

I KNOW WHERE YOUR BONES ARE BURIED

or

"You have some very hungry little birdies that love to chirp in my ear ... all for a meager handful of feed."

Scene from THE CAROUSEL

An original screenplay by Ross E Cooper

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FADE IN:

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - 2:15PM

THE MAYOR (50's) is at the head of a very long table, looking like the lawyer he used to be. He is flanked by his PRESS SECRETARY who whispers furtively in his ear.

SUPER: "THE MAYOR'S OFFICE - 2:15PM"

THE MAYOR

We've just heard from Ethan!!

He's caught in traffic.

Seated nearby, are ANTONIO and ALFONSO ANADONIA (40's), rotund twin brothers lounging comfortably in black, Italian knit shirts and pastel colored sport jackets.

AL

Always the prima donna!

THE MAYOR

He'll be here in ten minutes.

TONY

Do we really need this royal pain in the ass? Excuse me, your honor.

Opposite the twins is famed financier MERLE MENTKOWITZ (60's), balding, wearing gold-rimmed glasses. Close by are two law grads with pads and pencils in hand.

Merle rolls his eyes and exhales loudly with impatience.

MERLE

Tony's right! His Royal Highness,
Ethan Crosse, with all his noble
principles is costing us big time!

He's been workin' on HIS little
pot-o-gold since he was a kid!
What made him so high-n-mighty?

There are two dozen others in the room, exhibiting similar
irritation at being kept waiting.

THE MAYOR

We've gone over this!

This project has gotten too big to
fund privately. Now it's a
political issue which requires my
constituents' approval.

He may be difficult, but Ethan
Crosse is the only developer that
has the public's trust ... so
completely ... as to guarantee
success, pushing this through.

Ethan may have lofty ideas, but
he's always turned a profit.
Somehow he is seen by the public
as being their greatest advocate.
You can't buy that kind of PR!

The left side of the room is lined by massive architectural
drawings, charts and promotional copy. Merle points with
annoyance, at an illustration of a carousel.

MERLE

Why is he insisting on that stupid
carousel? Why do we have to foot
the bill for his mid-life crisis?

THE MAYOR

We just have to reason with him.

An attendant opens gigantic oak doors at the rear of the
room and ETHAN CROSSE (50) enters with a broad smile and
open arms, while the others can only muster weak grins.

Ethan is tall and trim with prematurely white hair contrasting a boyish face that is punctuated by piercing blue eyes. The boardroom crowd observes his impressive stature and charismatic presence with awe.

ETHAN

Apologies for my tardiness! That cross town traffic was murder!

THE MAYOR

That's OK Ethan. We just started. Ethan notices a more crowded boardroom than ever before, with many unexpected new faces ... and does a double-take.

ETHAN

I see we have some new friends!
You've done just fine without me.
Good to see you, Mr. Mayor.

Wearing a tailored suit, with dirt and grass stains on the back, Ethan walks to the front of the table scrutinized by the others who respond with muffled tittering.

THE MAYOR

Since when are we so formal?

He reaches the head of the table and is shocked by unfamiliar elements in the drawings lining the wall. Ethan struggles mightily to squelch a grimace.

THE MAYOR

The Seaside Project has gotten a lot bigger since we last met. As you probably noticed, there are some new people involved to help facilitate the expanded plans.

He regains composure, grasps the Mayor's hand, grips his arm and grins as he peers intently into the Mayor's eyes. The mayor returns a weak smile and shrivels from his grip. He swallows heavily, clears his throat and continues.

THE MAYOR

Errr ... the Baumgart Group has
joined us to help with associated
retailing. Burnham & Howe to
handle land rights, relocations
and evictions --

ETHAN

-- Evictions? I thought --

THE MAYOR

-- There are other new members
that you'll meet later.

ETHAN

I just love surprises!

THE MAYOR

Oh! ... On my right are the Anadonia
brothers, whom I understand you
have worked with in the past.
Al, Tony, you remember Ethan?

AL

Sure, Mayor, we go way back!

Ethan shakes the Anadonia brothers' hands reluctantly, as
they glare at each other like two cats on a fence.

ETHAN

How can I ever forget Two-Ton Tony
and Good-Time Al? I knew their
father, Andolino --

TONY

-- Hey ... where do you get off
calling me Two-Ton?
Nobody calls me that!

ETHAN

I thought we were old friends?
Anyway, I think that name should
be amended to ... one-point-five.

Have you been on a diet?

The twins look at each other in confused amazement.

TONY and AL

Aaaaaay!

AL

What's with the Good-Time AL?

ETHAN

I know, I never got that nickname!

AL

Hey! You're a funny guy! You didn't used to be this entertaining. You better hope our sense of humor holds up or --

THE MAYOR

-- Boys, boys ... this is the mayor's boardroom! You three can go out and play later.

AL

Sorry mayor.

TONY

Yeh, but Ethan is out of line!

ETHAN

Sorry Mr. Mayor. I'll behave.

