ALPHA HOUSE
Episode 1

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1 EXT. CAPITOL HILL DISTRICT, WASHINGTON D.C. -- MORNING 1

Open on a montage of deserted streets, streaked with early morning sun, in an upscale Capital Hill neighborhood of well-maintained Federal and late Victorian row houses. We see a newspaper deliveryman pitching plastic-wrapped copies of the Washington Post onto stoops. Over the montage, we hear NPR's Morning Edition (taped from an actual show as close to air date as possible)pop on mid-sentence. The hosts are discussing the upcoming presidential election.

2 INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM, ALPHA HOUSE, WASHINGTON D.C. - MORNING 2

Cut to an old Zenith clock radio on a bedside table. Nearby are multiple prescription pill bottles, a half-empty Wild Turkey bottle, a couple of Tom Clancey paperbacks and a pair of wire-rimmed reading glasses. The voices of the NPR hosts have now been joined by a rumble of steady, contented snoring.

We pull back to reveal a man buried under his bedcovers, only a patch of his shiny dome visible in the pillows. We start traveling across the room, passing a walnut valet stand draped with a navy blue pin-striped suit. A tiny American flag pin winks from the lapel. In passing the accessory tray, we catch a glimpse of a heavy gold watch, Blackberry, wallet, a plastic box of Tic-Tacs, Chapstick, a cocktail napkin scrawled with an address, a swizzle stick and a few campaign buttons.

As we approach the window, we hear two cars pull up outside, followed by the opening and slamming of doors. By the time we peer outside, the sidewalk below has filled with a half dozen grim-faced men in suits and several others in dark blue slickers with the legend "FBI" emblazoned in yellow on the back. Two of the men briskly mount the steps of the stoop. A sharp rap is heard on the door downstairs.

The man in the bed does not stir. We hear the door being answered, some muffled conversation, and then someone quickly shuffling up the stairs. The bedroom door swings open to reveal a large, 50ish man with a ruddy face and a full head of unruly, silver hair. He's wearing a ratty, plaid bathrobe and slippers. This is GIL JOHN BIGGS, Republican senator from the State of North Carolina.

GIL JOHN
Hey, Vern.

No response.

GIL JOHN (CONT'D)
Vernon!

The figure in the bed stirs. Senator VERNON SMITS, an unpleasant-looking man in his late 60's, lifts his head from the pillow and squints at GIL JOHN.

VERNON
What?

GIL JOHN
Were you by any chance scheduled to turn yourself in at the DOJ this mornin'?

VERNON shoots up in bed.

VERNON
Fuck!

He fumbles for his glasses at the nightstand and looks out the window. An FBI agent holding a shotgun stares up at him impassively.

VERNON (CONT'D)
Goddammit!

He races for the bathroom.

GIL JOHN
Okay, so that's just piss-poor staff work.

The sound of running water. Then the clatter of an old electric toothbrush.

VERNON
(mouth full)
Mother fucking son-of-a-bitch!

We hear a screech of tires outside on the street. GIL JOHN peers out the window as a TV news truck pulls up to the curb. The crew spills out onto the street and starts running towards the house.

GIL JOHN
Take your time. I'll make some coffee for everyone.

He turns to leave. Now we hear the hum of an electric shaver.

VERNON
Fuck me! Fuck me! Fuck me!

GIL JOHN looks back at the bathroom door, and then around the room, as if measuring it.

GIL JOHN
Gonna miss you, buddy.

CUT TO:

3 INT. -- SENATE FLOOR, U.S. CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY 3

CREDITS roll over a rapid sequence of scenes depicting the four senators, GIL JOHN BIGGS, ANDY GUZMAN, ROBERT BETTENCOURT and LOUIS LAFFER, JR. first at work, then heading home.

-- ANDY, showboating on the Senate floor.

-- GIL JOHN, sleeping through it.

-- ROBERT, looking at watch, then standing up, stretching, picking up briefcase. On his way out of the chamber, he loosens his tie and awkwardly tries to bump fists with the black doorkeeper.

-- LOUIS, running with oversized briefcase to catch the light rail Capitol subway, door closing just before he can get on. Through the window of the departing train, we see ROBERT, now in a jogging suit, oblivious to his stranded colleague.

-- ANDY, in a limo, being driven through a Capitol Hill neighborhood, passing ROBERT jogging towards home.

-- GIL JOHN, emerging from a cab in front of his house, as LOUIS, cleaning leaves from the gutter looks down from a ladder placed against the house.

-- ANDY, jacket off, mixing a gin and tonic in the kitchen.

-- GIL JOHN, now in sweats, grabbing a beer from the refrigerator.

-- All FOUR of them converging on the living room, three of them plopping down into the couch a' la Simpsons in front of the TV. Only LOUIS remains standing, picking up discarded garments and starting to fold them. As ROBERT and ANDY look around the couch for the remote, GIL JOHN flips open an old pizza box and finds it, right where he'd left it. He hits the power button, and we start to hear that day's political coverage from a newscast as close to air date as possible.

FADE TO BLACK

4 INT. LIVING ROOM, ALPHA HOUSE, WASHINGTON D.C. - MORNING 4

The sound of the evening's news gives way to the next morning's news, now punctuated by a dog barking.

We open on an unmade cot, then travel to the couch, which has been pulled out into a hide-a-bed, already neatly made up, then on into the kitchen.

CUT TO:

5 INT. KITCHEN, ALPHA HOUSE, WASHINGTON D.C. 5

A madly aggressive Coonhound, hurling himself at the back of the door. A young dreadlocked gas meter inspector in coveralls peers apprehensively through the window.

LOUIS LAFFER, JR. 45ish, balding, bespectacled Republican congressman from Nevada and owner of the building, arrives at the door to intervene.

LOUIS
Buster! Down!

He ineffectually tries to wave the dog off, clearly trying to avoid touching him. The dog bumps up against him, and LOUIS recoils.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
Jesus, Gil John, will you control your damn dog?

