

A Marriage of Policy

By

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Cast of Characters

Melanie : Mid-thirties. United States
Senator. Presidential
Candidate.

Sebastian: Early-thirties.
Partially-unemployed. Goes
with the flow.

Clifford: Late-thirties. Secret
Serviceman.

Scene

The living room of a United States Senator.

Time

Present.

A MARRIAGE OF POLICY

The lights come up on an ornate, thoughtfully decorated living room. The living quarters include a sofa, living room table and accompanying magazine spread, a fireplace, mounted taxidermy, shelves of photographs, and a framed American flag. The phony ensemble of Americana should reflect the nauseatingly sweet yet conservative nature of the home's inhabitants. A shower can be heard running in the next room. After several moments, the knob turns and the sound of water stops. Shuffling is heard offstage and after several moments, SEBASTIAN enters, shirtless and wearing nothing but a towel around his waist. He hesitates, looks around the room.

SEBASTIAN

Hello? Hello!? Senator?

SEBASTIAN wanders awkwardly, taking in the unfamiliar space. He looks at the line of shelves. He spots a photograph, picks it up and examines it in disbelief. MELANIE enters, and immediately spots SEBASTIAN. She is a well dressed woman in her mid-thirties. She wears stylish heels, glasses, and an expensive pant suit. Without paying much mind to SEBASTIAN, she continues to get ready, putting on a pair of earrings.

SEBASTIAN

Why do you have a picture of me in your living room?

MELANIE

If we're going to make this work, we'll need to be sure that our cover is convincing. Get dressed, the car will be here in about fifteen minutes.

SEBASTIAN

Make what work? What car? Where are my clothes!?

MELANIE

We disposed of them. There's a suit for you in the bedroom.

SEBASTIAN

You did what? How did you find this picture?

MELANIE

Our people are very well connected to most internet databases and public files.

SEBASTIAN

I didn't realize that my two-thousand-and-nine spring break vacation to Florida was a public file.

MELANIE

Your mother gave it to us.

SEBASTIAN

My mother!? You've pulled her into this too?

MELANIE

We're going to need full compliance from all relevant parties. She will be compensated just as handsomely as you. Hurry up. We're going to be late.

SEBASTIAN

Late? Late for what?

MELANIE

Late for our first public appearance. We're giving a rally just outside of Salt Lake City in four hours. Our car to the airport is on its way.

SEBASTIAN

Salt Lake City? You want me to go with you? Nobody told me that I was going anywhere. I was just told to freshen up.

MELANIE

I apologize for the lack of information. I can understand how it would be frustrating. Please know that I thank you for your support and for your participation in our campaign.

SEBASTIAN

So I'm hired? I expected at least a couple of interview questions...and I certainly didn't expect to be speaking with you directly.

MELANIE

Yes, you see...my people have decided that you will become a very integral part of my campaign.

SEBASTIAN

An integral part of your campaign? But Senator Wright, not that I'm questioning my value as a potential member of your team, but you don't even know if I'm a competent worker.

MELANIE

Most people would jump at such an opportunity.

SEBASTIAN

Of course! I'm just confused at how this came to be.

MELANIE

Your application was impressive.

SEBASTIAN

I answered an ad.

MELANIE

We've known who you were for quite some time. The ad was sent your way and we knew that you would answer it. Get dressed and I'll make sure that everything is fully explained.

SEBASTIAN

What's there to fully explain? I don't think it's too much to ask to have at least a vague idea of my involvement.

MELANIE

Let's just say that you will be aiding my campaign in terms of marketing and public appearance.

SEBASTIAN

Oh. Wow. Okay, that sounds like a pretty solid gig actually. I'm not sure that I'm fully qualifi-

MELANIE

Why don't you get dressed?

SEBASTIAN

Yes, right. Okay. The bedroom is-?

MELANIE

Through those doors. The first room on your left.

SEBASTIAN exits. MELANIE pulls out her blackberry, types, scrolls, perhaps uses it as a mirror to put on some lipstick. He speaks from offstage.

