

FOLLOWING THE GUIDELINES, by Camilla Thomson

Summary: *An environmental consultant is conflicted between her principled support for green energy, and the fact that the construction of a new wind farm will release more carbon than it saves. A commentary on the dangers of blindly following regulatory rules, this is set in a hypothetical near future assuming no change to the status quo.*

Characters:

MARJORY (f), *Scottish, late 40s or early 50s*

HENRY (m), *40s, Marjory's boss*

RACHEL (f), *late 20s or early 30s, Marjory's former colleague*

Divers REPORTERS (-)

Scene 1 – Marjory's office

MARJORY *is working alone in a fairly quiet office within a larger office space. We hear typing. This stops as HENRY comes into the room. He is walking quickly, clearly angry.*

HENRY: What's this?

He slams a report down on the desk.

MARJORY: Good morning to you too, Henry I see you got my report.

HENRY: What is this rubbish?

MARJORY: It's the environmental report you asked for.

HENRY: No, it isn't. This is some sort of hippie greenwash.

MARJORY (annoyed): You asked for an environmental report for Falray wind farm; I produced the environmental report for Fal/

HENRY: What I *asked* for was a report to submit for the final approvals, not this ... nonsense.

MARJORY (holding back): It's not "nonsense". It's a comprehensive review of the environmental impacts of the proposed farm. It follows all the SEPA guidelines and...

HENRY: Firstly, it's not a *proposed* wind farm. It's a *planned* wind farm. we've spent far too much time and money getting to this point to pull the plug now. Sec....

MARJORY: It's not sustainable ...

HENRY: Are the sustainability calculations wrong?

MARJORY: Yes,

HENRY: You know better than the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency?

MARJORY: Yes. They haven't ...

HENRY: So, little Mrs Marjory McInnes from Loanhead knows better than/

MARJORY (angry): Yes, I do! I've been doing this job a long time, Henry, as you well know. I may not work in a fancy office in Atlantic Quay, but I know my stuff and I keep up to speed with the research. And that research says we have to be more careful about building wind farms on peat bogs.

HENRY: Look, the government's carbon calculator/

MARJORY: Doesn't take into account how fast electricity is being decarbonised. It's all based on last year's data, but this wind farm will take several more years to build, and by that time the carbon savings just won't be enough!

HENRY (angry): Marjory. This is the tool we have to use. It's built by leading academics. who are *you* to disagree with the experts?

MARJORY (exasperated): I'm not disagreeing – other experts are. And they're not questioning that work on the impact on peat bogs, just the final calculation. *(She flicks through the report)* ... look here: carbon payback. The time it takes for the carbon footprint of the farm to be offset by its carbon savings? The peat *stores* carbon, so for Falray to be sustainable, its carbon savings *have* to be big enough to cover the carbon footprint of disturbing that peat, but they won't be! We need to completely re-work the design!

HENRY (still angry): I really need you to calm down! This emotion is unnecessary. The planning tool is not wrong, and the damage to that peat at Falray will be fine. We're *this* close to getting the final consents. Just follow the government guidance! *This (gesturing to the report)* is no use to me.

He throws the report in the shredder.

HENRY: I expect the new report on my desk within the week...

The office sounds fade away.

Scene 2 – Headlines

Sound bites from a number of reporters. REPORTER 1 is based in a news studio, with little background noise, but perhaps the underscore of the news headlines. REPORTER 2 is

outside the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood. We hear traffic noise, and protesters faintly in the background. REPORTER 3 is at a wind farm with HENRY BROWN. The prevailing background noise is of the wind and the regular thrum of the turbines.

Their voices fade in and out; a collage.

REPORTER 1: ... as it has emerged that some of Scotland's wind farms are actually making the climate crisis worse ...

REPORTER 2: ... a leaked environmental report for the recently completed Falray wind farm has called into question whether any of Scotland's wind ...

REPORTER 3: ... Green Blade Power CEO Henry Brown has denied any knowledge

REPORTER 1: ... attention has turned to Marjory McInnes, Environmental Consultant at ...

HENRY: ... we believe that Mrs McInnes suppressed this report ...

REPORTER 2: ... Marjory McInnes, is now under investigation for ...

REPORTER 3: ... blame lies with Marjory McInnes ...

Scene 3 – Wind farm

Three or four years later. At the windfarm. We can hear the turbines, and the wind (not too strong). There's also birdsong, insect noise, and the sound of MARJORY walking along a gravel path. A few seconds in we hear a RACHEL's footsteps approaching. They stop suddenly.

RACHEL: Marjory! ... What are you doing here?

MARJORY stops walking.

MARJORY: Oh! Hi, Rachel. I didn't expect to see anyone...

RACHEL (shortly): Why not? Some of us work here. At least for now.

MARJORY: I'm sorry. I should go. I just wanted to come and see Falray again, without all the madness.

RACHEL (bitterly): I can't believe this place hasn't done anything for climate change. That it's even made it worse. We worked so hard, and it was all for nothing.

MARJORY: We did some good here, Rachel, I have to believe that! That's why I came today. I needed to see it again: see all the colours, hear the insects buzzing, the frogs croaking and

birds singing. Look at all this healthy peat between the turbines! There's so much more life here than when it was covered in sheep. That's all your work.

RACHEL: But at what cost? This was supposed to be a shining beacon of a bright future and now the media is saying we're all liars. That renewable energy is just a scam. Everyone's holding their breath. God knows whether there'll be any work next year.

MARJORY: I almost wish I'd never written that blasted report.

RACHEL: I never understood why you did! What was the point of writing a report on how this farm would never reduce carbon emissions, and then letting it be built anyway?

MARJORY: I wanted to make a difference! I wanted to change the way we were working at Green Blade. To build those kind of carbon calculations into the way we designed projects, so that we'd pick the *right* projects – the ones that would give us the biggest possible emissions reduction.

But it was all too new. It was the "dash for wind". All anyone was thinking about was how to get the most renewables installed for the lowest price - they just assumed it would keep on reducing carbon. No one would listen, and I chose my job over my principles.

The stupid thing is that, in the end, they did listen. Even while this place was being built, we were working with University researchers and software developers. We even talked to the Government about updating their calculator. Now Green Blade designers have all the tools they need to design for maximum carbon savings and be a global leader on waste, on pollution *and* on biodiversity!

But you're right. It's probably all too late. I know how much policy and opinion are swayed by what's being said in the news....

Scene 4 - Report

Outside the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood. Again we hear traffic noise, and protesters faintly in the background.

REPORTER 2: ...we are live, awaiting the findings of the Falray inquiry...

REPORTER 1: ...experts have been presenting evidence over the last year in this major government inquiry...

REPORTER 3: ...this scandal has shaken the renewables industry to its core...

REPORTER 2: many are calling for a halt to all renewable energy developments. Will the sector recover?

REPORTER 1: What does this mean for global efforts in tackling the Climate Crisis??

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