

Slow Dance

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FADE IN...

EXT. AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT HOUSE -- DAY

A limousine approaches the futuristic Australian parliament building.

SUPER: 20** (current year)

EXT. LIMOUSINE INT -- DAY

BERNADETTE RICE, (BERNIE) the newly elected Australian Prime Minister, sits in back of the limo, absorbed in reading a brief.

DRIVER

Bit of a scrum ahead, ma'am.
Want to use the private entrance?

Bernie looks up and sees he is referring to a large contingent of PRESS, waiting around the doors of the parliament.

BERNIE

No, run the gauntlet.

EXT. PARLIAMENT HOUSE -- DAY

The Press, held back by SECURITY GUARDS, try to swarm toward Bernie as she gets out of her car. Their questions have to do with the potential Australian commitment to Coalition forces against North Korea.

PRESS

Prime Minister, are you going to commit troops to the crisis in Korea? What is your reaction to the US President's statement? How many Australian troops would you be willing to commit at this stage? Etc..

Bernie finally turns before entering the building.

BERNIE

I'm sorry, but there'll be no statements on the Korean crisis until the matter has been fully discussed with our allies. Thank you.

She begins to enter the building.

REPORTER1

Prime Minister, a word please on the unrest
in Western New Guinea!

BERNIE

We're monitoring the situation.

INT. OUTER OFFICER, PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE -- DAY

A SIGN PAINTER is painting a sign near Bernie's door. "Right Hon.
Bernadette Rice."

SYLVIA, The Prime Minister's Aid, is sitting at a desk that is
opposite the Prime Minister's SECRETARY, who is also seated at her
desk. Sylvia is absorbed in a "Time" Magazine that bears a picture
of the American President, Jed Roxborough, and a title reading "The
Axis of Evil Prophecy."

Bernie enters.

BERNIE

Morning.

SECRETARY

Morning, Prime Minister.

SYLVIA

(showing the magazine cover)
Oh, don't you think he's just yummy.

BERNIE

(going straight into her office)
He's a politician and therefore a liar.

She makes eye-contact with the Sign Painter.

BERNIE

A male politician.

She enters her office.

Sign Painter pulls an 'I wouldn't like to tangle with her' face.

EXT. WHITEHOUSE/SIDEWALK -- DAY

Establishing.

EXT. WHITEHOUSE/SIDEWALK -- DAY

Note: The 'cell' phone has advanced to be a camera-watch-phone with separate earpiece and microphone, termed an earwrap. Most people now wear their earwrap much of the time (although it is bad manners to wear it while dining). The earpiece is tailor-made to one's ear canal, and has a small, but elegant microphone which hugs the cheek down to the mouth. Women and young men often have theirs decorated as a fashion accessory. The Secret Service, who previously wore concealed microphones, now wear theirs openly in order to blend with the rest of the populace.)

A middle-aged FEMALE TOURIST wearing an earwrap, is talking, her FAMILY standing before the White House fence.

FEMALE TOURIST

No, no kidding, we're really here. Just hold on a sec.

She turns to her family.

FEMALE TOURIST

Say 'your mumma's too fat'!

The Family assumes a pose, says, 'your mumma's too fat' and smiles. Female Tourist takes their photo with her wristwatch by pointing it at them and pressing a button (a flip out lens allows for framing, similar to the old box camera).

The photo on the face of the wristwatch is being transmitted to the receiver. Female Tourist lowers her arm, revealing her family breaking from the pose.

FEMALE TOURIST

There y'are, how's that for service? (She laughs) See I told you you can still get your photo taken here.

EXT. WHITEHOUSE LAWN -- DAY

Gathered on the lawn is the PRESS along with PRESIDENTIAL STAFF, and the usual lectern set up for speech making. Recorded music

plays briefly as the President, JED ROXBOROUGH (late 40's/early 50's, handsome) the First Lady, MURIEL (30'S, beautiful) and their daughter, PENNY (10, beautiful) appear from within the Whitehouse along with a trailing contingent of STAFF and SECURITY. Jed approaches the lectern. There is an absence of microphones at the lectern. Jed, wearing an earwrap, presses a button marked PA on a panel on the lectern, thereby connecting to a loud speaker.

JED

Ladies and gentlemen, my meetings with our allies at Camp David over the next week will determine if the current crisis on the Korean Peninsula warrants our moving to a war footing. North Korea's declaration of war against South Korea and the potential involvement of Japan and China means that consideration of a preemptive strike by Coalition forces must be considered. A war like this, without control, could quickly escalate to include the use of weapons of mass destruction. Questions?

REPORTER 1

Mr. President, anyone with any sense of history could not help drawing correlations between what you are saying here now and what President Bush said back in 2003. As the intelligence back then was later found to be flawed, and some say, contrived, yet on the strength of that intelligence this country was led into a bloody war, and against United Nations policies...

JED

I do have a flight. Is there a question ahead?

REPORTER 1

Yes, sir, aren't you simply repeating history by insisting there are weapons of mass destruction in a non-democratic country, and that we have to invade it in order to stop their use? Isn't this the same situation as...

JED

No. Although one cannot help observing how prophetic President George W. Bush's naming of the 'Axis of Evil' was, and keep in mind I am giving credit here to a Republican.

There is muted laughter from the crowd.

JED

Folks, war has been declared, not against us so far, but on the table this time is a declaration of war against a peaceful American ally. With the rapid destruction of conventional weapons, this may escalate to include nuclear devises, along with biological weapons which have the potential to create pandemics on a scale hitherto unimagined. Now we can sit here and ignore it, but those biological weapons will come knocking on our door regardless, whether they release them over there or here, makes no difference.

Here's the bottom line. Nowadays millions of people in Iraq no longer live under the hand of a brutal dictator, no dispute, we found the mass graves. Iraq's neighbors no longer live in fear of imminent invasion. Libya quickly opened its doors for weapons inspection. And Iraq has become the first Arab democracy.

REPORTER 1

Yes, but, Mr. President...

JED

No no, let me finish. It was that flawed intelligence you speak of that led us to war, but it was the discovery of those flaws that stopped us going on to further wars, one of which would have likely been North Korea. Now I think I'm right in assuming that most of us here are worldly-wise.

He indicates a pretty, young intern reporter, SARAH ROBINSON, in the first row.

JED

Not counting you.

Sarah smiles bashfully and those around her laugh.

JED

The free world and the terrorist world are now and have been, ever since the Iraq and Afghani wars, locked into a secret but deadly, ongoing war. Now I'm sorry that it has resurfaced into our daily lives with the Korean crisis, but, to not face up to the obvious facts is to neglect my duties as the President of this country and as one of the leaders of the free world.

The Press is in general agreement.

EXT. HELIPAD, WHITEHOUSE LAWN -- DAY

Jed, Muriel, Penny, the President's Press Secretary, KATY HEATH, the Chief of Staff, FRED ROSS, the Director of Communications, BILL HERBERT move quickly across the lawn toward the President's chopper.

Jed turns to Muriel and Penny. He kneels and kisses Penny.

JED

Now you look after the country while I'm away. You're in charge.

PENNY

Bye, Dad. Good luck.

Jed gives her a kiss, stands, and kisses Muriel on the cheek.

JED

So long.

He begins to leave.

MURIEL

Oh, Jed...

He sees she is indicating they should pose as a family for the Press, and so moves in beside her. They are a very handsome family together as they smile for the cameras. Muriel drops her head affectionately back onto his shoulder, and Jed notices. Jed departs the minute that protocol has been observed, and climbs into the chopper, waving from the doorway briefly.

EXT. CHOPPER INT -- DAY

Jed sits down and buckles up. Fred Ross, Chief of Staff, an older man, is beside him.

JED

So who's my wife seeing these days, Fred?

FRED

How do you know she's seeing anyone?

JED

She's affectionate when I leave.

FRED

Well...don't worry, she's discreet.

Jed finds irony in that statement and throws him a derisive glance.

EXT. HELIPAD, WHITEHOUSE LAWN -- DAY

Presidential chopper lifts off.

INT. OUTER-OFFICE, PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Bernie enters from the hall and sees that both Sylvia and her Secretary are missing. She notices Sylvia's copy of the Time Magazine is on her desk and so takes it with her.

INT. AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Bernie reads the Time Magazine at her desk, and looking over her shoulder we can see there are various photographs of Jed Roxborough interspersed throughout the article.

There is a light tap on the door and Sylvia enters. Bernie looks guilty and closes the magazine.

SYLVIA

(voice slowing as she notices magazine)
Oh, just wanted to remind you we have to
be at the airport by five.

BERNIE

Yeah, hadn't forgotten.

SYLVIA

Is that mine?

BERNIE

Yes, sorry, just borrowed it.

SYLVIA

Bet you can't wait to meet him. They reckon
he's even better looking in the flesh.

BERNIE

Well believe it or not, Sylvia, I think it's
what the person says and does that makes them
appealing.

SYLVIA

Oh, well then you won't be needing this anymore.

She collects her magazine, gives Bernie a playful grin, and crosses to the office door.

SYLVIA

But if you're nice to me I'll let you read it
on the plane.

Sylvia exits. Bernie half-grins, but then is reflective for a moment.

SUBLIM: Her husband's suffering face, extracted from a later scene.

Bernie looks around the office, a bit sad, but sighs, pressing back the pain, and finds some paperwork to do.

EXT. AERIAL/CAMP DAVID, HELIPAD -- DAY

President's chopper comes in for a landing at Camp David.

On the ground, MARIANNE PREISLEY (50's), special aid to the President, comes forward ahead of general STAFF. She appears pleased to see Jed, but the burden of great responsibility also weighs heavily upon her.

INT. CAMP DAVID COFFEE LOUNGE -- NIGHT

Jed is dressed casually, standing by a fire, having a scotch. Fred, also with a scotch, is in a chair separate from Marianne. Marianne refers to an open folder resting on her lap.

MARIANNE

Twelve thirty, UK PM, Richard Flannery, arrives, you and the welcoming party to meet. There'll be refreshments in here until two at which time you and Fred make your affairs-of-state excuse and everyone goes off to take a nap. Least that was the plan. Trouble is the Aussie PM, Bernadette Rice, will be arriving at three o'clock, ahead of schedule, which means it'll have to be a short nap.

JED

She likes to be called Bernie, doesn't she?

MARIANNE

Only by her friends. Other people are instantly cannibalized.

JED (amused)

She that feisty?

Marianne shoots him a look suggesting he doesn't know the half of it.

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE, CANBERRA -- DAY

BERNADETTE RICE, the Australian Prime Minister, stands at a lectern and takes questions at a Press Conference, jammed-packed with

REPORTERS. She wears an earwrap. She is in the process of answering a question.

BERNIE

Look I'd be the first to admit that the trade figures for the June quarter are disappointing, but our fiscal planning is solidly on course and I'm assured by Minister for Trade, Mr. Holding, and the Treasurer, Mr. Gleeson, that we're about to turn the corner. I'm cautiously optimistic.

She indicates REPORTER 1 who stands and asks his question, which is boosted to the PA via his earwrap.

REPORTER 1

John Mackleray, 'Brisbane Telegraph', Prime Minister. Just from a human interest perspective, is it true that your husband, Dennis, aside from being compared quite often to Margaret Thatcher's husband, is also, like Dennis Thatcher, a keen train spotter?

There is mild amusement, but Bernie's pending hostile reaction quells it quickly.

BERNIE

You know, I don't know why it is, but whenever this subject pops up, despite the many times the paparazzi have been asked to drop it, I'm reminded of the words of one of the great Labor leaders, ex-Prime Minister, Paul Keating. And he used these words in Federal Parliament when describing the opposition, and he used them directly to the opposition. And I like this list because I feel it sets Australia apart, in that we permit ourselves to use this rather earthy frankness even in our houses of Parliament. Let me see if I can recall them exactly.

As the following list builds, members of the Press cheer Bernie on, while Reporter 1 feels more maligned and uncomfortable.

