

OPPRESSION

By William Haycock

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Chapter 1

I'm reclining in the living room. It seems that my mind, my body, my senses, in fact *everything*, has left me. I am just a lost soul, rendered effectively unconscious: a state of apathy which is such that it is equivalent to inertia.

I've realised something of fundamental importance: the results of the election are on, and I'm missing it. I switch on to Channel 2. My eyes behold a sight which they cannot believe. I blink twice, then I try and mentally adjust to the situation.

It's him.

It's none other than Simon Evans, that jerk from sixth form college, who I always despised. He was such a 'look-at-me-I'm dead-'ard-puff-my-chest-out-I-want-everyone-to-know-about-it' type of guy. I knew he had become an MP, somehow, but *this*? I can see him shaking hands with the Queen, smiling smugly. Next to him is a woman who I vaguely recognise. Once he has done this, he crosses his arms and announces 'I'm proud to be the new prime minister of the United Kingdom. May good fortune come to the British people. I will be doing my best for their future' he puts a fist to his mouth and coughs, while furrowing his brows, 'for, after all, it is me and my government in which they are invested. Thank you.' I do have to admit that his new approach is vaguely convincing, but I can't help thinking that he has an ulterior motive. Maybe I shouldn't let paranoia affect me: maybe he has turned over a new leaf. My disbelief turns to forgiveness for a second. Perhaps I had better keep watching, anyhow. The woman is introduced as Mary Evans, wife of the Prime Minister. I remember now: it was that awful girl he went out with just before he left. No-one could fathom what he - even he - saw in her. And, now, they're married? I cough with disbelief. He is now talking to the royal family. He is smiling with his mouth, but not with his eyes. Suddenly, a flashback overtakes me. I remember, only too well, the gaze. I saw him use it, over and over again, to try to influence people who he was on friendly terms with, and to intimidate and coerce those who he wasn't. Though, to be honest, the line between friendly and hostile was very unclear. Once he tried it on me: it was a cold autumn afternoon, and we had just finished Media Studies. I was getting very disillusioned with the way the subject was taught, and wondering what to do. I knew that it would be too late to change subjects, but that I would get very bored if I carried on with it. At the end of the year, I did not care, as I had become absorbed into the cocoon that occurs in the late teens, when one's primary interest in life is alcohol: in a dubious and temporary way, the problem was solved.

I was in the garden of the college, seeking some sanctuary while I put my thoughts together as to what to do next. Present matters were consuming my mind as much as future matters, as I had two hours until the next lesson, and I had recently discovered that the college was a very boring place to be in one's spare time. Perhaps I could try to sneak into one of the pubs? Suddenly, a familiar figure emerged from what seemed like nowhere. For the first

time, it was just me and him. I was truly petrified. I thought that he had arrived with violent intent: I had heard tales of his severe bullying of the other students, even those who he was 'friends' with. My imagination stretched even to the idea that this day would be the last day of my life. He stopped half a foot away from the bench where I was sitting. At this point, he gave me a look which will remain etched in my memory like a scar on a person's skin. I truly, try as I might, could not tear myself away from it. I found myself gazing into his sparkling brown eyes, as if a magnetic force were dictating where I rest my eyesight.

'Holmes.' he uttered 'Simon Holmes.'

'Yes. That's right.' I uttered.

It was at this moment that I decided to turn his gaze back on him: I looked straight into his eyes, in the most penetrating way I could muster, acting as if I were trying to see what lied beyond them. Not for a second did I shift my gaze away. I backed this up with an air of defiance which I had taught myself to adopt: the indestructible spirit that lies within. You think about all the inhumanity which has occurred over the centuries, and you focus entirely on it until a flame rises within your very heart and soul: one which refuses to wane. He seemed like he was about to open his mouth when, suddenly, he stopped. After a few seconds, he spoke: 'Sorry, I don't know what I was thinking. And, with that, he went on his way. I was very relieved at this point, not to mention amazed! I truly could have not imagined his reacting like this. Astounded by this phenomenon, I fell into a state of near-catatonia. When I came to, I jolted as a concept occurred to me: one that I didn't want to deal with at this time, nor in the near future, in fact: *never*.

