

FADE IN:

(Before starting our present-day odyssey, let's step back a moment to clarify one little-known fact about the history of construction.)

EXT. SHORE OF A RIVER, CONCORD MASSACHUSETTS (1813) - DAY

SHAKER SETTLERS wade into the water, guiding logs floating downstream into shore. A few men with poles stand in the water. Others drag the logs onto land. Pairs of lumberjacks push long, blunt pit saws through the wet timber. The SCREECH-SCREECH of saw teeth is prominent as the saws lurch back and forth, often getting stuck in the wood. Sweat pours down off many chins onto already saturated woolen shirts. As for turnaround time on the new home, don't ask.

Fortunately, on a slight hill overlooking these masochistic endeavors lies a single, solitary --

LOG CABIN.

SISTER TABITHA BABBITT, an appealing woman in her late thirties, sits on the porch, placidly spinning wool. She glances at her countrymen toiling away. She's troubled by what she sees. Then she looks at her spinning wheel. And an idea occurs to her.

EXT. SAME PORCH (A FEW WEEKS LATER) - DAY

Sister Babbitt directs a BLACKSMITH as he mounts a prototype circular saw blade onto her wheel. The other men gather around, watch her demonstrate the concept. She points to the river, then at her foot peddle, then the wheel turning. Everyone mulls it over.

EXT. SHORE OF CONCORD RIVER (A YEAR LATER) - DAY

The first lumber mill in the western world makes its debut. Powered by the river, the wooden contraption with its circular metal blade cuts a log with relative ease. Planks roll past the rotating blade and get stacked like hot cakes. The workers have a bounce to their step now as they breeze through their job. Sister Babbitt stands nearby, glistening at her important contribution to mankind. That is, until she spots a nearby BLUEBIRD CHIRPING at her in earnest. On such a perfect day, she wonders why.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EIGHTH FLOOR, OFFICE TOWERS UNDER CONSTRUCTION, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA (PRESENT DAY) - DAY

A micron carbide blade rotating at 360 rpm dazzles the human eye as it rips a 3/4-inch miter off a veneered, four-by-eight-foot panel. As the board moves past, a pair of guiding human hands comes into view.

But these aren't the big, gruff, calloused, hairy mitts of a tradesman. These hands belong to one WYLIE FERGUSON, 28, a strong, sturdy woman commanding a large panel saw. Now, for most of us, a saw blade spinning at 360 rpm might translate into ten bloody stubs at the knuckles. To Wylie, it's a walk in the park. She lifts the cut panel, carries it to a load-bearing concrete column. She positions the board between two other panels already installed. It's a perfect fit.

ELSEWHERE ON THE FLOOR,

TRADESMEN install lighting fixtures, run wire through conduit, fitting sheet metal ducts, fasten sprinklers, tape up drywall seams, etc. Outside the high-rise windows, a CRANE lifts a steel girder onto a second office tower.

EXT. PARKING LOT, SAME

Dirt-splattered pick-ups and SUV's are parked around a wide expanse of newly poured asphalt. A 20-story building under construction rises above them. Nestled among this rustic cornucopia of vehicles is a newer-looking domestic sedan bearing U.S. Government plates.

INT. SEDAN

A smartphone VIBRATES. In the back seat, a body stirs to life from beneath an airline blanket. A woman's hand appears, searches for the phone on the seat. Then KATHERINE "KASEY" BRENNER emerges. Curiously, she bears a striking resemblance to Sister Tabitha Babbitt. But Katherine's fashionable digs bely far more professional pursuits. Answering her cell:

KATHERINE

You're in trouble... Yes, I found the place...

(gazes up at towers)

It would be hard to miss. So, Ricky, the superintendent won't be here till nine. Your schedule said to get here at seven.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. FRONT OFFICE OF CONGRESSMAN MARK DOLAN, CANNON HOUSE
OFFICE BLDG., WASH. D.C. - DAY

The great seal of California covers much of the wall behind a reception desk. A prickly office manager, RICKY, 22, cradles the land line while sorting through the day's snail mail.

RICKY

I see there was some mis-communication. This is what happens when we don't read our text messages.

Katherine checks her phone and duly adjusts its settings. That generates a long series BEEPS. She begins reading her texts.

