OUR HOUSE: THE CAPITOL PLAY PROJECT
By Alan Berks
with Leah Cooper, Wonderlust Productions, and Capitol workers.
Music by Becky Dale.
Lyrics by Alan Berks, Becky Dale, and Leah Cooper
Directed by Leah Cooper with Alan Berks

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PLACE:
Minnesota. The State Capitol Complex.

TIME:
Present. After a recent election.

LOCATIONS:
The Vault.
Room 316.
Senate Hearing Room G15.
The Rotunda.
In the public space, on the stairs, by the columns and railings on the first, second, and third floors around the rotunda. Visible from wherever you stand.

CHARACTERS (5):
SHEILA
OSCAR
ANGELA
MATT
SARA

Chorus (5):
LEGISLATOR
ADVOCATE
CIVIL SERVANT
EXPERT
LOBBYIST

Additional Characters (6):
CONSTRUCTION WORKER GHOST/PRESS 1/SECURITY GUARD/EXERCISER
CIVIL WAR GHOST/TOURIST/PRESS 2/REPRESENTATIVE/TOURIST
INDUSTRY/MAINTENANCE/NATIVE GHOST/DULUTH DAVE/ZEALOT 1

11/29/17
PROSPERITY/CASS GILBERT/GOOD DAVE/ZEALOT 2
AGRICULTURE/DIRTY DAVE

TOUR GUIDES (3)
VIDEO PRE-SHOW

On video monitors near the entrance and in the waiting area/makeshift lobby we create for the audience to mingle, the following segment plays first near the entrance and then a few times on a loop, right before the show starts.

As much as possible it should maintain the clubby feel of an Almanac segment.

PRESS #1
It’s been two months since the new governor won his office in a surprise victory, but he still hasn’t announced his staff, commissioners—

PRESS #2
Yes! MMB—Minnesota Management and Budget—should be working right now with his staff to set his priorities. His budget—

PRESS #1
Which is legally due 5 weeks after swearing in—

PRESS #2
Yes! So, this is crazy? I mean, didn’t we learn anything from Ventura?

PRESS #1
Well, I think, some people liked Governor Ventura.

PRESS #2
No one who works here does.

PRESS #1
I don’t think you can say—

PRESS #2
I’ve had a presence in this building since I started my career in 1979, officed here since 1999, and I don’t think I have ever walked into the building and not been struck by the grandeur of the place, the beauty of it. The men who built this building made fortunes in Minnesota, and you can tell that they really thought they were a fabulous state, that they were really becoming someone special, and I can vouch to them that in Minnesota, state government is where its at. More important to how people live their lives than the federal government or the local government. And I believe that those men are turning over in their graves considering the disrespect that some people now show towards good government. I don’t even want to come to work some days.

11/29/17
PRESS #1 (trying to maintain professionalism)
Ummm. . .The questions we’re asking today, on this first day of the new session, are: How will the *duly-elected new governor* translate his priorities in service to the people of Minnesota?

PRESS #2 (directly to the camera, desperate)
Just tell us who will be leading the Department of Transportation. Tweet it! Management and Budget? Labor? Agriculture? Education? WHO WILL BE YOUR NEW CHIEF OF STAFF?
I never thought I’d miss Jessie Ventura.
LIVE PRE-SHOW

In a waiting room on the ground floor, just above the rathskellar, the AUDIENCE gathers to read material about the restoration and mingle. Ideally, some sounds from the building penetrate the noise the AUDIENCE is making.

At 7:30 pm, from below them, in the rathskellar, a voice rings through the sounds and echoes (either naturally or with two voices playing off each other).

ZEALOT #1
Let us develop the resources of our land, call forth its powers, build up its institutions, promote all its great interests, and see whether we also, in our day and generation, may not perform something worthy to be remembered.

(ZEALOT rises up the steps at the north side of the room and repeats, louder, his disheveled appearance belies the authority of his voice. AUDIENCE should be torn between the attractiveness of what he says and their desire to back away from him. He, or she, looks like he might not have showered recently.)

Let us develop the resources of our land, call forth its powers, build up its institutions, promote all its great interests, and see whether we also, in our day and generation, may not perform something worthy to be remembered.

TOUR GUIDE #1 quickly and urgently gets AUDIENCE’S attention on the opposite side of the room. It’s a comfort to know where to look and to look away from the ZEALOT.

TOUR GUIDE #1
Hi. Hello.

TOUR GUIDE #2 and TOUR GUIDE #3 rise above the AUDIENCE’S heads by stepping onto “soap boxes” almost in unison with TOUR GUIDE #1. A split second behind.

TOUR GUIDE #2
Hello!

TOUR GUIDE #3
Hi! Hello!
TOUR GUIDE #1
We'll be your interpreters for today's events. It's an exciting time to be at the Capitol. Obviously. With the new session. The new governor. Lots of questions.

Welcome!

TOUR GUIDE #2

Hi!

TOUR GUIDE #3

ZEALOT #2 (from the opposite entrance)
Empires place their reliance upon sword and cannon: Republics put their trust in the citizens’ respect for law. If law be not sacred a free government will not endure.

Yes, thank you, yes.

(ZEALOTS disappear.)

As this is a public building, the public can come here to say whatever they like. As you can see.

TOUR GUIDE #2 (congenial, lightly)
Once, I remember a woman who marched on the steps to protest the killing of racing dogs in Spain. It was just her with her dog, and a sign, on the steps. It was just, awesome.

TOUR GUIDE #1
And some people read the bible or, as you heard, the inspiring quotations that you'll see carved on the wall when we reach the second and third floors.

TOUR GUIDE #2
Or, an issue will just explode, and people will want to come to the Capitol to make their voice heard.

ZEALOT #1 and #2(from below)
Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.

TOUR GUIDE #3
That’s Thomas Jefferson [who said that]. I love the founding fathers. Love them.

TOUR GUIDE #1
We'll be starting today on the lowest level and moving up as we go. If you have a blue wristband on your program, stick with me.

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TOUR GUIDE #2
If you have a red wristband, I'm your interpreter.

TOUR GUIDE #3
If you have a green wristband, I'm your interpreter.

TOUR GUIDE #1
But let me begin with a story that I think will help you understand this journey.

TOUR GUIDE #3
Why are we starting with your story? Why don’t we start with my story?

TOUR GUIDE #1
We have to start somewhere.

TOUR GUIDE #2 (to AUDIENCE)
It’s important for you to understand that we’re not telling THE story of the Capitol. We’re telling A story of the Capitol.

TOUR GUIDE #1
Does anyone remember Gov. Harold Stassen?

TOUR GUIDE #3

TOUR GUIDE #1
Gov Stassen was our 25th Governor, and he almost defeated Dewey for the Republican nomination for President in 1948. I was working the information desk in 2000, and he actually was still running for President.

TOUR GUIDE #3
Governor Sibley was our first Governor. Governor Ramsey. Governor Swift. Miller, Marshall, Austin.

TOUR GUIDE #2
We’re called interpreters instead of guides because obviously we have to interpret what we think is important, and it’s extremely subjective.

TOUR GUIDE #1
Governor Stassen was going to bow out of the race for President for the final time. Chairs had been laid out for the press. A podium had been set up. But no one showed up. He was a distinguished politician but his day was past, and he didn’t know that he was about to give a speech to an empty room.
TOUR GUIDE #3
Governor Knute Nelson approved the building of this Capitol and then served as a United States Senator from Minnesota for 28 years.

TOUR GUIDE #2 (to #3)
They can see the portraits and read the bios when we’re done! They can get lots of information about the history of Minnesota. We have a story to tell them. Ok?

(TOUR GUIDE #3 grudgingly stops talking. SHEILA enters.)

SHEILA
Excuse me. It’s my first day at work, and I was wondering—

TOUR GUIDE #2
O please! Can’t you see we’ve got people here!

(SHEILA silently retreats.)

TOUR GUIDE #1
Right before the speech, a tour bus driver showed up with a group of Russian diplomats, and asked if I could keep an eye on them because they had been drinking all night and puking in the tour bus, and he had to get it cleaned before he could drive them any further.

(Waits for a second. Is not interrupted. Both TOUR GUIDE #2 and #3 are listening.)

At this point, the Russian diplomats were kind of subdued, hung-over, but wearing suits. So! I sat them in the chairs in the rotunda. Gov. Stassen gave his speech, and it was a good speech, about fighting for what you believe in and making the country a better place, and when he was done they leaped to their feet and applauded. And I remember how proud he looked when he shuffled away, not knowing they weren’t press and probably didn’t understand a word he said. He died less than year later.

(Pause.)

I think that story puts what you are about to witness in a certain context. Also, it may help to see yourselves cast in certain roles today, like the Russian diplomats. Please turn off your cell phone and blue wristbands follow me.

TOUR GUIDE #2
Red wristbands, follow me.

TOUR GUIDE #3
Green wristbands, follow me.
(TOUR GUIDES lead their respective groups in three different directions. TG ! leads their group around the East side of the building to the elevators on the South side of the building. TG 2 leads their group down the North staircase at the back of the room. TG 3 leads their group around the West side to the West stairs. They should talk to the groups the way tour guides would—pointing out a detail here or there—but also include some of the following information.)

TOUR GUIDES

. . . In this building, the Legislature meets. The Supreme Court sometimes. The Governor and the Attorney General have offices here. . . Yet, the building also has a ceremonial purpose.

(They each bring their group to a different entrance to the Vault.)

This newly renovated space is a central hub where all the tunnels, and the buildings, and their various purposes on the Capitol campus, and the many employees who work here, may pass by each other on their way to do the People’s business.

(As each group arrives at the vault, they wait outside the closed double doors of their side, group 1 on the South, group 2 on the North, group 3 on the West. Once they have all arrived, TGs open all the doors simultaneously. Inside the cast is frozen in the act of doing the People’s work, conversing, walking, etc. Music plays and the cast starts moving. TGs lead their audiences to seats on the opposite side they entered from, becoming part of the chaos and din themselves. As audience members pass cast members, actors freeze in response, step back, change direction, continue on, until the entire audience is seated. Once the entire audience is seated, music shifts, and the song begins.)

END OF PRE-SHOW
Our cast, but especially CHORUS, SHEILA, MATT and SARA, move through the space in a fluid, now slightly less chaotic way.

**CIVIL SERVANT, EXPERT, TOUR GUIDES (+ LEGISLATOR, LOBBYIST, ADVOCATE OFF)**

*Welcome to the People’s House.*
*Did you look at the paintings in the ceilings?*
*Did you notice the carvings and dramatic friezes?*
*Designed to awaken civic feelings?*

*Welcome to the People’s House*
*Did you climb the marble steps and see the view?*
*Were you moved by the vision and the statues?*
*Do you feel that the government is you?*

*Welcome to the People’s House.*

**CIVIL SERVANT**

_Those figures, peaceful memorials, the gardens, the art,_
_Remind me I work where the sum is larger than my small part._

**CIVIL SERVANT, EXPERT, TOUR GUIDES (+ LEGISLATOR, LOBBYIST, ADVOCATE OFF)**

*Welcome to the People’s House.*

(MATT and SARA step out of the din, walking and talking like on _The West Wing_)

**MATT**

Do you ever imagine—

**SARA**

Imagine I’m in an episode of the _West Wing_? Absolutely. So much of what we do is just work. Printing things, signing things, sending things, boring.

**MATT**

Late at night, when my footsteps are echoing through the hallways, I imagine _Mr. Smith Goes to Washington_.

**SARA**

Or _Veep_. I sometimes imagine I’m in _Veep_. But with less swear words.

**MATT**

But not _House of Cards_! No way _House of Cards_!

**SARA**

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Not in Minnesota.

(Cast moves at full speed again.)

EXPERT

Under the moon, I met my lover on the steps.
To talk about the latest budget fight.
There’s a passion for our state that we share,
Falling in love while we debate what’s wrong and right.

(The cast freezes, surrounding SHEILA, center.)

SHEILA

Excuse me. It’s my first day at work, and I was wondering—

I’ve never actually been inside the Capitol before. I’ve been outside, because every year, on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, I brought my daughter Angela down to the rally on the steps so she could see that people do make a difference.

Except, I remember this vividly, we’d park the car and stop at Sears to go to the bathroom. Cause I was sure the doors to the Capitol were locked. You think about these things when you have small children.

It was always so cold, and we’d all get bundled up. Jumpers and moon boots. Family and friends would come and stay with us because we were living in the city then, and, it didn’t matter what color you were, friends who were marching in the rally the next day would come and stay with us. When Angela was little, she said the Capitol looked like a rubber ducky. All the people marching around it were the water, and it was looking out for us.

The doors are open. No metal detectors. The bathrooms here are gorgeous. No one told me. No one helped us feel welcome here.

Excuse me. It’s my first day at work, and I was wondering—

TOUR GUIDES

Welcome to the People’s House
How do you figure that this place is Minnesotan?
Marble columns and goofy paintings?
Who takes the blame for these pretentious decorations?

