

THE PRESIDENT'S JESTER

Written by

Randy Cook

randy@rcook.com
323-207-5492

FADE IN:

INT. TV STUDIO - NIGHT

The small stage in front of the cameras contains the usual set of a talk-show: A couch for the guests, a desk for the host and an elaborate view of the Los Angeles skyline in the background.

A STUDIO AUDIENCE is settling in to their seats. Television monitors facing the audience display an animated logo which says, "Welcome to the Buddy Bean Show!". The studio band is warming up.

INT. BACKSTAGE

Rish (30's) watches nervously from the wings. He is startled by ARTIE KAPLAN (50's, business suit) clapping a hand on his shoulder.

ARTIE

Nervous?

RISH

Don't make me do this, Artie. I'm begging.

ARTIE

You have to do the warm-up, Rish. It's your turn.

RISH

It's not my turn! It's Jimmy's!

ARTIE

Jimmy's gone.

RISH

Gone? What do you mean gone? I just saw him.

ARTIE

Gone as in "not here anymore". As in "Buddy told me to fire him an hour ago".

RISH

No wonder he was crying at the craft services table. Now I feel terrible for yelling at him for getting the bagels all soggy. Why was he fired?

ARTIE

I don't know. I'm just the producer. Buddy didn't like his tie, bad breath, voices told him to do it. What do I care? What do you care?

RISH

You should hire him back.

ARTIE

I didn't know you liked Jimmy that much.

RISH

I don't, but if you hire him back then he can do the warm-up!

ARTIE

You're doing the warm-up.

RISH

I can't. I don't do public speaking. I write the jokes, others get the laughs. Besides, I had a bad dream last night that I did the warm-up and nobody laughed.

ARTIE

Dreams are just brain farts.

RISH

I'm a comedy writer, Artie. I take farts very seriously.

ARTIE

Now that's funny. You should use that. Not here, you can't say "fart" on our show, but somewhere else.

RISH

Let me out of the warm-up tonight and I'll have sex with you.

ARTIE

Now that's not funny.

RISH

You're right. It was cold of me to put it that way. I'll take you out for a nice dinner, then we can go dancing.

ARTIE

Knock it off.

RISH

And then, I'll make sweet, sweet love to you. I'll even spend the night.

ARTIE

Would you stop it? You're creeping me out!

Rish tries to grab Artie in a big hug.

RISH

Please, make love with me, Artie! I'm so lonely!

Artie pushes him away forcibly, hitting him in the head with a folder.

ARTIE

Cut it out! That's why nobody likes you! You take things too far. You've got no boundaries.

RISH

Nobody likes me? That's crazy! Everybody likes me! In fact, I'm beloved!

Artie speaks to TIM (30's, male, stagehand) as he walks by the pair.

ARTIE

Tim, what do you think of Rish?

TIM
He's okay, I guess.

ARTIE
Thanks.

Tim nods and moves on.

ARTIE (CONT'D)
See?

RISH
See what? He said I was "okay".

ARTIE
"Okay"? How long have you lived in LA? In this town, that's practically calling your mother a whore!

RISH
That's pretty harsh.
(yelling at Tim)
Your mother's a whore, too!

Rish scowls in the direction Tim went. JANET (20's, attractive) walks by.

RISH (CONT'D)
Hi Janet. How's it going?

JANET
Hi.

Janet smiles politely and keeps walking.

RISH
You keep my mother out of this! What a bitch.

ARTIE
See?

RISH
You really know how to build a guy up, Artie. In a world of ass kissers, you are the master!

ARTIE

I should lie to you? I'm telling you the truth because I like you. I respect you, Rish. You've got talent, but that's not enough. You've got to start thinking. You need to treat comedy like a serious business.

RISH

Thank you. I will. Starting right now. Can I have the rest of the night off? I have a doctor's appointment.

ARTIE

You're doing the warm-up.

Rish and Artie have a staring contest. Rish blinks.

RISH

You win. Just give me a minute to get my head straight.

ARTIE

You've got 2 minutes. And don't do any political material.

RISH

Why not?

ARTIE

Because you always trash President McReedy and nobody likes that. He's popular. Very popular.

RISH

He's a himbo. Good-looking, probably smells great, but dumb. Really, really dumb.

ARTIE

Nobody cares. No political stuff. Buddy doesn't like it either. Just stick to airline security, people who talk in movie theaters, Canadians, the lines at the Post Office, that kind of stuff.

RISH

The Post Office? Really? Maybe I could riff on that whacky Vietnam War while I'm at it. When was the last time you were even in a Post Office?

ARTIE

I'm just saying stay away from the political stuff, okay?

RISH

Yes, ma'am.

ARTIE

And just have fun with it. These tourists always love the warm-up. Best crowds ever. Laugh at anything.

RISH

Good. Now give me a minute?

ARTIE

No. Last time it was your turn, you hid. This time, I'm making sure you go out there.

Rish points behind Artie.

RISH

Look! A bunny!

ARTIE

That's not going to work this time either.

INT. STUDIO AUDIENCE SEATS

A MAN (40's, fat) checks his cellphone and is shocked by the text message he sees. He shows it to his GIRLFRIEND (40's, fatter). She also looks shocked at the news. The man elbows the SKINNY MAN (20's) next to him and shows him.

FAT MAN

Hey, dude. Did you see this?

Another AUDIENCE MEMBER (20's, female) pulls out her buzzing phone to see an alert.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Oh god, President McReedy just died! He had a heart attack!

The news ripples through the crowd and soon everyone is engaged in hushed, somber conversation.

INT. TV STUDIO BACKSTAGE

Rish waves at the band leader and the studio band whips up an upbeat blues riff as Rish nervously makes his way out to the center of the studio.

There is some scattered applause, but mostly the audience just stares at Rish.

The flop sweat is already forming on his forehead.

RISH

Hi everybody! How's it going? You guys ready for some laughs tonight?

Silence.

RISH (CONT'D)

Okay then. Great! So, my name is Rish Collins. I'm a writer on the Buddy Bean show.

Silence.

RISH (CONT'D)

Thank you. Great to be here. Glad you're here.

He taps the microphone a few times. Glancing off-stage, Artie shrugs at him and looks at the grim audience.

RISH (CONT'D)

So, anyway. I'm a writer. I live here in LA. How many people from out of town? Hands up if you're from out of town.

Nobody puts their hands up.

RISH (CONT'D)

Oh, really? Locals? You're all from this area?
Hands up if you're local.

Nobody puts their hands up.

RISH (CONT'D)

This is just like a dream I had.

He nervously wipes at the flop sweat on his forehead.

RISH (CONT'D)

You know, I don't want to say that President
McReedy is dumb, but did you notice that
dead stare he gives when he loses his place
on the Teleprompter?

Rish gives a dumb stare.

The crowd gasps in shock. One woman near the front begins to cry. Rish looks at the crying woman and her scowling boyfriend who's trying to comfort her.

Artie is furiously trying to get Rish's attention.

RISH (CONT'D)

Wow, you must be a real McReedy fan. Calm
down, lady. It's what we do on The Buddy
Bean Show. Dumb as he is, I know deep
down inside McReedy has a good heart.

The crowd starts booing angrily at him.

A STAGEHAND (20's) runs up to Artie and tells him. Artie slaps a hand to his mouth as if stifling a scream. Artie grabs a phone from the wall and jabs a number in it frantically.

RISH (CONT'D)

How about those slow lines at the Post
Office? Doesn't that make you nuts?

The crowd booing and shouting gets louder.

The band kicks up another tune and the ANNOUNCER'S VOICE is heard throughout the studio.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen, The Buddy Bean Show would like to apologize for that. We're very, very sorry. Now, just sit back and enjoy the righteous sound of Max Pound and the world-renowned Dog Pound of Sound.

The band plays and the crowd boos as Rish scurries offstage.

INT. TV STUDIO BACKSTAGE

Rish tries to run from Artie, but Artie grabs him.

RISH

I told you! That's exactly what happened in my dream! Except I still have my pants on and there's no flying sharks in the studio!

ARTIE

Have you lost your mind? I told you! The one thing I told you! No political material, I said. I stood right here and said it.

RISH

What the hell was that? I know the himbo is popular, but come on! Are they all his relatives or something?

Tim glares at him.

TIM

You cold-hearted bastard!

Janet stomps by, eyes full of tears.

JANET

How could you? You're a horrible person!

RISH

Artie, what is this? Am I in Hell? I'm asleep, right? This is the dream, right?

ARTIE

Rish, the President just died. He had a heart attack.

RISH

Oh shit.

ARTIE

I know you didn't know. It just happened.

RISH

You think Buddy will fire me?

ARTIE

No, he'll make me do it.

RISH

How about I put a bandage on my head and we'll tell him you kicked my ass?

ARTIE

That's not going to work.

RISH

You're right. I should bandage my ass.

ARTIE

This is serious. You hear that? They're still booing out there. Buddy's not going to go out there. We'll have to cancel the taping. You know how much money we'll lose? Tom Cruise was our big guest tonight. What am I supposed to tell Tom Cruise?

RISH

That he's not fooling anybody.

ARTIE

No! No more jokes! I've known Buddy for years and I know what he's going to say. He's going to say either I fire you or I'm fired. You understand?

RISH

I do and if you need a reference, don't hesitate to use my name. Do you need a few bucks until you find something else?

INT. BAR - A FEW WEEKS LATER - EARLY EVENING

MARCY (30's, smoking hot) is sitting at a small table with Rish, who is pretty sloshed. He downs a shot and tries to focus his eyes on her eyes, made more difficult by the previous shots and her impressive cleavage.

MARCY

What do you do for a living?

RISH

I'm currently between failures.

MARCY

It's \$250 for an hour. Another \$250 for the full Girlfriend Experience.

RISH

"Girlfriend Experience"? What's that?

MARCY

The Girlfriend Experience is when I pretend to be your girlfriend. It's more personal, more intimate, but seriously, and please don't take this the wrong way, in your current state, I think the Girlfriend Experience would involve me breaking up with you. We should just stick to a straight hour.

RISH

No, the other thing. Let's do that.

MARCY

Do what?

RISH

The Girlfriend Thing where you break up with me.

MARCY

Seriously?

RICH

It's perfect. I need closure in my life. You know, shut one door and a new one opens? Okay, a door closed and nothing opened for me. I need to fool the universe into thinking another door got shut. How much to fool the universe?

MARCY

\$100.

RISH

You want \$100 just to break up with me?

MARCY

Baby, it'll be the best breakup you've ever, ever had.

Rish pulls out his wallet and slides a hundred across the table. Marcy stuff it in her purse.

RISH

How do we do this?

MARCY

I'll go to the bathroom, you wait at the bar. What's your name again?

RISH

I'm Rish.

MARCY

Rich?

RISH

"Rish". Like "When you RISH upon a star."

MARCY

Got it.

They shake hands.

RISH

Nice to meet you.

MARCY

Go wait for me.

She heads to the bathroom in the back.

RISH

(muttering to himself)

Man, she's bossy. I'm glad we're breaking up.

Rish goes to the bar, weaving slightly, he bumps into a chair on the way. He settles on a stool at the bar. The BARTENDER (30's, male, big, tough), shakes his head apologetically.

BARTENDER

Sorry, chief. I'm going to have to cut you off.

RISH

No problem. I'll just have a club soda while I wait for my girlfriend.

BARTENDER

You got it.

RISH

She's going to break up with me.

BARTENDER

Dude, that's harsh.

The bartender pours them both a shot.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

On the house, but I'm calling you a cab.

RISH

Thanks. You're okay.

The bartender puts a hand on Rish's shoulder.

BARTENDER

And you're going to be okay too, brother. My boyfriend and I broke up last week, I cried for awhile, then I realized, it's for the best.

They toast each other and throw back the shots.

Marcy comes out of the back and joins Rish at the bar.

MARCY

There you are, baby.

She kisses him affectionately.

BARTENDER

(coldly)

Anything to drink, "ma'am"?

MARCY

I don't know. What are you having, Rich?

RISH

Rish.

BARTENDER

(muttering)

Bitch.

MARCY

Rish, right. Nothing for me then, thanks.

BARTENDER

Big order of nothing coming right up.

He smiles encouragingly at Rish, scowls at Marcy and moves away.

MARCY

Rish, I don't know how to start this.

RISH

Marcy, after all we've been through, you know me. I know you. Just say what's on your mind.

She takes a deep breath, her eyes wet with tears.

MARCY

You're so sweet and you don't deserve this, but I need to move on. It's not you, I know that's a cliché, but it's true. There's just something in me that's telling me this isn't going to work out. Don't get me wrong, the sex is amazing. Really. Mind-blowing, the best I've ever had.

