

PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS

Genre/Format: Romantic comedy feature

Logline: A feisty Labour backbencher and a jaded Tory minister fall in love, to the disgust of family, friends and both sides of the House, and are forced to choose between their relationship and their careers when the PM calls a snap election.

TESSA, a single mum in her 40s, is a long time Labour activist who has recently become an MP after a by-election. During her first debate, her passion, enthusiasm and (let's be honest here) her big mouth get the better of her and she ends up insulting the Tory Minister for Employment, JAMES (40s/50s) making him sound like a sleazy pervert who's shagging his nanny. A typical Tory minister, in other words.

A widower devoted to his two kids, James is hardworking and well meaning, but after years of being overruled by his more right wing colleagues, he's starting to wonder if he's actually making any difference to people's lives.

Their initial impressions of each other aren't complimentary – she's a strident Bolshevik harpy and he's a pompous middle class twat – but when Tessa apologises for her outburst, and James accepts it graciously, they realise there's more to each other than they first thought. Of course they don't agree on everything – Tessa *destroys* him in a debate on employment figures – and they have very different backgrounds; he's an old Etonian, while she's the first one in her working-class family to go to university. But both are witty, intelligent and a bit lonely, and before long they are having saucy secret rendezvous in James's Westminster office. They are forced to go public after a newspaper photographer spots them having a romantic meal out.

Tessa's colleagues begin to question her loyalty. Meetings go quiet when she walks in. Rumours of James's past affairs reach her. The PM tells James to 'manage' Tessa. Are there any skeletons in her closet – has she burnt flags or refused to stand for the National Anthem (she hasn't, but in her youth she *did* get out of a drugs charge by unwillingly giving a copper a blowjob outside a night club)? His aide suspects Tessa of spying. James jokes that they should both quit and join the Liberal Democrats but hey, things aren't *that* bad...

At home, things are no better. Tessa's son, BEN (20s), who's always been at his mother's side as she campaigned, thinks she's sacrificing her political principles for a quick bunk up. Her PA and oldest friend SARA (40s) accuses her of encouraging the media circus that has sprung up around their affair – next stop, Celebrity Love Island - and not taking her responsibilities as an MP seriously. And James's in-laws (and his kids) aren't impressed when they walk in on him,

naked, chasing a barely-dressed Tessa round the kitchen after having the grandchildren stay for the night.

When details of James's new bill are leaked to one of Tessa's colleagues, causing a political ambush, the finger is pointed at her (she's innocent). James refuses to believe it, but doubt has crept in.... Then the tale of Tessa's blowjob outside the nightclub is leaked to the Press. She is horrified; full of self-disgust and blaming herself for the incident, despite it clearly being sexual assault, she'd never told anyone except James. He denies telling anybody, but Tessa doesn't believe him; it's just the kind of shitty thing a Tory *would* do, to punish her for leaking his bill. Tessa dumps him. Heartbroken James swears to get her back but before he can, the Prime Minister calls a snap election.

The campaign starts. Tessa's relationship with James has left her traditional Labour constituency unimpressed. The Party chairman tells her she must stand down from her seat and let a more traditional 'Old Labour' candidate fight it, while she stands in the Tory stronghold of Kingsbridge Central; she has more chance of appealing to moderate Conservative voters who are losing faith with their own party. But Kingsbridge Central is the seat that James has held for the last 10 years. Tessa, torn between hating James and missing him desperately, doesn't want to stand at Kingsbridge but if she doesn't her career is over.

Tessa hides away at home in her Wonder Woman pyjamas drinking tea, until a guilty Sara comes to see her. She confesses that she leaked the story to the Press (she'd been at the club that night with Tessa), to make her resign in disgrace so she could take over. It didn't work, but the General Election has given Sara the chance to stand anyway, and she feels bad that she caused Tessa to split up with James unnecessarily. Tessa is furious that Sara had witnessed the assault but had assumed it was her idea (it had stopped her getting arrested), and pushes her into a duck pond, which doesn't really change anything but makes her feel better...

Tessa is horrified that she has let political prejudice ruin her life; she was too quick to think badly of James, simply because he stands on the 'wrong' side of the House. And today is the last day to rule herself in or out of the election. Ben, finally realising that his mother's happiness is more important to him than politics, lends her his scooter and tells her to go and get James back.

Tessa embarks on a mad dash across London (still in her Wonder Woman pjs) and arrives at Westminster in time to see James make a speech, resigning; he's sick of politics dividing people. Tessa tells him that she won't stand either, but he convinces her that she should. With her passion and idealism, she can still make a difference to people's lives, and he'll always be by her side to support her.