

WHIPPED

By
Becky Prestwich

1 x 45' Drama for BBC Radio 4

CHARACTERS

MEG	MOLLY WINDSOR
AMINA/TAIBA/MUM	NINA WADIA
DAVEY	REUBEN JOHNSON
NOAH	JAKE FERRETTI
NAOMI/LAURA	VERITY HENRY
DAD/SECURITY GUARD	RUSSELL RICHARDSON

Other parts played by members of the cast.

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Production Coordinator:	Pippa Day
Technical Team:	George Atkins and Simon Highfield
Recording:	Thursday 3 rd November 10:00 – 19:00 & Friday 4 th November 10:00 – 15:00
Location:	80 Hertz, The Sharp Project, Thorp Rd, Manchester M40 5BJ
Edit:	6 th /9 th /10 th /11 th /14 th November
TP:	Simon Highfield
TX:	Tuesday 22 nd November @ 14.15

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SC1. INT. MEG'S CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS. DAY.

1 At her campaign headquarters, Meg is on the phone to a journalist

2 MEG (V/O): Campaign Office –Polling day. The last push.

3 Meg: A political youth? I wouldn't have called it that. But I've always
4 been obsessed by policy, by change: how you get things done.
5 Let me give you an example: when I was thirteen, they built us
6 this swish new school building. It was designed to have no
7 doors... Literally. It was a disaster: freezing cold, kids running in
8 and out. And I remember thinking, who got to make that shit
9 decision?

10 *She is interrupted by her young son, Rory, running in and climbing on top of her.*

12 Meg: Excuse me, sorry. (*Calling*) Davey! Can you get him? I'm right in
13 the middle of a call.

14 *Meg's brother, Davey, 20 something comes in.*

15 Davey: Rory, come here mate, come on, Mummy's busy...

17 *Davey pulls Rory away.*

18 Meg: Sorry - where was I? The doors. Yep. I organised petitions, sit-ins.
19 I sat down with School Governors, architects. Eventually, they
20 put the doors back on. And I was hooked. This idea that I had it
21 in my power to change things for the good. Another example:
22 when I was fifteen, I realised all the lads were getting home
23 quicker than the girls –because there were paths that they all
24 took, that we were scared to. So, I campaigned to improve the
25 street lighting through-out the town. I didn't have to just accept
26 my school, or our town, or the world how it was – I could be a
27 part of changing it. And I never looked back.

28 RORY: Mummy, mummy, will you play?

29 *Meg waits as the journalist talks on the other end of the line –*

30 MEG: Can I ring you back in 2 mins? Great. Thank-you. Bye.

31 *She hangs up.*

1 Davey: You don't half talk some bull-

2 Meg: (*of her young son, who is listening*) - oi, little ears. What are you
3 two doing here?

4 Davey: Me and Rory were off to the park. He saw your picture on the
5 posters outside, wanted to come and see you for real.

6 Meg: Oh sweetheart, that's lovely – but it's a Davey day today,
7 remember? Mummy's working (*to Davey*) I told you I had this
8 call at two.

9 Davey: He was right outside, bawling, what did you want me to do?

10 Meg: I'll see you at home, later yeah? You have fun with Uncle Davey,
11 sweetheart.

12 *But Rory starts to cry for his Mummy again. Megan is making a call.*

13 Davey: Come on kiddo. Let's leave your Mum to it.

14 Meg: Hi, it's me, yes, sorry about that. Where were we?

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16 **SC2. INT/ EXT. THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL. DOORSTEPS/ ELECTION NIGHT. SPORTS HALL.**

17 **Meg (V/O):** This seat hasn't changed hands since I was two. The M.P who
18 has held it since then is in the same party as me – but we're
19 miles apart. He: a suited middle aged guy and me: a flame-
20 haired, very young looking twenty six year old single Mum.

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22 **SCENE 2A – EXERIOR – MEGS KNOCKS ON DOOR**

23 Meg: Hi, I'm Meg Stokes. I'm standing to be your M.P...

24 Resident: Who do you think you are? Turning up on my doorstep, looking
25 barely twelve years old, telling me what to think? How dare you?

26 *The door slams.*

27 Meg: (*Putting a brave face on*) Mark him down as an undecided then,
28 shall we?

29 **Meg (V/O):** **That's not uncommon, or this:-**

1 **SCENE 2B: CORRIDOR, MEG RUNNING, BREATHLESS, LATE**

2 Security Guard Hang on young lady, where you off to?

3 Meg: Meg Stokes. I'm here for the event.

4 Security Guard: (*Calling into the room*) One of Meg Stokes' people is here.

5 Meg: I'm not one of her people. I'm her .

6 Security Guard: You? You're...

7 Meg: I'm the candidate.

8 Security Guard: You lot get younger and younger, don't you?

9 **MEG (V/O):** **I don't get paid for any of this either. Standing to be an M.P is expensive! No one pays you to campaign, or pays your expenses, or covers your childcare. You have to quit your job, put everything into it. It's a gamble. And it locks people – ordinary people – out. Not many people without the bank of Mum and Dad or savings from their posh job in the City would take the risk. It's cost me about 15k so far – I took a bank loan out to do it – it can be more, a lot more than that, depending on your loss of earnings. And tonight, I'll find out if it's the biggest, most expensive mistake of my life.**

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20 **SC2C. EXT. ANOTHER FRONT DOOR.**

21 *Meg knocks on another door*

22 Meg: I was calling to see if you'd been out to vote yet?

23 Resident: You were here asking the same thing, three hours ago...

24 **MEG (V/O):** **It's polling day. Every vote counts. Our party's not cutting through nationally. Which means there's no such thing as a safe seat – not this time. You cannot be complacent.**

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27 Meg: And have you been out to vote in between?

28 Resident: I'll get my coat.

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1 **SC3. ELECTION NIGHT. SPORTS HALL. 2am.**

2 **Meg (V/O):** 2 a.m. in a freezing sports hall. Usually, you have a sense
3 before you turn up if you've done it; cos of the exit polls
4 announced in the media a few hours before, when they asked
5 constituents how they've voted. But my constituency is too
6 close to call. The count begins, as the votes are poured onto
7 the table...

8 CAMPAIGN MANAGER (sotto) :- I think his piles are bigger, Meg. What do you
9 think ?

10 Meg: I can't look.

11 **MEG (V/O):** But I do.... And we're like talking minuscule differences in our
12 ballot piles.

13 CAMPAIGN MANAGER If he wins, we ask for a re-count.

14 **MEG (V/O):** If he wins, I don't know how I'll pay the debt off. I won't bore
15 you with the agony of waiting, and waiting. We'll just cut to
16 the chase.

17 SFX: LOUD APPLAUSE AND CHEERING

18 **Meg (V/O):** I feel like I'm going to throw up. Like I'm going to fall off the
19 stage. – and I can't quite compute...

20 *More cheers and shouts.*

21 Davey: (SFX PHONE RINGING) Mum? Mum? She did it. Our Meg did it.

22 Mum: I don't bloody believe it. Is she there? Is she all right?

23 Davey: She's up the stage now...

24 **Meg (V/O):** I did it. By a margin of 148 votes. I did it.

