

## THE OVERPOPULATION COMMITTEE

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*ROBINSON* — head of Overpopulation Committee; all business, incapable of any emotion except for stoicism (if that even counts as an emotion)

*SMITH* — second member of Overpopulation Committee; an academic type, perhaps a bit too thrilled at this job opportunity

*WALLACE* — third member of Overpopulation Committee; how did Wallace get this job?

*CAM* — American citizen with a hat

*LEX* — American citizen without a hat

All roles are gender-neutral, but I've written he/him pronouns for the sake of flow. Pronouns can be adjusted. Committee members may wear matching uniforms or badges on their shirts.

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*The Committee is settled around the center right of the stage, each in a chair behind a table. They face stage left, as if waiting for someone to enter, and each has a clipboard and pen (or anything similar, such as computers, notebooks, etc.). There is a phone on the table, and maybe some name plates for each member. WALLACE is, perhaps, doing something ridiculous like playing with a paddle ball.*

WALLACE: Excited for today?

SMITH: Yes.

ROBINSON: No. Excitement clouds logical decision-making.

SMITH: Uh—I meant *yes*, according to what was professionally acceptable. Which means, of course, no.

*The phone on the table rings. ROBINSON picks it up.*

ROBINSON: Overpopulation Committee. Yes. All right. Send them in.

*ROBINSON puts the phone down.*

SMITH: I hope we get some good ones today.

*The first citizen, CAM, walks in stage left, stopping to stand in front of the Committee. Cam is very nervous.*

WALLACE: How's it going, mate?

CAM: Good. Very, uh, good. How are you?

WALLACE: Good, thanks.

ROBINSON: State your name, please.

CAM: Cam. Cameron Rogers.

ROBINSON: Tell us about yourself.

CAM: I'm twenty. I'm a university student, studying engineering. I'm the top of my class. My, uh, my dad was an engineer. I'm sort of following in his footsteps.

ROBINSON: Relationship status?

CAM: Single. I plan to stay single. No kids.

ROBINSON: You have twenty seconds to argue your case.

CAM: I have a future ahead of me. I am skilled both socially and intellectually. I think I can contribute to society. I am the last remaining member of my family, and I believe—

ROBINSON: Time. Thank you. You may leave.

CAM: Thank you for your consideration.

*CAM exits stage left. The Committee members begin taking notes on their clipboards, except WALLACE, who isn't very interested in writing things out.*

SMITH: He was nervous. Very nervous. "Contribute to society?" A bit vague, don't you think?

WALLACE: I liked his hat.

ROBINSON: Here comes the next one.

*SMITH and ROBINSON flip to their next clipboard page. LEX walks in, much more confident than CAM was previously.*

WALLACE: And how are *you*?

LEX: Excellent.

ROBINSON: State your name, please.

LEX: Lex Buchanan.

ROBINSON: Tell us about yourself.

LEX: I am forty-two. I have a Phd in mathematics. I have an above-average IQ. I am skilled in writing, teaching, problem-solving, and contain many leadership attributes. I have work experience in several fields and published an award-winning book about STEM education in America.

ROBINSON: Relationship status?

LEX: Divorced.

ROBINSON: You have twenty seconds to argue your case.

LEX: I have years of experience and quality education under my belt. I have helped educate thousands and plan to continue doing so, expanding the minds of generations to come in the fields of science, mathematics, and technology.

ROBINSON: Time. Thank you. You may leave.

*LEX nods, then turns and exits stage left. SMITH and ROBINSON take notes.*

WALLACE: What *I'd* like to know is the divorce story. Probably money. It's always money.

*ROBINSON puts down his pen. SMITH follows suit.*

ROBINSON: Thoughts?

SMITH: Lex is clearly capable. Everything coincides with his file, as well.

ROBINSON: I agree. There were no health conditions, either.

WALLACE: I liked the one with the hat.

SMITH: Did you like the *one* with the hat, or did you just like the *hat*?

WALLACE: Both.

ROBINSON: Attire is irrelevant.

WALLACE: Is it? You can tell a lot about a person from their clothes. I liked the hat, and I liked *him*. And I'll tell you something else—Lex failed my test. “How are you?” “Excellent!” But what about me? Come on! These are basic social skills! Cam’s a friendly guy. Lex—now, he’s conceited.

SMITH: Conceited, or confident? They *are* supposed to prove their worth. Cam didn’t give us as much.

*WALLACE suddenly grows very passionate about CAM’s case.*

WALLACE: He was being humble. Both claim they want to improve the world. Shouldn’t we keep the one who seems more caring? More selfless?

SMITH: But Lex has proved his usefulness already. Through experience.

WALLACE: Well, sure! Because he’s older! Cam didn’t get a chance yet. What if everything Lex does from this point on isn’t as good as what he’s previously done? He could’ve already reached his peak.

ROBINSON: We can only make decisions based on present information, not on hypotheticals. Lex has more experience and contributions. We must come to a unanimous decision. Wallace?

WALLACE: Can’t we keep them both, then? Do we really need to terminate a whole fifty percent of the population? Why not a third? A fourth?

ROBINSON: A fifty percent cut is imperative to ensure ideal living conditions for the human race. This is what is best for our nation. We cannot make exceptions.

*WALLACE tosses his clipboard onto the floor, frustrated.*

ROBINSON: Wallace. Are we in agreement?

WALLACE: Yes.

SMITH: Or, you know, we could just wipe out *everyone*. Now *that’s* equality!

*SMITH laughs, but no one else does.*

SMITH: Ahem. That was, uh, that was a joke.

ROBINSON: Here they come.

*CAM and LEX enter stage left, stopping side-by-side in front of the table.*

ROBINSON: After brief consideration, we have come to a unanimous decision. Lex, you have been selected for Future Society.

*LEX nods.*

ROBINSON: Unfortunately, that means Cam will be terminated. You will be escorted to the chamber for your final meal.

*CAM has attempted to hold it together, but begins to cry.*

ROBINSON: You may both leave.

*Both turn to exit. WALLACE gets up and walks over to CAM, who he embraces. LEX exits stage left as the two remain hugging for a moment. ROBINSON and SMITH just watch. It is silent other than CAM, who is sobbing. WALLACE lets go.*

WALLACE: It's all right. It doesn't hurt. They've got good food, too.

CAM: Thank you.

WALLACE: Bye, Cam.

CAM: Bye.

*CAM exits stage left. WALLACE paces for a moment.*

WALLACE: I need a minute.

*WALLACE exits stage left. SMITH looks at ROBINSON.*

SMITH: What's he so worked up for? He doesn't usually care this much.

ROBINSON: Yes . . . perhaps he isn't as emotionally controlled as we thought.

SMITH: Should we look into a replacement?

ROBINSON: It's something to consider.

SMITH: Maybe we should give *him* twenty seconds, huh? Heheh. No, no, not really. Another joke. But do you ever wonder if we've made . . . *mistakes* with some of these people?

ROBINSON: That is a dangerous question, Smith. Implying a flaw in the system means reevaluating every member of the Future Society. Including ourselves.

SMITH: Oh. Oh, well, that's not what I—

ROBINSON: But now that you mention it, that is something to consider, as well. Are we not biased toward ourselves? Hmm.

*WALLACE re-enters.*

SMITH: Feeling better?

WALLACE: Yes. Sorry about that.

SMITH: No worries.

*WALLACE sits back down, picking up his clipboard as he does so. The phone rings. ROBINSON picks it up.*

ROBINSON: Overpopulation Committee. Yes, we're ready. Bring them in.

*They turn to a new page on their clipboards.*

WALLACE: Excited for today?

*Blackout. End.*