

~~MARGARET. I really have to go, Dorothy... No, that's ridiculous, ridiculous, no!... All right, this Amazon warrior must go, goodbye.~~

~~*She hangs up.*~~

~~LEWIS. What's ridiculous?~~

~~MARGARET. Apparently, she's heard rumors that say um...well, I may be the leading candidate for the vice presidency.~~

~~LEWIS. And I may have helped spread those rumors.~~

~~MARGARET. Bill!~~

~~LEWIS. I thought you'd be pleased.~~

~~MARGARET. No, the country's not ready.~~

~~LEWIS. For you?~~

~~MARGARET. For a woman. Let's not pretend otherwise.~~

~~LEWIS. Whos pretending? You won with sixty-seven percent of the vote! In one of the most conservative states in the country! Maybe they're not ready for any woman, but they're ready for Margaret Chase Smith.~~

Scene 3

We are in a ladies washroom.

Margaret is at the mirror.

Miss Kerr enters.

MISS KERR. Oh, Senator Smith. I never expected to see you in here!

MARGARET. The ladies room?

MISS KERR. I just assumed you'd be in a senators' washroom.

MARGARET. There's only one for the men.

MISS KERR. Of course, how stupid of me.

MARGARET. I think there should be a Senate washroom for the ladies, but I'd have a stronger case if I weren't the only lady.

MISS KERR. May I just say, and I hope I don't embarrass myself—but I admire you so, so, so much! In fact, I've been studying you.

MARGARET. Studying me?

MISS KERR. Observing you, trying to pick up tips when I hear others talk of how you behave.

MARGARET. And how do they say I behave?

MISS KERR. Well, for instance, they say you always arrive early for meetings, before any of the other senators. I think punctuality is an excellent way for someone to express her seriousness of purpose, don't you?

MARGARET. The reason I arrive early is so the men don't stand when I walk into the room. I want to be their equal, not some receptacle for their chivalry.

MISS KERR. Oh! You are now my number-one heroine!

MARGARET. Please, that burden—

MISS KERR. Could I possibly take you to lunch sometime? I know it's bold of me to ask—

MARGARET. It'd be my pleasure.

MISS KERR. Truly? I'd just love to hear more of your ideas so I can help him more!

MARGARET. Help who?

MISS KERR. Senator McCarthy. He's coming up for reelection and I know he hasn't made a very strong impression here yet.

MARGARET. That is a sober observation.

MISS KERR. Yes and I've been trying to give him advice but he seems to want to focus on improved pensions for the elderly. It's an important issue, of course, but it doesn't get one a lot of headlines, does it?

MARGARET. There are more important things than headlines.

MISS KERR. Not when you're running for reelection. I've been urging him to take a stronger stand on national defense, just like you do. That's what voters care about today, don't you think?

MARGARET. You're really rather clever, aren't you, Miss Kerr?

MISS KERR. I know, it's surprising, right? People don't think a girl

can be both pretty and clever. Not that I'm saying that I'm pretty, but well, I am, so—And I learned very early on that being pretty can be quite useful. And to tell you the truth, I don't think a woman who wasn't attractive in some way could ever get elected to office, do you? Men have to like a woman to vote for her, and men tend to like attractive women more, don't you agree?

MARGARET. I do, yes. And now I have high hopes that someday you'll join me in this chamber and we'll get our own bathroom.

MISS KERR. Oh but I'm perfectly happy just working for Joe.

MARGARET. May I offer some advice then?

MISS KERR. I'd be honored!

MARGARET. Don't be honored, just—don't let him pat you on the fanny.

MISS KERR. Oh, he doesn't mean anything by it.

MARGARET. But he does. They all do.

MISS KERR. I'm uh not certain I agree.

MARGARET. It's the reason I enter meetings early. Allowing them to pat you on the fanny or stand when you enter a room—it has the same effect. It reinforces their position and reduces yours.

