

HALL OF PRESIDENTS

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT (1809)

Seen through well-lighted windows, servants clean up after a State Dinner. Others ready the President's bedchamber. We enter and pass from the Entrance Hall through:

A LIBRARY

stocked with leather-bound books.

A BILLIARD ROOM

TWO CHILDREN play, rolling balls on the table. A NURSEMAID enters to scoot them to bed.

THE KITCHEN

Busy STAFF simultaneously clean up and ready for the next day. We head out the back door onto...

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - BACK LAWN - NIGHT

A few DOGS roam around some loose croquet mallets and hoops.

EXT. WOODS BEHIND WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

Around a fire, a regal SLAVE PRIESTESS, 60s, stands amid a ring of other SLAVES performing a RING SHOUT.

Next to her, in red breeches and a blue cloth coat trimmed with gold lace is PRESIDENT THOMAS JEFFERSON, 60s. Huge gold buttons on his lapel shine in the fire.

The Priestess raises her hand. In response, the ring stops moving and chanting.

PRIESTESS

You certain you want this done?

JEFFERSON

This house, this office, corrupts the soul.

PRIESTESS

Power not allure a heart that pure.

JEFFERSON

I worry not about their hearts but  
their minds. Proceed with haste.

The Priestess raises her hand. The circle begins to move again. They CHANT in call and response in Gullah.

A ROOT DOCTOR, wide-brimmed hat, dark suit, sprinkles a bag of herbs at Jefferson's feet.

PRIESTESS

Boo hag a powerful thing to protect  
you from its bad mouthing. But I  
pity those wit' no such protection.

Jefferson nods. She raises a huge dead rabbit over her head.

PRIESTESS

I present the trickster. Dead to  
the world. He steal from the  
garden and the farm. He shall be  
plant here and never leave. Let  
him who live in this place what do  
the same, suffer the same. I say  
if the master do evil, his spirit  
shall not depart.

CROWD

If the master do evil, his spirit  
shall not depart.

PRIESTESS

Until a new dweller pure make right  
the bent ways of his soul.

CROWD AND JEFFERSON

Until a new dweller pure make right  
the bent ways of his soul.

PRIESTESS

It is done.

JEFFERSON

How can I be sure?

The Priestess lowers the dead rabbit and thrusts it at Jefferson. The rabbit's eyes open. It bares its teeth and hops from her arms into the camera.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - FRONT LAWN - DAY (PRESENT DAY)

A cute-as-a-button rabbit wiggles his nose. He's in a cage carried by equally cute-as-a-button DINA GARFIELD, 7, daughter of newly elected President CHANCE GARFIELD, 39.

Displaying the confidence that comes from experiencing nothing but success his entire life, Chance walks behind Dina towards a line of staff in front of their new home.

DINA  
We're really going to live here?

CHANCE  
For four years. Maybe even eight.

PETER DOWLA, 30s, Indian-American, Chance's best friend and campaign advisor, follows them.

DINA  
I hope it's eight.

PETER  
I'm with you, Dina.

Behind them, Chance's no-nonsense, well-grounded wife, MARTHA, 30s, and their precocious son, BUD, 9.

Native American Secret Service Agent STRONGBOW, 30s, brings up the rear. He's solid in every way.

Glad-handing the crowd is slick WINTHROP "WIN" WILLIAMS, mid-30s, WASP, a young Washington insider who knows whose hand-pricked, tailored coattails to ride.

BUD  
Who is that?

MARTHA  
One of your father's main advisors.

BUD  
I thought you were his main advisor.

Nearby, a REPORTER WITH A MIC speaks into the camera.

REPORTER WITH MIC  
That's former pancakes.com CEO, Chance Garfield, political neophyte and surprise winner of the closest Presidential election ever. President Garfield takes the reins at a time of unprecedented anxiety and economic and social upheaval.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Peter paces, annoyed. Chance sits nonchalantly on the Resolute desk fixated on a portrait of Thomas Jefferson, dressed as in the opening.

PETER  
But Chief of Staff! I thought  
that's what I was.

CHANCE  
There's something to be said for  
experience. Plus, you're Special  
Advisor. That's way better. It's  
special.

The door bursts open. It's Win.

PETER  
Speak of the devil.

WIN  
That's the nicest thing anyone's  
ever called me. Your schedule for  
tomorrow. First day, big day.

Win hands Chance a folder. He flips through the many pages.

CHANCE  
7 am? After the ball, I'm not sure  
I'll be all that awake then.

PETER  
Or all that sober.

WIN  
You know there's a system that  
records everything said in here.

CHANCE  
(Nixon-like)  
I am not a crook.  
(Groucho-like)  
You, I'm not so sure about.

EXT. PRESIDENTIAL MOTORCADE - NIGHT

The limos slowly head down a street lined with well-wishers.

INT. PRESIDENT'S LIMO - NIGHT

In formalwear, Chance and Martha sit across from Peter and  
Win. Chance tugs at his uncomfortable bow tie.

MARTHA  
You sure the kids'll be all right?

CHANCE  
I'm more worried about the Secret  
Service.

(MORE)

CHANCE (CONT'D)

A 9- and 7-year-old are a bit more challenging than the septuagenarians they're used to.

Win hands Chance a folder.

CHANCE

You with the folders. Where do you even pull them from? I never see you carrying anything.

WIN

We should get going on appointments.

Chance opens the folder, wrinkles his nose at what's inside and hands it to Peter. Peter peruses it.

CHANCE

What's wrong with the people that have the jobs now?

WIN

Mr. President, they were appointed by the last administration.

CHANCE

Everyone should be judged on his or her own merits.

PETER

There's something to be said for experience.

Chance smiles at Peter as if to say "Good point!" He opens the window. The long motorcade comes to an abrupt halt.

Well-wishers rush forward. One in a T-shirt bearing a picture of Chance with a plate of pancakes tries to shake his hand. Secret Service close in. The window closes, not by Chance.

WIN

Who do you think you are-- Andrew Jackson?

The motorcade moves again.

MARTHA

Who's in all the other cars?

WIN

Decoys. They'll peel off soon.

Martha rolls her eyes and SIGHS. Chance takes her hand.

CHANCE

She's right. I ran on energy independence, and we've got 10 empty limos burning a dozen T-Rexs.

WIN

Oil doesn't really come from dinosaurs, you know.

CHANCE

Still, we're cutting it out.

MARTHA

Really?

CHANCE

It's as good as done. Hey, maybe this can be your initiative.

MARTHA

My what?

PETER

Every First Lady has an initiative. Lady Bird Johnson did wildflowers. Michele Obama tried to get America to eat healthy, bless her heart. You could reduce the carbon footprint of the presidency.

MARTHA

Seems sort of meta. I'd like it to be something meaningful, but also something I'm interested in.

CHANCE

Not interested in saving the planet. Got it. You like hot yoga. "Make America Limber Again"?

Martha doesn't take the bait. She pulls out a cell phone.

MARTHA

I'm going to check on the kids.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

The inaugural ball. Celebs, glittering lights, opulent food, flowers and settings. Festive!

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

The President and First Lady of the United States.

Chance and Martha descend a stairway and commence to dance.

MARTHA

I don't like being reduced to just a lady, regardless of the number.

CHANCE

You look fierce tonight. What if it were the Fierce Lady? I think I can get that trending on Twitter.

They spin by Win and smile. Win forces one back. Next to him, Peter toasts them with a Bud Light and a big grin.

Nearby, with no smile at all, VICE PRESIDENT ARNOLD "ARNIE" BENNETON, mid-60s, broods. Benneton's wife DARLENE, 60s, a very former Miss Cotton Bowl, elbows him.

BENNETON

You know what Lyndon Johnson compared the Vice Presidency to? A bucket of warm spit.

DARLENE

And he became president.

BENNETON

That's how you see me getting in the big chair? Lady Macbeth had nothing on you.

DARLENE

I prefer Medea.

BENNETON

I better alert our kids.

They both smile.

DARLENE

That's better. A smile that befits the heir apparent.

BENNETON

To the Pancake Kid. And that's far from certain with an electorate on edge, economic turmoil, energy crisis, brewing unrest in a half a dozen countries including this one.

Darlene points at Chance, dancing with Martha like no one's watching.

DARLENE

Doesn't seem to bother him.



INT. FIRST COUPLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In bed in a nightgown, Martha watches Chance desperately try to undo his bow tie. He gives up and takes off the rest of his clothes, leaving the bow tie on to Martha's amusement.

CHANCE

So, are you ready to make love to the most powerful man in the world?

MARTHA

Sure. Bill Gates is hot. He'll take those glasses off, right?

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Agent Strongbow stands watch.

INT. DINA'S ROOM - NIGHT

In bed, Dina cuddles comforting items, teddy bears and such. When she finally settles, she's startled by a TAP at the Jack and Jill bathroom door. She tries to ignore it.

Another TAP. She gets up and opens the door. It's Bud.

DINA

What are you doing in my bathroom?

BUD

My room's on the other side, so it's my bathroom, too. Let's explore.

DINA

They said to stay in our rooms.

BUD

Our dad's the president. What can they do to us?

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Bud looks out his door as Strongbow walks the other way.

BUD

Come on. It's over here. I saw it on the Internet.

The kids sneak out and run the opposite way from Strongbow.

DINA

That doesn't make it true. The internet said Dad wouldn't win.

BUD  
I wish he didn't. I was supposed  
to be starting pitcher this year.

Bud presses against a low panel in the wall. It opens. Bud  
kneels down and looks in. He flashes a "told you so" smile.

INT. SECRET STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Bud and Dina inch down. It's dark. Dina hesitates. Her  
brother senses it. He turns on the flashlight of his phone.

DINA  
Thanks.

Continuing down the stairs, they hear VOICES behind a wall.

DINA  
Let's go back.

BUD  
Shhhhhhhh.

INT. WEST WING - PRESS OFFICE - NIGHT

Wiped out, on the couch, shoes off, CASEY PARK, late 20s,  
Korean-American, Press Secretary, rubs her feet. Win  
notices. She knows he does.

WIN  
Veep wants everything double-  
tracked to him. He doesn't want to  
leave anything to... Chance.

CASEY  
Hilarious. And that's his call how?

WIN  
Casey, Chance is new at this.  
Arnie's been around. He knows  
where all the bodies are buried.

CASEY  
He knows because he buried them.  
Like a homicidal squirrel.

Win looks into her eyes.

WIN  
You're funny. I like that.

Casey's not having it. Win hands her a folder. She opens it.

CASEY

You're asking me on day one to contradict every promise he ran on.

WIN

He didn't run on any particular promise. He just ran on promise. The promise of something new, of optimism, of...

CASEY

Hope.

BENNETON

No, hope was like three presidents ago. Garfield ran on something that's unsustainable.

CASEY

What's that?

WIN

Independence.

CASEY

So you'll curtail that with this.

INT. SECRET STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Dina looks at Bud.

DINA

What's "curtail"?

BUD

I don't know. But I don't think this Wilson is a good guy.

DINA

(blurting it out)  
He's a bad guy?

INT. WEST WING - PRESS OFFICE - NIGHT

Win looks at the wall.

WIN

What was that?

Casey shrugs and tosses down the talking points.

CASEY

I'm too tired for this.

WIN

It's late. Let's just agree for the time being we have to box him in?

BEHIND THE WALL

Dina's eyes widen.

DINA

They're going to put him in a box!

Bud pulls Dina to another panel. He pushes it. They enter.

INT. FIRST COUPLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Now on the bed in his T-shirt, Chance moves closer to Martha.

MARTHA

You think Bud will be okay?

CHANCE

If I say yes, can we...?

MARTHA

No, seriously, Dina seems excited, but Bud, he's out of sorts.

The mood's gone. Parents-mode has kicked in.

CHANCE

He misses his friends. His school. This wouldn't be any different if I took a job in another city, and we had to move.

MARTHA

I think he misses you.

CHANCE

I'm right here. I put him to bed.

MARTHA

That was the first time in weeks. You don't know how many times he asked for you during the campaign.

CHANCE

I was gone just as much when I started pancakes.com.

MARTHA

He was younger then. He's a smart kid. He knows you're not going to have any time for him now.

CHANCE  
I'll make the time.

MARTHA  
I saw your schedule.

CHANCE  
I'm the President.  
(stressing each word)  
I will make the time.

MARTHA  
Can we make that our thing? No  
matter how crazy this gets. No  
matter what's going on, we'll make  
the time. Promise?

Chance tosses Win's folders in the trash.

CHANCE  
Just like my campaign promises:  
it's as good as done.

Chance moves in on a now-receptive Martha.

INT. EVEN MORE SECRET RICKETY WOODEN STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Dina and Bud creep down. Dina steps through a missing tread.  
She almost falls into whatever abyss lies below. Quick-  
thinking, quick-acting Bud grabs her by the arms.

DINA  
Don't let me go.

Bud pulls her up onto his step. She hugs him, her eyes  
spraying tears.

BUD  
Calm down. I won't let anything  
happen to you. Ever. Are you hurt?

Trying to compose herself, she shakes her head no.

BUD  
Okay. We'll go slow.

Dina shakes her head no again. She doesn't want to move.

BUD  
Look, Dinnie, I'm sort of scared  
down here. If you hold my hand,  
I'll know there's someone here  
looking out for me. Can you do  
that for me?

DINA  
 (nodding yes)  
 Just don't let them curtail me.

BUD  
 Never.

DINA  
 Or box me in. I don't want to be  
 put in a box.

INT. LONG COBBLESTONE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Bud and Dina hear ARGUING from a room at the end, bathed in a glowing ball of white light. They creep towards it.

FILLMORE'S VOICE  
 You killed 10,000 at Shiloh.

GRANT'S VOICE  
 I brought freedom to millions.

NIXON'S VOICE  
 Only to be subjected to generations  
 of economic slavery.

FILLMORE'S VOICE  
 What's that smell? First Children!

Dina SCREAMS. So does Bud. They run. The ghostly glow chases the kids down the hallway. Bud tries different panels in the wall as the glow nears. One opens to:

THE WOODEN STAIRS

Bud drags Dina up as fast as he can, still pushing on walls all the way. Finally, one opens. They enter it.

CLOSE ON BUD AND DINA'S FACES

They SCREAM in bloody horror.

INT. FIRST COUPLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

We see what horrifies Dina and Bud: their parents in the throes of passion. Chance and Martha scramble for the sheets. Strongbow bursts in.

INT. FIRST COUPLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Strongbow and other Secret Service agents buzz around. On the bed, Martha has her arm around Dina. Bud drinks cocoa.

BUD

Don't you have anything stronger?

STRONGBOW

He's funny.

Now in silk pjs, Chance looks in the open panel in the wall.

CHANCE

He's a riot. You fellas always say someone's plotting to kill me, right?

STRONGBOW

Many people, actually.

CHANCE

So should there be a secret passage straight into our bedroom?

STRONGBOW

The White House is a fortress. No one can get in.

Chance points at his kids and the passage entrance.

STRONGBOW

They were already in the house. And that just goes down to the bowling alley.

DINA

And to the glowy place.

Martha hugs her a bit tighter.

MARTHA

Oh, sweetie.

BUD

There is something down there.

CHANCE

Down where, Bud?

BUD

Below the alley. We heard voices.

The Secret Service Agents look at each other.

STRONGBOW

I'll go. Bud, you think you can show me where you first went in?

Bud gets up. Dina jumps on him.

DINA  
Don't go, Bud!

