

UNDER STANDING PEOPLE

Written by

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Based on, If Any

Address
Phone Number

OVER BLACK:

The sound of rain pouring and thunder clapping is heard.

EXT. WATERSIDE- DAY

A grey, overcast day. Pretty normal for England, really. Rain causes ripples to appear on the River Arden.

Two men; WILLIAM DARCY, VISCOUNT ALCESTER (30, white, English) and CHRIS JOHNSON (30, white, English) hurriedly walk along the river in anoraks.

WILLIAM

So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

Chris smiles.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

But seriously, though. I want this meeting to go as smoothly and quickly as possible. So; what tea are you going to have?

CHRIS

Blackcurrant and Raspberry.

WILLIAM

Excellent. I will go for the classic Earl Grey.

CHRIS

Cool.

Chris and William walk past a trio of elderly women sitting on a bench. Their faces are covered by the black hoods of their anoraks.

WILLIAM

Do not be tempted by the prospect of afternoon tea. If he offers to make you a scone; simply ask for a rich tea biscuit.

CHRIS

Ok.

The three woman cackle as William and Chris cross their path.

Chris glances at them.

WILLIAM

Keep the conversation on topic.
Skip the preliminaries and cut off
all opportunities for small talk.
Only ask him the questions in here.

William taps the folder under his arm.

WILLIAM

And make sure he doesn't deviate
from them. That way, we should be
done within an hour.

CHRIS

Sure.

WOMAN 1

All hail, Johnson, hail to thee, MP
for Ardenvale!

WOMAN 2

All hail, Johnson, hail to thee,
Chief Administrator!

WOMAN 3

All hail, Johnson, thou shalt be
Prime Minister hereafter!

Chris glances at the three women.

CHRIS

Huh?

WILLIAM

Ignore them, Chris, they're just
being weird.

William tugs Chris along, the two men walking faster. Chris
looks behind him.

The woman watch them walk away, cackling as they do so.

EXT. ELSINORE LANE- DAY

Chris and William walk past half timbered Tudor cottages and
fine Georgian townhouses.

CHRIS

I swear one of those women was Judi
Dench.

WILLIAM

Then she'd know better than to sit on a park bench peddling out bullshit to those idiotic enough to believe them, wouldn't she?

CHRIS

I guess.

William and Chris arrive outside one of the Georgian townhouses.

William knocks on the glossy black door.

CHRIS

We could've just walked down Capulet Street.

William rings the doorbell.

WILLIAM

I know, but I fancied a riverside excursion. Before the heavens opened, of course.

William knocks on the door once more.

WILLIAM

Mr Benson? It's William Darcy and Chris Johnson, from the Administrative Offices. We're here to discuss the Strabovirus epidemic.

William tries his luck with the doorbell once again.

CHRIS

Why couldn't've Gord done this himself? Joe and he served together in Afghanistan, didn't they?

WILLIAM

They did, yes. But why do something yourself if you can get your subordinates to do it for you?

William opens the letterbox.

WILLIAM

We arranged this with you two weeks ago, Mr Benson. You cannot say this was unexpected.

William bangs the door once again. Chris looks down next to him.

Next to the door is an upturned Oxford shoe, recently polished.

Chris bends down to pick it up.

WILLIAM

Mr Benson, if you don't open this door, my father will hear about this.

Chris stands back up, with the shoe in one hand, and Mr Benson's front door keys in the other.

Williams looks at Chris. He beams at the sight of the keys.

WILLIAM

Excellent, Chris. Where did you find them?

CHRIS

Underneath this shoe next to the door.

William snatches the keys from Chris.

WILLIAM

Good man.

William unlocks Mr Benson's front door.

CHRIS

Wait. Isn't that breaking and entering?

WILLIAM

Technically, yes. But Joseph should have thought about that before he took this long to open the door, shouldn't he?

William opens the door, and ushers Chris inside. William follows suit, closing the door behind him.

INT. CORRIDOR- DAY

William and Chris slowly walk further into the house. They take off their coats, revealing their sharp suits.

William glances into the glass paned door to his left.

Inside the living room, a man sits in an armchair next to a roaring fire.

WILLIAM

He's in there. The bastard must have fallen asleep before we arrived.

William glances at his reflection in the mirror. He combs his hair with a comb he whipped out from his pocket.

He puts the comb back and opens the door.

WILLIAM

Let's go.

William strides into the room, Chris follows him.

INT. LIVING ROOM- DAY

William and Chris walk in front of the man in the armchair.

WILLIAM

My sincerest apologies for barging in like this, Mr Benson, but-

Chris and William freeze as they look at the man in the armchair.

JOSEPH BENSON, MP FOR ARDENVALE (mid 50's, white, English) stares back at them. But his eyes are glazed. His skin is pale. He is motionless.

WILLIAM

Sir?

CHRIS

He's not, you know, dead, is he?

WILLIAM

Of course not.

William notices the wine glass on the floor next to the armchair... and the pool of red wine its in.

William picks the glass up.

WILLIAM

He clearly thought he'd have a glass before our visit. It must have wiped him out cold.