MISS KERR. All right then, it stops today.

MARGARET. My assistant, Mr. Lewis, will call you about our lunch.

MISS KERR. Say what's that like? Having a man under you?

MARGARET. For my money, Mr. Lewis has the best political mind in Washington.

MISS KERR. So you don't mind he's like that?

MARGARET. Like what?

MISS KERR. Homosexual.

MARGARET. Miss Kerr—

MISS KERR. I mean, I didn't believe it when I heard the gossip, then again I never imagined a Commie would be working here but there's that Alger Hiss so...

MARGARET. He's not—what you suggest he is—Mr. Lewis is not that.

MISS KERR. Don't worry, I'm not here to judge.

MARGARET. But you did. And he's not.

MISS KERR. Well good. Good. Oh, when I tell my girlfriends that little Miss Jeannie Kerr will be having lunch with our first lady-vice-president!

MARGARET. Please, Miss Kerr—

MISS KERR. But I've heard you're at the top of the list!

MARGARET. I haven't heard that.

MISS KERR. But don't you want to be vice president?

MARGARET. Even if I did, it would be, well, unladylike for me to say so.

MISS KERR. Well I think you should say so! And why wouldn't they pick you? You'd get the vote of every woman in this country! Vice President Margaret Chase Smith! It sounds so nice, doesn't it?

MARGARET. Actually, Miss Kerr—it sounds lovely.

They smile, connect.

McCarthy steps forward.

MCCARTHY. *(To us.)* I was searching for an issue, I admit it. I knew the voters of Wisconsin didn't really like me, it was right there in all the polls—Question: Do you like Joe McCarthy? Answer: No. Question: Will you vote to reelect Joe McCarthy? Answer: Are you out of your goddamn mind? Getting reelected was going to be a bitch! I had to find something. That's how you get reelected—you say screw the goddamn polls and you find something!

Scene 4

A Washington restaurant.

Margaret and Lewis, eating, look up to see McCarthy.

MCCARTHY. Maggie, hello!

LEWIS. Oh God.

Scene 5

Margaret's office.

Miss Kerr is about to slip a sheet of paper into the office when Margaret catches her in the act.

MARGARET. Miss Kerr?

MISS KERR. Oh, I didn't realize...I was just leaving this for um...

MARGARET. Since it's my office, I assume it's for me.

She hands the note to Margaret, then quickly begins to exit.

MISS KERR. Have a good night.

MARGARET. Wait!

MISS KERR. There's nothing left to say, so—

MARGARET. No. This is...no! Where is he?

MISS KERR. Gone for the day.

MARGARET. So he sent you?

MISS KERR. I volunteered.

MARGARET. But he can't do this!

MISS KERR. He already has.

MARGARET. So I'm off the Permanent Investigations Committee? With no reason? With no warning? No!

MISS KERR. It's his committee, he can do what he likes.

MARGARET. But it's not protocol! It's not the way things are done!

MISS KERR. It's the way things are done now that Joe's in charge.

MARGARET. I demand to speak with him immediately!

MISS KERR. I speak for Joe, say what you like and I'll tell him.

MARGARET. All right, here it is—the two of you are cowards!

MISS KERR. If you're going to resort to name-calling—

MARGARET. If I was, I could think of much worse names for the two of you! I will fight this!

MISS KERR. There's nothing to fight, the decision's been made. You've already been replaced.

MARGARET. By whom?

MISS KERR. Senator Nixon.

MARGARET. I have years more experience than Dick Nixon!

MISS KERR. But unlike you, Senator Nixon seems interested in exposing subversives, not befriending them.

MARGARET. Who are you to speak to me in such a...?

MISS KERR. Senator Nixon's work on the Un-American Activities Committee really impressed Joe. Joe think he's in line to be vice president.

MARGARET. Dick Nixon?! I need to call Bill—

MISS KERR. Do you? Can't you ever make up your mind on your own? Or does Mr. Lewis make all the decisions for you?

