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*Wall: A Product of Resourcefulness and Efficiency in
America's Never-Ending Battle for Absolute Supremacy
and General All-Around Kick-Assedness*

by:

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Setting

Time: Present

Place: Here. Finding themselves at the very crossroads of change, and in desperate need of a vacant location exactly like this vacant location around them, our intrepid inspirationalists wait expectantly, and with dwindling hope, for the knock of opportunity!

Character Breakdown

Mr. Rondo: Casually efficient, but easily flustered. The building of the wall is initially his idea.

Ms. Ricki: Rondo's assistant. She's really the brains behind the operation.

Foreman: Head of the construction crew (the Constructionists) commissioned to build the wall.

Mr. Albert: Ms. Ricki's assistant. Delicate and timid, he's something of a nerd.

Agent Stern: A government official dispatched from the Dept. of Redundancy, Waste, and Red Tape to shut down the building of the wall.

The Man: A Latina woman

Emissary*: A messenger for The Man

Clive*:

Norm: Constructionists in the work crew.

Buck:

Courier*

Constructionists

Clown Troupe

* = can be doubled

ACT ONE

SETTING:

A bare stage.

Enter Rondo and Ricki. Rondo is well-dressed, though relaxed, informal. He looks like he belongs at work in an accounting firm on casual Friday. Ricki is his assistant. Typical, plain, glasses, semi-dumpy, carrying a pile of folders and papers, trailing along behind him like toilet paper on his shoe.

	RONDO
You have the files?	
	RICKI
Yes Mr. Rondo.	
	RONDO
Check. And the contracts?	
	RICKI
Yes Mr. Rondo.	
	RONDO
In triplicate?	
	RICKI
In triplicate.	
	RONDO
In triplicate. Check. Everything seems to be in order.	
	RICKI
Indeed. Everything is in order.	
	RONDO
Alright then. Ms. Ricki, I'll expect those on my desk first thing in the morning.	
	RICKI
Yes sir, right away sir, first thing in the morning sir.	
	RONDO
Now what we need is a location.	
	RICKI
Location is key, Mr. Rondo.	
	RONDO
Key, indeed.	

RICKI

Location, location, location.

RONDO

That is the mantra. Now if only we could find somewhere with plenty of open space, like this place here.

RICKI

Um...Mr. Rondo?

RONDO

Someplace with a good, reliable foundation. Like this one here. *(he stomps on the stage floor.)* By gawd, that's good. Rock solid, that is.

RICKI

Yes, Mr. Rondo. If you'd just...

RONDO

But, alas, Ms. Ricki. I fear we'll never find such a location.

RICKI

Mr. Rondo, I think...

RONDO

It's just not like it used to be, not like in the old days when a man would build something...

RICKI

Or a woman.

RONDO

Or a...what? Don't be silly, Ms. Ricki. We're talking the good old days, when men would actually roll up their sleeves and set themselves to work. Where they would toil through blood sweat and tears to manufacture...things! Things that would stand the test of time, and be passed down through the generations so that we, of the Modern Age, would have the opportunity to dump their sweat equity in landfills all across the country in order to build newer, crappier things that need replacing as soon as their overpriced warranties expire.

RICKI

That was true forethought on the part of our forefathers, Mr. Rondo.

RONDO

Progress!

RICKI

An inspiration to us all.

RONDO

An inspiration, indeed. And yet, here, finding ourselves at the very crossroads of change, and in desperate need of a vacant location exactly like this vacant location around us, we wait expectantly, and with dwindling hope, for the knock of opportunity.

RICKI

Um...About that, Mr. Rondo.

RONDO

Have all the long years of our forefathers' hard work gone to waste?

RICKI

Mr. Rondo...

RONDO

Where, oh where, will we ever find just the proper place to fulfill our needs?

RICKI

Mr. Rondo, why don't we just use this place right here?

RONDO

With all the urban sprawl these days, everything's been snatched right up. There's no room for the little guy anymore.

RICKI

Uh, this place is free.

RONDO

Now this place...hmmm...this place would be perfect. (!!!) Ms. Ricki, I've just had a fantabulous idea!

RICKI

Fantabulous, sir?

RONDO

Fantabulous! Yes, why don't we simply use this place.

RICKI

Yes sir, that's an excellent idea.

RONDO

An excellent idea.

RICKI

An excellent idea, yes.

RONDO

Alright, then. This place it is.

RICKI

Shall I have them brought in then, sir?

RONDO

Yes, indeed, Ms. Ricki. Bring 'em on in.

Ricki motions offstage: the universal bring-it-in-and-drop-it-here sign.

Alright boys. Bring 'em in. Bring 'em all in.

RICKI

Mr. Rondo...

RONDO

Not now, Ms. Ricki. That's right, boys. Unload 'em here.

RICKI

May I suggest...

RONDO

Uno monumento, Ms. Ricki. Please.

RICKI

But Mr. Rondo.

RONDO

Ms. Ricki, can't you see that I am busy.

RICKI

Yes sir, I understand that. But don't you think it might be premature to bring in the whole load all at once?

RONDO

Well, I...go on, Ms. Ricki, go on.

RICKI

Well, we haven't acquired the proper liens and permits. There are ordinances and mandates – and, and, and basic codes that must be established.

RONDO

Codes?

RICKI

Yes, of course, codes.

RONDO

As in “codes-of-conduct” codes? Or “codes established-by-the-business-and-legal-communities-intended-to-keep-one-individual-or-group-from-infringing-upon-the-basic-inalienable-rights-of-another-individual-or-group” codes.

RICKI

Um...Yes sir?

RONDO

Yes sir, to which? The former or the latter? We must be specific, Ms. Ricki. We must strive for specificity at all times, so as to alleviate confusion and eliminate miscommunication.

RICKI

Alleviate and eliminate. Duly noted sir. I was simply implying that we need to consider both the aforementioned codes. That's simply all I meant.

RONDO

Very well then.

RICKI

And as such, I don't believe that bringing in the whole load would be a very prudent course of action.

RONDO

Well damn prudence, Ms. Ricki! And while we're at it, damn their codes.

RICKI

Which codes, sir. The codes of conduct or...

RONDO

Damn them all! All their godforsaken codes.

RICKI

What about the fire codes?

RONDO

Damn every damned one of their damn codes!

RICKI

Well-spoken, sir.

RONDO

We must plow our own path to greatness...

RICKI

Indeed, sir.

RONDO

...And fight the brutal fight for individuality in a culture that continually browbeats us to accept their narrow-minded worldviews.

RICKI

Browbeats, sir.

RONDO

Browbeats!

RICKI

Worldviews, sir.

RONDO

Worldviews!

RICKI

Large words and lofty concepts, don't you think.

RONDO

Ms. Ricki, if you truly desire to be thought of as intelligent, you must use large words and lofty concepts whenever the opportunity arises.

