

THE CONGRESSWOMEN

by  
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**Women:**

CLARE BOOTH LUCE, Congresswoman, journalist, playwright, early 40s

HELEN GAHAGAN DOUGLAS, Congresswoman, former Broadway actress and opera diva, mid 40s

**Men** (10 characters played by 3 actors):

**YOUNG STUD -**

COMMON MAN, young working class/low-ranking military man of the time

JULIAN SIMPSON, British officer, late 20s, he appears in full military uniform.

ROALD DAHL, British spy, late 20s future author, appears naked, wrapped in a sheet.

**PRIME STUD -**

MILITARY MAN, high ranking US military officer of the time

JOSEPH P. KENNEDY, recent Ambassador to Great Britain, late 40s, appears in a loose robe.

LUCIAN TRUSCOTT, General in the United States Army in Italy, 40s, appears in his uniform pants and general's hat, no shirt.

DONALD FREEMAN, managing editor of Vanity Fair, late 30s, appears naked, holding a pillow over his crotch.

**OLD STUD -**

POLITICAL MAN, politician/wealthy businessman of the time.

BERNARD BARUCH, ultra-wealthy financier with influence in the Democratic Party, in his early 60s, he appears in boxers and his undershirt.

GEORGE WILLOUGHY, General in the United States Army in Thailand, mid-50s, he appears in uniform pants, hat and jacket, wears jacket open revealing his chest.

## THE CONGRESSWOMEN

**NOTE: The slides and special effects in the opening sequence can be scaled back to meet space requirements and resources of individual theatres.**

PROLOGUE. Two women stand on opposite sides of the stage in front of podiums. They are back-lit, in silhouette.

On the back wall, center stage, a SLIDE image of a giant American Flag appears. Within the flag, are projected black and white images from WWII and surrounding events.

Lights up on CLARE BOOTHE LUCE, early forties, stage right. She is intensely feminine, petite, almost fragile looking. She wears a glamorous but conservative dark colored dress. She addresses the Republican National Convention.

During her speech, the COMMON MAN wanders on stage. He is dressed in a subtle combination of working class attire and a low ranking military uniform. He listens.

SLIDE IMAGES (during her speech): 1) Soldiers fighting the war in Europe and Japan; 2) FDR speaking; 3) Men lying dead on the battlefield.

### CLARE

We all know G.I. Joe, the American soldier, the protector of our great Democracy, the man who will return home triumphant after fighting a long and hard war. But what about G.I. Jim? Who was he? Like Joe, Jim was the fellow next door. But Jim, was immobilized by enemy gunfire, immobilized for all eternity. Buried in an unmarked grave, Jim is the heroic heir of the un-heroic Roosevelt decade, a decade of confusion and conflict that ended in war. The inefficiency, evasion and personal whim in the management of the country's business has distorted our democracy into a dictatorial bumbledom. We Republicans must now nominate a president who will ensure that Jim's sacrifice shall not prove useless.

(MORE)

CLARE (cont'd)

A fighting man dies for the future as well as the past; to keep all that was fine of this country's yesterday, and give it a chance for a finer tomorrow.

SOUND of applause.

Full lights up on HELEN GAHAGAN DOUGLAS stands stage left in front of a podium, mid-forties, tall and confident, a beautiful winning smile. She wears, a conservative, but perfectly tailored ladies' suit. She addresses a large audience of supporters.

The Common Man switches his attention to Helen. While she speaks, the POLITICAL MAN appears and stands by the Common Man. The Political Man smiles and engages the Common Man, building a camaraderie while she speaks.

SLIDE IMAGES (during her speech): 1) Eleanor Roosevelt comforting the unfortunate; 3) "Rosie the Riveter," working on assembly lines; 4) Men and women waiting in ration lines.

HELEN

An army of forty-eight million have benefited directly under the New Deal. I do not know whether these women call themselves Democrats or Republicans. I only know that their government under Roosevelt has reached out to lighten their burdens and brighten their lives. Women are doing everything of an emergency nature that they have been asked to do to help win the war. After the war it will be as necessary for women to support themselves as it will be for men to support themselves. No one understands that more than our President. His wise and considered leadership has steered this country through its darkest hours. The American people can rest assured that we are on the right track as long as President Roosevelt remains at the helm.

SOUND of applause.

The Political Man turns to the Common Man, gesturing toward Helen's body and sex appeal. The Common Man timidly nods and makes a half-hearted sexual gesture toward Helen. Lights fade.

Lights up on Clare addressing the House Floor. The Common Man turns his focus to Clare. A MILITARY MAN appears. He wears a uniform that implies he is high ranking. He stares Clare up and down. Though she continues speaking as if he is not there, the Military Man begins moving closer in and circling her.

SLIDE IMAGES: 1) Images of the 1920s, post-WWI decadence; 2) Depression era, stock market crash; 3) Dust Bowl victims; 4) Long unemployment lines.

#### CLARE

It is Congress' job to bring out a tax bill during this emergency which will help drain off excess dollars. For the wild-burning dollars of a war boom could sweep the nation until all of America were swallowed up in a fierce fire of inflation, leaving nothing in its wake but a charred and bankrupt economy. We Americans must submit to heavier, wider, and higher taxes than we have had before in our history. Those who can afford it - the merely well-to-do and the frankly rich - must be taxed almost to the constitutional point of confiscation. All other members of the community must be reduced by taxation to the level of their actual needs in clothing, food, housing, schooling and health. In short, we must bring a tax bill adjusted, not to the people's wants, but their actual current need.

SOUND of applause.

The Military Man's sexual gestures escalate, never touching, but menacing to Clare.

The Common Man becomes concerned and steps in to interfere. In a sharp gesture of pulling rank, the Military Man turns and intimidates the Common Man with his superior ranking. The Common Man salutes timidly and moves away.

As the women speak in the following sequence, the Political Man enters with two gas masks. He hands one to the Military Man. Out of his pocket the Political Man pulls a cigar. The Military Man lights it.

Nonchalantly, the two men pass a cigar back and forth while the women speak. Gradually, the image of the American Flag smoulders, slowly catching fire as smoke (fog machine) seeps onto the stage.

The Common Man moves from Clare to Helen, trying to listen as the smoke and heat build.

SLIDE IMAGES: During HELEN's Speech: 1) Public projects, WPA 3 C's at work; 2) TVA building dams; 3) Farmers working healthy crops.

SLIDE IMAGES: During CLARE's speech: 1) Public lynching; 2) Joseph Stalin cut side by side with Henry Wallace and FDR; 3) Fat cats smoking cigars, making big business deals 4) Harry Truman

HELEN

The Democratic party is the true conservative party.

Lights up on Clare.

CLARE

The Democratic party is less a party than a podge, it is a mishmash of die-hard, warring factions.

HELEN

We have conserved hope and ambition in the hearts of our people. We have conserved the skills of their hands.

CLARE

Take the extreme Right or Jim Crow Wing of the party, led by lynch-loving Bourbons, it is anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic, anti-foreign. In short, antediluvian.

HELEN

We have saved millions of homes and farms from foreclosures. We have rescued banks and insured crops.

## CLARE

Then there is the Left or Moscow Wing of the party. This is currently master-minded by Stalin's Mortimer Snerd, Henry Wallace, champion of a misguided foreign policy he calls Freedom of the Air. No matter how you slice it, Wallace's naive attempt at global thinking is pure globaloney.

## HELEN

The Democratic Party has built schools. We have checked flooding rivers and turned them into power. We have begun a program to free men and women from the constant nagging fear of unemployment, sickness, accident - and the dread of old age.

## CLARE

Finally, there is the Center, or Pendergast Wing of the Democratic Party. This is run by the wampum and boodle boys, the same big city bosses who gave us Harry Truman in one of their more pixilated moments.

## HELEN

Ours, the Democratic party, is the conservative party.

Lights down on Helen and Clare. While the Common Man struggles to breathe through the smoke, The Military Man and Political Man put on the gas masks. Flames appear over the image of the American Flag as it pulsates with heat.

Lights up on Helen addressing the House Floor. During her speech, the Military Man leers over Helen, while the Political Man watches and encourages him. Helen takes no notice as he caresses the outline of her body and moves his face (wearing the mask) close to her neck and shoulders.

The Common Man cannot breathe. He goes to the Political Man for help. The Political Man sells him his gas mask.

SLIDE IMAGES: 1) African American units fighting the war i.e. Tuskegee Airmen; 2) Images of black families living in poverty; 3) Burning cross.

## HELEN

It is about the Negro soldier I wish to speak today, I wish to pay him the respect and to express the gratitude of the American people for his contributions to the greatest battle of all time. Three-fourths of all Negroes in the armed forces came from areas in this land of the free where their people had been held down for generations, denied educations, denied the right to participate in self-government, denied even the right to self respect. They went into the armed forces ill-equipped, through no fault of their own, for the tremendous job required of them. But they did the job, all the same, handicap or no handicap. And they did it magnificently.

By this time, the flag is engulfed in flames, the stage filling with smoke (fog machine). The Common Man struggles to put on the gas mask as he exits, escaping the fire.

The Military Man and Political Man dance of sexual ecstasy, making masturbation gestures toward the flag, feeling their power.

SLIDE images build in intensity of 1) Bombed out German cities; 2) American soldiers liberating Nazi concentration camps 3) American factories churning away at top production 4) Huge crowds of people in the streets celebrating the end of the war.

SOUND of cheers echoes all around.

The cheers crescendo and go out. Lights down. There are a few beats of silence. The American Flag disappears.

The men are gone. The stage is cold and dark.

Cool, area light up on Clare, speaking on the House Floor. During the following, SOUND of a LITTLE GIRL's laughter echoes around the women. Clare is deeply affected by the laughter, but maintains her composure.



