

Paul / Stephen

Scene 4

The main terminal at the Des Moines airport. Stephen is waiting nervously. Paul approaches him from behind, pulling his roll-away suitcase.

PAUL. Boo! *(Stephen whips around, startled.)*

STEPHEN. Paul.

PAUL. What're you doin' here?

STEPHEN. Thought I'd pick you up myself.

PAUL. *(Teasing him.)* That was sweet of you. I'm touched. Truly.

STEPHEN. Good flight? *(Paul sets his suitcase aside, pulls a tin of chewing tobacco out of his back pocket and wedges some chew in his cheek.)*

PAUL. Been *dying* the last three hours. Rude to spit into a cup when someone's sittin' next to you. I need to find another addiction is what I need to do. This snow — we circled so many times I thought they were gonna re-route us to fuckin' Omaha. How long you been waiting?

STEPHEN. 'Bout an hour.

PAUL. Sorry you had to wait.

STEPHEN. Don't worry about it.

PAUL. Seriously, it was nice of you to come out here and pick me up. I coulda gotten a cab you know.

STEPHEN. Well, I got a rental this morning, so ...

PAUL. I hope not an expensive one.

STEPHEN. On my own dime.

PAUL. You shouldn't've done that. If you needed a car, we could've —

STEPHEN. We need to talk.

PAUL. You're sounding way too serious.

STEPHEN. Did you get my messages?

PAUL. No — I haven't turned my phone on yet.

STEPHEN. What'd Thompson say?

PAUL. Cocksucker said he's having second thoughts.

STEPHEN. Shit.

PAUL. I know. Thought this trip was to seal it, but I get to his

house this morning and he starts throwin' up smoke right and left, says he wants to see how things pan out in Iowa. I almost rip him a new asshole, but I stop myself. I ask him — why'd you have me fly all the way out here just to tell me you're not sure? He says he needs more info — what our strategy is over the next ten days, all this shit.

STEPHEN. Did you tell him?

PAUL. 'Course I told him. Talked his ear off for an hour — exactly how we're gonna take Iowa, every single step. And *still* no dice.

STEPHEN. This is bad Paul.

PAUL. What is?

STEPHEN. Thompson's not gonna endorse.

PAUL. He's just playin' a little hard to get.

STEPHEN. No, Paul — he's definitely not gonna endorse.

PAUL. What are you talking about?

STEPHEN. He's gonna endorse Pullman three days out. Fuck — I should have called you last night, but I was hoping it wasn't true. I should have —

PAUL. Whoa whoa whoa — slow down.

STEPHEN. Look Paul — I met with Tom Duffy last night.

PAUL. You *what*?

STEPHEN. He called me just after you left for the airport and asked to meet. I asked what it was about, and he said it was really important. So I did. I met with him. Shit, I should've called / you. I —

PAUL. Stop. Let me get this straight. You met with Tom Duffy?

STEPHEN. Yes.

PAUL. What'd he want?

STEPHEN. Well first he — look — the gist of it is he wants to hire me. He wants me to jump ship and come work for him. This is bad, Paul. He showed me poll numbers with Pullman already ahead by four. They've been telling their supporters to pose as Morris people to the pollsters. We're in really deep fucking trouble.

PAUL. That can't be true. He was playing mind games with you.

STEPHEN. He laid out their whole plan. Robocalls, traffic jams, fake lit and fucking Thompson. Promised him Secretary of Labor and told him to lead us on. Everything you told him today's gonna go straight to Duffy's ear.

PAUL. If this is some sort of practical — I mean — my blood pressure is going through the roof right now.

STEPHEN. I'm sorry, Paul. I really should have called / you.

PAUL. This happened last night?
STEPHEN. Just before the press conference.

PAUL. And you didn't call me?

STEPHEN. I'm sorry, Paul. I — I don't know. I guess I thought
I thought maybe it wasn't true. Maybe / he was —

PAUL. Jesus, Steve. I can't believe you didn't —

STEPHEN. I know I know I know. Look — I was scared. I was
scared and totally confused, and I thought —

PAUL. It doesn't matter what you thought. It matters what you
did. It matters what you *didn't* do. If all this shit is true I made an
ass of myself at Thompson's place. And I gave away our whole god-
damn strategy. Just handed it over.

STEPHEN. I know, Paul. Believe me. But it's like — like I was
paralyzed. I didn't know if it was even worth telling you about if —
if you came back and said — yeah — Thompson's in the bag, but
... fuck, Paul. I don't know.

PAUL. I sure as hell hope you were gonna tell me even if I came
back and —

STEPHEN. Of course! Yes. I just —

PAUL. 'Cause I mean, if you were planning on keeping this secret —

STEPHEN. No! Not at all. That's why I'm telling you now.

PAUL. After I tell you Thompson said no.

STEPHEN. Seriously, Paul, that's why I'm here now. To tell you.
To —

PAUL. A little late now, don't you think? After I —

STEPHEN. You know me, Paul. You know I would never — I
really should have called last night. I should have and I didn't.

PAUL. You're fucking right you should have. You don't meet
secretly with the other guy's campaign manager and *not* fucking tell
me about it. You don't get a fucking *phone call* from the other guy's
manager and not tell me.

STEPHEN. This is the *first* time Paul. The first time I've ever really
fucked up. And I'm sorry. I am so sorry.

PAUL. It's a pretty big goddamn fuck-up whether it's your first
time or not. I mean if we lose here, if we *lose* — it's over, we're dead.

STEPHEN. We can figure this out. There has to be a way to fig-
ure this out.

PAUL. We *better* figure this the fuck out.

STEPHEN. Paul. Please. You gotta forgive me on this. I feel like
absolute shit. I feel terrible. Last night, I was so — you want to

know the truth? I was so wound up about this shit that I went out
and got wasted. Totally wasted. Drank myself to oblivion. Slept
with some girl I shouldn't have. I dealt with this completely the
wrong way. So I'm coming clean now. I came out to the airport to
tell you this so we can figure it out. I know if we put our heads
together and we — Goddamnit! I'm sorry. I am so so so —

PAUL. Steve.

STEPHEN. I am *so* sorry. I feel like I'm — I feel like —

PAUL. Steve. Stop. It's okay.

STEPHEN. No it isn't.

PAUL. It is. It's okay. You're right. We can figure it out. You did
the right thing. You told me, which means that we can do some-
thing about it.

STEPHEN. I know there's a way.

PAUL. There's always a way. So take a breath and get yourself
together. I need you at your best on this.

STEPHEN. I don't want you to think — I mean — I respect the
hell out of you, and your respect is something I —

PAUL. You and I are still okay, alright? It's been me and you from the
beginning on this thing, and I got a little upset, but that's just because
all of this — it's a bit of a shock to me. You're allowed your one fuck-
up. So now let's get past that and get to work. Sound good?

STEPHEN. Yeah.

PAUL. Good. Now. First thing we have to do is get to that fuck-
ing event in — where is it?

STEPHEN. Cedar Rapids.

PAUL. Cedar Rapids. We got to get to that event in Cedar Rapids
so I can break this all to the Governor. You can fill me in on the
drive out there — everything that happened with Duffy — every
detail.

STEPHEN. The Governor's gonna flip.

PAUL. He'll be fine. I know how to handle him. You just do your
job and deal with the press.

STEPHEN. I can do that.

PAUL. Of course you can.

STEPHEN. Thanks, Paul. Really.

PAUL. Don't thank me. Just win me this fuckin' state.

End of Act One