Martha picks her up.

MARTHA  
Honey, you can sit up here with me in Daddy's spot. We'll find some cartoons on the tablet, and someone will bring us some cookies.

DINA  
And Daddy'll make the glowy thing go away?

MARTHA  
Yes. Daddy's going with Agent Strongbow.

STRONGBOW  
That's not a good idea, sir.

Martha leans over to whisper in Chance's ear.

MARTHA  
It's the only way she'll believe it's okay. Or she'll be sleeping with us for the next four years.

CHANCE  
Now, that's not a good idea.

INT. SECRET STAIRS - NIGHT

Strongbow and Chance retrace the steps of the kids.

CHANCE  
What's with all these passages?

STRONGBOW  
At first, security. But each had his own reasons. Sneak down for a bite, a late night drink. Get out of meetings.

CHANCE  
Kennedy, get out on the wife.

STRONGBOW  
We don't judge, sir. Eventually, they all just got lumped together. They're not used that much anymore.

The floor CREAKS loudly.



STRONGBOW

It's not safe for you to be here,  
Mr. President. We know where to  
step. You don't.

Strongbow pushes a panel that opens to the White House study.

CHANCE

But I told the kids. I like to  
keep my word.

STRONGBOW

I'm very good with secrets.

Chance enters the study. Strongbow shuts the door behind him.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

A very early 20th century room. Chance takes down a book,  
*The History of the Presidents*. He sits and reads.

CHANCE

"In the doctor's hope it would  
alleviate his pneumonia, William  
Henry Harrison was frequently made  
to endure bloodletting as well as  
doses of castor oil and ipecac".  
Talk about getting it from both  
ends. "He died one month later,  
the shortest presidency to date."

Chance sees the first photograph of a President: Harrison's.

CHANCE

Sorry, Hank or Bill, or Bill Hank,  
but I think I'll outlast you.

John Tyler's portrait falls off the wall. Chance turns to  
it. He turns back to be met with WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON.  
Harrison looks like he's been dead for over 160 years.

Chance's face blanches, almost as pallid as Harrison. He  
passes out.

LATER

In blackness.

STRONGBOW (V.O.)

Mr. President? President Garfield!

From Chance's POV, Strongbow comes into focus. Chance looks  
at the wall. Tyler's picture is back in place.

CHANCE

I must have dozed off reading about my predecessors. Hellish dream.

Strongbow puts "The History of Presidents" back in its place.

STRONGBOW

All clear. You can tell Bud and Dina you saved the day.

CHANCE

I suppose a little revisionist history never hurt anyone.

STRONGBOW

Just ask my people.

CHANCE

Sorry, didn't mean anything by it.

STRONGBOW

Just a joke, sir. No offense taken.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Peter, Benneton and Win watch the clock. It's 10:30. A door bursts open. It's Chance. They point to the clock.

CHANCE

A watched president never sobers.

Win hands Chance yet another folder.

CHANCE

Folder again.  
(looking in the folder,  
then at Benneton)  
You will be having a busy day.

BENNETON

I have my own schedule.

CHANCE

Wow. So when you add this, you're gonna be really busy. But none of this moves the ball. You have it?

Peter pulls out an elaborate pancake-shaped trapper keeper.

CHANCE

You don't have a monopoly on cool folders, Winward. We also have one shaped like a bottle of syrup but you need to be a Pancakes.com VIP member for that. Something to shoot for. Anyway, what's first?

PETER  
(confused)  
Getting of foil.

BENNETON  
Is that your policy agenda or your  
shopping list?

Chance grabs the folder.

CHANCE  
That's getting off oil. My  
handwriting's horrible. We need to  
wean the US off fossil fuels.

BENNETON  
Tariffs.

CHANCE  
How would that work?

BENNETON  
Tax oil imports, price goes up,  
people gravitate to alternatives.

WIN  
The Middle East will destabilize.

BENNETON  
Like it's stable now.

CHANCE  
Arnie, work it up. I knew we'd  
make a beautiful team.

WIN  
It's not that simple.

CHANCE  
That's what they told me about the  
melted butter and maple syrup.

WIN  
Come again?

CHANCE  
No one thought I could deliver  
pancakes with melted butter and  
maple syrup by drone within minutes  
of an order without them getting  
soggy. But I found a way to keep  
'em fluffy. What's next?

PETER  
Universal Voter Registration.

WIN AND BENNETON  
(in unison)  
Not the time for that.

CHANCE  
Did you hear that harmony? Let's  
try "Sweet Adeline." The four of  
us. I'll get my straw hat.

PETER  
It was a cornerstone of our  
campaign.

BENNETON  
We've already been elected.

CHANCE  
It's not about us. It's about the  
voters. It's about their trust.  
It's about equal access to the  
voting booth for all. Anyway,  
didn't you say we had to throw up  
some quick wins?

WIN  
Quick? People have been trying to  
solve this since Reconstruction.

PETER  
But we already have the app. We  
just reprogram it.

CHANCE  
Good as done.

WIN  
What app? The pancakes again?

BENNETON  
Great, so when you vote, you can  
get a side of bacon with your  
Senator.

CHANCE  
This is America. If bacon ran  
against us, it would be sizzling at  
this desk instead of me.

A KNOCK at the window. It's Bud with a baseball and mitt  
with Agent Strongbow behind him.

CHANCE  
Look, fellas, I gotta go. Promises  
to keep.

Chance gets up and just goes.

BENNETON

But we haven't addressed the economy, inflation, the nuclear treaty. We--

MONTAGE OF CHANCE PLAYING WITH HIS KIDS

- Chance playing catch with Bud.
- Chance losing at card games, board games, all games.
- Chance playing dolls with Dina.
- Chance building a giant White House LEGO set with the kids. Chance backs up to look at it, steps on a LEGO in his bare feet and winces in pain.
- A huge Nerf Gun fight including Strongbow and other Secret Service agents. Bud is about to shoot Chance when Strongbow jumps in front of him and takes the projectile in the chest.

INSERT:

Footage of U.S. Protesters waving signs for Universal Voter Registration, another group protesting putting oil profits over the planet's welfare; now, it's the Middle East with an effigy of Chance being pelted with shoes.

We see it's from a conservative cable "news" show-- you can tell from all the flags and anger.

A graphic behind the bow-tied fireplug of a host, LAURA INGALLS WILDER, 40, (yeah, she was teased about that name a lot) shows Chance like a lost kid on a milk carton.

WILDER

Our country in tatters, the world on fire, and it's Day 14 of the missing President. If you've seen this man, call the White House. If this continues, like his famous campaign slogan, this president is as good as done.

INT. VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Benneton mutes Wilder on his TV and tosses the remote.

BENNETON

Christ on a cracker. Or should I say pancake? And, by the way, as fluffy those damn pancakes are, they don't make him a good candidate.

WIN

He's not. He's the president.

Win hands Benneton a folder. Benneton looks through it.

BENNETON

You have to keep reminding me? I see what he means about the folders though. Ribbon cuttings, women in tech forum, what the hell is this?

WIN

It comes direct from President Garfield to further clear his schedule. He also wants to know how you're doing on the oil thing.

BENNETON

Tell him, if you can find him, that we're not at war. I-- he can only impose short term tariffs absent Congressional approval.

WIN

Strangle the Middle East with this pricing pressure, we may get there. You really think this will reduce our dependence on oil?

BENNETON

On foreign oil. Domestic oil production will become competitive.

WIN

Garfield wants us off fossil fuels.

BENNETON

And I want a president who'll actually govern. But here we are.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - BACK LAWN - DAY

A quiet sentinel, Strongbow watches Chance with Dina and Bud.

CHANCE

Kids, I'm yours for the afternoon. What's it gonna be? Tag? Hide and seek? This place is big.

BUD

Cowboys and Indians.

DINA

Yeah!

CHANCE

What? We never played that before.

DINA

I want to be the cowboy!

BUD

You can't. You're too young, and you're a girl. It's cowboy.

DINA

No way am I going to be a red-faced, dirt worshipper!

Chance looks at Strongbow, but he doesn't flinch-- either he didn't hear or wasn't fazed.

CHANCE

Shhh. Dina, where did you hear talk like that? We don't say... that.

Both kids quietly look at Chance as if he's a space alien.

CHANCE

Okay, we can play cowboys and Indians, but it's just a game. What the cowboys did to the...  
(pointedly)  
Native Americans wasn't right. Okay?

INT. PRESS ROOM - DAY

The REPORTERS pepper Casey with a polyphonic cacophony of questions. Casey can't even get around to picking one out. She's lost control.

MULTIPLE REPORTERS

(all at once)

How does he feel about grain subsidies?... What's his position on the Paris Accord?... When will the Voter Bill be passed?... Has FEMA been brought in to deal with the flooding in the Midwest?...Has--

Casey's had it.

CASEY

Stop!

She points to ONE REPORTER.

REPORTER ONE

What's the president's reaction to the heightened rhetoric in the Middle East over oil pricing?

She smiles. She can answer this. She has regained control.

CASEY

He's monitoring the situation.

REPORTER ONE

From where? No one has seen President Milk Carton.

CASEY

Very funny, John. The President is engaged in some very high-level policy meetings.

EXT. PRESIDENTIAL MOTORCADE - DAY

The President's limo races through the streets.

CHANCE (V.O.)

You need to hold out for the best deal. This is the first time they'll be seeing you. You set the tone for these negotiations.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

A huge motorcade rumbles down the street. It stops. The main limo door opens. Chance steps out. He helps out Dina and Bud, dressed in their school uniforms.

The Secret Service clears a path through a mass of REPORTERS. Chance walks the kids to the school door.

CHANCE

Now, don't tell your mother I said it was okay to trade your lunch.

Chance hands Bud his lunch box.

CHANCE

Be good in school today.

BUD

We will.

DINA

Be good at President today.

CHANCE

I will.



The kids enter. Chance turns back to the motorcade.  
Reporters mob him as he reaches the car door.

REPORTER  
Mr. President, is this your  
domestic policy?

INT. PRESIDENTIAL LIMOUSINE - DAY

Peter sits opposite Chance.

PETER  
I know you promised Martha you'd  
spend time with them, but we also  
made promises to the American  
people.

CHANCE  
Petey, I'm all yours for the day.  
So what's it gonna be? Steal the  
Old Man's Bundle? Dodge ball?

PETER  
How about voter rights? Peace in  
the Middle East? Energy policy?

CHANCE  
Benneton's working the plan on that  
one. Good as done.

PETER  
People are afraid the tariffs will  
lead to inflation.

CHANCE  
Get that Casey to make a calming  
statement. She's sharp. It's why  
we hired her. If things are  
explained to people, they'll  
understand. The American people  
are level-headed.

A BLEEP goes off. It's Peter's phone. He looks at it.

PETER  
You think so?

ON THE SCREEN:

Protesters with signs: "SAVE OUR JOBS", "PRESIDENT MILK  
CARTON HAS GONE SOUR", "UNIVERSAL VOTER REGISTRATION NOW."  
They carry plates of pancakes towards a limo.

CHANCE  
Geez. Where's this happening?

## IN THE LIMO

A THUD. Chance looks at the window beside him. A plate of pancakes is smushed on it. THWACK. Another pancake on the other side, this one has a demonic face made of blueberry eyes, a cherry nose and a demented whipped cream grin.

PETER

Holy shit!

Police drag the protestors away. Peter and Chance watch one protestor in a rubber Chance Garfield mask being maced and flailing in the arms of the police.

PETER

At least I know what I'm gonna be for Halloween.

## INT. WHITE HOUSE - FIRST COUPLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

On the bed in a negligee, Martha casts a sly smile at Chance who's engrossed in folders of work at his desk.

MARTHA

Ready for your reward for spending time with the kids?

CHANCE

I already have my reward for that, a roll in the sack with this stack of hot folders. Oh, there's one for you, too.

He tosses one to her.

MARTHA

Is this the oil pricing stuff? You know, I have an idea about that. You see, the demand for oil is thought to be inelastic, but--

She opens the folder.

MARTHA

Oh, it's a map. Is this of the oil fields in...

She pulls it out. She realizes what it is. She gets up and heads over to Chance.

MARTHA

Chance, I didn't give up my career to figure out where to hide Easter eggs on the White House lawn.

CHANCE

You gave up your "career" because professional poker player is not a good look for the wife of the leader of the free world.

MARTHA

What else is a girl with a degree in statistical gaming and economics supposed to do?

CHANCE

You made Qui Nguyen, cry.

MARTHA

Sniffle, okay, bawl like a bitch.

CHANCE

And that's why you're not allowed to play UNO with the kids. Anyway, we already have our best people on the oil thing.

Martha puts her arms around Chance and stares into his eyes.

MARTHA

I went to grad school with one of them. The only thing he was best at was transmitting chlamydia.

CHANCE

I worry about how you know that, but still the leadership assures me they are our best people.

Martha shakes no. Chance stares blankly.

MARTHA

Chance, aren't I your people, uh, person?

CHANCE

Yes, of course you're my people, person. My best people, uh, person. But, honey, we have to tread lightly and not ruffle any party feathers with the midterms next year. We both agreed, right?

Chance kisses Martha on her non-committal forehead.

LATER

Chance is still engrossed in the folders. The ornate desk clock STRIKES MIDNIGHT. Martha, dozing, stirs. Chance heads to the bed to cover her.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Chance shuffles past Strongbow.

CHANCE

Insomnia.

STRONGBOW

There's a good collection of single malt sleeping aides in the study.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Dark. Lit by electric bulbs designed to give a late 19th century feel. The bound books, tufted leather chairs, TICKING of a grandfather clock add to the ambiance.

Chance steps to the well-stocked bar. He uncorks a bottle of Bowmore, sniffs it and looks in the mirror over the bar.

He sees a reflection of ULYSSES GRANT. Chance turns with the bottle. It's the eighteenth President of the United States.

GRANT

I prefer port.

Grant sips a glass of Sandeman. Chance corks the bottle and puts it back. He squints, blinks, shakes his head and closes and rubs his eyes.

CHANCE

I've got to get some sleep.

Chance opens his eyes. Grant's still there.

GRANT

I had my share of sleepless nights.

At the bar, Grant proffers Chance a Sandeman. Chance's eyes widen. He bolts from the room.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Chance closes the study door behind him. He proceeds down the hallway whispering at doors.

CHANCE

Strongbow. Strongbow?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Chance enters. RICHARD NIXON SLAMS the cupboard.

NIXON  
Where's the damn ketchup? My  
orders were to always have it.

ANDREW JACKSON, like on the \$20 bill, stands behind him.

JACKSON  
You want ketchup so bad why don't  
you break into Democratic  
headquarters and steal some.

NIXON  
Wanna take it outside, Jackson?

JACKSON  
Big talk since we can't go outside.

NIXON  
Then I'll clean your clock here,  
Ol' Dickory.

CHANCE  
(to himself)  
It's a tumor. I just know it.  
That's okay. I'm sure the President  
gets the best medical care.

The hideous ghost of William Henry Harrison floats by.

HARRISON  
I had the best medical care. The  
physicians blistered me with  
turpentine and ammonia and placed  
live venomous snakes in my bed.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Chance more manically searches the hallway.

CHANCE  
Strongbow!

Chance hears PIANO PLAYING in another room.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Chance enters. At a grand piano, HARRY TRUMAN plays.

TRUMAN  
Any requests?

Chance looks to the doorway where Grant pats the bottle of  
port. He turns again and sees MILLARD FILLMORE.

