

(Night. A large log cabin living room with a fire in the fireplace. A rifle hangs above it. There is a large easy chair with all sorts of crud near it. The room is horrendously cluttered with junk. It is not unsanitary, just terribly messy. Books, papers, devices, etc. A few dirty dishes are next to the chair. There is a front door, a doorway to the kitchen, and a closed door to a bedroom. VICK is sitting in the chair, eating soup, and watching TV. He is about 55, but looks very spent. He keeps himself well, and is dressed cleanly in warm comfortable clothes. Many dogs are heard barking in the distance. As the dogs get closer, VICK gets up, and looks out the window. He opens the front door, revealing a snowy landscape, and sits back down to eat and watch TV. The dogs continue to get closer, and eventually stop. After a few seconds, NED, dressed very heavily for the cold, comes to the front doorway. NED is about 52, but looks much younger than VICK. He stands in the doorway for a second.)

NED

Vick?

VICK

New dog sled.

NED

Same one I always had.

VICK

New dogs.

NED

(Pause.)

Mind if I come in?

VICK

Door's open isn't it?

NED

You always leave the door wide open like that?

VICK

I didn't want to hear you knocking.

NED

(Coming in, and shutting the door.
Silence.)

So, what's going on?

VICK

"What's going on."

(Laughs.)

NED

What are you watching?

VICK

Television.

NED

New set. Boy, and look at this fancy stereo system you got here.

(Pause.)

Hey, it's even hooked up to the TV.

VICK

Yes, I know this.

NED

Well, you've just been livin' it up.

VICK

Yeah, I hear spending every waking hour sitting in front of the idiot box really does wonders for my complexion.

NED

What are you doing for work these days, Vick?

VICK

Sitting here in front of the idiot box. I hear it really does wonders for my complexion.

NED

You look horrible.

VICK

Oh, gee. Thanks. Nice of you to drop by like this. I hear a good insult really does wonders for my complexion.

NED

How do you afford all this stuff if you're not working?

VICK

Mary's an M.D. down in Whistler. Sends us a check every month.

NED

Mary?

VICK

Oh, that's right. You wouldn't know about that, would you, Ned.

(Laughs.)

Mary's our daughter.

NED

I have a niece?

VICK

A nephew too. Paul.

NED

I see you still got Dad's rifle.

VICK

I see you still got Mom's gift for small talk.

NED

(Pause.)

Harriet's getting married.

VICK

Again?

NED

She wants us to be there.

VICK

Yeah? You gonna be there?

NED

Well, yeah.

VICK

Send her our regards.

NED

Just like that? You're not going?

VICK

Well, I wouldn't be tellin' you to give her our regards if I was, now, would I?

NED

You're not even going to ask Carol, or anything?

VICK

Carol won't put up any fuss about it, believe me.

NED

Well, what about Harriet?

VICK

What about her?

NED

Vick, she's our sister!

VICK

Is that right?

NED

It's important to her that you're there.

VICK

Aw, bull! How do you know?

NED

She says so herself.

VICK

Yeah? How often do you see her?

NED

She comes by my place every couple weeks or so.

VICK

Aha! See? She doesn't take the extra half hour to come up here from your place, does she? Oh no. And of all the messengers she chooses to send up here, she chooses you. Ain't that just a peach.

NED

Maybe she's afraid.

VICK

Pff! She's got nothin' to be afraid of. See, this isn't about her wanting to see me, Ned. This is her little thing about you and me. She thinks she's so damn sly.

NED

No, it isn't that, Vick.

VICK

Well, I'm no sucker. I know you think I am, but I'm not. No, if Harriet wants me to come to her wedding, she tells me that herself.

NED

What about me? Can I go?

VICK

It's a free country. You got a right to go. And I got a right not to go.

NED

I can't believe you.

VICK

You can't believe me.

(Chuckles scornfully.)

That's a hot one.

NED

How many times can I apologize? Can't we ever talk like brothers again?

(Pause.)

I guess not.

VICK

Alright, Ned. Let's have ourselves a buddy-buddy chat, here.

(Pause.)

What do you want to talk about, Neddy boy?

NED

Well... I just... How's everything going?

VICK

Mmm. Okay. "How's everything going." Alright, we can do that.

Well, I can't complain too much. What good would it do?

How 'bout you, Neddy?

NED

Well, fine... I guess.

VICK

So, I hear you're married now.

NED

What? I'm not married. Where'd you hear that?

VICK

Ah, I'm just foolin' about. I never heard that.

NED

Kayyy...

VICK

What about the kids? How's the kids?

NED

Vick...

VICK

Ah, I'm just pullin' your chain. I know you don't have any.

