

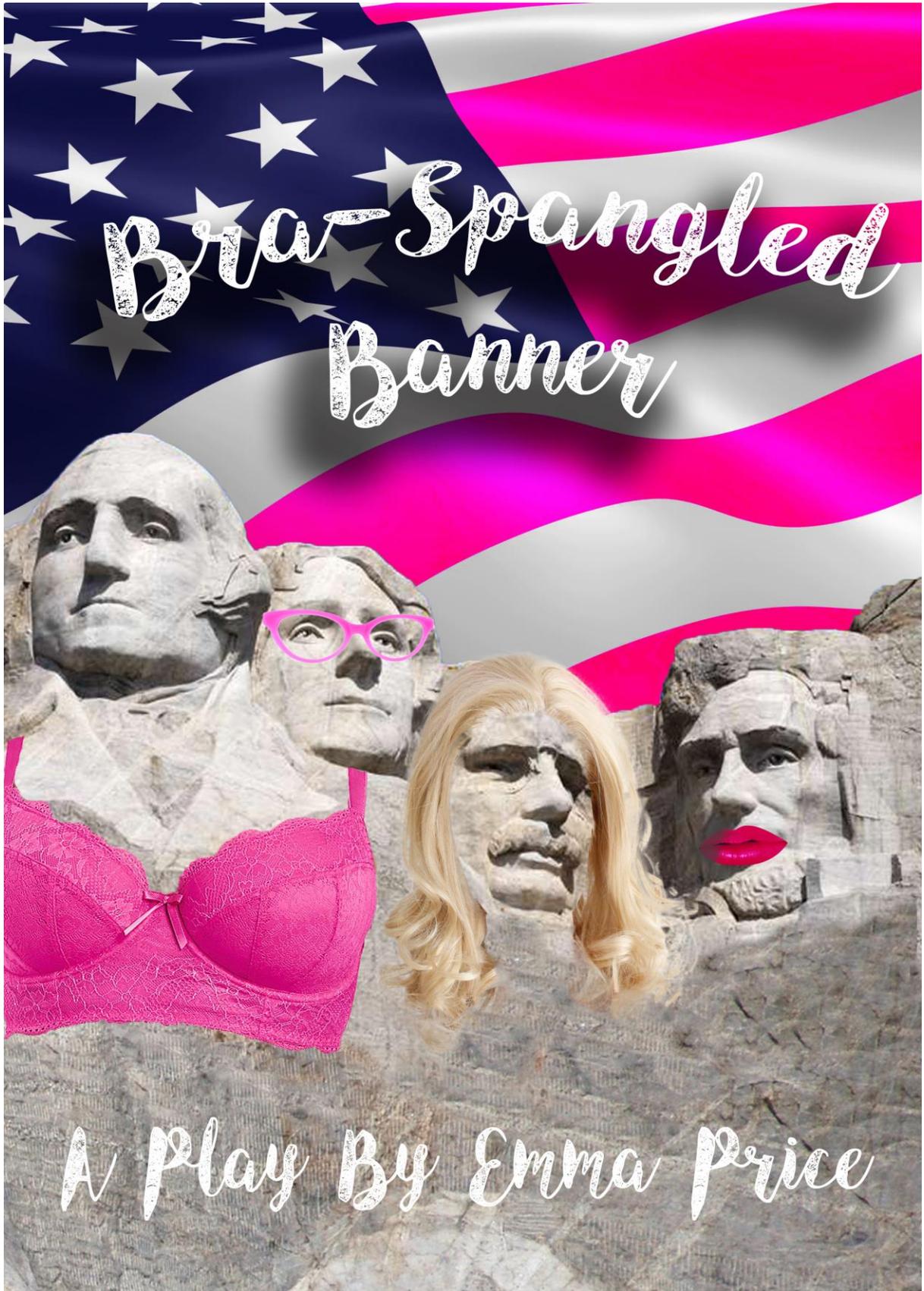


BRA-SPANGLED BANNER
BY
EMMA PRICE

Extract

A SMITH SCRIPT

This script is protected by copyright laws.
No performance of this script -IN ANY MEDIA – may be undertaken without
payment of the appropriate fee and obtaining a licence.
For further information, please contact SMITH SCRIPTS at
info@smithscripts.co.uk



*Bra-Spangled
Banner*

A Play By Emma Price

NOTES

This is the second publication made of Bra-Spangled Banner. A few further script tweaks were added including influences from the original performance, along with a few notes from the Writer and Director, to ensure her vision was more clearly portrayed to future directors.