RICKI

Duly noted, sir. I shall remember that.

RONDO

Now Ms. Ricki, if you don't mind, I believe we have work to do.

RICKI

Work, Mr. Rondo?

RONDO

Yes, work.

RICKI

Bravo, Mr. Rondo. Another big word. Another lofty concept.

RONDO

Indeed. Work. That is lofty, if I do say so myself. A concept with which our society seems to have lost touch. Where are those Constructionists! How long does it take to come in and drop a load. It's not bad enough they lack the good sense to bathe, but they're sluggish and slow-moving as well.

A Construction FOREMAN enters, carrying a clip board.

FOREMAN

I'm looking for a...Mr. Rondo?

RONDO

That's me. Rondo P. Rondo.

FOREMAN

Your name's Rondo Rondo.

RONDO

That's right. Middle initial, "P".

FOREMAN

Why's your first name the same as your last?

RONDO

I have no idea. It's the name the Machine assigned to me I guess.

FOREMAN

The machine?

RONDO

It spit me out into this great wide world; me, a virtual babe, the model of innocence, barely weaned from the teat of provision, and it christened me Rondo P. Rondo.

FOREMAN

What the hell are you talking about, Mister? What machine?

RONDO

The Great Machine.

FOREMAN

Nobody uses the word "teat" anymore.

RONDO

The Machine which is our mother.

FOREMAN

Our mother? You some sorta cult leader?

RONDO

Did nobody tell you?

FOREMAN

Tell me what?

RONDO

We're all actually robots.

FOREMAN

Yeah, well...I'm gonna need you to sign for these things?

RONDO

Tiny little machines ourselves. Mere cogs in a mechanized world, each one of us no more than a mere worker bee droning onward every day to benefit the greater good of our collective social structure.

Rondo signs his name with a grand flourish!

FOREMAN

(to Ricki)

He always talk like this?

RICKI

Inspirational, is it not?

FOREMAN

Sure – so long as you're sittin' on top the shit heap. Middle management, I tell ya – typical...Aw well, anyway – You just want 'em brought in right here?

RONDO

Yes, here. Here is good. *(indicating precisely where he's standing)* Well, not *here*, of course. *(now indicating a more generalized area.)* But *here*. That would be grand.

FOREMAN

(hollering offstage)

Alright boys, bring 'em in.

A group of workers enter, hauling in wheelbarrows and dollies and carts filled with common bricks.

Whatta ya want us to do after they're in?

RONDO

It is my desire to commission your services for a task of transcendent significance.

FOREMAN

There is something seriously wrong with you, man.

RONDO

Sir, I have some work for you to do.

FOREMAN

Work? I ain't familiar with that.

RONDO

Yes, yes. I understand. These days the concept of work is a common deficiency throughout the working class.

FOREMAN

Whoa, now. You criticizing my performance?

RICKI

Technically, sir, I believe he's calling you average.

FOREMAN

Cuz...cuz that ain't cool.

RONDO

That is bang-on, Ms. Ricki. Nicely done.

FOREMAN

For your information, I'm awesome. And don't forget it.

RICKI

Thank you, Mr. Rondo.

RONDO

Yes, yes, of course. Awesome. You're awesome, I'm awesome, we're all everybody awesome. There are no losers, and each of us gets our own certificate of participation, Now, Ms. Ricki, if you would be so kind as to explain to our Foreman friend exactly what the definition "work" is.

RICKI

Yes, of course. Work: Physical or mental effort exerted to do or make something.

FOREMAN

Oh no. Hold on. I don't do no physical or mental effort. See, I'm a foreman, I don't exert or do or make nothing. But the crew back there. They can make anything you want. Yeah, see, they're the Constructionists – they know all about work.

RONDO

Hmm...Yes, you do lack their malodorous stench – comparatively speaking.

FOREMAN

Malodorous stench?

RONDO

Yes. You don't have that uniquely pungent odor about you.

FOREMAN

Oh, yeah. Gamy is how I describe it.

RICKI

Gamy?

FOREMAN

Yeah, gamy. Look. (*motioning to one of the workers*) Yo, Clive, c'mere.

A lug of a man lumbers forward. He is sweaty and dirty, looking as if he may actually live inside a dead whale.

CLIVE

Yeah boss.

FOREMAN

Clive, whatcha got on top your helmet?

Clive raises both arms and begins feeling around on top his head. When he does so, Rondo and Ricki recoil from the stench of his exposed armpits.

CLIVE

Nothin'. I ain't got nothin' on top my helmet, boss.

FOREMAN

Alright, just checking. Go on back with the others.

Clive goes back to the others

See what I mean?

RONDO

Yes. Gamy, indeed. How precise.

RICKI

That's the beauty of the language, sir. The precision of it. Remember, "specificity at all times, so as to alleviate confusion and eliminate miscommunication."

RONDO

That's a brilliant thought, Ms. Ricki.

RICKI

Brilliant words from a brilliant man.

RONDO

So this "Clive" chap...your entire crew smells like him?

FOREMAN

Generally, yeah, for the most part. Some of 'em are more garlicky than others.

RICKI

Mmm garlic. I love garlic.

RONDO

And you have yourself an entire crew of Clive's?

FOREMAN

Well, sorta. See, Clive there, he's a newbie, a rookie. He's only been on the job a few days.

RONDO

But he listens to you.

FOREMAN

Yeah, Clive he gotta listen to me. Basically, Clive gotta listen to everyone.

RONDO

And why is that?

FOREMAN

Whatta ya mean, “why is that”? He’s new. He’s the new guy. New guy just does what he’s told.

RICKI

By everybody?

FOREMAN

Look, this is how it works. I’m the foreman. That means I get to tell everyone what to do. Now beneath me, I got an assistant – he takes orders from me. I tell my assistant what to do, then he instructs his aide to have each of the chiefs tell their deputies to relay those orders to their department heads. The department heads then tell the laborers in their crew that they better get their lazy, good-for-nothing kiesters moving on those orders I just gave, or else the head of human resources is gonna send out the subordinate to his internal affairs specialist, who’s gonna file a report...

RICKI

I’m sorry. Excuse me, Mr. Foreman, but you mentioned assistants...you have an entire crew?

FOREMAN

Well yeah, but see, the crew’s broken down into a number of subgroups.

RICKI

And they’re all beneath you.

FOREMAN

Sure. We got flunkies, henchmen, stooges, patsies, yes-men, puppets, pawns, chumps, suckers, and usually one fall guy.

RONDO

That’s fascinating.

RICKI

I would like an assistant.

RONDO

You appear to have a virtual microcosmic mechanism of your own, working harmoniously toward the greater good of society’s grand machine.

FOREMAN

Uh...yeah, I guess.

RONDO

Efficiency!

RICKI

I deserve an assistant.

RONDO

Efficiency is next to Godliness. Make note of that, Ms. Ricki.

RICKI

Efficiency, sir. Duly noted.