RISH

Wow, you are really good at this.

MARCY

Hush, I'm on a roll.

(back into character)

But I need more than just fantastic sex. I need to give all of myself. Not just my body, but my heart and my soul and I just can't do that now. I hope you understand.

Rish nods numbly.

RISH

Uh-huh

MARCY

Don't hate me. I know we can't be friends, that would never work. We'll just end up in bed or in the back seat of your car. I mean, I can barely keep my hands off you right now, so this has to be good-bye. In time, I hope you'll remember the good times and think kindly of me. Good bye, Rish. I'll always remember you.

She holds his face in her hands and kisses him tenderly on the lips, then leaves the bar.

Rish is snapped out of his trance by the bartender blowing his nose loudly, trying to hold back his tears.

RISH

She's good.

Rish drops a few bills on bar and heads to the door.

RISH (CONT'D)

I'll wait for the cab outside.

BARTENDER

(trying not to cry)

Be strong, brother!

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE BAR - EARLY EVENING

A long black limousine pulls up to the curb led by two motorcycle cops and followed by two black SUV's. SECRET SERVICE AGENT STEVE (30's, intimidating) with dark glasses and an ear-piece steps out.

AGENT STEVE

Rish Collins?

RISH

Yeah, but I really just wanted a cab. How much to take me to Sherman Oaks in that boat?

AGENT STEVE

Get in.

Agent Steve opens the rear door.

RISH

Nah, I'm good. I think I'll walk for awhile.

Agent Steve speaks into his sleeve.

AGENT STEVE

Incoming.

He tosses Rish into the back of the limo.

INT. INSIDE THE LIMO - EARLY EVENING

Rish lands on the floor of the large limo. He looks up and sees GENERAL CONKLIN (60's, severe) and SECRET SERVICE AGENT KEVIN (30's, dark suit, intimidating).

RISH

Hi, you guys heading toward Sherman Oaks?

General Conklin sips a drink as he stares at Rish with a penetrating look.

RISH (CONT'D)

Got another of those around, bartender?

GENERAL CONKLIN

Be quiet. I'll tell you when to be funny, son.

RISH

You know who you look like?

AGENT KEVIN

General Conklin, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

RISH

I was going to say Gwyneth Paltrow.

The limo pulls away quickly from the curb. Rish rocks around on the floor.

GENERAL CONKLIN

Get up. Sit over there. I want to inspect the merchandise before I pay for it.

Rish awkwardly climbs into the seat opposite the two men.

RISH

Whoa, hold on there, men. I'm not for sale. I was just waiting for a cab. Oh sure, I can see why you'd make that mistake, seeing as I'm so cute.

GENERAL CONKLIN

What are you talking about?

RISH

I'm not a prostitute. I'm flattered, really. I just lost my job, but I'm not desperate, you know?

GENERAL CONKLIN

Would you stop talking?

(to Agent Kevin)

Make him stop talking!

Agent Kevin leans over and jams his index finger into Rish's knee. Rish yelps and his leg sticks straight out.

RISH

Ow, shit! What did you do? I can't bend my leg!

GENERAL CONKLIN

Now are you going to be quiet?

RISH

No! I'm going to start screaming like an overcaffeinated baby! Why would you think that would keep me quiet?

GENERAL CONKLIN

Just calm down and listen to me, son. Nobody wants to have sex with you.

RISH

Really? Neither of you?

GENERAL CONKLIN

Of course not!

RISH

Okay, good. Hey, hold on. You really work for the President? Seriously? I was thinking of not voting for you guys, but if you went to all this trouble to give me a lift home, I suppose I should reconsider.

GENERAL CONKLIN

I don't care about your vote, you idiot. You think all politicians do is worry about who people vote for?

RISH

Sort of. Who's this?

GENERAL CONKLIN

Him? This is one of the Secret Service Agents assigned to my protection detail. Name's Kevin.

RISH

Hi. Cool trick with the leg thing. You can fix that right? I mean, they taught you how to reverse the spell at Hogwart's, didn't they?

AGENT KEVIN

Yes.

GENERAL CONKLIN

Don't worry about your chicken leg right now, son. Right now, you need to worry about what I tell you to worry about. Got me?

RISH

I'm not sure. What was I worried about again?

Agent Kevin hands the General a folder.

GENERAL CONKLIN

You're a comedy guy. Write jokes for a living, don't you?

RISH

Up until recently, but I'm trying to get my life back together, I just went through a really bad break-up.

GENERAL CONKLIN

You used to write for “The Buddy Bean Show”, didn’t you? You were feeding that fatass material live on the air, right?

RISH

I’m not supposed to talk about that. I signed this thing.

GENERAL CONKLIN

You signed a non-disclosure agreement.

RISH

Right, it was a non-disclosing thing.

GENERAL CONKLIN

I got it right here. I know all about it. I just want to know if it was you coming up with all the jokes.

RISH

Not all of them, he’s a pretty funny guy, in a mean kind of way. There’s a little monitor in his desk and he could see what I typed. I’m not going to get in trouble for telling you this, right?

GENERAL CONKLIN

I already know all that. I just wanted to see if you’d admit it.

RISH

What do you want from me, Miss Paltrow? Kevin?

GENERAL CONKLIN

President Donaldson’s got a fund raiser coming up for his re-election campaign. It’s a big deal. He needs his speech to go over big.

RISH

Kevin could do his finger trick.

GENERAL CONKLIN

I want you to make his speech funny.

RISH

How much time do I have?

The limo comes to a sharp stop. Rish almost falls out of his seat, but his straight leg stops him from falling.

GENERAL CONKLIN

We're here.

RISH

No pressure. How much am I getting paid?

Agent Kevin hands the General an envelope.

GENERAL CONKLIN

How much you want for one stupid joke?

RISH

\$500.

GENERAL CONKLIN

\$500!?! For one joke? Are you serious?

RISH

No, I'm funny. I'm a professional funny guy, I want \$500 and I want Obi Wan here to Jedi my leg back to normal too!

Rish and the General have a staring contest.

GENERAL CONKLIN

Alright. \$500.

He pulls a wad of bills from the envelope and hands the envelope to Rish.

RISH

How much was in there?

GENERAL CONKLIN

(laughing)

A lot more than \$500! What was I going to do?

(MORE)

GENERAL CONKLIN (CONT'D)

Get another joke writer between here and front door?

RISH

I suck at negotiating. What about my leg?

GENERAL CONKLIN

You get your leg unstuck if the joke's funny. So unless you plan on great parking spots for the rest of your life, start being funny.

RISH

Show me his speech.

The General hands him a copy.

RISH (CONT'D)

(reading)

Good evening, ladies. I'd call the rest of you "gentlemen" but I don't want to leave anyone out.

(to Agent Kevin)

Funny stuff. That's one of yours, isn't it?
You're a wild man!

Rish reads more of the speech to himself. His eyes start closing, his head nodding as if drugged.

RISH (CONT'D)

Eyes heavy. Can't stay awake. Losing all will to live.

He starts to slump over in the seat.

GENERAL CONKLIN

Alright, alright. Enough. Can you fix it? He just needs a joke to open with.

RISH

I'm going to give you a joke to give to the President. I'm going to tell you how to tell it and if he does exactly like I tell you, it'll kill them.

(MORE)

RISH (CONT'D)

(to Agent Kevin)

I mean, just win their hearts with humor.

Nobody needs to die tonight.

(to the General)

You ready?

GENERAL CONKLIN

Hurry up. The President needs to be hilarious in 10 minutes.

RISH

No problem. Remember, tell it just like I tell it to you.

INT. LARGE BALLROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The opulent ballroom room is filled with expensively dressed people seated at large banquet tables.

The crowd is applauding politely as the MASTER-OF-CEREMONIES (60's, plump) is finishing his introduction for the President's speech.

Rish and Agent Kevin are standing off to one side. Rish is hobbling around, trying to stay out of the way of the waiters, but his stiff leg makes it hard for him to move.

MASTER-OF-CEREMONIES

And so, it is with great pride that I introduce our main speaker of the evening, the President of the United States, President William Jackson Donaldson!

The crowd applauds politely.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON (60's) takes his place behind the podium as the lukewarm applause dies down.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Thank you, sir. Thank you all. Good evening ladies. And gentlemen.

He throws Rish a glance. Rish is eyeing a tray of food as it passes.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON (CONT'D)

As I was preparing for tonight, I was reminded of a time many years ago. I was just a little kid, hard to believe looking at me now, but like any little boy or girl, I couldn't wait for Christmas. Times were tough then too, my father had been out of work and my brothers and I weren't expecting much for Christmas. We were just happy to be able to have something to eat, so toys were too much to expect. Well, Christmas morning comes and we're all sitting around the living room floor, feeling a little sorry for ourselves, when our dad busts into the room with a big sack over his shoulder just like Santa Claus. We all jumped to our feet and cheered! I'll never forget what our dad said to us. He said, "What the hell is wrong with you stupid kids? Haven't you ever seen a man take out the trash before?"

There is a long, awkward pause. Someone coughs nervously.

RISH

(quietly to himself)

Wait for it.

The President glares at Rish. Rish holds up his hand, nodding confidently.

RISH (CONT'D)

(mouths the words)

Wait for it.

Someone in the back of the room bursts out laughing and soon the whole room is filled with loud laughter.

GENERAL CONKLIN

And with your continued support, folks, we'll go back to Washington and take out the trash! Just like Dad did!

The laughter turns to loud applause. The crowd gives him a standing ovation, cheering his name.

The President gives them all a big smile and wave. He glances at Agent Kevin and Rish and gives them a sly thumbs up.

Rish turns to the stone-faced Agent Kevin triumphantly.

RISH

Huh? See? Funny, right? You're laughing on the inside I bet! Come on, Kevin. Let it out! Give me a big old grin! A snicker! One smirk. Something!

Agent Kevin leans over and taps Rish on the knee. Rish's knee unlocks and he falls to the floor.

INT. INSIDE THE LIMO - LATER THAT NIGHT

General Conklin joins Rish and Agent Kevin inside the limo. Rish is eating a sandwich made from dinner rolls and a slab of chicken. He's got a linen napkin tucked under his chin and a banana tucked between his knees.

GENERAL CONKLIN

Where did you get that?

RISH

(mouthful of food)

I got hungry watching the President be funny.

GENERAL CONKLIN

Don't get any of that on the seats.

Alright then, you did good. You can't tell anybody about this. You understand?

RISH

You want me to sign an non-decloaking whatever?

GENERAL CONKLIN

What good is it to have you sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement? You blabbed about what you did for Buddy Bean even though you signed an NDA.

RISH

True, but you already knew about it.

GENERAL CONKLIN

That doesn't matter. That just tells me your signature doesn't mean shit. So, we're going to have a Gentleman's Agreement witnessed by the law firm of Smith and Wesson.

The General pulls out a large revolver and points it at Rish.

RISH

Holy shit! That thing's huge!

Rish drops the sandwich and puts his hands in the air.

GENERAL CONKLIN

I told you, don't get any of that on the seats!

RISH

You're going to cap me over a mayo smear?

GENERAL CONKLIN

No, but if you tell anyone, I mean, anyone about what happened here tonight, I will blow a hole in you big enough to park a bus in.

RISH

You don't need to threaten me with a cannon! Who does that? It's really not cool!

GENERAL CONKLIN

I don't care about being cool.

RISH

That must be great. I worry about it all the time.

GENERAL CONKLIN

Do we have a deal?

RISH

Can I have another \$500?

GENERAL CONKLIN

No.

RISH

Can I keep the sandwich?

GENERAL CONKLIN

I don't care.

Rish picks up the sandwich.

RISH

You got a deal. Ha! Nobody would believe me anyway and this is the most awesome sandwich ever! Who sucks at negotiating now?

The limo stops abruptly.

GENERAL CONKLIN

We're here. Get out.

RISH

Nice meeting you both. Thank you for a very enjoyable evening.

Agent Kevin tosses Rish out of the limo.

EXT. DARK CITY STREET - NIGHT

Rish hits the pavement, managing to save the remains of his sandwich.

Rish gets to his feet.

RISH

What about my banana?

The banana flies out the window of the retreating limo and rolls down a storm drain.

RISH (CONT'D)

Where the hell am I?

EXT. IN FRONT OF A LARGE APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Rish gets out of a cab and using his key, opens the front door to the building.

He stops at his mailbox and looks through his mail as he heads toward the elevator.

ROAN HAYES (40's, handsome, athletic) carrying a grocery bag joins him and they wait at the elevator.

RISH
How's it going?

ROAN
Good. You?

RISH
Weird night.

The elevator arrives and they both get on.