Bra-Spangled Banner is roughly a 45 minute One Act, and was performed by JACAL Theatre Company® on the 24th of May 2018, with the original cast as follows -

Jackie - Nathan WR
Karen - Emily Summers
Shirley - Emma Price
Patty - Thomas Crilly-McKean
Barb - Lauren St. John Jenkins
Interviewer 1 - James Beaumont
Interviewer 2 - Caelan Sailes
Camera & Sound (Cameo role) - Tom Hunt

We advise it is recommended for 16+ viewing as it is of a satirical influence, with offensive language and themes throughout - it is set in 60s America, where themes of racism and sexism were prevalent. The piece is true to the times, but the piece is also very self-aware, so the actors and director must take this on board when performing it.

This piece has plenty of room for adlibbing and slight deviations from the original lines stated. This is okay, but the ultimate goal is to be funny, so of course, don't take it too far. As previously stated, the piece touches on sensitive themes, but these shouldn't be the focus. For example, when racism occurs, the other characters must be shocked and offended, and **never** accepting of this. They're women that want to move with the times, and not be stuck in the past.

Any lines that can be reworded, or any space where adlibs are acceptable will be marked with a bracket as such [...]. It is strongly advised the rest of the script is adhered to so as not to infringe on copyright issues.

Originally, this piece was a cast of 9 with a gender split of 6 men / 3 women. The principle 5 cast members have gender fluidity – Jackie, Karen, Shirley, Barb and Patty can be cast as The Director sees fit. (Originally, Jackie and Patty were written as roles for men, and Shirley, Karen and Barb for women). However, the supporting roles are set as male as this is integral to the plot – both interviewers and JFK, including any other cameo appearances as a part of the interviewing team should be played only by men.

As Jackie has a lot of time to kill toward the back of the piece by herself, it is recommended to provide the actor with a lot of set so that they have the ability to make their time on stage entertaining for the audience to watch. Originally the set reflected that of the 1960s Oval Office as much as possible - it had a sofa for Jackie to recline on, a fully stocked bar and a stool on which she sat and drank profusely when the women were hatching their plan. There were also three large flats representing the large windows with regal curtains hanging

at the very back of the stage. Newspapers, magazines and cushions were scattered on coffee tables or surfaces - she used these to disguise her face as she moved from one side of the stage to the other, so she isn't seen by the other women whilst they act in front. We also planted flower vases or pencil pots containing matches and cigarettes throughout the set so she could sneakily break façade and "relax". This actor must be very comfortable with background acting, and able to have a wonderful stage presence with no lines at all. Not the easiest of roles to fill but a very, very funny one if done correctly.

CAST LIST

The Interviewers

(two speaking roles, opportunity for extras if wanted). Integral that they are played by men. Sleazebags. Great at feigning interest and charming their targets to get the inside scoop. A real double-act. Cannot possibly understand how a woman can have the intelligence to see through their scheming. In our original performance we also had a cameo role of our technician carrying a camera and a microphone following the men around the set – The Director can cast extras for this as they see fit.

Jackie

The Jackie Kennedy – wife of JFK. Originally a New York debutant that met and married JFK whilst he was a senator. Speaks very softly with a strange mixture of an American and an English accent (taught via elocution lessons). The epitome of elegance and class...until she snaps. Originally played by a man (with a beard).

