

THE GIRLS ON THE BUS

Ep. 101

Written by

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Based on the book "Chasing Hillary: Ten Years, Two Campaigns and
One Intact Glass Ceiling"

3rd Rev. Network Draft
February 19, 2020

My So-Called Company
Berlanti Television
Warner Bros. Television Studio

"THE GIRLS ON THE BUS"

EPISODE ONE

INT. DUMPY HOTEL ROOM IN IOWA - NIGHT

Twizzlers. Red Bull. Mini-bar vodka. Discarded room service on the bed. Campaign LANYARDS and crumpled ITINERARIES scattered amidst piles of Lululemon leggings and power cords.

FIND SARAH "SADIE" McCARTHY (35) in a Chicago Bears t-shirt and her underwear, fingers flying over her computer keyboard.

SADIE (V.O.)

I could argue that life doesn't really begin until you've had a career meltdown.

FLASH TO INFAMOUS MELTDOWNS: Tom Cruise jumping on Oprah's sofa. Nixon saying, "It's not illegal if the President does it." Britney Spears, shaved head, attacking the paparazzi with an umbrella. Howard Dean's infamous 2004 Iowa scream.

SADIE (V.O.)

I was nine days into Primary Season when I had mine.

CAMERA MOVES OVER SADIE'S FACE which is ablaze with the fervor of someone with something important to say. Plus an epic vodka/sugar/caffeine high.

SADIE (V.O.)

Honestly, I wouldn't really even call it a meltdown. More like an epiphany. Fuck it -- a mutiny.

Over a series of CUTS: Sadie CHUGS a Red Bull as she writes on her bed. Chews on Twizzlers as she writes on the floor.

SADIE (V.O.)

What was supposed to be a dry 800 words on the state-of-play turned into a treatise on the state of political journalism.

The curser fights to catch up with her thoughts: *We've forgotten our mission: Speaking truth to power, shining a light on injustice, telling stories that matter.*

SADIE (V.O.)

Basically, I Jerry Maguire'd the shit out of a 3,000 unedited word takedown of my profession.

She grabs another mini-bottle of Grey Goose and slams a FEDORA on her head as she continues writing.

SADIE (V.O.)
*I was lost. Angry. Trying to
remember why I had become a
journalist in the first place.*

INT. LIBRARY - **FLASHBACK - 1996** - DAY

9-YEAR-OLD SADIE reading The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal at the library.

SADIE (V.O.)
*I thought back to the smell of
newsprint on my hands...*

Her librarian MOM kisses her and tosses another paper on the stack. Headline: BILL CLINTON REELECTED IN LANDSLIDE.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - **FLASHBACK - 1997**

The principal awards a 10-YEAR-OLD SADIE the top prize. A banner tells us we're at the YOUNG NEWSWOMAN CONTEST.

SADIE (V.O.)
*The satisfaction of my first
byline, in which I revealed a
massive vote-rigging scandal in the
fifth grade race for student body
parliamentarian.*

PRINCIPAL
(into Sadie's ear)
You have a gift, Sadie.

Sadie nods solemnly.

SADIE
I know.

INT. SADIE'S CHILDHOOD LIVING ROOM - **FLASHBACK - 1998** - NIGHT

A banner reads HAPPY BIRTHDAY SADIE as 11-YEAR-OLD SADIE pulls a classic FEDORA out of a box while her mom tries to figure out the mechanics of a vintage typewriter.

SADIE (V.O.)
*The message in the book my dad gave
me just before he left us for an
American Eagle flight attendant
named Candy.*

Her DAD hands her the classic **THE BOYS ON THE BUS** before he exits with a suitcase. She flips through its pages and finds:
Sadie, Follow your dream and leave your mark. Love, Dad.

SADIE (V.O.)
I remembered the great men - and they were always men - who rode the campaign bus cycle after cycle, following the every move of the Presidential candidates.

FLASH TO BLACK AND WHITE DOCU-FOOTAGE:

INT. BOYS' BUS - **FANTASY**

A raucous BUS full of men in fedoras circa 1972. Smoking cigarettes and drinking whiskey. And in the back we find 11-year-old Sadie (in color, an observer in her own **fantasy**) taking it all in -- wearing her fedora, writing in a notepad.

SADIE (V.O.)
They anointed the favorites. Buried the also-rans. Wrote the first drafts of history. All I ever wanted was to be a part of that - a Gonzo journalist - part roadie, part rock star, tied to nothing but the story.

CLOSE ON ONE OF THE "BOYS". **A CHYRON APPEARS: HUNTER S. THOMPSON - ROLLING STONE MAGAZINE.** He talks to CAMERA.

HUNTER S. THOMPSON
Fuck objectivity. Write to revolt. Write to irritate. Write to shock. You gotta put yourself in the story - wrestle with the facts until you come out with the truth - even if it means tripping on peyote in the desert for eleven hours. You wanna be great? You gotta be Gonzo.

He SNORTS a line of COKE as Sadie takes it all in, wide-eyed.

INT. DUMPY HOTEL ROOM IN IOWA - NIGHT

Drink in hand, Sadie paces the hotel room.

SADIE (V.O.)
But what they don't tell you about dreams is that by the time you achieve them, they're not at all what you thought.

She plops on the bed. Chews on a Twizzler and keeps typing.

SADIE (V.O.)
*Love and the campaign trail are
alike in that way. You start out
full of hope, wanting to write
lovely words that live forever.
Instead you end up shit-faced in a
mid-range hotel raiding the minibar
and eating your problems.*

Sadie takes a deep breath and looks at her screen -- now filled with words. The time says 2 A.M.

SADIE (V.O.)
*I was at the end of my rope. So I
did what I'd been doing since I was
seven years old: I wrote it down.*

As Sadie finishes her piece, hits SEND and PASSES OUT...

OVER BLACK: TWO WEEKS EARLIER.

INT. NEW YORK TIMES - NEWSROOM - TWO WEEKS EARLIER - DAY

Sadie is salivating over CNN, watching from a cubicle in a quiet corner of the newsroom labeled OBITS. A wall of TVs tells us: FORMER VP ENTERS AN ENORMOUS FIELD of DEMOCRATS.

To her left is a gray-haired REPORTER, 70's, his head buried in an actual printed Thesaurus.

Her CRUSTY EDITOR/MENTOR BRUCE (late 50's David Carr type, dresses like the Unibomber) appears over her cubicle.

BRUCE
Jesus. It's like the Amish Country
over here.

SADIE
(quietly defensive)
You know he literally wrote the
front page lede: "*Men have landed
and walked on the moon.*"

BRUCE
Yeah, but what has he done for us
lately?

He sees she's fixated on CNN footage of an overly-face lifted ELDER STATESMAN challenging a MARINE to a pushup contest.

BRUCE (CONT'D)
Hope you've got his advance obit
ready. Lunch. Upstairs in five.

SADIE
Bruce. I'm on deadline. The inventor
of NERF football died last night.

BRUCE
(as he's walking away)
You gotta eat. It's tilapia day.
Plus, it's your last meal in Obits.

A beat as Sadie realizes what he means.

SADIE
Wait. Does this mean I'm freed?
Please tell me I'm freed.

BRUCE
You leave Monday.

SADIE
(arms to the sky)
Oh sweet Jesus thank you.

She leaps up, hurrying after him.

INT. NEW YORK TIMES - CAFETERIA - DAY

Sadie and Bruce move through the line together.

SADIE
What took so long? I've been
hammering you for weeks. I thought
I'd be stuck in Obits until I was
old enough to write my own.

BRUCE
You could've spent your off-cycle
at Metro.

SADIE
Thanks. I prefer Obits to Albany.

BRUCE
There were some procedural delays
with the budget.

SADIE
(calling bullshit)
Maggie got sent to Iowa a month
ago.

BRUCE
And some other concerns...

This stops her.

SADIE
About me?

He pulls out his filing cabinet of a wallet. Pays for lunch.

BRUCE
The masthead loved your Toni
Morrison piece. Just brilliant.
They know what you're capable of.
You're one of our best writers. You
see angles no one else sees.

SADIE
Uh. Why do I think this love fest
isn't gonna end well?

Bruce settles in at a table. She sits across from him. Ready
to be offended.

BRUCE
They do have some concerns about
how you do the job.

SADIE
I knew it. What the hell?

BRUCE
They're still a little burned about
Election Night.

FLASH TO: Sadie, tear-stained in a sequined party dress,
angry-smoking and on her iPhone on a curb on 11th Ave.

SADIE
First of all that was my personal
Twitter account --

BRUCE
-- your handle is @SadieNYTimes.

SADIE
The would-be FWP lost. I was
feeling some kind of way.

TYPEWRITER TEXT POPS UP: FWP = FIRST WOMAN PRESIDENT

BRUCE

I guess what I am trying to say is
that they recognize that you like
to live and write in a more...

He takes a beat. Knowing she'll blow.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

...emotional space.

SADIE

(blows)

That is such bullshit. Would you
call Hunter S. Thompson "emotional"?

BRUCE

If he assaulted a campaign aide,
yes. Yes I would.

SADIE

Assault makes it sound so MeToo'y.
And he deserved it for reasons I
absolutely cannot get into.

FLASH TO: Election Night 2016. Balloons. Streamers. Women in
pantsuits SOBBING. Sadie repeatedly kicks a handsome campaign
aide in navy slacks and BROWN LOAFERS.

SADIE (CONT'D)

And can we please stop reliving
that night? We were all at our
worst. The newsroom - no, the
nation - was a hot mess.

BRUCE

I assured the brass that you're
ready to get back out there -- that
you'd play ball this cycle.

Peeved, Sadie is ready to take her toys and go home.

SADIE

You know what? If that's how they
feel, fuck it. I'll stay in Obits.
I've done great work in Obits.

BRUCE

I did enjoy your last story on the
Central Park duck. Tragic.

SADIE

She was a Chinese Mallard.

