

FIRST LADY

Written by

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Inspired by Macbeth, by William Shakespeare

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FADE IN:

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - OVAL OFFICE - DAY

A voluptuous young woman lies on a huge desk, her blouse unbuttoned to reveal a lacy corset. Her eyes are closed and she's gasping with well-rehearsed ecstasy as someone unseen pumps away at her lower half.

He finishes with a grunt, and now we see him from behind -- a tall man with grey hair, wearing only a dress shirt.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - PRIVATE HALLWAY - DAY

Secret Service AGENT EARL, 50s, stares at a closed door, willing it to open. He's spent way too many years waiting around, keeping other people's secrets, and it's gnawing at him like an ulcer.

He checks his watch, then listens to something on his earpiece. He's just about to knock when the door opens and the young woman slips out, in a designer business suit, carrying a briefcase, and wearing a visitor's pass.

He eyes her with appreciation, then calls in through the open doorway.

AGENT EARL  
Motorcade's ready, sir.

PRESIDENT STUART (O.S.)  
Give me a minute.

Agent Earl closes the door, then escorts the young woman down the hall, smirking.

EXT. VIRGINIA CHURCH - DAY

A motorcade pulls up in front of an old stone church. The parking lot's full of expensive cars, and police and Secret Service agents are all over the place.

INT. VIRGINIA CHURCH - DAY

Two hundred wedding guests -- many in military uniforms -- are already seated. Pale autumn light streams through the narrow windows as a string quartet plays a lilting Scottish tune.

Secret Service agents with earpieces are stationed at the exits. There's even one with a rifle in the choir loft.

The doors open and in walks PRESIDENT DUNCAN STUART -- a tall, debonair man with grey hair. He's Don Draper at 65 -- wearing his debauchery like a well-tailored suit.

The guests turn to look and snap pictures as he heads down the aisle, smiling and nodding as he passes.

SENATOR JAMES PATTON, 40s/50s, goes to meet him and shake his hand. He's a hero without the swagger, with a bullet-scarred face and a U.S. flag pin in his lapel, and he walks with a slight limp.

JAMES

Thank you for coming, sir.

The President pats him on the shoulder.

PRESIDENT STUART

Least I could do for a man who's done so much for his country.

James shows him to a seat next to LOWELL CABOT, 60s, who's thumbing his Blackberry.

Cabot's a Boston blue-blood with all the warmth and compassion of his witch-hunting Puritan ancestors.

The quartet finishes and an organist strikes up a wedding march.

James goes to stand at the altar, where the minister waits.

The doors open, and BETH MACDONALD (30s/40s) appears in her vintage wedding dress. She's a Georgia peach -- ripe and luscious, with a country girl's air of bruised innocence.

The President can't take his eyes off her. He looks like he wants to bend her over a pew and have her right there.

But Beth has eyes only for James, who grins as she approaches.

INT. VIRGINIA COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

French windows look out onto a bare November garden. Waiters circulate with trays of champagne flutes, as a photographer takes pictures.

James introduces Beth to IZZY HARLOW, 60s -- a distinguished woman with a keen eye and a wry smile.

JAMES

Madame Speaker, may I present my wife Beth?

BETH

(Southern accent)  
It's an honor, Ms. Harlow.

IZZY HARLOW

James is a credit to his party.  
You've made quite a catch.

She turns to the man at her side -- CONGRESSMAN DAVID ISAACS, 40s -- a trimmer version of Barney Frank.

IZZY HARLOW  
Have you met Congressman David  
Isaacs?

BETH  
(shaking his hand)  
Congressman.

Izzy introduces DAVID'S HUSBAND, late 30s.

IZZY HARLOW  
And his husband --

DAVID'S HUSBAND  
I love your dress. Is it vintage?

LATER

James is surrounded by army officers offering their  
congratulations.

GLORIA BARTLETT, 60s, descends upon Beth.

GLORIA BARTLETT  
Beth, dear! You look lovely. I  
do hope you and James will be so  
very happy.

BETH  
Thank you, Mrs. Bartlett.

GLORIA BARTLETT  
Oh, please! It's Gloria now, dear.

Something about her is a little "off," a little spacey.

GLORIA BARTLETT  
I do hope you'll be coming to the  
Senate spouses lunches. So few of  
us even live in Washington any  
more.

BETH  
Of course -- I'd love to.

