

Joan receives an unsolicited call...

BONE (O.S.): Mrs. Castleman...

JOAN: Nathaniel.

BONE: ...listen, I want you to know that I've gotten an offer to write a book about Joe. I wanted to tell you so you don't think I'm doing anything behind his back.

JOAN: And is this going to be a scholarly work?

BONE: Yes and no.

JOAN: Meaning what?

BONE: Please don't take offense, but you might as well know that I'm aware of Joe's various indiscretions.

JOAN: (unruffled) I'm sure you are. I imagine it's all very juicy material for a biographer.

BONE: To be honest, it's a little predictable. Most of your men of genius seem to have overactive libidos. And thanks to the worshipful tomes put out by us biographers, we're supposed to find it all very charming and forgivable. I don't, actually. I think that kind of behavior is rather appalling.

JOAN: Please don't paint me as a victim. I'm much more interesting than that.

BONE: Oh, I know you are. Look, I don't want to make the wrong assumptions about your relationship. So why don't you set me straight?

JOAN: Oh Nathaniel, you're so transparent. I can't believe I let you lure me here. All right. You have an hour with me.

BONE: Thank you, Joan. I really do appreciate this. And if there's anything you don't want to talk about, feel free to tell me to fuck off.

JOAN: Oh, don't worry, I will.

BONE: First fascinating query -- this is the publisher's not mine: "What does the Nobel Prize mean to Joseph Castleman?"

JOAN: Oh God.

BONE: What if I just quote what he said to me on the plane, "it's not about the prize, it's about getting up the gumption to write the next book."

JOAN: Perfect. Thank you.

BONE: And what about you? How do you get up the gumption?

JOAN: To get up in the morning?

BONE: To write.

JOAN: I'm not a writer, Nathaniel.

BONE: I beg to differ. When I was looking through the Smith archives I found some of your stories that were published in the college journal. I read "The Faculty Wife." It's a beautifully written piece.

JOAN: Thank you, but the fact is I had potential and nothing more.

BONE: And you don't regret giving it up?

JOAN: No, I had very low expectations of what I could accomplish as a female writer.

BONE: But there were plenty of successful women writers back then.

JOAN: A few. But I didn't have the right personality for it.

BONE: Really.

JOAN: I'm quite shy. I don't like to be looked at.

BONE: All right, I won't look at you.

JOAN: How kind.

BONE: Did Joe encourage you to keep writing?

JOAN: Yes, but as I said, I didn't choose to pursue it.

BONE: Because he was the writer of the family.

JOAN: Now Nathaniel, if you're trolling for nuggets of bitterness you'll find none here.

BONE: Speaking of bitterness, I hope you know that Joe's affairs don't have anything to do with you. It's a compulsion. I believe it's a part of his deep-seated fear of inadequacy.

JOAN: Well, aren't you the therapist.

BONE: Do you have anyone that you confide in?

JOAN: No. But I don't really care to.

BONE: And that's what makes you so attractive. Your mystery.

JOAN: My God, Nathaniel, are you flirting with me?

BONE: Oh, probably. Why not?

JOAN: You know I don't trust you.

BONE: Of course you don't. I'm a writer on a deadline, why should you? Would you like another drink?

JOAN: One is my limit, thank you.

BONE: Oh come on. I'm having another.

JOAN: No, Nathaniel.

BONE: You know, I'm curious about something. Off the record.

JOAN: Off the record -- we've all heard that one before.

BONE: On my honor. I've read some of Joe's early work - - some short stories I dug up in a couple of obscure literary journals. I hate to say it, but they weren't so great.

JOAN: Early work is rarely very readable, I think you know that.

BONE: But there isn't even a hint of his mature voice. In fact your piece, "The Faculty Wife" reads more like early Castleman than these do.

JOAN That doesn't surprise me. Joe had a very heavy hand as a teacher.

BONE: Fair enough, but when I talked to Carol his ex wife, she said it was odd how his writing got so much better after he met you.

JOAN: That's very generous of her.

BONE: With all respect, I think you're tired of his affairs, tired of being invisible, tired of putting your enormous talent into creating the Castleman legend. And for the health of your family, this might be something you'd want to do. David seems like a very unhappy young man.

JOAN: You have no business talking about my children.

BONE: No, you're right. I apologize. (gently) I think you really do want to talk. And I give you my word, I'll never reveal my source. I'll be the bad guy so you don't have to feel like you're betraying Joe. The truth will be out and then you'd be free to write on your own.

JOAN: What a marvelous story, Nathaniel. You really ought to write fiction.

BONE: You know where to find me. And Joan, I want you to know -- I really do enjoy your company, sincerely.