BRUCE

But let's not fool ourselves here.
What did 25-year-old Sadie say to
me during our first interview?

FLASH TO: INT. NEW YORK TIMES - NEWSROOM - 10 YEARS AGO

Younger Sadie, pre-Keratin treatment and sporting a Hello
Kitty backpack, gives her best interview spiel:

SADIE

I want my words to report the
benchmarks of political history. My
name to live alongside the legends.
Crouse. Cramer. Johnny Apple.
Theodore White. This is the only
job I've ever wanted in life.

BACK TO SADIE AND BRUCE: Sadie shrugs, nonchalant.

SADIE (CONT'D)

I don't really remember.

BRUCE

You were born for the trail. I'm
not gonna take that away from you.
But this is the only way I can get
you there.

(then, softening)

And I want you to take it easier on
yourself this time around. Don't
let the job kill you before you've
had a chance to live.

SADIE

I've lived.

He gives her a look, slathering ketchup on his fried lunch.

BRUCE

Do you now or have you ever had a
functional relationship or the
ability to care for something more
sentient than a houseplant?

(off her silence)

I rest my case.

SADIE

So you don't want my sweepy
profiles? You love my sweepy
profiles.

BRUCE

Just be objective. No Gonzo. You're one of our best reporters -- no one, I mean no one, can poop out a thousand words of deadline gold like you. But the higher ups are newly gun-shy about blurring fact and opinion. The press is under assault. Half the country thinks we're Fake News. The masthead wants you to play it straight.

SADIE

So do my job but don't be me.

BRUCE

Exactly. Because you know what comes after Obits?

SADIE

A funeral?

BRUCE

Worse. A job in P.R.

Sadie sighs. Resigned. MUSIC UP, OVER TITLES:

INT. SADIE'S BROOKLYN APARTMENT - DAY

Cramped living room that also serves as the bedroom. Books everywhere. Vintage typewriter. Wilting houseplant in the window. Sadie pulls a pair of boots out of the closet and looks at them like a complicated old friend. She squashes a cockroach with one of them and then squeezes them into an overflowing duffel, along with sweatpants, power cords and dozens of RX bars and 100 calorie almond butter packs.

INT. VARIOUS APARTMENTS - DAY

A new set of hands (GRACE) folds a never-ending stack of colorful Hermès scarves and white tees. Plus Xanax.

More hands (KIMBERLYN) pack a large amount of brightly-colored clothes, Black Girl hair products and a Bible.

A final set of hands (LOLA) tosses in her hot pink vibrator and a tube of KY Intense Pleasure Gel.

EXT. ROAD/INT. SADIE'S RENTAL CAR - DAY

The anthem turns into a song on the radio in Sadie's rental car as it's rolling down I-80 past a WELCOME TO IOWA sign.

GRACE GORDON GREEN (59) is on her phone in the passenger seat. Elegant. Terrifying. A legend. Hermès scarf a permanent fixture around her neck.

GRACE (INTO PHONE)
You can't expect me to fly to DC
and then drive to Chicago. I'm in
Iowa. Google map the math on that,
for Christ's sake.

Sadie looks over at Grace.

FLASH TO: A campaign bus in a previous campaign. Grace schools a pack of baby journos, among them 25-year-old Sadie.

GRACE (CONT'D)
There are rules. All you have to do
is follow them. Number one: No
fucking the candidate. That should
just be obvious. Number Two: You
never give up a source. Also, don't
fuck the source either -- Rule 2A.

CHYRON: GRACE GORDON-GREENE. WASHINGTON POST LEGEND.

Sadie and the baby reporters hang on her every word.

RESUME with Grace on the phone --

GRACE (CONT'D)
You have my credit card and my
Prime account. What else could you
possibly need? I've got to go.

She hangs up, feeling pestered.

SADIE
What was that about?

GRACE
Annie wants me to drive her to
college.

SADIE
Well, freshman year's kind of a
rite of passage.

GRACE
So's the HPV vaccine. Don't have
kids. It never fucking ends with
them.

Grace takes in the scenery: corn fields upon corn fields.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Fucking Iowa. I can't believe they still let 300,000 farmers in a landlocked state decide the future of our entire democracy.

SADIE

I think it's poetic. Retail politics - real human connection - in this halcyon place where people still believe in the process.

GRACE

Halcyon? Last exit had an Arby's and an Adult Video store.

The GPS voice says, "Continue straight for 247 miles." Grace lets out a groan. Sadie turns up the music.

SADIE (V.O.)

I was back where I belonged -- on the road. Only this time, saddled by a few extra rules. But I was cool with it. My life needed a little extra structure. Grace had her rules. I had my resolutions.

She offers Grace a Pringle (she demurs) and then tosses the can in the backseat.

SADIE (V.O.)

I pledged to be a good soldier. I would only make responsible, healthy life decisions. I would not get - for lack of a better word - emotional.

EXT. SURF BALLROOM - NIGHT

Sadie's car pulls into the Surf Ballroom lot. Its marquee reads: WELCOME DEMOCRATS TO THE WING-DING DINNER. DIE-HARD DEMS adorned in campaign buttons and funny hats file inside.

SADIE (V.O.)

I would not smoke, get shit-faced, emotionally eat my way through the swing states or have empty sex with secret service agents, advance guys or bagmen.

A QUICK POP of Sadie in a nondescript hotel room, naked in bed with a MAN. A pair of BROWN LOAFERS on the floor.

BACK TO SADIE. She fixes her fedora. All business.

SADIE (V.O.)
*I would remain detached. Objective.
Goodbye Gonzo.*

INT. SURF BALLROOM - BUFFET LINE - NIGHT

Through the lens of an Instagram filter, we are led through a ballroom FROZEN in 1959. Faux palm trees, ambiance of a South Sea Island beach party.

A sultry, young voice narrates. This is LOLA GABRIEL (25). She flips the lens to show her face -- the kind of petite, pointed features made for a selfie.

LOLA (INTO PHONE LENS)
I'm here at the Wing-Ding dinner.
We're in this vintage music venue
where these 50's rock stars played
the night before their plane
crashed and they all died.

She flips her phone to pan over a DAY THE MUSIC DIED tribute of black and white photos of Ritchie Valens, the Big Bopper and Buddy Holly, pausing on a close up of Valens...

LOLA (CONT'D)
*Para bailar La Bamba... He was only
17. Fucking tragic.*

EMOJIS pour in: Hearts. Crying face. Smilies with heart eyes.

Sadie eyes Lola as she and Grace move down the buffet line. Sadie stops at the platters of chicken wings. Thinks better of it, moves to the salads and takes some wilted iceberg.

LOLA (VIA INSTA) (CONT'D)
Surprise surprise, no pescatarian
options. Good thing I always roll
with backup.

She holds up a Lust Natural Protein Bar to the camera. Grace looks to Sadie, judgy --

GRACE
Fucking Gen Z'ers. They're worse
than Millennials. No offense.

SADIE
OK, Boomer.

GRACE
But really, does she think this is
Burning Man?

SADIE
That's Lola Gabriel.

GRACE
No shit? What is she doing here?

SADIE
Sponsored content. The brave new
world of campaign reporting.

GRACE
Does she know anything about actual
journalism?

SADIE
Who cares? She has a mega-popular
YouTube channel and more Insta
followers than the Wall Street
Journal.

GRACE
That's depressing.

SADIE
I could argue it's more depressing
that she had to live through a
school shooting at fifteen.

GRACE
Fair.

They reach the PRESS FILE, a series of banquet tables. Two
junior EMBEDS flee when they realize they're in Grace's way.
Sadie crawls under a table to plug her computer in.

SADIE
Want me to plug you in? Pretty sure
they haven't mopped down here since
the day the music died.

GRACE
I'm not staying long. I'm running
down a scoop. Borrow your audio?

SADIE
Something big? Do tell.

GRACE

I love you, but no. You'll know
about it when the world does.

Grace takes off as Sadie settles in. On stage, a CANDIDATE
makes a snoozer of a speech.

SADIE (V.O.)

*There I was. Back in the game.
Ready to report. Gonzo-meter at
zero.*

(On the screen's edge, an actual GONZO-METER appears.)

Nearby, Lola puts the floppy dog ear filter on the Candidate.
Sadie leans in, exuding perversely fascinated fan-girl vibes.

SADIE

I'm kind of obsessed with your
Insta. I feel like I know you.

LOLA

(not rude, just Gen Z)
You don't. But thanks.

Sadie sits back. *Okay, then.* Up on stage --

CANDIDATE (O.S.)

...and I will restore that basic
bargain with our middle class...

Sadie's eyes start to glaze over. Her phone BUZZES. A text.

BRUCE (TEXT)

Where's my copy?

SADIE (TEXT)

Nothing new to say.

BRUCE (TEXT)

There are no new stories, just new
reporters. Print deadline is 8.

Looks at the time. 7:05 P.M. Swears to herself. *Fuck.* She
types DATELINE: CLEAR LAKE, IOWA. Stares at the blank page.

Eyes wandering, she notices an older lady hand the Elder
Statesman a crocheted rose on a stem. Sadie eyes Lola, who is
using the heart filter on a picture of an attractive
candidate. She's struck by an idea. Starts to type.

SADIE (V.O.)

In this era where life feels like one endless horrific reality show, is it possible the presidential primary is really just a higher-stakes version of The Bachelor? You have a parade of candidates vying for voters' love, eliminated one at a time until only one is left standing. So... who stepped out of the limo tonight?

BEGIN STYLIZED BACHELOR-ESQUE SEQUENCE:

EXT. SURF BALLROOM - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

A line of sparkling black SUBURBANS pull into the parking lot. A candidate exits the first "limo": The Elder Statesman.

SADIE (V.O.)

"The Geriatric." The ultimate elder statesman - a former governor, vice president, senator; he's been running for president since I was in diapers - and way before he was.

Peaking out of his dark Ray Bans, giving a Porcelain smile and a muscle man flex to the crowd...

