

VICTIMS OF THE ICE AGE

A COMEDY ABOUT PEOPLE AND POLITICS

By Ken Jones

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 WOMEN, 3 MEN)

ROBERT REASON..... An anthropologist and college professor. *(501 lines)*

SENATOR TED FOX .. A pompous, slick United States Senator from the New England region of the country. *(268 lines)*

SHARON CRANE A very intelligent, very ambitious aide. *(231 lines)*

BESS REASON..... Married to BOB REASON for 10 years. She lives her life through magazines. *(173 lines)*

FEMALE ACTOR 1..... Portrays the following roles: COUNCIL MEMBER, Council for the Humanities; GLORIA NOBLE, a town gossip; REPORTER, a television reporter; AUDIENCE MEMBER, speech in Act Two; MAKE-UP ARTIST, to Ms. Cecil in the debate; KRISTI KELLY, field reporter. *(Approximately 35 lines)*

FEMALE ACTOR 2..... Portrays the following roles: CHAIRMAN, Council for the Humanities; CYNTHIA PITT, another town gossip; REPORTER, a television reporter; MERRIAM CECIL, a famous television personality and host. *(Approximately 84 lines)*

MALE ACTOR 3..... Portrays the following roles: NEWSCASTER, a television reporter; MR. SMITH, a professional criminal; SECRET SERVICE, to Senator Fox; CAMERAMAN, newsreel photographer; GUEST, portrays an entire audience through costume and attitude changes; LAWYER, a divorce lawyer. TECHNICIAN; television stage manager. *(Approximately 62 lines)*

ACT ONE

Scene 1	Bob's home
Scene 2	Senator's office
Scene 3	Bob's home
Scene 4	A newscast
Scene 5	Senator's office

ACT TWO

Scene 1	Bob's home
Scene 2	Senator's office
Scene 3	A supermarket
Scene 4	A speech
Scene 5	A newscast
Scene 6	A supermarket
Scene 7	Bob's home
Scene 8	A speech
Scene 9	Bob's home
Scene 10	A television studio
Scene 11	A book-signing party

TIME

The play takes place during the fall season of an election year in some state somewhere in the United States.

SETTING

The stage is a series of plateaus located all around the entrance to a small cave located upstage center. Each plateau is joined by a series of ramps and bridges. There are items on each plateau that represent that particular area's function. The areas are: an office, a home, a speaker's platform, a supermarket and a television studio. As the play progresses, more red, white and blue should be exposed. The impression of an anthropological museum exhibit should be achieved; Americana against a primitive background.

***NOTE:** The areas of the set are divided by rope partitions. Each area has a small museum placard, which states the scientific name as well as the assumed purpose.*

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

As the VOICE OVER is heard, lights reveal different areas of the set. This gives the effect of a diorama presentation at a museum. The Senator's office is revealed.

VOICE OVER: Politicus Erectcus—"The Political Upright Man"—Politicus Erectus dominated the clan serving as leader, king or high priest. Politicus was often challenged for the leadership role in fierce and bloody battles called 'Elections.' Sacrifices in the way of food, clothing, money and tickets to special events were made daily by the clan members. The mating habits of Politicus were varied. Frequently, Politicus mated with many partners in many places. It should be noted that mating was very rarely for procreation, but more often occurred for pleasure, power or boredom.

Lights fade on Office. Lights up on flag-draped speaker's podium.

VOICE OVER: Anthrodebaticus—"Debating or Arguing Man"—Anthrodebaticus is considered to be of the same evolutionary path as Politicus. Anthrodebaticus is believed to have developed an intricate system of language, which allowed the creature to dominate the less verbal clan members. It is believed that Politicus and Anthrodebaticus were of the same evolutionary Class. Similarities in the cranial formation of the areas of the skull that housed the cerebral cortex of the brain lead many scientist to believe that these two animals were very adept at reading teleprompters, and perhaps, they were of the same species. Anthrodebaticus faded out during the great Computerassic Era during which images overwhelmed the world of words driving the "talkers" into extinction.

Lights out on podium. Lights reveal the interior of a small house. The style is 'Early American.' The living room is the main area represented by a sofa, a coffee table and a television. A study sits slightly upstage of the living room. There is a desk, it a chair and a bookcase; the shelves of which are cluttered with bones, pottery, and stone tools. A doorway leads into a kitchen. BOB, a small, frightened man, enters. He wears a Cardigan sweater and a bow tie. As the VOICE OVER is heard, BOB flips through a National Geographic that he found on the coffee table.

