DRIP

(or how I used precedence and pie charts to make my next million)

CAST

Spartac, a man in his thirties
Donna, Spartac's fiancé/wife, a woman in her thirties
Bill 2, a man in his forties
Bill 1, a man in his twenties
Vene, a man in his thirties
Wreck, man his thirties or forties
Ballast, woman in her thirties or forties
Rigger, man his thirties
Booms, woman in her twenties

SET

The set should be divided unequally, the larger area dedicated to the boardroom, what's left to the workers' room. Both rooms should be appointed to reflect the money/priority given each space. Both will need a table and chairs. Board room will need something to serve as a credenza to balance workers' break room counter. Eventually each side should have a screen or television to act as monitor that can be raised and lowered as directed.

FORMATTING

Dialog on the left occurs in the boardroom, on the right in the workers area. Line breaks imply a pause.

DRIP
(or how I used precedence and props to make my second million)

Act 1

Large spot rises and follows Vene. He busies himself with preparing the board room for a meeting until he decides to speak.

VENE
Well, this is a little awkward. Like when the star looks into the camera and gives the audience a wink or a roll of the eyes. So here I am and I'm not even a star. And here's the wink… there's going to be a lot of talk of money and images of the great class divide which we all know is an urban myth, followed by some blah blah on disparity of wealth which is easily fixed if about ninety percent of us would just make more money, and talk of rights which always reads great on paper but is a real pain in the ass to implement, and then some hopefully brief pontificating about responsibility and the morality of money which, frankly… talk about abstract… we might as well discuss the ethical life of a chicken.

Take compound interest, for example. There is no right or wrong to it. Genie, bottle. Cat, bag. Shit, fan. It's done. It's done. Move on.

So my advice, 'cause I'm a mid-ground figure, a reconciler, a conciliator, great finder of common ground,… I'm the guy who orders the sandwiches for lunch, so my advice to all of you, so we can keep this light and right where it should be, my advice is to is to let the high end talk just wash over you. Realistically,… common ground realistically,… what can any one of us actually do anyway.

(Stage lights rise)

So you've got the talk, talk, talk which I'm suggesting you just treat like the weather. And then you have the action. Focus on the action. There's a couple of pretty fair love stories to follow. Fun stuff there. And fairly guilt free, non-judgmental kind of stuff, good gut and groin kind of stuff, banana peel, fart in church, you know, that kind of thing.

I'll do my best to keep it light… up here… for your sake. But in the interest of full disclosure, last time round, when I did the same it took a nasty turn,… particularly for me,… and I'm sure for any those left watching.

But… fingers crossed… let's assume it'll go more smoothly this pass.

(BILL 1 and BILL 2 enter.)

Ready then. That's the warm-up, the intro…

BILL 1

Vene.

VENE
We're getting geared up here. Ready to roll.

BILL 2
Vene.

VENE
Some of you may need to buckle up though. We've got some movers and shakers here…

BILL 1
Vene!

VENE
And, admittedly, a few that mostly just shake.
Sirs.

(DONNA enters.)

BILL 2
We need minutes for the meeting.

DONNA
The agenda for today. You can use it as a template for your notes.

BILL 1
Is he coming?

DONNA
He'll be right in.

BILL 2
Can we expect changes?

BILL 1
Fundamental changes?

VENE
Have I begun the minutes?

BILL 2
Has the meeting been called to order?

VENE

When is a question not a question?

BILL 2
What?

DONNA
No minutes yet, thank you, Vene.

BILL 1
How is it *he* has survived?

BILL 2
A chameleon phoenix..

BILL 1
A lizard and mythical beast?

BILL 2
Full blown make believe pariah.

DONNA
We will need to entertain talk of change. Taxing instead of tithing. Seek to build consent rather to get mired down by the complexities of coercion. But we will limit the final choices so that whatever path is eventually taken will be along the lines of the path we've plotted.

BILL 1
Would you rather sign with a blue or black pen?

BILL 2
Would you rather bow or applaud?

VENE
Would you like fries or tater tots?

(Enter SPARTAC)

DONNA
Vene.

SPARTAC
Sorry if I'm late.

BILL 1
You're not, sir.

BILL 2

We were all early.

VENE
I've got ten after.

DONNA
They don't know you yet, dear. They're used to dealing with Daddy.

SPARTAC
Well, I'm not Daddy.

BILL 1
No sir.

BILL 2
That's right, sir.

VENE
So say the sirs, sir.

DONNA
If we could just call things to order.

SPARTAC
This the agenda?

DONNA
Yes. Top of the list. Introductions. Gentlemen. Vene.

VENE
Ladies. Mam.

DONNA
You can start taking minutes. Gentlemen, as you know, this is my fiancé and the new head of our company. I'd like each of you to introduce yourself and say a few words about your role in the company.

BILL 1
Mr. Spartac, I'm Bill. And let me start by saying what a pleasure it is to meet you. It's always rewarding to see someone of your … practical background … attain this kind of success.

VENE
Is "pucker up" hyphenated?

BILL 1
I'm Bill, your Public Relations manager. There's no sin I can't spin….

(No response.)
Yes… well. Moving on then…

BILL 2
Mr. Spartac, I'm Bill,… as well,… and the nearest thing to an ivy-leaguer this company has ever seen.

DONNA
Except for Daddy and most of our middle management.

BILL 2
I meant a graduate.

DONNA
Daddy has a diploma and I've seen others in all the corner offices.

BILL 2
And with at least a "B" average.

DONNA
Well that's not on the diploma is it.

BILL 1
Many captains of industry, such as your father, find higher education stifles their innate abilities.

DONNA
Exactly, thank you, Bill.

SPARTAC
You are good.

BILL 1
Saved my job more than once.

SPARTAC
I can imagine. (To Bill 2) So apart from providing work for the first two letters of the alphabet and for the diploma industry what is it you bring to the table?

BILL 2
Perspective. I've studied the porcelain trade along the Silk Route, the bond trade among the robber barons, the train schedules under Hitler. I know why most interest in a modern democracy is not considered a form of usury, why non-proliferation is not simply the flip-side to the will to power. I read therefore I legitimize. I'm here to tell you why your thinking is dead-on, justified, good for the future of mankind, womankind and even humankind, and which historical precedents we can call upon to prove it and thus compound our success.

SPARTAC
Jesus.

VENE
I believe he's on the board, but I've yet to catch him at a meeting.

(Beat.)

BILL 2
I'm your corporate ghost writer. I can make anyone's biography read as relevant. And finally, I would like to add my congratulations to both your pending marriage and your… synchronous promotion.

VENE
Wow… I'm Vene but you can call me Bill as well. I transmogrify monumental corporate decisions into bite size bits suitable for either a microwave or conventional oven.

DONNA
Vene.

VENE
I also order sandwiches and take minutes.

(As Donna speaks, enter Wreck, Ballast, Rigger, and Booms into their apportioned space. They grab snacks and settle into their chairs.)

DONNA
Alrighty then. That's our little who's who. Now before we go onto the next item, let's take a minute to refresh your coffees, and help yourself to something to eat.
(Beat.)
Vene, why is there nothing to eat?

VENE
Now look at that. My oversight, I'm sure. Let me just call down. (Exits.)

DONNA
Sorry, gentlemen.

WRECK
Okay, okay. Settle in and settle down. Ballast, the cup.

BALLAST
Remember the deeper you dig down the more we can dig in.

BOOMS
Sandwiches.

WRECK
Those are for upstairs.
(Beat.)
Why is there a tray of sandwiches sitting here.

BALLAST
My bad, my bad. Let me just call up. (Grabs tray and exits.)

RIGGER
I remember when the company sprang for the snacks.

BOOMS
You don't remember shit.

RIGGER
Every Friday it'd be pizza or meatball subs for lunch. The old man himself would come down with his pockets full of quarters and stand by the drink machine calling us each by name and banging out our drink orders.

BOOMS
My Aunt Fannie.

WRECK
Naw, Rigger's got it right. But that's been years and years. We've been passing this slop bucket around for at least the last ten, so ante your Aunt Fannie up.

(Ballast enters.)

BOOMS
Can I get a receipt?

BALLAST
This isn't charity, sister. You can't deduct this.

(Vene enters with sandwiches. The executives help themselves.)

BOOMS
I bet the old man deducted all those quarters.

BALLAST
Petty cash drawer.

BOOMS
So where's that drawer now.

WRECK
It's been rusted shut, soldered shut, sealed shut and sent packing. Now can we get the hell to work so we can go home?

RIGGER
What's on the agenda?

BOOMS
Hopefully just a call to order followed by a move to adjourn.

BALLAST
TGIF, baby.

WRECK
We're to make some suggestions on a slogan for a new campaign.

DONNA
Next item. New slogan for our new campaign.

BILL 1
And what's the new campaign?

DONNA
That depends on the slogan.

WRECK
Apparently, however, the new campaign has yet to be determined. So we're to keep our suggestions specifically broad.

SPARTAC
So keep your suggestions specifically broad.

BALLAST
If not now when.

BILL 1
It's the real thing.

BOOMS
Soon, baby, soon.

BILL 2
Semper Fi.

RIGGER
I'll pull out before anything happens.

DONNA
Can't win if you don't play.

WRECK
That's the spot!

VENE
Bingoooo!

(Stares all around.)

BILL 1
But we need to avoid copyright and trademark issues.

RIGGER
Something really American.

DONNA
Something that hints at democratic.

BILL 2
And relevant.

BILL 1
How about something in Latin…

BOOMS
Something having to do with money.

(All scramble to produce coins and bills.)

BILL 2
E pluribus unum

WRECK
In God we trust.

DONNA
Carpe diem.

RIGGER
One, five, ten.

BILL 2
Twenty, one hundred.

SPARTAC
Quid pro quo.

BALLAST
Legal tender and private.

VENE
Coitus interruptus.

(Stares all around.)

SPARTAC
E quid pluribus…

BILL 2
… pro quo unum.

DONNA
But with a hook for this generation of spenders.

BILL 1
Hope.

BILL 2
Too abstract.

BOOMS
Something sexy but safe.

RIGGER
A little leather, a little lace.

BILL 1
A relevant concern, timely, now.

SPARTAC
Green.

BILL 1
Perfect.

BILL 2
All the kids and their scientists are on about it.

BALLAST
Some little anime vixen park ranger.

WRECK
That's the ticket!

DONNA
E quid pluribus verde…

SPARTAC
… pro quo unum.

BILL 2
And this much green for that one.

DONNA
And this much green for that one.

BILL 1
It'll be a brand new universal banner.

BALLAST
Who doesn't like anime in uniforms.

BOOMS
What are you on about?

WRECK
Come on baby, let me see you pick up that plastic.

BALLAST
Now recycle it just like I showed you.

RIGGER
Did anyone write these ideas down?

WRECK
Shit.

BILL 2
It'll sell itself.

BILL 1
Easy Billy. Nothing sells itself which is why you need me, Mr. S.

BALLAST
Okay. What did we come up with?

(Beat. As all pretend to review their thoughts and ideas.)

BOOMS
Dear God, we trust that you recycle?

WRECK
Golden.

BILL 2
E.Q.P.V.P.Q.U.

SPARTAC
E.Q.P.V.P.Q.U.

VENE
In da houuuuse!

(Stares all around.)

DONNA
They know it from their coins, from their cop shows, and from Judge this, that, or the other.

BILL 1
The perfect umbrella phrase.

RIGGER
What has that got to do with anything we make or sell?

BILL 2
It shows we care about what's important.

WRECK
Like they're ever going to read this anyway.

VENE
It's reality agape.

(Stares all around.)

BILL 2
That's Greek. We're working in Latin. The language of Empire.

VENE
Gotcha.

DONNA
You're to keep the minutes not put yourself in them.

VENE
Editing now, mam.

DONNA
Next on the agenda.

WRECK
Item two. Health Care options.

DONNA
Who's to attend this year's Health Care Options seminar in Scottsdale?

BILL 1
Sweet.

BILL 2
It was my idea to review our current provider's full scope of benefits.

BILL 1
It's your job to see that it's reviewed.

BILL 2
Yeah, Bill, it is, but at this level I think we can all admit that getting a little extra for doing our jobs is par for the course.

BILL 1
Point taken.

DONNA
Take a minute to review the schedule and list of amenities.

WRECK
Make your choices. I'm reading now… As a result…

(Other workers joining in and ALL in unison)

…of the continuing challenges presented by the current economic climate…

WRECK
Exactly. And continuing…

The HR Department, after careful review, has decided to opt for a change in the Health Care provider and therefore the range and scope of benefits. As proclaimed in our company mission statement – Choice is at the heart of progress and peace – this decision…

BALLAST
The heart of progress and peace…

WRECK
… this decision offers…

BOOMS
Progress my ass.

WRECK
… this decision offers…

RIGGER
Peace my ass.

WRECK
… offers a broader selection…

BALLAST
I could go for a piece of …

WRECK
STILL READING… This decision offers a broader selection of options all around, offering affordable and desirable options tailored to meet your individual needs.

RIGGER
How many options.

WRECK
Three.

RIGGER
There are four of us. (Beat while he refigures.)

WRECK
Then two of you will need to be same individual.

BOOMS
If two individuals run into each other in the woods and there's no one there to see it, would they constitute an insurable society?

BALLAST

What's cheapest?

WRECK
The Gold Plated Platinum Plan for Family and the Optimum Select for individuals.

BALLAST
I said the cheapest.

WRECK
The BASIC Gold Plated Platinum Plan for Family and the BASIC Optimum Select for individuals.