At the kitchen table, GIL JOHN, lost in the sports section of the paper, calls out to his dog.

GIL JOHN
Buster. Come here, boy.

The dog continues to howl. LOUIS shouts to their visitor over the din.

LOUIS
Keeshawn!
(gesturing)
Go around the house! The basement's unlocked!

The nervous meter man nods, and quickly disappears around the corner. LOUIS rushes over to the sink, squirts himself with soap and frantically works it into his hands.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
I swear to God, Gil John, that dog is racist.

GIL JOHN
How can he be racist? He doesn't bark at Robert.

ROBERT BETTENCOURT, a dapper, 50ish, African-American senator from Pennsylvania, also Republican, dressed in white collared striped shirt with rep tie, gold cuff links and suspenders looks up from his newspaper and over at the dog. Buster starts wagging his tail.

GIL JOHN (CONT'D)
'Course, could be the French cuffs and cologne are throwing him.

LOUIS
Now, *that's* racist.

GIL JOHN finishes off his coffee, stands up, and reaches for his jacket.

GIL JOHN
Nah. I got nothin' against blacks. Spent my whole life around 'em. It's the gays I hate. Just kidding, Louis.

LOUIS looks around anxiously.

LOUIS
Why me? Why didn't you say that to Robert?

GIL JOHN
Because Robert hates gays, too. So he wasn't offended.

ROBERT ignores them both.

LOUIS
I'm not offended either. I'm a nationally-prominent critic of gay lifestyle, for crying out loud, okay?

LOUIS sits down at the table, picks up a section of the paper and snaps it open indignantly.

GIL JOHN
(shrugs)
Fine with me.
(to Robert)
You goin' to the caucus this morning? I got a car out front.

ROBERT
Excellent.

ROBERT gulps down his coffee and stands up. He pulls on his suit jacket, shoots his cuffs, and as he smooths his lapels, he suddenly remembers something.

Reaching back over the newspaper, he grabs a porcelain sugar bowl. He lifts off the top, revealing a cache of tiny cloisonné American flag pins.

As LOUIS fishes through the bowl and extracts a pin, we hear scuffling and a thump from downstairs, followed by the clatter of steel tools spilling onto the floor. Over in his corner, Buster's head shoots up.

LOUIS
Oh, shit...

The dog rockets through LOUIS's outstretched arms and the basement door. Over the meter man's scream, we

CUT TO:

6 INT. TOWN CAR, ON THE WAY TO CAPITOL, WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY 6

ROBERT and GIL JOHN, in the back of a town car speeding toward the Hill. ROBERT, already on his Blackberry, glances over at GIL JOHN and does a doubletake.

ROBERT
Is that Vernon's tie?

GIL JOHN
Yeah. He won't miss it in prison.

ROBERT
Who steals a tie with grease stains?
(laughing)
What else did you acquire?

GIL JOHN
Who cares? Vern wasn't as tight-assed about his shit as you are. By the way, who are we going to get to replace him?

ROBERT
(back to Blackberry)
I dunno. Louis's call -- it's his house. You seen the latest RNC internals?

GIL JOHN
No, but my wife has. Someone on my staff keeps feeding 'em to her, so she calls me up from Memphis every day screaming that I'm a lazy-ass fuck who's out to ruin her life by losing the race.

ROBERT
It is a little unusual that you don't campaign.

GIL JOHN
Why should I? My opponent's had two mini strokes since he was nominated. Who's going to vote for a walking timebomb? Besides, everybody in the state knows my record. Two undefeated seasons, eleven conference titles, two national championships.

ROBERT nods respectfully.

ROBERT
That does speak for itself.

CUT TO:

7 INT. MINORITY CAUCUS ROOM, CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY 7

A RNC party OFFICIAL in holding forth to 10 or so Republican senators in an ornate Capitol meeting room. The senators are sitting in gold ballroom chairs, sipping coffee, a few of them taking notes. Behind the OFFICIAL, a Powerpoint presentation is in progress, although the bulleted data points bear no obvious relationship to what is being said.

In the back of the room, ROBERT stirs his coffee while GIL JOHN yawns. His young chief of staff, TAMMY STACKHOUSE, as focused and intense as GIL JOHN is laid-back, leans forward attentively, note pad on knee.

OFFICIAL
Okay, folks, so here's the takeaway on Afghanistan from the party's perspective. With Obama's ten-year fade-to-black, we don't lose the war. With Romney's all-in-for-as-long-as-it-takes, we win the war. We're the GOP; winning is what we do. We've tested this. Not losing doesn't work for us. Not losing is a Democrat thing.

The OFFICIAL takes off his glasses and pauses for dramatic effect

OFFICIAL (CONT'D)
So that's what the trip is all about, ladies and gentlemen. You go to Kabul, you stand with the troops and you say loud and clear, "We can do better than not losing".

GIL JOHN snorts and looks over at TAMMY, who is busily scribbling notes on a legal pad.

GIL JOHN
You're getting this down?

TAMMY
Yes, sir.

GIL JOHN
Why?

CUT TO:

8 INT. CORRIDOR, U.S. SENATE, WASHINGTON, D.C - DAY 8

GIL JOHN and ROBERT are the first through the large oaken doors of the caucus room. Behind them, TAMMY is talking quietly on her cell phone.

GIL JOHN
Whoever put that on my schedule is about to have a bad day. What a waste of time. Do I look like someone prepared to fly to fuckin' Kabul for the goddamn national committee?

ROBERT
You do not. You look like someone prepared to fly to Philly for the World Series.

GIL JOHN
You get me, Robert. I'll give you that.

As TAMMY rejoins the two men, we hear a cell phone playing the Tar Heel fight song. GIL JOHN pulls it out of his pocket.

GIL JOHN (CONT'D)
(looking at screen)
My wife.

He turns away from the others and flips open the phone.

GIL JOHN (CONT'D)
What is it, Maddie?

MADDIE (V.O.)
You're going with the delegation to Afghanistan, right?

