

The Governor's Ball

By

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INT. GENTRY DINING ROOM - EVENING

Large living room table with copious amounts of food. Candle lit table.

At one end sits STARLA GENTRY, mid 50's matriarch of the family, very well to do.

AMANDA, 22, rebellious, spoiled daughter, twirls her fork in her food. She sits on one side of the table.

Opposite her is brother and Ivy league grad BRADLEY, 28. Next to him, ISABELLE WILLOWS, cheerleader smile, also 28, sports an engagement ring proudly.

DAVID GENTRY, mid 50's the patriarch and also Governor hangs up his cell, takes his place at head of table.

DAVID

(to everyone)

I apologize for that. Steven's made headway with a new donor that could really help the campaign.

STARLA

(concerned)

One dinner. That's all I asked for.

DAVID

(apologetic)

I know, I know.

STARLA

(recovers, beams with pride)

We have both our children here.

She extends her arms with pride.

DAVID

Bradley. Amanda. Thank you for coming. And thank you, Bradley for bringing Isabelle so we could finally meet her!

Isabelle giggles, hugs Bradley's arm.

ISABELLE

It's an honor, Governor Gentry.

DAVID

Oh Lord, we're family here. You don't have to call me that.

AMANDA

I've had to call you Governor ever since I could talk.

STARLA

Enough, Amanda.

She scoffs.

GREGORIO, early 20's swarthy male, long chocolate hair enters, carries a tray of small desserts.

DAVID

Who are you?

STARLA

This is Gregorio, David. He's our attendant.

DAVID

What does he attend?

Starla throws a flirty smile at Gregorio who winks. He serves Amanda.

GREGORIO

(whispers in thick accent)

You have your mother's eyes.

Amanda smiles. David doesn't like the exchange.

DAVID

(stern)

Thank you, Gregorio.

AMANDA

(sweet)

That's enough Gregorio. You're dismissed.

Gregorio freezes, holds the tray, awkwardly. He hasn't served Bradley and Isabelle yet. He looks to Starla.

STARLA

Oh good Lord, Gregorio, you're fine. Finish up.

GREGORIO

(smiles at Starla)

Finish?

DAVID

(serious)

FINISH.

David scowls, keeps a weathered eye on Gregorio as he sets desserts before Bradley and Isabelle with a twirl.

GREGORIO

Ta!

Gregorio exits with a flourish. David double takes at swooning Starla and Amanda.

BRADLEY

(changes subject)

Ahem, um, Isabelle made me ask her father for her hand in marriage.

STARLA

(excited)

Oh my!

Isabelle play slaps Bradley.

ISABELLE

(giggles)

I didn't force you. I asked you.

DAVID

That's the only acceptable way to enter a marriage. Isn't that right, honey?

Starla grins.

He raises his glass to Starla. She returns the toast.

Amanda rolls her eyes.

AMANDA

Pffft! Permission! Why can't you just marry who you want? That's what I'm gonna do.

STARLA

(to Amanda)

That's because you're the black sheep of the family.

(to Isabelle)

Bradley used to stammer when he got nervous or angry.

BRADLEY

Mom.

David swaps out Starla's wine glass with water.

DAVID
 She said yes, and that's all that
 matters! A toast!

All raise their glass except Amanda. She receives a death
 stare from Starla and a stern look from David. She sighs,
 raises her glass.

DAVID (CONT'D)
 To the Gentry family tree! May it--

--Gregorio enters. David stops the toast, agitated.

GREGORIO
 My apologies, but there is a man at
 door with cell phone and he says he
 know you.

DAVID
 Who is it?

Gregorio blinks.

GREGORIO
 I forgot to ask. Excuse me.

He bustles out.

DAVID
 (to Starla)
 Where did you find this guy?

Starla shrugs, swaps her water out for wine.

ISABELLE
 That was a very nice toast, um...
 Dad?

Everyone laughs but Amanda. David raises his glass to
 Isabelle.

BRADLEY
 Sounds great, babe.

Starla peers over the table at Isabelle's hand.

STARLA
 I see you went with the Carrington.

Isabelle lights up, holds up her ring.