CLARE

Existence for human beings at Buchenwald, Nordhausen, Bergen-Belsen, Ohrdruf, Lagenstein, Dachau and other extermination centers was a descent into the bowels of hell.

Tight cool light comes up on Helen.

HELEN

Mr. Speaker, mixed with feelings of elation on August fourteenth that we had come finally to the end of the war, was a feeling of stupefaction.

CLARE

No American can imagine what grisly tortures were visited upon the prisoners for the smallest infractions of the camps' inhumane disciplines.

HELEN

I realized that we had come to the end of one age and that we are witnessing the birth of another because of the smashing of the atom and the release of atomic energy.

CLARE

No words can describe them or evoke the ghastly sights and sounds and unutterable smells that day and night afflicted all the occupants of these infernos.

HELEN

We cannot retrace our steps.

CLARE

Torture for torture's sake is nothing new...

HELEN

This new age demands of us an entirely new concept in our responsibilities toward one another. These responsibilities must be based fundamentally on a fully Christian, moral attitude.

CLARE

Carefully calculated starvation of hundreds of thousands of human beings in the building of a modern aggressive war machine - this surely is something new and terrible to the world.

## HELEN

Now, more than ever before, is the time for all of us to read our Bible, to live by the principles found within the Golden Rule. The first order of business of this Congress and the peoples of the world is the question of the survival of mankind.

SLIDE IMAGE of an atom bomb mushroom cloud. Blackout.

Nighttime. Early September of 1945. Congress has recently resumed after the summer recess and official surrender of the Japanese, marking the end of WWII.

SOUND of a loud celebration, dominated by male laughter and conversation, fades up.

Lights up on the LADIES POWDER ROOM/LOUNGE of a popular Washington, D.C. hotel bar and grill. There is a settee, chairs and a vanity area with mirror and sink. The lavatories are located through a door leading offstage.

HELEN GAHAGAN DOUGLAS races in from the bar. When she opens the door, SOUND of the celebration climaxes, then drops as the door closes. Helen is smiling but weary. Her suit loosened and hair disheveled, she heads to the lavatory, struggling not to pee herself.

CLARE BOOTHE LUCE enters. SOUND of celebration is heard as she opens and closes the door. Clare appears freshly pressed with not a hair out of place. She holds a martini and smokes a cigarette. She sees Helen exit into the lavatory. After a moment, Helen lets out a relieved moan and then pees for a long time.

SOUND of a Little Girl's far away laughter freezes Clare on the spot.

Tight area light on JULIAN SIMPSON, a young British military officer in full uniform. He cradles a baby in his arms. He touches the baby's forehead as a priest would touch a baby during baptism.

JULIAN SIMPSON

The more we learn, the more we realize how little we know. Is it only when facing death that we live in truth? Or perhaps, within death's proximity - believing the end of consequence is nigh - we plunge into fantasy.

The toilet flushes. Area lights down.  
Helen enters.

CLARE

What is the expression Mrs. Douglas? Like a racehorse?

HELEN

(Caught off guard) Oh, Mrs. Luce! If Sam buys me one more beer, I'm afraid I'll explode or pass out!

CLARE

You don't seem at all smashed, Mrs. Douglas. Topsy perhaps... With those big doe eyes of yours, you always seem a little tipsy to me.

Clare stands close, watching Helen.

HELEN

I suppose I have a strong constitution for celebration.

CLARE

Must be our wicked Broadway pasts.

Clare takes another long drink.

HELEN

Perhaps. (Beat.) As satisfying as it is to finally celebrate the end of the war with my fellow Congressmen, my constitution is fading. I shall soon say good night.

CLARE

I am sure he is simply caught up in some meeting or rather. He'll be here soon, dear.

HELEN

(Startled) I beg your pardon? Who?

CLARE

Mrs. Douglas, you have been staring longingly after the front door all evening. Whosever arrival you are anticipating, clearly has not materialized. Yet.

Helen turns away from Clare and begins fixing herself up in the mirror.

HELEN

I have been waiting for several of my favorite colleagues to arrive.

CLARE

There is a certain colleague from Texas who seems to have taken quite an interest in the freshmen Congresswoman from California. Our first week back after that long summer recess, I'd expect to see you two chained at the hip.

HELEN

I have absolutely no idea what you're talking about.

CLARE

I suppose coming here to inform you that Lyndon Johnson walked into the bar at the precise moment you disappeared into the powder room, was a misguided gesture of female solidarity.

Helen makes a small start toward the bar, but contains herself. She focuses her nervous energy into her grooming. Clare smiles, sips her martini.

HELEN

Congressman Johnson has become a great friend. He has been a godsend for helping to organize my office.

CLARE

He's been organizing other matters from what I understand.

HELEN

He has introduced me to some influential people, if that's what you mean.

Clare plops glamorously on the settee,  
smoking her cigarette.

CLARE

Oh, Mrs. Douglas, no need to be so serious. I am the last woman on earth who would care. You know, I watched you this week, listening to Truman's 21-Point Reconversion Plan that seemed more like twenty one thousand. You had your little pen and paper, dutifully taking notes - so pretty and shiny without makeup - in your appropriately gray, yet beautifully tailored suit. And I thought there is a woman with whom I could have a splendid conversation about sex.

HELEN

Uh - Excuse me?

CLARE

Sex, darling. I assume you've had it and was curious as to how you found it; what it's been like for you, over the years, with various men.

Tight area light up on JOE KENNEDY. He wears nothing but a robe (about to fall open) and slippers.

JOE KENNEDY

You always want to know what everyone's done, Clare. Your old Pal Joe knows what you've done, don't I, you clever, dirty girl?

Area light down.

HELEN

Mrs. Luce, I am afraid that is a private matter. If you are up for conversation, however, I did wish to speak with you about something rather important.

CLARE

What is that, Mrs. Douglas?

HELEN

It seems to me that the most pressing matter on Congress' plate, now that the war is officially over, is what to do about this atom bomb business, how we move forward on nuclear energy. I thought, perhaps, you and I -

CLARE

Oh dear God! Shut up!

HELEN

I beg your pardon.

CLARE

I said shut up, be quiet, close your trap! I offer sex and you counter with legislation? I've had two martinis, Mrs. Douglas. My ability to discuss political matters ceases at about one and a half. (Downs her drink.)

HELEN

I know this is not an ideal setting. But we are in opposite parties, we serve on none of the same committees. Finding another opportunity may prove difficult. And I have a strong feeling that you and I hold many of the same opinions on this matter.

CLARE

Oh please don't tell me you think we should write bipartisan legislation together! I can see the headlines now. Glamour Queens Put Aside Party to Stand with Mothers Everywhere!

HELEN

What's wrong with that?

CLARE

I may have a strong voting record on so-called female causes, but I have no desire to be pigeonholed as a Crusader for Women.

HELEN

I believe the attention that our joint effort would draw to the issue would offset any superficial observations from the press. Atomic energy is not a just woman's issue. It is a human issue.

CLARE

Mrs. Douglas, do you remember our meeting during your first week in Congress? (Helen nods) As I stated before I have no interest in getting into a cat-fight with you. I was under the impression that you felt the same.

HELEN

But this isn't a fight. We would be on the same side.

CLARE

We would still have to work out the details. And we already agreed - under no circumstances - would we debate one another.

HELEN

I said that I didn't like fencing Mrs. Luce. I am not averse to political debate. If we focused our efforts, we can use the attention for good - and yes, I know, there will be more written about our choice of hats and favorite recipes - but if through all that, we can make the world a better -

CLARE

(Bursts out laughing) Make the world a better place! Oh you are precious! Seriously, how many times have you fucked Lyndon Johnson?

HELEN

I can't believe -

CLARE

We don't have to start with him. What about your husband? For all the plays I've written, I've never been with an actor. What's Melvyn Douglas like in the sack?

HELEN

Mrs. Luce, I am positive that Melvyn would not approve of -

CLARE

Who cares whether he'd approve? Where is he? In Hollywood? A whole fucking continent away!

HELEN

(Becoming defensive, but trying to remain composed) When Melvyn enlisted in the army, our home was in Los Angeles. In case it has escaped you, Mrs. Luce, that is where my constituency also resides. My husband has returned to his work in Hollywood, while I serve the people in Congress.

CLARE

No need to get all stuffy, Mrs. Douglas. When duty and family conflict, difficult decisions are in order. I'm sure Mr. Douglas understood the full responsibilities of your running for office and has stood behind you all the way.

HELEN

He has stood by me, yes, though he had to jump onto a moving train. He was stationed in Indian during the election and never received my correspondence. He read about it in the newspaper.

CLARE

When the shock wore off, I'm sure that he was very proud.

HELEN

My husband has always given me his undying support.

CLARE

Undying indeed! Nothing but the most ardent support in the world would enable a man to abandon his beautiful wife in D.C, surrounded by powerful, scheming men.

HELEN

When you were writing from the front lines - entrenched with soldiers for weeks - did your husband hold your hand to protect you from you work?

CLARE

Are you joking? With Harry around, I'd have never gotten into Colonel Willoughby's private quarters or General Truscott's for that matter!

Clare smiles suggestively and throws back her martini.

Separate area lights up on GENERAL CHARLES WILLOUGHBY and GENERAL LUCIAN TRUSCOTT. Willoughby, mid-fifties, well-groomed and handsome, wears his military pants and officer's jacket. The jacket lay open revealing his chest.

Truscott, late forties, handsome, but more rough and tumble. He wears uniform pants and a General's hat. His chest is bare.

Willoughby smokes a pipe. Truscott lights a cigarette.



