

# **A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE**

Pilot

written by

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**A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE: "Pilot"**

TEASER

CLOSE ON: A CAMPAIGN MANAGER

She's a polished pro, focused on her talking points.

CAMPAIGN MANAGER

Rebecca Principle is a respected member of the U.S. Senate. She's been elected four times, and each time she's won by a large margin.

As the screen expands, a box appears beside hers. She's doing a remote interview with CNN's JAKE TAPPER.

JAKE TAPPER

But her numbers have never been lower. And she's being challenged in the primary by Lawrence Butler, who, despite having no political experience, is riding a populist wave that just keeps growing.

Under this, VIDEO rolls of REBECCA PRINCIPLE, the GOP's answer to Hillary Clinton. Cultured, savvy, the smartest person in the room. And not afraid to let them know. We see her LEADING STAFF in her D.C. office; in conversations with the PRESIDENT; and presiding over SENATE HEARINGS.

The channel changes. Now PUNDITS sling rapid-fire views.

PUNDIT #1

Butler's an idiot.

PUNDIT #2

An idiot with deep pockets. Who's tapped into the power of fear-mongering.

The channel changes again to a roundtable (Meet the Press, Face the Nation) where JOURNALISTS continue the debate.

JOURNALIST #1

I think we can all agree the Senator's popularity has been compromised by her daughter's provocative legal escapades.

VIDEO CLIPS chronicle the legal exploits of MAGGIE PRINCIPLE (30, vibrant and self-assured):

**Chyron: Senator's Daughter Advocates for Pentagon Hacker**

Maggie holds a press conference beside a smirking TEENAGER.

MAGGIE

My client's not a criminal. He was simply identifying security flaws at the Department of Defense.

**Chyron: Maggie Principle Defends Modern-day Robin Hood**

Maggie's with a HARMLESS-LOOKING LADY on courthouse steps.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

After watching this company cheat her grandma out of her life savings, my client felt it was her duty to make them pay. You call it embezzlement. I call it equitable redistribution.

**Chyron: Principle Reps Teacher Fired Over "Un"Dress Code**

Maggie leads a rally alongside a SEXY YOUNG WOMAN whose breasts are bursting from her blouse.

JOURNALIST #1 (V.O.)

And ever since Maggie's role in the "Free the Nip" legal crusade --

JOURNALIST #2

To be fair, she had nothing to do with that movement. She simply litigated a wrongful termination suit on behalf of a Catholic school teacher...

(beat)

...moonlighting as a porn star.

INT. PRINCIPLE FOR SENATE HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

We're watching the report on the TV inside Rebecca Principle's campaign office. Everyone's gone home.

Except REBECCA (60's, refined and formidable), who's reviewing the Sunday news shows with a bottle of scotch. Well, half a bottle.

On TV, LAWRENCE BUTLER (60's) is before a rabid crowd. Zoom in on his shit-eating grin as the chyron reads *HEDGE FUND BILLIONAIRE LEADS CALL TO "BRING BACK WATERBOARDING!"*.

Rebecca stares at the screen. Then she refills her glass.

INT. MR. HOOPER'S STORE - DAY

The general store/lunch counter looks identical to the one on a popular TV series. A Christmas tree is draped with popcorn and cranberry garlands. Snowflake stencils cover the window.

Storekeeper ALLEN wipes the counter as ELMO the FURRY RED MONSTER sits atop a stool speaking in his HIGH-PITCHED VOICE.

ELMO

Guess what Elmo is thinking about?

He DANCES a jig, throwing back his head with delight.

ELMO (CONT'D)

Ya ta da da! Protection! You know...

He rubs a thumb against two fingers. Universal sign for \$\$.

ELMO (CONT'D)

Pro-tec-tion.

Allen flinches as AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE echoes in the distance.

ALLEN

I don't know...business is bad. The neighborhood is at war.

ELMO

Maybe that's because a certain big bird is making this furry red monster's life a living hell.

Through a window at the back of the store we see a BIG YELLOW BIRD shuffle past with his posse of MONSTER GOONS. All wear GOLD CHAINS and BLING. Pull back to reveal --

INT. THEATER - DAY

We're inside a theater where a rehearsal is underway.

MAGGIE PRINCIPLE watches from the audience. Sort of.

She's more focused on her iPhone, volleying between texts and e-mails. To her, this is normal, because as we'll come to see, Maggie is a force of nature: brilliant, headstrong, caring, exasperating. But happiest in constant motion.

Beside her, KENISHA PRUITT (late 20's) glances from Maggie to the stage. Unable to contain her frustration --

KENISHA  
You're being rude.

MAGGIE  
You said we were going to lunch.

KENISHA  
I promised Trevor I'd give him my opinion. It'll just take a few minutes.

MAGGIE  
I have an overbearing boss, two trials and forty-one e-mails to return. What I don't have is a few minutes. And neither do you.

Kenisha shushes Maggie and gestures to the stage where Allen the storekeeper tries to escape Elmo's shakedown.

ALLEN  
Elmo, this thing between you and the Bird...no one will go out. People are scared.

ELMO  
People shouldn't be scared. Don't worry, Allen. Elmo loves you. Elmo will take care of you.

He starts to leave, then pauses with a menacing tone --

ELMO (CONT'D)  
As long as you take care of Elmo.

TREVOR (O.S.)  
Okay, let's stop there.

As the cast takes five, TREVOR THOMAS (30, button-downed British) makes his way over to give Kenisha a warm hug.

KENISHA  
Maggie, this is Trevor Thomas. We were classmates at Princeton.  
(to Trevor)  
The play is wonderful. So clever.

TREVOR  
Maggie, what do you think?

Sneaking a glance at her phone, Maggie looks up, caught.

MAGGIE  
I'm not sure I understand.

TREVOR

It's called Sesame, The Street. Big Bird is a drug dealing pimp, Elmo's a loan shark and they vie for control of the neighborhood.

MAGGIE

Isn't that what they play on TV? Drug dealer, loan shark. I thought that was the show.

Trevor pauses, confused.

KENISHA

She's kidding. Tell him you're kidding, Maggie.

MAGGIE

I'm kidding.

An ADORABLE GIRL (5) climbs the stage and approaches ELMO as he bums a cigarette from a stagehand.

ELMO

(gruffly)

I don't give autographs, kid.

Seeing the girl, Trevor leans down and smiles.

TREVOR

May I help you, sweetheart?

ADORABLE GIRL

Are you the director?

TREVOR

Yes, I am.

She SLAPS an envelope against his stomach.

ADORABLE GIRL

You've been served.

She turns and heads up the aisle to her MOTHER, dressed in a suit with a briefcase. As the process-serving family leaves, Kenisha and Trevor stand there, stunned.

Maggie, however, is intrigued. This just got interesting.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. LOOKING-GLASS THEATER - MICHIGAN AVENUE - CHICAGO - DAY

The theater is adorned with twinkling holiday lights. Maggie exits onto the sidewalk, talking on her cell phone.

MAGGIE

I'm sorry, Tom, but the settlement was just not acceptable.

INT. DONOVAN/MARSH LAW FIRM - TOM DONOVAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Senior Partner THOMAS DONOVAN (50) talks on the phone in his tastefully decorated office.

Warm and congenial, Tom has built a successful firm through years of hard work. But he'd probably command more respect if he weren't so eager to be liked.

TOM

You can't keep doing this, Maggie. Dalton is just looking for a reason to fire you. And when he hears that you turned down an offer...

CROSSCUT CONVERSATION

MAGGIE

Don't worry, Tom, the clients are onboard.

TOM

They're onboard because you're feeding unreasonable hopes.

MAGGIE

This case will never see the inside of a courtroom. The phrase "nearly decapitated" conjures too many images in jurors' minds.

Tom sighs, knowing she's right. But loath to tell her. Maggie takes the opportunity to jump.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I'll let you know when the next offer comes in.

Hanging up, she turns back to Kenisha and Trevor. Kenisha hands Maggie the summons.