VOICE OVER: Homo Sapien Timidicus—"The Timid Man"—Homo Sapien Timidicus existed from approximately 2000BC – Present Day. He was often called the common man or the 'typical American citizen.' Evidence suggests that he was a hunter and a gatherer. Large plastic containers classified as Tupperware also suggest that he was a Sorter. His dwelling was fashioned from wood and sometimes stone, and he was very efficient at using hand-tools most predominantly a tool known as the 'universal remote.' Homo Timidicus developed strong bonds during mating, which

was infrequent and often determined by Lunar cycles and ceremonial Sporting events.

BESS, his over-bearing wife, enters and shuffles through a pile of old 'science journals' and 'anthropology magazines.' BESS is a woman who tries just a little too hard. BOB is sits at his desk in the study.

BESS: Where is my *People*?

BOB: *(From kitchen.)* What, dear?

BESS: My *People*. Have you taken my *People* magazine?

BOB: I put it away, dear.

BESS: Where did you put it?

BOB: Sweetheart, I'm working on my book right now.

BESS: Lord save me. You're always working on that book. I don't know why you bother. You'll never finish it. Now where is the damn magazine?!

BOB: Did you look in the bathroom?

BESS: Upstairs or downstairs?

BOB: Upstairs. I would guess.

BESS: Well, forget it. I'm not climbing those stairs. I was going to put it out, so the social workers would see it.

HE enters the living room holding a large bone.

BOB: Humanities advisers not social workers. And I put them away because I didn't think *PEOPLE* magazines would give the right impression.

BESS: Bob, one of the magazines has Senator Fox on the cover. Now I think these advisers would be very impressed to know that you and the Senator were college roommates.

BESS takes the bone from him.

BOB: I don't want to do that. I haven't spoken to him in twelve years.

BESS: So? You throw his name around, what harm will that do?

BOB: I just don't think it will matter to these people.

BESS: It couldn't hurt.

BOB: Maybe it could. Who can say?

BESS: Do you want this grant?

BOB: You know I do.

BESS: Then you have to fight for it. You have to use every trick in the book. You've been turned down by the *Council for the Humanities* every year for the past 12 years. I think it's time you re-evaluate your strategy.

BOB: I've told you already that I am going to try a different approach.

BESS: You mean besides being a doormat and letting them walk all over you?

BOB: They did not walk all over me.

BESS: No, they jogged in place.

BOB: I stood up to them last time.

BESS: They asked you one question, and you crumbled.

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BOB: “Do you now, or have you ever used drugs” is a pretty intimidating question!

BESS: Alka Seltzer-Cough and Cold doesn't count, Bob!

BOB: It's a drug. I didn't want to lie.

BESS: Bob, you're not being elected to the Supreme Court, you're just trying to get one stupid grant!

BOB: Bess, this money is very important to me! I've been looking through what I've written already, and I am sure that once I get back from seeing the skeleton, I could finish the whole book.

BESS: Then you're going to have to put on the gloves, climb into the ring, and fight for it.

BOB: You're right. I'll do it. I'll do what I have to do.

BESS: Great! Now we need to find that *People* magazine. Oh, Bob, get rid of these science journals, they'll give these advisers the impression that you're an egghead. We're going for more of an Indiana Jones feeling. (*BOB begins to take the magazines into his study. BESS stops him.*) Bob, get me a drink.

BOB: Yes, dear.

BESS: One Diet Coke and one napkin.

BOB: And three cubes of ice.

BESS: Yes. And turn on the television.

BOB: What station?

BESS: Just turn it on.

BOB: Yes, dear. (*BOB moves to the TV when the doorbell rings.*) They're here.

BESS: All right, Bob. Just stay calm.

BOB: Do I look all right?

BESS: You look all right. Not great, but all right.

SHE hides the bone behind her back.

BOB: (*Sarcastically.*) Thanks. You're always there when I need you.

The Adviser's from the COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES enter. They are both unemotional and extremely business-like.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. Reason?

BOB: Yes, Bob Reason.

CHAIRMAN: Not Robert Reason?

BOB: Robert is my full name, but I go by Bob.

CHAIRMAN: Interesting.

The CHAIRMAN records that on a memo pad.

BESS: Perhaps you would like to sit down?

CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

BOB: May I offer you a drink?

ADVISER: Do you often have drinks this early in the day?

BOB: I meant soft drinks.

CHAIRMAN: So you do not have a drinking problem?

BOB: No.

ADVISER: Uh-huh.

The ADVISER writes. THEY sit.

CHAIRMAN: We have to be very careful whom we give our money to these days. That's why we've begun visiting the applicants at their homes. We want to make sure that our money ends up in a secure family.

BESS: We'd be the best parents that cash could ever have.

BESS and BOB laugh. The COUNCIL does not.

ADVISER: As you may know our policies on funding have changed quite a bit.

BOB: Yes, I know, but I'm sure that after you understand what this project could mean to the world, I'm confident that you'll be able to help me financially.

