

BAD PRESS

by Ryan Bernstein

Copyright 2018 Bernstein
Draft: Dec 18, 2020

Characters

Diane Bailey Caine (50s) Former U.S. President, (D-TX)

Walter Caine (50s) Presidential Candidate, (D-MN)

Dee Platt (30s) Aide to Diane Bailey Caine

Kaylee Walsh (30s) CNN Contributor

Rudy Hughes (60s) CEO Rudy's House/Daddy's Secret (?-NV)

Where

Hotels Rooms and Campaign Stops Across America

When

An Election Year in the Early 21st Century

SCENE 1

A hotel room in Des Moines, Iowa. Former President Diane Bailey Caine, a force of nature, sits at a coffee table with her fawning but competent aide, Dee Platt. They are playing Jenga. On TV, a commercial. Rudy Hughes (in a cowboy hat) is surrounded by scantily clad women dressed as sexy chickens.

RUDY (on TV)

Lookin' for a little spice in your day? Come on down to Rudy's House. We've got chicken that's finger-lickin' good. And don't get me started on the chicks... ha ha! Come in for the wings, stay for the breasts. Those are the rules at Rudy's House.

DEE

I hate it but that commercial always makes me so hungry.

DIANE

Irresistible. Can you believe I almost married that man?

DEE

Rudy Hughes?

DIANE

Oh yes. We used to run around together back in the day. But I had ambitions, you know, and he was running a two bit porno magazine in Vegas. It wouldn't have worked. So I married a good old boring *Congressman*.

DEE

Wow. What was Rudy like back in the day?

DIANE

Oh, charming. So charming, but such a rascal. I was the only woman he wanted to settle down with. I broke his heart. I saw him a couple of years ago at one of his casino openings. He had some bimbo on his arm from his "Daddy's Secret" magazine. I had just lost reelection. He didn't talk to us long, he was still bitter.

DEE

Was Walter there?

DIANE

Walter was so embarrassing—kept talking about health care policy. There's a time and a place.

DEE

He's just trying to impress you. He loves you so much.

DIANE

When did you order the wings? I'm starving.

DEE

Forty minutes ago.

DIANE

Your move. Walter won't eat there on principle. Doesn't like to see girls objectified in cut-off jeans and feathery bras. He's so moral, it's infuriating. He would get eaten alive in this race I wasn't there to help. Sometimes I'm afraid I'm deluding him into thinking he's God's gift to America, when it's really all me pulling the strings!

DEE

Sometimes it sounds like you don't think he should be President.

DIANE

Of course I do. I convinced him to run, didn't I? Someone's got to take on the Sugarman administration and all of the dysfunction, and there's not a Democrat worth a damn in sight.

DEE

You could've run.

DIANE

I got beat. I'm damaged goods. The press has moved on. Walter is, unfortunately, my best chance to try to have some influence anymore.

DEE

Maybe you should've married Rudy. He would've generated enough press for the two of you.

A beat.

DIANE

Your move, Dee.

Dee pulls out a link and the tower tumbles.

DIANE

Tut tut. You always have to be a few moves ahead. That's how you survive in politics.

See, this is why Walter is so lucky.

DEE

What's that?

DIANE

He's got you.

DEE

Oh stop!

DIANE (loving this)

DEE
Diane Bailey Caine, America's beloved first female President, back in the White House again, bringing confidence and stability, prosperity and security—

DIANE
It will be nice to keep fightin' the good fight.

DEE
It will be just like a second term!

A beat. Dee's touched a nerve.

DEE
Not that... you needed one. Your accomplishments in four years were—

DIANE
No, no, I know how you meant it...

DEE
I just mean... unfinished business. If it weren't for Martinez...

Diane holds up a hand.

DIANE
Do not... bring up... that name... in front of me... again.

DEE
I'm sorry... he's a perennial loser. The fact that he's running again, against Walter...

DIANE
THE WORST. What he did to me was—

DEE

Unforgivable. What he did to the party was—

DIANE

Inexcusable. You never primary a president, NEVER!

DEE

Felix Martinez doesn't hold a candle to you.

DIANE

How could he? He's an F.M..

They both burst out laughing.

DEE

You are so bad!

DIANE

I know I am...

DEE

But it's so funny. Say his nickname!

DIANE (playing dumb)

What?? F.M. just means Felix Martinez!

DEE

Please!! Call him F.M.!

DIANE

Oh, you mean... FAKE MEXICAN??