MARGARET. I am done with your insolence!

MISS KERR. Don't you ever grow tired of being the only one left fighting Joe McCarthy?

MARGARET. I'm certainly not the only one.

MISS KERR. In the Republican Party, you are. And perhaps the reason for that is because you're wrong.

MARGARET. Oh, please. How you can defend the despicable! Because yes, your boss is despicable!

MISS KERR. Before you say anything else, you should know Joe and I are in love.

MARGARET. I'm sorry to hear that.

MISS KERR. I'm not interested in your insults.

MARGARET. It's not an insult, it's a warning. He's been seen all over town with other women.

MISS KERR. His faults are no worse than any other man's. You of all people should know what it's like to date a powerful man who also sees other women.

MARGARET. What does a bright young girl like yourself—what could you possibly see in a Joe McCarthy?

MISS KERR. Let me ask you this first. Why are liberals always so grim?

MARGARET. Don't waste my time!

MISS KERR. Joe is fun and he's loving and he likes to laugh and have a good time. And then I look at you and Mr. Lewis—which is a relationship I don't understand at all, by the way—

MARGARET. Mr. Lewis and I are simply...

MISS KERR. I don't care. Joe and I have a lot of laughs and someday I hope to marry him.

MARGARET. Well don't expect my congratulations.

MISS KERR. I don't expect anything of you. Which is such a shame because not long ago, I expected the world of you! Every girl did. You were our hero! You were supposed to be as smart and shrewd and as savvy as the men. And then you threw it all away on a silly speech. You could've been vice president.

MARGARET. I believe I still can.

MISS KERR. See. You're not nearly as smart as we hoped.

Miss Kerr exits the scene as we hear the cheers of a crowd on a victorious election night. McCarthy jubilantly steps into the cheers and triumphantly waves to the crowd.

Miss Kerr and Lewis step forward and speak to us.

The midterms came and the Republican Party became the Joe McCarthy party!

LEWIS. They echoed his words.

MISS KERR. They mimicked his passion!

LEWIS. It was like mini Joe McCarthy's sprouting up all across the country.

MISS KERR. It was glorious!

LEWIS. It was terrifying!

MISS KERR. We netted twenty-eight House seats!

MCCARTHY. And tell 'em about the Senate, son! No, it's too good, I'll tell 'em—I won back the Senate for the Republicans!

MISS KERR. Every candidate Joe supported, triumphed!

MCCARTHY. And every poor bastard I went after, lost!

MISS KERR. If you can't be the king, be the next best thing—

MCCARTHY. The kingmaker! Be the goddamn kingmaker! God bless America!

MISS KERR. God bless Joe McCarthy!

*McCarthy goes over to Miss Kerr, and they kiss.
A passionate, happy kiss. The cheers grow louder.*

Scene 6

We are in Margaret's office.

MARGARET. There's no need to panic, I'll have a national audience, I'll take my case directly to the people.

LEWIS. It's gone, I'm afraid, the vice presidency, I think it's...

MARGARET. Nonsense! They've slotted me nearly half an hour to speak at the Republican National Convention! If that isn't a vote of confidence—

LEWIS. It's been whittled down to five minutes.

MARGARET. What? No!

LEWIS. Truth be told, they'd rather you not speak at all.

MARGARET. Too bad! I can say one hell of a lot in five minutes!

LEWIS. We need to skip the convention.

MARGARET. Absolutely not!

LEWIS. You can't attend as damaged goods.

MARGARET. I am certainly not damaged...

LEWIS. Margaret, please listen to me. Your reelection will be here before we know it. We need to start campaigning.

MARGARET. Five minutes is fine! I'll offer an abridged version of my Declaration...

LEWIS. You'll embarrass yourself!

A beat.

I didn't mean embarrass, no...I mean they'll see you up there—wounded. And they'll think—look what McCarthy has reduced

McCarthy, Miss Kerr, and Lewis are in their chairs.