KATHERINE

Huh. My data got turned off. Oh, shoot, my dentist moved up my appointment.

RICKY

Anyway, the state Division of Apprenticeship Standards heard you were in town. Apparently, they have this agreement with DOL which provides for written notice in the event of an inspection, and then one of their agents has to -

KATHERINE

Yeah, I see all that. Can we cut to the chase, Ricky?

RICKY

Someone named Ronald's waiting for you in front of the building.

Katherine peers out a window, spots a grim-looking bureaucrat, RONALD BERGER, 48. He paces back and forth at the tower's entrance, two hard hats in hand. Katherine reaches forward to see herself in the rear-view mirror, adjusts her look.

KATHERINE

Swell. Remind me what I'm doing here, again.

RICKY

You're supposed to be finishing the survey for that affirmative action bill.

KATHERINE

It's not affirmative action anymore. That was in the eighties, before you were born.

RICKY

Excuse me, "The Equal Access to the Nontraditional Workplace" bill. Like I would know anything about that.

EXT. SEDAN - DAY

Katherine disembarks. Her sleek dress is matched with a fashionable shoulder bag retrieved from the front seat. She reaches back into the car, snares a pair of dark glasses. Ready to rumble, she locks up, then scoots toward the tower.

KATHERINE

Isn't it strange how that woman at E.T.A. bailed out on us?

RICKY

Curt said something about taking stress leave.

The sound of PILE DRIVING commences. Katherine cringes at the noise, sees puffs of smoke from that direction.

KATHERINE

One site left on her list and she folds. Strange. At least this one's on our home turf. So, are you still picking me up tonight?

RICKY

Actually, the congressman asked for that esteemed privilege.

KATHERINE

Did he? You know, this equal opportunity stuff can get extreme, even for me. The idea of defending a woman's right to be -

(looks up at an ironworker)
... a roofer.

Katherine sees Ronald waving the hard hats to get her attention.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Look, I got to go.

RICKY

Bye.
 (after she hangs up:)
 Like I was keeping you.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO TOWER ONE - DAY

On her way up the steps, Katherine searches her purse, retrieves a pill bottle. She passes a GARDENER watering some new landscaping off to one side.

RONALD

Have trouble finding the place?

KATHERINE

No. Do you think I could get a glass
 of water before we start?
 (flashes the pills)
 Allergies.

Ronald directs her attention to the gardener's running hose.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

It can wait.

INT. ELEVATOR LOBBY, EIGHTH FLOOR, SAME - DAY

Katherine bolts off the elevator at the same brisk pace we saw before. With a leather notepad in her hand and appearance of conviction, she's an immediate sensation with the workers. Ronald shuffles behind her like a disabled grinch.

KATHERINE

So, Ronald, tell me, what's wrong
 with this picture?

Ronald sees nothing wrong. He's surrounded white men hard at work. Some of them, anyway.

RONALD

A head count proves nothing. You do
 recall the electrician on the fourth
 floor. That laborer on the fifth ...
 and now this carpenter.

He points out Wylie Ferguson. She's installing another panel this time with help. HENRY, 64, steadies the panel as Wylie tightens two bar clamps to secure it between two other panels already hung. She notices Katherine watching her.

KATHERINE

You made that look so simple.

WYLIE

Yeah, well, you get a lot of practice around here.

KATHERINE

Amazing.

WYLIE

Is this about my back dues?

KATHERINE

God, no. I'm investigating gender discrimination. Here, let me give you my business card.

(commences search of purse)

Do I look a union rep?

WYLIE

No. You look like you're from Disney World.

KATHERINE

Washington. Same thing. So, how's everything going here?

Still searching for the card, Katherine fumbles her nail polish, lipstick and pill bottle out onto the concrete slab. She crouches down to pick it all up.

WYLIE

Lady, I got to get back to work.

A BEAT. Katherine takes off her sunglasses and looks up Wylie, mystified.

KATHERINE

Alright.

(stands; produces the card)

Call me if you need anything.

WYLIE

Do I look like I need something?

KATHERINE

Maybe a semester of charm school. Sorry to bother you.

After Katherine and Ronald move on, Henry takes the business card from Wylie.