Everyone is going to be talking about this.

I looked to the future with trepidation. At this moment, the same trepidation which I had experienced then is coming back to me.....

*

'Ha! Ha! People will believe anything you tell them.' Simon Evans comments to himself as he looks out of the window of 10 Downing Street. 'It's great, this new approach. Treating them rough works for a while, but when you leave college you get the pigs onto you, don't you? They have their uses, mind. And, now, they are on my side.' He rubs his hands with glee. 'Soon, the palace will be mine. I don't even need to use persuasion anymore.'

His monologue is interrupted by the entrance of Jason Bennett, one of his friends at college, who is now working under him. In exchange for no salary and the performance of menial tasks, he is allowed to live in the same house as the Prime Minister.

'Sir, there is someone who wishes to see you.'

'What now? Ok, go and get her, you little pigshit.'

The last time Jason told him this was rude, he found his head in the area that he is required to clean with his tongue, so instead of saying anything to do with this, he frowns and pouts. However, he offers the words:

'It's actually a he.'

'Oh, for fuck's sake! Ok. Hopefully we can send him away soon. Run along, now, twat.'

While making his way downstairs, Jason exhales sharply. 'Why did I agree to this?' he mutters under his breath.

The man enters with Jason in tow.

'Hello.'

'Don't talk to me like that. Call me "Sir".'

'Hello, Sir.'

'Yes,' Evans comments, glancing at the man disdainfully, 'I think some of us are.... happier... than others.' He puts his hand to his crotch, and makes a gripping movement. 'Want to know what I was doing last night?'

The man says nothing.

'Well, I'll tell you. I was snorting so much coke I was shitting it! And, while I was doing that, I was getting sucked by eight hot, horny bitches. Choking them, I was! I *rule!*' he makes a celebratory gesture with his fist. 'What were you doing? Bet you were moping. Wish you could have what I got.' He shrieks with mocking hysteria for a moment, then he leans closer to his visitor. His expression changes from amusement to something far more sinister. 'Probably wanking your little dick: if you actually have one, that is.' He spits out the last word in a jeering manner: the visitor can actually feel saliva touch him briefly.

'So, your point is?' A trace of resentment is shown, but the Chancellor tries to stay in control.

'Why are you here, you sardo?' Evans continues with his spitting style of speech, but it is becoming increasingly hostile in tone.

'I'm the Chancellor of the Exchequer..'

'Oh, are you? I didn't realise that.' He clenches his fists. 'Well, you're fired. Worthless piece of shit. Get out of here before I beat you up.' Every word is spoken with total venom. Although he has only just met the Chancellor, he seems to consider him an arch-enemy.

A human Minotaur suddenly looms before the Chancellor. He finds himself edging away a couple of yards. However, he is very upset at the tirade he has just received, and his pride

has been dented severely by the insults. Before he can stop himself, his wish to reclaim his self-esteem overtakes him:

'You fucking asshole! I don't believe...'

'Oi! Oi! Oi! No swearing!'

'Don't tell *me* what to do!'

'I'm Prime Minister, remember? You're not welcome here anyway, you little shit. Get the fuck out.'

'But, why are you doing this? I can't just....'

'Enough of your fucking lip!'

He grabs the Chancellor by the back, takes him to the top flight of stairs, and pushes him. As he rolls down the stairs, one by one, Evans' lips pucker into a smile which is so frightening it could freeze a bull in its tracks. He laughs, sadistically.

'Silly old twat. That's what you get for trying to argue.'

He makes his way downstairs, and leans over the Chancellor, who is groaning and clutching himself. Evans relaxes slightly.

'Nah, I'll let you off this time.'

He makes his way back to the room upstairs, where he sees Jason.

'I beat him black and blue. And if you tell,' he leans closer to Jason 'I'll do that to you.'

Jason has never previously been threatened in this way. He decides that this is too much; he will throw in the towel now.

'I've had enough of this. I'm quitting.'

'What do you mean, you're quitting?'

'Well, I am, so there.'

'You're not going anywhere!' He lunges at Jason, but it is too late: he is at the stairs.

'Sod it, it doesn't really matter.... but, hang on, he'll tell. What do I do?'

He can hear the hammering of the familiar staircase with footsteps.

