

GRACE

But when your spring of public approbation passes, and your reforms fall out of fashion, those with vested interests will erode them to nothing, and all the sacrifice will be wasted. I will resist you to the last. (pause) Or, had I the opportunity, I would try to reform the reformist from a sprinter who exhausts himself after one race, to a climber who scales the mountain one tortuous move at a time.

STANDISH

Your opportunity to reform me was surrendered ten years ago. (pause, as he moves away from her) State your intentions, Mrs. Robertson.

GRACE

I will not let you win. I care too much for what you stand for to allow it.

STANDISH

So you will...?

GRACE

...let the story stand. And if my personal concerns are sacrificed for the good of the Union, so be it.

STANDISH

Don't be a fool.

GRACE

You be one in my place, then. I see no alternative.

STANDISH

Then as soon as your father confronts me with his threat, I tell him your name.

GRACE

Lose your sense of honor and play me against the threat. I will pray you are man enough to do otherwise.

STANDISH

I can't let my mistakes as a man defeat my principles. I'm willing to sacrifice myself but not my cause.

GRACE

You sacrifice me.

STANDISH

I haven't the right to protect you. It's your good name against the good of millions.

GRACE

(suddenly emotional) I always thought that should it come to this, I could rely on your honor.

STANDISH

If there were any way of saving you, believe me, I'd do it.

GRACE

There is a way!

STANDISH

Not for me! I can smell victory, Grace, surely you know what that's like.

GRACE

I can guess.

STANDISH

(pause) I wish it had been different. From the beginning.

GRACE

There's no gain in that.

STANDISH

Your father wants to see me. Tell him I'll come back. (starts to leave)

GRACE

(stopping him, an offering) He has a winning hand.

STANDISH

No he doesn't.

GRACE

He thinks he does. (pauses as she considers whether to continue) ...but until he has a name it's all a bluff. He won't play if you don't believe he can win.

STANDISH

(taking the gift) So I call his bluff.

GRACE

And if you do, there will be no need for a name.

STANDISH

But if he plays it anyway, and the story goes out, we all lose control.

GRACE

It's a risk. Yes.

STANDISH

(with Grace's "yes") Yes. But worth it.

GRACE

I'm glad you think so.

STANDISH

The Governor has more than a good wife. He has a good woman. (exits)

## **Scene Seventeen**

*Grace, Wanda*

GRACE

No need for a name.

*Grace sits, letting out her tension with a great sigh. She pours herself a scotch. She drinks it quickly and sits to collect her thoughts. She knows that what has just transpired affords little protection. She suddenly knows what to do next, and reaches for the phone, signaling for the operator.*

GRACE

Hello! Is this Miss Kelly? Do you - you know my voice? Yes, Miss Kelly, I'm alone here. Can you come - please - right away, please. Yes, thank you.

*She pours water to clean her mouth, then unwraps a mint. The bell rings. Grace answers and Wanda enters.*

GRACE

Miss Kelly, I'm sorry for having been so brusque just now, I was...

WANDA

Mr. Standish won't protect you.

GRACE

(stunned by her forthrightness) You know men, Miss Kelly, far too well for your years.

WANDA

It's not men, it's...

GRACE

Power.

WANDA

Yes.

GRACE

And women handle power differently from men, don't you agree?

WANDA

Only the kind we don't have.

GRACE

Oh, but as we lack more power than we have, surely our practice in compensating for what we lack affects our behavior when we are blessed with some little influence.

WANDA

(laughing a little) I have no idea what you just said, Mrs. Robertson.

GRACE

(shocked again) Grace, please. What I'm trying to say, Miss Kelly...

WANDA

Wanda.

GRACE

Wanda, what I mean is that woman are more compassionate towards the victim, so often having found themselves... what I mean is...

WANDA

Have you ever just said what's on your mind?

GRACE

I don't...

WANDA

...using words to not say what you want to say, it seems with most people in the business, that's all they do. I'm saying this, but I'm meaning this, so if you quote me I can pretend I actually said the other thing. It's exhausting to listen to, I can only imagine what it must be to you.

GRACE

(stung) You don't understand the risks.

WANDA

Oh yes I do. It's the same risk I take when I tell some guest to get lost. I have to be a little rude to make it stick, and he might go tell my supervisor who might be in a bad mood and might take up the notion that I should be fired for it. But I say it. And so far I still have a job. And if I speak out too strong some day and lose my job, I'll find another one.

GRACE

Husbands are not as exchangeable as you believe jobs to be.

WANDA

Why don't you just tell me what you want?

GRACE

(admitting that Wanda is right) Wanda, please don't tell them about me and Matt... Mr. Standish. It's more than just the scandal. It's more in ways only my husband could sense, and there will be no hiding that from him. Please, I've got no one to trust. Your word alone will mean so much to me.

WANDA

Hm. Good. Now, here's the problem as I see it. If I don't tell, Central still has the numbers called from my station, listed by time and telephone.

GRACE

They do? But will they...?

WANDA

No, in order to release numbers there has to be a court order...

GRACE

That's nothing for them...

WANDA

...I was a whole lot more convenient, but I'm sure they're wasting no time...

GRACE  
...of course they're not...

WANDA  
So either way...

GRACE  
So either way, it comes out. .

WANDA  
The information is there.

GRACE  
You can't talk to your friends at...?

WANDA  
At Central? What would I tell them? They're not my friends, anyway, just the people I talk to over the phone.

GRACE  
Maybe I could confess...

WANDA  
(picking up on the idea) Tell your husband the truth...