Margaret addresses us.

MARGARET. Have I told you of how I won my three terms in Congress? Simple, really. By always appearing as people needed me to appear.

After my Clyde passed, I decided to run for his office. I ran on the image as his sympathetic widow. Trust me, there is no surer way for a woman to win election than by appearing as a sympathetic widow. And the party thought I'd make a wonderful placeholder, so they threw their support behind me, and this sympathetic widow triumphed.

But then this placeholder thought—I enjoy this, I'm good at this, I'd like to stay in place. But by then, there were others who hoped to defeat the widow. Sympathy has a time limit. One of them said, out loud—and I quote—why vote for a woman when you can have a man?

To many voters, he had a point. Worse, people accused me of acting too “mannish.” Is that an actual word, mannish? It is in politics. So I allowed myself to be photographed in my kitchen, wearing a tasteful apron, removing an apple pie out of my oven. And I made certain the photo was sent to every damn newspaper in Maine.

Did I actually bake that pie? Don't be ridiculous! I don't bake, I legislate. But the voters needed me to be a woman who bakes pies, so I appeared as I needed to appear. And I won with four times the votes of my closest competitor.

To put this in perspective—the scoundrel Joe McCarthy brazenly lied about his war record, and I lied about my baking abilities. And if our lies were ever found out, rest assured he would be forgiven for his, but they would crucify me for lying about that goddamn pie.

Lights snap to a congressional meeting room, several years earlier.

Margaret approaches Lewis.

MARGARET. Mr. Lewis, is it?

LEWIS. (*Introducing himself.*) Congresswoman Smith, yes—Bill Lewis. Pleasure to finally speak—

MARGARET. It was you who slipped me that note today, no?

LEWIS. I hope it wasn't too presumptuous, I'm just so impressed with everything you say on committee.

MARGARET. I hardly say anything.

LEWIS. That's why the note. I wanted to encourage you to say more.

MARGARET. How kind but—

LEWIS. I'm not being kind.

MARGARET. You are. I'm the least experienced one in the room.

LEWIS. Then how come every time you speak you sound like the shrewdest legislator in town?

MARGARET. I know my facts better than anyone else. That's the only way someone like me can get heard in these chambers.

LEWIS. May I slip you more notes?

MARGARET. Why? Are we in high school?

LEWIS. Sometimes I have questions that should be asked, but they'd be much more impactful coming from a congressperson. I could write them down for you. It'd really show these fellas you know what you're talking about.

MARGARET. But I do know what I'm talking about. Why do I need your notes?

LEWIS. How'd you like to go beyond Congress? The Senate or even further.

MARGARET. Further than the Senate?

LEWIS. You have great conviction, and that is a rarity here in Washington, but conviction without ambition is a waste of conviction.

MARGARET. It sounds as if you should be the one running for office.

LEWIS. No, not for me, no. Look I don't mean to blow my own horn, but I have great political common sense. May we speak further on this?

MARGARET. I don't see why not. May I buy you dinner tonight?

LEWIS. I um promised I'd be home for dinner.

MARGARET. Yes, your wife's expecting you, of course.

LEWIS. I'm not married.

MARGARET. A handsome man like you? Oh dear, I just sounded like your meddling old auntie.

LEWIS. I would hardly describe you as old, Congresswoman.

MARGARET. Bless you. And it's Margaret.

LEWIS. Margaret. And I um live with my parents. And it's Bill.

Please note—there is some weird-ass flirting going on here.

And I believe I can get you in the room with the boys.

MARGARET. I am in the room with the boys.

LEWIS. Not the boys who run the country.

MARGARET. You mean the president?

LEWIS. I do.

MARGARET. You have quite an imagination.

LEWIS. And you have quite a resume. An attractive, moderate Yankee. Tough on defense, compassionate on social issues. You seem made for these times.