FILLMORE

Dude.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

At a poker table, Truman and Fillmore fiddle with cracker chips. Grant watches. Nixon's in the fridge looking for ketchup. Chance watches, frozen like a dime-store Indian.

TRUMAN

Nixon, you're holding up the game,  
like you held up the country.

Nixon disgustedly returns to the table.

NIXON

Watch it, Harry. The Truman  
Doctrine only gets you so far.

GRANT

Please, gentlemen. Some decorum  
for the current president.

Fillmore gets up and checks Chance out.

FILLMORE

Mason?

Chance may pass out, or scream, or pass out screaming.

FILLMORE

Snap out of it, man. Are you a  
vile initiate of the corrupt  
infernal order of Free Masons?

JACKSON

Not this again.

FILLMORE

Do you know how many Presidents  
were Masons? Too many. Connect  
the dots, bro.

GRANT

As you can see, some of us are very  
passionate.

TRUMAN

Mule tick crazy, more like.

FILLMORE

I know you were a Mason, Truman.

Chance, now shaking, sweating, has lost it.

FILLMORE

He's having a bad trip. Talk him down.

GRANT

Mr. President, you must be wondering why we're here. The simple answer is our actions during our initial stay condemned us to remain until a current occupant undoes the wrong he wrought.

INSERT:

A close shot of each President, like they're in a lineup stating their crime.

JACKSON

Andrew Jackson, seventh President of the United States, Indian, um, Native-American Genocide.

NIXON

Richard Nixon, 36th President of the United States, obstruction of justice, illicit bombing of Cambodia.

TRUMAN

Harry Truman, 33rd President of the United States, Japanese American interment camps, atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

FILLMORE

I was framed.

They all react.

FILLMORE

Fine. Millard Fillmore. My support of the 1850 Compromise to continue slavery led to the Civil War. But I'm not a Mason. Hey, where's Grant?

NIXON

Where do you think? Back at the bar. That leaves us an empty seat. You play cards, Mr. Butterworth?

Chance stares into space. It doesn't look like he'll ever come out of this.

CELL PHONE VIDEO POV - LATER

Chance has come out of it. He now plays poker and drinks with the dead presidents. They all have piles of crackers. Chance's is the most meager.

JACKSON  
Down she goes again, like a red coat in the bayou. Close in on this pile, Johnson.

Jackson rakes in the crackers. The camera ZOOMS IN.

JOHNSON (V.O.)  
I pray you're a better President than poker player.

BACK TO SCENE

ANDREW JOHNSON hands Chance the phone.

CHANCE  
Thanks.

INSERT:

Andrew Johnson in a lineup like the others earlier.

JOHNSON  
Andrew Johnson, 17th President of the United States. I opposed the 14th Amendment.

Nixon steps into the frame.

NIXON  
And?

JOHNSON  
I compared myself to Christ. Just like John Lennon.

NIXON  
And?

JOHNSON  
I was impeached, all right?

Nixon smiles and sticks his face in the camera.

NIXON  
But they didn't get Dick.

END INSERT.



INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The game is over. It's just drinks now. Chance seems to have come to terms with the whole thing.

                  CHANCE  
Fellas, I really don't see what I can do. I assume that's why no one's tried.

                  JOHNSON  
Kennedy did.

                  CHANCE  
What happened?

Jackson mimics a gun shot to the head.

                  NIXON  
Typical Kennedy. Like that's an excuse.

                  CHANCE  
No one else?

                  TRUMAN  
Carter.

                  FILLMORE  
He told us to pray.

                  TRUMAN  
Schmuck.

They all LAUGH. Chance gets up.

                  CHANCE  
Let me level with you, if you existed, I'd love to help, but you don't. Anyway, I have way too many problems of my own. And tomorrow, it's time to tackle them. The one thing this dream shows me that if you nutters could succeed at this job, there's no way I can fail.

Chance leaves, slapping himself in the face as he goes.

                  CHANCE  
Wake up, Chancy.

                  TRUMAN  
Schmuck.

                  FILLMORE  
He's a Mason.

INT. STUDY - DAY

The lights are off. In his pajamas and robe, Chance sleeps in a leather chair, whiskey bottle on his lap.

Peter enters and opens the curtains. Sunlight slaps Chance's face. Disoriented, Chance rises. The whiskey bottle falls to the floor, clinking into another empty bottle.

PETER  
Quite a night, I see.

CHANCE  
Oh, no, I didn't drink all that myself. It was-- Hmm. I had the strangest dream. At least I think it was a dream. Where's my phone?

Peter rolls his eyes. Chance feels his pockets.

PETER  
I don't know, but we're due in the Situation Room.

CHANCE  
I need my-- Wait, Situation Room?

PETER  
Yeah, there's a situation. Why do you need your phone so bad? You're not having an affair?

CHANCE  
Of course not.

PETER  
Good, cause Martha would go all Squeaky Fromme on your ass. Come on.

INT. SITUATION ROOM - DAY

The SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, 60, a crew cut in a suit, Win and Benneton look at the disheveled, bath-robed Chance.

BENNETON  
You're taking a relaxed management style to a bit of an extreme.

Chance is captivated by the big screen. It shows an overhead shot of some God-forsaken place in the Middle East.

CHANCE  
What's all that?

BENNETON

The enemy.

CHANCE

You have to stop thinking that way about our fellow men and women.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

All right, then. They're our fellow men's tanks and fellow women's tactical short-range missile battery.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - SUBBASEMENT - DAY

Strongbow finds the Dead Presidents engaged in a heated game of Pictionary. Nixon has just finished drawing at a board. Jackson scoffs at him. Truman, Fillmore and Grant CHUCKLE.

JACKSON

If you think that's a mule, you're a jackass.

NIXON

I'm not the one who's a Democrat.

JACKSON

I am not a Democrat. I am THE Democrat.

TRUMAN

He got you there, Dick.

NIXON

Will you stop with the Dick, bit, Harry? I know what you really mean.

GRANT

But you have to admit, it never gets old, Dick.

All the Presidents LAUGH.

STRONGBOW

Gentleman, did you really let him record you last night on this?

Strongbow holds up Chance's phone. Jackson offers Strongbow a drink from the table.

JACKSON

We were just having a little fun. Firewater. Come on. Truce. It's not like I personally marched you off of your land.

FILLMORE

Allow me to apologize for my rustic predecessor, President Jackson.

STRONGBOW

President Fillmore, you and technology don't mix. Remember the whole adult site visit on the White House server history thing?

FILLMORE

Have a heart, when I was breathing, a peek at an ankle was all I could get. I don't want a slice of cheesecake: I want the whole cake!

The Presidents unite over this plea with HUZZAHS!

PRESIDENTS

Cheesecake, cheesecake!

TRUMAN

With butter pecan ice cream.

Strongbow and the Presidents stare at Truman, confused.

INT. SITUATION ROOM - DAY

Everyone is frustrated with Chance, who just can't focus.

CHANCE

They just need to understand our intentions are peaceful.

BENNETON

They're not buying it.

CHANCE

Then sell it. A good product just needs the right advertising. Pancakes are a good product.

BENNETON

Pancakes again.

CHANCE

Peace. I mean peace is a good product. Just sell it.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE SITUATION ROOM - DAY

Leaving the Situation Room, Chance runs into Strongbow. He hands Chance his phone.

STRONGBOW  
This is yours, sir.

CHANCE  
You found it! That's terrific.

Chance grabs it and starts looking through it for evidence of ghosts. But AIDES AND STAFF passing by interrupt him.

AIDE  
Sir, we need to schedule the briefing on the pipeline disaster.

CHANCE  
Yes, I just need a second to--

STAFF MEMBER  
The Fed Chairman is waiting for your call about interest rates. He says the jobless rate--

CHANCE  
One sec.

Chance returns to his phone. Casey stops in front of him but doesn't want to interrupt.

Chance finally sees that there's no evidence on his phone. He looks up to see Casey, just a bit too close. He YELPS.

CASEY  
Sorry, Mr. President. I didn't mean to frighten you.

CHANCE  
Oh, no. Sorry. I mean you're not a ghost or anything. Casey, perfect. I need you to huddle with Win on the Middle East thing.

CASEY  
In addition to the stock market?

CHANCE  
I'm sorry, what?

CASEY  
It dropped 2,000 points today.

CHANCE  
Right... Good catch, Casey. Work that up, too.

INT. MEN'S ROOM - DAY

Chance splashes water in his face.

CHANCE

I guess it was just a dream. Or  
this is?

Chance slaps his own face. In the mirror, he sees Truman.  
Chance YELPS. He turns around. No one there. He YELPS again.

Chance turns back to the mirror. Truman, in the mirror, TAPS  
on it to get Chance's attention. Chance YELPS yet again.

TRUMAN

What is that sound you keep making?

CHANCE

Surprise, shock.

TRUMAN

Well, cut it out, you nimrod. Now,  
let's talk turkey about Japan.

INT. OUTSIDE THE FIRST LADY'S OFFICE - DAY

Chance wanders, shellshocked. He HEARS a SHOUT from within.

INT. FIRST LADY'S OFFICE - DAY

By her desk, Martha looks lost in a forest of fabric  
swatches. Chance rushes in.

CHANCE

What is it? Did you see them, too?

MARTHA

Who? No. They've given me the  
important job of making sure the  
chairs and sofa don't clash.

CHANCE

We all have our swatches to bear.

MARTHA

Laugh now. You'll sing a different  
tune when the sofa acquires nuclear  
technology. My Masters is in Macro  
Economics, not Home Economics, you  
know. But listen, something's up  
with the kids.

CHANCE

Martha, I have something way more  
important to--

MARTHA

Way more important than the kids.

CHANCE  
No, it's not that. I--

Martha needs to stop this conversation before it heads somewhere from which they'll never come back.

MARTHA  
Why are you still in your robe and pajamas? Go change.

INT. FIRST COUPLE'S BEDROOM - DAY\_

Chance enters and heads to the wardrobe to get some clothes. He pulls out a suit, closes it, hears a knocking from inside. He opens it. It's Andrew Jackson. He shuts it again. Jackson bursts out.

JACKSON  
Women problems, eh? I feel your pain. Can't live with them. Can't challenge them to a duel.

CHANCE  
What? Who would challenge a woman to a duel?

JACKSON  
No one, except maybe John Quincy Adams, but don't worry, he's not here. Listen, all these mugwumps will come to you for help. But you must prioritize your own legacy. That's why you must start with America's original sin.

Chance nods.

CHANCE  
Slavery.

JACKSON  
No. America's original original sin: the injustice wrought upon the red man.

CHANCE  
Mr. President, please, that's offensive.

JACKSON  
Quite right, sir. Redpeople. That includes the squaws and the braves.

Chance shakes his head and ducks into the secret passage.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Chance comes out another secret passage to find Grant in a brown leather tufted wing chair, drinking port. Grant smokes a cigar. He has one poured for Chance.

CHANCE

You're here to lobby me, too?

GRANT

I'm here to counsel you. Now, what has you retreating here?

CHANCE

Take your pick: the Middle East, police and protestors clashing over the Universal Voter Bill, the economy taking a nosedive...

GRANT

Send me a telegraph when half the nation secedes.

Chance is cowed.

GRANT

Nothing you're facing hasn't been faced before. Nothing we haven't experienced...

CHANCE

Experience. There's something to be said for experience.

GRANT

There is a great deal to be said for experience, Mr. President.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Back at the poker table, all the Dead Presidents.

CHANCE

With all this experience, you'd be like a super cabinet.

FILLMORE

You expect us just to give it away? We're not Truman's daughter.

TRUMAN

Watch it, Fillmore.

JACKSON

Politics is about mutual interest.



FILLMORE  
Quid pro quo, Clarice.

CHANCE  
No, got it, fair enough. I'll  
right your wrongs.

NIXON  
How are you going to un-vaporize  
the country of Japan?

TRUMAN  
It was just Hiroshima and Nagasaki.  
That shortened the war.

FILLMORE  
That song is so bad you should play  
it on the piano.

Truman gets up to face Fillmore.

TRUMAN  
You know as much about good music  
as a pig knows about Sunday.

GRANT  
Gentlemen, settle. We have an  
opportunity to help ourselves and  
President Garfield.

FILLMORE  
How do we know we can trust you to  
keep your side of the arrangement?

CHANCE  
The American people trusted me.

They all LAUGH. Johnson points at Nixon.

JOHNSON  
They trusted Slippery Dick, too.

NIXON  
It's Tricky, you bastard.

INT. FIRST COUPLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

On a settee, Martha reads a book. Chance enters. She  
doesn't even look up.

CHANCE  
What are you reading?

MARTHA  
A book I found in the study. The  
memoirs of Nellie Taft.

Martha shows Nellie's picture on the book cover: an elegant woman in an improbably enormous floral bonnet.

MARTHA

She was William Howard Taft's wife.

CHANCE

Huh, I don't know him.

MARTHA

He was a president.

CHANCE

I know that. I mean I don't know him personally.

MARTHA

Obviously. He's long dead.

Chance shrugs and nods noncommittally.

CHANCE

Getting any tips?

MARTHA

Well, she was a chainsmoker. So I can think about starting that. She was also the first First Lady to ride beside her husband at the Inauguration. She even attended cabinet meetings, although she didn't speak at them.

CHANCE

Sounds like she had heap of gumption with a side of moxie.

MARTHA

Don't patronize me.

CHANCE

Look, Martha, I'm sorry about how things have been between us lately.

MARTHA

Me, too. I know you have a lot to deal with.

CHANCE

It's a goddamn full deck.

MARTHA

Do you mean full house? Because a full house is a good thing.

CHANCE

Then I don't mean that. What about the full deck?

MARTHA

Oh, you want to be playing with a full deck. Although people say you aren't.

CHANCE

Funny.

MARTHA

Look, honey, I'm worried. And I sort of feel responsible for pulling you away to help with the kids. Let me be your Nellie Taft.

She puts a floral throw pillow on her head mimicking Nellie.

CHANCE

You don't have to be. I found another way to do this. We'll have this country cleaned up quick. Good as done.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - STATE DINING ROOM - DAY

It's set up like a state dinner, but it's breakfast-- omelette stations, and stacks and stacks of pancakes.

Chance, Martha, the JAPANESE PRIME MINISTER and his WIFE sit at one table. Celebrities and others dot the room at others.

PRIME MINISTER

Fish for breakfast is not so different from eggs. It is protein.

CHANCE

Sometimes I have breakfast for dinner.

MARTHA

Sometimes you just have a bottle of Scotch.

Trying to ignore the dig, Chance turns to the Prime Minister.

CHANCE

But you do have okonomiyaki.

PRIME MINISTER'S WIFE

You say that well.

CHANCE  
I know pancake in every language.  
You know how to say it in Swahili?

She LAUGHS and shakes her head no.

CHANCE  
Pamba.

PRIME MINISTER  
You know, okonomiyaki is savory.

The Prime Minister drones on about Japanese pancakes, but Chance is transfixed by a Waiter across the room. It's Andrew Jackson. He pours coffee and stares down Chance.

Chance scans for other waiters. One is Fillmore. He mimics pouring coffee on a guest's head. Chance rises.

CHANCE  
No!

Everyone GASPS. Chance picks up his glass.

CHANCE  
I mean toast!

He BANGS A GLASS with a spoon.

