

Act 1, Scene 1

From the darkness: a rhythmic - if annoying - sound... a pickleball being swatted back and forth. A soundscape as the ball smacks to and fro, crescendoing and overlapping before transforming into the sound of rain beyond the walls.

A door opens and a silhouette - Reed - appears, rainwater pooling beneath her.

Reed: Hello? Anyone here? Jennifer?

Silence. Then, all the fluorescents come on at once. Reed winces at the light. She is in a school gymnasium, completely empty aside from a few tables and chairs. Upon one table, a cardboard partition has been erected. Upon another rests a sealed cardboard ballot box that reads "Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Elections" on the side. Wanda enters from a door off to the side. She wears a no-nonsense pants suit and surveys Reed archly.

Wanda: Reed Tremblay, I presume?

Reed: Oh, um- *(Glances back towards the door as though to make a hasty exit; more thunder and lightning)* That's me...

Wanda: *(Locking the door with an ominous clunk)* You are late.

Reed: Yeah, this storm is wild. Sorry, I'm supposed to be meeting the county clerk-

Wanda: I am afraid Mrs MacLellan has been compromised.

Reed: Compromised?

Thunder. The lights flicker.

Wanda: I have been sent to oversee this polling station on her behalf. *(Flashing her credentials)* Wanda Kiefaber. Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Elections.

Reed: Kiefaber? I've never heard that name before. Can you spell it?

Wanda: Yes.

Silence.

Reed: So are you from around here?

Wanda: No.

Silence.

Reed: Seen any good movies lately?

Wanda: Please, Ms Tremblay: time is of the essence. In precisely four minutes and forty-three seconds, this door will be unlocked, there to admit the huddled masses eager to participate in the last great experiment... Democracy! (Looks at her sleeve) Goosebumps. Whoa.

Reed: Right. So am I, like, checking IDs or...

Wanda: Ms Tremblay, what I'm asking you to do is far more important than merely "checking IDs." Today, we shall watch over these hallowed walls, inspiring our peers to comport themselves in a manner that behooves the standards imparted onto all of us by the holiest of authorities... the Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Elections!

Reed: Uh huh. Soooo...

Wanda: You can start by mopping.

Reed: Cool. (*She gets to work; thunder and lightning continue; Reed shivers*) I don't know what direction you came in, but the exit coming off the 104 was basically submerged.

Wanda: I didn't have any trouble.

Reed: That's good. (*Opens and stares into a supply closet*) Hey there's a sleeping bag in here. And a sleep apnea machine. And the biography of someone named... Kim Campbell?

Wanda: (*Snatching it away*) Unlike some of us, I was aware of the forecast and made the necessary arrangements. I knew I wouldn't have a moment to waste, not if I wanted to get all this set up! (*She gestures to the table, the chairs, the box*)

Reed: Uh huh. I take it that this is your first time in Briny Brook?

Wanda: Indeed. It is quite the... town? village? hamlet?

Reed: We prefer the term, "stretch of road."

Wanda: It's quite bad. The road, I mean.

Reed: Thanks, we're awful proud of it.

Wanda: And this is, what, the high school?

Reed: I hope so, otherwise I'm gonna have to repeat grades 10 through 12. (*Sighs wistfully*) Yessir, if these walls could speak, they'd say... well, I wouldn't know because I always cut gym. Go Briners!

Wanda: Well, it must be a special place indeed if the Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Elections saw fit to erect an outpost here.

Reed: Nah, Briny High's the only place that's big enough to host events like this—since the fire hall burned down anyway. This is where the holiday market is held, and where the community theatre does all their shows, and where the various sport-ball leagues play their various sport-ball games...

Wanda: Ah. Well it is nearly 8:30 and no doubt the local throng is chomping at the democratic bit. Ms Tremblay, would you like to vote now and avoid the rush?

Reed: Oh, no, thanks. I don't vote.

Wanda: (*A dark beat*) You don't vote?

