

THE WEST WING

IMPORTED WHINE AND CHEESE

WRITTEN BY: JACQUILYNNE SCHLESIER (with all due apologies to Aaron Sorkin, and whatever hacks wrote these same characters after him.)

BEGIN TEASER

FADE IN: INT - FANCY LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The remains of a party fill the background, various wine glasses and canapé trays scattered around, as well as slightly intoxicated looking guests, most of them young and attractive, still in pockets of conversation. JOSH, drink in hand, is huddled up with Congressman MCMICHAEL. The congressman's wife, JEANETTE McMichael is holding a martini glass and a print out of Hill News blog and watching the two of them.

MCMICHAEL

The bill is dead. It's been dead for a year.

JOSH

It can be undead.

MCMICHAEL

Great, a zombie bill. Just what we need.

JOSH

Congressman, we're not asking you to get the bill passed. We're not even asking you to send it to the hill for a vote. We're just asking you to pull it out of the slush pile and have the committee bat it around a little.

MCMICHAEL

Josh, I'm not sure if you've noticed this, but in addition to the USGS, the EPA, the Department of Energy and FEMA all fall under our jurisdiction. Our agenda is full of things that actually matter.

JOSH

This matters!

MCMICHAEL

To who?

JOSH

Jim Canton.

MCMICHAEL

Anybody who isn't the Senior Senator from Vermont?

JOSH

Doubtful.

JEANETTE approaches with the print out in her hand.

JEANETTE

Josh, Peter, you're all huddled up in the corner.

MCMICHAEL

This is a business conversation, Jeanette.

JOSH

Sorry, Mrs McMichael, I didn't mean to steal your husband away from his own party.

JEANETTE

It's you I'm worried about, Josh. I invited you here to have fun. Relax a little. [beat] Maybe meet a nice

woman.

JOSH

I know lots of nice women, Mrs McMichael. Like yourself. You're very kind.

JEANETTE

A nice single woman, Josh. They all want to meet you.

JOSH

I appreciate the thought that I'm in demand, but I don't really date so much as I make plans to meet women in restaurants and then subsequently have my assistant call to cancel. I don't have a lot of time right now.

JEANETTE

You should make time. [pretending to read the print out] You won't be Washington's most eligible bachelor forever.

JOSH

Let me see that.

MCMICHAEL grabs the print out from JEANETTE'S hand and reads.

MCMICHAEL

Joshua Lyman, the red-haired man-child of the Bartlet White House is number one on the Hill News list of eligible DC bachelors. He's got it all; smarts, savvy, power, and a tendency to wear the same suit two days in a row - so you know he's leading an interesting night life, ladies.

JOSH

I wear the same suit two days in a row because I sleep in my office.

MCMICHAEL

You should keep a spare.

JOSH

So Donna keeps telling me.

JEANETTE

Donna? Is she your...

JOSH

My assistant? Yes.

JEANETTE

Well, you're here away from work now, Josh, so why not make the most of what's left of the evening?

JOSH

With all due respect to your wonderful party, Mrs McMichael, and the duck was magnificent, by the way, I'm not here away from work. I came to talk to the Congressman.

JEANETTE

[pouting]Josh!

MCMICHAEL

[commanding]Jeanette!

JEANETTE walks away and joins another conversation at her party.

JOSH

Congressman?

MCMICHAEL

What are the politics here, Josh?

JOSH

They're complicated.

MCMICHAEL

Josh, it's a stupid bill. It's a stupid idea. It helps no one, does nothing and costs money. My committee is not going to waste time on it just to make the White House happy.

JOSH

What about to make you happy?

MCMICHAEL

What do you mean?

JOSH

What would make you happy to waste a half hour of the time of 43 of your distinguished colleagues.

MCMICHAEL

You can't possibly imagine we'd bring this to the full committee. That's insane.

JOSH

Full Committee, Congressman. That's what Canton wants. What'll it take?

MCMICHAEL

I don't know. You may have to give me some time to think about that.

JOSH'S cell phone rings. JOSH turns it off.

MCMICHAEL

People call you at 4:30 in the morning and you don't even answer it?

JOSH

That was an alarm.

MCMICHAEL

You have an alarm set at 4:30 in the morning? Doesn't that wake you up?

JOSH

That's the idea.

SMASH CUT TO: MAIN TITLES

END TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN: INT - THE MURAL ROOM - DAY

LEO is in the MURAL ROOM with most of the Senior Staff (CJ, TOBY, SAM, CAROL, LARRY, ED), MARGARET and various extras. They mostly look bored and sleepy. MARGARET has a pile of blue folders in her arms.

LEO

Where the hell is Josh?

SAM

He had a late night on GLASS.

LEO

GLASS?

SAM
Great Lakes Alignment for...

LEO
[cutting Sam off] I know what GLASS is Sam. What I don't know is why a defunct pork bill like Great Lakes Alignment for Scientific Significance is keeping my Deputy Chief of Staff up at night.