SEBASTIAN

You know, everything has been happening so quickly, I didn't really take the time to fully thank you Senator! And thanks

(MORE)

SEBASTIAN (cont'd)
for pulling me on board so quickly...not even a full interview process. I'm truly a fan of all that you have to say. Anything that I can do to help you secure the nomination would be an absolute honor.

MELANIE
Why don't you call me Melanie?

SEBASTIAN
Melanie? Oh, I couldn't be so informal.

MELANIE
I don't think that will be a problem, Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN
Melanie...Okay, Melanie(Pause).

Sebastian enters, wearing a pair of boxer briefs and a t-shirt.
Where did you get these?

MELANIE
What?

SEBASTIAN
Where did you get these boxers?

MELANIE
From the department store I assume.

SEBASTIAN
These are *my* boxers.

MELANIE
Sebastian, don't be ridiculous.

SEBASTIAN
These are my boxers, how did you get my boxers?

MELANIE
I'm sure they just look like your boxers, Sebastian. Calm down.

SEBASTIAN
No, these are mine. The band is pink.

MELANIE
It's clearly just the style.

SEBASTIAN
(with a twinge of embarrassment)
It's not the style. It's- It's-when I do laundry the colors bleed. These are mine.

Sebastian- MELANIE

Were you in my house? SEBASTIAN

No. MELANIE

Were you in my house? SEBASTIAN

No! Well, *I* wasn't. MELANIE

Jesus! Why are you sending people into my home, going through my drawers? How many pairs of underwear did you take? SEBASTIAN

It wasn't just the underwear. MELANIE

I'm sorry, what else did you take?! SEBASTIAN

The door bursts open. Clifford enters, dressed in a fitted suit, a pair of sunglasses and an earpiece.

Is he ready? CLIFFORD

Ready for what? SEBASTIAN

Clearly not. Senator, the car is waiting outside. We need to be bound for the airport in five minutes in order to stay on schedule. Tell your husband here to hurry up. CLIFFORD

Your husband? (There is a long pause). SEBASTIAN

I'm guessing that based on the general response of the room that you have yet to share that piece of information with him. CLIFFORD

That would be correct, Clifford. MELANIE

CLIFFORD

I assume you'll be needing a few more moments?

MELANIE

Yes, Clifford.

CLIFFORD

I'll be outside then.

MELANIE

Thank you, Clifford.

He exits. There is a long pause.

SEBASTIAN

Your husband?

MELANIE

Yes.

SEBASTIAN

Is that why you called me in here, to marry you?

MELANIE

Yes.

SEBASTIAN

You're bat shit crazy, I'm leaving.

MELANIE

No, Sebastian, wait!

SEBASTIAN

Where are my clothes?

MELANIE

Please, wait! Let me explain.

SEBASTIAN

Is this some type of joke? Am I being Punked.

MELANIE

No. I would never stoop so low as to participate in reality television.

SEBASTIAN

You're out of your mind. All of you. And here I was thinking that you were a moderate liberal...thinking that your head wasn't as far up your asshole as the other candidates. But I was wrong.

MELANIE

Let me at least tell you my reasoning.

SEBASTIAN

Where did you put my clothes? Give me my fucking clothes!

MELANIE

Sebastian, I don't think that language is appropriate. It's certainly not very presidential.

SEBASTIAN

Screw being presidential. Screw your bid for public office. Give me my clothing, now!

MELANIE

Let me explain...the latest poll said that I needed a husband to improve my likability. It's the only way that I can win Iowa.

SEBASTIAN

A husband? You don't need a husband!

MELANIE

These are the unfortunate realities of the world that we live in, Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN

I thought you were...you know-

MELANIE

Yes-?

SEBASTIAN

You know...

MELANIE

If you're referring to my strong political position on feminist policies, and my push for equal pay for equal work, then you should know that my effort to obtain a partner is not an appeasement to gender norms, but rather a personal reinforcement of my position and a strengthening of my authority and autonomy as a woman.

SEBASTIAN

How so?

MELANIE

Being single implies independence, yes, but think of the political repercussions of electing someone into office without a stable family unit. I come across as distant, cold, lonely, perhaps out of touch with the typical American family. Independence is beneficial only if you're young. When you have a partner, especially for a young middle aged

(MORE)

MELANIE (cont'd)

woman like myself, it suggests humbleness, warmth, collaboration, and a willingness to work. The American people need to know that their elected officials have someone to go home to at night...someone to share the burden...someone like you who, being three years younger than myself, would strengthen my claim as a leader of the household, as well as the country. This goes for anyone running for public office...regardless of gender.