William starts shaking Joseph.

WILLIAM
Mr Benson, sir? Can you hear me?
Sir?

The body slumps forward and lands on the floor, bent over itself.

William takes a step back.

WILLIAM
Ok. He is actually dead, Chris.

William turns round. Chris carries a box of Fruit Tea.

BEAT.

CHRIS
Might as well, shouldn't I? Not
like he's gonna need it anymore.

William and Chris look at each other for a moment. The thunder rumbles outside.

INT. ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES- DAY

A mahogany door. A bronze plaque engraved with "Brig. Sir Gordon Ainsworth, Chief Administrator" is fixed to the front.

William knocks it.

GORDON (O.S.)
(from behind door)
Enter.

William opens the door.

INT. GORDON'S OFFICE- DAY

William strides into the office. Chris, clutching the fruit tea, slowly follows him, and closes the door.

WILLIAM
Sir.

GORDON AINSWORTH (early 60's, white, English) stands behind his desk, with his back towards William and Chris, with his hands behind him.

He slowly turns round, and smiles.

GORDON

Ah. William, Christopher. So, what did our friend Joseph Benson have to say for himself. Hmm?

He gestures towards a teapot and some cups on a tray. William nods, Chris hands him the box of fruit tea.

WILLIAM

That's the problem, sir.

Gordon pours some tea into his and William's cups. He pours some hot water from the kettle into Chris' cup.

GORDON

Why? Did he conveniently forget that his appearance in the Commons clashed with our rendezvous?

Chris picks up his tea and quietly sips it.

WILLIAM

No, sir. He's... dead.

Gordon's eyes widen as the thunder roars outside. He sips his tea.

INT. THE FALSTAFF INN- NIGHT

Chris straightens outside his copy of the Ardenvale Gazette.

The headline "Joseph Benson, dead at 58: By-Election imminent" is emblazoned on the front.

Chris puts the paper down and takes a sip of his beer.

His wife, SOPHIE JOHNSON (30, white, English) sits opposite him, quietly eating her Seabass.

CHRIS

Gord believes he died of a heart attack, Soph.

Sophie sips her gin.

SOPHIE

Interesting.

CHRIS

When I saw his body, for a moment I was a ten year old again, staring at my mum.

SOPHIE

Really? In which case, I for one am glad I wasn't in the room with you. I'd rather not get such a visceral reminder of my father's mysterious death.

CHRIS

Yeah.

Sophie takes another sip of her drink.

SOPHIE

Has Gordon selected a date for the by-election yet?

CHRIS

Not officially, but it's most likely going to be in May, Soph.

SOPHIE

Ok. I just wanted to know so I could prepare myself for the days to come.

Chris chuckles as he takes a bit of his haddock.

CHRIS

Say no more, Soph. I know how much you hate politics.

SOPHIE

Anyone can become an MP, can't they?

BEAT.

Chris looks up, the fear visible on his face. The thunder roars outside.

Chris takes a bite out of one his chips.

CHRIS

Well, if you're a UK citizen, yeah. But it's not as simple as that, Soph. You need to declare your candidacy. People need to nominate you. There are forms to fill. You can't simply enter an election and hope people will vote for you.

SOPHIE

You could pull a few strings at work, couldn't you?

BEAT.

Chris slowly eats a chip.

CHRIS
You alright, Soph?

Sophie finishes her drink.

SOPHIE
Yes. I'm fine. I've never been
better.

BEAT.

CHRIS
You've been acting rather odd
recently, Soph. It's quite worrying
actually.

Sophie looks at the desert menu.

SOPHIE
Relax, I'm fine. There's no need to
worry about me. Now, then. I don't
know about you, but I'm in the mood
for a chocolate sundae.

CHRIS
I 'spose that'd be nice, once I've
finished this, of course.

Chris digs into his fish. The thunder roars outside.

EXT. CHRIS AND SOPHIE'S HOUSE- NIGHT

The lights from within emit a warm and welcoming glow.

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

Sophie sits up in bed, talking to her mum on the phone. Chris
sleeps next to her.

SOPHIE
I know! Chris actually found the
body, the poor thing.

Sophie sips some water.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

By the sounds of things, he had as peaceful a death as anyone could hope for. Sitting in an armchair by the fire with a glass of wine. I wouldn't mind going a similar way if I'm honest.

Chris turns next to her.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

He seems fine, considering. He hasn't been too triggered, bless him.

Chris groans and places a pillow over his head.

BEAT.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

He got a free box of fruit tea out of it, so that's all good.

Sophie takes another sip of her water.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

Yes. Apparently its scheduled for May. I'm planning to run myself.

Chris turns next to Sophie again. Sophie glances at him.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

Well, I think its time for a bit of a career change. Chris is going to aid me.

BEAT.

The person on the phone shouts inaudibly. Sophie sighs.

SOPHIE

Why shouldn't I take advantage of my husband's position of power for my own benefit?

Chris groans and turns in the bed once again. Sophie looks at him and quickly turns the light off. She is lit up by her phone.

SOPHIE

I have you, Chris, and Geoffrey. That's three possible nominations already.