HENRY

"Katherine Brenner. Congressional Aide to Representative Mark Dolan."

WYLIE

I'd like to boot her snooty ass down
the elevator shaft.

HENRY

Now Wylie, I think that gal wants to
help you.

WYLIE

Nobody's ever helped me do anything.
Go get another panel.

HENRY

You da boss.

CORRIDOR APPROACHING ELEVATORS

Still on the move, Katherine and Ronald maneuver around
CARPETLAYERS covering the slab floor.

KATHERINE

The Subcommittee's not going to be
happy when I testify.

RONALD

A foregone conclusion.

Katherine hits a groove in the concrete and steps out of one
of her high heels. As she backtracks to reclaim it:

KATHERINE

Ronald, why are we the only ones
wearing hard hats?

RONALD

Regulations.

Katherine removes the hat, fluffs her hair. WHISTLES and
CATCALLS sound from all corners. She ignores the gawkers,
removes her stuck shoe, checks for damage. It's still intact.
They head toward the elevator lobby.

KATHERINE

Fine, let's talk regulations. Let me
see. I don't have my calculator, but
three women out of a workforce of
say, two hundred, fifty.

RONALD

Construction work has never attracted
a large pool of females.

KATHERINE

Ronald, for thirty-eight an hour,
nuns would be abandoning the convent.
I had no idea the situation was this
bad.

RONALD

The state cannot order any contractor
to hire nuns, nor may it compel labor
organizations to recruit them.

KATHERINE

Fine. Tell me, what exactly does the
state Division of Apprenticeship
Standards do?

RONALD

You mean, besides babysit
plucky federal interns.

Katherine assesses the paint damage again, checks her phone,
and pushes the elevator button.

KATHERINE

You called us, remember? And I'm not
an intern. Ronald, look around.
This isn't some trashcan burning on
the sidewalk. We're talking about a
serious crime here..

EXT. PASSENGER AIRLINER ACCELERATING DOWN TARMAC

As it lifts skyward, San Francisco International Airport comes
into view, surrounded by the bustling peninsula.

KATHERINE (V.O.)

(testifying)

Beginning with Title VII of the Civil
Rights Act of 1964..

INT. AISLE SEAT, COACH CABIN - DAY

Her tray table open, Katherine swallows two pills from the
bottle we saw before, chased by a glass of white wine.

KATHERINE (V.O.)

Title IX of the Education Act of
1972.

EXT. CAPITOL HILL, WASHINGTON D.C. DAY

A summertime, sizzling post card shot.

KATHERINE (V.O.)

In seventy-eight, President Carter issued an executive order demanding that twenty-five percent of all new hiring go to women.

INT. HOUSE HEARING ROOM, WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

The SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONS is meeting. Its chair is CONGRESSMAN MARK DOLAN (47, fading good looks, prodding). The chamber before him is filled with brick-faced LABOR LEADERS busting out of their tight suits, cynically listening to Katherine, who's testifying.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Hardly a giant leap towards parity. Auto manufacturing reached twenty percent within a few years. Meanwhile, a half century later, construction is still chugging along at two to three percent. Way to go, guys.

A collective GRUMBLE reverberates among the mass of labor in the gallery. Chair Dolan cringes, uneasy. But Katherine's unphased. She stifles a yawn, drinks from her water bottle.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Let's see, in 1992, the Women in Apprenticeship and Non-traditional Occupations Act was passed, authorizing over a million dollars for employers and unions to recruit women.

Dolan's chief of staff, CURT DECKER (38, lanky, cerebral), enters the chamber. Curt's pensive gait indicates someone who has come to rely on tension alone to hold them together. He skirts past THREE REPORTERS (millennials, male), all of them killing time with laptops games or doodling. Curt lingers over the doodler's image.

HIS POV

It's a cartoon featuring Katherine as a soapbox agitator, with BIG LABOR gathered around her like a lynch mob.

CHAMBER

Curt's hard-wired jaw relaxes for a moment to allow a sadistic smirk to light up an otherwise grave countenance. Then he takes his seat behind Dolan.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

The bill before the committee today, H.R. 2650, authorizes the Employment Training Administration to take punitive action when local apprenticeship committees fail to hire women.