BERNIE

Stupid foul-mouthed grub, piece of criminal garbage, pig, sleazebag, scumbag, sucker, perfumed gigolo, harlot, boxhead, alley cat, barnyard bully, stunned mullet, pansy, harebrained hillbilly, corporate crook, loopy crim, clown, bunyip, aristocrat, mangy maggot, nong, vermin, dullard, clot, fop, thug, dimwit, gutless spiv, champion liar, fraud, cheat, ninny, dummy, dimwit, muck.

There is final applause from the Press who, with the exception of Reporter 1, rise to their feet. Bernie holds up her hands for silence and gets it.

BERNIE

Of course you are welcome to check Hansard as to my accuracy.

General laughter.

BERNIE

And I point out once again, that questions like yours only remind me of those words.

General laughter.

BACK TO:

MARIANNE

I have heard if she lets you call her Bernie, then you're definitely 'in'.

FRED

Mr. President, you have a height, weight and reach advantage. (shrugs) Call her Bernie.

JED

Yeah, but then she might call me Jeddadiah...publicly.

FRED

Hmmm...Then tell her she's got a fat ass.

MARIANNE

Ohh! I thought you were going to say something witty, like 'we have air superiority'.

FRED

Hey, we were trying to be friendly using nicknames, and she starts with the full names.

MARIANNE

Interesting attempt at shifting focus. Oh, and don't forget her husband died.

JED

Oh, yeah, like I'd forget that.

MARIANNE

Well there was that Turkish diplomat's wife.

FRED

Oh, you had to bring that up. Actually she's right. I'm playing on her side now.

MARIANNE

You might just slip up and say, 'And how's Dennis?'. Happens.

JED

Not with me. (To Fred) Never knew his name.

FRED (chuckling)
(toasting)

To the miracle of ignorance.

Jed toasts him back and they drink.

FRED

So what's the scoop with her?

JED

Dunno. We asked for her position and just got a lot of diplomatic hogwash. So I rang her direct.

FRED

How was she?

JED (evasive)

Pleasant.

INT. PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Bernie sits in the lounge area adjoining her office. She is speaking with a group of high-level PUBLIC SERVANTS. Bernie is dressed differently than as seen before. Sylvia enters.

SYLVIA

Excuse me, Prime Minister, the US President is on the line.

Bernie looks around, a look of repressed but heightened expectation on her face. She looks back at the others.

BERNIE

Okay. We can finish this up first thing tomorrow. Say, 9 a.m.? Thank you all for coming. And John, good submission.

The Public Servant she is referring to, John, nods and grins, pleased. Bernie stands and enters her office.

INT. PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Bernie approaches the phone on the desk and picks up.

BERNIE

Hello.

INTERCUT:

INT. OVAL OFFICE -- DAY

Jed is at his desk, a phone to his ear.

JED

Is that Mrs. Rice?

BERNIE

Yes, you can put me through.

JED

Oh, no, this is, I mean, I'm...

BERNIE

Oh! Sorry, I thought it would be your secretary or aid, Mr. President.

JED

Oh, that's okay.

BERNIE

You're my first President. I mean, you're the first, um, this is the first time I've spoken to a President. I mean a US President. Actually, maybe we could start this conversation again.

JED (chuckling)

No, I think you're doing just fine. I sometimes suffer from podiatric misplacement myself.

There is a small pause where Bernie doesn't get it.

JED

Foot in mouth.

BERNIE

Oh!

JED

So I already feel we have a lot in common.

Bernie smiles.

BERNIE

That's very kind. And I'm so relieved you're a Democrat. I'm not sure how I'd relate to a Republican.

JED

Well I feel the same way, especially since you're a liberal.

BERNIE

Mr. President...I'm Labor.

JED

Oh...No no, I knew that, I did, I just meant that you are a liberal person, you know, at least that's what I'm told.
(sighs) Listen, regarding your earlier suggestion, I think, yes, we should start again.

BERNIE

(smiling)

Well that's good, because...hello?

The line has suddenly gone dead. Bernie looks at the phone in disbelief. She puts it down and stares at it. It suddenly rings, startling her. She picks up.

BERNIE

Hello?

JED (hillbilly) (VO tele FX)

Ah, this here is Jed, is there some gal over there called Bernie?

Bernie suddenly bursts out laughing, amused. She tries to sober a few times without success. Eventually...

BERNIE

I have heard that you have a very relaxed style, Mr. President.

JED

Jed. Please. Jeddariah if you're feeling cruel.

BERNIE

Jed. But there is no Bernie here only a Bernadette, and I run a very tight ship.

JED

Yeah, and I have heard that about you.

BERNIE

And there's definitely no familiarity. We in the Commonwealth of Australia set the highest comportment standards.

JED

But it's me, the Americans.

BERNIE

(amused)

Especially with allies, otherwise we tend to let down our guard and our so-called ally screws us unmercilessly on so-called free trade agreements.

JED

Hey, that was the other guy, the Republican.

BERNIE

Yes, but I see you've done nothing to redress that imbalance.

TIME FADE OUT...

INT. OVAL OFFICE -- DAY

FADE IN TO...

The afternoon sun now streams through the curtains as Jed continues to talk. His chair turned to look out on the glow. He is enjoying the conversation.

INTERCUT:

INT. PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Bernie sits in her office alone, only a desk lamp on. We get the impression a great length of time has passed. She is smiling, taking pleasure in the conversation.

BERNIE

...and with the participatory mechanism in place I honestly believe that the people will take back many of the things that we as free enterprise governments have systematically sold off.

JED

Such as?

BERNIE

Well, telecommunications, public transport, but that's not my point. What I'm getting at is that this is how we can rebalance the impoverishment of vast sectors of our societies. Let the people take it back by themselves.

JED

Well, that's...quite brilliant, but you know that sort of thing could get you killed.

BERNIE

Well of course I'm not going to broadcast my intention to everyone, especially the captains of industry. I just think buying back the farm will be a by-product of the participatory process.

TIME FADE OUT...

INT. OVAL OFFICE -- DUSK

FADE IN TO...

Jed walks around his desk, talking. The President's Secretary, JOAN, enters and indicates her watch. Jed acknowledges her warning and she gives him a reprimanding look before departing.

INTERCUT:

INT. PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Bernie pours herself a coffee, and yawns as she is doing so.

JED

And so my plans were to take these farms, I mean the farmers are walking off the land anyway, and bring in a system where we urbanize sectors with low cost, sub-earth housing, but even so that process will still bring in enough money to purchase adjoining farmland and lock it up in an environmental trust.

BERNIE

Yes. I actually introduced something similar about twelve months back.

JED

You did?

BERNIE

Yes.

JED

Well, how'd it go?

BERNIE

Well so far, perfectly. We've managed to reclaim, rehabilitate, and lock down around three hundred thousand acres, and we've re-housed four thousand low-income families.

JED

Well, why haven't my people told me this? Oh, listen, ah, my secretary just came in and looked daggers at me. Supposed to be in a meeting an hour ago, and I got so wound up with this conversation I actually forgot to mention the reason I called.

BERNIE

Yes?

JED

Well, I had a little speech prepared, you know, on how far back our countries go as allies, and how many tight spots we've been in together...

BERNIE

You want to know my position re North Korea.

JED

Well...

BERNIE

I'm still thinking about it. We're discussing it, debating it. We're actually quite open on the subject.

JED

Well, you know, here's the thing. Past experience shows a keen initial response from close allies usually propels the fence-sitters to jump down on our side. It's generally agreed your quick response last time greatly assisted the formation of the coalition.

BERNIE

Oh? You flatter me, sir. Do you really feel the tiny contribution of a country like mine will sway others?

JED

You know I've never been told to stop the BS so diplomatically before. Now don't take this the wrong way, okay, but, it is in fact that you are a small nation stepping up to the plate that's the persuasive element.

BERNIE

You mean, like the Christians not flinching at the lions being the factor that persuaded the Romans to convert?

JED

Yeah, well, yeah.

BERNIE

I'm bothered by the logic that a periwinkle like us can shame others into a war, yet we can't shame an old fiend into a fair trade deal.

JED (smiling)

You know, you're dangerous, you are seriously dangerous.

Bernie chuckles, but decides to give her 'real' answer.

BERNIE

What troubles me is that your saber rattling sounds more like a fait accompli. I hope you're not already on a war footing, Jed.

JED

(chuckling uncomfortably) God. You sound like my mom. No, not at all, no. I'm very much committed to finding a peaceful solution. That our armed forces are making ready is purely precautionary and I think prudent. But I am also wary of the dangers of vacillation with recalcitrant opponents like this.

BERNIE

Well, I'm not one to vacillate, Jed, although I do prevaricate from time to time.

Jed laughs.

JED

So that's a definite maybe.

BERNIE

We trust and love the American people, Mr. President, and have always tried to remain a true, faithful, and supportive friend.

JED

But sometimes you have to save friends from themselves. Look, I want to assure you...

BERNIE

Only unwise friends, and you are not unwise. Although I do not vacillate, and have been known to prevaricate, I do promise not to procrastinate.

JED

I believe you...Innate.

They both laugh.

JED

Sorry, best I could do on short notice. You got me on my toes here, Ma'am. Well then, good. Listen, we're having a little private party over at Camp David, and your invitation goes without saying.

BERNIE

I'd be delighted of course. I'm looking forward to meeting you in person.

JED

Likewise...Prime Minister.

BERNIE

Mr. President.

They hang up, and both grin at the phone thoughtfully.

EXT. HELIPAD, CAMP DAVID -- DAY

Jed and his entourage stand at a suitable distance from the helipad, and watch the Australian Prime Minister, Bernie, being delivered - courtesy of the Presidential chopper. Jed looks up at the chopper, curious, trying to catch sight of Bernie.

INTERCUT:

EXT. PRESIDENT'S CHOPPER INT - DAY

Bernie sits by the window, looking to see Jed. Their eyes meet and they exchange a grin.

EXT. HELIPAD, CAMP DAVID -- DAY

The door to the chopper opens and Jed cannot help but notice the shapely legs of the Australian Prime Minister as she makes her way down the stairs and across to him.

Slow Mo: She grins, and he grins at her.

Her hand slides into his, and they shake hands and smile.

INT. DINING ROOM, CAMP DAVID -- NIGHT

The British PM, RICHARD FLANNERY, Bernie, Jed and Fred are sitting around a table and dining. Large wine glasses are prominent. Jed is at the end of an amusing story.

JED

So the ship's gone down and there's my uncle Thomas sitting in the life-raft, four days under the blazing sun, no water, and he suddenly hears this familiar voice. And the guy says, "I haven't forgotten about my wheelbarrow, Tom".

The others burst out laughing.

JED

And he looks up and there's his next door neighbor standing alone on the bow of this ship that's going by, and he's thinking, 'well, is he going to tell them he saw me? Is he going to tell them to stop?'

The others laugh.

BERNIE

So obviously he did rescue him, right? Or you couldn't be telling this story.

JED (becoming serious)
 No, no he left him. That's the sad part. Uncle Thomas wrote it all in his diary, and a week later they found the poor old guy. Died of thirst. Often thought that'd be a terrible way to die. Such a nice old man. And all for that stupid wheelbarrow.

BERNIE
 Oh...So what did they play at his funeral?
 (singing) 'Roll out the barrow, we'll have a barrow of fun.'

She laughs. Flannery looks aghast. Jed looks at her in amazement. Fred is frowning in reprimand. Bernie slowly dries, and begins to wish the ground would swallow her up.

BERNIE
 Oh dear...He really did die, didn't he. What's worse, it's roll out the barrel. Oh, dear.

There is an uncomfortable pause. Fred sighs heavily, then gets out his wallet and hands over ten dollars to Jed. They both start laughing.

JED
 Told you she'd buy it!

FRED
 Oh, she nearly had your number!

BERNIE (amused, indignant)
 Oh!...Oh!

FRED
 You got lucky!

FLANNERY (laughing)
 Hey, don't feel bad, they both had me.