GERIATRIC

Okay folks! Who's going to make that one a meme?

...pronounces it *mem-y*.

NEXT CAR:

...A WOMAN, 45, a wannabe Hillary in a blush pants suit.

SADIE (V.O.)

The "Mom Vote," whose most significant achievement as Secretary of Education was adding pilates to P.E. curriculums. She quotes Lean In verbatim and starts every sentence with...

Flash of THE MOM VOTE behind a podium...

MOM VOTE

As a working mom...

NEXT CAR:

...THE FRESHMAN, 35, WOC, red lipstick, too hot to be a public servant, but it works. Under a black blazer, her t-shirt reads A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN YOUR FACE.

SADIE (V.O.)
The "Freshman," the darling of the left who has made our entire political system seem accessible to the Everyman... or Everyperson.

...an adoring little GIRL, 10, approaches The Freshman...

GIRL
I'm writing a story for my Girl Boss blog. Can I get a quote?

THE FRESHMAN
I tell you what, sweetie, you can just be a boss. You don't need to qualify it with gender.
(then, starting to ramble)
Did you know the gender wage gap actually widened to 18.9% in the past year when median weekly earnings are adjusted for inflation? We don't need girl blogs. We need an overhaul of a patriarchal workplace and systemic gender inequities.

A Beleaguered Aide intervenes as she keeps walking...

FINAL CAR:

...An EXTREMELY HANDSOME MAN (40's) steps out. Poised but humble. Strong but sensitive. Hot as shit.

SADIE (V.O.)
Let's call him The "Hot White Guy". Because while he could actually be the Bachelor, he's polling at the bottom of the pack, unable to even turn his typically winning package of straight, white, maleness into a winning campaign.

END SEQUENCE.

INT. SURF BALLROOM - NIGHT

Sadie hastily types up the Bachelor angle, a small pile of half-eaten chicken wings by her side. On the edge of the SCREEN, a GONZO-METER appears. It ticks up to Level 2.

Up on stage, Hot White Guy (HWG) gives a speech to the crowd.

HWG

When my wife was battling cancer,
it was my veteran's benefits that
kept us from collapsing under the
weight of her medical bills. And
when she died, I had access to
mental health resources that got me
through a very rough time. I was
lucky. I wasn't among the millions
of Americans our country abandoned
to their own illness.

Sadie stops writing, listening to him talk. His voice is
clear and confident, and somehow also kind. TIME SLOWS as he
removes his blazer, rolling up his sleeves Beto-style. Climbs
on a chair to reach more of the audience. Fucking sexy.

She stares at him. He notices her gazing at him. He smiles at
her, amused. Charmed, even. Caught, she snaps her gaze away.

EXT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - NIGHT (LATER)

A HOMELESS MAN is spread out on cardboard in front of the
hotel, rambling to himself as Sadie pulls her car in.

HOMELESS MAN

Get outta my home. Get offa my
street. But Medicare For All sounds
pretty neat...

INT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - BAR - NIGHT

Lola is filming the social scene at a glassed-walled hotel
bar packed with the world's press corps and political
operatives. Bright lights. Khakis and cognac.

LOLA (VIA INSTA)

The Des Moines Marriott is the
spot. Everyone meets up here for
late-night libations. Y'all know
the Secret Service has a saying on
the trail? "Wheels up, rings off."

She eyes a hot Secret Service Agent adjusting his ring. She
passes Sadie, who carries two glasses of Chardonnay. Sadie
hands a glass to Grace and settles on a couch.

SADIE

Nothing says an Election Year like
that first swig of Yellow Tail.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

SADIE (CONT'D)

(as they cheer)

How's your scoop coming?

Grace gives her a look. Friendly competition.

GRACE

Find your own scoop.

SADIE

I don't do scoop. I do sweepy profiles. Although now I guess I just very obediently report the facts in the driest way possible.

GRACE

Ah. The bosses still stung from Election Night?

SADIE

That was three fucking years ago. Anthony Weiner lived down his dick pics faster than that.

GRACE

I don't think that's true.

SADIE

They're worried I'll get emotional.

GRACE

You do get worked up.

SADIE

Yeah, well. Meet the new me.

She checks her email and sees an edited story from Bruce.

SADIE (CONT'D)

Hang on. Just got a playback.

TYPEWRITER TEXT: PLAYBACK = EDITED VERSION OF RAW COPY, OFTEN THE SOURCE OF SCREAMING FIGHTS BETWEEN REPORTER AND EDITOR.

She opens her laptop and we see the emailed doc with a boring lede: *CLEAR LAKE, IOWA - The Democratic candidates took aim at Republicans and each other at the annual Wing-Ding Dinner.*

Sadie swigs her wine. Dials Bruce as we INTERCUT:

SADIE (CONT'D)

You butchered my copy.

BRUCE (ON PHONE)
No. I edited your copy.

SADIE
You said you thought the Bachelor
angle was cute.

BRUCE
Sadie, you've known me long enough
to know cute is not a compliment.
Besides, I left a reference to it.

SADIE
In graph 7. Readers will be asleep
by then. I was asleep by then.

BRUCE
The masthead wanted a straight news
story tonight. And we have a deal.

SADIE
Our deal was objective. This is
objectively boring.

BRUCE
Keep up the good work.

She hangs up. Defeated. Grace arrives with another round.

SADIE
Bless you.

She follows Grace's gaze to find the overhead TV set airing
CNN. CHRIS CUOMO and a veteran PUNDIT, 81, debate.

PUNDIT
Well, that "scoop" - if you want to
call it that - entirely missed what
is really happening in the race...

Sadie studies Grace, whose eyes narrow.

SADIE
He's shitting on your reporting
again. Why does he keep doing that?

GRACE
Fuck him. Who cares what that
dinosaur has to say anymore?

As Sadie watches the Old Dinosaur Pundit pontificate, Grace's
eyes shift to the windows.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Oh Christ. Look who's arrived.

EXT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - NIGHT

A satellite van with a LIBERTY NEWS emblem, an American flag and a bald eagle emblazoned on the side, pulls into the valet.

Grace and Sadie watch through the wall of lobby bar windows.

GRACE
Those right-wingers valet their van
but we're the elite media?

SLOW-MO as two wind-blown beauties breeze through the lobby's revolving door. KIMBERLYN KENNEDY, 30, black, poised and exceedingly well-manicured, and NELLIE CARMICHAEL, 28, classic bottle blonde, ample false lashes, trailed by a CAMERAMAN who lugs his gear and two enormous roller bags.

SADIE
I get that embeds constantly need
to be camera ready, but the Saudi
royal family travels lighter than
Kimberlyn Kennedy.

GRACE
I think that blonde she-wolf Nellie
Carmichael got her makeup
permanently tattooed on her face.

As Kimberlyn and Nellie sweep by the bar, the press corps glares at the right-wing duo as if they were Pomeranians.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Where do you even buy a pink suit?

SADIE
They used to be specially made in
Roger Ailes' basement.

Nellie overhears this and says to Kimberlyn, within earshot --

NELLIE
If you ever catch me wearing
sweatpants in public you'll know
I've given up on life.

KIMBERLYN
I believe liberals call it
"athleisure."

They keep walking. Sadie makes a "yikes" grimace at Grace.
But Grace is distracted by something at the bar.

GRACE
Speaking of debatable fashion
choices, do you see what I see??

Peeking out between bar stools, we see a pair of BROWN
LOAFERS -- the signature Italian leather of the fiercest
political flack in the game.

Sadie does a near spit-take. **FLASH TO:** SADIE'S ELECTION NIGHT
SPAT WITH THE CAMPAIGN AIDE. ZOOM IN ON THOSE SAME LOAFERS.

SADIE
What the fuck is he doing here?

She cranes to confirm it is, in fact BROWN LOAFERS, 37, the
handsome but smug staffer she kicked the shit out of in '16.
She holds up a giant laminated menu to hide.

SADIE (CONT'D)
I thought after the DNC, he clawed
his way up on the Hill to some
senior role with Senator Walker.

GRACE
And I thought you hated his guts
and had moved on.

SADIE
(lying)
I do and I did.

FLASH TO: Hot sweaty sex in a shitty motel in the Panhandle.

SADIE (CONT'D)
What is he doing in Iowa?

Grace looks over at Loafers who is on a sofa sipping a
whiskey surrounded by several pretty young EMBEDS.

GRACE
Scouring the lobby for someone else
to give scabies to?

SADIE
(can't tear her eyes away)
I thought I'd never see him again.

GRACE

After physically assaulting him in front of a ballroom full of Democratic delegates, perhaps that would have been for the best.

SADIE

Trust me. He deserved it.

GRACE

Yes. Remember that feeling. We're not traveling down that road again this cycle. That was a bad road.

SADIE

Don't worry. That road is forever closed -- like my vagina this election cycle. But what the fuck is he doing here?

(a thought strikes her)

Wait. Is Walker running?

Grace remains smugly silent. Sadie shoots a glance her way.

SADIE (CONT'D)

Is that your scoop? God, how do you always know everything??

GRACE

Don't waste your time. There are better stories.

SADIE

Are you kidding? I love her.

INT. CONGRESS - THREE YEARS EARLIER - **FLASHBACK**

SENATOR FELICITY WALKER, 50, questions an auto CEO in a heated congressional hearing. He takes a long sip of water.

WALKER

How does that taste, sir?

CEO

Excuse me?

WALKER

Well, I had my staff bring tap water in from Flint.

(as he spits it out)

With all due respect, if you won't drink lead-infested water, why should America's children?

INT. DES MOINES MARRIOT - BAR - CONTINUOUS

BACK TO PRESENT. Sadie contemplates her glass of ice water.

SADIE

She's a legit potential FWP.

GRACE

(finishing her drink)

Which makes him "legit" off-limits
in the name of female journalistic
credibility. Rule number 2A.

SADIE

Yep, yep.

As Grace heads off, Sadie steals another glance at Loafers.

