

Abstract

SPIN CYCLE

a play by

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Chair of English Department: Ron Mitchelson

Major Department: Creative Writing

Spin Cycle is a two-act stage play detailing the adventures of a group of people in the political consulting trade. Action takes place in a simple hotel room somewhere in the American Midwest during an extended primary campaign. Principal characters include: Donovan, a major player in the campaign; Elton Reel and John Rodman, two operatives, the former much younger, the latter an old hand; and a mysterious room service waiter named Walid.

What starts out as a simple misstep grows into a series of unforeseen problems involving some sexual misconduct by the candidate, all hysterically acted out against the constant hum of cable TV news that comments on and at times participates in the action

Mayhem ensues.

SPIN CYCLE

a play in two acts

A Thesis Presented To the Faculty of
the Department of English, East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts

by Stephen Jackson

December, 2009

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CHARACTERS

MARY DONOVAN

Attractive woman in her mid-40s, a political operative her entire working life. Usually wears a business suit.

JOHN RODMAN

Worn, dissipated man in his late 40s, worked as a political operative for most of his life, drinks too much, and is always on the verge of retiring and/or losing his mind.

ELTON REEL

Young, energetic man in his mid-20s, recently graduated university with a degree in political operations.

WALID

Attractive young immigrant in his mid-20s from a vague Middle Eastern country, waiter, bellhop and general go-to-guy at the hotel.

FARIDA

Attractive young maid in her early 20s from some vague country somewhere, probably around the Middle East.

Various TV voices including newscasters, Governor Eugene O'Neill, Kretschmer the Deli King, Jim Joyce and others.

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ACT I

SCENE 1
ROD AND REEL

(A standard hotel room with two double beds and a table with two or three chairs. Reel is sitting at the table working on the reel of a fishing pole. He pulls a bit at the fishing line and gets progressively more frustrated. The line becomes more and more like a tangled head of hair. Rod paces behind him.)

ROD

I thought you knew about this stuff.

REEL

What stuff?

ROD

You know... fishing poles, swimming holes... down home shit. You know...

REEL

(frustrated, pulling out bits of more tangled line)

Why is he so hung up on using this fishing image anyway?

ROD

You misrepresented yourself.

REEL

What!?

ROD

You come on all down home with that accent all “Shucks” and “Yes ma’am” and you can’t even fix a fishing pole!

REEL

I never claimed I was a fishing pole expert. There was no fishing pole expert listed on my job description. You assumed.

ROD

You projected.

REEL

No, YOU projected onto me. You turned on your little mind projector and ran a movie on top of me. What? You think everybody with a southern accent is Opey fucking Taylor?

ROD

Well... now that you mention it... Yes! Yes I do! Everybody does! Face it!

REEL

Let me define myself here, will ya? I'm not the opposition.

ROD

Stands to be seen.

REEL

So why is he insisting on using this fishing paradigm?

ROD

Focus groups, local demographics, land of a thousand lakes, and all that.

REEL

That's Minnesota.

ROD

What are you talking about? Minnesota isn't till the fifth.

REEL

No. No, the Land of a Thousand Lakes. That's Minnesota.

ROD

Minnesota, Montana, Minnetonka, Mony Mony, they all got lakes, okay? And people fish. Guys fish. Real guys fish, okay? Ever watch Bassmaster? No? Didn't think so. And you know why? Because you do not fit the "real man" profile? That's okay. Me neither. We are "above" the paradigm, you understand? We work with the profile, not "under" the profile. We are surrounded by the profile, but not part of the profile. ... We research the profile and manipulate the profile but never fall into a profile. Nor would we want to, nasty place. ... We brought in people from all over the state and the fishing sequence floated.

REEL

How close are we gonna see this fishing pole anyway?

ROD

Not sure. Storyboard has a long shot of him in a boat, then walking along the edge of a lake holding the pole and carrying some sort of fish.

REEL

And this is supposed to prop up the real man image?

ROD

After that disaster in New Hampshire, he's gonna need it.

REEL

Yeah but... Ever see this old, anti-alcoholism ad from the 60s with this old guy in a boat fishing and drinking beer?

ROD

Never heard of it. Where'd you see this?

REEL

Research. Called up Museum of the Moving Image and had them research men in boats on public service television announcement from the 1960s. Downloaded the spots. Watched them last week.

ROD

Really? Impressive, Opey. And what insight has this dubiously valuable use of time given you into the profile?

REEL

The voiceover says something like, "After he retired, he started having a couple of beers before lunch. Then those turned into six or seven. Maybe someone should talk to him about it." And that guy was in a boat on a lake in a long shot. Old guy, in a boat, doing nothing, drinking beer before lunch, not good. There is a fine line between a real man alone in nature with his strong, independent spirit and a sad old drunk stuck on a boat contemplating suicide.

ROD

He's not going to be drinking beer in the boat. He is going to be catching fish.

(Reel slams down the pole. The fishing line is now completely tangled, beyond repair.)

REEL

Not with this pole he's not.

ROD

You don't understand. We're just doing our due diligence here. Donovan says, "Try to fix this fishing pole." That's it. Not, "Fix it or you're fired." Just "Take a look and see if you can fix it." 'Course we thought you'd know how to work a fishing pole.

REEL

Your assumption. Your defining the opposition before he defines you. Your profiling. Sorry I didn't fit.

ROD

Tell that to Donovan. Misrepresentation, man. You looked like somebody you are not and that is not good.

REEL

There was nothing in the interview about fixing fishing poles.

ROD

So what we are basically doing here is fulfilling our promise to try and fix this fishing pole. Killing a little time. Looking busy. Making Donovan happy. Giving it the old college try.

REEL

I'm telling you this is not going to end well.

ROD

Give me the pole!

REEL

(handing Rod the pole)

What about a swordfish or something? We could have him on one of those boats yanking on a big pole, dragging in some kind of jumping...

(Rod takes the pole and starts playing with it, casting and pulling in imaginary fish. He taps it on Reel's head, increasingly harder as he speaks, as if Reel were some sort of fish. He musses Reel's hair until it stands out on top like the tangle of fishing line.)

ROD

Okay, let me count the ways that is a stupid idea. One, we are in a landlocked state here, okay. There is no deep sea fishing here, okay? Anybody in this constituency goes deep sea fishing on a yacht is not going to be considered one of the people, okay. Two, this little fishing pole here is enough of mystery already. How would it be if you had to work on one of those big, deep-sea poles? You know what they use for bait on those things?

REEL

No.

ROD

Me neither but ... something big I can tell you that. Like whole squids and stingrays, okay. They have people fishing just to catch the things they use to catch the fish. Somebody catches something small to catch something bigger to catch something even bigger. This is clearly a Darwinian pastime my hayseed friend ... Yes! This deep sea fishing is an evolutionary sport ... And finally, the whole thing is wrong. The whole image is just too over the top, too manly man. You know what I mean? Like a Viagra commercial. Like he's just trying too hard to be tough. Reflects a lack of confidence in his masculinity.

REEL

He doth protest too much...

ROD

What?

REEL

Shakespeare, I mean that...

ROD

You mean what? You mean you went to grad school? You mean maybe you are too well trained and qualified to sit at a table and take apart a fishing rod for the team? Well methinks you think too god damn much. You are trying too hard here to be something you are not. Misrepresentation my friend. You can put Opey in a tux but you can't make him quote Macbeth.

REEL

I just meant to say you're right. Put the guy on the boat with the shark and the public will think he's trying too hard.

ROD

Precisely. I need a screwdriver I think. This top section comes off with this screw.

REEL

I don't think we have a screwdriver.

ROD

And unprepared! No merit badge for Opey.... Rule of thumb on the campaign trail. Always be prepared for anything. Always have an extra suit, an extra speech, pair of clean underwear, a handy alibi ... and some duct tape... at least that.

REEL

Thought you said we were just doing our due diligence. Just making like we're fixing. What Donovan said.

ROD

Precisely.

(His cellphone rings. He answers.)

Rod. ... Go with the fish. Yeah, no, no chicken please. We are on a fish theme here. ... Fish! Just order the fucking fish okay? No, no... nothing... Well just assume, okay? Assume I know nothing about fish ... something homey... but trendy ... homey trendy ... nouvelle redneck something that looks good on camera ... fried? How do I know? ... Do fish have heads? What do I know? I know they don't vote is what I know ... Designer pythons and fritos, okay? Who gives a shit!

(He hangs up the cellphone.)

Do I have to take care of every detail? You tell me.

REEL

You never delegate so what do you expect.

ROD

Never delegate! I delegated you in charge of fishing poles and look how that turned out. First trust, then delegation. And trust is running thin around here.

REEL

Give me the pole, I've got a dime ... For the screw, instead of a screwdriver I'll use the dime to take the reel apart.

(Rod hands Reel back the pole)

ROD

We had some leaks.

REEL

Tell me you're not talking about the boat here 'cause there is no way I'm...

ROD

No, I'm not talking about the boat in the ad. At least that ought to float.

REEL

Hope it floats better than the storyboard.

ROD

Leaks from inside regarding our man's strategies. Where the money goes, what the target groups respond to, marketing data. Our hard earned, priceless marketing data is leaking out of the group.

REEL

So? That stuff's public anyway.

ROD

Not really. We spend a lot of time and money sizing up the local constituency and would like that data to be kept at least partially in our camp.

REEL

Like I said. What's it matter? Everybody's got the same data, haven't they?

ROD

Not really. We get a lot of inside stuff, access to marketing info from big guys like General Foods and whatnot. And it's leaking. And our sources are not happy.

REEL

What does Donovan say?

ROD

Donovan doesn't know.

(His cellphone rings again.)

Yeah... Almost straightened out and ready to go. ... When? ... Now? ... What brought this on? Right ... Two minutes.

(He hangs up.)

Put down the pole.

REEL

What?

ROD

Stop playing with your pole. Something's up. Donovan wants to see me downstairs.

REEL

Actually, I think I've got the screw off, see?

ROD

Put the pole down. Drop the screw. We may not need it after all.

REEL

Okay.

ROD

I'm going downstairs. Some kind of package Donovan left for me. Something about new image, new paradigm coming through, new data, focus group results, something. Wait here.

(Rod leaves the room. Reel plays with the reel.)

REEL

Just fishing. Man in the lake alone with his thoughts. ...

(He puts on an exaggerated Southern accent and chuckles to himself.)

Hey Pa! Look what I caught. Took me a long time to reel him in but I got 'em. Man of the people. Fishing boat guy, whistling Dixie dude, barefoot boy chewing something I pulled out of the ground. Yessiree. Representing the profile of the 35 to 55-year-old, middle income, mid-western male according to our focus data. Yessiree bobby.

(Rod re-enters with a long cardboard box.)

ROD

Put that thing down before you put my eye out. The image is in. Paradigm has been reassembled. ... Reel? Are you listening?

REEL

New image coming in, paradigm shifted.

ROD

Who were you just talking to?

REEL

When?

ROD

Just now. Did you call someone?

REEL

Why?

ROD

I heard your voice from outside the door.

REEL

Oh that ... just talking to myself.

ROD

You were using your Opey voice. What were you talking about? *(Pause)* We can check your cellphone. We can do that, you know? We can do lots of things without anybody's permission, you know?

REEL

Just me working on an image, working at projecting a bit more homespun.

ROD

Yeah? Remember, I tell you what image to project and when. Okay? Different projections for different situations, okay? ... No more image projecting without my say so. Got it? ... There are some major changes underway.

REEL

How so?

ROD

New information, new input, rolling with the punches, responding to immediate needs, that's the ticket.

REEL

So what's on and what's off?

ROD

Fishing is the old man's game, nothing moves, long shot of him in a boat, too distant. Does not reflect a man of action, makes him seem aloof and indifferent. We've got to consider the military aspect as well, wartime leader and all.

REEL

Where have I heard that before? Sounds familiar. ... Right, of course.

ROD

Results are in, new focus groups agree. No more of this country boy swimming hole catfish for dinner thing.

REEL

So now what?

ROD

Finally, something I know about. Finally, something I can feel comfortable with.

REEL

What? So?

(Rod opens the cardboard box and takes out a large hunting rifle. He cocks it and points it straight at Reel.)

ROD

Hunting.

(Blackout. A shot rings out in the dark.)

SCENE 2
THE SOUND BITE KIT

(The lights come up on the same hotel room as earlier. The TV is blaring a 24-hour news channel.)

TV VOICE #1

But you know Bill, the O'Reilly campaign just two days ago was polling between 38 and 42 percent across the state and now... to see this drop I mean...

(The door opens and in walks Mary Donovan, a once attractive middle-aged woman, now a bit worn down by the years, wearing a business suit and carrying an expensive briefcase. As the TV news continues, she sets the briefcase on the table and takes off her jacket.)

DONOVAN

O'Neill! It's O'Neill!

TV VOICE #2

I know Bill. Exit polls are giving O'Reilly just 14% of the Republican primary vote as opposed to a whopping... look at that... 55% for Senator MacNamara. Looks like the pollsters really slipped up on that one. Let's go now to our resident expert over in Atlanta, Bill Samuelson, Bill are you there?"

(The woman opens the briefcase and pulls out a beauty case containing a syringe, a spoon, a couple of small envelopes, an expensive scarf, and a bottle of water. She lays all this out on the table as the TV continues.)

DONOVAN

O'Neill! Morons!

TV VOICE #3

Hi guys. *(Laughing)* Well... when you're wrong, you're wrong I guess.

TV VOICE #1

Now was this just a miscalculation on the part of the pollsters or could in fact there be some other factor here?

TV VOICE #3

I know where your going with this and yeah... the hotel incident a couple of days ago could not help but have an effect on the outcome of the campaign. I mean... there were some growing image problems before that. O'Reilly being seen as superficial, as aloof, as someone who was not a "man of the people" so to speak.

(The woman taps powder from the envelope into the spoon, dips the syringe into the bottled water, squirts a little into the spoon, and heats the spoon with the flame from a small cigarette lighter. She pulls a cotton ball out of the vanity case and drops a tiny bit of cotton into the spoon.)

TV VOICE #2

Yeah but a shooting in a hotel, c'mon. I know we'd like to think voters here are more concerned with jobs and the economy, but when a blonde pop singer with no underwear gets out of a limo and fills a nice chunk of the news cycle for days I mean ... you have to admit something this big, a blunder this monumental is just...

(She pulls the contents of the spoon into the syringe, pulls up her sleeve, ties the designer scarf around her upper arm, and gives herself a quick, skillful shot into the vein. She pulls out the syringe, takes a very deep breath, and closes her eyes for just a moment. She slowly cleans her arm with the rest of the cotton ball then snaps to and makes a call on her cellphone.)

TV VOICE #3

Monumental blunder is not an exaggeration by any means, Bill. Governor O'Reilly might just be able to spin out of this quagmire before Tsunami Tuesday but that will take a couple of weeks. The effect of something like this hits quick and no matter how fast it passes, you just can't ignore the damage done.

DONOVAN

Hello, Bill? Donovan. Do I have to write this script for you word for word? Is all this still a work in progress? Rehearsals are over now get off book goddamit! Stop making this shit up as you go along ... O'NEIL! It's Governor O'Neil! Now ... tell your news monkeys to say they're sorry ... Tell them now... and tell them Mary Donovan is waiting.

TV VOICE #2

That's right Bill and ... wait... You know, I think you may have said Governor O'Reilly when you meant to say Governor O'Neill obviously. We apologize for the slip-up. These long days around here...

DONOVAN

Just stick to the script Bill. See you Sunday.

(She hangs up the phone and sets it on the table.)

TV VOICE #3

Oops... Of course, O'Neill... What was I thinking.

TV VOICE #2

... can really create a lot of stress.

TV VOICE #3

Just don't know where our head was.

TV VOICE #2

Extremely sorry.

TV VOICE #3

Getting back to the issue at hand...

TV VOICE #2

We, myself in particular, sincerely hope this has not caused any problems for the O'Neill campaign.

(She takes a laptop computer out of the case and sets it on the table. She carefully cleans the syringe with the bottled water and sprays water at the TV set with the syringe.)

TV VOICE #3

But as I was saying regarding this shooting incident, there really are just so many questions at the end of the day. Whose gun was it? What was it doing in the hotel anyway and how did it get there? I mean...

TV VOICE #2

... I mean there is a lot of talk about the media affecting elections and we here really hope this ultimately small slip has not created any enmity between myself... ourselves and the O'Neil campaign.

TV VOICE #1

Okay... They know we are sorry Bob. May we...?

TV VOICE #2

Sorry.

TV VOICE #1

This hotel is right downtown where a lot of journalists and junior campaign advisors and consultants stay and for someone to just walk in with a hunting rifle in the middle of the afternoon with no questions asked is a little... well... strange to say the least.

(Donovan's cellphone begins to ring. She ignores it and packs her drugs into the beauty case as the TV drones on.)

Here's Senior Campaign Advisor Mary Donovan this afternoon.

DONOVAN (on TV)

Governor O'Neill would like to offer his sincerest condolences to the injured staff member and assure the press and the public he had no knowledge of the staffer's activities regarding unlicensed weapons and would never condone this sort of obviously careless behavior.

(She starts watching the TV and mouths the words she is saying.)

The staff member involved had only recently been taken on as temporary help in the local primary race and...

(Her cellphone continues to ring. She grabs it, answers, and turns down the TV.)

DONOVAN

Donovan! Yeah... No I haven't seen the YouTube yet. I was just getting ready to let that one sink in. They should be here any minute. He's getting prepped for the press conference now. ... No... He knows his place. Sure he'll swallow it. They always swallow it.

(There is a loud knock at the door.)

THE MAID FARIDA

Housekeeping.

(Mary Donovan walks over to the door with the phone propped against her shoulder. She opens the door to the maid who carries a pile of towels and starts to step inside. As she speaks on the phone, Donovan grabs the towels, pushes the maid out, and closes the door, all with one hand.)

DONOVAN

No, we're doing it inside, in the conference room. Gives us control and gives us a bit more chance to get at the press before the Tsunami kicks in. ... Small door at the back. ... Yeah ... Well ... outside and they just scatter, the cameras wander around and it's like OJ's courthouse steps or something. Besides, the hotel people are worried their name in

the background might hurt business. Don't want the boy to be out front of the logo, know what I mean? I know, I told 'em but... Yeah, sure.

(No sooner does she sit down than there is another knock at the door. She stands up casually and opens it again. A room service waiter, Walid, enters with a tray carrying a bucket of ice, three glasses, tonic water, and a bottle of gin. He sets it on the table. She opens her wallet, pulls out a large bill, and holds it up in her hand. She wanders absent-mindedly around the room, talking on the phone constantly. The waiter watches the bill and periodically tries to grab it.)

DONOVAN

The key here is damage control, amputation. Prune away the dead parts and let the fresh new shoots reach up to the light.

(She finally notices the waiter drifting behind her and shoves the bill into his coat pocket. He mumbles something.)

DONOVAN (to the Waiter Walid)

What's your name? ... *(to the phone)* Just a second. ... *(to Waiter)* ... What's your name?

THE WAITER WALID

Ahhh... Walid.

DONOVAN

Charming. Walid, were you here a couple of days ago when there was the big shooting.

THE WAITER WALID

Nothing. I hear a shot but shot no worry no more.

DONOVAN

Sign of the times, Walid. Sign of the times. Okay, go... NO! Stay. Stand there. Stand right there. Wait!

(Walid stands. She closes the door and returns to the phone call.)

DONOVAN

Just hold. Hold! Okay, Walid?

THE WAITER WALID

Okay, okay ... ma'am.

DONOVAN

Okay. I need you to do a little errand for me. Do you understand errand?

THE WAITER WALID

Okay. Something to get. Yes.

(Donovan pulls a legal pad out of the briefcase, writes a quick note on a piece of paper, folds it, puts it in an envelope, reaches into the briefcase, pulls out a large denomination bill, puts the money in the envelope, and hands it to Walid.)

DONOVAN

I've written an address on this envelope. A car downstairs will take you to this address. It is a sort of eating place. Sit at the counter and when the man comes to serve you say, "Donovan wants to see Hector." The man will go away and another man, whose name will be Hector, will return with a brown envelope. You will give Hector this envelope. He will give you the brown envelope. You will get back in the car, return here, bring me the envelope, and collect fifty dollars. Does this sound like something you could do for me Walid?

THE WAITER WALID

Oh... I don't know. The boss, Mister Wilson he....

DONOVAN

I am sure Mr. Wilson would be more than pleased to know his top bell hop was doing a great service to the presidential campaign currently filling almost half his hotel and throwing away a King's ransom in his bar. Don't you think he'd be happy about that? I'll call Mr. Wilson.

THE WAITER WALID

Okay. Go. Hector. Get brown envelope. Come back.

DONOVAN

You know, carrying envelopes can be an extremely important thing in our business. You could have a great career in politics ahead of you, Walid. We should talk when you get back.

THE WAITER WALID

Okay. But...

DONOVAN

Car service, downstairs, car 156, Motor City Limos. He'll have a sign that says, "Walid."

THE WAITER WALID

Okay. Car 156, Walid. Hector, envelope. Okay.

(Walid leaves the room Donovan returns to her phone call.)

DONOVAN

Hey. I gotta go. Call you back.

(She hits a couple of more buttons on the phone.)

Hi, Motor City? Yeah, This is Donovan. The car at the hotel is for a Walid. Right. W-A-L-I... right.

(She hangs up and makes another call.)

Hi. Could I speak with Hector please? ... Hector, an hour tops and don't fuck around. Right.

(She hangs up and makes another call.)

Hello? Is there any way I could speak with the manager? Well, could I leave a message? Lovely. Could you inform him one of his waiters has graciously volunteered to run a couple of errands for the O'Neill campaign. Yes, he's the one. Clearly the campaign would like to make financial arrangements to reimburse the hotel for the services of one of their employees. Something along the lines of his hourly rate plus a percentage for operating costs? Hmm? ... I'll expect his call then. ...

(Another call.)

