

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, aceta...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)

CONNOR (CONT'D)

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