SIMULACRUM

by

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FADE IN:

INT. HALL - DAY

CONNOR, 20s, nerdy, in casual business dress, hustles along. Tablet computer in hand, he glances at his watch and shakes his head.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A comfy room with a large table.

At the head of the table JELLISON, 30s, ambitious, a man who views leadership as a right. He taps his tablet computer and looks at the screen.

On one side, TAMMY, 20s, glasses and angst, and SLOANE, 20s, pretty and sensual; both on tablets.

On the other side sits BRAD, 20s, easily distracted, reading his tablet.

Into the room charges Connor. He slides into a chair next to Brad.

JELLISON
With one minute to spare. OK, people, we have a full plate.
There are three constraints. Two hours, thirty requests, and limited funding. That’s four minutes of discussion per request. Let’s get started. I presume you have read the requests.

The others tap their tablets and study them.

JELLISON
Request number A B 7 4 4 2 D. Any discussion before we vote?

TAMMY
I don’t think this one lives up to our criteria. I mean, this is their third request, and they have yet to report significant progress.

CONNOR
There has been some progress.

SLOANE
Almost non-measurable.
BRAD
You said the same thing last quarter.

SLOANE
Because it’s true.

CONNOR
I think we should look at how close they are to the goal. It’s obvious that the closer they get, the smaller the progress.

TAMMY
This is not some theoretical exercise in limits. They actually have to land this space ship.

BRAD
Let’s look at this from a cost-benefit view. What can we expect to gain from funding it?

Jellison leans back and looks at his watch.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Your typical suburban kitchen with granite, stainless steel, all the appliances that make modern life modern.

Through the door trudges Connor. He wears a soaked trench coat which he removes in disgust. He drapes it over a chair next to an equally soaked coat. He grabs a towel and dries his hair.

He massages his temples to rub away the pain and goes to the cabinet. He opens it to find a shelf of vitamins, pill bottles, and over-the-counter medications. He rifles through them, looking for something and not finding it.

CONNOR
Where the hell...ROBIN!

He continues to push around bottles.

CONNOR
ROBIN!

In comes ROBIN, 20s, a well-kept woman with the vanity of a well-kept woman.

ROBIN
What?
CONNOR
Where’s the Tylenol?

ROBIN
You mean acetaminophen?

CONNOR
Tylenol, acetaminophen...where is it?

ROBIN
We’re out.

CONNOR
Out? How could we be out?

ROBIN
You used the last of it yesterday, remember? For you hangover?

CONNOR
Didn’t you go out today?

ROBIN
Yes, and you wouldn’t believe how crazy it was. I can’t remember how many places I tried before I found--

CONNOR
I don’t care how many places you tried. I just had the worst day imaginable. I walked home in a freezing rain, and my head is killing me. I want Tylenol!

He hurls a bottle across the kitchen where it explodes in a rain of pills.

ROBIN
You’ll just have to settle for ibuprofen.

They glare at each other before he snatches down another bottle and shakes some pills into his hand.

CONNOR
I don’t ask for much, just a clean house and some damn pain killers.

He opens another cabinet door to expose a half full bottle of whiskey and a nearly full bottle of gin. He peers around the bottles.
ROBIN
If you’re looking for vodka, you won’t find it.

He whirls on her.

CONNOR
No vodka?!

ROBIN
You finished it two days ago.

CONNOR
But you were going to buy more.

ROBIN
You saw the letter we got after we bought that second bottle. They monitor things like that.

CONNOR
I’m not going to let some dickless bureaucrat tell me when I’ve had enough to drink. Tomorrow, you’re going to get another bottle.

He pulls down the gin and a glass and goes to the fridge.

ROBIN
We could get Arnie to buy it for us, like we did in March when your liver tests weren’t so good.

CONNOR
That guy’s a bandit. It was one bottle for us and two for him.

ROBIN
It’s better than getting letters.

Connor adds ice to the glass and pours a generous dollop of gin.

CONNOR
Maybe you’re right. Chisel him down to a single bottle.