RIGGER
It don't matter, Bally boy, I can tell you without ever cracking the folder that it's all gone up. Every year a new provider, fewer choices…

WRECK
Fewer but better.

RIGGER
… and always more money out of our pockets.

BALLAST
Optimum Select. Holy Christ! I can't afford to be employed.

WRECK
Be sure you're looking along the seniority scale. After ten years the company pays three quarters.

BALLAST
So besides you, who here's got ten in?

WRECK
Booms and Rigger will both hit benchmarks next fiscal year.

(Booms and Rigger high five each other. All settle in to make choice and complete forms.)

DONNA
Bill, you went last year to Miami. You, Bill, the year before that to… San Diego.

BILL 1
San Diego.

BILL 2
It was grueling. The bar closed at one.

DONNA
Don't think we didn't hear about that. Let's keep it positive.

SPARTAC
You change providers every year?

BILL 2
Not quite. We follow a three two pattern.

BILL 1
Three years switching every year then two years under to the same provider.

BILL 2
Unless flagged.

BILL 1
Unless flagged, that's right.

SPARTAC
Flagged?

BILL 2
For questionable practices.

BILL 1
For questionable practices, in which case we inverse the three two pattern, keeping the same provider for three years and switching only every two.

BILL 2
That's how we missed Maui.

BILL 1
Do you think we could get through one goddamn health care meeting without you bringing that up!

BILL 2
My rotation, Bill,… Maui.

DONNA (To Spartac.)
We had to send the entire Board and all Heads of Department to a week's retreat in Aspen to try and allay concerns over the inquiry that led to missing Maui.

BILL 1
Now that was an intense week.

DONNA
Health Care. Not my forte. But Daddy said it was well worth the expense to get back on track.

BILL 2
He always had his hand on the helm.

BILL 1
A suggestion for this year then.

BILL 2
Oh, please.

BILL 1
As a kind of orientation, for both.

DONNA
Oh, I don't think that's necessary.

BILL 1
I'd suggest it as a wedding gift….

BILL 2
If it weren't so much work…
(Beat. Then both Bills laugh.)
Two morning sessions, the gist of which has already been faxed back to HR here, then a chance to network over golf, massages, and cocktails.

BILL 1
Do you golf, sir?
Ever had a massage?
Like a good martini?

BILL 2
They have beer too.

VENE
They'll even put an umbrella in it.

DONNA
Yes, well, thank you, Bill, for the suggestion. Bill, could you make the motion?

BILL 2
So moved.

BILL 1

Seconded.

DONNA
All in favor.
Vene, you don't get a vote.

VENE
I just want everyone to know how much I support this. Even off the record.

DONNA
Scottsdale, dear.

(Shuffling of paper as they prepare for the next agenda item.)

WRECK
Now the next item after we collect the health care selection forms. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
I'm reading now… As a result…
(Others joining in and ALL in unison)
… of the continuing challenges presented by the current economic climate…

WRECK
… That's the spirit… The company has had to reassess it's current staffing needs, and so I have these notices for both Booms and Rigger.

RIGGER
Notices?

WRECK
You need to open them yourselves.
Reading now…
It is our ongoing commitment to the dignity and privacy of our employees, hereinafter referred to as Ms X and Mr. Y, that these notices of workforce reassignment are administered and distributed without regard to ethnic proclivity, racial ambiguity, creedimincal allegiance, or religious delusion.

BOOM
Where are we being reassigned to?

RIGGER
What color is your notice?

BOOMS
Pink.

RIGGER
Right out the fucking door.

BALLAST
Benchmark denied.

WRECK
And this all brings us to the next item… the send off party for Booms and Rigger.

BALLAST
What's the budget?

WRECK
What's in the bucket?

BOOMS
Three dollars… thirty six cents.

WRECK
Looks like sodas all around.

BALLAST
There are four of us.

WRECK
Three sodas and cups.

RIGGER
You expect me to sit here and finish a soda.

BOOMS
What the hell happened to two weeks notice?

WRECK
That's what you owe them. They're paying you for two weeks and helping you initiate a workforce reduction claim.

BOOMS
What's that worth?

RIGGER
Half what you're would be making otherwise.

BOOMS
I can't live on half.

WRECK
You'll half to…(Hard laugh.)
What sodas do we want?

RIGGER
I'm going to Smitty's.

WRECK
We have to spend the bucket money in-house.

RIGGER
You can keep my dollar.

BALLAST
You never put a dollar in.

RIGGER
You can keep my fifty-five cents.

BALLAST
You put two coins in.

RIGGER
You'll never make to ten years either, boy.

WRECK
I've got fifteen.

BOOMS
You've got brown lips.

WRECK
Brown lips, Gold Plated Platinum Plan and a seventy-five percent company contribution.

RIGGER
Go buy yourself a soda.

WRECK
Don't mind if I do.

RIGGER (To Booms)
You coming?

BOOMS
I got a family.

RIGGER
Then you got more than one reason to drink.

BALLAST
Let me just grab my soda and I'll join you.

RIGGER
You might just see ten after all.

BALLAST
Can I get my soda money?

WRECK
Give me the bucket and tell me what you want.

BALLAST
An orange soda and two dollars and thirty-six cents of kiss my ass.

(Ballast, Rigger, and Booms exit.)

WRECK (Beat. Recounting change.)
Looks like a soda… and chips… and a jump on next week's fund.

DONNA
Next and last item.

BILL 2
It's a biggie though.

DONNA
We've got our new slogan.

VENE
E Quid Pluribus Verde Pro Quo Unum.

DONNA
Now we need a new direction that fits.

BILL 1
Ask and ye shall receive. If you'll look in your packets for the blue copies, you'll see that we have outlined a number of directions in line with our new slogan.

SPARTAC
How is that possible?

VENE
Inverse Serendipity.

BILL 1
You've taken a degree in economics?

VENE
I was bullshitting.

SPARTAC
So do you or don't you have a degree?

VENE
Good one, sir.

DONNA
Please don't encourage him, dear.

BILL 1
The principle of inverse serendipity states that a diversified company such as ours will be able to proffer pre-existing business plans to match any changes within the current vocabulary of progressive social poli-speak so that investors need only shred previous articulations of long term goals in favor of each subsequent more socially amenable articulations of the same.

VENE
So essentially the PIS allows us to PPBP's corresponding to any change within the PSPS's.

BILL 1
Precisely.

DONNA, SPARTAC, BILL 2
What?

BILL 1
Let's move from theory to practice.

VENE
TTP.

DONNA
Vene.

VENE
Just TCB-ing, mam.

BILL 1
Look at our sections on Water, Pharmaceuticals, and Property Development. As a result of environmental conditions, water continues to be more and more of a viable commodity and the only good commodity is the one we control. But to avoid seeming to exploit this tragedy too closely we concentrate our growth in ancillary products – rain barrels, filtering systems, piping and pumps.

SPARTAC
Seems a bit predatory.

BILL 1
Not at all, sir.

VENE
Nothing wrong with the Pope investing in diapers and daycares. He's not the one slinging seed.

BILL 1
Who really saw any of this coming?
(Vene raises his hand.)
Rhetorical, Vene.
(Hand drops.)
All these global repercussions?
(Vene starts to raise his hand then returns to note-taking.)
But they're here now. Do we spend our time assigning blame or seize opportunity?

VENE (Beat.)
OPPORTUNITY!

BILL 1
Pharmaceuticals next – again with environmental conditions, drought, overpopulation – terrible stuff – should never have happened…
(Vene starts to interject.)
But it did. It did. So what do we do? We both contribute to those foundations making charitable donations of medicines, vitamins, vaccinations all the while investing heavily in the companies developing the same. That's some good money. Good people making good money.

VENE
Good God, yes.

BILL 1
Finally, and this is out there but I think worth pursuing. Again changing environmental conditions, but there's land mass appearing as the melting continues. Stay with me on this, as some folks along the coastlines lose their current vacation homes to the rising water they will be looking for new coastal vacation homes. We could get in on the ground floor, no pun intended, of some of this emerging property development.

SPARTAC
It all seems a bit twisted.

BILL 2
Not twisted, sir, flexible. I can't argue with you on some points. We could grind our teeth and our wheels playing the blame game, we could set up committees, review how past practices contributed to current dilemmas, find and fire those responsible, issue apologies, apply for funding to clean it all up – or we could look to the future. We are exploring…

VENE
Exploiting?

BILL 2
EXPLORING ways we can help. And there is nothing wrong with helping ourselves as we help others. That is the modern meaning of charity. There is no me in E Quid Pluribus Verde Pro Quo Unum, sir.

DONNA (Stifling emotions…)
I hear Daddy's influence in how you speak.

BILL 2
That's because I've been his speech writer and publicist.

DONNA (Emotions quelled.)
Oh. Well, exactly.

VENE
Ditto and move to adjourn.

BILL 1
Move to accept the new direction for the company's programming and investment as presented, proffered, and professed.

VENE
Down boy.

DONNA
Second.

BILL 1
All in favor.

(All but Spartac and Vene raise hands.)

DONNA

You're not voting, dear.

VENE
I'm not allowed a vote.

DONNA
Dear.

SPARTAC
I understand the lure of it, but I haven't had time to consider.

BILL 2
You could abstain without affecting its passage.

DONNA
That sounds credible.

SPARTAC
Then I abstain.

BILL 1
Motion carries, the company is on its new course, the new slogan's a sure fire success, and the reigns of power have officially been passed.

VENE
Drinks on me!

DONNA
Well done, dear. Your first meeting under your belt and with no small amount of success.

BILL 2
I'll get to work on an update to the board and on the shareholder newsletter.

DONNA
Bill and Bill, we meet again tomorrow to go over the reception plans.

BILL 1
Looking forward to it.

BILL 2
I'll second that.

(All exit. Except Vene. In concert with Wreck gathers papers, straightens, arranges chairs, etc. Vene pauses to speak to the audience, lack of words, until…)

VENE

Water, drugs, and land.
New direction written all over that lot.
E Pluribus Verde… for some I'm sure.
You just keep your seats.

(Vene exits. Wreck dallies toying with speaking out as well as lights fade to black.)

Act 2

(Meeting just beginning. All four employees included.)

WRECK
Settle down. Find a seat. Come on, now. Settle in.
Welcome back Booms and Rigger. As the rest of you read in the memo …

BALLAST
There was only me left.

WRECK
As *the rest of you* read in the memo dated yesterday, Booms and Rigger have been rehired on a part-time exempt consulting basis to perform the duties of the jobs created by the recent employment restructuring.

BALLAST
I didn't see any memo.

WRECK
Have you checked your email?

BALLAST
Do I have a computer?

WRECK
I'll print a copy out after the meeting.

Welcome back again. Now according to our new organizational chart, you will each be assigned to a position best fitting your educational background and previous work experience.

RIGGER
We gonna do our old jobs?

WRECK
We will review your educational backgrounds and …

RIGGER
We gonna do our old jobs.

WRECK
I have the assignments here. Rigger you will work the floor, track inventory, restock and fill orders, and Booms you will work the floor, track inventory, restock and fill orders.

RIGGER

Couldn't last a day without us.

BOOMS
That and there's the class action paternity suit filed yesterday against the new CEO.

WRECK
As the rest of us have already read.

(Ballast clears her throat.)

I'll print a copy out after the meeting.

In the memo I have read, it states that we as employees and undisclosed potential claimants in the ongoing litigation should refrain from discussing the aforementioned litigation in order to protect the rights and privacy of all parties involved.

(All titter, nudge each other, and gossip among themselves. Enter Donna, Spartac, Bill 1, Bill 2, and Vene)

DONNA (Scolding)
You've not been at the head of this company a week and already this scandal!?

SPARTAC
I don't know any of the names on that list.

DONNA
There's a list?!

BILL 1
Well, it wouldn't be much of a class action suit without one, Mam.

SPARTAC
And I'm saying that I don't know any of them.

DONNA
You don't know or you don't remember having known any of them?

BILL 1
Well, if he doesn't remember them well enough to know, he couldn't have known them well enough to remember.

BILL 2 (After considering.)
Exactly. But more to the point, we need to take the lead in this.

DONNA
Ideas?

BILL 2

A few.

(The group gathers to discuss. Vene joins huddle but is dismissed. Beat.)

RIGGER
I knew that old boy back on the factory floor. He was chasing skirt the minute he got here.

BOOMS
I don't even wear skirts.

BALLAST
And from one claimant to another, I don't think he was the only one doing the chasing.

BOOMS
He was fine and I don't remember saying no.

BALLAST
I don't remember much talk either.

WRECK
Ladies.

BOOMS
But he needs to take responsibility.

BALLAST
And you needed your job back.

WRECK
Ladies, we don't know who all the claimants are or what other parties are named.

(Huddle breaks.)

BILL 1
It's a no-fail strategy.

SPARTAC
Are you sure?

BILL 2
Win the hearts, you win the minds.

BILL 1
Bill's written the text.

BILL 2

And Bill's decided how best to present it.

BILL 1
So if we could all just take our places.
Vene, if you could notify the staff to tune in.

(Vene crosses to phone. Phone in workers' area rings. Wreck answers, directs Ballast to switch on TV. Closed circuit – remains blank until Bill 1 cues prop and action.)

(To Spartac) Step up on the milk crate. Good. Good.
Very elevated.
Now, Donna… just off to the side. Good.
And your shawl. No, no, it's all part of the presentation. You're not really in mourning, but you can't seem too happy either.
Teleprompter ready?

BILL 2
Ready.

BILL 1
Camera?

BILL 2
You're the camera.

