

## Quotes from *The Black Stone* For The Press Room

### 1. Professor Gladys Mumfret says to Madeline:

“It's the speech her husband and his advisers wrote for her. Thinks she's going to be the Democratic nominee for President next time around, and she'll gain votes by talking like that. What she's not calculating on is that there may not be an America as she knows it by then.” Gladys shook her head and sighed. “Health care won't matter. Neither will social security, the minimum wage, the price of gas, or anything else.”

### 2. Gladys Mumfret says to Madeline:

“Those reporters don't realize that the game has changed. It's gotten a lot more dangerous out there. It's not the politics they grew up with in the 60's and 70's when you had Flower Children and hippies everywhere and the name of the game was to protest the draft and the War in Vietnam, and the Cold War was the only reality. Vietnam is miles away from Iraq and not just as the crow flies. It's a world away from the politics of terrorism.”

### 3. Julius Caesar addresses a party of senators at dinner:

“Some of their race had sailed as far as this Land to the West. Only a few had lived to return to the Land of Ice and tell tales. There is a vast continent there for the plucking. Only a few savages inhabit it now. The land is rich past imagining. It puts the fields of Britain to shame. This Land to the West is swimming with fish, lobster, and crab of all types so much so that the coastal sea waters are like a rich soup. Venison and game, wild birds and fowl, abound. They claim to have seen creatures unknown here in the Mediterranean. They described birds with wingspans longer than my arms,” he stretched them out, “that inhabit the natural harbors on the coast. The men of ice assure me that they are a sight to behold with their white heads and tails and brown bodies, that and beaks of gold. These big birds hunt better than vultures. They dream of them as symbols of that as yet unknown land.”

### 4. Lucius Antonius's observations:

The gods and goddesses that presided over Olympus were very human in their foibles and desires. Nor did they mind whatever the Romans said about them. When they put on a comedy in the theater, the very foundations of Mount Olympus rocked with laughter.

These Arabs in their dark robes who had followed Caesar to Rome had no sense of humor when it came to their strange rock gods --- especially this favored one called Allah. Allah had no personality, only a cartoonish appearance that resembled a child's etching on a piece of black rock. They valued it like the frieze of Phidias on the Parthenon in Athens --- only more so. The Arabs acted as if it were worth losing your life over one thousand times. The Roman people and the Arab nomads, Lucius decided, would never see eye to eye on much of anything.

### 5. Madeline's reaction to Drew's enlistment in the army:

What was obvious was that he was changing, slipping through her fingers no matter how hard she attempted to hold on — like the whole crazy world. Not too long ago Drew had been a kid who'd been wet behind the ears. He'd play pranks on her and his other friends, disrupt classes, and end up staying after school in detention. She'd yelled at him about it. She hadn't really meant it. It was part of the way things were supposed to be — the old, sane, rational order of life.

Now everybody was leaving at once. They were headed out in all directions — Brittany to Cuba, her father to Washington, D.C., her brother Wyatt to Iraq, and now Drew to Iraq as well. Soon she wouldn't have anyone left except Pumpkin and Scalawag. She hated this strange new world.

6. Marcie Cox (Democratic Presidential hopeful) droned on in her lackluster, monotone style:

*The President ignores the American people. He turns a blind eye to the fact that so many go without health care, including children. He pays no attention to rising energy prices. He doesn't lose any sleep over how many don't have the money to heat their homes during the winter. People can't find jobs and are unemployed. The President doesn't even read the headlines. All he can think about is another war and still another war! I say, America First!*

7. Senator arguing with Roman matron:

“He[Caesar] can't decide on a whim that our boys, our soldiers and officers, can be killed baby-sitting a civil war among the Alexandrians. Who cares whether Ptolemy or Cleopatra rules?” the senator was firm. “We ought to mind our own business.”

“Egypt is the bread basket of the world. She makes fine linens and jewels. We want them to flood into our marketplace.”