MARGARET. I hardly know what to say.

LEWIS. Don't say anything. Just let me slip you some more notes, see where this goes.

MARGARET. All right Bill, I shall indulge your fantasy for the time being.

LEWIS. It's not a fantasy.

MARGARET. A woman in the White House isn't a fantasy?

LEWIS. It just needs to be the right woman. Why don't I call my mother? Tell her I'm going to miss dinner.

MARGARET. You don't know Maine, Joe. And let me say one more thing—you have a remarkable ability to garner attention. You know how to excite the unwashed masses. Just think of all the good you—or even we—could have done with that.

She exits the scene.

MCCARTHY. Hey, get Owen Brewster on the line, now, now, now! *(Into phone.)* Owen, listen, listen, I heard your state party's letting Margaret Smith run unopposed in the primary. Well, that's a goddamn awful mistake!...

Miss Kerr enters.

No, she's beatable, Owen, she is totally...—Well, if she's so damn popular, then let's run a goddamn campaign against her and make her unpopular! And don't worry about money, I'll raise every goddamn cent you need... Jesus Christ, Owen, of course I can raise the goddamn money! I got me some boys down in Texas—they take a piss and oil shoots out! Better yet, I myself will stand on every stage in Maine and say what a crock of liberal bullshit she... No! I said she cannot run unopposed! There's gotta be someone in that goddamn state of yours who can... Who? *(To Miss Kerr.)* Robert L. Jones?

MISS KERR. He ran Owen's last campaign.

MCCARTHY. But Owen lost his last campaign.

MISS KERR. Still, with you behind him, Jones isn't a bad idea. I'm sure he'll do whatever you tell him.

MCCARTHY. *(Into phone.)* Owen, let's sign him up, yeah. And hey, I know all her secrets. And goddamn does she and her boy have secrets.

Scene 8

A domestic area (for the first time in the play), Margaret's home.

A buzzer. Margaret, wearing a bathrobe, enters.

She greets Lewis, who's probably had a couple of cocktails.

MARGARET. Bill, is everything all right?

LEWIS. Not really, sorry.

MARGARET. Come in.

LEWIS. I was out—

MARGARET. At this hour?

LEWIS. Ran into an old air force buddy. He told me you're going to be challenged in the primary.

MARGARET. By—?

LEWIS. Is it all right if I take a drink?

MARGARET. You seem as if you've had enough already.

LEWIS. *(Pouring himself a drink.)* I just need a little...—

MARGARET. Who's running against me, Bill?

LEWIS. McCarthy. I mean, he has a proxy, of course—Bob Jones is the fellow's name, but McCarthy's all in—financing him, running his campaign. Jones is McCarthy's puppet. McCarthy's going to go to Maine himself to campaign against you.

MARGARET. Fine. If there's one thing the people of Maine hate it's an outsider telling us what to do.

LEWIS. Margaret, McCarthy toppled thirty congressmen in the last election. And you're his number one target in this one.

MARGARET. I'm not worried, I'll simply do what I've always done—knock on every door in the state.

LEWIS. His people will do the same.

MARGARET. Well I'll be wearing heels!

LEWIS. No time to make jokes.

MARGARET. Who's making jokes? I'll be wearing heels. And heels hurt.

LEWIS. McCarthy knows things. He knows things, terrible things, and he'll use them against us.

MARGARET. I know what he knows, Bill.

LEWIS. Do you?

MARGARET. Perhaps it's time we discuss it.

LEWIS. I don't know how to start.

MARGARET. Clyde had an illegitimate daughter.

LEWIS. What?

MARGARET. Rita her name was—is. Rita. She was born four months after we were married and I didn't know of her existence till Clyde told me on his deathbed.

LEWIS. Why didn't you tell me?

MARGARET. Let me speak, please. And the only reason he told me was because he wanted me to continue paying for her child support, which I have. And once McCarthy starts campaigning against me, it will be leaked to the press and I'll be blamed.

