

The Luckiest Democrat

CAST

JESSICA BERNBAUM - A political analyst for the DNC. Earnest but realistic lifelong party member. Early thirties, no life outside politics. A strong believer in America, equality, justice, and democracy.

THE POLLSTER* - late 20s, very self-possessed. A genius and knows it; not a smart-aleck, but simply aware of and at peace with the fact that he's smarter than everyone around him.

BARNEY LUNTZ - an old political dog, been around the block many times and in every sense. Greases the wheel.

WILLARD "SKIP" GOODKIND - Barney's Bizarro-twin. High-octane, filled with the love of Jesus and the judgement of the Almighty.

LAWRENCE THE LUCKY REPUBLICAN - young. Just trying to get out of this alive.

THE ANALYST* - Dispassionate and hyper-intelligent.

JUDGE JODIE KIERKAOS - Most recently chosen United States Supreme Court Justice. In charge, no-nonsense.

JUDGE HERMAN WAYNE - Michigan State Supreme Court Justice. Prefers cooking to judging; wants to get back to the golf course, even at three in the morning.

*NOTE: The Pollster and Analyst are written as respectively male and female, but any genders may be used.

SETTING

A conference room at the Michigan State House. Three in the morning, during the tallying of the votes for the presidential election.

A conference table and chairs. Half-eaten bowls of popcorn, fast food wrappers, miniature American flags.

JESS paces back and forth, paging through an app on her smartphone. The POLLSTER focuses on a tablet computer and tosses a coin in the air.

JESS

Tails.

The Pollster catches the coin, checks it, and harrumphs. He swipes a finger across the tablet.

POLLSTER

Again.

JESS

How many times do I have to do this?

POLLSTER

Until they tell us to stop. Again.

JESS

Tails.

Another flip, another finger-swipe.

BARNEY, tie flapping behind him, storms in one door and heads for another.

JESS

Barney! Hey! What's going on-

BARNEY

Hang in there Jess gotta go.

JESS

What am I doing here why am I stuck in here who's winning Barney!

BARNEY

Sounds great I'll be back.

He's already gone. She stares at the Pollster. He shrugs.

JESS

Have you heard anything about the recount?

POLLSTER

I don't follow politics. Ready?

The Pollster holds up the coin again.

JESS

How many times have I done this?

POLLSTER

Five thousand two hundred and four.

JESS

And that's not enough?

POLLSTER

There's not really any such thing as "enough".

JESS

That's deep.

POLLSTER

It wasn't meant to be.

JESS

But there really is such a thing as enough. For instance, right here. I've had enough. I'm done with this. I have more important things to do. I'm leaving.

Barney sticks his head in the room, still on his cell phone.

BARNEY

Wait, hang on.

(to Jess)

Jess? *You're* number 714?

JESS

I don't know what that means.

BARNEY

Is she-

POLLSTER

Yes. She's 714.

BARNEY

You're kidding me. Let me see that.

He checks the Pollster's tablet. Then, to his cell phone:

BARNEY

Jackie, you there? Who's left? I'm with 714. Just two, that's it? What are the numbers? OK. And how about the other guy? How many? Out of?

(looking at Jess, stunned)

No, not even close. We got our winner. Huh. OK. Send everybody to the conference room. Hell, no, make 'em find us.

(He hangs up.)

Jessica. Did anyone ever tell you how beautiful you look?

JESS

In college. By boys who were very drunk.

BARNEY

I could kiss you.

JESS

And not married.

BARNEY

I won't kiss you. But I could.

JESS

Do I have to call any more coin tosses?

BARNEY

Just one more, darling.

JESS

Let's do it.

BARNEY

No, not yet. This one counts.

JESS

Well what the fuck have I been doing? Why would you pull me off the floor to play heads-or-tails for three hours, then send me all the way to fucking Lansing to play five thousand more games with this emotionally stunted jerk, on Election Night?

BARNEY

Technically, last night was Election Night.

JESS

Not for me! I've been awake for forty three hours, Barney! In Michigan! The state I would least like to spend forty three hours awake in!

BARNEY

Hey. I was born here.

JESS

No you weren't.

BARNEY

I almost was. And you said you wanted Michigan. You could have been in Washington.

JESS

The polls suggested that this was where the action would be.

BARNEY

Well they got that right.

JESS

Are they going to have another recount or not?

BARNEY

They're not.

JESS

Then it's over?

BARNEY

Not yet.

JESS

Do you know something? Do you know who won?

BARNEY

We'll all know very soon.