25 Meg: Thank-you. Thank-you for putting your faith in me. I'll do my
26 absolute best to earn it.

27 *More applause and cheers*

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1 **SC4. INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE.**

2 Meg (V/O): **Monday morning: the early train to London. Four days since I
3 was elected. A blur of press requests and packing and well-
4 wishers and lobbyists and trying to batch cook for Rory, so
5 there's one less thing for Davey to think about when I'm
6 away...**

7 Meg: Hey? Did I wake you?

8 Davey: You're kidding? He opened his eyes the second you shut the
9 door.

10 Meg: Oh no.

11 Davey: He's okay. Apart from replastering the room with Weetabix,
12 he's good.

13 Meg: I was phoning to say if he's too cold in that sleeping bag tonight,
14 the thick ones are under the cot

15 Davey: Okay, thanks.

16 Meg: And, he's almost out of dummies, you know how he likes to suck
17 on one and hold another. I meant to pick up an extra couple
18 but...

19 Davey: Meg. He's fine. We're fine. You go be brilliant.

20 Meg: Okay. Okay. I'll see you both Thursday. Tell Rory I love him,
21 yeah?

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23 **SC5. EXT. THE WALK TO PARLIAMENT SQUARE. MONDAY MORNING.**

24 Meg (V/O): **It's only the second time in my life I've ever even been to
25 London. I've had no time to find anywhere to live yet, just
26 chose a random budget hotel from a list they sent, and now
27 here I am trundling up to the Houses of Parliament with my
28 little wheelie case. I work here. Me. Meg Stokes M.P. Me.**

29 Party Leader: Welcome.

30 Meg (V/O): **Simon Cunningham - our Party Leader – is waiting on the steps
31 to greet us. Oh God, I'm nervous.**

1 Party Leader: Looking around its heartening to see so many fresh, enthusiastic
2 faces. We might not be in Government yet but against all
3 predictions, we are 47 seats closer than we were and that is
4 thanks to each and every one of you. You're the future for this
5 party – and for the country.

6 *There is cheering and applause.*

7 Photographer: If everyone could look this way. Group shot with the new
8 intake... That's lovely, big smiles.

9 *There are tuts and shuffles as someone – Noah - pushes through the crowd.*

10 Noah: Sorry, excuse me... I just need to get past...

11 Meg: Ow... Watch it would you.

12 Noah: Sorry. The sun was in my eyes standing right at the back there.
13 That's better.

14 Photographer: Eyes to the front: lovely.

15 *A camera flashes*

16 *Fade to –*

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1 **SC6. INT. THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT. CENTRAL LOBBY. SOON AFTER.**

2 Meg (V/O): **And then everyone disappears, like they all know where**
3 **they're going except me. I feel like the Muggle kid when they**
4 **first make it to Hogwarts: like the statues are all looking at**
5 **me, raising their eyebrows like, her? Really?**

6 *Amina Hussain, early 50s, a seasoned MP approaches.*

7 Amina: Lost: are you?

8 Meg: Just a bit.

9 Amina: Thought so. Your lanyard: green and white. It basically translates
10 as 'please look after this bear'.

11 Meg: Sorry?

12 Amina: You don't know Paddington? Party Unity aside, I can't share a
13 bench with someone who doesn't know Paddington.

14 Meg: I'm just a bit... (bewildered)

15 Amina: You get used to it. Less unused to it, anyway. I'm Amina. Chief
16 Whip.

17 Meg: Meg Stokes. Hello.

18 Amina: Where are you trying to get to?

19 Meg: I'm just not quite sure how I find out where my office is...

20 Amina: I see. Tell you what, follow me...

21 *They walk together.*

22 Amina: You know where the name 'whip' derives from? The'
23 whipper in' kept the hounds together as a pack.

24 *They walk down a corridor. Amina opens a door.*

25 Amina: You're lucky, no one's nabbed it yet...

26 Meg: Sorry, what is this place?

27 Amina: Ladies Members Room. Hair straighteners, spare clothes –
28 everything a 'lady' might need. It's spacious. Wifi's not terrible.

1 Meg: But....

2 Amina: It's that or a corridor... Newbies wait a while for an office
3 of their own, I'm afraid. Until then, it's beg, borrow or steal.

4 Meg: You mean, I....

5 Amina: You'll get used to it. We've all been there. Now, your pull-Whip
6 will be in touch soon...you're part of his flock. And you're all part
7 of mine. Forget all these myths about the Whips being street
8 thugs. Yes, we keep our MP's in line but we protect your health
9 and sanity, as well. Welcome to my flock Meg.

10 Meg: A flock, not a pack?

11 Amina: A bit of both, I'd say. I'll leave you to settle in.

12 Meg (V/O): **So, here I am, in the seat of democracy - perched between a
13 sink and a clothes rail. Okay. Well. Better get to work.**

14 *Meg opens her laptop and is hit by a barrage of voices.*

15 - Congratulations on your appointment, we'd love to invite you on a tour of
16 Pickborough's historic sewers...

17 - We'd be honoured if you'd join us to celebrate the launch of our campaign for
18 bee friendly hanging baskets.

19 - I emailed the old MP. I don't know if you can help. My gas has been cut off. I
20 don't know who else to turn to. Please.

21 - My nephew is still missing in Bucha. Please I just need to know where he is.

22 - Face like a slapped arse. Smug, ugly...

23 *Meg slams the laptop shut: overwhelmed.*

24 Meg (V/O): **206 emails.**

25 A ping

26 Meg (V/O): **207. Breathe. You can do this. Meeting requests: Lobbyists.
27 Local charities. I can't believe how quickly my diary is filling up.
28 Briefing meetings to discuss policy, phone calls from the Whips
29 to discuss party lines.**

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1 SC7. INT. THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT. CHAMBER.

2 The speaker: Any new members wishing to take their seats.

3 MEG (V/O): The Commons Chamber, my 'swearing in'. MPs can't take their
4 seat, speak in debates, vote or receive a salary until they're
5 sworn in. If I tried to I could get fined 500 quid and lose my
6 seat.

7 Clerk: Do you want to swear the oath or affirm?

8 Meg: I'll swear. Do I just...?

9 Clerk: Just read from here...

10 Meg: *(Reading)* I Meg Stokes swear by Almighty God that I will be
11 faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King Charles,
12 his heirs and successors, according to law. So help me God.

13 Meg (V/O): And then I sign my name. Pass the speaker's chair.

14 Speaker: Congratulations. Settling in okay?

15 Meg: ... I think so, thank-you, Mr. Speaker.

16 Speaker: You will do.

17 Meg (V/O): And that's it. Official.

18 *Fade to -*

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1 **SC8. INT. THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT. LATER THAT DAY.**

2 *Meg is walking down the corridor: lost.*

3 Meg: Sorry, excuse me - I'm looking for Room 302?

4 **MEG (V/O):** **This place is like a maze. We've had an induction tour, but every corridor looks like the next. Identical busts of apparently important men I don't recognise. (Reaching a door) This is it. I'm sure this is it.**

8 *She opens the door.*

9 A posh voice: Can I help you?

10 Meg: Wrong room, sorry.

11 Noah: Are you looking for this training thing? That's where I'm headed too. I'm Noah. Noah Campbell. It's Meg Stokes, isn't it?

13 Meg: It is, yeah.

14 **Meg (V/O):** **I don't tell him he nearly crushed me in his hurry to get to the front at that photoshoot.**

16 Noah: Majority of 148. Bet that was hair-raising.

17 Meg: How did you...?

18 Noah: I have this kind of thing for political stats. I know all the new intakes' majorities.

20 Meg: You do not.

21 Noah: Seriously. Try me.

22 *Meg points at a passing M.P – also heading to the training.*

23 Meg: All right, that guy....

24 Noah: Geoff Roe, 32,501.

25 Meg: Impressive. And weird.

26 Noah: Me or Geoff's majority?

27 Meg: Both.

1 Noah: Weirdly impressive. I'll take that. It's stupid, really. I've just
2 always been kind of a geek about that kind of thing. Started
3 when I was a kid. You know that game, Top Trumps?