LEWIS. But it's not your fault.

MARGARET. Please. Wives are always blamed for the sins of their husbands. And my husband had many other sins and many other girlfriends. He died of syphilis. How could he not?

LEWIS. You should've left him.

MARGARET. Left him? No, women like me, we're taught never to leave our Clydes. We're taught to stay and look the other way and never leave our Clydes.

Lewis goes to her to console her. He puts his arms around her.

LEWIS. I'm sorry, Margaret, I... Would you like to move in with me and my parents?

MARGARET. Pardon?

LEWIS. There's an efficiency apartment on the first floor, you'd have all the privacy you want. And we'd be able to spend more time together. Whenever you felt lonely or...—I suppose what I'm saying is you're the best thing that's ever happened to me, so...so...

And their embrace has grown close, so much so that Margaret leans in to kiss him. Or nearly kiss him. And Lewis stays in it for a moment—before suddenly pulling away.

MARGARET. No, I'm sorry. That was inexcusable and—and ridiculous and...

LEWIS. No, no, it was my fault, I've been drinking and...

MARGARET. It's late and I'm exhausted and...

~~LEWIS. You should know I ran into my air force friend at this bar~~

~~that I go to, this bar I really shouldn't go to but, well...—if McCarthy ever discovered I was there, and he will, you're right, he knows everything and I couldn't go on living if it was in the papers, if my parents knew, no. So I should um resign right now, I think. Leave before McCarthy exposes who I am, what I do with um men. Because I guess at heart I'm a degenerate and a um um...I'm sorry, I um...~~

~~*He looks up at Margaret.*~~

~~*A moment. He has no idea how she's going to react.*~~

~~MARGARET. You should've stayed out with your friend and done whatever you and your friends...~~

~~BILL. I'm sorry, I'm so...~~

~~MARGARET. Goddamn you! You were supposed to be there for me, Bill. I thought—stupid—you're what my life has led to—you and this office. And now you tell me of some other life of yours? And you tell me now—now?!—when I'm in the light of my political...? You have jeopardized everything!~~

~~LEWIS. I'll leave, immediately if you like.~~

~~MARGARET. Yes, do that! Leave! Another win for McCarthy! And I should listen to him, too, and not run for reelection, right? Because he'll surely defeat me just as he's defeated all the others, proving once and for all that a woman's place isn't on the Senate floor. Look at Margaret—she wasn't smart enough, she wasn't tough enough. And then we won't have another female senator for decades. All because you have secrets and I have secrets—~~

~~I AM SICK OF BEING DEFINED BY JOE MCCARTHY! When I met you, you said I was the conviction and you were the common sense. Well, what kind of sense was it for me to stand on the Senate floor and condemn the entirety of the US government?~~

~~LEWIS. I will leave.~~

~~MARGARET. Yes, go! That's what cowards do—first sign of trouble, they go. I expected more from you, Bill! Especially now, when we've reached a point that if someone doesn't fight this madness—if someone doesn't stop his lies! It's as if the truth no longer matters. Up is down and down is up and facts are lies and lies are facts. Well let me tell you silence is a form of complicity but cowardice is even worse.~~

Scene 2

The Senate train.

Margaret sits. McCarthy approaches.

MCCARTHY. May I?

Margaret glances away.

He sits next to her anyway.

Your Declaration of Conscience. That's what you called that crazy speech of yours the other day, right? Gotta admit, catchy name.

MARGARET. I hope—and I mean this sincerely—that you've been reflecting on all I said.

MCCARTHY. Yeah, especially the part where you called me a dictator, yeah, been reflecting on that a whole goddamn bunch, yeah. So Maggie—congratulations.

MARGARET. For what exactly?

MCCARTHY. Hell, your crazy speech caused a real firestorm! Tons of headlines! And some of them said some real nice things about you.

