

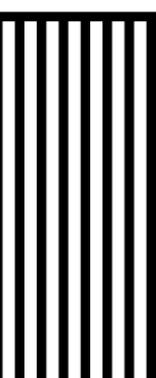


VICUÑA

BY JON ROBIN
BAITZ



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To Leon

*Who reminded me that it can't hurt
to love the audience just a little,
even when they take phone calls during the play.
Sigh.*

The world premiere of VICUÑA was produced by Center Theater Group/Kirk Douglas Theatre (Michael Ritchie, Artistic Director) in Los Angeles, California, in 2016. It was directed by Robert Egan, the scenic design was by Kevin Depinet, the costume design was by Laura Bauer, the lighting design was by Tom Ontiveros, and the original music and sound design were by Karl Fredrik Lundeberg. The cast was as follows:

ANSELM KASSAR	Brian George
KURT SEAMAN	Harry Groener
AMIR MASOUD	Ramiz Monsef
SRILANKA SEAMAN	Samantha Sloyan
KITTY FINCH-GIBBON	Linda Gehringer

Ojai Playwrights Conference (Robert Egan, Artistic Director) workshopped VICUÑA in August 2016.

CHARACTERS

ANSELM KASSAR

KURT SEAMAN

AMIR MASOUD

SRILANKA SEAMAN

KITTY FINCH-GIBBON

VICUÑA

ACT ONE

Scene 1

“Terms & Conditions”

Early October in Manhattan. A bespoke men's tailor shop on the Upper East Side, it is late afternoon and we are on the second floor of a brownstone in the sixties. Some street sounds waft up. Large casement windows give out onto the city. An elevator to the ground floor. There are two men in conference. Anselm Kassar, a tailor, a bespoke-suitmaker, with a shock of flowing white hair and an accent out of some part of Europe we can not pinpoint precisely—is in a suit and very good shirt, tie, suspenders, but not wearing the jacket, as he is working. His client is Kurt Seaman, a man in his early sixties, exuding power.

ANSELM. You need it when????

SEAMAN. For the final debate, it's November second.

ANSELM. Kurt, are you insane? With all possible—

SEAMAN. (*Cuts him off.*) Anselm please. Also I only have twenty minutes, they're waiting for me at the Jewish Council on Primate Development! Can we not debate this??? I have people downstairs—my daughter—her fiancé—

ANSELM. Twenty minutes?? Are you stark raving mad? I don't do twenty-minute fittings.

SEAMAN. Anselm, just measure me!

ANSELM. A suit normally, the normal number of fittings, the

process, it's at least three fittings, and then many, many adjustments, small ones, corrections and more corrections, more consideration. You are asking that this be done in three weeks. You are asking for an acceleration of a process that is by its nature—slow. *And you've lost your silhouette; your waist size has doubled!*

SEAMAN. Yeah, well, you try having a chef who does duck à l'orange and *gumbo carbonara* four nights a week! Jesus—Anselm—I know you made a suit for President Reagan in less time than that.

ANSELM. Mister Reagan, he was president. He was Ronald Reagan! You are not. For a president, you push others aside, and people understand. My clients understood that for Ronald Reagan, they must wait.

SEAMAN. Anselm. It's for the final DEBATE watched by MILLIONS! Come on! Picture it: *I walk across the stage*, I sit on a stool, every network around the world—on me. As I cut her to shreds and then win! A great giant cataclysmic operatic huge fucking triumphant win. And in your—in YOUR attire! Think how much business you'll get.

ANSELM. The last time I made a suit for you, black tie, gorgeous, to wear to the Met Gala, to wear to the opening of I believe the last Balanchine season, but on TV you were wearing a white jacket—WHITE—and then you never come back.

SEAMAN. *My second* wife, Cornucopia, she made me.

ANSELM. YOU attempted to return it in a brown paper bag from Bloomingdale's—Cornucopia brought it in. Rumped.

SEAMAN. I divorced her for that—and I have not come to you sooner because for one—I'm you know, *busy running for president* and for *two*, I'm not sure you're even on my side—

ANSELM. Mister Seaman. I am a Bespoke Tailor; I have no sides. I am to men's clothes as a doctor is to maladies: I cure the badly attired of the cancer of stylelessness. I see you on TV, and think, "Why does Kurt Seaman allow for a collar to hunch, hip to bulge, when all of these—*idiosyncrasies* of nature and genetics and *appetite* can be rectified by a master tailor." What I see standing here is a man who dresses like Boris Yeltsin at the opening of a herring factory in Vladivostok.

SEAMAN. (*Laughing.*) I'm trying to do something. PLEASE. For all of us, for the American people. Plus. Come on. You made "Her" a suit, didn't you?

ANSELM. Kurt. I don't discuss who I—

SEAMAN. (*Over him.*) Yeah, yeah you did. *And SHE suddenly looked the part.* My opponent—HER credibility. It—that royal blue—it gave her stature and made her hips less—hip-ish. It made her lies less—lie-ish. Right? I want that too!

ANSELM. *Yes, this is what clothing does.* Lend. Credibility. Authority. But it is too late to do the perfect job for you.

SEAMAN. This is the election where we finally are addressing the betrayal, the great betrayal of millions of hard-working unemployed folks—where suddenly on every corner its tacos and weird Ethiopian soups that you gotta eat with your hands—while people watch their jobs move to Asia and Mexico—

ANSELM. Notwithstanding the fact, you have a line of clothes made in *Bangladesh*? Really, Kurt. Please.