BILL 1
Camera?
Camera ready.
Arms up like we discussed.
(Spartac raises arms – resembling Christ's moment of doubt upon the cross.)
We need to see your palms. And you're looking up as you read.

SPARTAC
I can't see the teleprompter.

BILL 1
Eyes down then. No, that's pathetic. Keep your chin up.
Bill, can you raise the prompter?
Better?
Good.
Palms again. Good. Cue the prop.

(Video feed goes live.)

BALLAST
Here we go.

RIGGER
We should have snacks.

WRECK
Pay attention.

BILL 1
Vene, the prop!

(Vene grabs pole with rolled banner, takes up a position behind Spartac and drops what should read as the red and white bars of the US flag – no stars or field of blue, just stripes running slightly but unmistakably diagonally. Workers rise in unison, hands to hearts.)

BILL 1
And action.

SPARTAC (Awkwardly.)
Why me, Lord?

BILL 1
And cut.

(Feed goes dead. Workers are stunned.)

BILL 1
Nice work, everyone. Vene, do you know what vertical means?

VENE
Self- referential?

BILL 1
It means up and down.

VENE
Oh, self-pleasing.

BILL 1
I wanted them straight up and down. You had them crooked. This way and that. Hopefully most of the viewers will have missed your gaff.

VENE
You mean those four next door?

BILL 1

Four. Four hundred. Four million.

WRECK
It seemed a fair question.

BILL 1
We're done, sir, you can drop your arms. That's it. And off the crate.

BALLAST
I could ask the same.

RIGGER
But could you ask it in front of the prop?

BALLAST
No.

WRECK
There's the difference.

DONNA
Could we please move back onto the set agenda?
(Beat.)
Vene, if you could put that away and distribute the agenda.

(Vene complies and all gather around for another meeting.)

RIGGER
Are either of you two actually pregnant?

BALLAST
Are either of you?
Don't act as if you don't know your names aren't on the list was well.

RIGGER
I thought they were looking to prove he was my dad.

WRECK
I thought I was signing up to be named "Father of the Year."

BOOMS
So neither of you are looking to start stuffing pillows under your shirts?

RIGGER
The only thing I'm claiming is late around me is breakfast.

BOOMS
Yeah, that's what I thought. I doubt either of you two has gotten anything, and I mean anything, in the last six months?

WRECK
Hey,! I'm married.

BALLAST
That's a solid "no." What about you, stud?

RIGGER
Girl, let me tell you.

BOOMS
That's another solid "no."

RIGGER
Fine then, either of you two actually pregnant.

BALLAST
Doesn't that memo say that no one's supposed to discuss the ongoing litigation?

WRECK
That's a solid "no."

RIGGER
I wish you both were. Shake this place up.

BOOMS
Shake it down, you mean.

RIGGER
How 'bout bring it down. Look at this, me and you back here, couple of more bucks an hour than before but no medical, no life, no bennies whatsoever, and back only because you two got some lawyer to call him down on the mat for being the swinging dick he is. You think once they settle this little bit of he said she said that they're going to keep me on. They want me all fat and sassy for the time being then they'll cut me like old bait.

WRECK
You never answered, girl.

BOOMS
Well, this ain't no pillow.

BALLAST (Laying a hand on Booms belly.)

Oh my, yes. Feels like a boy.

BOOMS
Does it?

BALLAST
It does, indeed.

RIGGER
Now how can you even start to tell?

BALLAST
What you don't know could sink us all.
So is the new chiefy the daddy?

BOOMS
We can only hope.

BALLAST
Who else could it be?

(Rigger and Wreck grow agitated.)

WRECK
We're all on the clock so let's get some work done.

BALLAST
How come nobody ever knocks on my door?
(Rigger, Wreck, and Booms all scurry to get busy.)
Maybe I'll bet my own lawyer and look into that!

(Ballast joins others in work. The meeting reconvenes in the board room.)

DONNA
If we've all had a chance to review the agenda.

SPARTAC
It's only two items.

VENE
Am I taking minutes?

BILL 1
Is it a meeting of principal actors?

VENE
I don't know. Wreck's got almost as many lines as you.

DONNA
Yes, you're taking minutes, Vene. And yes, there are only two items.

VENE
Wedding plans and getting fitted for our paternity suit.
(Beat.)
In attendance… all the principal actors.

BILL 1
A suggestion?

DONNA
Bill.

BILL 1
We reconsider the order of the agenda. Deal with the unfortunate legal matters and end on a more positive note.

VENE
That's what I said. Wedding first. Baby last.
(Beat.)
Switching the agenda items.

BILL 1
I further suggest that we all agree to treat the allegations of the paternity as false.

DONNA
Well,… of course…

BILL 2
A smear campaign aimed at… aimed at… aimed at… sullying the image of… the image of… the character of one of their own made good.

BILL 1
From basement to boardroom.

BILL 2
That and more… driven into a legal rage by the misinterpretation of necessary cutbacks, these serfs…

BILL 1
Too archaic.

BILL 2
These workers?

BILL 1
Too Cold War.

BILL 2
These… these…

VENE (With mock contempt.)
Human resources…

(Receives a nod from Bill 2.)

BILL 1
… these human resources have rallied to a false cause… likely… likely to damage the progress of this company in… in… in making its full contribution to the country's economic recovery.

VENE
Scandalous!

DONNA
Thank you, Vene.
It is scandalous. So we counter the attack.

SPARTAC
Shouldn't we determine if it's viable?

BILL 1
Bad press is always viable.

SPARTAC
I mean the law suits.

BILL 1
Small potatoes. What we need is a message on point, something sure to resonate,… Bill,… a prominent figure wronged and demanding justice.

BILL 2
Got it. (Scribbling text onto a cue card.) Milk crate. No, no, no, Donna, you're the indignant spouse.

VENE
Spouse-to-be.

BILL 2

Spouse to be then. (Hands Bill 1 the cue card.) And up you go. A shawl, a shawl, we need a shawl.

Uhm… uhm… more bosomy… sternly bosomy.
Camera ready. Cue the prop.
Vene, the prop.
(Vene retrieves flag.)
And action.

(Feed goes live. Workers stop and stand with hands on hearts.)

BILL 2
Now look into the camera, stern, bosomy, and speak.

DONNA (Reading.)
Not your boy suffering.

BILL 2
Cut. (Feed dies.)
Excellent.
Let them chew on that.

(Confusion all around.)

BOOMS
Who the hell was that supposed to be?

BILL 1
Who the hell was that supposed to be?

(Confusion continues.)

RIGGER
Mother Mary?

WRECK
Not with those tits.

BALLAST
And doesn't she say, "Let it be?"

(Agreement all around.)

BILL 2
Mother Jones.

SPARTAC
Who the hell is Mother Jones?

(Shrugs all around.)

BILL 2
That's beside the point.

WRECK
What the hell did this one say again?

BALLAST
That's beside the point.

DONNA
Then what is the point?

BOOMS
Then what is the point?

BILL 2
She said it in front of the prop.

BALLAST
She said it in front of the prop.

(Agreement all around.)

RIGGER
So what do we do now?

WRECK
Get the fuck back to work!

(All return to their tasks.)

SPARTAC
So what do we do now?

VENE
Get the -------- back to work!

DONNA (After a scolding look toward Vene.)
No, I want this dealt with.

BILL 1

So the question is how do you negate the paternity suit?

BILL 2
No baby, no daddy.

SPARTAC
But I may not be the daddy anyway.

DONNA
Why “may not?” How come “am not?!”

BILL 1
Bad choice of words.

VENE
If I may.
If am not, we tie knot, but if may not, then maybe we not be knotted?

DONNA
Vene.

VENE
Not it.

SPARTAC
All I’m saying is….

BILL 1
Yes, yes, yes, yes, and I think I speak for the whole company when I say we couldn’t agree more. But the practical matter…

DONNA
The practical matter…

BILL 1
The practical matter at hand is how to void the premise of the pending litigation.

SPARTAC
Void the premise?

BILL 1
Exactly. I couldn’t have put it better myself, sir.

BILL 2
We have a pharmaceutical branch.

DONNA
Pharmaceuticals?

VENE
Exactly. I couldn't have punctuated it better myself, mam.

(Sharp stares.)

BILL 1
I need to be clear on this.

BILL 2
Since it's going in the minutes.

DONNA
Should we suspend the minutes?

BILL 1
Did you just write that down?

VENE
Verbatim.
(To Spartac.) That means word for word.

BILL 1
So then let the minutes reflect my attempt to propound a solution.
(Circling behind Vene.) Often in blind trials of new drugs, there is a control group (From behind Vene, indicates all of them.), the placebo group (Indicates Vene.), and the test subjects (Indicates the workers.)

BILL 2
All in favor?

DONNA, BILL 1 & BILL 2
Aye.

SPARTAC
So what are we voting on?

BILL 1
Exactly, sir. Let me just place that call.
Green light.

BILL 2

Vene, as a gesture of good will in these pressing times,…

BILL 1
We can be fierce competitors, contentious litigators, but still… but still…

BILL 2
But still break bread together…

BILL 1
More apropos that you know.

VENE
That means appropriate or fitting.

SPARTAC
Do you know what "Open a can" means?

BILL 1
We're springing for lunch.

BILL 2
Lunch is on us.

BILL 1
You can head down to the canteen, and they'll have a lunch tray of sandwiches for the floor, a tray for us, and even a special plate for you.

BILL 2
And, Vene… bring our tray up first.

DONNA
Oh, I think we can let…

BILL 1
Very generous sentiment, but let's do this… let's get our tray up here and we'll wait to start once we know all the others have been served.

BILL 2
Go ahead. Spread the goodwill.

(Vene exits.)

SPARTAC
You think a couple of lunch trays are going to take care of these lawsuits?

DONNA

I think the more accurate question is,… are we certain that sandwiches will take care of these lawsuits?

BILL 1
Actually, the precise question is,… will these sandwiches void the premise for the litigation?

(Enter Vene with tray of food.)

BILL 2
More immediately, however, is what color are the napkins?

(Bafflement as Vene leaves the tray and exits.)

BILL 1
White.

BILL 2
Then to answer all other questions… yes.
(Bafflement.)
Yes, I say. We can be reasonably certain that these sandwiches…

BILL 1
Or ones very much like them.

BILL 2
… or ones very much like them…

BILL 1
But with red napkins.

BILL 2
… but with red napkins…

BILL 1
And with no napkin for Vene.

BILL 2
… and with no napkin for Vene…

BILL 1
Who can use one of ours.

BILL 2
… who can use one of ours…

(Pause as Bill 2 waits for Bill 1's next amendment.)

BILL 1
… certain that these sandwiches…

BILL 2
Certain that these sandwiches… will void the premise of the pending litigation.

(Bill 1 and 2 completely satisfied; Donna and Spartac bemused. Vene enters with tray for workers.)

VENE
Eats all around.

WRECK
Eats all around.

BALLAST
Why eats all around?

WRECK
Yeah. Why eats all around?

VENE
Indeed. Why eats all around?

BALLAST
That's what we're asking you.

VENE
It is in fact what you're asking me.
(Bafflement.)
Eats all around.
(Bafflement.)

WRECK
Fair enough.

RIGGER
There's only four… You staying?

(All look at Vene.)

VENE
Moving on.

WRECK
Digging in.

(Vene exits.)

SPARTAC
So when again do we eat?

BILL 1
As soon as we're sure all is in place.

SPARTAC
And just what again is in place?

(Vene enters with single sandwich on a plate.)

BILL 2
Lunch.

VENE
I've got no napkin.

BILL 1
Dig in everyone.

(All eat.)

BALLAST
Hope you all see right through this. Hope they don't think… Hope they don't think that some half-assed tray of food changes anything.

BOOM
No changes over here. I'm still tight in the belly and getting tighter.

RIGGER
Well, ol' Wreck can say the same.

WRECK
Yeah, but six or seven or however many months from now, this'll still be here like my own little beer coaster.

BALLAST
If I hadn't forgot to take my lunch out of the fridge, I'd take a pass on all this just outta principle.

RIGGER
Principle. You fakin' knocked up. What kind of principles you got?

BALLAST
Just because it didn't take doesn't mean it wasn't done. Anyway… I'm standing in with her on principle.

RIGGER
That's why I haven't taken my name off that list either. That and I need a job.

BOOM
Could we talk about something else?

BALLAST
Sure, darling.

WRECK
And remember, "Not your boy suffering."

(Bafflement. Wreck points to monitor. Understanding blossoms. All return to quiet conversation, etc. as eating continues. As scene progresses, illness sets in with workers, progressively worsens until lines are spoken.)

BILL 1
How's that sandwich?

VENE
Fine, but it could…

BILL 1
Absolutely, we've plenty to spare.

DONNA
If we could work through the rest of lunch.
Does that suit you, Vene?

VENE
I hardly eat more than half a sandwich at any one sitting.

DONNA
Excellent.

(Vene retrieves minutes.)

The wedding reception.

SPARTAC (To Donna.)
We're doing this with them. I mean no offense, guys.

BILL 1
Absolutely not.

BILL 2
Well, maybe a little.

(Bill 1 shoots glance.)

Absolutely not.

SPARTAC
I just never imagined having minutes for this kind of thing.

BILL 1
The best record is a thorough record.
(Beat.)
Most of the time.
(Beat.)
When planning a menu.

BILL 2
You done?

DONNA
Relax, dear. I figured since we'd most likely delegate oversight of the details and the duties to Bill and Bill, and they in turn, to Vene,… why not have all three in on it?

BILL 1
Brilliant. So what can we do?

(Vene raises hand.)

