

Gary emerges from the men's room, joins Mike.

MIKE

A situation with the Vice President?

GARY

Oh God! Is she down? I should have been there!

Mike and Gary hurry after the VP, Anna and Dan as they leave the party.

CUT TO:

EXT. SRVA FUNDRAISER - CONTINUOUS

Selina on her way to the car with Anna and Dan. Mike and Gary bring up the rear. All are walking quickly, checking their Blackberrys. A sense of panic.

SELINA

This is not my fault.

DAN

I can't access Kagan's blog. Is it down?

ANNA

No, not your fault ma'am. I can't access Kagan either. Someone punch the AT&T guy.

SELINA

(to Dan)

This is your boss. She was using that word so much this morning - 'retard' this, 'retard' the other - it was like Hurricane Retard. It fixed it in my head.

DAN

There's a way to mend this. Tomorrow morning you meet with someone amenable from a mental health charity. I have a lot of contacts.

SELINA

I imagine you probably do. You're a hub. A nexus the size of Texas. Talk to Anna.

Selina gets in the car.

ANNA

Appreciate your input Dan but fuck off. She needs to call the Association of Mental Health Charities right now, not tomorrow, and apologise.

DAN

No! Calm things down. More haste, less speed.

ANNA

The way I see it, more haste, more haste. We need haste here.

Anna, Gary and Mike bundle clumsily into the car.

DAN

Larry, Moe - let Curly in first.

CUT TO:

INT. VP'S CAR - EVENING

Selina is on the phone. Anna, Mike and Gary with her

SELINA

Yes, that's right, so I was wanting to apologise over some comments that I...uh-huh, sure, I'll hold.

(to the car)

I'm holding. Actually, what if they haven't heard about it yet. What if the mental people haven't heard the retard comments?

ANNA

Well, they will hear eventually so...

SELINA

You think they'll definitely hear?

MIKE

They might not hear. What if Tom Hanks dies?

ANNA

What?

MIKE

Just a for-instance - what if Tom Hanks dies? That's all that will be on the news for like a week.

SELINA

He's right, they'll be going with the cutlery thing tomorrow. Plastics is worse than retard. I think it's worse. Is it? Fuck, I don't know any more. Should I hang up?

Selina holds her temples.

MIKE

Okay, how about - we let the retard thing blow up. It was a silly word, we apologise, but it's the main story, so we've drowned out plastics?

ANNA

Mike, the press didn't stop writing about Hiroshima just because the Nagasaki thing blew up.

GARY

(Reaching into the Leviathan)  
Codeine or Ibuprofen?

SELINA

Both. Plus that stuff they use in lethal injections.

(into phone)

Yes, hi, just one second...

(hand over phone, to car)

They've de-held me, I'm loose, I've gone rogue. What do I say?

Blank looks. No-one wants to commit.

SELINA (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Yes, hi, I was mentioning to your colleague, what happened was I used the word 'retard' in a...retard, yes. In a humorous context. No, I know, that is why I'm apologising now....

ANNA

I think we're going to need you to pull an all-nighter on this Mike.

MIKE

I can't. The dog.

SELINA

(hand over phone)

Go home. Feed the dog. Walk the dog. Shoot the dog. Bury the dog. Come back in.

MIKE

Actually, maybe...the dog will be fine.

CUT TO:

INT. VP'S OFFICES - DAY

Next morning Selina is in her own private office. Outside it's very busy. Phones ringing, staffers dealing with calls. Mike is tired and unshaven.

He cradles a phone receiver under his chin as he tries to take off his shirt and put on a fresh one out of a cellophane packet.

MIKE

It was a reference to a petard. No, not Star Trek - 'petard'.

Mike now in his undershirt. Anna crosses to Gary's desk.

ANNA

Okay, set up new Google alerts for 'VP.' 'Meyer offensive', 'Meyer retard', 'Meyer resigning issue'. Then delete your History.

Jonah enters. He's carrying a very large envelope.

JONAH

Okay, why the huge retard panic? The retard thing's not as bad as cutlery.