BERNIE (to Jed)
 Oh, you bugger! That's it, I am not believing anything else you say from now on!

JED (sobering)
Well, okay, I'm sorry. But see I did come clean and that's the important thing.

BERNIE/FLANNERY
(pointing at Fred)
No, he came clean.

Jed glances at Fred and Fred nods and they both become serious.

JED
Okay, well now that we're coming clean, I guess this would be the appropriate time to talk about why we're really here.

He looks at Bernie, and pauses for effect.

JED
It's actually China we're going to war with.

Bernie is frozen for a long moment, not knowing if he is serious or not, and partially horrified. Fred cannot contain himself and sprays wine, laughing.

JED (reprimanding Fred)
Oh, I had her!

He bursts out laughing and bangs the table.

JED
I had her!

BERNIE
Oh!...God!

Bernie closes her eyes and slaps her forehead, not believing he almost sucker punched her again so soon. They are all laughing very hard. She wipes tears from her eyes with her hand.

BERNIE
Oh dear. And I suppose my mascara's running everywhere.

FLANNERY
Yes, but on you it looks good.

BERNIE

Oh, thank you.

FLANNERY

It's when mine starts running we're in trouble.

They all burst out laughing, having a terrific time.

EXT. PATIO, JED'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Jed and Fred are sitting outside Jed's bedroom on cane chairs. The only illumination from a lamp in Jed's bedroom. They are about to smoke cigars.

From where they are they can see across a courtyard into Bernie's rooms. She is pacing, glasses on, dictating a letter from a notepad she holds. Her SECRETARY, whose face is projected onto a home-theater-sized LED screen, wears an earwrap, as does Bernie.

Fred produces a derringer replica and pulls the trigger, revealing it to be a lighter. He lights Jed's cigar then his own.

JED

What's that, a derringer?

FRED

(handing it to him)

Yeah, my son bought it for me. You keep it. You're the pistol.

JED (handing it back)

Please, I couldn't deprive you of such a...fine gift.

FRED (handing it back)

Yeah, but if I say you admired it and I gave it to you my son will forgive me for not having it.

Jed makes a small sound and gesture accepting it and leaves it on the table beside his cigar case.

FRED

Well, dinner went well.

JED

Yeah, did. You know I'd have those people round just as friends.

FRED

Make life a helluva lot easier and safer if everyone spoke the same language and worshipped the same god.

JED

And knew how to handle alcohol. But let's face it, you and I are rare people...
(leaning closer) There's no one around.
Think we can put the swastikas back on?

FRED

(nodding)

Was hoping you'd ask.

They grin and puff their cigars.

Using a remote control Bernie turns the Secretary 'off', and the screen, though still illuminated blue, is blank. She crosses to the curtains and pulls them shut, at the same time taking off her earwrap.

FRED

She's a truly beautiful woman.

JED

You know, I've never heard you say that.

Fred looks at him.

JED

'Bout a woman's looks.

FRED

Oh, I got different standards to most. I have to see the inner beauty first, link it to true intelligence, then cross reference all that with appearance. Eliminates a lot of candidates.

JED

You see all that in her?

FRED

Don't you?

JED

Well, I don't know. I've been seeing her as a Prime Minister.

FRED

So what do you see yourself as, a President?

Jed looks at him.

FRED

Well you take a dump too don't you, and when you wake up in the morning I bet you got a boner for women just like the rest of us.

JED

No...But keep talking, Earthling, I am strangely drawn to your talk of poo poo and boners.

FRED (chuckling)

(getting up)

So am I, which is why I'm going to bed, before we do something we'll regret.

JED

'Night.

Grinning, he watches Fred go, then finds his eyes drifting round to rest on Bernie's rooms. The lights are still on inside.

INT. FRED'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Jed, wearing a bomber jacket and baseball cap, knocks lightly and enters the dark bedroom. He crosses to the lump in the bed that he thinks is Fred.

JED

Hey, Fred. Fred, you want to come into...

The person in the bed suddenly turns to him, revealing it is Marianne. Jed freezes. Fred is on the other side of the bed.

FRED

Oh, hi, Jed.

JED

(slowly smiling)

Way to go, Fred.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE FRED'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Jed exits the bedroom and pauses. He shakes his head ironically.

JED

Really is lonely at the top.

EXT. COURTYARD -- NIGHT

Jed, still with the bomber jacket and cap, crosses the lawn toward Bernie's rooms.

INTERCUT:

Security cameras track him.

FX: Jed, walking, shown on a green 'nightscope' computer screen. As he walks field parameters scope quickly down onto his face and a facial identity program is running, resulting in a superimposed color image, identifying him, with the word 'Match' as the header.

EXT. VERANDAH - BERNIE'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Jed arrives beside the door. He can hear what sounds like a football game on a TV inside. After a moment's hesitation, he taps lightly. There is a moment of indecision where he wonders if he has knocked loudly enough, or if he should just go back to his room. The sound of the game is suddenly muted, however, and Bernie peeps through the curtains at him. She frowns, then grins, then opens the curtains and the door. In the background behind her there is an Australian Rules game on the LED screen.

BERNIE

Hello, Jed, what's wrong?

JED

Oh, I'm sorry, you're watching a... Gosh, what sort of game's that?

BERNIE

Just the footy. Australian Rules.

They watch as a player attempts a mark, the ball is spilt, everyone scrambles for it, and messy tackling ensues.

JED

Just looks like a brawl.

BERNIE

S'why they call it Australian rules.

JED

Oh...Yeah.

There is a small, awkward silence.

JED

So, you're a big sports fan?

BERNIE

No. I also watch the Rugby League, the Rugby Union, the cricket and the tennis, although I actually enjoy the tennis. See if you're not a sports fan in Australia it can be difficult to govern.

There is another awkward silence.

BERNIE

So what brings you out on this fine evening, sir?

JED

Oh, nothing. I'm just going into McDonalds for a shake. Thought you might like to come.

BERNIE

Um...Did you want to talk to me about something?

JED

No. Um...I usually go for a shake when I'm up here.

BERNIE

Can't they make it for you in the kitchen?

JED

Yeah, but then I don't get my fries and a free toy.

Bernie smiles.

JED

Come on. What do you say?

Bernie finds it odd, but nods. She holds up her finger, ducks inside, and comes back with her jacket. As she steps out beside him...

BERNIE

But aren't we miles from any town here?

JED

(casually circling his finger in the air)
Oh, there's a McDonalds just down the road.

SECRET SERVICE AGENTS 1 & 2, dressed in black suits, materialize out of the shadows around them. Bernie gasps in fright.

JED

The Prime Minister and I are going to McDonalds.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT 1

Yes, sir.

The Agents turn and leave, Agent 1 touching his earwrap mike preparatory to speaking.

INT. SMALL TOWN McDONALDS -- NIGHT

The night staff, consisting of MARY, the frumpy, middle-aged proprietor, and JESSIE, her teenage assistant (with braces and a ripe pimple on her nose) are standing by a vacant counter. The only

customer is a TRUCK DRIVER sitting at a booth, tucking into a Big Mac, fries and coke.

In the carpark outside the wind begins to swirl. This quickly becomes more violent and everyone looks outside. Presently the thumping roar of the President's chopper can be heard.

Everyone's eyes grow wide.

EXT. SMALL TOWN McDONALDS -- NIGHT

The Presidential chopper is descending into the McDonalds carpark.

INTERCUT:

INT. McDONALDS -- NIGHT

Mary turns to Jessie.

MARY

See, I told you he comes here!

She indicates a signed picture of the President on the wall.

EXT. McDONALDS' CARPARK -- NIGHT

The chopper is down, the door opens. Secret Serviceman 1 - 7 exit and form a perimeter as they are shortly followed by Jed, who assists Bernie. They go inside.

INT. McDONALDS -- NIGHT

The Truck Driver is open-mouth staring as Secret Serviceman 1 enters followed by Jed and Bernie. Jed pats the Truck Driver on the shoulder as he goes by.

JED

How you doing?

TRUCKER

Fine. Yourself?

JED

(still walking)

Oh, I'm fine.

INT. McDONALD'S COUNTER -- NIGHT

Mary comes out from behind the counter to shake Jed's hand, but it turns into an embrace.

JED

Mary! Well you're a sight for sore eyes.
How you been doing?

MARY

Oh, I'm fine, I been fine.

JED

And how's Bill, his lumbago still playing
up?

MARY (to Bernie)

No, he always forgets, it's gout.

JED

Oh, Mary, this is the Australian Prime
Minister, Mrs. Rice.

Mary, unsure of what to do, awkwardly shakes hands and curtsies at the same time.

MARY

Oh, it's an honor!

JED

Oh, I should have told you, Mary, they
still behead people who curtsey in
Australia.

MARY

(hand to her mouth)

Oh.

JED

That's right, isn't it, Mrs. Rice?

BERNIE

(nodding)

That and tipping your hat. We see those
things as vestiges of colonial repression.

MARY

(torn between manners and disapproval)
Oh.

JED

(Referring to Jessie)
And who's this lovely young lady?

MARY

Oh, Mr. President, this is my assistant,
Jessie.

JED

(shaking Jessie's hand over the counter)
Well I'm very honored to meet you, Jessie.

JESSIE

(shaking his hand and doing a half-curtsey)
Oh, me too.

JED (to Bernie)

Hey look, it's catching. (to Mary) You
know in Australia you'd both be dead by
now.

Mary frowns admonishingly at Bernie, who can no longer keep a straight face and bursts out laughing. Mary suddenly realizes she's being had and throws a playful punch at Jed's shoulder before going back behind the counter.

MARY

Oh!

JED

What? What?

MARY

Oh, I tell you, that sense of humor of
yours is going to get you in real trouble
one day, Jed Roxborough.

JED

Oh no, you can talk past tense, Mary, it's
always gotten me in trouble.

MARY

So I take it you want your shake and fries?

JED

And my toy.

MARY

(laughing)

And your toy.

JED (explaining to Bernie)

See, McDonalds got to me before I turned seven.

Bernie laughs and as Jed keeps talking her appraisal of him is more than just friendly interest.

JED

And would you like to serve us, Jessie?
'Cause the shakes always taste better if they're made by a pretty gal.

JESSIE (bashful)

Oh.

JED

Now I have strawberry, and Mrs. Rice, what flavor would you like?

BERNIE

Oh, actually strawberry too, please.

JED

Wow, you know I've never met another strawberry person before. Everyone's always vanilla or chocolate. God, it's like we're soulmates.

Bernie, a bit stunned by the term 'soulmates', is interrupted by...

MARY

And do you have fries in your country, Mrs. Rice?

BERNIE
 (smiling)
 Oh, yes...and electricity.

EXT. INT PRESIDENT'S CHOPPER, IN FLIGHT -- NIGHT

Bernie laughs hard, along with Jed. They are eating fries and drinking their shakes.

BERNIE
 Oh, and I just wanted to reach out and squeeze that zit on that girl's nose.

JED
 Oh, no way!

BERNIE
 Yes, I can't stand to see an unsqueezed zit.

JED
 Oh, but that's so gross! No, truly? You know doctors can fix that these days.

BERNIE
 Zits?

JED
 No, the compulsion to squeeze them, especially other people's. You know, when I was a kid me and my brother would pop all our zits and then dad would come out and see all this puss on the bathroom mirror and he'd just about, like, throw up.

They are laughing hard.

JED
 You know, so, we'd get the leftover white rice from the fridge and then we'd chew it all up and then, like, spit it all over the mirror.

He makes out he is doing tiny spits. Bernie lets out a sound of pain as she laughs at the repulsive imagery. Jed can barely speak because he's laughing so hard.

JED

And then we'd hide in the closet and wait for dad to get up in the morning.

They are both belly laughing.

JED

And he'd come out and go, 'Oh! Oh, my God!'

They are clutching their bellies.

Secret Service agents 1 and 2 sit solemnly a few seats away, watching.

STILL'S CAMERA FX: a frozen image of Jed and Bernie laughing together and touching. Holds for a few seconds before sound and action resumes.

