



Set in present-day Washington, D.C., *House of Cards* is the story of Frank “Francis” Underwood, a Democrat from South Carolina's 5th congressional district and House Majority Whip who, after being passed over for appointment as Secretary of State, initiates an elaborate plan to get himself into a position of greater power, aided by his wife, Claire Underwood. The series deals primarily with themes of ruthless pragmatism, manipulation and power.

season 1 Chapter 1

Congressman Francis Underwood has been declined the chair for Secretary of State. He's now gathering his own team to plot his revenge. Zoe Barnes, a reporter for the Washington Herald, will do anything to get her big break.

Zoe: Sorry. I couldn't get a cab. Had to take the train.

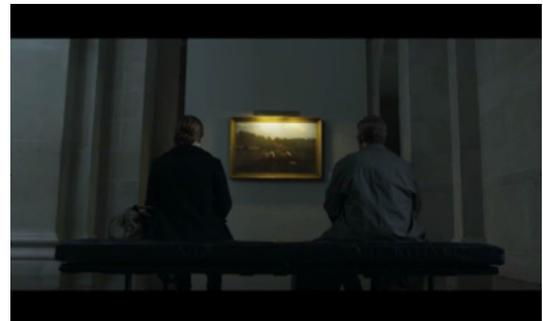
Frank: Just before you left my house. Think back. What were we discussing?

Zoe: The president's legislative agenda.

Frank: Specifically.

Zoe: Education. Was I right?

Frank: **Do the math**, Ms. Barnes.





Zoe: He needs a bill.

Frank: Sponsored by?

Zoe: You?

Frank: Be smarter than that.

Zoe: Somebody with legitimacy.

Frank: Good. And who screams "legitimacy" in Education?

Zoe: Donald Blythe?

Frank: Correct. The problem is...

Zoe: He's an old-school **tax-and-spend** liberal. Walker ran as a moderate. You think Blythe would talk to me?

Frank: He doesn't have to.

Zoe: Wait... We're in a very **gray area**, ethically, legally, which I'm okay with...

Frank: I just love this painting, don't you? We're **in the same boat** now, Zoe. Take care not to **tip it over**. I can only save one of us from drowning.



vocabulary

1. **do the math** (verb)

- to figure something out especially when the answer is obvious
- Ex: *Did closing thirty beds hurt emergency waiting times? You do the math!*

2. **tax-and-spend** (adjective <before noun>)

- a party, government, etc. that increases taxes to spend on public services
- Ex: *They remained committed to their tax-and-spend philosophy.*

3. **gray area** (noun)

- an area of uncertainty

Ex: *The responsibility for social studies in that college is a gray area. Several departments are involved.*

4. **be in the same boat** (as someone)

- be in the same (unpleasant) situation

Ex: *If he loses his job, he'll be in the same boat as any other unemployed person.*

5. **tip over** (verb)

- to cause something to overturn

Ex: *The wind tipped over the sailboat.*

Discussion Questions

1. In the beginning of the transcript, Zoe apologized for not making it on time. Do you also have the same tendency to be late for an appointment or are you always on time?
2. Is your memory as sharp as Zoe's to remember every single detail in your conversations with others even after a while?
3. Are you comfortable when someone challenges your intellect or do you fail to prove yourself?
4. What is your take on revenge?
5. Are you willing to conspire with someone to get your big break?