RISH (CONT'D)
Floor?

ROAN
Eight.

RISH
Me too. You just move in?

ROAN
Just visiting a friend. He's out of beer.

Roan indicates the bag. Rish nods, they ride up in silence.

They both get off. Rish heads to his apartment, Roan walks the same direction.

Rish glances behind him, Roan smiles affably. Rish stops at his apartment door and pulls out his keys. Roan stops behind him.

RISH
Hey, what's the deal?

Rish's apartment door opens. Rish is tossed into a chair by LEERY (40's, handsome, athletic) who has a gun pointed at him. Roan follows, closing the door behind him.

ROAN

Hi, Rish. My name's Roan. Roan Hayes.
That's my buddy Leery.

LEERY

How you doing?

Roan tosses Leery a beer.

Rish holds his hands out, ready to catch a beer.

RISH

Okay, cool. Thanks.

ROAN

Like I said, you're out beer.

RISH

Take anything you want, just leave me my
Donna Summer CDs.

ROAN

We're not here to rob you. Hey, I was just
kidding before. You want a beer?

RISH

Why not? I'm starting to sober up again.

ROAN

I'll sell it to you for \$500.

RISH

Huh? How do you know about that? I mean,
that's pretty steep for a beer. It's not domestic
is it?

ROAN

We know all about your little adventure with
Conklin. Jeez, that guys a hard-ass. Right,
Leery?

LEERY

Never liked that guy much.

Roan hands Rish a beer.

ROAN

Here you go, pal.

RISH

Thanks. You guys Secret Service?

Roan and Leery laugh.

LEERY

Do we look like a couple of bullet-catching manikins?

ROAN

No, we're not affiliated with any government agency or any government exactly. We're sort of independent contractors who work for an organization you wouldn't have heard of.

RISH

Try me.

ROAN

ANGEL.

RISH

Never heard of it.

ROAN

Don't worry about what we do. The important thing is, you're going to get a job offer tomorrow. We want to make sure you say "yes".

RISH

Considering I'm unemployed, I'd say that's probably what I'd say.

ROAN

Once you hear what the job is, you're going to want to say "no". Don't. Just say "yes", got it?

RISH

Why would I say "no"? Does the job involve exposing my nipples?

ROAN

Let's just say you'll never be more hidden and you'll never be more exposed.

RISH

That's like secret agent spy talk. You guys are super secret agents, right? This is so cool. Suddenly, I'm totally sober.

Leery taps his watch.

LEERY

We've got that thing.

ROAN

We've got to go. There's a warehouse that needs blowing up.

RISH

That is so cool. Can I have another beer?

ROAN

I'll leave the rest in your fridge. Remember to say "yes".

RISH

Or I'll vanish mysteriously, right?

LEERY

No, we'll come back here and put a couple of bullets in your head.

RISH

(scared)

Well, okay, sure.

(MORE)

RISH (CONT'D)

If that's what you think is best. You're the experts. Thanks. I'm looking forward to my new job.

Roan and Leery leave. Roan waves and winks at Rish as he closes the door.

Rish locks the door and peers out the peep hole. He's startled to see Roan smiling back at him. Roan mouths the words, "Say Yes", waves and slips away.

Rish backs away from the door and heads to his bedroom, pulling off clothes as he goes.

RISH (CONT'D)

What a great day. Best ever. Why do so many people have guns? How come I don't have a gun? I should get a gun. A really big gun.

He flops face-down on the bed, still half-dressed. He mutters to himself as he falls asleep.

RISH (CONT'D)

Really big gun. Nah, I hate guns. I should get a dog. A really big dog. The dog should have a gun. That was a good sandwich. I'm almost out of beer.

INT. RISH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Rish is snoring in bed. His phone rings and he shuffles through his clothing until he finds it. The scene cuts back and forth between Rish and his PARENTS (60's).

RISH

(groggily)

Hi. Hello. It's Rish. Good morning. Why am I sweaty?

MOM

Hello, dear. Did I wake you? Why are you still sleeping?

RISH

How's it going, Mom? Not asleep. Been up for hours. How's Dad?

MOM

We're both fine. Did you see me on "The Young and the Hopeful"?

RISH

Yes, I did. You were the best person eating in the background I've ever seen. Seriously. When you drank that water, I believed it.

MOM

(laughing)

Stop it.

RISH

No really, you're the extra that makes the scene extra special.

MOM

That's sweet. You always know what to say.

RISH

It was worth sitting through that entire crappy soap opera, in Spanish, so I could see my mom on television for 3 seconds.

MOM

You didn't like it?

RISH

Mom, I'm kidding. It was great.

MOM

Your father wants to tell you something.

(yelling loudly)

Stanley! Pick up. Rish is on phone.

DAD

(shouting)

What?

MOM
Pick up the phone!

Rish cringes at her shrill shouting and hears another phone being picked up as his dad joins the call from another part of their house.

DAD
Who is this?

MOM
It's Rish!

DAD
Hey sport! I built you another bird feeder.

RISH
That's great, Dad. Thanks a lot. The other three were getting kind of crowded. You know I live in an apartment, right?

DAD
You heard about President McReedy?

RISH
I heard about it about 30 seconds too late, but I heard about it.

MOM
Such a nice man and good-looking too!

DAD
I've got an idea for a joke. Let's see what you can do with this.

RISH
Okay, Dad. Shoot.

DAD
A guy walks into a bar and he's got an ostrich feather stuck in his ear. The bartender says, "Hey mister, why do you have an ostrich feather in your ear?" What does the guy say?

RISH

Ah, okay. Let's see.

DAD

Don't think too much. What does the guy say?
"Hey mister, why do you have an ostrich
feather in your ear?"

RISH

He says, "Have you seen the price of Q-tips
lately"?

Rish's mom and dad laugh.

DAD

Good one!

MOM

Very clever! You two are so funny!

DAD

You're too good to be giving all your jokes
away to some jerk like Buddy Bean.

MOM

Your father doesn't like Buddy Bean. He says
he's not funny.

RISH

He's mentioned it a few times, but 7 million
viewers every night would disagree.

DAD

Do you think he's funny?

MOM

Me?

DAD

No, I know you don't have a sense of humor.

MOM

What?

RISH

He's got the top rated late-night show for the 18-49 demographic.

DAD

18-49? Stop quoting press kits. That's not a target demographic, it's a wish list. What the hell does an 18-year-old and a 49-year-old have in common?

RISH

Nagging parents?

MOM

What do you mean I don't have a sense of humor?

(shouting loudly)

Are you upstairs?

DAD

Rish, the only time that man is funny is when he's doing your jokes and I can tell when he's doing your jokes because he reads them off that damn computer screen hidden in his desk. You should be getting credit for your work.

RISH

I get credit. I'm a writer and I get paid. I mean, I did.

DAD

"Did"? You got fired?

MOM

Oh honey, not again.

Rish's phone beeps.

RISH

I've got another call.

MOM
(suspicious)
Really?

RISH
No, for real this time. I better see who it is.
Call you soon, love you.

Rish hangs up and looks at the screen on his phone which displays "Private Number".

RISH (CONT'D)
This is never good.
(to phone)
Hi, this is Rish.

OPERATOR 213
Good morning. This is the White House
Operator 213. Is this Rish Collins?

RISH
Yep, that's me. Did you say White House?

OPERATOR 213
Rish Franklin Collins?

RISH
That's still me, Miss 213.

OPERATOR 213
Rish Franklin Collins, the comedy writer?

RISH
Oh, you want Rish Franklin Collins the
comedy writer? No, I'm Rish Franklin Collins
the Tree Surgeon. Hold on, I'll put the comedy
Rish Collins on.

Rish puts the phone down while he puts on his pants.

OPERATOR 213
Hello?

RISH

Hi, this is Rish Franklin Collins the comedy writer. Who's this?

OPERATOR 213

Good morning, sir. This is White House Operator 213. This is Rish Collins, correct?

RISH

Seriously?

OPERATOR 213

Please hold for White House Chief of Staff Warren Murray. Thank you.

Rish is on hold, music playing.

RISH

No wonder they can't get anything done in Washington. They're all so busy asking each other who they are.

WARREN

Hi, is this Rish Collins?

RISH

I'm not sure.

WARREN

I'm Warren Murray. I'm the Chief of Staff for President Donaldson. Got a minute? I'd like to talk to you about a job.

Rish's phone beeps. He looks at the screen and sees he has a text message: "Say yes."

RISH

Sure. Absolutely. I mean, yes! Yes!

WARREN

Come downstairs. There's a limo waiting.

The line goes dead.

RISH

Two limo rides in two days. Awesome.

INT. A HUGE AIRPLANE HANGER - DAY

The limo stops next to a large jet with the presidential seal on the tail. Several SECRET SERVICE AGENTS stand guard around the aircraft.

COLONEL JAMES (40's), a uniformed Air Force Officer, opens the door to the limo. As Rish peeks out, the officer gives him a salute and a friendly smile.

COLONEL JAMES

Good morning, Mr. Collins. I'm Colonel James. I'll be your pilot this morning.

RISH

We going somewhere?

COLONEL JAMES

Possibly, sir. That's one of the main things a jet does.

Rish starts removing his shoes.

RISH

Is that Air Force One?

COLONEL JAMES

No sir, it's Air Force Two.

RISH

Two? What a piece of crap.

Rish stands and starts taking off his belt.

COLONEL JAMES

Sir? What are you doing?

RISH

Just getting ready to go through security.

COLONEL JAMES

That would be me, sir. Consider yourself cleared. If you'd follow me, Chief of Staff Murray is waiting to speak to you.

Rish puts his belt back on while walking and hops while putting on his shoes.

RISH

Sorry, I see a jet and I drop my pants.

COLONEL JAMES

That's why I joined the Air Force, sir. This way.

RISH

Ohhh...I get it. Don't ask, don't tell. My lips are sealed.

Mimes locking his mouth and tossing the key.

INT. INSIDE AIR FORCE TWO - DAY

The spacious interior has desks and padded seats. Several MEN AND WOMEN (various ages, suits) are standing by a desk where CHIEF OF STAFF WARREN MURRAY (60's) is sitting. He is looking over some paperwork, making notes, signing documents. SECRET SERVICE AGENT BARRY (30's, tough) stands in the background watching everything carefully. There's a general sense of urgency in all the people's actions; several people are talking at once, moving quickly around the work area, trying to get the Chief of Staff's attention.

Warren Murray smiles and stands when he sees Rish.

WARREN

Rish! Hi! Warren Murray. Great to meet you.

He shakes Rish's hand enthusiastically. All the others stare at Rish, some smiling politely.

RISH

Hi. Nice to meet you too.

WARREN

Everybody, this is Rish. Rish, this is a bunch of people who are going to give us a few minutes to talk. Okay? Thanks.

The people scoop up papers and move into the other room. CHARLOTTE (40's, attractive) lingers.

CHARLOTTE

Don't forget we have the French Ambassador at noon and your security briefing at 1.

WARREN

Thank you, Charlotte. We'll just be a minute.

Soon it's just Rish and Warren and Agent Barry.

WARREN (CONT'D)

Agent? I'm sorry, what's your name again?

AGENT BARRY

It's Agent Barry, sir.

WARREN

Right, sorry. Agent Barry, could you give us a minute?

AGENT BARRY

Yes, sir.

Agent Barry goes into the next room.

WARREN

Jeez, that guy scares the shit out of me.

RISH

Did you know they can make your leg stick out straight with just one finger?

WARREN

I didn't know that.

RISH

Stay on his good side.

WARREN

I'll do that. Thanks. Have a seat. Hey, you hungry? You want some breakfast? Let's eat something. I'm starving.

Warren picks up a phone on his desk.

WARREN (CONT'D)

Hey, Charlotte. Can you see if the crew could make me an egg sandwich and some coffee?

(to Rish)

How about you?

RISH

Two aspirins, over easy and some coffee, please.

WARREN

(laughing)

And some aspirin. Thanks, Charlotte.

He sits in the chair opposite Rish.

WARREN (CONT'D)

Sorry for rushing you over here, but we're pretty pressed for time as I'm sure you can imagine.

RISH

No, I don't have much of an imagination. So, Warren, you work at the White House? That must be exciting. I've never met anyone who worked at the White House. Ever. Never. Ever. In my entire life.

WARREN

I know all about last night.

RISH

That's a pretty scary thing to say to me. It could mean a variety of embarrassing things.

WARREN

I know you wrote a joke for the President's speech and it went over very well.

Rish holds his breath and puts on his best poker face.

WARREN (CONT'D)

And I know Conklin threatened to shoot you if you told anyone. It's okay.

Rish breathes again.