Ricki exits in a hurry.

RONDO

So, Mr. Foreman, about that job.

FOREMAN

Yeah, that...what didya call it? Work?

RONDO

Yes.

FOREMAN

Sure. Yeah, work. Whatta ya got for me?

RONDO

I would like for you to build me a wall.

FOREMAN

Build you a wall?

RONDO

Build me a wall.

FOREMAN

Out of them bricks?

RONDO

None other.

FOREMAN

Oh, now see, we can't do that.

RONDO

What do you mean you can't do that?

FOREMAN

Out of those bricks? Those bricks. Those bricks are heavy, man. I can't put my guys at that kind of risk.

RONDO

But there is great work to be accomplished here. A feat of grandiloquent scale and epic importance.

FOREMAN

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I got all that.

RONDO

And being the sedulous, testosteronic wheelhorse that you are, surely you can't justify the refusal to work?

FOREMAN

Well, see...

RONDO

Work, my good man! It's the American way, the very foundations upon which Democracy and Capitalism were built. It's the reason for our existence: work

In the background, the Constructionists produce kazoos from their pockets and begin to hum "The Battle Hymn Republic" beneath Rondo's speech.

What is a man without a job. A man is his job. I say to you, a pig farmer tends to his pigs. And does that make him a pig? No! But it does make him a pig farmer. We work...because it provides us with a sense of purpose. We work...because daytime television is really not all its cracked up to be. We work...as a reminder of how our forefathers rose from the peonage of a tyrannical king and fought for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Of how they sacrificed their own personal needs on the belief that all men were created equal – except for blacks, of course, who were brought here on ships then trampled beneath the yoke of enslavement for hundreds of years...

FOREMAN

And women, they really weren't much more than property.

CONSTRUCTIONIST 1 (NORM)

Don't forget the Native Americans.

CONSTRUCTIONIST 2 (BUCK)

Yeah, yeah, and all those Irish immigrants!

RONDO

Yes, but all that aside...These great men were blessed with the wisdom and forethought to give Americans the freedom of speech, the right to bear arms, and most importantly the undeniable privilege to schlep through a minimum wage job for most of our natural, pitiable lives. So what do you say, who's with me?

Shouts and cheers from the workers.

Alright, then. Mr. Foreman, here's what I want you to do. I want you to build me a wall. I want you to build me a wall that stretches across this entire space. From sea to shining sea, blocking off...each sea from the other sea. I say damned be the fire codes! I want this wall to stand tall and be invincible, like America is invincible. I want it to stand for a new deal, free from the trappings of our unnatural existence, where we can all of us once again live meaningful lives of great significance.

FOREMAN

You're some kinda inspirational guru or something, ain't ya.

RONDO

Mr. Foreman, you get that crew of yours to build me a wall, and you be sure to build it high so that we can get the most out of it. You got that?

FOREMAN

Yup, I think I got it (*calling to one of the workers*) Hey Norm. Listen up. Mr. Rondo here's got some work for us to do.

NORM

Work, boss?

FOREMAN

That's right. Work. Now. See all them bricks we brought in? We're gonna build ourselves a wall. See, we need to take them bricks and stretch them across outer space there, create some sorta blockage. He says damn the fire codes cuz we're going to stand tall like Americans and be trapped here – something about finding significance in our otherwise meaningless lives. Now we're gonna build this wall, and we're gonna make it high, and then we're gonna get the hell outta here. Got that?

NORM

Sure boss, got it. (*calling to another worker*) Hey, Buck. I need you to tell the crew chiefs we got some work to do.

BUCK

Work?

NORM

Yeah. Alright, here's the deal: we got ourselves a serious blockage, and now America's trapped cuz a them goddamn fire codes. So, what we gotta do is build ourselves a meaningless wall. We're gonna make it high and then we're gonna get the hell outta here. Got that?

BUCK

You betcha. (*calling to other workers*) I need to see the crew chiefs. Gather round. Alright boys, listen up. I need you to tell the deputies that some meaningless fire codes have trapped Americans behind a godamn wall. So, let's get high and let's get outta here. Got that?

The crew chiefs disperse among the crew to explain the situation.

RONDO

That's an amazing system you've got there.

FOREMAN

That's right!

RONDO

Truly robotic in its efficiency.

The Constructionists begin to exit.

Ricki enters. She has transformed herself from a dumpy, plain girl to a business-savvy power executive. In tow behind her is MR. ALBERT, the stereotypical nerd, carrying a stack of papers and folders that outweighs him by half.

RICKI

Mr. Albert, I expect those forms, in triplicate, signed and ready to send out, on my desk first thing in the morning.

ALBERT
Yes Ms. Ricki, I'm on top of it.

RONDO
Ms. Ricki, my god, what has happened to you?

RICKI
Greetings, Mr. Rondo.

RONDO
You're a changed woman, Ms. Ricki.

RICKI
You noticed!

FOREMAN
Wow, you kinda got hot.

RICKI
Thank you.

FOREMAN
Sexy in a librarianish kinda way.

RICKI
Not to worry, Mr. Rondo. I'll have those forms to you first thing in the morning.

RONDO
But I didn't request any forms.

RICKI
Oh, but you will, Mr. Rondo. You will.

RONDO
Amazing.

RICKI
Efficiency, Mr. Rondo.

RONDO
Is next to Godliness.

RICKI
Precisely.

RONDO
But...I don't understand. How have you done this?

RICKI
Oh there's nothing to it. I simply hired myself an assistant. Mr. Rondo, this here is Mr. Albert.
Mr. Albert, Mr. Rondo.

ALBERT
Hallo.

RICKI

Mr. Foreman, you have been an inspiration to me. Your hierarchical system of order has spurred me to acquire an assistant of my own.

RONDO

Excellent! Ms. Ricki, you may turn into a studious little robot yet.

RICKI

Thank you Mr. Rondo. And have you broached the subject of our wall yet with the Foreman here?

RONDO

Of course, of course. We do have an informal agreement. However, Ms. Ricki, I'll need you to draft up...

RICKI

...those forms for you sir?

RONDO

(overlapping on "for you")
...those...contracts. Yes.

RICKI

Mr. Albert?

ALBERT

Already done. Just need to make copies, get 'em notarized.

RICKI

Like I said, Mr. Rondo, they'll be on your desk first thing in the morning.

RONDO

That is truly flabbergasting.

ALBERT

(to Foreman)
Flabberwhat?

FOREMAN

I think he just called her fat.

ALBERT

Does he always talk that way?

RICKI

(looking around, confused)
And...how is it we plan to get this wall built, exactly?

FOREMAN

Me and my crew back there.

RICKI

I don't understand...

Those guys can build anything.

FOREMAN

...I don't see a crew.

RICKI

What the...? Dammit, not again!

FOREMAN

The Foreman looks off into the wings, searching for his crew. Albert exits, also in search of the missing crew.