Reed: Um—

Wanda: Ms Tremblay, I urge you to reconsider this apathetic malarkey: voting is the most important - and dare I say, thrilling - duty a citizen can experience. I love voting. In fact, five years ago an elected official died in office, and although tragic it nonetheless prompted a bi-election. My god, it was like Christmas came early.

Reed: I am not apathetic! I'm a defeatist. There's a difference... I think.

Wanda: But why are you defeated? You're so young.

Reed: It just feels like nothing really changes, you know? And it's not like we're picking the prime minister- this is just to elect our next councillor. (*Wanda says nothing*) Are you mad at me?

Wanda: I'm not mad. Just disgusted. (*Before Reed can object*) Well, it is time to begin. Ms Tremblay, would you unlock the doors? That is, if it doesn't feel too "pointless.":

Reed: (*Sighs*) Sure.

Wanda: (*Throwing her the keys*) You would do well to leap out of the way as quickly as possible. I'd hate to have another poll worker trampled to death on my watch.

Reed: What was that?

Wanda: I'll tell you later. (*Reed goes to unlock the doors*) Oh wait! I nearly forgot. (*She produces a small Canadian flag and sticks it up*) We couldn't possibly begin without the good old Red, White, and Red. (*Salutes*)

Reed: Totally, I was gonna say...

Wanda: By the powers vested in me by the Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Elections, I pronounce the Briny Brook Polling Station in District 1 of Pictou County... open! NOW, MS TREMBLAY! NOW!

She braces for impact. Reed unlocks the door and leaps to the side. Nothing happens. The clock ticks.

Wanda: And now we wait.

They do.

Scene 2

The sound of the pickleball again, this time fading into the ticking of a clock. The arms of the clock spin 12 times until it reads 8:10 PM. The room is empty. Wanda reenters with a box of pizza.

Wanda: The pizza finally arrived, and only an hour later than promised– Ms Tremblay? *(Reed pops up from behind the partition, looking like she's been caught in the act)* What were you– *(A book hits the ground from behind the partition)* Ms Tremblay, were you reading my copy of Kim Campbell's autobiography, *Time and Chance: The Political Memoirs of Canada's First Woman Prime Minister*?

Reed: No.

A suspicious pause.

Wanda: Quite gripping, eh?

Reed: No!

Wanda: All right. *(Sets pizza down)* Help yourself.

Reed: Thanks, I'm starv– *(Opens the box)* What are these toppings?

Wanda: Anchovies and jalapenos. *(Off Reed's expression)* I asked you what you like on your pizza, and you said you did not care.

Reed: Right, my bad, I should have known that this classic combo was in the mix.

Wanda eats. Reed does not. The clock continues to tick. Reed sighs.

Wanda: Hold strong, we're nearly there. The final wave will break upon us at any moment.

Reed: And you're sure there's nothing else I can be doing? I mean, I'm no workaholic but there's gotta be more to life than mopping and pointing at a box for twelve hours. (*Beat*) Right?

Wanda: At last, a little proactivity. I am heartened to see it. I can tell Kim Campbell's memoir is rubbing off on you.

Reed: It is not!

Wanda: And there is a task you might enjoy. It is a bit above your clearance level, but I think you can handle it. Ms Tremblay, how would you like to... shake the box?

Reed: I think I would need more information first.

Wanda: As per the Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Elections handbook, it is important to shake the ballot box throughout the day to allow the ballots to settle. To breathe, if you will. Permit me to demonstrate. (*Gives the box a hearty shake*) Do you see? Do you see how I'm using a playful yet disciplined motion to aerate the ballots? Do you see?

Reed: Yep.

Wanda: Like a politically-charged snowglobe. Do you see? Now you try.

Reed approaches the box. She reflects upon all of her life decisions leading to this moment. She shakes the box. Wanda considers.

Wanda: Ms Tremblay. That was excellent.

Reed: Thanks. I feel so alive.

The excitement quickly passes. Silence except for the ticking of the clock and the pounding of the rain. Thunder rumbles and the lights flicker. Reed and Wanda freeze, but the lights seem to stabilize. Wanda picks up her book.

