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SAVING WASHINGTON

by Jane Hampton Cook

"The beginning pulls me in. It's super well-written. There's an urgency on why this story needs to be told. It's relatable, thematic to today, and female-driven. The writing is clean, well-paced and stripped down to the feelings."

a manager in the industry, formerly with CAA, who has read SAVING WASHINGTON

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AUG. 24, 1814

INTRODUCTION

The **award-winning SAVING WASHINGTON** is a female-driven, true-story, drama feature based on a book and inspired by the screenwriter's 9-11 evacuation from the White House.

SAVING WASHINGTON is a patriotic story of contrasts . . . the time frame and costumes of the beloved PRIDE & PREJUDICE wrapped in the patriotism of LINCOLN . . . Dolley Madison, a tenacious American Jane Austen . . . the emotional intimacy between a wife and husband who happens to be the president of the United States . . . the irony of Dolley's anti-war faith versus her husband's war . . . Dolley's polished appearance compared to the impoverished Elinor.

SAVING WASHINGTON captures the best in period drama . . . the shock of the British military burning the U.S. Capitol and White House (especially in context of the tragic Jan. 6, 2021 Capitol riot that shook the nation) . . . the inspiration and action of the wounded warrior Daniel Wells . . . the feeling of triumph as Dolley transforms from a hostess into a humanitarian and becomes the first, first lady while Madison finally emerges as a strong executive leader.

SAVING WASHINGTON is set primarily in Washington D.C., a small town in 1814.

SAVING WASHINGTON is relevant to today through a rich combination of action, emotional connections, strong characters, an epic setting, and cinematic events.



[Video Pitch](https://vimeo.com/516958722)

<https://vimeo.com/516958722>



KEIRA KNIGHTLEY

MATTHEW MACFADYEN — KENDRA BLUTHEN — DONALD SUTHERLAND AND JUDI DENCH

PRIDE & PREJUDICE

"SIMPLY AND ABSOLUTELY GLORIOUS"

NOT AVAILABLE ON DVD

TONAL COMPS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FORMAT/GENRE

Feature–Drama. SAVING WASHINGTON is a patriotic female-driven, family-friendly biopic that is inspired by a true story and adapted from the book, *The Burning of the White House: James and Dolley Madison and the War of 1812*, by screenwriter, author of 10 books, historian and national TV news commentator Jane Hampton Cook.

A former White House staffer, Jane’s evacuation from the White House on 9-11-01 inspired this story. She owns the film rights. [Video Pitch](#)

LOGLINE

Dolley Madison, a charismatic antiwar Quaker socialite, and her husband, wartime President James Madison, must save Washington as the nation’s capital city after British marines burn the White House and Capitol, the 9-11 of the War of 1812. This is the origin story of the first, first lady.

COMPS

PRIDE & PREJUDICE meets LINCOLN.

CHARACTER TRANSFORMATION

Devastated by the burning of the White House and inspired by a war orphan, Dolley unites both political parties, saves Washington three times, starts a charity for Washington’s war orphans, and emerges as the first, first lady. Inspired by wounded warrior Daniel Wells, Madison overcomes his jealousy and transforms into a decisive leader who secures a permanent peace treaty.

AGENT

Contact Jonathan Clements wheelhouselit@gmail.com 615.738.6970 to request the script.

RECOMMEND AND FINALIST

Receiving a recommend, SAVING WASHINGTON finished 3rd out of 1,000 entries in ScreenCraft’s 2018 Drama Contest. Since then the script has undergone an in-depth edit with ScreenCraft’s co-founder and received producer’s notes and consults from Lionsgate, 20th Century Fox, Entertainment One, the Gersh Agency and others.

TRENDS

“This premise feels very marketable for two reasons, the thematic topicality of the current political strife dividing our country and the empathetic very strong female protagonist,” ScreenCraft. **“86% say the conflict between the two major parties is very strong or strong.”** Pew Center.

MAIN CHARACTERS



DOLLEY MADISON

(46, who can look younger) is a charismatic socialite and anti-war Quaker who wants to make a long-lasting contribution to her nation. She's an American Jane Austen.

JAMES MADISON

(63) is a too-trusting scholarly wartime president who wants a peace treaty.

DANIEL WELLS

(40) is an archery ace and patriotic publisher willing to sacrifice it all for freedom.

GEORGE COCKBURN

(42) is a glory-seeking British admiral who wants to lead the British fleet.

ELINOR HENDERSON

(30) is a widow and war protestor who misjudges the Madisons.