TOBY
Because of the Canadians.

CJ
Oh. Well. Now it makes perfect sense.

SAM
And soybeans.

LEO
Soya beans?

TOBY
In order to get the Canadian Softwood Lumber Tariffs Amendment confirmed before the Canada trip, we need Wyler from Iowa.

SAM
But Wyler won't push it unless Soybean subsidies go up for a House vote.

TOBY
And holding up Soybean subsidies is our friend, the Senior Senator from Vermont.

SAM
Who wants GLASS back on the table.

TOBY
So Josh spent last night at one of McMichael's wife's marathon matchmaking soirees softening him up.

SAM
On the idea of bringing GLASS back to his committee.

LEO
Do you two rehearse this stuff?

SAM
No, we just...

LEO
[cutting SAM off] Where the hell is Josh? [beat] Margaret!

MARGARET taps him on the shoulder from where she's standing behind him.

LEO
Go get Donna and find out where Josh is.

MARGARET walks to the back of the room.

LEO
Margaret, the door is that way.

MARGARET
Yes, but the phone is this way.

MARGARET dials.

CUT TO: INT - JOSH'S BULLPEN - DAY

DONNA is sitting on her desk, sorting a stack of messages.

JOSH arrives, juggling a coat, a coffee and a jelly donut. He face looks haggard.

DONNA
Where have you been?

JOSH
Dinner. Jeannette McMichael still regards me as young and eligible. And so, apparently does Hill News.

DONNA
Until 7AM? You were at dinner until 7AM?

JOSH
You're not nearly as wrong as you usually are. [beat] Or as you should be.

DONNA
You're late for the meeting.

JOSH
It's 7AM. What meeting?

DONNA
With Leo. You know, your boss?

Josh looks at her, still puzzled and hazy.

DONNA
It's Big Block of.R

I thought you wanted to get more involved.

DONNA

On legislative policy, Josh, not on Big Block of Cheese Day.

JOSH and DONNA enter the MURAL ROOM. MARGARET is still on the phone, and LEO is facing her, away from the door.

LEO

If she's not answering her phone, go to her desk.

MARGARET

If she's not answering her phone, she's not at her desk.

DONNA

Who? I can go look for her.

LEO

Where've you two been?

DONNA

I didn't know I was invited.

JOSH

I was at the McMichael's dinner party, being inspected like a piece of meat and trying to get the Congressman to...

LEO

Never mind. Let's get started. [beat] Does everyone know why they're here today?

DONNA

Because Josh put me on the list.

SAM

Because we were promised cheese.

CJ

Because I was a bad, bad girl in a previous life? SCORE!

LEO

While he was in office, Andrew Jackson kept a large...

TOBY

Some would say huge.

LEO

...block of cheese in the foyer of his White House. Anybody who had an issue or a problem they wanted to raise with their government...

JOSH

I have some issues with our government right now.

LEO

...was welcome to partake of the cheese...

SAM

But did they get some wine with that cheese?

LEO

...and speak to their leaders about their problems.

CJ

Why yes. Yes, they did.

LEO

It is in that spirit...

TOBY

Is wine a spirit?

LEO

It is in that spirit, that we set aside this day to meet with some of our less mainstream...

JOSH

And less sane.

SAM

Not to mention, frequently less sanitary.

LEO

Our less mainstream constituents to hear their concerns. [beat] Margaret has your assignments. Donna, I understand you asked to be involved and I commend you for your civic spirit.

DONNA

It wasn't so much that I asked, as that...

LEO

As that Josh put you on that list.

DONNA

Yes, that.

LEO

Well, then, I commend you for not mocking the process. Let's hope you're still so accommodating after you meet with the League for the Legalization of Marijuana. [DONNA takes her folder from MARGARET and exits.] CJ, you've got the Entomological Protection Society of California. Josh, a lovely couple from Canada wants to meet with you about anti-dumping regulations.

JOSH

Were we short on Americans with zany problems this month?

LEO

Consider it a practice exercise in international diplomacy.

CJ and JOSH grab their folders. The camera follows them out of the room and into the HALLWAY.

CJ

You look like hell.

JOSH

Thanks.

CJ

Isn't that the same suit you wore yesterday?

JOSH

Yes.

CJ

Interesting night life last night?

JOSH
Dinner with the McMicha... You've seen it, haven't you?

CJ
Yes. Yes, I have.

JOSH
Damn. [beat] Who else?

JOSH and CJ enter JOSH'S BULLPEN and the assistants all stop, giggle and whisper. Hill News Blog is up on every computer screen in the office.

CJ
Pretty much everyone, lover boy.

JOSH and CJ go into their respective offices. JOSH slams his door behind him.

CUT TO: INT - OVAL OFFICE - DAY
President BARTLET is sitting behind his desk reading briefing papers. CHARLIE is standing behind him. LEO enters.

BARTLET
Morning, Leo.