EXT. VERANDAH - BERNIE'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Jed escorts Bernie to her door.

BERNIE

Well, I honestly can't remember when I've enjoyed a shake and fries more.

JED

Well I guess anything can be fun with the right company.

BERNIE

Yes.

She opens her door.

JED

Seems a shame we can't go on dating like this.

BERNIE

Yes. I suppose we get down to tin tacks tomorrow.

JED

Yeah. You know, Bernadette (starting to laugh) I've never understood how you can get down to a tin tack.

BERNIE

Please, call me Bernie.

JED

Well, um, thank you. You know, I really like Bernie as a name, on a girl I mean, it's...it's friendly.

BERNIE

Thank you, and I am friendly to those who use that name toward me...Well...

JED

Prime Minister.

BERNIE

Mr. President.

She goes inside. Jed raises his eyebrows to himself.

JED

Bernie.

He raises his eyebrows again, and walks away.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

Around the conference table are Flannery, Bernie, Jed, Fred, the SECRETARY OF STATE, CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS, the Australian and British FOREIGN MINISTERS. Also in attendance are Director of Communications, Bill Herbert, Press Secretary, Katy Heath. A LT. COLONEL is giving a briefing, using audio-visuals.

LT. COLONEL

It was back in 2004, that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, systematically derailed reformist platforms underpinning the democratization of Iran. Our analysts consider that this was the critical pivot catalyzing polarization and resulting in civil war and the emergence of far right theocratic factions, which coalesced into the new order known as 'the Red Robes'. And as these pictures demonstrate...

A slide appears of a jammed central square with some quarter million Middle Eastern men dressed in red robes and waving Kalasnikovs. This is followed by slides of North Korean men dressed and behaving similarly.

LT. COLONEL

...it has become the uniform and identity of a new order of fanaticism, and, for reasons which are still not entirely clear to us, the movement quickly spread to North Korea. One theory has it that this order actually originated in North Korea, and hence the red robes.

BERNIE

Has your intelligence shown any direct links between the Red Robes and al-Qaeda?

LT. COLONEL

Yes, ma'am, they are definitely aligned. In fact intelligence indicates these were, with little doubt, the planners of the London subway bombing, the Empire State bombing and your own Opera House bombing.

He continues the audio-visual.

LT. COLONEL

Aside from North Korea the Red Robes are known to have strong sleeper cells in Pakistan, Syria, and Chechnya. All locations are being monitored for weapons of mass destruction.

FLANNERY

You know, Colonel, I have a strong aversion to that term these days, especially after the flogging we took on it last time. Exactly what weapons do you think they possess?

LT. COLONEL

It was confidential information prior to this meeting, Prime Minister, but we have twice now intercepted dirty bombs in the container wharves of New York harbor. If both bombs had been detonated simultaneously, which we believe was the intent, almost all of downtown New York would have been destroyed and the projected radioactive fallout would account for two million deaths and a further five million casualties.

FLANNERY

(turning to look at Jed)

Well, that's a rather scary tale. Would you mind telling us the reason that has been suppressed?

CHAIRMAN JOINT CHIEFS

Prime Minister, we in the military considered it inadvisable to make that information public.

FLANNERY

Or to share it with allies?

Chairman hesitates.

SECRETARY OF STATE

Sir, the very nature of burning flags, waving rifles, and letting off bombs is inflammatory behavior designed to incite the West to attack. We rise to their bait, we're playing their game.

FLANNERY

Well, with respect, I do need a direct answer from your commander in chief here. Mr. President, are we going to use this sort of information? If not, I am going to have a hell of a time convincing the British public to go off to another bloody war. The general sentiment at home, and I would presuppose it's the same here, is to let all those fundamentalists wipe each other out. You know, we're in the hydrogen-electric age now, we don't need their bloody oil anymore, and if we leave the North Koreans alone they'll eventually starve to death.

JED

Is that how you feel?

FLANNERY

No, of course not, but our parliamentary system means that I have to have the numbers before I can even pretend to countenance military mobilization.

JED

Well, let's watch the rest of the show, first. Colonel.

LT. COLONEL

Sir. If I may, Prime Minister, we are in fact not that worried about attacks from nuclear weapons. Our ground detection and satellite relay systems allow us to detect gammas and neutrons emitted by isotopes of...

FLANNERY

In English.

SECRETARY OF STATE

We can detect a briefcase-sized dirty bomb anywhere we have sensors planted. We tracked those two bombs right across the Pacific. The point of origin in both cases was North Korea. We've been monitoring our allies with equal diligence. Nowadays our biggest threat is considered biological.

He looks back at the Lt. Colonel to continue. A new slide shows three Russian men.

LT. COLONEL

These men, Valenko, Yarvitch, and Zukuro now work and reside in North Korea. They also turn up in Syria from time to time. Their specialty in the former Soviet Bloc was germ warfare, specifically, anthrax, smallpox and typhoid retro-viruses. It is believed that a beaker full of concentrated bio-infectives, if emptied into something like Boulder dam, would result in some thirty million deaths within a forty-eight hour period. It would progress through the food-chain and cause pandemics the likes of which have never been seen, and as these viruses are genetically modified to self-disguise each generation, the residual effect could stretch across centuries.

He nods to the President.

PRESIDENT

Thank you, Colonel.

BERNIE

Surely those diseases would spread rapidly around the world and eventually come back to Iran?

CHAIRMAN JOINT CHIEFS

Oh, yes. See, if you're going to make an effective biological weapon you first invent the antidote, and you give it to your own people before you let all the nasties loose. We haven't detected any mass inoculations so far.

FLANNERY

So why couldn't they release the disease then inoculate?

SECRETARY OF STATE

This stuff is so lethal and the movement of modern populaces so rapid that it would be back on their doorstep within seventy-two hours. If they inoculate en masse they know that we know. And as we would still possess nuclear first strike capability, they know we would retaliate with full force.

BERNIE

So how do you fight something like this?

JED

Oh, fanaticism's hard. It's a bit like knowing someone is drunk and that they can turn real nasty if you don't handle 'em right. So what we want to do is keep 'em calm, get 'em to bed, put 'em to sleep, and then give them a damned good talking to in the morning.

BERNIE

And when you get them in the bedroom, presumably the most difficult task is to seduce them into going to sleep. So what is the most effective way of getting a drunk to sleep?

Jed is momentarily perplexed, wondering if she is meaning what it sounds like she's meaning.

BERNIE

I'm not being flippant, Mr. President. In fact I think your analogy of a volatile drunkard is perfect. So what I am saying is, within your analogy lies your true means for overcoming this threat. It's just less direct.

Jed is spellbound for a long moment.

JED

That's...very insightful...very...

He is completely taken with her insight, although the others in the room are perplexed.

FLANNERY

I'm obviously missing something here.

JED

We both are. And you know...it's because we're men.

Jed looks back at Bernie, who understands perfectly. Flannery looks at the Chairman of Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of State, and they exchange looks of confusion. Jed is staring thoughtfully at Bernie.

FLANNERY

Well, I imagine, by what is not being said here, that you have therefore already considered and computed a nuclear strike against a country not possessing verifiable nuclear weapons.

Jed finally looks at Flannery

JED

North Korea is the only country with the ability to manufacture plutonium. So, yes, that option is already and unavoidably on the table.

INT. BERNIE'S ROOMS -- NIGHT

Bernie is pacing, notepad in hand, and dictating a letter to her

Secretary, who is projected onto the big LED screen. Both wear an earwrap cell phone.

BERNIE

...and that the Prime Minister's office strongly disapproves of the Opposition's unconscionable scare-mongering tactics, being used on a populace already overburdened with anxiety. Alright, Jen?

SECRETARY

Yes, ma'am.

BERNIE

(Checking Australian EST on the LED)
Looks like you've missed the stop press so see if we can't get a few sound bytes on the morning news. Get Phillips to do it.

Bernie has wandered to the verandah door and notices a light from a cigar being smoked on the verandah in front of Jed's room.

SECRETARY

Okay...Will that be all, ma'am?

BERNIE

(distracted)

Oh, yes, thank you.

She turns the screen off with the remote control and looks back through the glass. She takes off her earwrap.

EXT. COURTYARD -- NIGHT

Bernie, wearing a sweater, crosses the lawn toward Jed's rooms.

INTERCUT:

Security cameras track her.

FX: Bernie, walking, shown on a green 'nightscope' computer screen. As she walks field parameters scope quickly down onto her face and a facial identity program is running, resulting in an adjoining, superimposed color image, identifying her, with the word 'Match' as the header.

EXT. VERANDAH - JED'S ROOMS -- NIGHT

Jed sits, having a cigar with Fred, as before.

JED

So when are you going to hit me with another simulation, Fred?

FRED

Well there's not much point in a simulation if you know it's coming, is there? But you'll like this next one.

BERNIE

Good evening, gentleman.

Both men, stand, surprised.

JED/FRED

Good evening/Evening.

BERNIE

I saw your light from across the way.

JED

Well we're honored of course.

BERNIE

Am I interrupting?

FRED

(leaving)

No, not at all. Here, take my chair, I was looking for an excuse to get away. This guy can bore the hell out of you with his fishing stories.

JED

Only because he's never caught anything as big.

FRED

(still going)

Or fictitious. Tell her the one you told me. Heard about the one armed fisherman? (He holds out one hand) Caught one this big.

Bernie laughs.

FRED

Night.

BERNIE

Goodnight...I didn't chase him away, did I?

JED

No, course not. Please, sit.

They sit.

JED

Everything okay?

BERNIE

Well, no, actually. I've been tossing it around in my head all afternoon. What we can do to tackle this problem.

JED

Well, I'm pleased it's 'we'.

BERNIE

But it's me, the Australians.

Jed nods, and grins, attracted to her.

BERNIE

I guess this isn't the sort of dilemma you wanted in your presidency.

JED

Well, you know what really bothers me, Bernie...I think a Republican President would handle it better.

BERNIE

Why?

JED

Those guys always see things in black and white.

BERNIE

I do know what you mean.

JED

You know who I think was the greatest President of all time? Honestly?...Ronald Reagan.

BERNIE (disapproving)

Really?

JED

Well, not greatest, most effective. I swear that guy was so dumb he actually scared the Soviet Union into collapse. No, really. And until this afternoon, that's what I thought was needed in this situation. You know, that sorta bible in one hand, ICBM in the other, kinda guy. Reasonable people just don't cut it in these situations.

BERNIE

(nodding)

I keep thinking about all the families in North Korea who aren't part of this, and all the families who'll suffer here if boys come home in body bags again.

They both sigh.

JED

Want a cigar?

BERNIE

Only if there's no car exhaust available.

JED

Oh, that's over-rated, burns your lips anyhow. Ever tried a cigar?

BERNIE

Well, no, my experiments as a schoolgirl stopped with cigarettes.

JED

Yeah, that's where I learnt, behind the girl's toilets.

BERNIE

Really?

JED

Yeah. Learnt to smoke there too.

Bernie laughs. He holds out his cigar to her.

BERNIE

But it's got your golly all over it.

JED

Is golly the same as spit?

BERNIE

Yes, and we're very particular who we swap golly with at home, unless of course you're male and drunk, in which case even Labradors aren't safe.

JED

Particularly Labradors.

They laugh. Jed hands her a new cigar. He holds the derringer lighter out in front of her.

BERNIE

(slightly startled)

Oh.

Jed pulls the trigger, lighting her cigar. Bernie realizes...

BERNIE

Oh. How terribly masculine.

She puts the cigar in her mouth and puffs. She starts coughing and groaning with disgust.

JED

You know you're not supposed to inhale a cigar.

BERNIE

(coughing)

Now's not a good time to tell me.

She coughs harder and Jed leans across and rubs her back.

STILLS CAMERA FX: a single snapshot is taken of their apparently intimate position.

Action continues with Bernie sitting up, now recovered. Jed takes the cigar back off her and pinches off the glowing ember.

