

1993 Sunday June 13

Washington DC

Oval Office

Back in time that Sunday. RUTH walks into the Oval Office wearing navy slacks and a blouse.

President Clinton stands before her behind his desk.

RUTH: 'Mr President.'

You're kidding me?

He's wearing a suit and tie.

RUTH's eyes watch the president stand.

All six-feet-two inches of him!

And all five-foot-zero of me (!) is wearing my weekend travel gear!

Oh, I'm gonna kill Bernie!

Not a great start.

No time for regrets, that's what you'd say, Momma.

Smile my best smile, disarming.

CLINTON: 'Mrs Ginsburg, thank you for coming in.'

RUTH: 'Thank you so much for seeing me, President Clinton.'

She reaches forward to shake hands but can't manage.

'Yes, Mr Clinton, it was all rather amusing.
Quite the cloak-and-dagger entry.
Bernie Nussbaum snuck me in through the side door.'

CLINTON: 'I hope this morning wasn't too early for you, Mrs Ginsburg.'

RUTH: 'No, not too early at all, Mr President.'

Well that's an outright lie.

Registers her outfit.

Gotta address it.

RUTH: 'Mr President, I'm so sorry, Bernie Nussbaum assured me the attire was casual, otherwise I would never have—'

CLINTON: 'You look marvelous to me.'

RUTH: 'Thank you, Mr President.'

CLINTON: 'Ruth, please call me Bill.'

RUTH: 'Oh ... Sure. Thank you ... Bill.'

So ... time for some small talk?

RUTH: 'Bernie Nussbaum's gone back to my apartment to join the vetting team. My husband Marty Ginsburg's going to cook them all a gourmet lunch.'

He's nodding, smiling. Such white teeth.
He remembers Marty.

CLINTON: 'Indeed, wasn't it Marty who lobbied to have your name on my shortlist?'

RUTH: 'Yes it was. That's right, he did, Mr ... Bill. Oh, he's a brilliant tax lawyer, quite a different slant to my specialty.'

CLINTON: 'Shall we begin?'

RUTH: 'Yes, let's do.'

CLINTON: 'So ah, tell me about your pervading value system as a judge.'
He's leaning back in his chair. He is enjoying this.

RUTH: 'Well sir, I strongly abide by the separation of the judiciary and the executive.

The constitution can only work its magic, democracy can only be maintained,
if we never meddle in the affairs of each other.'

The president laughs.

CLINTON: 'Except for right now where I must appoint a judge and therefore, I have my nose right in the business of the judiciary!!'

Oh god, he thinks I'm preaching to him.

RUTH: 'Oh yes, of course, Mr President I fully understand ... Oh, you're joking!'

He winks at me, smiling.

CLINTON: 'I've read many of your judgments, Ruth, they are quite brilliant pieces of writing.'

RUTH: 'Thank you, sir. I am honored you've read them.'

CLINTON: 'Listen. You are clearly well qualified, but tell me about yourself, Ruth?'

Huh?

RUTH: 'I'm sorry, what, sir?'

CLINTON: 'Where you are from?'

RUTH: 'Oh you want ... Well, I was born in Brooklyn to a Jewish family during the depression. It certainly wasn't easy.

My mother though, Celia, she was wonderful ... she talked politics and books, and in spite of being poor she was the first person to take me to the opera. It has been a great love of mine ever since.

Are you an opera lover, sir?'

CLINTON: 'No I can't say I am, Ruth.'

RUTH: 'Oh well, there's always time.'

CLINTON: 'Tell me, does Marty go with you to the opera?'

RUTH: 'Marty? Oh yes he enjoys it too.'

Our apartment is right by the Kennedy Centre,
the home of the Washington National Opera.'

CLINTON: 'I think you've met my wife, Ruth, Hillary. Are you familiar
with her work?'

RUTH: 'Oh yes, very much familiar. Indeed, I admire Mrs Clinton very
much. She's an extremely intelligent lawyer. When your second term
is served perhaps, she might even consider running for president?'

CLINTON: [*laughing*] 'Yes she is the over-achiever in our family.'

I don't quite know how to respond.

He looks right at me, it's intense, his face creases in a smile. I can see
why everyone finds him so charismatic. And yet such a decent man,
such a strong, committed unit with his wife.

He's talking about how Hillary had to fight at law school for everything
she did.

I nod in agreement.

CLINTON: 'I admire strong women, Ruth.'

RUTH: 'Well that's a very commendable position, Mr President.'

God did I just say that out loud?

Standing up, he's standing up.

Oh, he's walking to the door ...

CLINTON: 'I will be making my decision on this tonight.'

RUTH: 'Tonight. Oh. Well, if there's anything else you need ...'

That smile again.

I need to ask ...

She hesitates.

RUTH: '... So, someone might call my apartment tonight then?
One way or the other?'

CLINTON: 'There will be a call one way or the other, Ruth.'

RUTH: 'Right.

Well. Thank you, Mr President.

It's been a privilege.'

What! I have to wait until tonight?

I remind myself of my momma's words.

'Patience in all things, Ruth. Patience.'

She bows and leaves the Oval Office.