LEO
Good morning, Mr President. How are you this morning?

BARTLET
Full of vim and vigor, Leo. But apparently vim, vigor and the leadership of the entire free world are not enough to make me eligible.

LEO
Eligible, sir?

BARTLET
Apparently Joshua Lyman is vastly more eligible than I am. As is young Charlie here. Though Charlie, at number 36, is not nearly as eligible as Josh at number one.

LEO
I'm pretty sure your exclusion from the list is purely because, and I'm pretty sure the First Lady'll back me up on this one, purely because you're not a bachelor. Also, I'm thrilled to see that the clipping service is still including gossip in your morning package.

BARTLET
I'm a man of the people, Leo. I like to keep up on the latest haps.

LEO
Did you just say 'Haps', sir?

BARTLET
Haps. Happenings. [turning to Charlie] Is that not the right word?

CHARLIE
It's a perfectly fine word, Mr President.

BARTLET
See! I'm down with the kids.

LEO

Assuming we've all been secretly transported back to 1986.

BARTLET

Are you suggesting you're more hip to the lingo than young Charlie here?

LEO

No, just more hip to the lingo, as you say, than you are, sir.

BARTLET

Is that right, Charlie? Is Leo more hip to the lingo than me?

CHARLIE

Well, Mr President, 'haps' is a bit old school.

LEO

Along with 'hip' and 'lingo'.

CHARLIE

Yes.

BARTLET

Suddenly, I don't think you're cleared for this meeting, Charlie.

CHARLIE

That's fine, sir, I'll be right outside.

CHARLIE exits towards OUTER OVAL.

LEO

Charlie was trying to agree with you, sir. You should send me out into the hall.

BARTLET

No, Leo, you get your own special punishment. You get to stay and tell me about the Canadian thing.

LEO

Josh is working on the softwood lumber thing in between soliciting votes for People's Sexiest Man Alive. He's trying to get McMichael to cut loose Canton on soybeans so we can get Wyler. But all preferably without McMichael knowing why we need Canton.

BARTLET

Because loggers in the Oregon 2nd aren't a big fan of lumber tariff reform. And this'll all be wrapped up by the time we leave for Vancouver?

LEO

That's the current plan.

BARTLET

Okay. What's next?

LEO

Treasury is releasing new inflation numbers this afternoon.

BARTLET

Well, that'll give CJ something scintillating to talk about at the briefing. And?

LEO

Toby is going to have to go up to the hill on the Lillienfield thing.

BARTLET

And?

LEO

And Kashmir is relatively stable. No significant changes in the troop status since yesterday.

BARTLET

And?

LEO

And?

BARTLET

And today is?

LEO

Big Block of Cheese Day.

BARTLET

All right. What have you got lined up for the troops today?

LEO

Oh, it's a great line-up, Mr President. Toby's got technology grants for toddlers. CJ's got a potential endangered species.

BARTLET

She's a real friend to the animals, that CJ.

LEO

Yes, I anticipate she'll enjoy the American Black Dung Beetle. Donna's stepped up to talk to the marijuana legalization folks, while Josh will be talking with a couple from Canada that would like us to reconsider an anti-dumping embargo on Fiddleheads.

BARTLET

The Canadians are dumping violin parts on us? Can't they make their own instruments?

LEO

Fiddleheads are baby ferns, Mr President. They're a delicacy in some places.

BARTLET

Places like Canada?

LEO

Well, mostly Canada, but also parts of Maine.

BARTLET

Well, they're probably better than green beans. [beat] Who has Sam got?

LEO

An urban landscaping initiative. At least that's what I told him.

CUT TO: INT - WHITE HOUSE FOYER - DAY

A crowd of eccentric people (including two brightly dressed women, JANE and CINDY, and two conservatively and expensively dressed men, DAVE and JAMIE) are sitting and standing around the lobby waiting for appointments. Sam approaches a group of two well dressed women (KERRY and KELLY Ritter) and two casual, hippyish men (LINUS and CARL).

SAM

[to the women]Rebar?

KERRY
Ritter. Kerry and Kelly Ritter.

SAM
I'm looking for the people from Rebar. The Urban Development proposal?

LINUS
That's us.

SAM
You're the urban planners?

CARL
Rebar is a creative design collective.

LINUS
We believe in remixing the landscape.

CARL
We contest the uncontested acceptance of the daily life-world and the adherence to a set of social relations we take to be self evident.

SAM
If you contest it, then it's not uncontested is it?

LINUS and CARL look unhappy. Sam turns back to KERRY and KELLY.

SAM
Are you sure you're not Rebar?

KERRY
Relatively, yes. We're here about anti-dumping embargoes on fiddlehead imports.

SAM
You're the Canadian couple.

KERRY
Yes.

SAM
Here to meet with Josh Lyman.

KERRY
Yes.

SAM
Well. Good luck with that.

SAM starts to lead LINUS and CARL away and then turns back.

