

THE AMERICAN VERSION

---

an original screenplay

by Dan Gurskis

THE AMERICAN VERSION

FADE IN:

WASHINGTON, D.C. - OUR NATION'S CAPITAL - DEAD OF WINTER

Purgatory must be like this. Colorless, shivering, forsaken, a landscape of gloom and despair. There's no escape, not even for the icons - THE WHITE HOUSE, THE CAPITOL, THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT - which are pelted by a grizzly precipitation too solid to be rain, too wet to be snow.

OVER it all, we hear a voice, measured and thoughtful, the voice of SAM BIONDI.

SAM

(v.o.)

My father, just before he died, made a strange and puzzling admission in what had otherwise been a life of reticence and reserve. He could recall for every moment of importance in his life, good or bad, public or private, precisely what the sky had looked like. I mention this now because, in the year we're talking about, so many things happened, public and private, good and bad, that I can hardly keep them all straight, let alone remember what their meteorological conditions were. So many things....

EXT. CAPITOL HILL - ROW HOUSE - DAY

Behind the trim brick façade, a warm and snug refuge from winter.

INT. ROW HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Comfortably antique but for the lights of a stereo equalizer rising and falling with the voices from a TALK RADIO SHOW.

The topic of the day: in a society that tolerates more or less every kind of lifestyle, what is the meaning of marriage?

INT. ROW HOUSE - SECOND FLOOR - MASTER SUITE - DAY

The stereo downstairs is little more than a distant murmur as ELLEN STERN-BIONDI sits at a vanity.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In her late 20s, she is quietly self-assured, plainly intelligent, attractive in an understated way. She is, in short, the-girl-next-door - if the girl happened to be bat mitzvahed at the Potomac Jewish Center and went undergraduate to George Washington.

After a moment, SAM BIONDI, just recently out of the shower, steps from the bathroom. Open-faced, boyish, he is possibly 28 years old. Like his wife, he strikes one as all-American, though in a distinctly Italian-American way.

Lingering now in the bathroom doorway, toweling his hair, he studies Ellen's mostly uncovered body for a moment. And then for a moment more. And then for a moment more.

There is, we begin to sense, a problem here - marital discord - the nagging, deep-rooted sort that masquerades in almost excruciating civility. So if a tentativeness fills the air, it's not surprising.

Despite it - or perhaps because of it - Sam casually tosses aside his towel. Moving in behind Ellen, he begins to nuzzle her neck.

ELLEN

(even)

Sam.

SAM

(not so even)

"Sam" what?

ELLEN

I have a house to show in 45 minutes,  
and you have a plane to catch.

SAM

We can make it quick.

ELLEN

I hate it quick.

SAM

Since when?

ELLEN

Since I just got out of the shower.

He continues undeterred at the back of her neck until she rises, pulling herself away from him.

SAM

Christ, Ellen!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELLEN

Sam, be reasonable.

SAM

Reasonable?

ELLEN

I'm supposed to be at work right now.  
I don't have time for all that.

SAM

Then, how about just a little of  
"that?"

She looks at him: he just doesn't get it. He looks at her:  
she just doesn't get it. She reaches for her HAIR DRYER  
and turns it on. High.

SAM

(shouting over the hair  
dryer)

Ellen, do you know when the last time  
we had sex was?

Realizing that she will never hear him - which is, perhaps,  
the point - he turns off the hair dryer in mid-blow.

SAM

Do you know when the last time we had  
sex was? Two weeks ago - two and a  
half weeks ago.

ELLEN

Well, you're the one who was working  
late.

SAM

Not during the five days you went to  
New Orleans with your sister.

ELLEN

It was her Christmas present.

SAM

Her Christmas present? Ellen, she's  
Jewish. You're Jewish.

ELLEN

Do you have a problem with that?

She turns on the hair dryer again. He turns it off again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SAM

And before that - the second to the last time we had sex - do you know how long ago that was? Five weeks.

ELLEN

We were both busy getting ready for Christmas - and Hanukkah.

SAM

What about Christmas day? People have sex on Christmas. People have sex on Christmas all the time. It's almost like one of the holiday traditions.

ELLEN

You're the one who wanted to stay at your brother's all day.

SAM

Well, Ellen, he's the only family I have.

She is wounded by the comment.

SAM

Besides you.

She is not appeased.

SAM

Besides, it's Christmas night I'm talking about.

ELLEN

I'd just started my period. You know how I get.

She turns on the hair dryer again. This time, he bends down and rips the plug from the wall. He holds the cord tensely.

What he really wants is to tear the hair dryer from her hand and chuck it across the room. But that wouldn't be politically correct. He drops the cord and stands.

Now, all the marital problems that have lain dormant for so long awake with a start. The subject may be sex, but at issue is their very relationship.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SAM

Since Thanksgiving, we've had sex exactly three times, Ellen, three times.

ELLEN

Do you actually keep track of these things?

SAM

Don't you?

ELLEN

You never used to.

SAM

I never used to because there were too many times to keep track of! Ellen, people in comas have sex more often than we do.

Silence. A silence as deep and wide as the Grand Canyon.

SAM

(with a glance at a clock)  
Look at the - shit. You know, in the time we spent arguing ...

Angrily - furiously - he stalks back into the bathroom. Ellen, however, can't quite leave it alone.

ELLEN

(calling out)  
That's the difference between you and me, Sam. You have sex and I make love.

Suddenly, he reappears in the doorway.

SAM

No, Ellen, you're wrong. We don't do either.

Just as suddenly, he disappears into the bathroom. She returns to the vanity and tries to carry on as if nothing has happened. She can't, of course. Never again.

INT. AIRPLANE - MAIN CABIN - MOVING - DAY

Sam gazes out the window at the DISAPPEARING SKYLINE below.

INT. TAXI - MOVING - DAY

Ellen gazes out the window at the VARIOUS MONUMENTS as they flash by.

INT. HILTON HOTEL, DAYTON, OHIO - BALLROOM - NIGHT

An affair. The room is filled to capacity. Everyone is in black tie. And that includes Sam, who shares a corner of the back wall with SLOAN THATCHER.

Sloan looks more like 30 than 40, but appearances can be, as they say, deceiving. For despite her WASPy good looks, she is hardly the stereotypical Ivy Leaguer. She is, in fact, in a league of her own.

Both Sam and she have their eyes fixed across the expanse of candlelit tables to the dais where REPRESENTATIVE DICK McHUGH - 50ish, silver-haired, perhaps even statesmanlike to his way of thinking - addresses the gathering.

McHUGH

(at the microphone)

Now, I want you to understand what it means to be the wife of a Congressman. It means not doing what you want to do but doing what "your" district expects you to do. It means seeing your husband just long enough to be dragged off to a reception for some ambassador you've never heard of. It means having dinner with the Vice President and pretending he's interesting.

Appreciative chuckles.

McHUGH

But the woman who's about to come up here has done more than most Congressional wives - active in charity work, social causes, church work - hell, she's done more than most Congressmen. And so I'd like to introduce you to your Women's League Woman of the Year - and my wife - Maggie McHugh.

Enthusiastic applause as MAGGIE - elegant, beautiful, 48 - makes her way to the center of the dais. She gives her husband a kiss and a hug before taking over the microphone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAGGIE

Thank you. Thank you so very much.

Then, as the applause finally subsides:

MAGGIE

Dick's right about how little we see each other. I remember someone in the press once asking me how I liked being married to Dick McHugh and I said, "Dick who?"

More laughter. Which is not lost on the two at the rear of the hall.

SLOAN

Good line.

SAM

Thanks.

Sam, more edgy than bored, leaves his place at the rear of the ballroom and slips out through a back door. Sloan glances over just as he leaves.

INT. HOTEL - BALLROOM ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Sam is wandering the carpet to no particular purpose when one of the ballroom doors opens and Sloan walks out. It takes a moment for him to see her. By then, she's closing in fast.

SLOAN

(glowing)

I thought it went incredibly well. I thought the Congressman looked great. He sounded terrific - the best he has in a while - relaxed, assured, electable. A nice bit for Maggie, too. Good work there, kid.

He seems not to hear any of this - or, at least, not to care all that much about what he hears - which concerns Sloan. For, clearly, Sam and she have worked together long and well.

SLOAN

Buy you a drink?



INT. HOTEL - BAR - NIGHT

Uninhabited for the most part. A TRIO OF COMPUTER SALESMAN drinks boisterously at the bar while Sam and Sloan share an out of the way booth.

SAM

You know, when McHugh was my age, he was the number two guy on Jimmy Carter's California campaign.

SLOAN

He was.

SAM

Really when he took off - politically.

SLOAN

I'm not sure I follow.

SAM

I think it's time to make a move.

SLOAN

You? Where to?

SAM

Someplace where I can have an impact. Believe it or not, I got into government expecting to accomplish something: housing, education, the environment. But us - me - taking calls, writing letters, attending functions - now, what's that about?

SLOAN

It's about helping people. It's about the future. That's our job.

SAM

It's about politics, when it should be about government. It's about deals, when it should be about ideals. At least, it would be if I were McHugh.

SLOAN

But until you are McHugh, what better place to be - his press secretary?

It's with this comment that the seduction begins - a seduction as effective as it is inadvertent. For Sam

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

doesn't really desire Sloan; he desires power. And Sloan doesn't really want Sam; she just wants him to be happy. Nevertheless ...

SLOAN

(continuing)

I mean, you call up any newspaper in Ohio - in the Midwest - in the country, for Christ's sake - and what do they say?

SAM

"Oh, shit, not you again."

SLOAN

But they take your call, don't they? They listen to what you have to say, don't they? Sometimes, they even like what you say, and they put it in the paper. All those people in all those places picking up the morning newspaper and knowing it's so because Sam Biondi says it's so.

SAM

Except I'm usually "a spokesman for Representative McHugh."

SLOAN

And in two years you'll be a spokesman for Senator McHugh. Because after this November, Sam, after we win our seat again ...

Almost automatically, out of the sheer buoyancy of the moment, she squeezes his hand. But the gesture, so innocent at first glance, turns into something quite different, quite electric. Abruptly, leaning out of his seat, he kisses her. Hard. And she kisses him right back.

INT. HOTEL - SLOAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Without removing their lips from one another, Sam and Sloan tear off their formal wear, twisting and turning toward the bed.

SLOAN

We shouldn't be doing this.

SAM

I know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLOAN  
You're married.

SAM  
I know.

SLOAN  
We work together.

SAM  
I know.

SLOAN  
The Congressman will be looking for  
us.

Now, that is something to give one pause. And so Sam  
breaks ever so briefly to glance at his watch before we:

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - THE BED - NIGHT

The bed jumps rhythmically, rattling the half-empty  
cocktail glasses on the nightstand. Although there is  
undeniable enthusiasm to what Sam and Sloan do, some  
impassioned groping and heavy breathing, there's also  
something sloppy about it, something vaguely alcoholic.

Brief Encounter it's not.

Finally, when it's over - and it's over fairly quickly - we  
hear a moan. Not a moan of sexual arousal or release or  
even frustration. But a moan that indicates an error of  
some enormity has just been committed.

Sam lifts himself up and out of bed. He stares at Sloan  
glumly. She stares right back at him. This is not their  
finest hour.

SLOAN  
We'd better get downstairs.

SAM  
Yeah.

They gather up their clothing and begin dressing in guilty  
silence.

INT. HOTEL - ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Sam and Sloan, clothing perfectly in place, stare at the flashing numbers above the elevator doors. Neither dares look at the other, even as they say:

SLOAN

We can just pretend this didn't happen.

SAM

Can we?

SLOAN

I have a very short memory. I work in Washington.

INT. HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

The elevator doors open, and Sloan and Sam walk into a crush of formal wear. The dinner is breaking up. Instinctively, both look for McHugh. They spot him just as he emerges from the ballroom.

Sloan moves quickly through the crowd, weaving her way toward McHugh. Sam stays behind, lingering by the elevator, watching her position herself discreetly behind the Congressman as a PAUNCHY MAN approaches him.

PAUNCHY MAN

Dick! Dick McHugh!

The blank look on McHugh's face suggests that he hasn't any idea as to who the man is. But it's the millisecond of hesitation that Sloan picks up on.

SLOAN

(barely a whisper)

Henry Vishnevski.

McHUGH

(without missing a beat)

Hank, how long's it been?

PAUNCHY MAN

Too long, Dick, too long.

Sloan is still behind McHugh, still prompting him.

SLOAN

Commissioner of the Montgomery County Water Authority.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McHUGH

So what's news over at the Water  
Authority these days?

Having done her job, Sloan takes a step back. She looks across the room to see Sam, alone, staring at some distant unseen point. His reverie is interrupted, however, by an avuncular, balding man.

Even dressed in a tuxedo, WARREN SKIVVERS appears not to have changed clothes in a week. Fashion notwithstanding, his relationship with Sam is never less than familiar and more often than not entirely interdependent, the perfect example of two organisms thriving in the political ecosystem.

WARREN

Hey, Sam, whatta you say?

SAM

On background or are we on the  
record?

WARREN

Why do you always think I'm trolling  
for a story, Sam?

SAM

Because you're always trolling for a  
story, Warren.

WARREN

Well, it's just that the buzz in the  
room is this is Big Dick's swan song -  
that this is his last campaign, no  
matter what. I mean, you can see  
where that comes from. Just look at  
him. It's like he's getting ready to  
sit down for periodontal work.

Hearing this, Sam is concerned about the effects of a newspaper story touting McHugh's lack of enthusiasm for his campaign. He is also far too cagey to show it. Instead:

SAM

Sure, you can go ahead and write  
that, I suppose. But it's not even  
approaching the truth.

WARREN

And what is?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM

On background?

WARREN

Deep background.

SAM

Swear you won't print a word of it?

WARREN

Not a comma.

SAM

Two years from now, McHugh's in the Senate.

WARREN

How reliable is this?

SAM

Primo.

WARREN

When can I use it?

SAM

Not till after the election.

WARREN

I'm the first?

SAM

Number one for takeoff.

WARREN

(pleased)

Buy you a drink?

The mention of a drink instantly brings to mind Sam's most recent barroom-inspired activity - to which he reacts with suitable dread.

SAM

No, thanks. I've had enough for tonight.

INT. REAL ESTATE AGENCY, WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY

In a bustling office of TEN OR SO AGENTS, Ellen busily gathers up her things from her desk and stuffs them into a briefcase. Within seconds, she's hustling to the RECEPTIONIST.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLEN

(methodically handing over  
various documents)

If anyone needs to get in touch with me, my voice mail is on and my e-mail. Also, I'm expecting some contracts on the D'Amato property Express Mail. My cell phone is down, but I'll be carrying my pager, and I'll leave my fax on at home just in case.

RECEPTIONIST

Sure you haven't overlooked anything?

ELLEN

Only my husband.

Ellen pushes open the door and steps outside.

EXT. SAM AND ELLEN'S ROW HOUSE - DAY

A TAXI pulls up and Sam gets out, hang-up bag slung over his shoulder. He takes a long look at his house and sighs deeply. He's happy to be home.

INT. ROW HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

The front door opens and Sam stops abruptly. For greeting him, wearing nothing but a black, silk robe - and barely wearing that - is Ellen.

SAM

Sorry - wrong house.

She comes closer.

ELLEN

I've been waiting for you.

She comes closer still.

ELLEN

For a very long time.