The two double over with laughter.

DIANE

"Hola, me llamo is Senator Fake Mexican even though I only know 5th grade Spanish—"

DEE

I can't... breathe!!

DIANE

"I'll pretend that I'm straight out of Mexico even though my dad is from Canada and my mom's name is *Cheryl!*"

Liar liar!

DEE

Pantalones on fire!!!

DIANE and DEE

WALTER enters, bespectacled and earnest.

Hey-ho!

WALTER

...hi sweetie./...hello Walter.

DIANE/DEE

Sounds like you two have got a case of the giggles!

WALTER

Yepppp.

DIANE (he killed the moment)

Walter, I'm so excited for you to show off all of your hard work at debates.

DEE

Thank you. I'm really excited to delve into my new plan to keep social security solvent for the next generation. I've got some real zingers lined up to show those lightweights that they don't know math from diddly-squat!

WALTER

That's great, honeybee.

DIANE

I've got a soundbite for the millennials too: "the only thing more important than social media is social security—and you're really going to 'like' my plan for your future!"

WALTER

... that's really going to endear you to Iowa's youth I think.

DEE

I really hope so. Felix is all over Instagram, stirring up the millennials with his hashtags and selfies. 3 million followers! He really is doing quite a good job.

WALTER

Don't compliment him in my presence. He is our enemy. He is your competition!

DIANE

WALTER

I know you don't love him, sweetie. But we're all on the same team now. We all want the same things. Of course, I'd prefer if things went our way...

DIANE

Honey, work on your closing remarks.

WALTER

You're right, you're right... "I know you Americans are angry, and I'm very upset too. So remember, a vote for me is a vote for you... S... A! USA!"

Walter exits, happily. Diane holds up her hand... "SEE?"

DEE

I thought that was more convincing!

DIANE

I'm sure F.M. is going to be taking some cheap shots at Walter in the debates.

DEE

Walter's too nice to retaliate. It's too bad no one's there to take some cheap shots back.

A knock on the door of the hotel room.

DEE

The wings.

Dee exits. Diane looks off pensively.

DEE (O.S.)

Yes, thank you. No tip, we prepaid...

Dee reenters with a bag with the logo "RUDY'S HOUSE." Diane just stares at the bag.

DIANE

Dee... we need to take matters into our own hands.

DEE

What do you mean?

With the primary. To help Walter.

DIANE

Into our own hands...

DEE

To take care of F.M., once and for all.

DIANE

We're not going to...

DEE

Exactly.

DIANE

But it's wrong... so very wrong.

DEE

American politics runs on "wrong."

DIANE

Oh my goodness. I can't believe I'm hearing you say this... but it's exciting! It's just like out of those thrillers.

DEE

What do you mean?

DIANE

You're going to kill Fake Mexican!

DEE

What? No. No! NO! Why would you say that?

DIANE

Political grudges never die.

DEE

I'm a pit bull but I'm not a murderer, Dee! I meant... that I want to rig the primary.

DIANE

Ooooooooooh. You mean... change the votes?

DEE

DIANE

No, no, no, shhh, nothing like that. Nothing illegal. Just get someone involved who might spice things up a little.

DEE

Spice things up.

They sit down and begin to eat wings.

DIANE

We need someone obnoxious, obtuse, unprincipled to get in and take out the competition.

DEE

A sleeper cell...

DIANE

Exactly! Sleeper cell. Blow them up from the inside.

DEE

But won't that hurt Walter...?

DIANE

Walter? What could anyone say about Walter? He's a boy scout. The only skeleton in his closet is the time he accidentally put the compost into the garbage. He's boring. Let the three of them kill each other. Walter will rise right to the top.

DEE

But what about you?

A sly beat.

DIANE

What about me?

DEE

They might go after you... you're still a little.

DIANE

Polarizing?

DEE

Just a little?

DIANE

This isn't about me! It's not about me at all! I'm in the past. I'm not going to meddle, it's his campaign.

(She devours a wing.)

Now. Who can we get to sabotage the election?

DEE

It's a big ask... I can't think of someone starved enough for attention to do something like that. Someone who you know... someone who you can trust...

Lights up on Rudy Hughes, dressed in a smoking jacket.

RUDY

Why would I ever leave Vegas, when I'm drowning in pussy?

DEE

None of the politicians are pathological enough to do a suicide mission.

RUDY

I like the Mexicans, they clean my casinos. But illegals are better. Even cheaper.