... Hi, I'm back. Where were we? Oh yeah. ... Well you know that better than me. Times like this you go by the book, Disavow, Disown, and above all Distance. I didn't know him. If I did I don't know him now. He did it on his own. Never knew about it BECAUSE I am so far above him in the organization I couldn't possibly deal with everyone who comes into contact with the campaign. By the book. ...

(She notices the TV.)

Wait a second. The Candidate is on.

(She turns up the volume on the TV.)

O'NEILL (TV)

This is just a small step in a long campaign and we haven't got time to look back. Like they say in NASCAR, what is behind me is not important.

(He chuckles.)

TV VOICE #1

Has the shooting incident changed your views on gun control in any way?

O'NEILL (TV)

No. Absolutely not. Guns don't make mistakes, people do. We may need more gun education but there can never be any reason to limit our Second Amendment rights.

DONOVAN

(Talking to the TV)

And you couldn't come up with anything better than that?

(There is another knock at the door. Donovan stares at the TV. The knock at the door turns into pounding. She shuts down the volume on the TV and goes to the door.)

Who is it?

(Reel's voice comes through the door.)

REEL

It's us.

(Donovan smiles and opens the door. Rod comes rolling in seated in a wheelchair. His leg is in a full-length cast and propped up in front of him. Reel is pushing him. Rod is wearing a business suit with one leg cut off above the cast.)

DONOVAN

The hero returns on his shield. ...

(to Reel)

Just set him over there. He all prepped and ready to ... man up?

REEL

Yeah. Statement's ready. Are we still good for the conference room?

DONOVAN

Remember to plant him up behind the table so nobody sees the cast.

REEL

They'll know it's there.

DONOVAN

They'll know it's there but they won't see it. There's a difference. You keep the event in the language and not in view. That way we control the picture ... we control the horizontal, we control the vertical, we set the contrast ... How do you think he looks?

ROD

You know I'm still here.

(Pause as she looks at Rod.)

DONOVAN

No ... no John, you're not.

ROD

Yes I am still here. I'm not a stage prop, okay! This campaign ...

DONOVAN

No. No, Rodman. You are not here. You are an angry ghost, wandering the ether, unaware of the fact he is already dead. Drink?

ROD

Okay.

DONOVAN

You used to drink scotch, right? I've only got gin.

ROD

I don't really like gin.

(She pours some gin in a glass and pours tonic on top of it.)

DONOVAN

G and T, Rod. G and T. Remember your mother in Greenwich? Those afternoons in the Berkshires? "G and T dahling?" Seems more appropriate, more fitting to your ... preppie persona. Here let me give you a straw...

(to Reel)

One thing ... please... and I know this is going to be hard but ...

(She stifles a giggle.)

Keep your game face on, okay?

(Reel opens up the laptop on the table and logs on.)

REEL

Just in case you haven't seen the cellphone video on You Tube...

(He hits a couple of keys, clicks on the pad, and pushes himself back in the chair. Voices come from the laptop.)

ROD (FROM COMPUTER)

Oh shit! Ow... Goddammit! Turn that thing off. Ahhh! Ahhh!

REEL (FROM COMPUTER)

Oh man! Just recording this for posterity. Dude... you just shot yourself in the foot!

ROD (FROM COMPUTER)

Son of a bitch this hurts. Turn off the fucking video and call 911 asshole!

REEL (FROM COMPUTER)

Okay, okay. As soon as I get this down... this is bad, I know but ... I'm sorry. I can't help it.

(The video continues with the sound of Reel laughing, Rod screaming and swearing, and Reel calling 911.)

REEL (FROM COMPUTER)

(talking on the phone)

Hello. Yeah... his foot. He shot himself in the foot. The Marriot downtown. Room 912. ... I know ... I know.

(Reel turns off the video. Rod drinks. Donovan covers her mouth and stifles a laugh. She notices the TV.)

DONOVAN

Oh we gotta see this.

TV VOICE #1

Bob, we are here at Kretschmer's Deli downtown where owner Bob Kretschmer has become famous for naming sandwiches after political candidates. Bob, what have you got for us?

KRETSCHMER (TV)

(generic foreign accent)

Well... you know... we still have the Governor O'Neill, a big turkey sandwich on white bread with mayonnaise and pickle.

TV VOICE

Big seller?

KRETSCHMER (TV)

No really. No. No many peoples like the ... white bread and turkey, you know.

TV VOICE

Sounds like a newsman's lunch right there. You should see the stuff at our cafeteria Bob. What else you got?

KRETSCHMER (TV)

Well ... this from a couple days ago. The Rodman here. Big seller.

TV VOICE

And what's that?

KRETSCHMER (TV)

Is foot long kosher beef hot dog with hole in middle filled with ketchup ... you know like...

TV VOICE

You heard it Bob. Foot long with a hole in it. Back to you, I'm getting hungry.

TV VOICE #2

The Rodman hot dog! There you have it.

(Donovan turns down the volume and breaks into a giggle.)

REEL

You wanna see Leno from last night? We made it to the big time.

DONOVAN

Sure. Give us the intro...

(Reel goes back to the laptop and logs onto the Tonight Show. Computer faces away from the audience. A voice comes from the computer.)

LENO (FROM COMPUTER)

So you've all heard about the "hotel shooting." I mean... you gotta give it to them. Everybody always talks about shooting themselves in the foot but nobody every does anything about it ... *(laughter)* But seriously, I hear John Rodman is considering leaving politics and getting into the movies. Yeah... gonna be an actor... no kidding. He's already contracted to do a remake of Footloose... *(laughter)* ... Seems only natural after all those offers for Dr. Scholl's endorsements started pouring in. ... Gives a whole new meaning to "Are you gellin'?"

(Donovan smiles and turns down the TV.)

ROD

Let's just get this over, let me resign and go home.

DONOVAN

Really sorry John. But we can't let you go home just right now.

ROD

Why is that?

DONOVAN

Well...

(She changes the channel on the television and turns up the volume.)

There. There's why.

TV VOICE

We are here just in front of the home of the junior O'Neill campaign consultant, John Rodman, who inexplicably shot himself in the foot yesterday under mysterious circumstances. We are hoping for some comment from family members on what could have led him to do something like this...

DONOVAN

Unfortunate perfect storm of a slow news day and a streak of unseasonably warm weather, I'd say.

ROD

The sun had to come out, didn't it?

DONOVAN

Can't rain forever John. They'll go away ... sooner or later ... like bluebirds of happiness from a warm gun. In the meantime, you are free to enjoy all the ... luxury ... this hotel has to offer.

ROD

So you make me resign and bring me back here just to keep me prisoner?

DONOVAN

Nobody ever really resigns, John. We go into hiding. We take a temporary hiatus to spend more time with our families. But we always get the call when they need us. And prisoner never ... As soon as they tell us you can get around on your own, you're free to go ... naturally after signing a few non-disclosure agreements.

ROD

Still, it isn't fair. That one screw up cancels out years of service. Still... you'd have to say.

DONOVAN

Remoras don't criticize sharks Rodman! You are a bottom feeder! You catch the scraps that are constantly falling from their constantly feeding mouths and you say thanks and if the shark slips up and eats you in the process that is part and parcel of the game and you apologize if your backbone pricks his throat going down. When you go downstairs and make your little announcement, be contrite. It HAS been a great privilege to be a part of this organization. You ARE saddened by the event. You DO hope you have caused no problems for the O'Neill campaign. You ARE deeply sorry for all that Governor O'Neill and his family have had to go through and have great respect and admiration for them. You ARE lucky to have served such an outstanding individual and will continue to support his candidacy.

ROD

I can act.

DONOVAN

This is not an act. This is what you are ... at least right now.

ROD

A professional bottom feeder. So what does that make you, huh?

DONOVAN

It makes me ... the top ... bottom feeder! Get him downstairs.

(Reel wheels Rod's wheelchair around, opens the door, and wheels him out. Donovan sits down at the table, flips through the channels, turns up the TV, and watches.)

TV VOICE #1

Well it looks like we are down to two candidates in the primary since the announcement this morning another hopeful has dropped out. The Junior Senator from Ohio, Tim Leary just announced his resignation this morning. Mark, what do you think in the end was the problem with the Leary campaign?

TV VOICE #2

You know... I saw Tim Leary in the beginning. I saw him in New Hampshire and he was a different man. My question is where did this guy go, where did he disappear to. ... What happened was some cynical consultants persuaded him or he allowed himself to be persuaded early on to be something he was really not. You know, I've seen him at press conferences and...

(During the following, Donovan whispers while echoing the television voices.)

DONOVAN

Flip-flopping is not necessarily political suicide if you play it right. Public never remembers past the last sound bite.

TV VOICE #3

I disagree Dick, I mean... flip flopping in itself is not political suicide. You know, getting to the point you just made, I've been around this business a long long time and I have never seen any candidate do anything they did not want to do. Consultants aren't these...

DONOVAN

... svengalis ...

TV VOICE #3

... svengalis or ah ah...

DONOVAN

... Rasputins ...

TV VOICE #3

Rasputins or whatever they are... characters that force candidates into some strict demographic ... ah ...

DONOVAN

... paradigm...

TV VOICE #3

Paradigm ... to try and garner votes ... Listen ... You have to decide “Who am I?” and boy if you’re depending on hired consultants to tell you who you are and who you wanna be then you probably shouldn’t be ... ah...

DONOVAN

... winning races ... or even considering running.

TV VOICE #3

... even considering running much less... ah... winning races.

TV VOICE #1

Sorry to interrupt here but we have to switch over to the Rodman news conference that is just about to start.

(Sounds of voices in the background from the TV as we hear Rodman’s voice.)

DONOVAN

Start in mid-speech, get him warmed up first.

ROD

(In mid-speech)

... a great privilege to be a part of this organization.

DONOVAN

... saddened ...

ROD

I am saddened by these events. We all assume certain risks in whatever we do, whatever activities we pursue. And regardless of how experienced, careful, and dedicated we are, accidents do and will happen.

DONOVAN

... deeply sorry ...

ROD

I am deeply sorry for all that Governor O'Neill and his family have had to go through and ...

DONOVAN

... great respect and admiration for them as they deal with situations ...

ROD

... have great respect and admiration for them as they deal with situations that are much more serious than what I've had to deal with this week.

DONOVAN

... lucky to have served ...

ROD

I am lucky to have served such an outstanding individual and will continue to support his candidacy.

(Questions from reporters begin pouring from the TV.)

VARIOUS VOICES

Who did this gun belong... ? Mister Rodman! Mister Rodman! How do you feel about the way this... Mister Rodman! Have you seen the hot dog?

DONOVAN

Wheel him off. ... Wheel him off! WHEEL.... good.

(She pulls the beauty kit back out of the briefcase, opens it on the table, and takes out the syringe.)

DONOVAN

Conflict, climax, resolution... falling action ... run the credits...

(Blackout)

SCENE 3
PAYBACK AND THE LIL' ABNER PARADIGM

(The same room as before. Fast food wrappers, beer cans, and so forth are strewn around the beds and floor. John "Rod" Rodman, passed out lightly from drinking, is still in the wheelchair stage left. Elton "Reel" Reel is holding the bottle of gin and sitting on the side of the bed next to him. A chair next to Rod holds the laptop computer facing away from the audience. Rod is dressed as much as possible like Lil' Abner: black overalls, red shirt, brogan shoes and a straw hat. A straw is stuck in the side of his mouth and is holding up the broken fishing rod. Rod periodically takes a drink from the bottle of gin and laughs.)

REEL

Okay, okay see. That is perfect. The Lil' Abner paradigm. Focus groups lean toward the image of a strong, honest figure who... tests mattresses all day yet ... refuses sex and... has the mind of a five-year-old. You know... the all-American moron. Part porn star, part quarterback, the guy in the science fiction movies who always drove the spaceship and was always saying stuff like ... "I may not know much professor but... that thing out there has got to be ... blown up with something ... and then gets the nerdy girl assistant scientist who SPURNS the brilliant Nobel Prize winner for the... walking high school fuckstick and ... next president of the United States. HEY!

(He starts slapping Rod around a little, shaking his head and putting a gin and tonic to his lips.)

HEY! Johnny! Johnny boy! Wait... Wait. We are missing an essential element to the nuclear Dogpatch household... Wait!

(Reel stumbles into the bathroom and comes out with a big-breasted manikin dressed like Daisy Mae: short, cut-off skirt; tight, white blouse with large, red, polka dots; and a big, blonde wig.)

Here we go.

(He sets the manikin on Rod's lap and arranges her then starts taking pictures with a camera.)

And it's ... Sadie Hawkin's Day!! Smile Daisy! HEY! Snap out of it!

(Rod comes to and smiles at Daisy. He is still half asleep.)

ROD

Daisy! Is this the same one we used in Des Moines?

REEL

The very same.

ROD

How thoughtful... And I'm assuming this is payback for... uhhhm... Columbus?

REEL

Scranton! Payback for that supermarket parking lot in Scranton!

ROD

Oh... *(laughing)* Oh yeah ... Christ if you only knew how long it took to fill up the inside of that car. ... Okay. Fair enough.

(Reel continues taking pictures.)

REEL

Now give Daisy a nice big kiss and give me that Fearless Fosdick profile.

(Rod kisses Daisy and turns for a profile.)

So Mr. Yokum, what do you look for in a President?

(Rod gets into the Lil' Abner part.)

ROD

Well, I want somebody just like me only not like me. Somebody better than me but not that much better. Who reads but not too much. Somebody who is a man of faith ... but who doesn't really take the preacher that seriously. Somebody who reflects my virtues unless ... you know ... he needs to get stuff done and then to hell with my virtues. Somebody who will do the things I am not willing to do, unless they are things I don't like and then ... well ... Somebody who can think but in the end believes in stuff whether he knows anything about it or not.... A real man but somebody who would do better than me under the circumstances. Somebody like me but different, taller but just by a few inches ... The father I wanted for myself, the me I want for my son ... Now if you'll excuse me, I'm gonna drink some more Kickapoo Joy Juice and go test a mattress with Daisy Mae.

REEL

Didn't we do a focus group study in Dogpatch?

ROD

Everywhere is fucking Dogpatch, man! The Greater Dogpatch Metropolitan Area including Dogpatch Downs, Dogpatch Creek Country Club, the new Dogpatch stadium, name soon to be changed to the Kickapoo Joy Juice Arena after the company remodeled the parking lot ...

(As he mumbles, the laptop facing Rod on the chair next to him starts to ring like a phone. Rod picks it up and clicks it. A voice comes out of the laptop. We hear lots of voices in the background, as if there is a party.)

TOMMY (FROM COMPUTER)

John! Oh Johnny Rod!

ROD

Speaking of Dogpatch, Hey Tommy! How's the weather down in Macnamara land?

TOMMY

Check it out. They're serving fresh orange juice with the vodka. See? They're squeezing, man! They are definitely hand squeezing that fresh... Hey! Wait a minute! Lemme see. C'mon, turn the camera around.

(Rod turns the laptop around to face Daisy Mae. The computer explodes with laughter.)

ROD

Say Hi to the boys Daisy!

TOMMY

Wait! Turn it around again. I've gotta record this. Yeee Haaa!

(Reel takes the laptop and moves it around Rod like a fashion photographer around a model. Rod holds up Daisy Mae, smiles, and does Daisy Mae voice.)

ROD

(falsetto)

Hi ya Tommy!

TOMMY

Hey Johnny Boy! We're having a little Macnamara-takes-O'Neill-by-20-points-in-the-primary celebration and thought ... before the candidates show up and things get hot down here in the Sunshine State, we'd give you a little ... video conference nudge and... sing you a get well song. Me and the boys here.

ROD

You guys in Orlando already?

TOMMY

Ready? Here goes.

REEL

Freshen your drink up John?

(Rod tosses Daisy to the bed and wheels around to give his attention to the laptop screen. Reel pour a straight gin into a plastic cup and pour in some sort of mixer from a bottle on the table. Singing voices come from the laptop.)

TOMMY AND OTHERS *(singing from computer)*

“Have gun, will travel was the card of a man... A gun for hire in a savage land ... Have gun will travel was the card of... Rodman... Rodman Rodman where do you roam.”

(The guys in the computer laugh. Reel breaks up. Rod smiles broadly.)

ROD

You’re giving away your age Tommy. Or do they only get sixties re-reruns at those retirement homes where you’re campaigning?!

TOMMY

Hey, seventy is the new twenty. Besides, who else is gonna show them where to sign the check, man?

ROD

You always were a real fucking Boy Scout Tom.

REEL

So how is it down there?

TOMMY

John, is that the corduroy and bowtie boy... in the flesh?

ROD

Yeah. Regular party pooper.

TOMMY

C’mon man! You know how it is down here. It like it is everywhere down here. You got rooms. You got big rooms, little rooms, conference rooms, press rooms, stacks of file folders, the hotel bar, bad Chinese food, the strip, the Chinese restaurant bar, meetings, rewrites, voter canvassing, the bar, meetings, the bar and blah blah blah ... Here, here, when you look out a window here, right over there, to the right ... a palm tree! See it? Squeezing fresh oranges and a palm tree. That is a palm tree, right? I recognize them from the little plastic drink stirrers. Wait! Sean’s got another one.

(More voices start singing from the computer with the music of Bonjovi’s “Shot through the Heart” in the background.)

TOMMY AND OTHERS

“Shot through the foot, and you’re to blame ... baby you give ... Republicans ... a bad name.”

(More laughter from the room and the computer. Rod lightens up and drinks. Reel sits on the bed, an outsider in the conversation.)

TOMMY

Wait wait. Is that Daisy Mae the same one from Des Moines?

REEL

Same one. I found her in storage before we left and figured...

TOMMY

Oooh you are a kinky little wonk, aren’t you?

ROD

She sure looked real from that motel parking lot.

TOMMY

Yeah! Yeah! Those grainy videos through the window... *(laughing)* Christ Johnny you’re making this vodka and orange come up my nose.

REEL

Cullen lost that one though, didn’t he?

TOMMY

Oooh buzz kill, man! Turn off the fact check function every now and then, will ya Poindexter’?

(There is a knock at the door. We hear the voice of the Maid from Scene I.)

THE MAID FARIDA

Housekeeping.

(Reel opens the door. The Maid enters with a large garbage bag and starts picking up the refuse from the floor, table, and beds. Garbage should include a large variety of leftovers from a very strange party, empty cans and bottles, ripped clothing, Halloween masks, chicken buckets, a broad variety of fast food containers, etc.)

ROD

No shit good to see you Tom.

TOMMY

Really. Nice to see you too John. No more foot jokes, cross my heart. Hey! Who've you got back there?

ROD

Where?

TOMMY

Hey sweetheart!

REEL

It's just the maid.

TOMMY

That's your story, huh? Okay. Hey! What's your name? Como te llamas?

THE MAID FARIDA
(in halting English)

Sorry. I no speak Spanish.

TOMMY

What?

THE MAID FARIDA

No. No Spanish.

TOMMY

Could you come a little closer to the screen here Chica?

(She moves to the screen and smiles.)

What's your name?

THE MAID FARIDA

Farida.

(She moves a little closer to the laptop.)

TOMMY

Farida! Wowwy Zowie John! If I shoot myself in the foot, will she come to my room?

ROD

Stop fucking with the help Tommy!

TOMMY

Farida, you are fantastic. I mean it. Hey! Just a thought. How much would you want to put on a bikini, run into an O'Neill rally and give the candidate a big sloppy kiss?

THE MAID FARIDA

No... What is?... No. No Englis ... No bikini ... no.

TOMMY

A red miniskirt maybe? How about a laptop dance? Just one?

THE MAID FARIDA

No no. I clean. No lapping.

TOMMY

Mommy mommy! No say no!

(Rod makes the whistling sound of a nosedive with a plane crash.)

ROD

And Tommy Flanagan is shot down in flames once again.

(The Maid returns to cleaning the room.)

TOMMY

What? So I tried okay? Just tell me she wouldn't be great, underwear and fishnets, local parish fundraiser, out front of church with a sign, Vote O'Neill, just as the family faithful come to drop off their checks? Like what you did in Texas that time.

ROD

That was a long time ago okay? You wouldn't get her past security now.

TOMMY

Are you kidding? That woman could get past anything. Right place and the right time, I'd let her plant a bomb wherever she wanted and pop a cork when she hit the plug.

ROD

Security doesn't care about pussy. Security frisks his own sister. Security's a fucking harem eunuch. Fucking G-men for J Edgar nowadays.

TOMMY

That's why the bikini! What is she going to hide in the bikini?

ROD

Always thinking, huh Tom?

TOMMY

Not like you John. You are a fucking genius at this, man ... Remember that ... hundred pizzas with bacon and pepperoni delivered to the B'Nai B'Rith fundraiser in Chicago. Remember that one?

(Reel starts to laugh.)

ROD

Candidate shows up for a little glad-handing and had to fucking back peddle on the pork pies all afternoon ... good times Tom.

TOMMY

You are one of the best and you know this kind of thing that happened... fuck... Could happen to any of us.

REEL

Could happen to any of us.

TOMMY

Whoa! Hey. Us? Us?! Wait a minute there Beavis. Where'd you get that degree again? Whaddya call it? The Acme School of Ballot Stuffing?

REEL

Baruch College... Graduate School of Political Management.

(Pause, then Tommy and Rod burst out laughing.)

TOMMY

Yeah right! You ever run from the cops after rifling through a garbage can in the middle of the night doing opposition research?

REEL

Well I've...

TOMMY

Fucking sit in a parking lot for a week with your eye black from the peeping end of the telephoto lens that's been hooked to your face all night?

REEL

I don't know what this has to...

(Tommy starts to show the effects of the vodka and fresh squeezed orange juice.)

TOMMY

Well then you got nothing to say, have you? Do not presume my little Political Baruch Hack. Do not ... presume to be US ... just yet ... All I'm saying is... what was I saying?

ROD

This kind of thing...

TOMMY

This kind of thing... this little setback with the foot and the gun, this could happen to any of us. Am I right, Roddy?

ROD

Right, Tommy.

TOMMY

On the line. They want you to think fast and act quick but when you miss that triple mid-air somersault ... badaboom badabing ... you bite the bullet, make the speech and end up back doing print copy for hand cream.

ROD

Hazards of the sea we swim in, my friend.