SEBASTIAN

But why me?

MELANIE

You fit all of the major criteria. You're likable, handsome, a baby face that is offset by your light facial hair. You're just barely taller than me but I can be taller than you in heels, and you're non-traditional.

SEBASTIAN

Pardon me?

MELANIE

You know...you have a slightly different look about you. We're making this campaign as broad and diverse as possible.

SEBASTIAN

You've got to be kidding me.

MELANIE

It's not just your looks. Your life trajectory almost perfectly aligns with the path of one who will most likely drop their life to adopt this new style of existence.

SEBASTIAN

What do you mean?

MELANIE

Well, you don't smoke and there are no major illnesses that run in your family. No history of violence or addiction, you were an A-minus student all the way through high school and your accomplishments make it...easier to transition into our campaign.

SEBASTIAN

My accomplishments-

MELANIE

High school diploma followed by four years in retail, an online bachelors degree in finance and you supplement the money that your aunt sends you by walking dogs.

SEBASTIAN

Are you implying that I'm a deadbeat?

MELANIE

No, not at all!

SEBASTIAN

I'm sorry that I didn't go to Yale, I'm sorry that retail is the easiest way to pay my rent and walking dogs is actually a very well paying job opportunity. You people talk all the time about job growth yet you're so quick to judge those that actually try and make it work.

MELANIE

Sebastian, you are putting words in my mouth. I have met with many hard working Americans across the country who have all worked forty, fifty, sixty hours a week. I have the utmost respect for each and every one of them.

SEBASTIAN

Drop the rhetoric, will you? I understand what you want, Senator Wright, but I don't think that I can be the one to fulfill your wishes. I'm sorry.

MELANIE

We've invested a lot of time and effort and money into finding you, Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN

It's all a lie...a fabrication to alter public opinion. And you think you're someone for the people? Are you not ashamed of yourself? You can't find yourself a husband by taking applications. You're running for President of the United States for Christ's sake. Hell, you'll probably win. You're nothing but a cheap sell-out.

MELANIE

I am not a sell-out. I'm a realistic thinker. I understand the cost of my morals.

SEBASTIAN

Morals shouldn't cost anything.

MELANIE

Wake up and look at the world around you. There's a cost to everything. Including doing some good in this world. I want to make real change and before I can do that, I need to make sure that I win the party's nomination. When you enter public service, you give up a piece of yourself...I'm willing to make that sacrifice.

SEBASTIAN

That's exactly what's wrong with the political process. Why do you politicians feel that you have to be something that you're not...that you can't show an ounce of vulnerability? We don't need someone that thinks they need to lie to get elected.

MELANIE

I need you on this campaign, Sebastian. There is a lot at stake.

SEBASTIAN

I can't do it.

MELANIE

This isn't about you or me. It's about something greater than the both of us.

SEBASTIAN

You're asking me for my life.

MELANIE

I'm asking you to be my husband.

SEBASTIAN

For how long? What happens when you win the nomination...when you win the election? You're asking me for four years...eight if you get reelected.

MELANIE

If you really wish to leave we can get divorced after my first term.

SEBASTIAN

Not if you want to be a two term president. What would a divorce look like? That would wreck your political career.

MELANIE

Well-

SEBASTIAN

I will not be the Monica Lewinsky to your Bill Clinton.

MELANIE

Certainly not!

SEBASTIAN

-and what about after your second term? Do you think you'll be out of the public eye? Do you think I can quietly slip away, cash in my check and live my life peacefully? No. What you're asking for is my life.

MELANIE

(pause)

And what do you say to someone who humbly asks for your life?

SEBASTIAN

I tell them thanks but no thanks.