CASS GILBERT

It made my name. [Tour Guides: Cass Gilbert]
It launched my career. [He built the U.S. Supreme Court.]
It built my brand. [He designed every piece of furniture here.]
It gave focus to a young land. [We’re exceptional.]
PROTESTERS
No justice, no peace! No justice, no peace!

TOUR GUIDES
Welcome to the People’s House.

PROTESTERS
No justice, no peace! No justice, no peace!

TOUR GUIDES (louder)
Welcome to the People’s House.

PROTESTERS
No justice, no peace! No justice, no peace!

TOUR GUIDES (extremely loud)
Welcome to the People’s House.

SHEILA
I never thought I would be working here, I’m just a concerned citizen, a mother, with a black child. My child is why I am here. I love my kid. I don’t want her to fall through the cracks, but I don’t want anybody’s kids to fall through the cracks. And whatever I can do to help, if I need to meet people, if I need to address folks, whatever I need to do in this role ... I want to help.

ANGELA (entering and repeating)
No Justice, no peace! No Justice, no peace!

SHEILA
And that is my daughter.

CHORUS
Welcome to the People’s House
Don’t pay attention to occasional cost overrun
Just hear the history echo through majestic halls
Of this place where your business gets done.

ANGELA + PROTESTORS
No justice, no peace. No justice, no peace!

CHORUS
Welcome to the People’s House!

END OF SCENE 1
SCENE 2

The music subsides and the choreography devolves into what simply appears like movement.

ANGELA takes center stage.

ANGELA

No Justice! No Peace!

(SECURITY GUARD approaches.)

I have a right to be here.

(Pause.)

SECURITY GUARD

You can't have a sign on a stick, don'tcha know.

ANGELA

I can't have a protest sign? I can't protest here?!

SECURITY GUARD

You can have a protest sign. You can't have the stick.

(Shrug.)

Also, balloons with helium in them. I don't make the rules.

(ANGELA is puzzled but she does remove the stick from her sign. SECURITY GUARD takes it and walks away. ANGELA gets right in front of CIVIL SERVANT as she walks by.)

ANGELA

No Justice! No Peace!

(CIVIL SERVANT tries to walk around her but ANGELA won't let her.)

CIVIL SERVANT

I'm non-partisan staff.

ANGELA

So you don't care.

CIVIL SERVANT

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No. That’s not what non-partisan means. I work for both sides. I’m a civil servant.

ANGELA

What about being on the right side?

CIVIL SERVANT (side-stepping)
I have so much work to do. You don’t understand.

(LOBBYIST steps forward as CIVIL SERVANT gets by.)

LOBBYIST
It’s good that you’re here, that you’re out there making your voices heard. Your voices matter to the legislators.

ANGELA

Who are you?

LOBBYIST
I’m not important. I get along with everyone. Technically, I’m a registered lobbyist but really—

ANGELA

You’re part of the problem.

LOBBYIST
That’s not how things really work.

(moving on)

But good luck translating the noise you make into legislation. Think about giving me a call when you need me.

(LEGISLATOR steps up to ANGELA.)

LEGISLATOR
You can come and talk to me any time. I have an open door policy. Anytime. Especially if you live in my district.

ANGELA

What are you going to do about—

LEGISLATOR
Talk to my legislative aide about setting up an appointment.

(SARA steps forward.)
SARA
I can give you fifteen minutes 3 weeks from now.

LEGISLATOR
I enjoy working for all Minnesotans—especially the ones in my district. Which, as you can imagine, makes me very busy.

(LEGISLATOR moves on. SARA stands by with calendar. SHEILA steps forward.)

SHEILA
Angela?

ANGELA
I'm not talking to you, Mom. Not if you're going to work near this new governor.

SHEILA
I took a job here for the same reason you're protesting. To make a difference. I'm so proud of you.

ANGELA
Except they don't want us here. Do you see any black faces?

CIVIL SERVANT (overhearing)
That's not fair. We are trying to be more inclusive.

ANGELA
There's a neighborhood full of African-Americans two blocks away. How hard is it really to include them?

LEGISLATOR
The doors are open. If people showed up for hearings

ANGELA
They have jobs. Why don't you just take a walk down the street?

SHEILA
Angela, I raised you better than to be rude to people you don't know.

ANGELA
Mom, I know you count the black faces everywhere we go, I've watched you steel yourself to the way white people talk down to you.

SHEILA
I raised you to see people as potential allies no matter where they start and to value the progress we've made in the last 50 years.
ANGELA (in the face of EXPERT walking by)
No Justice! No Peace! No Justice! No Peace!

EXPERT (trying to get away)
Uh, um, uh. I’m an expert on environmental policy. I can’t pay attention to every issue. I’m sorry. Understanding this one issue is hard enough. It’s keeping the water clean—and, um, it’s mostly not about partisan politics actually. We just keep the state running.

ADVOCATE (stepping forward, to ANGELA)
Don’t take it personally. Politics doesn’t have feelings. Or logic. I’ve been working on these issues all my life from the outside, as an activist, like you. It’s slow work. You cry a little, and then you have to get a little numb to the realities at the Capitol.

ANGELA (to EVERYONE)
It sounds to me like you’re all basically saying that you don’t care that this crazy new governor gets elected or that the system was built to be unfair to people like me. You act like its business as usual.

(EVERYONE stops and looks.)

CHORUS (together?)
If I didn’t care, would I put up with the regular abuse?

LEGISLATOR
My father was the fix-it guy here when I was a kid, and I think I was ten when I decided to be a legislator. Because I saw what a difference I could make sitting in the chair where people voted.

ADVOCATE
I was on my way to a enter a Dominican convent when I stopped to visited Hubert Humphrey’s casket, lying in state up in the rotunda. Because of the great Hubert Humphrey, I knew I wanted to take action in the world. To make it better.

LOBBYIST
My grandfather was a legislator, my father an activist. My family shaped this state, and I’m proud of being a part of that.

EXPERT
While I earned my Ph’d, I realized that there was no better place to affect the roots of the system. Not just earn a paycheck but really make long-lasting change.

CIVIL SERVANT
When I was a child, I loved every trip to the Capitol with my family. I loved getting to hear people— I’d sit in the galleries in the house or senate chambers forever and listen to
speeches bout who knows what. Loved that someone could make a difference with their words. To be a part of the arguments and the negotiations and the effort to make a better world. Simply being on staff, simply working here, is the best job I can imagine.

CHORUS

We were born caring.

ANGELA

And I was born with this skin color in a culture that refuses to admit that it matters when it obviously does. Otherwise, Philando Castille would be alive.

(Silence. For a second. Then, CHORUS overlaps with:

LOBBYIST

Listen. All of us felt that.

CIVIL SERVANT

We care. We do care. Listen.

LEGISLATOR

Listen. That isn’t fair. You don’t understand what happened.

EXPERT

Listen. Even the nonpartisan staff needed to talk about it, and we try very hard to keep our feelings to ourselves.

ADVOCATE

Listen... Listen... Listen. We are trying to change that system.

SHEILA (cutting everyone off)

You’re not listening!

(pause.)

LEGISLATOR

Who are you?

SHEILA

Does it matter?

EXPERT

It generally does around here.

SHEILA
I thought everyone could just stop talking over each other for a second. If I could ask some questions, then—

(Overlapping)

CIVIL SERVANT
I have got so much work to do.

ADVOCATE
We’re working on it.

EXPERT
This problem isn’t in my area.

LEGISLATOR
People don’t understand what we’re trying to accomplish here.

LOBBYIST
This is not how things work around here.

(As they talk over each other and move around, the chants from the protestors outside the room become louder and ANGELA joins in.)

ANGELA (overlapping)
No Justice! No Peace!

SHEILA
Angela, Wait!

ANGELA (exiting)
I don’t want to talk to you. You can’t act like everything is normal.

SHEILA
Angela!

(As SHEILA moves to follow ANGELA, she accidentally bumps into OSCAR who jumps suddenly and throws his papers up in the air—mostly to get the audience’s attention so they can really see him. As the papers settle, OSCAR and SHEILA bend down, out of the AUDIENCE’S sight to pick up the papers.)

MATT and SARA are the only ones left in the room.)

SARA
If this were an episode of *The West Wing*

MATT
The new Governor would have sent his new Chief of Staff into the Capitol incognito

SARA
Yes. To ask questions about what we really do.

MATT
You don’t think . . .

SARA
She said she wanted to ask questions.

MATT
The members of the legislature that we work for

SARA
Would probably value that information.

MATT
If this were the *West Wing*.

SARA
Which it isn’t.

MATT
No, it isn’t . . . except . . .

SARA
. . . except . . .

MATT (almost gone)
What if . . .

(Exiting. Doors open. More protest sounds “No Justice! No Peace!”)

END OF SCENE 2
SCENE 3

A CIVIL WAR SOLDIER wanders in and meets a CONSTRUCTION WORKER, German accent, from the original construction. They look around in a bit of daze.

SOLDIER

Hey.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

Hi. Looks almost exactly like I pictured it would. I helped build it. Nice to see it finished.

Thanks for the monument.

You fought in the Civil War?

SOLDIER

I did. I died at Gettysburg, but my face is in a painting in the Governor’s reception room.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

I died here. During the building. Wheeling brick on a wheelbarrow. The wheel barrow fell and I went with it.

You helped to build a nice building.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

I like the restoration. Did you see? Pictures of all the people who worked on it.

SOLDIER

I like that they kept our flags on the first floor.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

Yeah, it’s nice to keep the history where people can be inspired.

(NATIVE AMERICAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN(AA) GHOST enter in a daze. They all look at each other.)

NATIVE GHOST

What about the history that isn’t so inspiring?

AA GHOST
Tell me why a building that attempts to be a monument to the war to end slavery only has statues and pictures of white people?

CONSTRUCTION

Maybe they didn’t know about you.

AA GHOST (ROBERT HICKMAN)

In 1863, in the middle of the war, I led 75 other slaves to freedom from Missouri to Minnesota, founded a church that still exists today, and lived and died here until 1900. They immortalized his face in the governor’s reception room forever. Why is that?

NATIVE GHOST (to SOLDIER)

While you fought in the Civil War, my people were being exterminated and driven off land we lived on for centuries.

SOLDIER

You were a sovereign nation that attacked settlers. They defended themselves.

NATIVE GHOST

The Bureau of Indian Affairs of the United States Government stole the money that was promised us through treaty after treaty. They kept food from us. When we asked for what was owed us, the response was “Let them eat grass. Or their own dung.” We were starved until we had no other choice but to defend ourselves.

SOLDIER

Do you even consider yourself Minnesotan?

NATIVE GHOST

Minnesota is our word.

CASS GILBERT (entering)

You can’t expect one building to represent everything that has happened in Minnesota.

CONSTRUCTION (following CASS GILBERT out)

But I thought that was exactly why we built this building.

(GHOSTS slowly dispersed or hang around through the next scene.)

END OF SCENE 3
SCENE 4

SHEILA stands back up with some papers in her hands.

SHEILA
Did anyone see what happened to the guy who was carrying the bill?

(CHORUS reappears, frantically. Slightly overlapping.)

LEGISLATOR
What bill?

CIVIL SERVANT
Is there a bill?

LOBBYIST
You've always got to see the actual bill.

EXPERT
What bill?

LOBBYIST
You've got to have the bill in your hand.

ADVOCATE
Or who knows what they've put in it. Or taken out of it.

EXPERT
What bill?

LEGISLATOR
Where's the bill?

(And they exit, looking for it. OSCAR appears, almost out of nowhere, trying to retrieve his papers from SHEILA, stealthily.)

OSCAR (whispering)
Excuse me.

(SHEILA jumps.)

You see me?

SHEILA
Of course I see you.

OSCAR

If you can see me, then something must be wrong... something’s different today. . . something’s strange.

SHEILA

Who are you?

OSCAR

I work in the office of the Revisor of Statutes.

SHEILA

You ready the statues?

OSCAR (whisper)

No. Revisor of statutes

SHEILA

You receive the cashews?

OSCAR

No!

CHORUS (popping head in)

Revisor of Statutes!

SHEILA

O. Cool name. What do you do?

OSCAR

We draft the legislation.

CHORUS

They draft the bills.

(Barbershop quartet?)

The bills.

The bills.

The bills.

OSCAR

People want to believe that their
legislators know
Ev’rything (beat) about
Ev’rything that happens here

(Beat) People do!

ADVOCATE

But! (beat) in reality most legislators only know a little bit about one or two of the issues closest to them.

OSCAR (and ADVOCATE and LOBBYIST?)

It’s true.

LOBBYIST

(beat) And they certainly don’t understand the intersections with other laws already on the books.

OSCAR

Well. Hey. The state’s more than 150 years old.

LEGISLATOR

(beat) So the legislators tell us what they want in a bill, and we write it.

OSCAR

How come you’re singing?

SHEILA

Because

We are the Keepers of the Rule of Law.
We’re kind of magic. Invisible but essential to making the process work. You can’t even get to our offices unless you know about the secret elevator.