She comes closer still, wrapping herself around him and offering up a hot, syrupy kiss.

ELLEN

For a very, very long time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Another kiss, even more breathless, on which we HOLD, then:

DISSOLVE TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS - AROUND WASHINGTON - EARLY SPRING

Buds sprout here and there. Grass begins to turn the faintest shade of green. SCREAMING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS swarm out of chartered buses. And, once more, we hear the voice, measured and thoughtful:

SAM

(v.o.)

If you're young in this country and you manage to find yourself in a position of some power or authority, you can't help regarding yourself in a certain way. It's not arrogance or smugness or invincibility; it's all three. Seven or eight weeks passed. Sloan never once mentioned that night in Ohio. And I never mentioned it to her. Or Ellen. It was great to be alive.

INT. RAYBURN CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

Sam - engrossed in a newspaper as he passes through a METAL DETECTOR - suddenly finds himself walking two abreast with another man: BACON.

Bacon is Sam's age. Chronologically, that is. For if each of us has an inner child within, Bacon has quadruplets. He is not helped by the fact that he is too handsome for his own good and that he seems to have the whole of Dixie in his drawl.

BACON

Weekend?

SAM

Okay.

They walk together in silence for a moment, then:

BACON

Aren't you gonna ask me about mine?

SAM

You've got to be kidding....

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Seeing a waiting ELEVATOR ahead, Sam and Bacon join the flow of drably dressed CONGRESSIONAL AIDES pouring into it.

INT. RAYBURN BUILDING - ELEVATOR - DAY

As the elevator doors close, Sam and Bacon elbow out a little breathing room.

SAM

(continuing)

The last time I asked you about your weekend it involved two secretaries from Albania and a video camera.

BACON

It was an Instamatic and they were from Estonia.

All eyes in the elevator are now furtively upon them.

SAM

Bacon, don't you ever feel like you're wasting your time?

BACON

Not with Eastern European girls - all those years of political repression turned them into party animals.

INT. McHUGH'S CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - ANTEROOM - DAY

Leading from the anteroom are three doors: one to McHUGH'S SPACIOUS PRIVATE OFFICE, another to SLOAN'S NOT SO SPACIOUS OFFICE, a third to A LARGE ROOM ACCOMMODATING CUBICLES for the rest of the staff.

Sam and Bacon walk in to the ringing of TELEPHONES. Without missing a beat (or a call), the 20ish receptionist TRACIE automatically hands over a stack of pink "While You Were Out" memo sheets, which Sam then riffles through.

SAM

(to himself)

Congressman Frank ... Senator Schumer ...  
Cleveland Plain Dealer ...

The phone rings yet again and Tracie looks up at Sam.

TRACIE

It's for you. He says it's Blake from Dayton.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

I'll take it at my desk.

With memos in tow, Sam continues into the adjoining room of cubicles. Bacon remains behind with Tracie.

SAM

(calling back)

The boss needs a list of questions for the Armed Services hearing.

BACON

Committee staff's writing 'em. Hey, but, Sam, don't do anything with Barney Frank's people till I give them our comments on the minority jobs bill. Congressman's gonna freak if we don't soften some of the language.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - CUBICLES - DAY

The room is aswarm with activity as a half-dozen AIDES race about, tending to their respective crises, ignoring C-Span on the TELEVISION hanging above them.

Within seconds of setting foot inside the room, Sam is caught by STEPHANIE, a bright-eyed, freshly-scrubbed 23-year-old, who waves some recent correspondence in the air.

As they walk:

STEPHANIE

We got this letter from someone in the district complaining the CIA is bombarding his brain with microwaves and he wants the Congressman to tell him what to do.

SAM

(matter of fact)

The CIA couldn't be bombarding his brain. He lives in our district so that would be a domestic operation. It would have to be the FBI that's bombarding his brain with microwaves.

He continues to his desk at the farthest end of the room under a window overlooking THE CAPITOL.

The vista is very nearly obstructed by the memos, correspondence, newspapers, and magazines heaped on his desk. In a small clearing at the center, however,

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

conspicuous to anyone who walks by, is an utterly romantic PHOTOGRAPH of Sam and Ellen locked in an embrace on a deserted beach.

As he approaches his desk, Sam reaches for the phone and picks it up on the fly.

SAM  
(on the phone)  
Blake? ... Uh-huh.... Uh-huh....  
Right now? ... Thanks....

Sam hangs up the phone only to realize that Stephanie is hovering next to him, poised for an answer.

STEPHANIE  
So what should I tell him? the guy  
with the microwaves?

SAM  
Tell him to line a shoebox with  
aluminum foil and wear it as a hat.

She looks at him incredulously.

SAM  
It always works for me.

Sam starts back out of the room.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - SLOAN'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

A perfunctory KNOCK after which the door instantly opens. Without so much as a "Hello," Sam crosses to a TELEVISION SET and turns it on.

SAM  
My guy just called from the district.  
D-Day.

On the TV SCREEN, addressing a typical C-Span gathering of men and women seated at dimly lighted tables, is LESTER CROUCH.

In his early 40s, handsome in a rugged, outdoorsy way, he is the very embodiment of a lifestyle that involves doing dangerous things at very high altitudes.

A CHYRON at the bottom of the TV screen reads, "Lester Crouch / Keynote Speaker / Association of Ohio Trial Lawyers."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLOAN

What's he going to say?

SAM

That about the only thing McHugh  
hasn't sold his vote for is a set of  
Ginzu knives.

All eyes are now on Crouch as he speaks from the TV SCREEN.

CROUCH

... Don't get me wrong. I like Dick  
McHugh. I just don't like what he  
stands for. Well, I take that back.  
I don't really know what he stands  
for - except lining up with the  
winning side. The man doesn't know  
his conscience, but he always knows  
which way the wind is blowing. He  
shouldn't be a Congressman; he should  
be a weatherman.

SAM

Get ready. Five, four, three, two ...

CROUCH

And that's why I am, this morning,  
announcing my candidacy for the  
United States House of  
Representatives.

Sam has called it right, right down to the point in the  
speech where Crouch would make his announcement. He turns  
to Sloan with a smile.

SLOAN

(good-natured)

What are you looking at?

SAM

He announces his candidacy at a  
convention of lawyers? Now, there's  
someone who's in touch with the people.  
I believe we need to start thinking  
seriously about where our Senate offices  
are going to be.

Sloan nods ruefully. Sam is premature. Very premature.

INT. SAM AND ELLEN'S ROW HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

It's very, very late when Sam drops his briefcase by the door. The house is dark, quiet, but for a RADIO that Ellen forgot to turn off.

As Sam crosses to the radio, we hear the day's talk radio topic: is rampant self-absorption the cause of the soaring divorce rate in this country? He kills the radio with the push of a button.

INT. SAM AND ELLEN'S ROW HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sam stumbles through the darkness, loudly colliding with a chair, which causes Ellen to stir in bed.

ELLEN

I was wondering when you'd get home.

SAM

So was I.

He carelessly takes off his clothes, tossing them onto whatever piece of furniture happens to be handy.

When he drops into bed, she slides over and gives him an affectionate kiss. He responds with a kiss of his own, one whose intensity surprises even him. Suddenly, despite his fatigue and her drowsiness, he is on top of her.

ELLEN

(without interrupting  
anything)

Sam...?

SAM

Hm?

ELLEN

Can I ask you a question?

SAM

What kind of question?

ELLEN

Have you ever made love to a pregnant woman?

SAM

What do you mean, have I - ?

Everything stops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

What do you mean?

ELLEN

What do you think I mean?

Laughter, then a euphoric burst of passion, then zilch.

ELLEN

What is it? Sam?

A brief, uncertain beat, as he sees his life pass before his eyes. But he quickly recovers, eagerly throwing himself back into the lovemaking.

INT. SAM AND ELLEN'S ROW HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

As Sam shaves before a MIRROR, Ellen bounces in. She is very excited - elated - which seems to deflate him slightly. She steps behind him and folds her arms around his waist.

ELLEN

Let's have a party.

SAM

A party?

ELLEN

A dinner party. For the family. To announce the news.

SAM

Okay.

ELLEN

Nothing elaborate. Mom and Dad and Rachel. And your brother and Barbara. I want to tell them all at once. I really want to see their faces. My parents are just about going to die.

SAM

Well, we can only hope.

She gives him a playful punch to the arm. He smiles.

SAM - MOVING

along the sidewalk on his way to work.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But instead of reading the newspaper as he walks - which is his habit - he looks around, studying everyone and everything he passes. And does he get an eyeful.

Everywhere he turns, he seems to encounter CHILDREN. Very young children. Very young, screaming children. Very young, screaming children making the lives of the adults they are with miserable.

If Sam is not made distraught by the sight, neither is he thrilled beyond all human expression. The idea of becoming a father has caught him completely unawares, and it's beginning to show.

One PARK in particular seems like something out of Dante. It's there that he hears:

BOY'S VOICE

(o.s.)

Hey, mister.

Sam lowers his gaze to find himself toe-to-toe with a water gun-toting FOUR-YEAR-OLD, who promptly squirts him in the face.

SAM

(wiping the water from his eyes)

A Republican.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL HEARING ROOM - DAY

The House Armed Services Committee is in session. A panel of four witnesses, including a BARREL-CHESTED, NO-NONSENSE NAVY ADMIRAL, sits at a table opposite the 20 or so committee members. McHugh is at the front of the committee, questioning one of the witnesses. Kneeling inconspicuously a few steps behind him is Sloan.

McHUGH

Now, Admiral, isn't it true that sailors MacKenzie, Butera, and Littlefield were all passed over for promotion?

ADMIRAL

Yes, sir, that's true.

McHUGH

And isn't it true that the reason each of these women was passed over was that she was pregnant?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADMIRAL

No, sir, that's not true, not at all.  
Each of these woman had a record that  
clearly indicated she was not ready  
or qualified for promotion.

Sloan now leans forward from her kneeling position.

SLOAN

(confidentially to McHugh)  
This guy's so full of shit he's  
drawing flies.

She then hands over a piece of correspondence to McHugh,  
which he studies for a brief moment. Then:

McHUGH

Admiral, I have here a memo, dated  
August 19, addressed to Admiral  
Galatin, in which you question  
whether a woman, any woman, can be  
both an effective career naval  
officer and a mother....

To ONE SIDE OF THE HEARING ROOM, meanwhile, Sam and Bacon  
are negotiating the narrow aisle between the  
Representatives on the committee and their respective  
staffers perched behind them.

SAM

(whispering to Bacon)  
We're having a dinner party this  
Sunday night.

BACON

(whispering back)  
Who all's invited?

SAM

Family mostly. But I need someone  
for moral support. Can you make it?

BACON

Sorry, got a date.

SAM

Bring her.

BACON

I don't think so, Sam. Not if your  
family's gonna be there. This  
woman's like a walking condom ad.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

The prospect of the party, especially the idea of enduring it alone, has plainly disturbed Sam. And so he sits pensively, staring at the action as it continues to unfold at THE FRONT OF THE COMMITTEE.

ADMIRAL

Congressman, the letter to Admiral Galatin was a confidential communication - a personal note between friends.

McHUGH

So in other words it's fine to think these thoughts in private.

ADMIRAL

Excuse me, Congressman -

McHUGH

(angrily cutting him off)

No, excuse me, Admiral. Where I come from, you hire the best man for the job no matter who she is. Even if she's pregnant.

As the admiral seethes down in front, Bacon leans into Sam's ear to ONE SIDE OF THE HEARING ROOM.

BACON

Hey, why don't you invite Sloan? She never does anything. I think the last date she had was during the Bush Administration.

INT. WASHINGTON, D.C. HOTEL - FUNCTION ROOM - NIGHT

Glasses clink. Voices crescendo. A sign on easel in the corner reads, "The American Woolen Institute Welcomes You."

Somewhere in the center of the after-work throng, with drinks in hand, are Sam and Sloan. Perhaps, Sam is weighing whether to invite her to his dinner party. Perhaps, not.

SLOAN

Same old faces, same old small talk, over the same old drinks. I wonder what I'd do without all this excitement.

SAM

What would you do? ever thought about it? if suddenly you just lost it all?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLOAN

Get as far out of town as fast as possible, for starters.

SAM

And then?

SLOAN

And then -

(truly at a loss)

Get even farther out of town. Even faster.

But then something captures Sam and Sloan's attention. Quite abruptly, they turn. Standing at arm's length is a strikingly handsome, strikingly debonair, STRIKINGLY ERUDITE CUBAN-AMERICAN IN HIS 40S. Call him ...

SLOAN

Carlos?

He smiles. They hug. They kiss - a bit too enthusiastically for this sort of gathering. They hug again. Sam takes an unconscious step back at the sight of it.

SLOAN

When did you get back?

CARLOS

Last week.

Sloan pauses a moment to look at Carlos, really look at him. There's something girlish, almost giddy, in her reaction to his unexpected appearance. It's then that Sam's presence slowly insinuates itself.

SLOAN

Oh - Sam - do you know Carlos?

SAM

No, I don't think we've met.

SLOAN

Carlos Molino, Sam Biondi.

Handshakes.

CARLOS

Sam.

SLOAN

Carlos is with the World Court in the Hague.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CARLOS

Was. I'm taking a position at the  
State Department.

SLOAN

Really? Back for good?

Carlos nods a small, understated, I-own-the-world nod. He is so smooth, so sophisticated, so Harvard that Sam can't help feeling uneasy - perhaps even inadequate - in his presence. What's more, he senses - quite rightly - that Carlos and Sloan share a history that is not exclusively professional in nature.

SLOAN

Carlos was my first boss in  
Washington.

CARLOS

You never forget your first, do you?

Laughter - although Sam's is not so amused. Then, an uncomfortable beat, as Carlos sizes up Sam sizing up Sloan sizing up Carlos.

CARLOS

Well, I didn't mean to interrupt.

SLOAN

You're not interrupting.

CARLOS

I'll give you a call.

SLOAN

Do.

Carlos starts off.

SAM

Nice meeting you.

Carlos turns, pauses, slightly puzzled.

CARLOS

Ah, yes, of course. Nice to have met  
you.

Sloan watches Carlos walk away, moving through the crowded room, her eyes never quite able to let go of him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SAM  
(slightly jealous)  
We're having a dinner party, Ellen  
and I, next Saturday.

SLOAN  
Are you?

SAM  
You're invited.

SLOAN  
Great. If it's all right with Ellen.

SAM  
Why wouldn't it be?

Just then, Bacon bursts INTO VIEW. At his side is an  
ATTRACTIVE SLAVIC WOMAN.

BACON  
Sam, Sloan, this is Olga. She's with  
the Ukrainian Embassy. Mind if we  
join you?

Sloan seems still to be working on Carlos, even as Sam and  
she make room for Bacon and his date.

INT. SAM AND ELLEN'S ROW HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The various dinner party guests are in the process of  
seating themselves or getting in a few last words before  
they do.

AT ONE END OF THE TABLE, Sam talks with his brother GUY, an  
older, intensely working-class version of himself.

SAM  
Don't you ever feel you missed  
something? by having kids when you  
did?

GUY  
Like what?

SAM  
Well - I don't know. It's just that  
you and Barbara were so young when  
you started a family.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUY

Not really. Not much younger than you are now.

SAM

Exactly!

GUY

Better than what Mom and Dad did. At least, Barb and I are young enough to enjoy our kids.