DEE

It has to be someone who has a fucked up sense of fun.

RUDY

You know, people laugh at me. I started by running a dirty magazine. I bought a couple of strip clubs. And now—would you believe it—I have a casino and my own damn restaurant! That's the American dream, baby!

DEE

Someone... spicy.

They both look at the delivery bag of wings.

DIANE

It's perfect. He loves me. He'd do anything for me.

RUDY

And I would never enter politics in a million years.

DIANE

Dee... I need a secure line to Rudy Hughes.

SCENE 2

Rudy enters the stage. A podium waits for him. He approaches it.

RUDY

Okay. I'm going to be honest here, ok? You're not going to want to vote for me. But you don't have to want to, okay? Because I'm your only hope. Like Obi-Wan Kanobi-style. Cuz guess what? You've had politician after politician, penthouse after penthouse, polished speech after polished speech. I've lived here in Nevada since I was born. My happiest memories are here. First time I rode a bike, Nevada. First time I got drunk, Nevada. First time I got laid, Nevada. I went to college here, dropped out, and I guess I did okay, cuz I went from working as a dishwasher running a little porno mag to being richer than all of those politicians that we all hate. And by the way—I've literally never been to Washington, okay? Yeah, I hear the strip clubs are bad. I would know, I own the best ones. Yeah, I said that. What do I have to hide? Daddy's Secret was a big hit. A successful business venture. And I know all of the little liberal talk shows will be talking about me right now, saying don't fall for this! He can't win! You know what? I say you can fall for whatever you want. This is your house. This is your country. This is your future. I'm Rudy Hughes and I'll be running for President as a Democrat. And it's going to be fun as tits.

SCENE 3

Diane sits for a studio interview with Kaylee Walsh, a young CNN reporter.

KAYLEE

President Caine, do you see Rudy Hughes as a true Democrat, with some of his more controversial remarks?

DIANE

I think it's a disgrace, frankly, the disparaging way he's spoken about minority groups, specifically Hispanics and the Latin-X community. These communities need our protection, not our vitriol.

KAYLEE

Do you worry, President Caine, about how Mr. Hughes's rhetoric will affect your husband?

DIANE

My husband is a statesman, and knows how to handle himself, even with a crude carnival barker in the mix. Senator Martinez, perhaps... not so much.

KAYLEE

He's really hammered your former rival, calling him a "Fake Mexican" in the debates.

DIANE (relishing the irony)

It is... simply beyond the pale. I am disgusted by his words and I think any fellow Democrat ought to condemn them wholeheartedly. I certainly do.

KAYLEE

Do you worry about his rise in the polls?

DIANE

A blip. The American public is far too smart to elect a man who has run pornographic magazines such as Daddy's Secret, and I think he ought to stick to his profitable businesses and stay the hell out of politics!

KAYLEE

President Caine, a pleasure.

DIANE

Thank you, Kaylee.

They go off the air. Dee approaches.

KAYLEE

Wild times, we live in, huh?

DIANE

Getting wilder...

KAYLEE

I tell you, I love this stuff. The circus. Ever since I worked on breaking the Sugarman scandal in 2012, my career has been...

(she pantomimes a jet taking off)

Rudy's the best thing to ever happen to the network. Our ratings are...

(she pantomimes a balloon expanding)

DIANE

Well, be sure to save a little coverage for Walter and I.

KAYLEE

Oh, we all know Walter's going to win the nomination. Just gotta advance the plot a little!

DIANE

Hm?

KAYLEE

Oh, sorry, it's something I used to say when I was still at E! news... in reality TV, you gotta make sure every episode has an event. Elections are the same way. People want a narrative, they want twists, they want turns... they want PLOT!

DIANE

Ah, I love you young folks. So passionate. Excuse me, running to the little girl's room.

Dee goes to follow her.

DIANE

I don't need an escort, Dee!

Dee and Kaylee wait in the studio.

KAYLEE

I don't believe we've met...

DEE

Dee Platt. Dee.

KAYLEE

Dee can you help me get out of this mic? Producer is down at the van...

DEE

Of course!

She does so, helping get the mic pack out of the back of Kaylee's dress.

KAYLEE

So, you work for them, I take it?

DEE

Mainly her. But when he's around him too.

KAYLEE

Must be weird. Seeing them together.

DEE

Why?