We are the
Keepers—

EXPERT
Well, actually, wouldn’t you say the judicial branch is really the “keepers” and you are more like the custodians—

LEGISLATOR
Wait. The judicial branch are the interpreters—

CIVIL SERVANT
The executive branch implements—

ADVOCATE
So then the Office of the Revisor of Statutes are. . .?

OSCAR and CHORUS
. . . the Keepers
of the Rule of
Law.

(CHORUS sees OSCAR as though for the first time but focus on the papers in his hands. Overlapping.)

CIVIL SERVANT
Is that a bill?

LOBBYIST
Let me get my hands on the bill.

LEGISLATOR
Who’s working on a bill this early?

EXPERT
I still don’t agree about this “keepers of the rule of law” thing—

ADVOCATE
Is the bill from the new Governor?!?

(Murmur murmur “New Governor” “What’s he up to?” “New Governor”. CHORUS is distracted by that possibility.)
More than once, after a late night negotiating session between legislators, and lobbyists, and interests groups, and activists, they'll bring us the notes that their legislative aides wrote down, trying to keep up with the conversation—sometimes on napkins, and we've got to make sense of it. We just hope they didn’t all agree to something that is actually illegal.

Everything depends on that bill.

You all make too much out of it. Everything depends on how we implement the laws on a daily basis in the agencies. Talk about being invisible.

I'm always nice to the nonpartisan staff. I have no complaints with the nonpartisan staff.

Except whenever you want to score political points. You freeze our pay and hiring, so we have to do more work with less people and no raises.

Well, in the business world, you would have to justify—

I've worked in the business world. All you've ever wanted to be is a legislator. They don't unilaterally freeze pay and hiring in the business world.

Ok. But you're job is different because

Just when I think we've successfully lined up the support for my client's bill, the nonpartisan staff will come in with questions and concerns and slow down the entire process.

Exactly! I can't get a road built for my district without years of nonsense—

Nonsense? You think its simple? What about the environmental impact?

What if it will harm important historical sites? Whose land will the road be built on?
Will it cut through historically marginalized communities? Will the vendors be selected in a fair process?

EXPERT
In my agency, we have to come up with a way forward that balances all the competing interests—regardless of who is the governor. If it’s a pro-business or pro-automobile governor, we go a little one way. But we don’t completely ignore the other side of the issue. Cause the parties will shift. And the state will still be full of different people.

CHORUS
The State of Minnesota,
My North Star, my dear.
I hold your interests close to my chest
And think about only what’s best
For you.
    You.
    You.
    You.

When I dream about your eyes
And the nays, and the ways
We disagree. I hope you see.
I’m just trying to be
The best
Keeper of the Rule of
Law.
For you
    You.
    You.
    You.

CIVIL SERVANT
It’s the process that matters. The process is beautiful.

LEGISLATOR
But my constituents still don’t have a road!

EXPERT
You only think of your constituents. We’re thinking of the best interests of the state.

CIVIL SERVANT
But we’re not supposed to make a big deal because we’re non-partisan

OSCAR

11/29/17
So non-partisan we shouldn’t even be talking to you.

SHEILA
How do act like you don’t have opinions when you see the outcomes going badly?

OSCAR
Because being in the room matters. During the Marriage Amendment debate, I know that me being a gay man made a difference. Legislators, my colleagues, lobbyists, could see a person they knew who would be affected by the law they were writing. I didn’t ever stop being nonpartisan but I know that if I stay in the room, I can make a difference. It’s the process that matters.

CIVIL SERVANT
We believe in the process.

OSCAR and CIVIL SERVANT and EXPERT
We are non-partisan
We work for everyone
We stay in the background
where truth can be found.

ADVOCATE
What people really want is to merge their identity with something larger than themselves.

CIVIL SERVANT
I worked in Materials Management, when the 35W Bridge collapsed. It was about 6pm when that happened and it was incredible the network of people who had to come together. They had to get immediate approval to secure the site, to get the right people in there. Immediately. The phone calls that went out. The emergency declarations that were made with respect to procurement. Immediately. Folks who had to come in – with contracts – to test the air and do other disaster recovery type services, necessary services-- a lot of people in our division that nobody thinks about--all the way through the construction of the new bridge. It was a big deal and a lot of work.

In an awful situation
You want people who are patient
Who will work together all hands on deck
To build a bridge of hope and respect
For you..

ALL
That’s what non-partisan means.

EXPERT

11/29/17
Crisis happens everyday and government deals with it. You may not notice if the crisis doesn’t affect you but it affects lots of people. I guarantee it. That’s what non-partisan staff do.

OSCAR
People talk about how the Capitol lacks civility and is too political, but my parents grew up in a place where trouble was solved with bullets. I am very appreciative of this country and the freedom and respect people have for the law, and I wish that other areas of world that are troublesome could actually learn something from the peacefulness of this democracy.

SHEILA (excited)
I have someone I need you to meet. Come with me.

(SHEILA grabs OSCAR by the arm and drags OSCAR out. CHORUS disperses. MATT and SARA reappear.)

MATT
Did you just see what I saw?

SARA
Did you just see what I saw?

MATT
What’d you see?

SARA
Who do you think she’s taking him to meet?

MATT
You don’t think she could be

SARA
The Governor’s new Chief of Staff? No? I mean—

MATT
Spying on us.

SARA
Would they do that on *VEEP*?

MATT
We should absolutely follow her!

(And they run off. SHEILA and OSCAR come back on immediately. Pause.)
SHEILA (to AUDIENCE)
Did you see which direction my daughter Angela went?

(And still dragging OSCAR, they go off again. MATT and SARA rush back on, confused.)

MATT
Which way

SARA
Did she go?

(And they go off out the wrong doors, separately or together?)

END OF SCENE 4
SCENE 5

The QUADRIGA characters enter. First, their entrance is magical and graceful, then it degenerates into disarray and breaks down.

INDUSTRY

So who am I again?

PROSPERITY

You are Industry.

AGRICULTURE

And I’m Agriculture? That’s why I have wheat?

INDUSTRY

Shouldn’t I have something then? Like a pipe wrench or something?

PROSPERITY

So get a pipe wrench. You work in Plant Management. I see you with tools all the time. I’m Prosperity.

INDUSTRY

What do you have?

AGRICULTURE

An eyeshade. A spreadsheet! Because you work in Management and Budget.

PROSPERITY

We’re supposed to be representing the statues on top of the building. Did they have spreadsheets in 1906 when the statues were built?

INDUSTRY

1906? Then why are we wearing togas?

AGRICULTURE

I thought we were going to be the horses.

PROSPERITY

You can’t be a horse. The horses are puppets.

AGRICULTURE

They’re too small. The horses are majestic. Huge. They cannot be held back. Earth. Wind. Air. And Fire. Marshaled for Minnesota. That’s why everybody loves the Quadriga. And the gold. You can’t represent that with little puppets.

PROSPERITY

11/29/17
You jerk. My kids made them.

INDUSTRY
It’s ok. We can use our imaginations.

(to AGRICULTURE)
Don’t be mean.

AGRICULTURE
Why not? I feel under-appreciated.

INDUSTRY
Thousands of people come and stomp on the lawn for their protests, and parties, and everything in between, and I’ve got to clean it up like it never happened, every time. You don’t see me complaining.

PROSPERITY
That’s kind of why we’re making the show. So people see more than just the horses. So they understand all the things that have made our state what it is. That’s what we’re going to talk about.

INDUSTRY
Wait, we have to talk? I thought we just kind of stand there, you know, like a statue.

PROSPERITY
It’s theater. The restoration inspired people to bring more arts and culture to the Capitol. We’re going to explain to people what all this symbolism really means.

INDUSTRY
Symbolism. I don’t like symbolism.

PROSPERITY
We’ve got a responsibility to explore the layers of history in this building.

INDUSTRY
When are we performing this?

PROSPERITY
At a reception for all the new legislators and staff and the press.

INDUSTRY
o my god. I don’t like being in the public eye. You guys always wanted to be legislators. I don’t find that attention fun. No way.

AGRICULTURE
It’ll be ok. . .Come on. We’re doing it together. . . Don’t worry. . .

People will make fun of us.  

INDUSTRY (calling back)

Not if we rehearse.  

PROSPERITY

No way.  

INDUSTRY

We’ve got to rehearse.  

PROSPERITY

END OF SCENE 5
SCENE 6

MATT and SARA re-enter, breathing heavily, behind a person in nice clothes and gym shoes, EXERCISER. They stop to catch their breath.

EXERCISER
Come on. Keep up. Don’t fall behind. Your lunch break is going to be over soon. I’m already on Lap 17.

MATT
We’re not using the tunnels to exercise! We’re trying to find—

SARA
How did we lose her?

MATT (pointing and getting all tangled up)
Well, you can go left at one fork in the road and then left again, and I think I saw her go toward the Centennial Building but then maybe it was the new Senate Office Building which would be the opposite direction.

SARA
Wasn’t the restoration supposed to make sure everything was clearly labeled?

MATT
Do you think the ghosts are moving the signs around already?

SARA
You believe in the ghosts?

MATT
I once saw this old man walking super slowly down the hall and go into a room, but when I ran over to the room, it was locked. I’m sure it was a ghost.

SARA
Once, my Member’s caucus was camping out in front of the governor’s office, as part of a protest. He had the 3 am shift, with another legislator, and they swear--they both swear--that they heard carts of bills being rolled down the hallway. Swear.

( Maybe the CIVIL WAR GHOST drifts by. MATT and SARA look around, glide closer to each other, get the chills as they imagine all the ghosts.)

MATT

SARA

yeah.

11/29/17
(Pause)

Why are we even down here?

MATT (snapping out of it)
Because the Governor's Chief of Staff is already secretly in the building, and we're the only ones who know.

(They look out at the audience, suspiciously. Are they on the Governor's staff?)

... and if we can tell our Members who it is,

SARA
That would be something.

MATT
The Member that I work for said that the people with information have power.

(Sudden, spooky laughter and AIDES jump and scream, thinking it's a ghost. CHORUS reappears.)

EXPERT (laughing, spooky)
Mostly, the people with power have power.

LOBBYIST
No, no. Information does matter. In my business, if I can put good concise information in front of a legislator, that will be appreciated. You need to know your subject.

EXPERT
I know my subject. I have a lot of information. I have very little power.

LOBBYIST
And you do need an election certificate on your side.

ADVOCATE (to MATT and SARA)
He means, you need to get elected.

LOBBYIST
That's what I said.

EXPERT
You are so inside the game, you don't even realize how you sound. You said, "election certificate" instead of "get elected".

MATT and SARA
Where did you all come from?

CIVIL SERVANT
We’re always here.

EXPERT
It’s like purgatory. I’ll go from one hearing to another hearing, to a seventh hearing, all in the same day. And the legislators will say the hearing is supposed to start at a certain time but who knows if that’s true.

LOBBYIST
Sometimes, there’s no point in coming back until they’ve worked out the details on the bill.

CIVIL SERVANT
On the side, with you, not in the normal process. Not in hearings, in the open, with transparency. There’s this secret process. Where legislative tricks happen.

LEGISLATOR
The more transparent we are, the less likely we are to get anything done.

That’s not true.

CIVIL SERVANTS

LEGISLATOR
It is true.

ADVOCATE
Does it matter what you get done, if what you get done doesn’t include the voices of all Minnesotans?

CHORUS
(Song)

*It’s a game, it’s a show.*
*There’s so much happening behind the scenes*
*That you don’t know.*

EXPERT
My job in legislative hearings is to play whatever role the politicians decide we’re going to play that day. Am I apologetic? Am I combative? What does the Governor need today? What play are the legislators trying to write?

My boss and I joke about which one of us is just going to crack first and just say, “You don’t care about the statement I’m about to make. Let’s just get to the games.”
(ANGELA enters and watches.)

Once upon a time, the Governor and the Speaker of the House told the press that they were sending their staffs into a room together to work out a compromise. But we knew that they weren’t ready to compromise. Into a conference room they go. I think the press was waiting outside. The first one to speak is going to have to start negotiations, so no one spoke. These are friends, by the way, people whose children have played together, who have known each other for years. No one says a word. How long do they have to sit here in order to make it appear to the press outside that we’ve really negotiated? 1 hour? Two? Two and a half. Two and a half hours. In a room. No one speaks.

LOBBYIST
Because their bosses needed to be able to say that intensive, good-faith negotiations broke down. It was a necessary part of the process in order to get them to an agreement later.

CIVIL SERVANT
That’s not the way the process is supposed to work.

LEGISLATOR
I remember one Senate Majority Leader who used to make the hearings run into the middle of the night because he wanted to make everyone so tired that they had to compromise just to get some sleep.

SARA
I want to be in that room.

MATT
I want to be in that room.

ANGELA
What? How can you say that?

ADVOCATE/CIVIL SERVANT
It’s a joke, it’s a game
There’s so much happening behind the scenes
You’d think they’d feel shame.

