Parliament "Pilot"

Ву

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INT. SEEDY MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A quartet of men sit around a table playing cards. They are all middle aged or older dressed in shirts and ties, and hazy smoke blankets the air. TANNER (50's) chomps on a cigar and grins widely as he slides stacks of twenty dollar BILLS into the ante pile.

TANNER You might want to work on your poker face, Miller. Raise you ten.

The man he's a addressing looks a little green under the collar, itching idly at his neck as he glances disdainfully at his cards again. Taking a sharp breath, he surrenders folds.

MILLER

I didn't come here to lose all my money, Tanner. I came to deal.

TANNER

Now now, my good man. All in good time. What's a couple hundred between friends, huh?

He chuckles, and the other two men join him.

MILLER

(Impatient) I think we've played this game long enough. Did you actually call me

here for a reason, or not?

He makes to stand, but one of the other men intercepts him.

TANNER

Whoa whoa whoa, friend. Didn't know you'd get so hot under the collar. They really aren't paying you Liberal backbenchers enough, are they? Alright, here it is. It's simple, we're in a bind. We really want to pass this bill, and we know we don't have the numbers. Minority governments, they do nobody good.

MILLER

What are you saying? Last I checked the House the Tories needed more than one vote.

TANNER

Did you think I called you down to waste your time and just take your money, Mr. Miller? Do you think I'd *just* approach you?

MILLER

(Guarded) Liberals?

TANNER

Possibly. Not important. The point is we have the numbers to blindside opposition and we want you to be part of this.

MILLER

How would this be worth it to me at all? I don't care about this bil at all, but you know as well as I do that my days in the party are finished if I do this.

TANNER

You're absolutely right. But it's been obvious for a while that you align more with us on the issues than many of your compatriots. I know that your wife's business has been struggling. We want to give her and people like her tax relief. In fact, I'm sure that we could come to an arrangement that would get her back in the black?

MILLER And that wouldn't look completely suspect?

TANNER

Of course it would get to you indirectly. Listen, here's a down payment. Consider it giving you back some of what we took tonight. Can we count on you?

One of Tanner's cronies lifts up a small duffel bag full of money. Miller eyes the bag, then picks it up after a moment of thought. Silently looking at the other men, he nods.

MILLER

I'll do it.

Suddenly, the door to the motel room CRASHES open and uniformed officers flood into the room. Before the shocked men can react, they are being handcuffed and read their Miranda rights.

TANNER

Were you wearing a wire, Miller?

An arresting officer shakes his head.

OFFICER

We've been watching you for a while, Mr. Tanner. No, Mr. Miller's just a cherry on the corruption sundae.

TANNER I want to speak to a lawyer.

OFFICER

Don't worry, you'll be talking to your lawyer a whole lot. (Leading Tanner off screen) And the worst part is, I voted for you.

EXT. PARLIAMENT HILL - MORNING

Red and white Canadian flags snap in the breeze atop the gothic buildings that make up the seat of government. A trio of youth make their way toward the Centre Block. PHIL KEENE (18) strolls across the grassy lawn with a broad smile on his face. He is wearing the uniform of a Parlimentary Page, a three-piece black suit, comprised of a jacket and pants, with a white shirt and tie. He's accompanied by a youth of slight build and aristocratic features, GRAY MACNEIL (18) and JUNE KIM (18).

> GRAY Will you quit your lollygaging, Keene? I would like to get to arrive on time on my first day, you know.

Phil looks turns back to his companions, walking backwards as he continues to beam at them.

PHIL Come on, Gray! Don't tell me that you're not excited! That this, all this, does not get your motor running? We're going to be walking the halls of power, hobnobbing with (MORE) $\begin{array}{c} \mbox{PHIL (cont'd)} \\ \mbox{some of the most influential men in} \\ \mbox{the} \ - \end{array}$

JUNE

And women.

PHIL - and women in the country. We got it made, people!

JUNE (Amused) Phil, we're parliamentary pages. This isn't rocket science and it's not saving the world. (Considering) In fact, it's being government's butt monkeys in exchange for having a nice gig on your CV.

PHIL (Shaking his head) You guys seriously think that this is all this is? This is our foot in the door. It's the first step on the road to affecting positive change in society. In the world! You gotta think big!

Phil turns his back on his comrades so that he is now facing the direction he's walking.

GRAY

(Sarcastically) Whatever you say, Keene. You're poised to take over the world with your gusto and gumption.

JUNE

Phil, I'm wondering if you were asleep through training? This is not going to be glamourous, I'm seriously doubting it will even be all that fun. What we won't be doing is changing the world.

Phil jams a hand into his pocket, then fishes out some spare change, which he gives to a homeless man sitting on the corner. The other two ignore his exchange and continue walking, forcing Phil to run to catch up. PHIL Hey, I'm going to have to agree to disagree. I see opportunity open right before me and I'm going to jump in with both feet -

Phil abruptly stops at the loud wet SQUELCH. Horrified, he looks down. Gray pats the him on the shoulder in a mostly condescending way.

GRAY You have to look before you leap, Keene. Because sometimes, your opportunity stinks.

With that, Gray continues on to the Centre Block. June gives Phil a sympathetic look but hurries on with Gray. With her back to him, she can let her disgust at his misfortune show.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

CARTER GAGE stands in front of a mirror, deliberately tying his garish tie. He's a black man in his mid thirties, with a perpetual five o'clock shadow and thick-framed glasses. He's wearing a grey suit that looks quite old fashioned, and gives him the air of a used car salesman. In the background, the morning drones on.

> NEWSCASTER (ON TV) Good morning, Ottawa. The Hill will see some new faces in the House of Commons today, as winners of the recent by-elections held across the country arrive in the capital for their first day on the job. The by-elections were held due to four seats becoming vacant simultaneously when Finance Minister Greg Tanner, Joseph Luis and Ben Wozniak - all members of the Federal Conservative party and Federal Liberal MP Andrew Miller were arrested in connection to the budget bribe scandal. Investigation into the bribery is ongoing ...

Gage's assistant, ADRIAN DAVIANO (25) stands in the door. He is dressed in designer slacks and shirt and his dark hair is slicked back. He is immaculately groomed. He has a cell phone pressed to his chest.

ADRIAN

Bettina's heading over to the West Block right now, the real estate agent will be sending over a folder of different places by 2 this afternoon, and you're scheduled to be sworn in in (checks his watch) 30 minutes.

CARTER

Got it.

Adrian checks his watch.

ADRIAN

You do? Because I'm going to head down and I thought we could go over some of the paper on policy before we get to the caucus meeting and -

CARTER Adrian. It's the same policy we've always had. Don't worry, I got it.

ADRIAN (Off his look) Okay. Alright. I'll be downstairs, in the car.

Carter nods and turns back to the mirror.

NEWSCASTER (ON TV) While the embattled Conservative governemnt struggles to hold onto its minority government, the shroud of the bribery scandal hangs over the Liberal Party as well. While MP Miller was a backbencher, the public still holds the Liberal leadership responsible.

Carter finishes with his tie, takes out a comb and starts running it through his very short hair.

NEWSCASTER (ON TV) ...new Liberal MP Carter Gage narrowly won his riding. Gage is no stranger to controversy, being a key player at the center of the Mayday Reporting scandal that rocked Queens Park two years ago. Said investigation is still ongoing. How this shakeup will (MORE) NEWSCASTER (ON TV) (cont'd) affect parliament remains to be seen, but -

Carter turns off the tv, and exits the hotel room.

INT. PROUDFEATHER'S OFFICE - MORNING

A First Nations woman in her mid 30's sits behind a desk covered with various FILES and FOLDERS, with a flatscreen COMPUTER MONITOR pushed to the side. She's got a desk PHONE cradled against her ear and shoulder while simultaneously typing away on a keyboard. The woman, EMILY PROUDFEATHER, nods as if the person on the other end of the phone can see her.

> EMILY Yes, I understand Mr. Roper. I am aware of the situation in Red Wolf Lake and I assure you I will be bringing it up in session. Thanks for your call.

She presses a call and switches to another line.

EMILY (CONT'D) This is Emily Proudfeather, how can I help you? (A pause as she listens) Hi, Mrs. Fisher. Thanks for your call. I agree, the way the government is handling Red Wolf Lake is unacceptable. I plan to bring it up in session. Thanks again for your call.

A mousy assistant sticks her head in the door.

JOY Here's your five minute warning, Emily.

EMILY Great, thanks. (Looks at the lit up buttons on the phone) Though I don't think I'll have time to get through the rest of these.

JOY The Red Wolf Lake thing. (Off Emily's nod) You know, I can screen your calls. You don't need to do this all yourself. Emily shakes her head.

EMILY We've been over this. I need to talk to the people as much as possible. I can't be back home, so this is the best I'm going to get.

JOY I thought, six months in, you'd realize there's too many. You do know I take calls when you're out, right? I'm not a complete incompetent.

EMILY You know I don't mean to offend -

JOY

And none was seriously taken. All I am saying is that you should consider that you hired me to help you out, so let me do that.

Emily considers, then sighs and nods.

EMILY Alright. But if I'm in the office I want them forwarded to me.

JOY Absolutely.

She turns to leave, then stops and turns back around.

JOY (CONT'D) There is one thing I thought I should mention, seeing you haven't been paying much attention to anything since the troubles on the reservation hit.

EMILY

(Wary) What is it?

CUT TO:

INT. MURPHY'S OFFICE - MORNING

This office is larger and has a much more lived in feel. It is also clearly that of someone who has been here for a while - overcrowded mahogany bookshelves line the walls and various diplomas, certificates and honours line the few bare places on the wall.

The current occupant, WILLIAM MURPHY (60's), sits behind his desk examining a document when the door bursts open and Emily strides in indignantly.

EMILY Gage? Carter Gage won the riding? And you're pulling him in?

Murphy makes a show of deliberately putting down the documents he is scrutinizing before taking off his bifocals and looking up at Emily.

MURPHY And good morning to you, Emily.

EMILY

Are you saying you had nothing to do with this?

MURPHY He won his riding. Are you accusing me of fixing the vote somehow?

EMILY

You know what I mean. Gage is done in provincial politics, and there's no way he's running in a Federal riding without the Party leadership sanctioning it. There's no way Addison would touch Gage with a three metre pole, so -

MURPHY

(Amused at the metric reference) Three metre pole?

EMILY (Determined to finish) So the only way this goes through is because you let it.

Murphy regards the junior MP for a few moments, then indicates the chair before his desk. She considers a moment and then takes a seat.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I thought we were going to change the way we did politics around here. Isn't that what you told me? That the Liberals could do better than they've been doing, that we could actually be proud of this party? And then you turn around and bring in a symbol of the worst excesses? This guy is bad news, Murphy.

MURPHY

Listen, I hear what you're saying. And you heard me right back then, we ARE going to turn this ship around. But Gage's election is out of my hands. The constituents voted him in, so he stays until the next general election.

EMILY

Or he gets caught taking a bribe like Miller. Which is pretty likely, now that I think about it. I'll use that to get me through the cold nights.

Murphy starts to stand, reaching for his coat.

MURPHY We'll talk later. We're in session soon.

Nodding, Emily stands and heads through the door, practically bumping into Carter Gage.

EMILY (Shocked) Mr. Gage.

CARTER Emily Proudfeather. Great to meet you. Big fan.

He's got a bit of a knowing smirk on his face as he holds out his hand. Cornered, Emily takes it and he pumps it vigourously for way too long. Then he holds an awkward silence, staring into her eyes. She breaks first, looking away. EMILY We're in session soon. I have to go get ready.

She exits.

CARTER Of course. (He watches her leave, then turns to Murphy)

MURPHY You were standing there the whole time?

CARTER (Shrugs) Long enough.

MURPHY I'm going to fire Yvonne. You were never supposed to hear that.

CARTER It's not a problem. People are obviously going to talk and if my skin was that thin, I'd never have agreed to come back in the first place.

MURPHY I'm glad you can look at the big picture.

CARTER That's why you asked me back, wasn't it?

MURPHY I suppose it is.