GIL JOHN slowly looks around at TAMMY, who is now staring at her feet.

GIL JOHN
Why would I do that, Maddie?

MADDIE (V.O.)
Because a full brigade of North Carolina Guard rotated over there last week?

GIL JOHN
So what? They know I support 'em. I'll make a video...

MADDIE (V.O.)
Gil John, everything's changed.

GIL JOHN
Changed? How changed?

MADDIE (V.O.)
Taylor had another mini stroke last night. He withdrew from the race.

GIL JOHN
What? That's... that's good! Well, not for him, obviously, but shit, that's an outstandin' development.

MADDIE (V.O.)
Wrong. The party replaced him with Digger Mancusi.

GIL JOHN stops pacing. He looks stunned.

GIL JOHN
What!

MADDIE (V.O.)
You're in a real race now, darlin'. You can't just sit in your man cave anymore, waitin' to be re-elected...

GIL JOHN
Goddamn son of a bitch!

GIL JOHN hurls his phone across the hall. It caroms off a door, skitters along the floor, stopping at ROBERT's feet.

ROBERT looks down at the shattered phone.

ROBERT
That's an iPhone. Who smashes an iPhone?

TAMMY
He's got a new opponent. Digger Mancusi.

ROBERT starts to laugh.

ROBERT
Digger Mancusi? The Duke basketball coach?

TAMMY nods gravely.

TAMMY
We're fucked.

CUT TO:

9 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY 9

LOUIS is meeting with a family values lobbying group that advocates against gay marriage. The event is basically a photo op, staged in front of a bank of flags in a Capitol Hill conference room.

SIMON, the group's curiously effeminate executive director, is presenting LOUIS with an absurdly tall, kitschy, brass sculpture of a wedding-cake couple to honor his support for their agenda. About two dozen people have crowded into the conference room, and a PHOTOGRAPHER, a videographer, and SHELBY, a reporter from LOUIS's hometown of Reno, Nevada, are present to capture the occasion.

SIMON
Senator Laffer, on behalf of the Council for Normal Marriage -- and all the born and unborn children conceived within normal marriages -- it is my privilege to present you with our 2012 "Say No to Sodomy" Award!

LOUIS
(nervous smile)
My.
(inspecting the award)
"Say No..."

SIMON
(emphatically)
"..to Sodomy"!

PHOTOGRAPHER
Could you move in closer, gentlemen?

SIMON throws an arm around LOUIS, who visibly stiffens. As the PHOTOGRAPHER clicks away, a flustered LOUIS tries to compose himself.

LOUIS
(studying the award)
Thank you, Simon. I'm deeply honored to receive this... this recognition. But I'm not the only one saying no to unnatural unions. There are millions of normally married Americans -- the men married to the women -- who are also repulsed when they think about two men together. Or two women together, though maybe not as much...

He glances over at JULIE, his chief of staff. She's drawing a finger across her throat.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
So hats off to the Council for Normal Marriage and the important work they're doing to prevent not just state-sanctioned sodomy, but also mutual masturbation, frictation, and barebacking across this great land of ours.

JULIE drops her face in her hands. Off SIMON's gleaming eyes, we

CUT TO:

10 INT. SENATE SUBWAY, U.S. CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY 10

LOUIS, cradling his bizarre new award, wanders onto a waiting car of the underground light rail train that travels between the Capitol Building and the Senate Office Building. GIL JOHN and ROBERT are seated together in the back, GIL JOHN in a sullen funk.

LOUIS
Hey.

ROBERT
Hey. How'd it go?

LOUIS sits down and shrugs.

LOUIS
What's TMI mean?

ROBERT
Too much information. Why?

LOUIS
I dunno. My staff's always saying it.

ROBERT
We're going to lunch. Wanna join us?

LOUIS looks down at his cumbersome trophy.

LOUIS
Um...

ROBERT
No worries. You can bring your friend.

CUT TO:

11 INT. SENATE DINING ROOM, WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY 11

An array of sparkling crystal and gold-embossed china on a crisp, white tablecloth. We pull back to reveal ROBERT, GIL JOHN and LOUIS seated at a table for four, with LOUIS's "Say No to Sodomy" trophy propped up in the empty chair.

LOUIS
(to Gil John)
Afghanistan? Are serious? Why?

GIL JOHN
I support the troops.

ROBERT
His wife's making him. Basically a campaign swing.

LOUIS
But you don't campaign.

ROBERT
He does now. Taylor dropped out. He's got a new opponent.

LOUIS
Who?

ROBERT
Digger Mancusi.

LOUIS's eyes widen.

LOUIS
Digger Mancusi? The Duke coach?

GIL JOHN
How the hell do you know who Digger Mancusi is?

LOUIS
My nephew goes to Duke. He's like a god in North Carolina, right?

ROBERT
Right.

LOUIS
(to Gil John, catching himself)
I mean, you're a god, too, Gil. But you're like a retired god. He's active.
(a beat, then blurts out)
Holy cow, you're fucked...

GIL JOHN
(curtly)
Thank you, Louis.

LOUIS
Sorry. Afghanistan. Good play. Very senatorial. Digger can't do that.
(to Robert)
You going, too.

ROBERT
Thinking about it. You ought to go, too, Louis. It's bicameral. You'd be welcome.

LOUIS
Me? Why?

ROBERT
I dunno. Couldn't hurt for youto pose with a few Spec Ops guys in wraparounds.

LOUIS
What do you mean by that?

GIL JOHN rises suddenly.

GIL JOHN
I gotta go. Late for a meeting.

ROBERT checks his watch.

ROBERT
Me, too. Louis, could you take care of the check? We'll square up with you later.

Before he can answer, both men are gone. Pull back on the forlorn sight of LOUIS sitting at lunch alone with his trophy.

