

## Excerpt from *The Intern*, by Michele Campbell

November  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

She loved the way her professor moved. The swish of auburn hair. The grace of her gestures. The nervous energy as she paced behind the podium. Madison had admired Kathryn Conroy since she heard her speak at a high school career day years before. A thousand times, she'd imagined herself following in Conroy's footsteps. Having a career like hers. Starting out as a crusading prosecutor, taking on the mob, the drug cartels. Holding press conferences, appearing on TV, looking amazing doing it. Then getting appointed to the bench, presiding over high-profile cases, writing opinions that were read across the land. Become so renowned that she'd be invited back to teach, with students hanging spellbound on her every word the way she did with Conroy now. Such a future was within the realm of possibility for Madison. She was one of the stars of her year. Top grades. Law review. A summer clerkship at one of the most prestigious law firms in Boston. On top of that, the special sparkle that came from her looks, her way with words, her confidence in the face of a challenge. Call it charisma, whatever—she had it. Coming out of Harvard Law, her opportunities were limitless.

Correction. Should be limitless. But there was a crack in the perfect facade, which came from her past. The fault lines were threatening everything she'd built. She worried that . . .

“Miss Rivera.”

Shit. She'd tuned out for a split second, and now Conroy was staring at her from the lectern with a finger on the seating chart. She had no idea what the question was. There was nothing for it but to admit that and brazen it out.

“I apologize, Professor, but could you repeat the question,” she said, sitting up straight, her voice ringing out across the staggered rows of the classroom.

People turned to take notice when Madison spoke, just as they did with Conroy. If she flubbed now, it would be with all eyes on her, including those of the professor she idolized. Judge Conroy crooked a delicate eyebrow, making a note before replying. That was class participation points lost, but she was positive she could recoup them once she knew the question.

“How did the Gates case change the search warrant process?”

Madison could answer that. She could answer anything, really. It wasn't just talent, but hard, slogging work. She did the reading every night, briefed the cases, wrote out answers to every possible question. She met the judge's eyes like they were equals and launched into a detailed reply. From there, the class devolved into a Madison-and-

Conroy show. They parried hypotheticals back and forth, refined the principle, even made a couple of nerdy law jokes. By the time the judge glanced at her watch and called time, she'd redeemed herself in Conroy's eyes and cemented her position as the whiz kid who never missed. Classmates on either side high-fived her as they got up to leave.

Now the race was on for face time with Conroy. Madison was in the middle of a row, locked in as her classmates took their time shutting their laptops, putting on coats, gathering their things. Frustrating. She wanted to capitalize on her ace performance by doing a little networking.

Thanking Conroy for the great class, asking a few follow-ups. That was just smart. Maybe she could parlay today's exchange in class to an invitation to office hours, even coffee. She got on the end of the line, rehearsing in her mind what she'd say, feeling more nervous than she should. Since the beginning of the semester, she'd been meaning to bring up the fact that they'd attended the same high school, that she'd heard Conroy speak years before, that it influenced her path. She just couldn't figure out how to drop that into a conversation around the lectern without seeming gushy. It was so personal.

The minutes ticked by as the students ahead of her monopolized the judge's attention, just as she'd monopolized in class. This was Harvard Law, and fair was fair. You had to fight for every inch of turf. The prof for the next class showed up and everybody scattered. Judge Conroy was pulling on her plaid trench coat, about to depart. Then she looked at Madison and smiled.

"Miss Rivera. I hope I didn't embarrass you, cold-calling you before."

"Not at all. You have to keep us on our toes, right?"

"Exactly. And you recovered admirably. I was impressed."

Madison blushed. "Thank you."

The judge hesitated, then seemed to decide something.

"I don't know if this would fit your schedule, but I just had an internship position open up in my chambers unexpectedly. Normally, you have to apply a year in advance, but I need someone right away. I'd like you to apply."

"For an internship—with you?"

"Yes. Are you interested?"

Of course she was. An internship with Conroy would be a dream come true, not to mention a gold star on her résumé. And Madison adored gold stars. The timing was

tricky, though. What were the chances that, if she went through an application process right now, Conroy would find out about her younger brother's legal troubles? That would be embarrassing. And definitely something she'd prefer Conroy not know about her.

The pause as she considered the question lasted longer than she'd intended. "Well," Conroy prompted. "Yes or no?"

The opportunity was just too good to pass up.

"I'm flattered to be asked, Judge Conroy. I would love to apply."

"Good. Get in touch with my chambers, and they'll give you the specifics. I look forward to interviewing you."

As Conroy walked out the door, Madison's phone buzzed in her pocket, and her smile faded. There were several missed calls from her mother. And one text. More bad news, it read.

Excerpted from THE INTERN. Copyright ©2023 By Michele Campbell. Reprinted with permission of St. Martin's Press/Macmillan. All rights reserved.