JED

You know I don't know what I'm going to do without you, Bernie, you are by far the most amusing woman I ever met.

BERNIE

(gasping)

Well I'll break a leg next time, really keep you happy.

JED

Now, see, that's what I mean. You're a born raconteur.

BERNIE

Worthy of a President.

JED

Worthy of a President.

BERNIE

Doesn't Mrs. Roxborough keep you amused.

JED

Ah, Mrs. Roxborough. I'm afraid my wife is from an old family. You know, old money, people used to living at a high standard of luxury, influence, and hypocrisy.

BERNIE

Sorry?

JED

Well I trust you can keep a secret, Bernie, but my marriage has become a... I'm afraid the greatest trust I have in my wife these days is in her discretion.

BERNIE

You don't seem...It's none of my business but you don't seem the type of man that would marry...

JED

Oh, didn't start that way. I did love her, truly did, but somewhere along the political highway we took different paths. We have separate bedrooms now. Only get together on official occasions. She's good at her role, though, I give her that.

BERNIE

Why are you telling me this?

JED (surprised himself)

I shouldn't, should I...I don't know. Just...you seem like a friend as much as a colleague.

Bernie looks at him long and hard. She stands.

BERNIE

Well...I'd better say goodnight.

Jed stands and crosses to her. For a moment Bernie thinks he might try to kiss her, which she really does not want him to do. Instead, he takes her hand and places the derringer lighter in it.

JED

I hope you'll accept this as a memento of
the time we smoked cigars together.

He grins. Bernie realizes Jed could be leading toward flirtation,
and steps back.

BERNIE

There's too much at stake for us to be
talking like this.

Jed is a little surprised.

JED

Oh, I'm sorry. Guess I shouldn't have
talked about my personal life.

BERNIE

(searching his eyes)
It's not that, it's...

She turns and leaves suddenly.

Jed watches her go, sorry and a bit confused about the way things
went.

INT. BERNIE'S BEDROOM, CAMP DAVID - NIGHT

Bernie is lying on the bed in the dark, and looking at the
derringer thoughtfully. She remembers...

INT. A HOUSE, AUSTRALIA -- NIGHT

Inside the kitchen-dining room area. The lights are out. A sliding
glass door with a light curtain is half-open. OS a car door closes
and a woman's footsteps in heels can be heard approaching. Bernie's
silhouette passes the curtains. She carries a briefcase and has an
armful of folders. She appears at the open doorway and looks in,
surprised. She freezes, seeing something on the floor.

Her husband, DENNIS, kneels naked on the floor, within a puddle of
urine.

Bernie gasps and hurries in, dropping the folders and briefcase.
She kneels beside him.

BERNIE

Dennis, what's wrong? What is it?

DENNIS

I'm sorry...I'm a little drunk.

BERNIE

Sweetheart, what is it? Tell me what's wrong.

DENNIS

You know...the irony, that I am a doctor, and yet failed to diagnose myself, has not passed me by.

He laughs without humor. Bernie gasps and stares at him in horror.

INT. COFFEE LOUNGE, CAMP DAVID -- DAY

Bernie enters. Aside from the many other people in the room having coffee, Bernie looks for and locates Jed. He is having a coffee and talking to Flannery. She stops, feeling uncomfortable about approaching, but Jed turns and sees her, smiles, and signals her over. She crosses somewhat shyly to them.

INT. COFFEE LOUNGE, CAMP DAVID -- NIGHT

Bernie arrives beside Jed and Flannery.

FLANNERY

Oh, good morning.

JED

Morning.

BERNIE

Morning.

JED

Can I get you a coffee?

BERNIE

No, I'm fine, thanks.

FLANNERY

So what's this I hear about you taking an early leave?

JED

Oh?

BERNIE

Oh, yes, there's rumbles in the jungle, next door, again. At home.

FLANNERY

Indonesia?

BERNIE

No. Well, yes, the West Papua uprising has escalated into full civil war it seems.

JED

Oh. So, when you headed out?

BERNIE

Well I did want to talk to you about that.

FLANNERY'S AID

Excuse me, Prime Minister.

An AID to Flannery takes him slightly aside and speaks to him confidentially. The Aid departs and Flannery looks back at them.

FLANNERY

Excuse me just a second would you.

He departs.

JED

Sure.

Jed glances at Bernie, and an uncomfortable silence ensues. Finally, they begin to speak at the same time.

JED/BERNIE

You know I...Oh/You know about my...Oh.

BERNIE

No, you.

JED

Oh, okay, um, about last night...

BERNIE

I was hoping we wouldn't talk about that.

JED

Oh. Ah, okay.

BERNIE

'Cause if we did then I'd want to say something too.

JED

Well then maybe we shouldn't...

BERNIE

You know you're a very smooth operator.

JED

Well, I...

BERNIE

And I am quite vulnerable.

JED

Well, I, I suppose you would...

BERNIE

And it did occur to me that you may be playing on that vulnerability in order to advance your cause.

JED

Well, yeah, after you went home I thought you might think that but...

BERNIE

But I don't believe that now.

JED

No?

BERNIE

No, I thought about it. And I also thought about you.

JED

And?

BERNIE

I don't fool myself for a second what men are like. But in a way I find that comforting, because there is one thing that can be counted on and that is male predictability. And I like predictability.

Jed looks at her for a long moment.

JED

Are we talking about what I think we're talking about?

Bernie nods.

BERNIE

And that's what does cause me discomfort, when I meet a man who is an exception. You're genuine, aren't you.

Jed stares at her for a long moment. He finds it necessary to tell her...

JED

You know, I do sometimes...

BERNIE

Have a hooker?

Jed stares at her for a long moment.

JED

Jesus, you are scary.

BERNIE

It's not easy being super-human, is it. Since Dennis' death I've almost picked up the phone myself, several times. Being completely alone, never being touched, being touched gently, I mean...intimately.

JED (aroused)

You know, I'm, I am getting...

FLANNERY (jolly)

Well, what'd I miss?

JED

Oh!...Ah, we were discussing, um...the next, the next manned probe...you know.

He is looking for Bernie to help him out.

BERNIE

Yes...and the, ah...the chances of an Australian being along on the mission. A female.

Flannery looks at them, wondering why they are talking so strangely.

FLANNERY

You know I think it's fair to say you two share a totally different wavelength to me.

Jed and Bernie stare awkwardly about.

INT. HALLWAY TO BERNIE'S ROOMS - CAMP DAVID -- DAY

Jed saunters down the hall, alone. He is not too sure if he is doing the right thing, but eventually gets around to knocking on Bernie's door. He is surprised when Bernie's personal assistant, Sylvia, opens the door.

SYLVIA

Oh, Mr. President.

JED

Hi, um...

SYLVIA

Did you want to see Mrs. Rice?

JED

Is she in?

SYLVIA

We're just packing. (offering entry)
Please.

JED

Oh, no, look, I'll see her at...

Bernie appears behind Sylvia.

BERNIE

Oh, Mr. President.

JED

Oh, hi, um, I didn't realize you were, you
know, packing.

BERNIE

No, please, come in.

JED

Oh, okay.

Jed enters.

INT. BERNIE'S ROOMS -- DAY

Jed enters. There is an awkward moment.

BERNIE

Oh, ah, Sylvia, could you leave us alone
for a minute.

SYLVIA

Oh, okay. I'll just go pack in the
bedroom.

BERNIE

No, alone, alone.

SYLVIA

Oh. I'll...why don't I...I'm just going to
... Down the hall. Outside.

Bernie nods and Sylvia exits awkwardly.

EXT. HALL -- DAY

Sylvia exits the room and grins while her eyes flare at the prospect of what she thinks is going on.

BACK TO:

Bernie locks the hall door.

BERNIE

Please excuse her, Mr. President, she's my
sister's child and they dropped her on her
head at birth.

Jed chuckles and comes close. As he speaks he touches Bernie's face.

JED

That's a sharp tongue you have there.

BERNIE

(shakes her head)

It's soft and wet.

Jed kisses her gently.

JED

You're right.

He kisses her more fully.

EXT. BERNIE'S ROOMS -- DAY

Through a small gap in the curtains, Jed can be seen kissing Bernie.

STILLS CAMERA FX: Jed kissing Bernie.

INT. OVAL OFFICE -- DAY

Jed paces, dictating a letter to his secretary, Joan, who is taking it down in shorthand.

JED

...and the acquisition of environmental trusts through these means. I wish to also commission a study of a similar scheme already underway in Australia and apply the positive aspects of that scheme to our own. Permission has already been granted from the Australian government for this study to commence.

There is a knock at the door, and Jed turns. Katy Heath, the President's Press Secretary, pokes her head in.

KATY

Sir, I need to speak with you. (showing a newspaper) It's, ah, urgent.

JED (to Joan)

(beckoning Katy in)

We'll pick it up later.

Joan exits, shutting the door. Katy crosses to Jed and shows him the front headlines of the Washington Post "INBEDDED ALLIES". There is a picture of Jed with his hand on Bernie's back (when she was coughing) and a picture of him kissing her in her room. Jed looks at the paper grimly. He presses his intercom button.

JED

Joan, get Fred and Bill in here. Hold my calls. And if it's a decent hour down-under I want you to get Mrs. Rice on the phone.

Close on the newspaper again.

INT. OVAL OFFICE -- DAY

The newspaper is being held in Bill's hands and Katy, Fred and Bill (director of communications) are seated on sofas. Jed paces.

BILL

Oo-ee, this one here we could get away with, but this one...I don't think they'll buy resuscitation.

JED

You tell me how someone in the press could get these shots. It's impossible.

FRED

No, in fact it's quite easy. The person was there, very close.

Everyone looks at him.

FRED

All Secret Service have been issued with camera-watch-phones, same as Joe public.

JED

My guys? They wouldn't...

BILL

No, he's right, with the security we have up there no one could get within twenty miles of the place.

JED

And why have they been issued with camera-watch-phones?

FRED

Cameras are considered vital for crowd watching and also procedural review. Anyhow, it allows our agents to wear earwraps and look like everyone else. They blend in.

JED

I want every agent lie-detected. You find the culprit and lay charges. And I want the charge to include confiscation of payments received from this.

FRED
(leaving)

I'm on it.

KATY
Mr. President. This is your decision, but everyone knows these days that photos do lie. Christ, the last Gulf war they had photos on the net within hours of Saddam and George W having sex. No one thought it was real.

JED
Three things wrong with that. Everyone knew those photos were impossible, and in this case we're up against the 'Post' not some hacker. These photos would already be authenticated. You're the Press Secretary, you tell me, in a shoot-out, who will the people believe, the office of the President, or 'The Washington Post'?

Katy's expression concedes they would lose.

BILL
So what's the third reason?

JED
I know they're real, and I won't lie.

The intercom buzzes.

JED
Yes?

JOAN
Sir, I'm informed the Australian Prime Minister is in Holland. But she is also planning to visit Washington sometime this week.

JED
You're kidding?

JOAN
No, sir.

BILL

Oh, yeah, that was on the wire a half-hour ago. We're still processing it.

JED

So why's she coming here?

BILL

She wants to get your position on West Papua. There's massive US mining interests there, which means we are effectively on the side of the Indonesians. Only trouble is the Indonesians are doing their usual genocidal thing, and you remember it was the Australians who came out against them in East Timor. We asked them to.

JED

Well that's a great Catch 22. So why's she in Holland?

BILL

Indonesia was formerly the Dutch East Indies. So they volunteered to negotiate.

Jed is thoughtful.

KATY

Sir, I really would recommend you turn down her request...Her coming here would be seriously bad timing.

JED

So when would the right time be?

Katy can't answer.

JED

No, let's not run scared. I'm in my second term. Not a lot they can do to me. And we need allies more than popularity points.

KATY

Sir, just please don't say 'I didn't have sex with that woman'.

JED

I didn't.

KATY

Well, okay, but please, just don't say those words.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE OVAL OFFICE -- NIGHT

Katy and Bill walk away from the oval office.

