

TRUTH IS...

A One Act Play

By Jim Siering

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TRUTH IS...

A service elevator in a government building.
Trash bin, janitorial equipment. SENATOR
SUZANNE CRAWFORD and Presidential
Advisor, KELLY CORCORAN, enter and cross
to the elevator. Kelly presses the button.

SUZANNE

How do I look?

KELLY

You look great, Senator.

SUZANNE

Nothing on the jacket?

Kelly fusses with her clothes.

KELLY

We have a large crowd outside, remember, a lot of press. Smile, wave, whatever, just
keep moving. No more than three questions, no follow-ups, no specifics. Let's run
through it before the elevator comes.

SUZANNE

Oh come on, I don't want to get stale.

KELLY

You won't.

SUZANNE

I don't want to come off as a politician.

KELLY

Just follow the plan and you'll seem like a real person.

SUZANNE

All right, if they ask about the economy, I talk about lower taxes. If they ask about the
environment, I talk about over-regulation. If they ask about healthcare, I say something
about choice. If they ask about jobs, I'm back to lower taxes.

KELLY

Just speak like your ideas are your own.

SUZANNE

I'm terrified of doing a Rick Perry.

KELLY

Never try to say anything specific. That's the key. Ugh, these service elevators are so slow! Don't these people work?

A LITTLE GIRL runs to the elevator.

GIRL

Going up?

SUZANNE

We are, young lady.

The girl presses the down button

KELLY

No, that's down! SHIT! Shoot, I mean. Where are your parents, little girl?

GIRL

My mom's over there. I like to press the buttons. My mom said I could.

KELLY

Don't you think you should go back to your mom, now?

SUZANNE

Oh leave her be, Kelly. I see her mother over there.

She smiles and waves.

GIRL

Are you a big shot?

SUZANNE

I guess you could say that.

KELLY

Don't say anything, Senator.

GIRL

My mom says this building is full of big shots.

SUZANNE

Well, your mom is a very smart lady.

GIRL

And she says they never ever tell the truth.

KELLY

Don't say another word. IS THIS YOUR LITTLE GIRL?

GIRL

Do you ever tell the truth?

SUZANNE

I always tell the truth.

GIRL

Promise?

SUZANNE

Promise.

KELLY

CAN YOU GET YOUR CHILD PLEASE?

GIRL

I knew it! HEY MOM, YOU'RE WRONG! I JUST TALKED TO A BIG SHOT
AND SHE SAYS SHE ALWAYS TELLS THE TRUTH.

She runs off. The elevator door opens.

KELLY

Shit, it's going down.

The door closes. Kelly presses the up button.

SUZANNE

What did she mean do I ever tell the truth?

KELLY

She's just a kid.

SUZANNE

It's sad that kids are brought up to think a United State Senator never tells the truth.

KELLY

Her mother's a janitor. You know how they are.

SUZANNE

Janitors' children?

KELLY

No, working class, you know, they're angry; they don't understand.

SUZANNE

I tell the truth.

KELLY

Of course you do.

SUZANNE

But, *ever?* She said do I *ever* tell the truth!

KELLY

Forget it, she's a child.

SUZANNE

Think of the socioeconomic maladjustment in working class people when, as children they're brought up thinking successful adults don't speak the truth.

KELLY

Oh God, where is this fucking elevator?

She presses the buttons again.

SUZANNE

It makes you think.

KELLY

Don't think, we've got to focus. When we get outside we've got about fifty feet to get to the car. Once we get in the car, we're safe. We take the underground, you record your vote, POTUS signs the bill, and we all go home winners.

SUZANNE

I've always thought of myself as an honest person.

KELLY

Senator... Fuck, I better text them and let them know we're running late.

She takes out phone and texts.

SUZANNE

I don't lie to the people. Intentionally.

KELLY

I know that.

SUZANNE

I'm just careful.

KELLY

You're smart.

SUZANNE

Still, maybe I could be a little more transparent.

KELLY

The trouble with being transparent is that people see through what you're saying.

SUZANNE

I mean as a strategy, an outside-the-box thing.

KELLY

We're not looking for outside-the-box, Senator.

SUZANNE

That little girl made me think, though, what if I simply tell the truth, let it all out, wouldn't that be refreshing?

KELLY

That would be a fucking disaster.

SUZANNE

I think if I was really, totally honest, I could explain, in simple terms, for example, how tax cuts empower working people to come out winners.

KELLY

No, Senator, you actually could not do that. First, working people do not have time to listen; second, it is not even remotely close to being true.

SUZANNE

How can you say that?

KELLY

Because, I understand math, Senator.