ADVOCATE
In 2008, the bill allowing adoptees to have access to their own birth information passed the House and the Senate. There was great euphoria, the author cried. Then it was vetoed. We don’t know why. So it went from high to low. There were people waiting to have things happen. For them, it was personal. They would have access to their own information, they might be able to contact relatives, find out who they are, if they have a tribal connection. It is like having the key to the door withheld. Every year, we know we have the votes. Bipartisan. And every year, the bill gets killed. Some people had some desperate reactions
to that veto--breaking down; emotional, physical responses; feelings of depression, loss,
grief. A political action does have real consequences. It’s not a game for them.

**LEGISLATOR**
You should know that this is true no matter which party is in power. They each use the
same tricks.

**CIVIL SERVANT**
Some bills you think will be big and they aren’t. Some idea that starts with everyone going
“of course” ends with something like, “Wait. We’re paying to breathe?”

**LOBBYIST**
No one likes the process except when it works for them.

*It’s a story, like a play
There’s truth beneath the drama
If you only see the way.*

(Can we do counterpoint here. With the LOBBYIST and LEGISLATOR repeating this
verse and the EXPERT, CIVIL SERVANT, and ADVOCATE singing:

*It’s a joke, it’s a game
There’s so much happening behind the scenes
You’d think they’d feel shame.*)

**SARA**
I want to be in the room.

**MATT**
I want to be in the room.

(ANGELA interrupts.)

**ANGELA**
How can you draw that conclusion from those stories? Those stories explain why people
elected this crazy governor. The process is incomprehensible to the majority of people?
Those stories are awful.

**LEGISLATOR**
People are more angry now than they used to be. That’s a thing that’s changed.

**EXPERT** (agreeing)
You’ll be called to a hearing on some uncontroversial thing and feel like the fangs are out
for reasons you don’t understand.

**LOBBYIST**
These stories simply show that everything takes time.

ANGELA
Don’t you see that it’s always the marginalized communities that are waiting the longest? How can I not be angry?

EXPERT
I remember one time a legislator from the Iron Range leaped across the conference table and tried to strangle another legislator.

LEGISLATOR
If an Iron Range Legislator calls you a sonofabitch, it means he likes you.

ADVOCATE
It’s true, people don’t take the time to understand each other anymore.

LOBBYIST
There used to be a more collegial culture.

ANGELA
That left out a whole bunch of people. It’s not a game! “No Justice!” It’s not a show! “No Peace!”

(SHEILA re-enters, dragging OSCAR with her.)

SHEILA
Angela!

MATT (referring to SHEILA)
It’s her.

SARA
It’s her.

ANGELA (sarcastic)
How’s your important new job, Mom?

SHEILA
There’s someone I want you to meet. He’s seen the process work, from the inside.

SARA
Did you hear that?

MATT
“How’s your important new job.”

ANGELA
That’s not what I heard. I heard about a process that hides what’s really happening from the people.

(ZEALOT 1 wanders in, holding a machete. Everyone freezes.)

SHEILA

Hi, um, can we help?

CIVIL SERVANT

Can we help you?

ZEALOT

I’m looking for the Governor’s office.

EXPERT

Ok.

LOBBYIST

Um.

SHEILA

It’s in this building.

(Beat)

You know you’re carrying a knife?

ZEALOT

I was gardening, and I forgot.

(Everyone laughs uncomfortably.)

LEGISLATOR

The Governor’s office is on the first floor.

ZEALOT

I have a message from the Aliens.

SHEILA (pause, thinking)

...Is it a good message?...

CIVIL SERVANT (whispering)

All kinds of people come here all the time with all kinds of problems. People call the Attorney General because they think he’s supposed to represent them in court.
EXPERT
A woman stopped me in the halls to yell at me for not doing enough about Methamphetamines.

SARA (whispering)
People call our office about anything they need help with. Loud kids on their street.

SHEILA (whispering)
What do you do?

CIVIL SERVANT (whispering)
We do our best. It’s part of the job of working in government.

MATT (whispering)
I spent a day helping someone with their utility bill once. It was a good day. I helped her.

ZEALOT (Whispering too)
Why are we all whispering?

EXPERT (kindly)
Why don’t you come with me?

(CIVIL SERVANT and EXPERT, followed by CHORUS, lead ZEALOT out a door. MATT and SARA keep an eye on SHEILA.)

OSCAR
A lot of people who work in state government are willing to help anyone who walks in the door. Even when they’re carrying a knife. Some people don’t know where to go, so they go to the big white building that they see from anywhere in St. Paul.

You know they really are going to show her where the Governor’s office is.

ANGELA
But she is not going to actually talk to the Governor. Just because the doors are unlocked and security is nice, you know that government isn’t accessible to a lot of people. To people of color who aren’t considered full Minnesotans.

OSCAR
Listen. I show up. I do my job. Like everyone else. I hope for the best, and I keep my opinions to myself. When I get home, I enjoy a glass of wine, or two. And come back another day. What else can we do?

SHEILA
We can make a bigger difference than that, if we have the will to do it. You need to expect more of yourself, Oscar. For our families, Oscar.
MATT (excited whisper)
She sounds a little like the new Governor.

SARA (excited)
I know! “Big, Beautiful Change!”

(SHEILA, OSCAR, and ANGELA finally notice MATT and SARA lurking—maybe they accidentally fall out of some hiding place.)

MATT and SARA
It’s an honor to meet you./We’re so happy to be the first to welcome you to the Capitol.

SHEILA
That’s nice. What do you do?

MATT and SARA
Legislative aides./Assistants/We’re call Aides/Or Assistants.

MATT
We’re available if you need our help.

SHEILA
Um, ok, I don’t think—I just started—

SARA
We won’t tell anyone. You can trust us to keep your secret.

What secret?

OSCAR (backing away, with SHEILA)
I don’t like the feel of this. Remember, invisible?

SARA and MATT (backing away too)
Invisible./Right./You can trust us./Invisible. We won’t tell. Don’t worry.

SHEILA (to ANGELA)
See. People who work here do want to help if we just give them a chance.

THAT’S THE NEW CHIEF OF STAFF!

(And they excitedly run off to tell people and run back on excited to confirm with each other--super-excited--chickens with their heads cut off-like--and then run off in opposite directions. SHEILA and OSCAR watch from a corner. Confused.)

OSCAR
The partisan staff. Can sometimes get caught up in something. They never check out. Their cell phones are always on. They’re always concerned about an issue or something. They stay very late. It’s not a healthy lifestyle.

(MATT and SARA bump into each other one more time and when they run off)

MATT & SARA

Which way--
Did she go?

(They leave a SECURITY GUARD standing where they were, hopefully in a light, as though he has been watching the entire time but we just now notice him.)

END OF SCENE 6
SCENE 7

After a reasonable and pregnant pause, the SECURITY GUARD, feeling the audience looking at him, speaks.

SECURITY GUARD
If I spoke. About everything that I've seen. In the last 30 years. Here. I would not have kept my job. For so long.

(Pause.)

30 years. You see. A lot of things. That other people don’t see.

(Pause.)

I can tell you this. Though. True or false. It takes a rumor. Less than five minutes to travel across the Capitol campus.

(Pause.)

I can tell you this. Once. Before cell phones. I watched two former legislators run an experiment. Legislator A says to Legislator B that he’s going to start a rumor that Legislator B was about to announce a run for governor. How long, says Legislator A, do you think it will take before a reporter calls you to confirm the rumor? Legislator B has an office downtown. Five minute walk south. Former Legislator A goes that way. Former Legislator B goes that way. Turns out, I hear later, the press was calling Legislator B’s office by the time he had walked back to it. That’s how quick rumors spread around here. Whether the rumor is true. Or false. And this was before the Internet.

(Pause. Pause. Pause.)

I thought I could tell you. That. Before you see what is about to happen. But don’t tell anyone it was me who told you. K?

(Pause.)

Ok.

END OF SCENE 7
SCENE 8

A solo cello plays in tango style.

3 new LOBBYISTS enter from all four doors on a mission to find this new Chief of Staff they heard about.

As this scene plays out, LOBBYISTS will lead SHEILA (or OSCAR) out the doors and then back in another door. Or OSCAR will appear at a different door with SHEILA. Or the PRESS will appear. The doors will be used to cover the rest of conversations but also to enhance the element of surprise. The rest of the CHORUS will also try to get in on the act.

The movement of the lobbyists bringing Sheila here and there, taking her attention, is a dance of influence.

(The cello holds one single note.)

GOOD DAVE HANSEN
Dave Hansen. Lobbyist. The Good Dave Hansen. Teacher’s Union. At your service.

(Cello adds a second note.)

BAD DAVE HANSEN
They call me Dirty Dave. Hansen is my name too. Dirty Dave because I represent gambling. Fossil Fuels.

(Cello adds a third note. BAD DAVE shrugs)

We create jobs.

DULUTH DAVE HANSEN
You can call me Duluth Dave.

(We hear a tango. LOBBYIST re-enters.)

SHEILA
Which Dave Hansen are you?
LOBBYIST

Steve.

(SONG. Has the rest of the CHORUS returned to be a part of it?)

LOBBYIST CHORUS

Allow me to help you understand
The Capitol. (Allow me.) I can tell you
How power really works.
I've spent more time in these halls than anyone else.
I know all the ins and outs and quirks.

(As the LOBBYISTs trade off dancing with SHEILA, CHORUS definitely talks here.)

CIVIL SERVANT

Here’s how you know when you’re talking to a lobbyist. First. They have better shoes than anyone else, even the legislators. Better clothes. They get paid better, and they want to be memorable. Subtly so.

ADVOCATE

Also, they smile a lot but have no sense of humor because they can’t afford to offend anyone.

OSCAR

I don't think you can trust them.

LOBBYIST

People demonize us but

LOBBYIST CHORUS

We tell you all about our agenda up front.
We also tell you all the other sides.
We build relationships with decision makers.
That’s where our success abides.

LOBBYIST

You try to convince legislators to vote one way. We try to convince them too.

ADVOCATE

But I don’t get paid to do it.

LOBBYIST

You get paid. You just don’t get paid as much as we do. Maybe you aren’t as talented as we are.
I choose my clients.

GOOD DAVE HANSEN
I choose my clients too. I worked pro bono to get funds for the 35W bridge collapse victims. I remember how happy we all were when we called the Governor to tell him we’d worked out a way forward.

LEGISLATOR (leading SHEILA away)
Did we get off on the wrong foot? What were those questions you wanted to ask me?

ANGELA
Now you care?

LOBBYIST CHORUS (underneath)
Relationships.
Relationships.

LEGISLATOR
I always cared. I just needed to find the time.

LOBBYIST CHORUS (louder)
They take years to build and seconds to destroy.
Build relationships and work it.
Relationships
Relationships

OSCAR
I don’t know what is going on but I don’t like it.

(As though trying to find a magic spell to protect himself and SHEILA, and maybe ANGELA.)

Invisibility. By the power of the Revisor of Statutes—Invisibility!

(As OSCAR tries, DULUTH DAVE HANSEN gently leads SHEILA away.)

DULUTH DAVE HANSEN
Unlike a lot of other people at the Capitol, we are bound by a code of ethics. I can’t represent clients that might be in conflict. There are rooms I can’t enter. There are methods I am legally prohibited from using that others—

(And they’re out a door. At the exact same moment that the PRESS enters another door.)

PRESS 1 and PRESS 2
We heard there was news!

OSCAR
Uh-oh. Invisible! Invisible! In—Sheila? Where’d you go?

(PRESS blows right out another door while SHEILA comes in a different door with LOBBYIST.)

LOBBYIST
All I have is my reputation. A legislator has to know that I’ll never lie to him. Or her. I’ll never put anyone I have a relationship with in a position that will embarrass them.

LOBBYIST CHORUS
I know a lot of facts about my clients concerns.
Relationships.
Take time to get to know. Don’t judge before you learn.
Relationships.
They take years to build and seconds to destroy.
Build relationships and work it.

(DULUTH DAVE leads her out a certain door.)

DULUTH DAVE HANSEN (exiting)
We’re beggars really because we cannot make anything happen without a legislator.

PRESS 1 and PRESS 2
(reappears, to ANGELA and OSCAR)

Is that her?

Is she who?

OSCAR

DIRTY DAVE HANSEN
You work with her?

ANGELA
That’s my Mom.

GOOD DAVE HANSEN (to OSCAR)
If you want to keep the secret, we can keep a secret.

OSCAR
What is it you think--?

(CIVIL SERVANT and ADVOCATE returns with SHEILA from a different door.)
ADVOCATE
Remember what we told you about how important a good process can be, that includes all voices.

CIVIL SERVANT
Could you please appoint commissioners with some experience in government or at least management, instead of politics, so that we don't have to train our bosses about how government actually works?

PRESS 2 (entering with camera, toward SHEILA)
What can you tell us about the Governor’s agenda?

(OSCAR tries to block them to protect SHEILA. Shoves CIVIL SERVANT and EXPERT in front of PRESS.)