CHAIRMAN: The recent mishap with the Council for the Arts has left a bad taste in the mouths of our politicians on Capitol Hill.

BOB: I think the whole issue was blown completely out of proportion.

ADVISER: You do?

BOB: Yes. Freedom of expression must be preserved.

CHAIRMAN: At whatever the cost?

BOB: Yes.

ADVISER: Interesting.

The CHAIRMAN writes on the application.

BOB: What did you write down?

CHAIRMAN: Nothing. Don't worry. Just a few notes.

BOB: But I haven't said anything yet.

ADVISER: It's not what you say, it's what we infer that's important.

CHAIRMAN: (*Flipping through the application.*) Before we move ahead, you have submitted all the proper forms?

BOB: Yes.

ADVISER: Form A, B, D and F-12?

BOB: In triplicate.

CHAIRMAN: Yellow and blue copies of the Proposal Manifesto.

BOB: Twice.

ADVISER: The W-62 and W-94's?

BOB: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: Were you given the proper series of "pre-interview" interviews?

BOB: Twice.

ADVISER: And you have signed the 'illicit sexual sensibility voucher'?

BOB: I had a few questions about the wording of that statement.

CHAIRMAN: Questions? (*Writes on the application.*)

BOB: I do have the right to ask questions.

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CHAIRMAN: Whatever you say, Mr. Reason. (*Writes on.*)

BOB: Well, I'm just not sure what was meant by 'proper' attitude.

ADVISER: You didn't?

CHAIRMAN: You have no idea?

BOB: I feel that the word 'proper' needs to be defined.

ADVISER: You do?

BOB: Yes...well...it's just rather vague.

CHAIRMAN: Vague?

BOB: Yes.

CHAIRMAN: Interesting. (*Writes on.*)

ADVISER: Mr. Reason, might I suggest that you tell us about your project, then perhaps we could be of more assistance in defining certain words.

BOB: Certainly. (*Pause.*) I am writing a book, and in order to finish this book, I would like to organize an archeological expedition to investigate the recent discovery of a complete Neanderthal skeleton. From this skeleton, I am sure I could establish whether Neanderthals were able to communicate through modern speech.

CHAIRMAN: I see a problem already.

BOB: You do?

CHAIRMAN: Yes. We've already funded an archeologist this year.

BOB: But I am an anthropologist.

ADVISER: There's a difference?

BOB: A large difference.

CHAIRMAN: But you said you wanted to organize an archeological dig.

BOB: Exactly. I need to see this skeleton firsthand to--

ADVISER: I see a problem.

CHAIRMAN: Skeleton?

ADVISER: Exactly.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. Reason, we'd prefer to use our money for the living not the dead.

BOB: If we can establish the existence of a well-developed language in a society existing more than 50,000 years ago, we can begin to evaluate the development of social orders, politics, education and even art!

Silence.

ADVISER: What's your point?

BESS: (*Interrupting.*) Did you know that Bob's college roommate was Senator Ted Fox?

CHAIRMAN: Really?

BOB: Yes.

ADVISER: Do you have a letter of recommendation from the Senator?

BOB: No. I didn't want to bother him.

CHAIRMAN: We would need a letter to verify your association with the Senator.

BOB: He's probably very busy.

ADVISER: I see.

BESS: I'm sure we could give Ted a call, and--

CHAIRMAN: Don't bother, we follow up on any bit of information. No matter how absurd it might be.

ADVISER: Now, Mr. Reason, if you were to receive a partial grant, could you finance the remainder of your trip?

BOB: I haven't really given it much thought, but Bess and I have a savings account—

BESS: —No!

BOB: But I think we have enough—

BESS: You're not going to waste my money on a trip to see a pile of bones.

BOB: It wouldn't be a waste.

BESS: Bob, we were saving that money for a trip to Hawaii. The honeymoon we never had.

BOB: Fine. We can take our honeymoon in Europe. I could visit the excavation site while you go sightseeing. Granted we wouldn't be together, but we'd probably have a better time.

BESS: No, Bob. And that's final. We'll talk about this later.

CHAIRMAN: Well, I think we've heard enough.

ADVISER: Mr. Reason, we'll review the information thoroughly before we turn you down.

BOB: Please, I need to do this. I've never been on a dig. I have spent so many years researching and digging through other people's words to find the answers. This trip could give me a chance of finding the answers on my own.

CHAIRMAN: Yes, well, you should receive our official rejection within the year.

THEY begin to exit.

BESS: Bob, do something?

BOB: Like what?

BESS: Throw yourself in front of the door and demand your money.

ADVISER: Mr. and Mrs. Reason, good day.

The CHAIRMAN and the ADVISER exit.

