Spin City

"Pilot"

Written by

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COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

A MEETING ROOM IN CITY HALL, PACKED, LOTS OF SMALL TALK. ENERGETIC HUB-BUB. AT THE HEAD OF THE TABLE SITS MIKE FLAHERTY. LATE 20'S - NOT ENGAGING IN THE SMALL TALK, SIPPING COFFEE, WAITING. EVEN IN REPOSE HE EMITS A DISCERNIBLE HUM.

ANGLE ON THE CLOCK AS IT TICKS OVER TO SEVEN A.M.

MICHAEL

(GETTING UP, SOFTLY) All right

let's begin. No one talks but me.

EVERYONE IS IMMEDIATELY QUIET.

ANGLE ON <u>JAMES HOBERT</u> - 22 YEAR OLD SPEECH WRITER. MID-WESTERN LOOK, TRYING DESPERATELY TO GET A CUP OF COFFEE FROM <u>KAREN</u>, THE SMILING YOUNG FEMALE INTERN WHO HAS POURED FOR EVERYONE ELSE.

JAMES

(HOLDING OUT CUP) Can I get a...

MICHAEL

(HOLDING UP A HAND, SHUSSHING!)

Ah.

JAMES

I just want...

MICHAEL

Ah, ah.

JAMES GLUMLY GIVES UP. CRADLES HIS EMPTY CUP. JUST THEN <u>STUART BONDEK</u>, LATE 30'S - SOUR LOOKING, RUMPLED <u>ENTERS</u> AND TAKES A SEAT NEXT TO <u>NIKKI FULLER</u>, LATE 20'S VERY NEW YORK OVERFLOWS WITH ATTITUDE.

STUART

(TO NIKKI) Did I miss anything?

NIKKI

(SARCASTIC) We're not allowed to talk.

STUART

(POINTS TO KAREN) You. I need coffee.

THE EVER SMILING KAREN COMES AND POURS COFFEE FOR STUART. JAMES HOLDS HIS CUP OUT TOO. STUART TAKES IT FROM HIM.

STUART (CONT'D)

Yeah, you're right. I'll need two cups.

STUART HOLDS OUT THE SECOND CUP AND KAREN FILLS IT, HE PUTS BOTH CUPS IN FRONT OF HIM.

MICHAEL

All right. As of one minute ago the Sanitation Department is officially on strike.

GROANS FROM EVERYBODY.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

This is something that could drag on for days. Maybe weeks...

PAUL LASSITER THE PRESS SECRETARY STICKS A NERVOUS HEAD IN.

PAUL

I really need something to tell the press, Mike. They're killing me.

MICHAEL

It's already taken care of, Paul.

Strike's settled. Garbage will be

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

picked up no later than 3 'o'clock.

PAUL

Really?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

<u>PAUL LEAVES</u>. EVERYONE STARTS SPEAKING UP ABOUT THE STRIKE. OVERLAPPING OPINIONS AND SUGGESTIONS, ETC. MICHAEL HOLDS UP HIS HAND "WAIT." JUST THEN <u>PAUL STICKS</u> HIS HEAD BACK IN.

PAUL

You're not lying to me are you?

MICHAEL

It's over. I swear. Spread the word.

PAUL

I love this job.

PAUL EXITS

MICHAEL

All right that's only gonna buy us a couple of hours. But, I don't want to be negotiating this in the press. You all know the rules, anyone tells Paul the truth, they put ten bucks in the kitty.

HE POINTS TO A JAR WITH SOME STRAY BILLS INSIDE.

JAMES

(STARING AT JAR) That's all my money.

Look, today is really gonna suck, so let's all try to hang together. James, you need to write one of your famous "Don't Panic" speeches. Nikki, you gotta keep the Mayor's schedule flexible today. And Stuart, I'm gonna have to focus on the strike, so everything else is yours.

PEOPLE ARE STARTING TO GET UP. JAMES REACHES FOR COFFEE.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Wait a second.

JAMES, EXASPERATED PUTS DOWN HIS MUG.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(BEAT) I want to say something. We've been in office seven months and the city's not bankrupt and nobody's in jail. No previous administration can make that claim. (BEAT) Now, today we've got garbage on the street and a weather report calling for temperatures in the mid 90's with no breeze. The city's gonna smell like a giant foot. I figure we're about an hour away from people hurling themselves into the East (MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

river. Cops are going to be on a our ass, Fire Department right behind 'em. And you know who everyone's going to blame, don't you?

DOOR OPENS AND MAYOR RANDALL WINSTON PEEKS IN. MID 50'S, PATRICIAN GOOD LOOKS. YOU'D VOTE FOR HIM. YOU WOULD. AD-LIB "MORNING MR. MAYOR." HE RESPONDS "GOOD MORNING" THEN, TO MIKE.

MAYOR

Hey Flaherty, how's our city?

MICHAEL

Couldn't be better, sir.

MAYOR

That's what I like to hear.

THE MAYOR LEAVES

MICHAEL

All right, let's go to work.

EVERYONE RISES AND STARTS TO CROSS OUT. JAMES YAWNS.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Jeez, James get yourself a cup of coffee.

FADE OUT.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

SCENE A

FADE IN:

INT. CITY HALL - DAY

WE'RE IN THE MAIN STAFF OFFICE AREA. CLUTTERED WITH DESKS, FAX MACHINES, COMPUTERS, ETC. A SENSE OF BARELY CONTROLLED CHAOS. OFF TO ONE SIDE A DOOR TO THE MAYOR'S OFFICE. MICHAEL WITH KAREN.