CUT TO:

12 INT. ROBERT'S OFFICE BATHROOM, SENATE OFFICE BLDG - EVENING 12

ROBERT is unzipping his garment bag in a small bathroom adjacent to his office. He removes a silk bathrobe and elegant pinstriped pajamas from the bag and starts to put them on. We hear the sound of the TV playing in his office, as we

CUT TO:

13 INT. ROBERT'S OFFICE, SENATE OFFICE BLDING - EVENING 13

A flat-screen TV, on which we see C-span coverage of Senate proceedings. The caption below reads: "Senate filibuster of the Buffet Rule". Senator MOWER is speaking, passionately. We pull back to reveal ROBERT's administrative assistant, AARON STIMSON, a seasoned Capitol Hill veteran.

MOWER
(on TV)
Mr. President, this body has already debated the Buffet Rule and rejected it. The White House can demagogue all it wants, but we cannot get this economy back on track by taxing job-creators. Job creators are people, just like corporations. You take away their incentives, they won't create jobs. They just won't feel it. History proves that.

ROBERT appears beside AARON. He's clad in elegant pinstripe pajamas, silk paisley dressing gown and black velvet slippers with gold embroidered crests. On the collar of his pajamas, he's wearing a tiny American flag pin. He's clutching a leather shaving kit.

ROBERT
This is so old school. What happened to the implicit filibuster -- where we just threaten to do it and nobody loses any sleep?

AARON
Harry Reid's no dummy. Calling our bluff keeps Republicans -- and only Republicans -- off the campaign trail.

ROBERT
What time am I on?

AARON
3:45 a.m.

ROBERT
Do I have a speech?

AARON
Not unless you want one. No one's going to see it. I can get Andrea to knock something out.

ROBERT
No. No, I guess not.

AIDE
If I can make a suggestion. You're going to the private contractor fund-raiser tomorrow. You could get something nice about them into the record.

ROBERT
I suppose it beats my doing bird calls. Or defending the rich. Rough up some bullet points.

ROBERT pulls a cell phone out the pocket of his dressing gown, and punches in a number.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
(into phone)
You watching this?

CUT TO:

14 INT. GIL JOHN'S OFFICE, SENATE OFFICE BUILDING - AFTERNOON 14

GIL JOHN in his office, which looks more like the rec room of the coach he once was. Signed basketballs, photos and other sport memorabilia line the walls.

Relaxing on a sofa, tie at half-mast, nursing a glass or scotch, GIL JOHN is watching the filibuster.

GIL JOHN
I thought we adjourned. What the fuck's he doing?

TAMMY enters his office.

ROBERT
(on speakerphone)
Same thing you'll be doing in a few hours -- filibustering.

GIL JOHN
Fuck I am.
(to Tammy)
Am I?
(Tammy nods)
Fuck, I am.

ROBERT
Just thought I'd call to remind you in case you were getting liquored up for the evening.

GIL JOHN
That's what normal people do, Robert. We don't all have season tickets to the opera.

CUT TO:

15 INT. ROBERT'S OFFICE, SENATE OFFICE BLDING - EVENING 15

ROBERT, walking toward the door, AARON in tow.

ROBERT
Tammy, get some coffee in him.

TAMMY
(V.O.)
I'll try, Senator.

GIL JOHN
(V.O.)
Both of you can kiss my ass.

ROBERT laughs, snaps his phone shut and reaches for the door.

16 INT. CORRIDOR, U.S. SENATE, WASHINGTON, D.C - EVENING 16

ROBERT emerges from his office with AARON.

ROBERT
Have someone wake me up at 3:15. I want to grab a shower first.

AARON
Yes, sir.

As he pads down the long marble corridor, ROBERT passes the night crew -- a cleaning crew is pushing a cart full of brooms and supplies.

ROBERT
Oh, Randall.

RANDALL
Good evening, Senator.

ROBERT
Where do we stand on the water rings on the burled side table in my office?

RANDALL
The finish has been damaged, Senator. That's not a cleaning issue.

As he passes RANDALL, ROBERT makes a game-show buzzer sound.

ROBERT
Wrong answer, Randall. The right answer is, "Whatever it takes." That's how you get ahead.

RANDALL watches ROBERT continue on down the corridor.

RANDALL
I'm retiring in three days.

ROBERT
(over shoulder)
Plenty of time. Your call. It's about the pride, Randall.

ROBERT and AARON turn the corner and disappear. Off a nonplused RANDALL, we

CUT TO:

17 INT. SENATE CLOAKROOM, CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, D.C. - NIGHT 17

ROBERT is asleep on one of two dozen cots that have been set up in the Senate cloakroom. Three other senators are snoring away, lit only by a TV with the sound off. On the screen, another senator is at the podium, apparently singing.

As we pan over this scene, we become gradually aware of the sound of a woman moaning. ROBERT eyes flicker opens, and he sits up suddenly. In the shadows of the far side of the room, he can just make out a couple in the throes of lovemaking. ROBERT clears his throat and they freeze. He then looks down at his watch: 3:10.

CUT TO:

18 INT. CORRIDOR, U.S. SENATE, WASHINGTON, D.C - NIGHT 18

ROBERT, in dressing gown, emerging from the cloakroom. AARON awaits him with garment bag, shaving kit and a steaming cup of coffee.

ROBERT
Since when is the Senate cloakroom being used for hook-ups?

AARON
I think it's the cots -- the novelty of it.

ROBERT takes the coffee, shaving gear and garment bag and crosses the hall to the men's room.

ROBERT
What happened to dignity, to privacy? I miss old Washington, when people fucked in broom closets.

He bangs open the door and disappears into the men's room.

CUT TO:

19 INT. SENATE FLOOR, U.S. CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, D.C. - NIGHT 19

The Senate floor, deserted save a handful of senators and their aides, among them LOUIS. The press gallery is likewise nearly empty -- only a few AV technicians and the same REPORTER we met in LOUIS's office are watching.

Meanwhile, in the well, a SENATOR, arms outstretched, is singing in a surprisingly rich baritone. A portable CD player resting on the podium is providing accompaniment.

SENATOR #1
"And the world will be better for this, that one man, scorned and covered with scars..."