Karen

Secretary of State (AKA The Foreign Secretary). The only woman to have a high powered job at The White House because “secretary” was in the title. Deals with foreign affairs, so naturally it was assumed she must be foreign. British accent required.

Shirley

JFK’s secretary. Blonde (no offence) and a bit of a bitch. Hates “the other secretary” Karen. Think, a combination of all 3 “Mean Girls”. A cretin for gossip and rumours. Really very stupid, but thinks she’s above everyone else. Loves Jackie, hates the other girls.

Patty

Head of catering. Super southern, super sassy, super racist. A strong, independent woman who’s short on time for anyone’s shit. Sarcastic and dry. Also originally played by a man.

Barb

Barbara; Barb for short. The white house “cleaner”. A tool belt and construction boots kinda gal. Loves a good innuendo and her phallic hammer that she carries EVERYWHERE. Married to lazy Bob the handy man, who also works at The White House. Constantly gets delegated all the jobs and Bob gets all the credit.

JFK – Man

The John F Kennedy. Smart. Professional. President of the USA.

SCENE OPENS

The White House, Washington D.C.

It's the early 1961 and John F. Kennedy is in power.

Jackie Kennedy giving a tour to an interviewer and his crew.

A recording of Star Spangled Banner, played by brass band, is played.

Lights up.

The Interviewers and Jackie are moving through the audience, toward a display of several photo frames, containing photos of past US presidents, right up to the current day president, JFK (use a photo of your actor for this frame).

They will eventually move through to The Oval Office (full set on stage) which has the presidential desk (with a functioning drawer), regal curtains against 3 flats to represent the floor-to-ceiling windows, American flags and patriarchal hangings on the walls, to represent the famously recognisable office.

Jackie And as we move through to the corridor, here we see the mantel dedicated to the men that have helped to build the America we know today. Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Theodore Roosevelt, Thomas Jefferson, and we also decided to include a few philanthropists too. Here you'll see the likes of Mr Aristotle Onassis and the most recent addition, Mr Frederic Trump. Mr Trump has contributed so much to the American economy, we felt it necessary to honour that. You never know, with how forward-thinking our society is today, maybe a wonderful family like The Trumps could one day make it to The White House.

Interviewer 1 Very interesting thought. The Trumps are such a grounded, forward-thinking family with such drive. I'm sure they'd make America great! *(Be self-aware delivering this)*

Jackie Exactly. And now I lead you through to our final stop of our tour, The Oval Office.

(slight murmurs from the crew as they scan the room and the interviewer looks around in awe)

Jackie Here are where some of the most confidential matters in all of The World's governments are discussed. No woman has ever been privy to the kind of information that is discussed in this room, and I have to say, I don't think we ever will be. I can only imagine what it must be like to be a fly on the wall during a presidential meeting.

Interviewer 2 Wonderful. Just wonderful. You're a very lucky woman, Mrs Kennedy, to be married to such an impressive man. But...well. Mrs Kennedy...

(looks for reassurance to the rest of the crew – they nod)

(Interviewer 2) I'd like to level with you, if I may?

Jackie *(concerned, hesitant)* why, certainly.

Interviewer 2 You see, Mrs Kennedy. There is a lot of incredibly valuable information within this room. And being American, we pride ourselves on...freedom, on liberty. And America has a lot of...speculation...as to what's happening in regards our wonderful country. Especially in regards to war, currently. You must understand that this is a very uncertain time, and we as the public would like to know everything, so that we may know what to expect. It is our right after all. Is your husband, President John F Kennedy, is he driving us as close to a war as expected?

Jackie *(visibly uncomfortable)* I...I can assure you, that John is doing everything in his power to ensure America remains as safe and as in-control as it has always been.

Interviewer 1 *(chuckling)* A true Politician's response. *(More forward)* What we mean to ask, Jackie...can I call you Jackie? What we mean to ask is, what does John discuss with you privately regarding these matters? Does he tell you his plans? Does he really value your opinion? Does he tell you you're beautiful? Because if you don't mind my saying, you're...wonderful, Jackie. A real oil painting. The epitome of elegance and class.

