

(DRAFT: 02 Dec 2018)

A FAIRLY WIDE STANCE
By Craig Houk

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Cast of Characters

SENATOR: Senator from Wisconsin (46 y/o)

SENATOR'S WIFE: Senator's Wife (39 y/o)

BUSINESS MOGUL: Senator's Adoptive Father (76 y/o)

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE: Senator's adoptive Mother (68 y/o)

WITNESS: Senator's Trick (29 y/o)

POLICE OFFICER: Senator's Arresting Officer (36 y/o)

Place

The State of Wisconsin

Time

Present

SCENE 1

(A dining room in the Senator's home. He and his wife sit eating together. He looks at her and smiles tenderly. She looks at him, smiles dimly and then returns to her meal. He continues smiling, with increasing intensity. Uncomfortable with his ogling, she addresses him quietly but sternly.)

SENATOR'S WIFE

Why are you smiling?

SENATOR

I love you.

SENATOR'S WIFE

The wine is tasty. Dry. Not at all sweet. Just the way I like it.

SENATOR

Did you hear what I said? I said, "I love you."

SENATOR'S WIFE

Yes. I heard you. I love you, too.

(She smiles politely.)

SENATOR

I mean it... this time.

SENATOR'S WIFE

This time?

SENATOR

Yes.

SENATOR'S WIFE

What do you mean by "this time"? Are you telling me that all previous "I love yous" were meaningless?

SENATOR

I've come to a recent realization. And... I love you. And it's the truth. This time.

SENATOR'S WIFE

Okay. Good to know.

SENATOR

That's all you've got?

SENATOR'S WIFE

That's all I can muster.

SENATOR

I tell you "I love you" and all you can muster is "Okay. Good to know."

SENATOR'S WIFE

Admittedly, I'm a little thrown. You're generally predictable. And now this.

(Beat.)

How long have we been together?

SENATOR

I... I can't remember.

SENATOR'S WIFE

Well, don't look so terrified. I can't remember either.

SENATOR

It's been a long time.

SENATOR'S WIFE

Has it been?

SENATOR

I don't know. I'm guessing.

(He pushes his plate away.)

I've lost my appetite.

SENATOR'S WIFE

I'm starving. Do you mind if I continue eating? Never mind. I don't know why I asked. I'm starving.

(A beat. She pokes at her fish.)

Where do you go? At night?

SENATOR

What do you mean?

SENATOR'S WIFE

Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night. I pass by your room and you're not there.

SENATOR

You're not sleeping through the night?

SENATOR'S WIFE

Rarely.

SENATOR

You're taking your pills?

SENATOR'S WIFE

Nothing helps. Maybe I should take the whole bottle.

SENATOR

I'm not sure that remark is appropriate. How do you think that makes me feel?

SENATOR'S WIFE

Where do you go?

SENATOR

I take walks.

SENATOR'S WIFE

Where?

SENATOR

Nearby. The park.

SENATOR'S WIFE

It's risky.

SENATOR

A man can take walks. To clear his head. To breathe.

SENATOR'S WIFE

To escape.

SENATOR

To escape, yes. What's wrong with that?

SENATOR'S WIFE

You come back.

SENATOR
This is my home.

SENATOR'S WIFE
Our home.

SENATOR
Our home.

SENATOR'S WIFE
You'll be exposed.

SENATOR
Is that a threat?

SENATOR'S WIFE
To me, yes. How do you think that makes me feel?

SENATOR
You are more than compensated for your pains.

SENATOR'S WIFE
I used to think so. I'm not so sure any more.
(A beat.)

SENATOR
How old are the kids?

SENATOR'S WIFE
What?

SENATOR
Our kids. How old are they? If I knew how old our children were, I might be able to figure out how long we've been married.

SENATOR'S WIFE
I don't know.

SENATOR
Think.

SENATOR'S WIFE
When I said, "I don't know", what I meant was "I don't care".

SENATOR

I'm talking about our offspring here. Our flesh and blood. Our son and our daughter.