MICHAEL

Karen, I need you to get Mr.

Sabatino on the phone. Now, he's the head of the Sanitation Union, and he doesn't want to talk to us, so you're going to have to do me a favor. You know how no matter what's going on you're always so cheerful that it makes us all want to stab you through the heart?

KAREN

(CHEERFUL) Uh-huh.

MICHAEL

I want you to use that to get
through to Mr. Sabatino. And if
that doesn't work I want you to
lie, scream, cry, whatever... Dig
down into the darkest corners of
your soul. That place where
(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

violence reigns, and no one's ever been but you.

KAREN

(HAPPY) Okey-dokey.

KAREN GOES. THE MAYOR'S WIFE, HELEN WINSTON, ENTERS. SHE DOESN'T SEEM HAPPY. EVER.

HELEN

Mr. Flaherty, you are aware that
I'm the Mayor's wife, correct?
MICHAEL

Oh yeah.

HELEN

Now, I was promised that the hours between one and three today would be kept open for my husband and I to have lunch together. And, yet what do I see on this schedule?

(POINTS) One o'clock - Mayor has walk-thru on Riker's Island.

MICHAEL

And you don't want to join him there for lunch?

HELEN

I really don't like prison food.

MICHAEL

Not a lot of people do. And, yet come Friday night it's always hard to get a table.

HELEN

Who's responsible for this?

MICHAEL

Had to be one of the interns.

JUST THEN $\underline{J}\underline{A}\underline{N}\underline{E}\underline{L}\underline{E}$ THE STRIKINGLY PRETTY, VERY SHARP YOUNG BLACK INTERN CROSSES NEAR. MIKE SEES HER.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(SWEETLY) Janelle?

JANELLE

(REFLEXIVELY) Wasn't me. (THEN

TO HELEN) Nice scarf, ma'am.

HELEN

Oh thank you, dear.

JANELLE KEEPS MOVING.

MICHAEL

(SOTTO TO JANELLE) You're good.

JANELLE

(SOTTO) And fast.

SHE'S GONE. MICHAEL LOOKS AROUND FOR A VICTIM. HE SPOTS JACK, A LONG-HAIRED YOUNG INTERN.

MICHAEL

(CALLING) Jack?

JACK COMES OVER, EAGER.

JACK

Yes, Mr. Flaherty?

MICHAEL

(SPINNING HIM TO FACE HELEN) It

was Jack. You're fired, Jack.

JACK

But, I...

Hey, hey, hey, tell your story ... walkin'.

HELEN

Thank you. I trust this won't happen again.

SHE EXITS TO THE MAYOR'S OFFICE.

JACK

This is totally unfair.

MICHAEL

Take it easy. You're not fired.

Go out get your haircut, come back tomorrow. From now on your name is John.

HE GIVES JACK A PAT ON THE CHEEK, CROSSES TO NIKKI SHE'S ON THE PHONE.

NIKKI

(SEXY INTO PHONE) It was just a run-of-the-mill orgasm. I didn't mean to scare you.

MICHAEL TAKES THE PHONE FROM NIKKI.

MICHAEL

(INTO PHONE) Bye sweetheart.

HE HANGS UP.

NIKKI

Hey! . .

MICHAEL

You're killing me. Look, I know the Mayor's schedule is full, but (MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

you've gotta find five minutes a.
day for him to spend with his
wife.

NIKKI

To do what?

MICHAEL

I don't care. Let 'em get a cup of coffee.

NIKKI

They hate coffee.

MICHAEL

They hate each other! Just find the time. We've been over this before.

NIKKI

Sorry, Mike. I guess I've been a little distracted. But, this guy I think he's...

MICHAEL

(MOCK AGREEING) He's the one isn't he?

NIKKI

(SIGHING) Yeah.

MICHAEL

Is he married?

NIKKI

He's like my soul mate.

Married?

NIKKI

Separated...

MICHAEL

Separated, really?

NIKKI

I think so. We don't talk much, he's usually with his wife.

KAREN COMES OVER HANDS MICHAEL THE PORTABLE PHONE.

KAREN

(SMILING) I got the bastard.

MICHAEL TAKES THE PHONE.

MICHAEL

(INTO PHONE) Mr. Sabatino...

Hey, there's no need to use that

kind of language. I'm Italian,

too... Flaherty.

SFX: WE HEAR THE PHONE CLICK DEAD.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

On my mother's side, you idiot.

CUT TO:

ACT ONE

SCENE B

INT. BACKSTAGE PRESS ROOM - DAY

MICHAEL AND A DISTRAUGHT PAUL ARE BEHIND A DRAWN CURTAIN.

PAUL

The strike's not over. It's not even close to being over. You lied to me.

MICHAEL

It's only 'cause I love you, Paulie.

PAUL

I look like a fool.

MICHAEL

No you don't.

PAUL

I don't?

MICHAEL

No. As far as you knew you were telling them the truth. You're the Press Secretary. You can't lie to the Press. If you do they'll know and they'll never trust you again.

PAUL

But, you can lie to me?

I should hope so. (THEN) Nice ... suit.

PAUL

Thanks, I just... (REALIZING)

I'm not going out there now. I've got nothing to say.

MICHAEL

Sure, you do. Strike's over.

Settled. I mean we're still

working out the fine points. But,

Sabatino's upstairs right now

ready to sign.

