

It's one that opens only a few inches and Jonah is smoking out of the small gap, - he leans in to take a puff, exhales through the gap from the side of his mouth.

SELINA

Jonah.

JONAH

Madam Vice President.

ANNA

I know you only do that to look cool and get the girls.

MIKE

You look like the guy from My Left Foot.

Selina goes through into her private office.

JONAH

The President lets me smoke out of the White House briefing room window, and that opens the whole way.

GARY

That one's an anti-suicide window.

JONAH

They only put it in when you joined, right Gary?

GARY

No.

Jonah flicks his cigarette butt out the window.

ANNA

How many times have you spoken to the President today, Jonah? You need to remember so you can put it up on your star chart on the refrigerator.

JONAH

Four times. In the briefing room, in the hallway, NSC meeting, in the hallway again.

MIKE

Is that as he was trying to throw you out of the NSC meeting?

JONAH

The President knows my name Mike. I doubt he remembers yours.

ANNA

You know he attaches an image to a name to make it easier to remember?

(MORE)

ANNA (CONT'D)

So for you - Jonah - he'd think of a whale, because you're called Jonah and you look like a whale.

Jonah moves over to where Anna has sat down.

JONAH

So, Anna, good new Italian place opened downtown. You like Italian?

ANNA

I love Italian Jonah. But still, unfortunately, really dislike you.

JONAH

Hey, I'm not asking you out. That wasn't a knockback because I didn't ask you out.

Selina has come out into the open-plane office again, checking her Blackberry.

ANNA

Jonah, you know I will never go out with you. I would rather go out with Gary than go out with you and I would never in a million years go out with Gary. Isn't that right, Gary?

GARY

Right. You've said this many a time.

Selina looks up from her Blackberry.

SELINA

Jonah, you are, I know, a very busy and important 24-year-old. So why have you come to see us?

JONAH

The White House would like you to go to tonight's SRVA fundraiser instead of the President.

SELINA

Why?

JONAH

He'd rather not be open to questioning tonight. Frank's remarks about off-shore accounts and curbing business tax breaks were obviously absolutely correct, but he will be resigning tomorrow. Pharmaceuticals and the Roundtable are flapping, we need to throw them a cuttlefish.

SELINA

Apt food metaphor, given there's no backbone involved. Sorry, Jonah, I'd love to go up there and publicly contradict my beliefs, but I have my own agenda space to tend to.

JONAH

The President is very keen that your going to the fundraiser should be, fundamentally, the sequence of events that does actually take place this evening.

Selina has no option.

SELINA

Let me make a call.

She goes back into her office, closes the door.

JONAH

You need to be there too Mike, so no going home to walk the dog. Make sure the VP doesn't mention cornstarch, plastics, fossil fuels or any type of organic or inorganic compound whatsoever.

MIKE

Don't tell me what to do, Doogie fucking Howzer.

JONAH

I don't know what that means. Or the left-foot thing. And I can fucking tell you what to do because one of us backed the winning candidate in the Presidential nominations.

(Jonah starts fiddling with his Blackberry.)

Let me text you the name of that someone who does now work for the President...

(he clicks send)

...and not for the candidate who lost.

Mike's Blackberry beeps. He looks at it.

MIKE

'Jungle'.

JONAH

Jonah. It's predictive text. You know what I wrote. I wrote my name.

MIKE

Okay Jungle.

Selina comes back out.

SELINA

Right, I've cancelled my date. Anna, we should get a speech and some jokes together.

JONAH

Jokes?

SELINA

Just some gags to liven things up. Anna will come up with some.

ANNA

Maybe not jokes as such. Maybe more a light touch. Like Ugly Betty - it's not technically a comedy, but it has a light touch.

JONAH

No, no jokes. These are not humorous times for America.

Jonah leaves.

SELINA

You know, I'm wondering just how hard I'll weep when that guy gets his embolism.

ANNA

Okay, let's turn this - use tonight's speech for your 'Re-energizing Floor Procedure' agenda.

SELINA

Right. Let's float my idea about cloture change needing 41 to prevent instead of 60 to invoke.

ANNA

You don't seriously expect me to come up with jokes about that?

Mike heads out.

MIKE

I'll go and check if the press room's ready for the fireball about to hit them.

SELINA

Mike - what were my two big campaign mistakes, would you say?

MIKE

You looked tired a lot of the time? And that hat?

SELINA

You don't think one of them was that we went too soon with attack ads in Oregon?

MIKE

Who knows about that shit? Anyway, we got here in the end.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON ROOF TERRACE - EVENING

The SRVA fundraiser is busy. Large free bar, waiters with canapes. Selina, Anna, Gary and Mike are there. Anna and Mike scan the room. Gary does too, but also nervously looks up, and across at other roofs, for snipers.

ANNA

Okay, Senator Clements is here, you should definitely talk to her. And Bill Knight from the Speaker's office.

MIKE

Ooh, little burgers. Great. Four of those make a normal one.

Mike takes four burgers from a waiter's tray.

ANNA

I assume you're taking some of those home for your dog?

SELINA

What utensils do they have here? I can't be seen using cornstarch over plastic. Or plastic over cornstarch.

MIKE

(eating)

You could use celery as a kind of shovel?

SELINA

Bring me some lentil salad, I'll go in the corner and eat it with my fingers.

CUT TO:

Gary next to WOMAN AT DESK, who is letting people in.

GARY

I expect this is a fairly low-risk event, yeah? All-ticket affair?

WOMAN

Pretty much. There's usually one or two unknowns.

GARY

Unknowns?

Three people - one female (KATE), two male - are coming in. The WOMAN on the desk knows the female guest. She addresses the guys.

