

EAT THE TASTE

(In the dark we hear a voice popping in and out on a police radio.)

VOICE ON RADIO

Number Three? Over.

(Pause, no response.)

Come in Number Three. Over.

(A door opens along the upstage wall; light spills in from the hallway beyond. Bill stands in silhouette in the door, gun drawn, alert. He wears a nicely tailored, FBI style suit.)

VOICE ON RADIO

Seventy-Two calling Number Three. Come in. Over.

(Bill pulls a radio from his pocket. He speaks quietly, confidently.)

BILL

This is Number Three, Number Seventy-Two. Over.

(Pause.)

VOICE ON RADIO

Number Seventy-Two calling Number Three. Come in Number Three. Over.

(Pause.)

BILL

This is Number Three, Number Seventy-Two. I'm coming in. What's your directive? Over.

VOICE ON RADIO

Come in Number Three. Come in. Come in! Over!

BILL

I'm coming in! What's your directive?! Over!

VOICE ON RADIO

Where are you, Number Three?! Come in, come in stat! I repeat, stat! Over.

(Bill looks at his radio, momentarily baffled. Then, realizing his error)

BILL

Oh, shit.

(He turns a dial on the radio.)

This is Number Three! I'm coming in, coming in stat, what's your directive?! Over!

(Pause. Then, with extreme irritation.)

VOICE ON RADIO

What is the condition of the nest, Number Three? The condition of the nest. Please advise, over.

BILL

The nest? Over.

VOICE ON RADIO

The room, Number Three, the motel room. Over.

(Bill flips on a light switch by the door. The room is a large, shabby motel room complete with a bed, a table with chairs, a nightstand and phone, a window looking out onto a parking lot, and a door that leads into a bathroom. Bill takes a quick but professionally thorough look around the room.)

BILL

Empty nest. The condition of the Nest is empty. I repeat, empty, empty and secure. Over.

VOICE ON RADIO

Copy that. Stand by.

(Bill crosses to the window and draws the curtain. He lingers there for a moment, scanning the lot for activity.)

VOICE ON RADIO

What's the situation at the welcome desk? Over.

BILL

The welcome desk? Over.

VOICE ON RADIO

The manager. Has he been briefed? Over.

BILL

Roger, that. Briefed and remunerated. The welcome desk will be welcoming. Over.

VOICE ON RADIO

Okay, Number Three, we're looking at an ETA of about ninety [inaudible]. Secure the nest. We're bringing in the hatchling. Over.

(Bill didn't catch this. Finally)

BILL

Ninety seconds? Over.

(Pause, no response)

Did you say ninety seconds or ninety minutes? Over.

VOICE ON RADIO

Ninety seconds, Number Three, we're just outside the building. We're coming in. Over.

(Bill looks out the window.)

BILL

Copy that. Oh, right, I can see you pulling up. Over.

VOICE ON RADIO

You're breaking up, Number Three. Repeat, over.

(Bill waves to the parking lot.)

BILL

I can see you. Look, I'm waving. Over.

VOICE ON RADIO

[Inaudible, but urgent!]

BILL

You're looking right at me. I can see you, there are three of you. Over.

(Bill continues waving.)

VOICE ON RADIO

[Inaudible, even more urgent!!]

BILL

I'm right here! You're looking at me, I can't believe you don't see me. Over.

VOICE ON RADIO

Get! Away! From! The! Window! Over!

(Bill dives below the window. He crawls to the curtain cord and pulls it closed.)

BILL

Room secured. Room secured, over.

(Pause, no response.)

BILL

The room - the nest is now secure, over.

(Bill peeks through the curtains. Paul and Eva enter with Greg, unseen by Bill, who's still focused on the parking lot outside. Paul and Eva carry guns and radios and wear FBI power suits. Greg is bound at the wrists, and has a pillow sack with a child's room style print tied over his head.)

BILL

Repeat. The nest is secure, over.

PAUL

I thought I told you to get away from the window.
(Bill spins, taken by surprise.)

EVA

Sit him down on the bed.

(Paul sits Greg down on the bed.)

EVA

I'll be back.

(Eva exits.)

PAUL

(To Bill.)

You were supposed to contact us after you settled with the manager.

BILL

It took a little time. He wanted more money.

PAUL

He always wants more money.

BILL

I tried calling in for authorization.

PAUL

Never heard your call if you did.

BILL

I had some trouble with my radio.

PAUL

Trouble, huh?

BILL

I didn't realize the volume dial was all the way down, then I didn't realize there was one dial for the mike and one for the speaker, so-

(Paul grabs Bill, pulling him close.)

PAUL

No more fuck ups, Bill. Cheney's Boys are all over this thing. Fuck up again and it's back to pushing paper for the both of us. Got it?

BILL

Number Three.

PAUL

What's that?

BILL

Number Three. You're supposed to call me Number Three.

(Bill nods toward Greg.)

PAUL

Right. Number Three.

(Paul and Bill turn to consider Greg.)

BILL

You got the liquid?

PAUL

Boss is bringing it.

BILL

You think this guy's gonna Eat the Taste, or what?

PAUL

We'll see.

