

I hate politics

‘So anyway,’ Marty continued, ‘after that a pair of velociraptors wandered out of the toilets and into our classroom, licking their lips and burping because they’d just eaten Jamie Tancock, who’d just gone in for his one o’clock poo, but luckily we were saved by some aliens who all looked just like The Queen, who’d just landed on the cricket pitch, who kindly blew them up with their laser cannons. Of course, then we were all abducted and subjected to hours of torture on their spaceship, but they returned us all in time for home time.’

‘Oh, that’s good then,’ said his mum, without her eyes leaving the TV.

Marty sighed. No-one ever listened to a word he said. He was getting used to it now. When the Politics Channel was on at tea-time he really couldn’t expect to get any sort of conversation out of either his mum or Emily, his little sister. His mum had an excuse he supposed, what with being the Prime Minister and all that, but Emily? What was her problem? She was an eleven-year-old girl. Why was she so interested in politics?

Everyone said she looked and sounded just like her mum, which she seemed to love. Fortunately, nobody had ever said that to Marty. Female, middle-aged, ever-so-slightly-frazzled politician – not a good look for a twelve-year-old boy. Emily was always saying she wanted to be Prime Minister too when she grew up, or PM as she insisted on calling it. He thought she probably would as well. She was definitely annoying enough.

On the TV a load of men and women in dreary, dark suits were sat in rows in the House of Commons, where Mum seemed to spend most of her time, listening to one bloke who was stood up, droning on about something or other. Mum was supposed to be there now, but she'd got delayed on the way back from a visit to some country or other, Marty couldn't even remember which one, so someone was standing in for her. From time to time the other MPs would either like what they heard or not like what they heard, and would do a weird kind of mumbly shout to either agree or disagree with him. It was mind-numbingly boring.

'Can't we turn over now?' Marty begged, before shovelling another forkful of rubbery, microwaved lasagne into his mouth.

'No,' snapped Emily. 'We need to watch this. The Chancellor is giving a very important speech.'

Marty had no idea who this Chancellor person was, or what he was on about, and he didn't want to either. He seemed to be banging on about some airport that he thought should be built, and if it wasn't built it would be very bad news, in his opinion. To be honest though, he sounded like the sort of person that if he told you you'd just won the lottery you'd end up thinking something terrible had happened, like a fat-berg had blocked up the sewers and your house had ended up six foot deep in raw sewage.

Marty didn't know who he was, but he had seen him around, arriving for meetings there at 10 Downing Street. The caption at the bottom of the screen said he was called Sir Jarvis Skelton, and he had a posh voice to match his posh name. He looked posh too, but there was something creepy about him as well.

'Which is exactly why I think we should turn over to something more interesting,' Marty argued. 'I think there's international paint drying on the other side, or maybe a repeat of a classic episode of celebrity grass growing.'

'Why don't you go and watch the paint in your bedroom if you're such a fan?' Emily told him.

'Why don't you go and...'

'That's enough you two,' interrupted Mum. 'Can't you both just get along for once? I do want to watch this. I should really have gone straight there from the airport. I'm sorry Marty, but once it's finished maybe we can see what else is on then.'

‘When this has finished you’ll be going back to work and Emily’s off to her meeting so I’ll be on my own again and I can watch whatever I want.’

‘Ooh, what will it be, Marty Farty, paint drying or grass growing?’ sneered Emily.

‘Oh shut up,’ he told her. ‘And don’t call me that.’

‘Both of you shut up!’ snapped Mum. ‘I can’t hear a word he’s saying now anyway. Why can’t you both just enjoy the nice meal and try to be civil to each other for five minutes. For goodness sake, it’s like being in a Cabinet meeting trying to keep control of you two.’