BRADLEY
 Chose it myself.

ISABELLE

He has wonderful taste!

She snuggles up to him.

DAVID

He should have great taste. His mom has every cut of diamond there is.

AMANDA

While his sister wallows away in self pity.

STARLA

(sing song voice)

Because any money set aside to buy you gifts goes to bailing you out and protecting your reputation.

AMANDA

I don't want my--

--Gregorio enters again.

GREGORIO

Excuse me. His name is--

AMANDA

--I don't want my reputation protected!

GREGORIO

No, that's not it. It's--

STARLA

(to Amanda, furious)

--You will NOT ruin Bradley and Isabelle's night, young lady, do you hear me?

GREGORIO

It's--

BRADLEY

--Great, here we go. Do tell Amanda. What's on your mind this week?

AMANDA

That's not fair!

GREGORIO

It's--

DAVID
--Let's all settle down.

STARLA
(to Amanda)
I can't believe you. Can you just
let them have their day?

AMANDA
Sure, why not? I'll never have one.
I'll elope.

GREGORIO
(frustrated)
His name is--

BRADLEY
(to Amanda)
See? That's what I'm talking about!
(to Isabelle)
She does this all the time!

Isabelle pats his arm reassuringly, throws shade at Amanda.

STARLA
(whispers to Isabelle)
I think she has a chemical
imbalance.

GREGORIO
(more frustrated)
His name is--

AMANDA
I don't have a chemical imbalance!
I have a mother who cares more
about image than her children--

BRADLEY
--So, Dad!

He gives the stink eye to Amanda; she sticks her tongue out
at him.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)
Isabelle's father wants us to do a
pre-nup.

GREGORIO
(super fast, super loud)
His name is Steven!

Everyone turns and stares. Gregorio smooths his shirt.

GREGORIO (CONT'D)

Uh... sir.

David glances at Starla. She shrugs.

DAVID

Send him in.

Gregorio leaves.

ISABELLE

I don't need to do a pre nup.

She nuzzles Bradley.

ISABELLE (CONT'D)

This is true love.

Amanda guffaws.

AMANDA

Gag me with the family silver.

ISABELLE

I'm sorry you're not in the spotlight right now, Amanda, but you really should get over that.

STARLA

Dammmmmnnnnnn.

She kicks back a big swig of wine.

AMANDA

(to Isabelle)

What did you just say to me?

STEVEN, very well dressed mid 40's aide enters, cell phone in his outstretched hand.

STEVEN

Mr. Governor. Mr. Remington on the line for you. I would have been in sooner but your *help* wouldn't let me through.

David gets up from the table, wipes mouth with napkin.

DAVID

(to everyone)

Excuse me for a moment.

AMANDA

Why am I not surprised?

David shoots her a go to hell look, phone up to his ear. He takes the call in the corner.

STARLA

Amanda, what has gotten in to you?
Can't we have one night where the
family--

AMANDA

--No. We can't.
(to Isabelle)
Sign the pre nup. We're the most
fake family you've ever seen.

STEVEN

(to Isabelle)
Of course they're fake. They're
politicians.

ISABELLE

I don't need to sign it.

AMANDA

You'll wish you had.

ISABELLE

I'm not you.

STARLA

No, you aren't.
(glares at Amanda, but
speaks to Isabelle)
Because you are pleasant and kind
and nice to be around.

AMANDA

Ahhhh!

She SLAMS her hands on the table. David turns around, finger in his ear.

STEVEN

Shhhhhhhh!!!

DAVID

(on phone)
I tell you what, Mr. Remington, let
me give you a call in the morning,
if I could. We have a new puppy and
she's getting into everything.

Bradley laughs.

AMANDA
(shocked)
Now I'm a dog?!

BRADLEY
If the leash fits.

He laughs. Isabelle joins in.

DAVID
(whisper screams)
Both of you! Quiet!

Amanda glares.

DAVID (CONT'D)
(on phone)
That'd be perfect. Tomorrow at 9am.
Yep. No, thank you.

Steven adds to his cell calendar, types note.

STEVEN
Purchase... puppy.