ROBERT and AARON are entering the chamber, ROBERT reviewing his list of talking points.

SENATOR #1 (CONT'D)
(big operatic finish)
"...still strove, with his last ounce of courage, to reach the unreachable star!"

The SENATOR doesn't come within a mile of the final note, but the handful of legislators and staff present give him a rousing ovation.

SENATOR #1 (CONT'D)
Thank you.

ROBERT, who doesn't even look up from his notes, continues walking towards the well.

ROBERT
Will the gentleman from Verona take five?

The SENATOR chuckles and gathers up his papers and CD player.

SENATOR #1
He will, sir. He yields to his colleague out of the great state of fatigue which has overcome him.

As the SENATOR steps away from the podium, ROBERT pats him on his back and takes his place.

ROBERT
I commend the gentleman for striving with his last ounce of courage and so forth. He reminds me of our troops.

The SENATOR pumps his fist as he leaves the well.

SENATOR #1
Hoo-ah!

As the SENATOR heads up the aisle, he passes GIL JOHN, disheveled, tipsy, making his way to his desk.

ROBERT
As well as our brave private security contractors.
(referring to notes)
Particularly those from Carthage Security Systems, Triple Canopy, Inc., 3-D Global Solutions and other members of the Southeast Asia Private Security Association. These are the real heroes.

CUT TO:

20 INT. SENATE FLOOR, U.S. CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, D.C. - NIGHT 20

Speech completed, ROBERT has settled into a seat next to GIL JOHN and is checking his email. In the well, another SENATOR is reading a list of names.

SENATOR #2
"...Mark Peter Begich... James Elroy Risch... Thomas Richard Carper..."

GIL JOHN
Who the hell are these people?

ROBERT
(distracted)
What?

GIL JOHN
Must be Afghan war dead. Wish I'd thought of that.

ROBERT stares at him.

ROBERT
They're the names of U.S. Senators.

SENATOR #2
"...Kelly A. Ayotte... John Henry Hoeven III..."

GIL JOHN
You sure?

SENATOR #2
"... ... Gil John Raymond Biggs ..."

GIL JOHN shrugs.

GIL JOHN
Who can keep track, you know? There are what, a hundred of us?

SENATOR #2
"...John Forbes Kerry... and Andrew Ramos Guzman."

ROBERT
Hey... Andy Guzman. There's an idea.

GIL JOHN
What?

ROBERT
Andy -- for the house. Shoulda thought of him. Ever since his marriage blew up, he's been staying at some hotel.

GIL JOHN
Is he up for election?

ROBERT
Yeah. But he's safe. Twenty point lead.

ROBERT stands up and stretches.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
I'll sound him out and run it by Louis. What are you doing for a speech?

GIL JOHN looks down at the prepared text in front of him.

GIL JOHN
I dunno. Somethin' Tammy worked up.

ROBERT hands GIL JOHN his own text.

ROBERT
Here, just read mine again. Contractors'll love you.

GIL JOHN
Hey, thanks.

CUT TO:

21 INT. CORRIDOR, U.S. SENATE, WASHINGTON, D.C - EARLY MORNING 21

ROBERT leaving the Senate chamber, joined by AARON.

ROBERT
Have you seen Senator Guzman this morning?

AARON
Nope. But I believe you did. In the cloakroom.

ROBERT
That was him?

AARON
According to... well, pretty much everyone in the building.

ROBERT
Good source.

ROBERT peels off and goes into the cloakroom.

CUT TO:

22 INT. SENATE CLOAKROOM, CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, D.C. - MORNING 22

The lights are up and RANDALL is folding up cots. ANDY is sitting on his cot tying his shoes and looking over his speech. At Robert's approach, ANDY looks up.

ROBERT
Got a moment, Andy?

ANDY
Robert, what do you think I should read -- the Bill of Rights or e-mails from my ex-wife's boyfriend?

ROBERT
There's time for both. Listen, you still looking for a place to live?

ANDY
(looking up)
I am, I am. Why?

ROBERT
Louis and Gil John and I are looking for a new roommate. And you seem like someone who could really use a room.

ANDY
Got that right. It's hard to have a date.

ROBERT
I know. I heard you dating this morning. In fact, it woke me up.

ANDY
Oh. Sorry.
(stands up)
That's just between the three of us, right?

ROBERT
Too late. This is high school. So what do you think?

ANDY
Possible. I'd have to check out the house. It's not a dump, is it?

ROBERT
Are you kidding? It's Louis's place. We have to use coasters. Come check it out tonight.
(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)
I've got a reception at the Sheraton, should be done by 6:30.

ANDY
(checking Blackberry)
Works for me. I'll swing by and pick you up.

ANDY stands up and stretches out his back, painfully.

ANDY (CONT'D)
I'm getting too old for this.

ROBERT
Filibusters?

ANDY
No, sex against a wall. But that, too...

CUT TO:

23 INT. JOHN'S OFFICE, SENATE OFFICE BUILDING - AFTERNOON 23

Later that day, in GIL JOHN's office, TAMMY is briefing her boss, ticking off items with customary briskness. She sits ramrod straight in a chair facing the senator's desk, an odd positioning since GIL JOHN himself is stretched out on the sofa on the other side of the room. Exhausted from being up all night, GIL JOHN is having trouble tracking his aide's clipped recitation of action items.

TAMMY
So if we're going to commit on the Afghanistan trip, I'll coordinate the schedule with the RNC and contact DOD public affairs. Do we want to run it by the campaign first?

Off GIL JOHN, who starts to reply but is cut off by a strong, southern-accented female voice from the speakerphone on his desk.

MATTIE (V.O.)
No. We're definitely committing. Do we have dates?

We now see why TAMMY is facing the desk and not her boss.

TAMMY
The 21st through the 24th, Mrs. Biggs.

GIL JOHN
Wait a minute. The 21st is...

MATTIE (V.O.)
That'll work for us. The debate's not until the 26th. Anything else?

GIL JOHN
Debate?

TAMMY
One last item, ma'am. Do we want to enlist any other colleagues?