KENISHA

Sesame Workshop filed for an injunction to close the play.

TREVOR

Can they do that?

MAGGIE

They're claiming copyright and trademark infringement. They're afraid your play will tarnish the integrity of their product. Which could cost them revenue.

KENISHA

I can call around, find you an attorney with experience in this.  
(off Maggie's look)  
You can't take this case. It'll be the nail in your mother's coffin.

MAGGIE

Kenisha, it's censorship. We have an obligation to fight it. Not just for Trevor but for every child who'll one day turn a beloved fairy tale into a horrifyingly dystopian drama. That will keep other children up at night.

Once Maggie's made up her mind, there's no point arguing. So Kenisha just smiles at Trevor. You've got yourself a lawyer.

EXT. CITY STREET - MOMENTS LATER

As Maggie and Kenisha hurry toward a sleek office building, Maggie's phone RINGS. Glancing at the ID, she waves for Kenisha to go ahead inside before she answers.

MAGGIE

Hello mother. This is a surprise.

INT. CAR - TRAVELING - DAY

Former Senator Rebecca Principle rides in a black town car, multitasking with newspapers and files on her lap.

REBECCA

Margaret, I need to talk to you.

CROSSCUT CONVERSATION

MAGGIE  
Now's not a great time.

REBECCA  
Is there ever a good time with you?

MAGGIE  
I'm in a meeting.

The town car pulls to the curb. The rear window rolls down, revealing -- Rebecca. She gives Maggie a look.

REBECCA  
You are not.

Rebecca climbs out and gives Maggie a hug. Not the warmest embrace, but still sincere. As they break, Rebecca pushes the hair from Maggie's eyes.

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
I'll never understand how you can see anything. It looks so much prettier pulled back.

Maggie sighs but endures the ritual.

MAGGIE  
Why are you in town, Mom?

REBECCA  
I have to give a speech at the university. They're naming some building after me.

Maggie's phone BUZZES. She gestures toward the building --

MAGGIE  
I have to get back to work.  
(beat)  
Come for dinner. Emma would love to see you.

REBECCA  
I'm having dinner with the mayor.

MAGGIE  
Of course you are.

Rebecca's chief of staff LIAM QUINN (30's) steps from the car. Dangerously handsome but seemingly unaware of it, Liam is a consummate professional. Work first, fun later.

LIAM

Excuse me, Senator. The Vice  
President is calling.

Rebecca sighs as she takes the phone and turns on the charm --

REBECCA

Mr. Vice President, how are you?

Maggie brightens as she hugs Liam, delighted to see him.

MAGGIE

Liam! What are you doing here?

LIAM

You know the Senator never goes  
anywhere without me.

MAGGIE

You are the perfect accessory. Not  
to mention, the best chief of staff  
she's ever had. How is she?

LIAM

Nervous. Lawrence Butler is  
beating her in the polls.

MAGGIE

How? Isn't he the one who said  
those Girl Scouts were asking for  
it because their uniforms made them  
look slutty?

LIAM

Yeah. And the voters don't care.

MAGGIE

Well, it's only December. She has  
ten more months to win them back.  
(off his smile)  
What?

LIAM

You really do love a challenge.

Still on the phone, Rebecca waves Liam back to the car.

REBECCA

Mr. Vice President, you know it's  
more complicated than that...  
(whispers to Maggie)  
Lunch tomorrow?

MAGGIE  
Okay. And Mom...

But Rebecca is already back in the car. As it pulls away --

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
Love you, too.

INT. DONOVAN/MARSH LAW FIRM - DAY

The holiday season's in full swing at Donovan/Marsh. Twinkle LIGHTS adorn the hallways and MISTLETOE hangs from every doorway. A BIN OF TOYS stands in the reception area.

DALTON MARSH, managing partner, scowls as he passes the bin. What Dalton lacks in looks, he makes up for in arrogance.

DALTON  
Toys for Tots. Please. You know how many people scam these programs?

SARAH, a paralegal, glances at WYATT, a stocky third year associate. Should we pretend we didn't hear? Or poke the bear? She grins, unable to resist.

SARAH  
What do you mean by "scam", Dalton?

DALTON  
All these sob stories. Dad lost his job, Mom's on disability. Then they head to the bar and let us saps pay for Christmas.

WYATT  
Ho, ho, ho.

DALTON  
Don't you need to prepare for court?

They make a swift exit, past Tom Donovan, who's heard them.

TOM  
I think it makes people feel good to give back to the community.

DALTON  
I give back plenty. I happen to be considering a pro bono case.

TOM

Two in ten years. The market might suffer if word gets out Dalton Marsh is willing to work for free.

DALTON

I realize you feed on the adoration of your minions. But somebody's got to be the businessman here.

(beat)

And pro bono means "for good". Free is just something the liberals came up with.

Choosing to ignore that, Tom smiles and walks away as Maggie steps off the elevator. And runs straight into Dalton.

DALTON (CONT'D)

When were you going to tell me?

Passing by, Kenisha offers up a guilty shrug. Maggie gives her a look: "Thanks a lot."

MAGGIE

And a fine day it is, Dalton.

DALTON

You cannot take this case, Maggie.

MAGGIE

You know why my mother named me for Margaret Chase Smith, the first woman to serve in both houses of Congress? Because she took on McCarthy and defended those who had the courage of their convictions.

DALTON

Sesame Street is a beloved institution. You don't mess with it. Not for some two-bit, risqué piece of over-rated theater.

MAGGIE

Are we talking morality? Family values trump free speech? Because as I understand it, the founding fathers made that item number one.

(beat)

Número uno for our bilingual rugrats.

She starts away. Over her shoulder --

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
And just think of all the free  
press we'll get.

EXT. COLLEGE QUAD - UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO - DAY

Rebecca Principle is in her element, addressing REPORTERS at the opening of a new research facility at the university.

REBECCA  
This state-of-the-art science center will attract the best and brightest to this campus. We're deeply grateful to Ted and Marsha Fleming for their incredible generosity.

She turns to TED and MARSHA FLEMING (40's), tech-savvy billionaires who smile for the cameras.

REPORTER  
Do you think the controversy over the university's stem cell research will hurt future endowments?

An expert at deflecting, Rebecca volleys back with humor.

REBECCA  
I admit, it was selfish of me to ask them to create a clone, but the commute between Chicago and D.C. can be exhausting.

REPORTER 2  
The Tribune is reporting that your former campaign manager Donald Healey is now backing your primary opponent, Lawrence Butler.

REBECCA  
This is not the time to talk politics. If you'll excuse me...

REPORTER 3  
How do you respond to voters who think you've deserted the Republican base?

Pretending she didn't hear, Rebecca follows Liam to her car.

INT. CAR - TRAVELING

As soon as the car pulls away, we see how shaken she is.

REBECCA  
What's Healey doing?

LIAM  
I don't know.

REBECCA  
Find out.

INT. DONOVAN/MARSH - KITCHEN/HALLWAY - DAY

Grabbing a cup of coffee, Maggie and Kenisha see Tom.

TOM  
How's your mom doing?

MAGGIE  
She's a moderate in a land where  
extremism is the new black. It's no  
cakewalk. But she'll be fine.

TOM  
She always is.

As he leaves, Kenisha eyes Maggie.

KENISHA  
How long is Rebecca in town?

MAGGIE  
Long enough to make me appreciate  
the seven hundred miles between us.

KENISHA  
Come on, she's not that bad.

MAGGIE  
She thinks Mother Teresa didn't  
accomplish enough in her life.

Nodding to the files in Kenisha's hands --

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
What have you got so far?

KENISHA  
I pulled media cases to refute  
Sesame Workshop's claim of  
copyright infringement.  
(MORE)

KENISHA (CONT'D)  
 Hustler versus Falwell provides a  
 strong foundation for parody...

MAGGIE  
 And we can exploit the fair use  
 decision in Campbell versus Acuff-  
 Rose. But this case is different.  
 We need a game-changer.

Off Kenisha's look --

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
 What?