OSCAR
Talk to them.

CIVIL SERVANT
I don't talk to the press./We're non-partisan./I have so much work to do.

(Tangled up with PRESS while they try to escape.)

PRESS 1
Do you work for the new Governor?

CIVIL SERVANT
Yes./And no./I mean, we're in the executive branch so—

(PRESS pushes them out of the way.)

PRESS 1 and PRESS 2
We need clear answers.

OSCAR
Invisibility!!!!!

RELATIONSHIP CHORUS
It's personal but not.
You have to learn the culture.
Relationships
Cultivate the interests of those you want to alter
Relationships
They take years to build and seconds to destroy. [Relationships]
We are advocates and beggars. [Relationships]
They take years to build and seconds to destroy. [Relationships]
Build relationships and work it. [Relationships]

(MUSIC STOPS)

GOOD DAVE HANSEN (leading SHEILA out)
A lot of people at the Capitol don’t know how to count. What does it take to get the majority you need. Basic arithmetic. But also who can you count on. There’s nothing magical about what we do.

PRESS 1 (going after her)
Are you avoiding the press?

OSCAR (grabs LEGISLATOR)
Tell them a story.

LEGISLATOR (in front of PRESS)
You know some funny things happen in the chamber. It can be like junior high. That time we passed the strip club regulations. They brought down the lights and started to play some music—

PRESS 2
Please, Senator. Do you have information about the Governor’s new chief of staff.

LEGISLATOR
Well, what I hear was—

(OSCAR interrupts with CIVIL SERVANT.)

ANGELA
What’s going on?

OSCAR
I think they think that your mother is—

DULUTH DAVE HANSEN (bring SHEILA in)
Did you know that the Legacy Amendment is the most popular thing the legislature has ever passed? A Lobbyist figured out how to build that coalition.

BAD DAVE HANSEN (taking SHEILA)
Most of what we do is simply try to stop bad legislation.

LOBBYIST (taking SHEILA)
You listen well. A Senate Majority Leader once told me, “You don’t have to talk. Just listen.” You’ll do alright I think. You’ll accomplish a lot.

SHEILA

Thank you.

(Finally PRESS gets in front of her. MUSIC stops.)

PRESS 2
Will you tell us what you think of state government?

(Everyone stops, leans in, listens. Perhaps there is a camera with a very bright light on SHEILA.)

SHEILA
Um. I guess I think people need to understand better about how the Capitol really works.

ANGELA
Or doesn't work.

SHEILA
Yes. It doesn't work for some people.

PRESS 1
Is that your agenda?

SHEILA
I do believe there are a lot of ways in which government doesn't feel accessible to all Minnesotans—I know I’ve felt that way—but I think that most Minnesotans would prefer that everyone was included in the task of making our state better, I think. Making it work for everyone.

PRESS 1
Access.

PRESS 2
For all Minnesotans.

PRESS 1
Inclusion.

PRESS 2
Equity.

Allow me to help.

DULUTH DAVE HANSEN

We can tell you who your allies will be.

GOOD DAVE HANSEN

We can tell you who they won’t be.

LOBBYIST

We can count for you.

DIRTY DAVE HANSEN

For me?

SHEILA

Absolutely! Whatever you want!

LOBBYISTS/CHORUS

Well, let’s do it.

SHEILA

We’re in big trouble.

OSCAR (taking SHEILA desperately)

You owe everyone an apology, Angela. People at the Capitol don’t see color. They want us here.

SHEILA

They see power. They’ve confused you for someone else.

OSCAR

Who do they think I am?

SHEILA

The new Governor’s chief of staff.
SHEILA
Holy –

OSCAR
Shhhh! We’re in so much trouble. I don’t know what happened to my INVISIBILITY power? It must not rub off. WE'RE IN SO MUCH TROUBLE!

ANGELA
This is so great.

SHEILA
Now I didn’t tell anyone I was—

OSCAR (peeking out a door)
People are gathering. The press broadcasting live. Something is happening.

SHEILA
What is happening?

OSCAR
Whatever they thought you told them that you think the Governor wants to do.

SHEILA
?

OSCAR
Access for all Minnesotans! Inclusion! I don’t know—Equity!

ANGELA
That’s really great.

OSCAR
No, it isn’t.

SHEILA
Yes, it is.

OSCAR
Are you crazy?

SHEILA
If that’s what it takes.

ANGELA
Aw’right, Mom!

SHEILA
Let’s make some change happen, Oscar. What are we waiting for?

(SHEILA moves quickly toward the door that the PRESS and LOBBYISTS ran out. OSCAR follows sheepishly. ANGELA also follows, proud. SHEILA opens the door and there’s a sudden sound of people rushing toward her. Door shuts and its silent.)

TOUR GUIDE #2
Well. This is an exciting day to be at the Capitol, isn’t it?

TOUR GUIDE #3
Uh, let’s take a ten-minute break. Don’t go too far and meet back here to see what happens.

TOUR GUIDE #1
I’m going to walk around and find out who the optimists and who the pessimists are.

TOUR GUIDE #3
Don’t listen her. Let’s take a ten-minute intermission.
ACT TWO
PRE-SHOW
After the intermission, the audience returns to the Vault where they are addressed by the TOUR GUIDE each group met at the top of show. Around the circle of the room, we hear:

TOUR GUIDE 1
Hi. Hello.

TOUR GUIDE 2
Hello.

TOUR GUIDE 3
Hi. Hello.

TOUR GUIDE 2
We'll be heading up to see the Senate and House Chambers

TOUR GUIDE 3
The new public meeting rooms and art galleries.

TOUR GUIDE 1
The very top floor. Follow me.

ZEALOT 1 (entering from a door)
Let us ever remember that our interest is in concord, not conflict.

TOUR GUIDE 2 (trying to keep focus off ZEALOT)
Yes, thank you. If you have a red wristband, follow me.

TOUR GUIDE 1 (also trying)
Blue wristbands, here.

ZEALOT 1
And our real eminence rests in victories of peace not those of wars.

TOUR GUIDE 3 (recognizing Zealot’s quote)
“Equal and exact justice to all men,

ZEALOT 1 and TOUR GUIDE 3
Of whatever state of persuasion, religious or political”

TOUR GUIDE 1 and 2

11/29/17
I love the founding fathers. You love the founding fathers. This building isn’t just built on the Georgia marble and St. Cloud granite you see on a tour. It’s built on the principles that those quotations embody. "Labor to keep alive In your heart

That little spark of celestial fire called conscience!"

(Silence. Echo.)

Green wristbands follow me.

Blue wristbands.

Red wristbands, right this way.

No government is respectable that is not just. No government is respectable that is not just. No government is respectable that is not just.

As the audience moves into the rest of the building for the first time, we should allow the TOUR GUIDES to reveal certain tour guidey details, just to give them a sense of the majesty of the place, something to make them look more closely at the detail and beauty. We might also hear as we move but cannot see these voices, like ghosts of past TOURISTS.

Are we allowed to be here, Mommie.

Why wouldn’t we be allowed to be here, Sweetie?

It’s a rich person’s house.
FATHER
No, Son. It’s our house. It’s the People’s House. Everyone is allowed to be here.

CHILD
Everyone?
INTERLUDE 1

As the TOUR GUIDES lead their groups out of the Vault, they share some of their own story.

TOUR GUIDE
If you grew up in Minnesota, then you, like me, first came to the Capitol with your school group. Do you remember how you ran up the stairs, with your teacher yelling at you to slow down, and then you burst in and stopped. Because your mouth fell open. The big columns, the elaborate paintings and carvings on the ceilings. My group went up to the roof and walked around the Quadriga--made by Daniel Chester French who also made the Lincoln Memorial—When no one was looking, I reached out and touched those beautiful gold horses with this finger.

In high school, I was a Capitol page. Our supervisor, MJ Hedstrom, handed me my first manila envelope and she said, “We have never lost a bill in the legislative chamber, and I would be LOATHE if this was the first one!” I felt so small, and so important. My memory is clouded by imbalances of power, big people and little people scurrying through the corridors, and back again, and around, like characters in an MC Escher drawing.

Now, as an interpreter, I am even more aware of how warped time and space are in this building. If we stop for a second and listen.

(TG does.)

You can hear conversations, and footsteps, and the creaking of doors opening in corners of the building you can't even find. Look around you.

(Pause. Look. Listen.)

Believe me when I tell you that there’s more than a little magic in this design. Stick with me, and I will take you to three moments in three different places, all happening at the exact same time.

(TG snaps fingers and the scene starts.)
ACT 2, SCENE 1A

Each of the following three scenes are witnessed by 1/3 of the audience from different locations. AUDIENCE will move and the scene will be repeated for a new group. Three times.

This scene takes place outside the House chamber. OSCAR catches REPRESENTATIVE as she is leaving.

OSCAR
May I speak with you, Representative?

REPRESENTATIVE
Did you hear something?

TOUR GUIDE
Legislators often find it impossible to walk ten steps without being addressed by a constituent or a lobbyist or someone.

OSCAR
I’m, um, actually trying not to be invisible right now.

REPRESENTATIVE
Do I know you?

OSCAR
I work here. We pass each other in the hallways sometimes.

REPRESENTATIVE
I know your parents.

OSCAR
No. You don’t know my parents.

REPRESENTATIVE
You’re not from Minnesota.

OSCAR
I am.

REPRESENTATIVE
Born here?

OSCAR
You find that hard to believe?
REPRESENTATIVE
I represent a rural district. We’re 99% white. Where I come from, I am diversity because I am a woman.

OSCAR
I want to talk to you about diversity.

REPRESENTATIVE
Then you agree with me that we need to change some basic assumptions around here. There’s a culture of casual sexism that that would shock our constituents if they knew. Men think they can talk about women like we’re objects you win in a poker game.

OSCAR
I want to talk to you about, um, how the language people use in their bills privileges people who are already in power, whatever gender, and we see this in the way that bills are written, and—

REPRESENTATIVE (genuine)
Listen. Don’t be nervous. I’m a person just like you, and I want to do what’s right for my constituents.

OSCAR
I come from a community where attention can be bad.

REPRESENTATIVE
You come from a disadvantaged neighborhood.

OSCAR
I wouldn’t call it disadvantaged. We’re just suspicious of attention.

REPRESENTATIVE
I want us to do something about crime in your communities so that everyone has a fair shot. If your community would elect a legislator from my party, then you’d have a voice in our caucus.

OSCAR
I wasn’t talking about crime. Crime is not the issue.

REPRESENTATIVE
My constituents are fed up with all the handouts. Taxes in this state are higher than almost anywhere in the country. Why should we keep providing more services to communities like yours than our neighbor states? It’s not sustainable.

OSCAR
I don’t want handouts. I’m not talking about handouts. I want to talk about the language! . . . I’m sorry.
REPRESENTATIVE
Honestly, it’s OK. Don’t be nervous. Arguing like this is what we’re supposed to do. It’s OK. We can work it out.

I know it seems like the divides are too great, but I can assure you that everyone here is honored to be a part of this community. We may argue about the cost of the Restoration but when the chandelier in the rotunda was restored and raised, we stood side by side together in reverence.

OSCAR
Ok. Um. Good. What I want to talk about is that, in the Revisor’s office, we try to use plain language so everyone can access the laws you pass. Together. Equally. But sometimes you tell us to put it back into the incoherent, grammatically-incorrect way you originally gave it to us. I guess, um, well, it sometimes seems like you’re trying to confuse people so they don’t know what you’ve passed?

REPRESENTATIVE
I understand that English can be a difficult language to master.

OSCAR
What? Yes. That’s why I practice it.

REPRESENTATIVE
Good for you. You speak entirely without an accent.

OSCAR
Do you understand how offensive that is?

REPRESENTATIVE
No. I don’t. I’m sorry. Some people in your community speak with an accent, don’t they?

OSCAR
I speak English without an accent because I was born in Minnesota. I work in the Revisor’s office. I’m an editor. Of English.

(GOOD DAVE interrupts.)

GOOD DAVE
Representative.

REPRESENTATIVE
Dave!

(to OSCAR)

Excuse me.
GOOD DAVE

Good Dave. Teacher’s Unions.

REPRESENTATIVE

I can tell the Dave Hansens apart, Dave. This is a constituent.

GOOD DAVE

Can I get your signature on this?

OSCAR

Excuse us. We were talking.

GOOD DAVE

This won’t take a second.

REPRESENTATIVE

What issue?

GOOD DAVE

Creating jobs. Attracting talent. Business climate. Bringing today’s best and brightest to us. The Governor’s new Chief of Staff is pushing for early hearings—wants it to be bipartisan.

REPRESENTATIVE

Great. We need to give the new Governor a chance—especially if he plans to be business friendly.

GOOD DAVE

Business-friendly!

(LEGISLATOR signs.)

GOOD DAVE

Thank you, Representative.

(He exits.)

REPRESENTATIVE

Thank you.