PAUL

(SKEPTICAL) He's in the building?
MICHAEL

Yeah, you want to meet him? C'mon forget about the press. So they'll get a little angry and impatient. Come up and meet him.

PAUL

(SMILING) I don't need to do that. Let's get this thing going.

PAUL SMILES AND PULLS OPEN THE BLUE CURTAIN AND IS IMMEDIATELY BOMBARDED WITH POPPING FLASHES AND THRONGS OF REPORTERS SCREAMING QUESTIONS.

CUT TO:

ACT ONE

SCENE C

INT. PRESS ROOM - DAY

PRESS CONFERENCE IN FULL SWING. PAUL AT THE PODIUM. MICHAEL OFF TO THE SIDE.

PAUL

Yorkers continue to bag and dispose of their garbage in the usual manner.

REPORTER #1 (FRANK)

Thanks Paul. You've been very helpful.

A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN, ASHLEY RISES, HAND UP.

ASHLEY

(TO REPORTER #1) Nice kiss ass question, Frank. What are you going for, free Knicks tickets?

REPORTER #1 (FRANK)

Shut up. My kid's in town.

PAUL

(CALLING ON HER) Yes Ashley?

ASHLEY

So am I to understand that you're guaranteeing that garbage pick-up (MORE)

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

will resume no later than tomorrow morning?

PAUL LOOKS OVER AT MICHAEL WHO IS DRINKING A GLASS OF WATER. MICHAEL NODS.

PAUL

Yes. You have my word.

ASHLEY

It's amazing you're able to speak while he's drinking a glass of water. (THEN) Just to be clear now, you said Sabatino's here in this building meeting with—the Mayor's staff ready to sign an agreement?

PAUL

Upstairs, pen in hand.

ASHLEY

That's interesting because I spoke to him about 15 minutes ago. He's out in Jersey and he said there's been absolutely no progress made.

PAUL WHIPS AN ANGRY "LOOK" ACROSS THE STAGE TO MICHAEL. MICHAEL SHRUGS "OOPS".

CUT TO:

ACT ONE

SCENE D

EXT. CITY HALL STEPS - DAY

REPORTERS MILL ABOUT. PAUL TRYING TO PLACATE. MICHAEL AND THE YOUNG REPORTER ASHLEY ARE TOGETHER OFF TO THE SIDE.

MICHAEL

Why're you beating up on Paul?

ASHLEY

I don't blame Paul. I know who has his hand inside the puppet.

MICHAEL

Thank you. That's a lovely image.
(BEAT) So anymore questions?

ASHLEY

Yeah. What do you hope to gain by this? It's a strike. It's not like people aren't going to notice.

MICHAEL

We just can't have you good and fair people in the media setting the agenda on this. Don't get me wrong, I know you have the Mayor's best interests at heart...

ASHLEY

Whatever. You're the one who has to sleep at night.

That's right.

ASHLEY

Okay, then.

MICHAEL

Okay.

ASHLEY

See you tonight?

MICHAEL

My place?

ASHLEY

No problem.

THEY KISS, A REAL ONE.

CUT TO:

ACT ONE

SCENE E

INT. CITY HALL - DAY

THE MAIN STAFF AREA - EVERYONE GATHERED. JANELLE ENTERS.

MICHAEL

What do you have for me on the sanitation strike, Janelle?

JANELLE

It hasn't hit that hard, yet. The "Times" is thinking of leading with it in the late edition.

MICHAEL

I can't have that. Stu?

STUART

Yes, Mike?

MICHAEL

Handle it.

STUART PUSHES HIMSELF TO PHONE, STARTS DIALING.

STUART

You know if I was Deputy Mayor I would've handled it myself.

MICHAEL

Stu, I know you think you deserve my job. Everyone here knows.

And, I'm sure most of your family

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

knows. The question is does anybody care?

STUART

I do.

MICHAEL

Make the call please

NIKKI

(BY TV) Hey, our guy's coming on.
THEY CROWD OVER TOWARDS THE TV.

MICHAEL

(TO JAMES) Mayor prepared to speak about the strike, James?

JAMES

Faxed it this morning. Six pages of spontaneous remarks.

ANGLE ON STUART.

STUART

(ON PHONE) No, Dan. Listen, if you gotta run the story run the story... How's your wife doin'?.. How's your girlfriend? They get a chance to meet yet?

BACK ON MIKE, NIKKI AND JAMES AT THE TV.

MICHAEL

Who's got the first question?

NIKKI

Watkins channel four. He promised — us a cream puff.

ANGLE ON THE TV - INTERCUT - MAYOR STEPPING OUT OF CAR. THRONG OF REPORTERS WAITING. WE SEE REPORTER FRANK WATKINS PUSH TO THE FRONT.

REPORTER #1 (FRANK)

How're you feeling, Mr. Mayor?

MICHAEL

That doesn't count.

REPORTER #1 (FRANK)

Any comments on the strike, sir?

Anything at all will be fine.

MICHAEL -

There's your Knicks tickets,

Frank. You're court side, baby.

Say "hi" to Spike.

ANGLE ON JAMES FOLLOWING ALONG FROM HIS NOTEBOOK AS MAYOR SPEAKS.

JAMES

(READING) I don't think we need to be overly concerned.

MAYOR

(ON TV) I don't think we need to be overly concerned.

JAMES

(READING) We all want this settled quickly...

MAYOR

(ON TV) We all want this settled quickly...

JAMES

Now mention the fake statistics...