SAM
Let me just say now, that we're sorry for whatever it is that Josh said to offend you.

KERRY
We haven't met him, yet.

SAM
Well, then he hasn't offended you, yet.

SAM leads LINUS and CARL back into the HALLWAY, encountering LEO.

LEO
Sam.

SAM
Leo. I just met the Ritters.

LEO
The Canadians?

SAM
The Canadian couple.

LEO
Are they nice?

SAM
They're lesbians.

LEO
Yes.

SAM
Do you think that was wise?

LEO
Inviting lesbians to the White House? This isn't the 50s, Sam.

SAM
Inviting lesbians to the White House to meet with Josh. Pretty lesbians. Pretty Canadian lesbians. There are about 9 ways for Josh to offend these women before he even sits down.

A scream emanates from the ROOSEVELT ROOM, and CJ comes running from the ROOSEVELT ROOM to the HALLWAY.

CJ

Leo!

Camera stays with LEO and CJ. SAM continues along the HALLWAY with LINUS and CARL trailing behind, exiting the shot.

LEO

CJ.

CJ

LEO!

LEO

CJ?

CJ

Leo! They brought live samples.

LEO

The Entomologists?

LEO and CJ begin walking around the ROOSEVELT ROOM, continuing in the direction LEO was first headed.

CJ

Live samples of dung beetles. There are little black bugs in the Roosevelt room rolling around little black balls of dung. Do you know what dung is, Leo?

LEO

I assume they're all in cages or tanks or something?

CJ

All but one.

LEO

An escapee?

CJ

Not anymore. I stepped on it.

LEO

It's a good thing they're not endangered yet.

CJ

They are endangered, that's the point. There are only 2 colonies left in the world.

LEO

Well, it's not official. So at least that wasn't a felony.

CJ

Leo!

LEO

CJ, go back in there and try not to kill anymore beetles. Or any entomologists.

CJ peels back into the ROOSEVELT ROOM from the other side. Camera stays with LEO, who continues walking until he meets JOSH coming the other way. LEO turns to walk with JOSH.

LEO

Josh. I was coming to look for you.

JOSH

Here I am.

LEO

Where are you on the Canadian thing?

JOSH

Which Canadian thing?

LEO

The softwood lumber Canadian thing.

JOSH

I'm still waiting to hear back from McMichael, to find out what he wants.

LEO

You need to know what McMichael wants to give you what Canton wants to give you what Wyler wants to give you what we want?

JOSH

Yeah.

LEO

Good luck with that.

JOSH

Yeah.

JOSH stops at CHARLIE'S OFFICE. LEO continues down the HALLWAY, out of the shot.

CHARLIE

Hey, Josh.

JOSH

Hey, Charlie. Or should I call you #36?

CHARLIE

You could. But then I'd have to call you #1. And you don't want that, do you?

JOSH

Not really, no. [beat] Is he in?

CHARLIE

He's in with the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

JOSH

So, busy then?

CHARLIE

Is there something you want?

JOSH

I just wanted to talk to him.

CHARLIE

About?

JOSH

Stuff.

CHARLIE

He's 48 minutes behind schedule. It's 11:17AM. If you want me to clear some time for you, you're going to have to do better than "stuff".

JOSH

I just want to...

CHARLIE

Not take your Cheese meeting?

JOSH

No. [beat] Yes.

CHARLIE

Man up, Josh. Meet the Canadians.

JOSH

What is it with Canadians today, anyway?

FADE OUT

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN: INT - MARGARET'S OFFICE - DAY

MARGARET is sitting at her desk, and hastily puts away a print out of Hill News when Toby arrives.

TOBY

Is he in?

LEO (OFF SCREEN)

Margaret!

MARGARET

He's in.

TOBY

So I hear. [beat] He wanted to see me about something with Lillienfield?

MARGARET
Yes.

TOBY
Can I go in?

LEO (OFF SCREEN)
Margaret!

MARGARET
Yes.

Camera follows TOBY into LEO's office, where LEO is facing his computer with Hill News up on his screen.

LEO
What time is my thing with Toby?

TOBY
Soon.

LEO
Toby. Great. Lillienfield's got another bug up his ass.

TOBY
So I've heard.

LEO
Apparently there are White House employees that still have time to have sex lives.

TOBY
And Lillienfield's jealous?

LEO
He wants a senior official to rake over the coals. He thinks White House staffers are sleeping with Congressional Staffers.

TOBY
Say it ain't so.

LEO
And offering them favors in return.

TOBY
Since when are we in a position to offer favors to Congress?

LEO
I was going to send you and Josh, but I don't think we want Josh answering questions about his [LEO turns towards his monitor] 'interesting night life'.

TOBY
Josh's night life consists mostly of finding the most comfortable position on his couch.

LEO
I know that. But Lillienfield doesn't, and really, do you want Josh talking about his sex life with Congress?

TOBY
I could take S... Never mind.

LEO
Maybe Ed or Larry?