CHANCE  
Hello. Thanks for coming to this first state pancake breakfast. Let me tear you away for an important announcement. Equal justice under the law, should be more than words inscribed in marble. They should be etched on our hearts to make a more perfect union and right past wrongs. So I want to talk about reparations.

Jackson and Fillmore whisper to each other.

JACKSON  
It's the Indians! He's giving them their wampum, and I'm finally getting away from you.

CHANCE  
The Gettysburg Address is not pretty speech to be memorized but a challenge to us all.

FILLMORE  
Gettysburg! He's going to pay off the ex-slaves! It is I who will be getting away from you.

CHANCE

The American Dream is for all who worked for the promise. Today, we finally fulfill that promise to these people who came here seeking a better life.

FILLMORE

That's not how the slaves got here!

JACKSON

Or the savages.

CHANCE

And I can think of no more fitting time to do this than when the Japanese Prime Minister is here with his lovely wife.

JACKSON

How is it fitting? What do these yellow infidels know about Indians?

CHANCE

Today, I'm announcing an executive order providing reparations to all descendants of Japanese Americans interned during World War II.

IN THE DRAWING ROOM

Playing piano, badly, in the drawing room, Truman stops. His hands fade. He looks up. Smiles. Disappears.

INT. STATE DINING ROOM - DAY

With long faces, Fillmore and Jackson leave in a wisp. Their coffee pots clatter to the floor. Heads turn. Benneton is livid. Casey and Win, fuming, look to Peter.

PETER

Hey, I'm hearing it for the first time, same as you.

WIN

Good thing this wasn't a brunch for France. He'd have given back the Louisiana Purchase.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Nixon enters eating cottage cheese with ketchup. Fillmore watches in disgust. Grant paces.

NIXON  
 Forget about oil pricing. Bomb the bastards. Thanks for the ketchup.

CHANCE  
 Bomb? The Middle East? No. Anytime on the ketchup, President Nixon. I know you like it.

FILLMORE  
 Bombing will definitely harsh the mellow. Have you considered assassinating key heads of state?

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE STUDY - DAY

Peter sees the door open a crack. He's about to enter.

CHANCE (O.S.)  
 I'm not assassinating anyone!

Peter freezes. He listens at the door. Peter's eyes widen as he hears only Chance's side of the conversation.

INT. STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Chance talks to Nixon and Fillmore.

FILLMORE  
 I'm talking about some helter skelter, witchy action.

CHANCE  
 Why does he talk that way?

FILLMORE  
 You're not down with it?

GRANT  
 Over the years, we pick up things, develop an attachment. Sometimes an annoying one.

FILLMORE  
 No, man, it's a gas.

CHANCE  
 Can we get to the Middle East?

IN THE HALL

Peter listens, more intently.

IN THE STUDY

Fillmore is indignant.

FILLMORE

Why should we help you? We're all still here.

NIXON

Truman's not.

FILLMORE

What made him so deserving? I sent Commodore Perry on a trade mission to Japan. The treaty of Kanagawa. Everyone's heard of that, right? I fixed all the problems with Japan until Truman went and bombed them.

CHANCE

No. Not right. Pearl Harbor.

FILLMORE

Right, fine. But Nixon here fixed all that when he went to Japan.

NIXON

That was China, you moron.

FILLMORE

China, Japan, they--

CHANCE

Don't say it.

GRANT

Gentlemen, decorum. Now, with the Middle East, what I would do is--

Peter enters. The ghosts vanish in wisps. Chance SIGHS.

PETER

I wanted to go over the Middle East policy brief.

CHANCE

I love you buddy, but if you'd've come in a few minutes later, we might not need to.

PETER

I don't think we should be that cavalier about it.

CHANCE  
 I'm not. I'm inspired. The  
 collective spirit of this place is  
 flowing through me like I'm a super  
 conductor. And I'm developing a  
 real taste for port, too.

PETER  
 Maybe we'll put a pin this.

CHANCE  
 Groovy.

INT. WILDER'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Wilder and Benneton spar. Casey watches from the wings.

WILDER  
 Mr. Vice President, welcome to my  
 little house on the prairie.

A little house appears on the screen.

BENNETON  
 Oh, I didn't think you were related  
 to that--

WILDER  
 (screaming)  
 I'm not!

The house on the screen bursts into flames and is swept away  
 by a hurricane force wind.

WILDER  
 You're in the Lion's Den!

A ROAR sound effect BLARES. It shakes Benneton. Behind them  
 on a green screen, a ferocious lion.

BENNETON  
 I know you're not this  
 administration's biggest fan.

WILDER  
 A fan won't blow out the stink.  
 President Milk Carton's gone sour.

Wilder sprays a can of air freshener everywhere. Sound  
 effect: COUGH, COUGH. A kitten with a hairball.

WILDER  
 Will you be the blown out match  
 that masks the stench of failure  
 from the dump that is this  
 administration?



Wilder lights a match and blows it out.

BENNETON

If the President Garfield succeeds,  
we all do.

Casey smiles until she sees the kitten on the screen now has Benneton's face and licks its paws. MEOW.

WILDER

If he succeeds at creating 10  
dollar a gallon gas, putting U.S.  
companies out of business, ceding  
the Middle East to terrorists, we  
all lose. And, Mr. Vice President,  
I think you share my view.

BENNETON

I think you've been misinformed.

Casey nods. A good comeback.

WILDER

You don't believe we need to kill  
the gas and oil industry.

BENNETON

Of course not.

ROAR. The lion's back.

WILDER

Or that we should allow the Middle  
East to descend into chaos.

BENNETON

No one wants chaos.

ROAR.

WILDER

So what will you do about it?

Wilder lights another match, grabs the air freshener and lights the spray on fire, like a mini flame thrower.

BENNETON

I... we're not going to let any of  
that happen. The oil industry is  
the country's backbone. Without a  
backbone, you can't stand.

Casey makes a concerned face.

WILDER

Testify!

BENNETON

The President has entrusted me with oil policy.

WILDER

Because he's playing Mary Poppins.

BENNETON

More like Mr. Mom.

CANNED LAUGHTER AND A ROAR. The lion chases a gazelle. Casey shakes her head no. Benneton looks over but ignores her.

WILDER

Gangsta!

BENNETON

But the American people can trust that this is in good hands.

The HALLELUJAH CHORUS and a ROAR. The lion devours the gazelle, ripping it to shreds. Casey is horrified.

BENNETON

And to anyone watching who thinks we'll fold our commitment to the security of the Middle East, know that we will not allow that.

WILDER

Even if it jeopardizes peace in the region?

BENNETON

Peace comes through security, through strength. As George Washington so eloquently put it in his State of the Union Address: "There is a rank due to the United States among nations which will be lost by the reputation of weakness. If we desire to avoid insult, we must be able to repel it; if we desire to secure peace, the most powerful instrument of our rising prosperity, it must be known that we are at all times ready for war."

WILDER

If only President Garfield was more familiar with the words of our former presidents.

INT. DEPTHS OF THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY

The TV blares at the Presidents while they play poker.

FILLMORE

That Wilder fella cracks me up.

NIXON

That's no fella: it's a damned women's libber. And she proves my point: the press is a joke. Straight flush.

Grant tosses his cards down. Nixon rises and passes Chance as he enters head hung low.

JACKSON

Here he is, our first woman president.

JOHNSON

You look worse than Harrison. And they gave him an enema of molten mercury.

CHANCE

Can I ask you all something?

FILLMORE

About your Vice President emasculating you like a prized bullock?

Chance shakes the comment off.

CHANCE

So did you ever have to deal with anything like this?

JOHNSON

I didn't have a Vice President.

FILLMORE

Me neither. Vice President's are a drag. And I should know. I was one.

JOHNSON

Me too. None of the REAL presidents had them.

CHANCE

Lincoln? Washington? Really? Benneton seemed to make sense on the tariff thing, but...

JACKSON

Tariffs!

Jackson storms off.

CHANCE

What's wrong with him?

GRANT'S VOICE

President Jackson, I know tariffs are a touchy subject. But please, it would help President Garfield.

Jackson returns. As he talks, we see the scene he describes play out MOS among translucent spectres in the room.

JACKSON

I recall a gathering to celebrate the birthday of Thomas Jefferson. My first Vice President, John C. Calhoun, worked up the throng into a succession of toasts in support of the right of states to nullify federal tariffs. I suffered through all manner of blather about the reserved rights of the people, the affection for liberty over power. Then they turned to me, and I said "Our federal Union-- it must be preserved," and you could hear a pin drop. I had dumped a bucket of excrement on their party. Calhoun's face dropped like a dead horse. He mumbled something about liberty, but he was cowed.

Nixon enters eating ketchup and cottage cheese from the container.

NIXON

Not the Calhoun nullification story again!

JACKSON

I should have nullified him.

CHANCE

I doubt that my giving a toast is going to solve this.

JACKSON

My toast didn't solve anything. It only got worse. No, sir, you must do the only honorable thing: slay him in a duel.

CHANCE

A what now?

JACKSON

My only regret in life-- and in death-- is that I didn't put the quietus on Calhoun, that coward, conspirator, hypocrite, traitor, and fool.

CHANCE

Okay. Any other ideas on what I can do about Benneton?

NIXON

What you must do is humiliate the man, publicly.

FILLMORE

Yes, perhaps lock him in the stocks in the public square and cane him like a fugitive slave.

CHANCE

Good God!

NIXON

But if you do plan on killing him, don't get your hands dirty. There are people I know that can help.

GRANT

These men are, of course, insane. But they make a valid point. You must stand your ground with Benneton. Put him in his place. But in private. That's the only way he will respect you.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Chance and Benneton sit across from each other.

CHANCE

I'm just saying that if you disagree with me, take it up with me, not the press.

BENNETON

I tried. But you were engaged in a heated bout of Mother May I.

Chance looks down at his desk drawer. It's rattling on its own. He opens it: a 19th CENTURY PISTOL. He SLAMS it shut.

CHANCE

Some people think I should publicly humiliate you. You know that?

BENNETON

You sure you want to take me on like that? I have many supporters out there, on the Hill, too.

Chance looks behind Benneton and sees Jackson materialize. His eyes widen. Benneton slams his hand down on the desk.

BENNETON

Are you listening to me?

Jackson picks up a bust of Churchill.

JACKSON

What the devil is this doing here? We fought a war to rid ourselves of the royalists, and now we have idols of them in the people's house. Still...

Jackson lifts the bust and hits it a few times into his hand to feel the weight. He eyes the back of Benneton's skull.

CHANCE

No!

BENNETON

Don't scream at me.

CHANCE

I'll scream at who I want. I'm the President. You will follow my lead, or you will be nullified.

BENNETON

Nullified?

CHANCE

Uhhh, from the administration. Eliminated. Eradicated. I don't care how many supporters you have, you have a problem, you speak to me and only me. We hash it out.

BENNETON

(ostensibly cowed)

I see. You're the one they elected.

Chance looks at Jackson as Benneton passes him. Benneton can't see Jackson. Jackson shrugs as if to say so what.

CHANCE

And another thing. I want that Universal Voter Registration bill passed and on my desk by month's end, you hear?

Benneton nods and opens the door. Jackson gives Chance a scolding look. Chance gets it and loudly CLEARS HIS THROAT.

BENNETON  
(getting the point)  
Mr. President.

INT. FIRST COUPLE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Martha eats breakfast in bed and reads the paper. Chance points to the headline: "Benneton Retracts!"

CHANCE  
Did I tell you how I did it?

Mouth full of toast, Martha nods, but it doesn't stop him.

CHANCE  
I stared him down, and I told him,  
Benneton, if you---

She sees something in the paper. Alarmed, she puts it aside.

CHANCE  
What? What? Let me see.

She tries to hold the paper away, but he grabs it. He sees what she was looking at. His face drops.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - SUBBASEMENT - DAY

Nixon strolls in with the *USA TODAY* newspaper.

NIXON  
The Presidential rankings are in.

The Presidents gather around except Grant and Fillmore who sit to the side playing draughts. Jackson grabs the paper.

JACKSON  
Holy gator's taint. You're 29th.  
You were literally a criminal.

NIXON  
But not a crook.

JACKSON  
Ford had to pardon you.

NIXON  
And he's 30th. The cover up is  
always worse than the crime.

JACKSON  
 (to Grant and Fillmore)  
 I've cracked the top 20! Aren't you gentleman interested in your place in history?

GRANT  
 I don't need a piece of paper to tell me that.

FILLMORE  
 Indeed. Who cares about that nonsense put together by egghead historians? Johnson, I assume you are last as usual.

JOHNSON  
 Not this year.

Nixon grabs the paper to rub it in Fillmore's face.

NIXON  
 Hehe.  
 (reading)  
 "And rounding out the bottom is Millard Fillmore, once a name synonymous with obscurity, history reveals him to be a man of weak principle and an even weaker capacity for leadership."

Fillmore SHOUTS and vanishes.

GRANT  
 Where does Garfield rate?

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Chance waves the newspaper in Win's and Peter's faces.

CHANCE  
 45th!

PETER  
 You beat that Fillmore guy.

CHANCE  
 Yeah, but he's a jerk.

WIN  
 What? Look, don't worry about this *USA Today* horse shit. Who cares where you rank against a bunch of dead men?



CHANCE  
They probably do. I'll never hear  
the end of this.

WIN  
Frankly, I'd worry more about our  
internal polling which indicates we  
should slow play the voter bill.

PETER  
People are literally rioting in the  
streets over it.

WIN  
Not the right people.

PETER  
You mean the white people.

WIN  
It's shitty, but it's how to hold  
on at the state and local level.

CHANCE  
But I told Benneton to get it done.

WIN  
So untell him. What you did with  
Benneton played well. This  
predates that. You may bump  
yourself above Millard Fillmore.

PETER  
Whoever that is.

CHANCE  
He's a reprobate.

WIN  
What?

CHANCE  
Sorry, that's just what Andrew  
Jackson calls him.

INT. FIRST COUPLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In bed with Martha, Chance is lost in his folders.

MARTHA  
Did you hear me? I don't like this  
atmosphere for our kids.

CHANCE  
They seem fine.

FLASHBACK - INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE OF DINA'S BEDROOM - DAY  
 Martha hears Dina making WHIPPING SOUNDS and Bud MOANING.

INT. DINA'S ROOM - DAY

Dina whips Bud with an imaginary whip.

DINA  
 You ran away and must be punished.

BUD  
 Please, master. I was feeling sad  
 because my family was taken.

DINA  
 You think you feel sad now. Wait  
 'til you feel the sting of my whip.

Martha bursts in.

MARTHA  
 Dina, stop. What are you doing?

DINA  
 I'm letting this slave know his  
 proper place.

MARTHA  
 (snapping, angrier than  
 they've ever seen her)  
 Don't say that. Never say that.

Martha sees *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on Dina's bed. She grabs it.

MARTHA  
 Your father decided to do all this,  
 run for office, run the country so  
 things like they talk about in this  
 book never happen again. And I  
 don't just mean slavery, but the  
 things that made people think  
 slavery was okay.

INT. FIRST COUPLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)

Chance tries to diffuse the tension, but he knows it's bad.

CHANCE  
 They probably found it in the  
 library. You know kids'  
 imaginations.

MARTHA  
 I don't want them reading that.

CHANCE  
I'll tell the household staff to supervise them more.

MARTHA  
Household staff, supervise, listen to you.

Chance stops himself, nods agreement and picks up the phone.