Wanda: You know, Kim Campbell is the only woman to have ever been prime minister.

Reed: They should put that on the cover.

Wanda: Quote: "I'd be prouder still to say I was Canada's 10th woman prime minister."
Page 146. Chills.

Reed: Yeah, spooky.

Wanda: We need more warriors like Mrs Campbell. You're welcome to keep this if you like. I have three other copies.

Reed: Um-

Thunder and lightning! Karen bustles into the gym, carrying an umbrella and bags. Beneath her chic raincoat, her clothes are flowy and multitudinous, bohemian and far more expensive than they probably need to be.

Karen: Greetings, all- (*she slips*) WAH! Did you see that? I nearly broke my neck!

Wanda: Ms Tremblay.

Reed: On it! (*Mops*)

Karen: Well Reed, you certainly run a loose ship. A loose, slippery ship! (*She laughs to zero playback*) But it's fine! My goodness, this rain, amiright? I'm not surprised. All day yesterday the trees were telling me, "It's going to rain, just wait and see." I'm a little witchy. (*Another awkward silence as Reed mops*) Well gosh, I only came from checking my property next door and nearly drowned; I certainly hope the weather isn't discouraging anyone from voting. (*Silence*) You know, I think this is the quietest that this gym has ever been! I can actually hear myself think. Soooo can I just grab any ballot, or...

Wanda: No one is permitted to vote without identification. That is, unless you bring in a friend who can confirm you definitely aren't lying, in which case we'll take you at your word. I'm sorry, I do not make the rules.

Karen: Oh I just live up the road. Reed knows me. Don't you, dear?

Reed: (*Grimacing*) Yes... I know her...

Karen: But I don't know *you*...

Wanda: (*Flashing credentials*) Kiefaber. Wanda Kiefaber. Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Elections.

Karen: Charmed, I'm sure. I assumed the county clerk would be working. Where is Jennifer? I hope she's okay.

Wanda: I have been hired to oversee this year's election to prevent any interference.

Karen: Oh? Does some foreign power want to influence Pictou County's municipal election?

Wanda: You never know.

Karen: You are a caution. So if I could just grab my ballot-

Wanda: Not without your identification.

Karen: But-

Wanda: Whilst I'm sure you're all "thick as thieves" here in Briny Brook, the rules are the rules. We cannot afford to cut any corners, not when our Democracy is at stake.

Reed: It's true. We've been carding everyone, even my mom. Did you know she's 52?!

Karen: Well fine! (*As she gets her ID out*) All I have to say is thank goodness it's raining and I had to drive my *Prius* here, because otherwise I might not have brought my ID and then where would we be?! Exactly! That's all I'm saying. But it's fine.

Wanda: (*As she cross-references the ID and her list*) Karen McSweeney...

Karen: It's not (*nasally, haughtily*) "Kare-en." It's (*frenchily, also haughtily*) "Ka-rén."
(*pronounced "careen"*)

Wanda: Sure. Here is your ballot and your ID.

Karen: How thrilling to see our tax dollars at work.

She moves behind the partition, marks her ballot, and then crosses to the ballot box; she holds her paper above the slot.

Karen: May I?

Wanda nods. Karen votes.

Wanda: Thank you for voting. (*With a glance towards Reed*) Wasn't that enriching?

Karen: Um... sure?

Reed: She's been doing that all day too. See ya! (*Karen takes a seat nearby*) Oh no, that's not necessary, you can leave now.

Karen: Didn't I mention? I'm watching the Count.

Reed: Ew, why?

Karen: Oh it's not because I don't trust you, honey! No no no no no. No, Opal asked me to be here on her behalf. Just to make sure there's no shenanigans or someone adds the votes up wrong or anything like that. No offense.

Reed: Some taken.

Karen: (*Producing some papers*) I have all the paperwork here.

Wanda: Thank you.

Reed: (*To Karen*) Do you really have nothing better to do?