Among the union officials in the crowd, ROY CRAWFORD, (55, crew-cut, head shaped like an ice-block) leans into the ear of his his boss, Carpenters Local 50 President EDDIE KENT, 60. Eddie has thick brows, a teddy bear face, and dresses like a well-to-do Ponderosa rancher.

ROY

Is she serious about this stuff?

EDDIE

Nah, what she needs is a little executive order up in my hotel room later.

At the front of the room, an elderly Republican on the committee, CONGRESSMAN YATES, now pipes up with a mint julep drawl:

CONGRESSMAN YATES

Young lady. Let me stop you for just a second.

KATHERINE

(reaching for the water bottle)
By all means.

CONGRESSMAN YATES

I read somewhere that in order to accomplish gender parity in America, seventy-seven percent of the labor force would have to change jobs.

KATHERINE

Sounds about right. Would you mind if I took yours?

CONGRESSMAN YATES

Well, first you'd have to move to Alabama. Now, could you explain to me the relevance of Title Nine?

KATHERINE

Sure. Most trade unions and employers participate in joint apprenticeship programs that offer training at a local college.

CONGRESSMAN YATES

I see. So, you're suggesting that just because there aren't many women in these programs, federal law is somehow being violated.

KATHERINE

Not somehow. The E.T.A. survey found gender discrimination to be widespread, pervasive and endemic to the operation of most programs.

The ears of the reporters have suddenly pricked up. Like dominoes, they switch from video games to MS Word. The labor leaders, meanwhile, are becoming increasingly agitated. Curt leans forward, confides into the Dolan's ear.

CONGRESSMAN YATES

But what does that have to do with unions? Don't companies determine who gets hired?

KATHERINE

Unless it's a family member of the owner, usually not. Applicants are dispatched from the union office. On the other hand, a contractor can reject anyone that's sent out to them, so it's a joint effort.

CONGRESSMAN YATES

So, this bill will now regulate that procedure?

KATHERINE

It allows Employment Training Administration to intervene when a pattern of discrimination is indicated.

CONGRESSMAN YATES

"When a pattern of discrimination is indicated."

KATHERINE

Yes, a pattern. Something that happens over and over.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

So, if the local apprenticeship committee - which is made up of union and company officials - doesn't correct the problem, E.T.A. can cut off funding.

CONGRESSMAN YATES

Sounds to me like the end of apprenticeship in America.

KATHERINE

I call it simple law enforcement. And given the track record of -

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

Mr. Yates, this is a chance to open up the trades to sectors that have been traditionally excluded. Minority men as well as women.

CONGRESSMAN YATES

Well, what about ex-convicts and refugees from Somali? They need jobs, too, don't they? No siree, this bill is just an attempt to reinstitute quotas. I'm having none of it.

The labor leaders get on their feet, burst into spontaneous and sustained APPLAUSE. Katherine closes her report, casually looks around the gallery and discovers -

A LONE TRADESWOMAN.

Dressed in a denim jacket and John Deere cap, the young woman's stern brow and stiff curvature gets crunched between two overweight union men when they sit back down.

KATHERINE

stares at the tradeswoman, gets angry.

HEARING ROOM

The clock on the wall reads 11:45.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

Well, I think that about covers it. Katherine, can we go ahead and insert the report into the record?

Katherine quickly reopens the survey, flips feverishly through the pages. Alarmed, Curt bends Dolan's ear again. But Dolan motions for him to cool his jets and wait.

KATHERINE

Just one moment. I think a few more statistics would underscore the problem. Consider, shall we, the case of the Plumbers, Local Nine in Philadelphia. Its current president for life is one James Dean Callahan.

In the audience, CALLAHAN, an old geezer with liver spots, snaps to attention at the mention of his name.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

In his 22-year tenure, not a single woman has completed an apprenticeship in Local Nine. Then there's William Mahoney, president of the Ironworkers Local in Tallahassee. Not one. Jeremy Quinn, Sprinkler Fitters, and Eddie Kent, Carpenters Local Fifty, both in San Francisco. None.