KAYLEE

Looks like their marriage is a little bit... (she pantomimes "awkward")

Kalyee gets a notification on her phone, and she starts reading messages and texting, barely listening to Dee.

DEE

I don't understand why people say their marriage is unhealthy. It's totally healthy! They have their own lives, Walter and her, but there's so much love. Sure, they don't "celebrate birthdays together" or "sleep in the same room every night" but come on, what celebrity couple does? I'm usually the first person to see her in the morning, and she's fine sleeping alone. I call "Madam President, it's Dee, are you up? Are you curling your hair?" things like that. I see her when she has pillow lines on her face—imagine, the former POTUS with *pillow lines*. It's so cute, she can barely open her eyes in the morning, and she drawls "Dee, I need five more minutes" and I say "no, you can't snooze, you have a meeting at 9 a.m." but sometimes she goes back to sleep and I have to climb in bed and shake her awake. She'll bat me away, "go away Dee, go away!" but I know she doesn't mind. I make her tea, one cream, one sugar, and I read the paper to her. I always circle the clips with her name in it. She loves hearing her name in print, even if it's something nasty. She just doesn't want to be forgotten, I think. There was a day last month, she was really sick. Her body was like an oven. She was sweating and shaking in bed, fever all over. I held her as she shook, and she let me... I just lay there with her until she suddenly said, in her usual way, "Dee, read me today's news." I went to the paper and looked and looked for her name, and for some reason, today of all days, I couldn't find anything. She wasn't in any of the papers. I panicked, and I just made up a story! About how she was being nominated for a Women's Achievement Award. She smiled and seemed to perk up, but when I gave her her tea, she asked to see the paper. I told her I threw it away. Maybe she knew I made it up, but it breaks my heart to see... I just I never want her to feel forgotten.

KAYLEE (still texting, not listening)

Sorry, I was listening. I agree. One hundred perfect... I think... um... hold on...

Diane reenters.

DIANE

Alright, Dee. We've got a plane to Nevada for the debate!

She goes to shake Kaylee's hand.

KAYLEE

Well, I'm off to interview Senator Butterworth at a Victory Fund forum.

DIANE

So inspiring to have a presidential candidate who's been openly gay for *two whole years*.

KAYLEE

It's a front. He made a pass at me last month.

DIANE

Ha! Too bad being "gay" didn't help his poll numbers all that much. It's going to be tough putting *that* genie back in the bottle.

KAYLEE

The irony of it all.. being a straight white man seems to be what the voters want!

DIANE

Oh... who knows! They're all so fickle.

KAYLEE

Anyway. I'm sure we'll see each other soon.

DIANE

Of course. The Iowa caucuses are a month away and we know Iowa loves the Caines.

KAYLEE

I don't know, I saw a lot of Rudy yard signs around Council Bluffs last week...

DIANE

Yard signs don't win elections, dear.

Dee gets a notification on her phone.

DEE

Oh no...

DIANE

What?

DEE

My aunt just texted me... there was a huge block fire in Flushing.

DIANE

Oh, no how awful. Is everyone alright?

DEE

No... it doesn't sound like they are.

KAYLEE

Oh my god!! Did you see what Rudy just tweeted? He said one of the Fox News anchors had "fake boobs!" HA! And I *happen* to know it's true. They're like (*she pantomimes what they're like*) It's too good, too good. Anyway. See you in Iowa...

Kaylee exits.

DIANE

I've got them eating out of the palm of my hand.

SCENE 4

Walter makes a speech alone at a podium.

WALTER

Thank you! Thank you, Iowa. I want to congratulate Mr. Hughes on his win tonight, as well as Senator Martinez and his wife and Senator Butterworth and his husband. I set out to be a reformer, and just call me Mr. Fix-It because that's not changing anytime soon!

Lights up on Rudy, also making a speech.

RUDY

Folks, we did it. We took down Fake Mexican and Butterworthless! And Wobbly Walter choked as well. They all said he was going to win! You were all smart enough to know that there's only one way forward, and that's on the Rudy Train.

WALTER

I want to thank my wife, Diane Bailey Caine, we love her don't we?? DBC! DBC!

RUDY

We're not going to stop this train until we strengthen our country and give you damn good paying jobs, instead of the crap jobs you've been working. When I'm president, I'd send missiles to China before I send your jobs there!

WALTER

I know you are all going to pick someone smart, ready, and qualified for the job.

RUDY

Those Republican shitshows are going to get it in November. We're done with the R, get ready for some D!