JESS

And it really all comes down to Michigan?

BARNEY

Yup. With all the results in, we're standing two-sixty-eight to two-fifty-four. So these sixteen electors put either guy over the top.

JESS

And who do you think is gonna take it?

BARNEY

I don't know.

JESS

Don't screw with me, Barney! I know you've been in secret meetings with power players all night. Who's gonna win?

BARNEY

Jess. Look in my eyes. I'm telling you the truth, I have no idea.

POLLSTER

You could explain to her why.

BARNEY

Probably not.

JESS

What? What the hell is he talking about?

BARNEY

Jess-

WILLARD bursts in, wearing a cowboy hat. He cocks a finger-pistol at Barney.

WILLARD

Hey, babykiller.

BARNEY

Hey, pumpkin.

WILLARD

You ready? This the chick?

JESS

"The chick"?

BARNEY

Oh, you're in trouble.

JESS

Who the fuck is this?

BARNEY

This is Willard Goodkind, Jess.

JESS

You're Willard Goodkind? What the hell are you doing here?

WILLARD

Didn't tell her, huh? Good idea, Barney. Keep fostering your reign of ignorance. Tell you what, dollface, what're they paying you? I'll double it.

JESS

I doubt it.

WILLARD

Try me. What're they giving you?

JESS

The ability to wake up and look at myself in the mirror.

WILLARD

With a face like yours? You're right, I can't work miracles.

JESS

Funny. Hey Willard - Skip, can I call you Skip?

WILLARD

No.

JESS

Skip, were you the guy who tried to convince the Republicans to expand their platform to outlaw vasectomies?

WILLARD

I see you're familiar with my work.

JESS

And yet, you're trying to get one for free, right now, in this very room?

She advances on him. He backs away.

WILLARD

Keep your dog on a leash, Barney.

BARNEY

Bring your guys over anytime, Skip.

WILLARD

Oh, we'll be here. Adios.

BARNEY

Smoochies.

Willard goes.

JESS

Wow. I've never hated a person so much so quickly.

BARNEY

Oh, he's a pussycat. He says shit to get people riled. That's his job, to make us look like unhinged, emotional basketcases so the GOP can sell it to the public. He's actually a decent guy if you're not in the business.

JESS

What the hell is he doing here?

BARNEY

We're gonna have a meeting. Him, two judges, and some other Republican.

JESS

What other Republican?

BARNEY

Whoever he brings.

JESS

Barney. What the hell is going on?

Brief pause.

BARNEY

How would you like to be a Vice Chairman?

JESS

I'm a woman, Barney, you call that a Chairperson.

BARNEY

I never got the hang of PC. How'd you like to be a Vice *Chairperson*?

JESS

Of what committee?

Of the party.

BARNEY

What, the victory party?

JESS

No. *The Party*.

BARNEY

The Democratic Party?

JESS

That's the party.

BARNEY

You're offering me the Vice Chairmanship of the DNC.

JESS

I'm offering you the Vice Chairpersonship of the DNC.

BARNEY

No.

JESS

You could be the Vice Chair of the victory party, if you'd prefer.

BARNEY

I've never heard such a load of horseshit before. You've gotta be a lifelong Congressman or Senator or very, very rich to be a party Chair.

JESS

Usually. Or, sometimes, it's a political favor granted. For a favor bestowed. And, because you are my friend, you see, I have wrangled, from the powers that be, a boon for you, should you do us a favor.

BARNEY

A favor? Oh, great. It's not something illegal, is it?

JESS

I wouldn't ask you-

BARNEY

Yes you would.

JESS

BARNEY

Jess. Such a low opinion of me. It's not illegal.

JESS

Or illicit.

BARNEY

It's very licit.

POLLSTER

FOR GOD'S SALES. Politicians.

BARNEY

Fine, you tell her.

POLLSTER

They want you to flip a coin.

JESS

I've been flipping coins all night.

POLLSTER

Exactly. Many people in this state, from your party, have been flipping coins all night. Some, like yourself, have been brought to the capitol building.

JESS

Why?

POLLSTER

Because you're all statistical aberrations. You call the coins correctly an abnormally high amount of times.

JESS

You're looking for lucky Democrats?

POLLSTER

So to speak. The Republicans are most likely performing the same experiments.

JESS

And I won.

POLLSTER

That's right.

JESS

And why would flipping a coin be worth a Vice Chair?

POLLSTER

Because the coin you flip will determine the next president of the United States.

Long silence. Then Jess laughs.

JESS

What?