RED OVAL ROOM

STORY & STRUCTURE

OPENING TEASER

Aug. 1814. Patriot **DANIEL WELLS** defies **British Admiral GEORGE COCKBURN** during the burning of the White House

ACT I

May 1813. Witty and brilliant **President JAMES MADISON** wants a peace treaty to end the War of 1812 with England. Motivated by marital love, **DOLLEY MADISON** is an antiwar, socialite known for her super power: her ability to charm the president's political enemies. Though she brushes aside suggestions that she do more than host parties, **she secretly wants to do something longer lasting with her life.** When Wells brings the horrific news that the British want to burn the White House, Dolley's socialite friends threaten to flee town. Madison puts his faith in his war secretary, while Dolley calms the panic. She becomes enchanted with a little girl who looks like her and is being bullied.

ACT II

After war protestor **ELINOR HENDERSON** threatens Madison's life and Madison becomes ill, Dolley fears Madison dying like her first husband and makes unpopular political decisions. **Aug. 24, 1814.** Receiving reinforcements, Cockburn attacks Washington. Though Wells fights valiantly and is captured, Madison's army flees while **Dolley saves a painting of George Washington to honor Madison** before the British burn the White House. In her flight out of town, Dolley sees the poverty of average Americans for the first time.

ACT III

The devastated Madisons return to Washington only to face a political battle by congressmen vowing to move the capital away from Washington City. **Motivated by love of country, Wells fights the British at Baltimore, kills their general and is wounded.** Overcoming their grief, Dolley and Madison convince their political opponents to rebuild the White House and save Washington as the nation's capital city. Dolley is shocked to discover that her nemesis Elinor is the mother of the little girl she has been admiring. Elinor is an impoverished widow with a child, like Dolley once was.

Dolley realizes that whether you live in a small house or a big mansion, anyone can serve others, which is the true American spirit. Ready to do something lasting with her life, Dolley enlists both political parties and starts a nonprofit for impoverished children of war veterans. She is the first wife of a president to engage in public service, making her the first, first lady. Moved by the dying Wells, Madison overcomes his jealousy of his wife and emerges as a strong leader. **The Madisons save Washington three times**—the painting, the city as the nation's capital, and the impoverished children.

January 1, 1818. In a reverse of the opening teaser, the final image shows Madison and Dolley in the rebuilt White House. He presents Dolley as the first lady of the land. Dolley morphs into her painting that hangs in the White House today and faces Washington's portrait that she saved. In this way, Dolley still keeps her eye on Washington.



Saving Washington



TRENDS

From censorship and cancel culture to political polarization, bridging the significant divide in our nation through an entertaining story with strong emotional through-lines and patriotic themes is the goal of SAVING WASHINGTON. Political division is stronger than other social divisions, according to the Pew Research Center.



An overwhelming majority (86%) of Americans say conflicts between Democrats and Republicans are either strong or very strong, according to a new Pew Research Center survey. By comparison, 65% of Americans see strong or very strong conflicts between blacks and whites, and 60% see them between the rich and the poor.

Likewise, cancel culture, censorship and blacklisting and other tactics are raging in American culture, similar to the days of McCarthyism and used by totalitarian governments. In addition, the breach of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, is an emotional news story that will make the burning of the U.S. Capitol and White House in this film more emotional and resonate.

Seeing the characters in SAVING WASHINGTON overcome their challenges and express their patriotism can inspire patriotism today. With cancel culture and political division serving as zeitgeists today, the time is ripe for a patriotic film that appeals to viewers in a healing way.