GIL JOHN
What debate?

MATTIE (V.O.)
No, I want G.J. on camera in every shot. Too many VIPs, it cuts down on his exposure.

GIL JOHN finally sits up and pulls on his suit jacket. TAMMY, facing the speakerphone, doesn't notice.

MATTIE (CONT'D)
It's going to be tricky, G.J. You got to hit all the fear buttons without looking afraid yourself. Like you're there personally staring down al Quaeda for America. Know what I mean? Gil John?

He's gone.

CUT TO:

24 INT. LOUIS'S CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE, WASH D.C. - AFTERNOON 24

A local news interview with AL HICKCOK, the 40ish rancher who's running for LOUIS's congressional seat in Nevada. AL's wearing a cowboy hat, plaid jacket, and he's sitting on a fence rail with a deer rifle across his lap. He looks good-natured and totally comfortable in his skin.

We pull back to reveal LOUIS, JULIE and another young aide, JAMES, viewing the interview. JULIE and JAMES are watching attentively, but LOUIS paces in the back of the room in front of a row of three antique one-arm bandits.

AL
(on TV)
Well, I happen to enjoy hunting, have ever since my grandfather took me out -- I must have been seven years old -- to track a pack of timber wolves who were preying on our cattle.
(MORE)

AL (CONT'D)
I told that to Louis once, when we were both state legislators, and he about fell over. His eyes got all wide and he said, "You hunted wolves? Wasn't that dangerous?" I said, "Yeah, for the wolves!"

AL roars with laughter.

AL (CONT'D)
But you know, Louis is great. Different backgrounds, that's all.

JULIE reaches for the DVD machine and kills the interview.

JULIE
You get the general picture, Congressman. He's trying to paint you as a wimp. And the numbers suggest he's getting some traction.

LOUIS sits down and slumps into his chair, despondent.

LOUIS
So what am I supposed to do? Switch to lo-rises? Wear Doc Martens 1460s on the Senate floor?

His aides exchange puzzled glances.

JULIE
Sir, we think we need to prepare a more aggressive communications package for the campaign, especially free media.
(motioning to James)
James just fielded an invitation for you from The Colbert Report, one of those "Better Know a District" segments...

LOUIS
Wait a minute. Nobody does those anymore. You got no control. Colbert makes you look like a horse's ass.

JAMES
Yes, sir. You gotta be pretty ballsy to do it.

LOUIS stares at him for a moment.

LOUIS
Which is your point.

JAMES
Well...

They are suddenly interrupted by ROBERT, who knocks on the doorframe.

ROBERT
Louis? Got a minute. It's important.

JULIE and JAMES take their cue, quickly leaving, closing the door behind them.

LOUIS
What's important?

ROBERT
It's not important. I just don't like to wait.

ROBERT walks over to the slot machines, pulls a few quarters out of his pocket and starts to play.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
What do you think of Andy Guzman?

LOUIS
(shrugging)
Guzman? Okay, I guess. I worked with him on a couple reconciliations. Bit of a showboat. Why?

ROBERT
He needs a place to stay. Like right away. His wife kicked him out. His seat's safe, so you won't have to worry about turnover. You got another quarter?

LOUIS fishes into his pocket and flips ROBERT a quarter.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
So what do you say?

LOUIS
I guess it'd be all right.

ROBERT
Great. He's coming by tonight.

ROBERT suddenly hits the jackpot. A hundred quarters sluice into the tray, bells ringing.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
Damn, I didn't think this thing actually paid out.

ROBERT paws at the tray, shoveling the quarters into his briefcase.

LOUIS
Neither did I.

ROBERT flips a quarter back to LOUIS and heads for the door.

ROBERT
Gotta go to a reception. See you back at the house.

CUT TO:

25 INT. RECEPTION ROOM, SHERATON HOTEL, WASH D.C. - EVENING 25

ROBERT, threading his way through a packed fund-raising event being held in his honor in a ballroom at a Washington hotel. He is stopped by ED CARTHAGE, CEO of a private security firm.

ED
Senator! Appreciate the shout-out. Even on C-Span 2 at 0300, love hearing the Carthage Security name-check on the Senate floor. Then to hear it again at 0530 from your buddy Biggs? Gold. Best media play we've had in the history of the company.

ROBERT
You've only been in business three years, Ed.

ED
What can I say? President Peace Prize has been good for business. Listen, Senator, I'd like you to meet an outstanding young patriot...

He motions to an intense-looking man in a crewcut and aviator glasses to join the conversation.

ED (CONT'D)
This is retired Special Forces Captain Brandon Carshaw, one of my best people -- he's just back from Afghanistan.

ROBERT
Welcome home, Captain. How do you like being a private contractor?

BRANDON
How do I like making a quarter-million a year? Very much, sir.

ROBERT laughs. He notices a clear plastic tube coiling out of BRANDON's ear.

ROBERT
Must make up for all those years living off lizards and paint chips.

BRANDON
Price of freedom, sir. I was happy to serve.

ED
The Senator's on his way over to the sandbox next week, Brandon.

ROBERT
Maybe. We don't know who's on the CONDEL yet.

ROBERT feels a hand at his elbow.

AARON
Gentlemen, if I might just steal the Senator away for a moment. He's got a lot of folks to thank here.

BRANDON whips out a business card and hands it to ROBERT.

ED
Anything I can do on the security front, sir, just let me know. I'd be happy to coordinate your trip.

ROBERT
Thank you, Captain...

The AIDE practically spins ROBERT away from the conversation.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

AARON
(hushed, urgent voice)
The grand jury just came back.

ROBERT slowly swivels to face his aide. AARON would not have interrupted him if the news were good. ROBERT's face falls as we

CUT TO:

26 INT. LIVING ROOM, ALPHA HOUSE, WASHINGTON D.C. - EVENING 26

LOUIS and GIL JOHN are drinking shots of Jack Daniels in the living room.

It's still early in the evening, but they're already half in the bag.