BESS: Was that it?

BOB: Was that what?

BESS: Was that your big, persuasive argument?

BOB: I wasn't arguing.

BESS: Is this how you've handled all your interviews? No wonder you've lost.

BOB: I didn't want to start a fight. I was trying to be nice.

BESS: Why? Nobody else is? Bob, people are not always going to treat you as well as you've treated them.

BOB: But that's the way I am, Bess. I don't know what you want from me!

BESS: I want anger. I want you to fly into a raging fury!

BOB: Why would I do that?

BESS: Because you're mad! Upset! Disturbed! Because you are tired of the world taking advantage of you! Making a fool of you! I want to see a spark

of passion! Sometimes I feel you're as dead as all the bones you study. (*SHE moves to the sofa.*) I want you to ask for much, much more. I want people to listen to you and respect you for your opinions.

BOB: Once I publish this book—

BESS: Get a grip! Even if by some miracle you finished this book. How many people are going to be affected by an anthropology textbook? How many people are even going to care?

BOB: I know you don't mean what you say. You're upset.

BESS: I am not upset!! I am angry! There is a very large difference between the two.

BOB: Let's think of the positive aspects of people. All right.

BESS: Make me.

BOB: What?

BESS: Make me. Make me do what you want. Force me to think about the positive aspects. Convince me that you are right, and I am wrong.

BOB: I'm not going to force you to do anything.

BESS: Were you always like this?

BOB: Were you? (*Silence.*) It hasn't been so terrible for you. Comfort, companionship, security.

BESS: What if I think I deserve more than that? Food on the table and a roof over my head can only go so far.

BOB: Perhaps you're asking for more than I can give.

BESS: Perhaps I know there's more, and you just won't let me have it.

BOB: I think we should talk about something else.

BESS: One day you're going to finish that damn book, and then all your excuses will be gone. (*SHE stares at him for a moment.*)

BOB: Can I get you something else?

BESS: Bob, go start the dinner.

BOB: Yes. (*Pause.*) It's about that time.

Lights fade as the scene switches to a campaign office.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

A campaign office. A large desk sits center surrounded by flags, banners and streamers. A large picture of SENATOR TED FOX hangs above the desk. A doorway leads to the main campaign headquarters. SENATOR FOX is seated in a large chair. HE is piecing together a model of a PT boat. SHARON CRANE, an aide, enters.

SENATOR: Sharon, I need you to do a few things for me, if you don't mind. Call this number and ask for Sammy. I need an estimate. Tell him I need to know how much it would cost to air condition an island.

SHARON: All right.

SENATOR: Then, if you would, call the Secretary of Transportation, tell him I need to add seven more feet to my limo, and I need the state highway law changed. If he gives you any trouble, mention his sister Maria. (*Continuing with the model.*) And don't forget to give Bob Reason a call.

SHARON: I will. Oh, yes, Senator, there's a man out here looking for you. He says his name is Smith. I asked for identification, but he just ignored me and continued to pick his teeth.

SENATOR: A tall man? Rather lanky...and bit disheveled?

SHARON: You know him.

SENATOR: Send him in.

SHARON exits. MR. SMITH, a professional criminal enters.

SENATOR: Mr. Smith, are you clean?

SMITH: As clean as I get.

SENATOR: Then have a seat. I must say that it's never a pleasure to see you again.

SMITH: Thank you, Senator. It's always an honor.

SENATOR: Now, Mr. Smith, I have a problem.

SMITH: Your problem is my problem.

SENATOR: If only that were true I'd be a much happier man. But I am afraid that this is a cross I'll have to bear by myself.

SMITH: Better to bear it, than to be nailed to it.

SENATOR: Obviously, you've never entered into the political arena. The martyr always receives the most votes. *(Pausing.)* Now, Mr. Smith, recently I was engaged in a heated debate on national television.

SMITH: I stole a TV just so I could watch. *(Takes a handful of jellybeans from the Senator's desk.)*

SENATOR: Then you know that my opponent, Michael Mightmire, told nothing but the truth. He completely destroyed my strategy. Now, it seems that I have fallen behind this man in the polls.

SMITH: And that's not good?

SENATOR: My dear ignorant man, to fall behind in the polls just months before Election day is a political catastrophe!

SMITH: Do you want me to kill him?

SENATOR: Please, Mr. Smith, the upholstery has ears. *(Pause.)* I'd prefer to use the word 'eliminate.'

SMITH: I could make it clean and quick.

SENATOR: No, sir. I'd rather solve this little problem in a more dignified way.

SMITH: A lead pipe in a dark alley.

SENATOR: That's not exactly what I had in mind.

SMITH: It's not dignified, but it's effective.