I sympathize with you, sir. It is difficult to find good workers these days.

RONDO

They gotta be around – that's the fourth crew this month.

FOREMAN

So true, Mr. Rondo.

RICKI

The Foreman looks into the house, still searching for his missing crew, and freezes. There are people out there!

Whoa! What the...

FOREMAN

What? What is it?

RONDO

What's the matter Mr. Foreman?

RICKI

(motioning to house)
There. You see 'em?

FOREMAN

(looking into house)
Hmmm. Well. There appears to be people out there.

RONDO

Yeah, all kinds of 'em.

FOREMAN

What are they doing?

RONDO

They're watching...

FOREMAN

It seems they're watching us.

RICKI

But why? RONDO

I'm not exactly sure. Albert? Mr. Albert? RICKI

Albert enters

ALBERT
I didn't see any "crew" but I did find this Baby Ruth bar.

RICKI
Mr. Albert...

ALBERT
You think I should eat it?

RICKI
...do you notice anything funny about this situation

ALBERT
It's still wrapped.

RICKI
Mr. Albert. *(she motions to the audience)*

ALBERT
(looks into the house, reacts)
WAHHH! Wow, where'd they come from? Like a bunch of floating heads – just looking at us.

RONDO
It's a tad nerve-wracking.

ALBERT
It's like we're in a zoo.

RONDO
Why do they keep staring at me like that?

FOREMAN
Let's ignore them. Here, c'mere. What were we talking about? *(sotto voce)* If we ignore them, maybe they'll go away.

RICKI
Good thinking.

They all go through the exaggerated act of consciously ignoring the audience. They rock back and forth, jingle the change in their pockets, whistle...

RONDO
Nice weather we're having.

RICKI

Yes. Yes.

FOREMAN

I must concur, chap.

ALBERT

They're still looking.

RONDO

Although, we could use some rain.

RICKI

Yes. Yes.

A Pause...

FOREMAN

I'm scared. *(to Albert)* Hold me.

Albert and the Foreman embrace each other fearfully.

RONDO

See that game last night?

RICKI

Helluva game!

RONDO

Helluva game. *(giving up the charade)* Oh, it's not working. They're still there.

RICKI

Helluva game, helluva game.

RONDO

Ms. Ricki, it's not working. Look, c'mere. Everybody.

They all huddle up, making exaggerated whispering sounds. After a moment, Rondo's head pops up from the huddle. He quickly surveys the audience, then drops back into the huddle. More whispering sounds. Finally they throw "odds/evens" or Rock Paper Scissors, and it is Rick who loses. She takes a step toward the audience, then stops and looks back at the others with trepidation; they motion her on.

RICKI

We've decided...um, that...well, we've decided that we're not going to pay attention to you people. And you can just look all you like because we don't care. So...so...carry on.

RONDO

Tally ho!

RICKI

Now then, gentlemen. Where were we.

The business of the wall.	RONDO
Yes, that's right, the wall.	RICKI
But we don't have a crew.	ALBERT
We can't build a wall with no crew.	FOREMAN
Oh, tis true, tis true. How shall I go on...Out, out brief candle...	RONDO
What're you doing?	FOREMAN
I'm emoting, good sir.	RONDO
Emoting?	ALBERT
Yes, it's very cathartic. You should try it. (<i>emoting again</i>) Oh the calamity.	RONDO
Alright.	ALBERT
The tragedy of it all!	RONDO
Um...woe is us.	ALBERT
I should smote mine eyes with a broach.	RONDO
Ew!	ALBERT
How Sophoclean of me!	RONDO
That's just gross!	FOREMAN
Um...Excuse me Mr. Rondo?	RICKI
What is it, Ms. Ricki? Can't you see we're emoting here.	RONDO

FOREMAN

Can't a fella even emote to hisself these days?

RICKI

It's just...The wall, Mr. Rondo. If we ever hope to have this wall built, we must stop wasting time.

RONDO

(after a moment)

Indeed. You are correct. And I apologize. I shouldn't be so selfish. From this point forward, I shall refrain from being so selfish – that's a difficult phrase to say: "refrain from being so selfish" – In any case, from this point forward I will focus all my perspicaciousness on the task at hand.

ALBERT

Perspirationness?

RONDO

Perspicaciousness.

ALBERT

Yeah, whatever. I can make up words too.

FOREMAN

Yeah, but we still got no crew.

RICKI

No need to fret, gentlemen. I have figured out a solution for that.

RONDO

You have?

RICKI

Yes. While you were busy brushing up your Shakespeare, I was sending out telepathic messages.

FOREMAN

Tele-huh?

RONDO

You can do that?

RICKI

Well of course I can. I am a woman, after all.

FOREMAN

Whoa whoa whoa. You saying you can read our minds?

RICKI

Well, it's not exactly –

RONDO

And all women can do this?

ALBERT

That is so cool.

No, no, no... RICKI

Fascinating. RONDO

Where do I sign up? ALBERT

Aw, man... FOREMAN

Gentlemen... RICKI

...I gotta make some serious apologies. FOREMAN

...you may relax. Not all women can read your mind. RICKI

Whew! For a minute there – FOREMAN

For a minute there you thought I could tell exactly what you were thinking. RICKI

Yeah. And of course it made – FOREMAN

Of course, it made complete sense. RICKI

It did, considering – FOREMAN

Considering how I am able to finish your sentences for you. RICKI

Right. FOREMAN Right? RICKI

Well, you may rest assured that not all women can read your thoughts. *(to Albert, who seems to be concentrating intently.)* Pumpernickel. RICKI

Whoa. ALBERT

Yes, yes. This is all well and good, Ms. Ricki, and I'm sure we'd love to hear more about it... RONDO

No you wouldn't. RICKI

RONDO

Of course we wouldn't. *(Taken aback. Suspicious, now)* How did you know that?! Anyway, I believe you were –

RICKI

Yes, I was about to tell you how I had solved our problem concerning the disappearance of our crew and the building of our wall.

RONDO

Okay. And this was through –

RICKI

Correct, through the sending out of telepathic messages. *(to Albert)* Coccyx and Kiwi.

ALBERT

That's frickin' awesome!

RONDO

Fascinating. So, these tele-whatever powers of yours...you just send out these messages, and...?

RICKI

Think of it as kind of a link, if you will. I simply...*(she squishes up her face in serious concentration)*...and voila!

Albert, with his eyes closed, subtly begins to twitch.

FOREMAN

What about the side effects. There's always side effects.

RICKI

Nothing...

Albert suddenly passes out.

...but the occasional loss of consciousness.

Foreman rushes to him.

RONDO

Seems harmless enough.

RICKI

And possible subsequent psychosis.

FOREMAN

Yup, sure enough, the bugger's out cold.

RICKI

But not to fear. Scientitions have yet to provide any empirical data in support of the latter...though I have to admit, between us, that the evidence does lean heavily toward it.