MAYOR

Besides, 88% of all major union strikes end in less that 48 hours, so this shouldn't drag on...

JAMES

(TO MIKE) And there's your sound bite.

MICHAEL

All right, we're golden.

MICHAEL STARTS OFF.

REPORTER #2 (O.S.)

Mr. Mayor, would you consider marching in the Gay Pride parade this week?

MAYOR (O.S.)

You gotta be shitting me. MICHAEL STOPS IN HIS TRACKS, TURNS.

MICHAEL

Did I just hear... that wasn't...

JAMES

(HOLDING OUT NOTEBOOK) I didn't write that Mike. I swear. Here you can look.

MICHAEL

That was just the satellite feed, right? Did that go out on the air?

SFX: PHONES BEGIN RINGING FURIOUSLY.

STUART

I'm thinking that's a yes.

JAMES

Oh, god, this is a code blue.

NIKKI

James, you really have to stop watching E.R.

STUART

(MOCKING) Somebody, I need coffee STAT.

MICHAEL

Focus people, this is big. All right he said it. It's out there. Now what?

JAMES

The best apology would be to just march in the parade.

STUART

He shows his face in that parade it costs us votes. I'm not saying I like people with that mind set. But, we need 'em. He can't march.

MICHAEL

Okay. He can't march. So, how do we stop the bleeding on the liberal side?

NIKKI

I'll tell you if we had one gay a person on the staff this whole thing goes away.

MICHAEL

All right, everybody stop.

ACTIVITY CEASES, EVERYONE TURNS TOWARDS MICHAEL.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Who in this room is gay? Let's see a show of hands. I need a gay person.

NO RESPONSE.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

No one even leaning that way? NO RESPONSE.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

C'mon, no one here went to camp? (THEN) James?

JAMES

Why are you asking me?

MICHAEL

When was the last time you had a date? You're "0" for the nineties. I mean for you it's just a question of what kind of action you won't be getting.

PAUL ENTERS.

PAUL

I assume you all get TV. I'd like (MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

to get a jump on our new problem...

MICHAEL

We're in great shape there.

PAUL

We are?

MICHAEL

Sure, we're an open administration. We even have prominent gay personnel on our staff.

PAUL

We do? Who?

MICHAEL

James.

PAUL

(BEAT) Oh, yeah.

OFF JAMES' LOOK.

CUT TO:

ACT ONE

SCENE G

INT. MEN'S ROOM - DAY

MICHAEL IS AT THE URINAL DOOR OPENS MAYOR STANDS THERE KEEPING DOOR AJAR. PEOPLE CROSS BACK AND FORTH BEHIND HIM. MICHAEL REMAINS IN PLACE.

MAYOR

Talk to me, Mike. Where are we at on the strike?

MICHAEL

No contact with Sabatino but he's got our proposal. We're hoping he'll continue picking up the trash while we're in negotiations.

MAYOR

All right. We got anything else working?

MICHAEL

(LOOKING DOWN) Not me personally.

MAYOR

I need you to push forward on those two schools closing in the Bronx. I can't show my face on this but it needs to be done.

Whoever goes up there is really gonna take a beating.

I'll send Stuart.

MAYOR

All right, then.

HE STARTS TO GO.

MICHAEL

Sir, there is the matter of that comment you made.

MAYOR

Oh yeah, Jeez, I didn't mean it that way. C'mon, who wants to march in a parade? But, you're right. Completely my fault.

Responsibility falls totally on my shoulders. (BEAT) Make it go away.

HE LEANS IN AND FLUSHES FOR MICHAEL. MAYOR EXITS.
MICHAEL

As soon as I'm finished.

CUT TO:

ACT ONE

SCENE H

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A GREAT NEW YORK APARTMENT. LOWER WEST SIDE. A LOT OF CHARACTER. WE'RE IN THE BEDROOM WHERE ASHLEY IS WORKING AT HER LAP TOP, TV TURNED ON TO CNN MICHAEL'S ON THE PHONE. CLOCK GOES TO ELEVEN. ASHLEY SHUTS OFF THE COMPUTER. TURNS OFF THE TV. MOTIONING TO MICHAEL.

ASHLEY

Eleven o'clock. Workday's over.

MICHAEL HOLDS UP A FINGER "ONE SEC" CONTINUES TALKING.

MICHAEL

(ON PHONE) But, we can't let that

happen. Mayor's gotta be

protected.

ASHLEY CROSSES CLOSE LIFTS UP HER T-SHIRT SHE'S NUDE UNDERNEATH.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(IMMEDIATELY) I gotta go.

HE HANGS UP.

ASHLEY

So, ... what do you wanna do?

MIKE IS FRANTICALLY SLIPPING OFF HIS JEANS.

MICHAEL

(FAKE CASUAL) I don't know.

Whatever you want to do.

HE'S IN BOXERS AND A T-SHIRT.

ASHLEY

We could rent a movie.

Nah, I don't feel like it.

HE TURNS OFF LIGHTS.

ASHLEY

We could read.

MIKE SHAKES HIS HEAD "NO" AND MOVES CLOSER TO HER.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

We could play Boggle.

THEY'RE TOGETHER NOW. THEY LOOK IN EACH OTHER'S EYES.

MICHAEL

Oh yeah, that's it. I want to

play Boggle.

SHE GRABS HIM THEY KISS PASSIONATELY. PHONE RINGS.

ASHLEY

Forget the phone.