VENE
Now for the next few minutes, every time you say *we*, should I just pencil my own name in?

BILL 2
Don't be ridiculous. Bill and I will still get the credit and the minutes should reflect that.
Now what can we do?

SPARTAC
By which you mean Vene.

(Laughter all around.)

BILL 1
Very good, sir.

BILL 2
Very good, indeed, and let the minutes reflect that there was general laughter all around.

DONNA
Yes, yes, alright. Let's get back on track.
Where's the reception to be held?

BILL 1
In the main conference room..

DONNA
Decorations?

BILL 1
We'll see to it.

DONNA
Guest list?

BILL 2
We'll see to it.

DONNA
Caterers?

BILL 1
Our own canteen.

BOOMS
Oh, my God!

WRECK
What is it?

BALLAST
I think she's contracting.

BOOMS
I can't be.

BALLAST

Be still. Just try and be still.

RIGGER
Christ! I feel like I'm a having a baby too.

BALLAST
Oh, Jesus. Here I go.

WRECK
What the hell?! I want my name off that paternity suit. I can't have this baby.

DONNA
Perhaps not our own canteen.

BILL 2
We'll see to it.

DONNA
Entertainment?

BILL 1
We'll see to it.

DONNA
And serving staff?

BILL 2
They should be finishing their lunches right now.

BILL 1
Vene, the milk crate.

BALLAST
Call a doctor!

RIGGER
I can't move.

WRECK
I can't have this baby.

BILL 2
Sir, if you could work the camera.

BILL 1
Mam, if you could hold the cue cards.

BILL 2
Vene, the prop.

(Spot light on Bill 2 in front of flag. Feed goes live. All but Booms stagger to their feet, hands on hearts.)

BILL 1
And reading.

BILL 2 (Taking Uncle Sam pose.)
Overtime!

BILL 1 (Stepping into the bottom of the shot.)
For qualified exempt employees only, twenty years investiture requirement to be met before clocking in, other restrictions may apply, voided if sick bank does not exceed 63 2/3 days, time and a half to apply to only those hours in excess of contractual agreement with local 638, currently under suspension due to the…

ALL IN UNISON
…continuing challenges presented by the current economic climate.

BILL 1 (Ducking out of shot.)
And cut.

(Feed falters. Bill 2 intercedes, fade dies. Wreck struggles to his feet and dials phone.)

RIGGER
How is she?

BALLAST
Worse.

BOOMS
The baby!

BALLAST
It's all going to be fine, dear.

(Phone in Conference Room rings, answered by Vene.)

BILL 1
Anything to report?

VENE
There's been an incident on the floor.

SPARTAC
An incident?

BILL 2
Of course, of course.

VENE
An incident.

BILL 2
Regrettable nonetheless.

DONNA
Should we adjourn?

BILL 2
Excellent idea.

(All exit meeting room. Workers huddle around Booms. Fade.)

Act 3

Enter Vene to check connections, turns on computer and camera, turns on monitor in meeting room, exits. Reappears on factory floor and switches on monitor. The monitor in the meeting room now projects Vene's movements on the factory floor. Vene starts to exit, thinks better of it, cuts toward stage front – makes audience complicit – then cuts through the imaginary wall separating the rooms in order to check meeting room monitor. Vene returns to factory floor and switches off monitor then makes a show of exiting properly. Reenters meeting room, switches off monitor and finishes setting up meeting room. As soon as others enter, Vene snatches up pad and begins note taking.

SPARTAC
So, one ended up in the hospital?

BILL 1
Completely unforeseen.

BILL 2
Completely.

DONNA
Completely.

BILL 1
I'm not pointing fingers but so often low income women fail to advocate for adequate prenatal care.

SPARTAC
What the hell are you talking about?

(Enter Wreck and Rigger onto factory floor. Lethargically, they go about getting coffee and taking a seat.)

BILL 2
Bill's dead on. In most urban areas the ratio of low weight births, premature births, complications…

(Spartac and Bill 2 sit so as to mirror Wreck and Rigger.)

DONNA
Enough, Bill. I'm tired of hearing about it.
Vene, stop writing. The meeting hasn't begun. I'll tell you when we start.
Is all the tech set up and operating properly?

VENE

Done.

(Bill 1 crosses and switches on monitor. Live feed of Wreck and Rigger appears.)

BILL 1
Can they hear us when it's on?

VENE
Only if it's turned on to broadcast on their end.

BILL 1
And is it?

VENE
No. I was to call down when we wanted to conference them in.

BILL 2
Hard at work as usual.

SPARTAC
Is that a picture of us or them?

BILL 2 (Waving in order to test Spartac's theory.)
No, it's them. They're the ones sitting on their asses getting paid.

SPARTAC
Any historical precedent for that?

BILL 2
As a matter of fact, one of the founding pillars of capitalism…

DONNA
Can we settle down?

SPARTAC
Are we going to talk about the girl who went to the hospital?

DONNA
It's first on the agenda. So everyone get their coffee and we'll try to get through the company's business before we deal with this spate of employee grievances.

(Just as Ballast and Booms enter onto the factory floor, Vene crosses over to switch off the monitor. Bill 1 notes preemption.)

BALLAST

Look at you two.

WRECK
What's she doing here?

BOOMS
I'm fine. I'm fine.

RIGGER
You should be home resting.

BOOMS (Beat.)
They killed my boy.

WRECK
It was a boy?

BALLAST
Don't ask her any questions.

RIGGER
We had a meeting last night.

BALLAST
Yeah, I can still smell it on you.

RIGGER
We had every reason to drink.

BALLAST
When don't you?

WRECK
What's up your ass?

BALLAST
Up my ass? What's up my ass?
You think what happened to her yesterday was an accident?

WRECK
It happened to us all. We all got laid out. Bad mayo. A bit of old ham.

BOOM
What happed to me doesn't happen because of a bit of old ham.

WRECK

Alright, alright. Get some coffee in you. And we'll tell you about what we've decided.

DONNA
Alright, alright.
Vene,… Item one – update on the paternity suits.

BOOMS
You don't lose a child because of a bit of bad ham.

BILL 1
The class action paternity suit has been dropped. All the women involved have failed to show proof of a viable pregnancy, and apparently in a clinical error, the last potential claimant was, in fact,… a man.

(Chuckles all around the boardroom.)

BOOMS
A little boy.

BALLAST
Don't you worry. We aren't going to forget and we aren't going to let them walk away from it.

WRECK
Damn right.

RIGGER
We decided that last night.

BALLAST
How many pitchers?

(Wreck and Rigger signal to each other but cannot settle on whether it was four or five.)

WRECK
Apparently more than three and less than seven.

DONNA
Item two…

SPARTAC
Wait. But one of them at least… was pregnant?

BILL 1
For the litigation to move forward there needed to be proof of a viable pregnancy.
Lacking such, voids any grounds for further discovery.

BALLAST
So after all that… consultation,… do you have a game plan?

RIGGER
All we got are headaches.

BILL 2
It is not unexpected for a man such as yourself,…
Coming from a similar background…

BILL 1
As far as you know…

BILL 2
As far as you know…
(Bafflement on the part of Spartac, Donna, and Vene.)
…to empathize with such a… a… simplistic…

BILL 1
Quite.

BILL 2
…arcane...

BILL 1
That too.

BILL 2
…set of values. There is a complexity to the responsibilities at this level of management. The world is no longer black and white…

VENE
Shades of gray.

BILL 2
…but shades of gray…

VENE
Some of them quite beautiful.

BILL 2
… Some of them quite beautiful…

VENE

Particularly in the tax codes.
(Stares all around.)
Since none of you actually said that, I won't bother writing it down.

DONNA
Item two…

BALLAST
So did you come up with anything… besides your headaches?

BILL 1 (Rising.)
Investment updates, starting with pharmaceuticals…

BOOMS
We have the fact of what they did to me and my baby.
I say we bring that up and keep bringing it up until we get some kind of answer.

BILL 1
We've had some recent progress with a particular compound that looks to bring a sizable return in that it will appeal to a broad market… On a side note, it is a product designed to give women more control over what is perhaps the most important decision in their lives… (Nodding to Donna)… particularly proud of this fact… Details to follow once the patent application has been officially recognized and further trials are completed… mostly in our overseas facilities.

DONNA
Other developments?

(Bill 1 shuffles papers.)

WRECK
That's not bad. We could do that, but ol' Rigger here had something like an idea last night.

BALLAST
What was it?

BILL 1
Investment in water resources are strong.

RIGGER
Girl, I had all kinds of ideas.

BALLAST
Anything we could use?

BILL 1
The only ripple in the pond, so to speak, is the insistence on collective bargaining.

WRECK
What was that one?... The one where you were up dancing all around?

BILL 1
That was your cue, Vene.

(Vene jumps up and switches on the monitor. Picture appears but without sound. This starts to elicit concern until the antics of Rigger and Wreck distract and baffle all.)

RIGGER
Oh yeah, when I was in high school this group came in and acted out this scene about date rape and stuff so we could see it from the victim's point of view. I was thinking we could do the same, show them all how it really is… boss man… to worker.

(As scene continues Rigger and Wreck should engage in ridiculous physical comedy representing abuse of authority and exploitation – political, social, and sexual.)

RIGGER
We should put on our own little social theater.

WRECK
Right with you, brother.

RIGGER
Put a camera on this.

WRECK
Put a camera on that.

RIGGER
Put a camera on this.

WRECK
And this.

RIGGER
And this.

BALLAST
They already have one on the both of you.

RIGGER
Of course they do.

WRECK

Got a camera on this. And a camera on that.

BALLAST
No, they really do.

RIGGER
Yeah, alright. They better be able to see me, otherwise I'd look a right fool doing this.

WRECK
And this.

BOOMS
How do you think it looks to them?

RIGGER
Social satire.

WRECK
Political parody.

RIGGER
Once it's been all broadcast and shit…

WRECK
…put into pixels and plasma and shit…

RIGGER
It becomes… it becomes…

BALLAST
Ridiculous and removed…

BOOMS
… and shit.

RIGGER
Valid. It becomes valid.

WRECK
Valid in the house.

(Vene picks up and dials phone.)

RIGGER

I'll concede that down here, in this vacuum, this just looks plain silly, but when they see it, it'll read like a wake-up call for social justice.

WRECK
That's how we roll.

(Phone in factory rings. Ballast crosses, answers, listens, and hangs up.)

RIGGER
Boss man… worker… women… worker… factory floor… board room…

BALLAST
They've turned the other end of all this on and are watching you right now.

RIGGER
What's that?

BALLAST
They got a camera on that.

WRECK and RIGGER (Returning to seats.)
Oh.

RIGGER
Well I hope that now they'll see us in a different light.

DONNA
Have them turn on their end.

(Ballast receives message and switches on the monitor. Awkward moments as people settle in and take a moment to size each other up.)

WRECK
Hey there, Spartac.

RIGGER
What do we look like from your end?

WRECK
What's the word, brother?

SPARTAC
Are they talking?

BILL 2
We can't hear them.

(Vene on phone again to Ballast.)

RIGGER
Did he just tell us to stop talking?

WRECK
Of course you can't hear us, brother, if you're not going to let us talk.

(Ballast makes adjustments.)

BALLAST
Can you hear me now?

DONNA
How 'bout you not infringe copyright.

WRECK
Hey there, brother.

RIGGER
Hey, brother.

SPARTAC
Hey, Wreck, everyone.

BILL 1
Building bridges already … but before we begin in earnest, I want to be sure both sides understand what we're looking to accomplish during this exchange – and for that I'll turn things over briefly to Bill, whom I'm sure you all know, to give the framework for today's teleconference.

BILL 2
Hi, everyone.

First let me just say that "In the words of Chief Justice Hughes, spoken in a case decided a few days after President Franklin D. Roosevelt's first inauguration, the problem then confronting the new Administration was clearly set forth. 'When industry is grievously hurt, when producing concerns fail, when unemployment mounts and communities dependent upon profitable production are prostrated, the wells of commerce go dry.'"

To that let me add, "Although it was conceded that practically all poultry handled by Schechters came from outside the State, and hence via interstate commerce, the Court held, nevertheless,

that once the chickens came to rest in the Schechter's wholesale market, interstate commerce in them ceased."

Which leads me to add, "Applied repeatedly in subsequent cases as a restraint on federal and state power, freedom of contract was also alluded to as a property right. 'Included in the right of personal liberty and the right of private property – partaking of the nature of each – is the right to make contracts for the acquisition of property.'"

And finally I want to remind us all that "Justice Harlan, pointing to the abundance of medical testimony tending to show that the life expectancy of bakers was below average, that their capacity to resist diseases was low, and that they were peculiarly prone to suffer irritations of the eyes, lungs, and bronchial passages, concluded that the very existence of such evidence left the reasonableness of the measure open to discussion and that the latter fact itself put the statute within legislative discretion."

That said. I look forward to a candid exchange and great progress.

(Atta boys all around in the conference room. Dumbfounded silence on the factory floor.)

WRECK
Somebody tell me they got that.

BALLAST
There was something about being prostrate and going dry.

RIGGER
Do they usually serve drinks at these things?

BALLAST
And something about chickens and freedom of contract.

WRECK
There's a fundamental part of my body that exercising it freedom to contract right now.

BOOMS
And what's with the below average life expectancy of bakers?

RIGGER
Don't be fucking with the flow of donuts.

WRECK
Don't be tellin' me, Spartac, that you got the drift of that.

SPARTAC
Well, I know that we can't afford down time.

(Crossing to the phone.) WRECK
Down time. I'll give him down time.