Wanda: Now now. Serving as a scrutineer is the highest honour a private citizen can attain. To ensure Democracy is upheld, and as a *volunteer* no less—
(*Something catches in her throat*) It actually makes me a little emotional.

Karen: Reed, sweetie, aren't *you* a volunteer?

Before Reed can answer, Craig bursts in, soggy and flustered. He grips a busted umbrella in his clenched little fists.

Craig: I hate the rain!!! I'm all wet now— (*Slips*) Mother of pearl, I nearly broke my neck! Wouldn't that be ironic? I can practically see the headlines: "Local chiropractor cracks neck!" I'd be the laughing stock of the entire industry! Why I oughta sue all of you!

Reed: (*Grabbing the mop*) Cool, love this energy. Here to vote?

Craig: Why else would I be here in this godforsaken weather?!

Reed: Right. Well— (*glancing at Wanda*) head on over to Wanda and make sure to have your ID ready, Craig Mensch of James River Falls.

Craig: But you know who I am. I'm Craig! Craig Mensch of James River Falls!

Reed: Sorry, the rules are the rules, no matter who or what you might be. That's what / always say.

Craig: This is preposterous—

Wanda: SIR. On behalf of the Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Elections, I order you to both cease and desist. Berating election workers is a felony and I will not hesitate to take you into custody.

Craig: Alright, alright! Jeez, some folks are so quick to anger.

Reed: (*To Wanda as Craig gets his ID out*) That's the first time I've seen anyone shut Craig down-slash-up.

Wanda: It's all part of the job. And I take my job very seriously. *(Aside, darkly)* It's all I have.

Reed: Pardon?

Wanda: NOTHING. *(To Craig)* Your ballot, citizen.

Midge enters, jittery and bookish beneath a well-worn raincoat.

Midge: Heya guys–

Reed: Careful, Midge, the floor is slippery!

Midge stops, looks down, and shrugs. Confused, Reed goes over and checks. Reed slips.

Midge: Whoa, that was close. *(She steps over Reed and approaches the table; as she hands Wanda some forms)* Heya, I'm Midge, Midge Bixby. I'm here to vote and then, whaddy call it, scrutinize.

Wanda: *(Credentials)* Wanda Kiefaber: Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Elections. You are all cutting it rather close.

Midge: I'm sorry?

Wanda: Typically we require scrutineers to be here at least half an hour before the polls close.

Midge: Sorry, I had an appointment!

Thunder. The lights flicker and go out. A high-pitched scream. The lights restore.

Wanda: Ms McSweeney, are you all right?

Karen: That was Craig.

Craig: Oh please, I was totally joking...

Midge votes before sitting down by the other scrutineers.

Karen: Who's your candidate, Midge? Tyler Murphy?

The locals chuckle knowingly.

Midge: Good one, Karen. Nope, Team-Zee, baby! WOOT!

Midge taps an orange "Vote Ziegler" button on her raincoat.

Wanda: Excuse me! No one is permitted to wear political endorsements whilst inside the polling station.

Midge: Oh—

Craig: *(From behind the partition)* Careful, she'll take you into custody.

Wanda: *(Sharply)* What was that?

Craig: Nothing... *(disappears sheepishly below the partition)*

Midge: You guys get a lot of folks in today?

Reed: Oh you know, like 40, 45.

Midge: 45? That's huge!

Reed: I know, right?

Midge: I guess there is a lot at stake...

Wanda: *(To Midge:)* May I see your identification?

Midge: Yes of course! Sorry!

Midge registers and heads behind the partition. Meanwhile, Craig emerges, slamming his ballot into the box and sitting next to Karen, though he drags his chair to the side, noisily.

Karen: *(Scoffs)* You *would* be here for Lucas.

Craig: You betcha! He won't accept any election results unless he has my personal assurance that it's all above board.

Karen: He said that?

Craig: Well, he might have, at some point, hypothetically...

He produces a dog-eared copy of Modern Chiropractics magazine and disappears behind its crumpled pages. Midge votes and sits. The group waits in silence as the clock continues to tick.