TOMMY

Fuckin' poet you are John. Hazards of the sea we swim in. The hazards of the sea we swim in. We live in dangerous waters my friend. ... Seriously, Donovan's probably got you holed up there for a week or so, right? ... I mean, that's what I'd do.

ROD

You'd have a better liquor cabinet.

TOMMY

What? What's she got you drinking?

(Rod holds up the bottle in front of the laptop and pours a little in his paper cup.)

TOMMY

Cheap gin? Mother of Christ Johnny! What is it with that fucking Donovan? You know, they say no one has ever seen her eat. No drink, no food, nothing. Spooky.

(The Maid has finished filling up the black garbage bag and has been staring blankly at the laptop. She starts to go.)

THE MAID FARIDA

I go.

TOMMY

Is she going? Don't go!

(She leaves and drags the detritus out with her.)

ROD

Say what you got to say Tom.

TOMMY

(Finally drunk)

What? Oh... Well, you know... We're here... same suite in Orlando. Man with your talents, your abilities, whatever. You know, you know. Whatever. You've always got a place. Not a good idea to get too specific on the ... whaddya call 'em? ... Public airways.

ROD

You're a good man Tommy.

TOMMY

And you are a great fucking liar John. Hey Wonky!

REEL

Yeah Tom.

TOMMY

You could learn a lot from this guy.

REEL

Sure.

TOMMY

(Getting weepy)

He's just, you know... the greatest ... ah...

ROD

Good-by Tom and ...

(Tommy gets even weepier from the computer.)

TOMMY

That thing in New Hampshire I mean... no one is ever gonna know just how brilliant...

ROD

Say g'night Tommy.

TOMMY

G'night Tommy.

(Rod hits the computer keyboard. The noise stops. He takes a long drink and Reel fixes himself another one. Rod snickers.)

REEL

Funny guy Tommy.

ROD

Funny guy. Funny he should bring up that bikini incident in Texas. He'll sure remember it tomorrow around two o'clock.

REEL

What? What's up?

ROD

Tommy's got this organizational meeting tomorrow with the Florida Hispanic Evangelical Association ... no big deal you know, just ... firm up the base, get the god squad in line, make sure everybody is there when the candidate lands and... well... I arranged for Miss Hispanic Female Impersonator 2007 and her court to be there out front and strut their stuff for the media dressed for their competition swimsuits with MacNamara sashes across the front.

REEL

What's the big deal? Shouldn't take them more than fifteen minutes to get that sorted out. Security comes in, moves them onto the street.

ROD

First off... You don't think that's funny? Really? Big Cuban Drag Queens in one-pieces and stilettos with MacNamara sashes? Really?

REEL

Yeah, funny enough I guess.

ROD

So yeah... Fifteen minutes before security comes in which is precisely why it's so important the crew from Mundo Vision gets there ahead of time so they can soak up an eyeful of the lively debate between Hispanic Evangelicals and the court of the reigning Miss Muñeca Viva as they are dragged onto the sidewalk.

REEL

Man you're good.

ROD

Naah... This ratfucking bullshit only goes so far. Not like back in the day when you could control media access better.

REEL

No YouTube, no blogs, no back door press outlets for anonymous statements, no sock puppets. How DID you ever get along?

ROD

Stirring the pot with disinformation is fine. Back then there were no metal detectors. Security was slack. You could send a stripper in to kiss a candidate. A pizza man could get through an entourage. And just because somebody knew something, that didn't mean everybody knew it. Now ... you can't get to somebody quick enough to pay them off before the whole thing hits online. Somebody's cellphone picks up a racist comment. Shit like that used to never happened. Candidates made racist comments all the time when they were drunk with other racists, doors closed, cigars lit, hookers working the room. Heh... Try and catch fucking MacNamara with his hand around a glass ... or some strange ass ... teetotaling faithful to his pig of a wife bastard.

REEL

So I guess we'll be on opposite teams down there, huh?

ROD

Not interested.

REEL

Not interested? In working for MacNamara?

ROD

Not really. I'm tired. I've got some money laid up. I've been moving from one local campaign to the next for a while now. Pulling tricks, moving cash, leaking disinformation ...

REEL

So what happens when the cast comes off?

ROD

I've been thinking of walking the Appalachian Trail.

(Reel does a spit take with his drink.)

REEL

Tell me you're not serious.

ROD

Why not? Recalibrate the equipment. Reboot the operating system.

REEL

Whatever happened to “Above the Paradigm”? Remember? We work with the profile. We are surrounded by the profile, but not part of the profile... Remember? Dude... have you fallen into your own manipulated man-profile?

ROD

Why does it have to be a profile? Why does this have to be some sort of paradigm? Why can't I just do something alone to prove something to myself, to increase my inner sense of identity? Can I do that?

REEL

Ahh... no... as a matter of fact, no, you can't.

ROD

Why? Why not? Why can't I just walk the Appalachian trail?

REEL

Not you. You'll be video-recording the whole thing. You'll have a blog set up. You'll call the local news team the day before you get to a town. Your only sense of character is what you've studied. You're building a stereotype around yourself for protection against what you know is not there. You are falling into a paradigm of your own making.

ROD

I'm doing it. I'm walking the trail. I'm getting the gear and starting off from Georgia.

REEL

No video?

ROD

No video.

REEL

No press releases?

ROD

Georgia all the way up and you will never hear anything about it.

REEL

A grand says you won't make it.

ROD

Done... and... when I make it to the end, I have the right to publicly humiliate you any way my vast imagination can conceive of.

REEL

Okay. You set it up.

ROD

Oh, I'll set it up.

(They pause and drink. The rest of the scene progresses into stuttering drunkenness and incoherence.)

ROD

So why Lil' Abner instead of Luke and Daisy Duke? Aren't they more your generation?

REEL

Like I said... research. I am... developing a knowledge base of the past fifty years of US popular culture, Yokums to Andy and Opey to Dukes and You Might Be A Redneck!

ROD

Creating a new history for yourself?

REEL

Just images, ab... ab... absorbing images... and yeah...

ROD

You can't create a new childhood, you know that?

REEL

Sure I can. As far as you know, my childhood is whatever I tell you it was.

ROD

So you grew up in the forties?

REEL

Sure.

ROD

You grew up in the fifties and sixties.

REEL

Absolutely.

ROD

You've got Huck Finn, Andy Hardy, Beaver Cleaver, Archie and Jughead, Richie Cunningham, and the Dukes of fucking Hazard all rolled up in a neat package there, haven't you?

REEL

Precisely. A file cabinet of childhoods I can access depending on... on... local... demographics.

ROD

Was there ever a time you believed in something you were doing?

REEL

What do you mean?

ROD

You know what I mean. Way off in the past, some movement, some concept, some guy with a nice speaking style. You know, maybe in college. Ever sell your soul to the Ralph Nader campaign for a blow job from that hot little hippie Classics Major?

REEL

My college roommate was this rich kid, Dad was a big developer. Dad thought it would be good if his kid became president of the Student Government Association. Saw it as some kind of character building, stepping stone, leadership crap. Kid didn't care one way or the other, but he wasn't that stupid. He saw the future, saw the potential in aspiring to a career in the public eye... launching out on a political track with a trust fund in his pocket. I was his unpaid campaign manager. The opposition was fantastic, great speaker, athlete, wrestling scholarship. Good-looking guy. Fucking All-American. You could not have photo-shopped a better candidate. Of course, then the campus police found a couple ounces of pot in his dorm room. And if that wasn't bad enough, a couple of strippers from a local club identified him as a regular and close personal friend, there were pictures... He fell into disfavor and later became extremely erratic and paranoid. The administration disqualified him from the elections and he dropped out. My roommate won. His Dad got me a Kiwanis Club scholarship to finish my undergraduate.

ROD

Unfortunate series of events.

REEL

Unfortunate series of events indeed.

ROD

Where's the aspiring candidate now?

REEL

Republican Congressman from the sixth district in Virginia. We still talk.

ROD

So no?

REEL

Yeah. So no. If you wanna know...

ROD

No?

REEL

No.

ROD

Shake your fist in the air and yell something long enough, you can believe anything. Once you know that, you are above believing. ... You make it cold and people put on coats, dangle food and drink and sex in front of the whole slobbering mass of Boss Hogs and Lil' Abners and they bite! They bite at promises, they bite at lies, they bite at thrills, they bite at heaven, they bite! Just have to find out what bait they like best. That's our job. That's what I believe in.

REEL

What are you talking about?

ROD

Never mind. ... I'm still walking the trail.

REEL

You can't fool me with this conversion crap. This "epiphany after a trauma" thing. If something big were to fall into your lap, some great chunk of fortune were to show you the way to turning the corner on a campaign, shifting a primary by two points, you'd be there. That's your bait.

ROD

I'm walking it.

REEL

C'mere Daisy! We need a nap.

(He grabs Daisy from Rod, stumbles over to the bed and lies down with her. Rod smiles and slowly falls asleep as he sings.)

ROD

When you're right, you're right... But I'm still walking it. ...

(singing)

"Daisy Daisy, give me your answer true. I'm half... crazy... all for the love of..."

(The lights begin to slowly come down on the scene of Reel in bed with the Daisy Mae manikin and Reel singing lower and lower. Suddenly, the light come up full and the door slams open with a loud noise. Donovan stands in the door, breathing heavily, and holding a briefcase and a large, unfolded Federal Express box.)

DONOVAN

Alright! Party's over. Everybody! Out of the pool! Where is that fucking bellboy with my fucking package?

(Blackout)

SCENE 4

THE TV AND HOUSECLEANING INTERMEZZO

(The stage is in half light. The TV is on and casts light toward upstage. Rod is fast asleep in the wheelchair. Reel is fast asleep in his clothes on the bed stage right. The Daisy Mae Manikin lies next to him. The door rattles and the Maid quietly lets herself into the room with a card key. She is wearing a long coat and has a Palestinian-style headscarf, a keffiyeh, tied around her neck. She carries a technician's bag. She sets down the bag and takes off her coat and scarf.)

TV VOICE #1 (Will)

... leaked photos of Senator MacNamara wearing a traditional headdress and Arab-style robes at a business meeting two years ago in the capital of Sana'a. The other man in the photo has been identified as Yemeni businessman Mohammed Al Haddad, head of an agribusiness consortium and alleged contributor to the MacNamara campaign. Bill, have you got anything else on this one?

(The maid takes a small spray can from her bag and sprays it quickly into the faces of Rod and Reel. She opens their eyelids to make sure they are out. She then goes to the computer, inserts a flash drive, hits a couple of keys and waits.)

TV VOICE #2 (Bill)

Indeed I have Will. The original photo was posted on several Arabic websites and the first came to light here in the online Mudd Report, the political blog operated by Harold Mudd who claims he got the photo originally from someone in the O'Neill campaign. The Mudd Report also says this was taken during an official visit to the capital of Yemen

when MacNamara was head of the Senate Agricultural Committee and working on increasing US exports of fertilizer and hybrid seed to Yemen.

(The Maid looks over at the TV and moves her hand like a puppet, miming speech and mouthing “peep peep.”)

Mudd says he acquired the photo via e-mail from an unidentified aid to Governor O’Neill along with the message, “If this were O’Neill, we’d be seeing it on the front page of every news magazine in the country.” Implying again some sort of ... prejudice on the part of the media.

(The Maid takes out the flash drive, puts it in her bag and takes out three small round microphones. She sticks one under the table, the other behind a trashy painting on the wall, and looks around for another place to stick the last one.)

TV VOICE #1 (Will)

Let’s go over to Bob who is traveling with the MacNamara campaign. Bob what do they have to say about all this?

(The Maid shrugs her shoulders and attaches it under Daisy Mae’s shorts.)

TV VOICE #3 (Bob)

Will, in a press conference earlier today the MacNamara campaign manager accused the O’Neill campaign of, quote, “shameful, offensive fear-mongering.” He went on to say, “While O’Neill is giving speeches about restoring respect for America around the world, his campaign has been engaged in an attempt to spread paranoia and fear that is more disgraceful than we have seen thus far in the campaign.”

(On the phrase “paranoia and fear,” the Maid makes “boogy man” gestures at the TV and ghost sounds. She takes a screwdriver from the bag and starts trying to unscrew the light switch from the wall. It is noisy.)

TV VOICE #2 (Bill)

Exactly Bob... and at the same time, here is what Mary Donovan from the O’Neill campaign said about it:

DONOVAN (on TV)

“If the MacNamara campaign wants to suggest that a photo of the candidate wearing a traditional headdress during an official Senate visit to a staunch US ally could in any way be divisive or spark fear or suspicion, they should be ashamed.”

TV VOICE #2 (Bill)

However, if you’ll notice here, the statement never responded to the central question of whether or not someone in the O’Neill campaign actually sent that photo.

(She has trouble unscrewing the plate to the light switch and starts trying to pry the whole thing off.)

TV VOICE #1 (Will)

Indeed, the central question soo ... ah ...

(She takes a hammer from the bag and starts bashing away with the screwdriver and a hammer at the light switch.)

TV VOICE #3 (Bob)

Well yes William, there are a lot of possible scenarios, the simplest being that someone in the O'Neill campaign, some junior staffer found this picture online and sent it off to the Mudd Report either with or without the knowledge of senior campaign operatives. Now this would put the O'Neill campaign into the classic category of "either malicious or incompetent" since either A) this was an old school dirty trick that backfired or B) the campaign is in such disarray at this point that O'Neill has major problems keeping his people in line and on message.

(She rips the light switch off the wall, leaving a large hole, and falling backward onto the floor. She stands up quickly.)

TV VOICE #1

So either dumb or mean?

TV VOICE #3

That's right! Stupid or nasty, take your pick.

(She flips the bird at the TV set.)

Let's get back to our commentators. Tina, Jim? What do you both make of this?

(She looks around, takes the painting down off the wall and pulls out the hanging nail with the hammer.)

TV VOICE #5 (Jim)

Can I just say something here, Bob ... uh... B uh Will. Everyone really seems to be missing the point. The other man in the photo, this Mohammed Al Haddad, has an extremely uhm... dubious past. His name has cropped up over the years in various arms deals and corruption scandals in his home country. He does in fact have business ties to North Korea and has organized purchases of weapons from that country, all perfectly legal but still...

(She starts loudly hammering the nail into the wall above the hole.)

Ostensibly, Senator MacNamara was there to promote US agricultural interests but this junket was underwritten by a lobbying firm connected to an international agricultural conglomerate so who knows.

(She continues to hammer, louder and louder.)

In addition, several allegations have ...

TV VOICE #1

I'm sorry what was that Jim?

TV VOICE #5 (Jim)

I said... several allegations have surfaced of illegal contributions from Arab business interests, talk of boxes of cash fedexed from overseas to the campaign and so on.

(Having hammered in the nail, she hangs the picture over the hole and looks satisfied until she pulls the black cylinder out of her pocket. She looks at it and frowns.)

So the real question here involves these aspects of the photo and the trip and not the ridiculous assumption that the Senator somehow has converted to Islam or has ties to a terrorist organization.

(She stridently walks into the bathroom with the object and hammer. We hear a brief but loud series of crashing sounds. She exits the bathroom without the black cylinder, brushes white dust from her shoulders and wipes it from her face.)

TV VOICE #1

So exactly what sort of turban was the Senator wearing? Tina can you help us out on this.

TV VOICE #6 (Tina)

Actually Bill this sort of headdress is a standard Arab keffiyeh, the sort of thing you'd see in different variations all around the Persian Gulf.

(The Maid sits down on the bed and watches the TV. She takes her keffiyeh from the table and wraps it around her head, modeling it for the TV.)

A black and white checkered version of this was worn by Arafat of course and was extremely popular here in the US in the late 1980s during the First Intifada. I have an old one right here I still like to wear personally. It works very well as a scarf and helps protect your face from those hard winter winds that you find along Fifth Avenue here in New York. This one is predominantly red, more common to Iraq, but the one the Senator

was wearing in the photo is the standard white keffiyeh like you would see more in Saudi Arabia.

(The Maid thinks a second, turns and looks at Daisy Mae. She brings Daisy over to the bed and sets her beside her. She puts the keffiyeh around Daisy's head and puts her arm around her neck.)

TV VOICE #1

Any chance this style could take off again here?

(TV Voice #5 breaks in.)

TV VOICE #5 (Jim)

Excuse me Willy Bobby whatever! This is just the kind of trivialization I was talking about... I mean... people are refusing to see the 500-pound elephant in the room.

(The Maid and Daisy have a mimed conversation about the TV conversation. The Maid waves her hand at the TV and pulls a face. She doesn't want to hear it.)

TV VOICE #6

Funny you should mention that Bill but a few years back, Urban Outfitters actually pulled keffiyehs from their shelves in part because of a political backlash. But as the fashion took off again in 2007, they re-instated the item and you see them all over now.

(The Maid starts moving the keffiyeh around Daisy Mae, trying it out over her head, around her neck, as a top, around her waist. The black disk falls out of Daisy's pants.)

TV VOICE #1

I remember my daughter coming back from England with one last summer, had a grey sort of pattern.

TV VOICE #5

(Loudly) Look! I have just about had it with you people! You constantly steer any discussion of any serious aspect of this campaign into a dead end of pure fluff. That's it! You can't keep treating your viewers as if they were all bored housewives on valium who spend their days clipping coupons and scanning Good Housekeeping for new things to do with ground sirloin. So screw you man! We have serious evidence of malfeasance here on the part of ...

(The Maid jams the black disk down inside the back of the TV and TV Voice #5 is abruptly silenced as if the signal were cut off. Pause. She looks at the TV and gives it a whack on one side.)

TV VOICE #1

Looks like we lost Jim's signal. Tina, thank you so much for speaking to us tonight.

TV VOICE #6

My pleasure Bill.

TV VOICE #1

And in keeping with our discussion, the cuisine of Yemen will be featured on tonight's episode of the Hungry Tourist. Thank you for watching.

(The Maid rubs Daisy's stomach and mouths "yum yum" face. She plants a big kiss on Daisy, puts on her keffiyeh, gets her things and goes. Blackout)

SCENE 5
THE BITCH IS BACK

(The set is more or less as it was at the end of Scene III. Walls are a wreck and dust from the Maid's overnight renovations cover everything. Donovan's briefcase and the unassembled FedEx box are on the table. Rod and Reel are still waking up. Reel is sitting on the side of the bed with Daisy. Rod is still in the wheelchair. Walid the Waiter is sitting on the edge of the bed nearest the door suffering Donovan's wrath and on the verge of tears. She waves around a large, padded envelope and yells.)

DONOVAN

... not the first time you've made this run, is it? You know how long it takes to get there, get the package and get back and you tell me an hour and I wait an hour and I am counting on this delivery and ... What the fuck Walid!

(She reaches into her bag and pulls out the syringe wrapped in the scarf. She has these in one hand and the envelope in the other and is gesticulating wildly with both.)

Three goddamn hours! Don't give me low priority, high priority! As far as you are concerned, from your point of view, from your position in life, anything and everything I could possibly want is the highest priority. When you look up you do not see the sky, you do not see the moon, you do not see the sun, you see me! Get it? Fucking idiot!

(She keeps talking as she goes into the bathroom.)

Fucking Bedouins! All of you!

(She slams the door to the bathroom but we still hear her yelling from inside.)

Two jumps away from herding fucking goats! If I ...

(She quiets down.)

... You ...

(She quiets down even further.)

Shit.

(Rod, Reel, and Walid stare at the bathroom door.)

ROD

Something tells me you had some problems with traffic today. Am I right, my friend?

THE WAITER WALID

She fire... I know she fire...

ROD

No no. She no fire. Don't worry about it.

THE WAITER WALID

I go and man say no got package and I say no go no package and he make wait and wait...

REEL

She can't fire you, man.

ROD

We don't know that, do we?

REEL

Kid's just a little late is all. What's the point?

ROD

You want a drink, kid? You old enough to drink?

THE WAITER WALID

No. No drink.

(He looks around.)

Little party?

ROD

Come on. Let's just say for argument's sake you are over 21.

(Rod wheels over to the gin and mixer and pours himself one in a plastic cup.)

THE WAITER WALID

No no. Thank you. Is ... is ... you dress funny? Funny hat?

ROD

You didn't bring any ice by chance, did you?

THE WAITER WALID

I ... I fired. She fire.

ROD

No kid. Me fired! Me shoot in foot, now in full cast and grounded. You good. She's got no sway over you. Don't put up with this shit. Have a drink.

THE WAITER WALID

I know. I fired. No drink. Is... is...

(The bathroom door opens and out walks Donovan, calm and collected. She carefully puts her scarf and syringe back into the briefcase.)

DONOVAN

Haraam. Walid cannot drink because it is *haraam*, forbidden, like being a hypocrite, doing forbidden things in private and claiming holiness in public.

THE WAITER WALID

Yes. You fire now?

DONOVAN

Don't be silly dear.

(She starts pulling bundles of money out of the briefcase and stacking them on the table. She tosses the unfolded FedEx box to Reel.)

Could you put this box together for me please, Elton?

(Rod and Reel look at each other. Reel clumsily and unsuccessfully attempts to assemble the box. He looks at it as if he'd never seen a box before.)

REEL

Ah... uhm... okay.

DONOVAN

You're not fired. You can't get fired for just being late and besides... you're just the messenger. You're just ...

(turning to Reel, suddenly angry)

Dammit Elton, give the box to Walid! You don't know how to do something, delegate to somebody who does.

(Reel immediately gives the box to Walid who starts skillfully folding it together.)

THE WAITER WALID

Aasef Missus! Aasef!

DONOVAN

La moshkelah Walid. Just help me with the box.

THE WAITER WALID

Shokran Missus. *Shokran jazeelan*.

DONOVAN

That's okay Walid. You are a very ... useful man. We like useful men here. This can help you here, being useful. Being useful is good, Walid. We repay useful.

ROD

Useful good.

DONOVAN

Understand Walid, We Americans are basically gentle and kind, quick to smile and welcome strangers. Our capacity for generosity is known worldwide. While we may become bitter because of ... because of ... something something ... foreigners ... not the fault of the American people, but of a government that has ...