(Vene answers phone. As combatants pair off the scene will digress in to cacophony.)

DONNA
Dear, I think Bill should field the direct questions.

SPARTAC
Even a direct question directed directly at me?

BILL 1
Happy to, but I'd like that to still use that term, "down time." It sounds like something to be avoided.

WRECK
Let me speak to the only one who's ever worked a day in his life.

VENE
Phone.

DONNA
Dear.

SPARTAC
I can handle a phone call.

BILL 2
Hi, again.

BALLAST
Hey, baby, you got more big words?

WRECK
What the hell is going on up there?

SPARTAC
When I was down with you lot, you walked away.

WRECK
Before my time.

BILL 2
No, we're ready to listen.

SPARTAC
You been here longer than me.

WRECK
Not my department, then.

BOOMS
You want to listen to how you killed my baby?

DONNA
Here we go.

BOOMS
What did she say?

BILL 1
We all are deeply saddened by what happened.

BALLAST
And what exactly did it look like from up there?

BILL 2
Norwalk's Virus. Most prevalent in confined social environments… convalescent homes.

RIGGER
Convalescents?

(Booms takes out cell phone and begins texting.)

BILL 2
Cruise ships.

RIGGER
This ain't no cruise ship.

BILL 2
Prisons.

RIGGER
Now you're getting warmer.

BALLAST
I asked Billy Number One not you. Where's another phone.

(As Vene crosses to answer different phone, Rigger begins his mimed political theater again.)

BALLAST
Put the spin doctor on.

VENE
Phone.

BILL 1
Who is it?

BOOMS
I got your number in here somewhere.

BALLAST
Can he see me on the screen? Hand him the phone.

VENE
It's the angry one.

BILL 1
Which angry one?

BALLAST
The angry one shaking the phone, you pencil neck.

VENE
Pencil Neck.

BILL 1
Thank you, Vene. Please let her know that I'm tied up in a meeting right now, but if she'd like to leave her contact information.

BILL 2
It's a family at the zoo being attacked by monkeys!

(Rigger waves off the guess and continues.)

VENE
Mr. Pencil Neck would like to thank you…

BALLAST
Put him on the damn phone.

DONNA (Answering her cell phone.)
I don't even know what these letters mean.

BOOMS
Let me spell it out for you.

BILL 1
Did she leave a number?

BALLAST
Tell the Little He-Bitch I'm watching him not come to the phone.

VENE
Little He-Bitch, she's…

BILL 1
What did you just call me?!

VENE
She, sir, she's taken to calling you Little He-Bitch.
It think it's a term of endearment.
Mostly.

BOOMS
There you go.

DONNA
You can't say that to me!

BOOMS
That's why I abbreviated it.

DONNA
Fine then.

VENE
What if we just abbreviate it to LHB?

BILL 1
If she's not going to leave a number…

BALLAST
Tell him to look at me. Look at the screen. Look at me.

BILL 2
It’s a family at Disneyland being attacked by the cast of the Little Mermaid!

(Rigger waves off the guess and continues.)

BOOMS
This doesn’t mean anything.

DONNA
Oh, do you need me to spell it out for you?

BOOMS
I need you to update your status to DWB.
Dead… White… Bitch.

DONNA
Let me help you translate your status.

BILL 2
It’s political theater with social commentary!

RIGGER
Yes! Yes! So you see it?!

BILL 2
It’s completely invalid.
Who’s your audience?

RIGGER
Who’s watching?

BILL 2
Just me.

RIGGER
Oh.

BALLAST
Who am I talking to then?

BOOMS
No way he’d take *that* over me?!

WRECK
You’re talking like you don’t even know where you come from.

SPARTAC (Hanging up and therefore speaking into the screen.)
Doesn't matter where I came from. Matters where I am.

DONNA (To Spartac.)
You considered having a child with that?!

BILL 1 (To Vene.)
You don't think she really knows who I am do you?

BILL 2
The problem is you only ever reach the individual.

(Vene steps over and hangs up phone, switches off workroom monitor, takes remote and turns off boardroom monitor.)

VENE
Turn off everything else as well.
(Bill 1 starts to comment.)
LHB… thank you.
(Donna starts to comment.)
DWB… thank you.
(Beat.)
I stopped taking minutes hours ago, so at some level none of this, even what I'm apparently saying now is really happening.
(Beat.)
So if its going to count for anything at all, then I need to write it down.
Everyone… I'm going to switch it all back on, sit back down, and take some notes.
(Turns all the electronics back on and takes his seat.)

BILL 2
That said, I think I speak for all of us gathered here and gathered there that we look forward to a candid exchange and great progress.

(Beat.)

WRECK
We faxed a set of demands.

BALLAST
Employee-directed expectations.

WRECK
We faxed a set of 'employee-directed expectations.'

SPARTAC
We've read 'em.

BILL 1
We've received and given the employee-directed expectations commensurate consideration.

SPARTAC
So you can see where this is going.

WRECK
What other choice did we have?

BILL 1 (Prompting Spartac.)
We've received and given…

SPARTAC
I just don't want you to get your hopes up.

BALLAST
There's no reason we won't make it this time.

BILL 1 (Prompting.)
… and given the employee-directed…

WRECK
We've got a few new tricks.

BALLAST
After what went down yesterday, we've got to move things along for all of us.

SPARTAC
But it never happens for all, does it? Maybe one or two squeak out from under. I looked to bring more with me, but in the end, when the rubber hit the road, they stalled. They couldn't move. So it's never *all*. It's one or two … or just me.

BOOMS
Under. That's where you like us the best though, isn't it?

BILL 1 (Prompting.)
… directed expectations commensurate consideration.

SPARTAC
I'm just trying to tell it straight.

BALLAST

You're a real public service announcement.

(Beat.)

SPARTAC
We've received and given the employee-directed expectations commensurate consideration.

WRECK
Run tape.

RIGGER
What?

BILL 1 (Prompting.)
And will provide…

RIGGER
Run tape… why don't we just roll out the barrel?

WRECK
Insert the disc then. Download the thumb drive. Upload the MP3.

SPARTAC
And will provide…

(Image of guillotine appears on both monitors and monitors slowly begin to rise, Ballast mimes at 'cranking' or 'raising the workers begin to drum the table quietly then more vigorously until the monitors reach their full height.)

BILL 1
And will provide…

SPARTAC
I've already said that…

BILL 1
And will provide…

DONNA
What is that?

BILL 2
Guillotine.

BOOMS

Gill – o – teen.

BILL 2
In the words of Dr. Joseph-Ignace Guillotin, “The mechanism falls like thunder; the head flies off, blood spurts, the man is no more.”

DONNA
They wouldn’t dare!

BILL 2
Aristocrats and Royalty were dragged out of their estates and palaces, tried, and executed.

BILL 1
Is it legal?

(Drumming reaches crescendo.)

RIGGER
Falls like thunder!

BALLAST & RIGGER
Falls like thunder!

BILL 2
It’s mob rule.

(With fists raised and pumping in time) BOOMS, BALLAST & RIGGER
Falls like thunder!

DONNA
Well, do something!

SPARTAC (Incredulous.)
Me?!

DONNA
Wasn’t this your thing? Isn’t this what you did? Isn’t this how we met?

WRECK, BOOMS, BALLAST & RIGGER
Falls like thunder!
Falls like thunder!

BILL 1
I’m still fuzzy on the legality of mob rule.

DONNA

I can't hear myself think. Vene, you do something.

(Vene crosses to remote, switches off meeting room monitor and sound from the floor. Workers continue to mime their threat from beneath their image of the guillotine.)

DONNA
Thank you.

SPARTAC
This is not what I did.

DONNA
It's what you did to Daddy.

BILL 2
There is both mythical and historical precedent for son-princes killing off their father-kings as a prerequisite for ascending to the throne.

(Slight puzzlement.)

DONNA
But he removed my father not his.

(Bill 1 and Bill 2 clear their throats with discomfort.)

BILL 2
The point is that there is a precedent for how the classic ruler figure goes about gaining power.

(The pantomime protest will start to lose energy until eventually all four are seated and quiet.)

BILL 1
What I think Bill here is trying to say is that your fiancé has, by virtue of his successful ascension, severed most if not all of the exploitable ties to his previous colleagues.

BILL 2
And a hearty well done, sir, on such an achievement.

BILL 1
Indeed.

SPARTAC
Fine, fine. Congrats all around. But I only just got here and I'm not looking to be dragged down quite so soon.

DONNA
No one's dragging anyone anywhere.

BILL 1
Absolutely not.

BILL 2
We need a rallying point that will distract them from these… incessant concerns,… an overarching, preemptive, archetypal…

DONNA
A common enemy…

BILL 2
Precisely. What do we all fear?

BILL 1
Communism.

BILL 2
Have you looked at the calendar?

DONNA
Educated voters?

BILL 2
Damn scary, mam, but no. This lot doesn't vote and wouldn't seek public office even if they knew how.

SPARTAC
The individual.

BILL 2
Yes.

BILL 1
Yes?

BILL 2
Oh, yes.

BILL 1
But were a nation founded on expanding the rights …

BILL 2

Oh please. We're a nation founded on collective individualism.
You can choose to support any sports team you want…

SPARTAC
But you'd better fucking choose a sports team.

BILL 2
You can choose to drive any pick-up you want…

SPARTAC
But you'd better fucking drive a pick-up.

BILL 2
You can choose to drink any beer, wine, or shine you want…

SPARTAC
But you'd better fucking drink something.

DONNA
So what is it then we fear?

BILL 2
Rank individuality.

(Cutting off the follow-up questions with each new sentence.)

Because it stultifies.
It undermines the core of the free enterprise system.
It attacks our most essential democratic principle... the need for an ever growing lowest common denominator.

BILL 1
Vene, switch it back on.

DONNA
They'll be in a frenzy by now.

(Vene turns on monitor and sound. Guillotine appears but the furor has declined into half-hearted protest.)

WRECK
Down with thunder.

BALLAST
Falls like…

WRECK & RIGGER
Falls like thunder.

BILL 2
We have a common enemy.

RIGGER
Where is the motherfucker?

BILL 1 (Stage whisper.)
Is the prop available?

VENE
We can't clear the screen.

DONNA
Keep going, Bill.

BILL 2
I say, that's right,… we have a common enemy.

RIGGER
Who?

BILL 2
The rank individual.

BOOMS
Who?

WRECK
Is there just one of them, then?

RIGGER
Let the man explain.

(Until she speaks, Ballast's fury grows. She circulates among her coworkers to rally them back to her view of their cause.)

BILL 1
Maybe he follows sports…

SPARTAC
But only maybe…

BILL 1

Maybe he gets the *need* for more torque…

SPARTAC
But only maybe…

BILL 1
Maybe he gets the *need* for a faster download…

DONNA
But only maybe…

BILL 1
Maybe he appreciates the *full* adequacy of the American style lager.

BILL 2
But you can bet he's not using the same tap as you…

BILL 1
Maybe he owns a nice, big, flat screen TV.

DONNA
He's not a true subscriber.

SPARTAC
He's too good to pay to watch advertising like the rest of us.

BILL 1
He's not anything like the rest of us…

BILL 2
He's a rank individual.

BILL 1
And they're everywhere.

DONNA
Like sleeper cells.

(Beat. As all wink and nod congratulations to each other.)

BALLAST
(Flatly.) Terrifying.
(Pointedly.) But until our demands are addressed, we've decided to boycott pharmaceuticals.

(Stunned silence.)

BOOMS
Prescription and over the counter.

(One by one the workers empty their pockets, purses, jackets, etc. of pill containers.)

(Rising.) RIGGER
Thelma. Thelma. Thelma.

(Bafflement all around.)

(Rallying the others to join.) RIGGER
Thelma. Thelma. Thelma.

WRECK & RIGGER
Thelma! Thelma! Thelma!

DONNA
Switch it off.

BOOMS, WRECK & RIGGER
Thelma! Thelma! Thelma!

(Vene snatches the remote. Workers return to miming their protest.)

DONNA
Well, that was goddamn brilliant.

SPARTAC
Who is Thelma?

BILL 1
I think they mean Selma.

BILL 2
On a standardized test with multiple choice, Thelma would read pretty much like Selma.

(Nods all around as the mimed protest once again loses steam.)

VENE
But the bus boycott was in Montgomery.

(Consternation.)

BILL 2

Well hopefully, for the sake of accreditation and so that none of them get left behind, that won't be among their options.

DONNA
Is it legal for them to do this?

SPARTAC
It's their money.

DONNA
No dear. It's our money that we've paid them with the full expectation…

VENE
Full and fair expectation…

DONNA
Full and fair expectation that they pay it back to us in one manner or another…

BILL 2
With interest…

DONNA
With interest…

(Chanting among workers almost burned out.)

VENE
With full and fair interest…

DONNA
With full and fair interest…

VENE
Wrapped up in a bow…

DONNA
Wrapped up in a…

(Chanting ceases.)

SPARTAC
They'll never be able to follow through on it.

BILL 1
And you know this how?

SPARTAC
The group will never hold. It never holds in the face of self-sacrifice… too much… instinctive concern for self over sacrifice.

BILL 2
God bless the spirit of individualism.

BILL 1
But not rank individualism!

BILL 2
But not rank individualism!

BILL 1
Take us live, Vene.

(Vene uses remote.)

Fellow employees… we must present a unified… thing of resistance… in the face of… of the stultifying effects… of rank individualism

VENE
Ism… ism… ism…

(Beat.)

RIGGER
Falls like Thelma, falls like Thelma.

BOOMS & RIGGER
Falls like Thelma. Falls like Thelma!