KENISHA  
 Why do I get the feeling your  
 interest in this has more to do  
 with pissing off the establishment  
 than defending free speech?

MAGGIE  
 Can't I do both?

EXT./INT. CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A storefront on a busy corner, bearing the signage PRINCIPLE  
 FOR SENATE. Inside is a well-oiled machine, with seasoned  
 employees directing student volunteers.

INT. CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS - REBECCA'S OFFICE - DAY

Rebecca confers with Liam and her CAMPAIGN MANAGER. We  
 recognize her from the interview on CNN in the first scene.

LIAM  
 Apparently Donald Healey's been  
 lining up donors for months.

REBECCA  
 How much has he raised?

CAMPAIGN MANAGER  
 I'm getting conflicting numb...

REBECCA  
 How much, Diane?

CAMPAIGN MANAGER  
 Ten million. And his PAC has twice  
 that.

Rebecca looks like she's been punched in the gut.

REBECCA

Sonofabitch. I got Healey's son his first job, did you know that? Got his daughter into law school.

LIAM

The press is taking Butler seriously. We have to find a major bundler, someone with a wide net.

CAMPAIGN MANAGER

How 'bout the Flemings?

REBECCA

Ted and Marsha only fund educational programs.

CAMPAIGN MANAGER

Chuck Manetti?

REBECCA

He's being indicted for tax fraud.

LIAM

You're looking for a knight in shining armor. He doesn't exist.

He and the Campaign Manager exchange a "lightbulb" look.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Except for --

REBECCA

Don't say it --

LIAM

-- Arthur Bradley.

CAMPAIGN MANAGER

Arthur Bradley.

Rebecca shakes her head. Absolutely not. Liam shrugs.

LIAM

It's the only move you've got.

INT. COURTHOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Dalton and Wyatt speak with MR. & MRS. BROGAN (affluent, 40's) as their daughter TORY (17) waits nearby. Her parents are nervous, but Tory seems surprisingly serene.

MR. BROGAN

I don't understand how they can call this involuntary manslaughter. All Tory did was text that boy.

MRS. BROGAN

She certainly didn't encourage him to kill himself.

WYATT

No state has been able to convict on these grounds.

DALTON

The prosecutor's whole case relies on eliciting an emotional response from the jury. She's already established how popular David Garcia was. Now she's going after Tory. So you need to remain calm and supportive. No matter what.

INT. COURTOOM - LATER

JUDGE PAUL RABINOWITZ presides as Assistant District Attorney LILA STAHL questions DETECTIVE RYAN CHIEN.

ADA STAHL

Detective Chien, can you tell me what you found when you examined David's cell phone?

DETECTIVE CHIEN

Prior to ingesting the lethal dose of hydrocodone and alcohol, he exchanged thirty-two text messages with the defendant, Tory Brogan.

ADA STAHL

You have the transcript of these messages. Would you read the highlighted section?

DALTON

Your Honor, the subjective nature of this delivery makes it highly prejudicial. I'd like to renew my objection to...

JUDGE RABINOWITZ

Counselor, we've been over this. The jury has a right to hear it.

He nods for Detective Chien to continue.

DETECTIVE CHIEN

David: I can't take this anymore.

ADA STAHL

Tory: This is really getting old, David.

DETECTIVE CHIEN  
No one will care. Probably  
won't even notice.

ADA STAHL (CONT'D)  
Ur probab right.

DETECTIVE CHIEN  
I'm going to do it.

ADA STAHL (CONT'D)  
I'll believe it when I see  
it.

There's an GASP from the gallery. Tory anxiously looks at her  
parents, who are having a hard time not reacting.

ADA STAHL (CONT'D)  
After receiving David's last text,  
in which he wrote "Pray for me",  
did Tory contact anyone?

DETECTIVE CHIEN  
No.

ADA STAHL  
And what was she doing when you  
arrived at her home that evening?

DALTON  
Objection. Irrelevant.

ADA STAHL  
Goes to state of mind.

JUDGE RABINOWITZ  
I'll allow it.

DETECTIVE CHIEN  
She was filming a makeup video to  
post on YouTube.

Wyatt looks at the jury. And sees the disgust in their eyes.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JUDGE HENRY O'BRIEN (60's) presides over a preliminary  
injunction hearing. Trevor sits nervously beside Maggie and  
Kenisha as plaintiff's counsel JOHN COGAN questions Sesame  
Workshop executive ELIZABETH MONROE (50, dignified).

ELIZABETH MONROE  
Sesame Street is a formative  
influence, honored with more awards  
than any series in TV history.

JOHN COGAN

So no matter what its intent might be, you believe "Sesame, The Street" dilutes the copyright held by Sesame Workshop.

ELIZABETH MONROE

The image of Big Bird strutting around like some thug...

(composing herself)

It destroys the perception of him as a wise and loving role model.

JOHN COGAN

Thank you, Mrs. Monroe.

Maggie is up and running before Cogan reaches his seat.

MAGGIE

Ms. Monroe, as head of marketing, you oversee the "brand", correct?

ELIZABETH MONROE

Yes, I do.

MAGGIE

Are you aware that street performers dress as your characters?

ELIZABETH MONROE

Yes.

MAGGIE

They pose for photos, and if they don't get a suggested "donation", some rip off their heads to scream at tourists. And by "tourists", I mean children.

ELIZABETH MONROE

We don't condone that. But we can't litigate every violation.

MAGGIE

Yet you took the time for this one.

(beat)

Do you know my client is prohibiting admittance to anyone under the age of sixteen?

ELIZABETH MONROE

I don't think that goes far enough.

MAGGIE

For centuries, parody has been used to expose injustice, criticize social mores and communicate ideas. Your own program uses it.

JOHN COGAN

Is there a question?

MAGGIE

Do you believe freedom of expression should be protected?

ELIZABETH MONROE

I do. But Sesame Street was designed for educational purposes and as such, is held to a higher standard.

MAGGIE

Come now, Ms. Monroe, even though Sesame Workshop is a tax-exempt non-profit, you make a tidy sum each year. Your CEO takes home a million in salary.

JOHN COGAN

Counsel is making speeches.

Maggie smiles. Fine, I'll play it your way.

MAGGIE

Don't you benefit from the forty million dollars in merchandising the show brought in last year?

ELIZABETH MONROE

Perhaps. But most of our revenue is channeled back into outreach efforts for literacy. Initiatives to promote nutrition and exercise for kids. Support groups for the families of deployed members of our military. Our concern goes beyond profits. We have an obligation to uphold our image for our audience.

MAGGIE

So just because a king gives away some of his fortune, no one should question his authority?

(beat)

Is that what you're saying? It's Elmo's world; we just live in it?

Instead of rising to the bait, Monroe levels Maggie with a look like she's just earned detention. So does the judge.

Off Maggie. Not feeling too welcome in the neighborhood.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. MAGGIE'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

EMMA (10) eats breakfast at the counter while she finishes homework. Maggie makes Emma's lunch, scarfs down yogurt and checks her e-mail. All at the same time.

EMMA

When are we going to get a tree?

MAGGIE

Soon.

EMMA

How come we never put up decorations? The Johnsons have had theirs up for two weeks.

MAGGIE

Mr. Johnson's retired, he has all the time in the world. And don't even think about asking him to do it. I'm still embarrassed you tricked him into decorating our house for Halloween.

EMMA

Oh, I almost forgot. My field trip permission slip's due today.

Maggie turns toward a large bulletin board beside the fridge. She removes a yellow paper and holds it up.

EMMA (CONT'D)

That's basketball registration.

Maggie grabs an orange paper.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Gifted and talented program.

(beat)

Field trip is blue.

MAGGIE

Got it.

Maggie signs the form and tucks it into Emma's backpack with her lunch -- and quickly returns to her computer.

EMMA

Mom?

MAGGIE  
 (reading)  
 Yes?

EMMA  
 Kaitlyn and Tracy were talking at  
 lunch...

MAGGIE  
 Mmmm-hmmm...

EMMA  
 ...and they want to know...  
 Why do you hate Elmo?