Unlike his outraged peers, Eddie smiles proudly at the shout-out. But Roy stands up with the other officials, peeved. As their IRATE GRUMBLING reaches critical mass, Congressman Dolan lifts his gavel. But he can't bring himself to use it. As for the other committee members, the Republicans revel in the chaos, while the Democrats all look like deer in headlights.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

No gentlemen, none of you can escape the inexorable zero.

Now emboldened, the woman in the John Deere cap leaps to her feet, points her cap around the room as if it were a pistol.

TRADESWOMAN

YEAH! It's high time you creeps got busted. You don't train us at all. You just lay us off after three months, after you get your "statistic". It's all bullshit.

The union men rise to their feet, HOLLER back at her. As Mark pounds the gavel, TWO FEDERAL SECURITY OFFICERS storm the room, sweep the tradeswoman up off her feet and carry her out.

EDDIE

She's right about us, you know.

ROY

Yeah, Eddie, the President's gonna send in troops.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

If there's no objection, this meeting is adjourned till one.

CONGRESSMAN YATES

Why, Mark, your gal there's just getting warmed up.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

May I remind the ranking member of our full agenda today.

CONGRESSMAN YATES

I can't wait to see Act Two.

The other Democrats on the committee are already breaking for the exit. Yates relaxes in his chair, savoring the Pandora's Box he's open. He gives Katherine a "gotcha" look. She responds in kind as she's ambushed by the reporters.

REPORTERS

Hey, what's the crime here? I don't get it - Is the government stepping in for real? - How will this bill stop they're their funding? - Yeah, how much money we talking about here?

Waiting for the barrage to subside, Katherine catches sight of Curt rudely leering at her from a few feet away.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

Curt.

Curt stiffens into an ironing board and quits the room. Now Dolan levels his own more discreet ire on Katherine as he annoyingly packs his briefcase. A BEAT. Katherine reopens the report, shares it with the reporters.

INT. BEDROOM, KATHERINE'S CONDOMINIUM - D.C. SOUTHWEST - NIGHT

Softly lit by an upward pointing lamp. PANNING around the room, we're sees a thriving fern, a framed UNICEF poster, and an antique mahogany bureau. A profusion of Easter flowers growing on a window ledge frames the WASHINGTON MONUMENT as it rises in the distance.

QUEEN-SIZED BED

Katherine lies between red satin sheets, staring into the eyes of her lover. It's Mark Dolan.

KATHERINE

I thought you were angry with me.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

I was.

KATHERINE

If it wasn't for that damned woman's stress leave, none of this would have happened. Why didn't E.T.A. just pull someone else out of the bullpen?

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

Didn't have time. Don't worry about it. You get your mortgage payment in?

KATHERINE

Had to borrow from my parents again.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

If it's any consolation, you're due for a raise next month.

KATHERINE

You could give me Curt's job.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

He doesn't like you, either.

KATHERINE

He doesn't like anybody. Why did you hire him, anyway?

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

(climbs out of bed)

Fifth in his class at UCLA Law.

KATHERINE

That used to mean something.

Katherine relaxes on her pillow, stares at the ceiling as Dolan steps into her bathroom.

KATHERINE

Not that I minded. Sometimes you need to shake things up. Wonder if I'd ever make it as a carpenter.

BATHROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Steamy after a shower. Draped in the same towel, Dolan finishes a shave, returns the razor to the medicine cabinet. He notices a pill container on the shelf, reads the label.

KITCHEN

Lettuce, vegetables and Munster cheese sit on a butcher block table near a counter that divides the kitchen from the dining room. Attired in a thick cotton bathrobe, Katherine sits on a stool eating a salad. Dolan enters half-dressed, picks up an open bottle of wine on the counter. he reads that label, too.

KATHERINE

Try some. It's organic.

He sets aside the wine, loops his tie into place. Katherine pushes a copy of the *Washington Post* towards him.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

See the farm bill passed the senate? Two billion in subsidies.

MARK

For the people who work the land.

KATHERINE

Hard to picture investment brokers toting rakes out to the corn fields. Family farms are history.

MARK

No, they're not. Did you find my blue swim trunks?

KATHERINE

I sent them out with the laundry.

He heads back towards the bedroom while Katherine brings up CSPAN on the laptop.