'It's ok. There's a way of dealing with this.'

Suddenly, Jason returns. 'Actually, it's ok. I won't quit after all.'

'Well, if you did, I'd break your legs. So I think you did the right thing.'

Jason smiles wryly. 'Erm... thank you, Simon.'

'Sir!'

'Thank you, Sir.'

'Fuck off to your room now.'

<editing>

*

Anne is reclining in the living room of the semi-detached house which she shares with her parents. She has poured herself a cup of blackcurrant tea and is waiting for the five minutes, between now and the finalisation of its brewing, to elapse. A croissant rests on the small, white circular plate next to her tea. This plate, in turn, resides on the wooden table next to the couch on which she has positioned herself. It shares the table with its neighbours: a remote control, a box of Smarties, a copy of the *Radio Times* and a pot which hosts a group of marbles. Anne's left hand lifts the remote control: this is no coincidence. She is left-handed, knows it, and consciously lets this guide her. She points it towards the television in the far corner of the room, and presses the 'On/Off' button. The screen changes to a fuzzy, grey picture. Her index finger moves over to the '2' button, which it pushes. This results in the same fuzzy, grey screen.

'What exactly has happened?' she wonders, out loud.

As neither of her parents will be returning home until the evening, she knows that her wondering is to no avail. She suspects that it is a technical fault, and that it will be fixed soon. For now, all there is to do is wait... but she can find something else to do. Once she has finished her croissant, she takes her tea and exits the living room. She makes her way up the staircase, while considering whether to investigate her parents' room. Although it betrays ethics, she would love to satisfy her curiosity. In fact, if there is something untoward in there, she will have the information to divulge to the police, which will help to keep Sidborough safe. So, perhaps, it doesn't go against ethics after all...

The only obstacle is the issue of when her parents get back. But now she has the opportunity to investigate the room. While the cat's away, the mouse will play. But she's no mouse, and she knows that if there is a secret which shouldn't be a secret, there will be a trouble. She opens the second door on the right, where the lair so known to her, yet previously unexplored, lurks.

*

Michael Turner, the shadow Education minister, is up on the first floor of the television centre giving an interview. Before he has time to answer the interviewer's pressing question about his latest proposals and his analysis of the recent election, he can feel the temperature rising in the room. He turns to face the other side of the room, to find that he is surrounded by flames. He flails about, desperately searching for a fire extinguisher. He realises that there is one in the corridor that he came through. Did he notice any in here? In despair, he tries to make his way through the flames, trying not to let them suffocate him.

'I'm sure that someone will call the fire people.' he mutters to himself. He is instantly reassured by this idea.

The fire people have arrived, but have been strictly instructed not to enter the building until the allowed time. Despite their disagreement with the orders, the threat of redundancy encourages them to comply. By the time they make their way into the abyss to put out the inferno, no-one in the building can sense this.

*

'Who was responsible for the fire?' asks the reporter, from the newspaper *The Chronicle*.

Henry Reeves, the Minister for People, pauses for a moment. 'It was an accident. Don't worry, we're doing what we can.'

'The entire country is complaining about the loss of two major channels. How are you going to resolve this?'

'We'll build a new station in its place...'

'And when do you think that'll happen?'

'Perhaps in the next two years. No, it will happen. It'll happen soon. Plans are under way already.'

The reporter moves on: 'Could you explain more about your new programme on social values in Britain?'

'Which one? Ah, yes. We basically want to get Britain back to a Golden Age, when traditional family values were respected and appreciated. The shift from this way of life to a more individualistic one has caused the moral decline of society. It has led to adultery, drug abuse, prostitution, and other such evils. First, we will eradicate these problems at their source: we will encourage husbands and wives to stay faithful by offering them an incentive....' he waves and tuts '....I mean, teach them that the family is at the centre of everything they do and if they don't respect this, everything falls apart. We take a firm pro-life position and plan to make abortion illegal within the next three years. We will introduce stricter penalties for drug dealing and for possession. We will make certain that prostitutes are arrested and introduced into decent, honest work.'

'Thank you very much. That is all from me.'

'Goodbye.' Reeves smiles obsequiously.