CHANCE  
Clear my schedule tomorrow.... Who? The Amir? Push it off. He'll wait. I have some important business.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Peter and Martha watch Chance playing on the floor with Dina and Bud. It has a JFK feel to it. They whisper to each other.

PETER  
That's a lotta Camelot right there.

MARTHA  
He's much happier doing this than...

PETER  
Running the country?

Martha doesn't disagree.

PETER  
How does Chance seem like he's dealing with all this to you?

MARTHA  
Better than the kids. Dina seems to think Simon Legree is the hero of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

PETER  
Pro, she's very precocious for a six-year-old. Con, well, 'nuff said. Martha, have you noticed Chance talking to himself?

MARTHA  
He's always done that. Self-motivation, he calls it.

PETER  
No. Different. Like he's having whole conversations. With people who aren't there, who don't exist.

Dina gives Chance a dead-eyed stare.

DINA  
You're drawing dead, pops.

CHANCE  
What?

DINA  
Go Fish!

Dina gleefully rakes in the pot of White House M&Ms.

PETER  
Maybe you want to let your Dad win  
a few hands?

BUD  
Dad isn't very good at cards.

CHANCE  
I think Pete has that figured out.  
Okay, kids, I better get back to work.

Chance gets up. The kids scamper off, scooping up the  
remaining M&Ms.

CHANCE  
Thieves!

MARTHA  
Chance, Peter is here to talk to  
you about the Universal Voter Bill.

PETER  
They say the vote will be close.  
I'm concerned you told Benneton to  
back off.

CHANCE  
You heard what Win said.

PETE  
I did. But that isn't right,  
Chance. Not seizing the moment,  
history frowns on that stuff.

CHANCE  
If I wanted to hear about history,  
I'd listen to--

Win bursts in the door with a panicked look.

INT. SITUATION ROOM - DAY

Chance, Peter, Win and Benneton. Tense.

WIN  
SEAL teams are on standby.

CHANCE  
That's only one option.

Their attention is drawn to the TV, muted. It shows footage of two STUDENT HOSTAGES. They look haggard and frightened. So does Chance.

CHANCE  
How did this come out of nowhere?

BENNETON  
Out of nowhere? My God, man, don't you pay attention to anything?

Chance rises and walks out.

PETER  
This is because of what you said on that stupid show.

BENNETON  
This is because he's playing tiddlywinks instead of leading. And where is he going anyway?

INT. STUDY - DAY

Grant pours Chance a port. Chance waves it off.

CHANCE  
I need a clear head.

GRANT  
They blamed my losses at Shiloh on drink. Couldn't prove it, though.

CHANCE  
Now you sound like Nixon.

GRANT  
More coincidence than conspiracy. It didn't matter if they could prove it. Perception can be more powerful than the truth.

CHANCE  
Is that why you're here?

Grant indicates the glass.

GRANT  
This? No.

The lineup again, but more like the Most Interesting Man in the World ads, yet world weary, contrite at the same time. Grant turns to the camera, drink in hand.

GRANT

Ulysses Grant, 18th President,  
reconstruction withered while I  
pursued political gain.

CHANCE

They're all here for what they did.  
But you're here for what you should  
have done, but didn't.

GRANT

Two sides of the same silver  
dollar. Inaction can be as damning  
as pursuing the wrong path.

CHANCE

They say I'm dithering.

GRANT

Better to pick a path than to be  
struck down at a crossroads. Will  
you be able to rise to the  
occasion, to do what is not popular  
but necessary?

CHANCE

Not without help.

GRANT

If you want our help, you're going  
to have to start delivering on your  
promise. I can't keep them  
occupied forever.

INSERT - The Presidents sing karaoke in the subbasement. Millard Fillmore does "Ball and Chain"; Johnson, "The Banana Boat Song" and Nixon "Once in a Lifetime." The warbling continues beneath the dialogue for the rest of the scene.

END INSERT.

CHANCE

I don't have time for that

GRANT

You'll have to make the time.

CHANCE

I can't make time.

GRANT

That's not what you told Martha.

CHANCE

That was about my family.

GRANT

So is this. America is your family. You need to muster the support of your team.

CHANCE

That's what I'm talking about.

GRANT

No. I'll talk to my brethren but I mean your living team. In times like these, you need to be aligned.

The TICKING STUDY CLOCK is overtaken by Nixon singing "Once in a Lifetime" echoing in the distance.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - SUB BASEMENT - NIGHT

Nixon, Jackson, Johnson, Grant and Fillmore watch the Middle East crisis coverage on TV.

NIXON

Bomb 'em. Bomb the hell out of 'em.

GRANT

It's not as simple as that. He wants to hear everyone's viewpoint. Like Lincoln's team of rivals.

JOHNSON

That's fine for you. Lincoln and his little team put you in charge of the Union Army. I wasn't even allowed in the room.

FILLMORE

You and that martyr complex. I see why you compared yourself to Jesus.

JOHNSON

Just like John Lennon.

NIXON

I knew John Lennon. John Lennon was on my secret enemies list. You, sir, are no John Lennon. You're not even Ringo.

GRANT

Gentlemen, put your bickering aside for the sake of the country.

They GRUMBLE ASSENT. Grant departs.

JOHNSON  
Grant's right. Garfield deserves  
our help.

FILLMORE  
Who died and made you boss?

JOHNSON  
Well, Lincoln.

FILLMORE  
Brahs, we're all still in da house.  
Garfunkel's gotta give us a little  
somethin' somethin'. He's gotta  
let some of these dogs out.

They nod agreement.

JACKSON  
What about Grant?

FILLMORE  
Leave him to me.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Grant swigs a glass of port. Fillmore pours him another.

FILLMORE  
I know we haven't seen eye to eye  
on Garfield. But I remember what  
you did for me when I died.

GRANT  
Nothing more than you would have.

FILLMORE  
But such kind words: "the long-  
continued and useful public service  
and eminent purity of character of  
the ex-President will be remembered  
beyond these days of mourning."

GRANT  
Hoho. You remember that, do you?

Grant drains his glass. Fillmore pulls out a whiskey bottle.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Chance and Benneton aren't getting on nearly as well.

BENNETON  
Open a dialogue with terrorists?



CHANCE  
Labeling people just gets their  
back up, Arnie.

BENNETON  
Mr. President, this isn't a thought  
exercise. It's a matter of life  
and death. You need to make a  
decision here.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Grant and Fillmore drink and reminisce deep into the night.

FILLMORE  
So maybe we're just twin sons of  
different mothers, dig?

GRANT  
You're saying we're not that  
different.

FILLMORE  
We both want out. Just need to pick  
the best guru to guide us on that  
crazy, hazy trip-- Garfield or...

GRANT  
Benneton?

FILLMORE  
Bingo, Ringo.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

Chance and Benneton debate.

BENNETON  
For a guy who made pancakes, you  
sure waffle a lot.

CHANCE  
Is that a zinger for your next TV  
appearance?

BENNETON  
The Joint Chiefs agree with me.

Chance SIGHS. He needs to put some cards on the table

CHANCE  
What if I told you that we have at  
our disposal a far more experienced  
brain trust that can help us  
navigate through this?

Chance looks at his watch.

BENNETON  
You have somewhere to be?

CHANCE  
We both do.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - STUDY - MIDNIGHT

The clock TICKS. Chance paces. Benneton sits impatiently.

CHANCE  
They'll be here.

BENNETON  
There is a crisis of state going on, and we're playing Mystery Date.

Chance squirms, nervously shaking his leg.

CHANCE  
Oh, you don't like games. Too bad. They're mad about poker.

BENNETON  
Is that what this is? Some poker buddies of yours?

CHANCE  
No. No. I'm terrible at cards.

Chance looks at the clock. 12:30. He pops up. He heads towards a secret panel. Opens it.

CHANCE  
Come on. We'll find them.

INT. SUBBASEMENT - NIGHT

Chance and Benneton, who has lost all patience, see a glow down the corridor and around a corner.

Chance runs. Benneton tries to keep up. They turn out of sight around the corner. The glow fades.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Benneton emerges from the passage. Chance follows, dejected.

BENNETON  
Who in blazes do you think lives in the boiler room of the White House?

Chance realizes he looks like a fool.

INT. BENNETON'S OFFICE - DAY

Benneton and Win confer.

WIN

I'm sure he was just messing with you. You know how he is.

BENNETON

Messing with me? That's how he handles a crisis? Back me up. You'll have a place in my administration.

WIN

But the 25th Amendment? That's not an option. You'll never get the rest of the cabinet to agree.

Benneton nods agreement with a SIGH. Win leaves. A VOICE from behind in Benneton's chair, facing the window.

FILLMORE (O.S.)

We only had 12 amendments in my day. And a lot bigger balls.

Benneton's chair spins around. It's Fillmore. He takes his head off and puts it back on to show he's a ghost.

VOICE ON SPEAKER PHONE

Sir, the Second Lady is here.

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Chance, Peter and Win are in deep discussion.

CHANCE

I can talk to the Amir.

WIN

That's not a good look.

PETER

And sending in troops is?

The Oval Office door opens. Martha enters.

CHANCE

Martha, this isn't a good time.

MARTHA

It's Dina.

CHANCE  
What? Is Bud whipping her again?

Win looks confused.

MARTHA  
She having trouble sleeping. She says there's--

CHANCE  
Give her some warm milk. Don't you understand? We have a hostage crisis.

MARTHA  
Oh. Sorry. I wish I could help you with that. Oh, wait, I tried to, but you said you had experts. Chance, you promised you would be there for your family. You said it was as good as done. Well, it's not good, and it's not done.

Martha storms out.

CHANCE  
She's right. The problem is that America's my family.

INT. BENNETON'S OFFICE - DAY

Benneton stares into space while Fillmore lights up a joint.

FILLMORE  
He's entered a dimension of the mind.

Darlene slaps Benneton hard in the face. Benneton shakes it off, looks at Fillmore and SCREAMS. Darlene slaps him again.

BENNETON  
He's, he's, a, a--

DARLENE  
A ghost. He is. We had lots of them growing up on the former plantation. Ghosts of ex-slaves, ghosts of Confederate soldiers, and one cross-dressing preacher who looked like he'd been through three wars and a goat roping. But this ghost is here to help.

BENNETON  
H-h-help how?

Fillmore pulls out a vial.

BENNETON  
What's that?

FILLMORE  
Same stuff that took care of  
Taylor.

BENNETON  
Who?

FILLMORE  
Zachary Taylor. I was his Vice  
President.

BENNETON  
I thought he died after eating a  
bowl of cherries.

FILLMORE  
That happens when the cherries are  
poisoned.

BENNETON  
You can't--

DARLENE  
Darling, sometimes, you're blind in  
one eye and can't see out the  
other. You said yourself your  
career may not survive Garfield's  
mismanagement. The country  
deserves better. We deserve better.

FILLMORE  
You dig, Burford? So screw your  
courage to the sticking place.

DARLENE  
Sweetie, that's my line. But the  
ghost is right.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - ROSE GARDEN - DAY

REPORTERS all YELL OUT QUESTIONS at Casey at once.

CASEY  
We're working with all speed. We--

The Reporters react, distracted by something behind her.  
It's Chance walking with Peter and Strongbow.

REPORTERS  
Mr. President, Mr. President.

Chance ignores them. Marine One touches down. Chance heads towards it with purpose. A REPORTER catches his attention.

REPORTER  
Where are you going?

CHANCE  
To get our hostages back...

REPORTER TWO  
So we're negotiating with terrorists?

CHANCE  
That's an awfully easy sound bite you're trying to force there, Ed. American citizens are in danger. Part of our family. I will do what is necessary to protect our family even if it may not be popular.

Chance and Peter head towards the chopper. Win frantically runs up, lagging behind, out of the loop. As the chopper takes off, Win stands alone. The press quickly descend on him and Casey, still with her dazed look.

INT. SUB BASEMENT - DAY

Grant and Fillmore have it out in front of the others.

GRANT  
This is about the office of the President. It's larger than us.

FILLMORE  
Save the campaign speech and have another drink.

JACKSON  
The lad is a bit milquetoast on dealing with the Moors.

JOHNSON  
You could call it compromise.

JACKSON  
You would.

JOHNSON  
Name the time and weapons.

GRANT  
Why not tell them the real reason you're so against President Garfield?

FILLMORE

I think he might be a Mason.

GRANT

So you deny working with Benneton?

NIXON

And they said I was double dealing.

FILLMORE

Like Jackson said, the dude is down with the Moors. Way uncool. Benneton will get things done.

GRANT

Benneton's not the president.

FILLMORE

Neither was I until Old Rough and Ready came a cropper.

GRANT

So that's what you have planned. Not on my watch.

INT. BENNETON'S OFFICE - DAY

Benneton stares out the window. Protestors gather at the White House fence. More than usual. He looks back at his desk. It now sports a bust of Millard Fillmore.

BENNETON

How did that--?

The Fillmore bust starts talking. It's creepy.

FILLMORE BUST

Still not down with cutting off the head of state?

BENNETON

It did wonders for you?

FILLMORE BUST

Oh, you want to go there? Fine, this is my chance to fix all that.

BENNETON

Fix what? I thought I was freeing you.

Fillmore appears.

FILLMORE

Metaphor, man, metaphor. Free to be you and me.

(MORE)

FILLMORE (CONT'D)

Free to rehabilitate the legacy of the Whigs! Free at last, free at last. Thank God it's Friday, I'll be free at last.

BENNETON

That's not how that goes.

FILLMORE

Alright, alright, alright. Let me sock something else to you. Two words: voter bill.

EXT. CAPITOL HILL - DAY

Benneton trots up the steps.

FILLMORE (V.O.)

Tis true I am far from a friend of the Nubians, but this could cement your legacy.

INT. SENATE CHAMBER - DAY (CSPAN BROADCAST)

The full Senate is voting. At the podium, Benneton presides.

CLERK OF THE SENATE

Mr. Peters.

VOICE OF MR. PETERS

Aye.

CLERK OF THE SENATE

Mr. Portman.

VOICE OF MR. PORTMAN

Nay.

GRUMBLING.

TV ANNOUNCER

This is a historic moment. The vote on the Universal Voter Bill which would allow registration and voting via an electronic application and which many believe will finally provide equality of access to the voting booth by all Americans is tied, 50/50. We now wait to hear from the Vice President, who sits as President of the Senate. The administration has sent mixed messages on this bill of late and, oh, he's going to speak.



All eyes turn to Benneton.

BENNETON

The yeas are 50. The nays are 50.  
The Senate being equally divided,  
the vice president votes in the  
affirmative on this important piece  
of legislation.

EXT. AIR FORCE ONE - DAY

Establishing. It streams through the clouds.

INT. AIR FORCE ONE - MOBILE OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Chance sits at his desk, fiddling with a tintype of Grant across from Peter and the SECRETARY OF STATE, 60, a pale, pasty, puffy bureaucrat.

SECRETARY OF STATE

If I understand your intention correctly, you're flying to meet with the Amir, but Mr. President, there's a protocol about how these state visits are handled. The Secret Service, for example--

Chance points to Strongbow, in the corner, watching.

SECRETARY OF STATE

With all respect, I just don't mean your personal detail, I mean the ground crew, the advance team. I'd ask that--

A screen on his desk starts RINGING. Chance holds up his hand to cut him off and answers the Zoom call.

CHANCE

Hello, Your Highness, I'm glad you've agreed to this call.

ON SCREEN

A wealthy potentate of a Middle East State, the AMIR, 50s.