Lights up on Dee and Diane watching on a TV screen. Another hotel room.

DEE

I just don't understand! The man has a sex tape with ten Raiders cheerleaders and he wins the Iowa Caucus??

DIANE

It is strange isn't it...

DEE

I don't know if you've ever thought about this but... but do you think it's possible he feeds on negative attention?

DIANE

What do you mean?

DEE

He's like the sword of Gryffindor. He just absorbs venom and it makes him stronger!

DIANE

The sword of...?

DEE

Do you think you're doing Walter a disservice by having the focus so entirely on someone else? It's like on *The Bachelor*, the girl's who's nice and respectful never gets the bachelor's attention in time. Walter is that girl, and voters are the bachelor. He's got to give them head in the hot tub and then punch Chris Harrison in the face!

DIANE

You know Walter isn't like that. He likes reading books on banking regulation and watching birds.

DEE

But that's how you win *The Bachelor*!

DIANE

He'll win in his own way.

DEE

Do you even want him to win?

A beat.

DIANE (offended)

Of course I do.

DEE

I'm sorry. I just think Walter might benefit from some bad press.

DIANE

You're right. You're absolutely right. He would.

DEE

Really?

DIANE

I've got an idea... but I'm going to need you to do something big.

DEE

I'll do anything you ask.

DIANE

No, I mean something very, very big. Not something I could trust anyone to do.

DEE

I've taken a bullet for you. I'll do it again.

DIANE

That was paintball.

DEE

Right, but I mean I'll do anything I can to get you two back in the White House.

DIANE

Good. I'm going to meet with Rudy in Nevada next week. Yes, *secretly*. Tell him to cool things down a bit. We still have New Hampshire to make a strong showing and if my calculations are correct, F.M. and Buttface will be dead by Nevada.

Diane strides across the country and into the palatial penthouse of Rudy Hughes.

RUDY

Diane!

DIANE

There he is. The truth-teller extraordinaire.

RUDY

How is the most popular woman in America?

DIANE

HA. I loved this month's edition of Daddy's Secret.

RUDY

"Stars and Strippers Forever"

DIANE

I miss having a body like that.

RUDY

You look incredible.

He goes to kiss her. She seems surprised.

RUDY

What? It's not okay now?

DIANE

No, it is.

RUDY

That's the nice thing about cheating: you do it once you might as well do it a hundred times. Can I make you a drink?

DIANE

Make me? Don't you have someone to do that?

RUDY

Never pay a man to do something you can do yourself.

He begins to make her a drink.

RUDY

Diane Bailey. You always had something that I keep coming back to. The first time I saw you, I told myself, "I'm going to marry that woman." But you picked someone boring, like you told me you would.

DIANE

Joke's on me. Who knew you were such a natural at politics?

RUDY

Well, who knew it was fun? And profitable! I'm selling more magazines and the protests outside the restaurants have actually *increased* the amount people spend. They feel all bunkered up! And the energy! It's like when was a kid and wanted to be an actor... but better! The audience just gives you so much. I'm not sure I'm ready to be done.

DIANE

No no. You keep on keeping on.

RUDY

Really?

DIANE

Yes. In fact...I think it might be time you took a few shots at Walter.

RUDY

Come on.

DIANE

Just before the primary! Get him a little bit of press.

RUDY

It'll get *me* press. And press is power, you know that.

DIANE

He'll respond with something... exciting.

RUDY

What good will it do if I savage him? The other two weasels are almost out of the race.

DIANE

It will toughen him up a little.

Rudy hands her a drink. A beat. She sips it.

RUDY

What are you planning, Di?

DIANE

Nothing.

RUDY

It just doesn't make sense.

DIANE

I'm going to need him to be feeling a little frustrated in order to go along with my next phase of the plan.

RUDY

How many phases are there? The other two are almost dead.

DIANE

Just hit him hard. Make a meme of him being a wimp or something. Accuse him of being a homo. Something outlandish.

RUDY

Are you sure?

DIANE

Positive.

Rudy shrugs, stands up and walks to a podium.

RUDY

You know, my sales department did a study. Did you know that of 42% of men in New Hampshire own at least one copy of Daddy's Secret? Those are real men right there. I'll tell you someone who's never picked up a copy... WALTER CAINE. Always saying he doesn't believe in seeing women as sexual objects. Well, women like being treated a little sexual every now and again, don't ya ladies? I mean, the guy has a bulldog of a wife, no kids... you do the math folks. He sounds a little sweet to me...