POLLSTER

In the presence of one Michigan and one United States Supreme Court Justice, you will flip a coin. A Republican operative, presumably Willard Goodkind, will bring his own coin tosser, chosen by the Republican Party. If the coins match, the Republicans win. If the coins don't match, the Democrats win.

JESS

Why would we do that?

BARNEY

That's the law.

JESS

Come on. Which law?

BARNEY

I can't remember the exact law.

POLLSTER

I know Florida has the same contingency.

JESS

Florida! Bullshit.

POLLSTER

It's in state statute Title IX.

Jess checks her smart phone.

JESS

I'm looking it up.

POLLSTER

It'll be under "Electoral ties" or something to that effect.

JESS

Here we go. Plurality of votes to fill vacancy; proceeding in case of tie.—If any more than the number of persons required to fill the vacancy as provided by blah blah blah....equal number of votes...shall be determined by...

BARNEY

Go on. Determined by?

JESS

Determined by lot drawn by the Governor. That can't possibly be right. Why has no one ever heard of this?

POLLSTER

Anyone can find the statute. It's public information.

JESS

But it's crazy. And - it's not even enforced!

BARNEY

Says who?

JESS

Well, Bush versus Gore in 2000 was too close to call in Florida, why didn't they settle it with a coin toss?

Hemming and hawing from Barney.

POLLSTER

Go ahead. You tell her.

JESS

Wait. No. That was not decided by a coin toss.

BARNEY

All right, believe what you want to believe.

JESS

It's not true! The Supreme Court stopped the recount and called it for Bush.

POLLSTER

And you think that's fairer than a coin toss?

JESS

I. Well. No. "Fair" would have been to recount the votes. Get an accurate count.

BARNEY

Have you ever counted six million pieces of paper?

JESS

No.

POLLSTER

If you did, do you think there's the slightest chance you could have made a mistake? Could you prove, without a shadow of a doubt, that your count was accurate?

JESS

You allow for a margin of error.

POLLSTER

It was a five-hundred vote margin. Official estimates put this state at less than a three-hundred vote margin. To calculate an accurate enough measurement you'd have to sample more votes than were actually cast. It was a statistical tie. It's just as meaningful to toss a coin.

Stunned silence. Then Jess laughs.

JESS

You two are so full of shit.

BARNEY

Like I said, Jess, whatever you want to believe. The judges'll come in here, you'll flip a coin, and then you can go home and tell yourself whatever you want.

JESS

I'll believe you, Barney, when two Supreme Court justices walk through that door.

Enter HONORABLE JUDGES JODIE KIERKAOS and HERMAN WAYNE in full robes.

WAYNE

-cause if you don't take it off the heat, you burn it.

KIERKAOS

I'll never remember this.

WAYNE

You will. I'll come over, I'll make it with you.

KIERKAOS

Herman, I'm not gonna make risotto with you. My mother was the cook.

WAYNE

Suit yourself, you don't know what you're missing.

KIERKAOS

Is this the room, Barney?

BARNEY

It is, Your Honor.

JESS

You're, uh. You're Jodie Kierkaos.

KIERKAOS

That's me.

JESS

(to Wayne)

And you're, uh. You're not from the Supreme Court.

WAYNE

I'm not chopped liver, either. Herman Wayne, Michigan State Supreme Court.

JESS

Oh. I'm sorry. I just. You're actually here.

KIERKAOS

Under duress, believe me.

JESS

I. You, uh. Spoke at my graduation. Temple. 2002. You kind of changed my life.

KIERKAOS

Mm. Right, Temple. Were you the valedictorian?

JESS

Yes.

KIERKAOS

I remember you. I liked your speech. "The soul hungers for achievement, which only the works of the hands can supply." Did I get that right?

JESS

You actually remember that?

KIERKAOS

It stuck with me. Where's Goodkind?

BARNEY

Getting his ducks in order, I guess.

KIERKAOS

Well get him in here. I need coffee.

WAYNE

I saw something brewing over in the ballroom. Let's hope it wasn't decaf.

KIERKAOS

Only one way to find out. We'll be back.

BARNEY

Very good, your honors.

The justices exit. Silence.

JESS

Barney.

BARNEY

Jess.

JESS

Is this a joke?

BARNEY

No.

JESS

Because if this is a joke, if there's a camera somewhere for a reality show, I'm honestly going to have to murder you.

BARNEY

Jess. If there's a camera recording this, and I die within the next year, you've just given them probable cause in the case against you.

JESS

I'll plead insanity.