FLASHES TO: Them making out in the elevator of a Holiday Inn
Express. Fucking in an empty bus outside Iowa's HyVe Center.

BACK TO SADIE. Tearing herself away, she texts Bruce.

SADIE (TEXT) (CONT'D)

You heard anything about Walker
jumping into the race? I think the
WashPo may already have it.

BRUCE (TEXT)

Get confirmation, then get the
first sit-down.

Marching orders set, Sadie gathers her stuff. Loafers' head
turns her way, but she ducks, waving at an amused Grace as
she sneaks away towards the elevators still behind the menu.

EXT. DES MOINES - DAY

The sun rises over the Des Moines River, illuminating a city
that is, at best, serviceable.

INT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - LOBBY - DAY

On her third cup of hotel coffee, Sadie jumps up when she
spots Loafers step out of the elevator. Their eyes meet. A
lot of history there...

SADIE

So, when should we expect Senator
Walker's announcement?

(he keeps walking)

Is it true she's already got a \$200
mil war chest?

(MORE)

SADIE (CONT'D)

(no response)

Are you going to tell me or what?

He stops, stares her down. Sexual tension abounds.

LOAFERS

Sadie. If an Ebola epidemic broke out in Iowa and you were the only one with an extra hazmat suit, I would not tell you.

SADIE

You're seriously still mad about Election Night? That was three fucking years ago.

LOAFERS

You never apologized.

SADIE

I wasn't sorry.

LOAFERS

You made a scene in front of half of DC. Do you know how many job interviews ended with a prospective boss - and at least two senators - asking to see the bruises on my shins from when my ex-girlfriend kicked the shit out of me?

SADIE

We could have talked about it if you hadn't hopped an Acela and fled to Washington.

LOAFERS

It was a Delta Shuttle. And unlike you I chose not to spend the off-cycle sulking and writing about dead people. I still had a promising career in public service.

SADIE

Public service? Is that what you call spinning the press while dropping your boss's name at BLT Steak to get laid?

LOAFERS

(flips to press sec mode)
The Senator is excited to be in Iowa today to show her support for her long-time friend and mentor.

SADIE

The Geriatric? That's about as believable as you being monogamous.

LOAFERS

(leaving)
We have no further comment at this time.

SADIE

(calling after him)
I liked you better when you were a bag man!

EXT. DES MOINES STREETS - DAY

Undeterred, Sadie works her sources to confirm the story.

SADIE (ON PHONE)

Call me back. Bye.

She checks SIGNAL and sends several rapid-fire texts.

SADIE (TEXT) (CONT'D)

You fucking promised me.

Angry face emoji. Her phone rings.

SADIE (CONT'D)

Finally. What are you hearing? Of course we're off the record.

An IOWAN looks at her like she's a crazy person muttering to herself. Sadie signals to her AirPods. Still looks crazy.

SADIE (CONT'D)

There's a bus? It's too early for anyone to have a bus. Unless...

Passing the same muttering Homeless Man, doesn't notice.

SADIE (CONT'D)

It has to be Walker. She's going all in, isn't she? Straight Talk Express like McCain. Thank you, Jarett. Yes, yes. We never talked.

INT. DES MOINES BUS DEPOT - DAY

A glorious maroon Signature people carrier sits in the depot. Sadie chats up an OLD MAN IN OVERALLS who carries a broom.

OLD MAN IN OVERALLS
Sure don't know anything about it.

SADIE
You may not know now, sir, but one little look at the requisition forms and bob's your uncle.

OLD MAN IN OVERALLS
I like you. You remind me of my granddaughter. She's pushy too.

SADIE
Occupational hazard.

OLD MAN IN OVERALLS
Nice boots. Sturdy. Built to last.

Sadie looks down at her reliable leather boots.

SADIE
Thanks.

OLD MAN IN OVERALLS
I always notice a person's shoes. Run my family's cobbler business over in Ames.

SADIE
You have two jobs?

OLD MAN IN OVERALLS
How the hell you think anyone pays the bills in this bullshit economy?

Sadie nods. Fair. Then, an idea. She pulls out her phone. Scrolls to find a 2016 photo. She's with Loafers at the Democratic National Convention. They're younger. Glowing. A DC power couple-in-the-making. She zooms in on his shoes.

SADIE
Any chance you've seen these lurking around here?

OLD MAN IN OVERALLS
I'd recognize those Italian hand-crafted beauties anywhere.

Sadie beams. Adrenaline an intoxicating cocktail. The GONZO-METER appears on the edge of the screen: Gonzo Level 4.

EXT. ROAD/INT. BOYS' BUS - **FANTASY**

Back with the Boys on the Bus. 11-year-old Sadie sits next to a smoking Hunter S., who regales her with his story.

HUNTER S. THOMPSON

*The rush of knowing the news before
anyone else...the euphoria of being
in on secrets that the masters of
the universe don't want you to
know...the adrenaline high of a
byline. If you've got a taste for
the buzz, you'll never go hungry.*

EXT. STREET/INT. SADIE'S RENTAL CAR - DAY

Sadie is gnawing on a Slim Jim, charging her phone, checking Insta, listening to an audiobook -- Diane Keaton reading Joan Didion's *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*.

We see Lola's face with the bunny ears filter. In the BG, a couple kegs, a bong, coeds passed out on a lawn.

SADIE (V.O.)

*True to form, while I chased my
story, Lola chased a house party in
Iowa City.*

Alert: @LOLA is going LIVE. Sadie can't help it. She clicks.

EXT. U OF IOWA - DAY - **LOLA'S INSTAGRAM LIVE**

LOLA (INTO LENS)

The University of Iowa for sure
knows how to party. Don't judge --
I'm a mess in yesterday's clothes.
Headed to cover the hottest horse in
the race. If you see me, bring
caffeine.

(to a passing fan)

Love you, too. Are you registered
to vote?

Her camera flips to show she's outside where The Freshman exits a panel called THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE MONETIZED.

LOLA (CONT'D)

Okay, let's get some action from
our candidate-crush...

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

LOLA (CONT'D)

You worried about student loan
debt, climate change and gun
safety? She's the one talking the
loudest.

An adoring campus LGBTQ group pushes Lola aside to get
selfies, engulfing The Freshman in rainbow...

LOLA (CONT'D)

Jesus, this is like trying to find
a needle in a haystack.

Out of place amongst the throng, Kimberlyn extends her mic.

KIMBERLYN

Congresswoman! Congresswoman! Why
are you afraid of Liberty News?

A young woman in a LESBIAN FARMER t-shirt snaps her head.

LESBIAN FARMER

How do you sleep at night?

KIMBERLYN

(used to this)

I sleep like a baby in a secure
Republican economy, thank you.

Chants of *HEY HEY, HO HO, RIGHT-WING MEDIA HAS GOT TO GO* as
menacing kids in black ANTIFA t-shirts, ski masks close in.

Kimberlyn is PELTED with a strawberry milkshake. Chants of
FASCIST! FASCIST! FASCIST! Lola grabs a now visibly shaken
Kimberlyn and drags her towards the backseat of a nearby GMC
pickup. Yelling at Antifa.

LOLA

You'll be getting a dry cleaning
bill, you pussies!

INT. SADIE'S RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Sadie SIGHS, closing Instagram. Calls Grace, who answers.

SADIE (INTO PHONE)

Lola Gabriel just turned a college
kegger walk of shame into a
livestream of an Antifa riot.
Guaranteed NOTD.

TYPEWRITER TEXT: NOTD = NEWS OF THE DAY.

EXT. I-80/INT. GRACE'S FAMILY CAR - DAY - INTERCUT

Grace drives a long stretch of midwestern road.

GRACE

Being in the right place at the
right time doesn't make you a
reporter.

SADIE

She lost five of her best friends
in the shooting.

GRACE

And spent the last ten years
monetizing it.

SADIE

Still, is it weird that I secretly
want to be her, like, dependable
big sister?

GRACE

Tampons are dependable. Get off
Instagram.

(then)

By the way -- Jarrett told me he
gave you the bus scoop.

SADIE

(annoyed)

He swore me to secrecy!

GRACE

Please. That guy leaks like my
bladder during pregnancy.

ANNIE (O.S.)

Jesus christ, Mom. Don't be foul.

SADIE

Is that Annie?

Reveal that Grace is in the car with her daughter, ANNIE
(18), sweet, excited eyes behind a Ladybird exterior.

GRACE

Yeah. I caved. Headed to Chicago.

SADIE

Good mom move.

Annie butts in from the passenger seat.

ANNIE

She's been on the phone the whole goddamn time, Sadie. Who even talks on the phone anymore?

GRACE

People who don't want the Russians hacking their emails.

A sudden worry strikes Sadie --

SADIE

Tell me you didn't beat me to the Walker Bus scoop while I was sucked down the rabbit hole of @Lola.

GRACE

I'm gonna say one thing: it's not the story you should be following.

SADIE

It's the only story I've got. Unless you feel like sharing...

GRACE

Rule number 3: Never share your scoop. Gotta go.

INT. SADIE'S RENTAL CAR - DAY

Sadie hangs up, frustrated. Texts a source via Signal. The source's name is REDACTED to the viewer with a BLACK BAR.

SADIE (TEXT)

Any idea what oppo research GGG is hunting down? Did a woman come forward about The Geriatric?

REDACTED SOURCE (TEXT)

Lemme ask around.
(three dots, then)
BTW, I hear there's a bus.

SADIE

(exasperated)
Fucking Jarett --

Sadie tosses her phone aside. As she starts up her car...

INT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - SADIE'S ROOM - DAY

Sadie enters, throws her stuff down, pulling up FaceTime.
DIALS: ED HENRY (real-life Fox News Correspondent).

He picks up. A cherub-cheeked man with a Pucci pocket square peaking out from underneath an orange hunting vest. Singing --

ED HENRY
S-s-s-sadie. Sadie. Sexy lady...

Sadie hears the sound of bullets and "Pull!"

