

First Date

by John Wentworth Chapin

“And I love the National Gallery. I was there two — no, three months ago — and the guy I was with knows a curator, so we got a special tour of works that aren't on display. They were being restored. It was... phenomenal.”

Pause. Both men sip their Cabernet Franc.

“Oh, that is extraordinary. I love knowing people in the right places. When I went to the Inaugural Ball last year, it was all because of my work. I chatted up Barbara Boxer: loves the gays.”

“She's fabulous.”

A wry nod. Of course she is.

Silently over the bar, four Taiwanese play table tennis on television, the ball invisible from speed, swiftly hit, deftly returned.

“So tell me what you do again.”

“DARPA contracts processing. Hush-hush.” Wink. “Their budgets are...enormous.”

When the waiter brings the check, neither reaches for it.