RISH

(nervously)

It's not okay! You don't know how scary it is to have a General point a gun at you! Then those other two guys? I mean, come on! How many guns are there and why is everybody pointing them at me?

WARREN

What other two guys?

RISH

Nothing. I just made that up. Forget I said anything about guys. Why am I here? Why did the General want me to write a joke for the President? How did he know where I was? How does he know who I am? How do you know who I am? How do I know who I am?

WARREN

That it?

RISH

Almost. You mentioned coffee?

WARREN

It's on its way. I know this is a lot to take in. Last night was a test. You passed.

RISH

A test? For what?

WARREN

We'll talk about that in a minute. First, I need to ask you a question: Do you love your country?

RISH

"Love" is such a big step. I'd say it's more of a physical thing, but lately the sex has been getting kind of boring.

Warren doesn't laugh.

WARREN

Rish, I'm going to ask you that question again and I need you answer me sincerely and seriously. Do you love your country?

RISH

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be stupid. I love the ideals this country was built on. Things like personal responsibility, independence, courage and equality, but I don't feel like our political system has reflected any of those ideals in a long time. No offense.

WARREN

None taken. I agree with you. So would President Donaldson.

RISH

I always thought he and I had a lot in common. People are always getting us confused.

WARREN

You got any plans for the next couple of days?

Warren picks up the phone.

RISH

I'm expecting a new bird feeder.

WARREN

Good. Want to visit the White House?

(into phone)

Colonel James? Let's go to DC.

The engines on the jet start up, the cabin door closes.

INT. AIRFORCE TWO AIRBORNE - DAY

Rish is sipping his coffee and looking out the window at the clouds as the Chief of Staff's staff bustle around the room.

Charlotte sits down next to him.

CHARLOTTE

Hi, I'm Charlotte. Mr. Murray's Assistant. Need anything?

RISH

Nope, thanks. Just trying to stay out of the way. Do you have any idea why I'm here?

CHARLOTTE

He didn't tell you?

RISH

Not really. He asked me a few questions, then said we're going to DC.

CHARLOTTE

Oh.

RISH

So you know?

CHARLOTTE

I don't think I should be the one to talk about it. The whole thing is pretty crazy.

RISH

I've been getting a lot of that lately.

CHARLOTTE
So you're in Comedy?

RISH
Yeah, I started out as an intern in Tragedy, but
it was really depressing.

Charlotte laughs.

RISH (CONT'D)
Sorry, I'm still kind of hung-over.

CHARLOTTE
I'd better get back to work. Let me know if you
need anything. He's going to have a few
minutes between conference calls here
shortly. I'm sure he'll want to talk more with
you.

RISH
I'll stick around then.

Charlotte smiles and goes back to her desk.

RISH (CONT'D)
(muttering)
"Stick around then." lame.

Charlotte returns to Rish.

CHARLOTTE
I'm sorry, I've been really caught up in my
career the last few years. Did we just have a
moment there?

RISH
I know what you mean, me too. I think I was
flirting with you.

CHARLOTTE
I thought so. I wasn't sure.

RISH
I'm kind of out of practice. Any thoughts?

CHARLOTTE

Not bad, I guess. There's kind of an age difference.

RISH

I promise not to let your youth and inexperience be an issue.

CHARLOTTE

You keep quoting Reagan and you might have a shot there, fella.

She walks away smiling.

RISH

(calls out)

Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall! Sorry, too obvious.

The others stare at him, Charlotte laughs as she returns to her desk.

Warren hangs up the phone and stretches. Charlottes speaks to him briefly, nodding toward Rish. Warren waves Rish over.

WARREN

Doing okay? Sorry I had to leave you stranded like that, but it's been back-to-back emergencies.

RISH

No, I understand. Thanks for the coffee and the aspirin and the jet ride and all, but what's this all about?

WARREN

Did you know Abraham Lincoln had a high, screechy voice? Teddy Roosevelt too? Harry Truman was rumored to have been a member of the KKK and it's been said that George Washington's breath was so bad, people would often sit at the far end of the room during meetings.

RISH

Should I be taking notes?

WARREN

Stick with me for a minute. Some of our greatest presidents wouldn't have been elected in this age of instant communication. Looking bad on television is an unforgivable sin in our society. That's how we ended up with a good-looking, well-spoken, charismatic but completely useless man like Bob McReedy as president.

RISH

No argument there.

WARREN

I've known William Donaldson most of my life. He's a good man, but he's not exactly easy to get to know. Some might think of him as cold or aloof. He is. He's not the hand-shaking, baby-kissing type, but he's a leader. He's a man who can get things done. We need him to be President. Now and for the next four years. You're going to help make that happen.

RISH

Me? How? You want to make sure I vote for him? Okay, I will.

WARREN

It's going to take a bit more than that, Rish. I want you to help the President be funny. Help him lighten up a little. Give him a joke or two for his speeches. Something he can use in meetings, press conference, in the debates. And if you can get him to crack a smile every now and then, it'd be a good thing. He needs it.

RISH

Sounds like you're asking me to be a court jester.

WARREN

I suppose I am. What do you think?

RISH

Is the President cool with this?

WARREN

It took some convincing, but he's willing to talk to you. We're in a tough spot and it's only going to get tougher. The President realizes we need someone to help smooth his image.

RISH

Why me?

WARREN

You have several distinct advantages. First, you're funny.

RISH

True enough.

WARREN

Also, you're almost completely unknown and the few people who do know you think you're such a huge flake that they'd never believe you if you told them about this.

RISH

You could've just stopped at "you're funny".

WARREN

I want you to have a sit-down with him. Just talk. See if you think you can help us out here.

RISH

You want to see if me and the President can be pals?

WARREN

That took me about 30 years. We don't have that kind of time. Let's just see if you two can spend a few minutes together first.

RISH

A few minutes? He sounds tough.

WARREN

Nah, he's the quiet, thoughtful type.

INT. WHITE HOUSE HALLWAY LEADING TO OVAL OFFICE - DAY

There is a lot of commotion, most of it centered on the doorway leading to the Oval Office at the end of the hallway. Warren is walking Rish ahead of him, his hand on Rish's shoulder. Rish is walking carefully, wide-eyed at all the activity. The loud, commanding voice of President Donaldson coming from the Oval Office is directing all the frantic activity.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON (O.S.)

Are you seriously standing there waiting to talk to me about make-up? I'm not going to the Jr. Prom, I'm conducting my first press conference as President of the United States!

A CHUBBY MAN (30's, poofy hair) hurries out of the office, looking close to tears.

CHUBBY MAN

Maybe you can talk some sense into him, Warren. If he wants to face the nation with a shiny forehead, it's his business!

WARREN

Thank you. I'll speak to him.

RISH

Was that Adele?

WARREN

I have no idea. Now, deep breath. Don't let his bark scare you.

RISH

Right, angry dogs just do that to let you know they're about to take a big chunk out of your ass.

WARREN
That's the spirit! Courage! Let's go!

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY

President Donaldson is on the phone while looking at a folder of documents.
General Conklin stands next to the desk.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON
(to phone)
Because the President of the United States
wants a fast Internet connection in the Oval
Office, that's why! You get your smartest nerd
and your fastest computer up here in 20
minutes!

The President slams the phone down.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON (CONT'D)
General Conklin, this intell is over 3 hours old!
We spend billions on our intelligence
gathering and I expect the most recent
information in my hands when I need it. Do
you understand?

GENERAL CONKLIN
Yes, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON
Nothing less than one hour old. Now get out
of here and get me fresh intell!

The General tries to collect the paperwork, but Donaldson tosses it in the full
garbage can next to his desk. The General comes to attention and stiffly walks
out the door.

WARREN
General Conklin.

GENERAL CONKLIN
Chief of Staff Murray.

RISH

Thanks for warming him up for us, Admiral.
Nice work.

The General glares at Rish as he leaves.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Warren! Thank God you're back! Where the hell have you been? Never mind! I don't care. We have one hour before the press conference and I don't have accurate information on the Hazmenian conflict.

WARREN

I'll get right on that, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I just sent Conklin out of here with a bug in his ear about it. Just make sure he gets back to me in time to read it before I go out there.

WARREN

Yes, Mr. President.

The President indicates Rish.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I thought you wanted to go with that other guy.

WARREN

This is the other guy.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Really? He's that guy?

WARREN

No, not that one. The other other guy.

RISH

Who am I again? You sure I'm not the other guy?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I really don't have time for this.

RISH

Me either. Internet porn doesn't download itself.

WARREN

Just give him a minute, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Alright, but as soon as the General gets back we're going to have to wrap this up.

Warren leaves, the President and Rish sit.

Awkward.

RISH

Is that couch from Ikea? Did you put it together yourself?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Is that the kind of thing people think is funny?

RISH

Yes. That was hilarious.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I'm not laughing.

RISH

Me either. What's your point?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

That what you said wasn't funny.

RISH

And how would you know? Are you an expert on funny?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

No, I'm an expert on international economics, world history and political science.

RISH

Can you prove it?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I've written two text-books on political science, three on world history and I've been awarded a Nobel Peace Prize for my work in economics.

RISH

My mom and dad think I'm funny.

Awkward.

Rish spots a chess game in progress on the table next to him.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

You play chess?

RISH

Sure, all the time. You any good?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I hold the ranking of Grandmaster.

RISH

Really? I'm a Level 87 Ultra-Megamaster. It probably wouldn't be fair for me to play you.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Warren seems to think we need you here to lighten my image up some. He wants you to teach me how to be funny. Apparently, the public perception is that I'm a cranky, old bastard.

RISH

You're not that old.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Seriously. What are you doing here, son?

RISH

(nervous babbling)

I made a dumb joke about McReedy but he was dead, see?

(MORE)

RISH (CONT'D)

But I didn't know he was dead, I thought he was just stupid. Then all these people were booing and this lady started crying and then I lost my job, which really sucked because I like eating in restaurants. Then these two scary guys told me to say "Yes" so when Warren asked me I said "Yes" because they reminded me of the guys in High School who used to kick my ass a lot. So, I have no idea what I'm doing here or what's going on. Does that make sense?

President Donaldson stares at Rish for a beat, then laughs.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

You sound exactly the way I've been feeling since McReedy died, son. Honestly, I have no idea what's going on either.

RISH

Let's ditch work today and go get hammered. First rounds on me.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I think I'll stick it out for awhile. I'm sure I'll have time in a few months.

RISH

Not optimistic about your chances of being re-elected?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I wasn't elected.

RISH

Oh yeah.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I don't know how I got here either.

RISH

McReedy ate too much saturated fat and didn't get enough exercise.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

No, I mean when I first ran for State Senate in VA, I never imagined I'd win much less end up in the White House.

RISH

Why'd you run?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I started my career in education as a high school history teacher. I loved it. People love criticizing the younger generations, always have, but in my experience, most kids, given the right direction, can accomplish amazing things. Of course, they need guidance and sometimes that means you've got to be stern, but I found that as long as you establish boundaries, most kids will do the right thing. I worked hard as the Dean of the university. Got the average grade point up to the highest in the state. It made the local news, people took an interest in my career. Then when the state congressman in my district decided to retire, some local businessmen wanted me to run. Warren was one of them. I had the opportunity to do some good and I took it. It seemed like a good idea at the time.

RISH

Not any more?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I don't have the luxury of doubting myself. There's too much at stake.

RISH

Your secret is safe with me, Bill.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Don't do that.

RISH

I have to call you "Mr. President"?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Yes, you do.

RISH

Then you have to call me "Mr. Fabulous".

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Warren will get you set up with a place to work. As far as everyone else is concerned, you're one of our new speechwriters. We've got a press conference coming up shortly. We've got that handled, so just try to watch how we do things and stay out of the way until you figure out how you fit in. That work for you, Mr. Fabulous?

RISH

(laughing)

Good luck with the press thing, Mr. President.

General Conklin is standing just outside. The President waves him in.

RISH (CONT'D)

(quietly to Conklin)

He's in a better mood now. No need to thank me.

The General ignores him and walks briskly to the President's desk.

GENERAL CONKLIN

Here's the latest intell on Hazmenia, Mr. President.

The President points to a section in one of the documents.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Is this accurate? What's your assessment?

GENERAL CONKLIN

I don't think this Hazmenian Premier Szullenski has got the stones to go nuclear, Mr. President. It's just hot air.

(MORE)

GENERAL CONKLIN (CONT'D)

Hazmenia will be back under Russian control within the week.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

You think we should stay out of it.

GENERAL CONKLIN

Our relationship with the Russian President has been shaky at best, Mr. President. President McReedy agreed with my recommendation.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

He would.