SADIE
Jesus, Ed, where are you?

ED HENRY
GOP donor thing at the Gov's mansion. Man's got a shooting range the size of Nebraska.

In the BG, Liberty News's Nellie lets out a WHOOP as she fires off a shotgun.

SADIE
Look, I'm close to confirming Walker is entering the race, but I'm not the only one chasing it. Do you know who she's doing her first sit-down with so I can crash?

ED HENRY
That's easy. Today at 3.

He tilts his phone back to show Nellie, bold and bouncy in the BG. Sadie takes a screen shot. Incredulous.

SADIE
Liberty News? Are you fucking kidding me? Nellie Carmichael?

ED HENRY
No, the black one. They wanted to go with a young black woman, but conservative. Get it? Hits all the demos but speaks to the red states.

SADIE
That's kind of brilliant. Fuck.

ED HENRY
You know the deal: your story can't fucking run before ours hits.

The noise of GUNFIRE fills the air.

SADIE

It won't. I promise. Beauty of
print. We're slow as shit.

She hangs up. Pulls up Lola's social media accounts which document her journey fleeing Antifa with Kimberlyn. We see what she sees... in short SNAP BURSTS: a Slobbery Rottweiler in the front seat of a giant GMC as it roars away from the Riot. Kimberlyn and Lola in the back.

KIMBERLYN

Whose truck is this?

LOLA

Lyft. Mind if we get a selfie?
They're a sponsor.

She pulls a still-shaken Kimberlyn into a selfie video.

LOLA (CONT'D)

Crashed a college party -- survived
a mob. I am now sharing a Lyft with
a Republican. (pause) Wait -- I got
it. We are bipartisan bitches.
Should we make t-shirts?

NEXT SNAP: Kimberlyn digs in her giant bag, pulling out a series of hair products, wet wipes and stain sticks, wiping at her clothes.

LOLA (CONT'D)

(trying to film it)
Damn, girl, what else do you have
in that Mary Poppins bag?

Kimberlyn shuts her bag.

KIMBERLYN

Please don't film me. I'm not your
conservative show pony.
(checking the time)
Can he drive any faster? I'm gonna
be late for an interview.

Kimberlyn talks with a delicate Southern Accent. She's bred to be eternally polite, but she's got a delicious edge lurking just underneath. Aka, don't fuck with her.

NEXT SNAP: They're stuck in a traffic jam. Kimberlyn frets as she pulls herself together.

LOLA (INTO PHONE LENS)
We're approaching the Jasper County
Watermelon Festival and apparently
it's the social event of the
summer, because fuck. Traffic.
While we wait, let's take this time
to get deep? Kimberlyn, tell us
where you stand on vagina botox?

Sadie checks the road signs in the snap story. Pulls up
Google maps. She does some quick map math tracking the girls.

KIMBERLYN (O.S.)
No way is anyone puttin' any
needles near my vajene, uh-uh. No.

While they chatter, Sadie makes a phone call.

SADIE (INTO PHONE)
Bobby, it's Sadie. Long time no
talk. Listen, I have some friends
in a bind and I need a favor.

EXT. IOWA ROAD - DAY

Kimberlyn and Lola stand on the shoulder. Traffic at a
standstill. Lola snapchats as Kimberlyn stares down the road.
Worried. Eyes the time on her silver Cartier.

KIMBERLYN
My ancestors will roll over in
their graves if a watermelon
festival derails my promotion.

LOLA
Why did you go all the way to Iowa
City if you had to be back?

KIMBERLYN
My friend Nellie was sick and asked
me to cover her, and women help
women.

LOLA
Preach.

KIMBERLYN
(having realized)
So. You're the girl who tied herself
naked to NRA Headquarters in 2017.

LOLA
I was protesting a school shooting.

KIMBERLYN

Which one?

LOLA

That you have to ask is why I tied myself naked to NRA Headquarters.

(then)

And still nothing changed, so here I am, snapchatting my way through the Heartland for money.

KIMBERLYN

I don't mean to be rude, but why are you here?

LOLA

Teen Vogue says I'm the eyes and ears of my generation.

KIMBERLYN

No pressure.

LOLA

Tell me about it. And you? What is a black woman doing working at lily-white Liberty?

KIMBERLYN

Reporting the news. Just like the rest of you.

Lola's phone RINGS. She answers it with a "yo".

INT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - SADIE'S ROOM - DAY - INTERCUT

Sadie stops pacing on her phone. On a mission.

SADIE

Lola. It's Sadie McCarthy.

LOLA

Who?

She winces at the shame of being invisible to an Influencer.

SADIE

From the Times. I was wondering if I could talk to Kimberlyn?

Lola hands the phone over to Kimberlyn with a shrug.

KIMBERLYN

This is Kimberlyn.

SADIE

Kimberlyn. Sadie McCarthy. I'm glad I caught you. I've been doing the road math, and given your current situation, you won't make it back in time for the pre-interview with Senator Walker.

KIMBERLYN

How did you know --

SADIE

And what if they give it to Nellie Carmichael? I heard through the rumor mill that you're both up for the same promotion. You really want to let her shine on your big day?

KIMBERLYN

It won't be Nellie. I'm already covering her schedule today. She's under the weather. Endometriosis.

SADIE

Too under the weather for this?

She sends the SCREEN SHOT of Nellie working it at the Governor's ranch. Kimberlyn puts the phone on speaker so she can see it. Her face drops. Lola sees it too. A low hiss.

LOLA

What a cunt.

KIMBERLYN

(chiding)

Lola --

(to Sadie)

Why are you calling me? You don't even like me.

SADIE

That's not true. I don't know you.

KIMBERLYN

We rode on the same bus for two hundred days last cycle.

SADIE

Yeah, but you were up in the front.

KIMBERLYN

By the trash. Yes. That's where you've decided the Conservatives go. The landfill seats, I know what you call them. Don't think we don't notice.

SADIE

I don't make the seat assignments.

KIMBERLYN

As if the Times and the Post don't control every fanny in every seat.
(to Lola)
You'll see. Grace Green is the seat nazi.

SADIE

Look. I need to know where you're scheduled to meet Felicity Walker for the pre-interview.

KIMBERLYN

I'm not handing over a Liberty News exclusive.

Sadie gets a TEXT from Billy: "I see them. Headed their way."

SADIE

What if I can still get you to your sit-down in time?

Just then, a TRACTOR APPEARS along the shoulder of the road. About 100 yards out. Approaching the girls.

SADIE (CONT'D)

Do you see the tractor headed your way? That's my friend Billy -- the Polk County Caucus Precinct Captain. And that John Deer Farm Pro 420 has double the horse power of a Porsche. He'll get you past the traffic and then you can Uber.

LOLA

Lyft. We Lyft.

SADIE

I'm not trying to steal the exclusive. I just gotta be first for print. All I need is to know where your meet-up is.

KIMBERLYN

This is crazy. You're crazy.

SADIE

Or I can tell Billy to turn around.

The tractor FLIES down the shoulder. Breezing by car after car. Kimberlyn looks to Lola, who shrugs. Fuck it.

KIMBERLYN

Embassy Suites, room two eleven.

Off Sadie, in the throes of it.

SADIE (PRELAP)

All hail the power of journalism.
And being pushy as fuck.

INT. ANNIE'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Grace sits on the bare floor of a dorm room, her phone charging as she speaks, typing on her laptop.

GRACE

I can't believe she called me a
nazi.

INT./EXT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - DAY - INTERCUT

Sadie hurriedly moves through the lobby to the valet.

SADIE

You are kind of a bitch about who
sits where.

GRACE

And as the only one who rode those
fuckers before they had WiFi, I
have earned that right.

She spots HWG talking to the Homeless Man. Their eyes meet. She almost walks right into a Camry at valet. Tires screech. HWG mouths, "You okay?" Sadie gives a mortified thumbs up.

SADIE

Ugh. Hot White Guy is out front
pandering. Even the cute ones can't
resist the homeless messaging.

Back with Grace as Annie and her dad, CHARLIE, enter the room loaded with boxes.

ANNIE

Mom, you can't disappear for a two
hour lunch and then sit on your ass
while Dad and I do all the work.

Grace blows a kiss at her husband, who rolls his eyes in good
humor. Endlessly amused-slash-abused by her. Back to Sadie --

GRACE

Listen. My scoop is probably gonna
drop before yours --

SADIE

-- it's a sweepy profile.
(catching herself)
In the most objective and detached
way, obviously.

GRACE

Obviously. Well. I love you.

Grace hangs up, noticing someone at the door. It's the Old
Dinosaur Pundit who'd been on CNN. He enters the room.

GRACE (CONT'D)

What the fuck is he doing here?

Annie beams, delighted, running to him.

ANNIE

Grandpa!

GRACE

(reluctantly stands)
Hi, Dad.

INT. EMBASSY SUITES - DAY

Sadie knocks on the door of room #211. **FANTASY POP** of Loafers
answering the door in a bath towel. Sadie blinks. He actually
answers in his Brooks Brothers blazer.

SADIE

Liberty News, seriously? They spent
the entire last cycle tearing down
your old boss. They called her a
criminal. A warmonger.

She barges her way into the cramped foyer of the "suite".

LOAFERS

Black female correspondent, right-
wing outlet polled in the 90s.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

LOAFERS (CONT'D)

The 90s. The only things that poll in the 90s are kittens and Chrissy Teigen. And we're supposed to shift this fail-proof communications strategy because Sadie McCarthy wants in?

Walker - rollers, red pants suit, pro makeup - enters.

SENATOR WALKER

What's that I heard? Sadie McCarthy of the New York Times is here?

SADIE

Senator, what an honor to meet you.

LOAFERS

Senator, Sadie was just leaving so we can get you prepped --

Walker holds up her hand. Loafers immediately silenced.

SENATOR WALKER

I loved your byline in the last cycle. Appointment reading. What was that line you had about the concession speech? *Silent and grim, like rushing a casket at a wake.*

SADIE

Something exactly like that.

