

INTRODUCTION

Publisher's Foreword

In July 2020, Canongate came into ownership of a hard drive, sent anonymously to our offices.

The hard drive contained emails, texts, journal entries, social media messages, fragments taken from notebooks, internal memos, phone transcripts and various other pieces of classified intel, all written by the same man over a four-year period. In all correspondence he is known simply as 'M'.

From gathering the information together, we have established that M is the infamous 'Man in the Room Next Door', a special adviser employed by a covert organisation to guide western politicians and other public figures through moments of crisis and upheaval.

After weeks of careful deliberation, we have decided to publish the contents of this hard drive. The material on it refers to events that took place between 2016 and 2020, beginning with the UK EU Referendum result and the rise of President Trump, and ending with the emergence of Covid-19 and the demise of President Trump.

We tried very hard to track M down and to find out more about the organisation he works for, referred to throughout the intel as 'Axworthy'. However, our investigations proved fruitless.

What you are about to read is the truth: the truth behind the most turbulent period of British and American history in more than fifty years. No document has been censored. These are the unredacted files of the Man in the Room Next Door.



AXWORTHY GLOBAL

PO BOX 998 · ALDINGTON ST · KW17 5EH

24 June 2016

The Right Honourable David Cameron
10 Downing Street
Westminster
London SW1A 2AA

Dear David

RE: YOUR RESIGNATION

I am writing this letter with great sadness. Sadness that our working relationship has come to an end and sadness that you were prepared to risk flushing your career down the toilet faster than an exuberant child on a water slide.

Promising to hold an EU Referendum in order to convince a few Eurosceptic, xenophobic knuckleheads to vote Conservative in the 2015 election may, at the time, have seemed like a move of breathtaking genius on your part (after all, you won). But somehow you didn't factor in that you would have to deliver on that promise eventually; it wasn't just some unpaid parking ticket you could squirrel away in the glove compartment with the toffees and tissues.

And now here we are: your legacy is an upturned casserole, seeping into a deep pile carpet, nothing but an irremovable stain by which to remember you. And you have only yourself to blame.

I just had to stop typing briefly to slow handclap you.

During the referendum campaign it was you against former London mayor Boris Johnson, and with whom did the public feel more affinity? Johnson. The very opposite of the people's politician, a catastrophe magnet who can't tie his shoelace without burning down a school. I'm surprised your resignation speech wasn't just a series of sobbing noises in closed brackets.

In the wake of this cataclysmic disaster, my only advice to you is to go as soon as you can. The instigators of the Leave campaign didn't really want this result. They just wanted to fire a warning shot with regards to your premiership, to let you know the vultures were ready to stretch their wings for a little circling in the near future. The mortified faces of Michael Gove and Boris Johnson this afternoon made it abundantly clear that a narrow defeat for them was their ideal outcome. Now they've got a builder's skip of clusterfuck on their gated driveway and no one's going to move it.

Go, and go *now*. Don't even try to make sense of the chaos that will burden the United Kingdom for the next twenty years. Don't even see out the day. Go home and watch *Bargain Hunt*. This action won't save your legacy, because that is beyond the capabilities of any historian: your biography should just be a flip book of a man jumping into a barrel as it rolls off a cliff. However, leaving office with bugger all in place to ensure a smooth transition for your successor is the least you can do to those treacherous mealy-mouthed pufferfish who threw you under the bus.

It won't affect me. I'm planning on taking a sabbatical myself.

Enjoy that caravan you're going to buy. That's all you've got now.

Yours,

M.

Diary: Sunday 3rd July 2016

Balls. Double balls.

Axworthy have called me in. Seems they've been approached by Theresa May for PPD.* Dear God, no. The very thought of operating the strings of that particular haunted marionette fills me with dread from my toes to my lobes.

They promised me a break. They said once Cameron was gone, they'd promote someone else; give some other poor soul the toxic shit-shovel and hazmat suit. But no.

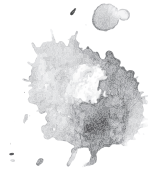
The overreliance on me is worrying. Axworthy is the most intimidating and fearsome behemoth of an organisation and yet even they can't find anyone else to manage the ceaseless onslaught of political ineptitude in this country.

I am of course flattered by their faith in me, but the fact is, after six years trying to turn David Cameron into a great statesman, I'm a husk. I'm a

memory of a husk. The man left his daughter behind in a pub, for God's sake.

I'm going to have to set some ground rules this time. Every time she makes a catastrophic error of judgement, I get the next bank holiday off. Something like that.

* Public Persuasion Duty



From: M [mailto: m@axworthy.com]
Sent: 12th July 2016 06:45
To: no10-communications@gov.org.uk
Subject: PM May's Maiden Speech Notes

Dear All,

Thank you for sending me Prime Minister May's speech ahead of her address this afternoon. It is clear from giving it the once-over that you made the rookie mistake all new speechwriters commit: letting the person reading it out have anything to do with it. Bless you.