“That's another thing,” the senator complained. “Rome used to be for Romans. Now you find such a motley crew claiming to be citizens that you wonder how many colors people come in, how many religions exist under the sun, and how many languages they speak. Why, the other day my wife tried to buy a dress. The dressmaker was Egyptian. She couldn't speak Latin. There ought to be a law. In Rome you can't speak any other language except Latin!” he made a broad sweep with his hands.

“Why shouldn't the dressmaker speak Egyptian? It's charming and exotic, sort of like Greek. My dressmaker's teaching me. I insist that my son learn it at school,” she said.

“There won't be a Rome anymore!” the senator proclaimed.

“It will be a new Rome, the center of the world and not just some rural backwater,” the lady defied him. “We can barter and trade with everybody. We'll be richer than anybody. All roads will lead to Rome.”

“You'll import troublemakers who won't fit in. They won't have jobs. They'll roam the streets. They'll rob and assault people. Do you really think it's worth it for a few new baubles?”

“Anybody who comes here can find a job. The shops are bursting at the seams with customers. They'll become new Romans. We'll grow even bigger.” She held up her chin.

“Bigger isn't always better,” he cautioned . . .

“Rome first!” the senator shouted as he climbed back up into his litter. He nodded stubbornly, grumbling to himself. His slaves lifted him up on their shoulders. They made their way down the street. The slaves turned the bend, and he was gone. The ancient walls of the city seemed to echo with the

words —

## Rome first!

8. Brittany gets a glimpse of Osama bin Laden on T.V.:

The other man didn't look like anybody she'd seen before. He was dressed in what she considered to be a bizarre fashion, like one of those sheiks in a white turban. One white tie of the turban fell down over his shoulder. His skin was swarthy and tanned. He had dark, penetrating eyes with long, dark eyebrows. He wore a mustache and a full, dark beard that had been neatly trimmed. He looked like somebody right out of the *Arabian Nights* she'd been fantasizing about — either that or out of an old Hollywood flick like *Lawrence of Arabia*. His outer garment or robe that was long-sleeved and loose was tied around his waist and fell to his ankles. It was of a slightly darker color than his inner robe, which was bleached pure white. That extended down a little past his ankles. Over that, as if the weather were very frigid, he was wearing what could only be called an army fatigue jacket. It was different shades of green and made to blend in with the surrounding foliage. He was clutching something in his hands, lying in his lap. It came to her with a sudden sense of extreme shock — it was a small rifle.

This strange, dark-skinned man had his lips perpetually clutched in a smile. It didn't really look like a smile after all. It was more like a grin. It wasn't a grin either. It was hard to define exactly what it was. Perhaps a smirk? He held his lips just so, firmly pressed together, in a line that was full of meaning — more than he was saying. She had once seen a famous painting like that. It had been of a woman instead of a man. The woman had lived long ago and been painted by one of the most famous artists of all time. It had been the *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci. The equally mysterious shape to her mouth had implied all the secrets of the universe.

9. Osama bin Laden:

“After the collapse of the Soviet Union — in which the U.S. has no mentionable role, but rather the credit goes to God and the *mujahidin* in Afghanistan — this collapse made the U.S. more haughty and arrogant, and it has started to see itself as a Master of this world and established what it calls the new world order. It wanted to delude people that it can do whatever it wants, but it can't do this ... The U.S. today as a result of this arrogance has set a double standard, calling whoever goes against its injustice a terrorist. It wants to occupy our countries, steal our resources, install collaborators to rule us with man-made laws, and wants us to agree on all these issues. If we refuse to do so, it will say we are terrorists ...”

10. Osama bin Laden:

“I say if the American government is serious about avoiding explosions inside the U.S., then let it stop provoking the feelings of 1.25 billion Muslims.”

11. FBI agent to Madeline:

“You know what I think the worst thing about this will be?” FBI Agent Furlow plopped down

into his chair and sighed. “Before a nuclear bomb seemed like the end of the world. Now it’s going to become like a bus bombing in Israel. An everyday event. We’ll pick up from there and go on living. Horrible!”

Madeline shook her head, “We can’t let that happen. We owe it to the dead.”