## WILLOUGHBY AND TRUSCOTT

(Simultaneously) Clare -

They instantly become aware of each other and exchange looks, confused and highly suspicious. Area lights down.

## CLARE

Oh Mrs. Douglas, I am simply making light of silly rumors. You understand, of course. Take the tittle-tattle about you and Congressman Johnson...

## HELEN

Mrs. Luce, I apologize for any discourtesy, but I am in no mood for gossip at this hour.

## CLARE

(Crushing out her cigarette) Honestly! We survive self aggrandizing, blow hard speech after blow hard speech and you can give me nothing!

## HELEN

This is all very strange, Mrs. Luce. I have to wonder at your true motivations.

## CLARE

Since we've returned from recess, all week, I've buried myself in war reports, casualty reports... I don't want to go home and, heaven forbid, close my eyes. I don't want to seek out a man of which there are numerous, though not necessarily desirable options. So... Mrs. Douglas, I was hoping - on a passing fancy - that you might provide me one last nibble of a life I will soon leave behind.

## HELEN

(Helen considers for a moment. ) Mrs. Luce, sharing intimacies with you is not something with which I am comfortable.

## CLARE

Oh.

## HELEN

(Extending her hand.) Good night Mrs. Luce.

CLARE

(Taking her hand and holding it.) If I told you that I lied and, in fact, Lyndon Johnson had not arrived, might you stay a little longer and entertain me?

HELEN

Lyndon Johnson's presence is of little concern.

Clare, who still hasn't released  
Helen's hand, clasps it in both of hers.

CLARE

Well, if you find your prince has yet to make his grand entrance, can you be a dear and have Mike pour me a scotch? Dewar's if he has it. (Helen is speechless. Clare tightens her grip on Helen's hand.) Joe Martin has had me cornered for the past hour, going on about some paper route he had as a child. He's the minority leader. I cannot be rude. I need to steel myself for a firm, yet gracious goodbye.

HELEN

Um.. (Tries to pull her hand away.) Yes, Mrs. Luce, of course. I will be right back.

CLARE

Thank you.

Helen exits. SOUND of celebration is heard still going full swing as the door opens and closes. Clare goes to the mirror. She takes a deep breath. She closes her eyes.

Tight area light up on JULIAN SIMPSON. He holds a baby in his arms, smiling proud of the child.

JULIAN SIMPSON

What if she had been ours Clare? What if we had been brave enough to make a go of love despite the odds against us? You were so young, under such pressure from your mother to hook a millionaire. I begged you not to marry George Brokaw - not because of what I was to lose, but because of what I believed you were to suffer.

Area lights fade. Helen enters with the scotch and a pint. SOUND of loud male laughter from bar at opening of door. Helen hands the scotch to Clare. Clare downs it.

CLARE

Thank you. That should do the trick. (Clare hands Helen the empty glass as if she were a servant.) No sign of Lyndon?

HELEN

No, not that it matters.

CLARE

You are very pretty, Mrs. Douglas.

HELEN

As are you, Mrs. Luce.

CLARE

True, but my beauty lies more within a delicate feminine radiance, whereas you are what I would call the Amazon Princess type. You have that bright-eyed way about you. That toothy all American grin is well used to your advantage on the House floor. When you find interesting what a man is saying, you stare at him like you're Daddy's little girl, and he is the only man who exists in the entire world. Lyndon is addicted to that about you, you realize?

HELEN

I assure you, Mrs. Luce, I am in no position to discuss Congressman Johnson's alleged addictions.

Helen takes a drink of beer and sets the glass down.

CLARE

Mrs. Douglas, all this power, in the middle of a war, how could a girl not fall on her back, at least once or twice? You know, if you didn't want people to talk about you and Lyndon, perhaps you shouldn't disappear in his office, leaving the chit chatty aids mulling around, wondering at all the animal noises.

Area lights up on BERNARD BARUCH, a wealthy financier and entrepreneur, attractive and fit, in his early sixties. He wears a T-shirt and boxers.

Though he is sexually charged, he has a Southern gentility.

BERNARD BARUCH

If you would be so kind, Ms. Clare to disrobe and lay yourself across this desk. The kitchen, I am afraid, is closed and your Big Daddy is starving...

Bernard licks his lips in anticipation of oral sex. Area light down.

HELEN

What business is this of yours?

CLARE

Absolutely none! If it were legitimately my business, at this stage in my life, it would be colossally boring.

HELEN

Wouldn't it be easier to gossip with the other Congresswomen about me?

CLARE

Talking about someone behind her back is no fun unless you are plotting her demise. Besides, except for Margaret, the rest of our fellow Congresswomen are a gaggle of boring, unambitious frumps.

Area lights up on DONALD FREEMAN, late thirties. He is the balding, out of shape editor of *Vanity Fair*. He wears boxers, glasses and socks with garters.

DONALD FREEMAN

Not like you Clare. Impeccably dressed, forever clawing your way up the next rung. I died with your scratches all over my back!

Area lights down.

HELEN

We may take a greater interest in the business of governing than most of our fellow Congresswomen, but that's no reason to insult them.

CLARE

I only point out how much more accomplished you seem than our female peers - quite frankly, that goes for our male peers as well. Your freshman appointment to Foreign Affairs was quite impressive. It normally takes years of seniority to obtain a spot on that committee.

HELEN

I might say the same about the position you've held on Military Affairs since your arrival in Washington.

CLARE

Yes. But let's be frank, Mrs. Douglas, your appointment is a tad more prestigious than mine. After such an illustrious beginning, I hope you don't find your star ceases to rise now that Truman is in the White House. It is well known that you don't support him.

HELEN

I support the president. We are, after all, both Democrats.

CLARE

But, you're different sorts of Democrats, aren't you? After that loss of composure you displayed at the national convention, he might not be so anxious to see your influence in Congress grow.

HELEN

Loss of composure? I have no idea what you're talking about.

CLARE

I heard that you were quite fond of Henry Wallace. But perhaps that is one of those rumors we were discussing.

HELEN

Henry is a *friend*.

CLARE

And you support your friends.

HELEN

Absolutely.

CLARE

And you think standing on a chair and sobbing in the middle of a national convention is a good show of that support?

(MORE)

CLARE (cont'd)

(Catching Helen off-guard.) Mrs. Douglas, though appropriate for the Broadway stage where you may feel more comfortable, don't you think it a bit inappropriate to the dignity of a congresswoman?

HELEN

You're one to talk! As less than stellar reviews would indicate, you've been on the stage far more recently than I have. No other member of Congress spent their summer recess performing in *Candida* or any play for that matter! Right or wrong, I stood on that chair as a politician. Henry Wallace served President Roosevelt with exception. He was the voice of the Progressive movement; he made its ideas accessible. It was pure politics they played - replacing him with Truman. I wanted it made clear that I knew that.

CLARE

That you did. I stood by Wendell Wilkie to the bitter end, but I didn't throw a tantrum in front of the entire world when he lost the election.

HELEN

(sarcastic) I am sure that President Roosevelt was touched by your restraint after you lambasted him during the entire election.

CLARE

Roosevelt and I were on opposites sides of the aisle. We were bound to butt heads.

HELEN

Butting heads in the course of political debate is one matter. Attacking the President in response to a social invitation is quite another!

CLARE

What can I say? I came out fighting.

HELEN

Fighting, indeed! At the very least, you could have given the President time to respond to your unorthodox RSVP before you sent your list of criticisms off to the press. No wonder Franklin couldn't stand you!

CLARE

Oh he made his dislike for this "sharp-tongued glamour girl of forty," quite clear. You know the first thing he said to me when I arrived in Washington? "How's Henry?" He knew my husband goes by Harry!

HELEN

Is that why you announced to the entire world that he was a dying man?

CLARE

I wasn't proud of that, but somebody had to say it. In his final months, our beloved President was far too ill to manage the rigorous duties his office required. The deal he made at Yalta? We should've hired sky writers over eastern Europe: "Take Me, Stalin, I'm yours!"

HELEN

Hitler would not have been defeated were it not for the aid of Russia. Our president did the only thing that he could do and that is treat the Soviets as our ally, which, during the war, they very much were.

CLARE

Roosevelt never articulated any tangible foreign policy, unless it was a paraphrase of Churchill. We became dependent upon the Soviets because we stumbled into the war.

HELEN

Melvyn and I were one of the first to speak against isolationism, but the country was split. We were a hair's breath out of a Depression, Mrs. Luce, and wars are costly affairs.

CLARE

I am well aware, Mrs. Douglas. I recently angered my constituency when I argued to cap individual incomes at \$25,000 to pay for it. (Laughs.) I received letters claiming I was as big a Judas to my class as Roosevelt. One thing I have never been apologetic about is my support for our men in uniform.

Area light up on GENERAL LUCIAN  
TRUSCOTT.

LUCIAN TRUSCOTT

I was helpless the moment I laid eyes on you, Clare! How would you like to see the front lines?

Area light down..

HELEN

I didn't realize you were apologetic about anything. If you couldn't issue a retraction of Globaloney, I cannot imagine remorse is in your character.

Area light up on General George Willoughby.

GEORGE WILLOUGHBY

I'm blinded by desire, Clare, a blaze of passion that I have never known. Do you want to have dinner with General MacArthur tonight?

Area light down.

CLARE

I have a great deal of remorse, Mrs. Douglas. When it comes to politics, I do not believe it is ever in one's best interest to admit you are wrong. Regarding the protection of American lives and property, I certainly don't think I was.

HELEN

Mrs. Luce, your globaloney speech was a brazen and ill-timed attack on the Vice President. There we were trying to defeat Hitler, and you announce to our European and Soviet allies that the United States should rightfully dominate the world's air space?