Walter, upset, approaches a podium.

WALTER

If the measure of a man's masculinity is objectifying women, I have no interest in being "masculine." I am proud to have never read one of Rudy Hughes's smutty porno rags!

RUDY

"Smutty porno rags!" He talks like a freakin' girl scout leader! What's next? Banning "Weedy Mary Jane sticks?" We're Democrats for god's sake, not Sunday school teachers! We don't have to be afraid of having a good time!

KAYLEE

And Rudy Hughes has once again bested his rivals and wins the New Hampshire Primary! Senator Martin Butterworth is expected to speak later tonight, and we anticipate he will drop out after a bad showing.... leaving only Secretary Caine and Senator Martinez to take down Rudy Hughes.

Lights up on Diane and Walter in another hotel room. Diane is holding a glass of wine.

WALTER

I can't. I really can't, Diane.

DIANE

You have to.

WALTER

And you spring this on me when I've been drinking...

DIANE

It's my birthday, and I wanted to share a bottle with you.

WALTER

But you're my wife. And I'd never ever ever do anything to—

DIANE

We need something bold to turn the press around. This is the only thing I can do.

WALTER

I'd rather just lose. Rather than embarrass you.

DIANE

No. We need the bad press. You do.

WALTER

Sex? It's just so cheap. Can't we have another scandal? Taxes?

DIANE

The IRS will clear us. We've been too careful.

WALTER

Then at least not Dee. She's like family.

DIANE

Exactly. She's practically the only other woman who you've been alone with.

WALTER

Can we please just wait until tomorrow? I never drink during the day, and my head is spinning.

DIANE

Be a man, Walter, it was just moscato!

A knock on the door.

DIANE

That'll be Dee.

Diane opens the door. Dee enters.

DEE

I got the camera, boss.

DIANE

Good.

WALTER

Hi, Dee. Diane, this is unacceptable. I refuse to—

DIANE

You have the final say. Just humor me. Deeptiha's come all this way on her day off.

Walter throws his hands up in the air. Okay!

DIANE

Okay. Maybe the best thing to do to start is for Dee to take off her blouse.

DEE

My...?

DIANE

Blouse, yes.

WALTER

For cryin' out loud, do what you want to me, but don't make Deeptiha—

Dee suddenly removes her blouse, standing with her torso toward Diane for inspection.

DEE

How is this?

DIANE

Perfect, thank you.

WALTER

I'm not comfortable with... does anyone want coffee? Hot chocolate?

DEE

You know, I will take a hot chocolate.

DIANE

I'm fine.

He exits.

DEE

Could you fix my necklace? It seems like the clasp has come undone.

DIANE

Um. Has it? Hm. I suppose I could.

She helps re-clasp the necklace with a blank expression. Dee turns around.

DEE

Is it straight?

DIANE

I... don't think it matters very much for the picture. But it's very beautiful.

Dee smiles.

DEE

You are the most incredible boss. The things you will do for others, but never for yourself.

DIANE (uncomfortable)

Well, some of it is for myself, obviously.

DEE

You have to do things for yourself every now and then. You have to. You deserve it.

DIANE

Well, when you really love someone sometimes you have to do what's best for them. Even if it's not what you want.

Walter reenters with two mugs.

WALTER

One for Dee, one for Walter. And no mug of cocoa is complete without some...

He reveals a can of whipped cream.

WALTER

Easy Whip!

DIANE

Okay, okay, take a sip but this has got to get to CNN by 6pm Eastern and I don't want to waste daylight.

They drink.

DIANE

Okay, Walter, on the couch.

WALTER

I don't want... Dee? You've got some... er...

Dee looks up, revealing a whipped cream mustache. Walter goes to wipe it off.

DIANE

No, no, leave it... you've inspired me. Walter, on the couch.

WALTER

I'm not taking off my shirt.

DIANE

No, *no*, God no. Your clothes stay *on*. Deepthia, could you please mount Walter?

DEE

Mount??

DIANE

Yes... like... put your legs around him, straddle him.

Dee looks confused. She sort of sits on Walter's lap.

DIANE

No, that's not right... let me show you.

WALTER

Diane, please!

Diane pushes Dee down on the couch, and demonstrates mounting Dee in a provocative position. Dee is speechless. Diane nods to Dee.

DIANE

Are we clear?

DEE

Yes, boss.