THE MAYOR

Now let's get on with business. There are a few changes you should be aware of, Ethan ... ETHAN!!

The mayor gets up and walks over to the right side of the room where the graphs and charts are.

Behind the mayor's back, Ethan blows a kiss to the Anadonia brothers who glower murderously at him for his insolence. Ethan finally takes a seat and smiles broadly at Merle Mentkowitz across the table. Merle is confused by the sardonic smile from someone he doesn't even know.

ETHAN

Excuse me Mr. Mayor.

THE MAYOR

Yes Ethan.

ETHAN

I noticed the graph to your right. We originally allocated twenty percent for low income and subsidized housing. Now the figure looks like it's just five percent!! How can this be?

THE MAYOR

I'm sorry Ethan ... we decided, that for this project to succeed, we'd have to go upscale to attract high-end consumers.

ETHAN

Gentrification?

THE MAYOR

Not exactly ... we wanted to make this a magnet destination for shoppers from outside the area.

ETHAN

This was to benefit everyone! Happyland was a landmark park ... a common denominator with no class distinctions! Now there's hardly any low income housing left and I don't see the amusement park in the blueprints! What has become of that ten block area ... if not an amusement park??

Don't tell me ... a mall?

THE MAYOR

Actually Ethan ... a MegaMall!

ETHAN

A MegaMall!!

(MORE)

(ETHAN - CONT'D)

Forget the last great American amusement park and put up in its stead a mall, with all the same stores to be found from here to Podunk, Iowa!!

I'm sure your upscale plans include a day spa, nail salon, marriage counselor and a laser eye surgeon for our myopic shoppers.

Of course, there'll have to be a chocolatier with bonbons costing average folk a week's salary. Naturally, we'll need a Java Joe's to compliment the chocolate with coffee so caffeinated and bitter to assure our shoppers the palpitations that will motor them more efficiently around the massive maze of marble promenades.

Our hyper-activated consumers can now buy up a storm in half the time ... with enough left over for a cardiogram in the medical wing and a quick prescription for Inderal to counter the espresso pumping through their veins.

THE MAYOR

Now Ethan, be reasonable! We brought you in feeling that you were the one to pull off a project of this scale. We need you, don't get unhinged because a few aspects of the plan haven't gone your way.

ETHAN

Speaking of scale ... I noticed from your pie charts over there that the budget has jumped from \$680 million to \$970 million. This was supposed to be privately funded. Now ... that's

(MORE)

(ETHAN - CONT'D)

impossible. Is that why you brought in Merlin? I've heard about his financial wizardry. Merlin's ability at making money disappear is legendary! Did I say Merlin?

MERLE

Where do you get the nerve!

THE MAYOR

ETHAN! Why do you insist on insulting everyone in the room? Did something happen to you today? Why is your suit full of dirt and grass stains? You look like you played football in it. Are you OK?

ETHAN

Very observant Mr. Mayor!

THE MAYOR

Can we take care of business??

ETHAN

What's left of it!

THE MAYOR

We brought in Merlin ...
... I mean Merle ...
... to keep the budget within limits. He's done his best.

Now we have the Anadonia brothers on board. They will share contracting responsibilities with you and have sworn to cut costs. You've worked with Tony and AL before and should know exactly what they are capable of.

ETHAN

I certainly do! Their contribution to our Newark venture was informing me how many no-show jobs I had to provide for the next day.

(MORE)

(ETHAN - CONT'D)

No worry! They always covered the
cost overruns with bootleg
materials that conveniently fell
off the truck by the next morning!

TONY

You arrogant bastard!! You can't
talk to us like that. You think
you can disrespect us and live?

THE MAYOR

Not in the mayor's office!
I can't be hearing this. NOT IN
THE MAYOR'S OFFICE! Are you crazy?

Ethan gets up, signals the mayor that everything is OK and saunters casually over to Al and Tony. The twins are sweating profusely, chests heaving, beet red behind the neck and ears, seething with anger. Ethan puts his arms on their shoulders, smiles warmly for the others to see and speaks in a menacing but deceptively poetic Italian, sotto voce, in a musically soothing Calabrian dialect.

ETHAN

(spoken in Italian,
English subtitles)

Now ... you've threatened my life!

I don't blame you ... My plump
little friends, but I don't fear
you ... because I just don't care!
I know, in your world, my sins are
worthy of the ultimate retribution.
I understand, but please indulge
me with one small favor.

Allow me to tell you a little
story. That's all I ask.

END OF SUBTITLES

AL and TONY

You're nuts! Do you think --

ETHAN

(spoken in Italian,
English subtitles)

-- A few years ago, after a summer drought, we re-sodded my estate's expansive lawn. It was a big job. We were pleased with the new lawn, but our Dobermans were unhappy.

We'd neglected to consider the hundreds of bones the dogs had buried over the years! Our pooches knew the exact spot they'd hidden every bone and must have felt that their booty might be lost.

