

THE INCUMBENT

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INT. OFFICE OF U.S. SENATOR CHUCK KILBRIDE - LATE AFTERNOON

Two offices are adjacent to each other, with a wall separating them. Both office doors are open, with two MEN visible, at their desks.

On the left, JASON MOORE, late 20s, clad in a dark suit and tie, sits on the phone. On the right, BEN DAVIS, late 30s, salt and pepper hair, also in a suit, sits typing on his computer.

JASON:

(on the phone)

I understand that, but the bottom line is that you and I are both waiting for a response from the VA at this point. They need to approve the additional presumptive conditions in the Federal Register before they can award benefits or disburse monies. Getting the new group of conditions approved in the Register is not a quick process, there's at least a year-long comment period in most cases, prior to approval being considered.

(a beat)

I'll e-mail my liaison again today, but as I explained, I don't think the status will have changed.

(a beat)

Well I'd prefer to cross that bridge when we come to it. If Senator Kilbride doesn't get re-elected, your case will be reassigned to another congressional office.

(a beat)

Understood sir, if the Senator doesn't get re-elected, and I get something back from my liaison before the end of the year, I'll let you know.

(a beat)

Thank you. Have a good evening.
Bye.

Jason hangs up the phone, looks at his wrist watch, and rubs his eyes. He types out a quick e-mail before shutting down his computer. He gets up from his chair and grabs his coat before walking over to Ben's office, and poking his head

inside.

JASON:
(to Ben)
You heading out?

BEN:
(looking at his watch)
Holy shit, it's five.

JASON:
The day goes fast.

BEN:
The last six years have gone fast.

JASON:
They have.

Ben shuts off his computer, gets up, and grabs his coat.

JASON: (CONT'D)
What time will you be at the party
tonight?

BEN:
I'm going to try to get there as
quickly as I can, but I want to
grab dinner first.

JASON:
Yeah, I want to grab a bite, maybe
get in a workout and a shower
beforehand.

BEN:
You should have time, polls don't
close until 8.

Ben shuts off the lights to his office, and Jason does the same in his. The pair walks out of the suite into the office hallway.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ben and Jason head to the elevator.

JASON:
How do you think we'll do tonight?

BEN:
It's hard to say. I want to think
that Chuck has a good shot, but who
(MORE)

BEN: (CONT'D)

knows. This cycle has been nuts.

Ben pushes the elevator call button.

JASON:

I can't get a read on it either.
To be honest with you, it scares
the shit out of me.

(a beat)

Have you thought about what you're
going to do if we don't win?

The elevator arrives, and the pair board.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Jason presses the floor button.

BEN:

I've got several feelers out there,
and I've had a few meetings with
folks over at the University health
system.

JASON:

Government affairs type jobs?

BEN:

Yeah. Or I might start my own
firm.

JASON:

Would you consider taking me with
you?

BEN:

Yeah, I would, but quite honestly,
the start up capital that you would
need for something like that...I
might not be able to do it.

The elevator opens into...

INT. OFFICE LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Ben and Jason walk out of the elevator, towards the front
door to the building.

BEN: (CONT'D)

What about you? How are your
prospects looking?

JASON:

I have a few contacts that said I'd be more than qualified to work in the Veteran sphere, or possibly other areas of the non-profit sector.

BEN:

Good for you.

JASON:

Yeah, I just...it would be a lot easier if we can win tonight. Takes the pressure of finding a job off the shoulders.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Ben and Jason exit the building into the parking lot.

BEN:

I hear you. I think a lot is going to change if we get re-elected.

JASON:

Like what?

BEN:

Well, your job title for one. I think Charlie and Sarah want you to be more of an outreach type of guy. You'd be more mobile, less time in the office.

JASON:

That'd be a nice change. I'll keep my fingers crossed.

BEN:

As will I.

(a beat)

How do you think Chuck's going to do tonight?

JASON:

I've avoided giving predictions.

BEN:

Too scared to be overly optimistic?

JASON:

No it's not that.

(a beat)

(MORE)

JASON: (CONT'D)

Quite honestly, I think we're going to lose by eight or nine points tonight.

BEN:

You think it's that bad?

JASON:

Ben, I think the American people are pissed off. What's worse is that their anger has no direction. That's how we got Andrew Eason at the top of our ticket. At the end of the day, he's going to do major damage to us.

They arrive at Ben's car.

BEN:

(knowing Jason's right)

Yeah. He could.

JASON:

And the worst part of it is that I've worked my ass off for the past five years, and in a few hours, it's very possible that none of that will matter--

BEN:

It does. I can promise you that.

JASON:

Yeah, well, it's hard to believe. If there's one thing that I've learned in this job, it's that perception and reality are two different things, and of those two things, perception is what matters.
(a beat)

I guess I just don't trust the voters to see past the perception that others have painted Chuck to be.

BEN:

Well, it's not like our campaign has been sleeping on the job. We've put out a perception as well.

JASON:

Yeah, but when you get screamed at
(MORE)

JASON: (CONT'D)

all day long, you tend to feel like the positive perception you've painted has no effect.

BEN:

People don't call their elected officials when they're happy, Jason.

JASON:

Yeah. I guess not.

BEN:

If we don't win tonight, you will find something.

JASON:

Yeah, it's just...the length of time that it could take that scares me.

BEN:

Well, I am going to write you a letter of recommendation. And to be quite honest with you, I think Chuck will do.

JASON:

You think so?

BEN:

Yeah. He respects you, and the work that you do. Hold your head high, Jason. You've done a good job. I gotta be honest with you though, you're going to be dealing with people's perception of you for the rest of your life. Some of those people are going to think that you're the scum of the Earth, and there's not going to be any way that you can convince them otherwise.

(a beat)

You've got to forget about those people, because there are plenty of folks, myself included, who do see how hard you work, and what a difference you make.

(a beat)

If you continue to dwell on those who see you as a failure, pretty

(MORE)

BEN: (CONT'D)

soon, they're going to convince you that you are. And you're not. Not by any means.

JASON:

Thank you.

BEN:

You're going to find something, I guarantee it...but let's not assume anything until after we watch the returns. I'll see you later tonight.

JASON:

See you then.

Jason walks to his car as Ben enters his and starts the engine.

THE END.