CLARE

That's not what I was saying! I meant that this excessively liberal, borderline communist idea of Wallace's: Freedom of the Air - that the air belongs to the people - is naive and dangerous. Enemy aircraft can and have appeared without warning. The press seized on the word, globaloney, and it overshadowed the true substance of my speech.

HELEN

Even those in your own party decried globaloney as a cheap oversimplification, just like your goddamn G.I. Jim nonsense!



CLARE

I was defending the American soldier!

HELEN

Hitler had a hell of a lot more to do with our casualties than Franklin!

CLARE

Mrs. Douglas, I only implied -

HELEN

To even suggest that thousands of our fighting men were killed because this country voted wrong in the prior three elections was a self-serving, disgusting breach of taste for which you should have been ashamed!

CLARE

Go to hell!

HELEN

Good night!

Helen heads for the door. Clare rushes in front of her.

CLARE

Helen, dear, I am sorry. You are yet grieving for President Roosevelt. Please forgive me. See, I can apologize.

Clare pats Helen, soothingly, on the shoulders, brushes off her suit and then straightens her hair. Clare gently pushes Helen away from the door then peeks into the bar area. The SOUND of the celebration in the bar has grown a little softer. She shuts the door.

CLARE (CONT'D)

No sign of him yet. No need to rush out to the stench of old men and cheap cigars.

HELEN

Mrs. Luce -

CLARE

Please call me Clare.

HELEN

Franklin Roosevelt was one of the greatest leaders that this country has ever known. There was no man more poised to continue Franklin's legacy than Vice President Henry Wallace.

CLARE

Oh, sweetheart. You are still stinging about Wallace I see. He is an incredibly intelligent and talented man. Being replaced by Truman was a stab in the back. But Helen, imagine, right now, if Henry Wallace, one tip-toe shy of a communist, were president of the United States?

Helen meets Clare's look. In Helen's mind, it would be much preferred.

CLARE

Oh for heaven's sake, Helen, how would a man like Wallace achieve even the slightest cooperation from Congress?

HELEN

Truman doesn't have the drive or the acumen to steer the country firmly on the path that Franklin started.

CLARE

I thought what we heard this week sounded an awful lot like a continuation of Roosevelt policies. Truman will have a hard time getting most of it through.

HELEN

I was encouraged for the first time. I was glad to hear that the president favors an extension of unemployment and I'm anxious for the details on his national healthcare plan.

CLARE

The unemployment benefits, though reasonable in a post-war military reduction, will have to be curbed. As far as this national health care business, well, I'll withhold my judgment until I receive the full pitch, but quite frankly, the idea smacks of socialism.

HELEN

The desire to protect this country's citizens when they are at their most vulnerable is not-

CLARE

(Cutting her off.) I did not follow you in here to debate our domestic agenda, Helen. There will be plenty of that of which to look forward to in Congress. God help me!

HELEN

Why exactly did you follow me in here?

Clare picks up Helen's beer and takes a few sips.

CLARE

Helen, this is difficult to say, but men from Texas well, they are well known for their bragging. It's best you don't hear this from anyone else. When I first came to Congress, Lyndon Johnson was quite helpful to me as well. He showed me around town, if you know what I mean.

HELEN

And you think that has something to do with me?

CLARE

Helen, it's just you and me, alone in the powder room. What do you have to lose?

HELEN

I am not afraid of losing anything. But, I have to ask myself, what I have to gain by sharing my most private secrets with you?

Clare sits on the settee and motions for Helen to join her. She gives Helen back the beer.

CLARE

At my first official dinner at the White House, I found myself seated next to a young and beautiful man, a British spy of sorts. Blonde hair, steel blue eyes, a lean and ribboned physique. Roald Dahl, a delicious cut of beef! In spite of the gorgeous young actress at his side, he spent all night charming me - a woman nearly fifteen years his senior. We stole a moment alone, in the hall outside the dining room. He confided about a mission that he had gone on in North Africa. It was all quite thrilling. We were soon going at it like animals.

(MORE)

CLARE (cont'd)

In bed, he had this arrogant need to prove he could satisfy. It takes quite a lot of pleasure to satisfy me. I once locked him in my hotel room for two days. By the time I was satisfied, his prick was sore, his tongue was sprained and he had to be put to stall wet.

Tight area light comes up on ROALD DAHL. He is in his late twenties, naked with a sheet wrapped around his lower body. He looks pitifully down at his over worked and flaccid genitalia.

ROALD DAHL

You fucked the fuck out of me. I haven't any fuck left. Bloody fucking Christ woman! You're a fucking animal! (Looks down again at his flaccid penis) Fuck!

Area light down.

HELEN

(Helen laughs.) You do know President Roosevelt caught onto your friend, Mr. Dahl?

CLARE

What do you mean?

HELEN

Franklin always enjoyed a little Hollywood gossip. In exchange, he'd offer up some of his own. Dahl, his pal, Ian Fleming and that gang had been sent over here on a mission, one quite different than those in North Africa. They were to ensure that the wealthy and influential saw the British way of things. They charmed high society by any civil means necessary and were most successful with socialite wives. Dahl got himself placed next to you at that dinner. Franklin said that he was so good, he even had Eleanor wrapped around his nimble fingers.

Area light up on Roald Dahl.

ROALD DAHL

I never loved you. I didn't even like fucking you. I did it for England!

Area light down.

CLARE

Well, aren't you an abundance of inside information from your old pal Franklin? That certainly explains a good deal. Instead of going to sleep afterwards, Roald talked. He'd go on and on about dear old Mother England and her good fight against the Nazis, like they were holding Europe together all on their own. I'd drift off to his blathering and fall into the most vivid dreams of the people and places he described. His plane crashed in Libya after he was given the wrong coordinates for an training flight. In my mind's eye, I can still imagine the blood spouting from that pretty face. Despite all his dashing war tales, never once did my feelings on England's brutal colonialism or America's right to secure our air space falter.

HELEN

I'm glad you didn't compromise yourself.

CLARE

Of course not! I wasn't in love with Roald Dahl. Beyond that sleek, chiseled body, there was nothing to tempt me.

HELEN

I could never find myself drawn to a man solely on his looks.

CLARE

If Lyndon Johnson is any gauge of your preference, that certainly bodes true. He does have quite the overpowering masculine physique. I will give him that. And there is no denying the excitement of attracting a younger man.

HELEN

Eight years is hardly anything to boast about.

Clare smiles, acknowledging that Helen has made an admission. Clare grabs Helen's beer and takes a drink.

CLARE

So Helen, tell me something. When I took my one short trip on the Lyndon train, I found that he wasn't a particularly generous lover - at least not with the sort of sexual prowess I find most pleasing. I wonder, does your political bond lead to other modes of compatibility?

HELEN

We are of one philosophical mind and soul.

CLARE

Oh, I am full aware that you are both unwavering New Dealers, right down to your bleeding liberal underwear! (Clare crosses around Helen, standing between her and the door.) I concede that I am getting nowhere with you! Fine! You were a Broadway starlet in the nineteen twenties! Perhaps there is another illicit dalliance you would find more comfortable discussing.

HELEN

If I tell you about one of my affairs, will you let me leave?

CLARE

If I find it sufficiently tantalizing, yes. (Clare peeks out the powder room door.) No Lyndon. Take your time. I want details.

Helen thinks, then decides to throw  
Clare a bone.

HELEN

I was touring Europe as an opera singer when I discovered I had been cleaned out by the Crash. My family was devastated. I had no choice but to return to Broadway. I took the lead in a play called *Diplomacy*. In that production, Tyrone Powers and I became involved.

CLARE

Hmmm, a little back stage romance....

HELEN

He was, of course, vastly more experienced. He acquainted me with a number of techniques that, as a young woman, I had yet to explore. Later, I even surprised Melvyn with a little trick of my tongue - one that I learned from Tyrone.

CLARE

Oh, I bet I know that trick. Tyrone Powers, Sr.! (Helen nods.) Experienced indeed! He was almost forty years older than you! Oh poor Helen. When the little working girl lost it all, she needed her daddy. Or in this case, her granddaddy...

HELEN

Let she who is without Bernard Baruch in her closet, cast the first stone.

CLARE

My goodness, you did have your precious little nose stitched into Franklin Roosevelt's sewing circle!

HELEN

Franklin sometimes referred to you as Barney's Girl.

CLARE

Apart from *Bernie* Baruch's massive wealth and connections, he possessed the energy and virility of a man a third his age and the charisma and sophistication of one twice as old! He still does.

Area tightens up on BERNARD BARUCH. He smokes a cigar and holds a receipt.

BERNARD BARUCH

Clare, have you been spending Daddy's money on pretty dresses? Aw, now Daddy doesn't mind. He wants his pretty girl to be happy. Oh, the way you talk Clare. (He grabs his crotch, feeling his own erection.) You're worth all the expense.

Area light down.

CLARE

Bernie has and always will be a man I admire. He even brought me into the Democratic fold for a brief time, though after Hoover, I suppose that wasn't all that difficult. It was I who suggested we needed a third political party with the slogan "A New Deal for America." One of Roosevelt's wonder boys overheard me and a few months later, there you had it. I almost joined your cult.

HELEN

I was raised in a sturdy family of loyal Republicans. Then, Melvyn woke me up one morning, a giant stack of books in his hands, "We can't get through life making love. We have to study too!" He opened my eyes to the suffering around us, the migrant workers treated like animals. By the time I toured the Dust Bowl, it took one speech from Franklin and that was it. Though, I never thought in a million years, I would end up in Congress.