GENERAL CONKLIN

Sir?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

McReedy was at his best whenever someone recommended he do nothing.

GENERAL CONKLIN

(stiffly)

Yes, Mr. President. I'd also like to recommend you not hire that writer. He's unreliable, untrustworthy and disrespectful.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Note taken.

INT. WHITE HOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

Warren is leading Rish down a crowded hallway.

RISH

I guess I got the job.

WARREN

I guess so. Happy?

RISH

I didn't pack anything. Where do I live? How much am I getting paid? Am I getting paid?

WARREN

We'll get you set up with a nice place and send some people back to your apartment to grab some of your things.

RISH

There's a box under my bed. Tell them to stay away from it.

Warren leads him to a door guarded by two ARMED MARINE GUARDS. The Marines check Warren's ID card. Warren hands a similar ID card to Rish.

WARREN

Almost forgot. Wear this at all times or you might get shot.

Rish laughs.

WARREN (CONT'D)

Seriously.

Rish holds up the ID card to the two Marines like a crucifix to ward off vampires.

MARINE

You're clear. Go ahead, sir.

Rish continues to brandish his ID card to everyone they pass.

Warren hustles him through the door. They are walking down another hallway toward a television studio control room.

WARREN

You have a problem with authority don't you?

RISH

I've never been good with bosses or people who boss me around.

WARREN

You realize I'm your boss now.

RISH
I'm able to overlook it.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

The room is crammed full of VARIOUS MEN AND WOMEN are all yelling at each other, working on the computers or rushing back and forth.

Several chairs face a bank of televisions which show the White House Press Room from various angles. Several microphones are mounted on the control panel. Each microphone has a small red light at its base.

ELLIOTT (50's, heavy, agitated) is at the center console acting as the director of all the activity.

Rish stares at the frantic activity from the doorway with Warren. TOM KIRBY (40's, angry nerd) the White House Press Secretary rushes up behind them.

TOM KIRBY
Out of the way damnit! Oh, sorry Warren!
(to the control room)
Are we ready in here, people?

Everyone ignores him.

TOM KIRBY (CONT'D)
Are we good to go? Hello? Come on! This is important.

WARREN
Would you all stop what you're doing for a second, please?

Activity stops.

TOM KIRBY
Thank you. Are we ready?

Everybody indicates they're ready. Tom runs back the direction he came.

The frantic activity kicks off again.

RISH

Ready for what? What's going on?

WARREN

This is one of those things you don't want to tell anyone about. We call it the Control Room. President McReedy wasn't what you'd call a "fact" guy. Whenever he gave a press conference or a speech or pretty much whenever he had to speak in public, he needed a bit of help with the facts. You see all those computers and all those people?

RISH

Right.

WARREN

Whenever President McReedy got in trouble, if someone asked him a question he couldn't answer, he'd be given the answer from here. He had a small receiver in his ear. We'd give him the answer, he'd say it.

RISH

You're kidding me. You mean the President of the United States was using cheat notes?

WARREN

Pretty much. We just couldn't take the risk.

RISH

Even during the debates?

WARREN

Especially during the debates.

RISH

This is terrible. Why is President Donaldson doing this?

WARREN

He was ordered to have a receiver implanted by McReedy.

(MORE)

WARREN (CONT'D)

You can't believe the amount of information a president has to have in his head. It's too much. This kind of thing has been going on in one form or another for thousands of years. In ancient Rome, the Caesars had men standing next to him whispering information he needed. It's the same thing you were doing for the Buddy Bean Show.

RISH

Is this what you want me to do? Feed him some jokes live during a press conference?

WARREN

Doubt you'll have the opportunity. We have to wait until the President gives us a signal. Rish, William doesn't like this any more than you do. I don't either, but we've had this job dumped on us at a very bad time. A chunk of Russia has broken away and declared independence. They've lined the border with troops, elected a leader and are now calling themselves the Republic of Hazmenia. Russia doesn't have a great track record for allowing things like that to happen. Normally, they'd have already sent troops in to reclaim the territory.

RISH

Normally?

WARREN

The leader of Hazmenia, President Szullenski, says they have a nuclear missile and if they're invaded, they'll launch.

RISH

Lots of opportunity for funny there. I'm sure I can come up with a few zingers.

WARREN

Elliot is in charge here. Do what he tells you, when he tells you. We'll talk after. Find a corner and try to stay out of the way for now.

Warren leaves. Rish moves into the Control Room, sliding out of the way as much as possible. Some people eye him, but he flashes his badge.

One of the television monitors shows the press room packed with reporters. Another monitor shows a nervous Tom Kirby take the podium.

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - DAY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The REPORTERS immediately all stand and begin shouting questions at Tom who nervously tries to talk. The reporters take their seats.

TOM KIRBY

Okay, okay. Settle down. Really. I have a brief statement then President Donaldson will come out.

FRANK TAYLOR (60's, suit), a slick news reporter, stands. More like grandstands.

FRANK TAYLOR

Mr. Kirby, what my viewers want to know, which means what all America wants to know is this: Will President Donaldson stay the course in regards to the Hazmenia crisis?

The press room begins shouting questions again as Tom Kirby tries to answer.

TOM KIRBY

The situation in Hazmenia is ongoing. The President has been fully briefed. As of right now, all options are on the table.

Frank Taylor's voice rises above the others.

FRANK TAYLOR

What does that mean, Mr. Kirby? Is the
President contemplating sending in troops?
Whose side will the troops be on?

Another REPORTER (40's, woman, well-dressed) shouts out a question above
the general bedlam.

WOMAN REPORTER

Mr. Kirby, the Russian President has said he
expects America to remain neutral. Will we
intervene or not?

TOM KIRBY

You're going to have to ask the President.
Ladies and Gentlemen, the President of the
United States!

Tom Kirby moves quickly out of the room.

INT. THE CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Elliot is shouting at the television which shows Kirby leaving the shouting
press corps.

ELLIOTT

Oh my freaking lord! Kirby just bailed!

Rish speaks to a RESEARCHER (30's, male) standing next to him.

RISH

It's like a feeding frenzy in there. Is it always
like that?

RESEARCHER

Yeah, McReedy liked them all shouting for his
attention, I guess.

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - DAY

President Donaldson steps out looking angry and confused. Through the doorway, Warren and Tom Kirby can be seen arguing. The press corps is shouting questions at the President as he steps up to the podium.

Warren pulls Kirby away from the doorway and out of the view of the press.

President Donaldson blinks into the bright camera lights and looks lost. The press continue shouting questions.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I have a brief statement. Then I'll answer a few questions. What? I can't hear you.

INT. THE CONTROL ROOM - DAY

ELLIOTT

This is terrible! Look at him! He's losing it!

On the monitor, President Donaldson is trying to call on one of the reporters, but the other reporters continue shouting questions.

A SECRET SERVICE AGENT is talking rapidly on his headset. Another SECRET SERVICE AGENT enters the room.

RESEARCHER

Oh shit! Here comes the SS. They're going to shut down the press briefing. This is a disaster! We're doomed!

Rish jumps forward and hitting the button at the base of Elliott's microphone, causing the light to go green.

RISH

Mr. President! Listen to me! They're just like a bunch of kids!

Elliott and several others try to pull Rish away from the microphone.

ELLIOTT

What are you doing, you idiot?

RISH

Mr. President! You're the man! Show'em
who's boss!

One of the researchers has Rish by his legs, Elliott has Rish around the waist, but Rish holds on to the table and keeps shouting.

RESEARCHER

Elliott! Turn off the mike!

RISH

Boundaries, Mr. President! Boundaries!

Rish's grip slips and they fall on the floor, knocking a table over with a loud crash. Elliott scrambles over to the hot microphone and slaps the switch off again.

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - DAY

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

(shouting)

QUIET!

The press corps go deathly silent and stare at him.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON (CONT'D)

I've never been more ashamed of a group of
men and women in my life. Is this any way to
behave? Now, take your seats!

INT. THE CONTROL ROOM - DAY

The men and women stare at the monitors which show the press corps obediently taking their seats.

ELLIOTT

I don't believe it.

Rish uses the distraction to scramble back to his feet and jump into Elliott's chair. He snaps the microphone back on. One of the researchers moves to stop him.

ELLIOTT (CONT'D)

No, let him go. It's okay.

RISH

Set some ground rules just like in High School.

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - DAY

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Much better. Now, here's how this is going to work from now on: When you have a question, you will raise your hand. I will call on you, you will state your name, who you work for and your question. I'll decide if you get a follow-up. Understand?

The press looks around at each other, some nodding, most scribbling notes.

INT. THE CONTROL ROOM - DAY

RISH

How did you start every school day when you were a kid?

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - DAY

The President smiles.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

And now, everyone stand, place your hands over your hearts, face the flag and together we will recite The Pledge of Allegiance.

Some stand, some laugh as if it's a joke.

FRANK TAYLOR

Mr. President. You can't really expect us to do that. We have important matters which must...

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Your name?

FRANK TAYLOR

My name? I'm Frank Taylor, White House Correspondent for World News Service, the largest cable news resource in the world.

INT. THE CONTROL ROOM - DAY

RISH

That and five dollars...

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - DAY

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Very impressive, Mr. Taylor, that and five dollars will get you a gallon of gas, but you didn't raise your hand and wait to be called on. I'll excuse you this time.

FRANK TAYLOR

In regards to Hazmenia, is it true...?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

No. Stop. The press briefing hasn't started yet. Since you're so eager, the briefing can start as soon as you're done leading your fellow reporters in reciting The Pledge of Allegiance.

Frank Taylor loses the staring contest with the President. He faces the flag and places his hand over his heart. The rest of the reporters stand and do the same.

EVERYONE

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. And to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all.

One of the Secret Service agents brushes away a tear from his eye.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

The men and women in the control room are applauding and laughing. Elliott grabs a chair next to Rish.

ELLIOTT
Okay, fun's over. Game time!
(to Rish)
You! Stay right there!

Everyone gets back to their stations.

On the monitor showing the President, he can be seen tugging his shirtsleeve cuff briefly.

ELLIOTT (CONT'D)
He's signalling us to stand down.

Elliott puts a hand on Rish's shoulder.

ELLIOTT (CONT'D)
Okay? No more, he's giving us a direct order.

RISH
I'm good. My work here is done.

ELLIOTT
Who the hell are you anyway?

Warren bursts into the room.

WARREN
What the hell happened?

Everyone points at Rish. Rish tries to point at anybody else, then gives up.

RISH
I was just trying to stay out of the way like you
told me.

WARREN
Just back away from the microphone.

Rish scoots his chair back against the wall. Warren looks at the row of monitors. The President calls on a woman reporter as Frank Taylor scowls.

INT - WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - DAY

The Press Corps are taking their seats. JESSIE HOWARD (50's, tough) stands when the President calls on her.

JESSIE HOWARD

Good afternoon, Mr. President. I'm Jessie Howard reporter for AllAmericanPolitics.com.

Frank Taylor snorts and rolls his eyes.

FRANK TAYLOR

Blogger.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Good afternoon, Ms. Howard.

JESSIE HOWARD

Mr. President, will you send American troops to intervene in the Hazmenian conflict and if so, what will their orders be?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Ms. Howard, I appreciate everyone's curiosity regarding this matter. However, if the Commander-in-Chief of the world's largest military force has plans to mobilize troops, I assure you the plans will not be discussed live on television first.

Frank Taylor stands.

FRANK TAYLOR

Mr. President, I don't blame you for not answering the question put to you by a blogger, but as the lead anchor of the world's largest news network, perhaps I can shed some light on the situation for you.

INT. THE CONTROL ROOM - DAY

The President's looks more and more angry as Taylor speaks.

RISH
(to Warren)
Oh boss, please let me off the leash!

Warren nods. Rish rushes to the microphone.

Taylor is droning on about the history of US and Russian relations and his own "historic" meeting with Russian President Gregaroff.

RISH (CONT'D)
Hi, Mr. President. It's Mr. Fabulous again.

On the screen, the President flicks at his ear as if a fly is buzzing it.

ELLIOTT
(quietly to Warren)
You sure?

WARREN
Yes.

RISH
Try this: Mr. Taylor, some make the news...

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - DAY

PRESIDENT DONALDSON
(smiling)
Mr. Taylor, stop talking. You weren't called on,
take your seat.

Frank Taylor slowly sits.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON (CONT'D)
Let me explain something to you, sir. Some
make the news, some report the news and
some, like you, read the news off a
Teleprompter.
(MORE)

PRESIDENT DONALDSON (CONT'D)

Now, since you don't want to participate in this press conference, turn your chair around and face the rest of the group.

Frank Taylor reluctantly turns his chair around so that he's facing the rest of the room.