MARGARET. And even more of them didn't.

MCCARTHY. Heck, you wanna talk bad headlines, you're talkin' to the right man, ha!

MARGARET. I didn't do it for headlines. I said what I said because my conscience demanded it.

MCCARTHY. You're a goddamn liar.

MARGARET. I am many things, but not that, no.

MCCARTHY. Oh yeah? You told me your husband died of a heart attack.

MARGARET. What on earth has Clyde got to do with—?

MCCARTHY. Syphilis, that's what he died of.

MARGARET. How dare you!

MCCARTHY. It was syphilis! Which ain't surprising, since he had

girlfriends all up and down the East Coast, not to mention young Miss Rita, a name you know all too well.

MARGARET. You can throw all the smears you'd like at me—

MCCARTHY. Is the truth a smear, Maggie? Well how 'bout this then—your office boy is a faggot. That's right, I know everything **SO DON'T KEEP THROWING YOUR GODDAMN CONSCIENCE AT ME!** Rescind everything you said, just like the others are doing—

MARGARET. The others?

The train comes to its stop.

MCCARTHY. And then maybe I won't tell the world about your syphilitic husband and your faggot office boy.

Scene 3

Margaret's office.

Margaret and Lewis, in a moment of crisis.

MARGARET. He said rescind, just like the others. What did he mean? What others?

LEWIS. Nothing's definite yet. What else did he say?

MARGARET. Oh for God's sake, tell me, Bill! What others?

LEWIS. We may be losing them, our Senate co-sponsors, they may be taking their names off.

MARGARET. How many of the six?

LEWIS. Five.

MARGARET. Oh no, they can't possibly! They can't possibly!

LEWIS. They're afraid of him.

MARGARET. But why? His only accomplishment is he's the loudest person in the room! Sometimes I think the Senate has gone as crazy as he has! Whosever idea it was to let men run this world has a lot of explaining to do.

LEWIS. Truman was asked about you at his press conference today.

her to. Every word you speak against him now will make you seem smaller and smaller. I'm sorry.

MARGARET. Do you know what the most insidious aspect of this insidious man is? I essentially agree with his politics. His methods, never, but his politics.

LEWIS. His politics? Margaret, he's only a Republican because he couldn't get elected as a Democrat.

MARGARET. What?

LEWIS. In his first campaign, he ran as a Democrat and lost. So he switched parties, won, and...

MARGARET. Good God, he doesn't believe a word of what we stand for, does he?

LEWIS. It'd be best if we forgot about him and focused on your reelection.

MARGARET. No, we've turned into a party of his sycophants and I'm the only one with the guts to stand up to the man. I need to speak with him.

LEWIS. Just don't, you know, poke the bear. Please, just don't give him another reason to come after you even more.

Lights snap to...

Scene 7

McCarthy's office.

McCarthy drinks.

MARGARET. You're a vile, petty, dishonest man!

MCCARTHY. Senator, always lovely to see you.

MARGARET. I have no time for your pettiness! I'm here to ask you a serious question.

MCCARTHY. Is it about you running for reelection? Wait, are you still running for reelection?

MARGARET. And why wouldn't I be?

MCCARTHY. With your liberal voting record?

MARGARET. I am a conservative and I vote my conscience!

MCCARTHY. Well everyone else expects you to vote Republican. *(Holding up a bottle.)* Cocktail?

MARGARET. You're going to die without a liver.

MCCARTHY. And you're going to die without a constituency. Cheers!

MARGARET. My question now—and I'd like an honest answer.

MCCARTHY. Ain't no more honest man in politics than me, Mags.

MARGARET. My question—do you truly believe all this—this malarkey you espouse? This geyser of nonsense that spews forth every time you part your lips?

MCCARTHY. That really your question?

MARGARET. I know about your secret past as a Democrat.

MCCARTHY. Whoa, good opposition research there, Mags, very good! So now that you've got my nuts in a vice, lemme think.