SPARTAC
Two days, tops.
And you know it.

BILL 2
Commensurate consideration…

WRECK, BALLAST, BOOMS & RIGGER
Falls like Thelma! Falls like Thelma!

DONNA
You're all rank!

WRECK, BALLAST, BOOMS & RIGGER

Falls like Thelma! Falls like Thelma!

DONNA (Same meter and emphasis as chant.)
Rank, rank, rank, rank!

BILL 1
Remember… thing of resistance!

(Spartac moves to gather all around him and vacate the room.)

DONNA (As to the image of the guillotine.)
Is it just going to *hang* there?

WRECK, BALLAST, BOOMS & RIGGER
Falls like Thelma! Falls like Thelma!

(All but Vene exit. Beat. Vene crosses to a phone. Phone in worker's room rings. Ballast answers.)

(Waving the others silent.) BALLAST
They've gone… they've gone.

RIGGER
Falls like Thelma! Falls like Thelma!

(Beat. As the workers continue scene, Vene wanders and collects/straightens conference room.)

WRECK
So they cleared out?

BOOMS
What does that mean?

RIGGER
We won the first round.

BALLAST
Or that it's cocktail hour.

WRECK
That was a sweet idea to threaten to boycott the meds.

BALLAST
It's not just a threat. We're off meds.

(Incredulously.) WRECK
Right.

(Incredulously.) BOOMS
Right.

BALLAST
And we're all going to stick to it.

(Incredulously.) WRECK
Right.

(Incredulously.) BALLAST
Right.
(Beat.)
What?

RIGGER
Don't get me wrong. I'm behind the whole thing 100%. We all are. (Gets nods all around.)
But I got this back thing.

WRECK
And you know how my ankles are.

BOOMS
I that that sinus thing and my elbow from last week.

RIGGER
So it's clear that we *want* to back the move 100%.

WRECK
Falls like Thelma?

BOOMS
100% falls like Thelma.

(Beat. Ballast will watch and listen and foresee defeat as scene her coworkers continue in their logic.)

Wait.
We threatened to boycott our meds, right?

WRECK
Right.

(Begins to separate bottles by name.) BOOMS
So I boycott my meds. And you boycott your meds.
Buuuuuuuut, *you* never agreed to boycott *my* meds, or Rigger's or Miss B's over there.
(Beat.)
What's the matter, Momma B? You look a little down.

(Rooting through his bottles.) RIGGER
I was taking something for down.

(Searching through hers as well.) BOOMS
Who's not taking something for down.

WRECK
Oh, I got what this cures in spades.

(Ballast recedes as others circle the table like a buffet conspiring until Rigger sees Ballast's utter dejection.)

RIGGER
Guys… guys…

BOOMS
No, no, no, no,… we leave these right here. We don't touch these.

WRECK
A symbol of our resistance.

RIGGER
We bring what we got from home tomorrow and set up a swap meet in the parking lot.

BOOMS
That was my last bottle of that one.

RIGGER
Which one?

BOOMS
The one Wreck needed.

WRECK
Oh, I gotta have that one.

BOOMS
I can't refill it?

RIGGER
But you can.

WRECK
You gotta.

RIGGER
Just don't take any yourself.

BOOMS
Right.

(Booms, Wreck & Rigger all exit happily. Beat. Ballast searches the table, finds and takes the needed tablet, sits in a chair and stares up at the guillotine. Lights fade. Guillotines light the stage. Beat. All black.)

Act 4

(Lights rise. Monitor in boardroom is dark. The guillotine glows above the heads of the workers. In boardroom, Bill 2 works among a pile of newspapers and books finalizing notes. In worker's lounge, Wreck stands as others sit around the table now covered with a massive pile of pill containers. Workers are dressed as valets or catering staff.)

WRECK
Please stop skipping ahead.

RIGGER
How many pages are there?

WRECK
Ten, maybe twelve. But if we vote yes on items twenty-six and twenty-seven and no on eighteen and thirty-four…

RIGGER
What?

WRECK
We've got pages of choices that their letting us make.

BALLAST
I can't find one of them that has anything to do with our demands.

RIGGER
Am I reading this right?... This is about getting basic cable in the break room?

BOOMS
What about what happened to me?

BALLAST
What about the boycott?

WRECK
Look at the table, woman. That's a whole pile of boycott.

BALLAST
They're all empty.

RIGGER
They don't know that.

BALLAST

I'll bet they do.

WRECK
There's one here about new vending machines.

BOOMS
Do any of you remember what happened to me?

RIGGER
You mean how you were planning to work that stretched belly of yours like a crow bar?

WRECK
Shut it, Rigger.
We ain't forgot.

BALLAST
What happened to you and then what they tried to do the fix it got us to the boycott.

RIGGER
Absolutely… and now we get to vote on our preferences for colors they'll have us use to repaint the lounge here.

BALLAST
Let me see that list.

WRECK
That's right. Take your time.

BOOMS
Are they at least offering to build covered parking?

WRECK
What this is saying is that we can choose how to mark the spaces should they ever decide to build it.

(All settle in to reading the list of options. Beat. Enter Vene. He turns on the monitor. For a brief time, he and Bill 2 watch the workers pouring through their choices. Vene then switches to the image of the guillotine.)

BILL 2
Must we?

VENE
It increases the pathos.

BILL 2

You buy that?

VENE
How ‘bout it’s only fair since that’s what they’re sitting under?

BILL 2
You expect me to buy that?

(Enter Donna and Bill 1.)

DONNA
For God’s sake, Vene, shut that damn thing off.
(To Bill 2.) And I’ve been looking for you for the last half hour. Have they voted?

(Vene switches monitor the view of the workers.)

BILL 2
They’re just sitting down to it.

DONNA
This is going to work?

BILL 2
Absolutely.

(Enter Spartac.)

SPARTAC
Have they voted?

(Donna points to screen.)

BILL 1
You both shouldn’t be back here during your own wedding reception.

DONNA
He’s right. What if one of the guests wanders in looking for us?

VENE
Not a chance. We’re an equity house. This is it.
(Stunned pause all around.)
Now when this plays in Paducah, you can bet every town councilman’s daughter will be on stage with a tray of canapés.

BILL 2
Not much on illusion are ya?

(Vene switches monitor to guillotine.)

BILL 2
That's allusion.

VENE (Switches monitor back.)
Touché.

DONNA
But what if they opt to continue the boycott?

BILL 1
Sales have actually been steady.

SPARTAC
No one's going off their meds…

BILL 1
No one's going off their placebos either…

SPARTAC
Everyone's still filling up their tanks…

VENE
Who doesn't love to get tanked?

DONNA
So why give in at all?

BILL 1
Bill.

BILL 2
In essence, we're not.

(Wreck rises and crosses to the phone.)

We're making a nice little cocktail… mostly American with a dash of South Africa… we're conceding to the vote without touching the location, concentration, or structure of the wealth.

(Vene answers phone.)

VENE
They're looking for clarification on question's 26 and 27.

(All but Bill 2 quickly flip through pages of contract. Vene will relay explanation to Wreck who relays it to workers.)

BILL 2
Excellent question. Philosophical points. Definitions really.

BILL 1
A "yes" vote on the first concedes that convergence is equivalent to community.

BILL 2
That by the fact that we all find ourselves under the same roof, so to speak, for fifty weeks out of the year.

VENE (With his hand over the phone.)
Forty-four for management.

BILL 1
Relevant to this room, not so much to the two-weekers.

DONNA
Poor two-weekers.

SPARTAC
Yeah, I hated being a tweeker.

BILL 2
As I was saying,… that this coincidence can be stretched to imply a commonality of design.

BILL 1
A "yes" vote on the second concedes that historically the successful community relies on a top down model in decision-making and that this convergent community sees no reason to break with precedent.

VENE
Oh, it's a consent to coercion clause.

SPARTAC
Watch yourself.

VENE
I covered the mouthpiece.

BILL 2
Good man.

BILL 1
And “yes” votes on those two items activates the C double B option as described in Amendment A.

(But for Bill 2, frantic flipping by all.)

SPARTAC (Flatly, setting aside his copy of the contract.)
Bill, what’s the C double B option?

BILL 1 (Proudly.)
The Cereal at the Breakfast Bar.

RIGGER
We get to choose the cereals!?

BALLAST
There are three pages of choices.

BILL 1
A “yes” vote on 26 and 27 allows each employee to make two selections and of the top three selections…

BILL 2
That receive a simple majority…

BILL 1
I was going to say that… that receive a simple majority, two will be vetted by the contractually recognized authority of this convergent community.

(Whispers among the workers, consensus, and a message relayed to Wreck.)

VENE
They’re asking just what the hell all that means.

DONNA
Just tell them to pick their favorite cereals.

BILL 1
But by secret ballot.
This is no sham democracy. They make their selections in secret, and then we’ll tally and announce the results.

RIGGER
I can only choose two?

WRECK

Maybe we should talk about our choices.

BALLAST
This is it!? The cereal thing is the last item!?

BOOMS
Oooh, they've got my favorite!

BALLAST
Booms… darlin',… we started this because of you.

BOOMS
And look at all these pages. We made them sit down and come up with this.

RIGGER
Look at all these choices.

WRECK
Ballast… darlin',… we're getting to choose.

(The workers engage in a lively mimed debate as the scene plays out.)

SPARTAC
Look at them.

VENE
Civics and cereal. God Bless the US of A.

DONNA
How much is this going to cost us?

BILL 1
Bill.

BILL 2
Thanks, Bill. We really came up with this contract as a kind of wedding gift.

BILL 1
It promises everything…

BILL 2
While delivering nothing new.

SPARTAC
Not even the cereal?

BILL 1
They'll never be able to reach a simple majority.

BILL 2
What my research has shown is that by sheer luck rather than design, choice itself can essentially confound the desire for social progress. Once the template of democracy…

BILL 1
Capitalist democracy…

VENE
That's a bit redundant.

DONNA
Don't venture above your pay grade.

VENE
Now that's aristo-corpo-cractic.

SPARTAC
Vene.

BILL 2
… the template of capitalist democracy is in place, real choice no longer exists.

BILL 1
All those cereals… all those paint chips… for your houses… for your trucks.

BILL 2
And even if by coincidence a simple majority is reached, it's all flour paste and corn syrup anyway.

BILL 1
And we've been dabbling in those futures for years.

BILL 2
And making tax deductible contributions to the charitable organizations forever trying to feed the world's poor.

BILL 1
And to those fighting the great tragedy of childhood obesity.

BILL 2
So that even if we raise social consciousness and a surplus, we also have a range of alternative markets.

BILL 1
Win, win.

BILL 2
Win, win.

VENE
And many happy tax returns.

DONNA (Beat. Looking to regain veneer of sincerity.)
What a wonderful gift. What a thoughtful gift. Isn't it dear?

SPARTAC
I think I should feel sick.

VENE
But…

SPARTAC
Shouldn't I?

DONNA & the BILLS
No, no, no. Not at all.

VENE
The people have spoken.

DONNA & the BILLS
The people have spoken.

DONNA
The people have spoken.

VENE (Back to phone. Wreck picks up.)
The people have indeed spoken and now want to know if they're to get lunch?

DONNA
Did we promise them lunch?

SPARTAC
We never got lunch when I came in on Saturdays.

DONNA
And they're not getting any today. Send them home.

(Vene relays messages.)

VENE
Are they to work up to lunch?

BILL 2
Are they done voting?

VENE
Yes.

BILL 1
Have they returned their ballots and sealed the envelopes?

VENE
Yes.

DONNA
Will they turn that ridiculous image off?

VENE
Yes.

(Rigger crosses over and flips some switch so that the image of the guillotine disappears. Beat.)

DONNA
Then they're off the clock.

(Beat. Ballast, Booms & Rigger start for the exit.)

DONNA
Except for those working at the reception.

(Ballast, Booms & Rigger spin, acknowledge how they are all dressed and return to their chairs. Each will exit as duty calls. Ballast and Booms to role as servers. Wreck and Rigger to role as valets continually trying to have more down time with paper and feet up than the other.)

BILL 1
You go and enjoy your reception.

BILL 2 (Sing song voice with randy movements.)
This is a banner day.

SPARTAC

Which means the honeymoon.

DONNA (Happily coy.)
Stop.

SPARTAC
Husband's prerogative.

BILL 1
It's in the pre-nup!

DONNA (Giddy.)
It is not!

(Enter Ballast and Booms as wait staff. Mood immediately changes. In passing her tray, Booms will intentionally avoid Donna.)

DONNA
Spartac, not in front of the staff.

VENE
So where are you headed for your honeymoon?

BILL 1
Asks the man who made the reservations.

BILL 2
Why are you still here? The negotiations are over.

VENE
Oh, you don't need me to repeat for you what you couldn't say directly to someone else?

BILL 1
There is a protocol to follow.

DONNA
Thank you, Vene. Why don't you take the rest of the day.

VENE
With pay?

(Ballast and Booms turn.)

DONNA
Don't be silly.

(Ballast and Booms exit.)

SPARTAC
And Vene, if you're not carrying a tray, head out by way of the stairs.

VENE
Right.
Oh, and Bills,…
… don't let them leave without telling them that they're related and shouldn't procreate.

DONNA
Vene!

SPARTAC
What!?

BILL 2
Don't undercut the narrative.

VENE
Nasty habit, I know … blame Vonnegut.

DONNA
Someone give me their drink. It was like I was invisible to that girl.

VENE
Bottoms up.

SPARTAC
Get out.

VENE
Hey! Your first executive decision.

SPARTAC
What the hell is he talking about?