INT. MEN'S RESTROOM - DAY

Phil stands at a sink, furiously scrubbing a shoe with brown paper towel. He stops and puts the shoe close to his nose, takes a deep breath. Immediately wrinkles his nose and shoves the shoe under the soap dispenser and depresses a couple of times, depositing gobs of the liquid pink stuff before running it under the tap and resuming his scrubbing. Nearby, his other shoe rests precariously atop an air dryer, the nozzle turned up to turn its full blast of hot air on it. Carter enters, notices the situation and smoothly ignores it, heading over to the farthest stall to urinate.

(CONTINUED)

Phil looks over at him, looking like a deer caught in the headlights. He regards the MP, unsure of what to do in this situation.

PHIL (Nervously) I'm not having a good first day.

Carter continues to ignore him, going as far as to whistle and avert his eyes down to the business at hand.

> PHIL (CONT'D) Like, I'm having a *bad* first day. I was hoping nobody would find me in here, because let's face it, even though everyone's too polite to actually say it, this is a terrible first impression, and this is my first day on the job so I'm going to be making a lot of first impressions. And I really hate that, you know? I find that people really like me once they get the chance to know me, and that external factors just get in the way sometimes. You know what I mean?

Carter looks over his shoulder to ensure that there's no one else in the place. Satisfied that he's alone, he goes back to his policy of ignoring the page.

> PHIL (CONT'D) And now I'm probably going to be late. This is not how I pictured things going -

Carter shakes out, zips up, and goes over to the sink furthest from Phil.

CARTER Listen kid, I'm going to give you free advice.

PHIL

What's that?

CARTER

NEVER talk to a man who's got his dick in his hands. Never, you hear me? You let him do his business in peace.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL (Dejected) Yes sir.

CARTER

Good man.

Carter heads for the door, and stops.

CARTER (CONT'D) Kid, one thing. Looks like you stepped in something, so wipe it off and get on with your day.

Carter exits and Phil watches him go, then goes back to scrubbing.

PHIL (Sarcastically) Gee, thanks.

INT. COMMONS CHAMBER - DAY

This grand room, filled with rows upon rows of green upholstered seats, and is quite empty, filled with a sense of serenity and a haunting beauty. From outside the chamber, the sound of a bell can be heard, loud and sonorous. A moment later the massive double doors are opened and in marches the Sergeant-at-Arms carrying a 5 foot long MACE. Followed by the Speaker of the House, JONATHAN DAVENPORT (50's), the HOUSE CLERKS, and a gaggle of PAGES, including excluding Phil.

Hundreds of MPs also file in, taking up their seats. Davenport makes his way to a raised chair at the far end of the chamber, and takes his seat.

> DAVENPORT Let us now say a brief prayer.

At the other end of the hall, Phil enters. He sees that he's late, but notices that most of the members are either closing their eyes reverently for the prayer or else looking at the Speaker. Taking a chance, he bounds down the floor to where the rest of the pages stand at attention. Halfway there, his foot catches on a bench and he stumbles to the floor with a big CRASH.

In his seat in the middle of the Liberal back bench, Carter chuckles and shakes his head.

Davenport stops his prayer to look at the commotion, causing any of the parliamentarians who had missed it to focus on the page getting to his feet.

> PHIL I'm - I'm alright.

Davenport nods, giving the page an icy and imperious stare, then returns to his prayer. Red faced and mortified, Phil makes his way over to stand behind Gray and June.

> PHIL (CONT'D) (Off Gray's look) Don't even say it.

GRAY (Smirking) Well okay then.

INT. TELEVISION SOUND STAGE - DAY

Carter sitting across from a news anchor personality. We tune in mid sentence:

CARTER ... and so I'm really glad to have this chance to prove my worth to the people. I won't abuse their trust in me.

GEORGE And that's our time. Thanks for chatting with me. Ladies and gentlemen, Carter Gage.

They shake hands, and someone yells that it's a wrap. Carter starts fiddling with his clipped on mic, trying to get it off and failing.

CARTER For crying out loud, I went to school for four years to become an engineer and I can't get this mic off -

An assistant appears from off screen.

ASSISTANT Let me help you with that. CARTER I really should be able to do this on my own, you know?

ASSISTANT You focus on criticizing the government, I'll focus on the mic.

Surrendering, Carter puts up his hands and looks over at the host as the assistant fiddles with his tie.

CARTER

That was a bit of a job, wasn't it?

GEORGE Beg your pardon?

CARTER

The interview. You guys still have the kiddie gloves on. Tony Bengal, Mayday Reporting, you didn't ask about any of the hard questions. You hear about Liberal bias in the news, but this is ridiculous.

GEORGE

I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about. But that being the case, you want to talk about those now?

CARTER

No. Hell no. I don't like how my whole career is being defined by these issues. I'm going to be exonerated when this is all said and done. But I'm surprised you didn't ask it.

GEORGE

I have the feeling I'll be talking to you plenty, Mr. Gage. Regardless of whether I was told to go easy on you, you have to admit that you stuck to the soundbites, didn't deviate from the party line at all. So yeah, this is pretty much just a fluff piece.

The assistant finally finishes getting the mic off and stands up straight.

ASSISTANT Latch was caught.

CARTER

(Grinning) Vindication! (To George) What can I say? I guess I'm curious why you

think my opinion matters. I'm the new guy on the hill, been in Ottawa for less than twenty four hours...

GEORGE

That's fair. But I mean, an insider's view is always welcome. For example, and I know you can't go too in depth, but I wonder how long it will take you guys to topple the government.

CARTER

I can't rightly say, since I have yet to have my first strategy meeting, and even if I had it would be completely confidential. But off the record? I think we 're going to have to force a non-confidence vote soon, because we need to keep McKenna off balance. I think the moment they threw Tanner and friends got new boyfriends the Liberal party's been gearing up the war footing.

GEORGE

Do you think the Liberals have a shot at forming the next government?

CARTER

Does Addison have the charisma to get people out in droves to put an X beside his name, you mean? Don't bother mincing words, everybody's thinking it.

GEORGE

What's your take?

CARTER

(Chuckles) It's going to be an interesting campaign, that's for sure. Emily is in transit with Joy. Emily juggles a briefcase and a folder while the assistant carries a stack of papers of her own.

EMILY

So, did we get the unemployment figures for the comparison study? I'd really like to look it over and do some cross reference before I present it at committee tomorrow...

JOY I left a message with StatsCan but

I'll follow up with them this afternoon.

EMILY

Great. And the report on the chemical dumping thing? Did that come through.

JOY Just after you left for session this morning.

EMILY (Looking at watch) Then I should be able to get in three solid hours of work?

JOY (Glancing at her organizer and shaking her head) No, they moved up the caucus meeting, that's at four.

EMILY (Frowns) Wonderful. They are not making it easy for me to actually do my job, are they?

JOY They never do.

EMILY Well then, if I rush I can -

As the two women reach the West Block, they are accosted by an OLD LADY (70's) and a younger man, SONNY (late 30's), both First Nations. OLD LADY Mrs. Proudfeather! Please, I need a word with you.

EMILY Of course. Please come to my office.

INT. PROUDFEATHER'S OFFICE - DAY

The old lady is seated in front of Emily's desk, nursing a CUP OF TEA. Sonny is standing behind her, his arms crossed over his chest. He looks angry.

OLD LADY Thank you very much, Mrs. Proudfeather.

EMILY

Miss Proudfeather. In fact, just call me Emily. (Beat) Now what's this all about?

OLD LADY You're a treaty Indian?

EMILY

(Nods) Ojibwe.

SONNY

See, I told you granma. I told you with a name like Proudfeather she'd have to be one of the People.

OLD LADY (Smiling) Good, I'm so glad. I voted for you, Mrs. Proudfeather, and I'm glad that you won.

EMILY Thank you. I appreciate it. The two of you came all the way from PROVINCE?

OLD LADY (Nodding) I had to see you in person, see what kind of a woman you are. (Beckoning) Let me get a look at you. Emily walks towards the woman, feeling self conscious as the old woman gazes unblinkingly into her face, then touches her cheek.

> OLD LADY (CONT'D) (Smiling) You have a kind face, Mrs. Proudfeather.

EMILY (Abashed) Well I... Um, thank you.

SONNY When are you going to do something about the Red Wolf Lake occupation?

EMILY

The? Oh! Yes, I've been on calls with a lot of the constituents. Rest assured, I'm working on the situation right now and I'll hold the government accountable.

SONNY

I don't want the government held accountable! Well, of course that would be nice but we know that's never going to happen. We just want them out off our town. We want them to leave us alone!

EMILY

Yes, and I'm trying to get that to happen, sir.

SONNY

They send in the police and they think they can just push us around. You know there are more Indians headed up there for solidarity. I came here to get you to lend your voice to ours.

OLD LADY

They just won't leave us alone, that's why we need a champion! The government never paid us any mind. The town's been falling apart, our youth are turning to booze and drugs and crime. Now when they want something on our (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

OLD LADY (cont'd) land, then they expect us to give it to them.

SONNY It's ridiculous. We won't let it happen again.

EMILY

I understand your frustrations and I've been trying to get concessions in the budget for more social spending on reservations -

SONNY

If we were French, you'd listen to our concerns. Do we have to threaten separation first?

EMILY

Sir, I'm doing the best I... I'm trying really hard here. Listen -

SONNY I can't believe we wasted our time with this -

OLD LADY Sonny! Let her speak!

EMILY

(Sighs)

Listen. I understand how frustrating this is, but it's technically not illegal, I went over all the laws, bylaws and statutes. The government retains the rights to put through that highway and cut down the woodland to do it. (She puts up her hands to forestall any complaints before they can be vocalized) HOWEVER, that does not mean we are done by any means.

SONNY

Go on.

EMILY

There's no legal imperative, but I believe there's an ethical one, and that's the issue I promised to raise in the House. With the (MORE) EMILY (cont'd) government weakened the way it is now, it's possible we can get this resolved without a fight.

SONNY

And if not?

EMILY And if not... then we give them a fight.

The younger man looks at Emily, and cracks a smile for the first time.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Gray and a few fellow pages are standing around in a stairwell chatting.

PHIL (OS) Gray! You got a minute?

Phil runs up to Gray, carrying a small pile of packages. Gray nods to his compatriots and then turns to his flustered colleague.

GRAY What is it?

PHIL Do you know where MP Heller's office is?

GRAY Heller? Or Hiller?

Phil glances down at the top package, and squints his eyes.

PHIL Heller. Definitely Heller.

GRAY (Bemused) East Block. Fifth floor.

PHIL Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Phil starts to take off, and Gray follows him.

GRAY

You know, one of these days you're going to have to remember that for yourself, Keene.

PHIL

There are three hundred and eight MPs, Gray. Are you going to give me a break on my first day?

GRAY to strive

You have to strive for excellence, Keene. Not just bray on about pie in the sky political daydreams.

PHIL

So then the answer to my rhetorical question is going to apparently be no.

GRAY You could stand to be a little less confrontational. And actually focus on your job a little more.

PHIL Thanks for your help Gray. I gotta get going.

Phil charges off up the stairs at a gallop, quickly outpacing his critical companion. Gray is soon left alone in the stairwell, with only the receding footfalls. He shakes his head.

> GRAY So undignified.

INT. HELLER'S OFFICE - DAY

JIM HELLER (50's) is standing here speaking with A STAFFER. Phil enters with his bundle, out of breath and a little sweaty. The two turn to him as he approaches.

PHIL MP Heller? (Off his nod) A package for you?

HELLER What's this all about?

Heller takes the package and opens it, looking at the contents with a frown. He then looks back at the front of the package.

HELLER (CONT'D) I think you got the wrong person, son. I'm Heller. I think this here's for Hiller.

Phil looks at the package closely then shakes his head.

PHIL

Are you sure? That looks like Heller to me...

HELLER

Maybe so son, maybe so. Perhaps someone was a little careless with their cursive 'i'. But I DO know I have not switched parties to the New Democrats, at least not this week.

Heller chuckles heartily at his own joke, and the staffer joins in. Phil on the other hand, is not amused.

PHIL Great. Now where will I find MP Hiller?

HELLER West Block, first floor.

PHIL The exact other side of the hill. Of course.

Inhaling to get a hold of his nerves, he leaves at a run. Heller watches him go, and shakes his head in amusement. A moment later he crinkles his nose.

HELLER Someone bring a dog in here?

