

INT. FOCUS PARTY HQ, DAY

Simon, Steve, Peter and Melanie are all sat on chairs around their small open-plan office. There's no meeting room, and the room's not big enough for them all to sit round one big table.

STEVE

One word Simon - fragmentation. It ain't easy to reach 'the people' these days, what with digital TV, the internet...

SIMON

I'd have thought that would have made it much easier to reach 'the people'.

STEVE

It's BECAUSE of all this new media that we can't get our message out. Too much distraction. Who wants to watch a political broadcast when they can watch a celebrity eat kangaroos' bollocks?

Simon looks perplexed.

STEVE (CONT'D)

The best way to engage with Joe public is through celebrities. You know, Heat, OK, Big Brother..

The penny drops, and Simon looks excited.

SIMON

I could appear on a celebrity show!

PETER

(Sneering) To do that people would have to have heard of you.

STEVE

Thanks Peter. (To Simon) It's been done. George Galloway. You'd struggle to top that cat moment.

SIMON

That was a good thing?

STEVE

Well it got him noticed. And that's what you need at the moment.

SIMON

To look like a cat?

PETER

(Hushed) Twat more like..

MELANIE

What about a celebrity interview?  
Blair used to go on Richard and  
Judy.

STEVE

With respect love, he ain't gonna  
get on there - we're looking at The  
Wright Stuff as our best option.

MELANIE

Don't 'love' me. Anyway, I was  
thinking you could push the  
sporting angle. Maybe Question of  
Sport, Soccer AM - or even Inside  
Sport.

PETER

(Sneering) With that nice John  
Inverdale?

STEVE

Yeah, actually that's not a bad  
idea angel. Give 'em a ring and  
sort it out will ya?

INT. TV STUDIO

Simon, Steve and Melanie are led down a very bland corridor  
by LUCY, a very prim and efficient assistant producer. The  
only sign that this is a TV studio, is the names on the  
doors.

SIMON

So John won't be doing the  
interview himself?

LUCY

Mr Inverdale has been called away.  
He doesn't usually do all the  
interviews anyway, as I'm sure  
you're aware.

STEVE

He's here when it's Beckham or  
Johnny Wilkinson.

LUCY

Quite. Besides, you're not the  
first politician we've had on the  
show.

SIMON

Oh really, who else have you had?

LUCY

Ming Campbell, John Prescott, even Jeffery Archer have all used their sporting past to promote themselves.

MELANIE

You mean their party?

LUCY

They may have mentioned that too - I don't remember.

Lucy stops and consults the sheet of paper on her clipboard. Looks at the number on the door, and pushes the door open.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Here we are. There are tea and coffee making facilities inside. Somebody will come and take you to make-up in about fifteen.

Lucy, turns on her heels and starts to walk back down the corridor, as they file into the room. Steve stops and calls after her.

STEVE

And you'll be?

Lucy stops and turns around. She is clearly irritated.

LUCY

On the studio floor, getting ready for the show. And seeing to the other guests.

STEVE

Oh, I see. The other guests get looked after properly.

LUCY

Frankly, you should be grateful you're here at all.

STEVE

(Slightly menacingly) Is that right?

LUCY

(Smiling sarcastically) Do you really think we call everyone the night before? You were the only ones desperate enough to appear at such short notice.

Lucy heads back down the corridor, and Steve enters the room, his head slightly bowed.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO, IN FRONT OF CAMERAS

MATT STEER (30s) a slightly full of himself sports presenter who has never played professional sport, joined by Simon. They sit opposite each other on over-sized armchairs, with a coffee table and two glasses of water between them.

MATT

I'm joined here this evening by Simon Easterby, the newly appointed leader of the Focus Party, making his first media appearance...

SIMON

Actually Matt, I have given an interview before - when I led Rushden and Diamonds to the fourth round of the Anglia Windows Trophy in 1995. We were the only non-league side left in it, and I'd just....

MATT

Yes, of course, a memorable moment...moving on, our first question tonight is about leadership...

SIMON

When I was captain of Mansfield Town...

Simon's pager BEEPs. He breaks off to turn round and unclip it from his belt.

MATT

Little bit of advice for you. Put the thing on vibrate, and keep it somewhere you can see it.