BARNEY

There's no camera. There will be no record of this.

JESS

What the hell does that mean? Will they shoot me if I tell anyone? I mean, this is big fucking news! People should know about this! This is important, Barney, are you seriously telling me we're choosing the president of the United States?

Barney gathers his thoughts.

BARNEY

What did you think about the presidency of George W. Bush?

JESS

What did I think? It was a travesty. Two poorly conceived wars, Hurricane Katrina, a budget surplus turned to deficit, a near total global economic collapse -

BARNEY

Did it change world history?

JESS

Absolutely.

BARNEY

We'd be living in a fundamentally different world if Al Gore had been elected.

JESS

Yes.

BARNEY

Now you said the Florida recount was stopped by the Supreme Court. The votes of five people instated George Bush as president. How does that make you feel?

JESS

Like the conservatives in the court stole the election. I remember it, I was the head of the College Democrats. I felt angry. Furious. Frustrated.

BARNEY

Good. Now. Here's a different story. On November 5th, 2000, Jeb Bush gathered a small group of Democrats and Republicans - nobody too high up - and they flipped two coins. Matches meant Gore would win. Democrats flipped heads, and Republicans flipped tails. George W. Bush became the president elect at that moment. A coin toss caused George W. Bush's presidency. Now. If you opened the newspaper on November 6th, and read that story, how would it make you feel?

Long pause.

JESS

I. I don't even know. Empty.

BARNEY

Disillusioned?

JESS

Disillusioned is way too weak a word. I'd feel like the order I expected from the universe is a fraud. It's just chaos and randomness. I'd feel nihilistic. Like nothing matters.

BARNEY

Then do you understand why the Court agreed to release the story of the vote? Why Bush and Gore went through the motions in the courts to give the story veracity?

JESS

Why didn't Jeb Bush flip? The law says "by lot drawn by the governor".

BARNEY

Oh. He didn't want to touch it. He didn't want to flip the coin that would decide whether his brother was president.

JESS

But no one would ever know.

BARNEY

He would. His brother would. And imagine if he flipped the coin and won it for Gore. Try living with that.

Knock at the door. Willard pushes his way in.

BARNEY

Yeah?

WILLARD

Time to do this thing. You ready?

BARNEY

Yup. Hang in there for a minute, Jess.

Barney follows Willard out. The Pollster watches Jess.

JESS

What are you looking at?

POLLSTER

Just observing you.

JESS

Why?

POLLSTER

That's my job.

JESS

Well, what should I do? Should I practice some more coins?

POLLSTER

Do you think that will help?

JESS

Of course not! Do you?

POLLSTER

I have no professional opinion on this matter.

Jess laughs.

JESS

If you don't care about politics, how'd you end up here?

POLLSTER

The Republicans cut NASA's budget.

JESS

OK, then, as a scientist, tell me this: do you believe in luck?

POLLSTER

I believe what they pay me to believe.

JESS

Then you're a sell-out.

POLLSTER

Not necessarily.

JESS

Yes. That's the definition of selling out. Chance is chance. There's no such thing as a lucky streak. It's the, uh, gambler's fallacy.

POLLSTER

That's what the Democrats said in 2000 when the Republicans started running these tests for coins tossers. Looks like they're willing to try it this time.

JESS

So we've succumbed to the madness, is what you're saying.

POLLSTER

I have, of course, heard of the gambler's fallacy. Have you ever heard of the sheep-and-goats theory? I see you haven't. Some ESP experiments suggest that the strongest indicator of positive performance is *belief in ESP itself*. Some interpretations of quantum physics suggest that we may in some small way determine the way our realities play out. Therefore, yes, while pure probability tells me that chance has no memory, the real world is only an approximation of mathematical truth. And the real world, as I experience it, suggests that some people are, in fact, luckier than others. Which certainly blurs the boundaries of "selling out".

In walks Kierkaos, trailed by Wayne, Barney, and lastly Willard. She stops him.

KIERKAOS

Hold on. Where are you going?

WILLARD

Where am *I* going?

KIERKAOS

Are you flipping the coin?

WILLARD

No.

KIERKAOS

Then get out, and don't come back without someone who will.

(She nearly shoves Willard out the door.)

And Miss Temple here's your volunteer, right, Barney?

BARNEY

She is, your honor.

JESS

Wait! Your Honor. Am I a volunteer? I mean, do I have to do this?

WAYNE

'Course not, sweetheart. It ain't the draft.

KIERKAOS

If you're uncomfortable with this, miss, don't let them push you into it.