NED

So, where is Carol?

VICK

Why?

NED

I guess I was hoping she'd be here too.

VICK

What for?

NED

Nothing. I'd just like to say hello after all these years.

VICK

She's in the bedroom. You're familiar with that bedroom, aren't you? Oh, well, of course you are.

NED

She know I'm here?

VICK

Probably.

NED

Well, what, is she hiding from me, or what?

VICK

She's sleepin'.

NED

Oh.
I guess I should have come earlier.

VICK

She turned in pretty early.

NED

You think she'd mind being woken up?

VICK

Why?

NED

What do you mean why?

VICK

Why?

NED

Well, what! I don't know, Vick. Maybe I'd like to see her.

VICK

Yeah, I just bet you would.

NED

Alright, fine. You think whatever you want, Vick.

VICK

You know, we have a new bed in there now. A fresh one. Yeah, there's just something bad about that old one. Really bad. I mean, kinda makes me queasy and all. You remember that old one. Oh, well, of course you do. Yup. That one's out there in the burn pile. Just a big old pile of charcoal now. The sheets too. You like new sheets, Ned?

NED

I suppose so.

VICK

Sure, sure. New set of sheets to go with a new bed. After all, who wants sheets that are all... crumpled and filthy. Sometimes they just don't come clean enough to sleep on.

NED

I guess not.

VICK

Yup.

NED

Yeah.

(Pause.)

So, how has Carol been, anyway?

VICK

Oh, you know. Can't really speak for her, I guess. But I guess she can't complain either, even if it would do any good.

NED

Well, maybe I should drop by in the day sometime.

NED

You sure you're up here because of Harriet?

NED

Well, sure.

VICK

Huh.

(Pause.)

Want some salmon? I'm baking up a real beauty.

NED

Well, uh. I...

VICK

You know, the funny thing about salmon is, they never give up. Never. No matter how hopeless the journey upstream is. They just keep on wriggling their slimy selves up against that raging stream, don't they?

NED

Yup. Pretty determined, alright. You know I was--

VICK

You bet they are, Ned!

NED

Yeah.

VICK

Salmon never relent. Them slippery, scaly sons-a'bitches will actually kill themselves trying, rather than give up.

NED

Yeah. Well, you know. Animals.

VICK

Exactly, Ned. Animals! Not a thought in their heads, huh?

NED

Yeah.

VICK

I mean, you look at them jumpin' up against the waterfall, and they look just plain stupid.

NED

Well, I don't-

VICK

Nah, I don't really think so, either. I mean, it's more obvious now that the critter isn't a moron. It's just that it doesn't care. Doesn't care, and doesn't change. No matter how much time goes by, it'll still be the same. Its mind is only on one thing. I mean, look at it. Look at the eyes. Silvery cold with a black spot right in the middle. Doesn't blink. Doesn't move. Doesn't change.

(Pause.)

Doesn't change at all. I mean, that's its nature. I mean, let's face it. All that really matters to that cold-blooded bastard is that it gets to have its fun with the female it chooses. And it doesn't matter what female. I mean, salmon's an animal. It doesn't care.

NED

Vick! All I want to do was say hello to her! I don't think that's a whole lot to ask.

VICK

(Pause.)

Nah, you're right, Neddy old boy. Hold on. I'll go get her.

(VICK exits to the bedroom, and comes back out with a little green box, which he hands to NED.)

Here you go. Say hello, sweetheart!

(Pause.)

What's wrong, Ned? Not the sexy 25 year old you remember?

(Pause.)

Oh, you want to say hello to all of Carol. Well, that'll probably take some doing. Rest of her's probably somewhere over in old Necromancer's cave. I mean, all I got was what he left me. 'Course I guess some critters do have an appetite for bear droppings. So, who knows? Carol may be scattered all over the wilderness by now. Now wouldn't that be nice?

(Silence.)

Now, how about that salmon?

(VICK dashes into the kitchen.)

You know, there's nothing like fresh baked Salmon. Hey, uh... you think Carol wants any? Nah, I suppose not. Kinda silly of me to think that, isn't it? One of her favorite foods, though. But, you know what, Ned? Necromancer really takes a lot of salmon out of the river. So those bear droppings ought to have a little of her along with a little salmon. Yeah, maybe Carol's kinda...

mixed in there with some of it. Yup. Mixed in with her favorite food. Now wouldn't that be nice?

(NED quickly walks out the front door with the box, and closes the door behind him. We hear the dogs, which the sound of which gets further away as the lights go down.)

So, let's see, uh... you like a little lemon on yours, Ned? I sure love lemon on mine. And uh, some rice here, let's get some rice...

END OF PLAY