ROBIN
Yeah, right.

CONNOR
I mean it. If I have many more days like today, I’ll drink it by the case.
Robin grabs a glass and joins him in a drink.

    ROBIN
    You can’t believe how hard it is to find the things that used to be everywhere.

    CONNOR
    It was my turn in the barrel. Thirty requests for funding, and not nearly enough money go around.

    ROBIN
    I mean, pantyhose used to be everywhere. Drugstores, department stores, more colors than you could count.

    CONNOR
    My worthless colleagues kept voting by gender. The women voted for female projects and against the men.

    ROBIN
    And lipstick, who would have thought lipstick would become as scarce as light bulbs.

    CONNOR
    They tried to hide their strategy behind some bogus analysis, but it was pretty plain. Screw the guys.

Connor falls into a chair and rubs the cold glass over his forehead.

    ROBIN
    They shut down the parking lot. I drove past and there was nothing but yellow police tape. I wonder if they actually arrested those people. I mean, I know it was all black market, but at least they had what you wanted, even chocolate.

She finds the last open chair.

    CONNOR
    That asshole Jellison, whose knowledge wouldn’t fill a gnat’s rectum, kept cutting off discussions.

    (MORE)
He didn’t care about anything but getting through the list.

They stop, realizing they’ve been talking past each other.

CONNOR
I’m sorry. I’m so wound up. What were you saying?

ROBIN
Just bitching. When I can’t find what I want, I get bitchy.

He reaches out and takes her hand.

CONNOR
You’re still my favorite bitch.

ROBIN
Oh gee, thanks a heap. I wouldn’t be a bitch if it weren’t for those greedy corporations. The people on TV say there would be enough for everyone if the corporations’ weren’t involved.

CONNOR
The talking heads don’t know squat. There are no corporations except those run by the government.

ROBIN
I’m just saying what I heard.

CONNOR
I just heard it’s frozen dinners again tonight, right?

ROBIN
Chicken or beef?

CONNOR
(standing)
Chicken. Don’t start them for a few minutes, I want to check on dad.

ROBIN
Check on dad?

CONNOR
My father. You remember, the man who kicked us out of our bedroom because he can’t do stairs.
ROBIN
But...but he’s gone.

CONNOR
What do you mean gone? Where would he go?

ROBIN
They came for him. They said his funding had been denied.

CONNOR
His funding couldn’t cease. I made sure he wasn’t on the list. Unless that asshole--.

ROBIN
That’s what they said.

CONNOR
And you let him go?

ROBIN
He said it was OK.

CONNOR
THEY WERE LYING TO HIM!

ROBIN
Yelling won’t help.

CONNOR
When did they take him?

ROBIN
This morning.

He knocks down his drink and grabs his coat.

CONNOR
Luckily, the process for this is riddled with inefficiency. I can still save him.

ROBIN
Save him? You never saved my mother.

CONNOR
This is my father we’re talking about. Besides, your mother was incurable. Where are the car keys?

She shrinks.
ROBIN
That’s what I wanted to tell you.
I ran out of gas.

CONNOR
What?

ROBIN
I had to drive all over, and no one
had what I wanted, and it was
raining, and I had to look for
parking.

CONNOR
Never mind! Where did you leave it?

ROBIN
Ten blocks north, on fourth.

CONNOR
Ten blocks? Where are the keys?

ROBIN
It won’t do any good. We’ve used
up our monthly gas ration.

CONNOR
Used up? How...

ROBIN
I’m sorry. I didn’t know he was
funded.

He rubs his temples and dons his coat.

CONNOR
They came for my father. Those
bitches!

He rushes out the door.

ROBIN
Connor?

He doesn’t answer.

ROBIN
When I should start dinner?

He’s gone.

She finishes her drink and goes back to the gin bottle. She
refills her glass, takes the bottle to the sink and adds
water to it.
Satisfied, she replaces the bottle in the cabinet and grabs her glass.

ROBIN
At least, I get my bed back.

FADE OUT.

THE END