Let's see then.

DIANE

Diane gets off of Dee. Dee dutifully mounts Walter. Diane holds a camera.

Excellent, excellent. now... let's get the...

DIANE

Diane grabs the bottle of whipped cream.

What's that for?

WALTER

You're going to put it all over Dee's breasts.

DIANE

All over Dee's... *hummina-humminas?*

WALTER (horrified)

Yes.

DIANE

For cryin' out loud, I don't want people thinking I'm some sort of deviant!

WALTER

You are as vanilla as they come.

DIANE

French vanilla, incidentally.

She looks at the whipped cream bottle.

I'm not...

WALTER

Diane begins to slather the whipped cream all over Dee's breasts.

Now stick your face in it.

DIANE

I'm just not comfortable—

WALTER

It's okay.

DEE

No, I *said* I'm just not comfortable

WALTER

What choice do we have? We have a press that won't give you the time of day unless you've said the "n" word or fucked the fucking Queen of fucking England!

DIANE

What about my Israel speech? That got good coverage—

WALTER

No. One. Cares. Because somewhere, right now, Rudy Hughes is saying something insane, like that the movie Aladdin is an ISIS recruiting tool or some shit. This is a war and if you don't want to race to ridiculousness you won't win! There isn't enough oxygen for you, my poor lovely boring husband! You're too good to make the news. So if you want to get coverage, if you want to win, squeeze that whipped cream and shove your face in Dee's perfect perky whipped-cream-covered tits and let me take a picture so you can be president!

DIANE

A beat. Walter buries his face in Dee's tits. He's crying.

Walter... you need to let us see your face.

DIANE

Walter turns his face to the camera. His face is covered in whipped cream.

Lick a little off of his face, Dee.

DIANE

But—

DEE

Do it.

DIANE

Dee does so. Diane snaps a picture.

Look happy Walter, you're getting laid for god's sake!

DIANE

Walter rearranges his face. Picture. Picture.
Picture.

DIANE

Dee look back at me. Perfect. Okay. Go get washed. I'm taking us all out for ribs tonight. This should hit the news by dinner time and I want to be somewhere public, just the three of us.

Diane exits. Dee looks at Walter.

DEE

Are you alright?

WALTER

I... wish I could just do the job, you know?

DEE

I know.

A beat.

WALTER

And this isn't right. It isn't right at all. Diane! Diane! You can't send those. I'm putting my foot down.

Diane re-enters. She's smiling.

DIANE

Oh, Walter. It's too late.

Kaylee enters, on TV.

KAYLEE (barely disguising her glee)

Presidential candidate Walter Caine in hot water after a photo emerged of him getting steamy with his wife's aide, sexy secretary Deeptiha Platt. Dairy haters, this photo is NOT for the lactose intolerant.

Lights up on Walter and Dee in the picture.

RUDY

What a hypocrite! This guy pretends to be all goodie goodie, but behind the scenes he's porking his own wife's secretary. I tell you what, Diane Bailey Caine may be a cow, but she deserves better than that!

KAYLEE

Going into South Carolina, a very Christian state, it seems this media attention won't be welcome...

WALTER (through gritted teeth)

I have to ask God for forgiveness for what I've done. My wife is the most incredible, strong person I know. I love her and America should love her too. She deserves better than what I've done to her. I heartily apologize for my behavior, and I promise to do better going forward...

DIANE

We need to resist Rudy Hughes! Forgive my husband and vote for him this Tuesday!

KAYLEE

Why aren't you running again, President Caine?

DIANE

That kind of talk isn't helpful at this juncture. Personal indiscretions are one things, but Rudy Hughes's hateful rhetoric is dangerous to the country!

KAYLEE

Felix Martinez is currently calling for another debate with the TwitterHashtag #WeNeedDe—

WALTER

What we need is to stop RUDY HUGHES from destroying America!

DIANE

Vote for Caine!

KAYLEE

The returns are coming in from South Carolina...

WALTER

I've prayed for forgiveness, and I know Jesus has forgiven my sins.

DIANE

This is about the soul of our country! We cannot back down now!

KAYLEE

Senator Felix Martinez in single digits...

DIANE

Come on... come on....

KAYLEE

Hughes and Caine are neck in neck...

RUDY

THANK YOU SOUTH CAROLINA!

KAYLEE

And we can now project that Rudy Hughes will win the South Carolina Primary.

DIANE (with triumph)

Yes.