INT. THE CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Everyone is laughing, some slapping Rish on the back.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

(on the monitor)

Now, does anyone have a question not related to top-secret military plans?

Several hands go up from the press corps.

INT. THE CONTROL ROOM - LATER

Elliott shakes Rish's hand.

ELLIOTT

Just in case I never see you again, I just want to say that was hilarious.

RISH

Thanks. What? What do you mean never see me again?

The researcher Rish was wrestling with comes over to shake his hand also.

RESEARCHER

No hard feelings, right? God bless you.

RISH

What?

Agent Barry comes to the door of the control room.

AGENT BARRY

Mr. Collins?

RISH

He's not here.

AGENT BARRY

Come with me, sir.

WARREN

Where are you taking him?

AGENT BARRY

The President would like to speak with Mr.
Collins alone, sir.

Rish walks slowly to join the Secret Service Agent. Warren puts a hand on his shoulder.

WARREN

Don't worry. You did the right thing.

RISH

Just so you know, I'm going to squeal like a
little pig and blame you for everything.

WARREN

Good luck with that.

RISH

I'll make stuff up if I have to.

WARREN

You do that.

RISH

I'm doomed, right?

WARREN

You'll be fine.

INT. HALLWAY OF THE WHITE HOUSE LOWER LEVELS - EVENING

Agent Barry and Rish are standing in front of an elevator waiting for the doors to open.

Agent Kevin joins them.

RISH
Hey, Kev! How's it going?

AGENT KEVIN
(to Agent Barry)
He's coming with me.

AGENT BARRY
No, I'm escorting him to the President.

RISH
Don't let him talk to you like that, Kevin.

AGENT KEVIN
You can take him to the President after I take him to General Conklin.

RISH
(to Agent Barry)
I don't think I like his attitude. Tell him to piss off, but watch out for his finger.

AGENT BARRY
Piss off, Kevin.

RISH
(laughing)
Wow, seriously? Kevin, you going to take that shit from this guy? Kick his ass!

The elevator doors open. Agent Barry takes Rish's arm to lead him into the elevator. Agent Kevin lets out a yell and attacks Agent Barry.

The two men fight using a variety of martial arts moves.

Rish quickly moves to a chair and watches.

RISH (CONT'D)
Right on, Kev! Damn, I was just kidding around. Come on, Barry, kick him in the nuts!

The two agents are evenly matched. They attack each other with a complicated grappling move which has both men holding the other in a headlock.

AGENT BARRY

Damnit, Kevin. Cut it out!

AGENT KEVIN

You cut it out, Barry!

RISH

This is one of the best jobs I've ever had.

Agent Kevin has the better hold. Agent Barry is choking and turning blue.

Rish is dancing around the struggling pair like a referee in a boxing match.

RISH (CONT'D)

Come on, break the hold, you wimp! No?
What's that, Agent Barry? You're a big girl and
you're afraid of spiders? Tap out! Tap out!

Rish raises Agent Barry's arm and drops it.

RISH (CONT'D)

He's out! Winner! Let him go, Kev!

Agent Kevin drops Agent Barry who hits the floor unconscious.

RISH (CONT'D)

Damn man, that was cool! I was rooting for
you the whole time, Kev.

AGENT KEVIN

Let's go, funny man.

RISH

No problem. How's my buddy the General?
He seemed kind of constipated before. Does
he get enough fiber?

Agent Kevin pushes Rish through a door.

INT. GENERAL CONKLIN'S OFFICE - EVENING

The General is watching porn on his laptop.

Agent Kevin pushes Rish into a chair in front of the General's desk.

GENERAL CONKLIN

Here's the deal: You're going to tell the President something for me.

RISH

Okay, but could you turn off your home movies? It's kind of distracting.

GENERAL CONKLIN

You're going to tell the President to send troops in to support Russia in the Hazmenian conflict. Got that? We support the Russians.

RISH

Check it out, the blonde has a wedding ring on! That always creeps me out. If you were her husband, wouldn't that bother you?

GENERAL CONKLIN

I am her husband.

RISH

She seems very nice. Where'd you two crazy kids meet?

GENERAL CONKLIN

Did you hear what I told you?

RISH

I heard every word. You want the President to send grapes to Persia and buy a hat from Tasmania.

(indicating the laptop)

Is that on a website somewhere?

The General closes the lid on his laptop, shutting off the porn sounds.

GENERAL CONKLIN

Hazmenia! Not Tasmania! Hazmenia!
Hazmenia! Support the Russian troops over
Hazmenia, you idiot!

RISH

I heard you! Really. I don't know why you think
he's going to listen to me, but I'll tell him.

GENERAL CONKLIN

Don't bullshit me, son. I saw you two laughing
it up in there like old pals. Make sure he
listens. We can all make some coin if the shit
hits the fan over there.

(to Agent Kevin)

Get him out of here.

Agent Kevin escorts Rish to the door.

GENERAL CONKLIN (CONT'D)

Hey, jokester, one more thing. When you've
got the ear of the President, everybody wants
your head. You do right by me and I'll do right
by you. Understand?

RISH

Absolutely. Speaking of head, does your wife
ever visit the office?

Agent Kevin grabs Rish by the back of the collar and tosses him through the
door.

INT. WHITE HOUSE HALLWAY - EVENING

Agent Kevin slams the General's door leaving Rish on his hands and knees
when Agent Barry comes around the corner.

AGENT BARRY

What are you doing? What was that noise?

RISH

Me bouncing.

Agent Barry helps Rish up.

AGENT BARRY

Wait here.

He moves toward the General's door with obvious bad intentions, but Rish grabs his arm.

RISH

Slow down, Terminator. Not here. Wait until you can pick the battleground then sucker-punch the bastard when he's not looking. Besides, isn't President What's-his-face looking for me?

AGENT BARRY

You're right. Come on. Where'd you learn about battle tactics? Sun Szu?

RISH

Spider-Man.

INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - EVENING

Rish is led to the Oval Office doorway by the recovering Secret Service Agent Barry.

RISH

Get some ice for that bump on your head. I was really rooting for you the whole time. You'll get him next time, Barry.

AGENT BARRY

Damn straight I will. Thanks, Rish.

The President is working on his computer. He glares at Rish angrily as Rish walks in.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Let's get something straight, son. When I say stop, you stop. Understand? We may have gotten by this time, but we got lucky.

RISH

Whoa, hold on, dude. I didn't ask for this. I've got people pointing guns at me, jabbing me in the leg, drinking my beer and riding in my elevator. You know how that makes me feel?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Did you just call me "dude"?

RISH

No. Absolutely not. Why?

President Donaldson angrily throws a paperweight against the wall.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

You will not speak to the President of the United States like that! Do you understand?

RISH

I'm not speaking to the President of the United States, I'm speaking to a man who's stuck in a bad situation and has anger management issues.

Rish picks up a paperclip from the desk and throws it against the opposite wall.

RISH (CONT'D)

So, there!

Two Secret Service Agents appear in the doorway, the President waves them off.

The President walks slowly, picks up the paperweight and returns it to the desk. As he does, Rish goes in search of the paperclip.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Just leave it.

RISH

No way. If you're walking around here barefoot, you might step on it and I'd feel really bad.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I'm not going to walk around the Oval Office barefoot.

RISH

Why not?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I'm just not going to do that. It would be disrespectful. Maybe that's something you wouldn't understand.

RISH

This is just a room. A pretty uncomfortably designed room, with some pretty scary looking furniture, but still just a room.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

And the flag is just a hunk of cloth, right?

RISH

Of course it is!

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Is there anything you take seriously? The American Flag is more than just a design on a cloth.

RISH

What it stands for is important. What it represents is important, but not the object itself. I respect the ideals, not the artifacts. I respect the decisions made in this room, but not the space. I respect the man, not his title.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Now you're just playing word games! There are institutions which should be respected. Symbols which should mean something to anyone who knows anything about the sacrifices made for them.

RISH

You really think wars are fought over who's flag is the prettiest?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

That's not what I'm saying and you know it!

RISH

You don't know what I don't know! I don't know a lot! Quit telling me what to think!

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

As long as you work for this office, you'll do as you're told!

RISH

That's what I'm talking about! I don't work for an "office", I work for you!

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Alright then, as long as you work for me, you'll do as you're told!

RISH

Deal! I quit!

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

You what?

RISH

I quit. This isn't going to work out.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Fine. I only agreed to this because Warren suggested it.

RISH

Fine. I only agreed to it because a couple of guys put a gun to my head.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

What?

RISH

I mean because Warren suggested it.
Anyway, here. Good luck. Good-bye. I'm out.

Rish tosses his security badge on the President's desk and storms out, slamming the door behind him.

The President sits back at his desk and starts working on his computer.

The door opens slowly and Rish peeks in.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

What now?

Rish walks to the desk and picks up his badge again.

RISH

I'll probably need this to get out of here. I'll
leave it at the front desk.

The President ignores him and Rish leaves again.

INT. WHITE HOUSE HALLWAY LEADING TO FRONT LOBBY - NIGHT

Charlotte sees Rish walking toward the exit doors. Rish drops his ID badge at the security desk.

SECURITY GUARD

Have a good night, sir.

RISH

This is the beginning of a beautiful black-out.

Charlotte runs to catch up with Rish.

EXT. FRONT STEPS OF WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

CHARLOTTE

Rish! Wait!

Rish keeps walking, Charlotte following.

RISH

Sorry, but there's a bar stool around here
that's calling my butt.

(as if replying to the call)

Yes, my love? I hear you! I'm on my way!

CHARLOTTE

Quit goofing around, we've got work to do.

RISH

No, you've got work to do. I quit.

CHARLOTTE

You what? You can't! Why?

RISH

I screwed up! Okay? It's what I do! Everybody
has a super-power, mine is screwing up.
Warren wanted me to make the president
funny, I can't do it. So, I quit.

CHARLOTTE

Just like that?

RISH

Yep. Tell Warren thanks and I'm sorry and
whatever, I don't care.

CHARLOTTE

Damn it, Rish! Warren didn't get you this job, I
did!

RISH

What are you talking about?

CHARLOTTE

You just don't get it do you? You think there's
something wrong with you because you aren't
in front of the cameras? Because you make
other people funny? Well, that's your super-
power! You're a kingmaker. I've been
following your career for years.

Rish stops walking.

RISH

Why? How? Why?

CHARLOTTE

It's what I do. I find people who can do what's needed. For every star in the spotlight, there's 50 people making sure the star shines. Warren is one of those people for the president. I'm one of those people for Warren.

RISH

You've found your place in the world. That's great for you. I haven't. Everybody tells me I should be able to step into the spotlight, but I can't.

CHARLOTTE

Then don't! But you've got to make a choice. Decide what you want and then go after it.

They stare at each other for a beat then Rish impulsively kisses Charlotte. She's surprised at first, but responds by putting her arms around his neck and returning the kiss enthusiastically.

RISH

Is that what you were talking about?

CHARLOTTE

Not exactly, but that was pretty great.

RISH

You want to go get a drink?

CHARLOTTE

No.

She raises an eyebrow and smiles suggestively. Rish shakes his head with confusion.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

I'm trying to be subtle.

RISH

(confused)

I'm sorry. I'm not good with subtle.

CHARLOTTE

I want to take you back to my place and have sex with you.

RISH

That's not a euphemism for something else is it?

CHARLOTTE

Just go wait for me out front. And you need a breath mint.

RISH

I'll be out front.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

Rish is pacing nervously while he waits for Charlotte.

RISH

(muttering)

Be cool. Man up. It's been awhile, but it's going to be fine. Hell, it's going to be awesome.

A black limo screeches to a halt in front of him. The rear door opens.

RISH (CONT'D)

Nice ride.

Rish climbs in the back of the limo. It screeches away as soon as he steps in.

INT. BACKSEAT OF LIMO - NIGHT

Rish is struggling to get into the seat.

RISH

Tell the driver to take it easy, huh? Who the hell are you guys? Never mind. Can you just take me back? And do either of you have a breath mint?

ANTON and ZORY (both 30's, male, tough) wearing dark suits and military-style haircuts sit across from Rish. Both men speak with very thick Russian accents.

ANTON

I am Anton. He is Zory.

RISH

Sorry?

ZORY

Zory.

RISH

For what?

ZORY

I'm Zory.

RISH

Sorry for what?

ANTON

What are you saying?

RISH

I don't understand what you're saying. Your name is "Anton" and he's apologizing for something.

ANTON

Be quiet!

RISH

Okay, take it easy. I'll just call you Boris and Natasha. I'm Rish.

ANTON

We know who you are.

RISH

That's not usually a good thing for me,
Natasha.

ZORY

Sorry?