(to OSCAR)

Tell me more about your family.
OSCAR
I feel like you know how to avoid having a real conversation with me.

REPRESENTATIVE
Don’t take it personally. If I gave all my attention to every person who stopped me between here and the restroom, I’d never make it there.

OSCAR
What about “Good Dave”? You just signed what he put in front of you.

REPRESENTATIVE
My sister-in-law went to high school with him. I don’t know you.

OSCAR
You don’t know me but you make all kinds of assumptions about me, and then you act like it’s my fault.

REPRESENTATIVE
When you have marched in I-can’t-tell-you-how-many parades every year, knocked on doors until you have calluses on your knuckles, eaten so many big fried things people put in front of you, then smiled through the abuse they expect you to wash it down with, all to get elected--what do you think happens then? Voice trashed, dignity barely hanging on, what do you think happens the moment that the majority of voters in a district of 40,000 people choose you, and you get that election certificate? What happens?

OSCAR
Wait. We’re still not talking about the issue.

REPRESENTATIVE
You get all the proof you ever wanted that you’ve been right about everything all along.

OSCAR
You’re joking.

REPRESENTATIVE
Of course. And also, not so much.

(PERSON walks up.)

PERSON
Hello, Representative.

OSCAR
No! I’m going to finish talking to you, Representative. Everyone is talking about making government more accessible to everyone. You are not going to allow another Scandinavian-looking Minnesotan to be more important than me!

(PERSON sheepishly walks away. OSCAR lays it on.)

OSCAR

How is a person—who comes from where I come from—supposed to get a person like you—who thinks it’s easy to get to know you [the Representative], when it isn’t—How am I supposed to get you to listen to me as seriously as you listen to people you knew from high school?!

REPRESENTATIVE

I’m doing the best I can.

(Pause. And, then, with the same attitude as before, he launches into another story.)

Listen.

In my first term, this fifth grade class came to visit. Classes come all the time but this time I decide I’m going to tell them what I really believe. “I believe in these four things,” I say. “Work hard. Because you have to. Two, play fair because cheaters don’t win.” And the kids nod ‘That’s right, that’s right.’ The third one I said, “You gotta do the right thing. “How do you know what the right thing is?” I said, “You have to talk to your parents, your teachers, your priest, your rabbi. You read what the founding fathers wrote and the Ten Commandments.” As soon as I said “ten commandments”. I thought “Oh shoot. Public school here. I’m in trouble.” I was nervous. Like you.

But then I went on anyway. Work hard. Play fair. Do the right thing. Expect the best in life.

Afterwards the older teacher came over, and I really thought I was in trouble. She said “Representative, I have come down here 26 years and . . . Until today, I’ve never heard anybody say something significant. Thank you for what you’ve shared.”

So that’s when I learned to tell people what I believe in and that’s really what they want to hear. Don’t worry. You follow rules, and you tell people what you believe in. Understand?

Gotta run. Nice to meet you. I’ll try to remember you next time.

(REPRESENTATIVE is gone. OSCAR is confused. TOUR GUIDE gets everyone’s attention again.)
ACT 2, SCENE 1B

TOUR GUIDE takes the group to a spot on the third floor where the audience can see down in front of the House Chambers where OSCAR and LEGISLATOR meet.

AUDIENCE can also see more closely some quotations carved into the walls that the ZEALOTS have been saying.

    TOUR GUIDE (pointing to quotations)
    See. “Law is the embodiment of the moral sentiment.”

“No government is respectable which is not just.”

(He notices OSCAR and LEGISLATOR meeting.)

And look down there. That’s living democracy. In these big hallways, a citizen can easily stop their representative to talk.

    (ANGELA and LOBBYIST appear on the level with this tour group, already arguing, loudly and pushing through the tour group.)

    LOBBYIST
    I’m on your side this time, I’m telling you.

    ANGELA
    Excuse me that I find that hard to believe.

    LOBBYIST
    At a certain point, you have to accept allies.

    ANGELA
    You will appropriate what my Mom is trying to say.

    LOBBYIST
    I won’t. I promise you.

    ANGELA
    You will. If you decide its worth it to you to make a bigger promise to someone else.

    LOBBYIST
    I couldn’t afford to jeopardize my relationship with her.
ANGELA
But what do you want in return?

(Stopping for a second, as they realize they’re surrounded by people who are listening to them. Pause.)

TOUR GUIDE
The genius of Cass Gilbert, Everyone! He knew that citizens would engage each other with big ideas in this beautiful building.

ANGELA
I don’t think you should include fiction on your tour.

LOBBYIST
It’s not fiction. I do most of my work this way.

ANGELA
You’re a lobbyist.

LOBBYIST
A lobbyist is a citizen.

TOUR GUIDE (trying to regain control)
Does anyone know where the word lobbyist comes from?

LOBBYIST (to AUDIENCE)
There was a time when lobbyists were prohibited from entering a hearing room. We had to do all our work in the lobbies. We’re still not legally allowed to enter the House or Senate Chambers.

ANGELA (to AUDIENCE)
Do you believe that?

(to LOBBYIST)
No one believes that.

LOBBYIST
We’re not legally allowed to—

ANGELA
Whatever. So you send them texts.
Democratic government relies on civility among competing interests.

LOBBYIST (agreeing)
Young activists today don’t understand what has made Minnesota such a model state.

ANGELA
I’m sorry I find it hard to be civil around people who think the second largest racial disparities in the country is a good model. It’s not only embarrassing. Those numbers are people.

LOBBYIST
First and foremost, you’ve got to understand that everyone in this building wants to do what they believe is best for Minnesota. In all my years, I can count on one hand the people who were actually corrupt.

ANGELA
Who’s talking about corruption? I’m saying you shouldn’t call people good when they have historically treated certain communities as though they weren’t really Minnesotan.

LOBBYIST
Historically, Hubert Humphrey was a monumental figure in the push for civil rights in the Democratic party. Know your information.

ANGELA
Is Hubert Humphrey here right now?

LOBBYIST
I’m trying to work with you. I’m trying to help you. Can’t you respect that we’re all evolving? This building has always inspired us to reach higher. Cass Gilbert was a genius who—

ANGELA
Please. Cass Gilbert was a careerist. He manipulated the Capitol competition by sucking up to rich white people.

TOUR GUIDE
Um. Oh-k. Let’s. Um. Both of the “interpretations” you just heard have a basis in the historical record. However, the complexity of historical interpretation is that –

ANGELA (referring to Scene 1A again)
Let me interpret what’s right in front of our face. That legislator down there is pretending to listen to that constituent.
LOBBYIST
No, in Minnesota, if you’re smart and you know your stuff, people listen to you.

TOUR GUIDE
Both interpretations—

ANGELA
She’s asking him about his background because she doesn’t want to hear about his issue.

LOBBYIST
She’s asking him about his background because she wants to get to know him better.

TOUR GUIDE
Again, both interpretations—

ANGELA
Both interpretations can’t be true.

(Seeing GOOD DAVE approach the scene below.)

Watch how the legislator brushes him off to talk to that lobbyist.

LOBBYIST
Except that’s Dave Hansen. They have a long relationship. The legislator knows she can trust him. Relationships.

ANGELA
Relationships. Because, money. Because if she doesn’t suck up to the people who represent the money, then she won’t be allowed to chair committees, she won’t be able to afford reelection.

LOBBYIST
They developed their relationship the way relationships develop, working together, within the system. Being aware, educated, sharing information. It’s not all about money.

ANGELA
I work. I have information. Why don’t I have such a good relationship with the Legislator? I’m standing right here. Because the power here is not in the hallways. It’s in the secret rooms where legislators, lobbyists, and businessmen do the deals.
LOBBYIST
You make it sound sinister. There are a lot of competing interests at play. Powerful people do talk to each other, but it’s not like it used to be where everyone played poker together. Although, lobbyists, legislators, the janitor, the Capitol Barber would come up for a couple hands. Learn how to play poker. Everyone was welcome there.

ANGELA
More things got done faster not because you played poker together but because you were all white men. And you didn’t have to work too hard to understand each other.

   My boss worked his ass off to help bring a measly million dollars to affordable housing in a neighborhood right around the block from here—had all the votes, made all the right promises, convinced everyone it was the right thing to do—and then somehow, late in negotiations in a back room somewhere, the million dollars got moved into some program in the Majority Leader’s district.

LOBBYIST
What makes you think that the Majority Leader’s program wasn’t an equally worthy cause?

ANGELA
I think it’s the people vs. the powerful. I think we shouldn’t pass any more legislation until we pass a bill that levels the playing field.

LOBBYIST
You have no idea what the consequences of what you’re saying would be. Most of the bills that pass aren’t even controversial. They’re about some obscure tax conformity thing.

TOUR GUIDE
Wait!

   (TOUR GUIDE points back toward Scene 1A.)

If we’re quiet, we might be able to hear the Representative share her story of the four things she believes and—

LOBBYIST
O, I love that speech.

ANGELA
What speech?

TOUR GUIDE (referring to PERSON from Scene 1A)
Who’s that person walking away? Should we know that person?

LOBBYIST
If you work hard, play fair, do the right thing, expect the best, things will work out. What is wrong with that speech?

ANGELA
How white privilege can you be? How blind are you to the fact that it isn’t true for People of Color in this country?

LOBBYIST
That language is so counter-productive. It makes people incredibly defensive. You don’t know what kind of privilege or background they—

ANGELA
If you have white skin, you’re treated differently. I’m not saying it makes your life a bed of roses, but it exists. If you don’t see that, it’s just because you don’t want to be uncomfortable. You don’t want to care because the system works for you the way it is.

LOBBYIST
I’m actually trying to help you by telling you what kind of language people respond to—I’m offering you my expertise for free.

TOUR GUIDE
Ok, ok, ok! Ok. Thank you so much for interpreting the scene we witnessed below. Who knows who’s right?

ANGELA
It’s not a debate. We’re saying that this state has to live up to the ideals carved in the side of this building. And maybe they should carve some quotes into the building that come from women and People of Color.

LOBBYIST
I’m saying that you don’t have the faintest idea of how to accomplish your goals, and if you can’t make things happen, then what are you actually talking about?

TOUR GUIDE
Ok! Let’s continue our tour now. Please follow me into the newly renovated rooms just inside these doors where we might be able to see a meeting in action.

(to ANGELA and LOBBYIST.)

I’d like to ask you two to stay right where you are thank you GOOD-BYE! 

11/29/17
(AUDIENCE keeps moving as LOBBYIST and ANGELA go back to arguing and walk in a different direction.)

LOBBYIST
To get things done, you need to integrate points of view you don’t agree with.

ANGELA
You’re so eager to get things done, you ignore the morality of what you’re doing.

LOBBYIST
I’m not immoral.

ANGELA
Maybe you aren’t immoral. Maybe you lose sight of what morality would even mean [when you adjust your language based on circumstances].

(And they’re gone.)
SHEILA sits in room 316 with DIRTY DAVE, GOOD DAVE, EXPERT, CIVIL SERVANT, and ADVOCATE.

AUDIENCE enters.

The scene begins with SHEILA speaking to the people at the table. If necessary, to cover for the audience’s entrance, we can create a quick bit in which each of the other people in the room look like they’re about to speak up but then don’t because they aren’t sure whether they’ll say the right thing, because they don’t yet know this new “chief of staff”. Finally, once everyone is settled, SHEILA speaks.

SHEILA
I grew up in North Carolina. Jesse Helms was our Senator. We were very much aware that we would be tolerated but never really celebrated. And so when we came to Minnesota we got this real, uh, amazement. At first it seemed like the land of milk and honey. We lived out in Burnsville, and eventually, I remember, people being so amazed to see me out there. Like I was some exotic creature.

And I think to myself, if I’m never truly celebrated in North Carolina, and my family doesn’t belong here either, “What am I? What is my daughter?” I looked at all the pictures in the Capitol today, and until I got to this room, I didn’t see any people of color.

CIVIL SERVANT
We have minority vendor outreach programs.

DIRTY DAVE
I feel like all we’ve been talking about for the last five years is diversity.

ADVOCATE (to DAVE)
Really?

(beat.)

Really?

(Beat.)
Outreach programs to underserved communities are funded at minuscule levels. They passed a bill explicitly to help the Hmong community address gambling addiction—the casinos were literally bringing buses directly to their community. Targeting Hmong elders. When the bill finally passed, $100,000 was allocated to South East Asian counselors to offer services in small nonprofits. The state appropriation for problem gambling treatment and prevention is $8 million. It goes to large treatment centers that don’t really do minority outreach.

DIRTY DAVE
One hundred thousand dollars is a start.

SHEILA
We’ve had a lot of starts. Shouldn’t we be in the middle already?

(They all agree “Yes, yes, of course, of course, that’s why we’re here.” Because she is the chief of staff.)

EXPERT
Except . . .

CIVIL SERVANT
It’s just . . .

GOOD DAVE
It’s just . . .

DIRTY DAVE
People want the process to be like McDonald’s, fast and inexpensive.