SENATOR: No, Mr. Smith. The best way to hurt a political adversary is to take away his votes, and that is how I will bring Mr. Mightmire to his knees. *(Smiling.)* I think it's time for me to become the martyr.

SMITH: I'm not sure I'm following you.

SENATOR: I'd be very surprised if you were. No, Mr. Smith, the plan will be delivered to you by an anonymous source within the next week.

SMITH: Usual place?

SENATOR: Usual time.

SMITH: I'll do what I can.

SENATOR: That doesn't inspire much confidence.

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SMITH: I hate to bring this up, but what about my payments...?

SENATOR: Go to the Burger Bagger on fifth street, and ask for a cheeseburger without meat and extra pickles. The money will be taped under the top bun. *(Pushes a button on his desk.)*

SMITH: Will I see you again?

SENATOR: I hope not. Goodbye, Mr. Smith.

SMITH exits. SHARON enters.

SHARON: I spoke with Bob Reason.

SENATOR: Bobby's a good man.

SHARON: He seemed very surprised to hear from you. I didn't tell him what you wanted.

SENATOR: Good. Bobby is a little gun shy. He'll take a little convincing. Thank you, Sharon.

SHARON: *(SHE begins to leave, but stops.)* Senator, may I speak with you?

SENATOR: Certainly, Sharon. For you my door is always open . . . except when it's closed. *(HE laughs.)*

SHARON: I've always had a fascination with government, and I have always admired you, Senator.

SENATOR: Admiration never hurts.

SHARON: And I've been working with your office for quite a while.

SENATOR: I remember when you first came to me. You were straight out of college.

SHARON: Yes.

SENATOR: And you did well in school, if I remember correctly.

SHARON: Magna Cum Laude. Third in my class.

SENATOR: That's a fine record.

SHARON: As you know, we are heading down that road to election day.

SENATOR: This will be your first one?

SHARON: Yes.

SENATOR: A campaign virgin. *(The SENATOR laughs.)* I remember my first. The banners. The buttons. The endless nights in nameless hotels. Babies to be kissed. One speech after another. Ducking and dodging. Trying to stay one point ahead of your enemy. *(HE pauses.)* Jesus! I love the smell of a rumor in the morning! Election Day! God, help me. I do love it so.

SHARON: Senator, may I be honest with you?

SENATOR: I wish you wouldn't, but if you must, go ahead.

SHARON: I don't think things are being handled very well around here.

SENATOR: What do you mean?

SHARON: Your campaign. There have been too many mistakes.

SENATOR: Name one.

SHARON: The Homeless Ski Vacation.

SENATOR: I gave those homeless people the weekend of their lives.

SHARON: But the homeless have other more pressing needs than a trip to Aspen.

SENATOR: They were amazing on the slopes. And besides, it got them off of the streets.

SHARON: Temporarily. But soon they'll be back, and your opponent will only use that against you.

SENATOR: You do what you can.

SHARON: And then there was the Howard Johnson's scandal.

SENATOR: I had no idea that they were all under age, and we did not use all 48 flavors!

SHARON: I want to work for you. With you. I have always been excited by your political power. Senator, what I am really trying to say is that I want to be your campaign manager.

HE removes a putter from his golf bag, and begins to practice with an imaginary ball.

SENATOR: You think I should put all my cards in your deck?

SHARON: I can do it.

SENATOR: Sharon, the political game is a rough game. There's no flag politics. It's all tackle.

SHARON: Yes.

SENATOR: Sometimes we have to do what we don't want to do, but we do it anyway. Sometimes we have to close our eyes to what might be the right thing to do, and do the political thing instead. Are you getting what I'm saying?

SHARON: I have always known that at times my moral obligations might come in conflict with my political ambitions.

SENATOR: A politician uses his morals like he uses an old overcoat. It protects him from the bad weather, but once he's inside, he checks that coat at the door.

SHARON: I understand.

SENATOR: Many people understand, but few are able to do it.

SHARON: I can do it. I'd love to do it...

SENATOR: And I'd love to have you do it...

SHARON: I've given it a lot of thought—

SENATOR: Very few successful politicians ever had a thought of their own.

SHARON: I know I've only been involved with politics for a very short time.

SENATOR: You shouldn't worry about that. Time means nothing to people in Congress.

SHARON: So what do you think Senator?

SENATOR: I always say that opportunity is a very timid creature. Turn it away once, and you may never see it again.

SHARON: Why don't we discuss this over dinner?

SENATOR: You and I?

SHARON: Do you like to dance?

SENATOR: I'm having dinner with my wife.

SHARON: *(She drops her pad.)* Too bad. I just bought a new dress. *(She bends over to pick up her pad.)*

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SENATOR: Call my wife and cancel. Tell her I'll have to re-schedule our dinner for next week. No, next week is no good. I know. Tell her we'll have lunch around the first of the month.

