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I approached someone who knows the Clintons well, asked how to make sense of this and got an answer that echoed observations about them from the past: "They'd rather seek forgiveness than permission."

Because they have passion and talent, forgiveness has routinely come. But the longer they live on that fault line, the greater the chance of an irredeemable misstep, and the taller the odds that they'll reclaim a temporary address: 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.