WAYNE

I'm sure they got a line of people around the corner.

BARNEY

Jess. You're it. You're the heavy hitter. The stats don't lie. You're our best shot at the White House.

JESS

I can't take this responsibility! I can't decide the fate of history! What if I lose?

KIERKAOS

I hate to tell you, honey, but if you step down, it doesn't change anything. You chose to hand it off to someone else. You'll still have to live with it.

JESS

You know what you've done to me, Barney? I actually understand what it's like to be Jeb Bush.

KIERKAOS

Do it for the president.

JESS

We don't have a president.

KIERKAOS

Do it for whoever that president will be. They won't get to walk away from the hard decisions, either. That's the job, the duty, they'll be called to perform. Whoever it is.

Jess nods, trying to feel it, but she clearly doesn't.

In comes Willard, leading the ANALYST, who in turn leads in a timid-looking LAWRENCE.

KIERKAOS

All right, we're all here, finally?

WAYNE

This your guy?

He is. ANALYST

Hi! Yes. Um. Present. LAWRENCE

You sure? KIERKAOS

Sure as shit. Your Honor. WILLARD

Classy as always. BARNEY

Volunteers step forward please. WAYNE

He ready? WILLARD
(to the Analyst)

His performance is unmatched by a full standard deviation. ANALYST

I don't know what that means, but you better be right. WILLARD

I am. ANALYST

Where's the coins? KIERKAOS

I got 'em. WAYNE

Shake hands, play fair. KIERKAOS

Jess and Lawrence step forward, lightly shake.

You OK? JESS

LAWRENCE

I feel nervous.

JESS

Me too. Like you're not sure if you're doing the right thing?

LAWRENCE

No, not really. I'm just nervous.

JESS

Like, what if you lose the coin toss?

LAWRENCE

No, not nervous about losing.

JESS

Nervous...about anything in particular?

LAWRENCE

I don't know. I'm just nervous.

JESS

I guess I understand.

LAWRENCE

Do you?

JESS

Sure. We're sort of pawns in the greater game.

LAWRENCE

Are we?

JESS

Sort of.

LAWRENCE

I guess we're kind of the same.

JESS

I guess.

LAWRENCE

I mean, don't get me wrong. I think Democrats are corrupt and selfish whiners and I think if you win the Presidency you'll usher in an age of evil. But *you* seem awfully nice.

JESS

Thanks.

LAWRENCE

I mean, if you want to get some coffee after this-

JESS

I really have to get some sleep. After this.

LAWRENCE

OK.

JESS

Been up for forty three hours.

LAWRENCE

Right.

KIERKAOS

OK. Hand 'em the coins.

Wayne hands two novelty-size plastic coins to Jess for inspection. Jess hands them over to Lawrence when she's done.

KIERKAOS

George Washington is heads, the White House is tails. Two heads or two tails mean Republicans win, one head and one tails means Democrats win. Any questions?

LAWRENCE

Can I go to the bathroom?

KIERKAOS

Oh for God's sake, Skip!

LAWRENCE
(indicating Jess)

I'm sorry, Mr. Goodkind. She made me really nervous.

WILLARD

They're cheating, your honor.

JESS

What?

BARNEY

Come on, Skip.

WILLARD

She made him nervous! That's interference!

JESS

I'm gonna interfere with your reproductive organs.

WILLARD

You're not allowed to interfere with reproductive organs, you're a liberal. Your Honor, we cry foul.

KIERKAOS

Goodkind, I'm here to fulfill the law. The law says lottery, this is how the governors saw fit to run the show. But all we gotta do is flip coins. I don't care who does it or what you jackasses went through to pick these people. You're gonna flip coins, and do it now.

LAWRENCE

No bathroom break?

KIERKAOS

No.

WILLARD

Can I give him a short pep talk, your honor?

KIERKAOS

Short.

LAWRENCE

I just have to pee, Mr. Goodkind.

WILLARD

No time for that, Gerry.

LAWRENCE

My name's Lawrence.

WILLARD

You gotta get your head in the game, right now.

LAWRENCE

This is a lot of pressure. I'm just an intern. I'm sure you'd be a better coin flipper.

WILLARD

(indicating the Analyst)

That's not what she says, Gerry. I listen to whatever this woman says on the matter of the science of probability.

JESS

What about on the issue of birth control?

WILLARD

I will gladly listen to her opinion on any subject as long as it is morally aligned with the teachings of Almighty God and the great Ronald Reagan.

JESS

Is he for real?

