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DAVE  
NED

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. 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.

DAVE. But, Ned, you *have* won elections before.

NED. Yeah, but I *told* you: when I was elected State *Treasurer*... people only voted for me because I looked like a treasurer. And when Larry Clarke ran for Governor, he picked me as his running mate because, you know, Larry is so charismatic, they decided he needed to run with someone extremely *dull* just to balance the ticket.

DAVE. I don't think that's true.

NED. No it is; he told me.

DAVE. Larry told you that?

NED. Yeah; the campaign did a poll. 66 percent of respondents said Larry was the kind of guy they'd like to have a beer with. 70 percent said they were wondering if I would drive them home from the bar.

DAVE. *(Beat.)* I don't even know what that *means*.

NED. It means I'm the boring guy.

DAVE. No, you're the guy they trust with their car.

NED. Only 'cause I'm not drinking.

DAVE. But the guy who's so drunk he can't drive... ?

NED. They want him to be Governor. This is why politics frightens me.