SUZANNE

Well the numbers I've seen, it creates jobs.

KELLY

Oh, God where is this elevator?

SUZANNE

And the corporate rate keeps us competitive with other countries which also helps the middle class in terms of jobs.

KELLY

Right, exactly, stick to those two points, say nothing else, and you'll be fine!

SUZANNE

And the standard deduction is bigger! Another good thing.

KELLY

What did I just say?

SUZANNE

It's much easier! You can do your taxes on simple form; you don't even have to hire an accountant! Of course, some people don't have investments in the stock market, they put everything they have into a house... and then they don't get the full deduction...

KELLY

Senator, this is why you stick to the script. You can't explain these things simply.

SUZANNE

I was just thinking about that little girl; she's about my granddaughter's age. My daughter has a huge mortgage. Totally underwater.

KELLY

We all have families, Senator.

SUZANNE

It might look bad when corporations keep all their deductions, get a big tax cut, buy back their own stock, and take the bonuses; but that's freedom! Anyone can see that. Maybe it's hard for a teacher who makes sixty thousand a year to understand why we need to double the ceiling on the estate tax, but I'd show her it's a matter of fairness. Teachers love fairness. Besides, if you have a good accountant, you can convert all your income to pass-throughs, and lower your taxes even more. My guy, Joel, set something up for us; and now we're saving a fortune!

KELLY

Senator, do not go off the reservation!

SUZANNE

Well, the President goes off the reservation all the time, why shouldn't I?

KELLY

Off the Reservation is the President's brand! Your brand is... not that.

SUZANNE

I like to think of my brand as independent.

KELLY

Okay.

SUZANNE

What, you don't think I'm independent?

KELLY

If that's your brand, that's your brand.

SUZANNE

I like to consider both sides.

KELLY

And then vote with the team.

SUZANNE

It's very important that I hear everyone out and...

KELLY

And then vote with the team.

SUZANNE

I wait until... the last minute...

KELLY

Senator, if you are not voting with the president, we need to know that right now.

SUZANNE

Oh God, I'm just a waffler, aren't I?

KELLY

I'm texting Mike.

She types into her phone.

SUZANNE

I'm the lowest person in the world.

KELLY

You may end up that way.

SUZANNE

I have no backbone.

KELLY

Senator, I'm waiting to hear back from Mike.

SUZANNE

I'm like a sea cucumber.

KELLY

If you cross us on this you are finished.

SUZANNE

What?

KELLY

You are finished! Primaried! For a start! Mike is already making some calls,

SUZANNE

Wait... WHAT?

KELLY

You think you're independent, Senator? There is no independent! There is us, and there is them. Our team, their team. I don't give a shit how you play it, as long as you are with our team when the chips are down, and the chips are fucking down! You want to hear everyone? Great! We need wafflers like you just to show we're being honest; but don't think we need you so much that we will not take you down if you block us, because let me tell something, Senator, there are no independent voters out there! None! There are numbers and there are targeted audiences, and we don't need your wishy-washy bullshit, we need your vote! So you are in or you are fucking out!

SUZANNE

NOW, JUST WAIT A GODDAMN SECOND HERE!

Kelly's phone rings. She answers.

KELLY

It's Mike.

SUZANNE

TELL HIM TO FUCKING WAIT!

KELLY

Mike, let me get back to you.

SUZANNE

You threaten me with a primary? Who the fuck do you think you are? You are a fucking messenger. I spoke to leadership. I committed my vote. My vote, not yours. Who the hell are you to call Mike?

KELLY

We need your vote.

SUZANNE

I GAVE MY VOTE!

KELLY

Then what's with all the second thoughts?

SUZANNE

What second thoughts?

KELLY

I'm such a waffler, such a miserable sea creature or whatever, what the hell was all that?

SUZANNE

I just got goddamn sick of hearing myself speak. I felt like such a shit.

KELLY

Fuck your feelings.

SUZANNE

Exactly. I am so sick of feeling like such a wimp! No more lying. For once in my life I am going to tell the truth. No more pretending the stock buy backs weren't good for me and my friends; we're getting rich! And let's face it, teachers are losers! You get what you deserve; and based on results, they don't even deserve the sixty grand they get! To tell you the truth, I can't stand teachers. My sister lived next to one. He smoked pot!

KELLY

What about that little girl?

SUZANNE

Fuck the little girl, she made us late.

Kelly punches in a number on the phone.

KELLY

Mike? We're on our way. Yeah, she's good.

The elevator door opens. They enter.

KELLY

Senator, let's vote.

The doors close. BLACKOUT.