MAGGIE  
 Why do I... what?

She looks at her daughter, sees this is really bothering her.

EMMA  
 Tracy's mom said you're trying to  
 destroy Sesame Street. Her brother  
 is only two. What's he gonna do if  
 they stop making the show?

MAGGIE  
 Honey, they won't stop. You know  
 what irony is?

EMMA  
 When you say something but mean the  
 opposite. Like when you said  
 Kaitlyn's dad is a rocket  
 scientist...only you really meant  
 he's a moron.

MAGGIE  
 Well, yes. But that's between us.  
 (beat)  
 My client used those characters in  
 an ironic way to make a statement.  
 He has the right to express  
 himself, and it's my job to defend  
 that right.

EMMA  
 If if someone believes something  
 you don't, they still have a right  
 to say it?

MAGGIE  
 Exactly.

EMMA

Great. Broccoli stinks, so I'm not going to eat it anymore.

MAGGIE

Nice try. As your lawyer, I'll defend your right. As your mom, I'm still gonna make you eat it.

Emma fakes a sneer; Maggie grins. Glancing at the clock --

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Damn, we're gonna be late.

As Emma pulls on her backpack, her hair falls across her face. Maggie grabs a hairbrush and barrette as Emma groans in frustration.

EMMA

Mommy, I'm fine...

MAGGIE

But your hair looks...  
(catching herself)  
Beautiful.

She tosses the brush onto the counter and follows Emma out.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Tory is on the stand, wiping away tears.

TORY BROGAN

David had talked about killing himself before. I read that the best way to deal with someone like that is to not make too much of it. Like how parents ignore a little kid when he's throwing a tantrum.

DALTON

What about when you wrote "You can't keep making these threats"?

TORY BROGAN

I wanted him to stop and think of all the people who cared about him.

DALTON

Thank you.

He crosses back to his seat as ADA Stahl shakes her head.

ADA STAHL

Do you expect us to believe that when you said "You're not the only David Garcia in the world," you were using reverse psychology to talk him out of killing himself?

TORY BROGAN

I meant other people have problems, much bigger than his. I never thought he'd go through with --

She begins to cry again.

JUDGE RABINOWITZ

Do you need a few minutes?

Tory shakes her head and tries to pull herself together.

TORY BROGAN

David and I were together two years. When you've known someone that long, sometimes you say things you wish you hadn't. But not a day goes by that I don't miss him.

ADA STAHL

Tory, where were all these tears when the police showed up to tell you David was dead?

TORY BROGAN

I was in shock. Not everyone shows it the same way. But I was upset.

ADA STAHL

You texted for half an hour. It never entered your mind David might go through with it? And that you could stop him if you called 911?

Tory's delicate veneer fades as she locks eyes with Stahl.

TORY BROGAN

I didn't know he had the drugs. If anyone could have stopped him, it's his parents. They knew he was depressed.

ADA STAHL

Move to strike. There's no evidence of --

TORY BROGAN

They said David couldn't tell  
anyone he was seeing a shrink. God  
forbid if their perfect little  
family wasn't so perfect.

The jury reacts. ADA Stahl looks worried. Dalton and Wyatt  
exchange a look. Did they just score reasonable doubt?

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - DAY

Rebecca waits at a table set for two. A WAITER places a glass  
of wine before her --

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Drinking at lunch? I thought you  
liked to stay in control.

She slips into the seat across from her mother.

REBECCA

Didn't you get my message?

MAGGIE

You cancelled. You always cancel.  
You know, you haven't seen Emma in  
months.

REBECCA

I've been busy. This race has --

MAGGIE

She's not stupid, Mom. She knows  
when you're back in town.

(beat)

Don't take it out on her because  
you're pissed at me.

Rebecca glances around, worried other diners will hear.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I know what the press is saying.  
But I'm not the reason your  
campaign's in trouble.

REBECCA

No? Ever since you passed the bar,  
you've been hell-bent on grabbing  
the media's attention --

MAGGIE

That's not true.

REBECCA  
 -- taking on that Pentagon hacking  
 case --

MAGGIE  
 That boy had every right to  
 representation.

REBECCA  
 By someone else. For God's sake,  
 Margaret, I was Chair of the  
 Senate Intelligence Committee!

She suddenly stops, seeing ARTHUR PERKINS (70's, grey-haired,  
 moneyed) approach. He kisses Rebecca's cheek.

ARTHUR PERKINS  
 Rebecca. You look lovely.

REBECCA  
 Arthur.

She turns, uncomfortable making the introduction.

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
 This is my daughter. Uh, Margaret,  
 this is Arthur Bradley, CEO of  
 Bradley Pharmaceutical.

ARTHUR BRADLEY  
 I didn't realize...will you be  
 joining us?

MAGGIE  
 No. No. REBECCA

Arthur raises an eyebrow at Rebecca's forceful response.

MAGGIE  
 I have to get back to work. It was  
 nice meeting you.

She leaves, glancing back. Her mother can handle heads of  
 state. Why does this man make her so uneasy?

INT. DONOVAN/MARSH - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Dalton and Wyatt eat take-out as they review the case. Sarah  
 appears, holding up a file.

SARAH

David's school transcript. When he transferred from St. Louis in sophomore year, he was a semester behind. The vice principal at his old school said David took a four month medical leave.

DALTON

Any record of a hospitalization?

SARAH

I can do better than that. After he tried to kill himself, David's parents sent him to a rehab center. Run by Alan Dorsett.

Hearing the name, Wyatt looks up, surprised. Dalton smiles.

DALTON

Looks like Christmas came early this year.

WYATT

We don't have to use this. Just the fact that David attempted suicide is enough.

Dalton looks at him. You can't be serious.

DALTON

No point in going into battle with a musket when you have an AK-47.

Off Wyatt, clearly disturbed by Dalton's plan.

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - LATER

A waiter clears the table as Arthur finishes a story.

ARTHUR BRADLEY

Only once she finished redoing the kitchen, she realized she no longer liked the house.

Rebecca smiles patiently as he laughs.

ARTHUR BRADLEY (CONT'D)

But you didn't ask me here to complain about my wife, did you?

REBECCA

I'm in need of some cash, Arthur.

ARTHUR BRADLEY  
You assumed you could count on  
Donald Healey.

REBECCA  
Yes.

ARTHUR BRADLEY  
And you were wrong.

REBECCA  
(beat)  
Yes.

He leans forward, speaking more intimately.

ARTHUR BRADLEY  
There was a time when I'd have  
gladly stepped in. A time I'd have  
done just about anything for you.

He takes a sip of his drink, drawing out the moment.

ARTHUR BRADLEY (CONT'D)  
You said you didn't need my help.  
You wanted to do it all yourself.

REBECCA  
It wasn't that simple, Arthur. You  
were married.

ARTHUR BRADLEY  
If memory serves, I still am.  
(beat)  
I'd like to help you, Becca.

Rebecca steels herself, knowing what's coming.

ARTHUR BRADLEY (CONT'D)  
But I don't think we want the same  
things anymore. For the country.

REBECCA  
So you'd rather support someone who  
spreads right-wing extremist  
propaganda. Someone who never set  
foot in a polling place before he  
decided to run for office.  
(beat)  
I've been a faithful public  
servant, Arthur. It's not like I've  
gotten rich in this job.

ARTHUR BRADLEY

Nobody forced you to do it. Frankly  
I'm surprised you're not calling  
the DNC for help. Do you even know  
where your party offices are?

Rebecca gives him a long look. Then she gathers her things.

REBECCA

I've earned my place at the table.  
No matter what you may think of me.  
(beat)  
You want me to beg, Arthur. It's  
not going to happen.

INT. DONOVAN/MARSH - HALLWAY - EVENING

Maggie and Kenisha head down the hall.

MAGGIE

The similarities to Campbell will  
work in our favor, but --

Passing in the other direction, Sarah nods to Maggie --

SARAH

Shame about your mom.  
(off her look)  
Haven't you heard? She quit.