Reed: So... how are classes going this term, Midge?

Midge: Oh you know, there's nothing like waking up at dawn to lecture 15 giant boys on hockey scholarships about feminist poetry... but someone's gotta do it! ... Right?

Craig: And what didja think you'd be doing with a degree like that?

Midge: *(Sarcastically)* We can't all be chiropractors, Craig.

Silence, save for the ticking of the clock.

Reed: So... Craig, you playing much tennis these days?

Craig: Oh, YEAH RIGHT.

He shakes his magazine angrily but does not elaborate. Karen pulls out her phone and begins taking selfies. She gets up and poses.

Wanda: Phones and recording devices are not permitted inside the polling station.

Karen: I'm just taking some selfies for my socials. It's important to me that people know I'm doing this important advocacy work. Otherwise what's the point?

Wanda: Ms McSweeney– (*She notices Midge is also on her phone*) Et tu, Ms Bixby?

Midge: It's okay, I'm just doing the Wordle.

Wanda: Excuse me!

Karen: Just let me get one with the box. (*Poses with the box; to the box*) Ugh, this ballot box is washing me out. Do you have one in black?

Craig: Come on, guys. Be professional! God! (*Looking at his magazine*) Ooh they brought back the quiz! I'm going to see which vertebrae I am.

Wanda: If you do not put those phones away at once, I'll have no choice but to report you– to the Prime Minister!

Midge: No, don't bother Mark! Look, it's in my pocket.

Karen: I hope the municipality is willing to compensate us for any income lost due to the lack of phones.

Midge: I think your rentals will be fine for two hours.

Karen: Oh Midge, how little you understand the ephemeral lodging business.

Wanda: What is that?

Reed: It's her way of saying she owns a bunch of AirBNBs.

Karen: And I'm proud of it. In fact, Wanda, if you need somewhere to stay tonight, you should hit me up. I'm a SuperHost.

Wanda: I bet.

A silence. Wanda and Reed wait. Karen stares into space. Craig reads his magazine, tensely. Midge pulls some essays and a pen from her bag and starts to mark, but quickly gets bored.

Midge: So where's Jennifer? Doesn't she usually work these things?

Reed: Compromised.

Craig: Compromised?

Midge: Oh my god— Is she... dead?

Wanda: No!

Reed: (*Simultaneously*) Yes.

Karen: Apparently she's a spy for the Russians.

Craig: I knew it!

Wanda: It is nothing as scurrilous as that. In small towns like this - or rather, on small stretches of road like this - it can be difficult to separate the personal from the political. For that reason, it is helpful to have an impartial professional on site. The practice is growing more and more common as elections continue to grow more and more, shall we say, complicated?

Reed: We shall.

Wanda: While the precise motivations behind your district's opting for my services remain unknown, it usually has something to do with fear of interference arising from candidate-based tensions. Perhaps if you were so kind as to get me "up to speed," we might better understand why I am here. Besides, I find it helpful to have a fulsome sense of the local scene: it helps bring the Count to life. To be perfectly frank, it gives me a sort of "high."

Midge: I mean, it's probably not much different than what you're used to.

Wanda: (*Scoff*) I think life moves a bit more quickly in big cities. And I should know: I'm from Halifax. Or as I like to call it, the Ottawa of Nova Scotia.

Reed: I like to call it "the Big Smoke" because it sounds cool.

Wanda: Perhaps you could "break it down," Ms Tremblay. Set the scene for me.

Reed: Oh, well like I said, I'm not really political—

Karen: Not what I heard.

Wanda: Pardon me?

Reed: (*Distracting, grandly*) Ah, the District 1 Candidates Debate! I remember it well. It was one week ago— right here in Briny High. Four candidates defended their spot on the ballot, and while each of these handshaking-hopefuls call Pictou County home, they couldn't possibly be more different.

Midge: (*To Reed*) You're doing great.