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

A large room, with several long tables, each big enough to hold over a dozen people, with a podium at one end. Most of the tables are already filled and the room is filled with the drone of gossip when Carter enters. He spots Murphy shooting daggers at him and walks over unhurriedly.

> CARTER You save me a seat?

MURPHY What the hell was that?

CARTER I'm sure I have no idea what you're talking about?

MURPHY The interview? You couldn't stick to the talking points?

CARTER

(Confused) I DID stick to the talking points. YOU were the one who told me to take the interview in the first place, remember?

MURPHY

And I told you to get the hell out of there as soon as you were done, not shoot off your mouth.

Carter frowns, not getting it for a moment, and then his eyes widen as he understands.

CARTER

No.

MURPHY

Yes.

CARTER But, but it was AFTER the interview was over! I... they, they turned off my mike.

MURPHY

Apparently not.

CARTER

It was off the record! They told me...

MURPHY

George is denying being a part of it, saying it's one of his staffers. When are you going to figure out that the press isn't your friend? They have a job, just like you. And that's to sell the public a story. Just like you. You got outplayed, son. CARTER Wait, does Addison know?

MURPHY At least half the hill knows. I would count on this particular bit of news reaching El Jefe's ears by now.

CARTER

Shit!

MURPHY

Alright, time to sit down and shut your mouth. You aren't going to say anything in this meeting okay? Hopefully it blows over and the possibility of an upcoming election makes Addison move onto something else.

Carter nods glumly and follows Murphy over to a seat at the end of one of the tables. Across from Emily and beside a young man in his early 30's, wearing a cowboy hat, a business suit and a charming smile. This man, KEVIN COOKE, leans over and holds out a hand.

> KEVIN Kevin Cooke, Calgary Southwest. Hear you're making waves?

Carter takes Kevin's offered hand and shakes it firmly.

CARTER Carter Gage, Parkdale-High Park. Apparently I am.

KEVIN

Hey, don't worry about it man. Everybody makes a mistake sometime in their life. We all got into politics, didn't we? (Laughs) This here's Emily Proudfeather, Algoma.

CARTER

We've met.

EMILY I'm a big fan. As Carter crosses his arms and appraises her through narrowed eyes, a husky grim-faced man in his mid 60's enters the room. With a baleful glare at those gathered, he marches straight to the podium at the front of the room. This is ADDISON, the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada.

As he takes the stage, the gathered politicians quiet down. He accepts a drink of water from an assistant, then begins talking in a loud clear voice.

ADDISON

My fellow Members of Parliament, let's begin this meeting of the Liberal Caucus. There's a lot to get through. First order of business, let's welcome the new faces. Tory Hamilton, Spiro Boulus and... Carter Gage.

Leads a round of applause with a slow golf clap. Though his lips curve slightly into a smile, it doesn't reach his eyes. Carter and Murphy exchange meaningful glances from halfway across the room.

ADDISON

Let's hope that this bolstering of our numbers presages a plurality at the next general election, shall we? (Pauses for laughter) For the benefit of our new MPs, all the strategy we discuss in these meetings is of the highest confidentiality and SEVERE repercussions will be meted out if there is a breach.

He looks around for a moment, scanning the audience as if in challenge, then he steps down from the podium and goes to sit at the head of the first table. He is replaced at the podium by yet another older man in his 50's, MIKE PUTNAM, the house leader.

PUTNAM

Alright people, first a note about our general strategy. We just got back the first polls taken after the by-election results and the news is not as good as we'd have liked. The Tories have lost a lot of points as we expected, but these are not converting into gains for us. In fact the New Democrats and (MORE) PUTNAM (cont'd) Greens are making out like bandits right now.

A general murmur winds through the crowd like a wave of furious concerned whispers. Over at the farthest table, Emily leans over to Kevin.

EMILY

What did they expect? We're not exactly blameless in the corruption game now, are we? And we really aren't promising to clean up on that score, with who we're fielding...

She stares Carter right in the eyes, and the two of them play chicken for a bit until Carter looks away.

KEVIN (Oblivious) Sure, but throw away your vote on the NDP? Or worse, the Greens?

He shakes his head.

PUTNAM

So for the time being, the policy is not to rock the boat. We do not go overly tough on the Tories. We still put in a showing at Question period, but we are not antagonizing the government. We don't want to invite the public to remember that Miller was one of our own.

Emily raises a hand, and the house leader acknowledges her.

EMILY

What about the Red Wolf Lake situation? We need to call the government to task on that one.

PUTNAM

No, we don't. We are staying out of that one. Again, we don't want to bring any fire down on us.

ADDISON And we certainly do not want the public to remember that it was my predecessor that approved that one. Let the NDP and Greens (MORE) ADDISON (cont'd) champion this one, they're well suited to it and no one will blink twice.

EMILY

With all due respect, Mr. Addison, this is happening in my riding. I'm getting calls from my constituents about this - a 70 year old woman came to my *office* today - If I don't do something people are going to cry bloody murder.

PUTNAM

Fair enough. Feel free to be absent from Parliament for the next little while.

EMILY

(Shocked) That's not what I meant! I need to represent my people, that's why they voted me in.

Addison takes off his glasses and wipes them meticulously with a silk hankerchief.

ADDISON

(Immpatiently) Thank you for your opinion, Miss. We're giving you two options: be absent or follow party discipline.

PUTNAM

Any more questions on that?

ADDISON We are finished with that topic.

PUTNAM

Moving on then. The next order of business is Media presence. It goes without saying that it's critical that we show a strong 'brand' to the public. We've decided that we a more active hand in this is necessary for public relations. All requests for Media must go through me. We want to control the message to a greater degree than we have been. Am I clear? He looks right at Carter at this last.

PUTNAM Excellent. Next order of business is committee appointments.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Pages are relaxing here on couches, in various states of decompression: some are reading books, some are socializing with their peers, some surf the internet on their laptops, while a group including Gray and June relax before a wall mounted flat screen TV. Phil walks in dejected and tired, and collapses into the nearest chair. He starts rubbing his temples, staring listlessly up at the ceiling. June notices him, and walks over toting a PLATE of food.

> JUNE You should eat something. Here. (Offering the plate) I wasn't sure if you were a vegetarian...

> PHIL Thanks. I guess I'd be a vegetarian except for all that meat in my diet.

JUNE It's got fish, if you're cool with that.

Taking a handful, he stuffs some of the food into his face.

JUNE Are you cool with raw?

Phil does a spit take.

JUNE (Laughs) So no to sushi, then?

PHIL

Sorry, I just wasn't expecting it. Never tried it before. Didn't seem very appetizing, you know? I like to make sure nothing's going to get up and walk away while I'm munching on it. JUNE

(Shrugging it off) Hey, I wouldn't just spring that on anyone. Technically, sashimi's the raw stuff, sushi is all cooked. But fair enough, you can't please everyone.

PHIL

No, that came out wrong. You went to all the trouble -

JUNE

(Nodding) There isn't exactly a plethora of good sushi joints in Ottawa you know, at least not in close proximity to Parliament.

PHIL

Yeah, so what my brain was trying to say before my mouth messed it up was that it's new and different but I'm going to give it a try.

He tentatively puts some to his mouth, making small exploratory bites, and then carefully munching, before a grin breaks out on his face.

JUNE

It's good?

PHIL It's good! I do like green eggs and ham after all!

JUNE

If you like that, you've got a treat coming. Back in Vancouver they'd throw this stuff out.

PHIL

Well then, we should find a good sushi place and do this for real, right? There's gotta be one here in this, our nation's capital.

JUNE Hey, anything's possible.

PHIL How'd you find time to get out and find a sushi restaurant (MORE) 30.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL (cont'd) anyway? I've been running around like a chicken without a head since I got in this morning.

JUNE

(Conspiratorially) MP Peters loves him some sushi. All part of my pagely duties.

PHIL

(Frowning) Wish I could say my day went as well.

JUNE It's the first day. I'm sure you'll settle into it. Everyone has bad days.

Gray strolls over, sparkling water in hand.

GRAY Look on the bright side Keene, at least you're not that man.

Motions his head in the direction of the TV, where a newscast is showing Carter speaking 'off the record'.

CARTER (OS)

Does Addison have the charisma to get people out in droves to put an X beside his name, you mean? Don't bother mincing words, everybody's thinking it.

PHIL

Wow.

GRAY How long until he's running as an independent, you think?

INT. MEN'S RESTROOM - NIGHT

Carter is in front of the sink and letting the faucet just run as he gathers water in his cupped hands and splashes it in his face. Phil enters. Both register recognition within a few moments.

PHIL Hey. Mr. Gage.

Carter gives a noncommital grunt.

PHIL

Listen, last time I saw you I don't think I made a good impression. I was having a bad day - and it didn't get any better.

CARTER

That right?

PHIL

But hey, I saw that yours didn't go that great either... I mean I messed up and made a lot of mistakes but none of mine were on the evening news.

CARTER

So I think there's a point you'll be coming to soon.

PHIL

Just saying, I thought you were making fun of me earlier today, but I think what you were saying was that I needed to get past my issues, whatever they were and get on with what I knew I had to do.

CARTER

I thought you had dogshit on your shoes, I was just advising you to clean them up before you stepped into the chamber.

PHIL (Knowing smirk) Sure you were.

INT. PROUDFEATHER'S OFFICE - MORNING

Emily is sitting at her desk, looking a little haggard. The phone is ringing, and the blinking lights show that there's more calls holding on the line. She reaches out to take the receiver, then hesitates, before withdrawing her hand.

Joy appears that the door, a small frown on her face.

JOY Er, I miss a memo? I thought you still wanted me to forward calls to you when you were in the office?

Emily blinks several times and looks up at her assistant.

EMILY Yeah, I did... say that. Listen, would you mind taking them this morning?

JOY No, not at all. I'd be happy to. (Beat) Is everything alright?

EMILY Hm? Oh, yeah I just need to really get this report read for committee this afternoon.

JOY

No problem. I'll be sure to get names and numbers if you need to do some call backs.

EMILY You're a lifesaver.

Joy nods and leaves the office, leaving Emily to stare at the blinking lights. With effort, she looks away and goes over to a bookcase lined with books. She takes out a couple of weighty looking tomes that are legal books on property rights.

EXT. PARLIAMENT HILL - DAY

Murphy is leaving the West Block as Emily races up to him from the side.

EMILY What do I do?

MURPHY (Surprised) Beg your pardon?

EMILY What do I do? (Off his look) About the Red Wolf Lake thing? I thought this would be one of the easy ones. Conservative (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EMILY (cont'd) heavy-handedness at its finest. Are we going to fight this one? Of course we are! Or were. We were going to fight this, until we weren't.

MURPHY

Emily -

EMILY

And I'm really not okay with that. I mean, even if I didn't have a constituency, even if I weren't First Nations - I'm guessing even if in bizarro world where I was on the right side of the political spectrum - I would be shocked and abhorred by what's going on up there.

MURPHY I don't know what to say -

EMILY

Because there really isn't anything to say, is there? I looked at all the laws, the amendments, the statutes and you know what I spent this morning doing? I was looking at them all again. Because I was hoping I missed something, so that I could get around this stupid gag.

MURPHY

And I've tried -

EMILY

Yes, you probably did. But let's not dance around this, when it comes down to it, it's just a bunch of Indians making a lot of noise right?

Murphy gives her a stern look down the bridge of his glasses.

MURPHY Is that what you really think of me?

EMILY

Bill, I don't know if I can do this. I thought I could, but I don't know if I can. The government shouldn't be on that land, to put in a stupid highway that won't be any benefit to that community. And they certainly should not be sending in the police.

MURPHY

McKenna's not backing down, and he's not afraid to bring us down with him.

EMILY

(Frustrated) I don't understand! I don't understand this game we're playing with people's LIVES!

They stand there looking at each other in the crisp morning air.

EMILY Tell me what to do, Bill.

MURPHY You don't want my honest opinion.

EMILY

(Nodding) Please.

MURPHY

Sit tight, vote with the party or be absent during those debates. We don't care about winning them right now.

Emily's mouth becomes a hard defiant line.

EMILY

Bill, how big a deal is this going to be? How much hot water am I going to be in if I break ranks on this.

