

The West Wing

Metamorphosis

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COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

EXT./EST. THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

Superimposed over screen:

9:30PM

CUT TO:

INT WHITE HOUSE - TOBY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

TOBY is rummaging through the bottom drawer of his desk. There is a very large CUT ALONG HIS LIP. He pulls out a fat, FROSTED BOTTLE of clear alcohol. Asian characters are written on the outside. He smiles but then grimaces when it hurts.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT THE WHITE HOUSE - THE OVAL OFFICE - EARLIER EVENING

BARTLET is already bothered. There's a knock on the door.

BARTLET

Yes!

Toby enters.

TOBY

Mr. President...

BARTLET

Goddamnit Toby!

TOBY

--Sir.

BARTLET

Toby, I am used to being maneuvered by the Republicans! I am used to being maneuvered by my constituents! Congress! The Justice Department! My own party! Hell, even my own wife!

TOBY

Sir--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARTLET

But Damn it, Toby, not my senior staff.
It's like the last bastion of people I
can actually bully!

SMASH CUT TO:

**INT - THE WHITE HOUSE - TOBY'S OFFICE - NIGHT (INTERCUT BACK
AND FORTH BETWEEN THE OVAL OFFICE).**

Toby drops ice into a martini shaker. He pours a deep shot,
takes a moment then pours a double.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT THE WHITE HOUSE - THE OVAL OFFICE - EARLIER EVENING

BARTLET

... These weren't issues I had to worry
about; totally off the radar. Except you -
not Congress, not the Senate, not even
the damned Supreme Court - made it into
something I had to wake up to after my
morning oatmeal!

TOBY

You don't like oatmeal, sir. And I think
if this administration --

BARTLET

Toby, I think it's abundantly clear that
I really don't give a rat's ass what you
think of this administration.

INT - THE WHITE HOUSE - TOBY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Toby is all bottoms-up.

INT THE WHITE HOUSE - THE OVAL OFFICE - EARLIER EVENING

BARTLET

My god Toby, you really are the problem
child. Why can't you be more like Sam,
Josh, and CJ - the good kids in the
family.

TOBY

If this administration didn't have it's
head up it's ass!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARTLET

Are you saying you think that this administration has it's head up it's ass or I, the President of these United States, has his head up his ass? Because there is very little distinction in what you're saying here Toby!

INT - THE WHITE HOUSE - TOBY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Toby pours another.

INT THE WHITE HOUSE - THE OVAL OFFICE - EARLIER EVENING

Bartlet and Toby are nose to nose.

BARTLET

-- you picked a hell of a time to become reactionary Toby!

TOBY

-- it beats the bleachers!

BARTLET

You know I have half a mind right now to knock you on your whining, self-absorbed ass.

INT - THE WHITE HOUSE - TOBY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

As Toby shakes the Martini tin, SAM bursts in.

SAM

What the hell were you thinking?

TOBY

Come on in Sam, the door's open.
(then)
You just missed Josh. You two could've given your condolences at the same time.

SAM

That was so damn...
(sees Toby's lip)
Yikes! Does that hurt?

Toby eyes him.

SAM (CONT'D)

I can't believe he did that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOBY

Yup.
(holds up the bottle)
Want one?

SAM

Toby, what the hell...?

TOBY

Sam! Do you want one?

SAM

What is it?

TOBY

Japanese Rice Vodka. It's really nice stuff.

SAM

Are you serious?

TOBY

It's kinda' like Sake, but with a lot more punch. Kicks the crap out of bourbon.

SAM

You don't think I'll have one, do you?

TOBY

Sam, I really don't --

SAM

-- Sure. Yeah. I'll have one. Why not? It's not everyday you get to drink to a friend's self-destruction.

Toby pours another with a wry smile. He shakes the martini tin then puts it against his split lip.

TOBY

Yeah.

FADE OUT.

END OF COLD OPEN

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT./EST. THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY

Superimposed over screen:

7:30AM

INT - ENTRANCE TO THE WEST WING -DAY

It's the top of the morning. TOBY briskly enters with CHUN (official-looking, Asian, late 30's to early 40's). They merge with DONNA.

DONNA

Hey Toby.

TOBY

Hey. Donna, this is the incomparable Chun.

DONNA

"The Incomparable?" Wow.

CHUN

'Morning Donna.

TOBY

Chun's our newly appointed liaison with Justice. He's the man. The head-dude. Our *Go-To* guy.

CHUN

It helps if the White House Communications Director signs your permission slip.

DONNA

I guess so.

Donna gives Toby a quick look-over.

TOBY

What?