ROD

Forgot the talking point again?

DONOVAN

... Are you finished with that box?

THE WAITER WALID

Yes Missus.

(Walid hands the completed FedEx box to Donovan who promptly starts filling it with the bundles of money.)

DONOVAN

You fast and meditate for thirty days. We fondle manikins in bikinis and trash hotel rooms. This is our coming of age ceremony, our way of proving ourselves as men. Right boys?

(She pulls a roll of packing tape out of the briefcase, wraps up the package, and slaps on a label.)

In the meantime dear, could you take this down to the FedEx drop in the lobby and bring us back some... Would I be wrong in saying breakfast?

REEL

Thanks but no thanks...

DONOVAN

Are you sure? Maybe some pancakes? Big stack of pancakes for the working boys?

REEL

No pancakes.

DONOVAN

Eggs? Couple of eggs and toast? Rodman?

ROD

Maybe later.

DONOVAN

You really should eat something. Get something in your stomach. Elton, I don't want you throwing up on the flight to Florida. ... Eggs Benedict? People who know about such things tell me they make a fabulous Hollandaise here, not too lemony, not too thick, soaks perfectly into the toasted muffin, yoke done just right. People who eat frequently claim it's a real treat. ... Eggs Benedict?

ROD

Order something for yourself.

DONOVAN

I'm fine, thanks. You know who could eat? Mike, Mikey could eat. Remember that guy at breakfast, John? Pack away a stack of flapjacks, sausage, three eggs.

ROD

Mike was a fat cross-dresser and an alcoholic.

DONOVAN

So true, so unfortunately true ... but he could eat like a pro. Okay... last chance. Breakfast going once.

REEL

No ... Urp.

(Reel runs to the bathroom and closes the door. Retching sounds come from inside. Walid continues to faithfully wait at the door.)

DONOVAN

Okay. Walid. Remember take this package to the FedEx pickup first, check at the desk for a delivery then come back here and just bring us a pot of coffee... and a Perrier, not the flavored kind, just a Perrier. *Maf Hoom* Walid?

THE WAITER WALID

Nam missus.

(Walid leaves. Reel comes out of the bathroom a little woozy. He sits on edge of the other bed. Donovan looks around the room at the damage.)

REEL

Honest, I had nothing to do with ripping out the wall.

DONOVAN

Sure you didn't. But that's not important. What is important is after all this comes out of your rapidly dwindling expense account, you actually may end up owing money to the campaign this time. My little indentured servant.

REEL

What about him? What about Rodman? He was here too.

DONOVAN

John shot himself through the foot, shattered his ankle and all those tiny little bones that make walking such a primate pleasure. He is stuck in a cast for at least six weeks and, what may be the worst of all, condemned to watching the entire primary season from the sidelines ... He's paid his dues already. Besides, he's in a wheel chair. How's he going to rip a painting off the wall? I rest my case.

ROD

Thanks for the vote of confidence.

DONOVAN

Don't get used to it.

(She sits on the edge of the bed and uses the remote control to turn up the TV.)

O'NEILL (on TV)

... American people are gentle and kind, quick to smile and welcoming to strangers. Our capacity for generosity is known the world over. While we may become bitter and in our bitterness and insecurity turn to guns or religion or some other immediate source for solace and comfort, this is not the fault of the American people, but of a government that has abandoned us and our wellbeing in favor of cynical, short sighted self-interest...

TV VOICE #1

Bill, this today from a speech posted on YouTube and I understand there has been some backlash to his comments about ...

TV VOICE #2

That's right Bob. The MacNamara campaign immediately seized on his comments about Americans turning to guns and religion, calling O'Neill elitist and out of touch with the people.

TV VOICE #1

This would be because they see religion as a matter of...

TV VOICE #2

Personal faith and a positive influence and not merely some sort of safe port in our current economic storm...

TV VOICE #1 (off camera)

(whispering)

He's stepping on my lines again. Did you hear that?... ahem...

(normal voice)

Thanks Bill. The candidate later attempted to clarify his comments...

TV VOICE #2

That's right. He later came out and claimed that he had not made himself clear and...

DONOVAN

Should've changed the line the way I wanted it. Should've said "against foreigners or people who are different." He's looking for black and Hispanics in Florida, not looking to alienate gun-toting, semi-literate, cracker...

(Donovan slowly closes her eyes then snaps to and changes channels. It's the Andy Griffith show at the end of the opening credits.)

TV VOICE #3

... starring Andy Griffith, Don Knotts, and Ron Howard. *(Intro Music)*

AUNT BEE *(on TV)*

Oh hello boys. Sorry I'm late. I brought your lunch.

ROD AND REEL

Hi Aunt Bee.

ANDY *(on TV)*

Well hey Aunt Bee. Mmmm... mmm.... Looky here at what we've got for lunch.

(Donovan slowly holds up the remote control as if to change the channel. Instead, she closes her eyes and freezes in that position.)

AUNT BEE *(on TV)*

Well I wouldn't want you boys to go hungry, would I?

ANDY *(on TV)*

Tuna sandwiches and potato salad...

BARNEY *(on TV)*

This sure looks good Aunt Bee.

(Rod and Reel talk over the TV.)

REEL

Oh I know this one.

ROD

Do go on.

REEL

Yeah. This is the episode where Malcolm Merriwether, the British guy comes back.

(Donovan begins slowly bending forward, still holding the remote.)

ANDY *(on TV)*

And looky here, she's put those little sweet gherkin pickles in there. How about that Barn? Mmm mmm.

BARNEY *(on TV)*

This sure does look good Aunt Bee.

REEL

See, Andy wants to give Aunt Bee a rest since he thinks she works too hard.

AUNT BEE *(on TV)*

Well I have to go pick up a few things for supper. I'll be back later to pick up the tray.

REEL

And so when this guy Merriwether shows up...

ANDY *(on TV)*

You know something Barn. I don't see how she does it. Cooking and cleaning and doing the shopping and taking care of Opey.

(Donovan has bowed completely forward at this point and is sitting with her head between her knees, still holding up the remote control.)

REEL

And Andy decides to give Aunt Bee a break but she thinks they want to get rid of her because...

ANDY *(on TV)*

We should do something to let her know...

(There is a loud knock at the door. Donovan snaps to, sits straight up, and hits the mute button on the remote. She goes to the door and lets in Walid who carries a tray with a pot of coffee, three cups, a bottle of Perrier and glass, and a large, bulging brown envelope.)

DONOVAN

(loudly)

And playful mayhem ensues. Coffee?

(Donovan mutes the volume on the TV. She looks at the Perrier.)

Oh... lemon zest? All I wanted was the fizz, not the flavor. You know I specifically asked for... well... Disappointing. You want something simple and nobody makes anything simple any more... everything's adulterated ... cut with baby laxative or calcium chloride.

(Donovan rips open the big, brown envelope and begins taking out stacks of cash and putting them in her briefcase. Walid sits back down on the edge of the bed and watches TV with the sound off.)

You know I thought this was the one where Andy finds out Opey has been leaking photos of the opposition candidate with a powerful Yemeni businessman to back door press outlets without checking with his Senior Advisor.

(There is a silent pause.)

ROD

Busted!

REEL

I don't know what you're talking about.

ROD

(making a buzzer sound)

Eehh! I'm sorry that's incorrect. The correct response was Blowback, What is Blowback?

DONOVAN

Alright. Let me see if I've got the right scenario here. You find a picture of MacNamara with Mohammed Al Haddad. Great. They are wearing silly clothes. Fine. Do you bother

to fact check? Do you bother to even Wikipedia Mohammed Al Haddad? Do you have any idea who this guy is?

REEL

Uh... no. Well, I mean, I ran the photo through Harry Mudd. I just thought...

DONOVAN

Mudd's a tool and a sock puppet for bigger tools. Bloggers are always Bloggers. Make 'em dance but never let anybody see the strings or your hand up their ass. Haddad...

(Rod picks up the laptop and types in something.)

Haddad is everywhere, hooked up to everybody. Nobody, I mean nobody out there has ever turned down that guy's money as far as I know. And you are daring the MacNamara campaign to research O'Neill's connections to this Yemeni money train? This is not good, Elton.

ROD

(Reading from the screen)

Blowback is a term now broadly used in espionage to describe the unintended consequences of covert operations. Blowback typically appears random and without cause, because the public is unaware of the secret operations that provoked it.

DONOVAN

Blowback Elton! Wrap your head around the concept of blowback for a second.

REEL

I just thought he was supporting...

ROD

See also Plausible Deniability, The Reagan Doctrine...

DONOVAN

Haddad supports everybody. Where he is from, there is no left or right, no liberal or conservative, no tree huggers versus NASCAR dads. Where he is from there are those with power and those without, the ones who rule and the one who grovel in the sand in front of them. People there don't want to know what you believe, just whether or not you are in charge. Not who is good or bad but who is running things...

ROD

... A.Q. Khan, The French Connection...

DONOVAN

Lovely country really, essential, blissfully lacking in subtleties, everything clear, delineated, sky and land, sun and shade, leaders and followers. ... People who use and people who are useful. Did you know ... Haddad owns all the McDonald's franchises over there?

REEL

Don't tell me? Camelburgers?

ROD

... and Guatemala.

DONOVAN

Fabulous they tell me. Very lean. They say the secret is the mint. ... Lucky for you, there is a Mutual Assured Destruction thing here. Nobody is going to lean on the Haddad connection as long as everybody is connected to Haddad. Nobody is going to point at finger at somebody in bed with him when everybody is in bed with him and knows everybody else is in bed with him. In other words, any spokes-monkey would have to be insane to even consider responding to it... like I in fact was actually forced to do recently all ... because ... you ... forgot ... to Google! Goddamit!

ROD

References list *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*, by Chalmers Johnson. Should I express order a copy for you from Amazon or do you already know how to Google yourself?

DONOVAN

Before we start pointing out the mote in our brother's eye, Rod, how are Tommy and the sunshine state boys these days?

ROD

Good. They're good.

DONOVAN

Fun and sun? Surf and ...

ROD

Turf... Yeah. You know that. They're on the MacNamara advance team.

DONOVAN

Just asking. Do you think we need a little refresher course in confidentiality Rod?

ROD

No... No ... we don't need a refresher course in confidentiality.

DONOVAN

Loved the Bonjovi song parody by the way. Nice. But anybody who remembers Have Gun Will Travel is way outside their target demographic.

ROD

Tommy watches too much TV Land. You know... that really wasn't for public consumption.

DONOVAN

Wanna know a secret? There are no secrets. It's all for public consumption. All of it, including the new basic cable series on Discovery, John Rodman Walks the Appalachian Trail.

REEL

(singing)

Daniel Boone was a maaaaan, yes a biiiig...

(Pause as Rod and Donovan stare at Reel. Reel quiets down.)

Sorry.

ROD

An idea, yeah. Why not?

DONOVAN

Good. Good. Give you a chance to... redefine your role, clarify your character for your return.

ROD

See... why can't I just not have a role anymore? No role! Just be here outside the assigned schematic. Be without a character...

DONOVAN

Opening episode... Rod buys his gear at the Outfitters at the head of the trail, sponsored by North Face. The affable reality star negotiates the arcane world of high-tech hiking equipment with the help of the North Face CEO. This could really fly, you know?

ROD

Sure. Don't you have to play Mary Donovan the Advance Man in Florida? Shouldn't you be packing sunscreen or something?

(Walid begins smiling and chuckling at the TV.)

DONOVAN

Walid? ... Walid? Is this something you'd like to share with the rest of the class?

THE WAITER WALID

(pointing at the TV) The old lady so nice and the man, the funny little policeman, nice boy. Beautiful place. Beautiful automobiles. Children.

(Donovan watches the TV.)

Everybody know everybody. Everybody have food. Everybody friend. Nobody steal, nobody hurt... beautiful. Mayberry is nice. Where is?

DONOVAN

It's not a place. It's a theme park, dear. Florida is a place. Primaries happen in places. The rest is just a back lot.

(Walid stops smiling and sits quietly. Donovan changes channels and turns up the sound.)

TV VOICE #1

... by the year 2000, Florida had grown to the fourth largest state in the nation, with 23 congressional districts and 25 electoral votes--and about to get two more from the 2000 Census. Twelve years earlier, Florida had voted 61% for the Republican candidate, who carried 66 of its 67 counties. Military-minded Southerners in the northern part of the state, affluent retirees on the Gulf Coast, middle-class conservatives in Tampa Bay and Orlando and around Disney World, Cubans in Miami and Dade County--all voted Republican, easily outnumbering the state's scattered black communities and its Jewish voters concentrated in Broward and Palm Beach Counties on the Gold Coast.

ROD

Cubans in Miami, New York Jewish Retirees on the Gold Coast, Big Agriculture in the Middle, Cracker Rednecks in the Panhandle.

(Donovan turns the sound off.)

DONOVAN

Somewhere we won't just be standing around waiting for a shit rain to hit us, just dodging great hunks of crap falling on us out of the sky. Christ I am fed up with damage control. Every time they open their mouths, it's like ... fucking ... Skylab is breaking up all over us again.

REEL

Miami Vice, The Golden Girls, Dukes of Hazard and...

DONOVAN

What?

REEL

Can't think of anything for Central Florida but... I mean... If you're looking for target groups, check Neilson on demographics for Miami Vice, the Golden Girls, and Dukes of Hazard. That ought to give you a nice break down.

ROD

Boil the whole thing down to TV Guide?

DONOVAN

Central Florida is Disney. The corporate block. Handle the Magic Kingdom vote with one meeting in LA. So ... drugs, violence, and immigration?

REEL

Miami Vice and Scarface. Either honest cops who love their city and fight big cocaine or desperate immigrants looking for a better life who went wrong.

DONOVAN

Retirement benefits, medicare?

REEL

Uhm... Golden Girls. Feisty female retirees who refuse to be put in a home, independent seniors who deserve the best. Don't touch their Medicare and protect them from scary things.

DONOVAN

Gun control, abortion, gay marriage?

REEL

Dukes of Hazard, Smokey and the Bandit. Burt Reynolds. All of these issues a threat to the happy-go-lucky, carefree, outlaw, good ol' boy lifestyle.

ROD

Target the Gay Republicans. TV spot where Jackie Gleason makes a pass at Burt Reynolds.

REEL

Luke in an NRA spot, Daisy in church with a baby ... whatever.

(Donovan closes her eyes an uncomfortably long time. The others wait till she opens them.)

DONOVAN

Horizontal demographics based on TV sitcoms. Find the show to fit the segment, access the ratings, write the script for the show's original target... you've saved time by linking the segment to an already researched scenario.

REEL

Well, this is something I've sort of been...

DONOVAN

I'm tired.

(She heads for the door and turns to Reel.)

You coming?

REEL

What? Ahh...

(Reel looks haplessly at Rod.)

ROD

Don't look at me Sport. You're the new talent. You get the cookie.

(Reel walks to the door.)

DONOVAN

You know... That is just an adorable idea. Just adorable.

REEL

Thanks I...

DONOVAN

One of those ideas to put on the mantle above your fireplace. Really.... Just an adorable idea.

(They leave and close the door. Rod wheels over nearer to Walid to watch television. He pulls a bag of chips off the floor, opens it and offers it to Walid. Walid takes a chip and eats it. Rod fumbles for the remote and turns on the volume.)

TV VOICE #1

So ... Do you think this is a real issue or are we in the media just making a mountain of a mole hill. In other words...

TV VOICE #2

Much ado about nothing? That is the question here. If we didn't run the soundbite constantly, would anyone really care?

REEL

Christ. ... Blitzer's putting on weight, don't you think?

TV VOICE #1

Here's the section of the speech in question.

O'NEILL (on TV)

... American people are gentle and kind, quick to smile and welcoming to strangers. Our capacity for generosity is known the world over. ...

THE WAITER WALID

Ha... Man with boys in bathroom.

ROD

What?

O'NEILL (on TV)

While we may become bitter and in our bitterness and insecurity turn to guns ...

THE WAITER WALID

The man he come hotel, find wild boys in the bathroom, pay for play.

ROD

What? O'Neill? What?

THE WAITER WALID

Man, boys, in bathroom... boom boom...

ROD

Wait... wait... You got boys for this man when he came to the hotel.

THE WAITER WALID

Many times. Many select boys. Some waiter, some dishy washy, some... you know foreigner boys ... that man really like the boys... I gotta go...

ROD

O'Neill! That man! Wait! Stop!

THE WAITER WALID

Oh yes. I gotta go.

(Walid starts to go. Rod jumps up, manages to stand briefly on his cast, then falls straight down. He grabs Walid's leg as he falls and hangs on as Walid walks toward the door.)

O'NEILL (on TV)

... or religion or some other immediate source for solace and comfort, this is not the fault of the American people, but of a government that has abandoned us and our wellbeing in favor of cynical, short sighted self-interest...

ROD

Wait! Wait! No! Stop!

(Quick blackout.)

ACT II

SCENE I

CITIZENS OF THE ZONE

(Reel and Donovan are lying in bed. Reel is under the blankets to Donovan's right. Donovan is lying on top of the blankets dressed in the same Daisy May costume from the mannequin in the previous scene. Donovan gasps deeply for breath once, then again, then sits up, turns on the bedside lamp and struggles to breathe. She gradually breaths deeply through her nose. A tight spot comes up on The Maid Farida sitting on the opposite bed. She is dressed in Donovan's business suit and sitting primly with her hands in her lap. Donovan and Farida face each other from the two beds. Donovan looks at her and stops breathing briefly. Farida speaks softly.)

THE MAID FARIDA

Stop me if you've heard this one. I know everybody's not crazy about it, but I've always been a big fan.

(She clears her throat and speaks in the raspy, deadpan voice that was ... Rod Serling.)

You are about to enter another dimension, a dimension not only of sight and sound, but of mind, a journey into a wondrous land of imagination. Next stop, the Twilight Zone. ...

(She hums the last bars of the opening music.)

Daaaaa da da da dat... Are you with me so far? So this is all in black and white, this big, early 60s department store in New York. When Macy's had Gimbels and Santa Clauses walked down Fifth Avenue all year long. That kind of early 60s, big city, uptempo soundtrack is playing and this blonde, this blonde woman with a mole right next to her upper lip, this ... well ... this Anne Baxter actually is walking around the department store looking confused. She gets into this weird express elevator alone, an express to the ninth floor. She's looking for something, a golden thimble ... yes, that's it. She's looking for a golden thimble but... she'll find a lot more than that. But you know that of course... this being the Twilight Zone and all you must know that this ... golden thimble is not the real point here. So ... she gets to the ninth floor and the floor is empty of things for sale, nothing but counters and empty tables and chairs and a glass display case. Nothing but the things you put things on or in you wanted to sell so ... this Anne Baxter character, her name is Miss White ... Am I boring you, Mary? Are you not a Twilight Zone aficionado? Did you not sit on the couch watching the Twilight Zone with your father while he poked you and tickled you in time to the opening music? Dee dee dee dee... Dee dee dee dee...

This was your childhood I was imagining and not somebody else's, wasn't it? No matter. What are you gonna do? Hmmm? Can't very well change the channel now, can you? Can't hit the mute button. Can't switch over quickly to CNN, can you? Dreamers are a captive audience. Dreams always have the dreamers right where they want them, dreams always have the dreamers glued to their seats, dreams have got dreamers by the short and curlies, eyes taped open, nowhere to go, relax and soak in the show ... So this Anne Baxter, this Miss White seems out of place, seems to have trouble doing and saying the simplest things. Nothing looks in place. Nothing is easy. Nothing is the way she expects it to be. Nothing looks right to her. ... A dark woman with her black hair tied back in a tight bun suddenly appears as if from nowhere and sells her a golden thimble. Miss White laughs. Then the Dark Woman asks her, "Miss White? Are you happy?"

DONOVAN

That's none of her business.

THE MAID FARIDA

You're right. That's none of my business. ... So she goes back downstairs and complains to the manager that ... that the thimble is scratched, that she bought it from a saleswoman on the ninth floor but that it's cracked and she'd like to exchange it. They look surprised and tell her she must be mistaken. There is no ninth floor.

DONOVAN

But of course there's a ninth floor. I went to the ninth floor and bought this golden thimble from that woman right there. She's the one who... Why that's her right there.

THE MAID FARIDA

... and then she points out the dark woman who sold her the thimble.

DONOVAN

... and she's not a woman at all. She's a mannequin.

THE MAID FARIDA

Precisely. She faints. Women were always fainting in department stores in the 60s. Nothing out of the ordinary, so the management takes her into an empty office to sleep off the classic 60s female fainting spell.

DONOVAN

She wakes in an office, all alone, surrounded by mannequins, posed still and lifeless. She is startled by her reflection in a mirror, herself as a living woman in contrast to the rest. She finds herself trapped in a strange sort of room, empty of human beings, but filled with drab, non-descript furniture and ... mannequins, all sorts of mannequins. Then the voices start.

(Female voices speak in overlapping whispers from offstage.)

FEMALE

Marsha, Marsha?

(Without stirring, Reel talks in his sleep and provides the male counterpart.)

REEL

Who do you think you're fooling dear? You remember, Marsha?

FEMALE

You know who you are.

DONOVAN

She runs to a phone but it's dead. It's only a prop phone.

REEL

Marsha? You remember Marsha?

FEMALE

Climb off it. Come on dear.

(Other Female voices chime in.)

FEMALE VOICES

Marsha ... Marsha ... Marsha ... Marsha ...

REEL

Come on dear.

DONOVAN

She becomes hysterical and runs crying to the elevator. The elevator arrives but when the door opens it's the dark mannequin who sold her the golden thimble. Marsha White collapses on the elevator floor as the mannequin comes alive and begins walking towards her.

THE MAID FARIDA

Marsha dear. You'll forgive an observation but you're acting like a silly child.

DONOVAN

Marsha cries desperately.

THE MAID FARIDA

Come now Marsha.

DONOVAN

Marsha enters a large room filled with living mannequins who all begin to step off their pedestals and move towards her. A man in a business suite and a bowtie. A girl holding a tennis racquet. A man carrying ski poles. A woman in a negligee. Men in skin masks, brides, secretaries, all mannequins, all alive, all surrounding her. The dark woman with her jet black hair tied up in a bun steps before her and speaks.