BARNEY

No. See the cowboy hat? He bought it in the gift shop at the Alamo. He's from Saddle River, New Jersey. He's allergic to horses.

WILLARD

Gerry. Is Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior?

LAWRENCE

Well. Yes.

WILLARD

Then pray with me.

They get down on their knees.

BARNEY

This is the same shit they pulled last time.

WILLARD

Father in Heaven. Righteous is thy cause on earth. Be with us in this, our darkest hour.

BARNEY

You just picked up forty seats in the House. This is your darkest hour?

Do you feel Jesus?
WILLARD

I do!
LAWRENCE

Sure it's not your bladder?
JESS

It's not!
LAWRENCE

Praise Jesus.
WILLARD

I'm ready.
LAWRENCE

Well, then, give me my coin back.
JESS

I'm ready!
LAWRENCE

I'm not-
JESS

Wait, let him go-
BARNEY

That is inadvisable, Lawrence.
ANALYST

OK, hold on, Gerry, Lawrence-
WILLARD

Jesus is telling me to flip! Here I go!
LAWRENCE

Uh, Lawrence-
WAYNE

HEADS!
LAWRENCE

NO, WAIT-

WILLARD

Lawrence flips. It hits his hand on the way down, bounces into Wayne's eye, and tumbles away.

Oh no!

LAWRENCE

My contact lens!

WAYNE

Nobody move!

KIERKAOS

Foul!

WILLARD

What?

BARNEY

Where is it? Who sees it?

KIERKAOS

I don't know, it's small, I can never find 'em when they fall on the bathroom floor.

WAYNE

I mean the coin, Herman.

KIERKAOS

Well, wherever it is, that flip didn't count.

WILLARD

Oh, it counted, Goodkind. Now everybody just look.

JESS

I got it.

BARNEY AND WILLARD

Where?

JESS

Right here. Under the table.

LAWRENCE

What is it?

JESS

Heads.

LAWRENCE

YES! THANK YOU JESUS! I DID IT!

ANALYST

An impressive record.

WILLARD

Yep, impressive. And if this was about you flipping heads or tails, that would have been great. But since it's about MATCHING, Lawrence, now all she has to do is get TAILS. It's all on her. Flipping heads, I could have done that myself. I didn't need to spend six hundred thousand dollars in payroll trying to pluck you out of the rough.

LAWRENCE

Oh. Can I go to the bathroom now?

WILLARD

And don't come back.

LAWRENCE

Kay. Bye.

He runs.

WILLARD

OK, Barney, we just handed you the election. It's yours to lose now.

BARNEY

Go on, Jess. Do it. Tails.

JESS

Tails.

BARNEY

Just think tails.

JESS

I wasn't thinking tails before.

BARNEY

You're right, I won't screw this up. You do whatever you do.

Jess steps forward. They hand her the coin. She weighs it heavily.

JESS

Oh god.

WILLARD

Oh Jesus, maybe? A little late to start praying, baby doll.

KIERKAOS

Knock it off, Goodkind.

WILLARD

Oh, what, now there's rules against pressuring the competition?

KIERKAOS

Shush.

WILLARD

Activist judges. They're all against us.

KIERKAOS

Toss, Jess.

JESS

OK. Whatever this is, it's out of my hands. It's meant to be.

Deep breath.

Jess flips. Barney closes his eyes. The coin hits the floor.

JESS

Tails.*

Barney cheers in triumph. Willard shakes his head and smiles grimly.

KIERKAOS

Tails it is. Let it be known that at three thirty eight on this November the sixth that the lot has been drawn for the Democratic nominee, and that those appropriate electors shall be chosen to convene in Lansing in December to cast their ballots.

WAYNE

I'm going home.

KIERKAOS

Me too. Call me a limo, Herman. You people all play nice when we're gone.

(touches Jess' arm)

Breathe, darling, it's over. Go home and sleep.

JESS

Uh huh.

WAYNE

Hey, Jodie, what about my risotto? Am I gonna come over and help you make that?

KIERKAOS

Oh, it's three thirty, Herman, screw your risotto.

Willard sticks out his hand to Barney.

WILLARD

Have a good four years, babykiller. Don't fuck up the country too badly. We want it back in one piece.

BARNEY

I'm gonna take you to dinner.

WILLARD

Bullshit. I'm gonna go get drunk. Is she gonna faint?

BARNEY

Jess? You all right?

JESS

(flat)

Of course I'm thrilled we won.

POLLSTER

(packing up, to Barney)

I'll send you a bill.