She's relieved when someone else comes over to kiss her.

BY THE BAR

The President, Lowell Cabot, and Agent Earl survey the room  
as they sip their drinks. Cabot eyes Beth with distaste.

LOWELL CABOT  
Jumped-up trailer-trash, I hear.  
Pulled herself up by her bra  
straps.

He spots a sultry woman on the arm of a much-older senator.

LOWELL CABOT  
 (under his breath)  
 Speaking of trash...

The President pretends he doesn't hear him.

PRESIDENT STUART  
 'Scuse me, Lowell. I see an old  
 friend I need to say hello to.

He crosses the room to shake hands with the old senator, but his attention's really on the sultry woman.

ELSEWHERE IN THE ROOM

Beth looks around, checking that everything's as it should be.

She spots a WAITRESS with a tray leaning against the wall, stifling a yawn.

Beth's eyes harden. She makes her way across the room to the Waitress and takes a glass from her tray.

BETH (CONT'D)  
 Tired, honey?

WAITRESS  
 A little, ma'am. I worked another  
 wedding last night.

BETH  
 (pointedly)  
 Well, aren't you lucky to have a  
 job?

She gestures at the other circulating waiters.

BETH (CONT'D)  
 And now you've had your little rest  
 -- maybe you could get out there  
 and do it?

The Waitress looks abashed.

WAITRESS  
 Yes, ma'am.

She heads off with her tray as Beth surveys the room for other slackers.

She sees that the President has taken the sultry woman aside for a private conversation, and notes the suggestive body language between them.

BETH  
 (to herself)  
 Oh. mv...

She turns away and spots something out the window that makes her freeze.

Across the lawn, at the edge of the woods, there's a figure in a wheelchair in a grey hooded sweatshirt. It's so far away it's impossible to tell whether it's a man or woman.

JAMES (O.S.)

Beth?

She turns to him, pale and startled.

JAMES

You look like you've seen a ghost.  
Come on -- let's go say hello to --

A man slaps him on the shoulder.

WOODY (O.S.)

(slurred)

Jimbo!

James turns to see WOODY ROGERS, 40s, a long-haired, unshaven guy in a ruffled out-of-date suit.

He gives James a bear hug, then releases him and eyes Beth.

WOODY

And his lovely bride!

He gives Beth a big kiss on the mouth. Her smile is frozen in place as he releases her.

JAMES

Beth, this is Woody Rogers--

WOODY

All the way from Bangkok. Wouldn't miss it for the world. Jimbo finally got hitched. Rest of us went through a wife or two each... an' not always our own. But not Jimbo. We used to think -- well, don't ask, don't tell, right, Jimbo?

He punches James on the arm. James winces.

JAMES

(to Beth)

We were in--

WOODY

We were in the shit together. Man saved my life more'n once.

He pounds James on the back.

WOODY

I'd do anything for this man.  
Anything.

His eyes tear up, and he wipes his nose on his sleeve.

WOODY

'Scuse me.

He stumbles away and snags a drink from a passing tray.

Beth watches him go, fascinated and repelled.

BETH

Old army buddy?

James looks embarrassed.

JAMES

I invited all the guys in the unit.  
Never thought he'd make it...

BETH

...all the way from Bangkok?

JAMES

He runs a club there.

BETH

A "club"?

JAMES

(lowering his voice)  
More like a brothel.

Beth sees that Woody's veering toward Sen. Bartlett and his wife Gloria.

BETH

Maybe we'd better get to the  
Majority Leader before he does...?

She takes James' hand and leads him toward the Bartletts.

ELSEWHERE IN THE ROOM - LATER

Izzy and David watch as the President has his picture taken with James and Beth.

Izzy turns to Lowell Cabot, still thumbing his Blackberry.

IZZY HARLOW

(re: the President)  
Is that why he's here? To get his  
picture taken with a war hero?

Cabot looks up to see what she's talking about. He frowns as he sees the President slip his arm around Beth's waist.

IZZY HARLOW

I suppose you could use a little  
reflected glory right now...?

Cabot glowers at her. David indicates the President.

DAVID ISAACS

(New York accent)

He's really gonna pardon the Vice  
President?

LOWELL CABOT

The man hasn't even been indicted --

IZZY HARLOW

Yet.

She smiles sweetly, and raises her glass to Cabot.