SIMON

Oh thanks. Where do you keep yours?

INT. PETER'S FLAT

Peter sits on the sofa, alone, with a glass of whisky in hand. The half-empty bottle is next to him on a side table. He is watching Simon's interview on TV.

PETER

Prick. Think you're funny?

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO, IN FRONT OF CAMERAS

Matt looks annoyed and slightly flustered by Simon's question.

MATT

Any chance we can get back to the question in hand?

SIMON

Well, after my playing days were brought to a premature end...

MATT

You were injured?

SIMON

Er, no. When Mansfield Town released me...

MATT

No one else came in for you?

SIMON

I considered a career as a pundit...

MATT

Most of them are very successful ex-players, would you count yourself in that category?

SIMON

I've played against the best - Al, Lee...

MATT

So you and Alan Shearer are friends?

SIMON

Well, I know how to get in touch with him if I had something important to say...

MATT

Like?

Simon looks a bit stunned.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO, BEHIND THE CAMERAS

Steve and Melanie exchange a worried glance. Steve, stabbing at his phone, texts the word JOKE and presses send.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO, IN FRONT OF CAMERAS

There's a muffled BEEP. Simon looks down at the pager between his legs.

SIMON

Er, we've kidnapped your daughter.  
That sort of thing..

MATT

You mean you know them well enough  
to joke with? It sounds a bit poor  
taste though.

SIMON

Well, you know how it is - a bit of  
friendly banter between mates.

MATT

So did you call on any of your  
famous friends for advice when you  
tried your hand at management?

SIMON

Um, we didn't really have that kind  
of relationship....

Matt leans in, sensing the kill.

MATT

Not even when you were desperate?  
You lost your first seven in a row  
when you were in charge at  
Kenilworth Road.

INT. PETER'S FLAT

Peter is now slumped on the sofa. There is much less whisky  
in the bottle than before.

PETER

Heh heh, loser. You're an even  
bigger fuck-up than I thought!

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO, IN FRONT OF THE CAMERAS

Simon pulls himself up in his seat and tries to reassert  
himself.

SIMON

I did speak to a few people  
actually, but in the end events  
conspired against me.

MATT

When you say events - are you talking about the supporters? They set fire to your car didn't they?

SIMON

They take their football very seriously in Northamptonshire.

MATT

So it seems. Now that was four years ago. What have you been doing since?

SIMON

Well, as I said, I considered a career in punditry, but found my true calling was politics.

INT. PETER'S FLAT

The whisky bottle is nearly finished now.

PETER

True calling my arse. If Marjorie wasn't such a bitch...

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO, IN FRONT OF THE CAMERAS

Simon begins to relax a little, taking a glass of water and leaning back in his chair.

MATT

And I understand it's been a pretty meteoric rise. Elected as a councillor only last year, you are now an MP and leader of the party!

SIMON

Well it has been a bit of a rollercoaster, but I've just taken each day as it comes, and tried not to look too far ahead.

MATT

Right. As an MP, aren't you supposed to plan ahead, think strategically, that sort of thing?

Again, Simon looks panicked. Another muffled BEEP, and Simon looks down at his pager.

SIMON

Um, we are conducting a root and branch review of all our policies at the moment - so we'll have some exciting announcements to make soon!

MATT

And what makes you stand out from the other political parties at Westminster?

Simon turns white and starts to make none-too-subtle signals for help to Steve and Melanie off camera.

MATT (CONT'D)

(Smirking) Take your time.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO, BEHIND THE CAMERAS

An exasperated Steve texts another message. Melanie looks on, her jaw rigid with tension.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO, IN FRONT OF THE CAMERAS

Simon's pager BEEPS again.

SIMON

Regionalism! We demand regional assemblies for the whole of the UK. We're the national localist party.

MATT

Won't that just waste taxpayers money with yet another layer of beauraucracy?

SIMON

We just want to make it more like America, with a small big government, and big small governments. After all, you can't fault their system - can you?

MATT

Indeed. Well, thank you for joining us on Inside Sport Mr Easterby. It's been very enlightening.

SIMON

No, thank you. Remind me, who was it you played for again? It's on the tip of my tongue.

MATT

I didn't.

SIMON

Oh yes, that's right. Sorry, my  
mistake.