'Hello, Sir. I'm from the *English News*. Do you mind answering a few questions?'

'Not at all.'

'Why do you think the fire at the independent television station took place?'

Reeves ponders for a moment. 'Because....' He takes a piece of paper from the upper pocket of his suit, and examines it. He scrunches it up and puts it back into the pocket. The reporter frowns with puzzlement. 'It was because the people in the vicinity are so discontented. There's not enough truly stimulating, appealing programmes any more. People are bored, and when they are bored they become angry. And that's when destruction happens. What do you expect? Arrests will be made, but I promise that sentences will be lenient owing to these pressing times.'

'Will you be working on a replacement?'

'Um... yes. Work is under way already. We hope to build it as soon as possible.'

'And when do you think that'll be?'

'There is no definite estimate, but I promise it will be done as soon as possible.'

'Tell us about your new social values programme.'

'Basically, we want to move Britain into a Golden Age. People will be more liberated than they ever were before. We plan to experiment with legalising drugs, and to promote rehabilitation of offenders. We accept adultery as human nature and believe that adhering to family values is a primary cause of stress in the home and workplace. We take a firm pro-choice position. We will be lenient on prostitution and hope to legalise it within the next three years.'

'Ok, I'm going to have to wrap it up there. It's been nice speaking to you.'

'Anytime.'

Another reporter appears. 'I'm sorry.' Reeves tells her, 'I've got to go and attend to the scene of the fire.'

'Surely you can spare five minutes?'

'No, it's all got to be sorted out now.'

'OK, that's fine.'

He makes his way over to the taxi rank, waving away a crowd of eager reporters. One of the drivers sets down the window and asks him where he would like to go. He leans closer to the driver and in *sotto voce* asks for a journey to 10 Downing Street. Just when the taxi sets off, he receives a text from Mary Evans, asking him to arrive at a meeting at the secret headquarters near St. James's Park. He is slightly annoyed at having to change his plan so suddenly, but looks forward to the meeting with great anticipation: this is the first he has known about it and he wonders why they are secret.

Chapter 2

They are seated around a large, oblong wooden table. Simon Evans begins the process:

'Today I call a meeting for us to discuss the implementation of a general test in place of the GCSE exam. That decision is made by me. The issue I will discuss is: how will this be done? Mrs. Evans will be taking notes.'

She smiles at him, obediently.

Mr. Stant, the Minister for Justice, is the first person to respond: 'I have spoken to the police about this matter and they are ok with it. They totally understand that, if they wish to keep their jobs, they must ignore what is happening.'

'Good good.' Evans says, smugly.

'Why are you planning to introduce this test?'

'That is not for you to ask.'

'Well, it is. I'm Minister for People, I'll need to let them know.'

'Drat.' Evans mutters to himself. He speaks louder, and directly to Reeves: 'Well, I'm Prime Minister, which means I'm higher up than you. I decide what the people get to know.'

'One day I'll decide.' Reeves mutters. He has always wanted to oust Evans so that he can be Prime Minister himself: at this very moment, he decides this is now something he has to do. He wonders if he can expose the location of the headquarters, and blame it on him.

'How will this test work?' asks Stant.

'It consists of a set of questions to find out their views. Anyone who doesn't get enough correct answers will be eliminated from society. I considered arresting them, but that will be too much hassle and, besides, there is not enough space in the prisons. The alternative is a force more powerful even than that of law: social stigma.'

'Are you sure that'll work?'

'Do you want to leave?'

'No....no.'

'Right, then. Don't question my proposal.'

'I have a proposal myself.' Reeves pipes up. 'I want to change our national sports a bit. I'm thinking of introducing a new one: gladiator fighting. Perhaps we could use anyone who doesn't fulfil the criteria required in the test?'

'Yes, that will be fine. Reeves, you are Minister for People after all. It is your entitlement as to what you do with them. The only thing is that if you make it too obvious people will get touchy and start a revolt.'

'Well, if they do that, we can draft them into the contests as well.'

'Reeves, you're a star.'

'Thank you, Mr. Evans.'

'Oi oi oi. Call me "Sir".'

'Thank you, Sir.'

'Fuck off, loser.' He gives Reeves a 'V' sign and blows a raspberry.