EXT. GEORGETOWN TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

An elegant brick building on a tree-lined street.

INT. GEORGETOWN TOWNHOUSE - LIVING ROOM

The newspaper on the coffee table has the headline: "VP  
Resigns After Financial Scandal." The subhead reads:  
"Presidential Pardon Expected."

A framed photo shows James in his Captain's uniform,  
receiving a medal. Another shows him in a flak jacket in a  
desert landscape.

On the mantel is a photo of an earnest high school graduate --  
Beth's sister Katie. A later photo shows her in an Army  
Staff Sergeant's uniform. A candle burns nearby.

Beth stares at the photos of Katie.

James notices and looks sympathetic.

BETH

I wish Katie coulda been there.  
She wanted to be my bridesmaid  
since she was four years old...

She sighs and gets back to work. They're surrounded by  
wedding presents, and she's making a list of who sent what.

BETH

What's next?

James unwraps a crystal ball and reads the card.

JAMES

"Wishing you a bright future."

He chuckles and hands the card to Beth.



She turns it over to read.

BETH

"Gloria and Henry Bartlett.  
P.S. This includes a one-hour  
session with Madame LeClerc."

JAMES

Who's that?

BETH

A psychic. Gloria swears by her.

James snorts his derision.

BETH

We should go. She'll be hurt if we  
don't.

James looks skeptical.

BETH

You wanna have any kinda future  
with the party, you don't wanna get  
on the wrong side of Mrs. Henry  
Bartlett.

She takes the ball from him and sets it on the mantelpiece  
next to Katie's picture.

BETH

Besides, it'll be fun.

She peers into the globe, and squints as she seems to see a  
tiny cloud forming inside.

JAMES

So what do you see?

Beth blinks and the cloud disappears. She forces herself to  
smile.

BETH

Looks to me like somebody's  
gonna get lucky...

JAMES

Yeah?

BETH

Maybe even tonight...

She goes to him and kisses him deeply.

EXT. GEORGETOWN STREET - DAY

The street's busy with a Sunday brunch crowd, dressed for  
cold weather. Storefronts have Thanksgiving decorations.

James and Beth walk hand-in-hand, window-shopping. They pass newspaper dispensers showing headlines like:

"VP Resigns" and "President Stuart To Appoint New VP" and "Party Approval Ratings at Record Low"

Beth spots a door with a brass plaque: "Madame LeClerc."

BETH  
(mock surprise)  
Oh, look!

James gives her a "you planned this" look.

BETH  
Gloria's bound to ask. Let's just  
get it over with.

James rolls his eyes as she reaches for the door.

BETH  
And be nice.

INT. MADAME LECLERC'S STUDIO - DAY

Stylish and modern, with art from Haiti and West Africa.

MADAME LECLERC's a stately Haitian with a piercing gaze.

MADAME LECLERC  
I've been expecting you.

She ushers them to a seat on the sofa.

JAMES  
(under his breath)  
Of course you have...

He sits beside Beth, who puts a hand on his knee to tell him to shut up.

The psychic looks at James like she can see into his soul.

MADAME LECLERC  
You are a soldier.

JAMES  
I was.

MADAME LECLERC  
You have... seen things. Things  
you do not wish to remember.

JAMES  
Anyone who's ever been in combat  
could tell you that.

MADAME LECLERC  
And now you are a Senator.

JAMES  
From the great state of Ohio. You  
wanna tell me something that's not  
on my Web site?

The psychic turns to Beth.

MADAME LECLERC  
And you are from Georgia...?

JAMES  
Like Scarlett O'Hara, but twice as  
feisty.

Beth tenses up at the word "Scarlett." The psychic notices.

BETH  
We already know 'bout our past.  
Aren't you supposed to be tellin'  
us 'bout our future?

The psychic studies them, getting a faraway look in her eyes.

MADAME LECLERC  
(to James)  
You will rise... and rise again...  
much sooner than you think.

Beth smiles at James and squeezes his hand.

The psychic turns her attention to Beth.

MADAME LECLERC  
Your path is not as clear. They  
say the road to hell is paved with  
good intentions -- but so is the  
road to heaven.

Beth frowns slightly at this.

MADAME LECLERC  
Is there anyone you wish to speak  
to, from the other side?

BETH  
The other side?

JAMES  
I think she's talking about dead  
people.

BETH  
(to Madame LeClerc)  
You can do that?