Murphy pauses, as if considering what to say.

EMILY Please. I value your advice.

MURPHY A week ago I'd have said go for it. Of course a week ago we would have wanted you to go for it but you know what I mean. The climate's changed since then.

EMILY

Gage.

MURPHY Hasn't helped.

EMILY I told you that he's no good for the party.

MURPHY (Irritated) Well congratulations, you may be right.

EXT. PARLIAMENT HILL - DAY

Carter walking along, looking at a report. A gorgeous statuesque woman in a designer suit grabs him gently by the arm. The woman, DELPHINE ROY (Mid-30's) gives him a big smile. She speaks with a Quebecer accent.

DELPHINE

Carter Gage! I thought that was you in the Commons. I did not think you would lose your brains quite so quick.

Carter takes a double take.

CARTER Delphine? God, it's been years. How's your brother?

DELPHINE

Good, good. Traded to the Penguins.

CARTER

I heard, I've been following him pretty closely. He's getting better, I think with their line these guys can be contenders again. Delphine nods absently.

DELPHINE Are you free for lunch? I would love to catch up.

CARTER (Hesitating) I don't know if I should.

DELPHINE (Disappointed) I understand.

CARTER But we should catch up later.

DELPHINE I completely agree.

CARTER

I have a lot of policy to read through, and by now you've heard how I put my foot in my mouth on national television, so I need to get a raincheck on that. But call my office, we'll set something up.

DELPHINE That would be lovely. Some other time then.

CARTER Some other time.

CUT TO:

EXT. DARCY MCGEE'S PATIO - DAY

Carter and Delphine sitting on a patio, a couple of emptied BEER BOTTLES between them. Both have taken off their jackets and hung them on other chairs, and Carter has rolled up his sleeves. The pair appear to be having a blast, laughing heartily.

> CARTER Let me tell you, I'll never try that again. G-strings chafe in all the wrong places.

Delphine giggles, pats his hand affectionately.

DELPHINE (In French) I missed having you around. Laughter is at a premium these days.

CARTER (Taking a swig of his beer) For you and me both.

The rest of the conversation takes place in French, in which both are completely fluent.

DELPHINE I admit, I didn't expect to ever see you here. In Federal politics. Not after everything that happened.

CARTER

We all surprise ourselves, I guess. What about you?

DELPHINE

(Waves a dismissive hand) It's nothing. Actually I'm here in politics because of you.

CARTER

Not so loud, I don't need that on my record as well.

DELPHINE

Should I sing it to the rooftops? (Chuckles) But seriously. Your passion and commitment - your drive. You're amazing, you know that?

CARTER

(Beaming) Oh, stop. Yeah I know, but stop. I could use you over in my camp. You ever consider crossing the floor, you know where to find me.

DELPHINE And if I ever would consider it, it would be for you, my dear.

Carter considers his drinking buddy with a look of amusement.

CARTER

What are we doing here, Del? You ever think in a million years, when we were cramming for mid-terms and grading papers that this is where we'd end up?

DELPHINE Life's a strange journey, Carter.

CARTER

That it is.

DELPHINE (Suddenly sad) Politics is not good for us, you know? We are both sharks in a small pond.

She puts a gentle hand on his.

DELPHINE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

CARTER Delphine, I'm not going to say this was my first choice. Even that the last seven years of my life were what I planned. But, we just have to do the best we can.

Delphine nods without a word, then picks up her purse and takes out a couple of bills to throw onto the table. She seems on the verge of tearing up.

> CARTER (CONT'D) Del? Are you...?

DELPHINE I have to go, Carter. Farewell.

He stands up a few seconds after her, but she's able to get out and walk off before he can get to his wallet. He recovers, but by the time he's paid for his bill, she's gone.

As Carter goes to gather his jacket, he catches the glint of a camera out of the corner of his eye. Turning, he sees a CAMERAMAN snapping up another picture before realizing that he's been spotted. The cameraman gives him a shrug and a sheepish grin.

Carter adopts a pensive pose, his forehead crinkling in thought, his hands jamming into his pockets.

CARTER Well, shit.

INT. MURPHY'S OFFICE - MORNING

Murphy is sitting behind his desk, sipping gingerly from his Tim's mug and looking at the morning newspaper. Something he reads causes him to sputter up some of the hot liquid. He immediately SLAMS on a button on his phone.

> MURPHY Yvonne, get me Gage. I'm going to kill him.

INT. COMMITTEE MEETING ROOM - DAY

Emily sits at a table with a bunch of other women. The sign on the door reads 'Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO)' and under it another sign proclaims that it is 'in session'. However, this session has just ended and everyone is getting packed up, while Emily continues to read her report. As she does so, URSULA BAINES, a 40 year old woman with her platinum blonde hair in a boyish pageboy.

> URSULA Emily, do you have a moment?

Emily looks up distractedly.

EMILY

Hm?

URSULA I noticed you've been a little... not all here lately. You okay?

EMILY I'm fine, Ursula, thanks. Justall this policy to go through for this report -

URSULA

Listen, I know you're probably not going to confirm or deny, but I heard through a little birdy that you aren't criticizing the government on the Red Wolf Lake thing, and that would explain why you're not on the POB at all anytime soon... 40.

EMILY (Defensive) What? Oh, don't be silly. I've been behind on my work, and I haven't finished doing all the legwork on it yet.

URSULA

(Raising her hands in peace) Okay, but I just want you to know, I've been authorized by Sullivan to bring it up during our portion of the private members.

Emily smiles weakly, an expression mixed with relief and shame.

EMILY

Thanks. The support on this is always welcome. Even from New Democrats.

URSULA

Hey, I'm just doing this because I'm pissed they tried to get the Women in Parliament luncheon cancelled. (Winks) We chicks have to stick together, eh? What caused the policy turn around.

EMILY (Rolling her eyes) Carter Gage.

URSULA I like him. (Off her look) What? He's going to get us a majority if he keeps this up.

EMILY Tell me about it.

URSULA

Myself, I would have thought that he'd be gagged and that would be the end of it. Man, was I wrong!

EMILY

What do you mean?

URSULA Okay, I'm trying to be here for a sister in need, but you're still a (MORE) URSULA (cont'd) Grit so forgive the schadenfreude. But you really need to pick up a paper sometime.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Emily steps out of the meeting room, and Joy walks up, toting a newspaper. Wordlessly, Emily takes it and unfurls it as they walk. Her eyes bug out.

> EMILY You have GOT to be kidding me!

JOY I'm sure it looks worse than it is.

EMILY Uh, it's Gage having drinks with a Bloc MP.

JOY The Bloc Quebecois?

EMILY We have another one?

INT. MURPHY'S OFFICE - DAY

Murphy is standing on his side of the desk, and fuming. Carter is standing too, but his body language is defensive; his arms are crossed and he's hunched a bit. He doesn't meet Murphy's eyes. Thrown down on Murphy's desk is a NEWSPAPER with the sensational headline: SECRET LIBERAL-BLOC ALLIANCE? with a photo of Carter and Delphine at the bar.

CARTER

So.

Murphy continues to glare at him, his jaw clenching methodically.

CARTER Look, I know it looks bad...

MURPHY Don't you say another word Carter, or so help me I will pitch you through this window! Carter clams up. Murphy walks back and forth, shaking his head.

MURPHY (CONT'D)

I know you're a smart kid, Carter. I've seen what you can do. And I think you learned your lesson with the media gag. So I KNOW that there is not any chance in hell that you'd be palling around with Seperatists. I know that even if you did for some reason, that you would NOT do it on Sparks Street five minutes from the Hill. So now tell me that this is some insane Tory plot and all will be forgiven.

CARTER Well okay, first of all -

Murphy raises a finger and makes a sharp little sound that stops Carter up again.

MURPHY Before you continue know that I'm the only one on your side here, and that I can generally be counted on to make your political life here... more interesting than it has been so far.

CARTER (Sullenly) Got it.

INT. GAGE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The moving in and unpacking is still in the early phases; the only things set up are a DESK, COMPUTER and PHONE. In between the stacks of boxes, Carter is giving an impromptu speech to his STAFF, including Adrian and BETTINA (mid-twenties) and half a dozen others.

Carter has a wine glass of red, and he's swirling it around while staring at it. Finally, he clears his throat and speaks.

CARTER So what can I say? I screwed up royally. I guess it can only get better from here. The following laughter has a tinge of the nervous to it. Carter lets it peter out before he continues.

CARTER

Listen, I know - I know that I really stepped in it today. And I know that my mistakes don't just affect me, they affect all of you. So I really want you guys to know that I know. I know, and I'm sorry. I wouldn't blame you if I dug out all of your resignation letters from this mess on my desk, but all I can say is: I need you, I can't do it without you. I'm asking you to stick it through with me because I don't have anyone else. I really don't.

There's a somber silence before Bettina pipes up:

BETTINA

Hey, we still get paid until they kick you out of office, right?

ADRIAN Until the dissolution of Parliament, you mean.

BETTINA

Yeah, that's what I said. (Turning to Carter) Your constituents voted you in. Now you have to go do some good while you can.

The others break into a polite applause. Carter smiles graciously.

CARTER

Thanks, guys. You know what, take the rest of the night off. We'll have time enough to get this place in shape. Think of it as compensation for working for the stupidest man in politics.

The others make positive noises and start to shuffle out of the room, leaving only Bettina and Adrian. The LA waits until the three of them are alone before he says anything.

ADRIAN

Look, I don't want to be the nag -

CARTER

(Goodnaturedly)

And yet nevertheless I sense some naginess coming from your general vicinity.

ADRIAN

Hey, I wanted to go over the policy paper.

CARTER

You did. I made the call.

ADRIAN

And had I been there, I could have told you that drinks with the Bloc would not have gone over well with the leadership.

CARTER

You could be expected to predict I would have seen that one coming myself.

BETTINA

Ade, can we drop it? He knows already.

ADRIAN

I don't want to be the bad guy -

CARTER

(Shaking his head) Adrian. You're not the bad guy here - I am.

BETTINA

You need to get over that, Carter. Fresh start in Ottawa, remember?

CARTER

Getting to be a little late for that.

BETTINA

Okay, I'm not going to fight with you guys tonight. Carter, I just need you to look over your budgetary allowances and square all the numbers away. Do that before you leave tonight, okay? CARTER It'll be on your desk when you come in tomorrow.

BETTINA Don't stay too late. You neither, Ade.

Both men nod, and satisfied, Bettina exits.

CARTER Alright, don't hold back.

ADRIAN I really wish we had pushed the

interview back a couple days. For other reasons. But yeah, that was colossally bone headed. And the Roy thing speaks for itself, really. What's your plan?

CARTER Honestly? I don't know.

ADRIAN Come on, what's your plan? You always have a plan.

CARTER

I don't know. Maybe the up jump from provincial politics is bigger than I thought?

ADRIAN

With all due respect, you made some rookie mistakes. If we were running for high school president we shouldn't be making these. What's going on with you?

There's a long pause as Carter stares straight ahead, fingers interlocks as he considers.

CARTER

Look, I'm wasting your time at this point. Go get some sleep, we'll go at it again tomorrow.

ADRIAN

(Unsure)

Sure.

Adrian leaves Carter alone with his thoughts.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

A lecture is in progress. The stadium seating is full to capacity and PROFESSOR LUCAS is animatedly gesticulating at the slides he has up on the projector. Suddenly, Phil BURSTS through the doors, still dressed in his page uniform. Huffing and puffing, he looks wildly around the class, and spies an empty seat up near the back.

> PROFESSOR LUCAS Mr. Keene! Really now, this is too much!

PHIL Sorry, Professor Lucas! The bus was running late!

As the professor shakes his head in disappointment, Phil hurries up the steps to the back of the class. He's stopped by the disgusted shriek of the Professor. Turning back around, he can see he's tracked in a trail of muddy foot prints. Well, it looks like mud.

PHIL

I am SO sorry -

PROFESSOR LUCAS Right now, I don't want to hear it. In fact, I'm more concerned with your choice of dress.

PHIL I was running late, didn't have time to change -

Phil stops as he looks down at himself, to see that he's now STARK NAKED, with only his books strategically covering his manhood. He lets out a horrified yelp and then we

CUT TO:

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Phil, is sitting smack dab in the middle of class when he wakes from his day dream. He's dressed in regular casual clothing for a college-aged teen, and he's just knocked over his NOTES and TEXTBOOKS.