KATY

Mrs. Roxborough is not going to take this very well.

BILL

Gee, do you think?

INT. JED'S BEDROOM, WHITE HOUSE -- NIGHT

In the dark, Jed takes off his tie and sits on the bed, dejected. His wife, Muriel, enters from a lit room and stops just inside the door. Arms folded, she leans against the wall.

MURIEL

Not coming round tonight? Penny was asking for you.

JED

Cut it out.

MURIEL

Did it occur to you, Jed, that when you were kissing that woman you were surrounded by an army of men, all with cameras?

JED

Actually, no. Unlike you, I didn't think to pull the curtain. Then again, it wasn't just some member of staff I was kissing.

MURIEL

Have I ever let you down? Have I?

JED

No...You've been...the 'model' wife.

Disgusted with him, Muriel leaves. Jed hangs his head.

INT. BREAKFAST ROOM, WHITEHOUSE -- DAY

Jed is having breakfast. A WAITER appears with the morning paper.

JED

No thanks. Not this morning.

The Waiter nods and takes it away.

Penny comes to the door and watches her father. Jed notices her.

JED

(holding out his hand to her)
Hello, baby, how long have you been there?

Penny crosses to him and he hugs her.

PENNY

Don't call me baby.

JED

Oh, you'll always be my baby, even when
you're old and have wrinkles like me.

PENNY

You'll be dead then.

JED

No, I'll just be wrinklier.

PENNY

Daddy, who was that lady you were kissing?

JED

That was the Australian Prime Minister,
sweetheart. Her name is Mrs. Rice.

PENNY

Do you love her?

JED

You don't have to love someone just to kiss them.

PENNY

That's not what I asked.

JED

Penny, sometimes even grown ups don't know what they're feeling. Sometimes you get so confused about things because you're lonely, or the job you're doing gets too hard.

PENNY

But you're the President.

JED

You know.....I am.

He hugs her, a new determination on his face.

INT. OUTER OFFICE, WHITEHOUSE -- DAY

Jed is strides down the hall, greeting people and looking pleased with himself. He goes past Joan's desk.

JED

Morning, Joan.

JOAN

Good morning, Mr. President.

JED

Get me a cub reporter from the Washington Post on the line, would you.

JOAN

Ah, which reporter?

JED

Any one.

He pauses by the door to the Oval Office.

JED

No. You know that cute little number that always sits up front at question time?

JOAN

Oh, yes.

JED

Find out who she is. Get her.

JOAN

Oh, sir, the Australian Prime Minister has been trying to reach you. She's in flight, en route from Holland.

JED

Well why didn't you tell me?

JOAN

You were having breakfast.

JED

From now on, if Mrs. Rice wants to talk to me, no matter where or when, let me know.

JOAN

Yes, sir.

Jed grins and enters his office. Joan begins to do her task, but also grins, pleased for him.

INT. OVAL OFFICE -- DAY

Jed stands near his desk, reading a letter. The intercom buzzes.

JOAN (VO)

I have Mrs. Rice on one and Sarah Robertson, that intern at the 'Post', on two. Which do you want first?

JED

Is it a video link to Mrs. Rice?

JOAN (VO)

Yes.

JED

Fine, put Mrs. Rice through but keep Sarah on hold.

JOAN (VO)

Yes, sir, coming through now.

Jed puts on an earwrap and looks up at a large LED screen. An interrupted transmission of Bernie comes through on the screen, but quickly clears. She sits in an airline seat, and a faint hushing sound tells us she is in flight. She also wears an earwrap.

JED

Prime Minister.

BERNIE

Mr. President.

JED

You alone?

BERNIE

(nodding)

You?

Jed nods. They grin at each other lovingly for a long moment.

JED

Where are you?

Bernie looks up at a flight map OS.

BERNIE

Half-way across the Atlantic. I have been requesting a meeting with you since yesterday, but due to recent events I'll understand your turning me down. In fact my timing really couldn't be worse, could it?

JED

So then why you headed this way?

BERNIE

Well, they tell me yours is the safest way home. See the North Koreans do actually have missiles, and are sympathetic toward Indonesia on principle.

JED

Come on, why really?

BERNIE

Oh, alright...Yours is the cheapest kerosene.

Jed chuckles.

JED

My daughter asked me if I loved you this morning.

BERNIE

Oh, I'm sorry.

JED

No, it's okay. In fact I'm just ringing the Washington Post right now to make a statement. I'd like you to hear it.

He presses the intercom.

JED

Joan, put...Sarah was it...?

JOAN (VO)

Yes.

JED

Put Sarah through, but leave Mrs. Rice's channel open, I want her to hear.

JOAN (VO)

Yes. Go ahead.

INTERCUT:

INT. WASHINGTON POST, REPORTER'S ROOM -- DAY

Sarah Robertson sits tensely at her desk, an earwrap on.

JED

Hello, Sarah, this is President
Roxborough.

SARAH

Oh, this is a great honor, Mr. President.

JED

Oh, you're welcome, Sarah. I wanted to
make a statement regarding the publication
of photographs by your newspaper,
depicting myself and the Australian Prime
Minister, Mrs. Rice, kissing. So you might
like to record this.

SARAH

Oh, I already am, sir.

JED

Well, you're supposed to tell me that,
Sarah.

SARAH

Oh, sorry, sir.

JED

That's okay. The statement I'd like to
make is this. I did not have sex with that
woman...but I sure as hell wanted to.

Sarah gasps, and her jaw drops wide open.

JED

Nice talking to you, Sarah.

Sarah takes off her earwrap, and slumps back, still speechless.

Bernie is laughing hard, her hand to her face, and shaking her
head. She finally looks up.

BERNIE

That's going to create a bit of a problem for me at home.

JED

I should think they'd be flattered.

BERNIE

Oh we have such an inferiority complex we're bound to be. But you see, we've already issued a statement saying those photos were frauds and digitally altered.

The color drains from Jed's face.

JED

You're kidding.

BERNIE

Uh huh.

She points the derringer he gave her at him and pretends to shoot.

BERNIE

See you in a few hours...lover.

The transmission ends.

Jed chuckles and it develops into a full laugh. He slaps his heart where the 'bullet' got him.

INT. OVAL OFFICE -- DAY

Jed works at his desk, when Katy comes in without knocking. She is flabbergasted.

KATY

Mr. President...I...I can't...I...

JED

Katy, listen. If I can get this obsession with terrorism off the front pages and replace it with a nice healthy sex scandal, then I am happy to do it. Plus it's the truth, so now we don't have to lie.

Katy is speechless, shaking her head.

KATY
They've bombed...
 Disneyland.

JED
 What?

KATY
 (nodding)
 A bomb.

Jed stares at her in silence, realizing something terrible has happened. His office is suddenly filled with Secret Service Agents, Whitehouse Staff, including Fred, Bill and Joan. There is pandemonium. Jed is ushered away quickly by the Secret Service.

EXT. PRESIDENTIAL MOTORCADE -- DAY

The motorcade is approaching the airfield and Airforce One at speed.

EXT. PRESIDENTIAL MOTORCADE, LIMO INT -- DAY

Fred, Bill, and Katy are in the limousine with Jed. They are all wearing earwraps except Jed.

JED
 We have casualty numbers yet?

FRED
 Coming in now, but they're vague.
 Definitely a hundred thousand or more.
 This only happened thirty minutes ago.

JED
 What was the size of the blast?

BILL
 Blast zone has a one-mile radius. Early indications are it was a small nuclear device, a dirty bomb.

JED

You mean right now there is a two-mile wide hole in the middle of Hollywood?

Fred nods solemnly.

Jed's face is set grimly.

EXT. PRESIDENTIAL MOTORCADE, LIMO INT -- DAY

Jed looks out the window and sees a jet with Australian markings.

JED

Is that the Australian Prime Minister's jet?

BILL

Yes, sir, I believe so.

JED

Contact her immediately, apprise her of the situation, ask her to join us.

BILL

Yes, sir.

Fred stares at him, indicating it is not a wise course under the circumstances.

JED

She's got a good head.

Fred is not happy with the situation.

INT. AIRFORCE ONE, ON GROUND -- DAY

The sound of jet engines winding up is growing to a roar as Bernie, Sylvia, and the Australian Prime Ministerial entourage of various SECRETARIES and BODYGUARDS are entering the plane. As Bernie is being shown to her seat by a FLIGHT ATTENDANT at the rear of the plane she looks forward and can see Jed standing, and talking to the Chairman Joint Chiefs, and Secretary of State.

ATTENDANT

Take your coat, ma'am?

BERNIE (distracted)
Oh, yes, thank you.

EXT. AIRFORCE ONE IN FLIGHT -- DAY

Establishing. Without making a point of it, Airforce One has black flat screen 'simulator' video screens covering its windows.

INT. AIRFORCE ONE, IN FLIGHT, AUSTRALIAN SECTION -- DAY

Some hours have passed. Everyone in the Australian contingent are asleep or reading. Bernie stares out the window at a beautiful cluster of clouds below, a stunning sunburst through higher clouds bathing them in gold. She is taken with the beauty she sees.

A man's shirt intrudes into frame.

JED (OS)
Would you like to come forward?

Bernie looks around. It is Jed looking at her. She smiles.

JED
What were you thinking?

BERNIE
How it's such a beautiful world, and yet we're never happy with it the way it is.

JED
(extending his hand)
Sorry I had to neglect you so long.

Bernie takes his hand and he helps her up. They go forward.

Sylvia leans into the aisle and watches them go.

INT. AIRFORCE ONE, IN FLIGHT, PRESIDENT'S SECTION -- DAY

Bernie is seated in a section with Jed, Bill, Chairman Joint Chiefs, Secretary of State, and Fred.

As conversation proceeds Bernie looks at a flight map on the wall. Their plane is not far from Los Angeles. Everyone wears earwraps except Jed and Bernie.

JED

What's the situation ahead? Can they give us landing clearance yet?

BILL

No, sir, doesn't appear so. LA X is closed, all flights diverted to 'Frisco. There's a national shutdown in progress.

CHAIRMAN JOINT CHIEFS

We have an airforce base reserved 'bout twenty miles out of LA, Mr. President. We can go in there but the roads are so choked with people evacuating that it would be difficult to maintain secure passage.

JED

I think it's important I get on the ground.

SECRETARY OF STATE

With respect, sir, I don't think it's a good time for that sort of promotion.

JED

Don't insult me. I'm talking about reassuring the people.

SECRETARY OF STATE

Of course.

CHAIRMAN JOINT CHIEFS

Intel reports the blast zone is 'hot', sir, so there is radioactive fallout, but at this stage it is considered low grade.

FRED

I don't like any of this. How do we know there aren't more of these dirty bombs planted elsewhere in the city? I mean look at it, it's a sucker punch. They can't get to you in Washington so they draw you out here.

SECRETARY OF STATE

I agree, Mr. President.

JED

I don't give a damn. Those are Americans in need down there and I am their President. You find an airstrip and set me down.

BERNIE

May I make a suggestion?

JED

Sure.

BERNIE

Most homes have home theatres and most cars have video screens. You hook a relay to a local TV station and speak directly to the people from here. They'll see and hear you in the air and they'll know you're with them.

JED (to Fred)

Told you she had a good head. Alright, let's do it.

EXT. AIRFORCE ONE -- DAY

FX: Airforce One in flight. Four sophisticated Fighter Jets appear and take up positions around the big plane. The video 'simulators' on the windows of Airforce One are now clearly shown.

AIRFORCE PILOT (OS radio FX)

Escorts now in place.

INT. FLIGHT DECK, AIRFORCE ONE - DAY

The aircraft CAPTAIN touches his earwrap as he speaks.

CAPTAIN

Sir, you said to advise you when we are about to begin descent.

INT. AIRFORCE ONE, SMALL STUDIO -- DAY

Fred listens to his earwrap.

FRED

Yes, thank you, captain.

Fred looks around and establishes Jed is being prepped to make the broadcast. Seeing himself unobserved, Fred moves down the passageway.