MICHAEL

(STILL KISSING) We have a phone?

MACHINE CLICKS ON WE HEAR PAUL.

PAUL (O.S.)

Hi Mike, this is Paul. I've got confirmation that the parade thing is breaking in the morning. Might be a good idea to have James there to answer questions. Get back to

me. See ya.

HE CLICKS OFF. ASHLEY BREAKS THE EMBRACE.

ASHLEY

Have James there to answer questions about what?

Off the record. About what it's like to be a gay man in the Mayor's office.

ASHLEY

Since when is James gay?

MICHAEL

Since about five fifteen.

ASHLEY GETS UP.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Look, you don't understand...

ASHLEY

What? You're trying to manipulate the media to protect your administration's ass.

MICHAEL

Oh, so you do understand. (THEN)

C'mon honey 11:05 work day's over.

HE RAISES HIS SHIRT. SHE TURNS AWAY.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Funny, it worked for you. (BEAT)

Look, can't we just put the lying

and manipulation on the back

burner for now?

ASHLEY

It's dishonest and immoral.

MICHAEL

Also, for later...

SHE TURNS AWAY.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Oh, you're telling me you never _
bend the truth a little for a
story? This is a ruthless
business and you're as ruthless as
I am. God, it's hard to say
ruthless a lot. Ruthless,
ruthless, ruthless... See? It
can't be done. You want to try?

ASHLEY

You have no excuse for...

MICHAEL

Look, you know what? I can't play our little game tonight.

ASHLEY

Why not? Come on, we'll argue for three hours, neither one of us'll change our opinion and then we'll have great sex.

MICHAEL

I'd like to but, I know from experience that we can't skip ahead to the great sex part. And, I really can't be up all night.
I'll make it up to you. But, do you think you can sleep at your own place tonight?

ASHLEY STARES AT HIM A LONG BEAT.

ASHLEY

(DEEP BREATH) I can't.

MICHAEL

Why not?

ASHLEY

I don't have one.

MICHAEL

Huh?

ASHLEY

I gave it up six weeks ago.

MICHAEL

So, then... We live together?

ASHLEY

Technically, yeah.

MICHAEL

I feel I should have been told.

SFX: PHONE RINGING. THEY IGNORE IT.

ASHLEY

I've been sleeping here every night for a year and a half.

MICHAEL

Yeah but, this is a big step.

THE MACHINE PICKS UP. ASHLEY TURNS ON THE TV.

STUART

(ON PHONE) Michael, Stuart. Just got off the phone with that dick-head, Sabatino. Now he says he ain't picking up no garbage (MORE)

STUART (CONT'D)

no-how. Meet you at the office in five minutes.

MICHAEL

I gotta go.

ANGLE ON THE TV. A NEWS REPORT ABOUT THE STRIKE. BACK ON MICHAEL.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Great. (GETTING DRESSED) Perfect end to a perfect day.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE J

INT. MAYOR'S LIMOUSINE - DAY

MICHAEL AND THE MAYOR IN THE BACK TOGETHER STACKS OF PAPER ON EACH LAP. MIKE LOOKS HAGGARD, DRAWN IS GOING OVER MORNING PAPERS.

MAYOR

What's the Times say?

MICHAEL

(READS) "Sanitation Strike

Cripples City."

MAYOR

What about the News?

MICHAEL

(READS) "Mayor Snubs Gay

Community."

MAYOR

Anything in the Post?

MICHAEL

(READS) "Family Dog Drives Heart

Attack Victim To Hospital, ... As

Mayor Snubs Gay Community."

MAYOR

I love the Post.

MICHAEL HANDS SOME NOTES TO MAYOR.

MICHAEL

(STUDYING PAPER) Here are your

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

remarks for the dedication. Proud to be a part of this... Proud of community on the rise...,
Basically, you're very, very proud.

NOTICING MICHAEL'S APPEARANCE.

MAYOR

You look terrible, Flaherty.

MICHAEL

Didn't get much sleep.

MAYOR

Well, I had a lovely morning. My neighbors were nice enough to throw all their garbage on to my lawn.

MICHAEL

I don't think most people share that sentiment. I mean when you consider the scope of what we accomplish on a daily basis...

MAYOR

Don't spin it back to me. I did your job for seven years. People put their trash out at night.

They don't want to see it again in the morning. It's garbage, Mike.

Not an old friend.

All this damage control. I feel. like I'm drownin' here.

MAYOR

(BEMUSED) Why'd you take this job, anyway?

MICHAEL

I don't know. Maybe because I believe in you. Maybe because you believe in me. Maybe I'm just an idiot. (BEAT) How about you?

MAYOR

I did it to meet chicks.

THEY SHARE A LAUGH.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Look, just keep pressing forward on our agenda. I'll keep the perma-smile on, I'll be at the right places and I'll say the right things. Pretty soon we won't have to deal with any New York City bullshit. We'll have Washington bullshit to deal with.

MICHAEL

Count me in.

MAYOR

So, let's just stay on top of things. Be prepared. Make sure (MORE)

MAYOR (CONT'D)

we know what we're doing at all _ times.

MAYOR STARTS TO GET OUT.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Where the hell are we?

MICHAEL

Prospect Heights. You got 67% of the vote here. Predominantly Hispanic.

MAYOR

(LEANING OUT) Buenos dias.

SFX: CHEER FROM THE CROWD.