They dedicated the next few weeks digging up every morsel they'd stowed away. They dug until the lawn was completely destroyed! We were forced to spend another \$5000 to redo the landscaping! This time, we re-interred the bones around the flowerbeds, under the close supervision of our two very curious dogs ... Hansel and Gretel.

END OF SUBTITLES

TONY

What the hell is the point of telling us this stupid story?

ETHAN

(spoken in Italian,
English subtitles)

The point is ... if you are laying a nice, clean new surface ... you don't want things buried in the past popping up in the present.

END OF SUBTITLES

AL

I still don't get it!

ETHAN

(spoken in Italian,
English subtitles)

My friends ... I know!
I know where your bones are!
I KNOW WHERE YOUR BONES ARE BURIED!

My lawyer's vault is stocked with
maps, transcripts and affidavits.
You know the rest ... you've seen it
on Columbo. So, I think, if
you're smart, you realize that it
is in your best interest to make
sure the Crosse family has a
healthy and prosperous future.

If not, you can always dig like my
dogs did, but forget just one ...
... and then ... you're done!

END OF SUBTITLES

Ethan pantomimes a dog digging furiously with their front
paws and wipes imaginary sweat from his brow. Ethan does
the symbolic knife across the throat and grins.

The Anadonia brothers gape at each other with drop-jawed
disbelief. They are too numb to react. Ethan walks back
to his seat beaming with a benign smile.

THE MAYOR

I hope all is settled between you
three and we can now get to the
business at hand.

By the way, Ethan, when did you
learn to speak such beautiful
Italian? I didn't know --

ETHAN

-- One must learn the language of
their business associates ...
... especially when your partners
are treachery and deceit!

(MORE)

(ETHAN - CONT'D)

It lifts a cloak for deception and betrayal that has desecrated the most beautiful of all the great romance languages ... for centuries!

THE MAYOR

Ethan ... why? Why do you insist --

ETHAN

-- I was merely explaining in their native tongue, to my porcine friends over there, that they will have a lot of digging to do!

They can't begin to comprehend the extent of my knowledge about their business that would put them --

TONY

-- You son-of-a bitch!

AL

You sick bastard!! You're dead!
You're dead! Dead! Dead!

ETHAN

(spoken in Italian,
English subtitles)

Mindless dimwits!
Now you're prime suspects!

You have some very hungry little birdies that love to chirp in my ear for a meager handful of feed. Go ahead ... give the orders to get my hide! All it will get you is a new address upstate!

END OF SUBTITLES

Tony and Al get up from their chairs, kicking them back as they stand tensed, ready to pounce. Ethan stands facing them and holds his chair in front. Ethan is still smiling, irking them even more.

Men in black suits with earpieces come out of the woodwork, talking into their lapels while they carefully close in on the scene that is about to unfold.

The twins lunge toward Ethan, growling like wild animals. They run a few steps, but Ethan slides his chair forcefully at AL, knocking him over like a bowling pin. He is on all fours, dazed and hurt. Tony rushes toward Ethan with murderous intent. Ethan assumes a classic boxing stance and easily sidesteps Tony, who passes, turns around and goes back after Ethan. Ethan throws a lightening jab between Tony's hands, feints a right and uncorks a big left hook to the midsection.

Tony goes down red faced and gasping for air. Ethan walks by calmly and kicks Tony brutally in the ribs! He saunters over to Al who's on hands and knees. Ethan places the instep of his shoe under Al's chin and with the flick of his foot, flips Al onto his back, knocking him unconscious.

Ethan turns toward the mayor, shrugs his shoulders and throws his hands in the air. He then faces the undercover security and puts his hand out in a stop gesture. He smiles, salutes them and shows his open palms, indicating he intends no further harm.

The mayor indicates by hand gesture to the officers that they should back off and let Ethan leave. Security backs away reluctantly and watches Ethan carefully as they continue talking into their lapels. Ethan walks toward the exit and twirls to address the mayor and smiles sheepishly.

ETHAN

Your honor, I think you can see
that I might have a problem
working with the Anadonias.

I'd appreciate your striking my
name from any and all contracts
for the Seaside Project. I'm
sorry for the disturbance and
whatever time I may have wasted.

Would you do me a big favor?
When they wake up, tell Tony and
Al I intended no disrespect.
It wasn't business ... just personal!

Ethan walks to the exit with a look of concern. His face is red, heart pounding, as he approaches the giant doors. He grabs the handles and swings them open violently, the doors crash, echoing THUNDEROUSLY down the hallway.

Ethan walks down a long corridor to the elevators. People stand outside their offices to see what the commotion is. Ethan salutes and waves to the onlookers. The elevator arrives and he steps into the oak walled cab.

He pushes "lobby" and the elevator descends fifty floors. The interior starts to spin, Ethan turns pale, his eyes glaze over as the interior whirls in a nauseating plummet like an out of kilter amusement park ride. Eerie, ghostly, swirling CAROUSEL MUSIC is heard as Ethan is trapped in a sickening free-fall consumed by nightmarish music wafting from a hellish carnival.

FADE TO WHITE