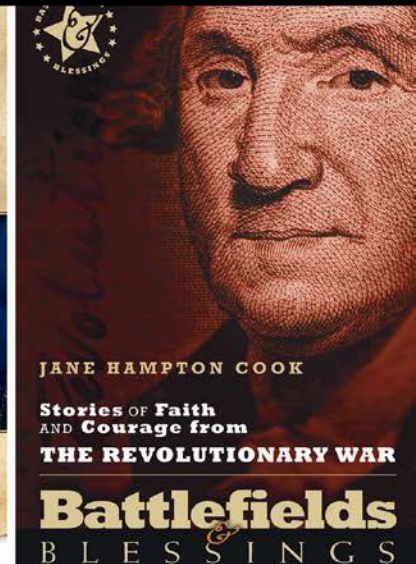
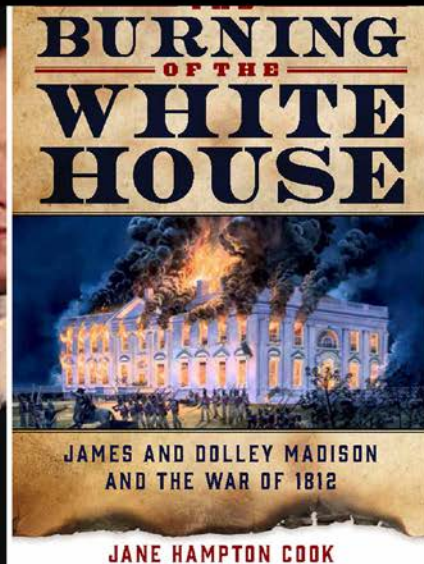
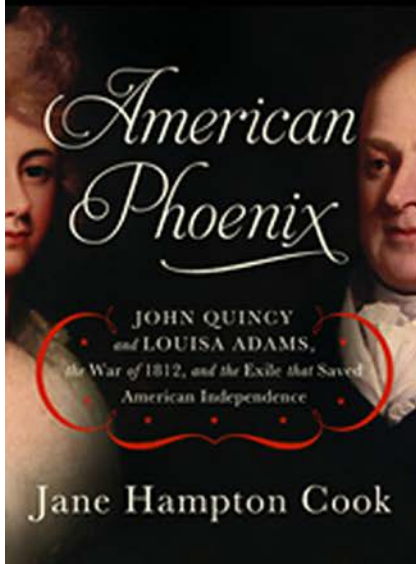


By not taking jabs at current political parties or specific politicians, SAVING WASHINGTON soars above today's conflicts but shows a time period that was just as divided politically and culturally. It also shows how James Madison, Dolley Madison and Daniel Wells embodied the American spirit. The Madisons brought people together for a noble purpose –a charity for children who lost a parent in war.

SAVING WASHINGTON as a title and film has the potential to appeal to viewers because many believe America needs to be saved today from totalitarian-style culture tactics and its internal conflicts. The title also fits Dolley, who wanted to be remembered as the savior of Washington.



TALENT-JANE HAMPTON COOK



SCREENWRITER JANE HAMPTON COOK

One distinct advantage that Jane brings as a screenwriter is her frequent appearances in the national and international news media over the past 12 years. Few screenwriters bring this kind of free media marketing potential. TV news has taught her how to make historical stories relevant to life today.

After being evacuated from the White House on 9-11, Jane wondered if Americans sought to live life differently and experienced a surge of patriotism after the “9-11 of the War of 1812,”—the burning of the White House by the British military. She discovered that the burning of the White House led to the creation of the role of first lady, which inspired her to write SAVING WASHINGTON.

Jane Hampton Cook makes history and biography relevant to news, current events, politics, faith and modern life. She is an award-winning author of nine books. Receiving a recommend, her feature screenplay SAVING WASHINGTON placed third out of 1,000 entries in ScreenCraft’s 2018 drama contest. She has since received producer’s notes from WME, Lionsgate, New Republic Pictures, Entertainment One, the Gersh Agency and others. Inspired by her 9-11 evacuation experience from the White House, SAVING WASHINGTON is adapted from her book, *The Burning of the White House: James and Dolley Madison and the War of 1812*.

A national media commentator, contributor to *The Hill*, and former White House webmaster, Jane is a frequent guest on the Fox News Channel, BBC, SKY News, and other TV and radio outlets. She was a cast member and on-camera storyteller for THE FIRST AMERICAN, a documentary about George Washington, and for the History Channel’s UNITED STUFF OF AMERICA. She received a bachelor’s degree from Baylor University and a master’s degree from Texas A&M University. Jane lives with her husband and their children near Washington D.C. www.janecook.com.

BOOKS

Resilience on Parade: Short Stories of Suffragists & Women’s Battle for the Vote (Wheelhouse Lit, 2020)

The Burning of the White House (Regnery History, 2016)

American Phoenix (Thomas Nelson, HarperCollins imprint, 2013)

America’s Star-Spangled Story (Lighthouse of the Carolinas, 2014)

Stories of Faith and Courage from the War in Iraq and Afghanistan (AMG, 2010) 2010 Gold Medal from Military Writers Society of America *Stories of Faith and Courage from the Revolutionary War* (AMG, 2007)

The Faith of America’s First Ladies (AMG, 2006)

FOR CHILDREN

What Does the President Look Like? (Kane Miller, 2011), *B is for Baylor* (Baylor Press, 2010), *Maggie Houston* (Hendrick Long, 2002)



CINEMATOGRAPHY HUES



MUSIC

COMPOSER FLETCH WILEY

Fletch Wiley is a Grammy-winning composer and arranger and friend of Jane Hampton Cook. He says he is John Williams but at a lower rate of compensation. He's composed a sample theme and an original song. Fletch Wiley is a Grammy-winning arranger and award-winning composer and conductor, whom Jane has known for 15 years. Fletch Wiley as composer of original score is Jane Hampton Cook's only MUST HAVE talent. Pictured with the Budapest Orchestra, he is excited to compose the score Jane's film projects.