TOBY
Would I have to pick just one?

LEO
Just go eenie-meenie-minie-mo.

TOBY
Catch a congresscritter by the toe.

TOBY turns to leave.

LEO
And Toby?

TOBY
Yeah?

LEO
Don't let this be a thing with Josh and Sam. You know how they get about Lillienfield.

TOBY
Yeah.

CUT TO: INT - JOSH'S BULLPEN - DAY

DONNA is gathering up various papers and things (including her blue folder) while giving JOSH his messages.

DONNA
McMichael called about GLASS. I said you'd call him back, but he said he might stop by later, since he's got a meeting at OEOB this afternoon.

JOSH
Kay. And?

DONNA
And Margaret called to cancel your thing with Leo.

JOSH
What thing with Leo?

DONNA
The thing with Leo that Margaret called this morning to schedule, which I would have told you about right now, except Margaret called to cancel.

JOSH
So a meeting I didn't know about was canceled. Glad to hear. Anything else?

DONNA
No, that's it.

JOSH
Are you sure?

DONNA
Yes.

JOSH and DONNA start walking towards the WHITE HOUSE FOYER, passing through the HALLWAY.

JOSH
So what was the meeting about?

DONNA
Which?

JOSH
The one with Leo.

DONNA
Something to do with Lillienfield.

JOSH
Lillienfield's got a bug up his ass about White House Staffers and Congressional Staffers having sex. He thinks the White House is giving better access to Congressmen whose staffers put out. Well, actually, he thinks he can get some TV time if he accuses the White House of giving better access to Congressmen whose staffers put out.

Donna
How do you know that?

JOSH
I'm sleeping with his Legislative Director. [Donna looks hurt.] Donna, Lillienfield's Legislative Director is named Brian Caldwell. Plus, he's a Republican.

DONNA
Well, I'm glad you had that extra little reason to keep you from sleeping with him.

JOSH
Yeah. That's what pushed me over the edge. [beat] If he'd been an independent...

DONNA
Josh.

JOSH
Whoo, baby...

DONNA
Josh!

JOSH
Then I'd be all over him.

DONNA
I got the joke each of the first three times.

JOSH
So, anyway, I need you to move my cheese appointment to later this afternoon.

DONNA
Can't.

JOSH
I've got time from three to four. It's not like they're going anywhere.

DONNA
I can't. I have to go talk to potheads right now because somebody put me on the list.

JOSH and DONNA arrive at the WHITE HOUSE FOYER. JOSH scans the dwindling group of eclectic people waiting in the foyer.

JOSH [whispering]
I wonder which ones are the Ritters.

DONNA
I have no idea. I'm here for the hopheads.

DONNA approaches CARL and LINUS, the hippyish men from earlier, who are signing out at the security desk.

DONNA
Excuse me? Are you the League for the Legalization of Marijuana?

CARL
No.

LINUS
Just because we're not in \$800 suits, we must be the druggies, right?

DONNA
Uhhhh

CARL
We're Rebar. We contest the uncontested acceptance of the daily life-world and the adherence to a set of social relations we take to be self evident.

DONNA
And you're not the druggies?

LINUS
No!

CUT TO: INT - CJ'S OFFICE - DAY

CAROL and CJ are sitting around CJ's desk. CAROL has a clipboard with the briefing rundown in her hands.

CJ
What have we got for the afternoon briefing?

CAROL
White House Press Secretary Claudia Jean Cregg narrowly avoided committing a felony earlier today. Fortunately the endangered beetle she killed has not yet been officially listed by the EPA.

CJ
Anything real? Anything that might draw attention from Lillienfield starting up a sex inquiry?

CAROL
You know about that?

CJ
Leo told me. You know about that?

CAROL
I'm sleeping with his Legislative Director.

CJ

Carol! He's a Republican.

CAROL

He's also number 7 on the list of Washington's Most Eligible Bachelors.

CJ

There are Democrats at 6, 4 and 2. Not to mention number one. Couldn't you sleep with one of them?

CAROL

Would you really be happier if I was sleeping with Josh?

CJ

No. [beat] Plus, there's not a lot of room on his couch.

CAROL

Treasury is releasing new inflation numbers this afternoon.

CJ

Any way to sex those up?

CAROL

Not really. Anything good in Big Block of Cheese Day?

CJ

Not unless we want to tell the press that the Bartlet Administration is considering legalizing marijuana.

CAROL

Are we?

CJ

Only on Big Block of Cheese Day.

CUT TO: INT - ROOSEVELT ROOM - DAY

DONNA is seated across the conference table from DAVE and JAMIE. They have a series of charts and graphs behind them.

DONNA

So what you're telling me is that people who smoke marijuana commit less crimes than other people.

DAVE

Our studies suggest that regular users of only marijuana actually commit 63% fewer petty crimes than those who regularly use hard drugs, and more surprisingly 7% fewer petty crimes than those who regularly use only legal drugs such as alcohol.