MAGGIE

The race?

SARAH

Her job.

What? Maggie finds a TV, turns it to 24-hour news.

NEWS ANCHOR 1

And while the State Department says  
the danger is confined to tribal  
areas, they are issuing...

Another channel, another anchor. We see a photo of Rebecca.

NEWS ANCHOR 2

Repeating our top story, Illinois  
Senator Rebecca Principle has  
resigned, leaving office before the  
end of her fourth term.

VIDEO CLIPS play of Rebecca over the course of her career  
(similar to those in the Teaser).

## NEWS ANCHOR 2 (V.O.) (CONT'D)

While conservative Republicans have made no secret of their desire to unseat her, the news stunned many on both sides of the aisle. Ms. Principle was respected by Democrats as well as the Republican voters who kept her in office for nearly twenty-four years.

Rebecca addresses the press outside campaign headquarters.

## REBECCA

It's been my privilege to represent the fine people of this state. But politics in this country has grown too divisive for me to do my job. It's time to move on.

Off Maggie as she stares at the TV screen --

INT. DONOVAN/MARSH - HALLWAY - NEXT MORNING

Maggie and Kenisha exit the kitchen with coffee.

## MAGGIE

I've called her five times.

## KENISHA

You don't think she got caught doing something, you know, like that Congressman...

## MAGGIE

Yes, Kenisha. My mother was sexting naked photos. Because you know she's all about "the new technology". She still calls the Internet the World Wide Web.

As they pass Tom's office, they see --

INT. TOM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Rebecca talking with Tom. It's clear the two have affection for each other. Liam fields calls nearby.

## MAGGIE

Mom. What the hell?

REBECCA

I'm sorry. The phone has not stopped ringing.  
(re Liam's conversation)  
The head of the RNC wants to kill me.

LIAM

The senator will give her full-throated support to whomever...  
Yes, you can count on it.  
(clicking off)  
When pigs fly.

MAGGIE

You're onboard with this?

LIAM

It's her decision.  
(shrugs)  
Too many crazy billionaires out there. You spend half your war chest fending off challengers from your own party.

MAGGIE

But what about the message you're sending? If you back down, doesn't that empower them?

REBECCA

There was a time I would have embraced the challenge. But it's impossible to get anything done. And I refuse to be a lame duck for the next ten months.

Dalton enters.

DALTON

I just got a call from Arthur Bradley. He's on the board of PBS. And he's not happy about your Sesame Street case.

TOM

I'm afraid Kenisha's friend will have to find another firm.

REBECCA

He's right. Arthur may be a pompous ass, but Bradley Pharmaceutical represents a significant percentage of this firm's billables.

MAGGIE

All due respect, Mom, I don't think  
you have a say in the matter.

REBECCA

Oh, but I do.

Confused, Maggie looks to Tom. He shrugs.

TOM

I owe your mother a great deal.  
When I was just starting out, she  
took me under her wing.

DALTON

And now that she's done with  
Washington, she's decided to put  
her talents to good use again.

Maggie looks stricken as she connects the dots.

REBECCA

Donovan. Marsh. Principle.

(smiles)

Has a nice ring to it, don't you  
think?

Off Maggie as we reach the --

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. ICE CREAM PARLOR - DAY

CLOSE ON: A GIANT ICE CREAM SUNDAE

Being carried across the restaurant. A waitress places it in front of Maggie.

KENISHA (O.S.)

Had a feeling I'd find you here.

She slides into the seat across from Maggie. But as Kenisha picks up a spoon, Maggie pulls the sundae closer to her.

KENISHA (CONT'D)

Oh, it's like that, is it?

MAGGIE

She does this every time. Just when I think I've carved out something for myself, something I can be proud of...she swoops in and steals it away.

KENISHA

Come on. *Every* time?

MAGGIE

When I was in second grade, I beat out four hundred kids to win the district science fair. Got my picture in the paper. That day, she made the evening news for leading the city council to ban phosphates in detergent.

She pauses to take another bite.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

The day I made the all-state soccer team, she announced she was running for Senate. When I got accepted to Stanford, she was watching the President sign her first bill.

KENISHA

What about when you passed the bar?

MAGGIE

Her book won the Pulitzer.

Kenisha puts down her spoon. Okay, you win.

KENISHA

The way I see it, you have two choices. You can stay silent and resent her for the rest of your life. Or you can show her what you're made of.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

The jury can't help but be moved as David's mother testifies, defiantly holding back tears.

MRS. GARCIA

It's not true what Tory said. David wasn't depressed.

ADA STAHL

So you'd never heard him threaten to kill himself?

MRS. GARCIA

She makes it sound like he was obsessed, that he was distraught when she broke up with him.

(to Tory)

Believe me, there were plenty of other girls who wanted to date my son. David didn't need you!

DALTON

Objection. Mrs. Garcia is a rebuttal witness. She can only address prior testimony.

JUDGE RABINOWITZ

Sustained. Mrs. Garcia, please refrain from addressing the defendant.

ADA STAHL

I have nothing further.

Mrs. Garcia rises to leave. She stops as Dalton approaches.

DALTON

I know this is difficult for you. I just need a clarification.

She sits back down, giving Dalton a look. If you insist.

DALTON (CONT'D)

You say David wasn't depressed.  
That he'd never threatened to kill  
himself before.

MRS. GARCIA

No.

DALTON

Then why was he hospitalized for  
attempted suicide during his  
sophomore year?

Jumping to her feet --

ADA STAHL

Objection! Counsel is assuming  
facts not in evidence.

DALTON

Whose fault is that?

JUDGE RABINOWITZ

Approach.

Dalton and Wyatt meet Stahl at the bench.

DALTON

Your Honor, I have a sworn  
statement by the St. Louis P.D.  
officer who responded to the  
emergency call.

JUDGE RABINOWITZ

Was the District Attorney's office  
aware of this?

ADA STAHL

No, Your Honor.

JUDGE RABINOWITZ

So entered. Step back.

As they head away, ADA Stahl pauses beside Wyatt.

ADA STAHL

A year ago, I thought you'd be a  
great prosecutor. Now you've gone  
and sold your soul to the devil.

Off Wyatt, feeling the weight of his conscience.

INT. COURTROOM - LATER

Medical expert DR. DEVON BREYER testifies.

DALTON

Dr. Breyer, following David Garcia's attempted suicide two years ago, he was admitted into a rehab program run by Dr. Alan Dorsett. Are you familiar with Dr. Dorsett's work?

DR. BREYER

Yes, he specializes in sexual orientation conversion therapy.

Off the jurors' reaction --

DALTON

You mean patients who seek to eradicate same-sex attraction?

DR. BREYER

As well as transgender identification. It's a controversial approach to mental illness with very little success. My studies have found enduring change in orientation is rare, and negative effects included anxiety, depression and suicidality.

DALTON

So a depressed patient treated by Dr. Dorsett may be more likely to commit suicide than...

ADA STAHL

Objection. Calls for...

DALTON

I'll rephrase. Based on your research, are Dr. Dorsett's patients more likely to relapse than those who undergo conventional therapy with medication?

DR. BREYER

Yes, on average, eighty percent of his patients were hospitalized again within twelve months.

DALTON

Four out of five patients.  
 (lets that sink in)  
 Thank you, Doctor.

ADA STAHL

You weren't present during David Garcia's treatment at the Dorsett Center so you have no proof of how he responded, do you?

DR. BREYER

Aside from my expert opinion...

ADA STAHL

Yes or no, please.

DR. BREYER

No.

ADA STAHL

Nothing further.

She takes her seat without looking at the jury. Well aware she can do little to repair the damage done.

INT. THE DRAKE HOTEL - BALLROOM - EVENING

A festive occasion. City and state leaders and local celebrities gathered to welcome a visiting foreign dignitary.

Rebecca, beautiful in a formal gown, listens as elder statesman AMBASSADOR RAMEY regales her with an anecdote.

AMBASSADOR RAMEY

But that was par for the course with President Johnson. Nine times out of ten, you knew he was calling you from the john.