SEAMAN. Don't be naive, so I had a licensing agreement with someone in Bangladesh, I'm after all a businessman and America is about business, is it not, yes it is. Period end of story now what?

Beat.

And more over, I can win. I see what your look says, “the polls,” *the “polling,”* they show me trailing—well let me tell you something about me and the polls—*they lie.* They stink! I had a poll taken about people who were afraid to admit to their friends and neighbors that secretly they were on my—on MY side, with me, UNDER ME—with me—so so—*it's much closer than people think.* I need you. You haven't had a presidential suit since Reagan!

ANSELM. (*Screams, outraged.*) I MADE BUSH'S JUMPSUIT for the AIRCRAFT CARRIER!!!!!!

SEAMAN. You will solidify your legacy as the greatest tailor to the greatest presidents in American history! You could be really, really rich.

And silence.

ANSELM. Let me look at the schedule.

SEAMAN. Alright! Great!

He peers at a calendar as Amir, Anselm's assistant, comes in—a handsome young fellow in his twenties, tea for two on

a tray.

AMIR. I have tea. I have tea and fancy cookies from Poll. Marzipan and ginger.

ANSELM. Put it down and leave us.

Amir sets down tea. Looks at Seaman.

(*Sharply.*) Amir. Please, go down and mind the shop if you will.

AMIR. But. I just wanted to meet Mister Seaman. In person.

ANSELM. This is my apprentice, Amir. Amir Masoud. Meet Kurt Seaman.

SEAMAN. "Apprentice." Apprenticeship is good, it's my thing, nice to meet you!

Seaman shakes Amir's hand.

AMIR. So. Is Mister Kassar going to build you a suit?

SEAMAN. Yeah, I have the final debate in three weeks, it's one of those where you're at a podium, you're on a stool, and you walk down to the audience and tell them you know exactly what they're going through.

AMIR. In three weeks? How?

SEAMAN. *Fast.* Best suit of all the suits. And not only that, I want to offer your boss here a branch of Anselm de Paris in my hotel in Abu Dhabi and my hotel in Singapore.

ANSELM. (*Pleased.*) Kurt, how generous.

AMIR. We do this, Anselm, and we get people *very angry*. It means everything else gets put aside. Suits for other important and powerful people.

SEAMAN. Is there anyone more important than the *president*?

AMIR. (*Laughs.*) Right now, I think almost *anyone* is more important than the president.

SEAMAN. (*Laughs with Amir.*) Ah. But I'll be different, son. I knocked out seventeen losers to become the candidate and one by one they went down, the Holy Rollers, the Texan reptile, and a weak-kneed Puerto Rican immigrant who tried to get into a pissing contest with me over our manhood, and who was left standing? Me.

AMIR. A Puerto Rican isn't an immigrant, it's a what do they call

it? A *protectorate*.

SEAMAN. Thank you. Exactly. But the real question is protection at what cost? You know what they say about trying to save a drowning man, son?

AMIR. No...? What?

SEAMAN. We can't let our country drown because of the weakness and irresponsibility of our illegal dependents. Wherever they are. See. The weak can kill the strong if the strong are too weak to know when the weak are getting too strong. One way for the strong to stay strong is to not give in to the weak, who can be very, very strong when cornered.

AMIR. Look at Mister Kassar here, he's an immigrant, right, who became a citizen—do you want to close the door on men like him? He came here with nothing. America was *good* to him, and he has been good to America.

SEAMAN. Yes. AND—the same must be true for your parents. They clearly brought up a fine, questioning young fellow, didn't they? Where did they come from, your parents.

AMIR. Iran.

SEAMAN. So many wonderful people there, so many less wonderful people there.

AMIR. Just like here. Right?

SEAMAN. I knew the Shah, he was terrific, I built him a terrific lodge on the Caspian Sea with a terrific terrazzo—were your folks Jewish folk who fled the revolution like Anselm here.

AMIR. (*A smile.*) No, they're actually Muslim.

SEAMAN. Immigrants?

AMIR. Yes, sir.

SEAMAN. I bet your parents are wonderful. I'd be happy to meet them.

AMIR. They would be very intimidated by you, but I'm sure you would assuage their fears. By your charm. And elegance.

SEAMAN. Oh. I like you, son.

AMIR. I like you too sir. But I've got to say, I don't think we have

VICUÑA

by Jon Robin Baitz

3M, 2W

A tailor to the wealthy, powerful, and famous struggles to serve a very unusual client: a blustering real-estate tycoon and reality-TV star who—to everyone's surprise—becomes a major party's nominee for president. As the election spins out of control, the tailor and his apprentice are forced to examine their roles as confidants and image-makers for the candidate...and whether the right suit has the power to clinch the presidency.

"...there are plenty of laughs... [Baitz] writes incisive and colorful dialogue peppered with passages of political acuity..."

—The Hollywood Reporter

"[VICUÑA is] an honest to goodness comedy...elaborately worked out (in the old-fashioned Broadway way of S.N. Behrman and George S. Kaufman)...with just enough wit and wisdom... In Baitz's hands, comedy and menace work together..."

—Los Angeles Times

"...withering political satire...a uniquely fresh theater experience..."

—Variety

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