GRACE  
He'd be furious.

WANDA  
Sometimes that's the only...

GRACE  
He asked me dozens of times before we were married if there was anything he should know.

WANDA  
He did?

GRACE  
Oh. Well, not in so many words...

WANDA  
(sadly) That's not very romantic...

GRACE  
...he was, it's just always career with him...

WANDA  
...so, he'd be angry...

GRACE  
...he'd see it as a betrayal...

WANDA  
...but he might forgive you...

GRACE  
Naturally he would forgive me, but to owe him that...

WANDA  
What else can you do?

GRACE  
Mr. Standish is going to try to...

WANDA  
(suddenly clear) You've got to stop them from using the story.

GRACE  
Well of course I do, but...

WANDA  
Appeal to your father's sense of fair play.

GRACE  
(laughing) You don't know him.

WANDA  
You're his daughter...

GRACE  
I don't...

WANDA  
Expect him to live up to your standards.

GRACE  
I've never talked to my father that way.

WANDA  
Well now, you have to.

*Mark rattles the door knob. Both women start, Grace takes Wanda's hand and leads her out.*

GRACE  
(very quietly) Through the service door to the back hall.

WANDA  
Keep your nerve, you can make it work. There's nothing stronger than family. Not even politics.

*She leaves Grace and closes the door after her.*

## Scene Eighteen

*Grace, Mark*

GRACE

What about family in politics. That's a juggernaut.

*The knocking is repeated. Grace goes up to the door and opens it.*

MARK

Sorry for disturbing you, dear. Desk doesn't have the key. In my rush, I must have left it somewhere...

GRACE

I didn't expect you back until...

MARK

Standish wasn't on the floor. Your father sent me back to see if he was here?

GRACE

Yes, he knocked but when neither you nor Daddy were here, he said he'd stop back...

MARK

Okay, well, I'd better be.... (starts to leave)

GRACE

And how's life on the front?

MARK

Jim seems to have things in hand.

GRACE

So maybe we can take a few minutes...

MARK

...I really should be... (leaving again)

GRACE

... just to catch up?

MARK

I'm not back, they'll be here in ten...

GRACE

...five minutes then.

MARK

Sure.

GRACE

It seems like years since we've had any real time together, at all.

MARK  
I know. Sorry. Mullins fight...

GRACE  
Don't. Even mention it. Can I get you a drink?

MARK  
(with a sigh) Yes. Fine. That would be nice.

GRACE  
You've got to relax.

MARK  
You're always right.

GRACE  
It's true. I am.

MARK  
Kiss?

GRACE  
(handing him a drink and moving close) Oh, Mark, it's so good to see you, darling.

MARK  
And you, my love.

GRACE  
I want you to succeed.

MARK  
Yes. Succeed.

GRACE  
I hope you know that.

MARK  
I do.

GRACE  
I live every moment of my life striving to help.

MARK  
And I worship you for it.

GRACE  
And I know you love me...

MARK  
...more than anything...

GRACE  
But to be completely honest... No. Not now.

MARK  
What?

GRACE  
Some other time.

MARK  
No, what? To be completely honest...?

GRACE  
I sometimes wonder if you will continue to put me first as your career becomes more... illustrious.

MARK  
Of course!

GRACE  
Really?

MARK  
I will.

GRACE  
The temptation might be... (pause)

MARK  
What?

GRACE  
...to put your career before me.

MARK  
Grace.

GRACE  
It's just a feeling...

MARK  
No.

GRACE  
...a thought that haunts me.

MARK  
Don't know what's got you thinking like this right now, but no.

GRACE  
Because you're so close to so much.

MARK  
I know, I know.

GRACE  
Why, four years from now...

MARK  
Don't even breathe it.

GRACE  
I won't.

MARK  
Step at a time.

GRACE  
I'm only saying that...

MARK  
Grace...?

GRACE  
Oh, Mark, please don't get dazzled by the prize. Please don't ever forget how much we mean to one another, how much your success means, and has meant, to me.

MARK  
Get you a drink?

GRACE  
Sorry. Going on. On my mind, lately. Too much time apart.

MARK  
Agreed. (he begins to waltz with her) Thing will be over by noon. Then we can lock ourselves in our rooms and... all afternoon, just the two of us.

GRACE  
And into the evening?

MARK  
Much as you like.

GRACE  
Mmm. I love the way you smell... Mark? How do you know it'll be over by noon?

MARK  
Developments.

GRACE  
Of what kind, dear?

MARK  
Oh, a little squalid politics, nothing to interest you.

*He spins her out of the dance and moves to the desk to make a note. She follows.*

GRACE

Mmm? Squalid? In what way, squalid? I'd never imagine that you'd be involved in...

MARK

Not me. Standish. Well, not exactly Standish. Something your father dug up on him. A clincher.

GRACE

And of course, it's all above board.

MARK

Sure. Mostly. I mean, we don't want to use it, but if Standish is stubborn against us, we will.

GRACE

(sitting on the desk, close to him) Does it involve...?

MARK

Oh, yes, it does indeed. Lord created it for our pleasure...

GRACE

Mmmm.

MARK

...and as a political tool.

GRACE

Oh.

MARK

Real genius, the Lord, making something so pleasant serve double duty like that.

GRACE

Oh, dear.

MARK

What?

GRACE

Then there's a woman involved, I suppose.

MARK

Well, yeah. There's a woman involved. You think Standish is...?

GRACE

...is it quite right to use this then?

MARK

Why?

GRACE

Why?