Maggie appears, still in business attire.

REBECCA

Is something wrong? Where's Emma?

MAGGIE

She's sleeping over at a friend's.  
 (to Ramey)  
 Sorry to interrupt...

AMBASSADOR RAMEY

Quite all right. Rebecca, you know how I feel: the Senate's loss is Chicago's gain. Mary and I will be expecting you for dinner soon.

REBECCA

I'd love to, Patrick. Have a merry Christmas.

Ramey nods to Maggie and moves on. A waiter passes.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Do you want a drink?

MAGGIE

I'm not staying. I just need to know...why are you doing this?

REBECCA

It's been on my calendar for months. I couldn't get out of it.

MAGGIE

Not *this*, Mother. Why are you joining my office?

(off her look)

You're a senior Senator with decades of service. You could write your ticket anywhere. Why, out of all the choices you had, did you pick Donovan/Marsh?

REBECCA

It's a good firm.

MAGGIE

But it's *my* firm. And you know damn well we can't spend five minutes together without getting into a fight.

(beat)

Are you trying to destroy my career?

REBECCA

Oh, Maggie, don't be so dramatic.

EVENT COORDINATOR (O.S.)

Senator?

The EVENT COORDINATOR interrupts.

EVENT COORDINATOR (CONT'D)  
 Senator, we're about to begin.

Rebecca nods and follows the coordinator away. Leaving Maggie completely stymied.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER

Her suit jacket off, a rather DRUNK Maggie looks sexy in a snug tank dress as she flirts with the hot BARTENDER.

Chewing on a straw, she places TWO SHOT GLASSES filled with water -- ONE UPSIDE DOWN OVER THE OTHER -- atop three bar straws laid across a larger ROCKS GLASS.

The Bartender watches in confusion.

BARTENDER  
 Let me get this straight: if I move  
 the water from the shot glasses  
 down into the rocks glass...you'll  
 go home with me?

MAGGIE  
 That's right.

He leans in, grinning. This is easy.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
 There's just one catch.  
 (beat)  
 You can't touch any of it.

BARTENDER  
 I can't...what? There's no way.

Maggie leans against the bar enticingly.

MAGGIE  
 I guess you don't want it enough.  
 If you did, you'd figure out a way.

LIAM (O.S.)  
 Can I try?

Maggie glances up. Liam's been watching the whole thing.

MAGGIE  
 Knock yourself out.

Liam reaches over and gently pulls the STRAW from Maggie's lips. Just the gesture itself is incredibly sexy.

He leans in, positioning the straw until it's almost touching the crack between the two shot glasses...then he BLOWS.

The water from the top shot DRAINS over the bottom shot, through the straws holding it, and into the glass below.

The bartender watches, stunned.

Liam looks at Maggie, who smiles back at him.

We have a winner...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Maggie's HALF-NAKED BODY backs up against the wall as Liam moves in, their lips hungrily devouring each other.

Maggie wraps her legs around his waist, pulling him close as he carries her to the bed.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. DONOVAN/MARSH - RECEPTION - NEXT DAY

Hung-over, Maggie enters as the RECEPTIONIST answers a call.

RECEPTIONIST  
Good morning, Donovan, Marsh,  
Principle.

Maggie nearly trips, then catches herself.

MAGGIE  
Isn't that a bit premature?

RECEPTIONIST  
Oh, I'm just practicing.

She taps her headset. There's no one on the phone. Taking a deep breath, Maggie moves on. Kenisha appears.

KENISHA  
Oh good. You're here.

MAGGIE  
You were afraid I'd get drunk and  
pick up some random guy?

KENISHA  
On a school-night? Never.  
(beat)  
You talk to your mom?

MAGGIE  
Yes. Kind of. Not really.  
(beat: ugh!)  
I can't believe she's doing this.

KENISHA  
You never know. It could be a good  
thing.  
(off Maggie's look)  
Or not.

INT. DONOVAN/MARSH LAW FIRM - DAY

Assistants listen to a news report while the lawyers assemble for a staff meeting in the conference room.

REPORTER

In accordance with state law, Governor Adams will make an appointment to fill Senator Principle's seat until the next election. Republican leaders do not welcome this change as Adams, a Democrat, is sure to select an appointee from his own party.

Maggie hurries in, nearly bumping into Liam as he arrives. The awkwardness is palpable.

She takes a seat. Liam sits beside her. What's he doing here? She glances around to see if anyone else wonders.

MAGGIE

She's got you taking notes, huh? I guess you'll be headed back to D.C. now, since my mom's --

Before she can finish, the others APPLAUD Rebecca's arrival. Rebecca feigns humility. But loves every minute.

TOM

Welcome, Rebecca. We're all excited to have you onboard.

Under the table, Liam's leg touches Maggie's. He smiles and playfully rubs his knee against hers. She grins and slips off her pump to run her toes along his calf.

REBECCA

Thank you Tom. I'll need a couple of weeks to tie up loose ends, but I'll be reaching out to each and every client so we can hit the ground running in the new year.

TOM

Wonderful. Moving on, what's the status of current cases?

SARAH

How's Elmo the drug dealer?

MAGGIE

Elmo's a loan shark. Big Bird's the drug-dealing pimp.

She grins. Rebecca gives her a look. That stopped being cute when you were nine. She turns to Tom.

REBECCA

I thought we agreed she wouldn't proceed with the case. It hardly makes sense to endanger the practice over some silly stunt.

MAGGIE

Since when is freedom of speech a "silly stunt"? That's interesting, coming from someone who trots out the Constitution every time the President does something you don't agree with.

REBECCA

I realize I'm not the tax-and-spend, food-stamp-loving, anti-gun Democrat you'd vote for. But after the next election, I'm sure you'll have someone even worse.

MAGGIE

And who's to blame for that? Maybe if you'd stayed in the race --

It's like they've traveled back in time, arguing over curfew. The others exchange looks. Feeling like interlopers.

TOM

Hey!

He waits for them to settle. To Rebecca --

TOM (CONT'D)

Rebecca, Amanda Higgins from the Chicago Theater League has taken an interest in this play. She's asked me to reconsider.

As Rebecca tries to interrupt --

TOM (CONT'D)

I understand Arthur Bradley's concerns. But we face potential backlash from other clients for deserting Mr. Thomas. So I told Maggie if she found a viable defense, she could try blocking the injunction.

MAGGIE

We're going with parody as fair use. It's Barbie in a Blender.

KENISHA

Of course! Mattel versus Forsythe.  
"Food Chain Barbie".

SARAH

Food Chain Barbie?

MAGGIE

To make a statement on the  
deception of advertising and the  
beauty myth in American culture, an  
artist photographed Barbie, naked,  
in bizarre scenarios...

KENISHA

On a cutting board, stuffed inside  
an enchilada...and in a blender.

MAGGIE

An appeals court deemed the works a  
parody that couldn't be blocked by  
trademark law.

Maggie gestures to Rebecca and Dalton. Ta da. Case closed.  
Before Rebecca can respond, her phone BUZZES.

REBECCA

I have a call with the Governor.  
(to Tom; pointedly)  
We'll discuss this later.

She exits. Maggie glances at Liam, who hasn't moved.

MAGGIE

Don't you need to go with her?

LIAM

No. She's fine.

MAGGIE

Then...why are you still here?

LIAM

I work here. At least I will be.

Maggie looks at Tom, who wanted to avoid this moment.

TOM

When Rebecca joins us in January,  
she's bringing Liam with her.

MAGGIE

As what?

TOM  
A senior associate.

MAGGIE  
The same as me.  
(sotto; to Liam)  
You couldn't have mentioned this  
last night?

LIAM  
I was otherwise occupied. Not that  
I'm complaining.

DALTON  
Is there a problem?

Inside she's screaming, but Maggie pastes on a smile --

MAGGIE  
No. No problem at all.

INT. DONOVAN/MARSH - CONFERENCE ROOM/HALLWAY - LATER

The meeting over, the attorneys file out. As Dalton and Sarah  
head down the hall, Wyatt appears, out of breath.