THE MAID FARIDA

Think now. Concentrate. Remember now? All of us will try and help you. We'll help you concentrate. Remember now? Is it coming back to you?

DONOVAN

And she says, "That's odd. That's really odd, but suddenly I seem to ..."

THE MAID FARIDA

Remember? Coming back now, is it?

DONOVAN

I'm a mannequin. That's what I am. I'm a mannequin. And it was my turn to ...

THE MAID FARIDA

You're turn to leave us for a month. Becoming much clearer now, isn't it? You left us for a month and you lived with the outsiders, but you were due back yesterday and you didn't show up. You know Marsha that's very selfish my dear. All of us wait our turn and we simply do not overstay it. It was my turn starting last night and I'm one day delayed already.

DONOVAN

Of course. Of course, I'm sorry, I forgot. But when you're on the outside everything seems so... normal. As if ... ?

THE MAID FARIDA

As if what Marsha?

DONOVAN

As if we were like the others, like the outsiders. Like the real people.

THE MAID FARIDA

Well, no serious harm done. Well then, I'll see you all in a month. Good-bye!

DONOVAN

Then all the mannequins gather round the Dark Woman as she heads off to become human for a month. They say good-bye and wish her well. Then a man in an old-fashioned yachting outfit comes up to Marsha and says ...

(Reel speaks the next lines in his sleep.)

REEL

Did you enjoy yourself Marsha? Was it fun?

DONOVAN

Ever so much fun.

THE MAID FARIDA

She then moves her arms and hands to a rigid position in front of her. She stiffens a bit.

DONOVAN

Ever so much fun.

THE MAID FARIDA

The scene changes back to the floor of the department store. Shoppers are walking around. The manager is checking everything before the store opens and he walks past a blonde mannequin, Marsha, beautiful, standing on a pedestal. The manager gives a double take then screws up his face straight into the camera. He walks off and there is a close-up of the mannequin, Marsha, just in case you didn't catch it the first time. Rod Serling's voice appears from Rod Serling-land and seals the deal. *(She switches back into Rod Serling's voice.)* Marsha White ... in her normal and natural state. A wooden lady with a painted face ... who one month out of the year ... takes on the characteristics of someone as normal and as flesh and blood as you and I. But it makes you wonder, doesn't it? Just how normal are we? Just who are the people we nod our hellos to as we pass on the street? A rather good question to ask ... particularly in the Twilight Zone. *(She leans toward Donovan and whispers.)* Do we understand each other Mary?

DONOVAN

Yes.

THE MAID FARIDA

Don't you want to go back to the show window? Don't you want to go back to the pretty, talented sorority girl on a pedestal?

DONOVAN

Yes.

THE MAID FARIDA

You're no good at this. The outsiders think you're good at this but really you don't know what you're doing and you live in the deep, dark horror that the others will suspect you don't know at all what you are doing ... you're just window dressing inside.

DONOVAN

Yes.

THE MAID FARIDA

You spend your time arranging other mannequins, placing them here and there against the proper backgrounds and landscapes, but you worry still. You long to be the window dressing and not the window dresser.

DONOVAN

Yes.

THE MAID FARIDA

Watch the men watching you as they pass the window. See how they look at you? See your reflection in their eyes? You don't have to wrangle them anymore. You only have to be there, be beautiful, be the thing, the ... obscure object of desire.

DONOVAN

They said I was beautiful ... long long ago they said that I was beautiful.

THE MAID FARIDA

So beautiful. Even with the glasses and business suits and your jet-black hair done up in a tight bun, you were so beautiful. The popular girl all set to marry a politician but things happened as things do and you fell backward into political science and met men who needed more things done and less something beautiful to consider. Sad really.

DONOVAN

So beautiful.

THE MAID FARIDA

Fantastic legs.

DONOVAN

Yes.

THE MAID FARIDA

Mary Donovan, why must you kick against the pricks? Go back inside, step back into the window and let someone else have a chance.

DONOVAN

Yes.

(Donovan slowly lies back down on top of the cover and stretches out her legs.)

THE MAID FARIDA

Come in from the cold, come away from the others and back where you belong.

DONOVAN

Yes.

THE MAID FARIDA

Shhhh...

(Donovan lies on her back. Farida brushes her hand gently down across her face and closes Donovan's eyelids. The lights come down slowly. Blackout.)

SCENE 2

THE BIG BRUSH OFF

(Walid and Rod are in the hotel room. On the bed nearest the door sits Walid, his hands bound with duct tape and head covered in a pillow case. Rod is in his wheelchair, pushed up against the door, blocking the exit. He looks at his laptop on the table in front of him and talks frantically into it.)

ROD

Just get me Tommy Flanagan. Tell him John Rodman has something important.

VOICE FROM COMPUTER

He's out front right now trying to calm down some kind of a demonstration I think.

ROD

Just do what you can.

THE WAITER WALID

Oh Mistah Rod? May I please go to...

ROD

Sit! Please. Just sit. Sit.

THE WAITER WALID

The toilet. Needing to use toilet Mista Rod.

(Tommy's voice comes from the computer. There is a huge commotion in the background. He sounds a bit out of breath.)

TOMMY

John?

ROD

Tommy?

TOMMY

Fuck you, John!

(Walid casually removes the duct tape from his wrists, but leaves on the pillowcase. He gets up to go to the bathroom. Rod is oblivious.)

WALID

Is okay. I see okay. No problem. All good.

(He goes inside the bathroom and shuts the door.)

ROD

Listen to me Tom. We gotta meet up. Something big is gonna ...

TOMMY

Was my Fuck You too equivocal, John? Let me try that again. FUCK YOU RODMAN...

ROD

... Will you just listen? Believe me you ...

TOMMY

FUCK YOU was just the preface to my expansive tirade John. So ... the Dominican Pentecostal Preacher is winding up the opening prayer over breakfast, the faithful have their heads bowed, I'm looking at a cool million in donations between Cuban bankers, Puerto Rican real estate guys and a couple of big Latin music promoters, and whammo! I got about fifteen Cuban trannies outside Vogueing for the Latin press in one-piece swimsuits, stiletto fuck-me pumps, and McNamara sashes!

TOMMY

Look. I didn't mean...

ROD

McNamara sashes John, singing McNamara theme songs in Spanish. "Latina Impersonators for McNamara." *Latina Impersonators*, John! I can't get security to clear them out because A) a candidate dispersing his own supporters looks bad, and B) the

potential for televised cop on cross-dresser action does not bode well and C) there is this one really big drag queen that is ...

(The commotion grows louder and we hear a slightly accented, high male voice from the computer.)

MICHELLE

Yohnny! Hi Yohnny! This is Michelle.

(Rod puts his head in his hand and closes his eyes.)

ROD

Hi Rodriguez. How's it going?

MICHELLE

Just wonderful, John. Beautiful day and the girls are fabulous. When you coming down to see me?

ROD

I'll let you know. Could you let me talk to the guy who was ...

MICHELLE

You mean that cute little preppie Anglo boy who was...

TOMMY

You know this guy?

ROD

Long story Tom, just...

TOMMY

Call them off, John. For the love of Christ, call 'em off.

ROD

What makes you think I can do that, Tom?

TOMMY

Cut the horseshit and just do it! Okay?

(pause then lowering his voice)

Half my pigeons have flown the coop; the preachers are all on their cellphones to Jesus reserving my personal presidential suite in hell and there this one guy with handful of chicken bones doing some shit I really don't wanna think about. Okay? Best case scenario, we lose money. Worse case, we lose the whole conservative Latin constituency, their money AND their votes, and South Florida goes ... well ... south, so to speak.

Okay? What more do you want? You win. Great. I got punked. Now call ... them ... the fuck... OFF!

ROD

Hey Mike ... ah Michelle?

MICHELLE

Yes Johnny the Rod?

ROD

I need you and the girls to go home now.

MICHELLE

Are you in a wheelchair John?

ROD

Yeah, another long story.

MICHELLE

Are you hurt? Did you get into some exciting accident doing something extremely dangerous? Do you have something important broken?

ROD

Look, you all did just great. Now take the rest of the day off.

MICHELLE

A woman's work is never done Johnny. We have rehearsals tonight for Miss Muñeca and I really don't have a thing to wear. Intiendes?

ROD

Okay. I got it. Check with Sean at the office. He'll take care of it.

MICHELLE

Such a real man, Johnny.

ROD

Not half the man you used to be Mikey.

MICHELLE

Thank you for bringing up my dark, depressing past John. My disposition is now becoming much less sunny.

ROD

Look, just get the girls together and go ... wherever it is you have to go ... okay?

MICHELLE

Whatever you say ... You know you are wasting your God given talents on people who don't appreciate you ... you big eh stud ... Bye bye Johnny. Oh Girls!

(Michelle's voice fades off.)

ROD

Tommy.

TOMMY

What the hell was that?

ROD

Look. We don't' have much time. We have got meet up or get on a secure line.

TOMMY

How close are you to this guy, John?

ROD

This is not the ...

TOMMY

I mean that sounded pretty chummy to me.

ROD

Tom, something's ready to blow over here and we need to ...

TOMMY

Get on a secure line? What? Are you gonna wheel out to the nearest phone booth? You know where the nearest public phone is to me? I'm not sure but I think there's one in the Bahamas. Just let me go check.

ROD

Not here! We need secure communication. We need a face-to-face Tom.

TOMMY

(laughing)

A face-to-face? You're in a wheelchair. Donovan's got you under watch 24/7 and we're gonna have a confidential sit-down? Whaddya planning on doing, John? Carting out the cone of fucking silence? There is no such thing as secure communication anymore. They got webcams planted in caves in fucking ... Mongolia for Christ's sake. Face-to-face is a thing of the past, man!

ROD

Trust me. You really want to know what I know right now ...

TOMMY

Trust you? Okay. Let me get this straight. There's a scandal brewing in the O'Neill camp and you need to ... ahh... discreetly spring a leak? So something this big could only be either money or sex. Money's too complicated for the news cycle unless the numbers are big and the bags are in the freezer or some shit ... Am I warm? Getting warmer?

ROD

You can't ...

TOMMY

Wait. Hmmm... Can't be money. Nobody gives a shit about money. Oooh, I know. Our old friend Congressman Wandering Dick? What have you got for me Tom? Live pigs, dead hookers, airport bathrooms ... What?

ROD

We're wasting time here.

TOMMY

Wives of campaign managers, Venezuelan newscasters ... boys? Boy Scouts? Pages? ... Uh oh ... Your face is one big leak ... Boys? Pages? Pizza delivery men? Yeah baby! ... Now we're cooking.

ROD

This is serious.

TOMMY

Of course it is. But let's take a moment to discuss wasting time. A) You are under closer scrutiny than a sick dick in a clap ward. Am I right? I'm betting the whole shooting match is bugged, which is really not necessary since Donovan is not going to let you roam that far since she has sensed the lingering stink of ... cold discontent on your part. Am I right? And B) you have got a set of cast iron balls to even start to assume I would swallow this shit. Really, John? You just ratfucked me. Thank you. Female impersonators at a religious fund raising. Very creative. But at the end of the day ... the girls go home, the 24-hour news cycle runs past the whole thing, and the deep Hispanic pockets come back to MacNamara because they like his immigration policy as well as the fact that, as I'm sure you well know, his wife is PUERTO RICAN! So ... what, John? What have you accomplished? What lessons have we learned here?

JOHN

But you ...

TOMMY

You were out of the running, wounded and on the bench. I was going to offer you a job, man! Do you have any idea how much we got going on the side? Back door revenue streams from printing, direct mail, TV time, phone banks, catering ... Name it. Kickbacks from coffee and doughnut services alone just bought me a new HD Widescreen. You could've walked out of that cast and into extremely cushy retirement ... instead of washed up ... and nothing ... which is what you are and what you got because you couldn't leave well enough alone. You had to do it. You had to pull the prank. Why? What were you thinking?

JOHN

Look ...

TOMMY

And now, as if nothing happened, seconds after the punch line, the smells of depilatory cream and cheap perfume, and the snap of swimsuits still hanging in the Miami air, you move right on the next scam. Like robbing two banks next door to each other on the same day. Couldn't wait till tomorrow, could it? ... You really think you can run this con on me, really? Send me some photo-shopped snaps of your boy in hot porn poses and have me start leaking them to the cable shows and blogs just so your squad can pull that "I'm shocked at this sort of ..." morality bullshit and "How low the opposition could stoop to fabricate the blah di blah blah blah ...?" Hah? Make us out a bunch of scandal mongers? A feeble attempt at de-legitimizing the candidate? We read the same textbooks, man!

(John stares at the screen, then looks down.)

JOHN

Yeah... sure. What was I thinking?

TOMMY

Take your fucking "eyewitness" testimony somewhere else, man. You got no more capital here.

JOHN

Yeah, sure.

TOMMY

But you know ... on the bright side ... As I'm sitting in the office of the aforementioned Pentecostal Dominican Minister making amends for this little incident, humiliating myself deeply by offering to do anything he asks to get back into the good graces of the Florida Hispanic Conservative community, I will not despair. Because, no matter what happens, no matter how low I have to go in the pursuit of campaign funds, I know ... that you will never fuck me again.

ROD

I got it, Tom.

TOMMY

I've gotta go. I got to try and make sure this shit doesn't go YouTube. But if it does, I guarantee you at least part of the shitstorm will land in your lap, John. Oh yeah, one more thing, don't call me any more John. Really. Don't call ... About anything. Ever! Okay? No more back slapping, no more grab ass games, no more confidential back channels, no more 1960s Segretti ratfucking practical jokes, nothing. Do not ever contact me about anything, personal or public, business or pleasure, ever. Got it? Have a nice life.

(Tommy hangs up. Walid comes out of the bathroom with the pillowcase still over his head. He sits back down on the bed and picks up a roll of duct tape.)

WALID

You want tie me up?

ROD

What?

WALID

Tape? You want tape me up?

ROD

What? No. ... No that's ... no....

WALID

Okay. I can tie me up okay?

(Walid starts unrolling the duct tape. There's a quick knock, then a loud bang at the door as if someone is trying to break it down. Rods wheelchair moves slightly. Donovan's voice comes through the door.)

DONOVAN

Open it!! Move the chair and open the door I swear Rodman! MOVE!

(Rod rolls the wheel chair forward enough to let Donovan bash open the door. She wears a bathrobe and looks disheveled.)

Alright! Cut loose the Arab and get off the phone with the opposition. Walid! What has he done to you Walid? *Kaifa Haloka?*

WALID

Zein ... shokran Missus.

DONOVAN

Al hamdu llalah, Walid. Let me look at you.

(She takes off the pillowcase off Walid and rubs his cheek.)

ROD

Hey! I was just ...

(She quickly slips the pillowcase over Rod's head. He reaches up to pull it off. But she holds the pillowcase down with one hand and picks up Rod's computer with the other.)

DONOVAN

Is this titanium? Nice.

(She whacks Rod hard behind his head with the computer.)

ROD

Ow! What the fuck?!

DONOVAN

Down! Hands down.

(She takes the duct tape from Walid and ties Rod's wrists to the wheelchair. She wraps a final strip of tape around his neck to fix the pillowcase.)

There, much better. Now let's cover a few talking points.

(She folds up his laptop on the table and starts tapping him on the head with it.)

Start at the beginning. What do you know and how do you know it?

ROD

Walid saw O'Neill on CNN and identified him as someone who might have been involved in ...

DONOVAN

Sexual activities with male hotel employees ...

ROD

Look! If you already know everything why are you going through this?

DONOVAN

A deep appreciation of the illusion of individual free will in a predestined universe ... Then again, no matter how much intelligence surveillance may gather, you can't beat torture for confirmation.

(She lays the laptop up against the side of his head and taps him just slightly.)

Let's get to the contact with the opposition. How far did you get? How did they respond?

ROD

You heard it, you know all about it, what's the point?

DONOVAN

Part of recovery they tell me is remembering your lowest low ... that point where you said to yourself, "Never Again." You need to remember and admit to yourself what you were thinking and feeling at that precise moment you made the decision to betray your sobriety ... or rather the campaign and consequently ...

(She punctuates this with progressively harder taps on the head with the laptop.)
... fuck ... your ... team and ... more importantly ... ME!

ROD

What I was thinking, what I was feeling, are not germane to our situation. We really need to get on with the current ...

DONOVAN

Yes. Our current embryonic scandal. That's priority, isn't it? But to do that, we need to purge the mechanism. And I mean "purge" in the Stalinist sense of the word. Bottom line. How much did you leak to Tommy Flanagan and will I have to deal with him on this thing?

ROD

Zero. Tommy doesn't trust my story. Thinks I'm setting him up.

DONOVAN

(giggling)

And if that weren't bad enough, you actually got Mike Rodriguez involved in this frat house grab ass. Really? Big Mike? You ... you... pulled Mikey out of his semi-retirement running that Drag Show Supper Club in Coral Gables ... what's it called?

ROD

Little Peter's

DONOVAN

Little Peter's! Right! Oh Johnny Boy! How the mighty fall.

ROD

Look, is this debriefing or just humiliation for kicks and giggles?

DONOVAN

Bit of both really. Whistle while you work and all that. Should I even ask what the fuck you were thinking? Were you looking for a one time massive payment or a job in the

organization? You must have known the decidedly minimal results would hardly justify the effort.

ROD

I don't know. I don't know what I was thinking, what I was doing, what I hoped to accomplish, nothing. Yeah, a payment, a one time payoff ... I don't know what I'm running on, okay? Satisfied? I took a long fast trip, ran out of gas and lost the map, okay?

DONOVAN

Running on cruise control. You prank, you lie, you hide, you spin, after a while you become the game; your game and identity are the same. You were just doing what you do, John. Scorpion stings the frog crossing the lake, snake bites the hawk in mid-flight. They don't know why ... but in the end, what have you got, a drowned scorpion and crushed snake, and for what?

ROD

Thinking fast is not exactly thinking clearly.

DONOVAN

You know, kids getting into this aspire to doing what you do as effortlessly as you do it. The great ones make it look so easy because they stopped thinking about it a long time ago; comes as naturally as breathing. Drink?

(She picks up the bottle of gin, pours him a drink, and holds it under his nose.)

I'm guessing you need a drink right about now.

(She sticks the gin tonic against his mouth and pours it into him through the pillow case. He takes a sip. She unwraps the tape around one arm and sets the glass in his hand.)

Only difference is, the great ones ...

(She keeps rhythm by whacking the laptop against his head between words.)

do ... not ... ever ... fuck ... UP!

(Final hard whack against his head. He drops his glass and flails away at her with his free hand. She moves out of the way. He grabs at her and the pillow case.)

ROD

Ow! Shit. Stop it! I mean it! Just ... will you ... What is wrong with you?

DONOVAN

Now walk me through the logic of AbuGhraibing the help!

ROD

He had something, he knew something, but he didn't know what he knew and I didn't know what he knew or how much he knew, but I knew he probably hadn't completely grasped the importance of this thing and so might go ...

DONOVAN

Blabbing the tale around to say ... the hotel kitchen staff? Am I right?

ROD

Is there any point going on here?

DONOVAN

Not really.

ROD

What do you want? I had to act quick and ...

DONOVAN

Until you could leak the gist. Right?

ROD

Until I could figure out what to do next. Shit. You weren't here and ... okay, maybe I exaggerated.

DONOVAN

Maybe you did. Okay ... very good ... as much as I have always fantasized about whacking a hooded man in the head with a titanium laptop, we really should be moving on now.

(She takes the pillowcase and tape off Rod, and picks up the glass.)

Walid dear. I know this may be against your beliefs but, given you most likely have made a few moral adjustments since joining our team, could you fix Mister Rodman another drink. I think the tonic water is on the nightstand.

WALID

Okay.

DONOVAN

What do you know?

ROD

What do you know?

DONOVAN

I asked first.

ROD

No. Let's talk about who did the candidate vulnerability study on O'Neill.

DONOVAN

You first. Is Walid the only witness or do we have to worry about others? How many "contacts" have been reported?

ROD

Did Joyce do the vulnerability study? It was Joyce, wasn't it?

DONOVAN

What did Walid tell you?

ROD

Why not go right to source and ask him? He's right there.

(Walid puts the gin and tonic on a tray and presents it to Rod.)

WALID

Lime?

DONOVAN

(Stops and stares at Walid.)

Positively colonial, don't you think?

(Rod takes the drink and speaks to Walid.)

ROD

That's fine. Thanks kid.

WALID

Five. Five.

DONOVAN

Five?

WALID

Sometimes I get things for people. They want drink, I get drink, they need smoke, I get smoke, tips tips ...

DONOVAN

They need girl.

WALID

I get girl.

DONOVAN

They need boy.

WALID

No problem.

DONOVAN

They need little boy.

WALID

Little bigger problem. But no problem.

DONOVAN

Your English is constantly improving. My compliments, Walid.

WALID

Shokran, Missus. I learn from fucking TV. I like to fucking talk at you all.

DONOVAN

Doesn't everybody. Tell me about the man you saw on TV.

WALID

Well... man asks me do I have friends who want to meet this man. I say I dunno. Then he say for party for money and I say, okay. I have friends. They need money. He pay. They happy. He happy. We happy. Everything party, money, happy.

DONOVAN

I'm sorry. This Berlitz Method Debriefing is just not working out ... Walid, dear ... I need to hear Mister Rod explain this. Okay? ... Rod? A little chase cutting, please? Twenty-five words or less, chop chop Johnny.

(Rod rubs his wrists and head, and sips the gin tonic.)

ROD

There's gonna be a knot there, you know? I can feel it.

DONOVAN

Don't tell me women haven't hit you with worse. Now start leaking.

ROD

Or a concussion, you know. I could have lesion or a ... hematoma or something.

(There's a tap at the door and Reel enters carrying an envelope. He wears nice, clean casual clothes, maybe a black t-shirt and expensive looking slacks. He is excited.)

REEL

Digital Video Surveillance friends and countrymen.