KAYLEE

Senator Felix Martinez is expected to drop out after finishing third in three respective contests.

DIANE

Goodbye F.M..

KAYLEE

Sources say that Martinez, a famous Caine foe who ran a primary challenge against then President Diane Bailey Caine, is planning on endorsing her husband, meaning this a huge win for the Caine family.

WALTER

We did it. Right? We did it?

DIANE

One more primary...

WALTER

Why would we let him win another? He should drop out now!

DIANE

No.

WALTER

He's going to win again if we don't stop him! He's going to actually think he can win.

DIANE

Trust me.

WALTER

Tell him to drop out.

DIANE

No.

KAYLEE

Polling suggests that Walter Caine may yet fall short yet again in the Nevada caucus.

WALTER

Put a stop to this! We need a win, Diane.

DIANE

He's not ready to drop out.

RUDY

You know, at first I didn't think I'd be good at this. But it turns out politics is easier than I thought!

WALTER

Then what did you do this for? Why am I losing?

KAYLEE

Will Rudy Hughes go on to the impossible... win the nomination?

DIANE

Not if I can help it.

DEE

Boss... your whole plan... it's backfiring.

But Diane just smiles.

DIANE

Walter?

WALTER

Yes?

DIANE

You're going to drop out tomorrow.

WALTER

I can't drop out. I could still win.

DIANE

And when you lose tomorrow, which you will, you're going to do it the very same night..

WALTER

What are you talking about? That would guarantee he wins!

DIANE

No. Because someone else is going to run for President.

Dee realizes.

WALTER

Who?

DEE

Her.

WALTER

You mean... next cycle?

DIANE

No. Now.

WALTER

No. No, absolutely not. This is a hiccup. You can run later, I am going to win.

DIANE

You're not going to win. You were never going to win in a million years.

WALTER

I... I don't understand. Why go through all of this if you never wanted me to win?

DEE

Her name is in the news again. She's got sympathy. Her poll numbers are higher than they've ever been...

A beat.

WALTER

You set me up. For some sort of comeback.

DIANE

I did what I thought was best.

WALTER

I'm your husband. You're supposed to love me.

DIANE

Of course I do, honeybee. But I love this country more. And someone has to stop Rudy Hughes.

WALTER

You created Rudy Hughes! This is all your fault! You... you... you... *FAG HAG!*

DIANE

Walter, do you even know what that/means—?

WALTER

NO, I DO NOT!!

DEE

You used me.

DIANE

Did you say something, Dee?

DEE

How could you use me like this... the things they call me in the street. What they're saying about me on TV...

DIANE (cutting)

Sometimes we have to do things we don't want to do... for the things we love.

A beat.

DIANE

Are we all clear about tomorrow? Things are going to move very fast, we all need to be ready.

WALTER

Yes, dear.

DIANE

After the concession we're going to need to place a call to Kristin at the D.N.C. as soon as we can. Draft a speech. And Dee, I need you to set up a secure line to Rudy Hughes. Dee, did you get that?

But Dee is gone.

WALTER

I'm going out for some air.

DIANE

Tell Dee to come in here.

WALTER

I don't think Dee is coming back.

DIANE

Of course she's coming back... tell her to come back in here.

But Walter exits.

DIANE

I don't need her. I don't need them. Weak. Weak. Small minds. For their own good. Walter?? I need a secure line. It's for the future. Walter? For democracy! Dee? I need a secure line to Rudy Hughes! Dee. Walter. He needs to know what were planning. DEE?? WALTER???

Diane digs in her pocket, and grabs her own phone.

DIANE

Secure line be damned.

She punches in some numbers. Lights up on Rudy Hughes, his back to the audience.

DIANE

Rudy! How are you? Well, well, I'm doing very well. Listen. We've had a family discussion, and, you'll never believe this, but we've decided that *I'm* going to jump in the race. Crazy how life happens, isn't it? Yes, I've decided that I'm the best person to take us forward. Not Walter. He had a good run, but it seems some parts of the plan didn't go as expected. Which means we're obviously going to exchange some heated words in the future but I won't mean any of it. For how long? Just until you drop out. A few weeks, shouldn't take long, until I win the next primaries. What do you mean *if* I win? (Laughs) Of course I'll win, honey! (Laughs) Either way, you are dropping out! (Laughs) You are dropping out. Aren't you? ... aren't you???

Rudy Hughes turns around and looks out to the audience.

END OF PLAY.