SHARON: So we'll talk more at dinner.

SENATOR: We'll discuss these career plans of yours. I'm always interested in our nation's youth.

SHARON: Thank you, Senator. *(SHE crosses to exit.)*

SENATOR: Sharon, just remember that if the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, then the longest distance is a straight line in the opposite direction. *(Pause.)* Let's just hope we never move in opposite directions.

SHARON: Don't worry, Senator.

SENATOR: Now, don't forget to check into Bob Reason's life. Find out what he has, and what he wants. *(She exits. Lights fade into Bob's home.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

BOB is dressed in his Sunday best. The house is spotless. HE nervously arranges the cheese and crackers on the serving platter. There is a knock at the door. BOB runs to the door, and opens it. A SECRET SERVICE man bursts into the room and rolls behind a piece of furniture. Immediately, he searches BOB for weapons. Assured that all is well, he radios the "okay" to the SENATOR.

SECRET SERVICE: Delta five-niner. This is Ramrod. Location t-six has been secured. We have a GO on Operation Professor Plum. Do you read? We have a GO on Plum.

"Hail to the Chief" is heard. The SENATOR enters with SHARON behind him.

SENATOR: Bobby *(HE takes both of Bob's hands into his.)* It's been so long. Too long.

BOB: Yes, it has.

SENATOR: What has it been five... fourteen... three... twenty...?

BOB: Twelve.

SENATOR: Exactly. Twelve years. Twelve long years. *(The SENATOR makes himself at home.)* Bobby, this is my campaign manager, Sharon Crane.

SHARON: We spoke over the phone.

BOB: Yes. It's very nice to meet you.

SHARON: I'm very sorry we couldn't have given you more notice.

SENATOR: He doesn't care! Do you, Bobby?

BOB: Oh, no—

SHARON: I hope you don't mind if I sit in on your conversation.

BOB: No. That would be fine.

SENATOR: I like to have Sharon with me. She has an amazing ability to remember what I say.

BOB: That's always important.

SENATOR: When it gets down to the final moments of the match, it's always wise to have the brightest of the bright in your corner rubbing your shoulders, wiping the sweat from your brow, and cutting that eye open when it's too swollen to see.

The SENATOR begins to play with knick-knacks. BOB watches nervously.

SHARON: He watched ROCKY last night on cable.

BOB: That's a wonderful movie—

SENATOR: —So Bobby where's your wife... Mary... Susan...?

BOB: Bess.

SENATOR: Exactly. Bess. A wonderful woman. Very attractive.

BOB: She left.

SENATOR: Bitch. When I heard you were marrying her, I started to worry. It's probably for the best.

BOB: No. She just left for the day. A church meeting.

SENATOR: Backbone of the community. You're a lucky man.

BOB: She's chairing a committee to have the phrase "melting pot" removed from the history books.

SHARON writes on her pad.

SENATOR: It's very reassuring to know that there are conscientious citizens always looking out for this great country.

BOB: Actually, I don't agree with her. Of course, we have different opinions on many issues.

SHARON writes on.

SENATOR: The last time I saw Betty... the two of you were just starting to date.

The SENATOR sits. The SECRET SERVICE man pushes BOB down onto the sofa.

BOB: That was the summer after we graduated from college.

SENATOR: You know, Bobby, it was just the other day, that I was thinking about our college days.

BOB: Those were wonderful times.

SENATOR: (To SHARON.) Bobby and I were college roommates.

SHARON: At Pribley State.

SENATOR: Good ole P.S.U.

BOB: I'm a professor there, now.

SENATOR: Archaeology?

BOB: Anthropology.

SENATOR: Right. Man is a fascinating subject.

BOB: Yes. I'm interested in why we do what we do. Where it all began.

SENATOR: There have always been beginnings. Haven't there?

BOB: Yes.

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SENATOR: And endings. Too many endings. Christ, I get teary-eyed just thinking about it.

The SENATOR eats a cheese cracker.

BOB: Hopefully, if we can learn from the past, then maybe we can save the future.

Eating the cracker, the SENATOR spits it into a plastic bag held by his SECRET SERVICE man.

SENATOR: You always had a special insight. Even when we were kids. I almost admired you for it.

BOB: Thank you—

SHARON: Anthropology must be a very interesting subject.

The SENATOR is bored. HE moves to Bob's desk and begins to look through everything. The SECRET SERVICE man shadows him.

BOB: Usually, it's just a lot of time spent combing through books and research data.

SHARON: Still you must feel special knowing that you're contributing to society.

BOB: Yes. I do.

SHARON: I took a human sexuality class, but that's as close as I ever came to Anthropology.