RISH

I called him Natasha. Oh wait! Your name is
"Zory"?

ZORY

Yes! I am Zory. Hello!

ANTON

Quiet! Zory and I members of the Hazmenian
Unified Military Protectorate.

RISH

(laughing loudly)

No! HUMP? Stop the limo! Stop! Let me out!
I'm going to piss myself! HUMP!?! No! I can't
take it!

ZORY

Is different in Russian. In English is "HUMP",
in Russian sounds much different.

Rish is still laughing hysterically until Anton slaps him across the face.

RISH

Hey, shit-stain! What the hell was that for? I
didn't pick the name HUMP for your little club!
Damn, I'm getting tired of guys bossing me
around!

ANTON

Yes? And being so tired of it, what will you do?

RISH

I don't know. Take a nap probably. Where are we on the whole breath mint thing?

ANTON

You are to tell your President to support the people of Hazmenia and he should commit troops if necessary to keep the Russians away.

RISH

Does everybody know everything about everything except me?

ZORY

There are no secrets.

RISH

Oh yeah? I know something you don't know. I don't work for the White House anymore. I quit.

ANTON

What? Impossible!

RISH

No, very possible. I lose jobs all the time.

ANTON

You will get job back.

RISH

I don't think so, Natasha. The President is pretty pissed off at me.

Anton and Zory pull large handguns.

RISH (CONT'D)

I could try sending him a muffin basket.

ANTON

You will get job back or we will kill you.

RISH

I had an agent like you, Natasha.

ZORY

If you are of no use to us, you are of no use.
Yes?

Rish's phone beeps.

RISH

I've got a text. Okay?

Anton shrugs.

Rish looks at the phone. The message says, "Get ready to jump!"

ANTON

Is booty call from girlfriend? Is naked picture?

RISH

Yeah, sure. Booty call from my girlfriend.

Anton and Zory laugh.

The limo is rocked hard.

EXT. THE STREET - NIGHT

A large black SUV slams into the left side of the limo again. The two vehicles race down the dark street.

INT. INSIDE THE LIMO - NIGHT

The LIMO DRIVER (30's, male) lowers the screen and shouts to Anton and Zory in Russian.

RISH

What's going on?

ANTON

We are being attacked!

Anton and Zory shoot at the other vehicle, but the bullets just bounce off. The SUV pulls up again and slams into the limo.

Rish's phone beeps again. He fumbles it out and reads, "Jump! NOW!"

EXT. THE STREET - NIGHT

The SUV slams into the left side, forcing the limo driver to make a hard right turn down another street.

INT. INSIDE THE LIMO - NIGHT

As the limo slides into the turn, Rish jumps out of the right side door.

EXT. THE STREET - NIGHT

The limo roars away, the sounds of Anton and Zory cursing fade into the night.

Rish peeks out between his fingers as the SUV passenger window rolls down.

ROAN

Hi, pal. You okay?

Leery waves at Rish from the driver's seat.

RISH

Hi, Roan. Hi, Leery. I'm good. How you guys doing?

ROAN

Want a lift?

RISH

No thanks. I'll just stay here in the middle of the street. Maybe a truck will come along.

INT. INSIDE THE SUV - NIGHT

RISH

This is a coincidence. What brings you two super-spies out on a night like this?

LEERY

We're not spies.

ROAN

We're covert operatives working in the shadows to manipulate world events for the greater good.

RISH

I'm never going to remember all that. You sure I can't just call you "spies"?

ROAN

We need to talk.

RISH

That's good. Talking I can do.

Rish grabs the door handle, but the door doesn't open.

RISH (CONT'D)

Damn child safety locks. That's just embarrassing.

ROAN

Rish, you've got a problem.

RISH

I know, but nobody has a breath mint.

LEERY

Funny. I like how he uses humor as a defense against fear. Ever notice that?

RISH

You guys use guns to compensate for your tiny penises.

LEERY

Watch it, funny man.

ROAN

Everybody take it easy. Rish, people would probably say you have a problem with authority.

RISH

I'd say authority has a problem with me.

ROAN

It's not that simple.

RISH

You'd be surprised at how simple I am.

ROAN

People in authority are those who are willing to face the world, make a decision and be responsible for the outcome of those decisions. You resent people who are strong enough to face the possibility of failure. It's not authority you have a problem with, it's failure.

RISH

You'd think I'd be used to it by now.

ROAN

You've never failed at anything. You've succeeded at everything you've ever set out to do. Unfortunately, you often set out to get fired before you're given more responsibility; before you're given the chance to fail.

RISH

Okay, let's say you're right. I don't understand what you want from me.

ROAN

It's time for you to step into the spotlight, Rish. It's time for you to face the world, make a decision and be responsible. It's time for you to be in authority. We want you to face your greatest fear.

RISH

Cyborg ninja snakes with giant boobs?

They drive in silence for a beat.

LEERY

That's scary and sexy at the same time.

RISH

I know, right?

INT. ROAN'S SUV - NIGHT

The SUV parks on a side street not far from the White House.

RISH

This must be the part where you two tell me to do this or you'll kill me.

ROAN

Not this time, Rish. What happens now is completely up to you, but there's a few things you need to know. Hazmenia doesn't have the bomb. The Russians don't know but they suspect it. They've decided to do the Russian thing and attack Hazmenia anyway.

LEERY

President Donaldson is being advised by General Conklin to send troops to protect Hazmenia.

ROAN

And Hazmenia shares a border with China, who might not like all this troop build-up in their backyard.

LEERY

This whole thing is going to get real bad, real quick.

ROAN

President Donaldson has convinced the Hazmenian President and the Russian President to meet on a conference call. He's even got some representatives from Hazmenia and Russia joining him at the White House. You can go in there and try your best to convince the President to help Hazmenia without using troops or you can walk away. No threats, no guns. Your choice.

RISH

How am I supposed to do this? Tell jokes until everybody's laughing and singing?

ROAN

Maybe it's time to stop hiding behind jokes.

RISH

I'm not even sure I'll be allowed back in the building and you think I can convince him to go against his staff, the Pentagon and the entire intelligence community?

ROAN

95% of what we do is convince people in key positions to do the right thing, but if you want to walk, we'll understand. Right, Leery?

LEERY

Absolutely, you did your best.

RISH

What do you guys do the other 5% of the time?

ROAN

Topple illegal governments, machine-gun fights on snowmobiles, sex with beautiful women.

RISH

We should hang out more.

Leery pops the lock on Rish's door.

EXT. STREET NOT FAR FROM WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

Rish gets out of the SUV. Roan rolls down his window and offers his hand.

Rish shakes it.

ROAN

Whatever you decide, thanks for everything.

LEERY

Good luck, kid.

The SUV pulls away, leaving Rish alone.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The television monitors show one of the White House meeting rooms from various angles. They show the President greeting VARIOUS HAZMENIAN and RUSSIAN OFFICIALS as they arrive and prepare for the meeting.

Warren runs in and sees chaos.

The small control room is packed with shouting, angry, NERDY COMPUTER ENGINEERS. Elliot looks like he'll be the first to have a heart attack.

ELLIOTT

Get it back online! Now!

One of the ENGINEERS (30's) tosses his headphones on the desk in frustration.

ENGINEER

Damnit, Elliot! Don't you think we're trying?

WARREN

Elliot!

ELLIOTT

What!?! Warren! Sorry, we've lost the signal to the President. He's flying solo.

WARREN

So? He can handle this. It'll be fine.

ELLIOTT

It's not fine. Someone's jamming the signal.

WARREN

Who would do that? Who could do that?

INT. MILITARY COMPUTER ROOM

In a dark, military version of the control room, uniformed military technicians work on sophisticated computers. A CORPORAL (20's, glasses) calls out to a MAJOR (40's)

CORPORAL

Sir! Jamming complete.

MAJOR

(into headset)

General Conklin. We are go.

INT. WHITE HOUSE MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

The large meeting room is full of VARIOUS OFFICIALS. Most look anxious, the HAZMENIAN DELEGATES on one side, the RUSSIAN DIPLOMATS on the other. Both groups are eyeing each other suspiciously.

President Donaldson and several staff members are at the center of the long meeting table.

General Conklin is taking his seat at the meeting table. He tugs his ear and smirks as the Major's message is heard in voice-over.

MAJOR (V.O.)

General Conklin, the President's signal is dark.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Conklin is seen on one of the monitors, smirking and nodding slightly as he rubs his ear.

RISH

It's Conklin! Look at that smirk on his mug!

Everyone is surprised to see Rish standing the doorway.

RISH (CONT'D)

Don't look at me! There! Follow my finger!

Everyone looks at the smirking Conklin on the monitor as he sips his coffee.

WARREN

Son-of-a-bitch! He must have been fitted with a receiver too. They must have their own control room somewhere.

RISH

Warren, you've got to get me to the President. I have to talk to him.

WARREN

That whole wing will be locked down.

RISH

We need a distraction. Who's the smartest nerd in here?

The group of nerdy engineers shrug and glance around, a few hands feebly start to go up.

RISH (CONT'D)

We don't have time for this! Who's the rightful ruler of Westeros?

One NERDY ENGINEER (20's, fat) snorts derisively.

NERDY ENGINEER

The Baratheon succession is illegal. Daenerys Targaryen is the rightful ruler and while some...

RISH

(interrupting)

Winner! I need you to find the signal to Conklin's earpiece thing and break into it.

NERDY ENGINEER

Then do what?

RISH

I don't care as long as it's loud and obnoxious!

The Nerdy Engineer nods and gets to work.

RISH (CONT'D)

Warren, come on!

Warren and Rish rush out.

INT. WHITE HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Warren and Rish are rushing down a labyrinth of hallways.

WARREN

I thought you quit.

RISH

I quit quitting.

WARREN

Where have you been?

RISH

Getting slapped around by some guys from
HUMP.

WARREN

Getting your what slapped?

Charlotte joins them.

CHARLOTTE

I thought we...? Where were you?

WARREN

Getting hump-slapped, whatever that means.

RISH

Can we talk about this later?

As they round a corner, Agent Kevin blocks their way.

AGENT KEVIN

Mr. Collins? Come with me.

WARREN

We're taking him to see the President.

AGENT KEVIN

I'm sorry sir, but you're not. He's under arrest
and I'm to escort him to a holding cell
immediately.

RISH

Under arrest? For what?

AGENT KEVIN

He's a suspected terrorist.

RISH

That makes sense.

WARREN

Who issued the warrant?

RISH
Who do you think?

AGENT KEVIN
General Conklin, sir. Mr. Collins, come with me. Now.

RISH
I knew it! Warren, Conklin is just trying to stop me from seeing the President.

WARREN
Agent Kevin, I'm giving you a direct order on behalf of the President of the United States, you will stand down and let us pass.

Agent Kevin unbuttons his coat and displays his sidearm.

AGENT KEVIN
Mr. Collins, this way.

Rish steps forward and Agent Kevin grabs his arm, pulling him down another hallway roughly.

RISH
Warren! Tell the President...

Agent Kevin pushes Rish through a door before he can finish.

AGENT KEVIN
Quiet! No talking! Get in there!

CHARLOTTE
What the hell was that about?

INT. WHITE HOUSE MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

The meeting is about to start. Everyone has taken their seats. A large flatscreen monitor at one end is displaying a split screen. On one side, PRESIDENT GREGAROFF, the Russian President. On the other side of the screen is PRESIDENT SZULLENSKI, the Hazmenian President.

The room quiets as President Donaldson addresses the men on the video.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

President Gregaroff, President Szullenski, on behalf of all parties involved, I would like to thank you for participating in...

Conklin can't hear a word anyone is saying. He's being blasted by loud rap music which is shutting all other sounds out.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone in the control room is laughing and dancing to the wicked rap beat being sent to Conklin's receiver.

INT. WHITE HOUSE MEETING ROOM

Conklin can't take it anymore. He leaps to his feet and shouts over the music only he can hear.

GENERAL CONKLIN

(shouting)

Mr. President! I must apologize to all of the bitches...God! Please, I'm sorry! I have to excuse myself!

President Donaldson motions to two SECRET SERVICE AGENTS. They quickly step forward and escort General Conklin from the room.

Conklin is still shouting, his voice echoing loudly from outside the room.

GENERAL CONKLIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

It's not my fault! Can you hear me? That writer!
He's the one!

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I'm sorry for that. The General has been under a great deal of pressure. Let's get started.

INT. HALLWAY OF THE WHITE HOUSE LOWER LEVELS - NIGHT

Agent Kevin pushes Rish ahead of him down a long, darkened hallway.

RISH

You know, Kev, I always liked you. I can tell, you're a good guy.