CLARE

I just wanted to write good plays. After all the success of *The Women*, I suppose I needed another accomplishment to hang around my neck. So, I put on my journalist cap and toured the front lines. That's when I realized I didn't just want to write about the war, I wanted a real say in how we ran it. Mother always told me to make something of myself, and I suppose I can't stop.

HELEN

My mother raised me not to think in limitations, even though she gave up her singing career because my father demanded it.

CLARE

My mother never pursued anything besides a wealthy husband, though a filthy rich lover would do.

Area lights up on Bernard Baruch.

BERNARD BARUCH

You'd never pressure me to leave my wife like the rest of them Clare. You're just like your mother - you'd fuck a rich one, but you'd never marry a Jew.

Area lights down. Clare takes a big swig of beer.

CLARE

Daddy dear took off to play the violin when I was eleven. My sedulous mother soon screwed us into riches then respectability. Unfortunately, she found those essentials in two different men. "Don't ever be a fool, Clare! Never marry for love! Marry for money!" Mother beat that into my brain, God knows how many times.

HELEN

You can hardly blame her. When she was a young, women didn't even have the right to vote. If you didn't marry well, God knows what would happen to you.

CLARE

Money can't buy happiness. That is the truth. Though it sure can make you a hell of a lot more comfortable while you're miserable.



HELEN

I don't think it takes much to be happy. I believe it is attainable for everyone as long as basic needs are met.

CLARE

Of course you do. You are one of FDR's disciples. Poor and happy is a simple man's game.

Area lights up on Julian Simpson. He burps the baby.

JULIAN SIMPSON

Had you lived simply as a mother and a wife, if you had chosen a man to whom you could've devoted yourself fully, would God have still punished you Clare?

Area light down.

CLARE

When I was nineteen, I fell madly in love. Julian was poor, a British naval officer. He lived with his mother. We adored each other. It would've been hard work, but we might have made it. Who knows? In the end, it didn't matter. Mother believed my interests were better served by marrying George Brokaw, a middle-aged man-baby who couldn't stay off the bottle. Oh, but he was rich, filthy fucking rich. Against everything I felt in my soul, I let her convince me.

HELEN

Perhaps, your mother didn't want to see you struggle as she had.

CLARE

You have a generous regard for my mother's character, Helen. When I married George, she had her ticket to high society. She didn't care how much I suffered. Oh that horrible man! His superficial self-important friends! That ridiculous baby talk in bed! When I told her that he'd beaten me on one of his drunken binges, that I was going to kill myself if I didn't divorce him, Mother implored me to hold out until the booze destroyed his liver and he dropped dead.

HELEN

I am sorry you went through that Clare.

Helen goes to Clare to comfort her.  
Clare moves away.

CLARE

Me, a gorgeous, intelligent young woman with the whole world before her, wasting six years of her life playing house with a man like George Brokaw! I even attempted one last compromise before I divorced him - not for myself, but for the sake of Ann. (Clare catches, but quickly recovers) I would have kept up appearances if only he'd not make such a fuss the other men in my life. Despite his countless affairs, the bastard would not comply.

Clare finishes the beer.

HELEN

Not many men would agree to such an arrangement.

CLARE

Harry and I don't live under such hypocrisy. We don't flaunt our indiscretions, but we certainly don't interfere with each other's private lives.

Area light up on LUCIAN TRUSCOTT.

LUCIAN TRUSCOTT

Oh, I have been waiting for the incomparable Clare Boothe Luce to grace the Italian Front with her enchanting presence. General Brousse still gets all dreamy-eyed when he remembers your visit to the Maginot Line. (In a silly feminine voice with exaggerated feminine gestures.) But Mr. General, what if those sneaky Germans come through Belgium? (He laughs.) What if they come through Belgium?! (Sexually charged and playfully sarcastic) Oh my my my, aren't you just a poor, silly woman, Mrs. Luce? (He smiles.)

Area lights down on Lucian Truscott

HELEN

Melvyn brought Lyndon up, rather awkwardly when I saw him in New York last month. He knows, but he didn't confront me. He seemed relieved, less guilty about his own infidelity.

CLARE

I know that relief.

HELEN

Part of me hoped he might fly into a jealous rage. Though for all the complexity of feeling he displays in his work, expressions of extreme emotion are not in Melvyn's nature.

CLARE

Your congressman seems more the type to fly off the handle.

HELEN

Lyndon is far more challenging to predict.

CLARE

I could map Harry's movements by the hour. Anytime, day or night, he may thousands of miles away, and I could tell you exactly what he was doing.

HELEN

There is something comforting - solid - knowing a person that well. Even when the passion goes belly up, it breaks your heart to lose the friendship.

CLARE

Harry is a good friend, that is true. Despite what everyone said, I didn't go after him for the choice writing assignments in *Time* Magazine or his money. We had a real connection. I wasn't some predatory alley cat, who charmed Harry away from his devoted wife and children. He pursued me.

HELEN

Melvyn and I melted together like oil and butter - at least in the beginning. (Helen laughs.) Who would have thought Clare? Two independent women like you and me, altering our politics because of the men we married.

CLARE

Harry and I share many a philosophical idea, but I came to the conclusion that Roosevelt was taking this country in the wrong direction all on my own. Bernie nearly abandoned him after the first term. He couldn't resist all the power and importance offered him. Roosevelt and his stupid "Brain Trust"! Wet-brain trust is more fitting!

Area lights up on Bernard Baruch. He offers Clare jewelry and other expensive gifts.

BERNARD BARUCH

Clare, my pumpkin, don't be cross! Daddy forgives you for becoming a Republican. And I know you love your Daddy.

Area lights down.

HELEN

Franklin's programs lifted the poor. I saw it with my own eyes. Young, desperate men coming back to life - building parks and roads, an infrastructure for this country.

CLARE

Working for a buck is one thing. Handouts from the government, like social security, is something else.

HELEN

What is wrong with the impulse to take care of our elderly or to feed and clothe sick children or giving families an opportunity to escape shanty towns? Those people were thrown off their land following one of the greatest natural disasters in U.S. history. And we left them, to suffer and die, in a country that calls itself Christian, built by our wise forefathers on humanitarian values.

CLARE

I am not against helping the poor. I voted for aid to European women and children. I sided with FDR on maternity appropriations for wives of enlisted men. But, I will not support these communistic ideas, seeping into our Democracy and hindering the growth of capitalism, our economic backbone. Our forefathers built this country on the idea that if you are intelligent, ambitious and willing to work hard, you can make something of yourself and prosper.

HELEN

When money is monopolized by the few and they use that money to buy politicians and to grow their own power - with no consideration for a healthy middle class - then for heaven's sake, you end up with another kind of royalism, a class system disguised as survival of the fittest economics, where the wealthy deify themselves as the givers of charity for whom they see fit to bestow - the precise kind of system that our forefathers rebelled against.

CLARE

Even though labor has held this country ransom in unconscionable times, I think that workers should be allowed to organize and bargain for fair wages and safe working conditions. But, you have to let capitalism run its course. We will kill industry if we over unionize it. And where will that put the average man? On the street with no jobs to be had!

HELEN

We, as servants of the people, have a responsibility to see to its morality, to ensure that opportunism and abject selfishness do not drive our economy. You need look no further than the Crash of '29 to see the inevitable result of greed at the helm. Look at the sweat shops that appeared like pock marks during the industrial age. We all deserve basic human rights. It is up to us to see that unscrupulous capitalism doesn't violate those rights.

CLARE

Why is it a basic human right that we all have two cars in every garage, two chickens in every pot, and two pairs of nylons on every chicken? Basic human rights do not mean rights to materialism. That's a dangerous gauge we set on not only our happiness, but the expectations of being an American. Frankly, "all men are created equal" is generous to say the least. There will always be those that have more and those who have less. But that doesn't preclude one from seeking happiness as happiness is a product of spirit. This idea that man lives by bread alone is a communist idea and it weakens America, because it weakens the fortitude and character of our souls.

HELEN

Why does every idea these days seem to be a communist idea or an anti-communist idea? Can't ideas simply be ideas?

CLARE

You must vastly underestimate the threat communism poses to this nation.

HELEN

I don't see it as a threat, at least not internally. While democracy thrives in this country, and, I believe it still does, there will be no significant draw to communism as a system of government.

CLARE

When Eastern Europe falls under Soviet control, you'll feel differently, I guarantee it.

HELEN

I thought you didn't want to talk politics? Isn't that why you called me in your office that day, to avoid these kinds of conversations.

CLARE

I didn't intend to talk politics, Helen, but it bleeds from the walls in this town. Besides, I am having fun. Go and get us some more drinks!

HELEN

Clare, I really must be going -

CLARE

Nonsense! You're enjoying this as much as I am. You had been dying for months to let me have it about Roosevelt! Besides, you're not going anywhere until Lyndon Johnson gets his ass here!

Helen exits. SOUND of celebration from the bar has grown even softer, the light of murmuring male conversation is heard as the door opens and closes. Area lights up on Donald Freeman.

DONALD FREEMAN

I'm merely the lowly managing editor of a magazine, Clare! Why would you want me when a man of Bernard Baruch's means is at your disposal? Never mind it was through my contacts that you were introduced!

Area lights down on Freeman. Area light up on Julian Simpson still holding the baby as if offering it to Clare.

JULIAN SIMPSON

You wouldn't be all that you are now, Clare. There would be no great Broadway play, no cover stories in Life magazine, no seat in Congress. But, I could've made you happy, Clare. Maybe you would be happy.

Area light down. Helen enters with a bourbon on the rocks and a gin and tonic. Clare grabs the bourbon.

CLARE

What took you so goddamn long?

HELEN

Mike was in the back. So, I looked at Sam's crotch, smiled, then snatched his drink. I went to Joe Martin and did the same.