DONNA

You're in a good mood. Actually, it's more than that. You're in a great mood.

TOBY

Donna, it's first thing in the morning. Why wouldn't I be in a great mood?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DONNA

Seriously, what gives?

TOBY

The Knicks won in over-time last night...

DONNA

I saw that. And that's why?

TOBY

McEnroe's still undefeated on the Seniors tour.

DONNA

It's good to see he's undefeated somewhere. And?

CHUN

Snap-G.

DONNA

Snap-G? The rapper who's suing a parental advisory group because of a label warning?

TOBY

Yup.

DONNA

So?

TOBY

So Chun here tells me he's about to win.

DONNA

Wow. You listen to Snap-G?

TOBY

Not even a little bit. But I like that he's about to win a major freedom of speech case. It reminds me of when I was young.

DONNA

You were young Toby?

CHUN

He was young and he would've protested things like record warning labels, believe me.

TOBY

Chun here went to PS 201, in Brooklyn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHUN

Toby went to PS 132, our biggest rival.

TOBY

The rival that pasted you four years in a row on homecoming.

CHUN

We used to hear stories about Toby. He graduated a legend.

DONNA

A legend? Wow.

CHUN

He held a war rally and locked the teachers in the teachers lounge. Made the stuff at Columbia University seem like a campfire girl rally.

TOBY

They were light-weights at Columbia.

CHUN

You would've loved record labels Toby.
(smiles and heads off)
Nice meeting you Donna.

DONNA

Nice meeting you.

TOBY

That whole case just gives me a tingle.

DONNA

A tingle? Wow, this kinda' makes me wish there was a major first amendment case every morning.

TOBY

Doesn't it though?

DONNA

I wonder how long this great mood is going to last.

ABBY approaches from behind.

ABBY

Toby Zacheriah Zeigler!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DONNA

(looks at her watch)
Wow. Three whole minutes.
(shares a look with Toby, then)
Good Morning Mrs. Bartlet; Toby's a legend.

ABBY

His parents must be proud.

Donna knows to move off.

TOBY

Good morning Mrs. Bartlet.

ABBY

Toby, a Senator Strictland has hit up my office with something called the Sorrenson Bill.

TOBY

Yeah, that would be the nationally mandated school uniforms thing.

ABBY

Very good Toby. Now I can see why you're such a legend. He said you haven't returned any of his calls. Toby, are you ignoring a United States Senator?

TOBY

Strictland's a third-termmer with very few friends and only three weeks left before he has to vacate the seat. He's a senator, but not for long. And the Sorrenson Bill is a joke.

ABBY

Of course it's a joke. That's not the point. He's actually bothering the First Lady because he thinks that's how you get to the White House Communications Director. Am I the only one who finds that backwards?

TOBY

He's just trying to make some noise on his way out the door.

Toby heads for the nearest coffee and pauses.

ABBY

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

TOBY

(RE: COFFEE POT)

In three years I've never gotten to the fresh pot. I always get the bottom. You know, the top of the pot smells really nice.

(smells, then says almost scared)

I'm really having a good day, it's weird.

ABBY

-- Toby --

TOBY

Oh, I'm going to keep on ignoring him because I should. So should you. I wouldn't even wipe with the Sorrenson Bill. We should also keep ignoring him because, well, it's fun.

Beat. Toby sips his coffee awaiting her reaction, then...

ABBY

Fine.

CUT TO:

INT - WHITE HOUSE - BULLPEN - SAME TIME

CJ trots in to find SAM and JOSH casually leaning up against the coolers.

JOSH AND SAM

Hey.

CJ

Hey. What?

SAM

Nothing.

CJ

Fine.

Beat.

JOSH

Hey Sam, did you know that CJ got another one of those mystery letters again?

CJ

Oh gawd...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

Really? Isn't that, like, the ninth one?

JOSH

Why, I believe so.

CJ

Drop it you morons!

CJ moves on, the guys follow-

SAM

"Morons?" Is that an appropriate way for a senior white house staff member to address her fellow senior white house staff members?

CJ

No, it's an appropriate way for a senior white house staff member to address you two morons.

SAM

(re: A LETTER in Josh's hand)
Josh, isn't that one of those letters right there?

CJ turns back. Josh and Sam examine the letter.

JOSH

I believe so. It was delivered to my office by accident.

CJ

Hey! Give me that thing!

SAM

Finders, keepers.

CJ

What are you in third grade?

JOSH

I especially like the colors on the outside. It looks official but not quite.

SAM

Yeah, this sucker's definitely personal.