(Interviewer 2 saunters over to the desk, very unobtrusively, and attempts to open the drawer. Jackie is quick to realise his game and meets him at the other side of the desk)

Jackie *(frustrated but remaining lady-like)* I can assure you, Mr Johnson, that President Kennedy does not casually "gossip" to his family about whether or not we'll be launching missiles at hundreds of innocent civilians over his breakfast. *(confidently)* I can also assure you, that The President's drawer in The President's desk is absolutely confidential, as is anything in it. Do you understand, Mr Johnson?

Interviewer 1 *(realising he's overstepped the mark)* No, of course, Mrs Kennedy. I apologise. I simply meant...*(looking to the other interviewers for confirmation, who motion to bail)* ...well, nothing, Mrs Kennedy. I think that concludes our interview today, thank you for your time. Come on gentlemen, let's leave Mrs Kennedy to enjoy the rest of her day.

Jackie Security will meet you the other side of the door to let you out.

(the crew pack up their equipment hurriedly and leave, murmurs of frustrations as they exit. Jackie takes a deep breath of relief, she ensures the men have left, then she relaxes onto the set alone. There is a lot of possibility for comedy here. Originally, Jackie (played by a man) ran over to the bar, poured herself several shots whilst checking the door regularly. Knocked them back, then searched through the vases for her cigarettes, running to the sofa with a drink and cigarette in hand. She lay here, scratching her groin, very un-lady like, she then

*adjusts her hat, and in doing so removes it, followed by her wig. **Karen enters** just as they're leaving)*

Karen Hi Mrs Kennedy, I'm sorry to interrupt but President Kennedy asked...

(Karen notices Jackie frantically searching for her wig. She is shocked. Jackie throws her drink and cigarette, and puts her hat on, without the wig. Karen turns away embarrassed. Jackie realises she isn't looking so removes her hat again, grabs the wig, then replaces the hat before Karen looks back. They continue as if nothing happened)

(Karen) ...asked if I could drop these off in here before the next meeting.

Jackie Of course, Karen. Isn't Shirley around to do that?

Karen I'm not sure. President Kennedy couldn't seem to get in touch with her, so here I am...as usual *(under her breath)*

Jackie Karen, I know you're fairly new here, but running errands isn't your job. You're the secretary of state! **Not** the secretary, okay? In future if The President needs something, leave a message with Shirley, okay?

Karen *(pretending)* Oh, I don't mind, I had some spare time...

Jackie Really, Karen. You must not let either of them take advantage of you like this. This isn't the 50's anymore, dear, and you're a part of the Senate now.

Karen Really, it's quite alright. How did the interview go Mrs Kennedy? Any better this time around?

Jackie Same as usual; they pretend they're interested, throw a couple of compliments your way and assume because you're a woman you're crazy enough to fall for it and give them access to the president's confidential drawer so they can write yet another dime-a-dozen article...

(Jackie tries to turn the lamp on as she sets the desk ready for the meeting, but the lamp doesn't turn on)

(Jackie) Oh dear, the electrics in this room are terrible. I'm gonna have to call Bob from maintenance to come fix that.

(Picks up the walkie-talkie on the desk, making the crackling noise of the walkie-talkie before and after each time she uses it)

(Jackie) Hello, Bob? Can we get you over at The Oval Office? Electrics seem to be playing up. We need to get it looked at before The President's meeting in fifteen minutes.

Barb *(voice over – pre-recorded sound effect, including the crackling noise of a walkie-talkie before and after)* Hi Mrs Kennedy, this is Barb. Bob's...*(sighs)*...he ain't around at the moment. I'll be over in two tics to take a look at it.

Jackie Thank you, Barb.

(She sighs, putting the walkie-talkie down. Continues to Karen)

(Jackie) Darn, I was really hoping they'd send Bob, he's just so efficient at his job. Barb's a wonderful housemaid and all but Bob just really gets those finishing touches. He really did a wonderful paint job in this office, didn't he? You know he even designed these frames! A wonderfully handy man to have around. I don't know where we'd be without Bob!