EXT. AIRFORCE ONE -- DAY

Airforce One comes down through clouds and approaches the still distant city of LA.

INT. AIRFORCE ONE, COMMAND CENTER -- DAY

Fred stands next to Airforce COMMUNICATION OFFICERS working at a sophisticated command panel. They are watching a screen showing the view outside the craft i.e. the outskirts of LA below. On another screen there is a similar view being shown, but not identical.

FRED

Okay, stand by.

INTERCUT:

INT. AIRFORCE ONE, AUSTRALIAN SECTION -- DAY

Sylvia, Bernie's Aid, looks idly out the window.

Back in the control room:

FRED

...Now.

At Sylvia's window the view changes suddenly, but only slightly, as the new image is shown. Sylvia blinks as if her eyes are playing tricks on her, but then thinks nothing of it and continues watching.

EXT. AIRFORCE ONE -- DAY

The undercarriage is dropped and airbrakes elevate on the wings.

FX: Fighter planes swing their wings forward (or assume slow flight positions).

INT. AIRFORCE ONE, IN FLIGHT, ALL SECTIONS -- DAY

Everyone moves to one side of the plane in order to get a view through a window.

INT. AIRFORCE ONE, IN FLIGHT, PRESIDENT'S SECTION -- DAY

Everyone is looking out.

BILL

There it is.

FX: There is a distant but distinct dark patch of Earth in the Hollywood area.

INTERCUT:

EXT. AIRFORCE ONE -- DAY

The same view from outside the aircraft shows that the same area is untouched and there has been no bombing at all.

INTERCUT:

EXT. AIRFORCE ONE -- DAY

The jet, descending to low altitude, lumbers closer to ground zero.

As they draw closer those in the plane are horrified to see the one mile radius blast which has destroyed everything in its path.

BERNIE

(tears in her eyes)

My God.

INT. COMMAND CENTER, AIRFORCE ONE -- DAY

Bill stands next to Airforce Communication Officers. He leaves the area and moves through the plane to the small studio setup. Jed is in place, ready to broadcast to the people below. Bernie watches on.

BILL

Ready to go, Mr. President. Remember this is fully live. On my mark in ten, nine, eight, seven, six.

He continues the countdown using his fingers and visually cues Jed.

INTERCUT:

INT/EXT. RESIDENT'S MONTAGE, LA -- DAY

As Jed gives his speech...

A] RESIDENTS watching home-theater screens or TVs in their living rooms. The President is not on them.

B] RESIDENTS in cars driving round the city are relaxed and having a good time. Dashboard LED screens (on the sun visor passenger side, front seat, and set into the back of front seats, for back seat viewers) are playing cartoons, etc..

C] RESIDENTS in houses move to a window and see Air Force One flying past at low altitude. They are curious about it.

D] RESIDENTS in cars look out their windows and see Air Force One flying past at low altitude. They point it out to each other and smile.

JED

My fellow Americans, this is your President speaking. I want to assure you that I am here with you, and that the situation is now under control and everything possible is being done to ensure your safety and minimize further loss of life. I am informed that the bomb used was a crudely made nuclear device and that the danger of death by radioactive fallout is minimal. At this stage we do not know who is responsible for this cowardly crime, but you have my strongest assurance that no stone will be left unturned in hunting down those responsible.

JED (Cont'd)

That we have now been attacked on our native soil, and with a nuclear device, means that our fight against terrorism has reached a new phase, and as a consequence the gloves are about to come off in seeking and revealing those people in this world who would do us harm.

Bernie is uncomfortable at what Jed is saying. Jed pauses, considering the gravity of what he is about to say next.

JED

It may be that we will have to go to war in order to bring this matter to a resolution, for certainly we cannot tolerate further abuse of this kind. If I have to go to war in order to do this, and I am left with no alternative, then war it will be.

Bernie is in two minds about what she has just heard.

E] The Hollywood area that was earlier seen as the blast zone, now is seen with no damage at all.

INT. AIRFORCE ONE, IN FLIGHT, PRESIDENT'S SECTION -- NIGHT

Bernie is seated in a section with Jed, Bill, Chairman Joint Chiefs, Secretary of State, and Fred. Bernie is seated at a round table, near a window, and across from Jed.

As conversation proceeds Bernie looks at a flight map on the wall. Their plane is now halfway across the US, heading toward Washington. Everyone wears earwraps except Jed and Bernie.

CHAIRMAN JOINT CHIEFS (fairly heated)

No, no, that's not what I said. I said we should detonate a low megatonnage nuclear device, something like a neutron bomb, on North Korean soil. Doesn't have to be a city. But that will send a clear, unequivocal message that we are prepared to respond in kind. We must demonstrate we are unafraid to use equal force, and

CHAIRMAN JOINT CHIEFS (Cont'd)
especially not afraid to use our nuclear
capability.

BERNIE (calm)
You don't even know for sure as yet that
bomb came from North Korea.

SECRETARY OF STATE
Mr. President, we have already tracked two
similar nuclear devices originating in
North Korea to New York harbor. So they
realize we are on to them and now have
simply changed tact. The very fact they
chose the Hollywood area is to ensure
maximum exposure for their cause.

FRED
I'd have to agree. God knows how many
movie stars are now dead. I can't begin to
imagine the outpourings of grief and
outrage around the world. I tell you, if
they'd wanted to pick a fight they
couldn't have done a better job.

JED (accepting)
Can't argue there.

Bernie is alarmed to see Jed agreeing.

BERNIE
Gentlemen, didn't your mothers ever point
out to you that two wrongs don't make a
right?

CHAIRMAN JOINT CHIEFS
With respect, ma'am, this really is an
American issue.

JED
Hey. Mrs. Rice is here at my invitation. I
invited her because I trust her judgment.

SECRETARY OF STATE

Sir, I'm afraid I have to add my objection to the General's. I don't believe it is appropriate that given your known personal relationship to Mrs. Rice that she be privy to decisions made in the interests of US citizens.

JED

Hey, you know, you guys are one step away from...

FRED

Jed.

Jed looks at Fred, and Fred shakes his head slightly. Jed stares at him for a long moment. He decides against accepting his advice and begins to read the riot act yet again.

JED

You know, last time I looked I still had 'Mr. President' written on my shirt tag...

BERNIE

Excuse me. Thank you, but I don't need you to stick up for me. (to the others) I am not embarrassed to be asked to leave your private club, gentlemen, but what you are failing to recognize is that the decisions you are now contemplating do not merely have implications for the American people. It is that very ethnocentric attitude which has people bombing you in the first place. You popularized it, so why not wake up and smell the coffee.

CHAIRMAN JOINT CHIEFS

Ma'am I don't think you have the faintest comprehension of the type of individuals we are dealing with in the wider world of military force. And that we must deal with ignorant, pig-headed, ruthless dictators who understand nothing but a force more powerful than their own.

BERNIE

So then explain to me why, if you have enough nuclear weaponry to blow up the world once over, General, you have acquired enough to blow up the world twenty-seven times over? Is that something you think you have to do to convince those ignorant, pig-headed, ruthless dictators that you have a force more powerful than their own? Let me put it in plain English for you. I think they know you are bigger and stronger, but that obviously has not phased them, so why do you continue to amass weapons of mass destruction?

SECRETARY OF STATE

Ma'am, it is the existence of that force that has guaranteed the free world safety from harm thus far.

BERNIE

You really believe that, don't you.

SECRETARY OF STATE

Then what would you suggest? You want us to kiss and make up with the people who just bombed us?

BERNIE

Has it occurred to you, Mr. Secretary, that people who are willing to blow themselves up whilst blowing you up cannot be defeated, only subjugated, and you can't go on doing that forever, because slowly but surely, they will drag you down to be as poor and as ignorant and as dejected as they are.

SECRETARY OF STATE

Which is why we seek to go to war with North Korea, and why we seek allies, like yourself to assist us, so that we not only conclude this business, but send a clear message to them that their behavior is not countenanced by the rest of the civilized world. Otherwise, what do you suggest?

BERNIE

What do I suggest? What do I suggest?

She suddenly pulls the derringer from her purse and by way of example points it at Jed.

CHAIRMAN JOINT CHIEFS

Gun! Gun!

BERNIE (realizing he doesn't understand)

No, no...

Secret Service Agents 1-5 suddenly appear and draw down on Bernie.

JED

No no, hold it, hold it, hold it!

Bernie realizes that what has happened might be played to advantage.

BERNIE (to Jed)

No...This is a real gun.

Jed looks at her, wondering what she can possibly mean.

FRED

But that's...

Jed silences him with a slight movement of his hand.

JED

Alright...it's real.

Fred looks at him, wondering what he is doing. Jed looks around at the Secret Service.

JED

Lower your weapons.

The Secret Service Agents lower their pistols, with the exception of Secret Service Agent 1.

JED

I just gave you a direct order, son.

SS AGENT 1

Sir, I put a bullet through her right eye, the nerve impulse won't ever reach her finger.

JED

Lower your weapon...now

Secret Service Agent 1 does not comply. Seconds drag by.

BERNIE

Amazing what happens when you introduce deadly force, isn't it. Suddenly people you thought would obey, don't. (to SS Agent 1) Alright, put a bullet through my right eye. I double dare you...You see, it will exit my brain and go through that window behind me, and then the very people you are trying to save, and you yourself, might die.

Secret Service Agent 1 realizes she is right, and lowers his weapon.

JED (to SS Agent 5)

Take it.

Secret Service Agent 1 is stripped of his weapon by senior Secret Service Agent 5.

JED

(jerking his head)

Do not interfere again unless specifically ordered by me.

Perplexed, Secret Service Agents 1-5 exit the compartment. Jed turns to Bernie.

JED

I believe you've made the point, but...

BERNIE

(still pointing the derringer at him)
I'm not finished.

Jed and Fred exchange a glance, barely tolerant.

JED

I think this has gone far enough.

BERNIE

No. the gun is pointed at your head. And I am nothing but a pigheaded, ignorant, ruthless dictator. What are you going to do? We've already seen, that for all your power, you shoot me and you destroy yourself.

CHAIRMAN JOINT CHIEFS

What the hell is this? 'Metaphorical Moments'?

BERNIE (to Jed)

You're supposed to have all the answers, Mr. President.

Jed thinks for a long moment.

JED

Let's step into my quarters.

INT. AIRFORCE ONE -- NIGHT

Jed walks ahead of Bernie toward his quarters. Although carrying the derringer, Bernie does not have it trained on him. They are walking past the Secret Service Agent's section. Secret Service Agent 1 is standing, along with Secret Service Agents 2 - 5. Secret Service Agent 1 is being berated heatedly by Secret Service Agent 5, his superior. Jed signals Agent 5, a large black man, over.

JED

No matter what you hear I do not wish to be disturbed. Is that clear?

SS AGENT 5

Yes, sir.

They continue on, Bernie waving self-consciously with her little gun.

INT. PRESIDENT'S SLEEPING QUARTERS -- NIGHT

Jed and Bernie have entered the sleeping quarters. Jed pulls the door shut and locks it. He takes the derringer off her and puts it aside.

BERNIE

(getting the derringer back)

No. Do it. Play it out.

JED

Come on, enough. Okay? Like thousands of my fellow citizens have just been vaporized. I'm not exactly in the mood.

BERNIE

Which is exactly why you have to do it now, because it is the opposite of what is so easy to do. You want to get a different perspective or not? We both know how they think. All I need do is grow some balls and OD on testosterone and I can give you exactly the same advice, which has always been the same from now back to the dawn of time. If someone hits you, hit them back, harder. Wow. Put that guy in a uniform and call him 'General'.

JED

(jerking his thumb)

You know my friends are not going to play poker with you ever again.

BERNIE

Come on.

Jed reluctantly nods. He half approaches her and she raises the gun, and he reacts by half-holding his arms up and signaling he will not attack. He thinks for a long moment.

JED

You want a drink?

BERNIE

How do I know it won't be poisoned?

JED

'Cause I'm going to drink it with you.