Marty and Emily both fell silent. He wondered if Mum was able to control her fellow MPs like that. He did wonder about pointing out that calling three microwaved lasagnes and a few bits of limp lettuce a ‘nice meal’ was pushing it a bit, but he didn’t think that would go down too well just then. Just like the lasagne wasn’t going down too well, as Mum had somehow managed to overcook it. She was definitely a better politician than she was a cook. It was pretty rare for the three of them to be eating tea together too, not that any of them were making the most of their quality family time.

If you were thinking for one moment that it sounded pretty cool, living in one of the most famous houses in the country, you'd be very wrong. It was dull. Dull, dull, dull. As dull as watching the Politics Channel 24/7 - unbelievably dull. The constant stream of boring, stuffy politicians and advisors who came to the house (which is the Prime Minister's office as well as her home) the endless security checks whenever anyone went in or out... it was all so tedious. If Marty wanted to just go to the shops, go for a burger or go out skateboarding, it all had to be planned in advance and cleared with security, and if he did go anywhere he had to have a security guard with him at all times. He kind of got why, but that didn't stop it being a right pain in the bum.

Not that Marty had any friends to go anywhere with anyway. He used to have some great mates back where they used to live, but he didn't like any of the other kids at the posh school he'd had to transfer to when they'd moved from their old home to London, and they didn't like him either. Put it this way, if your idea of fun was agonising over whether to go to Oxford like your mum or Cambridge like your dad, or boasting about how much your birthday party cost, or casually mentioning which celebrity happened to be on your family's yacht at the weekend, you'd probably have fitted in really well. It wasn't Marty's, so he didn't.

Emily seemed to like it at Number 10 though. She loved politics as much as Mum, and thought living in the heart of British government was great. She'd wanted to follow in Mum's footsteps for as long as Marty could remember, and living where she did, seeing and hearing what she did, was the best education she could possibly get, as she said *all* the time.

Marty sometimes wondered whether he should take more of an interest in what Mum was doing, like Emily did. She always knew exactly what was going on, what was at stake, but he just couldn't be bothered with it all.

On the TV someone seemed to be disagreeing with the Chancellor bloke now, talking about climate change, getting more mumbly shouts and causing other MPs to get up to demand their say.

'How do you think it's going to go Mum?' asked Emily.

'I really don't know,' Mum answered. 'Some MPs are convinced that the airport needs to be built and others are just as sure that it shouldn't because of climate change. What do you think?'

'I'm not sure either. I'm sure Parliament will make the right decision though.'

Marty pulled a face. What a creep. He didn't give his opinion, partly because he didn't have one and partly because no-one would care if he did. He was all for everyone doing everything they could to stop climate change of course, but he didn't really know anything about this airport, and he didn't want to either. He could have done without it being forced down his throat on the telly too, although, to be honest, it was a slight improvement on the lasagne.

The debate *finally* came to an end, and some woman with a microphone was now stood on the lawn outside the Houses of Parliament, explaining just how important it all was.

‘Can we turn over now then?’ Marty pleaded.

‘We’re still watching this,’ answered Emily.

‘But Mum said we could turn over when the speech finished.’

‘Let’s just see what the analysts have to say about it first, then we’ll turn over.’

‘Why would anyone care what anybody has to say about it?’

‘Why would anyone care what *you* have to say about anything?’

He’d had enough. He grabbed the remote control off the table and pointed it at the TV, but before he could change the channel Emily snatched it off him.

‘Give it back!’ he yelled at her, trying to grab it back, but she held it out of his reach and laughed.

He grabbed her arm and her laugh turned into a screech.

‘Marty! Get off her now!’ shouted Mum, plucking the remote control away from both of them.



Now he'd definitely had enough.

'It's not fair!' he yelled. 'You always take *her* side. It's always about what you two want, never about what I want! You never listen to anything I say!'

'Marty...' started Mum, but he was already off and was running out of the room.

'I hate politics, I hate this house and I hate you two!'

'Marty!' she called after him, but he ignored her as he stomped back to his bedroom. He slammed the door behind him and hurled himself down onto his bed, fighting back tears of rage.