David hands his phone to Steven, glares at Amanda.

DAVID
Amanda, I was on the phone with a
donor to my campaign!

AMANDA
Well, that's all that matters!
Maybe I should donate a thousand
dollars to get a half hour with
you! Steven, can you pencil me in?

Steven scrolls on his cell.

STEVEN
Next Tuesday is open between 3:45
and 4:00 pm.

Amanda growls.

ISABELLE
(to Bradley)
Wow, she does over react.

BRADLEY
No kidding.

DAVID
 (sternly)
 Bradley.

STARLA
 Don't get on to him. He's just
 telling the truth.

STEVEN
 (looks up from phone)
 Sir, what kind of puppy would you
 prefer?

DAVID
 (to Starla)
 I can get on to him if it's
 necessary, Starla. I'm still his
 father.

Starla snorts.

STARLA
 And *not* get on to Amanda?

BRADLEY
 Who's been a complete downer all
 night and is doing her best to ruin
 my and Isabelle's night?

AMANDA
 (incredulous)
 Me?!

Gregorio enters, stands by Steven. Steven scans him from head
 to toe, rolls his eyes.

ISABELLE
 I mean, she has been a tad
 aggressive.

BRADLEY
 A lot aggressive!

STEVEN
 (to David)
 Sir, do you have a favorite breed?

DAVID
 (to Steven)
 What?
 (notices Gregorio)
 Why are you here?

AMANDA
 (dreamy eyed)
 Does it matter?

STARLA
 (enamored with Gregorio)
 Yeah, does it matter?

She bats her eyes at Gregorio, who tosses her an amorous gaze. David doesn't like that at all.

DAVID
 Hell yes it matters!

Steven slaps Gregorio's arm, shakes his head as if to say "don't do that". Gregorio shrugs, turns, gives same sexy look to Amanda who eats it up.

DAVID (CONT'D)
 Gregorio, I have a good mind to--

BRADLEY
 --Dad! Should we sign the pre nup?

ISABELLE
 (to Bradley)
 Bradley! I told you we didn't need to do that.

STARLA
 (to David)
 Gregorio's been here for a month,
 David! I found him through Steven.

Steven jolts, backs up a step.

STEVEN
 Uh.. uh.. he came highly
 recommended through an agency, sir.
 I'd never met him in person. I sent
 an invoice; they sent him.
 Background was clear. No priors.

Gregorio smiles, proud.

DAVID
 (surly)
 That's a relief.

RING. Steven's cell. Steven, finger in ear, answers, turns away.

BRADLEY
 Dad! Pre nup?

Steven holds out the phone to David. It BEEPS on hold.

STEVEN
Sir? It's Mr. Remington again.

AMANDA
Don't answer the phone, Dad.

STEVEN
Sir, you could make budget with one call.

STARLA
Just take the call, David.
(flashes a smile to
Isabelle)
We're fine.

BEEP.

AMANDA
Don't do it.

BRADLEY
Shut up, Amanda.

ISABELLE
(irked)
Your father can do whatever he wants.

BEEP.

David takes phone. He glances from person to person.

STARLA
(nonplussed)
Go ahead.

ISABELLE
(supportive)
You're in a campaign! Take the call.

BRADLEY
It's all good, Dad.

STEVEN
Answer the phone, sir.

BEEP.

AMANDA
 (serious)
 Don't. Don't do it.

David glares at Amanda, takes the call.

DAVID
 (on cell)
 Hello, Mr. Remington. This is a
 pleasant surprise. Couldn't wait
 until tomorrow, huh?

Amanda jumps up from the table.

AMANDA
 (screams at top of lungs)
 I'm PREGNANT!

David jumps, drops the phone.

Everyone freezes, stares at Amanda. A beat.

DAVID
 WHAT?!?!

Mr. Remington's muffled VOICE comes from somewhere. Steven
 dives for cell, searches on the floor.

STARLA
 Oh that's just great, Amanda! In
 the middle of a campaign!?

AMANDA
 THAT'S what you care about?

BRADLEY
 She's lying! She hates the fact
 that the attention's not on her!