As Sam takes this seriously to heart, we shift our focus to SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TABLE: Ellen's parents LEN and MAYDA, both a youthful, tanned, 50 years old, chat with their grim, work-booted 21-year-old RACHEL and Guy's sharp-tongued, overly cosmeticized wife BARBARA.

BARBARA

How was the drive in from Potomac?

MAYDA

Len got lost again.

RACHEL

Which Mom kept reminding him of.

LEN

Do I look like a chauffeur?

BARBARA

Capitol Hill, Len. You just aim the car toward the dome and accelerate.

As the entire group (but Len) laughs, we shift our attention further to THE HEAD OF THE TABLE: Ellen is making her final preparations before serving when Sloan joins her. The two women know each other but not very well. Not very well at all.

SLOAN

Need a hand?

ELLEN

Sure, thanks.

SLOAN

It's you I should be thanking - for inviting me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELLEN

Well, I say to Sam all the time,  
"Let's have Sloan over, let's have  
Sloan over," but ...

SLOAN

We're all busy.

ELLEN

(decidedly maternal)

Too busy.

SLOAN

No, it's like riding a bicycle: if  
you don't keep moving forward, you  
fall down.

Then, with the CLINK of silverware against a wine glass,  
Sam draws everyone's attention.

SAM

Since we're just about ready to get  
started, I'd like to say something.

LEN

(clamorous)

Hey, Sam, it's not Grace you're going  
to say. Because we're Jews, you  
know.

RACHEL

Dad!

LEN

Reform Jews, but it still counts.

SAM

(raising his glass)

No, just a toast, Len.

The others raise their glasses.

SAM

To motherhood.

ALL

To motherhood.

A long beat, as each person at the table contemplates the  
implications of the toast, then:

MAYDA

Ellen...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Shrieks of surprise and delight as the women fly to her side, hugging and kissing her, half-seriously laying their hands upon her virtually flat belly.

At more or less the same time, the men - all two of them - approach Sam with manly words of congratulations and vigorous handshakes.

MAYDA

(to anyone who will listen)  
Didn't I tell you? Didn't I tell you  
something was up if Ellen was  
cooking? When was the last time  
Ellen cooked? I'm not being  
critical, but when?

Sloan seems a step or two removed from the festivity. Which Sam picks up on in fairly short order. But when their eyes meet, she winks and breaks into a small smile.

EXT. ROW HOUSE - REAR PATIO - NIGHT

Sam slips behind the bar as Sloan wanders onto the patio. In the b.g., the party has dispersed throughout the first floor.

SAM

So what can I get you?

SLOAN

More mineral water will be fine.

SAM

Mineral water? What's with you  
tonight? You're not planning to go  
into the office?

SLOAN

I'm pregnant, Sam.

SAM

You're - ?

SLOAN

I'm going to have a baby.

A tense beat. You can almost hear the synapses snapping in Sam's brain.

He then crosses to her with her drink. It's with great reluctance and not a little trepidation that he poses the obvious question.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

So who's the lucky guy?

She says nothing. He nods palely.

SLOAN

I didn't know if I should wait to tell you or - well, there's never really a right time for this sort of thing, is there?

SAM

But it was just one night.

SLOAN

I guess it was the wrong night.

SAM

You guess it was? You guess it was?!

Just then, Guy and Barbara drift out of the house.

BARBARA

So you're going to be a father, Sam.

Sam whips around defensively as the two approach.

BARBARA

What can I say but - it's about time?

Barbara gives Sam an enormous hug.

GUY

This is a special time, Sammy.  
You're never going to forget it.

Which naturally reminds Sam of something. But when he breaks free of Barbara, Sloan is gone. Without a word of explanation, he bolts into the house.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NEAR SAM AND ELLEN'S ROW HOUSE - NIGHT

Sloan walks away, disappearing into the night.

EXT. ROW HOUSE - FRONT STOOP - NIGHT

The door flies open and Sam races out. Too late.



INT. ROW HOUSE - MASTER SUITE - NIGHT

Ellen and Sam lie side by side in the darkness. She is ebullient. He is dumbstruck. But he doesn't have to say a thing; you can see it in his face: "Oh, fuck."

ELLEN

(rambling)

Did you see their reaction? my mother and father? I wish I'd had a camera.... Rachel was so funny - already volunteering to baby-sit. She's really turning out all right, even though I wish she'd buy a dress.... I didn't get a chance to talk to Sloan. She left so early. What'd she say?

SAM

About what?

ELLEN

The baby.

SAM

She was surprised, I think.

ELLEN

I like her. She's very - I'm not sure what. Her life is her own, no question about that. Maybe too much, though. I get no sense of proportion, none whatsoever. Do you?

Sam says nothing, interested in very little but the problem at hand.

ELLEN

So what do you think it will be, Sam: a boy or a girl?

SAM

Maybe both.

ELLEN

Twins? God. What a thought.

If Sam was upset before, he is now positively anguished, although Ellen sees none of it.

INT. ROW HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Sam stares at himself in the mirror.

SAM  
(mumbling to himself)  
Could've been a dream. The whole  
thing could've been dream.

He violently slaps shaving cream onto his face.

SAM  
What else could it be?

He draws a straight razor dangerously along his neck.

SAM  
Things like this don't happen to  
decent, caring people who've actually  
read all of Bill Bradley's books.

It's then that Ellen appears in the doorway.

ELLEN  
Did you say something?

Startled, Sam slices his neck with the razor and lets out a  
grunt.

ELLEN  
Are you okay?

SAM  
I should be clotting any minute now.

Sam reaches for something to stanch the bleeding.

ELLEN  
I thought I heard you asking me  
something.

SAM  
(very defensive)  
No, I wasn't asking you anything, I  
don't think.

EXT. CAPITOL HILL - STREET CORNER - DAY

Sam finds himself in the middle of a CROWD OF PEDESTRIANS,  
who are waiting obediently for a traffic light to change.  
It takes a moment before he realizes that he is standing

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

side by side with Warren Skivvers. When he does, he tenses visibly.

WARREN

Is anything wrong, Sam?

SAM

What could possibly be wrong?

WARREN

I don't know. You look ... strange.

SAM

Well, I'm not. I'm not in the least strange. That's the trouble with you Warren: something always has to be wrong. I mean, why don't you file some good news sometime?

Anxious to escape, Sam jostles his way out of the crowd and into the street, sidestepping the speeding traffic, barely avoiding a violent death (twice), causing a cacophony of BLARING CAR HORNS and SCREECHING TIRES in the process.

Warren has never seen Sam in such a state. In all likelihood, he's more concerned than suspicious, although the result is virtually the same: he cannot taken his eyes off Sam for a second.

INT. McHUGH'S CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - ANTEROOM - DAY

Still on edge, Sam hurries in, perfectly unaware of the world around him, Bacon included.

BACON

Sam - Sam, listen: the phones are ringing off the hook. We're getting like every veteran who still has enough fingers to dial a phone complaining about McHugh and the Armed Services hearings.

But Sam says nothing, instead continuing into Sloan's office.

BACON

He was too disrespectful, they're saying - Sam?

By then, he's already inside SLOAN'S OFFICE.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - SLOAN'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Sam crosses toward Sloan who sits behind her desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

I was up all night. We've really got to talk about this thing.

SLOAN

Sam, meet Jim Going.

Sam spins around to see JIM GOING alighted on a lowboy at the back of the room. Going is in his 40s, intense with a lean and hungry look, about as sincere as an oil slick.

SLOAN

The Congressman's asked Jim to run his campaign this time around.

Going doesn't miss a beat. He crosses to Sam with an outstretched hand.

GOING

Sam, congratulations. Sloan just told me the news.

SAM

What news?

GOING

About the baby.

SAM

Which baby?

GOING

You and your wife must be very happy. I know my ex-wife and I were ecstatic.

SLOAN

Jim's on his way to Dayton to get the campaign headquarters up and running. He wants to talk a little about what he'll be doing out there and what we can do around here without "pulling a Nixon" with the Federal Election Commission.

Sam nods his assent, but it's clear that his mind is anywhere but here. Still, he takes a seat alongside Sloan and Going as they get down to work.

GOING

Now, as you both already know, Dick is thinking very seriously about the Senate two years from now....

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - ANTEROOM - LATER - DAY

The meeting among Going, Sam, and Sloan has broken up. The three amble out of Sloan's office just in time to meet McHugh on the way out of his PRIVATE OFFICE.

McHUGH

Sam, I just heard about Ellen and you. Congratulations.

Sam half-smiles, half-grimaces.

McHUGH

So what are you doing for lunch?

SAM

Lunch?

What he was doing for lunch - judging from his pained look at Sloan - was expecting to talk privately with her. Not today.

McHUGH

We'll get a table in the Members' Dining Room. My treat.

Just then, Bacon strikes a confidential pose near Sam's ear.

BACON

Is this true, Sam? Ellen's great with child?

SAM

You're half-right.

INT. CAPITOL - CONGRESSIONAL MEMBERS' DINING ROOM - DAY

Not Morton's, but not a cafeteria, either. Sam and McHugh sit at a table in the center of everything. Punctuating the conversation are smiles and waves from McHugh to the VARIOUS CONGRESSMEN whom he spots.

In fact, McHugh's ability to split his focus, to keep his eye on everyone in the room even as he carries on a totally intelligent conversation, borders on the disconcerting.

McHUGH

So how's Ellen feeling?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

Fine. This is all pretty recent.

McHUGH

That's when they feel the worst.  
Maggie and I have two of our own,  
don't forget.

McHugh picks up on Sam's distraction - who wouldn't? - but he immediately draws the wrong conclusion.

McHUGH

You're not excited.

SAM

I am.

McHUGH

What, are you afraid this is going to  
change your life more than you want  
it changed?

Sam shrugs.

McHUGH

Well, it is. So what? It's a great  
thing, Sam. Maybe the greatest thing  
you can do in your life.

SAM

I know. It's just an adjustment,  
that's all. I'll make it. I'm  
making it.

McHUGH

How old are you? 29? When I was 29 -

SAM

You were running Bobby Kennedy's  
campaign in California.

McHugh seems caught off his guard by the comment.

McHUGH

A slight overstatement. But even so,  
the rest of my life didn't stop. Having  
children doesn't make you old or  
ineffective. It makes you human. It  
makes you more effective at what you do,  
whatever it is you do. Besides, how the  
devil are you ever going to run for  
Congress yourself if you don't have a  
couple smiling kids to hold up for the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

McHUGH (cont'd)  
crowds to see? People don't trust a politician without kids. They just don't. There's something about politics and babies - they go together.

SAM  
Well, then I'm in the right business, I guess.

SERIES OF SHOTS - THROUGHOUT THE AFTERNOON

as Sam tries to find a spare minute to speak privately with Sloan. It never comes.

Sloan accompanies McHugh to an empty HOUSE CHAMBER where he makes a speech to absolutely no one but a C-Span camera. She accompanies him to the Armed Services Committee HEARING ROOM. She meets with Bacon and him to discuss pending legislation.

Everywhere McHugh goes, Sloan seems to be at his side. Every conversation he has, she too seems to be a principal in. All the while, Sam waits and waits. Which only makes him all the more neurotic.

EXT. CAPITOL - STEPS - NIGHT

Briefcase in hand, Sloan leaves the building. After a moment, Sam appears far behind her, jogging to catch up.

SAM  
Sloan! Sloan!

She turns and waits.

SAM  
Finally.

SLOAN  
What?

SAM  
A minute alone with you.

SLOAN  
Sorry about that. It's been that kind of day.

They start down the steps. The Capitol is aglow in the b.g.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

I need to know what you're going to do.

SLOAN

About what?

SAM

About what do you think? The pregnancy. When you're taking care of it. If I'm supposed to pay for it. If you're going to do it here in the District or -

SLOAN

Sam, you seem to have the wrong impression.

SAM

How do you mean?

SLOAN

I'm having the baby.

He stops short. Seeing this, she too pauses.

SAM

Having it? In what way?

SLOAN

Have you ever felt in your heart that something was so right that it was almost like a revelation? I mean, despite what your head might be telling you? I've got to say, Sam, motherhood was not something I ever gave a whole lot of thought to. I couldn't say why; I just didn't. But it's a wonderful thing that's happened. A gift. And I'm grateful for it. I'm not going to walk away from it.

He looks as if he's been stricken with some dread disease.

SAM

You can't do this.

SLOAN

Why not?

SAM

Because - you can't.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

SLOAN

(wry)

I think this what they mean when they talk about pro-choice. It does involve a choice, doesn't it? Not some knee-jerk reaction.

SAM

But - what will people say?

SLOAN

Maybe "Good luck." And they might even mean it.

SAM

And Ellen?

SLOAN

I'm doing this on my own, Sam. This is about me. It really has nothing to do with anyone else.

If this is meant to assuage Sam, it doesn't work. He's even more desperate than before.

SLOAN

It's okay, Sam. Everything will be just fine.

She continues on her way as he stays behind.

SLOAN

(trying to lighten things up)

And when they get to be old enough for pre-school, we can carpool.

Sam manages to take her comment a little too seriously, which sends him plummeting even further into the depths of despair.

INT. SAM AND ELLEN'S ROW HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

As Ellen and he eat in silence, Sam shifts nervously in his seat. In fact, he moves about as much as one can and still be sitting down.

ELLEN

Are you okay?

SAM

Fine. Why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLEN

I just wondered.

SAM

I'm fine.

Ellen doesn't believe him for a minute, yet what can she say but ... ?

ELLEN

Fine.

EXT. SAM AND ELLEN'S ROW HOUSE - NIGHT

Dark. Silent. Still. All are down for the night. Or are they?

INT. SAM AND ELLEN'S ROW HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

While Ellen sleeps soundly, Sam lies next to her, his panic increasing with every passing moment.

INT. SUBURBAN COLONIAL HOUSE - ENTRANCEWAY - DAY

A KNOCK at the front door.

Coffee cup in hand, Sloan ambles down the hallway. She seems less than surprised when she opens the door to see Sam.

SAM

Mind if I...?

Without waiting for a response, he opens the door and enters.

SAM

I was thinking about your ... decision.

SLOAN

Were you?

SAM

I think it's good - it's a good thing, a good decision.

SLOAN

Do you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

Of course, there are going to be some major changes.

SLOAN

Of course.

SAM

Things you can't possible foresee.

SLOAN

I suppose.

SAM

Work, for instance. How you're going to manage it as a single mother? Are you going to have a problem on the Hill? Will there be a problem for you socially? a problem for your child socially?

SLOAN

(ironic)

Lots of problems there, Sam.

She starts up the stairs. He follows.

SAM

There are.

SLOAN

These things work out.

SAM

How can you be so sure?

SLOAN

Well, I have no other choice, do I?

SAM

(coming to the point)

Yes, you do.

She stops and faces him. She now understands what this is about: an abortion.

SLOAN

Ah, I see. Well, I thought we already had that discussion.

She seems disappointed by this turn - but not nearly as disappointed he. She then continues up the stairs. After a moment, he follows.

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Sloan crosses to a bed where an open suitcase lies. Sam has, we now understand, interrupted her in the midst of packing.

SAM  
Where you going?

SLOAN  
District office.

SAM  
(uneasy)  
With McHugh?

She nods. He says nothing. He simply stands there and fears the worst.

