

(Eventually, PAIGE is shown to the door, exits, and closes the door behind herself.)

START → NED. Oh god.

DAVE. You're fine.

NED. I'm just all...

DAVE. It's fine.

NED. This whole *day* has been...

DAVE. It has.

NED. *Hasn't it!?!?*

(It has. This day—what's already passed, and what's still to come—is a nightmare for NED. But DAVE has a talent for keeping NED calm and gently encouraging him—not pushing him—to do what has to be done.)

NED. (Beat.) I was hoping I could sneak in here. When no one was looking.

DAVE. It's your office, Ned; you don't have to sneak in.

NED. I just... I really want to get to work on the budget.

DAVE. Oh, good, that's good. Did you look at that proposal the General Assembly sent over?

NED. (Producing papers from his briefcase.) Oh yeah, I went through the whole thing. Good golly, Dave, those people are idiots.

DAVE. (With a laugh.) Yeah?

NED. Look at this, look: (Having found the page, indicating numbers:) They're completely ignoring the fact that there's a *massive* reduction in Federal funding for schools; our state's gonna get twenty-three million dollars less this year. Which is the equivalent of—what?—(Doing this math in his head, very quickly:) —uh... four hundred sixty full-time teaching salaries, right?

DAVE. Uh, sure.

NED. You overlook a detail like that, suddenly— (An even quicker calculation:) —eighteen thousand, four hundred of our students don't have a teacher.

DAVE. Is that right?

NED. Yeah! This is their education plan. And meanwhile, look... (Finding a number on a different page:) They're almost doubling—doubling—government subsidies for all these dairy farms.

DAVE
NED

DAVE. Uh-huh.

NED. If I sign this budget... we'll end up with a state full of uneducated children, and... really rich cows.

DAVE. *(Beat.)* I don't think the money goes to the cows.

NED. The whole thing is a mess, Dave.

DAVE. I see that.

NED. I need to work on this.

DAVE. I agree.

NED. I need to *just* work on this, and not do anything else, like public speaking or appearing on television ever again in my life, okay?

DAVE. Ned—

NED. You're supposed to say "yes," Dave—

DAVE. Well, no—

NED. As my Chief of Staff, you're supposed to say "yes" to whatever I ask.

DAVE. I don't think that's the job description.

NED. Can I make it the job description?

DAVE. I want you to work on the budget, Ned.

NED. Okay, good.

DAVE. I want you to work on all the important stuff—policy, and legislation, and, you know, doing your job, but... do you remember last night, when we first realized you might actually become Governor?

NED. And I started to cry?

DAVE. Right, and we said, okay, if this happens, you and I are gonna need to spend more time thinking about... politics.

(NED reacts in pain. DAVE is sincerely empathetic to NED's view of politics.)

DAVE. Look, I know that campaigning, *(Each of these suggestions causes NED physical pain.)* and giving speeches, *(Pain.)* and... working the crowd—

NED. *(The most painful of all:)* Oh god!

DAVE. I know you hate that stuff.

NED. It's not just that I *hate* it, it's... I can't *do* that, Dave; I'm not built that way.

STOP