BARNEY

Put some extra hours on there.

WILLARD

Yeah, welcome to the age of wasting money.
(to the Analyst)

Don't you get any ideas.

ANALYST

Of course not. That would defile your world view.

WILLARD

I'll be scrutinizing *your* bill very carefully.

ANALYST

May I make a suggestion?

WILLARD

Maybe.

ANALYST

Consider all the things that could possibly go wrong in your life. You're a very lucky man.

WILLARD

You're a very creepy woman and I'm just slightly turned on by your weirdness.

BARNEY

Jess. Relax. You did it.

JESS

I don't even know what I just did. I picked the president of the United States at random. That can't be right.

WAYNE

Don't worry about it.

JESS

I have to worry about it! That's my job, to participate in our political system!

BARNEY

Not anymore. Now your job is to run the Democratic Party.

POLLSTER

Look, I told you. No matter what you know, no matter what you think is right, somebody knows more mathematics than you do - enough to prove that your moral compass and common sense is simple naivete. And that person is me.

I beg to differ.	ANALYST
Why, you want to swap models?	POLLSTER
I'd only embarrass you.	ANALYST
To who, my MENSA buddies?	POLLSTER
MENSA.	ANALYST (scoffing, getting in his face)
What are you?	POLLSTER (getting in her face)
Triple Nine.	ANALYST
Not Prometheus?	POLLSTER
I haven't bothered.	ANALYST
Maybe you should before you trash talk a member.	POLLSTER
You're not Prometheus.	ANALYST
189.	POLLSTER
197.	ANALYST
Stanford-Binet?	POLLSTER
Ravens.	ANALYST

They start to make out. Willard sits down, heavily.

KIERKAOS

They're bipartisan, at least.

WILLARD

What do you expect? They're hired guns, no loyalty. Makes me sick. There's no justice, I tell you. That's what the Democrats'll do to you.

BARNEY

What? What are you talking about?

WILLARD

No justice! You work hard for your party, you get nothing. But what happens to all the know-nothing, do-nothing losers in this country?

Lawrence enters, flashing a lottery ticket.

LAWRENCE

I won the lottery!

BARNEY

What? How?

LAWRENCE

It's the Mega Millions! I was in the bathroom, and I slipped, and fell, and under the sink was a lottery ticket and I just checked it I WON EIGHTY MILLION DOLLARS!

WILLARD

You know, Lawrence, it's a sin to gamble.

LAWRENCE

I know! It's a good thing I just found it! Who ever said you can't win if you don't play?

ANALYST

(coming up for air)

Statisticians are vindicated.

POLLSTER

That's the fucking sexiest thing anyone's ever said to me.

BARNEY

Praise Jesus, Lawrence.

LAWRENCE

I do! And I never would have found it if you hadn't made me so nervous, Jess!

JESS

Really?

LAWRENCE

Well, and if I hadn't slipped on the soap. So that was lucky. So I'm going to split it with all of you!

Everyone cheers.

WILLARD

Even the Democrats?

KIERKAOS

Even you, Skip. You OK with that? That kind of redistribution of wealth?

WAYNE

You know, he'll have to give half of it to the government.

BARNEY

And the proceeds will benefit the elderly poor.

WILLARD

All right. For a cool million, I can swallow that. Maybe I'll retire and become a Marxist.

BARNEY

Democrats for a hundred years!

Barney pops a bottle of champagne. Wayne grabs Kierkaos' ass. She giggles. The Pollster and the Analyst both grab Willard lustily. The room breaks out in a loud, raucous, debauched, gleeful romp. An impromptu conga line starts, to a chant of *DE-MO-CRATS FOR-E...VER!* Only Jess is left out, staring blankly into space, distressed.

OR:

* if the coin Jess flips lands differently.

Jess flips. Barney closes his eyes. The coin hits the floor.

JESS

Heads.*

Willard punches the air in victory. Barney puts his head in his hands.

KIERKAOS

Heads. Let it be known that at three thirty eight on this November the sixth that the lot has been drawn for the Republican nominee, and that those appropriate electors shall be chosen to convene in Lansing in December to cast their ballots.

WAYNE

I'm going home.

KIERKAOS

Me too. Call me a limo, Herman. You people all play nice when we're gone.

(touches Jess' arm)

Don't beat yourself up, darlin'. Go home and sleep.

JESS

Uh huh.

WILLARD

And don't forget my offer, baby doll - sign up with the winning team. Barney, it's been a pleasure.

BARNEY

(shaking Willard's hand, dead inside)

A pleasure, my friend.