Reeves starts to seethe. 'How can he speak to me like that?' he mutters.

Mrs. Evans makes a gesture by putting two of her fingers together, while looking at Reeves.

'Now, where was I? Oh yes. Everyone must agree with the policy to have it passed. That has been sorted out.' He points to his wife, who ticks a box on her notepad.

'How can you speak to me like that?' screams Reeves, now unsure of the real reason for his indignation.

'Like what?'

'Telling *me* to fuck off.'

'Oh yeah. Well, you asked for it. Now, as I was....'

'I called you "Sir"!'

'That's the idea. I don't have to show *you* respect, do I?'

'I just don't believe it, I don't...'

Evans rolls his eyes.

'You'd better believe it because if you complain about it, you won't even be a minister any more.'

'Huh. Now you have to make threats. Going to sack me are you? Is that it? You can't do that.'

Evans walks over to where Reeves is sitting, puts his arms round his waist, and lifts him out of the chair. Stant and Smith both guffaw. With Reeves in his arms, he makes his way over to the far end of the room, from which the Thames can be seen. He opens the window. The guffawing immediately turns to gasping.

'No, no!' he mutters to himself. 'No. They'll tell on me.' Reeves can make out the sound but not the words.

'Ok.' He says, louder. 'I won't take it that far. I'm sorry.' He mutters an expletive. Reeves starts to struggle, but Evans restrains him.

'Oh fuck!' he mutters 'Fuck!'

If I throw him into the lift, someone will tell. Someone will have their revenge. And it won't get him out of the building anyway. The same if I chuck him out of the window on the lower floor. Maybe I could kill the others... the trouble is, I need them.

He puts Reeves back down.

'Ok, you can stay. But if you challenge me again, that's final.'

Reeves smiles, gratefully, and makes his way over to his place. Evans takes his place again. Smith and Stant look at each other with disturbed expressions.

'Right. We've solved that issue as well. We've done very well today. The very last thing to discuss is elections. I would like to scrap them, but if we do that, then the people will not think that they live in a free society. Any suggestions?'

'We could get people into the polling booths, then arrest them.' Says Stant.

'Yeah, the trouble is that it will be all over the news.'

'We can set the news.'

'That's true. But really, I meant international news.'

'Drug the reporters.'

'Excellent! But we also need to prevent the arrested getting away.'

'Execute them.'

'Ah, Stant, you're a marvel!'

Stant opens his mouth, and then decides not to say what he was going to, fearing humiliation. Smith notices this and smirks. 'Loser.' She chants, just loud enough for everyone to hear. Evans laughs out loud. Reeves sticks his tongue out at Stant, glad that this time it is not him. Stant is unsure what to do: he now knows that no-one is really on his side, but he wants to stay with the group. He hopes that eventually Evans will depart and he can become Prime Minister. Then, he can have his revenge.

'Right.' Says Evans. 'Meeting over. You can all fuck off now.' He leans closer to Mrs Evans. 'Except you. I want to discuss a deal with you.'

*

She found nothing of note in the room, and is now trying to deal with the boredom which is consuming her like a parasite. The familiar sound of the lock lets her know that her parents are back.

'Well, that was quite an evening!'

'Anne! Where is she?'

She knows that there will be news, but is not certain whether or not it will be good. The handle of the door to the living room turns clockwise, causing it to open.

Her mother's voice sings to her: 'Hiya, pet. We've got something to tell you.'

'Yeeesss?' She leans back slightly, and rolls her eyes.

'We've found you a new school.'

'Why can't I choose my own school?' she asks, trying not to sound resentful.

'Well.... we think it'll be the best place for you. You'll have to be dedicated: we want nothing less than As.'

'Alright, alright. I'm sure it'll be great. What's happened to the TV?'

'Oh, that. It's been like that for a few days. We've tried to get in touch with the council, but no-one can explain it. Our old friend Keith up in Shropshire was having the same problem. He said that the other channels work though. Absolutely baffling. Maybe there is a technical fault at the station. Who knows?'

'Well, I'd like to get this fixed before long.'

'It's not up to you, is it? We could do without the TV for a while.'