SCENE K

FADE IN:

INT. MAIN OFFICE - MORNING

THE INTERN FORMERLY KNOW AS JACK, NOW WITH VERY SHORT HAIR, IS HELPING HELEN PUT HER JACKET ON. MICHAEL ENTERS.

HELEN

Thank you, young man. Now, what's your name?

JOHN-JACK ---

(CAREFUL) John.

HELEN

(TO MIKE) He's much nicer than the other boy.

MICHAEL

Oh yeah. He's a peach.

HELEN LEAVES. MICHAEL CROSSES TO NIKKI.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Mayor wasn't thrilled with his

picture, Nikki.

HE SHOWS HER A PARTICULARLY UNFLATTERING PHOTO OF THE MAYOR FRONT PAGE. TIRED, UNSHAVEN, IN A HALF-OPEN BATHROBE.

NIKKI

You said you wanted casual.

MICHAEL

He looks like a homeless guy.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Make a note of this. No pictures before ten. No pictures before coffee. And, for God's sake no pictures in shorts.

PAUL COMES OVER DRAGGING JAMES WITH HIM.

PAUL

Michael as per your request I've scheduled a press conference today at five o'clock to introduce a key member of our staff who also happens to be homosexual. And, guess what? James just told me he's not gay.

MICHAEL

Ten bucks in the Kitty, James.

PAUL

I can't take this anymore, Mike.
The lies...

MICHAEL

I thought we understood each other, Paulie. There are going to be times here at work...

PAUL

It's not just about work anymore. .

I don't know what's real and
what's not. I don't even know if
you guys like me. Does anybody
like me?

JAMES

I like you, Paul.

MICHAEL

I like you, too.

STUART

I don't care for you that much. I never would've said anything but you seem to be on some kind of "truth" kick.

PAUL

I was talking to my friends.

STUART TAKES HIS WALLET OUT DROPS A TEN IN THE "TRUTH KITTY."

STUART

You don't have any friends...
HE STAYS THERE WALLET OPEN DROPPING BILLS INTO THE JAR.

STUART (CONT'D)

Your tie looks like something
Diane Keaton would wear... Can
anyone break a fifty? 'Cause I'm
just getting started.

MICHAEL .

Look, I remember telling each and every one of you that there'd be times when we'd have to make some tough choices. That if you weren't ready to go to war for this administration I didn't need you here. Well, this is one of those times.

JAMES

You never mentioned changing sexual preference.

MICHAEL

(BEAT) You ask one thing.

HE SHRUGS SHAKES HIS HEAD AND MOVES OFF.

SCENE L

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

MICHAEL ENTERS. AS THE STAFF NOTICES HIM THEY BEGIN TO GROAN THEIR DISAPPROVAL. MICHAEL AMICABLY GIVES THEM ALL THE FINGER (A LA PAT REILLY) AS HE CROSSES TO ASHLEY'S CUBICLE SHE'S WORKING.

MICHAEL

Hey.

ASHLEY LOOKS UP.

ASHLEY

(NON-COMMITAL) Hi.

SHE GOES BACK TO WORK IGNORING HIM.

MICHAEL

(SHIVERING) Brrr! Is there a window open in here?

ASHLEY

What do you want, Michael?

MICHAEL

Well, I think we need to talk don't you? I mean you dropped a bomb on me last night and I know you probably didn't get the reaction you were looking for.

ASHLEY

Not at all. I was hoping you'd say nothing then get dressed and leave.

MICHAEL

Well, and correct me if I'm wrong here, when most couples move in together they usually talk about it beforehand. I had always understood that it was kind of a joint decision.

ASHLEY

You want me to say I was wrong? I have no problem with that. I was wrong.

MICHAEL

Great. I'm sure I was wrong, too... Somehow.

ASHLEY

Look, maybe this is just too hard.

MICHAEL

(TAKEN ABACK) What?

ASHLEY

I mean, work keeps us at each other's throats. Maybe we should just keep the rest of our relationship platonic for awhile.

MICHAEL

So, you're saying keep exactly what we have but without the sex... I'm going to have to vote "no" on that. (THEN) Look, (MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

everything can stay the same.

Just get your old apartment back.

ASHLEY

I'm not going to do that.

MICHAEL

You don't have to. Just say you are. I'll believe it. I want to believe it.

ASHLEY

So, you're saying that you'd feel more comfortable pretending and living a complete lie than making even a semblance of a commitment?

MICHAEL

God, you make it sound ugly.

ASHLEY

I want us to move forward as a couple. We've been hovering for a year and a half. I've tried to tell you what I need, I've tried to talk about what you want, I even moved in with you to force the issue, and you know what I get? A joke. I'll be honest. I'm tired of the jokes.

MICHAEL

We're just different that's all.
(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

But, different is good. That's why it's great that we're together. I think we need people like you to keep people like me in check. And I think we need people like me to keep people like you from over-thinking things.

(BEAT) AS THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I also think people who need people are the luckiest people in the world.

ANGRY, ASHLEY EXITS.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

See how different we are? I would have laughed at that.

SCENE M

INT. MAIN OFFICE - DAY

NIKKI'S ON THE PHONE STUART'S LISTENING INTENTLY, JAMES IS THERE, TOO.

NIKKI

(INTO PHONE) Well, what're you saying?... No, there's gotta be some way that we can make this work...

STUART STARTS SLOWLY PUSHING THE PICTURE OF NIKKI'S BOYFRIEND OFF THE DESK.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Well, fine, then... Good bye.