SENATOR'S WIFE

Sons. We have two sons. We do not have a daughter. That much I do know. One from your first marriage. And one from... Well, somehow you and I managed to... procreate.

SENATOR

You're mistaken.

SENATOR'S WIFE

No. I'm not. Look. There on the sideboard. There's a photo of the four of us. On... vacation... in... somewhere.

SENATOR

(He looks.)

I'll be damned. Two sons?

(She nods her head.)

No daughter?

(She shakes her head.)

I'll be damned. You're sure?

SENATOR'S WIFE

Actually, no. I'm not sure.

(A beat.)

SENATOR

So, you're still having trouble sleeping.

SENATOR'S WIFE

Sometimes, I pass out from exhaustion and crushing anxiety. And when I don't come to right away, I sleep.

SENATOR

You should see your doctor.

SENATOR'S WIFE

Yesterday, I passed out in the back yard. I was gardening. I remember I'd just put in the last rose bush when everything went black.

SENATOR

Passing out is not a good sign. You should have that checked.

SENATOR'S WIFE

...And while I lay there, unconscious in a pile of composted manure, I slept.

SENATOR

That's awful.

SENATOR'S WIFE

I strongly suggest you cease taking late night walks.

SCENE 2

(A grand living room. A business mogul and his wife, the Senator's adoptive parents, are entertaining guests at a small pre-gala cocktail party. They are both slightly intoxicated.)

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

(To the guests.)

He was all alone.

BUSINESS MOGUL

He looked a little light in the loafers to me.

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

Please, dear, not in front of the guests.

(To the guests.)

He was eight years old.

BUSINESS MOGUL

And as soft as a chocolate teapot.

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

I had to have him.

BUSINESS MOGUL

The runt of the litter.

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

He turned out all right.

BUSINESS MOGUL

Senator for Wisconsin!

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

That's right! And you don't become Senator if you're as soft as a chocolate loafer, now do you?

BUSINESS MOGUL

You're mixing it up.

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

What do you mean?

BUSINESS MOGUL

Never mind.

(To the guests.)

It took a lot of hard work, but I turned that boy around.

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

More like you turned that boy over your knee.

BUSINESS MOGUL

Please, dear, not in front of the guests.

(To the guests.)

I've got a reputation for sternness. There's nothing wrong with that. There's nothing wrong with uncompromising discipline.

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

We think his birth parents were hippies.

BUSINESS MOGUL

Pot smoking, acid dropping liberals.

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

Shocking, but likely true.

BUSINESS MOGUL

There's no doubt in my mind. That boy got some kind of contact high from the hashish they were smoking.

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

All right, dear, no need to get graphic.

BUSINESS MOGUL

Irreversible damage to his brain. Screwed up his testosterone.

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

He turned out all right.

BUSINESS MOGUL

Senator for Wisconsin!

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

That's right! And you don't become Senator if you're brain damaged or limp wristed. Do you?

BUSINESS MOGUL

We had to pry a doll from his hands when we brought him home from the agency. He wouldn't let go of it.

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

Bubble Cut Barbie.

BUSINESS MOGUL

What?

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

Bubble Cut Barbie. A vintage 1963 honey blonde bubble cut Barbie doll. It was probably worth something, except that you tore off her head and ripped her arms and legs from her torso.

BUSINESS MOGUL

It had to be done.

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

And lit her on fire.

BUSINESS MOGUL

I may have gone too far. I think I made my point, though.

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

I still have a scar on my ankle from the lock of melted hair that fell from her scalp.

BUSINESS MOGUL

All right, dear, no need to get graphic.

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

We're extremely proud of our son.

BUSINESS MOGUL

He has a beautiful wife.

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

And two adoring...

BUSINESS MOGUL

Yes, indeed, his wife is beautiful. She could be one of those... What do they call them? Power models?

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

Super model.

BUSINESS MOGUL

Super model, yes. She's stunning.