A beat.

Yeah, I believe every goddamn word I say all the time.

MARGARET. You're the very worst kind of politician. Governing doesn't interest you. You only like the sport of it all, the throne you get to sit on. You say the stupidest thing imaginable and then you revel in the chaos.

McCarthy just smirks.

Don't snicker, Joe! Your actions have real consequences on real people's lives! And for you to not recognize that is abominable.

MCCARTHY. Anything else, Mags?

MARGARET. I'm not intimidated by you, not like the others! So keep taking your best shots. I'm not going anywhere!

MCCARTHY. Well then, good luck in your upcoming primary.

MARGARET. I don't need luck, I have no opponent, I've scared off all challengers.

MCCARTHY. That can't be right.

MARGARET. You don't know Maine, Joe. And let me say one more thing—you have a remarkable ability to garner attention. You know how to excite the unwashed masses. Just think of all the good you—or even we—could have done with that.

She exits the scene.

MCCARTHY. Hey, get Owen Brewster on the line, now, now, now! (*Into phone.*) Owen, listen, listen, I heard your state party's letting Margaret Smith run unopposed in the primary. Well, that's a goddamn awful mistake!...

Miss Kerr enters.

No, she's beatable, Owen, she is totally...—Well, if she's so damn popular, then let's run a goddamn campaign against her and make her unpopular! And don't worry about money, I'll raise every goddamn cent you need... Jesus Christ, Owen, of course I can raise the goddamn money! I got me some boys down in Texas—they take a piss and oil shoots out! Better yet, I myself will stand on every stage in Maine and say what a crock of liberal bullshit she... No! I said she cannot run unopposed! There's gotta be someone in that goddamn state of yours who can... Who? (*To Miss Kerr.*) Robert L. Jones?

MISS KERR. He ran Owen's last campaign.

MCCARTHY. But Owen lost his last campaign.

MISS KERR. Still, with you behind him, Jones isn't a bad idea. I'm sure he'll do whatever you tell him.

MCCARTHY. (*Into phone.*) Owen, let's sign him up, yeah. And hey, I know all her secrets. And goddamn does she and her boy have secrets.

Scene 8

A domestic area (for the first time in the play), Margaret's home.

A buzzer. Margaret, wearing a bathrobe, enters.

She greets Lewis, who's probably had a couple of cocktails.

MARGARET. Bill, is everything all right?

LEWIS. Not really, sorry.

MARGARET. Come in.

LEWIS. I was out—

MARGARET. At this hour?

LEWIS. Ran into an old air force buddy. He told me you're going to be challenged in the primary.

MARGARET. By—?

LEWIS. Is it all right if I take a drink?

MARGARET. You seem as if you've had enough already.

LEWIS. (*Pouring himself a drink.*) I just need a little...—

MARGARET. Who's running against me, Bill?

LEWIS. McCarthy. I mean, he has a proxy, of course—Bob Jones is the fellow's name, but McCarthy's all in—financing him, running his campaign. Jones is McCarthy's puppet. McCarthy's going to go to Maine himself to campaign against you.

MARGARET. Fine. If there's one thing the people of Maine hate it's an outsider telling us what to do.

LEWIS. Margaret, McCarthy toppled thirty congressmen in the last election. And you're his number one target in this one.

MARGARET. I'm not worried, I'll simply do what I've always done—knock on every door in the state.

LEWIS. His people will do the same.

MARGARET. Well I'll be wearing heels!

LEWIS. No time to make jokes.

MARGARET. Who's making jokes? I'll be wearing heels. And heels hurt.

LEWIS. McCarthy knows things. He knows things, terrible things, and he'll use them against us.

MARGARET. I know what he knows, Bill.

LEWIS. Do you?

MARGARET. Perhaps it's time we discuss it.

LEWIS. I don't know how to start.

MARGARET. Clyde had an illegitimate daughter.