FOREMAN

Albert? Can you hear me?

RICKI

On the upside, I have managed to acquire for us a crew of individuals who are more than capable of building our wall.

RONDO

That's remarkable, Ms. Ricki. Well done on that front.

RICKI

But. I think it only fair that I prepare you for their arrival.

FOREMAN

Anybody have a tissue? The poor guy's drooling all over hisself.

RONDO

Prepare us? Why for?

Suddenly, a large group of clowns enter.

RICKI

Because they're a troupe of clowns.

RONDO

Good Jehosaphat, Ms. Ricki. Clowns?

FOREMAN

Clowns? Are you serious?

RICKI

Clowns.

FOREMAN

You can't be serious. A clown troupe can't possibly do the work of an entire crew of union Constructionists.

RICKI

Well, you can't expect miracles at the last minute.

FOREMAN

What about your telephonic...cryptonomonic, whatever-you-call-em super powers? This the best you could do?

RICKI

The process is hardly perfected, sir.

FOREMAN

This is ridiculous. You realize this is ridiculous.

RICKI

No more ridiculous than the culture we've created.

RONDO

Aha! Bravely asserted, Ms. Ricki!

RICKI

A lofty concept, if you will.

RONDO

Lofty, indeed.

RICKI

Large words and lofty concepts, Mr. Rondo.

RONDO

Well done my astucious assistant.

FOREMAN

If ya ask me, it's a shame. A downright, rotten shame.

ALBERT

(regaining consciousness)

What's going on?

FOREMAN

What's going on? I'll tell ya what's going on. You realize that we have taken two-hundred years of hard work and dedication and just thrown it in the toilet? You people are mocking the very fabric of our working-class. Clowns!

ALBERT

Who you calling a clown?!

FOREMAN

I'm callin' them clowns clowns.

ALBERT

Oh...well...in that case.

FOREMAN

We in the blue-collar society have worked hard over the years to establish fair wages, a sensible work week, and the right to work without wearing our shoes in offices all across this great U.S. of A. And d'ya know how these things were accomplished?

ALBERT

Guerilla tactics and intimidation?

FOREMAN

No. Unionization!

ALBERT

Isn't that what I said?

RONDO

That is indeed what you said.

FOREMAN

Dammit, unions have existed since the dawn of man. The early hunters and gatherers had them. So did the Egyptians.

ALBERT

Yeah, I'm not so sure about that.

FOREMAN

Okay fine, maybe not the Egyptians. But here in America, the union has been around in some form or another for as long as the country itself. Don't forget about the industrial prosperity of the 1830s, and the formation of the National Labor Union in 1866. And how about the greatness of Samuel Gompers. We remember him proudly as the man who, despite his funny name, established the American Federation of Labor. And then there's John L. Lewis, who formed the Congress of Industrial Organizations. These men built something, by gawd. They provided a future for the rest of us. And now it's our responsibility! We gotta uphold the truths and ideals set forth by the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, and the –

RONDO

Mr. Foreman, I hate to interrupt,.

FOREMAN

Hey, I'm talkin' here!

RONDO

Yes, I know, but it's all so...how shall I put it?

RICKI

Dull?

RONDO

Dull.

FOREMAN

Dull?

ALBERT

Yeah. Y'know, boring?

RONDO

Humdrum, perhaps?

RICKI

Stultifying.

RONDO

Excellent, Ms. Ricki!

FOREMAN

Excuse me?! C'mon, people – I'm talkin' here about the history of America's unions.

RONDO

Yes, I know, and that's mostly my point.

FOREMAN

I am trying to educate you people.

Educate us? RICKI

Ho ho! Don't be absurd, dear sir. RONDO

We don't want to be educated. RICKI

Who wants to be educated? RONDO

Blech! ALBERT

No, we'd much rather be entertained. RICKI

Bravo, Ms. Ricki. RONDO

Hear hear! ALBERT

Lofty, lofty indeed. RONDO

RICKI
In any case...Gentlemen, dull or not, the Foreman does make a valid point in that I'm not sure these clowns will be the answer to our problem.

FOREMAN
Aha! I told you they'd be nothing but trouble.

RONDO
Give it to me straight, Ms. Ricki. What are you getting at?

RICKI
Well...while the Foreman was busy edifying us with his vast knowledge of American...um...thuggery, I took the liberty of making some quick calculations concerning the construction of our wall. It turns out that, given our current rate of construction, it will take our present work force approximately three years, forty-seven days, sixteen hours, and twenty-eight minutes to fully complete a wall of the proper dimensions.

RONDO
Good grief! That's preposterous!

RICKI
But that is just an approximation.

ALBERT
Yeah, what he said. Presposper...prepoopser...

RICKI

Fortunately, however, I have come up with a solution.

ALBERT

I know! More clowns!

RONDO

Of course!

ALBERT

We need more clowns.

RONDO

The more the merrier.

ALBERT

Ha ha. That's funny. Merrier...clowns...get it?

RONDO

Get me more clowns. Scour the lands. Search the far reaches of the countryside for clowns. Put out a clown A.P.B. We need every available clown.

ALBERT

Leave no clown left unturned.

RONDO

Sad clowns. Circus clowns. Clown cowboys who make those wacky balloon animals.

ALBERT

Rodeo clowns.

RONDO

Mute clowns with bicycle horns. Or just plain ol' clowns on bicycles. Tricycles, even. Unicycles. It matters not their mode of transportation. Just bring me more clowns. Clowns in those crazy clown cars.

ALBERT

Motorcycle clowns with badass leather chaps and clown skull tattoos.

RONDO

Yes! A parade-ful of them. A convoy of clown semi's. Bring them in droves. Drop them from planes.

ALBERT

Airborne Ranger Clowns.

RONDO

A whole battalion of them. Storm the beaches!

ALBERT

Send in the clowns!

FOREMAN

Excuse me? Hello!? Why don't we hire union workers? They'll get the job done, lickety-split.

The union! Yes!

RONDO

Sure as anything.

FOREMAN

Of course!

ALBERT

The union! We need more union workers!

RONDO

Not these clowns.

ALBERT

Down with the clowns.

RONDO

To hell with 'em. Stupid clowns.

ALBERT

Now you're talkin'.

FOREMAN

Screw them clowns!!

ALBERT

[!!!]

Uh...Vote union.

FOREMAN

That's right. That's good, I like that.

RONDO

Workers of the world unite!

ALBERT

Solidarity.

FOREMAN

Perestroika!

RONDO

Kickin' ass for the workin' class.

ALBERT

Excellent! Tally-ho, friend Foreman, and procure yourself a team of able-bodied union workers, for we shall support you to the fullest in our shared endeavor to build this wall.

RONDO

The Foreman exits

RICKI

Hmm...This is not exactly what I had in mind, Mr. Rondo.