"The depth of the musical experience never ceases to amaze me. Whether it is playing in churches in America, jazz cafes in Istanbul or outdoor festivals in Norway; writing a film score; or producing a record or jingle, I am in awe of the creative powers God has given us."
—Fletch Wiley, www.fletchwiley.com, fletch.wiley@gmail.com. Thus began a musical journey that has taken Fletch Wiley literally around the world playing and producing with some of the world's great players and given him a heart for helping the local musician. Fusing his love of jazz, classical and world music with technology has made Fletch a sought after producer, arranger, instrumentalist and orchestrator.

"At a very early age, I knew I was going to be a musician; maybe it was sleeping with my trumpet as a ten-year-old!"

Original Song for SAVING WASHINGTON: Fletch has composed an original song for SAVING WASHINGTON called "Set Your Heart on Fire," available to hear on request: Jane@janecook.com

MARY MILLBEN

Jane has been in discussions with Mary Millben to play Sukey, a supporting character who sings the Star-Spangled Banner as part of a scene that celebrates its creation. Mary is an actress and singer unofficially attached. She has a SONY Music contract and is known for singing the national anthem for Presidents Obama, Bush and Trump as well as for NFL games. Mary a career in the entertainment business after serving as a White House staffer for the same administration as Jane. She would be ideal to perform an original song.



COMPOSER DARYL BENNETT

Also to include on composition team. **Daryl Bennett**, Composer, <http://darylbennett.tv>, daryl@darylbennett.tv

WHY CALL THIS SAVING WASHINGTON?

Calling this film *SAVING WASHINGTON* honors Dolley and James Madison for their joint legacy of **saving Washington three times**:

- Painting of George Washington
- Washington as the nation's capital
- Impoverished girls of Washington through Dolley's charity, which still exists.

The title *SAVING WASHINGTON* jives with those seeking to culturally save America.

DOLLEY WANTED TO BE REMEMBERED FOR SAVING WASHINGTON

When biographers asked Dolley to tell her story in the 1830s, she gave them very little to work with. She wrote only about her parents freeing their slaves and then pointed journalists to a letter she wrote the day British burned the White House. She took credit for saving the portrait of Washington.

“This (saving Washington’s portrait), however, was the moment she most wanted to be remembered about her years as the president’s wife, indeed the years she reigned over Washington. It was not Dolley Madison as a hostess, or as a conciliator of warring political factions, or as the arbiter of fashion. It was Dolley Madison as a heroine of the War of 1812. **Dolley wanted to be known as the savior of George Washington’s portrait.”** Holly C. Shulman, speech to the White House Historical Association in September 2014. Shulman spent her career collecting Dolley’s letters for the University of Virginia. We honor Dolley by remembering her as the savior of Washington in more ways than one.

DOLLEY’S NON-PROFIT STILL EXISTS TODAY



Dolley’s charity still exists today as the Hillcrest Family and Children Center, a non-profit in Washington D.C. (<http://hillcrest-dc.org/>). Doing an event with Hillcrest or donating to is an outreach opportunity. Hillcrest is a behavioral health care and social services agency that provides behavioral health treatment and family support services.

SCRIPT EXCERPT

Included are the first several pages of SAVING WASHINGTON.

To read full script contact agent Jonathan Clements, Jonathan@wheelouseliterary.com, wheelouselit@gmail.com, 615.738.6970 cell, and 615.263.4150 office.

SAVING WASHINGTON

By

Jane Hampton Cook

Adapted from *The Burning of the White House*
by Jane Hampton Cook

Based on a true story

Agent:

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OVER BLACK

"U.S. President James Madison's war against England, the War of 1812, has polarized Congress and the nation."

"In 1814 the British military attacks America's capital."

"Washington needs saving in several ways by patriotic gentlemen and, in a first, ... a lady."

FADE IN

EXT. WASHINGTON - PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE - NIGHT

SUPER: "Washington City, August 24, 1814"

A SPYGLASS shows the U.S. Capitol building on FIRE.

The view darts down to the street.