BILL 2
Roosevelt married his cousin. Cleopatra followed the Egyptian custom of her time and married her brother.

SPARTAC
I'll ask one more time.

(Enter Ballast and Booms.)

BILL 1
Oooh, mini crab cakes.

BILL 2
When we taste-tested…

DONNA
… the crab cakes were the best.

SPARTAC
Flush the crab cakes.

DONNA
Dear.

BILL 2
Thank you, ladies. Let's not ignore the guests.

(Ballast and Booms exit.)

SPARTAC
You knew?

DONNA
Not at first. When you first moved up the ranks and appeared on the scene…

VENE
He climbed up the waste chute of your dad's office.

DONNA
… and showed your metal…

SPARTAC
I had a crow bar…

DONNA
I could hear you coming for me in the dark.

SPARTAC
I never got the whole kill the lights thing.

DONNA
You were all I thought of.

SPARTAC

You couldn't even see me. I couldn't see you. I couldn't see anything.

DONNA
But the image of you I had in my mind… blue collar… biceps…

VENE
… looking to bang the boss's daughter.

SPARTAC
I didn't even know you were still in the room.
Who stays in a dark room when they know some pissed off worker is climbing up the garbage chute with a… well, was far as you knew… with an ax?

VENE (Dismissively.)
Dramatic effect.

(Enter Ballast and Booms.)

DONNA
Oh, for God's sake.

BILL 2
Pigs in a blanket.

ALL BUT DONNA
Ooooh.

(Ballast and Booms exit.)

DONNA
It was only after we turned the lights back on and vetted you…

BILL 1
The old man saw some real potential in you.

SPARTAC
I beaned him with the crow bar.

BILL 2
Have you ever read *The Golden Bough*?

VENE
The king is dead. Long live the king.

(Beat.)

BILL 2
Precisely.

SPARTAC
So we're related.
Distant cousins or something?

DONNA
Not exactly.

BILL 1
During the vetting process, we discovered that our past president performed some of the…

VENE
Many of the…

BILL 1
A number of the… annual employee evaluations… personally.

VENE
Cocktails and dinner.

BILL 2
The virtues of micro versus macro management have been debated throughout the modern era.

(Beat.)

VENE
You're half-siblings.

DONNA
Vene!

BILL 1
With the old man's DNA…

SPARTAC
My father's DNA…

BILL 1
… your father's DNA buried, it can no longer be established.

VENE
Not tactfully, at least.

BILL 2
We couldn't and wouldn't simply hand over the reigns of the old man's company…

DONNA
Daddy's

BILL 2
Your daddy's company…

VENE
Both their daddy's company…

BILL 2
Both your daddy's company…
(Beat.)
… to someone without the proper…

VENE
Pedigree?

BILL 1
Credentials.

BILL 2
Credentials.

SPARTAC (To Donna.)
How long have you known?

BILL 1
I have a PowerPoint timeline that I think will answer that question.

SPARTAC
I'm asking my… my sister-bride…

VENE
Half-sister…

(Beat. Vene senses his limit.)

SPARTAC
… when she first knew.

(Beat.)

DONNA

Sometime between when you climbed through the chute and now.

SPARTAC
Before we announced the engagement?

(Ballast and Booms enter with drinks. Again both avoid Donna.)

DONNA
Daddy taught me to see every decision as potentially a boardroom decision. This was no different. In fact… in fact… in fact, Spartac, this had everything to do with the board room.
(Beat. To Ballast and Booms.)
Get out, the both of you, and don't come back in.
(Ballast and Booms exit.)
This is about continuity and having the right people in the right places. Where this goes now is on honeymoon and then we'll come back, sit down with Bill and Bill, and make it work.

BILL 1
And it will work. We've already had several planning sessions.

BILL 2
The best way to view this,… that both the market research and… some social anthropology…

BILL 1
A soft science….

BILL 2
I know… I know…

VENE
I think I need a shower.

(Beat.)

BILL 2
I would like to offer an argument with the broadest of underpinnings.

DONNA
Please, Bill.

BILL 2
If we would all just view this as tribal. To understand that there is a tribe of wealth. You were born into it.

BILL 1
Directly.

BILL 2
In this case, directly, but others by virtue of belief and action, upbringing, and even insight.

DONNA
Do you think you fit in on the factory floor?

SPARTAC
I was good at it.

DONNA
That's not the question.

BILL 1
You climbed through the garbage.

SPARTAC
I wanted out.

BILL 2
You sought your proper level.

SPARTAC
I asked the others to come.

BILL 1
Not your tribe.

DONNA
I'm your tribe.

VENE
Your tribal bride … More than blood, more than mater or pater, more than anything as amorphous as religion or politics… so more than J-boy, M-boy, or B-boy, thems swimming in donkey doodoo, thems covered in pachyderm poo, more than the love of your own swinging dick, there is a tribe that believes capital is alive, and I mean from the moment of conception. Not that it's god, nothing that trite, but that it has rights, and by virtue of that fact, that it should be protected, nurtured, brought to term, and allowed to walk this earth like a giant baby, all drooly and wailing, crapping its pants and knocking over shit.

(Beat.)

Yes?

(Donna and the Bills turn to Spartac expectantly.)

SPARTAC
My half-sister.

DONNA
Yes.

SPARTAC
My tribal bride.

DONNA
Yes.

BILL 1
The king is dead.

BILL 2
Long live the king.

VENE
Now you two crazy kids, get out of here and go have some fun.

(Spartac and Donna exit. Vene starts to do the same.)

BILL 1
Vene. A moment.

BILL 2
According to your file, you've signed the intellectual property waiver and the non-compete form.

VENE
Did I?
(Shown form.)
Well, lookie there.

BILL 1
Anything you say or propose in the context of an employee is property of this company.

(Enter Ballast and Booms to gather empties.)

BILL 2
That little tirade about capital…

VENE
Did you like that?

BILL 1
It's ours now.

BILL 2
And you're not to repeat it.

VENE
Can I at least tell my mom?
She'd be so proud.
Confused but proud.
Right, ixnay the epeatray. Anything else?

BILL 2
One last favor.

BILL 1
Since you're so up to speed on this tribal thing…

BILL 2
Which of these ladies was the source of the paternity claim?

(Ballast and Booms look to exit quickly but are stopped by Bill 2.)

BILL 1
Don't over think your role.

BILL 2
There's a point where even clever falls off the fence.

(Vene indicates Booms.)

BILL 1
That would have been my choice.

BILL 2 (To Vene.)
You take the stairs.
(To Ballast.) You, take her tray. She's done serving for today.

BALLAST
Don't you do anything to her.

BILL 1
The farthest thing from our minds.

(Vene and Ballast exit.)

BILL 2
Now, young lady, what do you know about tribal practices?

(Lights fade to black.)

Act 5

(At rise, the guillotine has returned in both spaces. In boardroom, Vene is busy and at the ready. In the worker's space, a meeting is in progress with Booms leading, Ballast, Wreck, and Rigger around the table agitated.)

BOOMS
It's not even out of the box.

WRECK
It's not out of the box because there's no plug for it. Not without unplugging the fridge or the other microwave.

RIGGER
And the new snack machine?

BALLAST
What about the new snack machine?

RIGGER
That's what I mean.

BOOMS
And the cereal they've got us putting out is the same stuff we were putting out before!

(Workers mime more consternated discussion eventually taking up placards and marching. Enter Donna, Spartac carrying a light bag of golf clubs, and the Bills.)

SPARTAC
Why are we back?

DONNA
We had just gotten past the whole sister thing.

VENE (Dialing phone.)
Half-sister thing.

SPARTAC
The whole half-sister thing.

BILL 1
It's been chaos.

(Ballast answers phone.)

VENE
It's been chaos.

BILL 2
The workers have failed to honor their agreement.

VENE
It's been CHAOS!

BILL 1
They've acted in bad faith.

VENE
Chaos! I tell you, CHAOS!

(Ballast waves the others into action. They begin to mime protest.)

DONNA (Indicating guillotine.)
What is that doing back?

BILL 1
That's what we've been trying to tell you.

BILL 2
They've gone all Federalist Papers and shit.

BILL 1
All Les Mis and shit.

VENE
All deTocqueville…
(Beat.)
… and shit.

SPARTAC
Can we still switch the screen to see what they're up to?

BILL 1
Vene?

(Vene switches to view of the worker's room. All watch the workers picketing.)

BOOMS
Are you sure the sound's off?

SPARTAC
Why don't we hear them?

BALLAST
They can't hear a thing.

VENE
Technical problems with an update or a download…

WRECK
So long as we look the part…

BALLAST
How do you think half of them got their jobs?

WRECK
By striking?

BOOMS
By looking the part, you ass.

VENE
… or a compatibility, platform to platform out of sync…

RIGGER
My gal is red hot.
Your gal ain't doodly-squat

BILL 1
Is one of them singing?

VENE (Getting out his cell.)
Damn. Sure… it's a protest song.

DONNA
They don't look particularly organized. Looks like they're just walking around in an disorganized circle.

(Ballast answers her cell. Beat.)

BALLAST
Tighten it up, boys and girls, make it a tight circle around the desk, spread it out evenly. Wreck don't bunch up.

(Picket line takes better form.)

SPARTAC
There they go.

VENE
They look tight and organized now.

BILL 1
That's not good.

BILL 2
It's never good when they organize.

DONNA
We need to chip away at their base of support. Which one's in charge?

BILL 2
The old woman.

BILL 1
That can't stand.
(Beat.)
No offense, mam.

DONNA (Confused but offended.)
No,…
…you're right. It can't stand.
Set up a one on one with me and find out what the others want.

VENE
More equitable pay, secure pension, inheritance…

SPARTAC
Then find out what they'll take.

BILL 1
Done.

BILL 2
Vene, you set the meet.

VENE
That's clipped executive speak for scheduling the meeting, right?

DONNA
Vene.

VENE
One meeting coming up, Mam … Sir … Mam.

BILL 1
You were one of them once… what did you want?

SPARTAC
To be exactly where I am now.

BILL 2
We don't give that away all that often.

SPARTAC
And only when they vet clean.

BILL 1
And only then.

SPARTAC
And I'm not looking to share anyway. Now that I've had a taste. And they're not really looking to climb. They know that they missed this lottery, so now they just play all the others. Spirit's the same though, believing that once you get it handed to you, that it's deserved same as if it was earned … So do what you always do …

VENE
Double Ess Dee Pee.

SPARTAC
Same shit different package, … but with some choice built in … six options in column A…

VENE
Half a dozen in column B.

SPARTAC
If it ain't broke…

VENE
Don't fix it…

(Spartac and Vene perform some overly elaborate self-congratulatory handshake/fist bump until Spartac catches himself and reassumes his character.)

SPARTAC
Call down. Tell them we've turned off the screen.
(Vene pulls out his cell.)
Sis, Boys, I want you to watch this. You want to know what they want?

They want what they've been told they want?

(Ballast answers her phone.)

Tits and beer.
Another car.
Something new to wear.
Something sweet to eat.

BALLAST
Camera's off…

(All scurry to sit.)

… but we should keep… we should keep…

(Spartac confiscates Vene's phone.)

SPARTAC
Use the office line from now on.

BALLAST
You don't just switch off the fight because the cameras are off.

WRECK
What's the point if there's no one watching?

BALLAST
The point is sticking to the point…

RIGGER
Should I be writing this down?

DONNA
Who's the woman not sitting?

BILL 1
We've already identified her as the problem.

BILL 2
We spoke with her quite firmly.

SPARTAC
Yeah, she looks shaken.

BALLAST
Do you do right only when someone's watching?

RIGGER
Have a seat. Take a load off while you can.

BOOMS
We'll get back up when the camera comes back on.

(Beat. Ballast sits.)

BALLAST
You know they know this about us?

WRECK
Know what?

BALLAST
That we really only care when there's something tangible to be gained or when there's an audience. That for us to be committed to anything… anything… there's got to be a payoff… a raise… a door prize… a pearly gate… a gas card or coupon.

RIGGER
They're no different. They don't do shit for us unless they get it back with interest.

WRECK
Pipe down, both of you, I'm trying to catch up on the scores.

SPARTAC
He's the one you want at the reigns.

BALLAST
Booms, what about you?

BOOMS
What about me?

BALLAST
After what you lost.

BOOMS
None of you have any idea what I've lost.
None of you care what happens to me.
(All start to protest.)
No you didn't… not after, I don't know… an hour.
You cared when they were watching, and you cared when I turned into some kind of scratch ticket for the rest of you.
(Beat.)
So I'll walk with you when they're watching, just like you walked for me only when that little camera lights up.

I'm all for regime change… as long as nothing else changes.

RIGGER
That little camera is lit up.

WRECK
The hell you say!

RIGGER
The hell I don't!

WRECK
So they're watching? I thought you took a call telling us we could take a load off.

BALLAST (Crossing to look into the camera.)
I took the call… but asked you to keep marching… I asked you to keep at it.

(Ballast places one of the placards in front of the camera. Workers huddle and talk strategy.)

DONNA
So, that was you before you climbed up the chute to marry me?

SPARTAC
No, she's much worse than me.

BILL 2
I don't see that, sir.

SPARTAC
I wanted to storm the palace, she wants to bring it down.

DONNA
Pull her out and get her up here. Get someone down there… and not Vene.

VENE
It's in my job description to function as a liaison.

BILL 1
You liaison for us, not for them.

VENE
Do you even know what the word means?

BILL 2
Language is s fluid and flexible…

DONNA
Not now, Bill.