GOOD DAVE
It’s not fast and it is expensive.

ADVOCATE
Says you. Because of you.

GOOD DAVE
I’m good Dave; he’s Dirty Dave. I’m just saying it takes time to build coalitions.

DIRTY DAVE
You need to have legislators on your side. You need to walk into a hearing and not hear any questions because every official has already signed on.

SHEILA
How do we do that?
GOOD DAVE (standing, quickly, he has an idea)
I'll be right back.

(He exits.)

ADVOCATE
We need to mobilize people like we did with marriage equality. That happened fast.

DIRTY DAVE
That movement was built from the resistance to the marriage amendment a year before.

EXPERT
The resistance happened fast.

SHEILA
There are people who have been working for equality for a long time.

("yes, yes, of course, of course.")

EXPERT
Relatively fast.

DIRTY DAVE
People could see how that policy directly affected the lives of people they know.

SHEILA
Do you see me?

(Confused, “Yes, yes, of course, of course.")

This issue affects me.

CIVIL SERVANT
Yes, but you're not like, regular people.

EXPERT
Citizens.

DIRTY DAVE
You're not “real people.” You're one of us.

SHEILA
You talk about people like they're from another planet than you.
(CHIEF OF STAFF enters.)

CHIEF OF STAFF
Hi.

CIVIL SERVANT
We’re using the room. We’re in a meeting.

CHIEF OF STAFF
Yes, I was told the chief of staff should—

EXPERT
Excuse us!

CHIEF OF STAFF
O... k...?

(She exits.)

SHEILA
You all like to pretend you’re listening and finding common ground, but each of you really thinks you’re smarter and you know better how to make government work.

EXPERT
...well...

CIVIL SERVANT
...how did you figure that out?

SHEILA
Because no matter what anyone says, you come up with a reason why it won’t work that way.

DIRTY DAVE
I will tell you the truth: We have too much at stake. We can’t afford to lose. Our positions. Our relationships. Our expertise. I need to be right, I need to be on the right side, and that means that other people are on the wrong side. It’s just the way it is.

SHEILA
It’s just the way it is? But I’ve seen people come together in my lifetime for a cause. You’ve seen it. Haven’t you? ... Haven’t you seen amazing things happen here? Haven’t you?

(Pause)

CIVIL SERVANT
When marriage equality passed. I remember I was down near the Governor’s office and it was full of people. And I noticed two older women in their 60s or 70s and they had matching t-shirts that said “Pam and Betty 45 years,” and they were hugging and I remember thinking that this was truly a nice time to work at the Capitol. That bill was really important.

EXPERT
There was a school shooting on Red Lake reservation, and I was close to those communities. All of a sudden there was word that there was going to be a ceremony on the steps of the Capitol... I went there, and I saw eagles circling the Capitol Mall. In Indian country, this is very symbolic. There are a lot of eagles on the reservations but not a lot in the city. That day, there were eagles circling the Capitol.

ADVOCATE
When Sen Wellstone died, people just showed up here. To mourn. Even though his office was never at the Capitol. The big rallies remind us of why we’re here, of what we’re trying to do.

CIVIL SERVANT
During the shutdown, a group of senior citizens came for a tour, discovered that the Capitol was closed, got back on the bus and made protest signs against the shutdown and marched in front of the steps for a couple hours, they were so mad.

EXPERT
I was embarrassed to work at the Capitol when that shutdown happened. If we can’t make the state work for people, then what are we doing here?

ADVOCATE
I brought a coalition of homeless people here and most of them feel like the government would rather they stay invisible. So simply being allowed to sit in the office of a state legislator and tell their stories made such a difference to their sense of place in the world. I love those days.

DIRTY DAVE
There was a plaque in this building honoring Americans who fought in the Filipine-American war. It was historically inaccurate and racist. One day, a Filipino gentleman on a tour politely pointed it out to the Tour Guide. That tour guide went around talking to everyone until she got a coalition together—that’s how I got involved; it took 8 years—and they got that plaque changed. I remember the day they unveiled the new corrective plaque, bronze. That Filipino gentleman touched it and, wow.

(Pause. GOOD DAVE re-enters, waving the piece of paper that the Legislator signed.)

GOOD DAVE

11/29/17
We got a hearing, and it’s gonna be a joint hearing of the House and Senate.

(General confusion. “What? How did you make that happen? What?”)

Relationships!

CIVIL SERVANT (exiting, in a rush)
Is it on the calendar? I’ve got a million things to prepare? Who’s in charge of this? I’ve got so much work to do!

GOOD DAVE (to SHEILA)
You’re on. Let’s go. Tell the legislators what the Governor wants.

SHEILA
What the Governor wants... I don’t know whether... At a public hearing...?

ADVOCATE
Don’t be nervous. We believe in you.

(“Yes, yes, of course. Come on.” ADVOCATE. EXPERT, GOOD DAVE, and DIRTY DAVE drag her out.)

EXPERT
You lead. We follow.

GOOD DAVE and DIRTY DAVE
We follow where you lead.

(Group left alone.)

TOUR GUIDE
OK. Well. OK... When have we seen big things happen in our state? Let’s keep going?

(Group exits quickly.)
ACT 2, INTERLUDE 2

One of the groups will be walking down the back stairs on the third floor, past the new location of the controversial paintings depicting “Father Hennepin at the Falls” and the “Treaty of Sioux”. The ghosts of a Native American and a construction worker are discussing the paintings.

NATIVE AMERICAN GHOST (referring to the paintings on the wall)
If they made the conquest and destruction of your people into a really well drawn comic book.

CONSTRUCTOR WORKER GHOST
I did not know, when I came from Germany to work for a better life here.

NATIVE AMERICAN GHOST
You did not know someone else lived here first or you did not care?
... If they made the conquest and destruction of your people into a really well drawn comic book.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER GHOST
I did not know, when I came from Germany to work for a better life here.

NATIVE AMERICAN GHOST
You did not know someone else lived here first or you did not care?
... If they made the conquest and the destruction of your people into a really well drawn comic book.

(As the hallway is narrow and people will have to walk down the steps in pairs, these lines of dialogue repeat until everyone has past.)
ACT 2, INTERLUDE 3.5A (Second)

MATT and SARA step into separate elevators, giving the same speech. They dial their cellphone.

MATT/SARA

Mom, you’ll never believe—
Mom, you’ll never believe—

(to AUDIENCE)
Excuse me.

(into cell phone.)

Mom, listen to me. I did this thing today at the Capitol. I discovered—

(Interrupted.)

No, Mom, it is important. I can’t believe you think that. Remember that little program I told you about that someone snuck into a bill. It helped save Aunt Julie’s home day care. It helped save a lot of businesses in our town. You don’t see how but I wish you’d believe me.

Sorry, I’ve got to go. I’m late for a hearing.

Mooooom. Yes, I’ll call grandma.

(Elevator probably opens by now.)
ACT 2, INTERLUDE 3.5B (First)

In a second interlude between Scenes 1A, B, and C, in the elevator.

They pull out their cell phone again.

MATT/SARA (to AUDIENCE, politely)

Excuse me. I just really need to make this call.

(into phone.)

Dad!
Guess what, guess what, guess what. I did this thing today at the Capitol. I discovered—

(Interrupted.)

No, I’m not still writing the Governor’s proclamations. I haven’t had that job for a few years. I’m a legislative aide. I help push through an agenda—

(interrupted again.)

Yes, I know you think the proclamations were silly, Dad, but for someone who was affected by Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, Dad, it was really nice to be finally recognized by the Governor. It meant a lot to them. People cried. Just because it didn’t affect you doesn’t mean the government is wasting time.

Thank you. So, let me tell you about how I single-handedly exposed the new governor’s secret plot to—

(The elevator arrives and/or the cell phone cuts out.)

Dad? Darn reception. Elevators!
Act 2, Interlude 3.5C (After Scene 4)

MATT/SARA (in elevator, bursting out, to group)
It was an honest mistake!

(awkward pause. Pulls out phone.)

Hi, Grandma. I caused a big problem in at my job, Grandma. People might be very angry at me.
. . Mistakes around here are much worse than in other places, Grandma. I won’t just lose my
job. Our name may be all over the TV and, and—

Yes, Grandma, of course, I’ll still take you to church/synagogue.

(MATT/SARA relaxes.)

I love you too, Grandma. . . .It’s actually kind of funny. . .
INTERLUDE 4

After the TOUR GUIDES take them into room G15.

MAINTENANCE MAN
There’s a rhythm to this place, almost like the Capitol is a living being. When the session starts, there’s a lot of public and excitement—spiffy and clean. In the middle, it gets emptier, quiet, secret meetings, who-knows-what’s-getting-done. Then at the end of the session everything’s moving, energetic, frenetic even.

SECURITY GUARD
People go into windowless rooms at all hours of the night and come out three years older. Time is strange here. You’ve probably been here longer than you think you have because a lot more than you could even watch has been happening. It’s probably not the same day as when you started.

CIVIL SERVANT
When the session ends, for those of us in the Executive Branch, there’s this quiet. You go to pick up the bills from the Revisor’s Office. A day ago, the place may have been full of people, craziness, but back to your desk now, it’s time to actually put the laws into practice.

MAINTENANCE MAN
Us workers bees don’t ever stop. We take pride in keeping this symbol of our state beautiful everyday. A guy fixes the light switches. People who hire the contractors. The very basic things that keep the gears turning that you don’t see.

CIVIL SERVANT
Our job is to take the last step. Everyone else has left. That’s what we do, outside the craziness. I go outside and discover the sun is still shining, and it’s an amazing relief. And I feel this amazing sense of accomplishment.

SECURITY GUARD
But. First, let’s go back to our story in progress. Try not to worry about the time at all. Everything will happen eventually. Or not. You know. The way. It does.
ACT 2: SCENE 4

TOUR GUIDE #3 snaps his fingers and the hearing leaps into action with REPRESENTATIVE gaveling the meeting to order.

MATT is the committee legislative aide, behind her, passing papers, etc.

REPRESENTATIVE
The Chair calls to order our joint hearings on—

(LEGISLATOR bursts in and takes his seat. SARA, his LA, comes in behind him and waits.)

LEGISLATOR
Sorry, I'm late. Sorry.

REPRESENTATIVE
Senator. We start on time in the House.

LEGISLATOR (shrugging, also playful digging)
Senate time is different than House time. What can I say? We practice more decorum in our choice of attire.

(SHEILA is excitedly brought in by EXPERT and OSCAR. ANGELA and LOBBYIST trail in as EXPERT signals for the committee’s attention while MATT whispers into REPRESENTATIVE’s ear and points toward her.)

REPRESENTATIVE
We would like to welcome the Governor’s new Chief of Staff to the Capitol and invite her to sit and testify if she would like.

SHEILA
Me?

REPRESENTATIVE
It’s an honor.

(SHEILA sits at the table.)

SHEILA
I can’t believe you’re going to listen to a regular citizen like me.
LEGISLATOR

We honestly prefer to hear from regular citizens.
    Though you aren’t one.

SHEILA

Everyone is above average in Minnesota, right? Though that is one of the many things we prefer not to talk about, right?

REPRESENTATIVE

The Chair agrees.

SHEILA

Did you say a chair agrees with me?

REPRESENTATIVE

The Chair.

SHEILA

What do chairs have to do with it?

MATT (stage whisper)

She’s the chair.

SHEILA (to MATT)

She’s a chair?

LEGISLATOR

You address the Chair. We don’t use her name.

SHEILA

Are you all crazy?

REPRESENTATIVE

Madam Chair. . . That’s how you would say it. “Are you all crazy, Madam Chair?”

SHEILA

Madam Chair?

REPRESENTATIVE (as though answering)

Speak.

MATT (stage whisper to REP)

It’s my job to remind you to keep the testimony moving forward. Two minutes per speaker you told me.
SHEILA (to MATT) Are you talking to me?

LEGISLATOR He’s not actually talking.

SHEILA I heard him talking.

REPRESENTATIVE According to the rules of the hearing, he’s not talking.

MATT But I am helping to implement the rules to keep the hearing on track, behind the scenes.

SHEILA Are the rules designed to keep me from actually talking?

(Pause.)

Madam Chair.

EXPERT (whisper to SHEILA) My first testimony was about an environmental issue that was poisoning Minnesotans but the people behind the table kept interrupting me to correct the way I spoke to them. I thought, this is why government doesn’t work.

ANGELA (from the back of the room) And why a lot of people feel left out.

(REP bangs gavel for order.)

REPRESENTATIVE You think we’d rather play games and be formal than accomplish meaningful policy?

CIVIL SERVANT (stage whisper) But the rules actually help keep us on track.

LEGISLATOR Even when the party in power changes, the way a bill becomes a law, doesn’t change.

LOBBYIST (from the back, stage whisper) If we had to reinvent the process every time, every change would cause chaos.
REPRESENTATIVE
Plus. People come before us with issues that are deeply personal. If we don’t create a certain formal distance, then their passion would drown us all. We’d be paralyzed. We’d never get anything done.