EXT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - SAM'S VOLVO - DAY

Sam slides into the driver's side and pulls the door closed hard. He turns the ignition. But instead of driving off, he stares straight ahead for a moment. Exasperated, he pounds the steering wheel.

INT. NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART - EXHIBIT - DAY

The exhibit on display must be centered on some Christian theme. For every painting Sam passes seems to be an elaborate crucifixion scene.

Not that he notices. For just then, he spots Bacon across the room. The two men approach one other.

BACON  
So what's the crisis I'm missing the  
second quarter of the Bullets' game for?

SAM  
Sloan's pregnant.

BACON  
Sloan? I always thought she was a  
lesbian.

SAM  
I'm the father.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BACON

You're what?!

A frantic look around, then he grabs Sam by the arm and yanks him out of earshot of anyone else.

BACON

Are you telling me you poked Sloan Thatcher?

SAM

Once.

BACON

What was it like?

SAM

Bacon....

BACON

Does your wife know?

SAM

No.

BACON

Sloan gonna tell her?

SAM

No.

BACON

Does McHugh know?

SAM

No.

BACON

Sloan gonna tell him?

SAM

That I'm the father? I don't think so.

BACON

So what's the problem?

SAM

I don't know what to do.

BACON

There's nothing to do. Don't open your mouth. Don't say anything to

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BACON (cont'd)

anyone. And if anyone says anything to you, deny everything.

SAM

What about Ellen?

BACON

What about her?

SAM

She's my wife. I feel like I'm keeping something from her.

BACON

You are keeping something from her. And if you're smart, you'll keep keeping it from her.

SAM

I don't know, Bacon.

BACON

Let me ask you this: now that all this has happened - forget about whether it's good or bad, right or wrong - now that it's happened, will it make Ellen any happier finding out about it?

SAM

Happier - no.

BACON

So you say, "Fuck it."

SAM

Fuck it?

BACON

Take it from me, that's what you say.

SAM

Fuck it.

BACON

Yeah, but with a little more conviction.

DISSOLVE TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS - AROUND WASHINGTON - CHERRY BLOSSOM TIME

Brilliant sunlight, cloudless skies, shimmering reflecting pools, with almost as many JAPANESE TOURISTS strolling the walkways as there are cherry blossoms.

OVER, we hear Sam again, although his voice is now less measured and more agitated.

SAM

(v.o.)

Desperation does strange things to a person. For me, it made Bacon seem like Aristotle. But who could dispute the wisdom of his advice: deny everything, deny everything, deny everything. It worked for Clinton, didn't it? Well, most of the time.

EXT. CLINIC - PARKING LOT - DAY

A SAAB pulls into a space near the main entrance. On the RADIO, still more talk from a radio talk show. Today's topic: are humans by nature monogamous, serially monogamous, or polygamous? Sloan turns off the car and the radio dies.

INT. CLINIC - DOCTOR'S OFFICES - WAITING ROOM - DAY

WOMEN IN VARIOUS STAGES OF PREGNANCY protrude from their chairs as Sloan arrives at the RECEPTIONIST's window.

SLOAN

Hello. Sloan Thatcher. I have a 9:30 appointment with Dr. Weissburg.

Across the room, a magazine slowly lowers to reveal Ellen. Her eyes lock on Sloan.

RECEPTIONIST

Please have a seat. The doctor will be with you in a just few minutes.

Ellen is tempted to raise her magazine, to hide behind it, not knowing whether Sloan wants to be seen in an obstetrician's office. But when Sloan turns away from the receptionist, she spots Ellen and instantly goes to her.

SLOAN

Ellen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLEN

Sloan, hi. What a surprise.

Sloan sits.

ELLEN

So you're...?

Sloan nods ruefully.

ELLEN

And how are you feeling?

SLOAN

Ten bucks says my hormones are more out of control than your hormones.

ELLEN

Well, you look great.

SLOAN

Thanks.

ELLEN

Now, me, I'm considering taking down all the mirrors in our house for the next five months - or maybe just painting them black.

SLOAN

You look fine.

Ellen is unconvinced.

SLOAN

You do.

ELLEN

Well, I know Sam's always wished I had bigger breasts. And now I have them. Boy, do I have them. Another three months and I'll be out in some pasture grazing.

A beat, as Ellen considers how best to put the question, then:

ELLEN

So what does your baby's father think of all this?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

SLOAN

He's getting used to it, I think.  
Slowly. But I'm really doing the  
whole thing myself. He really won't  
have anything to do with the  
pregnancy or the birth.

Just then, the receptionist slides back her sliding glass  
window.

RECEPTIONIST

Mrs. Biondi, Dr. Weissburg is ready  
for you now.  
(to Sloan)  
Don't worry. You're next, Mrs.  
Thatcher.

INT. SAM AND ELLEN'S ROW HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sam sets the table as Ellen removes hot things from the  
oven.

ELLEN

You'll never guess who else is  
pregnant.

SAM

Who?

ELLEN

Sloan.

SAM

(agonizingly calm)

Sloan?

ELLEN

Thatcher.

SAM

Really?

ELLEN

I saw her at the OB's today.

SAM

And what did she say?

ELLEN

She didn't have to say anything.

He, too, says nothing, uncertain where this is leading.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLEN

She looked good.

He still says nothing.

ELLEN

So, obviously, you didn't know anything about it?

SAM

About what?

ELLEN

The pregnancy.

He continues setting the table while she hovers around the oven.

SAM

(covering up badly)

Well, she has been acting a little strangely lately. We've noticed that. Bacon and I, I think it was, were talking about it just the other day. How strangely she's been acting.

ELLEN

But you didn't actually know anything?

SAM

Know?

A beat, as he weighs whether he should actually tell her a lie, as if he hasn't been lying already. But so preoccupied is she with the oven that she seems prepared to carry on both ends of the conversation.

ELLEN

Well, of course, you didn't. Because if you had - she's not married, right?

SAM

Who? Sloan? No.

ELLEN

So how do you suppose it happened?

SAM

The usual way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELLEN

You know what I mean. Is she seeing  
someone or - ?

SAM

She's - nothing.

ELLEN

An accident?

SAM

An accident.

ELLEN

Well, I think that's great. I really  
do. Because there really is a very  
easy way out of this. And she's not  
taking it, is she?

SAM

No.

ELLEN

And who cares really? in the end?  
whether she's married or not? She's  
smart. She seems very nice,  
responsible. I'm sure she'll be a  
great mother.

SAM

I'm sure.

ELLEN

I mean, it's really a sort of  
statement, isn't it? A sort of post-  
feminist feminist statement. That  
she's not afraid to do it on her own.  
That she's going to do it on her own.

She pours herself a glass of wine.

ELLEN

(raising her glass)

Well - here's to Sloan.

The idea of toasting Sloan's baby leaves Sam noticeably  
wan, which Ellen totally misinterprets.

ELLEN

I'm only having one glass. The  
doctor said one glass of wine is just  
fine.

INT. ATHLETIC CLUB - LOCKER ROOM SHOWERS - DAY

As Bacon showers, Sam - fully clothed - paces obliviously back and forth, nearly colliding with SOGGY NAKED MEN as they try to leave.

BACON

Hey, did you see that jump shot I made from the top of the key?

SAM

They're going to the same obstetrician.

BACON

The guy was all over me and I still made it.

SAM

(slightly frantic)

They're seeing the same doctor, Bacon!

BACON

You wanna hand me the conditioner.

Sam reaches into an unoccupied stall and retrieves a bottle of hair conditioner.

SAM

They need to be kept apart - far apart.

BACON

Hey, it's not like they're sharing the same examining table. When's the next time they're gonna see each other? Really?

SAM

Who knows? Every week maybe. And I don't know what Ellen will do if she finds out. I really don't. I mean, what if lurking under that calm, sweet exterior is a Jewish Lorena Bobbitt?

BACON

She's not going to find out. Because you're not going to tell her. You're doing this for her, Sam, never forget it. You're protecting her feelings at a time when she needs protection.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

But it's not very honest, is it?

BACON

Yeah, so? Whoever said "The truth shall set you free" was a total liar. There's no freedom in truthfulness - just a lot of aggravation.

SAM

Why do I think you're not the right guy to be talking to about this?

BACON

I am absolutely the right guy. I'm absolutely the right guy because I know, as bad as you think your problems are, they aren't a pimple on the ass of the universe.

Bacon turns off the shower and grabs a towel.

BACON

And you can take that to the bank.

INT. SAM AND ELLEN'S ROW HOUSE - FOYER/LIVING ROOM - SUNSET

Sam drops his briefcase by the door just as he hears FOOTSTEPS descending the staircase. He looks up to see Ellen. A few steps behind is Sloan. He struggles to appear as by-the-way as possible, but the fact is Ellen and Sloan are together in his home!

ELLEN

We've been out shopping for maternity clothes. Do you want to see?

Without bothering to wait for a response, Ellen ducks into the dining room. Sam then unleashes himself on Sloan.

SAM

Stop being pals with Ellen.

SLOAN

She called me.

SAM

Well, you should've told her, no.

Ellen quickly returns with several packages. Sam instantly goes from dark and brooding to beaming and doting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

So you went shopping.

ELLEN

Get your stuff, too, Sloan. I'm sure  
Sam's dying to see it.

When Sloan disappears down the hallway, Ellen leads Sam  
into the adjoining living room.

ELLEN

I didn't think you'd want to come  
along.

SAM

Well, you could have asked.

ELLEN

And you would have come?

SAM

I don't know. Maybe. Sure.

She gives him a dubious look just as Sloan reappears with  
several overstuffed shopping bags.

ELLEN

Did you see my - oh, I know.

Ellen abruptly disappears.

SLOAN

(taking up just where she  
left off)

Besides, we're not being pals. I  
don't even know her. She was just  
being nice to me.

SAM

Stop letting her be nice to you!

Ellen reappears. Once again, Sam's transformation is  
instantaneous.

ELLEN

Don't forget that stuff from Woody's.

Sloan disappears.

SAM

Next time ask me first, okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELLEN

Before I go shopping?

SAM

Before you call Sloan.

ELLEN

You want me to ask you before I call Sloan?

SAM

(realizing his error)

No. Of course, not. I just think this could have been a real bonding experience for us.

ELLEN

Buying nursing bras?

(to herself)

And so where's my stuff from Woody's?

Ellen once again disappears. Sam waits by himself for a moment. Then, when he hears FOOTSTEPS returning:

SAM

(expecting Sloan)

I've got to tell you I just don't think it's healthy - two women with your history hanging around together.

Ellen then appears in the doorway.

ELLEN

What do you mean - what history? And why on earth wouldn't it be healthy for us to spend a little time together?

Caught, Sam now freezes.

ELLEN

(still waiting for a response)

Sam?

You can see it in his face, in his eyes. He wants to tell her. He wants to tell her everything and he wants to do it now. The strain of concealment, of his duplicity, is beginning to take its toll. She sees this, all this, although she doesn't understand any of it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ELLEN  
(puzzled)  
Sam?

SAM  
Ellen, I ...

Just then, Sloan sweeps in wearing a very smart and very maternal maternity outfit.

SLOAN  
(oblivious to what has just  
passed)  
I'm really not so sure about these  
sleeves. They're so - look.

Ellen crosses to Sloan's side without so much a glance back at Sam. The moment has passed. The opportunity has evaporated. The two women carry on. Sam withdraws.

EXT. COUNTY FAIR - LIVESTOCK ARENA - DAY

McHugh is pressing the flesh, shaking hands in a crowd of people. Happy talk, all of it lighter than air, floats over the gladhanding. Accompanying the candidate, nearly out of sight, are Going and various CAMPAIGN VOLUNTEERS.

Just then:

MAN'S VOICE  
(o.s.)  
Dick! Dick McHugh!

McHugh turns to see the approach of Lester Crouch and his ENTOURAGE of young, clean-cut volunteers. Along the way, Crouch can't help shaking a few hands, which allows McHugh the time to cast a sidelong glance in Going's direction.

Then, as the two candidates meet and shake hands:

CROUCH  
So we finally meet.

McHUGH  
(less than pleased by the  
ambush)  
Indeed we do.

Both men, we now see, are very much aware of the audience they play to: not only the people attending the fair, but the cameras and the microphones aimed at them.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

CROUCH

I was just mentioning to a fellow back there, an unemployed auto worker from Vandalia, that I think the people in our district would be interested in hearing us discuss the issues.

McHUGH

I'm all for that.

It's about now we realize that we are watching this scene on a TELEVISION and that the television is inside an office.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - McHUGH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

The entire congressional staff is gathered around the VCR studying the tape of McHUGH AND CROUCH AT THE LIVESTOCK ARENA.

CROUCH

(on the TV screen)

Good, good. But issues, I'm talking about - jobs, taxes, crime - and let's agree to leave the fate of naval officers to the navy.

McHUGH

Are you suggesting that pregnant women don't have rights? that they shouldn't work wherever they want to work?

CROUCH

Now, don't go extremist on me, Dick. I'm saying, let's show a little respect for the military, for our fighting men and women who've given up so much for us.

Sam cannot take his eyes off the television screen. He unconsciously undoes his tie. He can feel the noose tightening around his neck.

INT. RAYBURN BUILDING - UNDERGROUND GARAGE - NIGHT

Sam is waiting impatiently by the side of Sloan's SAAB when she crosses the concrete toward him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLOAN

It's getting to the time when I'm  
going to have to tell McHugh.

SAM

Tell him what?

SLOAN

That I'm pregnant.

SAM

I don't think that's such a good  
idea.

She makes a move toward the driver's door. He steps out of  
the way a little too slowly. She opens the door.

SLOAN

I'm starting to show. Look at me.

SAM

He probably thinks you're just  
getting fat.

SLOAN

But I'm not, am I?

She slides in behind the steering wheel and slams the door.

SLOAN

Don't worry, Sam, your name won't  
come up.

She starts up the car and drives off.

EXT. LEN AND MAYDA'S SPRAWLING SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

Sam and Ellen's VOLVO is conspicuous in the driveway.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DEN - DAY

Sam and Len sit at opposite ends of a sofa watching a  
BASKETBALL GAME ON TV.

Sam is edgy, more manic than depressive, not quite able to  
stay in one place. So he rises from the sofa and walks out  
of the room.

Len's eyes remain locked on the TV.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Ellen and Mayda chat as they clean up after lunch. Sam goes unnoticed when he appears in the doorway.

MAYDA

So how's work?

ELLEN

Work's fine.

MAYDA

Have you thought about what you're going to do after the baby?

ELLEN

I have trouble thinking about what I'm going to do after lunch.

MAYDA

You know what I mean.

ELLEN

I can't afford to just quit work.

MAYDA

You can't afford not to.

Ellen now sees Sam in the doorway. They share a look, which probably consists of raising a collective eyebrow in the direction of Mayda. He then continues on.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - REAR DECK - DAY

Sam steps out of the house and crosses to the edge of the deck where he stares pensively into the horizon.

VOICE

(o.s.)

Do you think fidelity is possible?

Sam turns to see Ellen's sister coming toward him. Rachel, who seems always to be dressed in black, is the sort of restless, disconsolate undergraduate who makes Jean-Paul Sartre seem like a stand-up comic.

SAM

What do you mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RACHEL

Do you think it's possible for two people to remain completely faithful to one another?

SAM

Why not?

RACHEL

Because it's not in our genes for one thing. Our bodies aren't made for monogamy.