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

I think you might be overstating it a bit, dear. She's pleasant enough to look at, yes.

BUSINESS MOGUL

Gorgeous.

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

She certainly isn't repellent, I'll give her that much. Of course, she does otherwise possess the social graces of a howler monkey.

BUSINESS MOGUL

A toast! To our son!

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

To our son!

BUSINESS MOGUL

Senator for our great state of Wisconsin!

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

Oh! Oh, my goodness. Look at the time. We'd better get going.

BUSINESS MOGUL

Damn, I nearly forgot.

BUSINESS MOGUL'S WIFE

The gala starts in less than thirty minutes.

BUSINESS MOGUL

All right, everyone. Let's get a move on. The cars are waiting.

SCENE 3

(Outside the Senator's office building. The Senator stands at a podium behind several microphones addressing the press. His wife and mother stand on either side of him. His father is noticeably absent.)

SENATOR

Thank you all for coming out today. For several weeks now, my family and I have been relentlessly harassed by the Wisconsin Statesman and mercilessly besieged by patently false and deliberately misleading statements made about me in the media. If you've opened any newspaper or magazine or if you've turned on any news station in the past week, you know what I'm talking about. Let me be clear. I am not now, nor have I ever been gay. Still, without any indisputable evidence to contradict my assertion that I am not homosexual, the Statesman has continued to engage in this flagrant lynching of my fine reputation. I was foolishly premature in pleading guilty to the charge of lewd conduct at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport on the day in question. It was a mistake and I deeply regret it. Because of that, I have now retained counsel and am asking my attorney to review these matters and advise me on how to proceed. In the very near future, I will make a formal announcement as to whether I will seek another term in office. As an elected official, I recognize that my personal and professional life is wide open to public scrutiny, and I take absolute responsibility for my lapse in judgment in attempting to manage this matter myself. I am not gay. I love my wife, my children, and my family. I have the utmost respect for my colleagues and I am immensely proud to serve this great state of Wisconsin, where I have accomplished a lot over the years. I have been in the political arena and in the public eye for seventeen years now. The simple truth of the matter is that I do not go around anywhere hitting on men. And, by God, if I did, I certainly wouldn't do it in a toilet stall at the airport.

SCENE 4

(A courtroom. Closed hearing. The Senator is seated center. A Witness and a Police Officer sit on either side of him. While they are all seated next to one another, their testimony is not happening simultaneously. Shifting lights should help to define this.)

WITNESS

After passing through security and entering the terminal, I instantly made eye contact with a good-looking, nicely dressed, man who I quickly recognized as the Senator. After a few minutes of ogling one another, he got up from where he was sitting, bag in tow, and started

towards the men's room. Not the one at the gate, though. The one at the far end of the terminal where there's little to no foot traffic. Almost secluded. He kept looking over his shoulder and I knew he wanted me to follow him in. So, I did. We stood next to one another at the urinals. We both unzipped and... and I could see... well, I could see that the Senator already had a hard-on. Pretty ballsy I thought, but what the hell? I was turned on. I mean, here I was with the Senator from Wisconsin and he was flashing me his... credentials.

POLICE OFFICER

At about 7:00 PM on the date in question, I began working a plain clothes detail in a men's public restroom at the airport terminal, a restroom known for lewd sexual conduct. This particular restroom is situated at the far end of the terminal, just beyond a gate that was and is still under construction. I entered the men's room and, as I looked to the left, I observed two men standing at adjacent urinals. There was some fumbling as they both turned to see who entered. Their faces were flush, and they looked surprised and a little off guard. One of them looked familiar, but I wasn't able to place him at that moment. I walked past them and proceeded to a vacant stall in the back of the restroom on the right.