DONOVAN

Sit down and wait. We're just developing the plot.

ROD

Okay, bottom line. Five boys on different occasions. Four of them work here in low level service positions, dishwashers, busboys, and custodial staff.

REEL

Wait. Hold it. Hit pause. We're talking about ...?

DONOVAN

What do you think?

REEL

Got it...

ROD

As far as I can tell, they are all undocumented aliens and have little or no political sophistication, awareness of American VIPs or cable television content. This being said ...

DONOVAN

This being said, we need confirmation ... these kinds of sexual transactions require a certain anonymous ambiguity and compartmentalization to work. Walid may have ...

ROD

... just acted as the go between. Precisely. There's a lot Walid might not know.

WALID

Walid no know what Walid no need know.

DONOVAN

And this is why we love Walid. Big question number one: Do we even know 100% it was O'Neill?

REEL
(school boy excited)

Ahh... excuse me but ...

ROD
 We need surveillance tapes.

(Reel stands up and pulls a DVD out of the envelope.)

Jesus Jethro. Do you people ever sleep? ...

REEL
 As I was saying earlier, the whole thing is digital. Fifteen minutes to call up the weeks O'Neill was here and another fifteen to run face recognition. Then, as they say in Jersey, Badaboom Badabing, we got the goods.
(He puts the DVD into a player on top of the TV, grabs the remote, and pushes play. They all watch.)

Face recognition gave us eight hits over a six month period, with the understanding of course there may have been other times when his back was to the camera ... for ... one reason or another. ... The hotel has yet to wire for sound so ...

DONOVAN
 We'll read lips.

REEL
 This is from just after he announced ...

(They watch the TV for a couple of seconds. The flicker of light from the TV plays across their faces.)

ROD
 Okay, here we go.

REEL
 The fatherly kiss is especially touching I thought. Little tickle and slap in the hallway.

ROD
 But at the end of the day, they're just going into a room.

REEL
 O'Neill's room. Although registered under the name ... and I love this one ... James Joyce! Really, how stupid is that?

DONOVAN

Oh fuck.

REEL

Pat on the ass and they ... are ... in! Let's move on to what seems to be, for lack of a better word, a "layover" between flights.

ROD

Nice. Love the outfit.

REEL

The sunglasses are a new touch.

ROD

What's different here?

REEL

He's dressed casual and obviously in a bit of a hurry, but ... when you gotta have it, you gotta have it.

DONOVAN

He's drunk.

REEL

Do you think?

DONOVAN

Yeah, the dark glasses, the waving, limp wrists; the way he is moving his mouth. He's convinced he's unrecognized.

REEL

So?

ROD

He's off guard in public. Kiss of death for a candidate.

DONOVAN

Never get comfortable. The split second you think you're off camera, the moment you feel like you just have to "be yourself" in front of the people ... that's when the sound bites go sour. ...

(Watching the TV)

Oh fuck!

REEL

Granted the boys are a little hard to make out ... ha ... “make out” ... that was ...

(Nobody laughs.)

... okay ... We don't really have any clear images of the kid's faces but that is definitely O'Neill.

ROD

No touchy feely in the hall this time.

REEL

Yeah, tick tock tick tock. Man's got a plane to catch.

DONOVAN

What's this?

REEL

Yeah, we've got a different boy this time.

ROD

A very different boy.

REEL

You'll notice he comes in from outside the hotel and immediately walks over to our man.

DONOVAN

Hold it. Pause it right there.

(Reel pauses the video and Donovan moves close to the screen.)

That's no dishwashing immigrant.

REEL

Probably not.

DONOVAN

He's speaking English, leather jacket, tight jeans, white James Dean t-shirt. Kid's on the game.

REEL

He looks like he's got some kind of Brando thing happening.

(Donovan scrutinizes the screen, turning her head from one side to the next.)

DONOVAN

Didn't you say there were five boys, four of them illegals at the hotel? Who's missing? Who's the fifth boy?

ROD

We hadn't quite gotten to ...

DONOVAN

... the clear problems related to gathering information through a fucking pillow case?!
Next time you feel a Jack Bauer coming on, think again and then just don't. Okay?

WALID

I know. I know Missus. I can tell at you.

DONOVAN

Calm down Walid and tell us who this is as briefly as you can.

WALID

Is Bunny.

(pause)

DONOVAN

What?

WALID

He called Bunny. Many mens like Mister Bunny. Like Movie Star Mister Bunny.

DONOVAN

Do you call Mister Bunny?

WALID

Nobody call Mister Bunny. Mister Bunny come when he come.

DONOVAN

No calls, nothing. So he just cruises?

WALID

He Tom Cruises, Mister Bunny Movie Star.

DONOVAN

He comes and goes and gets work when he's there. Does he sit at the bar?

WALID

At the bar. Yes. Late night at the bar.

DONOVAN

I've seen enough.

REEL

You're sure? I've got some great footage after this party. He's leaning all over this one kid who is so short he's like ... dragging O'Neill drunk down the hallway see. Funny as hell, really. Let me see if I can jump forward to this ...

DONOVAN

(Ignoring Reel)

Alright. Walid, wheel Mister Rodman down to the bar for a bit of fresh air. Wheel him over to a table and order him something manly, get him a scotch and soda for once, his choice.

(She grabs a blanket off the bed, folds it up, and starts tucking it in over Rodman's lap.)

John, you're the rich old man, wheelchair, blanket over your lap... Walid, introduce Mister Rodman to your friends at the hotel.

REEL

Colonel Sternwood. He'll be like a kind of ... Colonel ... Sternwood ... "The Big Sleep"? Bogart meets him in the greenhouse? Old guy with a mustache, wheelchair, blanket, no? Nobody?

DONOVAN

(Ignoring Reel even more.)

Walid, this is very important. You are playing a part here.

WALID

Yes, actor, yes.

DONOVAN

Just bring your friends, the ones you introduce to the men, introduce them to Mister Rodman.

WALID

Okay, actor, yes.

DONOVAN

John, just relax and have a drink. Tell the boys you'll think about it, take their names ...

ROD

Wait a minute? Are you sending me out on a mission or just getting me out of your hair and away from telecommunications? You want my help or me out of the room? What's the deal?

DONOVAN

Does it really matter? Let's say you're back on the job. Okay? Let's just say you're out on a mission and I'm not just sending you out of the room because I have to do something you don't need to know about. Let's just say all that, why don't we? One thing, when you turn the boys down, tell them ... tell them you're looking for something really American ... something a little ... rougher ... somebody more ... Marlboro man ... hard core ...

ROD

Or just ask them if they know Bunny.

DONOVAN

... sure ... or just ask them if they know Bunny, and yeah ... leave any hidden cell phones you might have on the table. Don't make me make Walid search you. He might have a grudge.

REEL

You know I could play some kind of G-man here.

DONOVAN

Go downstairs. Take the camera. Sit at the bar and take a picture of every boy who talks to John. See if you can find out precisely where and when they work, if they have lockers, that kind of thing. Shift times.

REEL

That's it?

DONOVAN

That's it.

REEL

Should I change clothes?

DONOVAN

Why would you want to do that?

REEL

I got this kind of G-man suit I could wear. You know, dark suit, slim cut, narrow tie, tear drop sunglasses, talk into your sleeve. I could change into that.

DONOVAN

You're just a guy at the bar Elton.

REEL

Or am I?

DONOVAN

Just be as inconspicuous as possible and take pictures. I don't know. Tell the bartender you're remodeling the lounge or something.

REEL

Can I lean on the boys a little?

DONOVAN

No. No leaning. Just take the pictures and watch.

REEL

I could lean on them, you know. Get a fake ID and pretend to be from the INS or something. Corner them somewhere and make implied threats.

DONOVAN

Listen to me Elton. This is no time to start flashing our male plumage so to speak. Understand? No idle threats, no staking our territory. We are moving into a no bullshit situation here and you need to just focus on what you need to do at the moment. Now ... leave the DVD and go.

(Reel hesitates and starts to say something.)

REEL

But ...

DONOVAN

Aaa Aah ... Go.

(Reel leaves.)

ROD

Don't you think somebody higher up needs to be in on this ...

DONOVAN

How can you possibly feel permitted to hand out advice right now? And NO! I did not do the candidate vulnerability study, Rod.

ROD

That wasn't what I asked.

DONOVAN

You get hired for a job, you assume the groundwork's been laid.

ROD

Joyce?

DONOVAN

You need to go. Both of you need to go.

ROD

Do you think ...

DONOVAN

I don't think anything I don't know. You need to go. Now Go! Goddammit!

WALID

Okay, Mister Rodman, we go. We meet boys. We act.

(Walid wheels Rodman out of the room. Donovan opens up her laptop on the table and clicks a button. We hear a ringing sound. A woman's voice comes out of the computer.)

VOICE

Hello? Joyce's office. ... Oh ... Hi Mary. ... How are you?

DONOVAN

Fine Denise ... Is Joyce available?

VOICE

Sure. My isn't this video nice. Who would've thought this would be coming years ago, eh Mary? Are you still at the hotel? You look like you just woke up. Is everything okay?

DONOVAN

Yeah ... Could you tell him this is urgent?

VOICE

Oh, right, just a second and let me see ... ahhh... maybe I should ...

DONOVAN

Probably easier to just carry the laptop over to him, Denise. That should work.

VOICE

Sure, right... I guess that would be easiest.

DONOVAN

I guess.

(Moving sounds come out of the computer. We hear a man's voice in the background.)

JOYCE

Who is it? Mary? Donovan? Christ ... What is wrong this time? Is she still in ...

DONOVAN

I can hear you Jim.

JOYCE

What? Oh ... hello?

DONOVAN

Hello Jim.

JOYCE

This video is amazing. Look at that color. We should use this more often.

DONOVAN

We do Jim.

JOYCE

Are you still in a bathrobe? At this hour?

DONOVAN

There have been some developments here we need to discuss.

JOYCE

You operatives, work hard, play hard, eh?

DONOVAN

Was a vulnerability study ever done on O'Neill?

(pause)

JOYCE

My my, forgot how straightforward you were. Wow ... Been a while huh? What's the problem again?

DONOVAN

I mean ... anybody ever sit down with O'Neill when you took this job and discuss potential problems he might have with his personal history?

JOYCE

Sure, a vulnerability study. Of course, we went over everything with him.

DONOVAN

Everything ... with him?

JOYCE

Mary, I've known Charley O'Neill since we were undergrads. When he asked me to manage his campaign, I sat him down and said, "Charley..." I said ... "Charley, before we commit to this, is there anything I need to know that might hurt this project if the press ever gets hold of it? You know how they can be nowadays" ... and he said no.

DONOVAN

And that's it?

JOYCE

This video is really something, isn't it? I can really see the changes in the expression on your face.

DONOVAN

I'm sorry. I don't mean to seem skeptical.

JOYCE

That's okay. That's why I hired you. Where would be now without that Donovan Show Me spirit?

DONOVAN

But ... just for my information ... did anyone ever ... you know ... Do an outside investigation? Just to make absolutely sure.

JOYCE

We did hire a couple of private investigators recommended by the committee. They came up clean.

DONOVAN

PIs ... Recommended by the Committee?

JOYCE

Mary ... you are the best ... always one jump ahead of the game, always looking for that hole in the armor ... that weak spot.

DONOVAN

Just to make certain ... you did say "clean"?

(The lights in the hotel room start to flicker.)

JOYCE

What was that?

DONOVAN

Bad connection. Can I ask you if you ever reserved a hotel room under your name for O'Neill?

JOYCE

Must get you a better hotel next time.

DONOVAN

Do you regularly reserve rooms for O'Neill?

JOYCE

What kind of a question is that, Mary? Of course I reserve rooms under my name for a lot of people. You know that. Keeps expenses off the candidate's books. If he's near the contribution limit, and the committee can't foot the bill, he's got a credit card with my name on it he can use. The accounting gets worked out after the elections. Standard procedure.

(Light go off for a second, then back on.)

DONOVAN

Standard procedure. ... You know, we really need to talk in person.

JOYCE

What are you getting at Mary?

DONOVAN

Accusations have been made. Evidence has come forth. Problems are waiting in the wings that have yet to surface but ... if nothing is done ... things could become extremely ... unpleasant.

(Long pause.)

JOYCE

I afraid a meeting in person might not be possible or advisable at the moment.

DONOVAN

What about the Atlanta airport? We're there in a couple hours and can take care of the whole thing on the QT.

(Lights go off again.)

JOYCE

Things keep getting dark in there. Everything okay?

DONOVAN

No ... Jim. No. Everything is far from okay here. This ... thing needs your attention.

(Lights back on.)

JOYCE

I'm not so sure it does. You're the troubleshooter. You don't need me. Just make this go away.

DONOVAN

Make it go away?

JOYCE

I hired you to keep things like this away from the center of operations. You are the bouncer, the front line, now keep the commotion away from us.

DONOVAN

But you don't know what it is.

JOYCE

Should I, Mary? Should I really know what this is? Just means I may have to eventually lie ... I'm not good at lying. Think about what I should know for a second.

DONOVAN

So just take care of it?

(The lights go back off again. The stage remains in half light.)

JOYCE

Of course you will have all the necessary funds to facilitate any problem solving operations. You know how that works.

DONOVAN

You're cutting me loose.

JOYCE

I've never kept you on a leash, Mary. You've always been cut loose. You are my General Sherman on his march to the sea. No supply lines, no communications. Do what you have to do to survive and prevail. This light dark think here is making me dizzy.

DONOVAN

Something wrong with the wiring in this room ... faulty.

JOYCE

But how are your own problems, Mary? Should I be worried about you?

DONOVAN

No. Everything's under control.

JOYCE

Good. You know a lot of influential people warned me not to take the risk with you but ... we do go back a long way ... What you did in Des Moines. Wow.

DONOVAN

Yeah. How's she doing?

JOYCE

Got a nice settlement in the end and of course that radio talk show.

DONOVAN

Glad to hear it.

JOYCE

And that trouble during the California primaries, remember?

DONOVAN

And still nothing on my resumé...

JOYCE

Well I know what you've done. I know what you can do. I told them, when they said you were ... unreliable ... had bad ... well ... I told them ... As far as I'm concerned, two in the morning and something has got to be taken care of, your name is at the top of the speed dial.

DONOVAN

Flattering.

(Lights flicker on then go off.)

JOYCE
So... you're on the case?

DONOVAN
I'm on it.

JOYCE
Understand the committee still must maintain plausible deniability or we can't operate.

DONOVAN
Of course ... Standard ...

JOYCE
Did it just go dark again? I'm having trouble seeing you.

DONOVAN
It's the same face Jim. Just furrowing my brows.

JOYCE
Look at you concentrating. I've always envied people who can concentrate. You have definite powers of concentration. You know, a lot of people warned me ...

DONOVAN
We should stop talking now.

JOYCE
Of course. It's just been so long.

DONOVAN
Yes... and this is really where we should stop talking.

JOYCE
When this thing is over...

DONOVAN
Sure. When this thing is over...

JOYCE
Good-bye Mary.

DONOVAN
Good-bye Jim.

JOYCE

Ahh Mary ... Should I be worried about this ... potential situation?

DONOVAN

No need to worry.

JOYCE

Until of course there is something to worry about.

DONOVAN

Precisely.

JOYCE

Good-bye.

(She turns off the computer and sits for a moment in the half-light. The lights flash on for a second and she tries to turn on the TV with the remote. It lights up for a moment and gives some news. She goes to the bathroom and comes back with a plastic cup of water. She fishes in her pockets for the syringe, spoon, cellophane bags, matches, etc.)

TV

Heavy rains caused by a typhoon lashed the main island, flooding wide areas and leaving at least 28 people dead, officials said today. The flood was the worst to hit this city of 6.8 million in more than a decade.

(Donovan absent-mindedly listens while methodically fixing the shot. She taps powder into the spoon, fills the syringe with water, and sprays it into the spoon.)

Last week, another typhoon left 36 people dead. The President attributed the floods to garbage blocking the city's sewers, and appealed on national television "not to clog up the canals and sewage system with their garbage, which is an unpatriotic and selfish act."

(The TV and lights go back off again just as she lights the book of matches and holds it under the spoon. We see her face in the pale light from the laptop she now uses to light what she is doing. She speaks absent mindedly as she cooks the shot.)

DONOVAN

Here is our correspondent Mary Donovan standing in the floodwater at the site of this disaster. Mary, what is the situation like there?

(She changes her voice as she ties off her arm with the rope belt from the robe.)

Well I'll tell you Brian ...

(She gives herself the shot, takes a deep breath, sighs and sniffs.)

I am coming to you from here in shitworld waist deep in polluted floodwater, garbage and raw sewage and as far as anybody can tell, the situation seems to be getting worse by the second. Forecast is for great pools of human feces, hog lagoons, sludge pits, and hazardous medical waste facilities to overflow with the endless excrement from countless slums, favelas, bidonvilles, trailer parks, MacMansions, strip malls, DC office complexes, Howard Johnson's, and campaign war rooms brimming with bloggers, fixers, fact checkers, talking heads, ticking time bombs, PACs, pundits, push poll experts, and an happy assortment of hydrophobic meth heads and late night coprophiliac AM Radio DJs clogging communication canals and water treatment facilities ... *(Changing voice)* Well Mary, thank you for keeping us apprised of the situation? Aren't you worried about getting out of there? *(Changing voice as she starts to nod out.)* No Brian. Not worried at all. ... So do you have an escape route? ... Don't need one Brian. When the crap gets high enough, the sewers won't have me anymore and... the flood ... always ... spits ... me ... out.

(She closes her eyes and sits straight in the chair, completely still. End scene. Blackout.)

SCENE 3

(The sound of rain is in the background. Donovan is dressed in her usual business suit. She sits on the edge of the bed and watches the TV.)

TV

Heavy rains brought by the typhoon lasted for three straight days in most of the areas affected and caused several dams to overflow, forcing the authorities to release excess water that ended up inundating dozens of towns, particularly in the plains of the main island in the north.

(She changes channels.)

Governor Nestor Fongwan told local television stations on Friday rescuers had retrieved a total of 143 bodies in the worst hit regions. Police one village said 41 people were killed when 34 houses were buried late Thursday. Town officials have closed major roads for fear of more landslides.

(She changes channels again.)

Government and relief officials say high floodwaters and uncollected debris, especially in hard-to-reach areas, have resulted in higher numbers of illnesses like diarrhea, skin diseases, coughs and colds. The presence of mosquitoes and the spread of the diseases they carry, like dengue fever and malaria, have also become serious concerns.

(Reel barges in, excited.)

REEL

Man, you should've seen it! That was fucking awesome!

(Donovan changes channels.)

TV

... early morning raid on one of the city's largest hotels today netted over twenty-five illegal immigrants employed at the hotel. Immigration officials stated the hotel had been under surveillance for some time and the raid had been staged after specific details of illegal hiring were revealed through an inside source.

REEL

They got these battering rams up against the back door to the kitchen, all these guys run in, handcuff 'em, move on, load 'em up and out of there. Talk about taking care of business...

TV

Illegal immigrants were found in various positions in the hotel, kitchen and housekeeping mostly. The Drug Enforcement Administration also became involved when ...

(Donovan mutes the sound on the TV.)

DONOVAN

Elton ...

REEL

How do you make this stuff happen? And don't tell me you don't make it happen.

DONOVAN

Elton, you know ...

REEL

You gotta make it rain, you make it rain.

DONOVAN

Elton!

REEL

You make everything happen and never break a sweat. I mean ... Talk about knocking the problem in the head ... BAM ... problem solved.

DONOVAN

Give it a rest!

REEL

(quieter)

... awesome... You are an atomic ...

DONOVAN

If you finish that phrase I swear I will kick you in the nuts. Any word from Bunny?

REEL

Oh, ah ...

DONOVAN

Elton. You really need to work on your follow through. Not to be critical, but finishing what you start is not your strong point. The endgame, Elton. Focus on the endgame, tie up the loose ends or everything falls apart. Is there any news about Bunny?

REEL

Not yet. I sent out word through a couple of bartenders and coke dealers about a rich guy looking for a special event so if money is what he wants, he'll be snooping around before long.

DONOVAN

So Bunny is still in the wind. This is not good.

REEL

Hey! The problem is all but solved, I mean wiped out. Anybody here involved is back on the boat and out of the way.

DONOVAN

Elton, these were scared kids. Bunny is a hustler, he fucks and gets fucked for money. He's an opportunist. He's an American like us and that makes him a problem. ... And he is ...

(The door opens and Rod enters alone without Walid. He is wet, drunk, hysterical, and raving.)

ROD

He's here. I saw him. He's right downstairs.

DONOVAN

Is it possible to finish something around here without somebody banging through that door? John, what are you talking about? Why are you wet? *(to Reel)* Do you know why he is wet? Anybody? Why is Rodman wet?

ROD

I saw him there, in the bar, sipping his fucking Perrier and lime like he hasn't got a care in the world, like nothing's going on.

DONOVAN

But why are you wet? Okay. Should we chalk all this up to military training or is there something tangible going on here?

REEL

When the immigration guys stormed in, he got scared and rolled himself out in the rain.

ROD

Yeah, yeah. Fucking rain. Fucking fire and brimstone, fucking Dunn, Ray Dunn sitting there. People run in front of a train to avoid Ray Dunn. Rain, hah! Rain! Pussies. Think I can't take a little hard weather; I can soak it up, just watch me soak it up. Dish it out. Go ahead.

(The bathroom door opens and Walid walks out.)

WALID

No immigration man?

DONOVAN

No Walid, no immigration man. Would you be a dear and go slap Mister Rodman, please?

WALID

Missus? *La afham.*

DONOVAN

(She demonstrates.) Hand in air, with palm. Slap. Him.

ROD

Rain was cold too. Icy, little icicles froze up in my hair, my ears, down my cast, me Mister Freeze, just sitting there in my wheel chair. Slap me! Go ahead!

(Walid walks over and puts his hand beside Rod's head.)

WALID

Afwan! La afham! ... No. Why? Why slap?

DONOVAN

Why slap indeed. This torture thing gets habit forming. Well, as they say, catch more flies with gin...