At his podium at the front of class, Professor Lucas looks down the end of his glasses a minute before continuing. PROFESSOR LUCAS Well, I've heard that my teaching style can get a little dry but luckily we're all out of time, folks. Remember, I'm not saying that chapter 3 will definitely be where the next assignment will be from, but I AM saying you may want to check it out sometime, just for fun.

Students start filing out as Phil kneels down to start picking up his belongings. When he stands, the professor is looming over him. He's so surprised, he almost drops his things again.

> PROFESSOR LUCAS Hey there.

PHIL Professor Lucas!

PROFESSOR LUCAS That would be me. Hey, do you have a minute?

PHIL (Looking like a deer caught in headlights) Uh, sure. Look, about today, I'm really sorry -

PROFESSOR LUCAS This isn't really about today. I've noticed that for the past couple of classes, that you've been, well to tell the truth a bit disruptive.

PHIL Won't happen again.

PROFESSOR LUCAS That's the thing, we do like to give people the chance to find their place, and this is only the first week. But I really thought I should talk to you, make sure you're okay. Because, this is only the first week, and I've noticed that you may be struggling. PHIL I'm fine. Thanks for asking.

The professor considers a moment, then nods and starts heading for the front of the class.

PROFESSOR LUCAS Okay then. A lot of people find university a shock when coming from high school... it's a different pace, that's for sure.

PHIL

I can handle it.

PROFESSOR LUCAS Okay, just - this wasn't the first time you were sleeping in my class. And there's only been three of them.

PHIL It's my job. I'm a parliamentary page.

PROFESSOR LUCAS Oh? Well then, first off congratulations. Second off, the university has a lot of ties with the page program and is quite happy to work with you to fit your schedule. That being said, if you end up finding both overwhelming, you need to know that you can consider adjustments.

PHIL Thanks, but I signed a contract. Even if I didn't think I could cut it, which I totally do NOT think that, I don't think I could get out of it.

PROFESSOR LUCAS You did sign a contract, but it's not as ironclad as you seem to think it is. Anyway, I'm just telling you to consider it if you have to.

PHIL (Nods) Alright, thanks again. PROFESSOR LUCAS And no more sleeping in my class, okay? I've got a reputation to maintain.

INT. COMMONS CHAMBER - DAY

The seats in the commons chamber are a little over two thirds full when Carter takes a seat in the Liberal backbench beside Kevin. He hands that man a Tim's cup and hoists one of his own to his lips.

KEVIN

Good man. How much I owe you?

Carter shakes his head dismissively.

CARTER

Don't worry about it. (He looks down at the floor) How's it going?

KEVIN

(A bit glumly) Great. It's a little awkward having someone else standing up for something happening in a Liberal riding.

Carter looks down a couple rows, to an empty chair.

CARTER

That's politics for you. Proudfeather's not here.

KEVIN (Shaking his head) Emily's following the proscription for now. But she doesn't like it.

CARTER (Shrugging) I'm certain that's not the point.

KEVIN

Every day I sit here, I get to hate the system more and more.

CARTER

You have to learn to play the game. It's not perfect but it's what we have. Who's that on the floor?

KEVIN Baines, I think her name is? New Democrat, from out east I think.

CARTER She's got some fire in her.

On the floor, Ursula is addressing the speaker of the house:

URSULA Mr. Speaker, this is a travesty of justice! Perhaps the government would like to explain why this highway can't be built on land that is not claimed by the First Nations? Perhaps they could make it clear to the house why police presence was preemptively increased in the area? Mr. Speaker, do we live in a police state?

Applause bursts out in the New Democrat section of the benches.

TORY CABINET MINISTER Mr. Speaker, the government's action plan requires this highway to be built. As we all know, this is part of the stimulus plan to boost our economy. In fact, through the jobs that will be created and the infrastructure that will be built, the region in and around Red Wolf Lake will be getting a major influx of money.

Applause bursts out in the Conservative section of the benches.

URSULA

Mr. Speaker, the opposition has often questioned how effective the government's action plan as truly been - in fact, there's an ongoing investigation into a misplaced allocation of funding. My understanding of the situation is that none of this influx of money will be getting to the residents of the area, which his largely First Nations. The lion's share will be going to the construction companies that are headquartered in big

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

URSULA (cont'd) cities like Toronto or Montreal, am I correct?

To more applause in the New Democrat section.

TORY CABINET MINISTER Mr. Speaker, the government can't actually control where the money goes to that fine a degree, as Ms. Baines well knows. We strive to be fair and equitable, and do not have any directives to discriminate who we award contracts to, whether they are First Nations or not. It's the cornerstone of our democracy Ms. Baines I suggest you learn it.

To Tory applause.

Back in the Liberal backbench, Carter winces as if slapped.

CARTER Oooh, he went with 'the cornerstone of our democracy'. Bit cliche, but it gets the job done I guess.

KEVIN (Shaking his head) I really hate this.

CARTER

I don't blame you. But you have to learn to play the game.

KEVIN

Like you?

Carter winces again.

KEVIN

Sorry.

CARTER

Nah, I probably deserved that. Won't be living it down anytime soon, rightfully so. But I can admit I was not - I wasn't coming with the right mentality.

He glances over at Kevin, a little hesitant.

CARTER Have you heard anything? About me?

KEVIN

Pretty much all the talk is about you. All over the Hill. I'd bet your name's being brought up in every caucus. Of course, I'd never know since I stick to Liberal company...

CARTER

Okay, let me be more specific. Have you heard how they're planning on disciplining me?

Kevin meets Carter's gaze, swallows and then shakes his head.

KEVIN

Doesn't take a rocket scientist to tell that the leadership is not fond of you. And to be honest, I figure that Murphy was your biggest booster and he does not seem to be your biggest fan right now, either.

CARTER

Noticed.

KEVIN

But I'm pretty far in the bench, so you know how it is. I officially know as much as you do.

CARTER But unofficially?

Kevin swallows.

KEVIN Unofficially, I wouldn't get too comfortable in Liberal red.

EXT. PARLIAMENT HILL - NIGHT

Murphy is leaving the West Block with Emily.

EMILY Honestly, I've never been more miserable in my life. MURPHY

This is politics. You have to take the good with the bad, sometimes.

EMILY

(Angrily)

And why is that, exactly? Where's the good in all this? We're propping up a government we don't like because, as much as they're hurting, we don't know if we can take them in an election. One of the most corrupt governments we've ever had, IN THE HISTORY OF CANADA and we don't know if we can take them. Bill, I have to wonder if I'm on the side of angels here.

MURPHY

Look, I don't like it anymore than you do. That's why I asked you to join the party, remember? Rome wasn't built in a day, and Ottawa isn't going to be fixed in one sitting.

EMILY

I get that, it's just - you have me between a rock and a hard place here you know. I need to follow the party line, and I need to please my constituents, and the two are at odds - it's not making me feel good.

MURPHY We could be great, you know.

EMILY

What?

MURPHY

Canada. We could be great. Far greater than we are now. A world leader that matters, that stands tall on its own but thrives in the global community it's a part of. An example the rest of the world could learn from. But we're not there yet, Emily, and until we are I'm going to keep working for it. EMILY (Smirking) You are the last great patriot, you know that?

MURPHY Yeah, I know. But what I'm saying is that you need to hold on. There's work to be done.

Emily nods. The two stop before her car, and she fumbles for her keys for a moment. Murphy holds her door open while she stows her purse, briefcase and laptop bag.

> EMILY I can't hold on forever.

MURPHY

Fair enough.

She climbs into her car and starts it up, and Murphy watches her go before turning down the path.

INT. DAVENPORT'S OFFICE - DAY

Davenport, speaker of the House, sits at his desk filing away some papers when there's a timid knock at the door. He squares the paperwork neatly away before responding.

DAVENPORT

Come in.

The door opens enough for Phil to pop his head in, looking quite nervous.

PHIL Hi Mr. Davenport.

DAVENPORT Mr. Keene, is it? Please, come in.

He indicates a chair, and Phil takes it after a moment.

PHIL I don't want to take up too much of your time...

DAVENPORT Mr. Keene, I called you in here because it has come to my attention that you may be struggling here a bit... PHIL Nothing I can't handle, sir.

DAVENPORT Of course it isn't. And I feel obliged to make it clear that this isn't a disciplinary meeting or anything so dire.

Phil breathes a sigh of relief.

PHIL

I'm glad to hear that.

DAVENPORT

Yes, new pages have little bumps all the time. It's a big adjustment for some, being thrust with responsibility while simultaneously beginning studies at an institute of higher learning, many times away from home. It's only human to make missteps, and it's understandable.

PHIL

I am SO glad to hear you say that, it seems like my whole Thursday was a misstep, you know?

Phil attempts to laugh at his joke, to lighten the mood. Davenport raises a humourless eyebrow, then continues.

DAVENPORT

That said, at some point we expect that you'll have settled into the role. As with any job in life, you'll find that a grace period will only be extended for so long. I expect complaints about your performance to lessen, and I expect you to keep on top of your schoolwork. Do you think that this is possible?

PHIL Yeah, of course.

DAVENPORT

Good. I have many duties and responsibilities of my own, thus I can't extend a grace period (MORE) 56.

PHIL

work out any kinks, as they say.

Yes sir.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Phil sits at a table with a half eaten plate of FOOD on one side and a thick TEXTBOOK on the other. He's dressed in casual clothing, and June and Gray are sitting with him, with their own meals and text books.

GRAY Oh, I do so love these little meet and greets.

JUNE

Hey, you have to eat, and you have to study for midterms. I say, why not do both. (To Phil) So, I saw you were in the speaker's office today?

PHIL Don't remind me.

JUNE Rather not talk about it, huh? I

get it. Trying hard not to pry.

PHIL

Just a lecture of the shaping up or shipping out variety. Did the Hiller/Heller mixup again.

GRAY I'm sure you'll get it next time for sure, Keene.

PHIL Lean over here so I can punch you?

GRAY

You can stop with the histrionics now. God, Keene, everything is not the end of the world. That's your biggest problem: everything's this monumentally significant story in the grand ol' epic of Phil Keene. PHIL Wow, and now I'm an egocentric jerk. For wanting to do a good job.

GRAY

Hey, you wouldn't be the first on the hill. But that right there is precisely what I'm talking about. We deliver mail and make coffee. This isn't life or death, or in any way important in the grand scheme of things.

PHIL So why are you even here?

GRAY (Shrugs) It'll look good on the resume.

June stifles a chortle.

GRAY

What? I have ambitions. A tour in law school, some work in the private sector, and in ten years back on the hill, on the benches. Near the front center. Working as a page just lets be get a leg up on understanding what's what.

PHIL And I'm the egocentric one?

GRAY

Can you in all honesty say that you've thought about a life plan, and know where you want to be in a decade? Besides some general, feel-good 'saving the world'?

PHIL

Well...

GRAY And you, you're the biggest slacker I've ever met. Have you bothered to take notes the entire time we've been studying?

June looks down at her empty notebook, lifts her shake to her mouth and sucks hard in response.

GRAY

That's pretty much what I thought. Listen, I never said I thought what I intend to accomplish would be easy. But it's easily within my capabilities. When you get your head out of the clouds then come talk to me.

INT. MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

A crowded meeting room, packed with Liberals and standing room only. The Liberal House leader is concluding the meeting:

PUTNAM

...alright, that concludes the meeting, thanks for getting here on such short notice. I hope that clarifies the short-term strategy for the next week.

People start filing out, leaving a few clumps of MPs to chat with each other.

Carter watches as the house leader approaches a young female MP and taking her aside. He looks over to Adrian, who is reviewing his notes.

CARTER

You think Putnam is starting a bloc of his own? He's been chatting up Shortt a lot lately.

ADRIAN

Didn't think much of it, honestly. You think he's striking out away from Addison?

CARTER

I don't know. I DO know that Addison isn't pulling in a woman under 30 into his circle. Keep an eye on that?

ADRIAN (Making a note in his notebook) On it.

Adrian walks off, while Emily wanders by, giving Carter the evil eye.