4 Meg: Course.

5 Noah: When I was eleven, I designed my own set based on political
6 leaders, rather than super heroes or whatever. As you can
7 imagine I was very cool at school. Not!

8 *She laughs.*

9 **Meg (V/O):** **He might be a geek, but he's pretty easy on the eye, with it.**

10 *They have reached the training room.*

11 Noah: Room 302. After you.

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13 **SC9. INT. COMMITTEE ROOM. HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT. SHORTLY AFTER.**

14 *A trainer is in mid-flow.*

15 Trainer: Any post that arrives to parliament will be checked for toxic
16 substances and sharp blades... and your constituency surgeries
17 present with very high security risks...We'll be talking about that.

18 *The trainer's voice fades in and then out again.*

19 Trainer: If you receive a bomb threat, do not put the handset down or
20 cut off the conversation... we will need time to be able to...

21 *Again, they fade out and then in again.*

22 **MEG (V/O):** **When they said training, I wasn't expecting this...**

23 Trainer: Operation Bridgier officers will attend your constituency homes
24 to advice on the necessary home security...

25 Noah: (*Leaning in*) Do you think at some point they might talk about
26 something other than all the ways people might try to kill us?

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1 **SC10. INT. MEG'S HOTEL ROOM. LATER THAT NIGHT.**

2 Meg (V/O): I go back to my hotel, exhausted, but wired. I'd not had chance
3 to call my baby.. I wanted to facetime so he could see me
4 before bed. And now it's too late.

5 *Meg is calling Davey.*

6 Meg: (On the phone) Davey? Hey. Is he asleep?

7 Davey: Spark out.

8 Meg: Sorry I didn't call at bedtime.

9 Davey – It's probably better, to be honest. It might have upset him,
10 seeing you with you really being here.

11 Meg: Was he upset then? Doing bedtime without me.

12 Davey: He was fine.

13 Meg: I'd rather you tell me the truth.

14 Davey: It's the first night, innit? Early days. We've had fun. And now
15 he's fast asleep. You don't need to worry.

16 Meg: Could you turn the camera round so I can watch him sleeping?
17 Just for a bit...do you mind?

18 DAVEY Okay. (*he minds*)

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1 **SC11. A CORRDIOR. HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT. THE FOLLOWING MORNING.**

2 **Meg (V/O):** Next morning, I arrive early. I walk slap bang into the Speaker's
3 Procession: Commons' Doorkeeper, the Serjeant at Arms with
4 the mace, the Speaker, the Trainbearer, Chaplain and
5 Secretary, all processing slowly – and I mean really slowly -
6 past.

7 Serjeant at Arms: Speaker, speaker.

8 **Meg (V/O):** Every morning this happens. Literally every morning.
9 Apparently, the tourists love it. And there is something
10 bizarrely fascinating about the spectacle, the history of it.

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12 **SC12. INT. THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE THE CHAMBER.**

13 Speaker: We now come to questions to the Prime Minister. Antonia
14 Carr.

15 *There's a loud braying of MPs. (FOLLOWING IS UNDER V.O.)*

16 Antonia Carr M.P: Number One, Mister Speaker.

17 Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and
18 others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall have further such meetings later
19 today...

20 **Meg (V/O):** My first PMQs. It's mad. I'm there sat on the actual benches.
21 Like I've stepped inside my telly. I honestly feel like any second
22 someone is going shout 'imposter' and chuck me out, or I'll
23 wake up, back in my real life.

24 *Meg is on phone to Rory.*

25 MEG Mwah mwah (kisses) Love you darling. Love you. Bye. Bye.

26 *Noah catches up with her.*

27 Noah First time in a long-distance relationship?

28 Meg Noah, hi. That wasn't my... that was my two year old. He was
29 nagging Davey to call me, so...

30 Noah: Davey, your....

1 Meg: Brother. He helps me out with Rory.

2 Noah: Because his Dad's working or...?

3 Meg: Because his Dad's a useless wanker I've barely set eyes on in two
4 years.

5 Noah: Right.... Where you off to now? Fancy a coffee?

6 Meg: Actually, I've got the Northern MPs network, and then the
7 Women's Parliamentary Party and then...

8 Noah: I get it.

9 Meg: I'm glad I saw you though- I wanted to congratulate you on your
10 maiden speech.

11 Noah: Was it all right?

12 Meg: Yeah. It was good. Really good.

13 Noah: Couldn't see me shaking then?

14 Meg: Nervous?

15 Noah: Shitting it.

16 Meg: It didn't show. Another time for that coffee maybe? When
17 everything's a bit less... (mental).

18 Noah: Yeah, I'd like that.

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20 **SC13. INT. MEG'S HOME. SITTING ROOM.**

21 **Meg (V/O):** And then finally, it's Thursday. After all the meetings and the
22 inductions, the policy briefings and networking events, the 663
23 emails, the post bag that weighed as much as me, it's time to
24 go home.

25 *Meg opens the front door and throws the keys down.*

26 Meg: Hey – it's me.

27 *Rory runs to greet her.*

1 Meg: Oh baby, hello, hello. I've missed you. And Blue Bear I've missed
2 you too.

3 Davey: We're calling him Clive, now, after the nice man at swimming.
4 He got Rory to finally get in the pool.

5 Meg: He actually got in? Oh baby, I can't believe it. Your first swim.

6 Davey: There'll be other chances.

7 Meg: Yeah. Course.

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9 **SC14. INT. MEG'S HOUSE. HALLWAY. FRIDAY. THE SECURITY CHECK.**

10 Security Officer: Those windows will need replacing obviously,

11 Meg: will they?

12 Security Officer: Someone would smash right through that. You need them
13 reinforced.

14 Meg: Right. Okay.

15 Security Officer: And there's the panic buttons to be fitted... how many
16 bedrooms did you say?

17 Meg: Three but... you're not fitting a panic button in my little boy's
18 room, are you? He's two, he'll be setting it off all the time.

19 Security office: Three bedrooms. Now this letterbox...

20 *They are interrupted with Davey crashing in with Rory.*

21 Davey: Sorry, I thought you'd be finished...

22 Security Officer: Nearly done. Where was I?

23 Meg: The letterbox...

24 Security Officer: Oh, yeah. We'll need that bomb proofed too.

25 *There is a murmur from Rory, 'Mummy?'*

26 Davey: It's all right, Rory. Mummy's just working.

27 Meg: I'll be finished soon, sweetheart.

1 **SC15. MEG'S HOUSE. SITTING ROOM. LATER THAT NIGHT.**

2 *Davey and Meg are relaxing in the sitting room.*

3 Davey: Was Rory all right at bedtime?

4 Meg: Yeah, why?

5 Davey: Just earlier... he was asking about the police being here... what a
6 bomb was... All that.

7 Meg: Oh God, Davey.

8 Davey: It's all a bit freaky, isn't it?

9 Meg: Yeah, No. I mean it's to keep us safe though, isn't it?

10 Davey: Not going lie, hearing the word bomb-proof doesn't exactly
11 make me feel safe...

12 Meg: It's a precaution. Better safe than sorry.

13 Davey: Yeah. Maybe. Fancy having your arse kicked at Grand Theft
14 Auto? Bit of mindless violence to relax with.

15 Meg: I'm sorry – I've got about a million emails...

16 Davey: You're allowed a night off surely...

17 Meg: I need to stay on top of things. First constituency surgery
18 tomorrow...

19 **Meg (V/O): I get through my emails. But I can't sleep. So, I go for a walk
20 through the town, my town, imagining the people in these
21 homes: every one of them a constituent of mine. The ones who
22 put my posters in their window, the ones who didn't vote for
23 me, or didn't vote at all, the ones who don't even know what
24 M.P stands for. All of them my responsibility.**

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1 **SC16. THE BACK ROOM OF A COMMUNITY CENTRE: MEG'S SURGERY. A WEEK**
2 **LATER.**

3 *Meg is bombarded by a range of voices – each with –*

4 - I was only twenty minutes late – it was the buses. Surely they can't sanction
5 me for that.
6 - We'll take care of my niece – house her. She's not safe. Please. You're the
7 member of parliament, surely if you say she can come to this country – then
8 she can come.

9 **Meg (V/O): The back room of the community centre, tea urn on, plastic**
10 **chairs laid out. This feels good: real: talking to people about**
11 **their lives, their problems – trying to see a way to help them.**
12 **My predecessor's case worker has agreed to stay on and work**
13 **for me, and thank God, because the day is full-on...**

14 Taiba: I don't know if you can help me.

15 Meg: I can my try.

16 Taiba: My husband. He's... He's a bad man. He... (she stops)

17 Meg: It's okay. Take your time.

18 Taiba: I want... I need... I've left him now. But there need to be
19 consequences for what he did. I rang the police.

20 Meg: Good. That's good. Brave.

21 Taiba: I called them, thinking they'd help. On the phone, they said I
22 need to make a report at the police station...

23 Meg: That doesn't sound right...

24 Taiba: The police station is right by the Mosque. Everyone he knows,
25 everyone we know worships there. I'm not ashamed. It's not
26 about shame. But if I were seen – talking to the police, it would
27 get back to him. He could find me and...

28 Meg: They won't let you go to another police station?

29 Taiba: No, and I'm terrified...I'm terrified....

30 Meg: Did you tell them you were scared? That you we're putting
31 yourself at risk going there?

1 Taiba: I told them, and they said I had to go there, it was the only place.

2 Meg: That's wrong.

3 Taiba: I don't know what to do – if he sees me there....

4 Meg: Okay. It's okay. Would you wait outside for a minute? One of my
5 colleagues will look after you. I'm going to make some phone
6 calls.

7 **Meg (V/O):** **I got straight on the internet, researching my constituent's
rights. And then, I rang the police. They tried to fob me off, but
I insisted on speaking to the Chief Inspector. I'm quickly
realising that sometimes those two little letters after your
name make a difference, especially if you're prepared to kick
up a fuss. I informed the DCI in no uncertain terms that I was
aware of the correct safe-guarding procedures and my
constituent's right to make her statement in a safe place.**

15 *Meg steps out of her office.*

16 Meg: Taiba? I've spoken to the police. They can do the interview at
17 your home, or at work, wherever you feel safe – you tell them
18 how you need it to be okay?

19 Taiba: Oh thank you, thank-you so much.

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1 **SC17. INT. MEG'S CONSTITUENCY SURGERY. SOON AFTER.**

2 *Meg is speaking to the next constituent, Laura.*

3 Meg: So, I'm afraid, I can't change the DWP's decision on your
4 benefits, but if you think there's been a miscalculation, I can
5 help you to appeal...

6 Laura: I just thought... It's the government isn't it? The DWP. I thought
7 you'd...

8 Meg: I'm your MP. But I'm not the government. Hoping to be, one
9 day...

10 Laura: So, you can't help me.

11 Meg: As I say, I can write to the DWP...

12 Laura: This is stupid. Waste of time. Unless you could you lend me
13 some money? Please. If there's a fund or something... I will pay it
14 back.

15 Meg: I think you know I can't do that.

16 Laura: I wouldn't ask. I'd never ask. But we moved. We had to. The old
17 place was damp. Disgusting. You could hear it on my little boy's
18 chest. The new place is better. Much better.

19 Meg: I'm glad to hear that.

20 Laura: But it's unfurnished and... It's not me... I'm all right. But my little
21 boy... The teachers are saying he's tired all the time.

22 Meg: Sorry, I don't think I'm following...

23 Laura: He's not playing up or whatever. He's a good kid. But he can't
24 concentrate.

25 Meg: You're saying he isn't sleeping because he's worried about the
26 money..?

27 Laura: It's not that. It's... Like I said, the place is unfurnished and...

28 Meg: He doesn't have a bed? Is that what you mean?

29 Laura: I am trying – I'm saving up for one. I just....

30 *She breaks down – crying.*

1 Meg: Hey, hey it's okay. It's okay.

2 **MEG (V/O):** I promise Laura that I'll help her. And she seems to put her
3 trust in me. We try charities supplying furniture and bedding,
4 but there's a waiting list, and the thought of that kid going
5 another night without his own bed.... And that's one family,
6 isn't it? How many families like hers are there? Desperate for
7 help and not knowing how to ask for it.

8 It's been a long day. It's late by the time we finish going
9 through every case, actioning what we can. I've missed Rory's
10 bedtime again. And before I know it's back to Parliament.

11 **SC18. INT. THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT. LADY MEMBER'S ROOM. DAYS LATER.**

12 *Meg is in the middle of interviewing Naomi.*

13 Naomi: I didn't want to be stuck in a corporate career...

14 *Someone comes in and starts use the hairdryer, they mutter excuse me.*

15 Meg: Sorry – carry on.

16 **Meg (V/O):** I'm interviewing Naomi Doyle in 'my office'.

17 I'll need staff, good staff if I'm going to stay on top of things: a
18 Parliamentary Assistant, a Research officer, another case
19 worker in the constituency too. There's no such thing as a H.R
20 department here in parliament: I'm a small business,
21 apparently. I can get advice on dealing with my staff. But if had
22 a H.R dispute of my own it'd be handled by the Whips. And I
23 am responsible for recruiting my own team.

24 Naomi: ...My sabbatical at the National Democratic Institute showed me
25 a different course...

26 *Meg is struggling to hear over the hair dryer*

27 Meg: Sorry, what?

28 Naomi: (*Raising her voice*) The sabbatical: it was just fetching coffee,
29 really, but it made me realise this was the kind of environment I
30 could thrive in...

31 Meg: That all sounds... great. You sound great. You don't fancy doing
32 my job, do you?

1 **SC19. INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS. THE LADIES MEMBER'S ROOM.**

2 **MEG (V/O):** **Two days later, and Naomi's started, already thank God. It's a**
3 **bit weird, both of us sat in the Lady Member's Chamber, but**
4 **it's great to have her. Hope she can help with my diary. I'm a**
5 **member of the All Parliamentary Party Groups for Tackling**
6 **Loneliness, Women's Health, In-Work Poverty, Domestic**
7 **Violence and Abuse, Left Behind Neighbourhoods, Childcare**
8 **and Early education... Whatever issue you can think of, there's**
9 **an APPG for it. Which is great, but it's hard to squeeze it all in.**
10 **Monday. 8 p.m.**

11 *Meg is working on her computer. The division bell starts to ring.*

12 Naomi: Meg? You've got to get moving...

13 Meg: I just need to finish this press release...

14 **Meg (V/O):** **When the division bells ring, it doesn't matter what you're in**
15 **the middle of, you have exactly eight minutes to vote before**
16 **the doors to the division lobbies are locked.**

17 *Meg continues to type. The phone rings. Naomi answers.*

18 Naomi: Hello. Hey Mrs. Stokes – no, she can't really speak now... No...
19 Okay... Well, I'll ask. (*Turning to Meg*) Meg, it's your Mum. She
20 says she needs to talk to you.

21 Meg: Is it urgent?

22 Naomi: Mrs. Stokes, can it wait, is it urgent?... (*Naomi listens*) She says it
23 is to her.

24 Meg: Fine. (*Sighing, Meg picks up the phone*) Are you alright Mum?

25 Mum: You can't be serious about your Dad coming next week.

26 Meg: It's my maiden speech, of course I invited my Dad...

27 Mum: I can't spend a whole day staring at his smug face. I can't, Meg.

28 Meg: Well, if you don't want to come that's up to you...

29 Mum: You'd choose him over me?

30 Meg: No, but I can't force you to be there.

31 Mum: I didn't say I didn't want to be there...

1 Meg: Well, then. There's no problem, is there? I'll see you next week.

2 *Meg hangs up.*

3 *The bell is still ringing.*

4 Naomi: Four minutes...

5 Meg: Oh god.

6 Naomi: Pass. Don't forgot your pass.

7 *And she's off - sprinting down the corridors*

8 MEG (V/O): I'm literally legging it full pelt down the corridors...I'm not gonna make it... I can't... My heart will pack in first....but, but....

11 *She swears under her breathe.*

12 *The clerk is still calling.*

13 Meg: I'm here. I'm coming.

14 Meg (V/O): Made it. I know it's ridiculous, this dash to the aye and no lobbies to be counted in like kids on a trip, but it's kind of wonderful too - knowing you're literally standing up and being counted.

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1 **SC20. HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT. THE AYE LOBBY.**

2 **Meg (V/O):** Today, there's a queue in the Aye lobby, a huddle of MPs
3 around an unassuming notebook with the numbers 1 – 650
4 written in it.

5 Noah: Private Members Ballot. You signing up?

6 Meg: You literally just pick a random number?

7 Noah: Write your name by any number and you might win the law-
8 making lottery.

9 **Meg (V/O):** This is how you enter the ballot to introduce a Private
10 Members Bill. It's one of the few ways an opposition MP can
11 actually change the law – and some pretty some big changes
12 have happened this way: the end of death penalty, legalised
13 abortion.... You don't have to know what your bill would be
14 when you sign. But I do. I sign my name next to number 303
15 and wait for the draw.

16 **It happens a few days later.**

17 Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. The ballot draw for private member's bills is about
18 to take place. Twenty numbers will be drawn at random, giving
19 twenty members the chance to change the law.

20 *There is a rattle of numbers on white balls in a glass bowl.*

21 Number sixteen. Stephen Reeves.

22 Number two hundred and nine. Nadia Qureshi.

23 **Meg (V/O):** On it goes. Like Bingo but with higher stakes.

24 Deputy Speaker: Number 460. Nathaniel King.

25 Meg: And then it comes to the final seven. These are the seven
26 virtually guaranteed the opportunity of a full day's debate, on
27 one of the seven Fridays set for Private Members Bills.

28 Deputy Speaker: Number fifty nine. Lawrence Metcalfe. He had one last
29 year. Is he allowed another one this year?

30 *There's a cry of yes and a ripple of applause.*

31 Speaker: Well. There you go. Number 303. Meg Stokes.

1 **Meg (V/O):** **Oh -my - God!**

2 Noah: Congratulations.

3 Meg I don't bloody believe it!

4 Noah: That's amazing Meg. Come here.

5 *They hug.*

6 Meg: Thanks. Thank-you.....Noah.

7 Noah: Yes.

8 Meg: You can let me go now.

9 Noah: Sorry.

10 **Meg (V/O):** **I'm blushing like a bloody kid. Stupid.**

11 Noah: You're about to get very popular.

12 Meg: What?

13 Noah: Lobbied by every Tom, Dick and Harry with a cause.

14 **Meg (V/O):** **But I already have a cause. I think of that desperate Mum, her little boy with no bed to sleep in. Cold, exhausted. There are 400,000 kids without beds in the UK. 400, 000. In one of the wealthiest countries in the world....**

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1 **SC21. INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS. THE CHAMBER. THE DAY OF MEG'S MAIDEN**
2 **SPEECH.**

3 **Meg (V/O):** **But, before I can even think about my Private Members Bill...**

4 The Speaker: It is with great pleasure that I call Meg Stokes to make her
5 maiden speech.

6 **MEG (V/O):** **I feel sick with nerves – and it's not the speech. It's them, up**
7 **there. Dad on his phone. Mum shooting daggers at him. No**
8 **word of a lie, these two have not been in a room together since**
9 **I was nine, and they nearly killed each other then.**

10 Meg: Thank-you Mr Speaker. Firstly, I want to pay tribute to my
11 predecessor. He served the constituency for almost as many
12 years as I've been alive. He's shaped the town and the town
13 shaped me. Our media is saturated with stories of people getting
14 out of small towns, getting away. I want to tell a different story:
15 a story about a town full of opportunity and generosity. But it's
16 hard to tell that story, when the institutions of our county keep
17 letting people in towns like mine down... Child poverty nationally
18 is at 4 million and rising... I see evidence of it in my town, close
19 up, every day... It is a failure of state that any child in the UK today
20 goes hungry, or cold, or suffers life-long injuries from not having a bed
21 to sleep in.

22 **Meg (V/O):** **I make the mistake of glancing up. What are they thinking?**
23 **Mum and Dad? Are they proud? Bored? Embarrassed by me**
24 **and my big ideas? When I was a kid and I'd win a reading prize**
25 **or whatever, my Mum's mates would say, 'your Meg's a clever**
26 **one' and Mum'd roll her eyes and say, 'she certainly thinks she**
27 **is' and I'd wish that one time, just one time, she'd say, 'yeah,**
28 **she is, isn't she?' Do you ever outgrow that? The need for your**
29 **parents to be impressed by you?**

30 *Fade out...*

31

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1 **SC22. INT. HOUSE OF COMMONS. CENTRAL LOBBY. SOON AFTER.**

2 *Meg's family are waiting for her in central lobby.*

3 Dad: Meggy – bloody hell. That's my girl.

4 Meg: Thanks for coming Dad.

5 Dad: Carolina's sorry she couldn't make.

6 Mum: Carolina wasn't invited, Den.

7 Noah: I won't interrupt but I just wanted to say well done, Meg – you
8 were great.

9 Mum: Who's that?

10 Meg: Just a colleague.

11 Mum: A very handsome colleague.

12 Dad: You're embarrassing her, Lynne.

13 Mum: I'm embarrassing her...? Don't think I didn't see you, constantly
14 checking the time on your phone.

15 Meg: Shall we get a group photo? Happy family occasion and all that.

16 Mum: He's not my family.

17 Meg: Mum, please.

18 Dad: I'll have a photo with you love.

19 Meg: I meant both of you: all of us.

20 **Meg (V/O): I feel like I'm nine years old still, pleading with them.**

21 Meg: Come on, please. It's not every day you make your maiden
22 speech in the actual House of Commons.

23 Mum: Fine. Fine. Just don't expect me to stand next to him.

24 Dad: All right, go on, where do you want us?

25 Meg: Here. There we go. Big smiles.

26 *Meg takes the selfie.*

1 Meg: So, did you like the speech, Mum?

2 Mum: I did, love.

3 *The camera flashes.*

4 Mum: Wouldn't've killed you to wear a bit of lippy, though, would it?

5 **Meg (V/O):** **Months pass. I'm not the newbie anymore. I'm learning to be a little more discerning about which meetings to say no to - the kind that actually achieve naff all. I've secured a place on the Women and Equalities select committee. And I'm even shown a new office...**

10

11 **SC23. INT. TINY OFFICE:**

12 Meg: Get stuffed, I'm not having this

13 **Meg (V/O):** **Did I say office? Shoebox more like.**

14 Clerk: What do you mean? If you don't take it, you'll go to the bottom of the list.

15

16 Meg: Will I now?

17

18 **SC24. INT. THE WHIP'S OFFICE.**

19 *Meg is in the Whip's Office when Amina comes in.*

20 Amina: Meg? What are you doing?

21 **Meg (V/O):** **In the Whip's Office, they have this big map – all the offices in the parliamentary estate. I'm scanning it as she walks in.**

22

23 Meg: I want this office, I believe it's free.

24 Amina: What? No...you can't have that.

25 Meg: Why not? I need an office, Amina. A proper office. I wouldn't keep my dog in the one the clerk showed me.

26

27 **Meg (V/O):** **She gives me this look like I'm a massive pain in the arse but she kind of likes me anyway.**

28

1 Amina: Do you even have a dog? Fine. But you can do me a favour in
2 return. This by-election in Flintshire. It could really do with a
3 rocket up it. Someone fresh, enthusiastic...

4 Meg: But I've never been to Flintshire in my life...

5 Amina: Great part of the world. I'll have someone brief you on the big
6 talking points.

7

8 **SC25. A CHURCH HALL SOMEWHERE IN WALES. THE NEXT NIGHT.**

9 *The hustle and bustle of a community event.*

10 Meg(V/O): **So here, I am, smiling and shaking hands, talking about what's
11 best for a town I know barely anything about.**

12 *The MP whose campaign Meg is supporting approaches her.*

13 Philip: Thanks so much for coming.

14 Meg: It all seemed to go well.

15 *A voice calls. 'Phil, are you coming?'*

16 Philip: I don't know where Jan is... She's usually here to lock up.

17 *They call again, 'Phil?'*

18 Meg: I can hang on for her. I'm waiting for the cab back to my hotel
19 anyway.

20 Philip: You sure?

21 Meg: Sure, go. If I don't see you – good luck for polling day.

22 *Philip and his team bustle out.*

23 Meg: *(on the phone)* Hey Davey, just checking if Rory's in bed already?
24 I'm about to head back to my hotel, I thought maybe I could
25 read him his story over the phone...

26 *SFX A door opens – someone comes into the hall.*

27 Meg: Oh, wait – they're here to lock up. I'll call you back. Hello?

28 *It's a man. A stranger. Meg senses immediately that something is off.*

1 Meg: Who are you? You can't be in here.

2 Man: Bitch. Treacherous bitch.

3 Meg: My office manager is just in the back...

4 Man: Liar.

5 Meg: Don't come any closer.

6 Man: Or what?

7 *He steps closer.*

8 Meg: I mean it.

9 *Meg backs away – into a chair. It clatters to the ground.*

10 Man: Someone needs to shut you up...

11 *He reaches for her. There is a tussle.*

12 Meg: Get off me. Get off.

13 *And then someone comes in – the woman (JAN) here to lock up.*

14 Jan: Hello? Hello? Who's in there? Oy, what you doing?

15 *The man pushes past Jan.*

16 Man: Out my way. Out my way.

17 *The man runs out.*

18 Meg: Call the police, please. Please just call the police?

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1 **SC26. INT. MEG'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. NIGHT.**

2 *Meg is in the kitchen, she opens the fridge and pours herself a large drink.*

3 *Davey comes down the stairs.*

4 Davey: Hello? Hello? Who's there.

5 Meg: It's me. Only me.

6 Davey: Bloody hell. You scared the life out of me. Thought you were
7 away until next Thursday (*Seeing her face*) Hey... are you?
8 What's happened? Hey, hey...

9 *Meg collapses into her brother's arms, crying.*

10

11 **SC27. INT. MEG'S BEDROOM. THE NEXT MORNING.**

12 *Davey knocks on Meg's bedroom door. She's already up – bustling about getting ready.*

14 Davey: I brought you a brew.

15 Meg: I haven't got time.

16 Davey: Meg, you can't seriously be going into work ... You were
17 assaulted.

18 Meg: I'm fine. I wasn't hurt. Not really.

19 Davey: You still need to look after yourself... One day off. Watch some
20 trashy telly, eat ice cream.

21 Meg: I can't. It's the debate on my Private Member's Bill next week
22 and there's so much still to do. I'm fine, really.

23 Davey: What have the police said?

24 Meg: Not a lot. I couldn't even describe him. Generic angry man.

25 Davey: But he knew you'd be there? At this campaign thing? It was you
26 he was looking for specifically?

27 Meg: I don't know. Maybe any mouthy woman would have done.

7

8 SC28. INT. HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT. MEG'S OFFICE.

9 Meg (V/O): I need to keep working. When I'm working, I'm fine. Charities,
10 landlords, housing associations have been working with me to
11 firm up the detail of my private member's bill. At the moment,
12 29% of privately rented properties and only 2% of social
13 housing comes furnished. So, if you need to move home
14 because you're fleeing domestic violence or because your
15 family has hit challenging financial circumstances, you're very
16 likely to end up in an unfurnished property. My Bill would
17 mean landlords and housing associations were legally required
18 to supply beds for any children under the age of eighteen,
19 should a family request it - just like they're legally required to
20 provide cookers, toilets, sinks, light fittings. Of course, there'll
21 be families – homeowners – we need to support in other ways.
22 But it's a good policy. I know it is. And I plan to do everything I
23 can to get it over the line.

24 Meg is typing.

25 Naomi: Meg? They've sent the Whip for next week.

26 Meg: And?

27 Naomi: It's not great. The debate on your bill – it's only a one-line Whip.

28 Meg: Bollocks.

29 Meg (v/o): You get a three-line Whip, literally a vote underlined 3 times
30 for 'Do as instructed. You HAVE to vote' But a one-line Whip is
31 'recommended' only.. So I'm gonna have to work even harder
32 to persuade my colleagues to come to my Bill .

1 Meg: I guess I've got a few more calls to make....

2 Naomi: Okay, but it's already nine o clock and I've... (got to go)

3 Meg: You head home. We'll catch up in the morning, yeah?

4 *Meg picks up the phone and dials.*

5 Meg: Siobhan? It's Meg Stokes....

6 *We fade out.*

7 *And then we hear a hoover.*

8 *Hours have passed.*

9 Cleaner: Sorry. I didn't think anyone was still here.

10 Meg: I was just leaving. Thanks.

11 Meg (V/O): **It's late. Really late. Only a few hours until I'm back for my first meeting in the morning. Home, then. Bed.**

13 *Meg is walking home. It is late. Dark.*

14 **Streetlight's out. I need to get on to the council about that.**

15 *There are heavy footsteps behind Meg.*

16 Meg (V/O): **Is he following me? Course he's not. Course he's not. You're being paranoid, Meg. Keep walking. Almost home. Cross the road.**

19 *Meg's footsteps speed up – crossing the road.*

20 Meg (V/O): **He's crossed too. Shit. Shit. Has he recognised me? Was he waiting for me?**

22 *The man shouts something.*

23 *Meg breaks into a run.*

24 *Meg slams the door behind her, breathing deeply.*

25 *Her phone rings. She jumps.*

26 *And then she answers it.*

1 Meg: Jesus, Davey, what time do you call this?
2 Davey: You're awake, aren't you? Rory had a nightmare, I thought he
3 might like to hear your voice.
4 Rory: Mummy, I'm scared.
5 Meg: Oh baby, hello, hello. It's all right my love, I'm here, I'm here.
6 Nothing to be scared of. Nothing to be scared of, angel.

7 **SC29. INT. HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT. OUTSIDE THE CHAMBER.**

8 **Meg (V/O):** I keep on working, working. Keeping focussed. And now, today
9 is the day: the second reading of my bill. Private Members Bills
10 are debated on Fridays – meaning MPs need to stay in
11 Westminster to participate, rather than going back to their
12 constituencies. And for a bill to pass, 100 MPs need to be
13 there. Whoever worked out this system didn't make it easy,
14 did they?
15 Meg: You're coming in, aren't you?
16 Noah: Course. And not just because... Not just because we're mates.
17 It's a good bill, Meg. Important.
18 Meg: I've been ringing round like a maniac trying to persuade people
19 to stay for it.
20 **MEG (V/O):** Private Members Bills are debated on Fridays – meaning MPs
21 need to stay in Westminster to participate, rather than going
22 back to their constituencies. And for a bill to pass, 100 MPs
23 need to be there. Whoever worked out this system didn't make
24 it easy, did they?
25 NOAH: I've rang round too.
26 MEG: That's... thank-you.
27 NOAH: Like I said, it's a good bill.
28 MEG: I owe you one, really.
29 NOAH: Tell you what, buy me a drink sometime.
30 MEG: Listen, I'm gonna go and give myself 5' quite before we go in.
31 NOAH: See you in there. Keep breathing. You'll be brilliant.

1 **SC30. INT. THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.**

2 **Meg (V/O):** **Ten minutes later I'm in the chamber. Sweaty palms, and heart**
3 **pounding. I have to introduce what I want to do and why.**
4 **There must be a 100 MP's – there must be – loads are here....I**
5 **haven't got time to do a head count....I'm on.**

6 *Meg addresses the house.*

7 Meg: This morning, like every morning, I called my little boy to ask
8 how he'd slept. It's a question parents ask all the time. But
9 for almost half a million children the answer is they slept
10 without a bed: on sofa cushions, salvaged mattresses, wooden
11 pallets even.

12 I know there are people in this house, who wouldn't understand.
13 Who think if you want a new bed, buy one. Who'll argue there
14 are charities doing excellent work in this field.

15 But this shouldn't be about charity. In modern Britain, G.Ps,
16 shouldn't be treating children for infected bed bug sores,
17 teachers shouldn't be finding children falling asleep on their
18 desks, too exhausted to focus. Children should not and must not
19 be allowed to bear the brunt of the cost of living crisis.

20 The landlord and tenancy act of 1985 set out the minimum a
21 landlord must provide – light fittings, sinks, toilets. But shouldn't
22 our families, our children, have more than the minimum? This
23 bill would require landlords to provide any tenants under 18
24 with a bed, should they request it. Surely every child has a right
25 to a bed? Because sleep is It's fundamental to– to our their
26 health, to our their ability to thrive, to survive even - and we
27 cannot in good conscience allow our children to be deprived of
28 it.

29 **Meg (V/O):** **I get to the end of my speech, hands shaking and then other**
30 **supportive MPs start sharing their stories from their own**
31 **constituencies. But then -**

32 Government M.P: I'm not sure if the unintended consequences of this bill have
33 been fully considered...

34 **Meg (V/O):** **Here we go...**

35

1 Government M.P: Do we really want to create an environment, where landlords
2 are disincentivised from letting family homes? Or where young
3 families are made to feel renting is a better option than buying
4 and furnishing their own home?

5 **Meg (V/O):** **And he goes on and on. We have until 2.30pm. If he keeps**
6 **going, we'll run out of time, he's going to talk the bill out.**
7 **Should I call a closure motion to shut him up? People are**
8 **leaving already. I start to do a quick head count.... 76, 77, 78...**

9 Government M.P: The Government is not a charity.... Where does the honourable
10 lady propose to get the money from? It's a naïve proposition
11 from a naïve inexperienced politician, who needs to fully realise
12 what the Government is already doing to help. It is my belief...

13 **Meg (V/O):** **For a private members bill to pass there needs to be one**
14 **hundred ayes. 85, 86, 87... It's not enough. Better to let him**
15 **talk than to force a vote and lose it... 2.30. He's still talking.**
16 **That's it. It's over. The bill will go back to the back of the**
17 **queue – essentially, there won't be another chance to debate**
18 **it. I haven't done enough.**

19

20 **SC31. HOUSES OF COMMONS. THE STRANGERS BAR. AFTER THE VOTE.**

21 *Noah approaches Meg in the bar.*

22 Noah: I'm sorry.

23 Meg: Yeah. Me too.

24 Noah: You we're great.

25 Meg: It doesn't matter though, does it? It wasn't enough.

26

27 **SC32. INT. THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT. LOBBY.**

28 *Meg is crossing the lobby, soon after her Private Member's Bill Debate. She is*
29 *accosted by a journalist.*

30 Journalist: Meg...? Lucy from the Enquirer. Our readers will be as
31 disappointed as you are about the bill. We can keep making
32 noise for you. Make it a campaign for the paper.

1 Meg: I'd appreciate that.
2 Journalist: If I could just get a quote to kick us off...
3 Meg: Now?
4 Journalist: Why do you think the bill failed?
5 Meg: I didn't get the numbers, did I? We got talked out.
6 Journalist: Yes, but why didn't you get the numbers?
7 Meg: Honestly? I think because too many people here, have no idea –
8 no real idea – what it's actually like to be skint. Too many
9 politicians find it easier to imagine themselves as a landlord than
10 as someone sick with anxiety because they can't afford a bed for
11 their kid.
12 Journalist: There are people who'd say it's a parent's responsibility to
13 provide for a child and if you can't afford to...
14 Meg: That's all very well in theory, isn't it? But these aren't theoretical
15 children. Like, I don't know how many people in this place have
16 ever had to question, really question if they can 'afford' to have
17 a child, but I have. When I got pregnant, I was twenty-four, a
18 single Mum, in and out of temp jobs. The thought of providing
19 for a kid, when I could barely provide for myself was terrifying.
20 Properly terrifying...

21 *Fade out on the interview*

22

23 **SC33. INT. MEG'S HOUSE. KITCHEN.**

24 Davey: (*Reading from the article*) Skint M.P considered termination.
25 Meg: I didn't choose the headline.
26 Davey: How could you? I mean, come on, Meg. How's Rory going to feel
27 reading this?
28 Meg: Rory can't read Biff and Kipper. I don't think he's going to be
29 subscribing to the Enquirer.
30 Davey: I'm serious, Meg. How's he going to feel? Knowing you almost
31 didn't...

1 Meg: I'm not ashamed of considering my options.

2 Davey: That isn't the point. It's private.

3 Meg: I'm not ashamed of who I am.

4 Davey: I'm not saying you should be.

5 Meg: If I want to talk about my experiences, that's my decision.

6 Davey: This isn't just about you though, is it? Have you even read the
7 comments? (*Reading the comments*) Kid would have been better
8 off dead than with a bitch like that for a Mum. Evil bitch. Doesn't
9 deserve a son.

10 Meg: Davey, stop.

11 Davey: You think he won't Google you, as soon as he's old enough? You
12 think he won't be scared senseless reading all of this?

13 Meg: So, what do you suggest? I teach him to keep quiet, say nothing,
14 just in case people say snide things on the internet?

15 Davey: I'm not saying keep quiet. But abortion - of all the things to talk
16 about. You must have known what the reaction would be like.
17 You must have.