ISABELLE
 (snotty)
 So rude, Amanda!

DAVID
 Who's the father?!

UNDER TABLE

Steven almost has the phone, Starla kicks it. He chases.

AT TABLE

Starla guzzles some wine.

STARLA

Maybe we can get through the campaign and it comes out afterwards.

AMANDA

(proudly)

Nope! Voting day is when I'm due.

STARLA

(buries her face in hands)

Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

DAVID

Who's the father?!

STARLA

I'd like to know that too! She's been on house restriction! No one's been here except...

Everyone turns to Gregorio. He smiles, refills Starla's wine.

David comes over the table at him.

DAVID

Ahhhhh! I'll kill you!

Gregorio hides behind Bradley and Isabelle.

STARLA

You slept with her too?

David stops.

DAVID

Wait, what?

ISABELLE

(shocked)

Oh snap!

AMANDA

Oh my God.

BRADLEY

(proud)

Get it, Mom!

Isabelle gives him a WTF look.

STARLA
 He's MY attendant, David. He
 attends ME. He shouldn't be
 attending our daughter!

Gregorio's eyes widen. He throws up his hands.

GREGORIO
 No! No! She already pregnant when I
 love on her.

David and Starla look to Amanda, wide eyed, open mouthed.

AMANDA
 Yeah, he's not the dad.

Bradley checks for cameras on the wall.

BRADLEY
 Are we... are we being punked?

ISABELLE
 She looks pretty serious, baby.

DAVID
 Who's the father? Please don't say
 it's a republican.

STARLA
 Who else comes here? The only
 people who've been here are David,
 me, Gregorio, and--

Steven jumps up, holds cell phone triumphantly over his head.

STEVEN
 --Got it!

Silence. Everyone slowly turns to him. DIAL TONE from phone.

Anger creeps over David and Starla's faces. They rise.

Bradley LAUGHS hysterically.

Isabelle's horrified.

Amanda shrugs, shovels food in her face.

David and Starla close in on Steven.

DAVID
 To think I trusted you! My
 own daughter! We gave you
 Christmas Day off!

STARLA
 Are you crazy? Do you have
 any idea what this will mean?
 What were you thinking?

Gregorio joins them.

GREGORIO
What is the meaning of you allowing
them to think I am the father?

DAVID
(to Gregorio)
You don't get to talk. You slept
with Starla AND Amanda!

GREGORIO
I only did what they ask of me.

STARLA
(wails)
Our daughter is pregnant during an
active campaign!

Bradley doubles over with LAUGHTER.

DAVID
(to Steven)
Why did you do this?

STARLA
(to Amanda)
Why during a campaign? Of all the
stupid things to do!

She lifts her glass. Gregorio fills it.

STARLA (CONT'D)
(slurs)
I knew you were trouble when my
labor was forty seven hours with
you.

DAVID
(to Steven)
My aide? My daughter!?

Bradley laughs.

Isabelle grabs her purse. She pulls out the prenup, nudges
Bradley.

BRADLEY
(to Isabelle)
What's this?

STEVEN
(to the others)
She's very persuasive!

ISABELLE
 (to Bradley)
 The pre nup. I think we should sign
 it.

Bradley throws his hands up.

BRADLEY
 Are you serious? Dad. Dad! Should I
 sign this?

STARLA
 (to Steven)
 Of course she's persuasive! She's a
 housebound prisoner of the state!

Amanda proudly throws one leg up on the table to reveal an
 ankle monitor.

GREGORIO
 (interested)
 Oooooooooohhhhhh.

Gregorio smiles at Amanda. She drops her leg, eats.

DAVID AND STARLA
 (to Gregorio)
 Shut up!

GREGORIO
 (sad)
 Oohhhh.

Isabelle hands Bradley a pen.

ISABELLE
 Sign it. Or I walk.

Amanda laughs.

AMANDA
 (to Isabelle)
 Maybe we'll be friends after all.

ISABELLE
 Oh my God.

Isabelle takes in the scene with horror:

DAVID
 (yells at Starla and
 Steven)
 I can't get a divorce right now!
 What am I supposed to do!