CLOSE ON SCREEN

Katherine's testimony at the hearing is playing in halting snatches of slow-streaming bytes. We see her delivering her beatdown of the unions, followed by the ruckus created by the woman in the John Deere hat.

KITCHEN / LIVING ROOM

Katherine slams the laptop shut. Now fully dressed and toting his briefcase, Mark breezes into the kitchen, kisses her from behind, and heads to the front door. Katherine has to chase after him. As he opens her door.

KATHERINE

So anyway, we're going ahead with the bill, aren't we?

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN
Congressman Warner and I are thinking
of tabling it.

KATHERINE
Damn it. Sometimes you got to be
bold.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN
After your Bobby Kennedy routine, the
allies have pulled back their tanks.

KATHERINE
Why?

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN
A hundred million in PAC money this
election.

KATHERINE
What are they going to do, give it to
the Green Party?

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN
(concedes the point)
Long day.

KATHERINE
Yeah, it was rough, wasn't it?

MARK
Don't forget that report on the
Mexican thing. I have Government Ops
next Wednesday.

KATHERINE
Still waiting on the embassy.
(The door closes.)
Long night.

INT. RECEPTION AREA, OFFICE OF CONGRESSMAN DOLAN - DAY

It's Monday morning. Katherine enters the office and stops at
Ricky's desk. He looks at her askew, then retrieves her mail.
Through a side doorway, we hear a staff meeting in progress.

RICKY
I thought you had a dentist
appointment.

KATHERINE
I cancelled it. I need to catch
up on my in-box.

AIDE 1 (O.S.)
She's available, Mark.

AIDE 2 (O.S.)
Dude, bachelors don't do well at the
polls.

There's LAUGHTER O.S. Katherine's amused and flattered by the
exchange next door. She inches her way to the doorway.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN (O.S.)
Jefferson was a bachelor.

CURT (O.S.)
He had slaves, too.

AIDE 1 (O.S.)
And this would get us pretty deep
into the Interior. You do want to get
in there, don't you, boss?

As Katherine reaches the opening, she's now totally confused.
She looks back at Ricky. He rises like a jack-in-the-box and
exits. Now Dolan paces over to the doorway, sees Katherine.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN
Uh, Matt, check with State for the
new numbers on that peacekeeping
operation.

MATT
Yes, sir. Which one?

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN
Sudan.

KATHERINE
(Mark steps out of the room.)
What the hell is that all about?

MARK
It's not what you think.

KATHERINE
"Get us into the interior." Are you
seeing Margo Berger?

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN
Don't listen to those guys.

KATHERINE
And I thought you decided not to run
for senate.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

Let's talk about it later. What about Mexico?

KATHERINE

That visa clerk never called me. So, I complained to the staff director. And he said there's no one else I can talk to.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

That's ridiculous. They have over a hundred people working there.

KATHERINE

Maybe you should call the ambassador. Light a fire.

MARK

Just take care of it.

Dolan returns to the meeting, rudely closes the door right in Katherine's face when she tries to follow him inside.

INT. WORKOUT GYM, FOGGY BOTTOM - THAT NIGHT

Sweat drips off Katherine's chin as she goes full tilt on the rowing machine. Her seat seizes in the slide mechanism on each back and forth as well. But she keeps going, as her full water bottle dribbles over the lip. TWO GYM PATRONS marvel at her.

PATRON 1 (O.S.)

Look at her go.

PATRON 2 (O.S.)

She's not stopping till she reaches Tahiti.

EXT. DEPT. OF LABOR, FRANCES PERKINS BLDG. - NEXT DAY

Dressed in a black power suit, Katherine comes up the sidewalk, stares up the concrete steps. She takes a breath, lowers her shades, and starts climbing.

INT. RECEPTION AREA, E.T.A OFFICES, SAME - DAY

Katherine stares through an office window as a secretary, CAROL (24, red perm) confers with a white-haired administrator, GERALD SILVERMAN, 38. Silverman squirms on his feet as he listens behind his cluttered desk

CAROL

She's an aide for Congressman Dolan and asked if she could talk to you about the tradeswomen survey.

Silverman looks out the door, sees Katherine staring at him. Annoyed, he shuts it, then the blinds over the window.