SAM

They aren't made for walking erect, either, but we still do.

RACHEL

Not in heels. I think now that societal restrictions are breaking down we're reverting. To our natural polygamous state. Or at the very least serial monogamy. That's what I think.

SAM

I don't.

RACHEL

That surprises me.

SAM

Why?

RACHEL

Guys especially seem to have a problem keeping it in their pants - anthropologically speaking. I would have thought you'd be sympathetic to that.

Perhaps, it's simply a slight case of paranoia, but Sam now suspects that Rachel knows more than she's letting on.

SAM

Think again.

INT. NATIONAL AIRPORT - PASSENGER GATE - NIGHT

McHugh emerges from the jetway to see Sloan waiting expectantly. He can't help pausing a moment, sensing bad news is on the way.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - McHUGH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - NIGHT

Sloan sits opposite McHugh who is behind his desk. A long, long, long silence. It's quite clear that she has just given him the news.

McHUGH

Who's the father?

She pauses a second too long.

McHUGH

Do you even know?

SLOAN

Thanks.

McHUGH

You're not going to tell me.

SLOAN

What purpose would it serve, Dick?  
Truly?

McHUGH

You used to tell me everything, you  
know.

SLOAN

It's better this way.

There is, we now begin to sense, a real familiarity between McHugh and Sloan, one borne of - well, working together, yes - but perhaps something else as well.

McHUGH

So you're not planning to get  
married?

SLOAN

I'm happy with this, Dick. It's  
something I really want to do. I was  
hoping you'd be happy for me.

It's then that the door opens and Jim Going barges in. He's about halfway into the room before he realizes that McHugh is otherwise engaged.

GOING

Oh - sorry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McHUGH

No, come in, Jim. We're going to dinner, Sloan. Care to join us?

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

McHugh, Sloan, and Going sit at a corner table. The Congressman - in stark contrast to meals previous - is distracted to the point of silence.

SLOAN

I wouldn't have planned it this way. But that's what life is: making the best of what you have.

GOING

(sardonic)

Oh, so that's what life is.

Going looks to the congressman for a show of support. The most that McHugh can muster is a distracted smile.

GOING

So when are you due? Before or after the election?

SLOAN

Before.

GOING

How much before?

SLOAN

Two weeks, maybe less.

GOING

See if you can't have the baby the weekend before the election so there's absolutely no hope for damage control.

McHUGH

Jim....

GOING

I'm sorry, Dick, but this is going to be a major issue - your chief of staff pregnant and single, without even a boyfriend in sight, without even a date in sight - Crouch is going to beat up all over us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McHUGH

I don't think so.

GOING

But what if you're wrong?

Just then, Carlos Molino appears at their table.

CARLOS

(to Sloan)

I can't seem to get away from you.

SLOAN

Carlos Molino, do you know  
Representative Dick McHugh?

The seated men stand. All shake hands.

CARLOS

The question is does he know me?

McHUGH

Of course.

SLOAN

And Jim Going.

As they talk, a thought occurs to McHugh concerning the paternity of Sloan's baby. And so he can't help a hard look at Carlos, one that Carlos can't help detecting. The men regard each other briefly, penetratingly, only to return their attention to Sloan.

GOING

They have you in the State Department  
yet, Carlos?

CARLOS

Next week.

A brief beat, then:

CARLOS

Well, I was just on my way out.

SLOAN

Would you mind giving me a lift?

CARLOS

My pleasure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SLOAN

I left my car over at the Rayburn Building.

She rises from the table.

SLOAN

Thanks for dinner, Congressman.

McHUGH

Not at all.

SLOAN

See you later, Jim.

As Carlos and Sloan walk away:

GOING

She's a liability, Dick. I'd get rid of her like a bad suit.

McHUGH

I can't do that. I was the one who got up in front of the entire country and blasted the Navy for treating pregnant sailors unfairly.

GOING

Well, if you had asked me, I would've told you not to commit yourself like that. They have it on tape.

McHUGH

(shrugging it off)

People are fundamentally decent. I think they'll forgive us this one. Life isn't all treachery and deceit.

GOING

No, just the good parts.

EXT. CAPITOL - STEPS - NIGHT

Warren Skivvers lurks in the shadows, lying in wait, until Sam emerges with briefcase in hand.

WARREN

Sam!

Warren hurries out of the darkness to Sam's side.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

SAM

What's up?

WARREN

I was going to ask you the same question.

SAM

Oh, yeah?

WARREN

McHugh and Going come back from the campaign suddenly, no warning. Closed door meeting right away between Sloan Thatcher and McHugh. Then, the three of them meet for dinner at some out of the way place. I'd say something's up.

SAM

I don't know anything about it.

Sam continues on his way, and Warren watches him go. He clearly senses something is wrong. A good reporter, he may actually do more than sense it. But from the ambivalent look on his face, we see that he wishes he knew nothing about any of it.

INT. SAM AND ELLEN'S ROW HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

Sam sits in a chair, staring into space, when Ellen appears in the doorway. She studies him for a moment. She doesn't like what she sees. For even when she goes to his side, he barely looks up.

ELLEN

Are you all right?

SAM

Don't I seem all right?

ELLEN

No. You seem like you're under a lot of stress.

SAM

(too strong)

I'm not.

(softer)

Not really.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLEN

You're happy about the baby? You're not having second thoughts?

He reaches out and takes her hand.

SAM

What's a marriage without a baby?

This idea he tosses off quite automatically. But, suddenly, without warning, without preparation, there is a kind of epiphany for him:

SAM

Really. It's some sort of - what? - contractual obligation. A corporation, for Christ's sake. What's the point of marriage - the real, historic point - except to raise a family?

ELLEN

People do get married because they're in love.

SAM

They also live together because they're in love. I'm talking about a legal, walk-down-the-aisle marriage. If it's not about children - I mean, why go to the trouble?

ELLEN

People who're not married also have children.

Sloan - no matter what he says or does, he can't seem to get away from her.

SAM

They do.

ELLEN

I spoke to Sloan today.

SAM

What do you mean you spoke to her?

ELLEN

I called her. At work.

SAM

She never mentioned it to me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELLEN

Why would she?

SAM

I just would have thought she'd say something. What were you talking to her about?

ELLEN

There's an orientation at the hospital for this summer's Lamaze class. I wanted to know if she was interested in coming with us.

SAM

She's going to come with us to Lamaze class?

ELLEN

No, orientation. Class isn't for a while. But I suppose she could. Come to class with us.

SAM

I don't think that's such a great idea.

ELLEN

You know, you could even be her partner, really.

SAM

You want me to be Sloan's Lamaze partner?

ELLEN

Why not? She's all alone, Sam. And it's not like the two of us are going to be giving birth at exactly the same time.

INT. BACON'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Spartan, to say the least. Bacon and Sam sit on what appear to be vintage stadium chairs taken from an old ballpark. That's about it for furnishings except for a TV and a VCR which plays FATAL ATTRACTION.

SAM

Why me? I'm really a very decent guy, I think. Loyal. Steadfast.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM (cont'd)  
Moral. I say "Chee-lay" when I  
really mean Chile.

BACON  
(eyes glued to the set)  
Just keep your cool.

SAM  
Bacon, my marriage is in jeopardy, my  
career is in jeopardy.

BACON  
Your career's not in jeopardy. Oh,  
watch this - this is great - the  
knife into the leg.

On the screen, Glenn Close draws blood as she talks to Anne  
Archer.

BACON  
Self-mutilation - I love that in a  
woman.

Sam rises.

SAM  
I've got to go.

But Sam finds himself hypnotized, if only for a moment, by  
the image of a woman scorned.

BACON  
(eyes still on the screen)  
"Bitch!" - say it, say it....

Glenn Close then shouts: "Bitch!"

BACON  
Yes!

Sam trudges toward the door.

BACON  
Hey, Sam, where you going?

INT. METRO STATION - PLATFORM - NIGHT

The platform is empty but for Sam and a sleeping HOMELESS  
MAN. Sam glances at his watch and paces.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE

(eerie, barely more than a  
whisper)

Your wife's going to find out.

Hearing this, Sam spins around and glares at the homeless man. He seems to be sleeping.

SAM

What did you say?

But the homeless man only snores. So Sam glances at his watch, backs off slightly, paces a little more.

VOICE

McHugh's going to find out, too.

Again, Sam spins around. Again, the homeless man only snores. Again, Sam takes a few steps back and resumes pacing.

A TRAIN now approaches and Sam heaves a sigh of relief - only to hear:

VOICE

(more like the wail of  
wounded animal than  
anything human)

They're both going to find out  
everything and they're going to mount  
your ass on a wall plaque.

Sam whirls around violently. Eyes locked on the sleeping homeless man, he backs farther and farther away until one foot slips over the edge of the platform and into thin air.

The train WHISTLE shrieks a piercing shriek.

Time now seems to come to a standstill as Sam feels himself falling backward. The train races down the track toward him. He turns his eyes heavenward.

Suddenly, the homeless man is at the edge of the platform, throwing out his hands, latching onto Sam, hoisting him back to safety just as the train rushes into the station.

An uneasy, unnerved beat.

HOMELESS MAN

You better watch yourself, pal.

Sam unhands himself quite abruptly. Then, without saying a word, he jogs away from the man toward the waiting train.

INT. SAM AND ELLEN'S ROW HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Still shaken, Sam trudges in from the outside. It's then that he hears what sounds like two VOICES drifting down from the second floor. With an involuntary shudder - who knows what the women are up to now? - he climbs the stairs.

INT. ROW HOUSE - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY/MASTER SUITE - NIGHT

As Sam creeps toward an open door at the end of the hall, one voice - Ellen's - becomes more distinct.

ELLEN

(o.s.)

Everything's going to be fine - perfect - fine. I'm sure of it. Sam's a little strange right now. But it's his first child. Who can blame him? I know I'm feeling pretty strange myself.

At the end of the hallway, Sam peers into the room to see Ellen, all alone, applying luxurious amounts of after-bath lotion, talking to herself - or, more accurately, her fetus.

ELLEN

But once I finish things up at the office, once I can tell them all to take a hike for a couple of months, once I can focus on family things, the important things - he'll come around. I know he will.

Sam takes a step back as Ellen continues.

ELLEN

Because he's going to be a wonderful daddy. Don't you think so? Don't you?

(when there's no response  
from her womb)

Well, you don't have to answer just yet.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - ANTEROOM - DAY

Stephanie walks up to Sam who stands at the receptionist's desk, holding some newly arrived mail and not knowing quite what to do with it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STEPHANIE

Sam? The guy who wrote in saying the CIA was microwaving his brain?

SAM

Yes.

STEPHANIE

Now he says he tried the shoebox with the aluminum foil inside and it didn't work. So what do I tell him?

SAM

What do you think, Steph?

STEPHANIE

What do you mean?

SAM

How do you think the letter should be answered?

Stephanie seems momentarily paralyzed by the idea of making a decision for himself.

STEPHANIE

Tell him to put aluminum foil on the outside of the box, too, and to make sure the chin strap is securely fastened.

SAM

There you go. Write it.

The door to Sloan's office opens and she walks out.

SLOAN

Sam, we need to talk to Congressman Delay's people about ...

Suddenly - alarmingly - she begins reeling backward. She tries to prop herself up on a chair. She misses the armrest by at least a foot and falls to the floor. Out cold. Sam rushes to her side.

SAM

Tracie, Stephanie, 911. We need an ambulance.

He quickly checks her eyes and pulse. He looks up to see Tracie frozen with panic.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM

Tracie! Dial the God damned  
telephone!

INT. RAYBURN CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

McHugh and Going are approaching, rapt in some political discussion, when TWO PARAMEDICS wheel Sloan out of the office on a stretcher.

Conscious again, she sees the men as she rolls by and smiles weakly at them. Within seconds, Sam is racing down the hallway after the stretcher.

SAM

(to McHugh and Going)

It's okay....

We HOLD on McHugh and Going as they watch the stretcher pass an ever-growing group of ONLOOKERS.

SAM

Everything's going to be all right.

GOING

(muttering to McHugh)

Says who?

I/E. AMBULANCE - REAR - DAY

Sam hunches between the two EMTs as one finishes securing Sloan's stretcher and the other climbs out the back of the ambulance.

Just as the ambulance doors close, Sam glances outside. Standing at the rear of ambulance, note pad in hand, taking in everything, is Warren Skivvers.

Sam lunges for the closed door and peers out the window. Skivvers is gone - if he was ever there in the first place.

EMT

Please have a seat, sir.

Sam drops numbly onto the bench seat as the ambulance pulls away and the EMT goes about the business of checking vital signs and making Sloan comfortable.

Mentally, Sam is all but removed from the situation. So when Sloan gazes in his direction and extends a hand to him, it takes a long moment for him to react. And even

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

then, he holds her hand with what can only be called perfunctory solace.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - BEHIND A PRIVACY SCREEN - DAY

Sloan is alert and ruddy now, sitting up in bed, with Sam close by her side. Looking at the two of them, you would swear the whole thing never happened - except for the matter of the RESIDENT consulting a medical chart at the end of the bed.

RESIDENT

Some women faint when they're pregnant. It's not unusual, although naturally it's not something we encourage.

SAM

So this is normal?

RESIDENT

It's not abnormal. But I am concerned about your cervix.

SLOAN

What about it?

RESIDENT

It's starting to open slightly. Not normal. Not good, either. We have a couple of options. But what I'm recommending - I've spoken to Dr. Weissburg and he agrees with me - is complete bed rest while we keep an eye on this thing.

SLOAN

How complete?

RESIDENT

Eight, ten weeks. Maybe longer.

SAM

In bed?

RESIDENT

Sorry.

EXT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

A TAXI idles in the driveway as Sam pays the DRIVER. He then races around the back of the cab to help Sloan out the other side.

EXT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DAY

As Sam fumbles through her keys, Sloan seems ill at ease - and not simply because she is going to be spending the next few months in bed.

SLOAN

Sam -

SAM

No, it's all right. I'll do it.

SLOAN

That's it. That's the one.

Sam singles out the front door key from the ring and inserts it into the lock.

SLOAN

(curt)

I'll take it from here.

SAM

But ...

She starts into the house then stops and turns.

SLOAN

It would have solved all your problems, wouldn't it?

SAM

What - ?

SLOAN

If I'd had a miscarriage. That's what you were thinking. On the way to the hospital. You thought to yourself: "This is it. I'm off the hook."

SAM

That's absolutely -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLOAN

Wait - stop - don't say anything, Sam.  
Because it doesn't make any difference  
to me what you thought. It really  
doesn't. The only one it should matter  
to is you.

She stares at him a moment then closes the door. Sam  
lingers a moment. He ponders. He wonders. Perhaps, he  
even comes to some conclusion.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - ANTEROOM - NIGHT

The office is deserted. Everyone has left for the evening  
when Sam finally returns for his briefcase and papers.  
Then, just as he walks past the door to McHugh's PRIVATE  
OFFICE:

GOING

(o.s.)

Sam....

Sam backtracks a few steps until he is even with the door  
to the office.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - McHUGH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - NIGHT

Going sits feet up, hands behind his head, at McHugh's  
desk. There is no sign of McHugh anywhere.

GOING

Quite an amusing little scene this  
afternoon. But, then, I enjoyed Miss  
Saigon, too.

Sam walks warily through the doorway. He doesn't trust  
Going, but so what else is new?