WOMAN

You guys with Kate?

The men nod.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Okay.

(jokily)

You're not terrorists are you, 'cos Kate knows a lot of terrorists!

They all laugh. Gary looks very worried, shuffles off.

CUT TO:

Mike chatting to a YOUNG WOMAN, stares a little too hard at her. He holds his left arm out, on which he has balanced five small spring rolls and two mini burgers.

MIKE

They deliberately don't give you a plate at these things to discourage you from getting a free dinner. But I always say - the forearm is nature's plate.

He takes a spring roll off his arm and eats it.

MIKE (CONT'D)

By the way, I'm Mike.

He goes to shake her hand with his greasy fingers. She doesn't respond.

CUT TO:

Selina is with Anna, ready to make her speech. Selina wiping lentil salad from her hands.

SELINA

Do you have my notes Anna?

ANNA

Gary has them.

Selina speaks quietly over her shoulder.

SELINA

Notes please Gary.

He isn't there. He's about two yards away.

SELINA (CONT'D)

Gary?

GARY

Sorry ma'am - do you need me?

SELINA

I need my notes. Why are you over there?

Gary brings the notes, but stands behind one of the PA speakers and leans across to Selina to hand them over.

A LITTLE GIRL is on the rostrum, playing with the microphone. Mike approaches her and whispers.

MIKE

Take a hike kid.

LITTLE GIRL

I'm sorry sir?

MIKE

Take a hike. Defcon one.

Slightly desultory applause as Selina steps onto the podium. People aren't paying attention. There's lots of talking, ordering of drinks.

SELINA

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen...
(she looks at a party
official)
...and Tom!

A beat. She expects a laugh. There's nothing.

SELINA (CONT'D)

Aaahm. These are serious times. And in serious times we require an effective legislature. I'm reminded tonight of the late Senator David Reeves...

She steps back from the microphone a little, waits for warm applause. Zilch. Selina starts getting flustered.

SELINA (CONT'D)

He died. He's dead now. And I remember him talking to me about the absurdity of allowing multiple filibusters on a single bill. In his words...

The noise of the crowd gets louder. More people drift away to get drinks.

CUT TO:

Anna is with Jonah and Dan, watching Selina's speech.

JONAH

This isn't quite the Gettysburg Address.

DAN

It's more a recreation of the tragic events that led to it.

ANNA

Could you two shut your mouths?

(to Jonah)

It's that red and yellow hole you use when you sieve carbohydrates through your pubey 15-year-old's beard.

JONAH

I'm sorry. Are you having difficulty hearing the other 200 people talking over your boss?

Jonah looks over at a very attractive woman a few feet away - CAROL HALLOWES.

JONAH (CONT'D)

That your date?

DAN

That's the woman I'm with tonight, yes.

JONAH

She's nice. An eight. Definite eight. I used to get sixes, now I'm in the White House I get eights.

DAN

I've never seen you with an eight.

JONAH

Oh, I get eights, believe me. I'm up to my neatly trimmed nuts in eights...

Jonah scrolls through his Blackberry. Dan is keen to see his Contacts. After a long silence, Dan can't help himself.

DAN

So, who do you know?

Jonah, uncomfortable, heads off to the bar. Anna looks across at Carol.

ANNA

Carol Hallowses? How do you even say that? Carol Hallowses. "Hallo Carol Hallowses!"

DAN

You know I did promise her she'd be three feet away from the President tonight.

ANNA

What a shame - she's going to have to be content with being, what?

(cock-measuring gesture)

...three and a half inches away from you later?

DAN

That doesn't work. As a joke. The penis, whatever size, is inserted into the vagina. So she would be the same distance from me if my penis were small or huge.

Carol joins them.

ANNA

Hallo Carol Hallows!

CUT TO:

Selina's still speaking.

SELINA

With a Senate logjam like we currently have, hundreds of bills are getting stalled, which means millions...

Anna gives the 'lighten it up' signal - pushing the corners of her mouth up with her fingers to make a smile.

JONAH

What are you doing?

ANNA

I'm giving her the signal to make a joke.

JONAH

Don't, she's in enough trouble.

Anna again does the pushing her mouth thing. Jonah puts his hand on her face, squashing her cheeks together.

ANNA

Get your hand off me you freak!

Jonah does.

ANNA (CONT'D)

And don't tell people you got to first base with me, because that wasn't first base. That was assault.

Selina has seen Anna.

SELINA

So, I'll let you all get back to enjoying yourselves.

(MORE)

SELINA (CONT'D)

Actually talking of enjoyment, and leisure, I just booked a holiday in Florida. Wonder if that makes me the Miami Vice President!? Or...

Nothing. If there was such a thing as a negative laugh, she just got it. Deathly.

SELINA (CONT'D)

Okay, thank you for listening and...

A HECKLER calls out.

HECKLER

You going to be tweeting about this?

SELINA

Ha! If that's a reference to the rogue cutlery tweet - I'm afraid that there we were very much 'hoist by our own retard'! Thank you so much.

She gets down to sporadic applause. She crosses over to Anna and Dan, who are on their Blackberrys.

SELINA (CONT'D)

Do people not listen any more? So rude.

ANNA

Ma'am...the last remark you made...

DAN

The word 'retard'.

SELINA

It's not that bad a word, is it?

ANNA

It will be deemed offensive to anyone with learning difficulties. Yes ma'am.

DAN

This will soon be getting on the blogs.

SELINA

What? Shit - how? I just said it like a second ago. Fuck broadband.

ANNA

Ma'am, the President of AT&T is in the room.

They start to walk. Anna calls on her Blackberry. We see Mike across the room answer his phone.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Mike, put the crabcakes down, we have a situation with the Vice President.