WALKER

Your words are always so beautiful. Such a personal touch, you have.

(then)

I've got a few minutes before the sit-down. Why don't you and I chat?

LOAFERS

We promised Liberty the exclusive.

SADIE

This won't run until after their segment has aired.

SENATOR WALKER

See? These things don't need to be tense. I want an open, respectful relationship with the press.

They walk to an adjacent room. Loafers follows. She turns --

WALKER

I'm out of cough drops. Could you
run and get me some? Lemon Honey,
not the menthols you got last time.

Sadie gives him a snide grin when Walker's back is turned.

INT. ANNIE'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Grace works on her laptop. Annie and Charlie exit to get
another load. Harold looks at Grace. Awkward silence.

GRANDPA HAROLD

You got your Veep sources lined up?

GRACE

Yep.

GRANDPA HAROLD

Don't waste your time with Senator
Stevens. He talks a big game, but
he'll be the last to know.

GRACE

I got it, Dad.

GRANDPA HAROLD

No one's ever scooped more than
five Veep picks in a row. It took
me ten cycles. You've only been at
it for, what, six?

GRACE

Eight. Thirty-two years.

GRANDPA HAROLD

(nods, that's right)
Dukakis. Poor bastard.

(then)

I'm betting my record will hold.

GRACE

May the best man win.

Beat. Her dad eyes her as she works.

GRANDPA HAROLD

Cuomo sends his regards. I said,
"Chris, you've got to put Grace on
the show one of these days."

GRACE

Was this before or after you shit
on my scoop?

GRANDPA HAROLD

That's what we do on those shows,
Gracie. Everyone's fair game. Gotta
be tough or they'll eat you alive.

Over it, Grace returns to her work, hitting SEND...

EXT. ROAD/TRACTOR - DAY

Lola and Kimberlyn fly down the road on the back of Billy's
tractor. Kimberlyn is on fire --

KIMBERLYN

...that lash-wearing, James Woods-
loving, faux Christian piece of
southern trash. She pulled the
period card. You don't pull the
period card unless you mean it.

(beating herself up)

Shoot, Kimberlyn. You know better.
You blew this. This one's on you.

LOLA

Hey, give yourself a break. She's a
nasty bitch. Take pride that you're
the better person.

KIMBERLYN

I can't just be the better person.
I have to be unimpeachable. I
cannot make mistakes.

LOLA

Fuck that. That's what the
patriarchy makes us think. We're
allowed to be flawed.

KIMBERLYN

(pointed)

Not all of us.

Lola quiets. Beat. She pulls out her phone. Makes a call.

LOLA (INTO PHONE)

Hi. Is this Nellie Carmichael? This
is Lauren in Senator Walker's
scheduling office.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

LOLA (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)

Yes, we're still on, but the Senator has decided to make her announcement at the Jasper County Watermelon Festival. Yes, so fun...So can you get your crew there ASAP? (pause) Fantastic.

She hangs up. Leans backwards into Kimberlyn with her phone in selfie video mode. Kimberlyn has to smile.

KIMBERLYN

You didn't have to do that.

LOLA

(to her followers)
Women help women, right?

INT. SENATOR WALKER'S SUITE - DAY

Sadie and Walker are deep in girl talk. Sadie takes notes.

SADIE

That's why you never had children?

WALKER

In a way, the miscarriages - which you couldn't even talk about in my day - it's why I'm running. I couldn't have children, so I want to make my presidency about helping other families.

SADIE

But what about the Strong Commander-in-Chief thing? Aren't you worried?

WALKER

Sadie. I'm talking about upending 200 years of policy crafted by and for men. A total recalibration of the American middle class.

SADIE

But polls show a majority of voters don't think a woman...

WALKER

Can I be blunt with you? Off the record? Fuck the polls. The polls told your last candidate to run like a man, right? And how'd that work out?

SADIE

True. But you're not afraid...?

WALKER

I am terrified. But is that a
reason not to do it?

She stares at the Senator, moved and inspired.

STYLIZED BACHELOR-ESQUE SEQUENCE: Everything slows. "Almost Paradise" plays. Walker beams in sequins and an updo. Rose petals fall. It's Election Night and she's holding the Final Rose. Sadie at her side, wearing WHITE HOUSE credentials. Walker addresses the crowd --

WALKER (CONT'D)

*...and with Sadie McCarthy by my
side to document the journey of the
First Woman President, we will take
first the White House -- and then
the world -- by storm.*

The crowd roars. Sadie beams. On the edge of the screen,
GONZO-METER inches up to 6.5. **END SEQUENCE.**

INT. CAMPAIGN KICKOFF RALLY - PRESS FILE - DAY

Rolling green BALLOON FIELD lined with WALKER FOR PRESIDENT
and PUTTING FAMILIES FIRST signs. Walker is greeting Iowans.

Grace holds court with a bunch of newbie trail folk.

GRACE

Rule number 4: Never fall in love.
They're all liars. They'll all tell
you what you want to hear. And none
of them will ever, I repeat ever,
live up to their promises.

At the Press File, Sadie is on her laptop in noise cancelling
earphones. She's struggling. She types a boring lede.
*Indianola, Iowa - Senator Walker declared she would seek the
Presidency, disrupting a crowded Democratic field...*

NEWBIE JOURNO

What's Rule number 5?

GRACE

No booze the night before a morning
live hit. The camera doesn't lie.

Sadie deletes her lede. She stares into the abyss of an empty
page on deadline.

She flips through her Reporter's Notebook and STOPS on the notes she took about the Old Man in Overalls. It hits her. He's her angle. She starts to type.

Ames, Iowa - In overalls and bifocals, the old man popped the hood and shined the engine. He spat twice for luck. He had to work two jobs to make ends meet -- one of them was putting the finishing touches on the bus that could carry the first woman president to the White House.

BRUCE (PRELAP)
What the fuck is wrong with you?

INT. NEW YORK TIMES - NEWSROOM - DAY

Bruce is pissed off. Lo mein takeout and Marlboro Reds on his desk. Sadie's copy in his hand as he expresses his outrage.

BRUCE (VIA PHONE)
I said objective.

EXT. CAMPAIGN KICKOFF RALLY - DAY

Sadie moves through the crowd on her phone as we INTERCUT:

SADIE
It's objective. Ish.

BRUCE
I went to bat for you.

SADIE
Bruce. It's a good piece.

BRUCE
I know it's a good piece. I have eyes. And a brain. And fucking taste.

SADIE
Then what's the problem?

BRUCE
The problem, Sadie, is that I, your friend and mentor - not to mention your boss - was very specific about what I wanted from you.

SADIE
Bruce, you knew who you were sending. Any sheep can write the dry stuff.

BRUCE

I didn't want any sheep. I wanted you. But I wanted a more careful you. A restrained you. A circa 2012 talented-as-hell-but-still-a-little-afraid-of-me you.

SADIE

I was never afraid of you.

BRUCE

Do you think I like bending over to the masthead on this? I wouldn't even think twice about it if I wasn't also looking out for you. The last election almost broke you in half. There's a fine line between passion and insanity and I'm working very hard to keep you on the right goddamn side of it.

SADIE

Bruce, you're being dramatic.

Bruce COUGHS. A long, ugly HACKING series of spasms.

SADIE (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

He WHEEZES. Clears his throat. A big swig of Diet Coke. Quick glance at a framed pic with his three daughters.

BRUCE

How many days did you spend in your own bed in the last five years? How many relationships have self-destructed while you're out on the road? Remember when you missed your mom's fiftieth birthday? I do. Because I'm the one who took her out. I had to spend an entire meal listening to her talk about your shrinking fertility window. Do you think there's any part of me that ever wanted to hear the words 'egg freezing' over Peter Luger?

SADIE

Oh God please never say them again --

BRUCE

Don't let the job kill you before you've had a chance to live.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BRUCE (CONT'D)

That's what I said. You want me to
tattoo it on my face?

SADIE

(feeling small)
Not particularly.

A beat, then --

BRUCE

All that said, we're running the
fucking piece. They want it for the
front. Go fuck yourself.

A smile breaks out on Sadie's face as she basks in this news.

SADIE (V.O.)

*I don't care what they say about 'I
love you' or 'It's benign.' For me,
the most beautiful words in the
English language remain 'They want
it for the front.'*

Sadie makes a YES! fist motion. A BEEP from her phone as
REDACTED SOURCE texts her back.

REDACTED SOURCE (TEXT)

Found out what GGG is up to.

SADIE (TEXT)

What?

Just then, a NEWS ALERT: WASHINGTON POST EXCLUSIVE pops up on
Sadie's phone: FELICITY WALKER PAYS FOR ABORTION FOR STUDENT
PREGNANT WITH HUSBAND'S BABY. Byline Grace Gordon-Greene.

Sadie's face DROPS. She starts to move through the crowd,
pushing towards the Press File. Passing CHAOS amongst the
press. Reporters RACE to do TV hits. Lola Snapchats.

LOLA (INTO PHONE LENS)

I'm at the Walker rally and shit
just blew the fuck up.

(sees Grace)

And here she is, the legit GOAT who
dropped the bomb. Damn girl. Can we
call you Scoopy?

A news CORRESPONDENT jumps on camera and wings it.

CORRESPONDENT

The stunning news sent ripples
through the Democratic primary and
cast a presumably lethal blow...

AT THE SAME TIME: A virtual U.N. of TV correspondents -
GERMANY, FRANCE, Al JAZEERA, BBC, JAPAN - all do the same.

An angry SCRUM surrounds Loafers.

LOAFERS

The Senator has devoted her life to
helping women and girls...

He stops himself. Not even he can spin this one.

LOAFERS (CONT'D)

Fuck it. Write what you want.

Sadie pushes to the front of the rope line, where Kimberlyn
shoves her mic into Walker's personal space.

KIMBERLYN

Senator. Senator. Any comment on
the report that you forced your
husband's lover to get an abortion?