JOSH

And you can tell there's a hint of, dare I say it, "festivity" to it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CJ

(growl)

Josh Lyman if you don't give me that letter immediately, I will eviscerate you in such a painful and evil way that the Devil will be envious of my ingenuity and God himself will find it too gruesome to forgive!

Beat. Genuinely afraid for his life, Josh sheepishly hands her the letter.

CJ (CONT'D)

Thank you.

CJ enters her office and slams the door closed.

SAM

"Eviscerate?"

JOSH

(silently)

Wow.

SAM (O.S.)

What was with those letters?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT TOBY'S OFFICE - NIGHT (9:00PM)

It's the same time as the cold open. Toby pensively looks out his window.

TOBY

What?

SAM

Those letters.

TOBY

What letters?

SAM

You know, those letters that CJ has been getting. A whole bunch of them. They've been coming through our security checks for the past three weeks. They look real personal too. And festive.

TOBY

I don't give a damn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

Ok.

Beat.

TOBY

I was having a good day, you know.

Toby looks out his window again.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT TOBY'S OFFICE - DAY (9:00AM)

Toby is seated at his desk still enjoying the aroma of his coffee. LYDIA MINELLI (45, confident, smart, and always comfortable) is at his door.

LYDIA

Knock, knock.

TOBY

Hey. What are you doing here?

LYDIA

Got a moment?

TOBY

That depends on what for.

LYDIA

What, one friend in Washington just can't stop in, unannounced, right at the beginning of the day to say, "Hello. Good morning. How are you doing?" to another friend in Washington?

TOBY

No.

LYDIA

Toby...

TOBY

You're not going to give me a thing are you?

LYDIA

"A thing?"

TOBY

Yeah, and I ask because I'm kinda' in a good mood this morning.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lydia smiles and plops herself down on Toby's couch.

LYDIA

Then you're gonna' love this one Toby.
And you know why, because you have a
sense of humor.

TOBY

I'm famed for it in the Oval Office.

LYDIA

Oh I bet you are.

TOBY

Why are you here?

LYDIA

Guess.

TOBY

You're here to tell me how happy you are
the Knicks won in over time last night.

LYDIA

I am not, however I am happy they did.
Any other guesses?

TOBY

The chief political operative of the head
of the Senate Majority Whip drops by my
office, unannounced. Gee, could it be
that perhaps she's got a thing from the
head of the Senate Majority Whip?

LYDIA

Sort of. Remember that sense of humor
thing...?

TOBY

Lydia!

LYDIA

Senator Strickland, Toby.

Beat.

TOBY

Are you kidding me?

LYDIA

I sincerely wish I were.

Toby sighs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LYDIA (CONT'D)

Toby, Strickland has worked with my boss--

TOBY

That would be the leader of the Senate Majority Whip again.

LYDIA

Yeah, that guy. Anyway, they've been working together for three terms now. They're chums. They're buddies. One might even call them cohorts. But unfortunately one of them is about to leave the island. Some technicality about being voted out of office, or something like that.

TOBY

Yeah. I hate it when that happens.

LYDIA

'Totally with you on that. In any event, Strickland has never had legislature come out exclusively from his office. He's always been a team player. He's always attached himself, kinda' like a patron to the arts although some people think it's more like a barnacle attached to a whale. But now he wants his chance up at the plate to swing at the pitches all by himself.

TOBY

The Sorrenson Bill.

LYDIA

Yup.

TOBY

Your boss can't seriously care about the Sorrenson Bill.

LYDIA

Between you and me, I don't really think he does. But your boss--

TOBY

Who would be the President of the United States.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LYDIA

-- Yeah, that guy. He put school uniforms in his State of the Union last year, which gave Strictland something to nibble on.

TOBY

I can never get my boss to keep his mouth shut.

LYDIA

Yup. So now my boss wants your boss to consider the Sorrenson Bill because it's Strictland's baby and he's headed out to graze in a few weeks.

TOBY

And your boss wants us to hold his hand out to the pasture.

LYDIA

That's politics Toby.

TOBY

The Sorrenson Bill is a joke.

LYDIA

And you won't hear any arguments on that from me.

Beat.

TOBY

When you woke up this morning, did you think this was how you were going to start your work day?

LYDIA

(laughs)

No. I didn't. But I just did. And now, I'm going to get myself a cup of coffee.

(Re: Toby's Coffee)

That smells great.

(gets up to head out)

Just let him bat for a bit Toby. He won't even get on base.

TOBY

Yeah.

FADE OUT:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CUT TO:

INT WHITE HOUSE - BULLPEN - DAY

CAROL passes CJ. She has several LETTERS in her hand.