'We could do without Channel 2!' Says Mr. Tyler, jokingly but at the same time indicating his disapproval. Anne smiles at him.

'It is a bit suspicious though.' Says Mrs. Tyler.

'Nowt we can do about it. I'm sure they'll get it fixed.'

*

The light of the day in the room lets Simon Holmes know of his surroundings. He groans, first of all, but the few seconds after this are followed by a sigh of satisfaction. He's clearly slept well and has no hangover. He gets himself up, gets some new underwear and socks from the drawer, and changes. He looks at the alarm clock on the bedside table: 10:23. He wonders if the post has arrived? He makes his way downstairs, and walks over to the front door. No sign of the post. He makes his way back, and turns to the left, into the kitchen. He makes himself a cup of tea and get himself corn flakes with sunflower seeds. He thinks about what he's going to do today: maybe he'll get a newspaper and head off to a museum. He's wanted to check out that one in Fort Goldfax for a while: today he will absolve himself of his duties and go for it.

When he's finished his tea and his breakfast he makes his way out. He'll hit the shops for that paper first. He walks along Broad Street, where he lives, to the row of shops: a chemist, a barber, an off-licence and a newsagent (the place that he has in mind). The newsagent has a spacious layout with a major stand in the centre of the room and two shelves of magazines to the far left and right. The floor is a dark blue colour, and the ceiling is white. The lights on the ceiling are an oblong shape. The newspapers are located on the stand. Holmes takes a copy of the *Sidborough Herald* as usual, and considers a national newspaper: normally he would buy this another day but this *is* election time. It would be worth keeping in touch with what's happening. Not accustomed to buying the same newspaper, he always makes a choice at the time. Today, he has the choice of *The Sun*, *The Times*, *The Independent*, *The English News*, *The Chronicle* and *The Messenger*. *The Messenger* is a newspaper that came out around six months ago. He has never tried it before. It clearly has some election coverage so he opts to give it a try.

At the counter, Mr Smith greets him:

'Good day, my friend.'

'Hi.'

'What did you make of the election, then?'

'I was very surprised. A bit disappointed as well, to be honest.'

'Ah, why?'

'I didn't particularly want the New Way to get in, that's all. To tell you the truth, I don't like any of them. How is anyone supposed to trust a politician?'

'Well, they're the best deal that Britain can have. They're going to be doing a lot more for society than any of the other parties. You should appreciate it. Yes, I know what you mean about politicians, but don't knock their policies until you're sure.'

He pauses for a moment.

'Yes, I guess that you're right. They may not be empty promises. I should be more patient, and I recognise that. I just get fed up sometimes.'

'Don't we all? That'll be £1.60 for the two papers.'

Holmes hands Smith the money, announces his departure, and leaves. He carries on, turning into Maple Road.

'Scoundrel!' He looks around, but can't find the owner of the voice. He tries to ignore it. Just as he is passing the local branch of Dreams, he registers a group at the traffic lights. They seem to be glancing in his direction. He tries not to glare at them, but a few of them seem familiar.

'Dissident!'

'Take that rag out of your hands!'

It is not clear to him what they are talking about. He walks a little faster than usual, looking around him. Suddenly, he is startled by a shattering sound. He turns around very briefly, just in time to see part of the window of the church showering onto the pavement. At once, he realises it is the newspaper they were referring to: he throws it towards the mob, and breaks into a run, not caring where he's going. He holds onto his pocket, hoping to take his phone out in time, but he can't concentrate, he knows he's got to....

'Holmes!'

'I knew it was him!'

Oh shit.

He finds himself at the police station, hoping they are not right outside, at the same time not particularly caring: there simply isn't time for that.

*

Chapter 3

'Buckingham Palace has been captured for you, sir.'

'I don't want it any more.' Says Evans, 'It was just an idea.' He is speaking to the Minister of Defence, Tim Anderson.

Mr. Anderson looks absolutely exasperated. 'Do you realise the work that went into that operation? Why do you have to be so ungrateful? Why do you want the palace anyway?'

'In response to the first question: yes, I know, and I don't care. To the second, you are there to serve me and you do what I tell you, so why should I have to be grateful? To the third, that is none of your business, so go fuck yourself.'