Reed: (*Aside*) Thanks! (*Grandly once more*) The first candidate is the incumbent centrist, Opal O'Hair. (*A flex*) And yes, "incumbent" and "centrist" are both words I learned on the drive in this morning.

In a quick and fluid costume change, Karen transforms suddenly into Opal: a senior citizen wearing a red tracksuit with zero tolerance for bullshit.

Opal: Listen folks, I'm not gonna stand up here and tell you what to do. I did enough of that as the former principal of Briny High here, eh? Go Briners! (*Heartly applause*) Thanks. Whaddya say we make sure that the folks who actually live in this District stay in charge of it, eh? (*Cheers*) Don't forget: a vote for Mrs O'Hair is an A-Plus!

Reed: She's serving her third term, but rumour has it that ol' Lucas Garland - the CEO of Oil Atlantic, owner of the New Glasgow Gas 'n Go, and self proclaimed "petrolsexual" - might be giving her a run for her money. Literally.

Lucas - played by Craig in a similarly-slick costume change - appears. He is a refined man wearing a suit and blue necktie.

Lucas: You're going to see a lot of passion tonight, friends, and you're going to hear a lot of name calling. My colleagues will also speak. But I urge you to keep this in mind during tonight's debate: they call us the far right, not the far wrong. Don't you think there's a good reason for that?

Reed: In a consistent and seemingly-endless third place is our left-est leaning legislator, Helena Ziegler (*“Helena” is pronounced “He-lee-na”*). She’s young, hip, and – if I’m being honest – a little sexually-ambiguous.

Wanda: That’s not appropriate.

Reed: Totally, I heard it, won’t happen again.

Midge morphs into Helena: a hip but professional-looking politician wearing funky orange glasses.

Helena: This election isn’t about me, it’s about you: *the people*. And if my track record as an attorney or as an ally or as an amateur birdwatcher has proven anything, it’s that I know how to... (*a slogan/not the first time she’s said this tonight*) “Get ‘Er Done!” (*Tepid applause*) Thank you so much. If elected, I’m not just going to cater to those bigwigs up in Merigomish. I’ll be out here too, working for you nice people. And if I *don’t* win, I vow to send out so many newsletters that you’ll have to turn off the notifications on your phone. That is my pledge.

Reed: And finally, the green candidate, local underdog/ultimate frisbee enthusiast: Tyler Murphy.

Craig pulls on a green bucket hat and stumbles into the light, becoming the deeply baked Tyler Murphy.

Tyler: (*Craig*) Yeah, I dunno, I think we should all just, like, have a good time. Like, have you ever wondered why we have to pay money for food? Isn’t that weird?

Wanda: Why do you have someone from a federal party participating in a municipal election?

Reed: Oh, we just call Tyler the “green candidate” because he’s always... (*mimes smoking a joint*)

Wanda: Ah.

Karen appears as Tyler in the green bucket hat.

Tyler: (Karen) I can't help but feel that maybe our whole electrical system is, like, out of date. Like we're playing on a Game Cube when we could definitely be playing on a PS4, at least.

Reed: He smokes a lot of weed, you see.

Wanda: I said, Ah!

Midge appears as Tyler in the green bucket hat.

Tyler: (Midge) Sorry, I've totally forgotten the question. (Listens) Uh huh, and can you explain what you mean when you say, "budget"?

Wanda: Does Mr Murphy have someone watching the Count on his behalf?

Reed: Yeah, but his mom got called into work.

Wanda: So tell me about the debate. What are the issues that Briny Brook cares about?

Reed: Oh, you know, totally normal stuff...

Opal: Economics!

Lucas: Tax cuts!

Helena: Healthcare!

Tyler: (Craig) Ultimate frisbee!

Opal: Tourism!

Lucas: Tax breaks!

Helena: Housing!

Tyler: (Karen) What's cool about ultimate frisbee is that there are no refs! It's up to the players to respect the spirit of the game. Actually, I think there's an argument to be made that politics should be more like... uh... Whoa, I totally forgot what I was talking about. Does that ever happen to you?