Walker is a deer in headlights. Looking for Loafers.

WALKER

Excuse me. I have a campaign to
launch.

KIMBERLYN

No, Senator, I don't think you do.

Pushing in next to Sadie, Lola films --

LOLA (INTO LENS)

BOOM. My bipartisan bitch babe with
the burn.

SADIE

Senator! Why did you lie?

Walker's eyes lock with Sadie, whose question is loaded with
all kinds of betrayal. She's led away, question unanswered.

Sadie's phone buzzes. Bruce.

SADIE (CONT'D)

Yeah.

INT. NEW YORK TIMES - NEWSROOM - DAY

Bruce isn't angry anymore. He knows this one hurts.

BRUCE
So... you need a new lede.

SADIE
Ya think?

A quiet moment as she lets the disappointment wash over her.

BRUCE
I'm sorry. It was a good piece.

SADIE
I'll put it on my vision board next
to my 2016 Madam President story.
(heart not in it)
What do you need?

BRUCE
Six hundred words. Deadline at 10.
(hates to say it)
Just the facts on this one, Sadie.
It's just too heated for analysis.

She hangs up to find that the scrum has moved on, chasing Walker to her car. But Grace is there.

GRACE
Sorry, honey. I couldn't tell you.

Sadie nods. Business is business. But fuck. Grace puts her arm around Sadie, leading her home.

On the screen's edge... GONZO-METER: 0

INT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - BAR - NIGHT - LATER

A dejected Sadie chugs wine. Nellie pauses as she walks by --

NELLIE
Careful. White wine can bloat.

Sadie takes a giant handful of potato chips from the bar.

SADIE
Thanks. I'll keep that in mind.

She looks up at a TV playing nonstop footage of Kimberlyn getting the first/only quote from Walker.

SADIE (CONT'D)
How was the watermelon festival?

A beat as Nellie lets this roll off her.

NELLIE
Don't worry, hon. The day worked
out for me. I'm almost tired of all
the winning.

Nellie bounces. Sadie shovels in chips. Down the bar, someone
orders a drink. She looks over to see that it's Loafers.

SADIE
Did you know?
(off his silence)
Was everything about her a lie?

He gives her a long look. Sees the wine. The chips. Her face.

LOAFERS
Oh boy. I know that look. You're
gonna kick someone tonight.

SADIE
These boots are steel toe. Also --
you are an asshole.

LOAFERS
Don't get all worked up about it,
Sadie. It's just politics.

He takes the drink and walks away. She sits there for a
moment. Then pounds her wine and follows him.

INT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Loafers steps in. Alone. The doors start to close, when --

SADIE
Hey -- HEY.

Sadie hurries across the lobby, squeezing in to the elevator.

SADIE (CONT'D)
Don't do that.

LOAFERS
Sadie, I don't have time for this --

She reaches over and STOPS the elevator. Head full of steam.

SADIE

It's not just politics -- it's
never been just politics for me and
it was never just politics for you.
One of the only reasons you and I
even tolerated each other was
because we were both believers.

FLASH TO: INT. CONVENTION HALL - NIGHT

*It's Election Night, before the tide turned. Sadie and
Loafers giddily stumble into the elevator together.*

SADIE

*I have a front-page story to file.
And you have the President Elect's
bags to man, bag man.*

LOAFERS

*You're not gonna be calling me that
when we're in the White House.*

SADIE

*I won't be able to call you
anything if you're Press Secretary
and I'm Chief Correspondent.*

LOAFERS

Ugh. Grace's fucking rules.

SADIE

Not just Grace's rules. My rules.

LOAFERS

*Sadie, the first woman is about to
be elected President of the United
States. We can make anything work.*

*High on ambition, he pulls her in for a tender embrace.
Suddenly their phones buzz. They check texts, faces ashen.*

SADIE

How the fuck did she lose Michigan?

*As the two of them realize all their shared dreams are
collapsing...*

BACK TO PRESENT.

LOAFERS

And where did believing get us?

He reaches past her to undo the elevator. She puts her hand out to stop it. They're standing very close.

SADIE

Don't be that guy. No one likes that guy. I still remember when you were one of the nice guys.

He smirks. Knows this to be true. Hates himself for it.

LOAFERS

And we all know where they finish.
(pressing his floor)
Her intern will get you tomorrow's itinerary. Should be under your door by midnight.

SADIE

Tomorrow's itinerary for what?

LOAFERS

She's not dropping out.
(beat, dickish)
We gave it to the AP 5 minutes ago.

SADIE

So you're gonna work for a Zombie?

TYPEWRITER TEXT: ZOMBIE = CANDIDATE IS DEAD BUT WALKING.

SADIE (CONT'D)

That's gonna dramatically decrease your date-ability in DC.

LOAFERS

Oh, I'm not staying. I don't do the loser brigade.

The elevator doors open. He leans in to her just slightly. It should be obnoxious, but it's still sexy.

LOAFERS (CONT'D)

See you on the next one, McCarthy.

He grins at her. Not moving an inch from her space. She curses herself as her face flushes, giving her away. Another extra-long linger and he finally goes. Her phone buzzes.

BRUCE (TEXT)

Where the fuck is my copy?

Sadie looks at her watch. Shit.

INT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - SADIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sadie flies into her room takes out her laptop. 2% battery. She scrambles to find her charger.

SADIE

Shit shit.

Fuck it. She starts to type. Racing against the clock. Trying to file her new Walker story. MUSIC UP:

INT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - NIGHT

GRACE'S ROOM. Grace applies an anti-aging cucumber mask.

ANNIE (TEXT)

Youngest staff reporter ever accepted!

Selfie of Annie in front of The Daily Northwestern.

GRACE (TEXT)

Not too late to switch to pre-med.

Smiley face winking emoji. Text from her editor.

EDITOR (TEXT)

Pro move visiting the source in Chicago today to get the exclusive. You rock.

As we realize Grace's mixed motives for changing her mind about taking her daughter to college...

KIMBERLYN'S ROOM. Kimberlyn puts a silk pillowcase over a lumpy pillow. Her hair pulled back in a wrap. She pulls off false lashes. Pops out her contact lenses and puts on thick Coke bottle glasses. Gets an email from her NETWORK BOSS.

NETWORK BOSS (VIA EMAIL)

Great job today, but the network felt viewers would respond more to Nellie's look. She got the job. They need you to stay on the Dems.

A beat, and then she lets out a PRIMAL scream. STOMPS and THROWS an ice bucket, the remote across the room. And just as quickly she pulls it TOGETHER, crouches at the bed, clutches the cross she wears around her neck and prays.

LOLA'S ROOM. Lola is in a t-shirt and panties. The real Lola - the one her Insta followers never see. She desperately checks her DM's. Meme of her face in center of NRA bullseye.

Dude's dick pic. She lays down in the fetal position, spiraling. Picks up her phone, texting someone --

LOLA (TEXT)
Bored and horny. Room 211.

Her unknown FRIEND responds: "I'll be there in ten."

INT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - SADIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sadie puts her finishing touches on her piece and sends it to Bruce as the clock hits 10P.M. Bruce GCHAT'S her.

BRUCE (VIA GCHAT)
When I give a deadline, it's in eastern time, FYI.

SADIE (VIA GCHAT)
Fuck off. It takes longer to write the boring ones.

BRUCE (VIA GCHAT)
Thanks for being a good soldier --

SADIE (VIA GCHAT)
I hate mys --

Her computer DIES.

INT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - LOBBY - NIGHT

Sadie pulls her forgotten power cord from the outlet at the bar. She heads for the elevator when she notices HWG deep in conversation with Homeless Man outside on the street.

She watches for a beat, eyeing them cynically, as HWG gives Homeless Man half his Quiznos sub.

EXT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - STREET - NIGHT

HWG watches Homeless Man shuffle off, when Sadie appears.

SADIE
I don't see your ad maker. You're gonna want to re-do that scene for the camera. It will play perfectly before your American Legion speech.

HWG looks confused at first. And then, realizing...

HWG
Sadie McCarthy. You really think that little of me, don't you?

SADIE
Shouldn't I?

HWG
I needed Tom's help. That's his name. Tom. After 3 tours in Iraq, sometimes I just need to talk to someone else who's been through it. Who reminds me that no matter what I've done in the past, I can still be the person I want to be today.

SADIE
(contemplating this)
And what happens if the person you want to be gets you in trouble?

His eyes find hers. He's trying to figure her out.

HWG
Now I'm intrigued.

He offers her some of his Doritos that came with the Quiznos.

SADIE
I can't accept gifts from candidates.

HWG
It's a fucking Dorito.

Even the way he curses is sexy. She takes the chip.

HWG (CONT'D)
So spill. What kind of trouble?

Sadie eyes him for a beat. Debating whether or not to open up. But it's a nice summer night. The air is fresh. The Dorito is her favorite cool ranch. And so...

SADIE
Well, all I've ever wanted is to write a lede like Jimmy Breslin's gravedigger story. To have an angle so poignant, so memorable, it would live forever. Some reporters work fifty years and never find it. And I swear to God, I had it today with this old man I met at the bus depot. I was so fucking close I could touch it.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

SADIE (CONT'D)

And then the Walker scandal broke
and my story got killed, and my ex
sold out, and my editor's worried
about my fertility window and I
guess I'm just feeling kind of...
lost.

She notices HWG has been hanging on her words. Stops herself --

SADIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I definitely shouldn't
be telling you this.

HWG

*Clifton Pollard was pretty sure he
was going to be working on Sunday,
so when he woke up at 9 A.M. in his
three-room apartment on Corcoran
Street... he finished breakfast and
left his apartment...*

Sadie lights up. She starts to recite the lede with him.

SADIE

*...so he could spend Sunday
digging a grave for John
Fitzgerald Kennedy.*

HWG (CONT'D)

*....so he could spend Sunday
digging a grave for John
Fitzgerald Kennedy.*

SADIE (CONT'D)

You know the gravedigger story? By
heart?