Barney nods to the Analyst. She pulls a small plastic tip off of her fingernail. She walks up behind Willard and pushes hard on his neck.

WAYNE

Hey, Jodie, what about my risotto? Am I gonna -

WILLARD

Ow! What the fuck just bit me?

(to the Analyst)

Was that you?

The Analyst withdraws a small silenced pistol from her tote bag. She shoots the two judges dead: FTT! FTT!

Jess screams. The Pollster dives for cover behind the table.

Willard recoils in horror. Then he sees Barney, sad, but unsurprised.

WILLARD

What is this? What-

(he falls to the ground, shaking)

What did you do? What did you...

He collapses, unconscious.

The Analyst aims the pistol at Jess.

BARNEY

JESS

Wait-

Please!

ANALYST

(to Jess)

Don't speak. Don't make a sound.

She drags the Pollster out from under the table.

POLLSTER

Look. Look, I'm nobody. I don't even vote. You don't have to pay me. I'll pay you. I'll-

Barney nods to the Analyst. She shoots the Pollster in the chest; he instantly goes limp.

The Analyst feels Willard's pulse.

She turns the gun on Jess again. Jess fights to keep her mouth shut.

BARNEY

Now, look. We can get her on board with this.

ANALYST

That's your call.

BARNEY

Jess. Now this is probably pretty shocking to you. I never thought you'd be here. So I'm sorry about that. But here's what happened. You flipped tails. Willard Goodkind went crazy and shot the justices. Then he ran. That's all anybody ever has to know. Can you handle that?

Pause.

JESS

May I speak now?

BARNEY

Yeah, yeah, go ahead.

JESS

If I don't agree with this, will you kill me?

BARNEY

Look, Jess, you said it yourself. History depends on what happens right here in this room.

JESS

Will you kill me?

ANALYST

Yes.

JESS

Then I guess I have no choice.

BARNEY

No, that can't be it, Jess. You have to really convince us, here. Convince her. She's objective. Because if we can't trust you...your party needs you. Madame Chair. Right?

Pause.

JESS

How can I justify this?

ANALYST

You heard him. What are you willing to do to change the course of history? Will a Democratic party in power save lives?

JESS

Yes.

ANALYST
 Stop wars?

JESS
 Yes.

ANALYST
 Help the helpless?

JESS
 Yes.

ANALYST
 Not to mention replace a now-deceased left-leaning Supreme Court justice? It doesn't make any difference to me. I can pull the trigger or not. So you tell me what to do.

Pause.

JESS
 I can get on board.

BARNEY
 Really?

JESS
 Really.

BARNEY
 (to the Analyst)
 Yeah?

ANALYST
 Sure.
 (pulls out a cell phone)
 I need room service. Ten minutes.
 (hangs up)
 All right, they'll take care of Goodkind. What about Lawrence?

BARNEY
 Who?

ANALYST
 The Republican.

JESS

Let him go. He's not going to know any different, right? And a Republican survivor makes it more credible.

BARNEY

That's good thinking, Jess.

ANALYST

You understand, if you ever deviate from the story, you'll hear from me again?

JESS

Yeah, I get it.

ANALYST

All right. You ready to do your part?

BARNEY

Oh. Yeah. And, Jess. There one more thing we have to do. You and I. For the party.

Jess looks over the Analyst, the gun. She gets it.

JESS

Oh Jesus.

BARNEY

Nobody ever questions the victims, Jess. This is safer. I'll go first, if you want.

JESS

I'd like that.

BARNEY

Well. OK. Chivalry and all that crap. OK.

(he pats his shoulder)

How about right here. No, wait.

(he indicates his shin)

How about here? I can get disability and give up the treadmill.

ANALYST

OK.

JESS

I don't know that I ever said I'd take a bullet for the Party, Barney.

BARNEY

Well. Here's our chance. Ready?

JESS

OK. Oh God.

ANALYST

Here we go.

BARNEY

On three, OK?

ANALYST

Everyone who does that always chickens out.

JESS

I'll count.

ANALYST

That works for me.

BARNEY

OK. That's good. Do it, Jess. I'll return the favor.

The Analyst aims the gun at Barney's leg. Jess stares, fascinated.

JESS

One. Two. Three.

Black.

[Note: the alternate ending may be played immediately following the "first" ending, separated by a blackout or a "rewind" by the actors. However, it is also acceptable (and preferable) to stage a production where the coin is actually flipped fairly, *randomly determining* which of the two endings occurs.]