DALTON  
You missed staff.

WYATT  
Tory knew.

SARAH  
What?

WYATT  
About David. One of her friends  
told her David had been treated by  
Dorsett. When Tory looked him up,  
she was furious. She said if David  
came out, she'd be humiliated in  
front of the whole school.

SARAH  
Wyatt, that's hearsay.

WYATT  
It's motive. We're suborning  
perjury.

DALTON

Not after the fact. She's already testified. We have no obligation to disclose.

WYATT

But...

DALTON

Wyatt, I hired you because you were a zealous prosecutor. But you're a defense attorney now. And if you can't represent your clients to the best of your ability, I'll find someone who can.

INT. DONOVAN/MARSH - JOE'S OFFICE - DAY

Tom and Rebecca review the client list together.

REBECCA

I'll have to recuse myself from this one until...

There's a commotion in the hall outside --

SYDNEY (O.S.)

But sir, he's in a...

Barging in --

ARTHUR BRADLEY

What the hell is going on?

Tom's assistant SYDNEY follows.

SYDNEY

I'm sorry, Tom --

TOM

It's okay, Sydney. Hello, Arthur.

ARTHUR BRADLEY

I understand this firm is still fighting the injunction regarding Sesame Street.

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Actually, it's "Sesame, The Street".

Maggie's in the doorway. Ignoring her, Arthur turns to Rebecca.

ARTHUR BRADLEY

Is this because I wouldn't finance  
your campaign?

REBECCA

Yes, Arthur, it's about you. It's  
always about you.

ARTHUR BRADLEY

They've made a mockery of a beloved  
program.

REBECCA

Sesame Workshop is making too much  
of this. I read the suit. Copyright  
infringement is a valid claim. But  
libel?

MAGGIE

Who exactly has been wronged?  
Cookie Monster?

Tom gives her a look. You're not helping.

TOM

Arthur, we have an obligation --

ARTHUR BRADLEY

-- to clients like me. At least you  
have until now.

REBECCA

Are you threatening us, Arthur?

ARTHUR BRADLEY

No need. You're a smart woman,  
Rebecca. Smart enough to read  
between the lines.

Off Rebecca, bristling at his attempt to intimidate her.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Wyatt watches as Dalton delivers his closing.

DALTON

I'm not a fan of texting. It may be  
expedient, but it's not the same as  
a face-to-face conversation in  
which tone, gesture, nuance all  
play a part, making it easier to  
understand what's being said.

Moving down the length of the jury box --

DALTON (CONT'D)

But like it or not, texting is how kids communicate. And despite her attempts to appear mature, Tory Brogan is still very much a kid.

Reaching the end, he turns and the jury follows his gaze to Tory, who suddenly looks very vulnerable.

DALTON (CONT'D)

A kid who was in way over her head when she tried to use psychology on David Garcia. He'd threatened to kill himself before. She thought this was more of the same, that he was just looking for attention. She thought tough love would turn him around. She was wrong.

A grandmotherly juror regards Tory, softening.

DALTON (CONT'D)

The prosecutor says what Tory did was deplorable. And it was. But it wasn't criminal. The district attorney wants someone to blame. Hell, we all do.

Mrs. Garcia looks away, her eyes wet.

DALTON (CONT'D)

But in order for the statute to apply, a person must "knowingly coerce and exercise substantial control" over another. David took those pills himself; no one forced him. It was his decision, his act.

(beat)

There's no crime here. Just a horribly tragic end to a troubled life.

INT. TOM'S OFFICE - EVENING

Tom listens as a frustrated Maggie vents.

MAGGIE

It won't work. We can't be under one roof for any length of time.

TOM

I think you're getting ahead of yourself. Who knows how long this will last? Your mother's spent most of her life in politics. It might be harder to walk away than she thinks.

MAGGIE

I can't have her as my boss. She'll block me at every turn.

TOM

Maggie, you know you're like the daughter I never wanted.

His tone is playful, but Maggie knows he's dead serious.

TOM (CONT'D)

If you'd prefer, Dalton can decide this for you right now. Your mom's a rainmaker. What do you bring to the table?

INT. DONOVAN/MARSH - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

The offices are nearly empty as Maggie paces back and forth in the conference room, preparing her closing argument.

REBECCA (O.S.)

You were right.

Maggie looks up to see Rebecca watching her.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

I stayed away because I was angry. You didn't understand how much damage you were doing.

MAGGIE

You can't blame this on me. You didn't have to quit.

REBECCA

I didn't have a choice.

MAGGIE

Sure you did. You always taught me not to back down from a fight. Hell, you're the reason I take these cases. I'm sorry some of them have backfired. But voters didn't desert you because of me.

(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

They support morons like Butler because he tells them what they want to hear. He taps into their worst fears and validates their misogyny and racism.

(beat)

You always say you can't reason someone out of a position they didn't reason themselves into. Those voters don't care about the facts. They'd rather blow the government up than fix it.

Rebecca knows she's right. But it doesn't make it any easier.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Remember when I was little and I wanted to change my last name 'cause I got teased? You said I should be proud, because it meant something.

(beat)

Mom, you were a wonderful public servant. You did a lot of good.

Rebecca slowly nods.

REBECCA

How's the case coming?

MAGGIE

Not great. I read some of Judge O'Brien's decisions. He's not a fan of parody as fair use.

REBECCA

Then change his mind.

MAGGIE

It's not that easy.

REBECCA

After the speech you just gave me? Maggie, you took this case and you fought to keep it. And while I may not agree with your methods, they've worked so far.

(beat)

You go into that courtroom and get the judge's attention. Your client deserves nothing less.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Trevor glances anxiously at Kenisha. Maggie's a no-show. Across the aisle, John Cogan smiles at the plaintiff.

Kenisha turns to the back of the room where Rebecca sits.

Growing impatient, Judge O'Brien checks his watch.

JUDGE O'BRIEN

Ms. Pruitt, I'm not inclined to wait much longer.

KENISHA

She'll be here, Your Honor.

Suddenly, BIG BIRD steps into the courtroom. Or rather Maggie, dressed in a Big Bird costume.

Rebecca's jaw drops as Maggie waddles past.

REBECCA

What are you doing?

MAGGIE/BIG BIRD

Taking your advice.

REBECCA

I never said...why on earth would I tell you to wear that?

JUDGE O'BRIEN

Ms. Principle --

MAGGIE/BIG BIRD

Sorry for the delay, Your Honor. It's not easy walking in this. Don't know how those birds do it.

JOHN COGAN

Your Honor, this is completely inappropriate --

MAGGIE/BIG BIRD

Don't worry. I rented it from an authorized party service. Wasn't cheap either.

She turns to Elizabeth Monroe.

MAGGIE

You must make a fortune at Halloween.

JUDGE O'BRIEN

Ms. Principle...

MAGGIE/BIG BIRD

Just doing a little research, Your Honor. Mrs. Monroe testified Sesame Workshop keeps close tabs on their licensed characters. I wondered how easy it is to obtain a costume. For the purposes of playing Big Bird at say, a children's birthday party. Or the opening of a car dealership. Or a convenience store robbery.

JOHN COGAN

Objection! Counsel cannot make these claims without corroboration.

JUDGE O'BRIEN

He's right, Counselor.

MAGGIE/BIG BIRD

Yes, Your Honor. For that reason, defense calls Lester Danes.

The spectators turn as LESTER DANES, enters the courtroom. Wearing an ELMO costume. He makes his way to the stand.

JOHN COGAN

Your Honor!

The judge can hardly suppress his enjoyment.

JUDGE O'BRIEN

You asked for corroboration.

He nods to the BAILIFF, who steps forward to swear Danes in.

BAILIFF

Raise your right...hand.

Danes raises his large furry red hand.

BAILIFF (CONT'D)

Do you swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth?

Everyone waits to hear what he sounds like. But Danes speaks in his own voice.

LESTER DANES/ELMO

I do.