STARLA
 (screams at David, slurs)
 If you were more of, more of, more
 of a man I- I- I...

She trails off, winks at Gregario. He blows her a kiss.

David lunges at him over the table, knocks over Starla's wine.

STARLA (CONT'D)
 Hey!

David struggles across the table, knocks over the candles.

WHOOSH! Fire lights up the table cloth.

Bradley laughs.

STARLA (CONT'D)
 AHHHHHH!!!

DAVID
 (to Steven)
 You son of a bitch!

David chokes Steven.

Gregorio throws his hands beside his eyes.

GREGORIO
 I see nothing! I see nothing!

Amanda happily eats amidst the chaos.

STARLA
 It's... it's a... FIRE!!!!

David continues choking Steven.

ISABELLE
 Jesus, God.

GREGORIO
 I see nothing!

Isabelle thrusts the pre-nup at Bradley.

BRADLEY
 Babe! I just need to check with Dad
 is all. Dad!

DAVID
 (chokes Steven)
 A little busy right now, son.

ISABELLE
 You should make your own decisions!

STARLA
 (screams)
 FIRE!!!

GREGORIO
 I see nothing! I see nothing!

Bradley cackles.

Isabelle stuffs the papers in her purse, removes her ring,
 sets it on the table.

AMANDA
 Dammmmmnnn. Bradley, she's walking.
 That's legit.

STEVEN
 (gasps for air)
 ...she attacked me!

Amanda rolls her eyes.

AMANDA
 Oh yeah, right.

GREGORIO
 I remember this day.
 (spitefully)
 One of many. She no beg. He begged
 her.

AMANDA
 Damn skippy.

Amanda takes a bite of food.

ISABELLE
 (to Bradley)
 Goodbye.

He sees the ring on the table.

BRADLEY
 Dad! I need to know if I should
 sign the pre-nup! Isabelle, hold
 up!

Panicked, Starla stumbles around the room, drunk as hell.

STARLA
FIRE!

ISABELLE
Acorns don't fall far from trees,
Bradley.

BRADLEY
We don't have any acorns here. Just
Bradford pears.

Isabelle's disgust surprises him.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)
Well, we don't.

Isabelle heads out, glances back.

Steven wrenches free, coughs for breath.

DAVID
(to Starla)
This is all your fault. You'd spoil
the kids all the time and they've
thought they can own anything!

GREGORIO
No one owns Gregorio!

BRADLEY
I don't think that!

AMANDA
(scoffs)
Yeah. As if.

She takes another bite of food.

Starla bumps into the table, knocks over more wine. WOOSH!
The fire doubles in size.

STARLA
Fire!

BRADLEY
(to David)
That's not fair!

DAVID
You wrecked the first car we ever
gave you and then expected--

STARLA

--Leave him out of this! This is
about your aide! Fire!

Gregorio's hands fly up to his face.

GREGORIO

I see nothing!

Isabelle peers over at Amanda, who smiles at her.

AMANDA

Run while you can.

ISABELLE

Amen, sister.

STARLA

Fire!

She leaves. The SLAM echoes throughout the house.

Everyone jolts. Silence. The fire crackles.

DAVID

(to Steven)

I hope you don't expect a
reference!

STARLA (CONT'D)

(to Steven)

You hafta cover this uppp...
Fire!

Steven sobs, drops to his knees. David notices the fire.

DAVID (CONT'D)

What a perfect metaphor.

STARLA

Where's the wine?

David glares at her.

Bradley rubs the engagement ring.

BRADLEY

(defeated)

Isabelle.

Gregorio slides into the seat next to Bradley.

GREGORIO

You no worry. I attend to you.

He smiles amorously.

Bradley shrugs, makes a face that says, "It's worth a try."

Amanda grabs the last full wine glass, takes in the carnage. She takes a drink, leans back in chair, puts feet on table, grins.

Starla bumps into the wall, completely snookered.

Steven gasps for air.

STARLA

Fire!

DAVID

(gives zero cares)

Yeah, yeah.

Amanda finishes the wine.

AMANDA

What a ball.

FADE OUT.