SHE HANGS UP. STUART TIPS PICTURE OF GUY OFF DESK INTO TRASH.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

Well, that sucks.

STUART

Let me guess he's, "afraid your love is so overpowering that it's going to consume the both of you?"

SHE SHAKES HER HEAD "NO."

STUART (CONT'D)

"If he loves you this much there's no way he could ever love himself?"

NIKKI

(SHAKING HEAD "NO") Spending time with me made him realize how much he still loves his wife.

STUART

Well, that's new.

JAMES

There's a positive side. You're bringing families together.

STUART

So, how long did you actually date the guy?

NIKKI

You don't care.

STUART

No, I do care, believe me, I really do. (BEAT) We have a pool.

NIKKI

Six days.

STUART

(CLAPPING HANDS) Yes! Six days.

I win. Pay up, everyone.

JAMES PAYS STUART.

JAMES

God, I never win.

STUART

That's 'cause you always guess "forever."

STUART CONTINUES MOVING AROUND OFFICE COLLECTING.

JAMES

So, I bet with my heart.

NIKKI

James, that's so sweet.

THEY HUG JAMES HOLDS ON TIGHTLY. MAYBE TOO TIGHTLY.

NIKKI (CONT'D)

(LIGHTLY SCOLDING) That's enough,

James.

MICHAEL COMES OUT SEES JAMES HUGGING NIKKI.

MICHAEL

Hey, break that up. What are you doing? There could be reporters around. You want to hug someone, hug Stuart.

STUART OPENS HIS ARMS JAMES DECLINES. PAUL ENTERS.

PAUL

All right, if we're actually going to go through with this charade of a press conference, we should probably take a couple of minutes to go over the kind of questions you'll be asked.

JAMES

Is it really going to be that big a deal? I mean it's not like it's front page stuff. Is it?

PAUL

(BEAT) You might want to call ..

your parents.

JAMES TURNS TO MICHAEL, IMPLORING. MICHAEL PUTS A FATHERLY HAND ON HIS SHOULDER.

MICHAEL

You can use my office.

<u>JAMES AND PAUL GO OFF.</u> MIKE CROSSES THE OTHER WAY STOPS IN FRONT OF THE TV WHERE THE STAFF IS WATCHING LOCAL NEWS.

STUART

This guy's killing us, Mike.

ANGLE ON TV WHERE <u>CARTER HEYWOOD</u>, A HANDSOME YOUNG BLACK MAN IS SPEAKING TO A REPORTER.

CARTER (ON TV)---

No, this wasn't just a "slight" to the gay community. We consider it to be symptomatic of a hostile and repressive administration. And, until we see significant changes we're going to harass and haunt the Mayor at every turn. We're going to make his life difficult for the next four years and make sure there aren't four years after that. (LOOKING AT CAMERA) What do you people have to say about that?

MICHAEL

What do I say? You're hired.
Your desk is over there. I love
you.

JAMES EMERGES FROM MIKE'S OFFICE.

Mike I can't go through with this.

I'm not going to do it.

MICHAEL

Relax you're not gay anymore.

MICHAEL EXITS, JAMES, TO JOHN-JACK, STANDING NEAR.

JAMES

As if anyone would believe that

I'm gay.

JOHN-JACK

I'm gay.

JAMES

Hey I've been there, man.

SCENE P

INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY

IT'S SHADOWY, MURKY. MICHAEL IS THERE WITH CARTER HEYWOOD.

MICHAEL

No, no this is not a publicity scam.

CARTER

So you're trying to tell me that if I took this job it wouldn't help you guys out of a spot.

MICHAEL

I would never tell you that.
You're too smart.

CARTER

Smarter than you, anyway.

MICHAEL

Bottom line, Carter. Where do you think you're going to accomplish more? Standing outside and throwing rocks at us through the press? Or coming inside where you'll have a real place at the table and a real opportunity to influence policy?

CARTER

You know you can't control me.

MICHAEL

We'll have that written into your contract.

CARTER

You can put it right after the "I'm smarter than you" section.

MICHAEL

Look, I'm not trying to pressure you. I know this is a big decision. But, I'm looking for a yes or no. And, I'm looking for it now.

CARTER

Yes.

MICHAEL

All right, then. Step this way.

MIKE USHERS CARTER THROUGH THE CURTAIN. BRIGHT LIGHTS - CAMERAS FLASH. A PRESS CONFERENCE IN PROGRESS.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

AS MICHAEL AND CARTER COME OUT, THE MAYOR IS AT THE PODIUM.

MAYOR

...So, with those qualifications it's easy to understand why I've hand picked Mr. Heywood to be this administration's liaison to the gay community. In addition he will head up a team that will

(MORE)

MAYOR (CONT'D)

concentrate on minority issues. ..

Glad to have you aboard, Carter.

HE HOLDS OUT HIS HAND TO SHAKE. CARTER GIVES MICHAEL A "LOOK," SMALL SMILE THEN SHAKES THE MAYOR'S HAND AND STEPS UP TO THE PODIUM. MICHAEL MOVES OFF STAGE.

CARTER

I'll be happy to take some questions.

THE REPORTERS BEGIN SHOUTING QUESTIONS AND SNAPPING PICTURES.

ANGLE ON: MIKE AND ASHLEY OFF TO THE SIDE.

ASHLEY

Very impressive.

MICHAEL

The guy's for real. We ended up in the right place.

ASHLEY

Great. 'Cause I'd hate to see all that treachery and deceit go unrewarded.