RONDO

Is that so? Well, what's your idea Ms. Ricki? Who's brain did you telepathically fry in order to obtain workers this time? I'm sure it can't be any worse than clowns and Constructionists. So whatta ya got for me, Ms. Ricki? Irish clog dancers? How about dancing bears? Civil War re-enactors! Or hey! why not mimes – they could build us an imaginary wall. So who is it this time, Ms. Ricki? Go ahead, sock it to me.

She gestures toward the audience.

I'm waiting.

She gestures toward the audience twice more.

ALBERT

I think she's having a seizure.

RICKI

No. Out there.

ALBERT

Out...

RICKI

Out there.

RONDO

Out where? Out...What? (*sotto voce*) You can't be serious. Do you suppose...they can't still be watching us? Are they still watching us?

RICKI

They are.

RONDO

How can you be so sure. Do you sense them with your telepathic powers?

RICKI

No.

RONDO

Extra sensory perception?

RICKI

No.

RONDO

Clairvoyance, perhaps?

ALBERT

An out-of-body experience. Time travel. Teleportation. A worm hole! That's it, you've discovered a worm hole!

RICKI

I can hear them.

ALBERT

Hmph. I was way off on that one.

RICKI

Listen.

They remain quiet, listening to the audience. At the first noticeable sound – a cough, the rustling of papers, etc. – they immediately perk up.

There! Did you hear that? [*she makes reference to the sound they heard from the audience.*]

RONDO

I did hear that.

RICKI

See? They're still out there. Think of it. An untapped resource. Imagine what we could accomplish if we put them to work.

RONDO

But they looked kind of seedy, don't you think?

ALBERT

Yeah, with beady little eyes.

RICKI

Oh, now don't be silly.

RONDO

But what if they...what if...what if they're –

ALBERT

What if they're aliens! Come down from the planet Glazon to suck our brains out through our belly buttons.

RONDO

Mr. Albert, I hardly think –

ALBERT

What if they intend to use our bodies for experimentation. Or worse, as hosts for their parasitic embryos...

RONDO

Mr. Albert...

ALBERT

They may have already infiltrated our society. Think of it, how else can you explain people like Gene Roddenberry.

RICKI

Gene Roddenberry?

ALBERT

Gene Roddenberry was an alien, I tell you.

RICKI

Who's Gene Roddenberry?

ALBERT

Look at how much he knew about outer space.

RONDO

He created Star Trek.

ALBERT

Beam me up, Scotty? Tell me that little flippy-thing – what was it...the, uh...the communicator – yeah, yeah, tell me that wasn't a cell phone! Touch-sensitive control panels – right? Motion sensing automatic doors? Way before their time.

RONDO

He may be onto something here.

ALBERT

Voice-activated computers? Guy invented Bluetooth *and* GPS years before they existed.

RICKI

That is quite amazing, Mr. Albert; however –

ALBERT

“Set your phasers for stun”? The stun gun, the taser?

RONDO

“Taser” does rhyme with “phaser.”

ALBERT

And Spock's Vulcan Death Grip.

RONDO

Well, no, that one is not real. They still haven't –

Without hesitation, Albert applies the grip to Rondo's shoulder/neck, who then instantly collapses to the floor unconscious.

ALBERT

I'm tellin' ya, only an alien from the future could possibly know how to do all that stuff.

RICKI

Mr. Albert, while I would concede that you do pose a convincing argument, the fact remains that if we are ever to get this wall built, we must recruit an effective and efficient work force, aliens or not. And since the clowns have proven to be ineffective, and the Constructionists...

Rondo suddenly regains consciousness, as if a bucket of water has been tossed on him

RONDO

Damn the unions!

RICKI

...Since The Constructionists...

RONDO

Damn, dirty apes!

RICKI

...Since the Constructionists are clearly insouciant, we must obtain an alternative work force.

FOREMAN

Alright, boys, we're back on the job. Hard times are over. Bring it on in here, a chicken in every pot. Let's get this wall built.

The Constructionists enter.

ALBERT

Yeah, but how we gonna explain this to the Foreman?

RICKI

Leave that to me. Excuse me, Mr. Foreman.

FOREMAN

Yeah. One second.

RICKI

May I have a word or two?

FOREMAN

Hey. Can't you see I'm working? Gimme a second, will ya.

ALBERT

(taking over)

Hey! Listen, pal! You and your crew here, you just too buggin' slow, see! And that's all there is to it. Alright? So! Listen and listen good, greaseball, cuz here's the skinny. We got ourselves a whole slew a people out there just itchin' to get up here and work. Faster. Meaner. More efficient.

RONDO

They're aliens from the future.

ALBERT

That's right: aliens, the work force of the future. They'll work longer hours and take fewer breaks. And they'll do it all without stealing so much as a stapler from the staff room. So. Here's the deal: you and your boys are gonna have to make room, cuz ready or not, here we come. Whatta ya say to that?!

FOREMAN

Yeah, sure. Whatever.

RONDO

That was easy.

FOREMAN

Alright boys, slide on over. We gotta make room for a whole new crew to come in.

They clear to the edges to continue working.

There ya go. Ready to roll.

RONDO

Splendid! Now then. Ms. Ricki, Mr. Albert, I believe we are ready to choose those individuals who are going to assist us in changing the world in which we live.

A MAIL COURIER enters, brandishing a crisp envelope aloft.

COURIER

Special delivery. I have a special delivery here.

RONDO

(approaching Courier)
My good man, can I help you?

COURIER

I have a letter here. Official, registered mail.

RONDO

Excellent. I'll take it.

COURIER

No sir. A signature is required for this here letter. Official, registered mail, don'tcha know. I can't just hand it over to anybody. Not just anybody, y'understand.

RICKI

I'll sign for it.

COURIER

Okie dokie, then.

Ricki signs and receives the letter. The moment the Courier exits AGENT STERN enters.

RONDO

Well what is it, Ms. Ricki? Go on, read it.

RICKI

(reading)
It's from the government, Mr. Rondo.

RONDO

The government?

ALBERT

That can't be good.

RICKI

Apparently, we're being ordered to shut down construction on our wall. Says here that an agent is being dispatched...

ALBERT

(re: Stern)
Say, who's that guy?

RICKI

...to check on the start-up of said shut-down.

STERN

Alright, listen up, everybody. Name's Agent Stern...

ALBERT

Wow. That was quick.

STERN

...and I'm with the office of Codes, Liens, Loans, Caps, and Quality Control.

FOREMAN

Whoa, hold on. That really exists?

STERN

Yes sir. It belongs to the Department of Redundancy, Waste, and Red Tape.

FOREMAN

Figures.

RONDO

I'm sorry, what's this all about. Ms. Ricki?

RICKI

We're being shut down, Mr. Rondo.

RONDO

I don't understand. Shut down?

STERN

That's right, sir. Shut down.

RONDO

Yes, that's what she said...

RICKI

That's what I said.