DONNA

This is ignoring the fact that using marijuana is, itself, a petty crime?

JAMIE

Yes.

DONNA

And that purchasing marijuana is also a petty crime?

DAVE

It wouldn't be if it were decriminalized.

DONNA

And that [Donna consults some notes] 44% of all marijuana users have, on at least one occasion, sold marijuana. Which is not a petty crime, but an actual felony?

JAMIE

Ms Moss. Have you ever smoked marijuana.

DONNA

A couple of times. [beat] In college. [beat] Once. [beat] Once in college, I was in a room where other people were smoking marijuana.

DAVE

Did you feel the need to lie just now to cover up your otherwise benign behavior so it wouldn't bring about any unnecessarily harsh legal consequences?

DONNA

I felt the need to lie so you wouldn't think I was boring.

JAMIE

So you've never smoked marijuana.

DONNA

No.

DAVE

Imagine, if you will, the metaphorical rose colored glasses. The world is soft and peaceful and very slightly fuzzy.

JAMIE

You feel at peace with yourself.

DAVE

You feel at peace with others.

DONNA

You're both high right now, aren't you?

JAMIE

You start to think about the world.

DAVE

And your place in it.

JAMIE

Your mind drifts into a reverie.

DAVE

And beautiful music fills your soul with enlightenment.

DONNA

At what point in this do I get the munchies?

JAMIE

You're not really getting into the spirit of this.

DONNA

No.

DAVE

The point is, when your mind and spirit are filled with wondrous joy, why would you want to commit a crime?

DONNA
To fund my illegal drug habit?

CUT TO: INT - MURAL ROOM - DAY

TOBY is sitting across the table from JANE and CINDY, who had earlier been amongst the crowd in the foyer. He is visibly bored and scanning flipping his attention between a briefing memo and the women in front of him.

TOBY
You're here representing the Association of Independent Early Childhood Educators.

CINDY
That's right!

JANE
She's Cindy, I'm Jane.

CINDY
And we fear learning's on the wane.

JANE
If kids grow up not knowing.

CINDY
What their monitors are showing.

JANE
We fear they'll fall behind.

CINDY
More educated minds.

JANE
In China!

TOBY
That was cute, I get it. So what's your proposal?

CINDY
Statistics on math and science show

JANE
That the US has much room to grow.

CINDY
We spend as much as other nations.

JANE
On health care, roads and soldiers' rations.

CINDY
But I'm sure that you already know.

JANE
How little we spend to help kids grow.

CINDY
Their brains.

TOBY
Ha ha. No really, I get it. Now stop.

JANE
We're sure that you will surely see

CINDY
A child needs more than ABC

TOBY
Okay, now, you're just annoying me.

JANE
We must bring technology

CINDY
To children still under age three.

TOBY
Can they even type yet?

JANE
We don't ask a lot of our government.

CINDY
Just a tiny little start up grant.

JANE
12 million.

TOBY
Okay, seriously. Government and grant don't even rhyme. You two have got to stop this little routine.

CINDY
Mr Ziegler, we ... we just...

Cindy begins crying. Toby looks mortified and offers up a crumpled napkin from his pocket.

JANE
Mr Ziegler. We've been trying to get this grant money for years. We've tried grant applications, petitions, presentations, speeches, we even tried begging our Congressman once.

CINDY
On our knees and everything.

JANE
He didn't even remember us when we came back a month later.

CINDY
We're just trying to be memorable. Mr. McGarry's office said you all had about 2 dozen of these meetings today. We didn't want to be forgotten again.

TOBY
So you figured annoying me would help?

CINDY
Mr. Ziegler, I work with 2 year olds.

TOBY

You'd think that'd better prepare you for dealing with Congressmen.

CINDY

I'm just not very good with adults. But I know kids, I like kids. We could help them with this program.

TOBY

I'm going to give you a piece of advice. The guy who said 'There's no such thing as bad publicity' was a drunkard who spent a lot of time in jail. Getting people to remember you isn't the trick. It's getting them to like you.

JANE

You don't like us?

TOBY

I like very few people, so I wouldn't worry about me. But let's talk about how you can have better luck with other people.

230

CUT TO: INT - JOSH's OFFICE - DAY

JOSH is sitting at his desk, with his feet on it, reading a copy of the Hill News blog post. There's a knock on the door.

JOSH

Come in?

MCMICHAEL

Josh.

JOSH gets out of his chair and stuffs Hill News under his blue folder.

JOSH

Congressman.

MCMICHAEL

Sorry for the interruption, but your assistant isn't around.

JOSH

Yeah, she's listening to potheads.

MCMICHAEL

Why?

JOSH

I put her on the list.

MCMICHAEL

There's a list for that?

JOSH

Sort of.

MCMICHAEL

I had my Chief of Staff make some inquiries today, Josh.

JOSH

And?

MCMICHAEL

The GLASS thing is about the Softwood Lumber deal?

JOSH
Yeah.