WITNESS

No sooner did I reach for the Senator's cock... sorry, is it okay if I say cock? Anyway, as I reached for his shaft... shaft...? Penis, his penis... another man entered the restroom. Nice looking guy. Well built, stocky, dark hair, blue eyes, nice ass. In any case, we were both surprised to see someone else in there, though in retrospect, I don't know why. I mean, it's a public john. Look, I'm an openly gay man who's resigned to forever being single. I've been cruising public parks and toilets for a very long time. My point is... as hot as this guy was and as turned on as I was to be screwing around with a Senator, I could tell something wasn't right. Something serious was about to go down in that restroom and I wasn't about to stick around to find out what it was. I do have limits. So, I zipped up and hauled ass out of there.

POLICE OFFICER

While seated in the stall, a white male with graying hair appeared just outside, the same gentleman who just minutes before was standing at the urinal when I entered the restroom. He peered through the crack in the door, looked down at his hands, fidgeted with his fingers, moved closer, and then peered into my stall again. He repeated this for about two minutes. It was during that time that I realized who he was. The senator then entered the stall next to mine and placed his roller bag against the front of the stall door. From my position I could observe his shoes and ankles. He was wearing tan dress pants with black dress shoes. Lavender argyle socks.

WITNESS

Why did I come forward? Well, I did just take an oath on the big book of fiction after all, so I suppose I'm obligated to speak candidly. I came forward for two reasons. One... the senator of the great state of Wisconsin is a mo and everyone needs to know. Two... I'm hoping to get a date out of this. Thank you for allowing cameras in the courtroom.

POLICE OFFICER

The senator tapped his right foot several times and then moved his foot closer to mine. I responded by moving my foot up and down slowly. He then placed his foot against mine. I did not respond, but just waited. He then swiped his hand under the stall divider in a direction from front to back. His palm was facing towards the ceiling as he guided it along the divider. I was only able to see the tips of his fingers on my side. I could see that it was his left hand due to the position of his thumb. I could also see that the senator had a gold band on his ring finger as his hand was on my side of the stall divider. I held my Police Identification in my right hand down by the floor so that the Senator could see it.

SENATOR

I sat down to use the toilet. Okay? I positioned my feet, yes. Maybe they were close to his. Maybe our feet bumped. I think maybe they did. He said as much. I don't disagree with that. But I don't recall exactly. I have to spread my legs when I lower my pants, so they don't slide. I'm a fairly wide guy. Yes, and at one point I believe I did reach down to pick up a piece of toilet paper behind me on the floor. As one does, I suppose. I mean, he in fact solicited me, isn't that the truth of the matter? I understand that he's out to enforce the law, but he shouldn't be out to entrap people. Okay, listen, I don't want to get into a pissing match here, but I mean, come on! This whole effort has been a calculated political hit. Revenge on behalf of my political opponents. It's a circus! And this officer is an accomplice to all of it. And if he's not, he's mistaken. In a misguided effort to become some kind of hero, his senses have failed him. He saw what he wanted to see. And this so-called witness - this pervert - he's just looking for publicity, looking for his fifteen minutes of fame. He's a liar. And one day, he'll come face to face with his maker. And he will have to answer for the choices he's made. This has nearly destroyed my family and my good name. A name built up through years of hard work and dedicated public service. I swear today, under oath, before everyone in this room, and before God... I am innocent of these charges.

SCENE 5

(The Senator's home. He is on his knees praying.)

SENATOR

I'm scared. Terrified. And I don't know why this feels like life or death to me, but it does. I have a sickness - an incurable disease - one that I need to fend off every second, of every minute, of every

hour of every day. And I'm tired. I want this pain to end. This infliction to go away. Why have you done this to me? Where did I go wrong? Please. Tell me what to do.

(He waits for an answer that won't come. During the above, the Senator's wife has appeared, her hands behind her back. The Senator rises and reaches for a coat. He puts it on and heads for the door.)

SENATOR'S WIFE

What are you doing?

SENATOR

I'm going for a walk.

(She reveals a gun and offers it to him, handle out. He stares at it for a long moment but decides not to take it. He looks up to her and, after a beat, turns and heads off slowly. She turns the gun around, raises it, and aims it at his back. She cocks it.)

END OF PLAY