GIL JOHN
Okay, so one more reason why you should make the Afghanistan trip...

LOUIS
I wasn't aware of even one.

GIL JOHN
That interview with the guy runnin' against you. Hickcok.

LOUIS
How'd you see that? It was local.

GIL JOHN
Christ, Louis, nothing's local anymore. Even I know that. It went viral. YouTube.

LOUIS
Shit.

GIL JOHN
Point is, if you're holding pressers in front of an MRAP in Kandahar, the other side can hardly call you out for being a fag.

LOUIS
He wasn't calling me a fag.

GIL JOHN
Well, he sure as hell wasn't calling you Arnold Schwarzenegger.

LOUIS sways in his seat, trying not to pitch over.

LOUIS
Schwarzenegger's a fag.

GIL JOHN
What are you talkin' about? Like twenty women accused him of sexual assault.

LOUIS
Never proven.

GIL JOHN
Look, Louis, I'm tellin' you, man, you need to go. Get your ass behind a SAW or M-2 or somethin'.

LOUIS
What are they?

GIL JOHN
Light arms.

LOUIS
Right.

GIL JOHN
You never handled a weapon in your life, have you?

LOUIS laughs, too loudly, as we

CUT TO:

27 EXT. CAPITOL HILTON, WASHINGTON D.C. -- NIGHT - NIGHT 27

ROBERT and AARON emerging from the hotel. The senator is worried.

ROBERT
How's this going down, Aaron?

AARON
Legally, you should be fine for now. No way they empanel a jury until after the election. But the ethics committee will have to convene.

ROBERT
But those are closed sessions, right?

AARON
Yeah, but you can expect the Democratic staffers to leak like crazy.

ROBERT
There's nothing to leak. There was no kickback.

AARON
Well, then, maybe someone will leak the lack of evidence. You know Gil John's on that committee, right?

ROBERT
Christ, that's right...
(after a moment)
Okay, we need to change the subject when this breaks. Get me on that CONDEL.

AARON
You want to leave the country?

ROBERT
You got a better idea?

While they stand on the corner, a limousine glides up to the curb. The window lowers, and ANDY, black tie, grins out at them.

ANDY
Ready when you are, boss.

CUT TO:

28 INT. ANDY'S LIMO, ON THE WAY TO ALPHA HOUSE - NIGHT 28

As ROBERT slides into the jump seat, he feels like he's just entered a rolling discotheque. Salsa music blares over the sound system, and a multicolored rope of LED lights pulsates in time with the music. One side of the limo is paneled with mirrors and a small wet bar with full array of liquor. ANDY, with drink in one hand, has his arm around a companion, ADRIANA, a spectacular 30ish Cuban-American billionaire heiress.

ROBERT looks totally nonplused.

ANDY
I know what this looks like.

ROBERT
What does it look like?

ANDY
Like I'm bringing my mistress to check out my new crib. But the truth is we just met.

ADRIANA
Although I've been backing him for years.

ANDY
And I've been fronting for her! Who knew?

ROBERT
Who knew what?

ANDY gazes at ADRIANA appreciatively.

ANDY
That she was so much more than an illegible signature. And it gets better: She's setting up a SuperPak for me!

ADRIANA
Shhhh!

ANDY
Yes, shhh! We can't coordinate! Forget I mentioned it.

ADRIANA extends her hand.

ADRIANA
Adriana de Portago.

ROBERT
Robert Bettencourt.

ADRIANA
Are you a junior senator or senior?

ROBERT
Senior. Unlike Andy, who has no standing at all.

ADRIANA playfully squeezes ANDY's arm.

ADRIANA
A girl has to start somewhere.

Everyone laughs for different reasons as we

DISSOLVE TO:

29 INT. KITCHEN, ALPHA HOUSE, WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT 29

ADRIANA, ROBERT and ANDY standing in the living room of the house, surveying an unmade cot and a small hill of dirty laundry that has been built up in the corner.

ADRIANA
You guys aren't really senators, are you?

ANDY
(to Robert)
Are you kidding me? This is how you live?

ROBERT
It's how Gil John lives. I live on the non-hillbilly side of the room.

ANDY
Let's see the rest of the house.

CUT TO:

30 INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM, ALPHA HOUSE, WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT 30

ADRIANA is bouncing on the bed, laughing.

ANDY
Wait, wait, don't start without me!

He dives in after her and pulls the covers over them. More laughter.

ANDY (CONT'D)
(muffled voice, from under covers, to Robert)
This is more like it. What's the rent?

ROBERT
Actually, Andy, on account of my seniority, I'll be moving into this room. You'd be sleeping with Gil John.

ANDY's head pops up from under the covers.

ANDY
I don't think so.
(to Adriana)
Let's go, honey.

ADRIANA
I want it! I want it! I've never had a love-nest!

Then...

The thunderous sound of a shotgun BLAST from downstairs.

ROBERT
What the hell...

CUT TO:

31 INT. BASEMENT, ALPHA HOUSE, WASHINGTON, D.C. - NIGHT 31

LOUIS, shaking, looking down at the discharged shotgun in his hands. A teetering GIL JOHN is staring at LOUIS in disbelief. He starts to laugh.

GIL JOHN
How could you miss that? How could you fuckin' miss that?

We cut to the other side of the basement, where a large pumpkin has been set up in front of an old mattress. About three feet above and to the left of the perfectly intact pumpkin, there's a large blackened hole, still smoking, where the spray of shot pellets tore through the mattress.

We hear the clatter of the others coming down the basement stairs.

LOUIS
(meekly)
Give me a break. I'm shit-faced.

ROBERT
Jesus, Gil John...

GIL JOHN grabs the shotgun from LOUIS.

GIL JOHN
So what? We're only 20 feet away, for Chrissake!

GIL JOHN swings the shotgun up and lets fly at the pumpkin -- BOOM! BOOM! ADRIANA screams and covers her ears. Ejected shotgun shells fly across the basement, bouncing off the furnace.