HWG

I remember things when they're
written with that much emotion.

Sadie tears her eyes away -- feeling something but she's not
sure what. Is she being played? Is he for real? Awkwardly --

SADIE

Yeah, well, thanks for listening.

HWG

(as she walks away)
Don't let them turn you cynical,
Sadie.

This punches her in the gut. On the edge of the screen, the
GONZO-METER re-appears. As it nudges SLIGHTLY up from Zero.

INT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - SADIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Twizzlers. Red Bull. Mini-bar vodka. In a series of CUTS, Sadie tosses this bender booty on her desk. Plugs in her laptop. Chugs some booze. Starts to write.

GONZO-METER remains onscreen through this next sequence. Slowly rising as we take her through all the beats from the opening scene -- the drinking, the crying...

SADIE (V.O.)

I spent my whole life wanting to be one of the Boys on the Bus. (By the way, it's fucking typical that by the time it's the girls on the bus, we're all on deadline constantly like we're in a secretarial pool. The boys didn't even have computers. No Twitter. No online mob of aggrieved fact checkers).

INT. BOYS' BUS - **FANTASY**

Adult Sadie (in color) rants to Hunter S. Thompson.

HUNTER S. THOMPSON

We did have it pretty fucking great.

SADIE (TO HUNTER)

When the guys went Gonzo they were shit cool. When us girls do it, we're hysterical? Don't get emotional. Don't lose control. Don't make it personal. Fuck that. I want my words to mean something -- not to just feed the latest social media shit storm. I know it sounds self-righteous, but I'm emotional because I care about this dumpster fire of a political process. The question shouldn't be: 'Why is this girl journo so worked up?' But 'Why isn't everyone else?'

She takes his cigarette, taking a long drag.

INT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - SADIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Sadie puts her fedora on. She scrolls through the "Essential Feminism" playlist on Apple Music. She's dancing it out on the bed using the remote control as a mic while half-crying.

GONZO-METER climbs to 8, then 9 as she types feverishly -- fueled by vodka and a sugar high but also something else, something profound. The cursor fights to keep up with her.

SADIE (V.O.)
*And if being labeled as an
emotional liability isn't bad
enough, you tell me you're worried
I haven't had a chance to live?*

CUT TO: Sadie in the middle of the room, laptop in hand, reading her words like Hamlet monologue-ing to the skull.

SADIE
As if a husband and a houseplant
and freezing my eggs is somehow a
requirement for living? Would you
tell a man he's giving too much to
his career? This job is my life.
And yeah, there are definitely
areas for improvement, but overall
it's the job that's fucked, not me.
You're gonna give me shit for
saying this but we've forgotten our
mission: speaking truth to power.
Shining a light on injustice.
Telling stories that matter. What
this country needs right now are
people like me who live between
passion and insanity. Who want the
truth, not just the facts. Who can
Bachelor the fuck out of this
primary so that we're all in love
at the end. The people who - in the
words of our hero Jack Kerouac -
'never yawn or say a commonplace
thing but burn, burn, burn, like
fabulous yellow Roman candles
exploding across the stars.'

Now face down on her bed. Laptop in front of her. Back to VO.

SADIE (V.O.)
*So please accept this as my
resignation. I can't do this job
the way you want me to do it. And
the truth is -- I don't want to.*

GONZO-METER reaches Level 10. Sadie hits send and PASSES OUT.

EXT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - EARLY MORNING

It's dawn as a BUS DRIVER in grip gloves loads luggage into Walker's campaign bus. We recognize them from the packing MONTAGE. Kimberlyn's pink roller. Grace's Tumi.

INT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - LOLA'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Lola quickly throws her belongings into her Away bag. Leans over to the naked WOMAN asleep in her bed. Whispers --

LOLA

Gotta go. Press is loading. See you
in Sioux City?

As the woman rolls over towards her, we see it's The Freshman. So much for Rule #1.

EXT. BUS - DAWN

Kimberlyn is in line to board the bus, loaded down with camera gear, makeup bag, giant purse. Secret Service doing their daily security check. As she's getting wanded down --

Nellie exits the lobby, Kenny the Cameraman lugging her bags.

NELLIE

Hurry the hell up, Kenny. If you
make me late for my first day in
the big leagues, I'll blend your
balls into that Slurpee.

Nellie gives her a little wave as she hops into the back of a waiting SUV. Kimberlyn's veins go icy. To the SS Agent --

KIMBERLYN

Mark my words, I am going to murder
that girl.

(then, oops)

In a vengeful but totally non-
violent manner.

EXT. BUS - DAWN

Up ahead, Grace waits in line to load on. Her phone rings. Her husband, Charlie.

GRACE

Hey, hon.

CHARLIE

Annie saw your story. She's not
stupid, Grace. Chicago?

GRACE
(defensive)
Annie asked me to show up, Charlie.
I showed up.

CHARLIE
It's a move your dad would have
pulled.

Ouch. That one stings. As she boards the bus --

INT. BUS - MORNING

Grace boards to see two YOUNG MALE JOURNOS setting their things down in the prime middle seats. Cranky --

GRACE
Not there, newbies. Get the fuck in
the back. Go on, now.

They scurry back, terrified of the Seat Nazi. She takes the seat labeled for her.

Kimberlyn boards. Eyes her 'landfill' seat at the front. She closes her eyes, gearing herself up. Then she grabs the Liberty News sign and moves eight rows back, sticking it onto a prime seat - right behind Grace - labeled WSJ.

From the back of the bus, the two newbie journos protest.

MALE JOURNO
Those seats are reserved for the
major dailies.

GRACE
Shut the fuck up, boys.

She gives Kimberlyn a solidarity nod.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Nellie Carmichael can suck it.

As Kimberlyn settles in, Lola races onto the bus in sunglasses. She sees Kimberlyn and plops down across from her, ignoring the sign that says it's for Politico. She pulls a t-shirt out of a Raygun bag. Tosses it on Kimberlyn's lap.

LOLA
Here. We're a hashtag.

Kimberlyn opens the shirt. It says "#BipartisanBitches." She smiles.

Grace looks across the aisle to the empty seat labeled Sadie McCarthy, New York Times...

Just then, her phone BUZZES as an article POPS UP in her FEED: HOW WE FUELED THE DUMPSTER FIRE OF AMERICAN POLITICS AND HOW WE CAN FIX IT by Sadie McCarthy. Grace starts reading, a grin spreading.

GRACE
Motherfucker.

INT. DES MOINES MARRIOTT - SADIE'S ROOM - MORNING

Sadie wakes, still in her fedora, a hungover mess. She rolls over to look at her phone.

It's a SHIT STORM: 75 new texts, 40,000 new followers, 500 new DM's, etc. Four missed calls from Bruce. She's pale, trembling. The Drudge Report leads with: ELITE MEDIA TELLS THE TRUTH, SHOCKS WORLD. Text from her mom: "Honey, Call me."

SADIE
What the fuck?

INT. NEW YORK TIMES - NEWSROOM - MORNING - INTERCUT

Bruce answers Sadie's call. He's in the newsroom giddily measuring the clicks. 3 million. 3.2 million.

BRUCE
You are a traffic monster.

SADIE
You published it?

BRUCE
Yeah well first I edited it. Cut 33 uses of the word fuck -- possibly a NYT record. Good thing you have a patient and benevolent editor.

SADE
Bruce what the fuck? That was just between us. That was my private fucking resignation letter to you.

BRUCE
Well you didn't say that.

She walks to the bathroom putting Bruce on speaker.

SADIE
The subject line was literally
"Between us."

She dips her head into a sink full of ice water.

BRUCE
Readers are really responding to
this. They hear you.
(beat, pointed)
I heard you.

This is his apology. She gratefully accepts it. Moving on --

SADIE
What about the masthead?

BRUCE
(gleeful)
Fuck the masthead. We haven't had 3
million clicks since the video of
Keanu Reeves playing with puppies.

SADIE
What am I supposed to do now?

BRUCE
Go Gonzo, kid.

He hangs up. Leaving her spinning. And late. As she starts
shoving her shit into her duffel bag.

INT. BUS - DAY

Sadie steps onto the bus, looks at the traveling press.
Grace, Kimberlyn, Lola, photogs -- everyone stands and
cheers, Jerry Maguire-style. ("*That's how you become a
legend*" and "*Fuck yeah. Somebody finally said it.*")

She snaps out of her **Fantasy**. In reality, everyone is busy
with their own shit. Chaos brewing. Grace waves her over.

GRACE
Did you hear? The Geriatric
collapsed in Cedar Rapids. Heart
attack. Word is he's dropping out.

SADIE
Oh shit.

As she throws her bag into her seat, pulling out her laptop
to get to work... An Instagram alert pops up on her phone:
@LOLA has followed you. She smiles, somehow validated.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

As the bus flies down the road, Sadie peering out the window --

SADIE (V.O.)

It was the beginning of the most dramatic primary season in history. One by one, each candidate would fall. By the end I would finish with a story that would be forever cemented in the annals of history. The executive editor of the Times called it the greatest piece of political journalism ever written. Worthy of a Pulitzer, even.

INT. UNKNOWN ROOM - **FLASH FORWARD**

FLASHBULBS and REPORTERS create chaos as they surround someone moving through the crowd. Someone important. Crowd parts to reveal SADIE -- a couple years in the future, as she takes her seat at a table with a microphone.

SADIE (V.O.)

...A tale of betrayal, romance, hubris and the kind of conspiracy that could bring down not just the president but our entire democracy. It was as Gonzo as Gonzo gets, like I always wanted.

POP WIDE TO REVEAL --

She's a witness in a Congressional Investigation. A sea of REPRESENTATIVES stare intensely down at her.

CAMERA FINDS Sadie at her seat. She looks straight to camera.

SADIE (V.O.)

Be careful what you wish for.

As the gavel DROPS,

SMASH TO BLACK.