

THE PRESIDENT'S JESTER

Written by

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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 COLLINS(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

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
See?

RISH
See what? He said I was okay .

ARTIE
Okay ? How long have you lived in
LA?

(MORE)

ARTIE (cont'd)
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 wacky 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 dead-eyed, blank 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.

(MORE)

RISH (cont'd)
 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 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
cliche, 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.

(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 over caffeinated 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 Hogwarts, 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? 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.

(MORE)

PRESIDENT DONALDSON (cont'd)

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.

PRESIDENT DONALDSON

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 a 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.

(MORE)

GENERAL CONKLIN (cont'd)
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 don't have to kill me. Some
club soda will take that right out.

GENERAL CONKLIN
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. 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. 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.

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?

(MORE)

WARREN (cont'd)
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. Charlotte 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

Who was that?

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? 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.

(MORE)

RISH (cont'd)

Then these two cool but really 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 and I expected hard work from others. 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.

(MORE)

PRESIDENT DONALDSON (cont'd)

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. 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. 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. 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.

(MORE)

TOM KIRBY (cont'd)
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 signaling 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. 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 is 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.
(MORE)

PRESIDENT DONALDSON (cont'd)
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?

(MORE)

RISH (cont'd)

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 support Russia.

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.

(MORE)

ROAN (cont'd)

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.)
 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 shoes.

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 swiveling 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.

(MORE)

RISH (cont'd)
(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
You're going to need a new suit.

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 canceled.

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.

FADE OUT.