RONDO

...And then I said "I don't understand"...

STERN

I understand that. What are you talking about?

RONDO

I'm talking about I don't understand. That's exactly what I'm talking about.

STERN

What's exactly what you're talking about?

I don't understand. RONDO

Don't understand what? STERN

What? RONDO

...What!? STERN

Sir, you don't know what I'm talking about because I don't know what you're talking about. RONDO

(to Albert) STERN
Does he always talk this way?

Wait'll he starts making up words... ALBERT

So now do you understand why I don't understand? RONDO

...Complete gibberosity! ALBERT

What the hell is going on here? STERN

Ms. Ricki, this gentleman seems a bit dense in the head. How is it the thickheads are always the ones in charge? RONDO

It's a glitch in the system, sir. RICKI

Hmm...Sounds so...mechanical. RONDO

(overlapping) RICKI
In how the system is structured. Once a thickhead is put in charge — accidental or not — he will multiply and spread like a plague.

A plague. So it's Biblical? RONDO

Thickheads hire other thickheads. They promote thickheads who are even thicker thickheads than their thickheaded selves. RICKI

RONDO
Thicker thickheads?

RICKI
Yes. And they hire even thickerer thickheads...

STERN
If you don't mind. *(to Rondo)* You in charge here?

RONDO
Absotively!

ALBERT
See what I mean?

RONDO
My idea. My wall. My work force.

Stern tases him. Rondo falls twitching and drooling to the floor.

ALBERT
What the crap!

FOREMAN
Whoa! Whoa buddy, you can't just do that.

STERN
(to Foreman and Albert, brandishing the taser)
You want some of this?

FOREMAN
(ad lib)
No, you're good...Carry on...

ALBERT
(ad lib)
Hate to get in the way...I'm actually allergic...

STERN
Alright everybody. Listen carefully. I have a "cease and desist" order here. "Cease" and "desist." For all you simpletons, that means "stop" and "stop."

FOREMAN
Wow, I guess there really is a Department of Redundancy.

STERN
"Cease" and "Desist."

ALBERT
Ms. Ricki, what's going on?

STERN
(to Constructionist)
You there, put that down – stop this work, immediately.

RICKI
Well...according to this letter...

FOREMAN

(to Stern)
Hold on there, buddy.

RICKI

...we have failed to acquire the proper permits and liens.

FOREMAN

(overlapping)
Nobody but me tells my crew what not to do.

RICKI

(overlapping the previous overlap)
And since our wall does not abide by local ordinances and codes – Codes! I knew it! I knew we should've paid attention to the proper codes. Not the “codes-of-conduct”, mind you, but rather the “codes established-by-the-business-and-legal-communities-intended-to-keep-one-individual-or-group-from-infringing-upon-the-basic-inalienable-rights-of-another-individual-or-group” codes.

FOREMAN

(overlapping on the overlapping of the previous overlap at “paid attention to the proper codes”)
That's a fact, buddy. That's union work right there.

STERN

Union or not, this whole project is officially on hold.

ALBERT

Oh my god! Ms. Ricki, you gotta do something!

RICKI

Sir, may I have a word with you, please?

STERN

Ma'am.

FOREMAN

Who the hell do you think you are anyway?

STERN

I believe you people received a letter, by registered mail. An order to cease and desist the building of this here wall. *(to Norm)* That right?

NORM

Uh...yeah...I guess.

STERN

And yet you have neither ceased nor desisted.

NORM

...Okay...

STERN

You mind telling me what's going on?

NORM

Um...I don't know, I'm just...

Stern promptly tases Norm...who commences to twitching and drooling.

RICKI

Oh my!

ALBERT

Fascinating.

FOREMAN

Aw, c'mon! Norm's one a them "simpletons". He didn't even know what that meant!

RONDO

(groggy, coming to, wiping at his mouth)

Have I been drooling?

Stern promptly tases Rondo back into oblivion.

ALBERT

Never gets old.

FOREMAN

Man, that can't be good for you.

RICKI

Mr. Government Agent Stern, please. We did receive your letter.

STERN

I thought so. By registered mail?

RICKI

Yes, yes, I signed for it.

STERN

Well then I'm sorry, ma'am. I've no other choice here.

He moves in the direction of Ricki, with the intention of tasing her.

RICKI

Hold on! Wait a second! I'm sure we can come to some kind of understanding here.

STERN

Ma'am, I'm a government agent – I don't come to understand anything.

FOREMAN

Ms. Ricki, why don't you let me handle this. *(pulling a wad of money from his pocket)* Mr. Stern, I'm sure we can come up with some kind of an agreement here.

STERN

Sir, please. I said I was a government agent, not a politician.

FOREMAN

Damn, this guy's tough!

STERN

Look, can we just get through with this? You wouldn't believe the paperwork I'm going to have to fill out.

RICKI

One moment.

Ricki motions Albert and the Foreman aside.

STERN

It's all in triplicate, and of course they won't give me any overtime for it.

ALBERT

What are we gonna do? Whatta we gonna do!

RICKI

Calm down.

FOREMAN

No, he's right. We don't finish this wall my men gonna get laid off.

RICKI

Let me think.

FOREMAN

No work, no workers...

ALBERT

Oh my god! Oh my god! We're canceling Christmas!

FOREMAN

...No workers, no tax base...

RICKI

Just, one second.

ALBERT

And what about Rondo.

FOREMAN

...No tax base, our economy goes in the toilet.

ALBERT

Rondo's dead!

RICKI

Rondo's not dead!

ALBERT

He is. He's dead! He's dead!

RICKI

Get a hold of yourselves. Both of you. Okay. Now. Here's the plan.

They huddle up again, making exaggerated whispering sounds. After a moment, Albert's head pops up from the huddle. He quickly surveys the scene, then drops back into the huddle. More whispering sounds. They throw "odds/evens" or Rock Paper scissors again. Again, Ricki is the loser...(mere co-incidence, or poorly strategified?)...Finally they break and disperse casually, as if they're up to nothing.

Ricki takes on a seductive air and moves to Stern.

Albert gathers the clowns around him to explain the plan.

The Foreman moves to the Constructionists to do the same. After a moment they begin to advance on Stern as nonchalantly as is possible for a large crew of "gamy" Constructionists.

RICKI

(Ridiculously seductive.)

Hey there Mr. Stern.

STERN

Ma'am.

RICKI

Agent Stern.

STERN

Uh...ma'am.

RICKI

Sexy stern man.

ALBERT

(to Foreman)

This isn't gonna work.

RICKI

I bet you've got an awfully big...gun.

STERN

Ma'am, I'm a pencil pusher. I don't carry a gun.

FOREMAN

(to Constructionists)

Remember, boys: on my signal.

RICKI

Would you like me to push your pencil?

STERN

Are you trying to seduce me?

RICKI

I'll sharpen your lead.

STERN

Your womanly wiles have no effect on me.