MAGGIE/BIG BIRD

Mr. Danes, you are employed by an entertainment service to play the role of Elmo on cruises and at resorts, correct?

LESTER DANES/ELMO

That's right.

She hands copies of a document to the clerk and Cogan.

MAGGIE/BIG BIRD

I'm entering into evidence Mr. Danes' performance contract. Your service is licensed by Sesame Workshop, correct?

LESTER DANES/ELMO

Yes.

MAGGIE/BIG BIRD

Are these cruises and resorts only for families with children?

LESTER DANES/ELMO

Oh, no. They get all kinds. Baby showers. Bachelor parties. Plushies conventions.

MAGGIE/BIG BIRD

Plushies?

LESTER DANES/ELMO

Fetishists. They like to dress up as their favorite characters...

MAGGIE/BIG BIRD

And while dressed as their favorite characters, what do they do?

LESTER DANES/ELMO

They have sex.

MAGGIE/BIG BIRD

In costume.

LESTER DANES/ELMO

Yes.

MAGGIE/BIG BIRD  
 And you've entertained at these  
 events? In costume?

He gives an embarrassed shrug.

LESTER DANES/ELMO  
 A guy's gotta eat.

JOHN COGAN  
 Your Honor, Sesame Workshop does  
 not sanction this kind of behavior.

MAGGIE/BIG BIRD  
 They don't prevent it either. As  
 this witness can attest, these  
 characters are licensed all over  
 the world, for a variety of  
 reasons. My client is perfectly  
 within the fair use doctrine to  
 employ them for social satire. One  
 can't wave the decency flag every  
 time something offends you. Sesame  
 Workshop is a successful company  
 and they know full well how the  
 game is played. In for a penny, in  
 for a pound.

Maggie glances at Rebecca, who nods her approval.

Crossing back to her table, Maggie pauses beside Kenisha and  
 gestures toward her feathered yellow backside.

MAGGIE/BIG BIRD (CONT'D)  
 Does this make my ass look fat?

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Dalton and Wyatt stand beside Tory as the FOREPERSON reads  
 the verdict.

FOREPERSON  
 In the matter of the State of  
 Illinois versus Tory Brogan, we  
 find the defendant not guilty.

Smiling with relief, Tory reaches out to hug Dalton. But he  
 just nods to her parents and heads for the door.

Wyatt watches. Dalton may believe in his client's right to  
 representation, but it doesn't have to include validation.

INT. MAGGIE'S OFFICE - EVENING

Maggie finishes up some work. Rebecca enters.

REBECCA  
Quite a week.

MAGGIE  
Didn't see you after court. I  
figured you left town again.

Rebecca looks over the family photos on Maggie's side table.

REBECCA  
I thought it might be nice to spend  
some time with my family.

Maggie nods, appreciating the olive branch.

MAGGIE  
Emma will be thrilled.

Tom appears in the doorway.

TOM  
Knew you could do it, Maggie.

MAGGIE  
Any word from Arthur Bradley?

REBECCA  
Matter of fact, I just got off the  
phone with him. I said we  
appreciate his business and will  
continue to do our very best to  
protect his interests.  
(beat)  
Then I told him today's program was  
brought to you by the letter "I"  
and the number "one".

As in "I won". She waits for the laugh. There is none.

REBECCA (CONT'D)  
Not really.

Embarrassed, she exits. Maggie and Tom share a smile.

INT. DONOVAN/MARSH - WYATT'S CUBICLE - EVENING

Wyatt is packing up his things when Dalton appears.

DALTON  
You're not fired.

Wyatt stops, looking down at the family photo in his hands.

WYATT  
When I was little, I had this older cousin, Zach. I thought he was so cool. Smart, athletic. You name it, Zach could do it. But junior year of college, he put a bullet in his head.

His tone is calm, matter-of-fact.

WYATT (CONT'D)  
According to my dad it was because Zach was weak and unstable. My mom said he was selfish; how could he do such a horrible, thoughtless thing to his parents? It wasn't until years later that I learned the truth. Zach didn't shoot himself because he was weak. He shot himself because he was gay.

He finally looks Dalton in the eye.

WYATT (CONT'D)  
I don't know what was in David Garcia's mind. But Tory Brogan knew exactly what she was doing.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - EVENING

As Rebecca leaves the building she sees Ted and Marsha Fleming waiting. The power couple from the university.

MARSHA  
Rebecca, are you okay?

REBECCA  
Marsha, I'm fine. At least I will be. I just got tired of trying to fit a square peg into a round hole.

TED  
Too many voters don't understand how government works.

MARSHA  
They'd rather blow the system up than try to fix it.

REBECCA

That's funny. My daughter said the same thing.

TED

Maybe they're right.  
 (off Rebecca's look)  
 We think it's time to expand politics, create a viable independent party. And we'd like you to lead it.

REBECCA

I'm flattered. But I think I did as much as I could in the Senate.

MARSHA

So do we.  
 (beat)  
 That's why we want you to run for *President*.

Off Rebecca, stunned by this amazing offer --

EXT/INT. MAGGIE'S HOME - EVENING

Strings of TWINKLE BULBS FLICKER across the front windows of the house, framing the front door.

PUSH IN as a PIANO plays JINGLE BELLS. The music hits a wrong note and stops. Then starts again from the beginning.

REBECCA (O.S.)

That's lovely, honey. How 'bout you play something else now?

Emma turns to Rebecca, who's drinking a cocktail and furtively checking messages on her iPhone.

EMMA

I can't, Grandma. My teacher says to play it all the way through. If I make a mistake, I'm supposed to start over.

She begins to play again. And makes another mistake. Rebecca cringes slightly as the tune starts once more.

REBECCA

Where on earth did your mother disappear to?

INT. MAGGIE'S HOME - DINING ROOM - SAME

Maggie puts the finishing touches on a project. We can't see what it is; we can only see her face, deep in concentration.

Kenisha's in the kitchen, POPPING open a bottle of champagne.

KENISHA (O.S.)  
I thought you said you didn't own  
any Christmas decorations...

MAGGIE  
I made do with what I had.

The doorbell RINGS.

EMMA (O.S.)  
I'll get it.

Entering the dining room, Kenisha regards Maggie's handiwork with a bemused look.

KENISHA  
I had no idea you were so...  
creative.

Emma appears in the hallway with Liam. He holds up a bottle of wine.

LIAM  
Your mom invited me. Hope you don't  
mind.

Maggie eyes him, considering. Finally she nods a truce.

He grins back at her. Looking forward to the challenge.

KENISHA  
Emma. Come see what your Mom did.

She waves Emma into the dining room. Emma looks at Maggie's creation and sighs. Parents are so embarrassing.

EMMA  
Mom. Really?

Rebecca approaches from the hall.

REBECCA  
Am I the only one who's starving?  
(glances into the room)  
Oh, good Lord.

A NATIVITY SCENE adorns the antique sideboard.

A CABBAGE PATCH baby lies in a four-poster pink BARBIE BED.

Watching over him are an IRON-MAN DOLL as Joseph and DISNEY PRINCESS BELLE as Mary.

A menagerie of STUFFED ANIMALS, MY LITTLE PONIES and AVENGERS ACTION FIGURES surround the blessed event.

Maggie and Kenisha stand beside the display. TWO WISE WOMEN in search of a third.

Maggie waves Rebecca in, handing her a glass of champagne.

MAGGIE

Hope you brought the frankincense  
and myrrh.

Rebecca looks at her daughter and granddaughter, remembering what Maggie said about living up to their name.

REBECCA

I'll be right back.

MAGGIE

Mom...

REBECCA

There's something I need to do.  
It'll just take a minute.

INT. MAGGIE'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Rebecca scrolls through the contacts on her phone until she gets to MARSHA & TED FLEMING. She waits as it rings.

MARSHA (O.S.)

Rebecca. Is everything okay?

REBECCA

I thought about what you said,  
Marsha. You and Ted are right.

(beat)

Let's blow this thing up.

Off her smile, we --

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW