

From: reachforthetop@hotmail.com  
To: g.cullen@fastcon.org  
Subject: RE: moneybombing

Gordon, I can't have you sending letters to my work e-mail anymore. If you must, you can contact me through this address that I've set up; I'd rather you didn't.

There will have to be consequences for phoning—and humiliating—me during a cabinet meeting like you did yesterday. The public wants me to do the things I was elected to do, and cleaning up the mess you made is not one of them. I think it's best for the country that you don't exist for a while; it's best for us that you sit in hiding until I say it's okay for you to come out. Here is my proposal:

While there may be room in the new budget, after the next election, for your "Reclamation and Re-Zoning Project," it's still too sensitive an issue. I will call the election when the time is right but that could be years from now. It could be days. Once I do, you'll have carte blanche to do whatever needs to be done, within the boundaries of The Fence, of course. I think we have a

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mutual acquaintance that can help you with the finances of your project. As long as your “moneybombing” keeps ordinary Canadians out of harms way, I’m fine with it. I’ll mention you in a press conference. That’ll be our signal. That’s how you’ll know it’s time.

I have to govern, Gordon. These are hard times and you are only making them harder. So you will stay hidden. If you don’t, you’ll disappear. That is my offer.

And of course, once we do this, remember that it was my idea, not yours.

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ACT I

Friday

Scene 1 – A House in Suburb Five

There’s a single bed in the corner of the room. The walls are white and unpainted. A mound of bloody sheets is lumped on the floor. A few of

Helena's notebooks rest on a desk in the opposite corner, alongside a t-shirt in a pile by the phone and the little piece of paper with R.J.'s number. There is a picture on the desk of her parents, Gord and Jessie, and another girl, an older sister with Helena's eyes and a slimmer jaw. Her dark hair is in dreads.

The window is open. Spearholder, the Actor that followed them home, hangs from the windowsill by his dirty, mud-caked nails. He watched them both sleep. Marcus, the bum, didn't toss or turn. Helena was restless. She woke up constantly to sit at her desk, and stare vacantly at the man in her bed. Spearholder kept his eyes on her, trying to understand what it was that drew him here, to her bedroom. He's been hanging out of sight since sunup, since she last got out of bed. The pain in his

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arms hasn't subsided but he's used to it; he welcomes it.

Light pours over Helena's back through the large square window. Her head is propped up in her hand; a duvet curled around her and her desk chair. She watches Marcus rise and pull his jeans up, tucking them underneath his black jacket. There are sounds of pans and plates clanging from the kitchen below them.

"I'm sorry," she says first.

"No, it's cool. I get it," he replies. He wraps a length of torn sheet around his hand, still caked with blood from the broken glass the night before.

"There's nothing to get!"

He is silent.

"There's nothing to get! It's Just that they'll basically kill me if they see me here with you."

“Because you have a guy in your bed?”

“No,” Helena pauses. “Because... the city.”

“Yeah, and no one should go there. I know, I know.”

“Especially me,” she offers. He turns his back to find his toque and she can smell the dust of the city on his jacket. “You don’t understand. Especially me,” she repeats.

“Yeah, I know, I just...” Marcus trails off and his face betrays the feeling of rejection and the folding hurt in his chest. For a moment they both think back to their first conversation two weeks previous, leaning on opposite sides of the same checkout counter. He feels like he is losing her. She likes him less than she thought she did. Neither says anything. Helena forces a smile.

“Go and get that thing looked at,” she says. The pain in Marcus’ chest feels lighter as he looks down at his spotted white hand and smirks.

He sits up on the sill of the open window and asks, “When do I get to see you again?” Spearholder drops to the grass below, rolling behind a bush.

“I’m not sure. When are you done filming?”

“I think today is the last day. I’m meeting Terry at, ah, at around 9:30. I guess. Right after I get my hand checked out.”

“So you’ll be pretty busy all day?”

“Yeah... will you? How about, I mean, would you like to stay over tonight? My place at sundown?” Marcus’ voice is hopeful.

“Sure, tonight,” she replies after some deliberation. “Your place.”

“My place. Sundown,” Marcus smiles and takes a length of bed sheet from her. She braces her weight against the wall, holding him in the window long enough to exchange a smile. He rappels down the house into the backyard, landing beside the cherry tree and far enough away from the first floor windows.

Helena puts on the shirt she slept in and breathes in the city again. She closes her eyes and lets the smell evoke memories of late nights and backstage parties, of laughing with her sister and running down Queen Street with her shoes off. When she opens her eyes again she thinks only of Marcus and wishes she had said something more.

The brown brick house, three storey’s high, stands thin on its plot. She can see some of the

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other houses on the street from her window, erect on their tiny lawns, cherry trees in their backyards, repeating endlessly down Eggleton Drive. In the distance, the monorail chugs away from the City Centre at the heart of Suburb Five.

Helena straightens her shoes next to her parents' by the front door. The carpeted staircase curves up to the right and the hardwood floors track to the kitchen at the back of the house, towards the clattering sound of cupboards and flatware. On the left is the dining room with its finished oak table and matching oak cabinet. On the right is the family room with its leather couch and flat screen television and the fat, vinyl blinds that let knives of morning light break through.

The window to the backyard is opened slightly. Spearholder lifts his eyes to it as Helena

enters the kitchen. The room is narrow with a short marble counter and a distressed pine table, marked with the scars and scratches of everyday use. Jessie is behind the counter in a lavender yoga suit. Her light brown ponytail bounces as she prepares spinach omelettes. Gord sits at the table in his green fall jacket, his legs dangling off of his chair like he's ready to leave, flipping through newspaper pages with focus and speed. Helena pulls a bottle of orange-coloured juice from the fridge and Jessie stops plating omelettes to give her a kiss good morning.

“I almost didn't see you there, Dad. You were so quiet. Good morning to you,” Helena offers sarcastically, bringing the juice to the table and tousling Gord's white hair.

“Shh, Helena. Amir called this morning and said that the Prime Minister finally mentioned your father in a press conference. It’s in the paper,” Jessie whispers, walking to the table with three plates. “He’s just excited to read the article.”

Jessie sits down, placing the smallest omelette in front of her. Helena’s is the second smallest. They begin eating and a practiced silence falls over the table. “Have you found it yet honey?”

“Yeah, Dad. Tell us what it says.” Helena’s over-excited tone is interrupted by Gord’s extended finger.

“You, Miss... you don’t get to be sarcastic until you fix those holes in the bathroom,” he says, pointing. He doesn’t look up from the paper. Shapes of steam colour the plate around his eggs.

“I told you that I’d get it done soon.”

“You told me that last week. Today, please.”

“I don’t see what the big deal is.”

Gord’s eyes lift to hers, the paper leaning into the grease of his eggs. His voice is low and hard: “Do you know how much this house cost?”

“A hundred thousand dollars,” Helena moans.

“Ninety-seven thousand five-hundred when the no-money-downs went up after the evacuation. Do you have any idea what real estate like this will be worth once I get that Fence taken down?”

“At least five times that.”

“At least *seven* times as much. This house is an investment, for *you*. We didn’t buy it so you could let it fall apart. You’ve got to start taking care of it. I’d like to see at least one of my daughters looking out for her future.”

Helena drops her fork.

“Dad, we’re neighbours. You come over every day for breakfast and complain about the state of the house, but you bought this house. You want the holes fixed? You do it. Aren’t you my landlord or something? I only took this house because Beth—”

Gord puts a hand into the air.

“This is it, here it is,” Gord’s voice heightens. “Here, listen. *‘PM Confirms Election Rumours.’*” Jessie reaches for Helena’s half-finished plate and smiles at Gord as he skims through sentences. “...and if...’ wait. “...regarding his plan...’ wait, here: ‘though speculators believe that Prime Minister Harper was only addressing the situation in Toronto to better his chances of securing his 7<sup>th</sup> straight electoral victory in six years.’”

Gord chuckles and pulls a corner of the paper down. “That’s Harpy for you. Takes any chance he gets. They would have voted him out right before the riots, but he didn’t miss a beat. Hell, I was sick when our high school went to the *Reach for the Top* nationals—you know, that old high school quiz show. I think I told you this story before, Helena. Anyway, I was sick and the bus was waiting to take us to the nationals, and he just climbed up onto the bus and took my place. We would’ve been a man short, too.” Gord is silent for a moment, coughs, and continues:

“Harper went on to announce that he has been in talks with Gordon Cullen over the past few years about finding a solution to the “housing difficulties” in the MegaCity and that he and Cullen have devised a plan that will help get the ordinary

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Canadians in Toronto back on their feet.” Jessie claps. “Cullen is the ex-CEO of FastCon, the defunct urban development firm responsible for the pre-fabricated airdrop high-rises that many real estate experts blame for the initial overpopulation and devaluing of Toronto land, and the subsequent Queen’s Park Actors’ Riots and military evacuation of the city that took place in February of last year.” Gord trails off and looks at his eggs, spotted with black ink.