CARTER What now? EMILY It's not just now. You've been messing things up here since day one. CARTER Alright, I'm sorry. EMILY I don't care.

CARTER What's your problem with me?

EMILY Honestly? You're asking me what my problem with you is?

CARTER (Crossing his arms across his chest)

I am.

EMILY You know what my problem is.

CARTER So say it to my face instead of running to others behind my back.

Emily steps up close and looks up at Carter, meeting his gaze.

EMILY

I don't like you. You're bad for Liberal politics, and you're bad for Canadian politics. You can't touch a thing without poisoning it. The backroom deals and the political assassinations are bad enough, but the vain attempts of self-aggrandizement that just keep ruining our reputation? Those take the cake! You're a liability to any cause that isn't yourself. On second thought, scratch that last.

CARTER And you'd let blind idealism stupidly destroy any of your (MORE)

CARTER (cont'd)

political aspirations. Do you ever get out and see the world from the top of that ivory tower? So the Liberals get to have the claim to fame of having the world's most honest and dumbest lawyer all at the same time as the party falls apart around them.

EMILY

I'd hit you SO HARD right now, but I wouldn't want to give you the satisfaction of an assault charge.

CARTER And I'd press charges, too.

MURPHY

Enough!

The pair turn to see Murphy standing at the door, seething quietly. They look about and realize that the room isn't entirely bare; there are still a handful of Liberal MPs about, and all of them are openly staring at the two. Grim faced and abashed, the two file out of the room in silence.

INT. MURPHY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Carter and Emily are followed into the room by Murphy. They both start to attack each other before the older man intervenes by SLAMMING the door.

MURPHY

ENOUGH!

This immediately gets their attention.

MURPHY

You're like a pair of children! Is this what passes for debate nowadays?

EMILY

Bill, you don't know -

MURPHY

What I know is that both of you are members of the Parliament of Canada. Act like it. You want to air your grievances? Alright, do that here. We do not need to give (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MURPHY (cont'd) Addison any more ammunition to run things the way he's always been running them. Can we at least have debate without sounding like the leaders on debate night?

CARTER (A bit sullenly) I'm willing to give it a try.

EMILY Are you, now?

CARTER Rein it in, Proudfeather. I just said I'm willing to listen.

The two continue to stare daggers at each other for a while, before Emily nods.

EMILY Bill's right. I'm better than this. Better than you.

CARTER Did you JUST not hear the whole appeal for us to act like adults?

EMILY I can't just pretend we're friends, Gage. I won't. So let's just agree to disagree and civilly pass each other by in the hallways. Your time here's likely to be brief, so good luck to you I

She heads for the door and pauses at it to look back at Murphy, then to Carter before finally leaving. Murphy sits heavily into his chair and puts both hands to his head.

> MURPHY The two of you are making me grey before my time.

Murphy perches on the edge of the desk.

guess.

CARTER Jesus, Murphy. I don't understand you, why do you even have her on your team?

MURPHY

Because we need people with people with heart, compassion and conviction. These are the people that should be running our country.

CARTER

So then, why am I even on your team?

MURPHY

(Smiling) Because we need to get there, first. Listen, I'd love to live in Emily's world, but I've been in politics too long. I know this system will just chew up and spit out people like her. So I need people like you to help her navigate the rough waters.

Carter nods.

CARTER

So I get to play enforcer while she gets to skate blithely by.

MURPHY

Well, I'd rather not look at it like that. I have to face the facts that our political system requires people with your skillset to get anything done.

CARTER

No, I'm not really offended. Much. I guess - I thought maybe that there could be a fresh start for me here.

Murphy looks up at Carter.

MURPHY

I can't stop you, and I never would, but you know that would make things harder.

CARTER

I know. I couldn't just sit by while we were decimated anyway.

A dozen Liberal MPs are sitting around a table going over voting strategy. The group includes Murphy, Kevin, Carter and PAULINE SHORTT (early 30's), the young MP the House Leader was chatting up earlier.

MURPHY

What's up next?

KEVIN

Bill C-112, The Tory Eco-bill. Leadership doesn't think it goes far enough, so we'll get some amendments made and push to toss it back to the Senate, after which they'll likely kill it.

Murphy nods in agreement. He marks something down in a notebook and then waits for Kevin to proceed.

KEVIN Next up, Bill C-132, the BLAH bill. We actually agree with the Tories on this and have no desire to make some sort of point, so we'll be voting for this bill.

Kevin flips the page, looking pensively over at the next sheet of paper.

KEVIN

Okay, Bill C-644, an Act to BLAH BLAH. Introduced by the NDP. Leadership's on board with this but we don't know if we'll have the numbers. Tories won't back it, the Bloc won't back it. I think we're still going to vote for but I wouldn't be surprised if this is one of our few free votes.

CARTER Has Addison allowed a free vote before?

KEVIN Always a first time.

CARTER Just checking if I'd missed something.

Kevin shakes his head, then continues down the list.

KEVIN

Bill C-645, an Act to amend the Indian Treaty. Introduced by Emily.

CARTER

(Looking around) Where is Proudfeather, anyway?

KEVIN

I think she's back in her riding? She wasn't in session today. In any case, this is the most leadership is willing to clash with the government over Red Wolf Lake right now, so yeah, we get to vote for. NDP will likely vote with, Tory against, and Bloc probably against. Also, Emily won't be back by then so we'll need a pair.

MURPHY

(Making a note) I'll set it up.

PAULINE

I guess I'm wondering why we even bother with this one? I mean, we're pretty sure we're going to lose, right?

CARTER

(Nodding)

Yes, but that's not necessarily the point. We're here to represent our constituents, and polling shows that around 75 percent of our base is against the expansion. And from a strategic perspective, we don't want to agree with government more than we have to.

PAULINE

Mike thinks we should vote for it, though.

KEVIN

I'm getting my notes straight from the leadership office. You're talking about Mike Putnam, right?

CARTER

Well, it makes sense that he'd champion it in an unofficial capacity. As much as we've been trying to downplay it, this was originally a Liberal cock up, and Putnam was part of the government that devised it.

PAULINE

Cock up? A little rich for the separatist sympathizer to be throwing that around, don't you think?

MURPHY

Pauline, let's stick to business.

CARTER

No, let's finish that thought. I'm being demonized in the media and on the floor for having drinks with a member of the Bloc. Does that seem healthy to you, that we don't even talk to the other MPs unless we are mandated to by law? We ALL form the parliament. We should be working together regardless of our views.

PAULINE

Well maybe I'd believe you if you didn't publicly insult Addison. Or even if you didn't pal around with people who want to tear apart Canada. We have a proscription from fraternizing for a reason.

CARTER

I'd contend it's not a good one.

PAULINE

Well maybe you can sell that to your ridership when you're running as an independent.

CARTER

If it comes down to it.

KEVIN

Okay, I think we've gotten enough off track. Only one more of these, I promise, then we can go back to tearing this party apart. PAULINE Mr. Gage started that as well -

CARTER

I wouldn't say that I STARTED the decline of this party, you guys were doing just fine before I came along -

PAULINE And now you're playing cute.

MURPHY

Enough!

Into the sudden silence, Kevin pipes up:

KEVIN

So, as I was saying. Last bill to review is C-234, the Act to SUNSHINE AND PUPPIES, informally known as the Family bill. Proposed by Addison.

PAULINE

So it goes without saying that we are voting for.

KEVIN

Definitely. Though this does look a bit progressive for us. (Leafing through the bill) Provides relief for single income families, targets child poverty... it's a decent bill.

CARTER

The tiny idealist in me says that even Addison can have a good idea once in a while. The much larger cynic says he's playing to base.

PAULINE

Wow, who's side are you on, Gage? Right or wrong, Addison's the leader of this party. That you have such a low opinion of him speaks volumes about your character.

CARTER

Hey, Addison's an able politician. I even voted for the guy once or twice.

PAULINE

I'm sure.

KEVIN

Doesn't really matter. We don't have the numbers. The Tories won't support it, the NDP says it doesn't go far enough, the Bloc says there isn't enough in it for Quebec. It's pretty much symbolic at this point.

CARTER

But as a start, it would be nice to get the foot in the door as legislation. Something we can build on later.

KEVIN

Not going to happen, but we have orders to vote for it. It'll be a nice gesture to the public.

PAULINE Good enough for me.

Carter sits back and considers quietly, the gears obviously working in his head.

INT. LOUNGE - DAY

June reclines on a couch, listlessly watching the flat screen when Phil comes in. She looks over at him as he enters and gives him a warm smile.

> JUNE Phil! Take a load off.

> > PHIL

Why not?

JUNE Thing's going better?

PHIL They're not going catastrophic, so yeah I guess they are.

JUNE Good to hear you're settling in.

PHIL

Well, I don't know if I'm settling in. Just cause I'm keeping my head above water doesn't mean I've figured out how to tread water.

JUNE

You know, I'm starting to think Gray is right about you.

PHIL

That I'm just an inferior human being full of naivety and idealism.

JUNE

Well, yeah that of course. But I was referring to your self-defeatist attitude. There are plenty of mission critical jobs on the Hill, but ours isn't one of them. You should enjoy it, not struggle with it.

PHIL Can we talk about something else now?

JUNE

(Shrugs) Sure. What do you make of all the hoopla going on these days in the House?

PHIL

Certainly not our finest moment in the realm of government.

JUNE

I'd have to agree with you there. You think these guys are going to get their acts together?

PHIL Yeah. I hope so.

JUNE Heh. You are so naive. General election within a year.

PHIL Naaaah. We JUST had one. JUNE Two years ago. The Tories are on borrowed time.

PHIL Well amen to that.

JUNE I don't know what you're so happy about. The Grits are just as bad.

PHIL

You're not a NDPer, are you?

JUNE

And what if I am? Honestly, I know what I'm not and that's Grit or Tory.

PHIL

But... none of those other guys even have a chance of forming government in our lifetime! And we're going to live for a long time!

JUNE Because of our awesome health care, introduced by the NDP I'll point out.

PHIL Yeah, it's pretty much the reason they're not totally irrelevant.

JUNE Hey, I'd even be willing to vote Green...

PHIL

Are you trying to raise my spirits? Because you're succeeding admirably.

JUNE

Ah, so I see not an idealist in all things.

PHIL Hey, in an ideal society we'd all vote Liberal. 70.

JUNE Oh my god, you're officially giving Gray a running for guy who spouts crazy now.

PHIL Look, you want to throw away your votes on pot-legalizers and the like -

JUNE Pot decriminalization!

PHIL

Okay, pot decriminalizers. Better? If you want to do that, there's nothing I can do to stop you. Even if you're throwing your vote away.

JUNE You talk a good game, but you're just as stuck as Gray.

PHIL If you mean I'm not going down the list of candidates, looking to vote for the dude with the tattoos and hippy agenda -

JUNE What's wrong with tattoos?

PHIL I'm just saying if you're voting for counter-culture -

JUNE Counter-culture? Tattoos? Did you actually grow up in this decade?

PHIL I was trying to make a point -

JUNE Poorly, I'll say. Body art is firmly in the mainstream.

PHIL Okay, granted. JUNE I have a tattoo.

PHIL Yeah, well... wait, what?

JUNE You wanna see it?

CUT TO:

INT. OUTSIDE THE LOUNGE - DAY

Davenport is followed by some OFFICAL.

DAVENPORT Yes, we've had a few complaints but those have all but abated. As is to be fully expected, I might add. I'd like to take this time to say that this year's group of pages are among the most professional and courteous individuals I've ever had the -

PHIL (OS) Tramp stamp! Nice!

CONTINUOUS:

INT. LOUNGE - DAY

He stops as he comes upon June, Her blouse hiked up and pants pulled just a tiny bit down to fully expose her lower back, and a surprised Phil behind her.

> PHIL Uh, I can come up with no good reason for all this.

June starts buckling up her pants and pulling down her blouse.

DAVENPORT (Through clenched teeth) You can work on one on your way to my office.

OFFICIAL (Smarmy) As you were saying, Mr. Davenport? EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

A few establishing shots of a green lakeside city, and a shot of sign declaring that this is Elliot Lake. Emily walks down the street with ALBERT, a robust First Nations man in his 40's in tow.