REDCOATED BRITISH SOLDIERS march double-file, smirk and carry javelins. Some are African.

EXT. WASHINGTON - PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE - CONTINUOUS

The spyglass shows terrified AMERICAN ONLOOKERS. Armed REDCOATS push back a plucky Quaker ELINOR HENDERSON, 39.

ELINOR
Barbarians!

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - 3RD FLOOR - BROKEN WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

British Army CAPTAIN BEAU URQUHART, 20s, stands at a broken window. Lowers his spyglass. His face in shame.

The view pulls out. This redcoat is at -- the WHITE HOUSE.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - 3RD FLOOR - MADISON SUITE - MOMENTS LATER

Urquhart thunders into a stately bedroom.

CAPTAIN URQUHART
Rockets are on their way.

The gentlemanly Urquhart:

-- Slows as he sees Dolley Madison's displayed satin turbans and tiaras. He respectfully removes his Napoleon hat.

-- Glares as TWO BRITISH MIDSHIPMEN, 20s, act like pirates and toss President James Madison's white shirts onto a pile.

-- Approaches his opposite, the British admiral's glory-seeking aide, NAVY LT. JAMES SCOTT, 30s.

Scott mockingly dons one of Madison's shirts by a mirror.

LIEUTENANT SCOTT
The rockets will wait.

A midshipman tosses another one of Madison's shirt.

LIEUTENANT SCOTT (CONT'D)
There's still time for an exchange.

Urquhart reluctantly catches it.

LIEUTENANT SCOTT (CONT'D)
(Said in British style:
Coburn)
You oppose our orders? Admiral
Cockburn acts for Britain's glory.

CAPTAIN URQUHART
Or his own?

Scott scoffs.

Midshipmen hurl Dolley's gowns from an armoire to the pile.

This is too much. Urquhart tosses Madison's shirt aside.

CAPTAIN URQUHART (CONT'D)
Burning their military assets is
fair game, but their Parliament
building? Now this lady's house?

LIEUTENANT SCOTT
You're worried about doll clothes?

The midshipmen pour lamp oil on the gowns. Urquhart winces.

With cold eyes Scott removes TWO MINIATURE WALL PAINTINGS.

He keeps one. Tosses the other to Urquhart, who catches it.

LIEUTENANT SCOTT (CONT'D)
Keep it. Prove to Mother England
you were here.

Urquhart sadly conceals the picture in his fist.

CRASH. Midshipmen smash windows.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NORTH LAWN - LATER

The British soldiers aim fiery javelins at the windows.

Scott watches gleefully. Urquhart grips the picture. Tremors.

Midshipmen wield muskets and shove their patriotic American captive, the princely DANIEL WELLS, 40.

Wells is a newspaper printer in a blue Maryland militia uniform. A book is tucked under his arm.

They push the defiant Wells toward the glory-seeking British ADMIRAL GEORGE COCKBURN, 42, a cocky Scott.

ADMIRAL COCKBURN

My Yankee witness is the last out.

WELLS

(American style: Cockburn)

Admiral Cockburn!

(beat)

You may burn our houses but nothing
can extinguish the American spirit.

Urquhart casts an admiring glance at Wells.

ADMIRAL COCKBURN

You're mighty opinionated for a
newspaper man.

Wells lunges at Cockburn. The midshipmen restrain him.

WELLS

I'll make target practice of you.

ADMIRAL COCKBURN

Now, now. You don't want to miss
tomorrow's headlines.

(To the British soldiers)

Introduce this white house to its
final guests!

Cockburn fires his pistol. The soldiers throw their javelins.
Cheers. Wells's face wrenches in pain.

Elinor and the onlookers recoil in anguish.

Urquhart unfolds his fist. The gold frame glistens.

He reveals a miniature painting of a lady.

This is Dolley Madison. A sweet, upscale American Jane Austen
in a white gown and gold shawl.

EXT. HOUSE - WINDOW - SAME

SUPER: "Across the River"

The painting morphs into DOLLEY MADISON, 46. Posed the same way in the same clothes. Shock covers her face.

Dolley protectively touches the notch of her neck. Her wedding ring flashes.

An unseen WOMAN hands her a note. Dolley speaks in a soft, slightly Southern accent.

DOLLEY
From James!

She unfolds it. Reads. Worry fills every line of her face.

EXT. U.S. CAPITOL - MARKET - DAY

SUPER: "15 months earlier, Washington City, May 5, 1813"

Dolley merrily walks in front of the unfinished Capitol.

She is impeccably-dressed above others here and throughout.