We cut back to the MATTRESS, which now has two new holes. Fibers of stuffing fill the air. The pumpkin remains unscathed. GIL JOHN looks down at the weapon, mystified.

GIL JOHN (CONT'D)
Fuck me. Must be the sighting.

LOUIS, too shaken by all the gunfire to gloat over GIL JOHN's errant shots, heads for the stairs.

LOUIS
I'm going to bed. I gotta do an interview in the morning.
(noticing Adriana)
Who are you?

ADRIANA
Adriana de Portago.

LOUIS thinks that over for a moment.

LOUIS
From Miami?

ADRIANA
Yes.

LOUIS
You gave me some money once. Thanks.

ADRIANA
You're welcome.

LOUIS then notices ANDY.

LOUIS
Andy.

ANDY
Louis.

LOUIS
You joining us?

ANDY
If I can have the upstairs room.

LOUIS
No problem.

ROBERT
Hey, wait a minute...

LOUIS
It's my house.
(glancing at Adriana)
Thanks again for your support.

A beguiling smile from ADRIANA.

ADRIANA
Any time.

ADRIANA looks over at ANDY and mouths the word, "Cute." LOUIS shuffles up the stairs. Another BOOM! As we

CUT TO:

32 INT. KITCHEN, ALPHA HOUSE, WASHINGTON D.C. - MORNING 32

The kitchen TV, with latest election news. ROBERT's seated at the kitchen table, skiming the Wall Street Journal.

ROBERT
You know how long I've been waiting for that room?

GIL JOHN, pouring chow into his dog's bowl, ignores him.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
I'm so tired of living in squalor. No offense.

GIL JOHN
Just as well. I'd move out before sharing a room with Andy Guzman. Then y'all'd be back to where you started.

ROBERT
What's your problem with Andy?

GIL JOHN
Damn hot dog. It's never not about him. Ever try doin' a joint press conference with him? I did, once, on the hurricane relief bill. Spent 40 minutes holdin' my cock while he took credit for a bill I wrote!

ROBERT
You didn't write it. Your staff wrote it. You didn't even read it.

GIL JOHN
What for? Bill didn't have a chance. But that's not the point...

GIL JOHN sits down at the table and pours himself his coffee. ROBERT puts down his newspaper.

ROBERT
Listen, Gil, something's come up. You may not have heard about it yet...

GIL JOHN
Well, that may be because I don't want to hear about it.

ROBERT
That grand jury in Philadelphia? Looks like I might get indicted.

GIL JOHN whistles softly.

GIL JOHN
That's rough, Robert. Sorry to hear that.

ROBERT
The U.S. attorney's a bigoted wacko. He's been turning over rocks for...

GIL JOHN
Okay, so we can't talk about this, right?

ROBERT
Why not?

GIL JOHN
An indictment will trigger a hearin' with the ethics committee, which I sit on.

ROBERT
You do? Well, then, I think you should know that this thing is racially-motivated and...

GIL JOHN
(with finality)
I doubt it, but I really don't think we want to talk about this, Robert. Besides, maybe you won't get indicted.

We hear Buster growl. The two men look around to see ANDY and ADRIANA standing at the kitchen door, dressed in a rumpled version of the clothes in which we lost saw them. ADRIANA bends down to pat Buster.

ADRIANA
Hi, baby!

ANDY looks at ROBERT with a crooked grin.

ANDY
We'll take it.

CUT TO:

33 INT. LOUIS'S CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE, WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY 33

LOUIS, taking a deep breath, walking into his office. A camera crew is setting up for the Colbert interview, and JULIE, JAMES and SHELBY are hovering about. STEVEN is behind LOUIS's desk, feeding quarters into the slot machine.

LOUIS
(voice breaking)
Mr. Colbert...

He's interrupted by a whooping siren followed by the clatter of cascading coins. STEPHEN spins around, smiling with delight.

STEPHEN
Congressman!

The rest of this scene will be improvised, with STEPHEN interviewing LOUIS. The questions can be about anything, but the Wimp Factor should be brought up. For instance, STEPHEN could tee up a question with something like, "Congressman, I don't see sexual preference..."

In any event, the interview does not go well. At its most embarrassing point, we

CUT TO:

34 EXT. ALPHA HOUSE, WASHINGTON, D.C. - AFTERNOON 34

A cab, pulling up in front of the house. LOUIS emerges and trudges slowly up the stairs to the brownstone and fumbles with his keys.

CUT TO:

35 INT. FOYER, ALPHA HOUSE, WASHINGTON D.C. - AFTERNOON 35

LOUIS, letting himself in. We hear a football game in progress in the living room. He hangs his keys on a key caddy, takes off his overcoat and walks quietly into the kitchen. He grabs a bottle of beer from the refrigerator and heads for the living room.

CUT TO:

36 INT. LIVING ROOM, ALPHA HOUSE, WASHINGTON D.C. - AFTERNOON 36

LOUIS, joining ROBERT and GIL JOHN on a couch in the living room. The coffee table in front of them is littered with junk food and beer cans. LOUIS reaches forward, opens a decorative box on the table, withdraws a coaster and puts it under his beer can. The other two take no note of him. After a moment, LOUIS grabs a handful of taco chips and leans back into the couch.

LOUIS
So I'm thinking I might go to Afghanistan.

His two housemates look at him with surprise.

ROBERT
Oh, yeah? What changed your mind?

LOUIS
Nothing really. Just thought about it, seems like a good move.

GIL JOHN
Colbert rip you a new one?

LOUIS
No, no...

ROBERT
You did Colbert? Were you out of your mind?

LOUIS
You could make that case, yes.

The three men stare at the flickering screen. After a few moments, we hear the rattle of keys, shuffling in the hallway. It's ANDY. Loosening his tie, he drops down into an armchair. He smiles at his new housemates, as if to say something, but the others are in full man-cave mode. No one even looks at him. He grabs a beer off the coffee table, pops it open, and leans back into his chair.

The cheers from the crowd swell as we

FADE TO BLACK