GOING

(a seedy attempt at  
earnestness)

Sam, can I give you a piece of  
friendly advice?

SAM

What's that?

GOING

Stay clear of Sloan Thatcher.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

Yeah, why?

GOING

She's no good. For you. For Dick.  
For the campaign.

SAM

She's the Congressman's chief of  
staff.

GOING

This week. She's not going to last.  
Trust me. And I don't think I'm  
speaking out of turn when I say I  
have a pretty good idea who her  
successor will be.

But Sam is not buying what Going is selling.

SAM

I thought your responsibility was the  
campaign, Jim.

GOING

My responsibility is doing whatever  
it takes to get Dick McHugh re-  
elected. Whatever it takes.

INT. SAM AND ELLEN'S ROW HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

As Sam ferries dirty dishes from the dinner table Ellen  
loads them into the dishwasher.

ELLEN

So who's with Sloan now?

SAM

No one.

ELLEN

The woman's all alone?

He nods.

ELLEN

How's she going to manage? on her own  
like that? for eight or nine weeks?

He does not respond.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLEN

I'm going to send Rachel over there to look in on her. She has just those two courses this term. The rest of her time's totally free.

Gradually, we begin to realize that Sam is upset. Not simply concerned. Upset. Finally, he drops into a chair and buries his face in his hands.

An unsettling beat, as Ellen watches this, unsure of what to make of it.

Then, when Sam looks up:

SAM

God help me, but I wanted her to lose the baby. I really hoped - when I was sitting there in the ambulance - I was relieved she might have a miscarriage.

ELLEN

Why?

SAM

I'm the father.

At first, it almost seems that she's not heard what he's said. Then, it seems that she's heard what he's said, but the words don't quite add up to anything, as if he's been speaking in tongues. Finally, her face goes ashen. Her eyes well up. Her muscles tense. Her world comes to grinding, quaking halt.

ELLEN

What did you say?

SAM

I'm the father - of Sloan's baby.

She sleepwalks her way to the kitchen table. But once she manages to seat herself, shock quickly gives way to anger.

ELLEN

What are you telling me, Sam?

SAM

I'm sorry.

ELLEN

That you and she -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM

No. It's not what you think.

ELLEN

Then, what is it?

SAM

It was back in January. When we went back to the district office with McHugh. When things weren't, you know, so terrific with you and me. It was just that one time. That's all. There's nothing between us. Honestly.

She glares at him for a moment. She then rises, picks up some plates from the table, and crosses toward the dishwasher.

But halfway there, she lets go of the plates, sending them crashing to the floor. She lunges back toward the table and with one, swift, violent motion pushes everything onto the floor.

She then throws herself at him and begins flailing away. He doesn't try to block her blows. He stoically absorbs their full force - corporal punishment.

ELLEN

(as she strikes him)

Fuck you, Sam - just fuck you - fuck you! fuck you! fuck you!

SAM

Ellen - Ellen -

ELLEN

Get out, Sam - go - somewhere - just go!

Pulling herself off him, she watches as he does just that: out the kitchen, down the hall, into the street.

INT. BACON'S APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

A KNOCK at the door. Nothing.

Another KNOCK. Still nothing.

Then, another KNOCK. This time, Bacon emerges from a bedroom, struggling to pull on his underwear as he walks. When he opens the door, he is more than a little surprised to see Sam.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM  
I need a place to stay.

BACON  
Now?

Sam nods his head heavily.

BACON  
Sure.

WOMAN'S VOICE  
(o.s.)  
Bacon...? Bacon...?

It's then that Tracie, the office receptionist, appears stark naked in the bedroom doorway. She stands there just long enough to see that Sam has arrived before dashing back inside the room with a gasp.

SAM  
(to Bacon)  
Sorry.

INT. BACON'S APARTMENT - GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sam lies supine, staring at the ceiling, weighing his problems, not paying all that much attention to the muffled voices in the room next door.

Gradually, the voices seem to grunt and moan rather than speak. The grunting and moaning grow louder. The bed next door begins to thump and squeak.

Now, the sexual activity is all Sam can hear. He tries hard to ignore it. But the harder he tries, the more aware he becomes.

Finally, when he can stand it no more, he turns onto his side and pulls a pillow down hard over his ears.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - ANTEROOM - DAY

Sam walks in bleary-eyed only to be jolted awake by the perfect PANDEMONIUM:

1. MIDDLE-AGED MEN IN MILITARY UNIFORMS hover around Tracie, clamoring for a private audience with McHugh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

2. TWO HANDSOMELY DRESSED LOBBYISTS conduct a loud discussion with Bacon about the legislation that they believed McHugh had agreed to support.

3. SEVERAL BURLY MEN IN FARM APPAREL linger in the center of the room for no apparent reason.

4. All throughout, the PHONES ring and ring and ring.

Sam maneuvers his way through the throng of bodies until he spots Stephanie sobbing in a heap in the corner. He quickly goes to her.

SAM

What is it?

STEPHANIE

(through the tears)

A call came in for Jim Going and I -  
I - I didn't know he was in the  
office. I thought he was back in the  
district. He's the campaign manager,  
isn't he? So I told the person to  
try him in Dayton. And when Going  
found out he missed the call, he had  
a fit - screaming at me in front of  
the whole office - saying he was  
going to have the Congressman fire  
me....

SAM

(as reassuring as he is  
furious with Going)

Going runs the campaign, Steph.  
Sloan runs the office. No one's  
firing anybody.

TRACIE

(calling out over the din)

Sam, the Congressman wants to see  
you!

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - McHUGH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Going tosses a NEWSPAPER onto McHugh's desk.

GOING

Fresh off the plane from Dayton.

McHugh opens the newspaper.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

GOING

Left hand corner below the fold.

The headline screams: "STAFFER COLLAPSES IN McHUGH'S OFFICE." But McHugh's eye immediately goes to the sub-headline: "PREGNANT WOMAN UNMARRIED."

McHUGH

Let's see what happens.

GOING

I know what happens. Not only can you kiss this election good-bye, you can say "Sayonara" to that Senate seat, too.

A KNOCK at the door.

McHUGH

In.

The door opens and Sam walks in. Seeing Going causes to him hesitate briefly. He wants to say something to him but realizes that this is neither the time nor the place. Instead:

SAM

(to McHugh)

You were looking for me?

McHUGH

I have all of this stuff I need brought over to Sloan.

GOING

(sarcastic)

Her letter of resignation's right on top. Have her sign that first.

Sam shoots a sharp look of disapproval in Going's direction.

GOING

It's joke, Sam. You remember jokes?

Sam visibly checks his growing anger with Going.

McHUGH

Can you have Stephanie or somebody go?

SAM

I don't mind....

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Sam crosses to the desk where he is about to pick up the heap of things that McHugh has put together. It's then that he sees the NEWSPAPER HEADLINE. He freezes. Then:

SAM

I'll make the delivery myself.

GOING

Did someone say delivery?

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sam pulls up a chair alongside the bed where Sloan lies on her side. He hesitates briefly before handing over the NEWSPAPER with the article on Sloan's collapse.

SLOAN

Well, it had to come out sometime.

A long, thoughtful beat, as he considers just how much of his problems he is willing to share with her, then:

SAM

I told Ellen. Everything.

SLOAN

How did she take it?

SAM

I'm staying at Bacon's.

SLOAN

That well?

SAM

It's only temporary. For her to sort things out.

SLOAN

Do you want me to talk with her?

SAM

No.

SLOAN

Because it might mean something coming from me.

SAM

I think she blames you for the whole thing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLOAN

Me?

SAM

I think so. Maybe not.

Sloan seems genuinely surprised to hear that Ellen might hold her accountable in some way for what has happened.

SAM

I just wanted you to know what was going on, that's all.

EXT. REAL ESTATE AGENCY - SIDEWALK - DAY

Sam waits, leaning against a parking meter, until he sees Ellen on her way in. She spots him just as she is about to reach the door and stops.

She seems neither surprised nor unsurprised to see him, neither happy nor sad, neither forgiving nor unforgiving. Indeed, she seems to be in something like a state of shock. Reluctantly, she goes to him.

ELLEN

How long were you going to wait to tell me?

SAM

I don't know.

ELLEN

Or were you even planning to tell me?

He does not answer. He does not know.

ELLEN

I have a house to show in fifteen minutes. I'm just picking up the keys.

SAM

I'll meet you - after work - we can talk.

She weighs the offer then wordlessly starts for the office door.

SAM

Ellen?

She stops, turns.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLEN

It's easier for gentiles to have affairs.

SAM

What's that mean?

ELLEN

It just is. It's a cultural thing.

SAM

It wasn't an affair. It was one night. Not even a night. More like fifteen minutes. Before we realized we'd made a mistake.

ELLEN

But not before you got her pregnant.

A wistful beat, then:

ELLEN

This was supposed to be the happiest time in our my life, Sam. We were supposed to be making plans, looking to the future, enjoying our last few months alone together. And you've taken that away from me. You've taken it away and I can never get it back.

SAM

I'll make sure you do.

ELLEN

I have a house to show.

SAM

We've got to - we just need time together. We need to talk. Now. Later. Whenever.

ELLEN

I'm not free.

As she disappears into the office, we HOLD on Sam, ashen, then:

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sloan lies on her side reading when the DOORBELL rings. She reaches over to a small INTERCOM that has been rigged within reach of the bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLOAN  
(into the intercom)  
Who is it?

ELLEN  
(through the intercom)  
Ellen. Ellen Biondi.

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ellen edges into the room.

SLOAN  
Over here. You're going to have to  
come to me, I'm afraid. I'm still  
under house arrest.

Ellen doesn't make a move.

ELLEN  
I feel betrayed.

SLOAN  
By Sam?

ELLEN  
By you.

SLOAN  
Me?

ELLEN  
Because I thought we were friends.

SLOAN  
We were. We are.

ELLEN  
I don't think so.

Ellen now begins to move tigress-like around the room, the  
predator stalking her prey.

SLOAN  
It wasn't anything, that night, you  
know. It wasn't really romantic or  
passionate. Wasn't even sexual,  
really.

ELLEN  
What did you think when you saw him  
at work every day?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLOAN

That he was lucky - lucky to have you  
- luckier than I am.

ELLEN

And when you came into our home?  
spent all that time with me? made  
yourself a part of my life?

SLOAN

I didn't think anything, really.

ELLEN

You went to bed with my husband,  
Sloan. And you're carrying his  
child. Now, tell me what I'm  
supposed to do about it.

SLOAN

There's nothing to do about it. Sam  
has nothing to do with this - no  
responsibility of any kind. He knows  
that. You should, too.

A tense silence, then:

ELLEN

You really don't get it, do you - any  
of it? This baby isn't another human  
life to you, it's something else to  
put on your resumé. It doesn't  
matter that my husband's involved -  
that I'm involved - that my own  
baby's involved - all that matters is  
that you want what you want. What a  
cold, selfish life you lead.

Another tense silence, then:

ELLEN

I'd better go.

She crosses to the door.

ELLEN

In case I didn't mention it before,  
Sloan - go fuck yourself.

She exits, leaving Sloan unsettled, shaken. What Ellen has  
said has struck a nerve. And as we HOLD on Sloan alone in  
bed, we again hear Sam's voice, increasingly less measured,  
more distraught than thoughtful.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM

(v.o.)

When I heard about that night at  
Sloan's, I knew then that Ellen and I  
would never get back together....

DISSOLVE TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS - AROUND TOWN - THE FULL HEAT OF SUMMER

Despite the scorching temperature, despite the sultry air,  
despite the waves of heat that twist up from the sidewalk  
like proliferating strands of DNA - despite all that,  
PEDESTRIANS smile, DRIVERS wave, BICYCLISTS take time out  
to patronize LEMONADE STANDS.

All the understanding and good humor begin to make sense  
only when realize that we are not in Washington but in  
Dayton, Ohio.

OVER it all, Sam continues.

SAM

(v.o.)

We could go through the motions, the  
soul-searching and the soul-baring.  
But the fact was she had been pushed  
to a place she had never been to  
before. And it was clear to me at  
least that she was never coming back.  
Even if she had really wanted to -  
and she didn't - events were  
conspiring against it.

EXT. BAPTIST CHURCH, DAYTON, OHIO - FRONT STEPS - DAY

Lester Crouch descends the steps and touches down behind an  
array of microphones. But his usual entourage of young,  
clean-cut volunteers has been replaced by TWO MINISTERS IN  
COLLAR on one side of him and three distinguished MILITARY  
VETERANS IN UNIFORM on the other. This is, after all, a  
photo op.

CROUCH

Well, now we know why Dick McHugh was so  
concerned with pregnant women in the  
military: his own congressional office  
has become a halfway house for unwed  
mothers. To which I say, enough is  
enough. Let the Congressional Ethics  
Committee conduct an investigation into

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CROUCH (cont'd)  
the affairs - and I do mean the affairs -  
of his staff. And let them do it  
immediately.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL HEARING ROOM - DAY

The Armed Services Committee is in session. Or was. The gavel drops.

Sam lingers among the staffers loitering behind the committee. He watches expectantly as McHugh buttonholes a fellow COMMITTEE MEMBER.

Then, once he makes whatever point he intended to make, McHugh looks in Sam's direction and nods.

INT. RAYBURN CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Sam and McHugh walk side by side amid the bustle of legislative bodies in motion.

McHUGH  
I need someone to take over the  
office now that Sloan's out of the  
picture.

SAM  
(believing the worst)  
Out of the picture?

McHUGH  
Temporarily, at any rate. You're up  
to it, I hope.

SAM  
I'm up to it.

McHUGH  
We're going to be spending a lot of  
time in the district office between  
now and the election. That's not a  
problem for you, is it?

Sam considers this. It may be a problem. On the other hand, it may actually be a blessing.

INT. McHUGH'S OFFICE - ANTEROOM - DAY

When McHugh and Sam walk in, the office is abuzz with the activity, the most audible of which is staff members answering the TELEPHONE.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

TRACIE

Congressman, Sloan Thatcher on line  
three.

Sam seems concerned, perhaps even taken aback, by the idea that Sloan is calling. McHugh nevertheless proceeds directly into his office.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - McHUGH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

McHugh picks up the phone and Sam lingers in the doorway, as we:

INTERCUT:

THE TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

between McHugh at his DESK and Sloan in BED.

SLOAN

Talked to Going this morning?

McHUGH

Not yet.

SLOAN

Crouch has decided to go the low road. He's demanding an investigation into the conduct and personal morality of your staff.

McHUGH

(unflappable)

Is he?

SLOAN

He's just blowing smoke, but I still think you need to get back to the district ASAP to control this thing. Do the papers, the radio stations, TV. Let people know Dick McHugh is still in charge.

McHUGH

Thanks.

As McHugh hangs up, we go:

BACK TO:

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Sloan pauses before hanging up, as if she somehow will lose contact with the world the moment she does.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - McHUGH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

McHugh looks up to see Sam standing in front of him.

SAM

What?

McHUGH

I need the next flight out.

The look on Sam's face says it all. Forget about the new job title. He's out of the loop before he ever was in the loop.

EXT. REFLECTING POOL - SUNSET

Sam gazes thoughtfully into the water when Ellen appears at his side.

SAM

(looking up)

Thanks for coming.

She is less than enthusiastic about being here. Even when he manages a tentative smile, she can only glare.