CAROL
(re: Letters)
'Morning CJ. These arrived.

CJ
Oh geez. Ok Carol, we need to discuss
you discussing my mail with other people.

CAROL
What, I'm not allowed to discuss your
personal, private mail with other people?

CJ
Well at least not with Sam and Josh -
Huey and Luey of the West Wing.

CAROL
I didn't discuss your mail with Huey and
Luey. They were just in the room.

CJ
In the room with who?

CAROL
The President.

CJ
The President?! The President was
discussing my mail?

CAROL
One of *The Letters* found its way to the
Oval Office.

CJ
You're kidding me.

CAROL
No. Ya' know, I think it was those crazy
guys in Mail Security. I think they're
getting tired of screening them.

CJ
They can't get tired, they're Security.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAROL

Are the letters a threat?

CJ

No. You were in the room when I called them and told them they were personal.

CAROL

And you told them to --

CJ

Keep sending them through. Which is exactly what they're doing, isn't it?

CAROL

Yeah.

CJ

Ok, call down to those *crazy guys* in White House Mail Security and tell them to chose someone as a sacrificial lamb, immediately. Otherwise I'll just randomly get to one of them when they least expect it.

CAROL

Gotcha.

Carol moves off. LEO approaches.

CJ

Hey Leo.

Leo hands her a LETTER.

LEO

This was very decorative. What did it say again, from the "TJFHSA Board?"

CJ

The "BJFHSA Board." It's a long story.

LEO

Are these letters a threat?

CJ

No, they're personal.

LEO

But they're roaming around the West Wing like gerbils?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CJ

Well, I'm gonna' call down to security
but... yeah, gerbils sounds about right.

LEO

Ok.

CJ moves off. Toby passes by.

LEO (CONT'D)

Toby, you had a visitor this morning?

TOBY

Yeah. Lydia Minelli from --

LEO

The Senate Majority Whip.

TOBY

Yup. She was delivering a request for
Strictland.

LEO

That Sorrenson thing?

TOBY

Yup.

LEO

What do you think?

TOBY

That it's a joke and she and her boss
know it. I think they're just trying to
show a little effort.

LEO

And maybe her boss is a little sore that
his big playmate is being asked to leave
the sandbox.

TOBY

Yeah that too.

LEO

You know we don't have to give Strictland
any love here. Push comes to shove, the
Majority Whip ain't gonna' count nurse-
maiding a pouty Senator as a favor later
on.

TOBY

I know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LEO
So what do you want to do?

TOBY
Keep ignoring him.

LEO
Good, but do it in a loud sort of way.

TOBY
The loud sort of way is the most fun.

LEO
Then don't ever tell me I don't give you
the good stuff.

TOBY
Yup.

MARGARET approaches.

MARGARET
Leo.

LEO
What's up?

Off her stern look WE

CUT TO:

INT WHITE HOUSE - LEO'S OFFICE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Sam enters. Leo, CJ, Toby and Josh are already there.

SAM
I just got your call.

LEO
Josh, contact Justice to make sure we're
up to date on this one. CJ's gonna brief
in a few minutes.

TOBY
I got a friend from Justice here today.
Chun. He's good.

LEO
Your new appointee?

TOBY
Yup.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEO

Good.

(to CJ)

Tell the press that the White House will not be issuing a statement until we've had a complete report from local authorities. An official statement from the President ain't gonna happen until the FBI report comes back in either.

CJ nods.

SAM

What's going on?

LEO

Twenty-five minutes ago a junior at Westlake Academy in Maryland entered the school quad and shot off an entire clip of a 9mm Baretta.

SAM

How many bullets is that?

TOBY

Seventeen, plus one in the chamber.

SAM

Jesus. Any casualties?

JOSH

We don't know yet.

SAM

Admiral Fitzwallace's kids go there.

JOSH

Are you kidding, half the Cabinet's kids go there; not to mention the Senate and Congress.

LEO

(to Sam)

Put the President's position on handguns on deck. Bring out the speeches you wrote for him in Chicago last year.

JOSH

Are you sure it's a good time to bring this back up? It might look like we're trying to use this as a way to bring guns back on the table --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TOBY

-- something we always should be trying
to put back on the table --

LEO

-- No, I'm not sure it's a good idea.
But yes, I want it on deck just in case
it becomes a good idea. Like you said,
half the Cabinet's kids go there.

SAM

I'll bring out the speeches.

LEO

Good idea. Get going.

The team heads out.

TOBY

(to himself)

It seemed like it was going to be such a
good day too.

DISSOLVE TO:

END ACT ONE.

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