

Start

NED. ~~I want to at least have the option.~~ *(Beat.)* My god. Why the hell did we ever get involved in politics?

DAVE. That's a good question. *(Realizing:)* Actually, that is a good question. *(Not having a bright idea yet—just wondering why NED picked this masochistic profession.)* Why did you? Why did you go into politics?

NED. *(Beat. A simple hope, but spoken by someone who believes his opportunity to realize it has passed:)* Because I believed that... government, when... when it worked right... could do something good.

(Beat.)

DAVE. That's... wait. Ned. That's *it*. What you just said—that exact thing you just said—why don't you say *that*... on television? We—yes!—we tell Arthur Vance he can launch Lulu's campaign from your office, let him bring his TV camera in here, and then you look into that camera and tell the voters... the things you want to do as Governor—the kind of Governor you want to be. Tell them... why you want the job.

NED. You're saying I would talk.

DAVE. Yes.

NED. On television.

DAVE. Yes, but—

NED. 'Cause that hasn't gone well so far.

DAVE. Just talk like *you*.

NED. I can't—

DAVE. In Larry Clarke's first budget—infrastructure spending—how much did you propose?

NED. A hundred forty-nine million dollars, which was an increase of seventeen-point-three percent, but I more than paid for that by eliminating the program for... *(Realizing he's naturally, easily answering the question)* Oh.

DAVE. See? Like that.

NED. You want me to talk like that on TV?

DAVE. Yes.

NED. And you think people will find that interesting?

DAVE. That's not the question, Ned. It's not about you... being some way you think people *want* you to be. It's about you... being you, and letting people decide if that's what they're looking for. Let the people

decide. That's what Arthur said: I put *my* guy out there, you put *your* guy out there. And... (*Surprised by the realization:*) I think he's right, Ned. I think you should go on TV and talk like *you*, and Lulu should talk like Lulu, and then... we leave it up to the people. Maybe they won't like you, maybe they'll still kick you out of office, but this way at least they'll know who they're kicking out.

NED. So I show people who I am...

DAVE. Yes.

NED. By talking about infrastructure spending...

DAVE. (*"Among other options":*) Well...

NED. In the middle of Lulu's campaign launch.

DAVE. Yeah, it's not a perfect plan.

NED. No, but... it is a *plan*. And you've got two days; you'll think of some way to make it work.

DAVE. I will?

NED. You never let me down, Dave. You stopped me from jumping off a balcony today.

DAVE. (*With a shrug:*) It's the little things.

NED. So *you* figure out how to get me to talk on television, and I'll get to work rewriting this budget, okay?

END

(*Takes the budget out of the banker's box and puts it on the desk.*)

DAVE. What's with the box?

NED. Oh—it's just stuff from my office. I thought, in case I never came back, there were a few things I'd like to have. For sentimental reasons. (*Taking them out:*) My supplemental appropriations proposals.

DAVE. Uh-huh.

NED. The first one, especially. My fix for Social Security.

DAVE. Oh, definitely.

NED. My fiscal transparency plan. That was special, huh?

DAVE. Ned?

(*NED looks at DAVE.*)

DAVE. Can I borrow this box?

(*Blackout.*)