EMILY

(Wearily)

I know what you're going to say, Albert. Let me guess, you don't like what the government's doing with Red Wolf Lake?

ALBERT

No. Well yes, but that's not what I wanted to discuss with you.

EMILY

(Shocked) Really?

ALBERT

I want you to be clear; what's happening up there is a shame, but it's nothing new from the government.

EMILY

And I got elected to change that, to make sure that it's NOT an everyday thing anymore.

ALBERT

Of course. But there are other injustices affecting the First Nations. How about funding for social programs, for community centers, for cultural pursuits?

EMILY

That's all in good time, Albert. In the meantime I'm firefighting, and I have one hell of an inferno to put out.

ALBERT

And I don't want to see you become a one note candidate. Everything can't be about the First Nations.

EMILY

That... doesn't sound like the Albert who organized my last campaign - who got me onto the Hill in the first place, at all.

ALBERT I've done some maturing since then.

EMILY

I'll say.

ALBERT

The truth is now that you're in, that you have a seat at the table, we need you to stay in. And yeah, it would be great if we could have you focus on only our issues. We're certainly due for it. But, that'll have to wait until we get a province of our own. Right now, you have to also satisfy a whole lot of people who are not Indians.

EMILY

Well yes, I want to do the best job for all of my constituents, no matter who they are. But if I'm staring right at injustice... I am not going to ignore it due to worry that I'll be seen as that Indian MP.

ALBERT

I'd prefer you been seen as that damn good MP. I know you'll have everyone's best interests at heart. Why do you think I backed you instead of running myself?

EMILY

Because you didn't want to catch the heat yourself?

ALBERT No, I like my version better. I sound less self-serving that way.

EMILY

I'm going to head up to see what's going on at the lake. Then we'll see where we stand. I don't feel I (MORE) EMILY (cont'd) can in good conscience not speak up in parliament if things are as bad as they say.

ALBERT

If you speak up against Addison's wishes, you're done in the caucus, you know. You'll be sitting independent like your friend Gage.

EMILY Gage is not my friend. (Beat) But I"m aware of what's at stake, Albert. Everyone makes sure I never forget it.

INT. GAGE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The office is looking a bit more moved in, but just a little; there are still a lot of BOXES that require unpacking. Gage is perched on the edge of a table with some of his staff, including Adrian and Bettina. PIZZA BOXES are piled in the center, while the rest of the table space is taken up by notepads, papers, and the occasional laptop.

ADRIAN

So going through every source I could tap, every grapevine I could put my ear to - we're on borrowed time. Addison's happy enough to boot you because his whole inner circle is telling him it's a good idea.

CARTER Tell me something I didn't know.

ADRIAN

Judging by the news on the francophone stations in Gatineau, you're getting a nice boost in the region. All you need to do is get yourself parachuted into one of the three Quebec ridings that's actually in play, and we'll be in business.

CARTER Montreal's beautiful this time of year. BETTINA Oh, the shopping I'd do!

ADRIAN I'd suspect you'd be looking a bit more north.

BETTINA How much more?

ADRIAN Closer to Arctic circle than not.

Carter stands and moves over to a window.

BETTINA Carter, what are you thinking?

CARTER

Honestly? I'm thinking it's probably over. Unless you found anything on those leads I sent you?

ADRIAN

I'm still working them, boss. It's going to take time.

CARTER

Addison's been off the Hill putting out fires in BC. He's back in a day. He'll make it to session in time to see his piece of pet legislation get voted down, and then we'll have a caucus meeting where they'll vote me out. (Looking steadily at Adrian) We're running out of time, Adrian.

ADRIAN I can go press my contacts right now, see if I can dig something up-

CARTER

No.

Carter's shoulders slump a bit.

ADRIAN Boss, you sure?

CARTER

Yeah, you're instincts are good, that's why I hired you. I don't need to look so desperate. BETTINA We can fight it, Carter...

CARTER No, we can't. They're well within their rights to boot me. I'D boot me if I was them. You guys get out of here.

BETTINA

Carter...

CARTER I'm serious, Bettina. Go home and get some rest. I imagine becoming independent is going to be a bit of work. Least of all, we're going to need to change all our letterheads.

The pair look at each other, then after a few moments gather their things and get going. Carter takes a deep sigh, and heads outside.

EXT. PARLIAMENT HILL - NIGHT

Carter goes for a walk along the grassy lawn, watching Ottawa at night driving by muted in the distance. He heads over to the overlook and spots a glum Phil there. He starts to turn away but is too late, the kid spots him.

> PHIL I can't catch a break, man.

CARTER I know the feeling.

PHIL I thought I had this, I thought this was going to be pretty straightforward.

Carter nods politely.

PHIL I just keep messing up. Stepping in dog waste, mixing up messages -

CARTER Yeah, we hate that. I get enough mail as it is, I don't need some other guys'. But see kid, PHIL Caught looking at another page's bare ass-

CARTER These things happen when you're just starting out and learning the ropes. Wait, what?

PHIL AND I'm doing horribly in my classes.

CARTER Why were you looking at another page's bare ass?

PHIL I'm pretty much a failure at everything I set out to do, and I'm wondering where I went wrong?

CARTER I'd hazard somewhere around the gazing at another page's bare ass stage.

PHIL

Well, okay, it wasn't bare, she was wearing a thong. Doesn't matter; Davenport was not happy. I think he's going to kick me out.

CARTER

I'm still missing a crucial piece of this puzzle. How is it that Davenport came across you staring at another page's bare ass?

PHIL

Look, I misspoke before. I just said, I just clarified the ass was actually thonged.

CARTER

I kinda like the flow of bare assed better, honestly. The whole thing: another page's bare ass. I guess important thing is was the attention wanted? PHIL Well I wasn't supposed to be looking at her bare - her thonged ass.

CARTER You know, thongs don't leave much to the imagination.

PHIL I know right?

CARTER Pretty much you were getting the full bare assed experience. Through no fault of your own of course.

PHIL I was supposed to be looking at the tattoo on her lower back.

CARTER But Davenport caught you stealing glances at your seminude female coworker and now you're in jeopardy. Okay I got it. I'm caught up.

PHIL So what do I do?

CARTER You're asking me?

PHIL Seems like you have experience in these sorts of things.

Carter chuckles, and gazes out at the view before him.

CARTER

Did you have your dick in your hands?

PHIL

What?

CARTER

You heard me.

PHIL No! I was just innocently admiring body art.

CARTER And you're sure the girl isn't going to press charges?

PHIL She's the one who showed me the tattoo! She offered.

CARTER Well then this is fixable.

PHIL

Can you put in a good word with Davenport?

CARTER

Probably not. I haven't been in town a month yet, and I'm pretty much what you'd call persona non grata. But I can tell you what what you need to do to get out of this.

PHIL

And that is?

CARTER

Live a little, kid! Let Davenport get his panties in a bunch. Work hard, play hard. That's the only advice I can give. But here's the catch: you go in there tomorrow and be the best damned page they've ever seen. You can do this in your sleep, so make 'em look stupid if they even think of turfing you... are we good here? I need to go make some calls.

Phil breaks into a smile.

PHIL

Thanks, Mr. Gage. I knew you wouldn't let me down.

CARTER

Why do you keep bothering me anyway? Don't you have parents you can call or a guidance councilor or something? PHIL Well, technically, you're my Member of Parliament. My parents live down the street from your Toronto office.

CARTER

Huh.

PHIL Don't sweat it, I voted for the other guy.

Carter laughs and exits, leaving Phil with a crooked (but hopeful) smirk.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

The construction site is nestled in a wooded area, with diggers and other construction vehicles bracketing a freshly dug trench. Big signs on the chain link fence proclaim that TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED.

Emily walks over to the gates and gazes in, followed by the young man who visited her in Ottawa.

SONNY They're not going away, Ms. Proudfeather. There used to be a single lane road through here, and you could practically touch the trees when you drove by. Now...

EMILY Now you've got a triple-lane highway going through here.

Sonny shakes his head, as he rattles at the fence.

SONNY This is supposed to be our land. Why is this happening to us again, in the twenty first century?

EMILY I'm ashamed to say that the government failed you. I want to say that I had nothing to do with it, because I didn't. But that's no comfort to you.

She looks on at the fallen trees.

SONNY So you're saying that there's nothing you could do?

EMILY

(Shrugging helplessly) I have raised a motion in Parliament, but honestly I don't think it's going to be passed.

SONNY

So is there any point to it?

EMILY

I guess in the end it was a useless gesture, but I had to try.

SONNY

No, I was talking about government. Trying to work within the system. Nothing we do matters! Nothing changes!

EMILY

I understand your frustration Sonny, I really do. But we have to work within the system.

SONNY

Why? Does anyone other than the old rich white men get what they want out of your system?

EMILY

Sometimes. There was a time when we had a lot less than what we have right now.

SONNY

And there was a time when we had a lot more. The government has not even come close to making reparations on that score.

EMILY

I know.

SONNY

The system of government here is broken. No other way to put it. How can they talk of respecting the First Nations when they pillage from us at the first sign that they can? EMILY

I don't know.

Sonny gives her a hard look.

SONNY

You better know, Ms. Proudfeather. Because if you don't know, I don't know what's going to happen here.

EMILY

What do you mean? (When he doesn't respond) Sonny, what do you mean?

Sonny stares off into the distance, then motions his head over Emily's shoulder. She turns to look over her shoulder to see a bunch of First Nations men, dressed in rugged coats and with masks covering their faces. The men are carrying a long link CHAIN. Emily looks back at Sonny, who is pulling on his own mask.

> EMILY Sonny. Don't do anything stupid.

SONNY What? I'm going to go exercise my right for protest.

EMILY Peaceful protest.

SONNY

Yeah, whatever. You get the government to listen, and things will be fine. Otherwise, what was that you said before? We'll give them a fight.

Sonny turns and walks away to join his fellows in protest, as Emily shudders.

INT. COMMITTEE MEETING ROOM - DAY

Several Liberal staffers are here chatting. The meeting that was being held here has just wrapped up, most of the staffers are leaving. Putnam is closing down his laptop, and Pauline stands nearby.

> PAULINE That was some presentation, Mike.

PUTNAM

(Smiling) You think so?

PAULINE

Four so far this week, and we're not campaigning? You need to slow down, before you wear out.

PUTNAM

Addison thinks he needs to micromanage because of this Gage putz. He thinks this guy's dangerous, so I need to beat the drum. Make sure everyone else is in lockstep.

PAULINE

I get it, I suppose. I just don't think we really have that much to worry about. I mean, we're booting him out at today's caucus, right? Then he'll be nothing but a bad memory. Plenty of more candidates in the wings to replace him with, especially in Toronto.

PUTNAM

(Shrugs) I don't know, I hate Toronto. Such a dirty city.

PAULINE

And the 401, God. Glad I don't have to do it. But you know what I mean, there's no shortage of warm bodies if Gage steps out of line.

PUTNAM

It's not just Gage, though. He's worried about Proudfeather and not sure about most of the new batch. Personally I'm with you, I couldn't care less about these guys and few people are stupid enough to vote against the party and end their career in politics. We make a few examples if we have to. Can't make an omelette without cracking some eggs, right?

Pauline smiles, steps closer to Putnam so that they're almost nose to nose.

PAULINE You know I love it when you talk about food. Will you come over and cook for me?

Putnam's about to respond but then his eyes go to the door and he takes a step back. A moment later June enters.

> JUNE There you are, Mr. Putnam. I have a message for you.

She hands him an envelope.

PUTNAM From Addison? Maybe he's back early?

JUNE No, sir. From Adrian Daviano.

PAULINE

Who?

Putnam shrugs, then opens the envelope. His eyes narrow as he scans the message, then he looks over at Pauline.

JUNE Adrian Daviano. He's a legislative assistant to-

PUTNAM (Full of loathing) Gage. Carter Gage.

INT. COMMONS CHAMBER - DAY

The room is mostly full today, with only a handful of the three hundred eight members of Parliament missing. On the Liberal front bench, Addison takes a seat beside a nervous looking Putnam. The House leader makes a few furtive glances over his shoulder into the Liberal backbench, where Carter is sitting beside Kevin.

ADDISON

Mike. What have I missed?