Tired of waiting, Katherine meanders around the room, exploring. Presently, she comes across a framed group photo on the wall.

CLOSE ON PHOTO

A team of collegiate golfers pose before a banner: UCLA GOLF TEAM, 2000".

KATHERINE'S POV

Curt and Gerald stand beside each other, like 12-year-olds hamming it up before the camera.

OFFICE

Carol emerges from Silverman's office, closes the door, and returns to the reception desk.

CAROL

I'm sorry, but Mr. Silverman doesn't have time to see you.

KATHERINE

He looks like a barrel of laughs.

CAROL

(softly:)

Biggest prick on the planet.

KATHERINE

Can you tell me why Pearl Sanchez went out on stress leave?

CAROL

Who told you that? Pearl quit. She had enough of that asshole.

KATHERINE

What happened?

CAROL

They had a big blowout over that survey you asked about. Silverman hollered at her about all the

research she was doing. He said he just wanted the head count.

KATHERINE

Well, that's interesting. Does anyone here have her phone number?

Carol pulls out her cell, looks up the number. As she waits, Katherine notices the blinds on Silverman's window bending. Then a pair of eyes peak out at her.

EXT. FIRST STREET, CAPITOL HILL - DAY

It's late in the afternoon. Katherine and Dolan exit the Cannon building, step into the throng of pedestrians pouring out on the street. Dolan tries to hail an empty cab.

KATHERINE

Pearl told me he excoriated her for auditing the union dispatch records.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

You shouldn't have gone over there.

KATHERINE

Maybe he didn't want her naming names in that report.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

As in the rogue's gallery you went public with the other day? I told you to stick to a broad overview, not burn these guys at the stake.

KATHERINE

They need to be roasted. So, what should we do?

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

It's Tuesday and I still don't have your report.

KATHERINE

Did you call the ambassador?

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

(A cab pulls up.)

I'm not kidding, I need that report first thing tomorrow.

KATHERINE

They're three hours behind us.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN
 (prevents Katherine from
 boarding)
 Listen, I'm not up for Sam's tonight.
 I'm going home

KATHERINE
 Gee, thanks for the heads up.

The cab pulls away. Left at the curb, Katherine watches as the car turns right at the corner.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
 And that's not the way home.

Now another cab pulls up. She waves it off, turns down the sidewalk and hoofs it towards the metro station on the corner.

INT. DOLAN STAFFERS' BACK OFFICE - DAY

It's Wednesday. A clock reads high noon. Katherine sits at her desk inside a small, partitioned cubicle. A carrot dangles from her mouth as she cradles a phone and speed types.

KATHERINE
 Uh-huh... Seems to me when a drug dealer gets a work visa, it undermines our zero-tolerance policy... No, I don't see how the media blew this out of proportion.
 (Ricky appears, hair on fire.)
 Alright, we're done... So where are they sending you? ... Uzbekistan? Ooh. Well, good luck, David. Ciao.
 (to Ricky:)
 What's up?

RICKY
 Mark wants to see you in his office.

KATHERINE
 I'll be right there.

RICKY
 He wants to see you NOW!

KATHERINE
 Mind if print this out?

Katherine finishes typing, hits the print button. But the document doesn't print. The paper tray's empty. She adeptly reloads it, hits the Start button. Three pages leap out. She grabs them and goes.

INT. CONGRESSMAN DOLAN'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

A large portrait of the California governor hangs on the wall. Next to it, a smaller portrait of Dolan standing before the Capitol building like he owns the place. An aide, MATT, 20, waits at the desk as Dolan signs a document and hands it to him. Matt departs as Katherine steps in

KATHERINE

Hey, Matt.

Matt ignores her. Then CURT steps in the office and shuts the door. He's pulls a letter out of a manila envelope, hands it to Dolan, who signs it.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Just got off with the visa clerk. Their server was down that day he issued the visa. He said the applicant was well dressed, showed him a stockbroker certificate, said he was in a hurry to get to New York, yada, yada.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

Have a seat. Hank Warner called me this morning and said you contacted one of his aides about H.R. 2650.

KATHERINE

I wanted to get some feedback on the hearing. No big deal.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

First you investigate the E.T.A. And now me.