EXT. REFLECTING POOL - FATHER DOWN - SUNSET

Sam and Ellen walk, keeping a safe distance from one another.

SAM

People make mistakes. But being apart - that's no way to make things right. We're never going to get back together that way.

ELLEN

And you want that? Getting back together?

SAM

Don't you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She says nothing.

SAM

Well, don't you?

She still says nothing, walking in silence, until:

ELLEN

All my friends growing up - they all had secrets. Family secrets. One had a mother who was an alcoholic. Another had father who was having an affair. Another one had an older brother who suddenly disappeared and no one would said why. Everyone seemed to have a secret. Everyone but me. Because with Len and Mayda, what you see is what you get. And I liked it that way. It was safe. Reassuring. But now - now I'm the one with the secret. It's my child who'll have something to hide.

SAM

Our child. Don't you see, Ellen? Something bad has happened to us. I take total responsibility for it - I'm not saying I don't. But it's done, it's over, and now we've got to put it behind us.

ELLEN

I honestly don't think I'll ever forgive it, Sam. And I know I won't ever forget it. That doesn't leave me with too many options, does it?

He stares an uncomprehending stare. He is both stunned and confused by what she is saying, easily as stunned and confused as she was the night he claimed responsibility for Sloan's baby. Which may, of course, be the point.

EXT. SHOPPING MALL - CAMPAIGN STOP #1 - DAY

A MINIVAN sporting signs that read "RE-ELECT DICK McHUGH" is parked in the mall's parking lot. With Going, Maggie, and Sam crowded behind him, McHugh climbs a makeshift podium to address a crowd of about 100 people.

Fewer than half of the people actually bother to clap. The others don't wait for the applause to finish before they begin shouting out questions.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

1ST SHOPPER

Hey, Dick, what about this woman on your staff?

2ND SHOPPER

Yeah, the pregnant one.

3RD SHOPPER

The one who's not married.

McHUGH

Well, I appreciate your interest in that, I really do, but what I think we should focus on are the issues -

4TH SHOPPER

So what do you intend to do about her?

5TH SHOPPER

Unless you're not planning to do anything?

6TH SHOPPER

For personal reasons.

Smutty laughter throughout the crowd, which Sam winces at - the day has just begun.

INT. CONVALESCENT HOME - CAMPAIGN STOP #2 - DAY

McHugh visits with perhaps two dozen ELDERLY PATIENTS, at least three-quarters of whom seem to be suffering from Alzheimer's Disease. With Sam close by his side, he has come here to shake hands and be seen. Instead:

1ST PATIENT

(obsessively repetitive - something out of Marat/Sade)

So who's the father of the child?

2ND PATIENT

What I want to know is what kind of man would just walk away from his responsibilities like that?

1ST PATIENT

So who's the father of the child?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

3RD PATIENT

Can you send me some bumper stickers? I  
always love your bumper stickers.

1ST PATIENT

So who's the father of the child?

The questions - forget their source - eat at Sam, although  
he carries on dutifully in front of his boss.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - CAMPAIGN STOP #3 - NIGHT

In the overheated gym, with row upon row of empty folding  
chairs facing him, McHugh is fielding questions from no  
more than FOUR CONSTITUENTS who alternately drip sweat and  
fan their faces. Off to one side, Maggie and Going  
struggle to stay awake in the oppressive heat - not so Sam,  
who hangs nervously on every word.

McHUGH

District-wide, we're looking at -

1ST CONSTITUENT

Do you accept the idea that fathers  
are an essential part of the American  
family?

McHUGH

District-wide, we're -

2ND CONSTITUENT

Congressman McHugh, are you a church-  
going man?

McHUGH

District-wide -

3RD CONSTITUENT

Just where do you stand on family  
values?

McHUGH

District -

3RD CONSTITUENT

Congressman, are you a church-going  
man?

McHUGH

(losing it)  
She's on leave, isn't she! She's out  
of my office, isn't she! Isn't she!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sam has never seen McHugh like this in public. And so, while everyone else in the tiny gym is hot on this sweltering night, Sam is positively on fire.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

As one or two campaign volunteers climb wearily back into the MINIVAN, Sam stands at a PAY TELEPHONE on the edge of the blacktop. With the receiver to his ear, he listens to the phone ring and ring and ...

INT. SAM AND ELLEN'S ROW HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ellen, seated on a nearby sofa, moves not a centimeter in the direction of the ringing PHONE. Rather, she lets it continue to ring and ring and ...

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - AS BEFORE - NIGHT

Disappointed but hardly surprised, Sam hangs up the phone and heads for the minivan.

I/E. MONTGOMERY CO. AIRPORT, OHIO - PASSENGER TERMINAL - DAY

McHugh sits quietly, thoughtfully, still slightly shell-shocked from the preceding day. From the seat next to him, Maggie threads her hand through his. In a row of chairs across from them, more or less out of earshot, Sam searches through some papers.

MAGGIE

(confidentially)

It's been a disaster, Mac - the entire trip's been a disaster.

McHUGH

A lot of it was the weather - the heat.

MAGGIE

I know he's your friend and I know he has a reputation, but I just don't think Jim Going is doing it for you.

Going, who has overheard almost the entire conversation, steps forward. He unfolds a NEWSPAPER and hands it to McHugh, who grimaces at the sight of it. Maggie must read it a second time to believe what she sees.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GOING

(pointedly)

Mr. Chief of Staff, I think you  
should take a look at this.

Sam now rises from his chair and circles around behind them. INTO VIEW comes the headline: "McHUGH SAID TO BE FATHER OF STAFFER'S BABY." Sam's throat tightens and his stomach churns.

GOING

Well, maybe you'll have better luck  
next time around.

SAM

What's that supposed to mean?

GOING

(sticking it to him)

Only that I'd hope someone in your  
position would be a little more  
conscientious about what gets into  
the papers - especially since it's  
your friend Sloan Thatcher who's  
causing all these problems in the  
first place.

All this poisoning of the well is strictly for McHugh's  
benefit, which causes Sam to burn a not-so-slow burn.

INT. AIRPLANE - MAIN CABIN - DAY

In the f.g., McHugh and Maggie sit side by side, still  
numb. In the b.g., Sam stares dumbly out the window at the  
passing farmlands below.

MAGGIE

I think of all those middle-aged  
congressmen and all those firm young  
women working for them - all that  
power, all that flesh - it must be a  
temptation. A terrible temptation.

(distrustful)

It's a good thing I have so much  
faith in you, Mac. Otherwise ...

McHugh broods, too troubled to be troubled by his wife's  
smoldering distrust. Sam, we now realize, has heard every  
word.

EXT. REAL ESTATE OFFICE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Closing time. Ellen locks the door from the outside when Sam materializes out of the darkness.

SAM

I've never loved anyone else but you, Ellen. Never. From the day I met you, I knew you were the one. You're the first thing I think about in the morning and the last thing I think about at night. And it's going to be that way forever.

He leans forward and gives her a kiss. Sweet. She then pulls him back toward him and gives him a kiss. Passionate. Suddenly, they are swept away by the heat of the moment.

Sam reaches his hand up her dress and begins caressing her pregnant belly. He pulls down hard and slides off her panties. He raises her dress above her waist and unzips himself.

ELLEN

(concerned)

What if someone sees us?

SAM

(turned on)

Yeah, that'd be great.

Now, as they kiss breathlessly, as they can't seem to get close enough to one another.

INT. SAM AND ELLEN'S VOLVO - MOVING - NIGHT

Sam and Ellen ride in silence for a moment, then:

ELLEN

It's a funny thing, sex.

SAM

How's that?

ELLEN

It's enough to drive people apart, but it's never quite enough to pull them back together.

He looks over at her. She keeps her unhappy gaze straight ahead.



INT. SAM AND ELLEN'S ROW HOUSE - FOYER/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The door unlocks. Sam and Ellen enter slowly. They move silently into the living room where they take seats at opposite ends of the room.

SAM

So what is it you're saying?

ELLEN

I like making love with you. I've always liked making love with you. I probably always will like making love with you. But - so what? Sure, it's nice. It's maybe even essential. But it's not the only thing - not enough to stake a marriage on. And it definitely doesn't make everything right.

Sam can't believe what he's hearing. For one fleeting, sexual instant, he thought that he had repaired his marriage. Wrong.

SAM

(struggling to convince  
her)

Ellen, you and I were on the verge of leading two completely separate lives. And we could have gone either way: together or apart. That's where I was that night - caught somewhere in the middle - I didn't know. That's how all this started.

Before she can respond, the TELEPHONE rings. She rises to answer it.

ELLEN

(on the telephone)

Yes...?

(to Sam)

It's for you.

SAM

Me?

ELLEN

Someone named Warren Skivvers.

I/E. LINCOLN MEMORIAL - NIGHT

Warren is waiting somewhere below Abe's giant feet when Sam edges INTO VIEW. They eye each other uneasily, Warren for what he knows he is about to say, Sam for what he suspects he is about to hear.

WARREN

There was a call today.

SAM

What kind of call?

WARREN

Said you're the father of Sloan's baby.

SAM

(trying to laugh it off)  
You called me out for that? because of a prank? a crank call? Warren....

WARREN

It was a reliable source.

SAM

Yeah? Who was it?

Warren smiles: Sam knows better than to ask a question like that.

SAM

Well, I'm here to deny it.  
Categorically. It's a lie, Warren.  
It may even be libelous.

WARREN

You're not living at home these days, are you, Sam? Why's that?

SAM

None of your damned business. But I will tell you this: Sloan's attractive, successful. Anyone could be the father of that baby. You could be the father of that baby. We're talking about a very large pool of possibilities.

WARREN

No, we're not. Her job's her life.  
The number of men she spends any kind  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WARREN (cont'd)  
of time with you can count on one  
hand. How many men are there even in  
your office? you? Bacon?

SAM  
I'm sorry I can't help you, Warren.

Sam starts away.

WARREN  
(obviously torn)  
I'm going to have to print it, Sam,  
sooner or later. I can't sit on it  
just because you're my friend. I  
can't. You're a part of the story  
now. And people have a right to know  
that.

SAM  
No, they don't.

Sam then slips into the darkness. For his part, Warren is  
no more pleased with the situation than Sam is.

I/E. RIVERFRONT RESTAURANT - INDOOR BAR/OUTDOOR DECK - NIGHT

Going stands chatting with an extremely WELL-HEELED COUPLE  
at the bar when he spots Sam rushing toward him from across  
the room.

GOING  
Sam?

The name has barely left his lips when Sam throws a hard  
right. Going sails backward into an hors d'oeuvres cart.

SAM  
You told him.

GOING  
(dazed)  
What?

SAM  
You told him, you scheming,  
backstabbing son-of-a-bitch.

GOING  
Told who what?

SAM  
Skivvers - that I'm the father of  
Sloan's baby.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Going struggles back to his feet.

SAM

I've got a family, you know!

GOING

Nothing personal, Sam - it's just politics.

Sam lets loose another right, sending Going through an open door onto THE DECK OVERLOOKING THE RIVER. Heads turn. Waiters scatter. Sam is quickly on top of Going, pulling him from the floor.

GOING

You're fucked!

SAM

Wrong again, Jim. You're fucked.

Sam connects with yet another right, this one launching Going over the railing and into the RIVER below. Sam doesn't even bother with a peek down to see if Going has survived - he has - instead rushing out of the bar as fast as he rushed on in. On his way out, he passes TWO OLD POLS who have been glued to every punch.

POL

(to his crony)

I think the budget debate's gone just a little too far this year, don't you?

I/E. SPORTING GOODS STORE, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND - NIGHT

Closed. Just a naked light bulb burning in the BACK ROOM where Guy is stacking shelves.

A KNOCK on the store's front door.

GUY

(calling out)

Closed.

Another KNOCK, this one more impatient.

GUY

(calling out again)

Said we're closed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Still another KNOCK, this even more impatient. Guy climbs over the half-empty boxes and emerges from the back room, struggling to make out who is at the front door.

GUY

Sam? Talk about surprises.

Guy unlocks the door for Sam.

SAM

I was driving down 95 and I thought I'd stop by.

Guy looks hard at him: sure he was.

INT. SPORTING GOODS STORE - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

As Guy continues stocking shelves, Sam looks on.

SAM

I always wanted to be someone, somebody important.

GUY

Always. Not like me. I like being a nobody. It's a lot of laughs.

SAM

But I'm not, Guy - I'm not anybody. I'm just some little guy who's fooled himself into thinking that being around important people is the same thing as being one of them. I've turned into someone I don't like very much.

GUY

So what are you going to do about it?

Sam shrugs then automatically joins Guy in stocking shelves.

GUY

Remember Ricky what's-his-face from your high school class?

SAM

LaRosa.

GUY

LaRosa. He was in here the other day. Talk about screwed up. Divorced again - number three. On  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUY (cont'd)  
about his nine-millionth job. Just  
plain pissed off at the world. He  
doesn't have a clue. 'Cause, as Dad  
used to say, "You gotta know what you  
know."

Guy now looks at Sam in a slightly suspicious manner.

GUY  
But maybe it's different for guys  
like you.

SAM  
Guys like me?

GUY  
Beltway types.

SAM  
We're brothers, Guy. Blood. We used  
to catch perch off the bridge at  
Paper Goods Pond. You taught me.

GUY  
(after a moment)  
It's not so hard to know what you  
know. I know the reason I do this is  
my kids. I know my kids are average -  
good kids - but average. I know I'd  
rather be fishing. I know the  
closest I've ever come to a religious  
experience was casting in a stream  
near Lake Superior. I know that  
after 20-and-a-couple years together,  
Barb still looks pretty terrific  
without any clothes on. I know that  
you have to do what you have to do,  
and no one can do it for you.

Sam nods: he now knows what he knows.

EXT. GEORGETOWN STREET - SUNRISE

Sam waits drowsily behind the wheel of his VOLVO, coming to  
life only when he hears the front door of a nearby house.

Peering from his half-sleep, he sees McHugh in a bathrobe  
stepping out of his IMPOSING BRICK TOWNHOUSE to fetch the  
morning newspaper.

Instantly, Sam springs into action. And by the time McHugh  
has picked up the paper from the walkway and has begun to

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

skim the headlines, Sam is standing right in front of him. McHugh is surprised, to say the least.

INT. McHUGH'S TOWNHOUSE - STUDY - MORNING

Amid the floor-to-ceiling bookcases, McHugh paces furiously while Sam - having just spilled the news - sits uneasily in an easy chair.

McHUGH

Sam, you are an unmitigated horse's ass. Did anyone ever tell you that? We're this close to losing this election, and for what? So you could get your rocks off. What were you thinking of?

He continues pacing.

McHUGH

You know, the Japanese used to fall on their swords. A very honorable way to deal with dishonor. What were you thinking of?

He continues pacing.

McHUGH

Christ, Sloan's been with me forever. She is who she is, thanks to me. And you - you started with me when you were still at Georgetown, as an intern, for God's sake. What were you thinking of?

SAM

Congressman, I know how angry you are.

McHugh pivots angrily and glares.

McHUGH

No, you don't. You have no idea how angry I am.

The undercurrent of rage is so palpable, so close to exploding into violence that Sam needs a moment to recover.

SAM

This whole thing - it's my fault, all my fault. Please, don't blame Sloan - not for deciding to have the baby. Having a child is a great thing,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM (cont'd)

maybe the greatest thing someone can do in life - that's what you said.