The SENATOR rushes back to the sofa.

SENATOR: *(Yelling.)* Human sexuality! Remember that, Bobby?!

BOB: I don't think Ms. Crane would be interested in that story.

SENATOR: Bobby tried to take human sexuality, but he developed this rash on his elbows.

SHARON: How awful.

SENATOR: His eyelashes fell out after the birthing film.

BOB: May I get you a drink?

BOB tries to leave, but he is stopped by the SECRET SERVICE.

SENATOR: And of course, there were the nosebleeds during the masturbation discussion sessions.

BOB: I had a blood sugar problem.

SENATOR: I decided the only way to cure him of this fear of sex was to engulf him in it.

BOB: A sandwich? Cookies, maybe?

Once again, BOB tries to break free. The SECRET SERVICE flips BOB over the sofa. BOB pops up injured.

SENATOR: I convinced the Delta-Luv-Delta's that Bobby was a worthy, charitable event. So the Delta's cured him of his problem.

SHARON: The entire sorority...?

BOB: It was much more innocent than it may sound.

SENATOR: Jesus, Bobby! Those were the days! We had some good times. Didn't we, pal?

BOB: We had a few.

SENATOR: Do you ever miss it?

BOB: Once in a while.

The SENATOR throws his arm around BOB. BOB pulls away.

BOB: You must be thirsty.

BOB moves to the kitchen, but the SECRET SERVICE grabs him in a choke hold.

SENATOR: What do you have?

BOB: Coke or Pepsi.

SENATOR: Any real drinks?

BOB: I don't drink any—

SENATOR: Forget it. I've already had too many today.

BOB: Are you sure, because—?

BESS bursts through the door.

BESS: Senator Fox, it's a pleasure. *(BESS crosses to the SENATOR ignoring SHARON and BOB.)*

BOB: Senator, this is my wife.

SENATOR: Betty—

BESS: —Bess—

SENATOR: I've heard so little about you.

BESS: Thank you, Senator. I just want you to know that I voted for you all four times. Even after you were almost impeached for shooting that man.

SENATOR: Such an ugly memory.

BESS: I knew you were innocent from the beginning.

SENATOR: It's good to meet someone with your insights.

BESS: My daddy always said, "Call them the way you see them."

SENATOR: A wise man.

BESS: *(Noticing SHARON.)* Oh, hello. Who are you?

SHARON: Sharon Crane. The Senator's campaign manager.

BESS: Oh! *(Cheerfully.)* Hello! It's very nice to meet you! *(Spotting BOB.)* Bob, where are your manners? No one has a drink in their hands.

BOB: I've already asked.

SENATOR: I prefer to have the harder drinks at this time of the day.

BOB: We don't drink.

BESS: I'll get you one. Will scotch and soda be all right?

SENATOR: The drink of champions!

BOB: Bess, where did you get the liquor?

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BESS: *(Under her breath.)* Chill out, Bob! So I have a drink every now and then! Now get back over there and start rubbing some elbows! *(Exits to the kitchen.)*

BOB: I'm sorry.

SENATOR: *(Traps BOB on the sofa.)* Bobby, do you know why I'm here?

BOB: No. I—

SHARON: I didn't think it was my place to tell him over the phone, Senator.

SENATOR: Fine. *(Pause.)* Bobby, I need your help.

BOB: Well you know that—

SENATOR: I am arranging for a press conference, and I want you to be there. To be my assistant.

BOB: I couldn't.

SENATOR: Sure you could.

BOB: I don't know a thing about politics...

SENATOR: I'll handle the politics. You handle the honesty.

BOB: Ted—

SENATOR: —Senator.

BOB: —Senator, you know I have never been a people person.

SENATOR: Nonsense. People are your specialty.

BESS enters with the drinks for SHARON, the SENATOR and the SCRET SERVICE.

BOB: I don't think I could do well in front of all those people.

BESS: You're a teacher. You're in front of people everyday. Speaking. Performing.

SENATOR: I had Sharon do a little checking up on you. She said you were a fine teacher.

SHARON: Outstanding Professor three years in a row.

BOB: I like to teach.

BESS: And he does it very well.

BESS sits on the sofa next to the SENATOR.

BOB: But teaching in front of students is different from speaking in front of the press.

SENATOR: I need you, Bobby. I need your insights. I need your knowledge.

SHARON: I could help you Prof. Reason.

BESS: You could.

BOB: Bess, please!

SHARON: I could give you a few pointers on 'what to say' and the best way to say it.

BOB: I don't know.

SENATOR: Tell you what I do, Bobby. Give and take. How 'bout I give you something in return?

BOB: There's nothing I need.

BESS: Robert!