AMIR

Mr. President, I am concerned about reports that you are flying to meet with me. We have not arranged--

The Secretary of State gives an I-told-you-so look.

INTERCUTTING BETWEEN AMIR AND CHANCE AS NECESSARY

CHANCE

Oh, don't go to any trouble.  
Really, I'm just coming to pick up  
our students.

AMIR

Mr. President, we don't have your  
students. A radical faction has  
taken them.

CHANCE

Well, it's in your country. You  
run the place. I'm sure you can  
sort this out.

AMIR

Mr. President, I am offended by  
that insinuation. And I must say  
that if you invade our airspace--

CHANCE

No one is talking about invading.  
In fact, look, if you don't control  
the people that have our students,  
just point us to where they are.

AMIR

I will not authorize any sort of  
military incursion.

CHANCE

Why do you keep saying military?  
Here's what we'll do. I'll offer  
myself in exchange for the  
hostages. Wait, that won't work.

The Secretary of State breathes a SIGH of relief.

CHANCE

There are two of them. I'll offer  
up me and the Secretary of State,  
Mr.-- Mr. Secretary of State.  
Look, see.

Chance turns the screen around so the Amir can see the  
panicked Secretary of State as his face drops and eyes widen.

CHANCE

So can you pass that message on?

AMIR

Mr. President, that will-- that  
will start a war.

CHANCE

I believe it was Ulysses Grant who said "There never was a time when some way could not be found to prevent the drawing of the sword." See you soon.

Chance hangs up. He looks at the shaking, sweating Secretary of State. They sit in silence. Chance turns on the TV.

ON TV

The Wilder show. Wilder interviews Benneton again.

WILDER

So he's gone full on Neville Chamberlain.

BENNETON

I certainly do not agree with negotiating with terrorists. But I'm here to talk about the passage of the Universal Voter legislation.

ON AIR FORCE ONE

The highly agitated Secretary of State gets up.

PETER

Where are you going?

SECRETARY OF STATE

To look for a parachute.

ON SCREEN

Wilder is on a roll. Benneton, too.

WILDER

We took a chance on Chance, and it turned out to be pretty chancy.

BENNETON

It's all fun and games until someone loses a country.

WILDER

Ding ding ding ding. We have a winner. Wait, we have some breaking news.

Soldiers escort the Students from a helicopter on a tarmac.

REPORTER ON THE GROUND  
 This footage just in. It appears  
 the Amir's own forces have taken  
 the compound and rescued the  
 students. The terrorists were  
 taken completely off guard as it  
 appeared that the President was  
 going to negotiate for the their  
 release. Instead, President  
 Garfield somehow convinced the Amir  
 to take action against these  
 radical forces in his own country  
 without giving a single concession.

IN THE STUDIO

Benneton's face drops, even further as Wilder goes after him.

WILDER  
 Well, it seems you were mistaken  
 Mr. Vice President.

BENNETON  
 Well, I don't know. Look, can we  
 talk about the Voter Bill? It--

WILDER  
 I'm sure you want to talk about  
 anything else but your coming on  
 national television to undermine  
 your own administration. Chance  
 Garfield delivered. Brought the  
 boys home. The kitten...

A MEOW

WILDER  
 ...has become the lion.

A ROAR FROM A LION WITH CHANCE'S FACE

WILDER  
 Don't know where he found his  
 manhood: I'm just glad he did. And  
 Arnie Benneton is the goat.

A GOAT WITH BENNETON'S FACE BAAHS. BAAAAAATAAH.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - ROSE GARDEN - DAY

A party where Chance welcomes the Students. The Students sit  
 on his right, the Secretary of State on his left.

In the audience, drinking champagne, Darlene whispers in  
 Benneton's ear and slips something in his pocket.

DARLENE

You forgot something, sugar.

Benneton feels in his jacket pocket. His face blanches.

INSIDE BENNETON'S POCKET

Benneton's fingers feel the vial of poison.

BENNETON

I can't do this.

DARLENE

shushes him and points at Chance on the dais.

CHANCE

We are so happy to have our family home. On this auspicious day, I am also pleased to announce passage of the Universal Voting Rights bill, which I will sign forthwith. But before I do, I'd like to thank someone who made it possible.

Benneton smiles. He trots towards the stage. Someone points out Benneton moving towards Chance.

MAN IN AUDIENCE

The Goat! The Goat!

THE WHOLE AUDIENCE

Baaaaaah!

Benneton has reached Chance. Chance ignores him, pointedly.

CHANCE

Someone who pushed tirelessly for this moment and he was, of course, right. My most special of special advisors, Peter Dowla.

Peter rises to APPLAUSE.

Humiliated, fury crosses Benneton's face. It drives him to a moment of madness. From a row of champagne glasses, he grabs two, dumping the vial in one. No one notices in the hoopla.

Benneton hands the glass to Chance and lifts his own.

BENNETON

I'm just here to toast your success.

Chance raises the glass to his lips. Thinks about it. He turns back to the mic.

CHANCE  
A toast. To family. The American  
family.

Chance is about to drink when the Secretary of State rises.

SECRETARY OF STATE  
No!

CHANCE  
No?

SECRETARY OF STATE  
We should toast our President,  
Chance Garfield. But first, I'd  
like to say a few words.

Chance puts his glass down.

SECRETARY OF STATE  
Mr. President. People say you are  
unconventional. People say...

As the Secretary of State drones on, the gravity of what Benneton's done sets in on him. He wanders past Darlene. With a deliciously evil smile, Darlene's eyes meet Fillmore's in the window of the Study.

FLASHBACK - INT. BENNETON'S OFFICE - DAY

Fillmore and Darlene watch Benneton slam the door.

FILLMORE  
Your old man's square as a Rubik's  
cube.

DARLENE  
Now, why are you all bowed up like  
a cottonmouth, sugar? Arnie's  
going to have the same problem as  
Chance in setting you free.

FILLMORE  
That's not what I want from dear  
Arnie. Your hubby must denounce  
his party and revive the Whigs.

DARLENE  
Only wig I know about is a  
delicious horse hair beehive I wore  
to my cotillion.

FILLMORE  
Whigs. With an H. When they return  
and the Masons are defeated, I will  
assume my rightful place in history.

DARLENE

And Arnie will assume his.

FILLMORE

I appreciate your grasp of this auspicious moment. If I had had a woman of substance like you, perhaps I would have won the nomination for a second term.

Out of the wall, as stern looking female ghost, ABIGAIL FILLMORE, 55, materializes.

ABIGAIL

If you hadn't signed the Fugitive Slave Act, as I warned you against, you would have won a second term.

Darlene looks at Abigail and SHOUTS.

DARLENE

Depart, foul spirit, I command you.

Abigail fades away. Fillmore is impressed.

DARLENE

As I said, we were plagued by ghosts on the estate, although none were quite as bitchy as that. Anyway, you just leave Arnold to me, sugar stick.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

Fillmore nods to Darlene from the window of the study. Grant appears behind him.

IN THE ROSE GARDEN

The Secretary of State drones on.

SECRETARY OF STATE

I believe it was Rutherford B. Hayes who once said not to resort to force-- not even the force of law--to advance reforms but rather to use education, argument, persuasion, and above all the influence of example. Well...

Chance picks up his champagne again, but Casey interrupts him carrying a folder.

CHANCE  
Rutherford B. Hayes. I wonder if  
he's lurking around here somewhere.

CASEY  
What? Should I cut him off? You're  
due at the climate conference.

Chance picks up the folder with the Universal Voter Bill.

CHANCE  
No, but I might as well get a head  
start and sign this.

Chance pulls out a pen and signs it with a flourish.

IN THE STUDY

Grant SHOUTS at Fillmore.

GRANT  
I'll not let you harm him. I'll  
see you--

FILLMORE  
What? Dead? Too late, General.

Unsteady, Grant looks at his hands. They're fading.

GRANT  
I'm sorry, Mr. President.

Grant evaporates.

INT. RESTROOM - DAY

Benneton splashes water in his face. He HEARS A VOICE.

NIXON (O.S.)  
You'll like it here forever. All  
the ketchup you can eat.

Benneton turns and pushes open the stall to find Nixon  
reading the Pentagon Papers.

BENNETON  
Fillmore said there were more of  
you. Wait, what do you mean?

NIXON  
Don't play cute, kid. I had a  
number of heads of state  
assassinated. Didn't do it  
personally, mind you.

(MORE)



NIXON (CONT'D)

And not in our country. You've taken it to a whole new level. I admire that.

Benneton smiles at the compliment.

BENNETON

But what did you mean forever?

NIXON

Oh, killing the President, makes you the president. And condemns you to haunt these halls for eternity. You play poker?

Utterly panicked, Benneton rushes out.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Benneton rushes towards the exit when he's blocked by a WAITER carrying a huge tray of glasses. The Waiter turns around. It's Fillmore.

FILLMORE

Lost your nerve? Look, fella, don't worry about that whole even handed justice commending the ingredients of your poisoned chalice to your own lips thing.

Benneton barrels through him with a SHOUT. The tray of glasses crashes down. The Waiter on the ground is now just a bemused waiter.

EXT. ROSE GARDEN - DAY

The Secretary of State continues his droning speech. Benneton heads to the stage, but Darlene steps in front to stop him.

DARLENE

(manically and maniacally)  
Alea Iacta Est. The die is cast.  
Glamis thou art, and Cawdor and  
shalt be what thou art promised.

Benneton pushes past his insane wife.

SECRETARY OF STATE

And so, I toast you, Mr. President.

Chance raises his champagne glass. Benneton rushes the dais and knocks the glass from his hand. Strongbow drags him away.

CHANCE  
 Arnaldo, have you gone mad? You're  
 lucky there's no 25th Amendment for  
 Vice Presidents. Well, drink up.

Chance takes a nearby bottle of Champagne and swigs from it.  
 Darlene looks at Benneton trying to explain himself to  
 Strongbow and other agents. She slips off.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Martha and Chance sit on a sofa. Strongbow stands nearby.

CHANCE  
 Like good ol' Harry Truman says,  
 he's mule tick crazy.

MARTHA  
 That's not funny, Chance. The  
 pressure got to Benneton. I won't  
 let that happen to you.

CHANCE  
 What are you saying?

MARTHA  
 To give this up. Nixon did it.

CHANCE  
 Great role model. Let me tell you,  
 the guy's no saint...

MARTHA  
 Is? You know, Pete says you've  
 been talking to yourself.

Martha puts a finger to Chance's lips to stop his protesting.

MARTHA  
 I've heard you, too. Talking to no  
 one, like you're waiting for an  
 answer and getting one.

Chance pulls Martha close to whisper.

CHANCE  
 Listen, I hated to hide this from  
 you, but, I am talking to someone--  
 dead Presidents. They can't leave  
 because of their actions while they  
 were here. They help me. Well,  
 Ulysses Grant did. But he's gone  
 now. The voter law freed him.

MARTHA  
 Chance, I begged you not to run.

CHANCE

Don't worry. I don't need them anymore. I freed the hostages on my own. The ghosts didn't show when--

Martha cries. Strongbow approaches.

CHANCE

I'm not crazy.

STRONGBOW

He's not. This house is haunted by the ghosts of Presidents who put self over country.

MARTHA

Agent Strongbow, I appreciate you covering for my husband.

STRONGBOW

Ma'am, I took an oath to protect the Presidency, not a President. I wouldn't lie about this.

MARTHA

Great, you two think you see ghosts, Dina can't sleep because she's seeing an old man in her room.

Strongbow and Chance look at each other with alarm.

INT. DINA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Fillmore pulls a coin out of Dina's ear-- a silver dollar from a bygone era. She LAUGHS.

FILLMORE

You like this house, don't you?

DINA

Well, I don't like the basement.

FILLMORE

But you like your room. It's sad you have to leave in four years.

DINA

Maybe eight years!

FILLMORE

It's still a shame you have to leave some day.

DINA

I wish I could stay forever.

EXT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Strongbow and Chance run down the hall. Martha follows.

MARTHA

You honestly can't believe...

They find Dina's door locked. They rush to Bud's door.

INT. BUD'S ROOM - NIGHT

Chance, Strongbow and Martha burst in as Bud unrolls a pin up of Betty Grable.

BUD

Va-va-va-voom. Uncle Harry was right, you sure are a dish. Hey-- what's the big idea?

The trio shake off this weird scene and head into the Jack and Jill bathroom. Bud follows.

INT. DINA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Chance, Martha, Strongbow and Bud enter from the bathroom to find Dina alone, playing with the silver dollar.

DINA

Hi, Daddy!

Bud notices the coin.

BUD

Hey, where'd she get that?

DINA

From my ear.

BUD

Liar!

DINA

My new friend found it. He does magic.

CHANCE

Dina, tell me about your new friend?

DINA

He's really old, like forty. He talks funny and has a funny name, Milton Filmont.

Fillmore appears.

FILLMORE  
 It's Millard Fillmore, Dina. I  
 know it's a hard name to remember.  
 People don't name their kids  
 Millard much anymore.

Dina fiddles with the coin.

FILLMORE  
 Careful with that coin, dear. It's  
 very old, like me.

Dina LAUGHS. Martha moves between Fillmore and Dina, like a  
 lioness protecting her cub.

BUD  
 He was a President like you, Dad.

FILLMORE  
 Not exactly like your Dad.

Fillmore produces a piece of rock candy, again by magic.  
 Martha pulls Bud over.

FILLMORE  
 Your old lady needs to lose that  
 paranoid vibe.

STRONGBOW  
 Stand down, Fillmore.

FILLMORE  
 That's President Fillmore, Chief.

DINA  
 Milton says I can stay here  
 forever!

INT. WHITE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

Chance, Martha, Fillmore and Strongbow circle each other  
 around the room as they speak.

CHANCE  
 We had a deal.

FILLMORE  
 (a la Darth Vader)  
 I am altering the deal.

CHANCE  
 You can't. Only a President can  
 free you by righting your wrongs.

FILLMORE

Unless a dweller of the house  
agrees to substitute her sins for  
mine. Read the fine print, broseph.

MARTHA

What sins? She's a child.

FILLMORE

The sins of the father are visited  
upon--

Chance charges, but he passes right through Fillmore and  
crashes into a bookshelf.

FILLMORE

Dude, I'm a ghost.

Strongbow helps Chance up.

CHANCE

But I was going to right your  
wrongs.

FILLMORE

My wrong was unforgivable. There's  
nothing you could have done to fix  
it. Luckily, your little Dinnie  
has.

Martha SCREAMING IN RAGE now charges at Fillmore, but  
Fillmore disappears.

LATER

The clock TICKS in this long night. Dazed like a prize  
fighter, Martha barely hangs on. Chance and Strongbow seem  
beaten, too.

CHANCE

How could this happen? How could  
he be allowed to trick someone into  
taking his place? A kid! What  
kind of curse is that? Did you  
know about this?

STRONGBOW

I've only heard about it happening  
once before.

Strongbow sinks into a chair.

MARTHA AND CHANCE

And?

INT. SECRET PASSAGES - NIGHT

Strongbow rapidly guides the First Couple through myriad passages. Far more winding and creepier than we've seen before. They end up before a wooden door.

INT. TEDDY'S ROOM - NIGHT

The door opens to reveal TEDDY ROOSEVELT in all his glory, in a room filled with taxidermied animals and volumes of books and manuscripts all written by Teddy Roosevelt.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
Company, Bully!