McHUGH

Sam, the woman's been knocked up, not canonized.

SAM

Look, sir, I know it would be great if every family had a mother and father. But sometimes - sometimes children come into this world in ways they're not expected to -

McHUGH

Sam, you committed adultery. You committed adultery and, while you were at it, you got her pregnant. Honestly, how do you expect me to react to that?

SAM

I'm resigning, sir. That's really why I came here.

The offer surprises McHugh, who seems not quite certain enough to accept it.

McHUGH

Don't kid yourself, Sam. You're not getting off that easily. Now, go.

Head low, Sam rises and exits, passing Maggie in the doorway on his way out.

MAGGIE

So what are you going to do, Mac?

McHUGH

What would you expect me to do?

MAGGIE

I'd expect you to give them a little more time. I'd expect you to try to ride out the storm a little bit longer.

McHUGH

Yeah, well, that's because you're one of those God damned liberals.

MAGGIE

You used to be one of those God damned liberals.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

McHUGH

Still am. Except in election years.

A beat, then:

McHUGH

Is it too early for a drink, do you think?

DISSOLVE TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS - AROUND WASHINGTON - FALL FOLIAGE SEASON

Hardly the season of brilliance and visual fire that it is elsewhere. The leaves that fall and blow and swirl are as subdued and grey as the BUREAUCRATS who ignore them.

SAM

(v.o.)

In any journey - especially, I suppose, in a journey of the heart - there comes a point when turning back is no longer possible - when what lies ahead, no matter how treacherous, can't be avoided. By then, I saw what was coming. All I could do was strap on my seat belt and prepare for the ride down.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - McHUGH'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

McHugh sits with his feet up while Going studies a newspaper article under the headline: "A CAPITAL TALE OF ADULTERY AND PREGNANCY."

GOING

This guy Skivvers doesn't care much for Biondi.

Going folds up the newspaper and tosses it aside.

GOING

But then, who does really?

McHUGH

I know you and Sam have had your differences.

GOING

You just can't wait any longer, Dick, as much as you want to. You have only one  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GOING (cont'd)  
card left to play. In the debate, you say you fired the two of them. End of story.

McHugh still seems reluctant.

GOING  
Hey, Dick, forget the Hamlet thing. You're losing this election, do you understand that? Your lead against Crouch is this much from the margin of error. You have to take decisive action. Immediately. Today.

INT. SAM AND ELLEN'S ROW HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

The DOORBELL rings.

ELLEN  
(o.s.)  
Coming!

Now extremely pregnant, Ellen waddles slowly down the hall. When she answers the door, she can't help a surprised shake of the head. For there, standing in front of her in all her maternity, is Sloan.

SLOAN  
Is this a bad time for you?

INT. ROW HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ellen and Sloan sit at opposite ends of a sofa.

ELLEN  
(genuinely concerned)  
Are you okay - being out like this?

SLOAN  
I've done my time. I've paid my debt to society.

Ellen manages a small smile.

A beat, as each attempts to sort out her feelings for the other, then:

SLOAN  
I've decided I'm going to leave Washington - once the baby is born. I thought you'd want to know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLEN

What made you decide that?

SLOAN

You were right - what you said. I've just been looking out for myself. Moving's in everyone's best interest, I think.

ELLEN

(surprised)

Do you? Think that?

SLOAN

Don't you?

ELLEN

I suppose I do, but it's not really my decision to make.

SLOAN

(looking to be dissuaded)

But you agree I should leave?

ELLEN

I think you should do whatever is best for you and your baby. If that means leaving, leave.

Feeling some quite unexpected movement in utero, Ellen suddenly lurches forward.

ELLEN

This baby ...

SLOAN

Mine, too. Almost time for the big entrance.

ELLEN

Sooner than later, I think.

Having said what she has come to say, Sloan then rises.

SLOAN

I guess I should be going.

ELLEN

Don't - please.

INT. CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE - ANTEROOM - DAY

Sam is checking the incoming mail at the receptionist's desk when McHugh and Going emerge from the private office. Going can't help a triumphant smirk.

McHUGH

Sam, Jim and I are on way to National. I was wondering if you'd mind driving us over in my car.

SAM

(sensing something is up)  
No, I don't mind.

As McHugh and Going walk away, Sam turns to see Bacon staring at him. He obviously shares Sam's sense of foreboding.

BACON

You know what they say: you've got everything as long as you've still got your -

SAM

- health.

BACON

Well, I was gonna say, "your penis."  
But I guess your health is pretty important, too.

INT. LINCOLN CONTINENTAL - MOVING - DAY

Sam is behind the wheel while McHugh and Going share the back seat. Outside, the sky has darkened ominously and large drops of rain begin to fall across the windshield.

GOING

I suppose our plane could crash on takeoff and then all our problems would be solved. Who knows, Dick? You might do better running against Crouch as a dead man. Never underestimate the sympathy vote.

All of this gallows stuff has a point, which is not lost on McHugh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McHUGH

Sam, after you drop us off and bring the car back to the office ...

McHugh can't quite bring himself to say it. Going, on the other hand, is all too happy to.

GOING

After you drop us off, Sam, you should head back to the office and write your letter of resignation. Make sure that it's suitably remorseful and that you accept full responsibility for everything.

SAM

(shaken)

And Sloan?

GOING

That's all right. She can write her own.

EXT. NATIONAL AIRPORT - PASSENGER TERMINAL - DAY

As Sam unlocks the trunk, McHugh comes around to the back of the car.

McHUGH

I wish it could have ended some other way, Sam.

Just then, from a distance down the sidewalk:

MAGGIE

Mac! Sam!

The men turn to see Maggie struggling with a suitcase. Without a second's hesitation, Sam jogs down the SIDEWALK and helps her.

MAGGIE

Thank you, Sam. All set for the debate?

SAM

I'm not going.

She now looks in the direction of her husband and understands. It's then that we hear a PAGE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAGE

(o.s.)

Will Mr. Sam Biondi please pick up a  
white courtesy telephone? Mr. Sam  
Biondi, white courtesy phone.

INT. AIRPORT PASSENGER TERMINAL - COURTESY TELEPHONE - DAY

Sam picks up the phone.

SAM

(on the phone)

This is Sam Biondi.

OPERATOR

(through the phone)

Mr. Biondi, you just received a call  
from your wife and you're to go to  
the hospital immediately.

SAM

Hospital?

OPERATOR

She'll meet you in the birthing room.

SAM

Birthing room?

OPERATOR

She says she's not sure how long she  
can wait so you'd better hurry.

SAM

Okay.

OPERATOR

Congratulations, Dad.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - PASSENGER GATE - DAY

Seated together as they wait to board, McHugh and Going are  
conferring in hushed tones when they suddenly realize that  
Maggie is standing above them, staring at them.

MAGGIE

Shitty business, isn't it?

GOING

Is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAGGIE

Oh, I know it's your job, Jim,  
winning. But maybe winning isn't  
everything.

GOING

I have to tell you, Maggie, I think  
Dick's election is just a tad more  
important than Sloan Thatcher and Sam  
Biondi.

MAGGIE

I don't. I think it's for people  
like Sloan and Sam - people who need  
help - that he got into politics in  
the first place. And I'll tell you  
something else, Dick. If you were  
running today for the first time,  
you'd lose in a landslide.

Going smirks a superior smirk at Maggie's egregious  
naïveté. McHugh does not.

I/E. VOLVO - DAY

Trapped in bumper to bumper traffic under a drenching rain,  
Sam looks at the clock on the DASHBOARD: 4:30 - quitting  
time for civil servants. He taps fingers. He chews on his  
lip. He stares at the slapping windshield wipers.

SAM

Civil servants. God damn civil  
servants. Eight hours a day and not  
a second more.

But when the car goes nowhere, not even an inch, he can  
stand it no more. He climbs out of his car into the rain  
and begins canvassing the drivers of the cars stalled ahead  
of him.

SAM

(to the 1ST DRIVER he  
passes)

My wife is having a baby. My wife is  
having a baby.

(to 2ND DRIVER he passes)

Would it kill you to put in an honest  
day's work for once in your life?  
Maybe even overtime.

(to the 3RD DRIVER he  
passes)

I pay your salary. I'm a tax payer.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM (cont'd)  
 I'm ordering you back to work.  
 (now shouting to the entire  
 traffic jam)  
 I'm ordering all of you back to work.

A collective yawn from all who can see him. So he races back to his car and climbs in.

He throws the car into reverse, then into drive, then into reverse, then into drive, slamming into cars ahead and behind until - to the accompaniment of HONKING HORNS and CURSING CIVIL SERVANTS - he has opened up some room to maneuver.

The Volvo screeches off the road, hopping a curve and cutting directly across the promenade in the direction of the WASHINGTON MONUMENT.

Tourists drop their umbrellas and run for cover at the sight of the Volvo hurtling across the lawn. Behind the wheel, Sam is - for the first time in a long while - pleased with himself.

INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDORS - DAY

Sam is quickly sucked into the vortex of medical hyper-activity. Movement everywhere. All around men and women in scrubs or uniforms or lab coats rush from here to there. Sam sees a sign ahead directing him to "MATERNITY" and he runs for it.

INT. HOSPITAL - NURSING STATION - DAY

Sam rushes up to a desk where a NURSE calmly studies a medical chart.

SAM  
 I'm looking for my wife. Ellen  
 Biondi. What room is she in?

NURSE  
 Ellen Biondi? I don't think we have  
 an Ellen Biondi.

SAM  
 How about Stern - Ellen Stern?

NURSE  
 I don't recall a Stern, either.

SAM  
 Maybe it's under Stern-Biondi.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

NURSE

No Ellens at all.

SAM

Then, where is she? Someone just called me at ...

NURSE

(amused)

Are you sure you have the right hospital?

Sam really panics now. Just then, the sound of waddling FOOTSTEPS.

ELLEN

(o.s.)

Sam....

He turns to see Ellen, looking as fresh as if she had just been idling away the hour over a cup of tea, which she in fact has. He goes to her.

SAM

What - what's going on? How come you're not in the birthing room?

ELLEN

It's not me. It's Sloan. She's in labor.

SAM

Sloan?

Sam gives a look that suggests that either she's lost her mind or Sloan has, maybe both.

ELLEN

I tried to go in with her, but the nurse took one look at me and told me lawyers didn't write releases long enough for that.

INT. HOSPITAL - BIRTHING ROOM - DAY

From Sam's POV, a no less hyperactive place than the hospital corridors. There are fewer people here, however. And the point of it all is considerably clearer: Sloan - grimacing, colorless, cloaked in sweat - is being helped into a birthing chair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Still, she manages a smile and a wink when she sees Sam approach. Which is when a NURSE comes at him with scrubs and a mask.

NURSE

Are you the father?

SAM

No. Uh, yeah. Yes. I'm the father.

NURSE

(calling out to all)

Husband's here.

SAM

No, I'm the father.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - THE DEBATE - NIGHT

The usual arrangement: candidates are side by side at their respective lecterns, facing a panel of INQUIRING JOURNALISTS, this time led by Warren Skivvers.

WARREN

Congressman McHugh, one minute.

McHugh peers into the darkness beyond the view of the television cameras. Even with the hot glare of the television lights, he can make out Maggie and Going gazing at him expectantly.

McHUGH

Mr. Crouch will be interested to know that just this afternoon the people involved in this situation handed me their resignations.

Going smiles. Maggie does not.

McHUGH

But as I got to thinking about it, I started to get angry. Not at my aides. At Mr. Crouch. Because people like you, sir, present yourselves as advocates of decency, and yet you'd have me throw this young woman, an expectant mother, out into the street just like that. You talk on and on about personal freedom, and what you really want is to meddle in this woman's private

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

McHUGH (cont'd)  
affairs and tell her how to run her  
life. I think it stinks.

CROUCH  
The father of that child is a married  
man - a member of your staff!

McHUGH  
I still think it stinks. And as long  
as the people on my staff do the job  
they've been hired to do, what  
happens in their personal  
relationships is nobody's damned  
business. Certainly not Lester  
Crouch's.

Going can only shake his head at the enthusiasm that McHugh  
has brought to his defeat. Maggie clearly doesn't share  
this view. She is exuberant.

SERIES OF SHOTS - HOSPITAL BIRTHING ROOM

As the contractions come with greater regularity and  
intensity, as Sloan wears the tormented look of someone  
undergoing a kind of medieval torture, Sam stands by  
offering comfort and encouragement.

Sloan is now presented with her new baby. With tears in  
her eyes, she cradles the child. She then looks up to Sam.  
Although his joy is unmistakable, he's uncertain - under  
the circumstances - how he should show it.

Ellen, meanwhile, has managed to sneak a look into the  
birthing room through a window in a door. She sees Sam and  
immediately senses his indecision.

ELLEN  
(sotto voce)  
It's all right, Sam. It's okay. Go  
ahead.

And with that, without ever having heard the words his wife  
has spoken, Sam takes the baby in his arms.

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Sam walks up behind Ellen and puts his arm around her  
shoulders.

SAM  
It's a girl.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He then rests his free hand on her very large belly. She smiles and wraps her arm around his waist.

OVER, we hear Sam once again, and once again he is measured, thoughtful.

SAM

(v.o.)

There are events in life that have the ability to transform, to turn a person quite literally into someone else. That day, and in the days that followed, Ellen and I were not who we had been - not even close. And so we found new ground to start our lives over on....

DISSOLVE TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS - AROUND TOWN - CHERRY BLOSSOM TIME

Brilliant sunlight, cloudless skies, shimmering reflecting pools, with perhaps one or two fewer JAPANESE TOURISTS than in previous years. OVER, Sam continues:

SAM

(v.o.)

That, I suppose, is how I happened to tell Ellen the story of my father and what he'd said to me before he died - how he could recall for every moment of importance in his life, good or bad, public or private, precisely what the sky had looked like....

EXT. PARK - CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND - DAY

A bright, perfect, sunlit day. More than two years have passed. Sam and Ellen are watching their YOUNG DAUGHTER solo up a ladder to the top of a slide.

Once at the top, she looks across the park and claps her hands eagerly. For a SAAB has just pulled into the parking lot, and inside it she sees Sloan and her own young DAUGHTER, identical in age to Sam and Ellen's girl and a very obvious Sloan clone.

As Sloan and her daughter climb out of the car, we can't help noticing a bumper sticker that reads: "McHUGH FOR SENATE." We also can't help noticing there is a MAN accompanying them. It's difficult to tell precisely what

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

his relationship to Sloan is, although he waves enthusiastically upon seeing Sam and Ellen.

When Sloan comes close enough to see that Ellen is pregnant again and showing, there is a laugh, a shout, a joyous shake of the head. Sloan then reaches over and gives Ellen an enthusiastic embrace.

Naturally, the two young girls couldn't care less about any of this. For they have toddled off to the nearest SANDBOX where they are already well into in their sandy game.

OVER it all, we hear the voice of Sam as he wraps it up:

SAM

(v.o.)

I told Ellen how strange and puzzling I found his comment - all the more so because I knew it was supposed to mean something to me. Ellen was breast-feeding Ellie at the time and, without looking up, without even a second of hesitation, she said: "Well, of course, he could remember the sky all those times, Sam. He was looking up to heaven. He was looking up to God."

Sam, who has been studying the children, raises his gaze upward, higher and higher, until he is staring into the sky. He smiles.

FADE OUT:

THE END