CLARE

(Holding up her glass as if to toast Helen.) To tits and ass, my dear woman, we still got'em! (They laugh.) I take it that Lyndon has not arrived?

HELEN

No, but his aid was out there. He is not coming.

CLARE

Oh, I am sorry Helen. At least he thinks enough of you not to keep you waiting all night - just most of it.

Helen takes a drink and plops down on the settee.

HELEN

You said you were with Lyndon. How many times?

CLARE

One unremarkable toss off in a hotel room. We had drinks at Ebbitt's Grill with Sam. I don't think Sam was even out the door when Lyndon suggested we get a room. I was all for it. But, I had a few things to say first. I knew I'd never have another opportunity to explain to him how his political beliefs were absurd. I confess, I may have overplayed it and blown out the anticipation. We stripped down as if at the doctor and he lay back on the bed. He grinned, unfurling at the woolly mammoth between his legs, like he was presenting the Holy Grail and all I had to do was climb on. I was barely stimulated and, as you know, he is both long and thick. Some men don't understand that you can't pop them inside you as fast as you can get your knickers down. And it is always those with large pricks who are the worst about it, when they should be the most sensitive.

HELEN

I've found Lyndon considerate in that regard. He's not always gentle, though he seems to know my moods. He walks into the room and his presence, alone, is stimulating.

CLARE

That's your head, Helen.

HELEN

What?

CLARE

Tyrone and Melvyn were both actors. You understood each other's minds. Then Melvyn pushed it further with the socialist thinking and all the books -

HELEN

Melvyn is not a social-

CLARE

Let me finish. And now you and Lyndon. Both New Dealers. You both idolized Roosevelt. Once a man latches into your mind, your sex soon follows. I bet you even found Franklin appealing in a sensual way.

HELEN

Don't be ridiculous! He was like a second father to me.

CLARE

That hasn't stopped you before.

HELEN

Clare!

CLARE

Oh poor Helen. That Texan has got himself so wrapped around your mind, all he has to do is drop his drawers and holler, "Ride-em cowgirl!" Roald and Bernie so impressed me with their knowledge of a woman's southern hemisphere. Unfortunately, though it gives us great pleasure, some men find the tropics too messy.



HELEN

Clare, my dear, it's not that Lyndon refuses to explore below the equator. Though he may have docked in your port, he knew better than to stick his tongue on anything frozen.

CLARE

Helen, you're in love with that man or certainly falling that way.

HELEN

Of course. I wouldn't sleep with him, if I didn't love him.

CLARE

You're one of those women.

HELEN

One of those women?

CLARE

You require affection. That's why, even though I'm younger than you, I've fucked a lot more men. Well, at least Lyndon reciprocates your feelings. But, if it goes on too long, there will come a time, where your politics will diverge. He will possess more than one means to wound you.

HELEN

I don't see that happening. Lyndon and I agree on domestic and foreign policy, taxes, equal rights, social security...

CLARE

Times change. That man is ambitious. Love would never get in his way. And if you hurt him, he will strike you deeper.

Tight area light up on Roald Dahl.

ROALD DAHL

Your cunt tastes like death!

Area light down.

HELEN

What are talking about?

CLARE

I've been in the House two years longer. I've watched these men. They can't hide from women like us. You're an actress. I'm a writer. We see in their gestures and facial expressions - under those none too subtle masks - exactly into who they are.

HELEN

I know Lyndon is insecure, Clare, deeply so. I am not as blinded by love as you think. His erratic shifts in mood can be rather alarming. An aid or assistant will make the most innocuous comment and he'll fly into a rage. I suppose you may be right. If he and I did not agree on so much, he wouldn't bother to handle me.

CLARE

In what way does he *handle* you?

HELEN

When Franklin died, I was so beside myself.

CLARE

You were hysterical for months.

HELEN

He was our President!

CLARE

I'm sorry, Helen. Go on.

HELEN

Lyndon and I hid away together after we heard the news. He has these secret places all over DC. I couldn't stop shaking. I let loose these terrible cries. I felt not just a president, but an entire dream dying. There was no hesitation from Lyndon. He was a tree, a rock. And when we made love afterwards, I completely lost myself in him.

CLARE

I'm happy for you. Women like us need sensual passion to feel alive. It keeps our blood flowing and our minds sharp.

HELEN

Knowing I have someone like Lyndon on my side, that he believes not only what I believe, but he believes in me, in who I am and what I could accomplish. - it means the world. (Helen laughs.) I barely had my office unpacked when I looked up and saw him sitting across from me, his feet propped up on my desk, "Welcome to Washington, Mrs. Douglas." In one flabbergasted second, all my doubts and fears about becoming a congresswoman turned to exhilaration.

CLARE

I take it that you hadn't felt that kind of excitement in a long time.

HELEN

I first met Melvyn when we were cast in *Now or Never* on Broadway. I left the producer's office consumed with thoughts of screwing him. The first time we made love, naked and sweating and rolling until we were twisted all up in the sheets - I had never known such wholeness before. Then, a few years into our marriage, a cold draft crept in. I found out he was having an affair. He suggested that we divorce. I refused and...I suppose I closed a part of myself, tight like a fist.

CLARE

I happened to catch you and Melvyn in *Now or Never*. George took me out for dinner and a show - one of his rare nights sober. The play was silly. One good roll in the hay and a stifled opera diva is cured of her ailments? The elusive magical prick... You two almost sold it. It was a shame they replaced you in the movie. Gloria Swanson's chemistry with Melvyn wasn't nearly so steamy.

HELEN

She was a great actress and she was Joe Kennedy's mistress. Back then, Joe got whatever he wanted.

CLARE

Back in those days, everyone was sure Joe would be something in politics. That staunch isolationism of his! Even after it obvious to everyone that Hitler was a monster, Joe was hellbent on appeasing him!

Area lights up on Joe Kennedy.

JOE KENNEDY

How can you blame me for not wanting war, Clare? Over a bunch of goddamned Jews! I had four boys, fighting age. I lost my oldest son to that damned war! You of all people should understand.

Area lights down.

CLARE

Ann and Jack dated briefly. I received a lovely note from him after her accident.

HELEN

I was very sorry to hear about your daughter, Clare. I can't imagine what it would be like to lose a child.

CLARE

Pray that you don't ever know. (Clare takes another gulp of bourbon.) I have spoken to Joe quite a bit of late, about his faith, what it's like to be a Catholic in politics.

HELEN

Was Joe's son serious about your daughter?

CLARE

There was some affection between them, but Jack's courtship of Ann never came to much. Ann was too serious for a boy like that. In a way, he is like his father. Joe is fun, pure fun! We had a few "chance" encounters in Europe right before the war. I flew across the Atlantic with him and Rose. We laughed the entire way!

Area light comes up on Joe Kennedy.

JOE KENNEDY

Oh, Clare, we should send your mouth to Europe instead of wasting our money and troops. One sweet lick of your tongue over his balls, and Hitler would be rendered helpless as a baby.

Area light down.

HELEN

Did Rose suspect anything?

CLARE

She's not the sort to make a fuss. Look at all those children she bore him! Heaven knows, a devoted Catholic wife deserves a break!

HELEN

I take it faithful was a vow you had the preacher skip.

CLARE

I had a good intentions. But, Harry always put me on a pedestal. "Oh sweet angel!" he'd cry and bury his face in my breasts like a boy. "For God's sake Harry, just fuck me!!" It wasn't long into our marriage that he couldn't perform - not with me anyway.

HELEN

Melvyn's never put me or anyone on a pedestal. Our mutual admiration and respect has never diminished, even if the passion has quite thoroughly disappeared.

CLARE

Harry and I have accomplished a great deal together. He loved Ann and... I'm used to him now, as a permanent fixture in my life, a rock of male eccentricity and power. Harry supports me in whatever I do. We ignore the rest.

HELEN

I am committed to my marriage and my children. Lyndon loves his wife no less than I do my husband. Our time together will pass.

CLARE

Women our age do not equate love and eternity.

HELEN

I can't imagine that some part of me won't always love Lyndon. He's shaped something inside me - toward the woman that I am.

Area light of up Charles Willoughby

CHARLES WILLOUGHBY

I received your stiletto correspondence, Clare. Bear no doubt, it tore the heart straight out of my chest. Through your husband, you have become unconsciously accustomed to a certain scale of living. I can't change that.

Area light down.

CLARE

That's all well and good for you, Helen, but I am finished with that kind of love - unbridled screwing with a man who knocks your socks off. It is fleeting and you're always left with ice cold feet.

HELEN

Only a few years ago, I had reconciled myself to a celibate life of dedicated service. Now I'm having more fun than I could ever imagine. You never know what lies before you Clare.

CLARE

I've screwed men over four different continents. I've rarely felt peace or satisfaction. Bishop Sheen said that I needed to sever sex from my life's motivations.

HELEN

I don't know how good Bishop Sheen figures in all this. But you cannot simply pop into the surgeon to have your sex drive removed.

CLARE

If that were that case, I would have the surgeon remove a lot more than my sex drive. He could start with my tongue. It is a finely honed, deadly weapon. The only way to stop its endless spew of clever vitriol is to bite the damn thing off. Donald Freeman was right. I am a heartless bitch.

Area light up on DONALD FREEMAN.

DONALD FREEMAN

I believed in you Clare. The only one who saw through that porcelain skin and those delicate features into your true talent! Why can't you love me, Clare? Why? Please. Please. Love me Clare. (He reaches out for her then collapses into sobs.)

Area light down.