INSERT - THE LINEUP

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President  
of the United States.

Silence.

CHANCE  
And? That's it? Why are you here?

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
I took the bullet for McKinley.

MARTHA  
No. McKinley was shot.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
He was shot. I was shot. All good  
presidents get shot.

Chance reacts nervously.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
I said all good presidents. You're  
in the clear from what I hear. But  
I was speaking metaphorically. I  
have the soul of a poet.

CHANCE  
I'm not following you.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
When the bullet pierced my side, I  
finished the speech I was giving.

Roosevelt hands Chance a yellow newspaper: RABID SOCIALIST SHOOTS PRESIDENT; BULLET RIPS THROUGH ARMY COAT, VEST AND SPEECH MANUSCRIPT, LODGES IN RIGHT BREAST; T.R. FINISHES SPEECH WITH GRIM DETERMINATION.

CHANCE  
You're pretty tough.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
You should try it. I wish McKinley had. When he was shot by that wretched Anarchist, he went and died.

Teddy hands Chance another yellowy paper: MCKINLEY IS DEAD.

CHANCE  
That's how you became president.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
A student of history. Yes. And I was immediately haunted by McKinley. I felt terrible. A well meaning man spends his entire life caring for his invalid wife. Then to be ambushed so, ah, the jack-nape of fate is a harsh mistress.

Teddy eyes Martha.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
Soul of a poet. Libido of a lion.

CHANCE  
So why was McKinley stuck here?

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
I'm afraid it was my fault. He wanted to free the Philippines. And I came up with one of my clever sayings: "McKinley has no more backbone that a chocolate éclair." It's widely regarded as one of the best Presidential insults.

MARTHA  
Is that something to be proud of?

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
(sadly)  
No.... Anyway, I felt that slight pushed him into digging in on his imperialist stance, which led to his being shot and cursed. So, Bill, I said, I'd gladly take your place if I could. And wasn't I surprised when he accepted.

CHANCE  
How can you get free?



TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Do you need an ear-horn, man?  
Someone would need to right the  
wrongs McKinley committed.

CHANCE

Wait a second, if you're here  
because of McKinley and the  
Philippines, why didn't you become  
free when the Philippines did?

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

You're smarter than they say. I did  
finally convince Truman to do that.

CHANCE

Nice guy. I freed him, you know.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Good man. As you note, the  
Philippines is a free nation, but  
here I still dwell while McKinley  
adventures in the Great Unknown.  
That cream puff must have had some  
other transgression. Been trying  
to figure that out for some time.

Roosevelt rises and pats one of his many piles of books.

CHANCE

If I free Fillmore, I free Dina.

MARTHA

He said his sin was unforgivable.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Indeed, it was. He killed Zachary  
Taylor. But don't tell Zach. He's  
already pretty high strung.

CHANCE

How do you know?

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

I've been researching and writing a  
history of the Presidency. I'll be  
getting to you if you ever do  
something worth writing about. In  
the meantime, I must continue my  
research to free myself.

CHANCE

I guess that's your only way out.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Unless another dweller of the house  
agrees to take my place.

Chance and Martha exchange Eureka glances.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - SUB-BASEMENT - NIGHT

Fillmore packs a giant steamer trunk with things stolen from the White House. Harrison appears.

HARRISON

Have you heard the expression "You can't take it with you"?

FILLMORE

I'm not going to the after life, Wilbur. I'm going to the after party. Road trip! Next stop Lost Wages! And then I'm coming back here to help Benneton manage the war he's sure to cause.

HARRISON

That young Garfield girl looks pretty healthy. Doesn't have the cholera or anything. I don't think you'll be leaving here for a good 80 years. Possibly hundreds given the advances in medical science. Did I mention that they use common awls from a woodworker's tool bench to fashion holes to draw out the "bad humours" from my body?

Chance enters. Fillmore smiles.

INT. FIRST COUPLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Martha and Chance talk.

MARTHA

He agreed you could take Dina's place? Just like that?

Chance nods, glumly.

MARTHA

Why so glum? Most of us don't know what will happen when we die.

Chance forces a smile.

MARTHA

And that Teddy character seems nice. You even said you like Nixon.

CHANCE  
Stop making me feel better. It's  
making me feel worse.

MARTHA  
You'll figure out how to get  
yourself free.

CHANCE  
Teddy's been working on it for a  
century.

MARTHA  
But he's not you.

CHANCE  
Right. He won the Nobel Peace  
Prize, dug the Panama Canal,  
established the National Parks,  
busted trusts, charged up San Juan  
Hill, explored Africa-- should I go  
on?

MARTHA  
It's saving Dina. From your mess.  
I know it'll be hard, but I'll be  
with you all the way. And you have  
years before...

CHANCE  
No. I don't.... Martha, I had to  
make another promise.

MARTHA  
What?

CHANCE  
Fillmore wants to be released now.

MARTHA  
He has to wait until you're dead.  
That's the way it works, right?

CHANCE  
It is the way it works.

Chance tears up as he looks in her eyes.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

Martha tears through halls and rooms, banging on walls.

MARTHA  
Where are you? Come out, you  
bastards. Show yourselves.

Chance chases her, trying to calm her down. Strongbow, too.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nixon rummages through the fridge. We only see his ample posterior. Martha storms in SHOUTING TO HIGH HEAVEN with Chance trying to catch her.

NIXON  
She is woman, hear her roar.

MARTHA  
I'll do more than roar. That  
bastard wants to kill my husband!

Ketchup bottle in hand, Nixon looks at Martha.

NIXON  
Who? G. Gordon Liddy? He's crazy,  
you know.

MARTHA  
Not him.

NIXON  
Well, whichever bastard it is, my  
advice is to have him killed first.

MARTHA  
It's Millard Fillmore!

NIXON  
Tricky. And not in a good way.  
You see, Fillmore's already dead.

MARTHA  
You have to help us.

NIXON  
Look, I like the ketchup and all,  
but no pulse and still condemned.  
What can I do?

MARTHA  
Connive, scheme, plot. Come on,  
you're Richard Nixon.

NIXON  
You have a point.

Nixon closes the door. Jackson is behind the fridge. Jackson bows and kisses Martha's hand.

JACKSON  
A pleasure. Garfield, I couldn't  
help but overhear your predicament.  
(MORE)

JACKSON (CONT'D)  
Your only choice is to be a man and challenge him to a duel.

CHANCE  
Enough with the dueling. You can't duel with a ghost.

JACKSON  
If you could, the halls would be littered with dead ghosts. Double dead ghosts.

MARTHA  
Oh, what's the use!

An idea crosses Chance's mind and face.

CHANCE  
Wait, Jackson's on to something.

JACKSON  
Sabres or pistols? I think with sabres, you might have him on reach. He has stubby arms.

CHANCE  
No, no. They can't duel. So what they do is play games. And they take them super-seriously. What if I offer him a fair deal, a contest? He wins, I take his place right away. He loses, it's all off.

MARTHA  
Would he go for it?

Johnson appears.

JOHNSON  
He hates to lose-- goes back to when he was the incumbent President and didn't even win his party's nomination.

NIXON  
Like you did.

JOHNSON  
You had to bring that up.

NIXON  
Oh, and did I mention that I wasn't impeached.

JOHNSON  
Quitter says what?

NIXON

What?

JOHNSON

Never gets old, eh, Dick?

Nixon growls.

JACKSON

Still, Johnson's right. I bested Fillmore at cornhole this morning, and I thought he was going to burn the place down like the British in the War of 1812, in which I was a hero. You know they used to put up statues of me.

NIXON

Now, we'll need to trick him. And you know, there's one thing he hates more than losing...

Jackson and Nixon smile.

INT. SUB-BASEMENT - NIGHT

The Dead Presidents gather for Fillmore's going away party. Paper hats, streamers, the presidential works. Jackson, wearing a novelty Indian headdress, lifts a glass to toast.

JACKSON

To Garfield!

Fillmore lifts his glass, magnanimously.

FILLMORE

Ah, why not? To Garfield.

JOHNSON

Not a bad guy for a Mason! I love sheet cake.

Jackson reaches for the sheet cake. Fillmore goes to drink, stops and grabs Jackson's hand as he goes for he cake.

FILLMORE

Whaaat?

NIXON

It's true. Garfield's a Mason.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Chance grabs Peter's arm, awkwardly, like a handshake but weird. Peter yanks his arm back.

CHANCE  
No, grip the wrist. Petey, I need you to learn this.

PETER  
This is the White House, not a treehouse. We don't need a secret handshake.

As he speaks, Chance again goes through the complex handshake.

CHANCE  
The ghost of Millard Fillmore has taken my soul in a fair trade for Dina's, but I need to win it back and, for that to happen, he has to believe I'm a Mason. Quick, the handshake, then go out, come in, and we'll do it for realsies.

PETER  
Buddy, we need to get you to a doctor.

Peter open the door and runs into the wall that is Strongbow.

STRONGBOW  
I believe you have a handshake to deliver.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Chance looks towards paintings of Washington and Lincoln. The eyes are missing, and there's an unearthly glow behind them. He pretends not to notice.

BEHIND A WALL

Nixon and Fillmore look through the missing eyes.

IN THE STUDY

Chance grabs Peter's wrists as they practiced. Peter returns it awkwardly but close enough for Fillmore. Fillmore's eyes in the painting widen. Chance looks around conspiratorially.

CHANCE  
Brother, I have the good news.

PETER  
Uh... okay, bro.

CHANCE

The Supreme Council and the  
Worshipful Master have conferred on  
me the Scottish Rite. I have  
ascended to the 33rd degree.

PETER

Uh.... That's great?

CHANCE

I appreciate the good wishes. This  
is the most momentous thing that  
has ever happened to me.

PETER

You remember you were elected  
President, right?

BEHIND THE WALL

Fillmore is furious.

FILLMORE'S VOICE

I knew it! I accept his challenge.  
No Mason will ever best me.

Fillmore evaporates. Nixon comes through the wall and nods  
at Chance. Peter is flabbergasted.

PETER

You're Richard Nixon.

NIXON

That's President Nixon. Remember,  
I wasn't impeached. I resigned.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

No words are needed as Chance and Martha walk by Bud's room.  
They peek in. He's not there. They run to Dina's room. In  
Dina's bed, Dina sleeps in Bud's arms.

INT. FIRST COUPLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

On their backs in bed, Martha and Chance stare at the ceiling  
where shadows of trees from the window dance, ominously.

Nixon's shadow appears on the ceiling. They look at the foot  
of the bed. He's eating from a pint of Ben & Jerry's Chunky  
Monkey. Martha and Chance YELP.



NIXON

Truman said you made a odd sound  
for no reason. This commie ice  
cream is sure good, the bastards.

MARTHA

Can we help you with something?

NIXON

Fillmore's settled on the contest.

CHANCE

Thank you. Sir, can I ask you, why  
are you doing this for us?

NIXON

You got me the ketchup for my  
cottage cheese. But if this works  
promise me we can drop some bombs  
on someone somewhere. I live for  
that shit. Well, I used to.. Live  
that is. I still love it.... Oh,  
the challenge is...

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

Chance's head is on the desk. Martha and Peter pace.

PETER

Poker?! You're horrible at cards.

CHANCE

I know.

MARTHA

Dina destroys him at Old Maid.

CHANCE

Destroys is a strong word.

PETER

And that's a kids' game.

CHANCE

There's actually a pretty  
sophisticated strategy. I use an  
approach suggested by the game  
theory theses of French  
mathematician Augustin Cournot...

MARTHA

And you NEVER win.

CHANCE

But is winning really the goal?

MARTHA AND PETER

Yes!

PETER

Can't you help Martha? You were in that tournament thing.

MARTHA

That was the final table of the World Series of Poker at Binions.

PETER

Exactly. The World Series. Chance couldn't make the cut as a batboy or cigarette girl or whatever it is they have.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

An elaborate poker table. Martha has a big pile of chips, followed by Nixon. Then Peter. Chance has a few. Martha rakes in a pot. In his green visor hat, Nixon gives her a nod.

NIXON

If you played any more like a man you should pee standing up.

MARTHA

Thank you, I think.

Martha expertly shuffles. Passes to Peter, who tries to mimic her. The cards end up all over the table.

Martha scoops them up and deals. Nixon takes a drag on his cigar and blows smoke over the table.

NIXON

Take that Ho-Chi-Min.

PETER

Some of us aren't dead yet and want to stay that way.

NIXON

Maybe you'd prefer pot, hippie.

PETER

Did you know an anagram for Spiro Agnew is "Grow A Penis"?

Nixon LAUGHS and COUGHS.

NIXON  
I've never heard that before.  
Speaking of phalluses, maybe you  
should try growing one and stop  
playing like a woman.

CHANCE  
Mr. President, that's really not  
called for.

NIXON  
Fine. Open.

PETER  
In.

MARTHA  
In.

CHANCE  
Two questions, is it in or open,  
and does four of a kind beat a  
flush?

NIXON  
I think I can get some cyanide  
capsules from Alger Hiss to make  
your passing easier. But, you're  
not bunking with me.

CHANCE  
No. No. I got it, full boat beats  
a flush-straight.

PETER  
Martha?

MARTHA  
He's joking. You're joking, right?

CHANCE  
Check.

MARTHA  
You mean yes, yes? Cause check  
means you're not betting but not  
folding. You remember that, right?

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. Martha heads to it.

PETER  
(very *Poltergeist*)  
They're here.

CHANCE  
Ghosts don't knock.

Chance opens the door. It's Win. He YELPS and tries to close the door on him. But Win manages to shove a stack of folders in preventing the door from closing.

WIN

Mr. President, you need to see this. The poll numbers are through the roof.

MARTHA

Him and those folders.

Win manages to peek in further.

WIN

Wait, are you playing poker?

Martha and Peter step in front of Nixon to block the view.

MARTHA

Oh, do you play poker, Mr. Williams?

WIN

I know how to play poker.

PETER

Then you have one up on Chance.

WIN

It's an occasion. So, deal me in.

Win waves his folders and pushes by Chance. Nixon evaporates. His visor drops down to the table. Benneton enters.

MARTHA

Now what are you doing here?

BENNETON

And a good evening to you, too, Madame First Lady. I received an invitation.

He hands Martha a card. Chance grabs it.

BENNETON

It's not from you?

CHANCE

No, you see it says it requests the pleasure of your company. I'd never say that. About you.

Benneton sits and starts shuffling.

BENNETON

Cute. Shall we begin?

Fillmore steps out of the shadows.

FILLMORE

Yes, let's lay our cards-- and our lives-- on the table.

WIN

Who's this guy?

FILLMORE

Guy? I'm Millard Fillmore, hoser.

WIN

Oh, I get it. A poker game cosplay, LARPing deal. I didn't think you had it in you. I think Fillmore would be more of a whist guy, if that's what he even looked like. But you need a Truman. You know, the buck stops here and all. And you need a Nixon, of course.

Nixon re-materializes and puts on his visor.

WIN

Oh, you have a Nixon.

PETER

President Nixon. He resigned. He wasn't impeached.

Nixon beams so much so he becomes translucent, glowing.

FILLMORE

Ah, parlour tricks. My hat's off to you. And my head.

Fillmore removes his head and bows. Win's eyes widen to saucers. He remains in a stunned stupor throughout the rest of the scene. Made worse when Jackson and Johnson appear.

PETER

It's like the Hall of Presidents.

NIXON

I hate that ride. Disney made me look like Humphrey.