MCMICHAEL
I'm in favor of the Softwood Lumber deal.

JOSH
But you have loggers in your district. Lots of them.

MCMICHAEL
I also have home buyers in my district, Josh. People who have mortgaged their futures for a piece of the American dream. The tariffs on Canadian lumber drive up construction costs which drive new home prices which drives up resale prices which contributes to the housing bubble. And when that bubble bursts, a lot of my constituents are going to lose their dreams and their futures while a lot of banks go bankrupt. If Canada wants to subsidize our housing market with their tax dollars and stave off a recession while they're at it, let's let 'em.

JOSH
So you'll actually vote for it?

MCMICHAEL
Hell, no. That would be political suicide, I can't run without forestry money and I can't win without loggers' votes. But I'll make sure it comes up for a vote, and I'll make sure you have enough other votes that you won't need mine.

JOSH
Congressman, I'm incredibly...

MCMICHAEL
Josh, I know you're not filled with a deep and abiding respect for Congress. But we're not all mouth breathing pork barrelers.

JOSH
I'd never say...

MCMICHAEL
You would say it, Josh. You have said it.

JOSH
Well. Not to your face.

MCMICHAEL
I don't want you to say it about me. Ever.

JOSH
Never, Congressman. [beat] So you'll bring GLASS back to committee tomorrow?

MCMICHAEL
Yes, and then I'll bury it in a hole so deep it'll never see the light of day. I just need one thing.

JOSH groans out loud.

MCMICHAEL
Oh, don't look at me like that. I just gave you my big impassioned I'm one of the good guys speech. This is just a personal favor. [beat] Let my wife fix you up with someone.

JOSH
Congressman, I...

MCMICHAEL

Josh, she hates Washington. She misses her friends. She misses her family. The only fun she has here is meddling in other people's lives. Let her meddle just a little. It'll make her happy. That's all I ask.

JOSH

Have her call me with the details.

MCMICHAEL

Thanks, Josh.

JOSH

No, thank you, Congressman. Can I walk you out?

JOSH rises and follows MCMICHAEL out his door.

ACT THREE

FADE IN: INT - WHITE HOUSE FOYER - EVE

Only KERRY and KELLY remain from the earlier crowd, aside from the usual security guards.

JOSH [to security]

Did the Ritters leave?

KERRY comes running across the room.

KERRY

We're the Ritters!

JOSH

You're the Ritters. The nice couple from Canada. Mrs and Mrs Ritter.

KERRY

Kerry and Kelly Ritter, yes.

JOSH

Well. I assume you've signed in?

KERRY

We've been here for 9 hours, we managed to fit that in, yes.

JOSH

Yeah, well, that's sorta your fault. I mean, not yours specifically. But the fault of your countrymen. Or countrywomen. Never mind.

JOSH and KERRY and KELLY enter the HALLWAY and as they walk, SAM meets up with them.

SAM

So what did McMichael want?

JOSH

Same as everyone else these days. My body.

SAM

Do I want to...

JOSH

No.

SAM exits to his own office and they continue to the MURAL ROOM. TOBY is still inside with CINDY and

JANE.

TOBY

Now, you see this, this is a strong statistic. You want to present that early in your pitch, but never lead with numbers. Start with something personal that sets the stage for it.

JOSH

Toby?

TOBY

Josh?

TOBY crosses the room to where JOSH is standing by the door. They speak quietly.

JOSH

Aren't you supposed to be explaining to Lillienfield that my life is less interesting than Hill News thinks it is.

TOBY

You heard about that?

JOSH

Yeah.

TOBY

From Leo?

JOSH

No, Leo is keeping it a secret so I don't get pissed at Lillienfield.

TOBY

That's working out well.

JOSH

Yeah.

TOBY

So are you pissed at Lillienfield?

JOSH

No more than usual. [speaking normally] You going to be long? We can do this in my office.

TOBY starts clearing up the table. CINDY and JANE rush to help.

TOBY

We'll get out of your way. [to CINDY and JANE] Why don't you ride along with me to the Hill? I can introduce you to the head of the House Committee on Education.

CINDY

Oh, my god, Mr Ziegler!

TOBY

He's a Republican, though, so you might want to try the rhyming thing on him. It's probably close to his grade level.

TOBY, CINDY and JANE exit. JOSH ushers KERRY and KELLY into the room.

JOSH

Have a seat. I'd pull out your chairs for you, but...

JOSH notices the stony faces of his guests, and just takes his own seat.

JOSH
Pitch me.

KERRY
We're here on behalf of the Alternative Economic Development Council of Atlantic Canada. We want the White House to support our bid to have an anti-dumping exemption for Fiddleheads added to the Fair Trade Measures Act.

KELLY
Fiddleheads are...

JOSH [reading from a briefing memo]
Immature ferns. A delicacy in Canada and parts of Maine. The anti-dumping guidelines are pretty objective - there's a set of distinct criteria that must be met.