18 Meg: And I chose to say it anyway. A different brother might be proud
19 of me.

20 Davey: I'm thinking about Rory. I mean Jesus, someone has to.

21 Meg: I beg your pardon?

22 Davey: You heard me.

23 Meg: How dare you? Rory is my son, Davey. Mine. Not yours.

24 Davey: No. He's not mine. But I'm the one wipes his arse, aren't I? Tucks
25 him up at night. Wipes his tears when he's sobbing his heart
26 out, missing you.

27 Meg: You wanted to look after him. You offered. Not like you had
28 much else on.

29 Davey: You what?

1 Meg: Looking after Rory has been the making of you. Better than
2 sitting round getting stoned with the same mates you've had
3 since you were seventeen, same shifts in the same dead-end
4 jobs.

5 Davey: How dare you! What? You're so much better than me, now, are
6 you?

7 Meg: I didn't mean...

8 Davey: Ungrateful cow. You wouldn't even be able to do the bloody job
9 if it wasn't for me.

10 Meg: I'm sorry, okay? I'm sorry. I just meant... you love looking after
11 Rory.

12 Davey: Yeah, well it's a good job, isn't it? Because at least he'll have me
13 if one these nutters does what he's threatening too.

14 Meg: What?

15 Davey: Do you never think about Rory? What it would do to him if...

16 Meg: Davey, stop.

17 Davey: Because I do. All the time. Keeps me up at night.

18 Meg: You shouldn't read that shit. You can't.

19 Davey: You're my kid sister, Meg. Just because it doesn't scare you.

20 Meg: Who said it doesn't scare me? That man, the thought that he'd...
21 That he could....

22 *And then she starts to cry. Really cry.*

23 Meg: I'm scared all the time too. But it's not just that man. All the men
24 like him.. It's... What if I'm putting all of us through all this and I
25 won't be able to change anything anyway because who am I to
26 believe I can?

27 Davey: Oh, Meg. Come here...

28 *They hug*

29

30

1 **SC34. INT. THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT. WHIP'S OFFICE.**

2 *Meg knocks on Amina's door.*

3 Amina: Meg, come in.

4 Meg: Thanks for seeing me. I'm not sure you're the right person
5 but...

6 Amina: Before we get started - I have news. Great news. Your bill is
7 going to be included in the Government's budget.

8 Meg: What?

9 Amina: They're ring-fencing money to support landlords and housing
10 associations: providing beds for under 18s will be a statutory
11 requirement.

12 Meg: Are you serious?

13 Amina: We'll need to look at the detail – but yes.

14 Meg: I don't believe it.

15 Amina: It's fantastic. Really excellent work.

16 Meg: Thanks. Thank-you. This is... I don't know what to say.

17 *The phone rings.*

18 Amina: Yes, no Meg Stokes is here now – I just told her. (*turning to Meg*)
19 Meg, I'm so sorry, I need to take this, can we reschedule?

20 Meg: But I haven't actually spoken to you about...

21 Amina: (*Into the phone*) Yes, no, I'm looking at it now. Just a sec. (*to*
22 *Meg*) Congratulations again. You should feel good Meg. Really
23 good. It's a big win.

24 **Meg (V/O): And it feels like it. It does. Until...**

25

26

27

28

1 **SC35. INT. MEG'S OFFICE**

2 Naomi: Meg, you should probably take a look at this...

3 Meg: What is it?

4 Naomi: The press release about the bed scheme.

5 *Meg reads*

6 Meg: It doesn't mention me at all. It doesn't even mention the bill.

7

8 **SC36. INT. HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT. AMINA'S OFFICE.**

9 *Amina is in her office. Meg knocks.*

10 Meg: I wanted to speak to you about the press release...

11 Amina: I see.

12 Meg: It implies the Leader's Office led on this – you wouldn't realise I

13 had anything to do with this.

14 Amina: It's clearer messaging, that's all. Opposition forces Government

15 to find a conscience.

16 Meg: But it was my bill...

17 Amina: And you should feel very proud of it. What does it matter whose

18 name is attached? Isn't it the making the difference that counts?

19 Meg: Of course, it matters that people know it was me.

20 Amina: Why? For your ego? I'm sorry Meg – but this isn't crowdfunding

21 a new community centre, in politics you won't always get a

22 round of applause. You're part of a bigger picture now. We

23 need to tell a story to the nation.

24 Meg: Don't patronise me.

25 Amina: I'm not.

26 Meg: Do you know how small my majority is? How much grief I get

27 from my constituents over the some of the party lines? But this.

28 Achieving this – that would mean something to them.

1 Amina: Meg, you know, your best chance of increasing that majority is if
2 the whole party is riding high.

3 Meg: But why at my expense? Don't we have to put up with enough
4 abuse as it is?

5 Amina: Sorry?

6 Meg: The abuse. The threats. How many people get called the names
7 we do, for just doing their job? Especially women. How many
8 have panic buttons fitted in their toddler's bedrooms?

9 Amina: Meg, I'm not sure where you're going with this, but Operation
10 Bridgier are here to protect you...

11 Meg: They protect us here and in our constituencies. But what about
12 everywhere else? That by-election... Some guy came into the hall
13 when I was alone there... It was horrible, he grabbed hold of me,
14 he, he.....The woman arrived to lock up. But if she hadn't... I
15 don't know what would have happened...

16 Amina: I had no idea...

17 Meg: I haven't talked about it. I haven't wanted to. But we need to,
18 don't we? We should warn women. We have to...

19 Amina: Meg, I can see you're upset. Rightly. And I'd encourage you to
20 pursue what happened with the police...

21 Meg: I have. I am. But mine's a spit in the ocean. Siobhan Ellerton was
22 raped.

23 Amina: What happened to Siobhan was terrible but it's rare.

24 MEG Are you sure?

25 Amina: I don't think scaring women away from this place is the solution.

26 Meg: Is that why you don't talk about it? The abuse. Because you must
27 get it.

28 Amina: Oh, believe me, I do. But every time I speak publicly about it - I
29 get the feeling someone out there is getting off on it. Someone
30 is thinking 'good', she sounds small and afraid – just how we
31 want her. And I don't want to keep giving them the satisfaction.

32 Meg: Then what? What?

1 Amina: Honestly? I don't know. But I do know it needs women like you
2 leading the change. Look - I don't know if you've heard but Leila
3 Nazari is likely to be leaving the Whip's Office. They'll be looking
4 for a replacement... It's not my decision, obviously, but I could
5 mention your name...

6 Meg: A Whip, me?

7 Amina: It's long hours. Exhausting. You'll piss everyone off. But if what
8 you want is to change things...

9 **Meg (V/O):** **Why's she asking me? To keep an eye on me? To shut me up?**
10 **To make up for taking all the credit from me? Or because she**
11 **actually thinks I'm good at this?**

12 Meg: I don't know... I'd need to speak to my brother... This job... it's
13 already a lot.

14 **SC37. EXT. A PARK IN PICKBOROUGH. A SUNDAY.**

15 *Davey and Meg are watching from a bench as Rory plays.*

16 Davey: Park's looking good. Better.

17 Meg: Yeah, it is.

18 Davey: That down to you?

19 Meg: Not just me.

20 Davey: There are MPs who don't get their faces in the paper. Who get
21 stuff done in their community. They're still making a difference,
22 aren't they?

23 Meg: And some extremist can still run into their office with a knife and
24 a grudge. If I'm going to do this, I have to do it, you know?

25 Davey: I know. So – are you doing it? Are you taking the promotion?

26 Meg: They haven't officially offered it me yet.

27 Davey: They will.

28 Meg: Then, I think I have to. I have to do this, Davey. Nothing changes,
29 does it? Not unless someone changes it.

30 **END OF EPISODE**