BYSTANDERS, especially poor children, are awestruck by her.

Except for the disapproving Elinor Henderson, who resembles Dolley but her plain clothes are tattered.

Dolley stops. A FARMER, 50, fills a basket with strawberries.

DOLLEY
Yours are the pick of the season,
the perfect topping for tonight.

FARMER
Your husband should call Congress
into a special session each summer.

DOLLEY
We want this war to end as you do.

FARMER
Absolutely, but it's worth coming
to town when Congress meets. Will
you throw a party every week?

She hands him coins. He gives her the basket.

DOLLEY
I can't imagine who could stop me.

Elinor stares disapprovingly. Dolley doesn't notice her.

Dolley painfully glances at the bystander children. She quickly looks away.

They part like the Red Sea. She fakes a smile. Walks uncomfortably past them toward her CARRIAGE.

EXT. WASHINGTON - PENNSYLVANIA AVE - CONTINUOUS

Dolley sees Madison's worst political enemy.

Redheaded, antiwar NY SENATOR RUFUS KING, 59, strolls on the street. He slightly trips in the mud and dirt.

She covers her mouth, amused. Then amps her superpower charisma. Her tone is more effusive than with the farmer.

DOLLEY

Welcome to Washington, Senator!

King loves the attention. Bows grandly as if president. A STAGE COACH rushes by. Splashes mud on him.

DOLLEY (CONT'D)

Need a ride, Senator King?

King looks over, astonished that she would invite him.

SENATOR KING

Mrs. Madison? Your Republican carriage has room for a Federalist?

DOLLEY

Always. I can put a heated election behind me, if you can.

She opens the door. He glares at the mud and is won over.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - 3RD FLOOR - MADISON SUITE - SAME

By the mirror where Scott tried on his shirt, a man with wavy white hair dons a snowy white shirt.

This is PRESIDENT JAMES MADISON, 63. His giant intellect and quick, humble, wry wit overcome his weak, short stature.

The president speaks as if teaching someone. Beating it out.

PRESIDENT MADISON

Hello, Mr. President.

Coming into view is his green pet PARROT, GILBERT.

GILBERT THE PARROT
Hello, hello.

Madison gently corrects the parrot.

PRESIDENT MADISON
It's hello, Mr. President.

Gilbert won't repeat it. Madison is frustrated but amused.

Lines the cage with the LONDON TIMES newspaper. Grins.

PRESIDENT MADISON (CONT'D)
While we're waiting, aim at the
Prime Minister's speech.

He carries the cage toward the door.

INT. PRESIDENT MADISON CARRIAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Dolley sits across from King. He wipes off dirt.

SENATOR KING
The capital should never have left
Philadelphia's paved streets or New
York's metropolis for this
barrenness.

DOLLEY
New York has much to offer.
Philadelphia has many charms.

SENATOR KING
You were once one of them I hear,
an antiwar, antislavery Quaker from
Philly.

DOLLEY
I maintain essential Quaker habits.

She offers him a strawberry. He takes it. Loves it.

DOLLEY (CONT'D)
You don't believe in Washington's
unlimited potential?

SENATOR KING
Our capital doesn't belong in a
swamp that breeds pests.

She answers pretentiously.

DOLLEY

I haven't met any alligators here.

He gets that she means him. He teases. Picks another berry.

KING

Some only bite when provoked.

He takes a bite. The carriage hits a pot hole. Jolts them.

DOLLEY

It's easier to expand than squeeze
a capital into a crowded city.
President Washington thought so.

SENATOR KING

At least he avoided a second war
with England.

She swallows his slight against her husband.

DOLLEY

I'm not as wise in politics.

SENATOR KING

England is ready for peace. --

DOLLEY

(beat)

-- As is the President.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - STATE FLOOR - NORTH HALL - SAME

Madison carries the parrot cage down the hall.

EXT. OCTAGON - MOMENTS LATER

A more relaxed King disembarks from the carriage.

DOLLEY

Will I have the pleasure of seeing
you this evening?

He looks puzzled.

DOLLEY (CONT'D)

The President's House is open to
all each Wednesday night. No
invitation is required. --

SENATOR KING

(beat)

-- Life is a never-ending party,
isn't it? Especially for a
president's wife.

She overcomes his jab with a sugary tone.

DOLLEY

Only if the party serves ice cream.
Some say it's better here than in
Philadelphia or New York.

His eyes gleam. Won over. The alligator is tamed for now.

INT. NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER - PRINTING PRESS - SAME

A STAGECOACH DRIVER conveys alarm to a shocked Wells.