SHEILA
You do consider how your legislation affects people, passionately, right?

ANGELA
You tell ’em, Mom.

REPRESENTATIVE (to MATT)
Does she get to ask questions of the committee?

CIVIL SERVANT (to SHEILA)
That’s the bureaucratic way of telling you to watch what you say.

REPRESENTATIVE
But I didn’t say that. I referred to the rules. They may seem foreign at first, you may not understand, but the rules do actually help us hear the voices of more Minnesotans.

OSCAR
Can I speak?

(REPRESENTATIVE bangs gavel.)

REPRESENTATIVE
Who’s talking?

OSCAR
I’m right here. Here.

(REPRESENTATIVE bangs gavel, doesn’t seem to see him. ANGELA comes down to OSCAR to be supportive.)

Hello? Hel-lo?

We need order.

OSCAR
I thought you said—

(REP bangs gavel.)
SHEILA
He’s with me.

(REP stops banging gavel.)

REPRESENTATIVE
O, I see you now. Come forward; I recognize you. We talked earlier. How are your parents?

OSCAR
I live in fear for my parent’s safety. (Exhales.) Phew. I spend all my time with words but I’m never said those words out loud. I spent so much time trying to fit in here that I forgot why I really wanted to be here. I believe in helping my parents and my community. There are many more people like me who live in fear for their parents’ safety. Why do my parents work so much and we still have nothing? Why was my father never home? He’s working all the time, and we still lived 6 in a one bedroom apartment. They did it for the opportunity to make their children’s lives better. And now I feel the weight of that community on me—even though they haven’t asked. I dream of speaking up for them because they can’t.

LEGISLATOR
We are not responsible for federal immigration policy. We can’t pass laws that—

OSCAR
But you do pass laws that make life even more difficult for them than it needs to be, about identification cards, taxes, driver’s licenses. You pass laws as though, because they aren’t citizens, you don’t recognize them as people.

LEGISLATOR
Regardless of how I might feel, we can’t do whatever we want. We are responsible to our constituents.

ADVOCATE
That reasoning always seems to be used to resist change.

LEGISLATOR
I don’t like what you’re implying.

ADVOCATE
Why don’t certain people ever seem to have representation?

ANGELA
Why is it that we never seem to count equally?

LEGISLATOR (frustrated)
The doors are open! What more do you want? Would you like us to ignore law? History? Young Lady, I am in the party that generally supports your causes, but you should respect my experience when I tell you that we can’t just magically make things the pretty way you want them to be?!
Representative (calming him)
Senator... I am reminded that on my first day, you told me that “policies come and go, people even come and go, but don’t forget that you are always part of a culture...”

Civil servant (as though an echo)
You are always part of a culture.

Expert + advocate
You are always part of a culture.

Lobbyist
You are always part of a culture.

Representative
“And you’re creating a culture that will outlast all of us.”

(Pause. To Sheila, Angela, Oscar, and hearing room.)

Look. This place. It’s just people, who have weaknesses and flaws. Laws and rules are a reflection of those people. Because people are the way we are, little people, that’s the reason we have this building and procedures. It’s all designed to awaken our aspirations to be greater than the sum of what we are as individuals.

Sheila
How can the sum be greater if not all the individual parts are added into the equation equally?

(A quiet general murmur of agreement. “She’s good.” “I like how she phrased that.”)

Representative
What would you like us to do?

Sheila
Be more uncomfortable.

Legislator
I’m extremely uncomfortable right now!

Sheila
Madam Chair.
I hear friends complain when a march stops traffic around the Capitol. Because they’re inconvenienced. But I think we all need to redirect traffic for a little bit even if it slows us down on our way.

There was a time when there was no wheelchair access here. Cass Gilbert didn’t design any restrooms for female legislators. But the restoration didn’t restore that part of
our history. No, we said we need to make an effort so that people who are different are able to come in too. Now we take the wisdom of those accommodations for granted even though they inconvenienced us at first.

My hope is that the next generation of any type of person—Minnesotans of African descent, Asian, Native, poor—will have the same access to the system as any other person. What we’re asking now is only the type of facilitation that will not even be remembered because the changes will have been accepted.

(Appplause from the hearing room. CHIEF OF STAFF enters.)

CHIEF OF STAFF
What’s so exciting?

MATT
Excuse us. We’re in the middle of an important hearing.

CHIEF OF STAFF
Then, I should be here. I’m the new Governor’s Chief of Staff.

(Thud. Big pause. Everyone looks at SHEILA.)

SHEILA
You know, I never actually said that I was the new Chief of Staff. . .

Slowly everyone turns to MATT and SARA, who try to make themselves as small as possible but, failing that, shrug helplessly.

One more moment of silence to let that sink in, then chaos.

Everyone jumps up. PRESS runs back and forth. REPRESENTATIVE bangs a gavel. People shouting at each other and moving around.

SHEILA (over the din)
Um, I still think the points that we were discussing are-- Um, Excuse me. I mean, you all seemed to agree with what we were--Hel-Lo? Hello? Um.

(We have fully returned to the chaotic circular motion at the beginning of the play and the musical din that was created there. In a sense, even though what has happened seems ridiculous, the culture of the Capitol just absorbs it and moves on to the next thing. SHEILA returns to that same dazed searching mode she entered the play in.)
Can someone please--

(Eventually, the room clears enough to focus on SHEILA in the center of it. OSCAR approaches her this time, not trying to hide. REPRESENTATIVE and ANGELA have also remained in the room.)

OSCAR
They can't see you now. You're not important anymore. I mean, to them. You're important to me.

(He hugs her.)

Thank you.

(He sees ANGELA and decides to leave them alone, but as he leaves, he turns back to ask.)

What is the new job you were supposed to be starting?

SHEILA (pulling out a piece of paper to read it)
Capitol Information Desk.
It says here they answer 35,000 questions from citizens every year.

OSCAR
I wonder how you'll answer them now.

(As he goes.)

I'll find you. You'll see me.

(SHEILA looks at ANGELA.)

SHEILA
I guess you were right, Honey. You can't make change inside the system.

(REPRESENTATIVE comes down to them in that warm and intense way that legislators greet people when they turn on their charm.)

REPRESENTATIVE
I want you to know that your story is important. Your issue matters.

SHEILA (cynical)
Please.

REPRESENTATIVE
Sometimes, through all the noise and clutter, we do hear the voice of the people. I'm going to tell you the truth. The Minnesotans you're talking about don't show up to vote. And when they do show up, their vote is predictable. I don't have to change my vote to know how
theirs will be counted. If you can find allies across the aisle who believe they have a reasonable shot at earning some of those votes, maybe—maybe, eventually—you can build coalitions and move people closer to your positions. We can want this culture to be more kind and inclusive but it isn't designed to run on wishes... It may not be the way it should be, but it is the way it is. This is still the white male power structure on steroids. People have their biases. They learned history a certain way. Don’t shoot the messenger.

Good luck.

(REPRESENTATIVE leaves.)

SHEILA (to ANGELA)

Sign me up for the revolution.

ANGELA

Why? She just told us what we need to do. And we’ve been able to see how people behave around here. We need to show her community is activated. We can overwhelm the ballot box. We need to force those legislators to listen. And we need to build coalition inside this building. We need to understand how all the different people are motivated, and we’ll keep at them until they do what they need to do because we’ve made them do it. She just told us how to make them listen.

SHEILA

Wait. You’re optimistic now?

ANGELA

You just testified in front of a joint committee in the Senate Hearing room in the state Capitol, Mom.

SHEILA

That was an accident, Angela.

ANGELA

It happened. And it was cool. And I know that Representative heard you. I saw it. I saw it.

SHEILA

What she was describing takes a long time, and it shouldn’t. It should have been done by now.

ANGELA

It’s ok. I’m young, and I have a good role model.

Now that I know those doors are open, they’re not locking them on me again. I’m going to come here and use the bathroom everyday just to make up for lost time.
(SHEILA loves this version of ANGELA, the happy one excited about justice, and she embraces her deeply. Then they turn to the audience.)

SHEILA
Come on. One more stop today. Follow us.

ANGELA
Follow us.

-- END OF SCENE 4 --
SCENE 5

As SHEILA and ANGELA lead the audience out of the Senate Hearing Room, TOUR GUIDES grab their attention and remind them to stick with them.

*Maybe VOLUNTEERS hand them protest signs and tell them to be ready for their cue.*

*Maybe TOUR GUIDES distract them with bits of the song the AUDIENCE should have learned during the walking parts of Act 2.*

*Or, maybe, our cast is singing excerpts from Act 1 songs.*

Then, the beautiful music of the Quadriga’s first entrance is coming from the rotunda.

The AUDIENCE moves through the archways and into the rotunda for the first time this evening. The music swells.

INDUSTRY, AGRICULTURE, and PROSPERITY with HORSES enter majestically on the second floor balcony, above the audience on the floor of the rotunda.

*Can we do something to the sound of their voices to enhance the majesty?*

**QUADRIGA CHARACTERS**

Welcome to the People’s House!

INDUSTRY

I represent Industry.

AGRICULTURE

I am Agriculture.

INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE

Together, we represent Civilization.
PROSPERITY
I am Prosperity. I ride in a chariot pulled by ...

AGRICULTURE
Earth

INDUSTRY
Air

AGRICULTURE
Fire

INDUSTRY
Water

(She makes the horses whinny.)

INDUSTRY
We celebrate, uhm ...

(she can’t remember her line)

PROSPERITY (stage whisper)
Minnesota.

INDUSTRY
Minnesota.

(whisper)
I knew that. I know what state we’re in! I’m just nervous!

(louder)
We celebrate Minnesota!

PROSPERITY (to AGRICULTURE)
It’s your line now.

AGRICULTURE
We celebrate ...

PROSPERITY (stage whisper)
Hospitality.

AGRICULTURE
Hospitality!--Hospitality? Really?
PROSPERITY

We are the Progress of the State!

(PROSPERITY looks to them to say their line. Nothing. He stage whispers)

Repeat it back.

INDUSTRY

What?

PROSPERITY

Repeat it back.

AGRICULTURE

Repeat what back?

PROSPERITY

The Progress of the State!

INDUSTRY and AGRICULTURE (half-heartedly)

The Progress of the State.

INDUSTRY

The Progress of the State? I think that if I have to stand in front of all these people watching me make a fool of myself, I’m going to say what I think.

(She takes off her mask.)

Hi. You don’t notice me, but I help make this place run. Minnesota industry and agriculture have always been successful through the work of a wide variety of people, born here and immigrants of different races and backgrounds. But Prosperity? Prosperity has been monopolized by a small group.

PROSPERITY (still stage whisper)

No. No, no. You’re ruining the story, the play.

INDUSTRY

He gets to play Prosperity. So he doesn’t care.

(PROSPERITY removes his mask.)

PROSPERITY

I care. I care! We’re just entertaining people here. This isn’t the right time for this. You should care about what they think of us!
INDUSTRY
Why? Why should I worry more about what they think of us than what I think is right?

PROSPERITY
Who gave you a monopoly on what’s right?

INDUSTRY
I think you can listen to my ideas for once! That’s the opposite of a monopoly!

PROSPERITY
Don’t tell me about monopolies! I’m Prosperity. I know what I’m doing!

(AGRICULTURE breaks in.)

AGRICULTURE
Hey! HEY! Everyone is staring at us.

(To AUDIENCE, from above.)

Hi. Sorry.

Pretty good puppets? What do you think? I just work in the Chief Clerk’s Office.

Help me out, Guys?

(Silence. INDUSTRY and PROSPERITY are awkward, embarrassed, angry, and don’t know what to do. Silence some more. Then, someone sings, from the crowd.)

CIVIL SERVANT
Welcome to the People’s House . . .

MEN (LEG., LOB., EXP., TG #3)

The State of Minnesota,
My North Star, My Dear

CHORUS (LEG., LOB., CIV., ADV., EXP.)

There’s so much happening behind the scenes that you don’t know.

CHORUS + TOUR GUIDES

Take time to get to know, don’t judge before you learn.

SHEILA

Welcome to the People’s House
Try to see another point of view
Look up, look out, look around

11/29/17
Share the things we know and honor what is new.

ANGELA

Is this the People’s House?
We need to face the harm that’s been done

SHEILA

There’s inspiration in these halls

SHEILA & ANGELA

But it’s got to include everyone

Welcome to the People’s House
The people’s house is open
Now what is the role for me?
There’s inspiration in the halls
Set the power free!

ANGELA

Whose house?

(Pause)

SECURITY GUARD

Our house

ANGELA

Whose house?

SECURITY GUARD, SARA, OSCAR, ADVOCATE

Our house

ANGELA

Whose house?

SECURITY GUARD, SARA, OSCAR, ADVOCATE, TOUR GUIDES

Our house

ANGELA

Whose house?

ALL (& AUDIENCE)

Our house

(The chant repeats.)

11/29/17
Welcome to the People’s House

ALL

-- END OF PLAY --