AGENT KEVIN

Doesn't matter what I am, I do what I'm told.

RISH

The General wants things to kick off over Hazmenia, you know that right? I bet he's going to make millions supplying government contracts to companies he owns stock in or something.

AGENT KEVIN

So am I.

RISH

Really? You're willing to start a war so you can get paid?

AGENT KEVIN

Sure, why not? You going to stop me?

RISH

Of course. I have a brilliant plan.

AGENT KEVIN

Sure you do.

RISH

Give me a few months and I'll come up with one. I'll let you know. You on Facebook?

AGENT KEVIN

Funny. Right to the end.

RISH

What does that mean? "The end"? You're not going to kill me, are you, Kevin? Really? Why? It can't be because I know too much because I really don't have a clue.

The door at the far end of the hallway opens. Agent Barry steps through and closes the door behind him. Agent Kevin pulls his sidearm, Agent Barry does the same.

RISH (CONT'D)

If you guys are going to start shooting, can I step aside? Preferably on the other side of that door?

AGENT BARRY

He's coming with me.

AGENT KEVIN

You want to do this again? You know you can't beat me.

Agent Barry holsters his sidearm. Agent Kevin smiles and does the same.

AGENT BARRY

Rish, step aside.

Rish grabs Kevin's gun from his holster and jumps back. He shakily points it at Agent Kevin.

RISH

Finally I get to point a gun at somebody! This is great! Kevin, don't move!

AGENT KEVIN

You won't shoot me. An unarmed Secret Service agent escorting a prisoner? Even if you had the balls to pull the trigger, you'd get the death sentence.

Agent Kevin takes a step forward. Rish's hand is shaking.

AGENT KEVIN (CONT'D)

Give me the gun, you idiot.

Before Agent Kevin can react, Agent Barry slaps him in a sleeper hold.

RISH

Ha! Snuck up on you! Who's the idiot now?

The gun goes off and ricochets around the small hallway. Agent Kevin struggles, but can't break the grip.

RISH (CONT'D)

Shit! Sorry! I hate these things. Sorry! I'm putting it down now.

Agent Barry drops the unconscious Agent Kevin on the floor and starts removing Agent Kevin's clothing.

RISH (CONT'D)

We can tea-bag him and take pictures later, but right now, I really need to talk to the President.

AGENT BARRY

Help me with his pants.

INT. WHITE HOUSE MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

The meeting is falling apart.

PRESIDENT SZULLINSKI

(from video screen)

I protest the use of force on our border.
Furthermore...

The Russian side of the room shouts him down. President Gregaroff silences them with a wave.

PRESIDENT GREGAROFF

(from video screen)

We do not recognize your border! You have no border! There is no Hazmenia! Your illegal secession is not recognized by...

Now the Hazmenian side of the room explodes with angry shouts. President Donaldson rubs his ear and tries to maintain order.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Rish is wearing Agent Kevin's suit. He's putting the dark glasses on. The suit is a terrible fit, much too large for him.

RISH

Perfect. Nobody will notice.

AGENT BARRY

He's a little bigger than you.

RISH

You think!?! This will never work!

AGENT BARRY

Conklin's got everyone looking for you. We'll just have to bluff our way into the meeting room.

RISH

Bluff? Like in Chess?

AGENT BARRY

You don't play Chess at all do you?

RISH

You don't bluff in Chess? You sure?

AGENT BARRY

Stay behind me, walk fast and keep an expression on your face like somebody just farted.

RISH

Really? That's it?

Rish tries a few faces.

AGENT BARRY

What's with your shoes?

Rish is still wearing his tennis shoes.

RISH

That guy's feet are huge! I won't be able to walk in those boats.

AGENT BARRY

Just keep moving, no matter what. I'll get you in the room, but you're going to have to talk fast if you want to stay in there.

INT. HALLWAY LEADING TO THE MEETING ROOMS - NIGHT

Agent Barry is walking quickly with "Agent" Rish on his heels. Rish has his hand to his ear and is pretending to be speaking on his radio microphone.

A MARINE (20's, tough) is guarding the doorway.

Agent Barry waves his credentials at the Marine, Rish pulls his ID card as well, waving it in front of him.

MARINE GUARD

Stop, gentlemen. There's a meeting in progress.

AGENT BARRY

We know that, Marine. We need to talk to the President.

MARINE GUARD

I'll have to see your ID's.

The Marine looks around Agent Barry at Rish, seeing his baggy suit and white tennis shoes.

MARINE GUARD (CONT'D)

What the hell?

RISH

Who farted?

MARINE GUARD

What?

Agent Barry karate chops the Marine, knocking him cold. He takes the Marine's magnetic door key and swipes it.

The door buzzes open.

AGENT BARRY

Make it good.

Rish and Agent Barry push the door open to a long hallway.

INT. WHITE HOUSE MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

Everyone is pissed!

PRESIDENT SZULLINSKI

(from video screen)

You will respect the sovereign nation of Hazmenia or you will learn respect!

The Russian delegates respond angrily.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

(angry)

This is getting us nowhere! President Gregaroff, if you do not move your troops from the Hazmenian border immediately...

He is interrupted by the thunderous sound of running feet coming down the hallway. Everyone in the meeting stops as they hear the door across the hallway slam open.

RISH (O.S.)

Mr. President! You've got to listen to me! What the hell! I thought you said it was in here.

AGENT BARRY (O.S.)

It must be across the hall.

A few more running footsteps and the door to the meeting room creaks open a bit.

Rish peeks around the door.

RISH

Yeah, it's in here.

Rish steps in followed by Agent Barry, who waits by the door.

RISH (CONT'D)

Mr. President!

ALL THREE PRESIDENTS

Yes?

RISH

This is going to be confusing.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

(to Agent Barry)

Agent...?

RISH

(interrupting)

That's right, sir. I'm Agent Roan Hayes of
ANGEL!

The Russian and Hazmenian delegates all respond loudly, as if they were just told their favorite movie star just walked into the room. Over the excited babbling, ASSORTED VOICES are heard.

VOICE #1

The famous super-spy!

VOICE #2

You broke my sister's heart!

VOICE #3

You broke my snowmobile!

VOICE #4

Can I have your autograph?

Anton and Zory are sitting on the Hazmenian side, off in the corner.

ZORY

(whispering in Russian)

SUBTITLE: We are lucky he didn't kill us.

ANTON
(whispering in Russian)
SUBTITLE: He must be a master of disguise.

RISH
(off the reaction)
Yeah, okay, settle down. It's me. Roan Hayes.
Yep. Sorry, I'm late Mr. United States
President of America.

President Donaldson motions for Agent Barry to come get Rish.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON
I think this has gone on long enough.

The Russian and Hazmenian delegates groan in disappointment.

PRESIDENT SZULLINSKI
(from video screen)
No, please, President Donaldson. I would
welcome Agent Hayes' input on this situation.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON
But this...

PRESIDENT GREGAROFF
(from video screen)
I too would like to hear what the famous Roan
Hayes has to say.

President Donaldson sighs and nods to Agent Barry. Agent Barry steps back to the door.

RISH
Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President. Mr.
President. Did I leave anyone out?

A few chuckles, mostly confused stares.

Rish walks down one side of the room toward the video screen where the two Presidents watch him.

RISH (CONT'D)

I suppose you're all wondering why I'm taking time out from my busy schedule of having sex with beautiful governments and toppling illegal women.

Rish stops in front of the video screen.

RISH (CONT'D)

Wow, this painting is so life-like. Watch how the eyes follow me.

Rish weaves side-to-side, both the Presidents on the screen continue to watch him, their heads swivelling like they were watching a tennis match.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Do you have something to contribute or not?

Rish whirls around dramatically.

RISH

Yes! Want to hear a Russian Secret Police Knock-Knock joke? Knock, Knock!

ZORY

Who is there knocking?

RISH

(bad Russian accent)

We will ask the questions!

Silence. Rish is bombing again. The flop sweat starts.

RISH (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I don't mean to pick on the Russians. I'll do a Hazmenian joke now to be fair. How many Hazmenians does it take...?

Rish stops for a beat. He gets serious.

RISH (CONT'D)

How many Hazmenian nuclear weapons does it take to start World War 3?

Silence.

RISH (CONT'D)

Nobody knows. There's no such thing as a
Hazmenian nuclear weapon.

The Hazmenian side erupts with protests, the Russian side cat-calls.

PRESIDENT GREGAROFF

(on video screen)

I knew it!

PRESIDENT SZULLINSKI

(on video screen)

What are you saying?

Rish shouts the room down.

RISH

Not yet! Not now, but there will be one day. If
that's what they want! If that's what you force
them to do.

Silence.

RISH (CONT'D)

All the Hazmenians want is what everyone
wants: the chance to make their own choices.
They want to stand on their own.

(to President Gregaroff)

You wanted that, right? I bet you couldn't wait
to move out of your parent's house and get
your own place.

PRESIDENT GREGAROFF

Is true.

RISH

I'm not Roan Hayes.

Another groan of disappointment.

RISH (CONT'D)

My name is Rish Collins. I write stupid jokes for a living. My whole life is joking around. I'm good at it too, but I can't see anything funny about any of this. Russia attacks the little guy, we help the little guy, China helps themselves and pretty soon, nobody's laughing at anything for a long time. You're all really good at blowing stuff up. That's a proven fact. Why not make a different choice this time?

Everyone turns to look at President Gregaroff. Gregaroff stares at the desk for a beat.

Rish starts to speak again, but President Donaldson catches his eye, holds up his hand.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

(mouthing the words to Rish)

Wait for it.

Rish smiles and bites his lip.

PRESIDENT GREGAROFF

On behalf of the people of the Russian Socialist Republic, I welcome the Republic of Hazmenia to the global community.

Big smile.

The room burst out in applause, the Russian and Hazmenian delegates hugging and congratulating each other.

President Donaldson pulls Rish to one side amid all the cheering.

RISH

So, what now?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I think first we need to get you a suit that fits.

MONTAGE OF WEBSITES AND VIDEO REPORTS:

General Conklin arrested on ethics charges.

President Donaldson announces his candidacy for re-election.

Tom Kirby resigns as Press Secretary.

The press laughing with President Donaldson during another press conference.

The Buddy Bean Show cancelled.

An audience laughing and applauding with President Donaldson as the guest on a talk show.

Donaldson wins re-election!

Hazmenian and Russian Presidents welcomed at White House.

INT. THE CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Rish is sitting alone in the Control Room. One video monitor is displaying the empty podium with the Presidential Seal in the White House Press Room. Several other monitors show the room from various angles, filled with ASSORTED REPORTERS AND CAMERA CREWS. Another press briefing is about to begin.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Nervous?

The President is standing in the doorway.

RISH

You know, I'm really not.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I never really thanked you.

RISH

That's true.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I want you to have this.

The President hands Rish a small box.

RISH

If there's a ring in here, we've got a problem.
Charlotte and I have been dating.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

(laughing)

Just open it, smart guy.

Rish finds a paperclip inside.

RISH

A paperclip?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

Stepped on it in my bare feet. You made your
point.

RISH

This must've set you back, what? 900th of a
cent? You couldn't have sprung for one of
those cool plastic-covered ones?

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

You don't get it?

RISH

I get it. Thanks. I'm glad I was able to help.
Dude.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

I'll see you upstairs. Mr. Fabulous.

The President leaves.

Rish pauses for a beat, then switches off the video monitor and the light as he
leaves the room.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Rish walks down the hallway, turns a corner and is among the busy offices of
the White House Staff.

Warren and Charlotte join him.

WARREN

You ready?

RISH

I'm ready.

Charlotte hands him a notebook.

CHARLOTTE

So you made your choice. I'm proud of you.
Don't forget, your parents are meeting us for
dinner tonight. Eight o'clock, Tony's and don't
wear that tie. Good luck.

She gives him kiss on the cheek and leaves.

WARREN

I thought you didn't like being bossed around.

RISH

I like how she does it.

Rish's phone beeps with a text message: "Give'em hell! We'll be in touch.
Roan."

WARREN

Bad news?

Rish looks worried for a beat. Then, he smiles confidently at Warren.

RISH

Nah, nothing I can't handle. Let's do this.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - DAY

The press room is jammed with reporters, cameras and lights.

Rish walks confidently to the podium.

RISH

Good morning. I'm Rish Collins, White House
Press Secretary and muffin basket weaver.

The press laughs, cameras snap pictures.

RISH (CONT'D)

We've got a few items to go over, but first, you know how we start these things, right? Frank, kick us off and you can ask the first question.

Frank Taylor stands, the rest of the room does the same. Everyone places their hands over their hearts and Frank Taylor leads the group in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

RISH (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Man, I love this country.