

INT. THE BILLIARD ROOM - NIGHT

SHEPHERD has converted one of the rooms on the second floor residence. His expert shot demonstrates that playing pool is something he does almost as well as being President. A.J. stands to the side with his pool cue.

A.J.

McSorley, McCluskey and Shane know we're making our move on the crime bill. They're circling the wagons on the assault weapons.

SHEPHERD

Should I meet with them?

A.J.

Let Lewis take a pass at them first.

SHEPHERD

Fine. 2 ball in the side.

SHEPHERD sends the two-ball flying into the corner pocket.

A.J.

Nice shot, Mr. President.

SHEPHERD

Nice shot, Mr. President? You won't even call me by my name when we're playing pool.

A.J. assesses the table.

A.J.

I will not do it playing pool, I will not do it in a school, I do not like green eggs and ham, I do not like them, Sam-I-am.

SHEPHERD

At ease, A.J., at ease. Would you get away from the pocket.

A.J.

I beg your pardon, Sir?

SHEPHERD

9 ball in the corner.

SHEPHERD makes the shot.

A.J.

Leo Solomon phoned. He said he was thrilled with the deal you made this morning.

SHEPHERD lifts his cue for a moment... trying to think it there was something he was supposed to tell A.J.

SHEPHERD

I forgot to tell you.

A.J.

It's a waste of time.

SHEPHERD

But it's not our time. GDC makes a big push to get the votes. When they come up short, we move in with the softer bill and get it passed. We're everybody's hero. 3 ball in the side.

A.J.

Also, Sydney Wade called.

SHEPHERD, a hair too excited by this news, misses by a mile.

SHEPHERD

Sydney Wade?

A.J.

(beat)

She wanted to apologize one more time for her behavior. Excuse me, Sir, 3 ball in the side.

SHEPHERD

Did she say anything about me?

A.J.

(beat)

Miss Wade?

SHEPHERD

When she called.

A.J.

Did she say anything about you?

SHEPHERD

No, it's just that we had a nice couple of minutes together. She threatened me and I patronized her and we didn't have anything to eat, but I thought there was a connection.

A.J. is staring at him in disbelief.

A.J.

Excuse me, Sir, 13 ball in the corner.

SHEPHERD

She didn't say anything about me?

A.J.

(quietly)

Well, no, Sir, but I could pass her a note before study hall--

SHEPHERD

Tell me this: Hypothetically--

A.J.

I feel a nightmare coming on.

He misses the shot.

SHEPHERD

--What would happen if I called Sydney and asked her to be my date at the State Dinner Thursday evening?

A.J.

You're not serious.

SHEPHERD

Don't I sound serious?

A.J.

The President can't just go out on a date.

SHEPHERD

Why not? Jefferson did. Wilson did. Wilson was widowed during his first term. He met a woman named Edith Gault. He dated her, courted her, married her, and somewhere in there managed to form the League of Nations.

A.J.

Mr. President, this is an election year. If you're looking for female companionship, we can make certain arrangements that'll ensure total privacy and--

SHEPHERD

I don't want you to get me a girl, A.J. What is this, Vegas?

A.J.

No, sir, this is the White House.

SHEPHERD

And I'm talking about something that in no way is at conflict with my oath of office. I'm a single adult. I met a woman that I'd like to see again socially. Now how's that different from what Wilson did?

A.J.

The difference is he didn't have to be the president on television. You've said it yourself a million times: If there had been a TV in every living room 60 years ago, this country does not elect a man in a wheelchair.

SHEPHERD

So what are you saying?

A.J.

I'm saying we'll take a hit.

SHEPHERD

How big?

A.J.

Five points. Maybe more.

SHEPHERD

Five points, we're sitting here talking about five points!?

A.J.

It could be more.

SHEPHERD

I drop five points when Wisconsin doesn't make it to the Rose Bowl. 5 ball in the corner.

A.J.

Do you want me to have Kodak put together some numbers so we know what we're talking about?

SHEPHERD

Yeah. Yeah.

(beat)

No. No. I don't want to check a polling sample to see if this is okay, like I'm asking permission to stay out an hour past curfew. This is not the business of the American people.

A.J.

With all due respect, Sir, the American people have a funny way of deciding on their own what is and what is not their business.

SHEPHERD

I like her, A.J.

(pause)

Stop being my chief of staff for one minute.

A.J.

(beat)

Give her a call.

SHEPHERD

(calling out)

Janie!

(to A.J.)

She didn't say anything about me?

A.J.

She did say you were taller than she thought you'd be.

SHEPHERD

Well that's something.

JANIE enters--

JANIE

Yes, sir?

SHEPHERD

Janie, I need you to track down a phone number for me.