(She pours Rod a drink and hands it too him.)

Rodman! Get a grip! What are you talking about?

(He knocks back the drink.)

ROD

You wanna hit me? Huh? You can't touch me. I froze in the ninth circle of hell before the mouth of Satan. What you gonna do to me? Huh?

DONOVAN

Humor me. Walk me through this politics Dante connection.

ROD

Once, once... in Pittsburgh a couple of years ago, Senate race, a bunch of protesters were outside a rally, puppets, drummers, flute players, just a bunch of hippies, couple of cameras that's all. Nothing to worry about. Just hippies.

REEL

Hippies?

ROD

Dunn keeps getting distracted. Rally's going on, candidate's talking, Dunn can't hear himself think. Puts a ski mask over his head, grabs a stainless steel baseball bat from his car and starts cracking heads, breaking legs. Five kids in the hospital, one in a coma, one paralyzed for life. Dunn wipes down the stainless steel bat, puts it back in the car, wipes the blood off his hands and goes back to work like he'd just had pizza for lunch and nobody says a thing 'cause ... you know why? Because nothing unusual happened. This is SOP for this guy, man... He does this shit every goddamn day.

(He calms down and stares straight ahead.)

DONOVAN

Okay. And this ties into ...

ROD

He's a part time bagman for MacNamara. Off the books. He's here with a couple of guys I don't know, setting up some kind of black branch office. There's a printed out sign on the door, "Spartans for Representative Government."

REEL

Really? Spartans for Representative Government? Really? Are they kidding? Do they really think they're hiding anything with that?

ROD

No ...

(He drinks and calms down some more.)

No... But that's the thing see. He doesn't care. He knows you know. He knows it's obvious. He wants you to know he's here and he's on the job. Like running up the Jolly Roger right before you board the other ship. The more obvious the better. He knows you know. That's the point.

DONOVAN

Bring this all together for me John or I'm changing your medication.

ROD

So he comes walking out of this office and into the bar and ... He's got this second guy, the Brando guy, walking with him, laughing and walking...

DONOVAN

Oh fuck.

REEL

Bad timing or what?

ROD

No ... no... No timing. No coincidence. There is no coincidence here. He's got this team, off duty cops, feds, ex-FBI, ex-MI5, ex-human fucking beings. They cost but they don't quit. Somebody was on the job.

DONOVAN

Who are these guys?

ROD

I heard he had Liddy on retainer, couple of Cuban rejects and some contract agent from Zimbabwe ...

REEL
(joking)

No Somali pirates?

ROD
(serious)

What do you know about Somalis? You know something I don't? What have you heard? What?

REEL

Ahh ... nothing just you know ... bad ah... nothing...

(Rod and Donovan really don't laugh.)

DONOVAN

So Bunny cruises in.

ROD

Bunny's out, Bunny's out and ... Nobody cruises into a scene by chance here; nobody. Everybody's taking cues from somebody. Somebody else is always calling the shots here. ... So I think maybe Dunn doesn't recognize me, maybe he does, who knows, best steer clear so ... I hit the door and roll across the street and watch the whole thing through that big window.

DONOVAN

Out in the open?

ROD

Out in the big wide open, big plate glass windows around the bar. Bunny and Dunn and a couple of spooks all cozy as kittens, couple of little hamsters right there. Right out there in the open ... in the rain ... and the sleet. You know it's sleeting?

REEL

Any idea what they were talking about?

(Pause as Donovan and Rod look briefly at Reel.)

ROD

Little needles of ice blowing sideways. You know? My head froze. Sleet. Can you hear it from in here? No? Like white noise. Sleet blasting into your face. And those evil little hamsters sucking down Perrier.

DONOVAN

John! What did they do?

ROD

Bunny talks and they hand him a big folder and he looks into it and makes sure he's got what he's got and they leave and ... Shake ... hands ... and... smile.

DONOVAN

Something happened in that office.

ROD

Something happened in that office you goddamn right something happened in that office. They were there. Bunny comes out of the office with another guy, sits, laughs, takes the envelope, leaves. Deals were made, hands were shaken, brown envelopes, man! They were passing fat brown envelopes around! Deals were made. Plain envelopes changed hands. Hands were shaken. Deals were made.

REEL

What happened?

DONOVAN

We don't know.

REEL

Do we have an idea? Don't you always have an idea?

DONOVAN

No. I don't always have an idea. But from the looks of this, somebody got debriefed.

REEL

Oh tell me that's not a joke. I mean, tell me there is only one meaning there.

DONOVAN

Elton, shut up, and you and Walid come with me.

(She opens the bathroom door and Farida is standing there inside holding towels.)

FARIDA

Immigration? ... Ah ... Towels?

DONOVAN

You know, I would so love to have the luxury of figuring out just precisely what you here in this scenario means right now but unfortunately other things are pressing ... You have keys? Yes?

FARIDA

Keys? Yes.

DONOVAN

Keys to offices?

FARIDA

Keys, yes.

DONOVAN

Put down the towels and come with me, come on, everybody out. Rod!

ROD

I'm such a small man. I don't need this shit any more. This is bigger than anybody thinks. Lots of big men, big nasty men in little warm rooms, drinking things and smiling at each other.

DONOVAN

See you on the other side.

(Short blackout.)

SCENE 4

(The stage is dark. We hear crashing and smashing sounds, people yelling, and doors breaking. The lights come up on Rod, disheveled and blankly watching TV. We hear Reel's voice coming out of the TV yelling "Lashkar-e-Taiba! Lashkar-e-Taiba!" as the mayhem continues in the background. Rod looks quizzical.)

ROD

Lashkar-e-Taiba? Really?

(The door bursts open and Donovan, Reel, Walid and Farida stumble in, all wearing kaffiyehs wrapped tight around their heads and dark sunglasses. They carry stacks of paper file folders, boxes of CDs, flash drives, a laptop and anything else people might carry who just ransacked an office looking for information. They put all this on the table.)

DONOVAN

Asre'! Asre'ee!

(The TV continues with crashing sounds and Reel's voice yelling "Lashkar-e-Taiba!" Donovan and Reel take off the kaffiyehs, sit down at the table, and start going through the materials. Walid and Farida remain standing, still wearing the dark shades and kaffiyehs. The lights start to flash and flicker again then go down. Donovan sighs.)

Is electric light too much to ask for here? An electrician? Somebody? Who do we have to fuck to get some illumination in here?! Goddammit! Light me!

(Lights go black. End of scene.)

SCENE 5

(Lights come up on Reel and Donovan at the table, now stacked with folders and CDs. Rod sits in front of the TV. Walid sits at the table and looks at the laptop. In the background are the sounds of smashing and general mayhem coming from the TV, along with cries of Lashkar-e-Taiba.)

REEL

Nothing on any of the CDs, flash drives, nothing. I'm scanning that laptop but ...

DONOVAN

It's all paper, the whole thing's on paper. They moved everything to old school file folders on printed hard copy.

(to Walid)

Don't break anything.

(The bathroom door opens and Farida comes out with a screwdriver and some wire.)

FARIDA

Electrical... have ... illuminate electrical. Okay?

DONOVAN

All the lights work? Here and everywhere?

FARIDA

Lights everybody. I fix. Good-bye?

DONOVAN

Okay. Stay close. I might need some light work somewhere else. Go...

(She goes.)

Alright, everybody ...

ROD

But why Lashkar-e-Taiba? What were you ...?

REEL

Stupid right? Way down the list of terrorist organizations ... No way.

ROD

They are Afghans and Pakistanis, not Arabs. They don't wear kaffiyehs. They don't wear those wrap-around sunglasses. I mean ... it makes no ...

REEL

Precisely. Bad theater. Stupid cover. The news guys will run around in circles, and Homeland will shit themselves, but those guys know, they know. They know who really did this, but they can't say because then they'd have to admit to being "Spartans for Representative Government" who just got raided by Lashkar-e-Taiba ... Makes no sense, right? But the Spartans know we know, and we know the Spartans know ... Like a magic trick between magicians ... and the rest is just ...

ROD

Bad TV plots?

REEL

That wasn't what I was gonna say but you know best ... I mean, you're the one above the paradigm.

ROD

Hayseed.

REEL

Fuckup ... go ahead and give me that weak Jethro shit one more time.

DONOVAN

Boys! Sorry to interrupt this scintillating point-counterpoint but take a look at this.

(Reel and Walid come over and look over a sheaf of paper she is holding. Reel starts to read.)

REEL

(Reading)

Dunn: Mister Brogan. Bunny: Call me Bunny. That's what everybody calls me. Dunn: Bunny? Why to they call you that? ...

(Stops reading.)

This is the interview.

DONOVAN

This is the goods.

REEL

Why no video, no audio, nothing. Just a typed hard copy in a manila folder. That's it.

DONOVAN

Track this down through cyberspace and find it in a manila folder. Hard copy, they hid it in hard copy. Sure. Who is gonna look at a piece of paper anymore?

REEL
(Reading)

Dunn: Bunny is a strange nickname for somebody like you.

DONOVAN
 Wait ... I can't concentrate this way. I need to watch this.
(to Walid)
 You, sit over there and you sit here. We got two copies.

REEL
 What are you doing?

DONOVAN
 They say Reagan used to have his Daily Briefings done the same way, only with a sound track. Just read. It helps me think when somebody acts it out.

ROD
 Yeah TV boy! Sell me something.

(Walid sits on one side of the table and Reel on the other. They act out the interview scene with Bunny. Reel plays the Interviewer and Walid plays Bunny. When he plays Bunny, he loses his accent.)

REEL
 So why do they call you Bunny?

(Walid briefly gets into the role, maybe does a bit of a young Brando impression.)

WALID
 I don't know. Why would you call me Bunny?

REEL
 I wouldn't.

WALID
 Maybe if you knew me like they knew me, you'd call me Bunny.

REEL
 Who are they and how do they know you?

WALID
 As Bunny, the man with the Buns.

DONOVAN

Wait, don't react to the "Buns" line. Just let it hang there. Don't give him the pleasure of seeing you smile.

REEL

Oh.

ROD

And drop that "Shucks and Shazzam" attitude. Dunn is a blank, a big cold nothing.

WALID

Or maybe just they used to call me Boney because of my Bone, then that just ... slipped ... into Buns and then Bunny.

REEL

Why not Buggy? That's a kind of bad boy name.

WALID

Ooooh bad boys. What do you know about Bad Boys ahmm Mister?... Why not tell me your name so we're lying on the same level?

REEL

Dunn.

WALID

Not Dunn yet? Or ... Dunn too quick?

REEL

You work as a male escort?

WALID

Nah ... not really.

DONOVAN

Wait ...

(to Walid)

Could you slouch a little more?

ROD

How about a cigarette? How about a drink? How about something? Smoking would look good. Let it swirl around your face, you tough little cocksucker.

REEL

We don't have any cigarettes.

DONOVAN

Just ... you know ... slouch and look away. Brando forgetting his lines.

(Walid slouches down some and works the image of a TV bad guy under interrogation.)

WALID

I never escorted nobody nowhere. Never went arm and arm to the theater, never accompanied a gentleman to a formal occasion. So the term “escort” is technically ...

REEL

Still, that’s what they call you.

WALID

I’m just a big, silver screen. “They” can project whatever they want on me.

REEL

What I mean is ...

WALID

“They” can file me away wherever they please. That is what ... “they” get for their money.

REEL

So what I meant to ask was ...

WALID

What you mean is fucking men for money is what you mean, right? Say it.

REEL

Well...

WALID

Say, “Do you fuck men for money?”

REEL

So do you? Is that what you do?

WALID

Do you Mister Dunn fuck men for money?

REEL

My interview. My questions.

WALID

You look like somebody who has fucked a lot of men for an awful lot of money. You look like you know how this works. Okay. Your money, your fuck.

ROD

You are letting him get the upper hand, dammit. He is defining you. He is forming a pattern. Define him, before he defines you!

REEL

Maybe you don't understand, but you are no longer giving direction here. Understand who I am and what I can do before you start assuming anything. You have much less choice and power here than you think.

WALID

You don't understand. You keep seeing resistance where there isn't any. There is no conflict here. There is no coercion. I'm just a team player in contract negotiations right now. This is not a power play. Unless of course, power is the game you want to play.

REEL

Are you a prostitute?

WALID

Are you a prostitute?

REEL

Do you have sex for money?

WALID

Limited definition, you know. Sex is only part of what I provide. What do you do for money?

REEL

Okay. You do things for money that men ...

WALID

Men? ... Okay, sure, whatever. Potato potahto ... Give me a category, I'll make it fit. Entertainment means lot of different things to lots of different people.

REEL

Right. Of course.

DONOVAN

Okay hold it. See there, there you should have tightened up a little, play that homosexual subtext.

REEL

Me? Are you still directing me?

DONOVAN

Yeah, just tighten up a little more. This is making you uncomfortable. You know? You want this to stop, but you don't want it to stop. You want it touched, but you don't want it touched. Let me see that little hidden gay thing you got.

ROD

Repulsion attraction masculine feminine he men she men touch no touch ... okay ... chop chop ... moving on.

REEL

Ahhh ... line ...

DONOVAN

... only deal with men ... Entertainment means a lot of different ...

REEL

Right ... Look, here's the point. We are really only interested in this man. Have you ever had an appointment with this man?

(He mimes sliding a photo across the table. Walid mimes looking at the photo.)

WALID

Really? I have no problem answering that with either a yes or a no. But you have got to give me some indication here, some hint, change your voice, gimme a sign ... squeeze my hand. Let me know if the answer is yes ... or no.

REEL

Look closely.

WALID

I don't know, I mean ... he's a suit. I see a lot of suits.

REEL

This is a very important suit.

WALID

All the suits are important suits. Just ask them. They'll all tell you they are not just another suit. But they are ... all suits, I mean. They aren't snowflakes, they aren't all different and they sure aren't all beautiful... or cool ... or pure ... or white for that matter.

REEL

This man would have come in every two or three months or so, sat at the bar, maybe went with some other boys from the hotel.

WALID

... and? ...

REEL

You might have noticed him late at the bar and ...

WALID

I keep waiting for some identifying characteristic to ... pop out as they say but... so far, you are simply reinforcing my daily humdrum ... with lots of ... hum... and not much drum.

REEL

Take a hard look at him... Just look at the photo again.

WALID

I knew this suit one time, Edwardian-cut Valentino custom number, fabulous, really fabulous. That was a suit. I would've fucked the suit for free but... as usual there was some guy in it. Guy would bring another pair of trousers, same cut, like a thousand dollar pair of tailored trousers, with a big hole cut right over the asshole ... ha! Never even undid his tie. Never took off his shoes. Just walked in the room and bent over. Whew! You're smiling. You're thinking about that aren't you? Suitable for framing? Hang that in your fantasy bank.

ROD

Dunn! You freak! Sick dark skeevy mother ...

DONOVAN

Can you not wait for the commercial or something?

WALID

You know, just tell me what you want me to say.

REEL

Well ... just whether or not you have ever ...

WALID

No, no “whether or not,” no “Have you ever ...” No “Just the facts” No ... Listen, I need you ... to tell ... me ... what ... you ... want me to say. Get it?

REEL

Did you ... ?

WALID

What? Shoot JFK? Kill Jesus Christ? Fake the Gulf of Tonkin incident? Invent New Coke? Drill a hole in the levee to the New Orleans fucking 17th Street Canal! What? What do you want me to say? What do you want me to confess? And the truth is not a valid answer; you look especially like somebody who knows that.

(Reel sits and stares.)

Okay. Let me take a stab at this. This guy is either a businessman or a politician, right? Businessman might have a wife who is planning something, divorce, lawsuit, small potatoes, not worth the time and trouble. Now the big deal would be a politician, that might ... wait look at me ... look at me ... Politician? ... Poli ...ti ... shun? ... Man you have got to work on your poker face...

REEL

What do you know?

WALID

My experience is that guys in the middle, middle management, your junior senators, first year state representatives, Vice Presidents in charge of Marketing, tenured assistant deans, you know, the suck-up kick-down guys. They haven't hit the cruise control yet. They are still taking abuse from up top so they like to get rough, threaten, control. I could tell you stories. But ... when they get to the top with nobody else to suck up to, maybe they start feeling a little confused. Everybody's their whipping boy now; everybody sucks up to them. Maybe they ask themselves what they are doing up there. What they did to get up that ladder and look out over that sea of ass-kissers. Maybe they think they never really deserved it. Maybe they crave a slight reminder they are not the Lords of the Universe. That's where I come in. They call me when they need a little daily humiliation under the table. I'm guessing this guy ... this guy looks like he wants on the bottom. Yeah ... sure, why not. I'll say I've fucked this guy. I've fucked this guy.

REEL

Do you know him?

WALID

Sure I know him. I don't know him, but I know him. Here again, you don't strike me as somebody addicted to the facts. Why so complicated? Pay me, leak the story, take the pictures, hit the cable news. You want a money shot? I'll give you the biggest goddam money shot you've ever seen and on cue. Believe me, I've fucked everybody and afterwards it's all fucking he said he said she said they said. There are no facts! There are never any facts. There are no such things as facts and you, my disingenuous little closet case, should know at least that by now.

REEL

Would you be willing to go to Washington, meet some news people?

WALID

Hey! You wanna hear a story about this senator from Iowa? I got a great story about this golden shower freak from Iowa.

REEL

Maybe some other time.

WALID

Maybe when you're on somebody else's payroll, right? Am I right?

REEL

What do you think?

WALID

Come to think of it, guy with my special talents might be an asset in your organization.

REEL

Stands to be seen. Are you in?

WALID

Sure, I'll go. I'm in. But understand ... I'll need a whole new wardrobe.

DONOVAN

Okay. Cut. I've seen enough.

REEL

How much wardrobe are we talking about?

WALID

From the sound of it, lots and lots of wardrobe.

DONOVAN

Stop! Drop character. Stop! Blackout!

ROD

(Applauding softly)

Loved the pilot. The networks are over the top.

DONOVAN

There's no fixing this. We haven't got the resources to turn this thing around. This is not patching holes in dikes ... the thing has burst and we are riding the flood all the way down. Elton, you need to go meet with Dunn.

(Reel turns to Donovan. Walid falls out of character.)

WALID

No more act.

DONOVAN

Different act now Walid. Elton, tell Dunn we've got surveillance and a witness. Tell him we are ready to play. Make him a deal.

REEL

What kind of deal?

DONOVAN

You know, a "deal" deal. Exchange offers, weigh mutual benefits, a deal.

REEL

Did you just quote "Kelly's Heroes"?

ROD

Horse trade, cow to market, crack for crackers ...

REEL

Alright, that's it. You wanna talk to me about your paradigm now, asshole?

DONOVAN

No point to sell. No point lying. Tell him what we've got and let him know in no uncertain terms we are all currently free agents.

REEL

So we're selling out?

(Big Pause. Rod starts to giggle. Donovan smiles.)

DONOVAN

What?

ROD

Are we what? What did you just say?

REEL

Just so I know. ... I mean ... We're selling out. Right?

DONOVAN

(She stifles a laugh.)

I'm afraid that train left the station quite a while ago, Elton.

REEL

No, no. You're not ... This is not ... naïve I'm ... look ... I didn't mean like ... There is no moral consideration here ... just ...

DONOVAN

Moral considerations are above your pay grade.

REEL

Absolutely, but our job was solving a problem. That was the mission. And ... well ... Just so I know. We have now officially stopped trying to solve the problem, right?

DONOVAN

We had a lot of problems to solve and this is going to solve enough of them.

REEL

Okay, but finishing the job I mean ... that counts for something, right? Just doing the job, signing off on the contract, that has to count for something, doesn't it?

DONOVAN

No. Not anymore. Not here. Other rules apply.

REEL

Okay. Just wanted to get that straight.

DONOVAN

So we're clear?

REEL

Sure.

DONOVAN

Go downstairs. Talk to Dunn like you'd talk to ... Rod ... well, maybe not Rodman but another professional.

REEL

And tell him we want to make a deal.

DONOVAN

And tell him we want to make a deal, yes. Dunn is not an idiot. He knows we're here. He knows we've got something.

REEL

Okay.

DONOVAN

Don't think too long about it. It only makes it harder. Just go talk to Dunn.

REEL

What if this deal is beyond his pay grade?

DONOVAN

We don't know what's beyond his pay grade yet. Take Walid just in case he has needs proof we got a witness.

WALID

Acting.

DONOVAN

Acting. Follow Mister Reel down to the bar. Stand behind him and look tough. Can you look tough?

(Walid looks tough.)

Good. Speak when you're spoken to and everything will be fine.

WALID

Okay. We go.

(Reel puts his jacket on and he and Walid leave the room. There is a pause as Donovan sits down and Rod stares at her.)

ROD

Not for nothing, you did have a job to do.

DONOVAN

You are not allowed comments.

ROD

Still. You were supposed to run interference for the candidate.

DONOVAN

Was that a comment? You know how this all works. As long as everything runs the way it runs, we'll come out smelling like roses. But now you are really pushing it. Your position is much more tenuous than you currently imagine.

ROD

So to business as usual.

DONOVAN

That's more like it. I gotta make some phone calls.

(She goes into the bathroom. Rod sips a drink and starts to laugh.)

ROD

Selling out!! Ha!

(Blackout)

SCENE 6

(Donovan sits on the bed and watches TV. Rod is in the same spot talking in the background to himself.)

ROD

... somewhere nobody else can take but me, somewhere wet, yeah. I can do wet. Not the desert, no, too clear, too much ... clarity. See somebody coming a mile off and you get lazy. You think, yeah, there's time before I have to deal with him. He's no threat to me, then Bam! Fucker cuts your throat. The light, always there, never goes away, all that light and shadow. How can anybody cope?

TV

The Department of Agriculture is urging farmers to take action to tackle rising locust numbers heading into warmer weather. Authorities are monitoring the infestation of the plague locust, which has developed in the Coonamble area. Pockets of locusts, not seen from the air, may still breed.

ROD

Somewhere wet, yeah. I can do wet. Maybe the Everglades, yeah. Just cash in and do it, House on stilts in a cypress swamp. Cabin, shack, shed ... a shed a shed on stilts ...