WELLS

How many lost?

STAGE COACH DRIVER

Forty. Worse than pirates. He needs
to know.

WELLS

I'll pass the news along tonight.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NORTH LAWN - MOMENTS LATER

Dolley disembarks from her carriage. Jolts her head toward a
noisy SMALL CROWD OF PROTESTERS on the grass.

A MALE PROTESTER, 20s, holds up a sign: "End Mr. Madison's
War." The protesters holler and applaud.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - STATE FLOOR - NORTH ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Steward JOE FREEMAN, 36, an African freeman, steps between
Dolley and the protesters. She dashes inside.

JOE

Uninvited guests again.

DOLLEY

The president isn't concerned with
dragonflies on the lawn.

She hands him the basket.

DOLLEY (CONT'D)
Thank you Joe.

JOE
The president is waiting for you in
the Red Oval Room.

She brightens. He adds slyly, with amusement.

JOE (CONT'D)
So is Washington.

She brightens even more.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - STATE FLOOR - RED OVAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A grand oval room with striking red curtains. An eight-foot veiled painting leans against the wall on the floor.

The parrot cage hangs on a hook. Dolley sweeps in and sweetly kisses Madison. Their connection is strong.

GILBERT THE PARROT
Hello Dolley. Hello Dolley. --

Madison blinks in disbelief, jealous.

PRESIDENT MADISON
-- And Hello Mr. President.

DOLLEY
He still won't repeat it will he?
... Sorry I'm late. I had to tame
an alligator.

PRESIDENT MADISON
Which one?

DOLLEY
The king of alligators.

He nods with instant recognition.

DOLLEY (CONT'D)
Shall I bring him to you tonight?
Maybe he'll be open to hearing
about your peace commissioners.

He smiles. This is what he most wants.

PRESIDENT MADISON
Give him the oval room treatment.

She smiles knowingly at their shtick. He gestures.

Together they unveil George Washington's stately painting by Gilbert Stuart. She is overjoyed. He teases.

DOLLEY
President Washington has returned!
The new frame is brilliant.

PRESIDENT MADISON
Where do you want to hang it?

DOLLEY
Where it belongs, the dining room.

Madison's shoulders slump, deflated.

PRESIDENT MADISON
I thought you wanted it in here?

DOLLEY
I did but Mr. Latrobe insisted on
hanging it in the dining room which
has more space for a gallery.

PRESIDENT MADISON
But you're the hostess ...
(beat)
... You could start a new
tradition.

Her face twists with tension. She struggles.

DOLLEY
A president's wife dare not break
... with tradition, no matter how
trivial.

PRESIDENT MADISON
Very well. I'll tell Joe.

He leans in to kiss her but CHANTING startles them.

PROTESTERS (O.S.)
End Madison's war!

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NORTH LAWN - SAME

Elinor leads the protesters. She stands on a crate and throws
a rope from a burlap bag over a tree limb.

PROTESTERS (CONT'D)
End this war, Mr. President!

The crowd feverishly cheers. Elinor's long black hair is piled high. Her eyes, fierce. She takes out a long sword.

PROTESTERS (CONT'D)
Elinor! Elinor!

Elinor puts the sword on her head. BALANCES it.

She turns around in a circle without the sword falling.

The protesters CHEER. A MALE PROTESTER yanks the rope and lifts a straw effigy of Madison.

She loosens her hair. It cascades to her knees.

ELINOR
If this war does not end soon, I
dare thee to cut off my hair and
hang President Madison with it!

She holds up the sword. Her eyes are fierce with a 1,000 yard stare. The awed crowd thunderously CHEERS.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - 3RD FLOOR - OVAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nonchalant Madison and a glaring Dolley watch at the window.

PRESIDENT MADISON
No one shall be deprived of his or
her right to speak.

DOLLEY
She threatened your life.

They leave the window. His posture is relaxed. Hers tense.

PRESIDENT MADISON
She's standing for her principles
and wants to be heard. She reminds
me of the Tunisian diplomat.

DOLLEY
The one who gave you the saber?

PRESIDENT MADISON
He told me a story. A woman who can
balance a saber while dancing
carries her true love's honor....

He looks at her hair turban and teases her.

PRESIDENT MADISON (CONT'D)
It's possible for a fashionable
Virginia farmer's wife. We have the
saber somewhere.

She laughs momentarily. Seeks reassurance.

DOLLEY
Impossible! ... What about tonight?

PRESIDENT MADISON
Joe can watch the protesters.