But let me remind you that when a toddler asks if they can play with the remote control, you take the batteries out first so they can't do any damage. By all means, let the PM *believe* she's written it, just ensure it is signed off without a single comma in it attributable to her.

I know it sounds like an impossible task but over the years this will become second nature to you. Politicians are not writers. If they were, they wouldn't need writers.

For future reference, always write the PM's speeches when she's not in the same room as you. Keep her at arm's length. Perhaps you should set up your writing room adjacent to a room full of distractions like a fancy Nespresso machine or a half-finished jigsaw of a lovely mountain. Whatever. Just stall her.

Having said that, it's not a bad first attempt. See my notes below:

'In David Cameron I follow in the footsteps of a great modern prime minister.'

Get her to rehearse this line to ensure she can deliver it without smirking.

‘ . . fighting against the burning injustice that if you’re born poor you will die on average nine years earlier than others.’

I would lose this part. You can’t paint yourself as a bastion of social equality arriving to shake things up if you’ve been at the heart of government since 2010. What has she been doing the last six years if she wasn’t fighting burning injustices as Home Secretary? Learning the flute? Making her own plum jam?

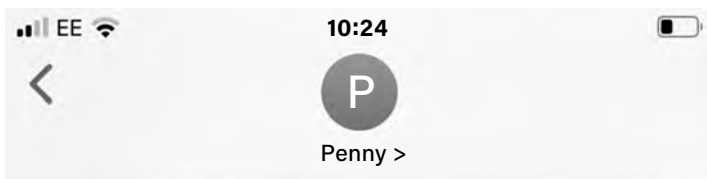
‘When we take the big calls we will think not of the powerful, but of you. When we pass new laws we will listen not to the mighty, but to you.’

Again, lose this. The general public sees through empty statements. They know the rich and powerful still hold all the cards and that that’s why there are more tax loopholes in this country than there are arseholes in Westminster.

That should do for now. No point burdening you with heavy notes for a maiden speech: they’re famously scant on detail and you don’t want to defy decades of tradition by making the PM say anything significant.

Best of luck,

M.



Monday 2 August 2016 10:15

M, I need to talk to you urgently.

Can it wait? I'm trying to make Theresa May seem human and it's draining all my energy.

As you know, Axworthy dispatched me to Hollywood last summer.

Oh, I am pleased. Do go on. How's the weather over there? How juicy are the oranges? How beautiful are the people? Does everyone look like Chris Hemsworth and Olivia Wilde? When was the last time you saw a thick sheet of miserable low cloud?

I've just been contacted by Clint Eastwood's PR team. They want me to be in his ear when he conducts a series of interviews to promote his next film.

Why?

Because in recent weeks he's been defending presidential candidate Donald Trump for making racist remarks.

Oh.

Eastwood believes Trump is heroically railing against political correctness.

Oh good. That's just what we need. More white guys using offensive language to describe how they can't use offensive language any more.

How am I supposed to convince Clint Eastwood that he should take direction from me? He's the epitome of staunchness. Plus I'm pretty sure he's 95% granite now. I need help here. What am I going to do?

Well, Eastwood is the embodiment of 20th century masculinity: to many white men who see him as a beacon of traditional American values, it's comforting to read a magazine interview where he snaps and grizzles about 'the endangered white man'. It won't change anything, so where's the harm? He reminds me of my potty uncle who thinks onions are getting a bit too 'mosque-shaped' these days. Tell his team not to worry: his career will survive.

They don't care about his career. They believe these interviews could be the turning point, that he could crystallise the argument between progressives and those who want to get back to when men were men, back to the good old days of traditional family values and polio. They think his words could chime with swathes of Republicans who may well vote Trump into the White House this November.

Oh please. Trump? It's been a tremendously surreal ride with the silly old bag of flour, but I think the White House is one uneconomical luxury accommodation he WON'T be able to get his hands on.

You sound terribly sure of yourself.

I'm just feeling lucky. 'I'm feeling lucky, punk!'

That's not what he says.

Oh.

Diary: Wednesday 10th August 2016

Woken at two a.m. by our man in Washington. It seems Trump has said if Hillary Clinton becomes president and gets to pick her judges there will be nothing the American public can do about her taking away the second amendment, then hinted to those who carry arms that there is one other way.

So he essentially joked that she should be shot. Luckily the United States doesn't have a strong historical association with assassinated leaders, so this is fine.



Axworthy are becoming increasingly concerned that if Trump does become POTUS, and therefore automatically our client, we'll be working tirelessly around the clock, pouring all our resources into this dangerously inept plum cake and putting too much strain on the already stretched team.

With that in mind, I may suggest to the top brass that - for the first time in fifty years - the Axworthy organisation retracts its longstanding services to the presidency. I imagine that'll go down about as well as when I suggested a birthday cake ban in the office.*

* There are just too many February birthdays. By the beginning of March my blood type is Colin the Caterpillar.