CLARE

When he discovered I'd gone back to Bernie, he called me a whore. I told him Bernie was a man, an old man, but strong and hard like a man should be. I told Donald I couldn't stand his dirty fingernails and cream puff belly. I said if I wanted to screw women, I would have remained a suffragette! Then he went off and drove his car into a tree. He lingered for a day in the hospital. I never went to see him.

HELEN

We all say terrible things when we're angry Clare. You couldn't have predicted what he was going to do.

CLARE

Oh, that's not what everyone thought! When I took his position at *Vanity Fair*, the staff all whispered that I deliberately drove him to it. Why did he have to fall in love? Mother taught me that an ambitious woman can't be too precious about sex because men certainly aren't. I wasn't some vacuous tart screwing my way up the ladder for kicks! I had ideas. I had talent. I had... Oh God! Another body mutilated on the tracks of Locomotive Clare. I should have stayed with Ann's father. I deserved a man like George Brokaw! I deserved to get knocked around!

HELEN

Clare, God did not take your daughter in order to punish you for your scathing wit. Even if you had been a saint, the same senseless, inexplicable accident would've occurred.

Area light up on Julian Simpson. The baby's blanket is covered in blood around the head area.

JULIAN SIMPSON

(Calmly praying.) Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall separate us from the Love of God.

Area light down.

CLARE

She was only twenty years old. God, if I had known I would have her for such a short time, I would've said the hell with running for Congress. The hell with writing! I wouldn't have divorced George. I would've taken Ann away to a little beach house or an apartment in Paris. I would've been with her, every second of everyday.

HELEN

Clare, you feel guilty that you can't foretell the future.

CLARE

I deposited Ann with her grandmother time and again to go off on some frivolous pursuit. I stuck her in boarding schools because I was too busy to raise her. You know something about that one yourself.

HELEN

I hate not being able to spend enough time with my children, but I don't think we do our kids, especially our daughters, any favors by ceasing to be who we are because we have chosen motherhood. Men certainly don't make those kinds of sacrifices.

CLARE

Oh Helen, please, men are incapable of making those kinds of sacrifices.

HELEN

I am trying to serve my country, to build a better future for all of us, my children included. I believe that Peter and Mary Helen will come to understand - that my love for them and the hope that their lives would see nothing but a world in peace - limits the time I can spend with them.

CLARE

You are so much as I was two years ago, so sure of what you could accomplish, positive, through the passion of your reasoning, your strong influence will be felt. But, you are merely one tiny piece in a five-hundred member legislative body that, in its entirety, is but half of the legislative wing. Better get your helmet on. You'll be banging your head on more solid brick walls than you could ever imagine.

HELEN

Perhaps I won't have the same experience as you.

CLARE

Because you think your ideas are better than mine and therefore you'll have a better shot at success? (Helen is silent.) I tell myself, if I were a man, I would be thought cavalier and insightful instead of a raging bitch. I would've sky rocketed into influence! Maybe that's true. Maybe it isn't. Whatever the reason, I don't possess what is necessary to accomplish anything of significance in politics.

HELEN

Clare, whether I agree with you or not, you seem to have the country's best interest at heart. Seeking elected office must come from a deep desire to help make the world a better place.

CLARE

(Sarcastic.) Oh yes, Helen! That's why we're all in this. For the selfless sacrifice of public service! (Beat.) I did want to help win the war. For all my sarcasm, my motives were altruistic.

(MORE)



CLARE (cont'd)

Oh, and I loved campaigning - if for nothing else but the distraction. Campaigning is quick - you breeze in to some ribbon cutting or rather, make a few well-meaning promises, shake hands, kiss babies, and it's on to the next batch of folks. Governing is slow, monotonous, an endless sea of reports and tedious details.

HELEN

Campaigning is like putting on a series of little shows. I spent most of my life doing that. (Helen laughs.) Though sometimes, even a seasoned performer can have an off night.

CLARE

Did the articulate and earnest Mrs. Douglas muddle one of her pretty speeches?

HELEN

You could say that. My district is a salad bowl of mixed races. I arrived to speak to a Colored congregation. The place was packed. I was introduced to thundering applause. And, I looked out at this sea of smiling dark faces and I blurted out, "I just love the Negro people!"

CLARE

(laughing) Goodness gracious, Helen, it is a wonder you won the election.

HELEN

Before the day was out, I got them back.

CLARE

How?

HELEN

By getting straight to the issues and not condescending to them after that. Last winter, when that bastard, John Rankin said that we had not been able to win the war because of all the Negroes on the front lines, I wanted to rip his face off!

CLARE

Negro wasn't his exact word Helen and I believe yor' speakin' of Congressman *Lightnin'* John Rankin.

HELEN

Oh! I hate that man!

CLARE

He knows it was you who hissed him!

HELEN

Good! He's the type of Southern Democrats that disgusts me.

CLARE

I own a plantation in South Carolina. I've seen it first hand. So many Negroes, beaten down, humiliated. If you look closely, you see a fire in their eyes. Unless things change soon and drastically, those fires are going to rage.

HELEN

They will have to give us time to work it out. We can pass laws for equality. Already I've broken barriers here in Washington. I hired a Negro secretary, a wonderful young woman. There were grumblings, but the world didn't fall in. I've almost got the cafeteria desegregated and I plan on nominating a promising Negro boy for West Pointe.

CLARE

Why Miss Helen, you white folks is so wise and those lynchin's don't hurt a bit. For crying out loud, the barriers you broke exist in a fish bowl, not the real world. I cancelled a speech with the DAR when they banned Marian Andersen from singing. That didn't change their minds. The only thing that will force real change is when Negroes aren't taking it anymore and the government is forced to act.

HELEN

The last thing this country needs, after a war, are race riots.

CLARE

To those afflicted, racism is an embedded poison for which fire is the only anecdote. I see violence as inevitable.

HELEN

I have to believe - especially now - that every major problem that we face can, somehow, be resolved peacefully, through communication. We've just come out of a war, Clare, and not just any war, but a World War.

CLARE

I don't hold much hope, Helen, not with human nature being what it is.

HELEN

We have developed and used technology that has the capability to destroy the entire human race! Surely, now of all times, we must figure out a way. I hold considerable hope in the UN. It is yet in the nascent stages, but there now exists a tribunal, an international policy making institution comprised of members from of the entire world.

CLARE

Policy doled out by a group of administrative diplomats is not going have any effect without a strong military to back it up. And who is going to provide that?

HELEN

If all nations are involved in the decision making process, I think that military force, in many cases, can be avoided. I plan to lobby President Truman for a post on the UN delegation. There will be real change, you'll see.

CLARE

Helen, I am afraid your naivete rivals that of an unborn child. Though it would be ducky if you were right.

HELEN

It can't end with atom bombs flying. We cannot go down the road of war again, not after Hiroshima and Nagasaki showed us exactly what we are capable of. I have nightmares. Mary Helen and Peter crying out for me and there is nothing I can do. We should never have dropped the atom bomb. If Franklin hadn't died, we might have found another way.

CLARE

Helen, you have to be out of your mind! Truman didn't pull the Manhattan Project out of his hat and voile, in four months you've got an atom bomb. Don't deify your precious Franklin. The Japanese were licked, but they weren't going to surrender until every Japanese soldier was dead and they had taken thousands more American lives along with them.

HELEN

I understand that, Clare, but we targeted the civilian population when we dropped those bombs!

CLARE

Hitler didn't target the civilian population?! Don't oversimplify this, Helen.

(MORE)

CLARE (cont'd)

Harry and I toured China with Chiang Kai-shek long before most Americans knew we were fighting a war on more than one front. The Japanese slaughtered Chinese civilians just as Hitler slaughtered the Jews. Hirohito was hellbent on world domination. The population followed him with devotion. The Japanese army mercilessly bombed Chinese villages, raped and tortured women and children. We had the means - horrible means, yes! - to end this abominable war suddenly and decisively. Like Truman, Roosevelt would've seen the wisdom - political and moral - behind saving thousands of American lives.

HELEN

It's only a matter of time, isn't Clare? A matter of time before the Russian's have it, a matter of time before England and France follow suit. Could you imagine what a man like Hitler would've done with the atom bomb? How long before another Hitler rises in the world, another Hirohito? How long do we have before one of those bombs ends up in the wrong hands? And he simply gives the order, with no care that he could end it all.

CLARE

As our war with the Nazis proved, the world of totalitarianism and the world of liberty are doomed to come into conflict. It's a matter of our winning that conflict before it is too late.

HELEN

Too late? Never in our history have we had the capability to destroy the entire planet.

CLARE

I read the reports from Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Some of those who survived the immediate explosion - they had horrible radiation burns. Masses of them went into the water. They thought it cooled the fire in their skin. That's where they died, in agony. Radiated bodies rotting like logs. I remember China on the road to Mandalay. We came around a moat where bodies of Chinese children floated in the water, babies bobbing like apples. When I close my eyes, I see them - charred and melted faces, their eyes are fixed in horror.

HELEN

(Approaching Clare carefully.) Clare, try not to upset yourself.

CLARE

You live through a few bombings, Helen, and you think death is the worst that can happen. I felt lucky when I cheated it, exhilarated by the risk. But then it hits, not me - I'm a cat. I have too many lives - it takes my daughter, my only child. Her entire life ahead of her and she was gone. They told me that her injuries knocked her unconscious; she died instantly. She didn't suffer. That's what they wanted me to know. Some deaths are far worse than others, I suppose. There are things that men do to men in this world that make death preferable.

HELEN

Clare, the more you try and make sense of it, the more it is only going to send you into despair. All this death and destruction, it makes no sense!