ANNA

The Veep apologised last night about the retard thing.

JONAH

What? She put it out there? Okay, here's a couple more News Alerts for you then: try 'VP worse than the Jonestown massacre' and 'VP 9/11 point 2'.

ANNA

I haven't got time to ignore you Jonah. Gary, could you ignore Jonah for me?

GARY

I assume you're joking Anna. Hi Jonah. What do you have there?

Jonah puts the envelope on the table.

JONAH

Condolence card, for Senator Reeves' widow. The President's already signed, so if Selina could too, while she still has a job? Then I'll send it round the Hill.

Dan arrives with another man - PAUL, early 40s, smart. Anna slightly taken aback.

DAN

Anna, this is Paul Burton, Chair of the American Association of Mental Health Charities.

PAUL

Hi.

Paul smiles at Gary. Gary quickly shifts his chair to cover a card pinned up in front of his desk that says 'You Don't Have To Be Mad To Work Here But It Helps'. Selina emerges.

SELINA

Mr Burton. Why don't you come through to my office. Gary, could you fix some coffee?

GARY

Yes ma'am.

Gary does. Paul and Selina go in to her office.

JONAH

Ma'am, I have a condolence card here for Senator Reeves' widow...

As Selina closes the door she mimes a writing gesture to Anna, and makes a different, odd, gesture to Dan.

ANNA

What was that gesture? I've never seen her give that gesture.

Jonah gets closer to Anna with the card.

JONAH

Is she not going to sign this card?

ANNA

I'll sign the card. That's what her gesture was to me, to do her signature on this. What was her gesture to you Dan?

DAN

I'm not sure I noticed a gesture.

Gary takes the coffee in to Selina.

ANNA

Can you not stand so close Jonah, you stink of cigarettes.

JONAH

I smell like a man. All men used to smell like this. Spencer Tracy used to smell like this. Cary Grant. I smell like them.

DAN

Dead old men.

Gary emerges from Selina's office.

JONAH

You all smell of women, especially you Gary.

Gary points to the VP's bag, The Leviathan.

GARY  
That'll be the VP's scented wipes.  
Vanilla and rose.

ANNA  
I know what you're doing Dan, okay?

DAN  
Yes? What am I doing?

ANNA  
I don't know, exactly, but I do know that  
you are one sly fuck. You know Fantastic  
Mr Fox? That's you, only you're worse  
than a fox. You're Fantastic Mr Shit.

JONAH  
Sorry to interrupt the pre-nup, but is  
this card going to...?

Anna grabs the card.

ANNA  
I'm signing the fucking card.

She does a quick signature. Jonah glances at the card. A  
smile. He leaves as Mike comes in.

MIKE  
Hit the deck, fuckers! Brett Kagan's blog  
is now saying the VP was calling Senator  
Reeves a retard at the fundraiser.

DAN  
Well, see, that's Kagan getting things  
completely wrong. We can prove the VP  
didn't say that and discredit him. Which  
is why I planted that story with him in  
the first place.

ANNA /MIKE  
What the fuck...?

DAN  
It's a dumb story anyway, and we also  
show it's unreliable, because it comes  
from a blogger who's a news slut. He  
shuts down, cutlery moves to page 10,  
retard moves to page 5, and on page 1 we  
have "Bloggers Eat Babies".

GARY  
I don't understand. Are you meant to be  
clever?

DAN

It's brilliant Gary. And it gets better. What you need to do, Mikey, at the 11:30 press call today is make it clear there were two people - the VP and Senator Hallowes - involved in Retardgate.

GARY

Can we not call it Retardgate? Can we call it the R-word F-up?

Dan turns on Gary.

DAN

I don't give a splayed fucking anus what the fuck we call it you clumsy fucking human tumour, we've got to deal with it, okay? Now get on board, or I swear I'll slice your tits off so Mike can take them home for his dog. We need a body. And we can't give them the Vice President.

MIKE

So we give them your boss? Are you doing a thing, a clever double thing, or...?

