

who got set up and blackmailed by the KGB. It's why he's so strident now, he knows he's compromised. (*Stewart considers this calmly.*)

STEWART. Who do you know that's seen them?

HALBERSTAM. I've heard from a bunch of different people. FBI guys, mostly.

STEWART. "FBI guys."

HALBERSTAM. Evidently Hoover has the negatives.

STEWART. And you believe that?

HALBERSTAM. I ... it ...

STEWART. The KGB sends its dirty photos to Hoover.

HALBERSTAM. No, but —

STEWART. My brother's "compromised," so he's *harder* on the Soviets? Gossip. Spiteful, envious sleaze that doesn't even make sense on its face. I thought you were a better reporter than that. (*Stewart puts down his drink.*) Do you know, for a moment there I was actually going to defend you to Joe? But now I think I'd better just say good afternoon, and go fuck yourself. (*Fade.*)

## 4.

*Joe's study. November, 1963. Abigail, now 16, in a chair with schoolbooks in her lap. Joe perched on his desk.*

JOE. Again.

ABIGAIL. *Dividimus muros et moenia pandimus urbis. Accingunt omnes operum pedibusque rotarum subiciunt lapsus, et stuppea vincula collo intendunt; scandit fatalis machina muros feta armes.*

JOE. Very good. Only it's *operi* not *operum*, and *armis* not *armes*. But otherwise, you're doing splendidly.

ABIGAIL. (*Packing up her books.*) Thanks, Joe.

JOE. Where are you going? We have to review your vocabulary.

ABIGAIL. Not today.

JOE. Yes, today. Don't you have a quiz Friday?

ABIGAIL. Yeah, but I'll do fine.

JOE. Last week you got a B, I think we could do a little better than that.

START



ABIGAIL. But I have to be somewhere at two.

JOE. Where?

ABIGAIL. Somewhere.

JOE. Where?

ABIGAIL. Joe. Come on.

JOE. I have not tutored you assiduously for the past two years to watch you slack off now. I had to reschedule or postpone multiple important interviews to preserve today's session. Shall I read you the list?

ABIGAIL. No.

JOE. Two United States congressmen. An undersecretary of defense. A top Senate staffer. The First Lady of the United States.

ABIGAIL. What?

JOE. You heard me.

ABIGAIL. You canceled with Jackie to help me practice my Latin vocab.

JOE. Yes.

ABIGAIL. Liar.

JOE. Prove it.

ABIGAIL. They're not even in town, I read about it.

JOE. Very good. The others were real; that last was an exaggeration designed to suggest the importance I attach to your education.

ABIGAIL. Thanks, but don't bullshit me, Joe.

JOE. I take it back. You have learned some new vocabulary.

ABIGAIL. You use language like that all the time.

JOE. I am not a fifteen-year-old girl.

ABIGAIL. Neither am I. I'm sixteen. *(She gets up. She's wearing a skirt that stops above the knees.)*

JOE. Dear God. What are you wearing?

ABIGAIL. What? Nothing.

JOE. I can see that. Were the bottom four inches torn off in some sort of garment-rending incident?

ABIGAIL. It's just a skirt. This is what people are wearing.

JOE. It's an abomination. It doesn't even cover your knees. Has your mother seen you in it?

ABIGAIL. What? I don't know. I guess.

JOE. Don't you dare leave the house like that. Where are you going anyway?

ABIGAIL. None of your business.

JOE. A social occasion?

ABIGAIL. Maybe.

JOE. A date?

ABIGAIL. It's just a bunch of friends going out.

JOE. Male and female friends? That would account for the acres of thigh you're exhibiting.

ABIGAIL. Oh for God's sake — *(The phone rings.)* Better get that. Could be the Queen of England.

JOE. Do not leave this room. *(On phone.)* Hello? Scotty! No, it's a perfectly good time, thanks for calling back. This won't take long. I just have one question and it's entirely public-spirited: When are you going to fire those irresponsible children you've got reporting for you in Southeast Asia? Of course I'm serious. If I didn't think it were an appropriate question, I wouldn't ask it. I — *(Susan Mary enters.)* Sorry, just a moment. *(To Susan Mary.)* Knock, Susan. Is that really too much to ask? I'm working.

SUSAN MARY. I'm sorry, Joe. I just have a quick — *(Joe holds up a hand to stop her.)*

JOE. I'm sorry, Scotty. I simply refuse to believe you and the paper wouldn't be far better off having them cover something more suited to their experience and abilities, such as high school athletics or one of the sleepier state legislatures ...

SUSAN MARY. What are you wearing?

ABIGAIL. Nothing.

SUSAN MARY. You're not going out in that.

JOE. That's what I told her. Now will you both please leave? I am trying to conduct a conversation.

ABIGAIL. A minute ago you ordered me to stay.

JOE. Now I am ordering you to go and change, and then come back for the rest of the lesson. Scotty, I'm sorry, I ... Hello? Scotty? *(He's lost the call.)* Oh for God's sake, now look what's happened. Susan, really, I've asked not to be interrupted while I'm working.

SUSAN MARY. I thought you were having a lesson.

ABIGAIL. We're finished.

JOE. No, we still have to do your vocabulary. After you change your clothes.

SUSAN MARY. Yes, you really should change, Abby.

ABIGAIL. I can't believe you're siding with him.

SUSAN MARY. I'm not siding with anybody. I do think the skirt is a little much. Especially for November.

ABIGAIL. My legs don't get cold! Please. Everyone gets to wear them

↓  
END