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 JAMES HOBERT - 22 YEAR OLD SPEECH WRITER. MID-WESTERN LOOK, TRYING DESPERATELY TO GET A CUP OF COFFEE FROM KAREN, 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 STUART BONDEK, LATE 30'S - SOUR-LOOKING, RUMPLED ENTERS AND TAKES A SEAT NEXT TO NIKKI FULLER, 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.

PAUL LEAVES. EVERYONE STARTS SPEAKING UP ABOUT THE STRIKE.
OVERLAPPING OPINIONS AND SUGGESTIONS, ETC. MICHAEL HOLDS UP HIS HAND
"WAIT." JUST THEN PAUL STICKS 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.
MICHAEL

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 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 JANELLE 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...
MICHAEL
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.
MICHAEL
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 DISTRESSED 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?
MICHAEL
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

...so, yes we do hope that New 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.
MICHAEL
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 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.
MICHAEL
I'll send Stuart.

MAYOR
All right, then.

HE STARTS TO GO.

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

MAYOR

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.
MICHAEL
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?
MICHAEL
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.

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

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.
MICHAEL
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.

CUT TO:
ACT TWO

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.
ACT TWO

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.

CUT TO:
ACT TWO

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.

JAMES AND PAUL GO OFF. 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 CARTER HEYWOOD, 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.

JAMES

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.

CUT TO:
ACT TWO

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)
MAJOR (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...

THEY LAUGH. ASHLEY GIVES HIM A QUICK KISS THEN.

ASHLEY

See you at home.

CUT TO:
ACT TWO

SCENE 5

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.

CUT TO:
ACT TWO

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


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

Met supporter, as in Metropolitan

(MORE)
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.
SHE KISSES HIM AND 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