Bernie nods.

BERNIE

Privacy. Hospitality. It's a start.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE PRESIDENT'S SLEEPING QUARTERS -- NIGHT

Secret Service Agent 5 approaches the door. He presses his ear against it quietly.

INTERCUT:

INT. PRESIDENT'S SLEEPING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Jed pops the cork off some champagne.

Secret Service Agent 5 is alarmed at the noise.

SS AGENT 5

Everything alright in there, sir?!

JED

Yes, fine! Step away from the door!

SS AGENT 5

Yes, sir.

He immediately puts his ear back against the door.

Jed pours a glass of champagne, which he hands to Bernie.

JED

Got any kids?

BERNIE

Yes, twenty-seven.

Secret Service Agent 5 screws up his face at the absurd answer.

JED

That's a lot.

BERNIE

And we're very poor and the children are badly educated.

JED

Maybe I can help you. Maybe, give them a scholarship, build them a school.

BERNIE

Some of them are Islamic. I want those children to go to an Islamic school.

Secret Service Agent 5 mouths incredulously - Islamic?

JED

Well, fine, that's fine. (Getting an idea)
In fact we have many fine Islamic schools here. Perhaps we could start a major exchange program. That way when our children grow up they'll already know each other.

BERNIE (encouraging)

What else? Come on, or I will shoot you.

JED

Well, maybe we can address your poverty, you know, help you out, somehow.

BERNIE

But it's you who made us so poor. You said that no one could trade with us, and no one has for many years, and now we have no financial infrastructure.

JED

Well, your human rights record stinks...what if I was to see to it you had a whole new industry. What do you currently have for sale?

BERNIE

Well, in the Middle East we have oil, in North Korea, well...Ah...that's why they invented the revolution, the Red Robes, they have plutonium, the Iranians have oil...

JED

Of course. The perfect trade. So what if...what if we helped the North Koreans build factories to produce hydrogen? Then they don't need to trade for oil.

Bernie lowers the gun.

BERNIE

And get rid of the trade embargos.

JED

And the Red Robes eventually just fade away...You like music?

BERNIE

Why?

Jed puts on some slow music.

Secret Service Agent 5 leans back and stares strangely at the door when he hears the music.

INT. PRESIDENT'S SLEEPING QUARTERS -- NIGHT

Jed crosses to Bernie.

JED

May I?

She nods, but for the moment does not know what to do with the derringer. Jed takes it off her and drops it down the front of his trousers.

JED

If you want it, you know where to find it.

He offers his hands for the dance.

JED

How'd you like to slow dance round the axis
of evil?

They grin sexually and begin to slow dance. They kiss.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE PRESIDENT'S SLEEPING QUARTERS -- NIGHT

Fred appears behind Secret Service Agent 5.

FRED

What are they doing?

SS AGENT 5 (confidentially)

Sir, there's some seriously strange
stuff going on.

Fred signals him away and Secret Service Agent 5 leaves. Fred
knocks at the door.

FRED

It's me...And I know her guns not loaded.
(mumbling) although I'm not sure about
yours.

The music goes off and Jed answers the door.

FRED

There's an urgent communiqué from the FBI.
Better take it in the Command Center.

Jed nods and turns to Bernie.

JED

I'll be back.

He leaves. Fred looks at Bernie.

BERNIE

(sipping her drink)
Hope Arnold Schwarzenegger's alright.

INT. COMMAND CENTER, AIRFORCE ONE -- DAY

Jed stands before the command center, Fred alongside.

JED

So how'd you get the images out the window?

Fred reaches forward and presses a button. A schematic of the plane's exterior appears on the screen and demonstrates the exterior video screens.

FRED

Flat 3D screens. What you saw was pure Hollywood.

JED (impressed)

That is your best simulation ever, Fred.

FRED (bashful)

Well...

JED

No, I mean it. I mean, I, you had me totally fooled.

FRED

Well thank you, appreciate it, been working on it for months. Thought you were going to blow it when you invited Mrs. Rice along.

JED

And what about the Secretary of State and Chairman Joint Chiefs?

FRED

Oh, no, they were for real. Hook, line and sinker.

JED

Christ, I have got some serious butt-kicking to do in that department. 'Let's let off a neutron bomb on North Korean soil.' Jesus.

They look at the screen. Jed shakes his head, still in wonder, and pats Fred on the back.

JED

Well done.

EXT. AIRFORCE ONE -- DAWN

Airforce one touches down on a Washington tarmac.

INT. PRESIDENT'S SLEEPING QUARTERS -- DAY

Bernie, asleep on the bed, wakes at the sound of the plane touching down. A man's jacket has been placed over her. She realizes daylight is streaming through the window, and then sees Jed asleep in a chair opposite, his jacket off.

She sits up and looks at his face lovingly. She brushes his hair softly with her fingers, and he slowly wakes. She kisses him.

JED

Have we touched down?

Bernie nods.

BERNIE

Back to the real world.

JED

Yeah. Thank God.

Bernie gives him a quizzical look as he sits up and looks for his shoes.

JED

I'll give you a lift to your plane.

Bernie half-laughs, also looking for her shoes.

BERNIE

Another photo opportunity?... No, I think the press already have enough bullets to fire.

JED

What are you going to do?

BERNIE

Going to find the agent who took those photos, and shove his camera-watch-phone into a low light environment.

Jed chuckles.

JED

I love you.

BERNIE

And I love you.

He stops laughing and kisses her gently.

JED

I'm going to miss you.

They hold each other for a time, a hand to the other's cheek.

JED

So what will you do?

BERNIE

Well, develop a sense of humor for a start. You know, see how many times I can laugh at things like 'She is doing to our country what Jed Roxborough did to her'.

JED

I meant about your career.

BERNIE

Oh, still deciding, might save myself a lot of trouble and resign. Besides, I've already broken the glass ceiling, there's a lot of Ozzie men dying to pay me back.

JED

So what if I stand by you? You know, tell the world I love you, that I'll get a divorce and marry you.

BERNIE

Well, I'm flattered. But weren't you invited to a Jihad or Fatua or something?

JED

No, that's the other guys.

BERNIE

Oh, yeah. Well what do the Koreans call it.

JED

Oh, it's a Korean word...ah, fuckuyankee.

BERNIE

Oh, fuckuyankee. I didn't know you spoke Korean.

JED

Yeah, summer school.

BERNIE

So what are you going to do?

JED

Going to start a think tank. See if we can't figure out a way to socially engage with a bunch of people we'd rather not even know.

BERNIE

I meant about us.

JED

Oh. (dismissive) Ahh. The public is scared. My indiscretion's not even a sideshow to the main event. And anyway it's sort of okay with good friends.

BERNIE

A variation on the warm handshake?

JED

Yeah. Plus I'm the boy.

BERNIE

Ooooh.

They arrive at the door together, dressed. They hug. He leans out from her, enough to see her face.

JED

Bernie. I meant what I said. I want to marry you.

She realizes he is serious.

BERNIE

The answer is 'yes'...And I'm free this afternoon.

They look long and hard into each other's eyes, sad-grinning, but cementing their commitment.

BERNIE

I was going to turn you down, you know, about going to war.

JED

Well what about being an ally in détente?

BERNIE

Now you're talking.

JED

Bernie...not sure how to tell you, but, all that you saw, you know, the bomb and Hollywood and stuff.

Bernie stares up at him.

JED

Well...did you ever see the Pink Panther, you know, the movies? Peter Sellers.

BERNIE

Yes.

JED

And you know how Clouseau had this assistant, Cato, that used to jump out and attack him all the time? And you know, sometimes it really wasn't the best time?

BERNIE

Yes?

JED

Well, Fred's my Cato.

BERNIE (Indian impersonation)

(wobbling her head)

Oh, I am not understanding.

JED (chuckling)

Well you know how captains do simulations on submarines, you know, like something's gone real wrong and we have to do this emergency drill to find out what we might do wrong in a real emergency?

The smile is drying on Bernie's face.

BERNIE

Tell me you're joking?

JED

I didn't know either.

BERNIE

But, I...

She appears faint and Jed takes her to the bed, sitting beside her.

BERNIE

A hundred thousand people aren't dead?

JED

No, no they're all fine.

BERNIE

And all the movie stars? Arnold Schwarzenegger?

JED

Fine.

Bernie is half laughing in relief and exasperation.

BERNIE

But how...?

JED

3D TVs? They're really something.

BERNIE

You asshole!

JED

No, not me, I'm Clouseau, Fred's Cato. And a damned clever asshole at that. Anyway, you can't call the President an asshole. It's illegal, isn't it? If it's not I'll make it illegal. You know...for all my liberal values, I was still thinking, I'm going to war.

She kisses him.

BERNIE

'Make love, not war.'

Jed is thoughtful for a long moment.

JED

I know this sounds seriously dumb, but I never got that before. It is an entire strategy, isn't it.

BERNIE

My team's been kicking goals that way since the dawn of time, while your team was off reading "The Art of War".

Jed nods gratefully. They grin.

JED

Prime Minister.

BERNIE

Mr. President.

EXT. PRESIDENT'S LIMOUSINE, TARMAC -- DAY

Jed strides from Airforce One toward a waiting limo. He pauses and looks up at Airforce One and at the screens mounted over each window. He shakes his head in wonder. He enters the limo where Fred is waiting alone.

EXT. PRESIDENT'S LIMOUSINE INT, TRAVELING -- DAY

The limo heads out.

JED

So where is everyone?

FRED

They thought they'd go in another car.
Just in case they were forced to bathe in
the after-glow of your love.

JED

I did not have sex with that woman,
Fred...but I sure as hell intend to.

INT. SECRET SERVICE AGENT 1'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Secret Service Agent 1 packs his bags on the bed, when a woman's
form intrudes into frame.

MURIEL (OS)

Going somewhere?

Secret Service Agent 1 looks round, sees who it is, but continues
gathering belongings from around the room.

MURIEL

Cat got your tongue?

SS AGENT 1

They know I was the one who took the
photos.

MURIEL

How could they?

SS AGENT 1

They said we'd be given a lie detector
test, so I confessed.

MURIEL

Oh?

SS AGENT 1

Yeah, 'Oh'. Are you going to tell them it was you asked me to take shots like that?

MURIEL

But, I didn't say that.

SS AGENT 1

(freezing)

You didn't? Then who gave them to the "Washington Post"?

MURIEL

I don't know why we're even having this conversation.

She leaves and a door closes OS.

Secret Service Agent 1 realizes he has been hung out to dry, and sits on the bed. He buries his face in his hands.

EXT. PRESIDENT'S LIMO INT/EXT, TRAVELING -- DAY

The electric window of the limousine comes down and Jed looks up into the sky.

The Australian Prime Minister's jet soars overhead, taking off.

JED

There she goes.

Jed looks at Fred.

JED

Now that, is a woman.

FRED

You know it's not very nice to give away a gift you were given.

JED

Yeah...but I promise, your son will never know what you did (he grins at Fred)
...Here.

He reaches down his pants and pulls out the derringer. He hands it

to Fred. Fred looks at it as if he was just handed a turd.

JED

Don't thank me. You know, Fred, I don't think a President has visited downunder since old George W got heckled in the Australian parliament. What do you say we go get heckled.

FRED

(wiping his hands with a handkerchief)
So why would they heckle you?

JED

'Cause there's this rumor going round, that I am doing to their Prime Minister, what she has already done to their country... Something like that.

Fred snorts a laugh.

FRED

(offering a cigar)
Hey, we're alone. Let's smoke in the car.

Jed takes one, as does Fred.

JED

Got a light?

FRED

As a matter of fact I do. But I flatly refuse to touch that thing.

Jed laughs.

EXT. PRESIDENTIAL MOTOCADE -- DAY

The motorcade proceeds.

EXT. AUSTRALIAN PM JET - DAY

The jet banks.

INT. AUSTRALIAN PM JET -- DAY

As the jet banks, Bernie looks down on the motorcade and grins lovingly.

FADE OUT.