(Shirley enters at her own leisure unaware of Jackie and Karen, humming and flicking through a magazine. Jackie coughs to get her attention)

Shirley *(covering for herself)* Oh, hi Mrs Kennedy! Beautiful blouse – Chanel, right? I'm sure it's in this month's Vogue...*(flicks through a couple of pages hurriedly whilst attempting to walk away)*

Jackie Shirley, where were you? President Kennedy couldn't reach you. You're aware he's having an important meeting in here shortly, yes?

Shirley *(fumbling for an excuse)* Oh, of course, I'm sorry Mrs Kennedy, I just ran to see if I could do anything to help Patty in the kitchen before she brought the coffee up. I'm real sorry Mrs Kennedy, next time I'll leave a note on my desk.

Jackie That would be much appreciated, Shirley. Well, I better check that John's ready. Have a nice day ladies.

Karen Goodbye, Mrs Kennedy.

(Jackie exits. The atmosphere immediately changes and the women try to disguise their dislike of one another – Karen tries a lot harder than Shirley)

Shirley *(dismissive, meaning to offend)* Claire, right?

Karen Karen. *(her voice is spiked with sarcasm)* It always amazes me how quickly you forget Shirley, seeing as you ask every morning. There's only one female member of this Senate. Are you even aware of what a Secretary of State is?

Shirley *(dismissively)* A secretary's a secretary, sweetie, don't kid yourself.

(Shirley sarcastically smiles, throwing a sickly-sweet look Karen's way before returning to her magazine, sitting on a chair to the side of The Presidential Desk.)

Patty enters carrying a tray with several coffee cups on. She has a cigarette hanging out of her mouth, and a whiskey bottle tucked under her apron, nestled in between her bosom. Her apron proudly displays *The Confederate Flag*, to drop a mild hint as to what kind of woman Patty may be. She has been disapprovingly listening to what Shirley has been saying to Karen. She quietly creeps up behind Shirley whilst she reads her magazine, then lets the tray fall onto the table, startling Shirley and making Karen grin)

Patty Shirley! Still on break, huh? That makes, what, four hours now? *(To Karen)* You know she's been reading that crap in the canteen all morning, right?

Karen *(digging at Shirley)* Oh, I thought you were helping out in the Kitchens?

Shirley Well, why work when there are those that'll do your job for you?
(nodding to the files Karen is holding. She sniggers to herself)

Patty Well ain't you a ray of sunshine. *(To Karen)* You ain't still runnin' round doin' ole prissy-knickers' work, here, are you?

(Shirley looks up from her magazine, uncertain whether that insult was meant for her. Patty takes a swig from the bottle)

(Patty) Yeah, I'm talkin' 'bout you. 'Bout time you got off your ass and did somethin', and I don't mean another one of the security guards, ya hussy.

Shirley *(gasps and stands)* Excuse me?!

Patty *(walking to meet her)* Oh don't piss on my leg and tell me it's raining, honey. We all know the stories, they're written on the bathroom wall. Hell, you probably wrote them.

Shirley *(offended)* Well aren't you just lovely?

Patty You bet your sweet ass I am! *(slapping her thigh)*

(She glugs from the bottle and wipes her mouth up her arm. Shirley mutters under her breath in disgust whilst Patty giggles to herself)

Karen *(interrupting the kafuffle, short on patience)* Look, Shirley can you please just tell me where I can leave these files so I can get on with my day? Where does The President usually keep them?

Shirley *(frustrated)* Just leave them on his –

(sound effect of a light-bulb. Suddenly realising she can manipulate the situation to her advantage)

(Shirley) – oh, those files? They're special files...The President wanted those in the top drawer of his desk. They're confidential, you see. They must be left in that specific drawer.

(She enthusiastically indicates to the same drawer the reporter previously tried to open)

Karen *(doubtful of Shirley's sudden helpfulness)*
Oh. Can I not just leave them on top here? I'm not entirely comfortable with going through The President's drawers...