DOLLEY
How about a band of marines?

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NORTH LAWN - LATER, NIGHT

A MARINE BAND competes with the protestors, drowns them out.

Joe greets a spiraling line of GUESTS. In line Wells looks
incredulous at the effigy. Something bulges in his coat.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - STATE FLOOR - SAME

The rooms are packed with women and CONGRESSMEN.

Off the North Hall, the Yellow Music Room is between the
State Dining Room and Red Oval Room.

YELLOW MUSIC ROOM

King conspires with distrusting WAR SECRETARY and GENERAL
JOHN ARMSTRONG of New York, 56, in uniform. They see:

STATE DINING ROOM

Washington's painting hangs behind a table filled with
strawberries and ice cream.

In an elegant gown, Dolley is the life of the party, swarmed
by a woman (ELIZABETH MONROE) and a man (SENATOR LACOCK).

DOLLEY
(To Elizabeth)
You look dazzling, darling.
(To Lacock)
I picked these berries just for
you, Senator.

He brightens.

YELLOW MUSIC ROOM

A sarcastic King and Armstrong turn toward the Red Oval Room, where Madison is in the center with the towering dark-headed ambitious SECRETARY OF STATE JAMES MONROE, 55.

SENATOR KING

What of the president tonight?

GENERAL ARMSTRONG

Too trusting in the undeserving.

SENATOR KING

Our esteemed Secretary of State?

GENERAL ARMSTRONG

Especially Mr. Monroe.

SENATOR KING

The president in waiting?

GENERAL ARMSTRONG

Never. The Virginia dynasty must end with the next election.

Dolley approaches.

GENERAL ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

Here comes the Greek goddess.

DOLLEY

General Armstrong, the President says the war is going well now with you at the helm.

Their tone switches to fake warmth. She looks King in the eye.

DOLLEY (CONT'D)

Senator King, I'm thrilled you risked mingling with the dastardly Republicans.

SENATOR KING

Many make the sacrifice, I see. Why do both political parties come to your parties?

DOLLEY

Jefferson wouldn't host both.

GENERAL ARMSTRONG

Especially after his vice president killed Alexander Hamilton.

DOLLEY

We always remember the ladies.
Congressmen dare not challenge each
other to a duel in their presence.

GENERAL ARMSTRONG

I disagree. People come because ...
(beat)
... Everyone loves Mrs. Madison.

Her tone is pretentious.

DOLLEY

Ah, no. Mrs. Madison loves
everybody.

They laugh. She takes King's arm.

DOLLEY (CONT'D)

The President has asked for you.

NORTH ENTRANCE HALLWAY

Wells urgently whispers to Joe, who points to the oval room.

RED OVAL ROOM

Dolley escorts King along the perimeter.

DOLLEY (CONT'D)

Do you know why George Washington
preferred circular rooms?

He shrugs.

DOLLEY (CONT'D)

When the president is in the
center, everyone is at an equal
distance. No one is more important
than another. It's very American.

They arrive at Madison, which makes her point.

SENATOR KING

Mr. President, your wife is a
Quaker by day and a queen by night.

She's embarrassed. Jealousy flashes on Madison's face. King
and Madison shake hands in strained familiarity.

PRESIDENT MADISON

I'm glad your governor appointed
you to fill the vacancy, Rufus.

SENATOR KING
Someone needed to fill the vacuum
of leadership in Washington.

Madison absorbs the slight with wit.

PRESIDENT MADISON
People say I'm indecisive, but I
don't know about that?

Madison and King laugh. This breaks the ice.

Wells enters. His gaze flits, searches. Dolley approaches.

DOLLEY
How's the news, today, Mr. Wells?

He shows her a newspaper. Shocked, she leads him to Madison.

WELLS
(beat)
Excuse me, Mr. President. Two days
ago British marines burned Havre de
Grace, Maryland. Two-thirds of the
houses are gone. The British want
to burn Washington next.

Madison freezes.

WELLS (CONT'D)
The scoundrel Admiral Cockburn
wants to take a bow in Mrs.
Madison's dining room.

Dolley is composed but concerned. Monroe's eyes lift in
shock.

Wells's patriotism is on steroids.

WELLS (CONT'D)
I'll defend you, Mrs. Madison and
Washington City, at all cost.

A scowling Monroe looks at the skeptical King and Armstrong.

SECRETARY MONROE
(beat)
Our worst enemy may soon be within.

Dolley looks around, takes in the shock on people's faces.

Her eyes lock on Madison, who looks like he's carrying the
world on his shoulders.