TV

Locusts began hatching earlier in the region because of higher than average temperatures during August.

ROD

I can deal with that. I can prepare for that. Maybe near the Seminoles, yeah. Maybe make a deal with the Seminoles for a good spot.

TV

The outlook for summer remains unclear because locusts are highly migratory and breeding could increase if there is significant rainfall to encourage a population boom ...

(The door to the room opens and Reel and Walid enter. Walid is wearing a leather motorcycle jacket, white t-shirt and a pair of dark sunglasses. He swaggers.)

REEL

Okay. Deal is going down.

(Donovan mutes the TV.)

DONOVAN

Why is he dressed like that?

REEL

And guess who is staying here ... in this hotel?

DONOVAN

Walid, why are you dressed like that?

WALID

Mister Bunny make me gift of Brando.

DONOVAN

Elton?

REEL

MacNamara! Fucking MacNamara came in two days ago when his guys got wind of this thing.

ROD

... and these Great Horned Owls swooping down, ripping something alive out of the water...

DONOVAN

Okay. Why did ... Did Bunny give ...

REEL

Oh yeah. Bob, ahh ... Bunny gave him that. They sort of know each other.

WALID

(smiling and doing Brando with a Middle Eastern accent)

Could be contender Charlie!

DONOVAN

Okay, where's my phone and what about MacNamara?

(Reel pulls a disposable Tracphone out of his pocket.)

REEL

Right. Here's your phone. I'll tell you one thing about Dunn, he sure admires you. I mean you're like ...

DONOVAN

Why is MacNamara here?

REEL

Says he knew you back in the day. Says he worked opposite you in ... where was it ... New Jersey senate race in ...

DONOVAN

Yeah yeah ... Precious memories ... Where is he?

REEL

Oh Ray? He's got a suite, man. Nice one too. Great view.

DONOVAN

Ray? Ray Dunn is now Ray?

REEL

Nice guy by the way, and what a history. Still kindling a flame for you, no two ways about it. He thinks you're like a fucking X-man or something. You guys ever...?

DONOVAN

I meant the Opposition Candidate.

REEL

You and MacNamara?

DONOVAN

Where is MacNamara staying and ... why are you getting chummy with Dunn?

REEL

Oh, MacNamara is on the down low, way low down. Single room booked under the radar under the name Shaw.

ROD

Dunn and Chum.

DONOVAN

Why is MacNamara here?

REEL

Too polite to ask really. Looks like this thing we've got has drawn interest. Plus I think he's on some kind of black box fund raiser.

DONOVAN

Black box what?

REEL

Big black bus with tinted windows. Looks like he and Dunn are pulling out tomorrow and stopping off different places for a little ... undeclared fund raising.

DONOVAN

And this means in real terms ... ?

REEL

All the hot spots on the southern tour ... Memphis, New Orleans, some fixer in Jackson, press the flesh, pass the plate, hold the bag ... Anything to eat around here?

DONOVAN

No, so how does our plan fit in?

REEL

Cold pizza? Half an egg-salad sandwich? No?

DONOVAN

No. No food. There is no food here.

REEL

All set. They're leaving on that big black bus and ...

DONOVAN

Alright ...

REEL

Bunny is going too.

WALID

(still in Brando mode)

... going for the price on Wilson.

DONOVAN

You guys have to be on the bus. That's it. When?

REEL

No problem there. They want us on that bus alright. I said I'd let them know. They're moving out tomorrow morning.

DONOVAN

Let them know. Make the deal. Now. Walid, you are going to take a little trip.

WALID

One way to Palookaville.

DONOVAN

Yeah, something like that.

REEL

Can we get something to eat?

(Donovan opens the briefcase, pulls out some cash, and hands it to Reel.)

DONOVAN

Go out and get something to eat ... and get Walid some clothes, never know when a TV camera is going to show up ...

WALID

A title shot in the ballpark.

DONOVAN

And make sure he's prepped for Chrissakes. Just stick with "man come, man want boys, I get boys." Stay on book and don't improvise. Think cable news ... 15 seconds tops ... And look sad and judgmental and ... morally indignant, something.

WALID

Stella!

REEL

Is that chicken place still open?

DONOVAN

Pack a bag.

REEL

That one at the end of the block. What was it?

WALID

Kennedy Fried.

REEL

Right. Kennedy Fried Chicken.

DONOVAN

Am I just running in the background here? When did I become wallpaper sound? Tomorrow morning! Get it? Wake up call! Alarm clock! Ready to roll! Don't make Ms. Donovan come get you out of bed boys.

REEL

Okay. We're already there.

WALID

Kennedy Fried Chicken. Gizzards and Livers, four ninety-five.

REEL

Okay. Come on, man!

DONOVAN

I mean it. On the scene ...

REEL

Black bus. No problem.

(They head out the door.)

WALID
(still Brando)

It was you Charlie!

REEL
(as Rod Steiger)

Oh I had some bets down for you. You saw some money.

WALID
(Brando)

You don't understand. I coulda had class. I coulda been a contender. I coulda been somebody.

REEL
(as Rod Steiger)

Listen, Terry. Take the job, no questions. Take it!

WALID
(as himself)

We see Waterfront? No problem?

REEL
 Oh no problem, I'll watch Waterfront again with you. Got the DVD in the room.

(Reel laughs as they exit. The lights start a slow fade out.)

ROD
 ... the Seminoles, yeah. Maybe make a deal with the Seminoles for a good spot. They need money, they need some tribal consulting, find some chief to work for, that's a definite possibility. I mean ... they got tribal governments. They got elections and ballots, swamps, weird politics, natural environment ...

(Donovan turns the TV back up just slightly as she pulls a new briefcase out from under one of the beds and attempts to open the hard plastic packaging to the Tracphone Her attempts at breaking the package open accompany the following.)

TV
 Residents, officials and scientists have been baffled by the apparent downpour of tadpoles in the central Prefecture. Clouds of dead tadpoles appear to have fallen from the sky in a series of episodes in a number of cities in the region since the start of the month.

ROD

What am I saying? What the fuck am I thinking? Here comes my brain again, couple of years and I'd be working as some Seminole's bagman for the Cuban Mob and there you go, brain brain back where I started.

TV

One man caught in a tadpole downpour described hearing a strange sound in a parking lot and on further exploration, found more than 100 dead tadpoles covering the windshields of cars across the lot.

ROD

They got Burmese Pythons down there gone feral. Pythons gone wild. People turn them loose.

(Donovan finally rips the Tracphone package and turns on the phone. She sets it on the table next to the briefcase and opens the briefcase.)

TV

Local officials also reported dead tadpole downpours later in the same prefecture.

ROD

Guy buys a Burmese Python to for a pet at the Frat House, or maybe his girlfriend gets him one because he's in a band and that would be cool, and the thing starts to get big, then they can't keep it in the house and nobody wants Python boots anymore and damn thing is eight feet long and maybe they've got to move to LA because the band has got a new manager and so bye-bye Burmese and into the Everglades.

(Donovan looks at the TV and changes channels.)

TV

(a calming, late night TV voice)

Have we no alternative? Is nothing predictable? Must we live in ignorance of our future?

(Donovan arranges things inside the briefcase.)

Can we discover a source for information about where this world is headed? Indeed we can, and it tells us a great deal about what lies ahead.

ROD

Then they get like twenty feet long, eat alligators and great, huge ... things, swallow airboats and ... yeah ... little cool house pet got out of hand ... not so cool now huh? Big ass twenty foot snake there guys ... heh heh ...

(Donovan closes the briefcase. She lies on her back on the bed and crosses her hands over her chest.)

TV

Where can we find answers? The answers have been waiting for us all along. They're in the pages of the Bible.

ROD

Maybe they need somebody killing pythons down there. Maybe there's a bounty. Maybe python boots will come back in style and they'll need the skins. Career choices, reinvention, new opportunities. Career choices. Python skinner. Nice ring. Python skinner. Look at your pets now!

(Light and sound from the TV fades out.)

TV

Much of this remarkable book is prophetic. Its prophecies reveal crucial information about the future of mankind. When we realize that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, then we begin to realize the significance of its prophecies.

(Full blackout and end of scene.)

SCENE 7

(Lights come slowly up on Walid, dressed better but the same as before, "Wild One" leather jacket and t-shirt, and Reel standing over Donovan who is still lying dressed on the bed on her back. Rod seems to be asleep in his chair. Reel clears his throat.)

REEL

Ahhh ... Mary.

WALID

Missus?

(She sits straight up and looks around, still asleep.)

DONOVAN

Well hello boys. Rested? Breakfasted?

REEL

Yeah. We had ...

DONOVAN

Waffles? Did you have some waffles?

REEL

No, we ...

DONOVAN

Make yourselves some waffles at that do-it-yourself waffle bar downstairs?

REEL

No. Just some coffee and ...

DONOVAN

Cheerios? Did you have some Cheerios?

REEL

We were sort of in a ...

DONOVAN

They say I never eat. You must have heard them say that. She doesn't eat. They don't know anything about me. I know Cheerios. I am well acquainted with Cheerios.

(She lies back down on the bed on her back and closes her eyes. Walid and Reel look at each other uncomfortably. Reel shakes her lightly.)

REEL

Uhhmmm ... Mary? Hello? We are still here.

(She wakes up again and gets the briefcase.)

MARY

What took you guys so long? Okay, here we have the surveillance DVD and a copy of the interview we pilfered. They may want that back. And no ... no wire, no recorder, let them search if they want. You have the combination. Walid ...

(She holds the briefcase out and Walid takes it.)

Clearly a different fashion statement could have been made, but that's all Monday morning quarterbacking at this point. This could still work. Walid, just act the way you always do. No new characters necessary. They will ask you questions. They may have other people ask you questions in front of the TV camera. This means nothing. These people are not important; they are just behind TV cameras. Stick to what you told us. Do not go beyond your vocabulary. Do the accent. Be Walid. Be that fantastic kid we all know and admire. Okay?

(Walid starts to tear up a little and become emotional.)

WALID

Oh Missus. I learn much, you Misters Rod Reel. You make me home. You are my Americans.

(He hugs Donovan spontaneously. Donovan stiffens, looks at Reel, and motions for them to go.)

DONOVAN

Yes yes. We all feel the same Walid. No need to get Californian here. Now go. Go.

(Walid exits. Reel turns and starts to exit when Donovan grabs him.)

Don't get on the bus.

REEL

Okay ... What? Why?

DONOVAN

Listen to me Elton, and don't ask anything. Do not under any circumstances get on the bus. Do you hear me?

REEL

Well ... yeah. Okay.

DONOVAN

You stop at the door. Tell Walid something urgent has come up and you will see him in Washington. Wait until he gets on the bus, then text me. Just text "places" then sit and wait, watch the bus. When the bus pulls out text "rolling." When you see it get to the highway, text "action." Tell me you've got that?

REEL

(Confused)

Okay. I've got it.

DONOVAN

Tell me again what you're going to do? Tell me.

REEL

Stop at the door, get Walid on the bus, text you "places, rolling, and action," then just ... hang.

DONOVAN

Hurry. He'll be at the elevator.

(Reel exits. Donovan looks around the room.)

Rod! Where is my phone? Rod!

(Rod opens his eyes and looks at Donovan.)

ROD

What are you talking about?

DONOVAN

My Tracphone. I put here last night and now it's not there. Where is it?

(Rod reaches under his seat and pulls out the Tracphone.)

ROD

You mean this Tracphone?

DONOVAN

Give me the phone!

ROD

No. No. I can't.

DONOVAN

Quit dicking around Rod. Give me the phone.

(She grabs for it but he changes hands and starts playing a little game of "keep-away.")

Rod! What the ...

ROD

You are not getting ... I can't be a part of ...

DONOVAN

Rod, we don't have time for this talk now. Give me the fucking phone!

ROD

I can't ... I have ... priorities I have ...

DONOVAN

John! Seriously, listen closely to me. You are feeling something, but what you are feeling is not there.

ROD

No no no.

DONOVAN

You are feeling the itch of something you had taken out a long time ago.

(The phone rings once. Donovan notices.)

ROD

Gone.

DONOVAN

What you are feeling is not a feeling. You are just feeling the need to feel something.

ROD

Something gone.

DONOVAN

And I understand that. We are a lot alike. But you have got to understand that thing that is itching, that part that is aching, that leg you had blown off in the war, whatever, all that is gone.

ROD

Gone.

(Rod collapses and lets the Tracphone fall into his lap.)

DONOVAN

No more itching organ. Just you ... here ... shot foot ... no extras, no frills.

(The phone rings again. Donovan grabs it and walks to the window.)

ROD

It's just ... just ...sometimes everything feels so real.

DONOVAN

Yeah, Tell me about it. I've been there.

ROD

So real you think it's real.

DONOVAN

(looking out the window)

Don't beat yourself up over it. It's an easy con to fall for.

ROD

Real people, real people with real things ...

DONOVAN

A momentary lapse John. You'll feel better when you're over the DTs.

(The phone rings again. Donovan looks at it, looks out the window, dials a number, and pushes the send button. She waits a second, puts the phone in a plastic shopping bag, puts the bag on the floor, takes off her shoe and starts pounding the phone as hard as she can, smashing it to bits. When she is satisfied the phone is in pieces, she walks to the door.)

I gotta go downstairs.

(She walks out and we hear the distant sound of a large explosion. Rod sits and stares. The lights start to go down. We hear a faint siren growing louder and louder, and see flashing blue lights in the distance. Blackout.)

SCENE 8

(Stage lit only by the TV. The sound from the TV runs on in fragments with bits of white noise in between as if changing channels.)

TV

... here at the blast site. Luckily Brian this road was not highly travelled at the time so the ... ah ... damage was contained ... as you can see this massive explosion actually blew the windows out along the avenue and damaged a warehouse structure over here ... you can see the crumbled section of the wall here ... an almost unbelievably powerful blast leaving little to help identify those four bodies ... as of this moment Brian we only have confirmation of the identities of two of the four bodies found inside the bus ... that of Republican Presidential Primary candidate Governor Bob MacNamara and his assistant campaign manager Raymond Dunn. The other two bodies are still being identified at the moment ... Authorities has informed us this may take some time, because the heat from this blast has made traditional identification methods near ... impossible ... no word as to where the Governor was going or who the other two ... Okay ... Senator O'Neill is ready to make a statement ...

(We hear camera clicking sounds then O'Neill's voice.)

TV (O'NEILL)

... condolences to his family and staff. He was a great governor, a worthy opponent, and above all a great man. We sometimes did not agree on everything and frequently fell into the trap of heated public debate, but beyond the cable TV news, beyond the sound bites, we were first and foremost friends and colleagues ... *(static)* ... and officially halt all campaign advertising until the convention ... But we will not stop. I know Bob would want this movement we have started to continue and carry on all the way to the convention and beyond to the White House ...

(Static and the sound of changing channels.)

TV (ORIGINAL VOICE)

... and a sort of plastic explosive authorities are still trying to analyze. We have word just now that prior to this explosion there seems to have been a break-in at the office of a political action committee here at the Hilton downtown and there are some audio surveillance recordings of intruders they think may have been members of ... ahh ... Lashkar-e-Taiba who we know are a group ... ahh... a group on the government's terrorist list but ... really ... until we know more we can't ...

(Lights come up on the empty room with the TV on. Donovan and Rod enter. They are both dressed formally and Rod is walking on crutches. They don't speak. Rod immediately flops down in the chair at the table. Donovan grabs the remote, sits down on the bed in front of the TV and starts changing channels.)

TV (DIFFERENT VOICE)

... has been identified as staff member Robert "Bobby" Brogan, 25-years old who joined MacNamara's staff over a year ago after graduating Stanford University. We are not certain what his particular role was in the campaign but again ... to repeat, authorities have identified one of the two other bodies as Robert Brogan, a young staffer on the MacNamara campaign who ...

ROD

Bobby Brogan?

DONOVAN

(laughing, muting the TV sound)

Bobby!

ROD

(laughing)

Bobby!

DONOVAN

Sure didn't see that one coming. Who would have guessed?

ROD

Bobby. Little Bobby Bunny Brogan.

DONOVAN

How long do you think it took to set this up?

ROD

A long time. Six months? A year, maybe.

DONOVAN

Stroke of genius when you think about it. They must have heard of O'Neill's little vices and...

ROD

... and dangled the bait right in front of him. O'Neill turns it down. No loss, Brogan goes back to the office.

DONOVAN

He bites and MacNamara has a mole.

ROD

What an appropriate rodent metaphor, Mary.

DONOVAN

Thank you John.

ROD

Lying little hustler.

DONOVAN

Wait, here's the acceptance.

(She turns up the TV. We hear the sound of a political convention on TV, applause in the background and the noise of a crowd.)

TV (O'NEILL)

Thank you all very much. Tonight, I have a privilege given few Americans -- the privilege of accepting our party's nomination for President of the United States. And I accept it with gratitude, humility, and confidence. In my life, no success has come without a good fight, and this nomination wasn't any different. That's a tribute to the candidates who opposed me, and their supporters. The greatest of these was my long time friend and colleague Governor Robert MacNamara, whose death at the hands of America's enemies is in all our hearts and minds. He was a leader of great ability, who

loved our country, and wished to lead it to better days. His life and work were an inspiration and the fact so many of his supporters turned to me in those dark days following this brutal attack on American soil and against our political system is an honor I won't forget ...

DONOVAN

Better world, better world ...

TV (O'NEILL)

Today, the prospect of a better world remains within our reach.

DONOVAN

Thank you.

TV (O'NEILL)

But we must see the threats to peace and liberty in our time clearly and face them, as Americans before us did, with confidence, wisdom and resolve.

(Reel enters carrying a large envelope and a gift box of whiskey.)

REEL

Oh, did I miss anything?

DONOVAN

He's at "serious blow."

TV (O'NEILL)

We have dealt a serious blow to al Qaeda in recent years. But they are not defeated, and they'll strike us again if they can. Iran remains the chief state sponsor of terrorism and on the path to acquiring nuclear weapons.

ROD

Lashkar-e-Taiba seems to have missed the Oscars this year.

REEL

Lashkar has got to get a new press agent. That's for sure.

(Donovan mutes the TV and speaks to Reel.)

DONOVAN

So what did you bring me?

REEL

This was downstairs at the desk for you.

(He hands Donovan the envelope and she looks inside.)

And Joyce sends this over. He says it used to be your favorite.

(He opens the box and takes out a nice bottle of scotch. Rod smiles.)

ROD

Lagavulin ... Lagavulin son of a bitch.

REEL

Joyce says it's nice to see you back on your feet, says he wants you back as soon as you can work. How's the leg feel? Should I pour?

(Reel produces two nice glasses from the box. Donovan goes into the bathroom. Reel pours Rod a glass of scotch. Rod looks at it, savors it, and throws it down.)

ROD

Great. Just great. Nice scotch at the end of a job. Just great. You're not having one?

(He pours himself another drink and drinks half.)

REEL

Not yet. I've still got some loose ends to tie up before my day's over. Go ahead. So how does it feel, man?

ROD

How do you want it to feel?

(He finishes the drink and pours another.)

REEL

Point of reflection, looking back, a scotch for meditation. How does it feel?

ROD

Just can't get my head around the Bunny scam.

REEL

That's it? That's all?

(Rod finishes his drink.)

ROD

They recruited him; they sent him here to this hotel; they had background information; they knew things about O'Neill nobody knew. How? How can anybody ...

(He pours himself another drink.)

How can anybody be that ... good at this? Do all that research and still stay so far below the radar ... How?

(He sips at the drink.)

This is really ...

(He finishes the drink. His face freezes up a little and he smacks his lips.)

You forget how great whiskey really is; go for a while without then you taste it and it reminds you how much you like it.

(He has trouble speaking and closing his mouth.)

Bunny had to establish his own definition, had to ... had to fuck all those men just to define his character.

(His mouth droops to one side.)

He didn't know from one day to the next. He wasn't even there anymore. He stopped knowing he was lying a long time ago. He was so far deep in character. We should have known.

(He starts to drool.)

We should have been tipped off ... by the fact it was only written down ... shit ... Who writes anything down anymore? ... Nothing but hard copy? Nothing but a script? The whole interview thing ... a script. What the fuck ...

(He smacks his lips and talks out of the side of his mouth. He reaches for the whiskey bottle but falls short.)

I mean ... No video. We couldn't find any ... video ... no recordings. That should've been a tip off. How real can anything be if there's no video?

(His head falls to one side and he mumbles.)

Lying little hustler.

(The sound of a loud thud comes from the bathroom. Rod stops moving, head to one side, eyes still open. Reel looks at him closely. He wipes down the bottle and puts it and the glass back in the box. He tries to open the bathroom door, but can't. Something is blocking the door. He pushes harder and manages to open it just enough to stick his head inside. He reaches into the bathroom. He pulls out the envelope from earlier and puts it along with the gift box of a bottle of whiskey and glasses into a plastic carrier bag. He turns up the TV and starts to go. As an afterthought, before he leaves, he turns to Rod and closes his eyes with his hand. Reel exits the stage. The lights fade slowly during the following speech and go to black before the finish, so we see the stage lit by the TV until the end of the speech.)

TV (O'NEILL)

I know how the world works. I know the good and the evil in it. I know how to work with leaders who share our dreams of a freer, safer, and more prosperous world, and how to

stand up to those who don't. I know how to secure the peace. I'm going to fight for my cause every day as your President. I'm going to fight to make sure every American has every reason to thank God, as I thank Him: that I'm an American, a proud citizen of the greatest country on earth, and with hard work, strong faith and a little courage, great things are always within our reach. Fight with me. Fight with me. ... Fight for what's right for our country. ... Fight for the ideals and character of a free people. ... Fight for our children's future. ... Fight for justice and opportunity for all ... Stand up to defend our country from its enemies. ... Stand up for each other; for beautiful, blessed, bountiful America. ... Stand up, stand up, stand up and fight. Nothing is inevitable here. We're Americans, and we never give up. We never quit. We never hide from history. We make history. ... Thank you, and God Bless you.

(Final blackout, end scene, end play)