Shirley Don't be so ridiculous Karen, if they were so confidential don't you think it would be locked?

Karen *(tries the drawer. Pointedly)* It is.

Shirley *(cunning)* They get stuck like that sometimes. Barb is coming over soon, she'll be able to wedge it open for you.

(Barb enters, conveniently. Strapped to her waist is a tool belt, she wears a beautiful sun dress and builder-style boots, and a bandana holding back her hair)

Patty Well, would you look at that timing.

Barb *(standing proudly)* You should know by now Patty, I always come at the right time *(wink wink nudge nudge to Patty)*. And just what can I do for you fine ladies today?

(She plays with the handle of her hammer, flirting with the other ladies whilst she looks Shirley up and down, making her feel very uncomfortable)

Shirley *(venomous)* Listen you pervert, The President is having a very important meeting in here soon, and we don't need the mantel dusted right now, so why don't you run along and grab your husband Bob for us so we can actually get this done, hmm?

Barb *(restrained anger)* I'm sorry?

Shirley *(loudly and abruptly)* We need Bob, not the cleaner.

Barb *(grabbing the walkie-talkie off the desk and handing it to her, with composed anger)* You ask him, Hun. He's all yours.

Shirley *(using her professional voice, crackling before and after she speaks into the walkie-talkie)* Hi Bob, Shirley here. Just chasing you up on that light bulb situation at the Oval Office? Any news?

(Barb picks up her own walkie-talkie off her tool belt in preparation and holds it up awaiting Bob's response. A pre-recorded voice of Bob in a deep, southern accent plays, with the crackle of the walkie-talkie before and after)

Bob Barbieeeeeee, that secretary floozy is lookin' for a bulb fixed in The Oval Office. The security boys and me are half a round into poker, be a darlin' and run along and fix it, will ya? And don't forget to finish up in the rose garden, and the plumbin' up in the Presidential suite too honey-pie. Bobby loves ya! YEEEE-HA, THAT'S A FULL HOUSE BOYS! READ 'EM AND WEAP!

(All the girls are shocked, shaking their head in disapproval and realisation)

Karen Oh, Barb! It's you, isn't it? You're the one that's done all this work! You're the painter and the gardener and the plumber and the real owner of that tool belt...you're...you're Bob!

Barb Yer darn tootin' I am!

Patty *(dragging one of the chairs forward from aside The Presidential Desk, straddling it backwards)* I always knew that husband of yours was as useless as pair of tits on a bull.

Barb You have no idea, Patty. That son of a gun sits on his lazy ass all day, drinking whiskey, smoking 'till his heart's conten-*(noticing Patty)*

Patty *(very unlady-like, legs akimbo, blowing out the smoke from a drag of her cigarette, opening the bottle of whiskey)* ...let it all out, honey.

Barb ...*(resuming)* The point is, I work my ass off running round this building every damn day, covering for that turd-bucket and never gettin' no credit! I ain't the cleaner, I'm the whole damn maintenance team! I'm sick to heck of it! How would you like it Karen if the boys in Office treated you as the damn secretary instead of a part of The Senate?

Karen *(glaring at Shirley, pure sarcasm)* Gee, I can only imagine.

Shirley *(getting irate)* Well girlies, I'm really loving this chit-chat we've got going on here but can we please move on to the matter at hand?

(Jackie enters, unseen by the other girls. She is confused as to what's happening, so remains toward the back of the stage silently, listening to what is about to unravel. As the other girls make their way to the back of the stage, Jackie uses the set to disguise herself. She can hide her face using cushions, newspapers, flowers from the vases, photo frames...whatever the set allows. A lot of possibility for comedy here)

Barb *(wandering over to the desk)* Sure, let me just take a look-see what size bulb this lamp needs -

Shirley *(cutting her off, trying to compose her desperation)* - Barb, no, it's not the bulb we're needing. It's that drawer to the desk here, we're gonna need you to open that for Karen here so she can drop in The President's most confidential files.