Wanda: Sounds more or less typical.

Reed: Yeah... I mean unless someone brings up... um...

Wanda: What?

Reed: It's incredibly embarrassing.

Lucas: Thank you, Mr Moderator. I agree that this is a very important issue that requires a great deal of consideration. What I will say is that I know first-hand what Nova Scotians actually care about, and it's not spending ever more taxpayer dollars on something as controversial, dangerous, and downright stupid as *pickleball*.

An eruption of anger amongst the candidates:

Opal: Stupid?!

Helena: Mr Moderator, I object to Mr Garland's offensive language—

Opal: Pickleball is a Basic. Human. Right! (*Applause from the audience*) Across this great country, folks have been uniting - regardless of their political association, religion, or economic background - to dink, serve, and smash together— as Canadians!

Helena: With all due respect to Mr Garland, this is yet another instance of his complete disconnect from hard-working, middle-class Nova Scotians. To call something as integral to our cultural fabric as pickleball “stupid” is a direct burn on you: the people. Mr Garland doesn't know the first thing about what real Nova Scotians want.

Lucas: Thank you, Helena. I always appreciate honest feedback, especially from someone who went to the best private school in Montreal. My friends, don't

listen to these silly women. I know I sure don't. I've had critics coming after me my entire life, saying that - just because I was born into a family that owns every gas station this side of Moncton - I don't know what it means to be a Pictounian. And while I may not be a fisherman, I've been on a boat before, plenty of times! And while I may not be a farmer, I don my orchard gauntlets one at a time, same as any of you. And while I may not be a miner, I was young once. The fact of the matter is, my opponents don't care about what's best for Pictou County. In fact, if it were up to Opal O'Hair, she'd have this entire district paved over with pickleball courts from Marshville all the way to Marshy Hope. And maybe it's because I'm an incurable optimist, but if it were up to me, oh this county could be used for so much more! The gentle majesty that is Mount Thom, the cultural mecca that is Stellarton... When I look at these Canadian landmarks, I see the potential for *change*. Also, the huge potential for *pipelines*. But again, I'm a silly, silly dreamer.

Tyler: (*Midge*) Is it just me, or would some dill pickle chips hit the spot right now?

Opal: (*Ignoring Tyler*) Well, Garland, you probably have lots of time for dreaming when you're flying back and forth from Halifax on your family's private jet. Well, while you were busy dreaming, I was out there *working*. Working on bringing tourism to Pictou County. To improve Briny Brook's infrastructure. You say pickleball is stupid? Well, I say that pickleball is the single greatest innovation of the modern age! And if re-elected, I vow to open a state-of-the-art pickleball facility right here in Briny Brook.

Tyler: (*Craig*) You guys ever try those Miss Vicky's ones? Spicy..

Helena: I don't know about all of you, but I wouldn't mind being a constituent in Mrs O'Hair's fantasy land. Opening a new facility is simply ludicrous. Why not use that money to improve existing pickleball courts?

Tyler: (*Karen*) Oh snap, I forgot I brought some! (*Pops open a bag of chips*)

Helena: I have released an official proposal to convert and renovate over a dozen pre-existing tennis courts in our district, bringing them up to code and ensuring that they meet the requirements for international pickleball competitions- all at a fraction of the cost.

Lucas: And what of my fellow tennis enthusiasts? What are we to do? Frolic in the streets like ragamuffins?

Opal: Ziegler, I've seen your proposal. Are we to believe that the world's best picklers are going to fly halfway across the globe to dink behind the fire station in Barney's River? Or smash next to the Piedmont Cemetery? Or backhand right here in the Briny High gym? All because you slapped down a fresh coat of concrete?! Get real. Pickleball is a deluxe, multisensory experience, and we have the potential to be a global pioneer. And if we don't act now, we won't get another chance. My sources have informed me that right now, just across the border, Antigonish County is conspiring to open their very own world-class pickleball facility in... *Malignant Cove*.

The candidates spit and disappear.