KATHERINE

Investigate you? If I wanted to investigate you, Mark, I would have followed your cab the other night. How was dinner with Margo?

MARK

(A BEAT.)

Sometimes I get the impression you think you're an independent contractor rather than one of my employees.

KATHERINE

I guess that's what happens when you sleep with the help.

Curt's normally grim expression turns Friday, the 13th. Dolan picks up the phone.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN
 (into phone:)
 Get in here.

Dolan hangs up, pulls the paperwork out of the envelope and signs the letter on top. He hands it to Katherine. as Ricky enters the office.

KATHERINE
 You're firing me? For what?

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN
 Did you find some packing boxes?

RICKY
 I got two out of the storage room,
 but I had to take out all the files
 for that discrimination bill.

KATHERINE
 Just as well. They weren't doing us
 any good.
 (after Ricky leaves:)
 So, forgive me if I'm a little slow.
 You're firing me for making a phone
 call?

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN
 You arrived late for your site survey
 in California.

KATHERINE
 I was there two hours early!

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN
 You failed to produce briefing
 material on time.

KATHERINE
 That was out of my control.

CURT
 No one asked you to go butt in at the
 E.T.A.

MARK
 I told you to leave this alone.
 (to Curt:)
 Give her that.

Curt hands Katherine the paperwork.

MARK (CONT'D)

Your final paycheck and pink slip. Did I mention your erratic behavior at the hearing? Katherine, there's a code of etiquette in Washington.

KATHERINE

I was just thinking the same thing about you.

(to Curt:)

And what's up with you and your golf buddy, Silverman? Is that how this whole fake bill to extort campaign money got started?

CURT

It's not a fake bill.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

I told her I was tabling it.

(to Katherine:)

We'll reintroduce next session. As for E.T.A., a problem staff member quit without notice. So, Jerry called us and that's how you got involved.

KATHERINE

And now by some amazing coincidence, you're having a problem with a staff member.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

It's the pills, Katherine. You need to take time off, get help.

KATHERINE

(foisting the paperwork:)

You're both in trouble.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

If you pursue this, I'll have to put out a press release. I'd rather not do that.

KATHERINE

Considering how bad Curt writes them.

Dolan cuts off Curt's protest while Katherine strides out of his office. He catches up with her. They pass through the reception area, then through the door to the back offices.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

No, you were an ace at that. Why don't you go back to your PR job on "K" Street?

KATHERINE

I thought when I came here, I could stop lying to the public. Dumb.

Katherine enters an unmarked door leading into the -
STAFFERS' OFFICE.

She makes her way past partitioned cubicles, arriving at one in the back. She steps behind the desk, pulls a large shoulder bag from a drawer, then starts packing up her desktop things.. Dolan scans the room, sees they're alone.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

So, what's your press release going to say? That I'm a crazed suffragette?

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

CSPAN already took care of that. It'll say you've been under the care of a psychiatrist, taking medication.

KATHERINE

A garden variety anti-depressant. I tried St. John's Wort, but nothing.

Katherine efficiently disconnects the cables on her computer and printer in a methodical fashion, coils each one expertly and packs starts packing up the two boxes Ricky brought.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

Those are your electronics?

(She nods.)

Well, how do I explain to my constituents that one of my staff has to take drugs for depression?

KATHERINE

I think they get it, Mark. Besides, you'd violate my confidentiality.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

We'll leak it then. You'll just embarrass yourself. Look, there's no shame here. Not everyone copes with the rigors of politics. Can I help you with that?

Katherine lifts the printer, sets it into the box easily. She removes a bungee strap from a hand truck parked outside the cubicle and secures both boxes. She heads out.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN (CONT'D)

Good luck.

Curt passes Katherine as she exits. Mark sits at her desk, starts feeling the gravity of what he's just done.

CURT

I talked to my contact at the FBI.
He thinks they can arrange a tail
off the books.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

Just leave her alone.

CURT

I don't think so. I'll go give me
a call now.

CONGRESSMAN DOLAN

Did you hear me? Without a
reference, she's done in this
town. Now go round up the crew.

Annoyed, Curt stalks away, leaving Dolan to his pine over his lost lover.

(end excerpt - contact rregello@thecityedition for info)