SENATOR: Bobby, there's always something you need! What if the IRS just happened to overlook your taxes for a year?

BOB: That would be illegal.

SENATOR: *(To BESS.)* Is he the best? You can't slip anything by Bob Reason. That was just a test. You passed with flying colors.

BOB: I see.

SENATOR: How 'bout I give a little nudge to your tenure committee?

BESS: He has tenure.

SENATOR: Want to be chairman?

BOB: No. I'm fine—

SENATOR: President of the university?

BOB: No. Really.

SENATOR: *(Angry.)* Bobby, let me give. *(Pause.)* I need you on my team. I'm hurting. My opponent is approaching this campaign from a humanistic point of view. I know nothing about humanity. I only know politics. Votes. I need you. An expert in—

SHARON, BESS and the SECRET SERVICE: —anthropology—!

SENATOR: —to help guide me. Lead me up the path of good. Show me what the people want and need. Teach me, Bobby. *(PAUSE.)*

BESS: There is one thing he could use.

BOB: There is?

SENATOR: You name it!

BESS: He has always wanted to go to Europe to—

SENATOR: *(Already moving toward the door.)* You're there! Paris, London, Berlin?!

BOB: Actually, it's a cave.

SENATOR: A cave?

BOB: I've been trying to get this grant to examine this skeleton.

SENATOR: If that's what turns you on, Bobby, say no more. The grant will be yours.

BOB: Just like that?

SENATOR: For a friend, I'll always bend over backwards.

BESS: I told you, Bob.

BOB: Thank you.

SENATOR: Good. I knew I could count on you. I'll send Sharon by in a couple of days.

BESS: Why?

SHARON: To give your husband a few pointers in the art of public speaking.

BOB: If she doesn't mind.

SHARON: I'll look forward to it, Dr. Reason.

SENATOR: She doesn't mind.

BOB: That will be very nice.

SENATOR: All right, boys. Let's move out.

BOB: That's it? You wouldn't like to get caught up?

SENATOR: Seeing you was enough for one day. Bobby, you're the best. Barbara it was a pleasure. Move'em out!

The Secret Service men clear the way as the SENATOR exits the house.

SHARON: I'm sorry, Professor. The Senator's not very good with 'good-byes.'

BOB: He never was.

SHARON: Perhaps it might be better to meet at the campaign office.

BESS: Why not meet here?

SHARON: The office is where the press conference will be held. You could get a feel for the room.

BESS: He can 'feel' here, too.

BOB: Bess, it will probably be better if we're alone. Not all alone. Just alone for the time we're together. So that I'm not nervous...that you're there. Seeing me. There trying to speak in front of people.

BESS: Whatever.

SHARON: Great.

BOB: I just wouldn't want us to be distracted. Not that you would distract us, Bess. I meant-

BESS: -shut up, Bob.

SHARON: So it's set.

BOB: That'll be very nice.

SHARON: (*SHE smiles.*) Good-bye.

BOB: Yes. Good-bye.

SHARON exits. BESS shuts the door after her. SHE stares at BOB.

BESS: If you blow this opportunity, I'll never speak to you again. I never dreamed that I would meet ambassadors or congressmen or senators...or anyone. Go to fancy balls. Or eat at restaurants that have fingerbowls!

BOB: He just wants me to be an assistant for this one press conference.

BESS: It's a test. After this, who knows what position he might give you?

BOB: He might just need a few anthropological facts.

BESS: Since when would a politician need to know anything about the study of man? Robert, he's grooming you for an aide position. Must you always be so dense?

BOB: I'm sorry, dear, I just thought-

BESS: -Don't think at home. It unnerves me.

BOB: Whatever you say.

BESS: Do you think he wants you to be a speech writer?

BOB: I have no experience in speech writing.

BESS: Who needs experience? Wake up! The Senator is probably thrilled to have someone who can use pronouns.

BOB: It might be better if I don't accept whatever position the Senator offers.

BESS: Why would you do something stupid like that?

BOB: It's just a lot of changes we'd have to go through.

BESS: Nothing remains the same. We try and succeed, or we try and fail. But we try.

BOB: I have to tell you, Bess. I am a little afraid.

BESS: Who's not afraid?

BOB: Couldn't you be just as happy if we just stayed here?

BESS: No. (*Pause.*) No, I couldn't, Bob. We can't keep hiding from the world. We have to face it. We need to take chances. We need to eat more red meat.

BY KEN JONES

BOB: What does red meat have to do with this?

BESS: It's something we're not supposed to indulge in! So I say "only eat red meat from now on." It's dangerous.

BOB: We'll have steaks tonight. Will that make you feel better?

BESS: You're missing the point.

BOB: Maybe baked potatoes.

BESS: Only foods that bleed!

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