Barb *(quickly moving away from the desk toward Shirley)* Absolutely no way, Shirley, under no circumstance is anyone to open The President's desk drawers. We can't just grant ourselves access to the most confidential files on the property! We all signed confidentiality agreements when we started working here, you know we can't just-

Shirley *(composing her frustrations, smiling through gritted teeth)* Open the drawer Barb.

Barb This ain't no normal 9-5 honey, this is The White House-

Shirley *(rage, running at Barb)* -NOW YOU LISTEN HERE, YOU CLOSET BULL-DYKE!

(Barb jumps back in shock. Silence falls amongst the other girls, who stare on in disbelief. Shirley has snapped)

(Shirley) I've been trying for years to get into that mother fudging drawer to read those CIA reports! I've dreamed about scouring through the private investigation snaps, perusing the alien landing reports, to find out if The President is really the sleazeball the media say he is and NONE of you skanks are gonna take this moment away from me!

(Shirley's eyes are wide, she's panting from her rage, like a wild animal. A long beat. The other girls simultaneously break their silence and murmur their own adlibs – ['Jesus, Shirley's bat-shit crazy!'], ['she's madder than a bag of cats on acid'] etc. Shirley is frustrated that they aren't taking her seriously. She runs to grab a cup from the tray that Patty brought in which is full of coffee, and proceeds to pour it over the desk. Jackie watches on in disbelief from the back of the room)

Shirley Oopsie-daisie!

Karen What the hell are you doing?!

Patty This bitch is crazier than a bag of wet cats in a tumble drier.

Shirley *(calculated)* Barb, you better open this drawer quickly, or else all this water is gonna leak in, and those really important files are gonna get ruined! You don't want Mr President to think Patty's to blame for all this, do you?

Patty *(furious)* Pardon me?!

Shirley *(provoking)* That Patty, so clumsy! She tripped on her way into the room and spilled the tray all over The Presidential Desk. Gee, I don't know how someone so unreliable could keep a job like this at The White House, around all this important, valuable information!

Patty *(anger is building)* You sneaky little beaver!

Shirley *(pointedly, at Barb)* If only someone could have helped open that drawer and aired out those files before anyone else would have even noticed, then Patty wouldn't have gotten fired...

Patty *(utter disbelief)* Surely you can't be serious?

Shirley Oh I'm serious alright. *(shouting)* AND DON'T CALL ME...*(realises)* Never mind.

Barb I can't believe you Shirley, you've lost your damn -

Karen - Do it, Barb!

(A beat. All the other ladies simultaneously shout "What?!". Jackie also shouts "what?!" but slightly later than all the other ladies, realises what she has done and grabs a prop to disguise her. They all take a moment to look around the room, realise they must have imagined it, and carry on)

(Karen) What have we got to lose, huh?

(a spotlight falls on her, centre stage, just in front of The Presidential Desk)

(Karen) Look at me... I'm the Secretary of State, for God's sake! Do you know what my day consists of? Every morning, Mr President asks me to get him his coffee. Every lunch, I call in his order to the kitchens. I pass him his cigarettes. I get him a paper. He doesn't ask me into the meetings, he finds an excuse to...

(Karen notices the lighting, as do the rest of the girls. They all look at the ceiling, confused. Karen turns to Barb)

(Karen) ...Hey Barb, what's going on with the lights?

Barb *(looking at the lighting)* Oh, the damn electricians in here...they do that from time to time. Don't worry, I'll get them.

(Barb bangs the floor once with her hammer, and the spotlight instantly lifts back to full lighting)

Karen Thanks. *(continuing.)* There was one time

when I thought things were changing, that he really respected me... he wanted me to contact the UK Government. He said to me, *(in an awful American accent)*

“Karen, I got a job for you, it’s a real important one, can you handle it? I need you to contact the British Prime Minister at 2pm, I need you to relay this vital information to Harold Macmillan himself.”