CLARE

Sense! That's a hell of a word, coming out of war! You want to talk sense? When I went to Buchenwald, I'd already heard about the horrors of Hitler's concentration camps. In a moment of defiance, I went to face death head on. I had seen its worst when it took Ann, there was nothing else it could do to me. I recognized the smell of decay as we approached. There was no choking back vomit like in China. I knew what to expect. I examined the stacks of emaciated bodies. I thought I'd seen the most despicable atrocities all before. But, I hadn't seen anything. Death, when it finally comes is a release. At the camp, I tried to find some way to comfort the survivors. I looked into their eyes, dull and confused, gray skin stretched over their skulls... It won't ever stop. We'll barely have time to catch our breath and it will all kick up again - more death, more slaughter. The players may shift, but the war games will never end. Not until we're all dead.

HELEN

Clare, when more time passes, you'll feel hope again. It's going to be all right.

CLARE

It's not going to be all right! You've never lost a child, Helen. There is no hope after that! The back of her skull was crushed. Her pelvis was crushed. But there wasn't a scratch on her beautiful face. She looked perfect lying in her casket. She looked like an angel. God! Why?! I always told her to lock the doors so they don't fly open. Her grandmother was tossed out of the car in front of a train. Ann promised to be diligent after that. She promised me. I wasn't around to remind her. It's my fault! God, I can't take it anymore! I want her back! Please God anything! I'll do anything!

Helen rushes to Clare as Clare shrieks  
and breaks down into sobs

HELEN

Clare! Ssssh. It's all right. It's not your fault. We do the  
best we can. So many things are dumb luck!

There is a knock at the Powder Room  
door. Clare gasps, afraid to be  
discovered in such a state.

MIKE

Mrs. Luce! Mrs. Douglas! Are you all right?

Helen rushes to the door and opens it.  
SOUND from the bar as she opens the  
door, has grown quiet. Helen slips out.

HELEN

Mike! You must be wondering...

Helen exits. Clare tries to pull  
herself together. Her hands shake. She  
stares blankly in front of her, then  
sinks onto the settee.

Area light up on Charles Willoughby.

CHARLES WILLOUGHBY

I fell into a desperate longing, a sudden knowledge of the  
dragging of time and the years passing. Then, I felt your  
lips and hope sprang anew. Months of war toll on and on. In  
this separation, my darling, remember how natural and free we  
were together, how that was a true blueprint for life.

Area light stays on Willoughby as the  
second area light comes up on Lucian  
Truscott, holding out a glass of red  
wine. As Truscott speaks, Willoughby  
listens, slowly realizing that Truscott  
is another man in Clare's life.

LUCIAN TRUSCOTT

Drink with me Clare! Listen to birds singing in this pine  
tree. This same tree is where death almost took me. It is so  
peaceful now with you.

(MORE)

LUCIAN TRUSCOTT (cont'd)

The sun reminds me of your hair, the sky your eyes so blue. Men crouched against this tree, bullets cutting through their hearts and brains. So strange this place, no longer a hell, is yet haunted by ghosts that mock your beauty and your grace.

The two Generals look at one another and look to Clare. Julian Simpson steps in behind them, his eyes fixed on Clare. Willoughby becomes dejected while Truscott laughs in amused disbelief. Area lights down.

Clare grabs the gin and tonic and places it to her lips. She stops. She sets it down. Clare closes her eyes, pulls a rosary from her dress. She prays.

Helen enters with a plate of food and a glass of water. She watches Clare. Clare opens her eyes, suddenly clear.

HELEN

It's pretty empty out there. Most of the others have gone home. Sam was having a late dinner. I convinced him he had enough. You should eat something.

CLARE

I'm not hungry.

HELEN

We'll let it sit. Maybe when you've calmed down...

CLARE

Thank you Helen. I am calm. (Clare tosses the gin and tonic into the sink.) I am positive now that I am not going to seek re-election next term.

HELEN

You're not even half way through this term. You don't have to make that decision right at this moment.

CLARE

There is no deciding to it. I am choosing a different path.

HELEN

What path is that? Are you going to write another play?

Clare turns to Helen and stares at her very seriously.

CLARE

I am going to devote myself to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Helen laughs. Clare remains serious.

HELEN

Honestly?

CLARE

Never more true in my life. I have been working with Bishop Sheen, studying Catholicism. I am ready to surrender myself to it.

HELEN

You're becoming a nun? Have you told your husband?

CLARE

I am merely converting, Helen, not joining a cloister. As far as Harry, he rather likes me in Congress and he rather dislikes the Catholic faith. His father was a Presbyterian missionary, in hot competition with the Holy Church for Chinese souls. I can see him now, when I break the news. He's going to get all boiled up, his face will turn red and he will stomp out of the room, muttering something unintelligible.

HELEN

Knowing your husband that well, Clare, one might argue that you're joining the Catholic church to provoke a heart attack.

CLARE

(Laughs.) I would miss old Harry terribly I'm afraid, though I did almost leave him for a soldier. Ann grew quite fond of my devoted General Willoughby. He wrote her letters. I think she had a little crush on him. If she hadn't... I don't know, Helen, you believe a lot of things during the war that fall to shreds within the banality of everyday life.



HELEN

Clare, I still don't understand where converting to Catholicism figures in all this. There's no law that states you are excluded from politics because you have embraced religion.

CLARE

This has to be pure. It may be the first pure thing I've done in my life. I don't want the press saying that I converted to win favor with my Catholic constituency.

HELEN

What does it matter? If you were elected for a third term, you'd be a senior member of Military Affairs. You would have a strong say in shaping our nuclear policy.

CLARE

I know Congress moves at a jalopy's pace, but we will pass something before I have left these hallowed halls. Nuclear power should not be under the control of the military. It will turn into a gigantic pissing contest as soon as other countries figure out how to split the atom. We'll have radioactive pricks all over the planet!

HELEN

We must create a civilian committee to oversee our nuclear program. I agree with our scientists that, if we share the knowledge with our allies, we can push the world in the right direction.

CLARE

(Clare grabs the plate of food.) Don't get all riled up, cowgirl! A civilian committee is one thing! But, I'm not about to hold hands with Russian Communists and sing let there be peace in the land! (Taking a bite of steak.) What is it about Texans and their shoe-leather preference for meat. Steak should be rare and juicy! (Helen stares at Clare as she shoves a few more bites down her throat, followed by a long gulp of water.)

HELEN

You said that women like us need sexual passion to feel alive. I don't think they approve of that sort of thing on the Roman side.

CLARE

They don't approve of that sort of thing on any side, Helen. (Clare puts the plate aside.) Believe me, I've had more than my share of sexual passion and all the great dramas that come with it. I want to sleep soundly at night. I only feel peace when I feel God.

HELEN

I believe in God. I couldn't have run for Congress without my faith. You and I may disagree on many things, but you have such a zest for life, a need to devour the world the likes of which I've never seen. Do you honestly believe that God requires you to give up being a woman?

Silence.

CLARE

When I visited the Italian front, early one morning, I came upon a group of young soldiers receiving communion. They had a visible light shining from them as they knelt, solemnly, in an awareness of God. To know God with the totality of my being is the only way I can live with my grief.

HELEN

And you think you need the Catholic Church to truly know God?

CLARE

Oh I know what you're thinking. The Inquisition, the corruption... God gives us something pure and before we can say "amen!" we have degraded it. But it's not about that. Much to my consternation and terror, I stand at the threshold with nowhere to go, but off the cliff.

HELEN

All right, Clare. I accept, for whatever reason, it is your path. I...well, I suppose I will hate to lose you, differences between us being what they are.

Helen moves closer to Clare either for a light embrace. Clare shifts away quickly.

CLARE

You helped me a great deal tonight, for which I am grateful, Mrs. Douglas. Perhaps we should stop by Lyndon's house on the way home. We can throw rocks at his bedroom window to see if he'll come out to play.

HELEN

I have quite a full agenda tomorrow. It's straight to bed, alone, and off to sleep.

CLARE

Yes. Time for sleep.

They prepare to leave. Clare turns and grabs her dirty plate. She hands it to Helen. Clare grabs the liquor glasses and stacks them on the plate as if Helen were her personal busboy. Clare steps past Helen toward the door.

CLARE

Grab that glass by the sink on your way out.

Helen grabs the glass off the sink and follows. As Clare reaches the door, she suddenly turns, nearly causing Helen to run into her.

CLARE

It will be hard for me to give up sex, Mrs. Douglas. Quite hard.

HELEN

Give the Catholic church the old college try. Sex will always be there if you change your mind. Besides, Mrs. Luce, isn't that what confession is for?

Clare smiles and takes Helen's face in her hands. She looks into Helen's eyes and, with gratitude and affection, Clare kisses Helen on the lips. Helen accepts the kiss wholeheartedly. Once the moment is over, Clare turns to leave, making no more of it. She holds the door open for Helen. Helen, beaming with delight, exits. Clare follows. Lights fade.

SLIDE IMAGE: 1) Picture of a middle-aged Clare Boothe Luce from her Italian Ambassador days.

Slide fades into caption: "After her conversion to Catholicism and subsequent break from politics, Clare Boothe Luce returned to the international stage as Ambassador to Italy in 1952, appointed by President Eisenhower." 2) "She served on the President's Foreign Advisory Board under Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan. In 1983, Ronald Reagan awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom."

SLIDE IMAGE: 1) Photo of Helen Gahagan from her Nixon Campaign followed by the caption: "Helen Gahagan Douglas ran for the California seat in the U.S. Senate against Richard Nixon in 1950. She was defeated soundly in one of American history's dirtiest tricks campaigns. She never sought public office again; 2) "In the 1960s, Helen vigorously protested the Vietnam War. During a visit to the White House, then President Lyndon Johnson turned away from her during the receiving line and refused to shake her hand."