DAN

Don't worry your meaty head, Mike, just tell the press that Senator Hallowes introduced the expression 'retard' into the conversation. And she encouraged - strike - she *goaded* the VP into using it.

MIKE

You think I'm going to do what you say?

Dan gets very close to Mike.

DAN

Ask yourself - do you think I'll end up working in a position above you or below you Mike? Every shred of ambition left your body a long time ago and all you've got left for the remaining 10 years of your working life is a damp apartment, cold dwarf-burgers from a buffet, and an invisible fucking dog. Make a calculation.

Dan and Mike exit to the other office. Gary is looking through some paperwork. Hands a sheet of paper to Anna.

GARY

Oh, could you sign this customs form to confirm that Selina's French sweeteners weren't a gift? Not, if you will, a 'sweetener'.

Anna signs.

ANNA

You, Gary, are as funny as...fuck.

GARY

Why thank you.

ANNA

No. Fuck. The condolence card. I think I signed my own name. Not Selina's, mine.

GARY

How sure are you, on a scale of one to ten, where one...

ANNA

I can work out how the fucking scale will go Gary. Nine. I'm nine sure that I signed my name.

GARY

Nine. That's almost the full ten.

ANNA

Okay. Not good. The VP couldn't be bothered to sign a card for one of the most revered Senators of the last 50 years. Selina can't know about this.

GARY

No.

Gary almost immediately gets up and goes straight towards the VP's office.

ANNA

Gary...!

GARY

If she's going down, I've got to catch her.

He knocks and enters. A pause. From outside we can hear the VP's voice is raised. Gary comes out.

ANNA

Why did you tell her? You lunatic. She's going to turn into an apeshit crazy person.

At the words 'lunatic' and 'apeshit crazy person' Selina opens the door and comes out. Paul has obviously heard. She closes the door.

SELINA



SELINA (CONT'D)

This is insane. We've done Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We're doing Chernobyl as well?

ANNA

I'm so sorry. I ..

SELINA

I need every Senator on side to get reform through and you give me this? Senator's are fucking prickly people, Anna. I know. I used to be a big fucking prickly Senator.

ANNA

I'm so sorry. We'll get the card back.

SELINA

Yes you will. Now get on with it, because I'm busy in there apologising.

She goes back in.

SELINA (CONT'D)

Sorry, now where...

The door closes. Mike and Dan have come back through. Mike is still half-dressed.

ANNA

Mike, a truckload of fuck has just been unloaded all over this office.

MIKE

Man, this is too much information.

He puts his hands over his ears. Selina emerges from her office with Paul, the Mental Health guy, who stares at a man in his undershirt with his hands over his ears.

CUT TO:

INT. EISENHOWER BUILDING - DAY

Mike and Dan are heading to the Press Room.

MIKE

I need you to know I'm not happy about giving this briefing.

DAN

And I need you to know that I couldn't give a shit.

MIKE

Is this going to be like Moonlighting  
where we end up falling in love with each  
other and fucking?

DAN

No, more like The Wire, where I end up  
blowing your brains out. And then like  
Dexter, where I cut you into little  
pieces and incinerate you. And then like  
The West Wing, where I become President.

CUT TO:

INT. VP'S OFFICES - DAY

We're in the open-plan office with Selina, Gary and Anna.

GARY

I'm feeling a bit like, you know, the  
Watergate burglars? I mean, this is...

ANNA

Don't be a dick Gary. With Watergate they  
burgled party secrets, you're retrieving  
a greetings card. OK? They forced illegal  
entry, you have a pass that authorises  
you to enter most of the White House.

SELINA

This isn't Watergate. This is walking  
through a gate.

GARY

I need a long coat. To hide the card.

ANNA

You can borrow mine.

SELINA

Good luck Gary - take that bullet for me!

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

Establisher.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE LIAISON OFFICE - DAY

Gary enters the office wearing a scarlet overcoat with a  
fur trim on the cuffs. Looks sick with nerves. Heads  
towards Jonah's empty desk. But suddenly there's Jonah.