SPARTAC
Bill, you go down with another of your surveys. Figure out who we put in charge that will not prove too much of a lightning rod. Bill you bring the old woman up here.

(The Bills exit.)

Donna, you do whatever you feel is necessary, but she needs to be shut up and shut down. And Vene, you and I are going to spend a little time reviewing your job performance.

(The Bills enter the worker's area. Bill 2 immediately corrals Ballast and they exit. Bill 2 produces a stack of surveys and has the others settle in for a meeting.)

VENE
Other duties as assigned.

SPARTAC
You just keep talking and talking.

(Spartac retrieves an iron from his golf bag.)

VENE
Ah, the white collar crowbar.
But it's only chit chatter pitter patter, and I order the sandwiches…
Light mayo for you, right, Donna? Right, Mam?

(Enter Bill 2 and Ballast. Tense looks between her and Vene as he exits with Spartac. Donna and Ballast settle in at the table – Ballast with her back to the monitor. Bill 2 stands off to the side. Bill 1 distributes surveys and pencils, and then crosses and clears the placard from in front of the camera. As Donna interviews Ballast, she can now watch the proceedings with the workers.)

DONNA
Where do you see yourself in five years? The company is beginning to consider new and exciting directions, a kind of five year plan, and as has been our practice, we look to our valued employees to contribute in steering this great company into new waters.

BALLAST (Flatly.)
What?

BILL 1
Reading now: As a result…

(Others joining in and ALL in unison)
…of the continuing challenges presented by the current economic climate…

DONNA
Are you still going to be picking orders and restocking shelves? Still marching for new cereal selections and another stall in the women's room?

BALLAST
That's never been what we marched for, that's just what we all get thrown at us in response.

RIGGER
Has this got anything to do with why the second microwave doesn't work?

(Bill 1 directs Rigger back to the survey.)

DONNA
The fact that you can see that well enough to say it, means to me, that you should understand then you are only ever marching for what you actually get.
(Beat.)
The rest is window dressing.

BALLAST
Marching got our children out of the mines and into schools, got us an eight hour work day, got us the vote, got you sitting in that chair.

BILL 2
Ancient history.

DONNA
Bill.
(Beat.)
Those were the old obstacles. They've been pulled down and you and I had nothing to do with that. It's all color coordination and which birthday card to pick, what kind of upholstery for seats in the car.

BALLAST
There's all that money running uphill.

DONNA
You can march till you drop, march till your legs are stumps and you drop. Money runs uphill, same as water runs downhill.

BALLAST
Then in five years, I hope to raze every hill and mountain there is so that the money pools around all our feet.

DONNA
You're limiting yourself.

BALLAST
By this fight?

DONNA
By not seeing this fight as unwinnable.

BALLAST
Better that than simply playing dress-ups while the boys continue to rage.

DONNA
I like dressing up… you would too… and the boys… well, they wouldn't know the first thing about how to handle themselves in our place.

BALLAST
A great big doll house.

DONNA
I chose this table, those lamps, this carpet.

BALLAST
But you didn't build any of it. Daddy did or Daddy's Daddy, and as long as you bring him his slippers and fix him his drink… sure, you can pick the pattern for the pillows.

DONNA
I was in on Bill's hiring. I was there when Spartac rolled in, and I survived. I stood by Father when he stepped down.
(Beat.)
I've stood in front of the prop.
(Beat.)
Because you and I have never been anyone's little boys, we have had to… manage… and even account for success differently… I stand by the choice of my husband as Father's replacement.

BALLAST
Like he was your brother…

DONNA (Bitterly.)
Thank you for your time.

BALLAST
You firing me?

DONNA

We'll be shifting some responsibilities.

BALLAST
Putting the old man back in charge?

DONNA
Thank you again for your time. We appreciate your input…

BALLAST
Has it really worked for you?

DONNA
"It's working for me," is my mantra.

BALLAST
"It's sure working for them," is mine.

DONNA
Bill.

BILL 2
If you'll come with me.

BALLAST (Rising.)
Just tell me if you're putting the old man back in charge.

DONNA
We'll be looking at past performance reviews and recent events, and will make adjustments accordingly.

BALLAST
Don't expect to solve what's ailing us with a three card Monte stall.

BILL 2
I'll be happy to provide you with a long list of examples of when that specific strategy has been used to great effect.

> (Bill 2 and Ballast exit. Beat. Spartac and Vene enter. Vene clearly cowed and traumatized. Donna moves to kiss Spartac and they have quiet words. Spartac switches on sound in workers' room. Bill 1 in the midst of cajoling Booms to stay out of the mix and return with him.)

SPARTAC (Disappointed, not surprised.)
Oh shit.
Get the prop.
Honey, I'm going to want you to speak to the first…

BILL 1
I'm reading now: There is nothing we value more than our employees…

RIGGER
I'm asking one more time – what has any of this got to do with why the second microwave doesn't work?

BILL 1
It's right here.

RIGGER
We know where it is but there's no place to plug it in.

BILL 1
Unforeseen.

WRECK
It's the same with the vending machine.

RIGGER
Fuse blows them both out when we plug the second one in.

BILL 1
Unforeseen.
(Beat.)
Let me review the current options on the table…. Either we modify…

RIGGER
Roll-back.

BILL 1
… modify some of…

WRECK
All.

BILL 1
… of the previous concessions or we reconsider the company's offer to retrain you.

BOOMS
Ship us south where the jobs are.

BILL 1
You would be given priority in choosing your shifts.

RIGGER
But with reduced benefits.

BILL 1
Our coverage is fully aligned with similar offerings in the host country… to offer otherwise would be tantamount to being culturally insensitive.

WRECK
Not to mention costly.

BILL 1
Our people are our most precious resource.
(Beat.)
And of course, we'd offer language classes to further facilitate your transition.

RIGGER
Like, chequeté puta?

BILL 1
Yes… I mean, Sí, y ustedes?

(Enter Bill 2 and Ballast.)

BALLAST
You're back in, old man, but they're looking to screw us both.

WRECK
I'm with ya, sister.

BALLAST
For how long this time?

WRECK
All the fucking way. Grab your signs.

RIGGER
Now we're talking.

(The Bills confer frantically.)

BALLAST (To Booms.)
You okay, darling?

BOOMS
He wants me.

BALALST
Who?

BOOMS
He wants me back…

BILL 1
You're not to discuss anything…

BALLAST
Darling, don't believe a thing…

BILL 1
We need to move…

BALLAST
Get it in writing.

BILL 1
We have it in writing… upstairs.

(Monitor switches from guillotine to image of Donna in front of prop.)

DONNA (Frantic with script.)
These times… threat level…

(The monitor goes blank.)

WRECK
What the hell was that?!

BALLAST
We need to march.

WRECK
Did she say threat level?!

BALLAST
You leave that girl alone!

(Donna reacts poorly to news of plans for Booms and Spartac. Spartac works to calm her.)

BOOMS
Says I can have another child.

BILL 1
It’s all in the contract.

(Donna rushes to the remote and image of guillotine appears on worker’s monitor.)

WRECK
Christ, is that for us?!

RIGGER
They can’t do that.

BILL 2
Did you copyright it?

WRECK
Damn it.

BILL 2 (Taking Booms by the elbow.)
Now’s the time, dear.

BILL 1
Let’s give these folks time to consider their options.
There’s a whole different set of choices for you.

BOOMS
Ballast?

WRECK
I’d do it.

BOOMS
Ballast?

BALLAST
Honey, they took your first away before it ever took a breath. What do you think they’re going to do with this one?

WRECK
We don’t know for sure what happened to that first one.

BALLAST
She knows.

BOOMS

What if this works for me?

RIGGER
Then you got to take it.

(Booms is pulled from room by the Bills.)

WRECK
Good for her.

BALLAST
Good for her!? Good for her!? Nothing they're planning is going to be good for her.

WRECK
Shouldn't you be marching?

RIGGER
Yeah, I can't pull this off by myself.

BALLAST
What did you boys ask for now? Bigger spoons for your cereal and automatic flush on the toilets?

WRECK
We didn't think about the spoons.

RIGGER
Microwave number three.

WRECK
And a plug for the vending machine.

WRECK & RIGGER
What do we want?
More vending!
When do we want it?
Now!

(The Bills enter with Booms. The workers march distractedly.)

SPARTAC
Here we go… She on board?

BILL 1
Yes, sir.

DONNA
Of course, she's on board.

BOOMS
How come you can't have his kid?

DONNA
That's not your concern.

BILL 1
If you'll just sign here.

BOOMS
What's all this say?

BILL 1
That you agree to bear Spartac's child. That upon birth you forfeit your rights as the birth mother and consent to all parental rights remaining with the child's natural father and his wife.

(Donna steps in front of prop. Workers' monitor switches from guillotine to Donna.)

DONNA
It's working for me.
It's working for me.
It's working for me.

(Monitor switches back to guillotine. Workers confused but respectful.)

BOOMS
I'll be able to watch her grow up?

BILL 1
Your viewing rights will be determined at a later date.

BILL 2
We can find other candidates.

WRECK & RIGGER
It's working for me.
It's working for me.

BOOMS
You want me back?

SPARTAC
For this… absolutely.

(Booms signs.)
I'll be in in a moment.

(Bill 2 exits with Booms.)

DONNA
I can't listen to that.

BILL 1
I spelled out our offer repeatedly based on their answers to the questions we phrased.

SPARTAC
What do we have left over from the wedding reception?

BILL 1
We were going to have the top layer of the cake frozen and we have a few extra gift bags.

SPARTAC
You and Vene take it all downstairs and give it out when we cue you through the monitor.
(Beat.)
Vene, put it on.
(Beat.)
Anytime they're to see you now, you're to be wearing it.
(Vene dons a jester's cap.)
That's my boy.

(Bill 1 and Vene exit.)

DONNA
It's working for me. It's working for me.

SPARTAC
We can pull this off.
Donna? Honey, I need you to focus. Up you go and be ready.
Smile, Honey.

(Bill 2 enters.)

BILL 2
All set.

SPARTAC
You're granting all their wishes. Just read what's on the cards. Ready?
Donna?

DONNA
Dear?

SPARTAC
The child will be yours.

DONNA
Will it?

SPARTAC
Same as I am.
(Beat.)
Ready?
(Beat.)
Bill, can you give her a bit more… authority.
(Bill 2 steps behind Donna and reaches around to push up her breasts.)
Read the card.

(Monitor shows Donna in front of prop.)

DONNA
Let them eat cake!

BALLAST
Cake?

(Enter Vene and Bill 1 with leftover cake. Monitor flips back to guillotine.)

RIGGER
Wreck, there really is cake.

WRECK
Sweet.

RIGGER
Did we even ask for that?

WRECK
It's all gravy now.

(Monitor switches to show Donna in front of prop. Still behind Donna, Bill 2 waves his hands in showy support of her next pronouncement.)

DONNA
Let them wash cars.

BILL 2
Gift bags all around. Coupons for a car wash – good for a month.

(Monitor switches back to guillotine.)

VENE
With a fill-up of $45 dollars or more at participating vendors.

WRECK
Double sweet.

RIGGER
Gravy and more gravy.

(Monitor switches to show Donna in front of prop. Bill 2 now makes finger pistols and fires them off in quick order.)

DONNA
Let them watch sport.

(Monitor to ESPN or like – live feed best, if possible. Vene and Bill 1 exit.)

WRECK
Hey, girl, better get in on this before it's all gone.

RIGGER
Here you go, Bally, wouldn't be happening like this if not for you.

WRECK
Hey?!

RIGGER
Oh yeah, you the top man alright, but she did her part.

WRECK
That's true, that's true.
Come on now, the both of you, game's on.

SPARTAC
That's it, dear. Maybe you can do some shopping while I take care of some other business.

(Enter Bill 1 and Vene. Vene immediately takes his cap off.)

Bill, would you see that my wife gets a car and some petty cash?

BILL 1
Certainly. Mam, how much would you like?

DONNA
It's working for me.

BILL 2
We're all working for you.

(Bill 1 and Donna exit.)

SPARTAC
Ring the bell. Send them home.
Get that down and get all this cleaned up.
And not a word to any of them. They're on their own.
Same as you.
(Beat.)
Hey, put it back on… just in case.
(Vene dons cap.)
Perfect… See you tomorrow… early.
Nice big nod.
(Waits for Vene to concede.)
That's it. Now, Bill, where'd you stow our surrogate?

BILL 2
Right this way, sir.

(Spartac and Bill 2 exit. Vene sounds end of day bell and monitor goes to color test bars.)

WRECK
There it is, everyone. Grab a piece for the road.
(Beat.)
Bally, darling, what's wrong?
Hey, no worries. You did a fine job. I think they're just more comfortable with a man in the big chair.
(Beat.)
Take a piece of cake. Get that car of yours washed.

(Ballast exits with cake and coupon in hand.)

RIGGER
What about the game?

WRECK
It'll be on down at Smitty's.

(Vene switches both monitors to guillotine. As the scene winds down, Vene will slowly play at regaining spirit and spring.)

WRECK
I thought we were done with that.

RIGGER
Cake and coupons.

WRECK
That's the spirit. Hard won spoils of war.

RIGGER
Let's go catch the end of the game.

(Wreck and Rigger exit happily. Vene crosses by stage front into workers' area. Continues transformation to clown/jester role. Mugs more and more as he straightens break room. Disposes of placards – except for one. He writes on it and places it in front of the camera, switches so that both monitors project the word "It's Working For Me…" [with ellipses]. He mugs to the image, takes a piece of cake, and, between bites of cake, mugs to the image a few more times before exiting. Fade to black.)