

## Scene 9: Late 1959

*A light shift. At the coffee cart between the Capitol and the State Archive Building. Senator Higgins is already there, ordering his coffee from a coffee cart server, played by Garth Williams. Emily walks up, wearing sunglasses and a winter coat, carrying a leather tote bag.*

HIGGINS. Is that you, Miss Reed, behind those glasses?

EMILY. Senator Higgins. Yes, indeed. Here we are again at the watering hole.

HIGGINS. I understood you were leaving us. I thought maybe you had gone already.

EMILY. I have just now relinquished my keys. One final walk down these steps.

HIGGINS. The Keys to the Kingdom! Here, let me buy you one last cup of coffee.

*He gestures to coffee server.*

For the lady. *(To Emily.)* How do you take it?

EMILY. That's really not necessary / —

HIGGINS. / C'mon now. Let me buy you a twenty-cent cup of coffee

for the road! The road to Washington. I used to dream that I might be in the national eye. Make change. How do you take it?

EMILY. Black.

HIGGINS. (*Noting that, even if she doesn't.*) Black! Of course—

*He gestures to the coffee server.*

I like mine with lots of cream and sugar.

*Higgins hands her the cup.*

I need that cream in my coffee.

EMILY. You never ran for a seat in Congress, did you?

HIGGINS. It tears up my stomach—coffee without cream, I mean. Eats away at my stomach lining. Congress? I coulda. But that's your destiny, not mine.

EMILY. I am not off to the Library of Congress, just the DC library system.

HIGGINS. Don't reduce it, now. Don't! A job offer for a lady like you doesn't come along every day!

EMILY. Well, actually, thanks to you, Senator, I was fairly *flooded* with job offers from around the country this past year.

HIGGINS. "*Flooded*." Is that so? One little mention in *Time* magazine, and now you're off to higher ground, while we are left here. It is a step up, I hope?

EMILY. The new job, in the long run, offers more opportunities.

HIGGINS. But less money, I gather. I read in the paper you'll be making five hundred dollars less a year.

EMILY. Did you?

*Beat.*

I think you will be happy with my successor, *Mrs. Beamguard*. A fine person with a fine husband. Native of *Tennessee*. Educated in *Georgia*. Alas, not a native of Alabama—

HIGGINS. Let's not speak of others today! A toast to you, Miss Reed. This past year my good ear got a welcome retreat from the noise of my least favorite library issue. I speak of integration of libraries. You see, Miss Reed, the Alabama Negroes that want them,

have their libraries. Here, in Montgomery, even: The Cleveland Avenue library is there for them. It's theirs!

EMILY. Underfunded, with fewer books and less square footage.

HIGGINS. They have theirs, we have ours. And thus it shall ever be.

EMILY. You are never wrong and you are never sorry, are you, Senator?

HIGGINS. If I'm never wrong, Miss Reed, what have I got to be sorry about? Good luck up there in Washington, Miss Reed. The "unflappable" Miss Reed!

*She begins to exit. A thought strikes her. She fumbles in a large tote and pulls out an oversize envelope, which mirrors the size of the packages/gifts given in previous scenes.*

EMILY. Senator, I had almost forgotten. I have something for you.

HIGGINS. Oh?

*She offers him the envelope.*

It's not my birthday. What is it?

*Please note the timing of the book "reveal." We should think The Rabbits' Wedding is in there. He gingerly begins to open the envelope; he is perplexed.*

EMILY. I have a friend in Hartford who deals in old books.

*He slides a book out of the envelope.*

He found me a first edition that I thought you might like. I had read in the paper that you were a fan of *Tom Sawyer*. That it was your favorite book, as a boy.

HIGGINS. I don't quite understand. Is this a library purchase?

EMILY. No, this was a private purchase. I ordered it, it was sent to my home, and I was going to drop it at your office, but here we are.

HIGGINS. This is for me, then?

EMILY. *(Bemused.)* Yes, Senator.

*Beat.*

This should be the least complicated of our exchanges. It is a *gift*.

HIGGINS. *(Undone. Moved. Inarticulate.)* It's...well...I don't know exactly what to say.

EMILY. What would your mother have told you to say?

HIGGINS. My mother? *(After a moment. Moved. Sincere.)* “Thank you,” Miss Reed.

*He cradles the book in his hands and gazes at it.*

I will keep it on my desk at the Capitol. Where I will see it every day.

EMILY. Happy New Year, Senator.

*She exits. He looks back at her. He doesn't know what to do with himself. He regards the book. It gives him joy and pain. The light on him fades. Light shift to:*