PUTNAM Not much. A lot of posturing. The Tory Eco-bill got pushed back to the Senate with the expected amendments. ADDISON (Eyes narrowing) Everything alright? You seem a little distracted.

PUTNAM

What? No, nothing at all. It's just that I - I slipped up and made the last vote free.

ADDISON

(Surprised and annoyed) How the hell did that happen? We don't do free votes.

PUTNAM I know, I know. I take full responsibility. I screwed up.

ADDISON What was the last vote.

PUTNAM The gun control bill.

ADDISON (Lips pursed) I see.

PUTNAM

I know we were going to vote with the Tories on that one, but- in the grand scheme of things, this is better for us -

ADDISON

I don't want to hear any more.

Putnam shuts up, glances back over his shoulder and up at Carter, who nods. Addison has picked up his copy of the HANSARD and is leafing through it.

ADDISON This is a mess. Let's just get this last vote over with. Once they kill this bill, we can get to removing Gage from the caucus, and

Putnam laughs nervously.

I'll rest easier.

At the seat of the speaker, Davenport is getting up.

DAVENPORT Alright, we will now vote on Bill C-234, introduced by Mr. Addison. An Act to SUNSHINE AND PUPPIES BLAH. Those in favour?

A wave of Liberals raise their hands and say 'yea', as well as all the NDP MPs present... and even a sizeable number of Bloc and Conservatives, to the surprise of their fellows. Davenport himself raises and eyebrow in surprise as he speaks again:

DAVENPORT

All opposed?

A trickle of nays.

DAVENPORT It looks like the ayes have it?

Addison looks over at Putnam in confusion.

ADDISON What just happened here?

Up in the Liberal back bench, Kevin is staring unbelieving at the rest of the chamber.

KEVIN What was that?

CARTER You're welcome, Mr. Addison.

Addison does not look pleased at the development at all.

ADDISON (Fuming) Does he think this changes anything? If anything he's made it even more clear I have to get rid of him. He's too dangerous. What the hell is he playing at?

PUTNAM Listen. Can we talk? Before the vote?

Addison turns fully to look at Putnam as if regarding him for the first time.

ADDISON What did you do?

EXT. PARLIAMENT HILL - DAY

Carter is leaving the Center Block while Emily is walking up. She stops before reaching him.

EMILY I heard about what you did. Somehow you got the community bill passed. And escaped being kicked out of caucus.

Carter puts his hands in his pockets, doesn't say anything.

EMILY This doesn't make us friends, you know. I'm grateful for what you did but I don't owe you anything.

CARTER I'm not looking for your friendship, Emily. Your honour's safe.

EMILY This isn't about my honour-

EMILY

CARTER Don't bother with the justifications, I'm tired of fighting. Done enough of it for one day.

Alright then. CARTER Why are you always so angry? I'm not the one whose opposing you here.

EMILY (Audibly sighing) You know what, I get tired too. Let's not do this right now.

Carter nods, then after a pause motions toward the letter in her hand.

CARTER You're resigning.

EMILY (Shocked) How did you know?

CARTER

Just a guess. Listen, contrary to popular belief, I'm not friends with everyone on the Hill. But what I am willing to do is work with just about anyone.

EMILY I guess that's how you pulled off your trick today?

Carter shrugs his shoulders, as if the answer is unimportant.

CARTER

All I'm saying is that there's a lot more we could be doing by working together, without being the best of friends. You don't have to be my secret Santa or anything, promise.

EMILY

It doesn't matter. I'm not staying in the Liberal caucus and voting against Red Wolf Lake. And we both know that Addison and his cronies will have me booted as soon as that happens. So, here we are.

CARTER

Here we are. Would you reconsider?

EMILY

No. What's to reconsider?

CARTER

There's a lot more work to be done. We passed the family bill, but that just the tip of the iceberg. There's more legislation to work out.

EMILY So I'm just supposed to sell out my principles?

CARTER

You're supposed to pick and choose your battles. You're going to be here, barring the dissolution of Parliament, for another three, four years? In that time, how much more legislation like the family bill can you get passed? As opposed to going out on the first slightly contentious issue?

EMILY

I'm not like you, Carter. I can't turn off my conscience when it suits me.

CARTER

(Annoyed) You're a human being, Emily. Of course you can. The difference between me and you is that I can admit when I did something stupid.

EMILY I thought you didn't want to fight?

CARTER

I'm done.

EMILY

Good, I can make better use of my time.

CARTER

(Exasperated) You know what? You're absolutely correct. Though I have to note the irony that you're going to be the one sitting as an independent after all the grief you gave me. Have a nice life, Proudfeather.

Carter strolls off in an unconcerned fashion as Emily watches him go. Suddenly enraged, she yells and slams a fist into the door, before forcefully pulling it open and storming inside. INT. EAST BLOCK CORRIDOR - DAY

Phil is walking down the hall carrying a stack of notes. He is moving with a renewed sense of vigour. He sees Heller and walks up to him confidently.

> PHIL I've got your mail right here, Mr. Hiller.

He hands Heller an envelope. The MP sighs.

HELLER Son, how many times do we have to do this dance around? I'm Heller, Hiller's over in West Block! Me, John Heller. The other guy, Will Hiller. Me Liberal, the other guy NDP. Shall I go on?

He stops at Phil's smirk, then looks at the envelope again.

PHIL Did I say Hiller? Must've beeen a slip of the tongue.

HELLER (Returning the smirk) I guess it was.

PHIL

Must have been. I mean, how could I forget my favourite member of parliament from the great riding of Nova South? I'd never get you mixed up with New Democrat from Sault Ste Marie. Never!

Heller checks the envelope again, then raises the envelope in a mock salute.

HELLER

I salute you, sir.

In response, Phil bows.

Another MP walks up.

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT Do you have anything for me? PHIL I sure do, Mr. Bafinidas! And I think you should head down to the third floor lounge. Someone made a run to Timmy's and there were still some honey crullers there last I checked.

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT Did you say honey crullers? Thanks for the tip!

He takes his mail and heads for the steps, while June and Gray enter the hallway.

JUNE Look at you! You seem to be in much better spirits.

PHIL Things are looking up!

GRAY Are you high, Keene?

PHIL High on the drug of life!

GRAY A simple no would suffice, Keene.

PHIL

You know, you can't bring me down, Gray. I listened to some good advice and I'm going to make the best of this.

GRAY Glad that you're finally listening to sense, Keene.

JUNE What turned you around? Was it Gray, or me?

PHIL Honestly? It was something Carter Gage said.

Gray snorts.

JUNE Did you just snort?

PHIL I'm pretty sure he just snorted.

GRAY

That was completely justified. You took advice from Carter Gage? That's eminently snort-worthy.

PHIL You're jealous, because Carter's cooler than you.

GRAY I'm going to go with... no.

JUNE I gotta say Phil, your hero worship of a scumbag is a little worrying.

PHIL Scumbag? That's harsh.

GRAY She's right. Liberals are double-talking arrogant slimes and he makes the rest of them look good.

JUNE And another thing-

GRAY

Shhhh!

Everyone shuts up. A couple of MPs, including Davenport come up the stairs. All three pages stand in a line looking nonchalant and smiling warmly at the new arrivals.

> DAVENPORT Good morning, pages. I haven't been getting any complaints lately, keep up the good work.

GRAY (Proudly) Thank you Mr. Davenport! We take our work as pages seriously.

DAVENPORT I'm glad you do, Mr. McNeil. And I'm happy to see that you are fully clothed Ms. Kim. Keep up the good work.

JUNE (Cheerily) You know I will, Mr. Davenport!

Davenport nods, then walks off with the other MPs in tow. The three hold their smiles, until they're out of sight, and then Gray's head whips around to June.

> GRAY Tell me about this fully clothed thing.

June and Phil exchange looks.

GRAY Why are you looking at him? What does he know?

JUNE Leave me alone, you repressed pervert!

She heads off down the hall, Gray following after her.

EXT. PARLIAMENT HILL - DAY

Carter?

Carter is leaving the Eastern Block with Kevin, Adrian and some LIBERAL STAFFERS when the group comes face to face with a bunch of BLOC STAFFERS, including Delphine. Delphine has the good grace to look a bit ashamed. The two groups recoil from each other like antimatter, but Delphine lingers behind.

DELPHINE

Carter stops.

DELPHINE Un minuit, s'il vous plait?

He turns to look at Kevin and Adrian, who are shaking their heads and drawing a hand across their throat, respectively. Carter indicates to the two of them that he'll be alright. Reluctantly, they turn to catch up with the others. Finally, Carter turns back to her. CARTER If I didn't know better, I'd say you were trying to get me booted from federal politics.

She favours him with a slow smile.

DELPHINE And be rid of the most dangerous man on the Hill? I wouldn't dream of it.

He nods, then glances at his watch.

CARTER I'm in committee in a half hour and I have to go get ready-

DELPHINE (Blurting out) You shouldn't be mad at me.

CARTER

Pardon me?

DELPHINE You would have done the same thing.

CARTER Because we're sharks.

She nods, not breaking their gaze.

DELPHINE Circling our prey. When we smell blood, we attack.

CARTER (Unconvinced) Of course. Good catching up with you, Del. Now if you'll excuse me...

DELPHINE

Wait!

Carter waits.

DELPHINE (Plaintive) Don't be mad at me. CARTER (Lying, poorly) I'm not mad at you. You were just doing your thing. Look, I really am running late. We'll talk later. Maybe we'll be on committee sometime together.

Carter leaves, and Delphine sighs sadly as she watches him go.

DELPHINE (Whispering) Je suis desolee.

INT. COMMONS CHAMBER - DAY

Davenport stands at the seat of the speaker of the House.

DAVENPORT The House will now vote on Bill-266, amendment to the Red Wolf Lake Highway act, as proposed by the honourable member from Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing.

He nods towards Emily.

DAVENPORT The question is simple: should the construction for the proposed Red Wolf Lake Highway be cancelled, and should an alternative be

In order, each MP in favour stands. This is pretty much all NDP candidates. When it comes to Emily herself, she looks over at Addison who is icily looking on. She doesn't stand. Davenport looks a bit surprised, but continues on in stride.

DAVENPORT

investigated? All in favour?

All opposed?

Emily doesn't seem to notice as the various MPs, pretty much all Conservatives, Bloc and Liberals stand one at a time.

INT. GAGE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Kevin, Adrian, Bettina and Carter sit around a table, laughing and playing cards. Murphy knocks at the door and walks in with a bemused expression.

> MURPHY Working hard, I see.

> > KEVIN

It's a bit of a celebration. Amazingly enough, the caucus hasn't lost a single seat this week.

MURPHY Understandable, of course.

Carter motions him over.

CARTER Come on, Bill. Get in a few hands.

MURPHY

I don't know...

BETTINA Oh, come on Mr. Murphy. Let your hair down a little. (Off Murphy's look) So to speak.

MURPHY Alright, if you insist. One game.

CARTER You're going have barely gotten into it. You're going to have to play at least two games, probably three. At the least.

MURPHY Let's start with one game, shall we? See where that takes us.

Smirking, Carter starts dealing out cards.

MURPHY What are we playing?

ADRIAN Texas Hold'em.

MURPHY That's still popular? I hate to date myself, but we used to just call it poker. BETTINA So what do you think about making this interesting? Playing for a little moolah? She steals a glance at Carter, who shakes his head. CARTER Just a friendly game tonight, Betsy. Once we get everyone hooked, then we bring in the game taxes. ADRIAN Spoken like a career politician! MURPHY (Wryly) You'll go far in this business, son. CARTER I aim to please. KEVIN Seriously, this week was mostly a win, Bill. The caucus is intact, our people are both still here- I have to admit I expected two independents out of the whole mess. MURPHY I'm glad it didn't come to that. CARTER You and me both. ADRIAN Well, we've survived our first month. Now if we can keep you away from the French canadiennes

Kevin and Adrian share chuckles at Carter's expense, but he makes a show of being put out by the gentle ribbing.

there'll be no stopping us.

CARTER

Hey, not cool guys. Don't I have your backs?

KEVIN

You do, you do. I definitely want you on my side. Still want to know what you have over Putnam and the others.

CARTER

I don't know what you guys are talking about. Are we going to play, or what?