MONTAGE - THE POKER GAME

- Piles of M&M's see-saw among the players. Except Chance who just keeps folding, noticeably and constantly folding.

- Jackson and Johnson bicker. Jackson reaches for a pistol in his waistcoat. Peter calms him down. Chance folds again.

- Nixon looks at his cards. Dreck. He mucks the cards. Chance, too.

NIXON  
This hand is in worse shape than  
Cambodia after I got done with it.

- Jackson looks like he's about to win a hand but gets trounced by Johnson.

JACKSON  
Deader than the British at the  
battle of New Orleans, at which I  
was the hero.

ALL  
We know, we know.

JACKSON  
But did you know they wrote a song  
about it. "We fired our guns but  
the British kept a coming, but  
there wasn't as many as there was a  
while ago..."

Jackson keeps WHISTLING, HUMMING and SINGING "the Battle of New Orleans" throughout the rest of the montage and subsequent scene, giving it all an even tenser feel.

- Chance folds again. Benneton looks at Chance's cards.

BENNETON  
Aces and Eights.

NIXON  
Dead man's hand.

- Fillmore smiles at that comment.

- Johnson reaches in the pot and eats some M&M's. Jackson reaches for his gun again.

- Chance is about to fold again, but Martha stops him. Chance wins. Maybe his first pot of the night. A huge one. Fillmore's stack is shrinking. Fillmore BANGS on the table.

FILLMORE  
You wanted a showdown, but it seems  
it's your old lady I should be  
playing... Mason.

CHANCE  
Behind every great man...

NIXON

I know she wears the pants in your family, but Millard is right. This is between you two. Mano a mano.

END MONTAGE.

Martha, Peter, Win, Johnson and whistling Jackson stand a tense vigil watching Chance's one-on-one with Fillmore. Another Chance fold. They all SIGH. Benneton smiles.

NIXON

You've got to be in it to win it, you know.

BENNETON

Think of the bright side, Garfield. Soon you won't have to deal with protestors burning your pancakes in the street.

NIXON

I had protestors too. Hippie beatniks. I walked right up to them. Talked football. You've got to confront adversity head on.

Nixon looks pointedly at Chance and shuffles.

FILLMORE

Dickwad, you talk a good game about wanting to bomb everyone and everything if you don't get your catsup, but I'm actually going to do it.

NIXON

Mrs. Garfield, did you hear what the Yale historian said about Millard Fillmore?

MARTHA

Tell me.

NIXON

To discuss him is to overrate him. Now, just because we're dead, doesn't mean this game has to be. Texas Hold 'em. In honor of LBJ.

CHANCE

Didn't you hate him?

NIXON

When I had phlebitis, he visited me at Walter Reed. Class act.

LATER

Nixon deals. Things are getting real. Chance: 3♥, 5♦.  
Fillmore: 8♦, 8♥.

BENNETON

So, Garfield, how are you going to do it anyway?

FILLMORE

Maybe a little Suicide King action?

Fillmore mimes putting a sword through his head.

CHANCE

Arnie, I'm going to take pleasure haunting you. I think I get to see your wife naked.

JOHNSON

Who hasn't?

CHUCKLES. Chance bets a big stack. Fillmore doubles it before Chance can blink. Martha winces. The Flop - ACE♥, 8♠, 4♦.

NIXON

It's to you, Garfield. I saw this funny once about a cat. His name was Garfield, too. Fitting, cause you play like a pussy.

CHANCE

Check. That's what you say when you don't think you have something good enough to bet, right?

FILLMORE

I don't know if you're bluffing or stupid, but I'll bite. 2,000.

Fillmore puts in the M&Ms.

CHANCE

Call. No, fold, no, call.

NIXON

You're bound by your first action whether verbal or physical. You called. Put in your chips.

CHANCE

But I only have--



NIXON  
You called. The rule is you have  
to follow through.

Jackson stops his incessant, annoying whistling. They all  
look at him.

JACKSON  
Look who's a stickler for the rules  
all of a sudden.

Nixon turns a card: 2♠. Fillmore pushes in his whole pile.

FILLMORE  
All in.

A hush.

CHANCE  
I don't know about that. If I put  
all my chips in, it would be more  
than you.

FILLMORE  
Don't you understand anything? If  
you do and you win, then I'm  
busted. Of course, if I win,  
you're ghosted.

Chance looks like he might just fold. Then...

CHANCE  
Confront adversity head on, eh?  
Worth a shot, I guess.

NIXON  
Gentleman, you're all in, turn your  
cards.

Fillmore sees that Chance has a straight.

FILLMORE  
Scoundrel, scalawag, meathead,  
nerd, muggle--

CHANCE  
What? Do I have something good?

That incenses Fillmore even more. He GRUNTS his displeasure.

NIXON  
Stop your whining, you long-haired  
hippie freak. You still have a ton  
of outs.

FILLMORE

Don't tell me how to play. Turn  
the card. And don't think we  
forgot about Kent State.

Nixon flops the card. K♥. The Suicide King. Fillmore's  
done. Chance wins!

BENNETON

No, no. It can't be. Fillmore,  
you swore to me Garfield would be  
dead. And I'd be President. Free  
to enact my policy, my vision.  
Damn it. This is MY time. I've  
earned it. I should have let you  
drink that poisoned champagne.

CHANCE

Dude.

BENNETON

Why did you risk this on a game?

FILLMORE

Because he's a Mason.

BENNETON

Because he's a Mason? A Mason!  
He's no Mason, you idiot. Hell,  
I'm a Mason.

FILLMORE

You damned idolator!

Fillmore charges at Benneton. They scuffle, but Fillmore is  
at times an ethereal wisp making Benneton's efforts useless.

CHANCE

Martha, did you get that?

Martha pulls out her phone and plays a recording.

BENNETON'S VOICE

You swore to me Garfield would be  
dead. And I'd be President. Free  
to enact my policy, my vision.  
Damn it. This is MY time. I've  
earned it. I should have let you  
drink that poisoned champagne.

Benneton and Fillmore freeze in their tracks.

NIXON

Tapes, they'll get you every time.

Benneton tries to get Martha's phone.

FILLMORE  
Outwit her. She has a small brain.

Nixon holds his hands out for a pass.

NIXON  
Sock it to ME!

She tosses the phone, but Fillmore intercepts it and scrams.

THROUGHOUT THE WHITEHOUSE

A crazed dash through secret corridors, up and down rickety stairs, through common areas. It's an all out, madcap chase.

It's pretty hard for the humans. The ghosts can pass through walls. But the phone can't, so when Fillmore passes through a wall, the phone drops to the floor.

A scramble for the phone. It passes from hand to hand. Ghost to human. Finally Benneton gets it.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Fillmore and Benneton find themselves back where they started. Benneton has the phone. He stares past Fillmore.

FILLMORE  
Well, what are you waiting for, Mason? Destroy it. It's their only evidence.

Benneton points behind Fillmore at what he sees: Zachary Taylor appears with two period-dressed secret service agents.

TAYLOR  
You're finally going to pay.

Jackson, Chance, Martha, Win and Peter burst in, shocked.

FILLMORE  
Didn't I poison you?

WIN  
You killed Zachary Taylor?

FILLMORE  
Him you recognize?

TAYLOR  
He is the reason I am dead.

PETER  
President Taylor, I'm pretty sure by now you'd be dead anyway.

FILLMORE  
He was inept and a Mason!

JACKSON  
Still to poison him like a kitchen  
rat. That's no way to kill a man.

Jackson removes a dueling pistol from his waistcoat and hands it to Taylor. Taylor fires at Fillmore. The shot passes through Fillmore and hits Benneton, who drops to the ground. Taylor disappears.

JACKSON  
What just happened?

NIXON  
Shooting that idiot must have  
righted Taylor's wrong and lifted  
his curse.

JACKSON  
If that's all it takes.

Jackson removes a derringer from his boot and shoots Win, who drops. Jackson doesn't disappear. He shrugs.

Peter looks at Win's body, crumpled on the ground.

PETER  
Maybe Win wasn't bad as he seemed.

JACKSON  
He's a politician, isn't he?

The Secret Service Agents move on Fillmore.

FILLMORE  
Step back, honkey cats. You work  
for me.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT  
We work for the office.

Strongbow calmly enters, like he's seen worse. He checks Benneton for a pulse.

STRONGBOW  
He'll live.

Strongbow picks up Martha's phone and hands it to Chance.

STRONGBOW  
This is yours. We've got this.

Strongbow acknowledges his fellow agents. They seize Fillmore under each arm.

FILLMORE

You'd give the mistress that is our country to be defiled by this craven husk without honor to be the strumpet for the world's lust.

PETER

You really need to get out more.

JACKSON

Save your speechifying, Fillmore. This man was willing to sacrifice himself for his daughter. There is nothing more honorable than that.

As the Agents take Fillmore, he comes eye to eye with Martha.

MARTHA

I forget, is it men or women who have smaller brains?

The Agents drag Fillmore away.

FILLMORE

You dirty rats. You'll never pin this rap on me. I'll lawyer up. John Adams defended the perpetrators of the Boston Massacre, did you know that? Mother of mercy, is this the end of Millard?

The Agents drag Fillmore through the wall.

SPLIT SCREEN

SUPER: NEWSPAPER HEADLINE:

"Peeved Veep Tries To Assassinate Prez. Secret Service Save The Day."

ON THE LEFT:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

Benneton wheeled out to an ambulance under heavy guard.

ON THE RIGHT:

EXT. ROSE GARDEN - DAY

At a ceremony, Chance awards Strongbow a medal.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - BALLROOM HALLWAY - NIGHT

Festooned in Christmas decorations with a Dickensian feel.  
Peter stands with Martha. Dina and Bud run up.

PETER  
Merry Christmas, kids.

DINA  
If I could work my will, every  
idiot who goes about with 'Merry  
Christmas' on his lips, should be  
boiled with his own pudding, and  
buried with a stake of holly  
through his heart.

BUD  
Please don't send me to the  
workhouse, Mr. Scrooge.

The kids run off past Chance, dressed in period clothes.

MARTHA  
I still think Dickens was the right  
choice. But you seem glum. Wait,  
does Bob Cratchit have consumption?

CHANCE  
I wish I could've freed them all.

STEWARD (O.S.)  
Ladies and Gentleman, the President  
and Vice President of the United  
States.

MARTHA  
First Lady was kind of growing on  
me, but that has a nice ring to it.

They kiss and enter to FANFARE.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

Casey and Win watch the festivities. Chance reads to a  
gathering of children including Bud and Dina.

CASEY  
Who knew you had it in you to take  
a bullet for the President?

Casey playfully punches Win in the arm. He winces.

WIN  
So, you have a different view of us  
career politicians now?

CASEY  
I'll tell you under the mistletoe.

Chance finishes reading.

CHANCE  
"And as Tiny Tim said..."

DINA  
God bless us. One and all.

ANOTHER KID  
That was a scary story.

STILL ANOTHER KID  
No, it wasn't, ghosts aren't real.

DINA  
Yes, they are!

BUD  
Shhhhh. We're not supposed to tell.

DINA  
But there's one now.

The kids turn around. They don't see anyone. But Chance does. It's Teddy Roosevelt. He motions for Chance to follow.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Chance follows Teddy.

CHANCE  
Who is it? FDR? Lincoln? Lincoln would be terrific.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT  
No. It took some persuading to get her back here.

INT. TEDDY'S ROOM - NIGHT

The Priestess, glowing, rises from the chair.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

Through the ballroom window, workers take down a "Happy New Year" banner and sweep up confetti and balloons.

We glide to the First Family area to see Martha tiptoe the hallway, high heels in her hand. She stops to look in Dina's bedroom, smiles. She moves to Bud's. Smiles again.

We float by Martha and into the private corridors behind the wall, stopping by the press office. In party clothes, Casey and Win toast with a glass of champagne.

We move towards a light that grows brighter and brighter.

EXT. BEHIND THE WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

Around a bonfire, Chance, the Priestess, Peter, Jackson, Johnson and other past presidents, with RONALD REAGAN, HERBERT HOOVER and Teddy Roosevelt.

HERBERT HOOVER

Before they were called Reaganvilles,  
they were Hoovervilles.

PETER

You want the credit for causing  
wholesale poverty?

HERBERT HOOVER

I'm just saying, historical  
accuracy. At least I did  
something. Not like Garfield.

JOHNSON

To be fair he was assassinated six  
months into his term.

HERBERT HOOVER

Not Jimmy Garfield, you idiot.  
This one.

REAGAN

Speaking of him, how come Garfield  
got Nixon his ketchup? I never got  
jelly beans. My administration  
never played favorites.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

Yeah, you ignored all poor people.

REAGAN

T.R. What does that stand for  
Total Racist?

TEDDY ROOSEVELT

I invited Booker T. Washington to  
the White House.

REAGAN

Once.

JACKSON

I really do like Indians.



PETER  
I'm not Native American. I'm  
Indian American.

JACKSON  
Oh, I like chutney, too.

To cut off the inanity, Chance motions to the Priestess.

PRIESTESS  
That which was done by the one who  
feared evil, be it undone by the  
one who has good in his heart.

The Priestess untangles a large knotted rope.

PRIESTESS  
I unwind the past and free from the  
bond of this place those who are  
here and those to come if their  
intentions be true. I free you. I  
free you. I free you.

She throws the rope in the fire. A blueish green explosion  
erupts. Smoke fills the air. The smoke clears. No ghosts.

CHANCE  
Did it work?

The Priestess gestures to a dead rabbit that had been prone  
in front of the fire. It stirs. Will it be rabid as before?  
It runs to Chance. Their eyes lock. He cuddles it.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Chance and Martha sit comfortably. They have grown into it.  
It all fits, naturally. Dina and Bud burst in.

BUD AND DINA  
Ghost, ghost!

MARTHA  
Kids, that's not funny.

Ulysses Grant runs in panting. Dina tags him.

DINA  
You're it.

The kids run off.

GRANT  
If I wasn't dead already, those two  
ragamuffins would kill me.

CHANCE  
I freed you.

GRANT  
Yes, but that doesn't prevent us  
from checking in, so to speak.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

As usual, Chance and Grant sip port and smoke cigars.

CHANCE  
That night when you were supposed  
to meet me, and you didn't show.  
That made for some tough going.

GRANT  
If you couldn't handle that, how  
could you handle all this?

CHANCE  
A test?

Grant nods.

CHANCE  
Did I pass?

GRANT  
I couldn't leave. You could. But  
you didn't, President Garfield.

We move away from the two Presidents, contently sipping port  
and smoking, to the wall and into the passage way.

We hear a RHYTHMIC BEAT and then MUSIC attached to the BEAT.  
Louder and clearer as we move...

INT. WHITE HOUSE - SUB-BASEMENT - NIGHT

It's karaoke time. Nixon, Jackson, Johnson and Truman.  
Reagan is up, singing LIL NAS X's "Old Town Road."

REAGAN  
"I'm gonna take my horse to the old  
town road I'm gonna ride 'til I  
can't no more..."

JACKSON  
He still thinks he's a cowboy.

NIXON  
Cut him some slack. It's the only  
song he can remember the lyrics to.

TRUMAN

Pipe down. He sucks, but show the office some respect.

As Reagan continues to sing, he does the dance from the "Old Town Road" video. The other Presidents join in.

REAGAN

"Can't nobody tell me nothin'.  
You can't tell me nothin'..."

FADE OUT.