JOSH searches flips pages in the briefing memo looking for this info.

KELLY
It's a tri-part test. If, in any fiscal period, wholesale prices drop 29.925%, imports increase 20.67% and US production falls 11.684%, anti-dumping embargoes are automatically enacted.

JOSH
And Fiddleheads met those criteria?

KERRY
Yes. But here's the thing. Those numbers were designed with much larger crops in mind. Soybeans, beef, colour televisions.

JOSH
Technically, color televisions aren't a crop.

KELLY
Fiddlehead prices last year fell from about \$2.50 a pound to about \$2.10 a pound.

JOSH
US or Canadian?

KELLY
US

JOSH
So, a decrease of about \$1000 Canadian, then?

KERRY and KELLY are stone faced.

KELLY
And imports to the US nearly doubled.

KERRY
At the same time as prices fell and imports doubled, the only US producers, the Martins, a lovely retired couple from Maine, ceased harvesting entirely.

KELLY
So American production fell 100%, completing the tri-part test.

JOSH
So what happened?

KERRY

The anti-dumping tariffs were automatically levied.

JOSH

I meant what happened to the US producers. Why'd they stop?

KERRY

John Martin broke his leg, so Cecile had to stay home with him.

JOSH

The Fiddlehead Harvesters Association doesn't offer a health plan, eh?

KERRY

The US Government doesn't offer a health plan, eh?

JOSH

Never mind. Let's talk about real numbers.

KERRY

We gave you the percentages.

JOSH

Lies, damn lies and statistics. How much money are we talking about?

KELLY

The estimated net loss of revenue to fiddlehead producers in Canada represents approximately 48% of their potential annual revenue.

JOSH

Now you're giving me statistics about stuff that hasn't even happened yet. I have to confirm a major trade agreement with your people and go on a date for a Congressman's wife yet.

KERRY and KELLY look offended.

JOSH

For! For a Congressman's wife. Not with. Never mind. Just give me the numbers. How much money did the US spend last year on your fiddleheads?

KELLY

\$3780.30

JOSH

That's not even worth making a currency joke about. So this is a multi-hundred dollar a year industry we're talking about? I should be taking this more seriously.

KERRY

You're obviously not taking this seriously at all.

JOSH

Come on. You flew all the way here, stayed in a hotel, probably rented a car, all over a couple of grand in designer salad greens? Your airfare must have cost as much as your entire industry earned last year.

KERRY

That's not the point.

JOSH

Is there a point?

CUT TO: INT - SAM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Sam is sitting behind his desk, tapping a pencil on a yellow legal pad. TOBY enters without knocking. He has his coat over his arm and looks ready to leave.

TOBY
How's the speech?

SAM
Toby. Back from the hill?

TOBY
Yeah.

SAM
How's Lillienfield?

TOBY
As much of a pain as ever.

SAM
I could have gone with you.

TOBY
No, you couldn't.

SAM
She wasn't a Congressional Staffer.

TOBY
Doesn't matter.

SAM
It matters.

TOBY
Not to Lillienfield.

SAM
It's none of his business. None of this is.

TOBY
He likes to think it is.

SAM
Yeah.

TOBY
How's the speech.

SAM
Hard to say.

TOBY
What's the problem?

SAM
We don't know what it's going to be about.

TOBY
Blah, blah, blah, favored neighbors, blah, blah, North American cooperation, blah, blah, blah, partners.
How hard can it be?

SAM

Well, for one thing, I have to remember to spell neighbours with a 'U'.

TOBY

Anything else?

SAM

Well, the 'U's and the fact that we don't actually have a softwood lumber agreement.

TOBY

Josh has that settled. McMichael is going to bring GLASS to committee tomorrow.

SAM

Jeanette McMichael took their two sons out of school this afternoon and flew with them to her parents' house in Portland.

TOBY

She's not coming back?

SAM

Not any time soon.

TOBY

So McMichael probably won't be running that committee meeting tomorrow.

SAM

Doesn't seem likely.

TOBY

How's Josh taking it?

SAM

Last I saw him, he was talking to the Canadians. But that was hours ago. He may have maimed them in the meantime.

TOBY

Let's go find him. He probably needs a drink.

SAM grabs his coat. The camera follows SAM and TOBY as they walk out of SAM'S OFFICE, down the HALLWAY past empty meeting rooms and cleaning staff, through JOSH'S BULLPEN (empty) and to JOSH'S OFFICE. JOSH is inside, and he looks up from a notepad when TOBY knocks.

TOBY

Beer?

JOSH

The breakfast of champions.

SAM

Come on. We'll buy.

JOSH

You two go ahead, I'll just finish this and follow in a few minutes.

TOBY

Okay.

TOBY and SAM walk away, out of the shot. The camera lingers on JOSH at his desk, scribbling more notes on the pad, then pans to his couch, where a blanket and pillow are already waiting.

FADE OUT.
CUT TO END CREDITS.