RICKI

Let me rub your eraser.

STERN

How many times I gotta tell you people: I'm not a politician.

RICKI

(dropping the sexy bit.)
Damn, this guy is tough!

Stern now notices the Constructionists creeping up on him, just as...

FOREMAN

Get 'em boys!

The Foreman lets loose some ridiculous, otherworldly bird call – the signal for his men to attack. And, all at once...

...Chaos ensues!

The Constructionists pile onto Stern.

Albert and his crack team of special-ops Clowns begin to disappear ninja-like into the wings the house the loft...wherever they can manage to disappear.

Stern wreaks havoc with his taser...Constructionists are dropping like frogs from a Biblical sky. Yet, somehow, they manage to swarm him under.

Straight out of a Looney Tunes cartoon, Stern crawls from beneath the mass of still-conscious Constructionists attempting to subdue him.

Albert returns to the stage with one of the clowns (the other clowns, one can only assume, have fled to their car somewhere far away.)

ALBERT

Ms. Ricki, use your super powers – your chromatastatic-teletastic mind control thingy-job!

RICKI

Oh! Yes, yes good idea.

Ricki concentrates for a moment, and then BLAM!...The Constructionists fall unconscious.

Oops.

ALBERT

What the hell was that?!

FOREMAN

Not helping!

RICKI

I told you the process was hardly perfected.

The lone remaining clown jumps into action! He squirts Stern in the face with a trick flower.

FOREMAN

Albert! The taser-thing! Grab his taser-thing!

Albert does so!

Now use it. Quick.

In a mad panic, Albert tases the nearest person: The Foreman.

RICKI

Not him, you fool.

STERN

(blinking, half-blinded by the flower.)

You'll never get away with this. Sooner or later they will shut down your wall.

The clown offers Stern a hanky to wipe his eyes, but when he takes it he is struck by a hidden hand buzzer and is so surprised that he stumbles backward toward Albert...

ALBERT

Never!

...who promptly tases him.

RONDO

(re-gaining consciousness)

What...what's going on?

RICKI

The wall, Mr. Rondo!

ALBERT

Kick ass!

RICKI

The wall is going on!

Curtain

ACT TWO

SETTING:

Same as Act One. Later.

The wall has been completed. It's a towering, formidable structure, intended to send a cold wave of terror down the spine of all who oppose its existence! Spanning all along the top are coils of barbed wire that spiral like a twisted nest of wicked snarling vipers with really really sharp teeth! In the very center is an imposing set of fortified doors so big that the army of Mordor itself could march right through them. Seriously. Bottom line: this ain't some fly-by-night, hasty suck-job. This wall's China-big, and then some!

The space around the wall is a mess. Buckets and wheelbarrows. Trowels and towels, boards and garbage bags bursting with scraps. A scaffolding, half assembled, rests lazily nearby.

At rise, Mr. Stern sits tied to a chair. Albert stands nearby, hovering, looming, menacing, as if stalking his wounded prey. There is no visible action or life on stage other than the two of them. The mood is very dark, heavy with an interrogatory and sinister feel – not the Albert we've come to know and love, that's for sure.

ALBERT

Well, here we are. You and I. And yet we decidedly have the upper hand – my colleagues and I, our cause. You seem to be at a disadvantage, now don't you. Not a position, I'm sure, in which you're accustomed to being – you, the representative of our Brobdingnagian bureaucracy, wielding your authority like some mighty weapon, armed and unafraid to strike at any and all who may question your infallibility. Yes you, just look at you, an agent of our great government: of the people, by the people, for the people. So how is it that we the people have finally become the collective embodiment of the tired, the poor, the huddled masses yearning to breathe free? Did you take us for a bunch of dullards, buffoons playing at a child's game? Were you so blinded by your own egocentric agendas that you could see no purpose in our cause other than the fulfillment of our own whimsical and superfluous fancies? Did you think you could come here and thump your chest, throw your gorilla dust, and have us just roll over and bare our bellies? We are the people, the common ones, and we have raised our banners of war against those who deign to hand down our best interests to us. We have raised this wall as a symbol for what our country was meant to be. And we will stand behind it, strong and immovable, though you send your famine, your war and pestilence, your email – the weight of all your injustice to topple it down...(He shifts suddenly, and –whew – we're back to levity) So whatta ya think?

STERN

Umm...

ALBERT

Not bad?

STERN

Well...

ALBERT

C'mon, give it to me straight. I can take it.

STERN

I did like the whole “of the people, by the people, for the people” bit.

ALBERT

Yeah? I just made that up on the spot.

STERN

(Huh?)

Okay. And the Ellis Island allusion – that was very powerful.

ALBERT

The what? The who? Who's Ellis Island?

STERN

Y'know, the whole “the tired, the poor, the huddled masses yearning to breathe free” part?

ALBERT

Yeah, I know what I said. Duh. I wrote it.

STERN

You...what?! It's Emma Lazarus. The Statue of Liberty?

ALBERT

What are you talking about?

Rondo enters with Ms. Ricki hot on his heels.

RONDO

Mr. Albert.

ALBERT

(to Rondo)

Who's Ellis Island?

RONDO

My speech to the marauders when they arrive, how's it coming?

ALBERT

Good, good. We were just rehearsing it, working out the timing. Wait a second...marauders?

RICKI

Yes, of course. Surely you understand that with the capture and immobilization of Mr. Stern here, it's only a matter of time before a horde of people are sent out to retrieve their captain.

ALBERT

Yeah, but...marauders? Is my life in danger here?

RICKI

No, no. Of course not.

RONDO

Mr. Albert, with a wall of this magnitude at our backs, I am confident that we shall remain safe and unharmed.

ALBERT

Oh, alright then. Say, you ever heard a Ellis Island?

RONDO

Ellis Island.

ALBERT

Yeah, you know him?

RONDO

I believe Ellis Island was an African American chap who provided the voice for that funny cartoon dog...what's-its-name.

STERN

Hong Kong Phooey?

RONDO

Yes!

STERN

No, That was Scatman Crothers...

RONDO

Really?

STERN

...who also played Louis the garbage man on the television show, *Chico and the Man*.

RICKI

Wasn't Charo in *Chico and the Man*?

ALBERT

The "coochy-coochy" lady?

STERN

Yes.

RONDO

That's amazing! The the efficiency with which your cranial mechanism processes information is truly impressive, sir.

STERN

Thank you. We in the government do believe that efficiency is next to godliness.

RICKI

A motto after our own hearts, Mr. Rondo.

RONDO

Yes, it is indeed. But let us not be duped, Ms. Ricki. We must take precautions not to forget that this gentleman – admirable motto or not – is still government scum trying to shut down our operation; therefore no matter how large his words or lofty his concepts may be, they are still scummy by nature.

RICKI

Excellent point, Mr. Rondo.

RONDO

Thank you. And now, where were we?

(sample ends here)

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