MELANIE

Sebastian, if you only understood the difficulties in seeking political office. The system is intricately designed to invalidate and disenfranchise people like myself...and I'll be damned if I don't at least try to give myself a fighting chance. I'm seeking office because I wish to seek office for the good of this country. Because I believe that I can do a fair amount of good. Take a good look at the world around us, Sebastian. The walls of this society are crumbling around us. The very foundations of our country...our god-given rights are in jeopardy. We're inches away from another economic disaster. We're six days away from another boots-on-the-ground operation in the middle east. There is no middle class. I don't know that I can fix all of that but I can try.

SEBASTIAN

And you need my help.

MELANIE

I want your help. I want your voice.

SEBASTIAN

Did you choose me yourself?

MELANIE

I don't understand your question.

SEBASTIAN

Did they just bring me here or did you actively choose to bring me?

MELANIE

It doesn't matter.

SEBASTIAN

Then I can't help you.

MELANIE

(pause)

Your clothes are in the bottom left hand drawer in the bedroom. I'll have the rest of your clothing returned to you this evening.

SEBASTIAN exits to the bedroom.
MELANIE continues to speak alone
onstage.

I never thought that I would find myself in this position. I've spent a better part of the last fifteen years working through the ranks. I wanted to be successful, I wanted power, I wanted to be the one to defy all odds and to make a difference in this world. And now, being so close, when I should be strongest, when I should be cold and ruthless and plastering my face and political rhetoric all over every news media outlet in the country, I feel alone. I was always too busy to realize that I was lonely. I considered my lack of a family to be an asset. I never had to worry about balancing two things or being there for another person...a husband...or a child. Now I'm at a point of no return. Anyone that wants me from this point forward won't want me for me...they'll want me to advance some sort of agenda. They'll want me for media attention, carefully cooked food, and tacky knick-knacks. You were different, Sebastian. I knew that you were good and honest and careful. Hardworking, well-tempered, kind and gentle. Someone without an agenda and someone who hadn't been corrupted in some back hall of Washington. I chose you myself. It was a risk that I took...a foolish one. And by the time I saw all of the videos and pictures and public files that they had gathered...I felt like I knew you. I didn't do it for the polls...I did it for myself...to give me a fighting chance...not my campaign. I don't regret a single decision I've made. But I can't help but wonder...'what if'.

SEBASTIAN enters, fully dressed in a suit and tie. The tie matches MELANIE's dress.

SEBASTIAN

I don't know what exactly it is that I can do for you, and I'm not entirely sure that I can do anything at all, but I think that perhaps...after tonight's rally, you and I could sit and chat over drinks.

MELANIE

That would be nice, yes.

The door bursts open. Clifford walks in.

CLIFFORD

Senator Wright, we really must be going. We're eight minutes behind schedule.

MELANIE

Thank you Clifford.

CLIFFORD

Senator Wright?

MELANIE

Yes, Clifford?

CLIFFORD

The President just called to wish you a congratulations on your marriage. He says he couldn't be happier and looks forward to publicly endorsing you next week.

MELANIE

You can tell the President that his sources are incorrect. I don't have a husband...for a while at least. But I will neither confirm nor deny the rumors about the identity of the man that was standing in the background at my next rally.

CLIFFORD

Yes, Senator, of course.

He exits.

MELANIE

What changed?

SEBASTIAN

You always seemed...human to me. There aren't too many of those left.

MELANIE

No, as the contemporary world that we live in will have it, real human beings are few and far apart.

SEBASTIAN

Give me a job.

MELANIE

A job?

SEBASTIAN

Let me work for you. I responded to the ad for a reason.

MELANIE

Surely you're joking. There's not a chance that you're actually qualified for any of my positions.

SEBASTIAN

Then teach me. And I'll teach you how to...(he trails off)

MELANIE

I don't know how this is going to end and that scares me...but I think I can take a chance. I wouldn't want to force anything between us, of course. But if someday we- we-

SEBASTIAN

But if someday we fell in love-

MELANIE

-I wouldn't be opposed.

There is a long silence. MELANIE reaches forward and squeezes SEBASTIAN's hand. They both turn forward to face the audience. The stage is enveloped in bright flashes of light. The sound of crowds cheering. Helicopters whirring, cars honking. The space is filled with calls of 'Senator Wright, Senator Wright!' The lights build to a blinding flood of white light. And then...

BLACKOUT.