BILL

People don't change their stripes. Aging hippies, life long Republicans, people are what they are.

PAUL

Unless they Eat the Taste, of course.

BILL

That's right. Unless they Eat the Taste.

(Paul and Bill share a sinister laugh. Eva returns, which silences the two. She carries a briefcase and a boombox, both of which she puts on the table.)

EVA

Any word from Hollmann?

PAUL

Not yet.

BILL

Manager's been briefed. He'll call up when Hollmann shows.

EVA

Hollmann is the Urinetown composer, is that right?

PAUL

Composer/lyricist.

EVA

And this one's the book writer?

BILL

AKA librettist. Librettist/lyricist.

EVA

Strange job title.

PAUL

Strange job.

EVA

Well, what Mr. Ashcroft wants, Mr. Ashcroft gets.

(Eva takes out a file from her briefcase. All wait while she examines the papers.)

EVA

How are you today, Mr. Kotis? Everything okay?

(No response. To Bill)

EVA

Take off the bag.

(Bill undoes the pillowcase and takes it off Greg's head. Greg is gagged and a little disoriented.)

EVA

The gag, too.

BILL

He might start screaming.

EVA

Are you going to start screaming, Mr. Kotis? Because if you are, the gag goes back on, and so does the bag. You understand?

(Greg nods.)

EVA

Okay.

(Bill takes off the gag.)

EVA

You've given us quite a run for the money these past few days, Mr. Kotis.

GREG

I didn't know who you were at first.

EVA

But you know now, right?

GREG

You're with - - the Justice Department?

EVA

That's right. I'm with Justice, they're with Homeland.

PAUL

Department of Homeland Security.

EVA

Do you know why you're here, Mr. Kotis?

GREG

Um...I think I do.

EVA

Your file says you were fully briefed concerning the status of this matter.

GREG

I got a few calls, but I screen my calls.

EVA

You never talked to an agent in person?

GREG

Um...no. I do have their messages on my machine, but no, I never picked up.

BILL

His machine only gives you ninety seconds, so it took a few phone calls. But I was able to go into a little bit of detail.

EVA

You briefed the detainee via voice mail?

BILL

Answering machine.

(Eva considers Bill unhappily, then returns her attention to Greg.)

EVA

You should probably erase those messages, Mr. Kotis. The sooner the better.

GREG

Okay.

EVA

We'll have some people help you with that.

GREG

Or I could just do it myself. When I go home.

(Eva signals to Paul, who takes out a pad, makes a note, then returns the pad to his pocket.)

EVA

How do you feel about the Justice Department, Mr. Kotis?

GREG

No particular opinion.

EVA

Too harsh?

GREG

I don't know. Maybe.

EVA

Too punitive?

GREG

Could be.

EVA

Some fear the new law enforcement tools Justice has at its disposal. Access to business records, library records, tools like that.

GREG

Well, you need those tools. To fight terrorism.

BILL

You're God damn right, we do.

PAUL

And other things.

EVA

Some say we've acquired too much power. Some say our efforts don't jibe with the Constitution. Are you one of those people, Mr. Kotis?

PAUL
People who say our efforts don't jibe?

GREG
I'm sure your efforts jibe.

BILL
You're God damn right they jibe.

(Paul makes another note in his pad.)

EVA
How about Mr. Ashcroft, John Ashcroft, the Attorney General? How do you feel about him?

GREG
Don't you mean retired Attorney General?

EVA
"Retired"?

(Eva, Paul, and Bill chuckle knowingly.)

EVA
Just tell us how you feel about him.

GREG
No opinion.

EVA
Theater people usually don't like Mr. Ashcroft.

GREG
I don't know that you can really generalize about theater people like that.

PAUL
Except to say that there's no people like them.

BILL
No people I know.

GREG
I just think you'll find as many opinions among theater people as you will among government people.

EVA

How about your opinion?

GREG

No opinion.

PAUL

A villain?

GREG

Not particularly.

BILL

An oppressive figure? A usurper of civil liberties?

GREG

Couldn't really say.

EVA

You write a play like "Urinetown" and you have no opinion of John Ashcroft?

GREG

Not a well thought out one.

EVA

I thought you were a political science guy.

GREG

I was. I just never got into legal issues. I liked international stuff, that was about it.

BILL

Legal issues are international these days.

GREG

I suppose that's true.

PAUL

You support the war?

GREG

The war?

EVA

You said you liked international stuff. I assume you have an opinion about the war?

GREG

Which war?

EVA

They're all the same war, Mr. Kotis.

GREG

Why are you asking me about the war?

PAUL

Are you uncomfortable sharing your views on the war?

GREG

They've been going on a long time, I suppose.

BILL

The fight is about freedom, Mr. Kotis.

GREG

Of course.

PAUL

As is Mr. Ashcroft's fight.

GREG

Well, that's important. Freedom.

BILL

You're God damn right, it is.

PAUL

And as Mr. Ashcroft himself once said, "We know the battle is not yet won, nor does the war to defend liberty ever end." Ever.

BILL

That's from his address to the Heritage Foundation.

PAUL

You know it.

BILL

Except for the extra "Ever."

PAUL

Personal touch.