Anderson inhales sharply, and continues: 'I commanded the operation for you, so it is in my interest to know.'

'Look, I've already told you. I haven't got all day, so you can fuck off now.'

'What are we going to do with the palace?'

'Call me "Sir!"'

'I said: what are we going to do with the palace?'

'You will call me "Sir!"'

'Why should I when you won't even answer my questions properly?'

Evans throws his hands up and starts shouting: '*I've listened to you, and you... You have the fucking nerve to disrespect me!*'

I need him to fulfil my dreams of conquest. But I can always find another minister....

'When you treat others the way you do, why should they respect you?'

'Don't you answer back! I'm your leader, you do what I say!'

'Well, I think that you need to change your attitude, or let someone else be the leader.'

Evans screams. '*How dare you! How dare you say that! Get the fuck out right now!*'

'What happens if I don't?'

'I'll give you a serious hiding, that's what! So get out of here!'

'You realise that other people will know about that?'

Evans twitches for a moment. Suddenly, he smiles. He throws his hands up as if he is pushing something away. 'I'm sorry. I just had a bad day, that's all. I get angry when we have these arguments because I want the best for all of us and it upsets me so when there is a dispute between us. You can be in charge of the palace, as you have been so faithful to the government. Also, I promise: no more arguments.'

Anderson stares at Evans, trying to decide whether he is serious or whether he is making this up.

'It's fine: I'll do without the palace. If I organise another campaign for you, I don't want to be told that you are no longer interested in the goal of it. Is that clear?'

I can't guarantee that. However, it may be a laugh to pretend to just to get on his nerves. Trouble is, he'll leave. Maybe it's time to find a new minister...

'Well, no it's not. That'd be organising it on your terms, and I don't think that's appropriate.'

Anderson ponders this for a moment. 'Well, in that case, I have no option but to resign.'

'Of course. Off you go then.'

Anderson raises his eyebrows, but he makes his way out of the room. He can't help thinking that something like this is not supposed to happen; although he is becoming dissatisfied with it, he will remain in the political world a little longer, just for surveillance.

*

'Surname?'

'Holmes.'

'First name?'

'Simon.'

'You are arrested on suspicion of making a false claim.'

He can hardly believe it.

'I'm sorry.... you what?'

'Rules are rules. Everything you say from now on will be taken down in evidence.'

'But you.... you just can't....'

He feels the iron grip on his wrists. He know what's going to happen next.

'No way! *No fucking way!*'

'That's another year for you, you swearing bastard.'

'Don't I get a trial?'

'You'll get a trial, alright.' The officer guffaws. 'Just not the kind you thought.'

As his coerced parade to the van takes place, the mob appears.

'Go! Get him!'

'No, no!'

'Bloody pigs! Go on, fuck 'em up!'

'No! No!'

Six hands grab the potential attacker, pulling him back. The back doors of the van are opened, and Holmes is thrown in. As the doors slam shut, his fate is sealed.

'Let me out!'

'Let me out, you cunts!'

'Fucking *let me out!*'

He starts banging on the doors, but soon he is no longer in denial about what is happening.

*

The room is around 10 metres by 8 metres. There is a bed at the far right corner which resembles the kind you might find in a psychiatric ward. It does at least have some colour: blue and white stripes.

'You can make yourself useful and clean that crap off the floor.'

Holmes is disgusted by this blatant abuse of authority. However, there seems like no way out at this moment.

'Is there a bucket? A mop? Anything like that?'

'You clean it off with your tongue, douche bag! What do you expect? Get that outfit off first, though. You don't want you getting it wet, do we?'

He sighs and peels the thing off. There's no way he's cleaning blood with his tongue though.

The two guards guffaw.

'Look at him! I could swear he's actually got shit on his arse. If you look closely, you can see. It's alright, you little fucker, you can clean it off with a toilet brush. But you're cleaning that floor like this.' He moves his tongue upwards and downwards while sticking it out in an exaggerated format, and closing his eyes. His lips contort into a sarcastic grin.

'Don't you realise that I could get AIDS from licking blood?'

'Yes, I realise that.' Says the guard, who he has been speaking to. He is not one Holmes has seen before. He has curly black hair, which is shoulder-length, and vaguely round features.

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