MICHAEL

Yeah, me too.

NIKKI, JAMES, STUART AND PAUL SLIDE OVER.

NIKKI

(TO MIKE AND ASHLEY) You guys want to meet up with us for drinks?

MICHAEL

Not sure. We might not be dating anymore.

ASHLEY TURNS AWAY.

JAMES

Okay. See ya if it works out.

PAUL

(TO STUART AS THEY LEAVE) We're really meeting at McSorley's right?

STUART

Yes.

PAUL

'Cause I went there the other night and you guys never showed.

STUART

(EXASPERATED) Are you really that insecure?

MIKE GOES TO ASHLEY.

MICHAEL

So, you want to go have a beer?
Or, you want to break up?

ASHLEY

You can't stop can you? You're always so glib.

MICHAEL

I'm hoping glib means charming and lovable. (BEAT) I was glib again wasn't I?

ASHLEY

See ya.

SHE STARTS TO GO.

MICHAEL

Wait a second...

SHE TURNS.

ASHLEY

What?

MICHAEL

I uh,.. That is... Well,.. Why is this so hard? They're just words.

Put 'em together. You're good with words.

ASHLEY

Are you done?

MICHAEL

(LOOKING RIGHT AT HER) I want you to move in with me. I know you already have. But, I mean for real. I would really like it.

ASHLEY

Like what?

MICHAEL

I'd like it if we lived together.

ASHLEY

(SMILE) Okay.

MICHAEL

(SMILE) Okay, then. (BEAT) So, you'll keep your old apartment?

ASHLEY

Michael, I can't...

MICHAEL

(COVERING HIS EARS) Ah, ah...

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THEY LAUGH. ASHLEY GIVES HIM A QUICK KISS THEN.

ASHLEY

See you at home.

SCENE S

INT. MCSORLEY'S PUB - NIGHT

PAUL SITS ALONE AT A BIG TABLE IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS CROWDED BAR.

WAITRESS

Are you sure you don't want to order yet?

PAUL

I'm all right.

WAITRESS

Not even a drink?

PAUL

No, no my friends'll be here any minute...

THE WAITRESS WALKS AWAY, PAUL SITS, SMILING, FOR A LONG BEAT UNTIL FINALLY HE PUTS HIS HEAD DOWN ON THE TABLE. MOANS.

SCENE T

EXT. CITY HALL STEPS - NIGHT

THE MAYOR AND MIKE COME DOWN THE STAIRS MIKE CARRIES A BRIEFCASE.

MAYOR

(OFF WOMAN IN CROWD) Who's that woman in the red coat? I know her. Don't stare.

MICHAEL

Janice Glassman. Head of The Women's Caucus. Big Met Supporter.

MAYOR

(WAVING) Hey, Janice.

JANICE

Mr. Mayor.

MAYOR

We fill that hole at shortstop, get one good lefty in the bullpen we bring that pennant home this year.

JANICE

(CONFUSED) Uh, okay, right.

SHE GETS IN A CAB AND GOES.

MICHAEL

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Museum of Art.

MAYOR

Hey, she doesn't like baseball I don't want her vote.

MICHAEL HOLDS BRIEFCASE OPEN POINTS.

MICHAEL

Notes for the borough president's breakfast tomorrow. Low income housing proposal. And a lot of other stuff you'll never read.

HE HANDS BRIEFCASE TO THE MAYOR.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I'm going to go back in and try Sabatino one more time.

MAYOR

Mike, it's a strike. There's no quick fix there. Let it rest.

Now, let me tell you what you're gonna do tonight. You're going to go home get that pretty girlfriend of yours and you're going to go down to Union Square Cafe and have dinner there on my tab. Not including drinks.

MICHAEL

I don't...

MAYOR

The city's not going to fall apart because you take one night off. I mean it probably will but, it will anyway.

CAR PULLS UP.

MICHAEL

Okay. Whatever you say.

MAYOR

One more thing. I think I'm going to march in that parade on Sunday.

MICHAEL

(DEAD-PAN) Wonderful.

MAYOR

I've been talking to Carter and a couple of his friends. Nice group of fellas. It'd bother me if I didn't.

MICHAEL

You have any ideas on how you want me to deal with the backlash?

Between this now, and the garbage strike... We've got budget problems, schools are...

MAYOR

(INTERRUPTS) Michael.

A LIMO PULLS UP.

MICHAEL

What?

MAYOR

It's not my problem.

THE MAYOR WINKS AT MIKE GETS IN, THE CAR PULLS AWAY.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

TAG

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - DAY

THEY'RE IN THE BEDROOM IT'S REDECORATED - A DECIDELY LAURA ASHLEY FEELING.

MICHAEL

No, no I like it.

ASHLEY

You sure?

MICHAEL

Yes, yes it has a certain Charles
Dickens devil-may-care early
victorian strawberry jam thing
working for it.

ASHLEY

What are you talking about?

MICHAEL

I don't know. I hate it. But who cares? I don't spend a lot of time here anyway.

ASHLEY

Okay, and whatever you do don't let the cat out. 'Cause he'll just disappear.

MICHAEL

So, you're saying we have a cat?

ASHLEY

Yep.

 $\underline{\mathtt{SHE}}$ KISSES HIM AND $\underline{\mathtt{EXITS}}$. MICHAEL CROSSES TO THE WINDOW OPENS IT LEANS OUT.

MICHAEL

Hey kid. Yeah you. I'm gonna need that back.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW