

Rubber Duckies in a Row

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A Fable

by

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RUBBER DUCKIES IN A ROW

CHARACTERS

BILL MELVIN - Male, mid 30's. Bill painter. The "new kid" in the department - a little too corporate for a blue-collar job. Bill devoted the early part of his life to succeeding as a Junior Account Executive for an ad agency, only to find that his deceptively low pay and his required lifestyle were not possible. In order to simplify his life and repay his debts, he takes this seemingly menial job.

CALVIN NETTLES - Male, 40's. Burned out, cynical bill painter. Calvin had integrity, ambition and talent, but he's been burned so many times that he no longer cares and just wants to get through the day with as little effort as possible.

RAY ELLIS - Male, 40's or older. Supervisor of the Bill Painting Department at Consolidated Duck. Strong, brash, hardened, but a real cheer-leader. Ray took the same path as Calvin and took pride in doing as little work as possible. But recent events have caused him to reevaluate his job and take a new perspective to it.

ALBERT "AL" BARROWS - Male, late 30's to 40's. Supervisor of Consolidated Duck. As anal and forceful as they get. Very slick, very loud - the muscle of Consolidated Duck. Albert has yet to meet an opportunity that he wouldn't take.

KATHRYN SAUNDERS - Female, 40's. CEO of Consolidated Duck. Motherly and kindly, though very shrewd and heartless underneath. Kathryn *believes* that her way is the only way. She also *believes* that she is fair and just. She's also a bit of a snob.

RONALDO SANTOS - Male, mid 30's. Ronaldo is a working stiff. He values his job - not the quality of it, but just the fact that he has one. Ronaldo is also gay and the comic relief of the play.

ISELA HERNANDEZ - Female, 30's or 40's. Quiet and mousey bill painter. Isela was a real go-getter many years ago. Since then she has learned every possible way to avoid doing work to the point that she probably doesn't even know how any more.

JUDY BLOOM - Female, late 20's. Judy is a strong believer in New Age philosophy. She's also a bit scattered and eccentric, and very VERY judgmental.

The play is a fable that takes place in the bill-painting department of Consolidated Duck. The room is cramped and dismal, housing one desk and several long counters with stools. Present are pots of paint and jars of brushes. Rubber Duckies litter the room. By each desk there are boxes and boxes of ducks. There are shelves for the ducks to dry on. There are only two doors - one the entrance and one to a supply closet (which is not used in the play). Next to the entrance door is a rack with smocks on it, in which each painter changes into each morning. A large clock looms over the room. Each scene takes place a small, undetermined days apart from each other. The time of day is always determined by the clock.

There are periodic announcements made over the INTERCOM. They're always the same announcement and can therefore be taped.

ACT I, SCENE 1

(The clock on the wall shows 8:55. BILL turns on the lights and enters. He wears shirt and tie. As he dons a smock and moves to his seat at the counter, the phone rings. He answers.)

BILL

(Into the phone) Bills.

(beat)

I'm sorry, you want Billing. This is Bills.

(beat)

Bills - like duck bills.

(beat)

No, bills. We paint bills.

(beat as he takes out a jar of brushes and a pot of paint)

Not customer bills, duck bills.

(beat)

Yes, that's right.

(beat)

My name? Bill.

(beat)

Yes, I'm serious. Let me transfer you.

(BILL transfers the call as he laughs to himself. He picks up a carton and sits it down next to him at the counter. He pulls out a duck and starts to paint the bill. After a few seconds he gets into a rhythm and soon he is painting one duck after another. CALVIN groggily enters. As they speak, CALVIN puts on his smock, gets out his paint and brushes.)

CALVIN

Before we begin this day of grueling and mindless menial labor, let us bow our heads and pray. Oh Lord, please lay us off so that we may collect unemployment. Amen.

BILL

'Morning, Calvin.

CALVIN

Once, just once, I wish I wouldn't have so much trouble getting up in the morning. (notices BILL working)
Jesus, Bill. It isn't even nine o'clock yet.

BILL

Hmm? Oh, son of a gun.

CALVIN

Please preserve your sanity. Slow down.

BILL

I can't do that, Calvin.

CALVIN

Sure you can. Everybody does it.

BILL

I don't.

CALVIN

(Takes the brush from BILL's hand) Billy-boy, slow the fuck down!

BILL

(Takes the brush back) And I said I can't.

CALVIN

Look rookie, I've been painting duck bills for ten years and you've been doing it for three months. All you're gonna do is piss everybody off and get taken advantage of. Now, it is in your best interest to SLOW DOWN!

BILL

But this is the pace I work comfortably at.

CALVIN

Then slow it down.

(CALVIN looks poised for work, but instead takes out a newspaper and a cup of coffee.)

CALVIN (cont'd)

How many bills do you paint a day -- roughly?

BILL

I don't know. One fifty? Two hundred?

CALVIN

One hundred. Our daily quota is one hundred per employee. The entire system is designed for each of us to paint one hundred, not one fifty or two hundred. From squeakers to feet to eyes to bills to packaging -- all based on one hundred per day. I paint one hundred bills per day -- no more, no less. People like Isela will paint fifty if you're lucky -- and she's been doing it for eight years. They don't care about quality here, and they don't care about quantity. You have to understand that.

BILL

And what DO they care about?

CALVIN

Attendance. Getting in on time. Ability to work with others. Personality. Look, Billy-boy, I'm not trying to criticize you or hurt your feelings. I'm trying to spare you from getting into trouble.

BILL

But it's not right ...

CALVIN

Life isn't right. (beat) Your attitude will get you into trouble someday.

(RONALDO enters. He puts on his smock and takes his seat.)

RONALDO

Have I got news!

CALVIN

Dish it out, homeboy!

RONALDO

Well, the boys in the mailroom say that old man Barrows is in a serious tizzy. It seems that Saunders is all OTR about the Squeaky Bath Time Ducky since the Taiwanese came out with a cheaper model. So, Barrows is looking to trim some fat, if you know what I mean ... some "middle management" fat.

CALVIN

Not again. (to BILL) Barrows is famous for firing middle management whenever Saunders gets on his case.

BILL

Will it effect us?

RONALDO

Sadly, no. Nothing effects us. Eyes, feet, bills and squeakers never get touched. We're the best kept secrets in the company.

CALVIN

(Gets up) Need anything from the kitchen?

BILL

(Looks around) Has anyone seen my coffee cup?

RONALDO

Uh-oh. Not again.

CALVIN

Three?

BILL

Four. Either someone has a big collection of coffee cups or I have an enemy on the night shift.

RONALDO

Tell Ray.

BILL

I'll go styrofoam.

(RAY enters. He seems mad.)

RAY

You'll go nowhere. Have a seat, Calvin.

CALVIN

C'mon, Ray. I need a refill.

BILL

Hey Ray, coffee cup number four is missing.

RAY

Later. I have an important announcement to make. Where's Isela?

BILL

She was clocked in when I got here.

RONALDO

She's missing -- as usual.

RAY

(Picks up the phone, dials) Yes, have Isela Hernandez report to bill-painting, please.

INTERCOM

Will Isela Hernandez please report to bill-painting.
Isela Hernandez please report to bill-painting.

RONALDO

(Looks at his watch) One ... two ... three ... four
...

(ISELA enters pensively.)

ISELA

Yes?

RONALDO

... five. Not bad.

RAY

Take a seat. What about Judy?

CALVIN

She'll be here.

RAY

Fine. Everyone listen up and listen good ... I only
wanna say this once ...

RONALDO

What happens when Judy gets here?

RAY

Then I'll tell her what I'm telling you.

RONALDO

Then you'll be saying it twice.

RAY

You're getting on my nerves.

RONALDO

It's my specialty.

CALVIN

Ronaldo! Shh!

RAY

Now, where was I?

RONALDO

You were saying what you want to say once for the
second time before you say it a third.

RAY

Right. Folks, today is the day. Today will mark a NEW beginning for the bill painting department at Consolidated Duck.

CALVIN

New brushes?

RONALDO

A different shade of orange?

BILL

A work ethic?

(All laugh, except RAY.)

RAY

YES! That's EXACTLY what I'm talking about!

(JUDY makes a grand entrance.)

JUDY

Hi everybody! Am I late?

RONALDO

Yes.

RAY

Have a seat. I have something to say.

RONALDO

And he only wants to say it once.

JUDY

Has he said it yet?

BILL

He's close.

(JUDY puts on her smock and gets herself situated.)

JUDY

Good morning, Isela.

ISELA

Good morning, Judy. How are you today?

JUDY

Traffic was terrible, wasn't it?

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ISELA

I don't know. I slept on the bus.

RAY

AHEM!

JUDY

Sorry. You may continue.

RAY

Now where was I?

CALVIN

Work ethics.

RAY

Right! Work ethics. Let me digress for a moment.

RONALDO

Only a moment?

CALVIN

Ronaldo, shh!

RAY

I've been with Consolidated Duck since the beginning. 'Started in shipping and moved my way up the ranks to packaging, squeakers, feet, eyes and, for the last ten years, bills. Now you're thinking -- he must love his job. He's spent such a large portion of his life here that he must really love it here. The fact is, I couldn't tell you if I do or not. I stopped thinking about it fifteen years ago.

RONALDO

Does this digression have a point?

RAY

Tell me who you are, Ronaldo.

RONALDO

Ronaldo Santos. I knew you were slipping, Ray. You need help.

RAY

No, I mean who ARE you? What defines you? What do you do for a living? What do you do with your life?

RONALDO

I don't know -- I paint duck bills.

CALVIN

What the hell is going on, Ray? You never gave two shits in your life about what happened here -- that's why Barrows moved up and you stayed put. Hell, we used to spend weeks not painting a single duck just to see if Barrows would get steamed. And you know what? The ducks would pile up, and eye-painting never cared, and packaging never cared, and the raises came in and nobody CARED. You were proud of the fact that Barrows or Saunders never walked through that door. Developing something stupid like a work ethic will just get you into trouble.

RAY

Are you finished?

CALVIN

Not until you come to your senses.

RAY

Then you're finished, because I have. I've come to my full senses.

CALVIN

Uh-oh. I know what this is. What happened, Ray? Was it Raymond, Jr.?

RAY

Well, he's at that age, you know? Starts askin' questions. A few days ago he asked me "Daddy?" - he says - "What do you do at work?" And I said "Son, I paint duck bills." And I thought about it. I thought about it long and hard. And do you know what I came up with?

CALVIN

That you have no pride in your job or your life because you mindlessly perform a thankless task for a corporation who cares more about their machinery than you and you have absolutely no concept of how that job and that corporation's philosophy fits into the world? You don't contribute anything to life, society, the future or your children?

RAY

Did we talk about this before?

CALVIN

We've been side-by-side for ten years, Ray. I know the drill.

RAY

Then what are you prepared to do about it?

CALVIN

Don't judge me, Ray.

RAY

Do you know how many bills you paint a day?

CALVIN

One hundred.

RAY

Right. Exactly one hundred. No more, no less. Every day you paint one hundred ducks.

CALVIN

That's the company mandated quota.

RAY

When we started the quota was three hundred. Every few years they'd knock a few off. Shit, Bill here could fulfill the quota and not even show up. How many bills do YOU paint, Bill?

BILL

Oh ... I don't know ...

RAY

Take a guess.

BILL

I really don't want to ...

RAY

I insist.

BILL

Come on, Ray. This isn't really ...

RONALDO

(Interrupting) Oh, come on! Don't be such a pain in the ass! Answer the man!

RAY

Five hundred and six - give or take twenty. Since the day you've worked here you've never painted less than five hundred. Now, for those of you doing the math, that's about one every 45 seconds or so. Not bad since it should take you only about ten to paint one bill.

JUDY

He shouldn't do that. (To BILL) You shouldn't do that. Calvin ...

CALVIN

I've tried to tell him.

JUDY

Ray, he can't do that!

RAY

No. He can. And you can.

ISELA

What?

RAY

Ah, Mrs. Isela Hernandez. And how many bills do YOU paint a day?

ISELA

I don't know -- one hundred?

RAY

Try fifty. And that's on a GOOD day. That rounds out to one duck about every eight minutes.

CALVIN

Aw, don't pick on Isela. She's been here almost as long as us.

RAY

According to our records, Isela has fulfilled the quota for the first year of her employment. Since then she's been fifty percent under the quota every day she's worked - and I use that term loosely.

JUDY

Isela is a model employee! She's in on time every day ... never calls in sick ... never complains ... always willing to do OT ... she works very hard! She's got two kids to take care of!

RAY

So do I! And I'm the Supervisor and I STILL manage about two hundred a day. Do you know what YOUR numbers are?

JUDY

I fill the quota.

RAY

Actually, you squeak above it usually. And Ronaldo floats around the line.

RONALDO

Why bother?

RAY

Maybe Mr. William Melvin can tell us that.

BILL

Aw, come on, Ray. Leave me out of this.

RAY

It's because of you that I'm doing this.

JUDY

(Angry) Thanks a bunch, Billy-boy.

RONALDO

I told you he'd be trouble.

BILL

Hey! I had nothing to do with this!

RAY

In a way, you did.

CALVIN

Don't put that pressure on him.

RAY

Billy-boy here reminded me about the time when you cared about what you did at work. Billy reminded me about pride.

RONALDO

Pride doesn't ... (stops)

RAY

Yes?

RONALDO

Pride doesn't ... put food on the table. Pride doesn't pay the bills.

RAY

I know. Consolidated Duck has never been known to be behind their employees - but as your supervisor you have to know that I am behind you. Forget the company.

CALVIN

Only when YOU sign our paychecks.

RAY

There has to be more, Calvin. And Bill knows that.

BILL

What did I do?

RAY

You wanna know? You REALLY wanna know? I'll tell you -- you worked hard. Honestly, the last time I've seen someone work that hard was over ten years ago. A skinny little guy came into the department, working nights so he could go to art school during the day. A skinny little guy named Calvin Nettles.

CALVIN

Ray, don't.

RAY

What's the matter, Calvin? It hurts to remember?

CALVIN

Frankly, yes. It does.

RAY

What happened, Calvin?

CALVIN

(mumbles something)

RAY

What was that?

CALVIN

I SAID "BLOW ME," YOU SHITHEAD!

RAY

You all complain that the company doesn't care about you, but do you care about the company? Okay, so they've lowered the raise percentage annually ... and they've taken away overtime ... and they've taken away half of your paid holidays ...

RONALDO

Don't forget the insurance plans.

RAY

Right ... they make you pay for your own insurance ...

JUDY

Axing the savings plan.

RAY

... they've eliminated the savings plan ...

ISELA

Vacations.

RAY

... no carry-over of vacation days or sick time ... no Christmas break ... in short they treat us very unprofessionally. And since we're non-union we don't have any juice in our corner. But maybe they'd change their tune if we actually acted like professionals.

JUDY

Excuse me, but I'm a professional.

RAY

Professionals don't squabble about piddley things. They do a job.

ISELA

What do you want us to do?

RAY

Four hundred. Four hundred ducks a day. That averages out to about one per minute. Each and every one of you will be required to paint four hundred ducks a day. And not one less.

JUDY

Oh no you don't!

RONALDO

Dickweed!

RAY

Calvin? How about you?

CALVIN

What's wrong with the quota of only one hundred?

RAY

It's one hundred. But four hundred is four hundred. Come on, I know you can do it.

CALVIN

That isn't the issue.

RAY

And what is?

CALVIN

That the company says only one hundred.

RAY

Calvin, I need you on this. We've been together for too long and it's time to make a difference. If we can turn this department around, we can turn the company around!

CALVIN

Why?

RAY

Tell him, Billy.

BILL

Ray, I don't know why ...

RAY

Sure you do. Why do you do it?

BILL

It's just the pace I work at.

RAY

Bullshit!

BILL

Because ...

RAY

Yes?

BILL

Because if I don't I can't sleep at night.

(Everybody looks annoyed for the duration of a very long pause.)

JUDY

What?!

BILL

I can't explain it. When I just get by I can't sleep, but if I push myself I can. That's why I had to get out of Advertising. Being a Junior Account Executive was pretty demanding. If I didn't simplify I'd have gone nuts. Besides the financial benefits ...

RONALDO

All because you can't fucking sleep?! Try jerking off.
It works for me.

JUDY

Ray, are you sure about this?

RAY

Completely. Today I'm imposing a quota of four hundred ducks per person. I'll post a chart to monitor everyone's progress. (beat) Please.

RONALDO

We won't lose our jobs because of this, will we? This is the nineties, man. I'm lucky I have a job.

RAY

How can you get fired for doing your job better?

CALVIN

The company says one hundred. I'm painting one hundred.

RAY

Think of what old man Barrows will do.

CALVIN

(Laughs) He'll shit bricks!

RAY

I know you want that, Cal.

CALVIN

(Thinks) No. I'm out.

RONALDO

I'm in.

JUDY

Me too.

RONALDO

I figure if Calvin won't do it, it's DEFINITELY worth doing.

RAY

You're making the right decision.

CALVIN

You're a bunch of mental cases.

JUDY

(To ISELA) Are you okay with this?

ISELA

Hmm? Me? Sure. (Glares at BILL)

RAY

You people are the best. As of today we're gonna be the hottest department in the entire company. Bill will sleep at night and Calvin will come around soon.

CALVIN

I don't want to come around.

RONALDO

Oh, shut up. What have we gotten ourselves into?

BILL

It's not so bad.

JUDY

You shut up. This is all YOUR fault.

Blackout.

SCENE 2

(The clock on the wall shows 2:15-ish. Everybody is working, except ISELA, who is missing. On one wall is now a chart with a line graph charting everybody's output. It doesn't have to be legible, but it's obvious that the line marked "Bill" is on top, with "Ronaldo," "Ray" and "Judy" gaining on it. "Calvin" holds steady and "Isela" is still way on the bottom.)

RONALDO

(Screams) Yaaaaaaaaaaaaaugh!

(Nobody budes.)

BILL

You'll never do it if you waste those motions.

RONALDO

Okay Billy-boy, you win. Show me.

BILL

You have to use both the number two and number five brushes.

RONALDO

I can't deal with number five. Number five and I have sort of a hate/hate relationship.

BILL

Look.

(holds the two brushes like chopsticks)

Hold 'em like this. Then lay out two jars of paint.

Dip the brushes ...

RONALDO

That's not too much?

BILL

If your touch is light enough you can do three or four bills before you have to reload. Now, keep the ducks at your side so you can reach in and get one without looking. Like this ...

(shows him)

BILL (cont'd)

Now, in five strokes --
(demonstrates)

One ... two ... three ... now brush number five ...
four ... five. There.

RONALDO

Are you sure you've been doing this only three months?

BILL

Only three months. Now you try.

RONALDO

You should watch this, Judy. It's amazing.

JUDY

I don't need any help.

RAY

Judy ...

(JUDY grumbles as she
watches.)

RONALDO

Okay. Hold the brushes ... loading up ... one ... two
... three ... number five ... four ... five. Hey!
Look at that! It's like the last five years have been
a waste! I'm impressed, Billy-boy!

BILL

Thank you.

RONALDO

(Changes his attitude) This doesn't mean I like you,
y'know. You're still on my shit-list.

BILL

Oh, I'm sure I am.

(They go back to work,
RONALDO laughing to himself
as he works infinitely
faster with this new method.
BARROWS barges in and
watches them work.)

BARROWS

What the hell is going on here?!

RAY

Can I help you, Mr. Barrows?

BARROWS

Ellis, tell them to cut it out.

RAY

Cut what out, sir?

BARROWS

What do I look like, Ellis?

RAY

I beg your pardon?

BARROWS

Do I look like the biggest fucking asshole in the world?

RAY

Sir?

BARROWS

I've seen it all in my time, Ellis, and I know when I'm being fucked over.

RAY

I'm glad to hear it, sir.

BARROWS

Then tell them to cut it out.

RAY

Cut what out, sir?

BARROWS

Pouring on the steam when I walk in the door.

RAY

They're just working at their normal pace, sir.

BARROWS

What kind of fucking idiot do you take me for?

RAY

I'm not ...

BARROWS

Do I have the words "Jackass" tattooed across my forehead, Ellis? Did some candy-ass jerk-off paste a "Kick Me" sign on my back? You! Needles!

CALVIN

Nettles.

BARROWS

What the fuck is going on here?

CALVIN

Nothing, Mr. Barrows.

BARROWS

Bullshit! You asswipes were fucking around and snapped to it when I walked in the room, didn't you!

CALVIN

I'm afraid not, sir.

BARROWS

So, you think I'm a fucking idiot, too?!

(CALVIN almost says "yes."
BILL stands up.)

BILL

We're just working.

BARROWS

Excuse me?

BILL

Work. This is work. We're working.

BARROWS

Is that a fact. After fifteen years of running this company I guess I've never seen actual work.

BILL

I suppose so.

BARROWS

Up to this point everybody's been fucking around, is that right?

BILL

No ...

BARROWS

Everybody's been living high on the hog taking money out of Saunders' pocket while propin' their feet up and drinking iced fucking tea. Everyone's getting a free ride, is that right?

BILL

Look, I don't want to ...

BARROWS

(Interrupting) No, no, that's okay. I appreciate it when some pathetic nothing of a mindless menial laborer piece-o-shit plebe tells ME what work really is.

BILL

You're taking this out of context.

BARROWS

So, tell me plebe, why are you working so ... "hastily?"

BILL

Because we want to.

BARROWS

Look son, I don't know who you are or what you think but I'll give you some advice: Never bullshit a bullshitter. Now, I don't know if anybody told you, but I run this company like it was my own, and I won't have any green-horned, smart-assed, piece-o-shit fucking nothing of a loser bill painter telling me what work is! What's your name, plebe?

BILL

(With some bite) William Melvin, sir.

BARROWS

Melvin. Melvin. Do you know how long I've been at Consolidated Duck, Melvin?

BILL

Fifteen years, sir. You just said ...

BARROWS

(Interrupting) Fifteen years. I started in shipping with Ellis and Needles here ...

CALVIN

(Quietly) ... Nettles ...

BARROWS

... and I worked my way up into Administration and now I'm in charge of this godforsaken place. I eat little plebes like you for breakfast.

RONALDO

(Quietly) Good thing it's after lunch.

BILL

Then ...

BARROWS

Then WHAT?!!

BILL

Then why does everybody work like they don't care?

BARROWS

(Almost in hysterics) WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!

BILL

Well ... the quotas keep dropping. Quality is going down. You keep taking things away from us.

BARROWS

Because quotas ARE dropping, quality IS going down and, frankly, because you're expendable.

BILL

No we're not. Without us this company would close.

BARROWS

Without you we'd hire more mindless drones to do the work -- and undoubtedly pay them less. Or even better - we'll automate! Then ALL of your candy-asses would be out on the street.

BILL

Mr. Barrows?

BARROWS

What?!

BILL

Do you like your job?

BARROWS

Nobody likes their job, son. Anyone who does is lying.
(to RAY) Ellis, fire that idiot.

RAY

No, sir.

BARROWS

Ellis, fire the plebe or you're fired.

RAY

Oh, knock it off, Albert. You may be able to intimidate the rest of the employees but not me. Hell, I saved your ass more than once when we were in shipping together. Look. Look at my department.

RAY (cont'd)

We're working. We're working like we love our jobs and like we love the company. This is what's known as "Professionalism." This is what's known as "Pride."

BARROWS

What the FUCK are you talking about?

RAY

We've decided to care, Al. We've decided to put forth an actual effort.

BARROWS

Raises already went out eight months ago. There won't be any more money ...

RAY

It's not for the money. We're doing it for us.

BARROWS

I don't know what's eating you, Ellis, but you'd better get over it and get back with the program.

RAY

It's a whole new program. It's called "efficiency."

BARROWS

I'm going to have to report you to Saunders.

RAY

Fine. Do it. I'll deal with her. But all she'll see is a finely-tuned machine.

BARROWS

Your ass is really in a sling, Ray.

RAY

Then it's in a sling -- Albert.

(BARROWS exits.)

JUDY

Clearly homosexual panic.

RONALDO

(Stews for a moment, then explodes) I HATE HIM! I HATE HIM! I HATE HIM! I ... HATE ... HIM!!!

CALVIN

Tell us how you REALLY feel about him?

RONALDO
I HATE HIM!!

BILL
Did I do something wrong?

CALVIN
You might say that.

RAY
You're fine, Bill.

JUDY
(Starts to meditate) Ohmmmmmmmmmm.

RONALDO
Oh Jesus. She's at it again.

JUDY
(Louder) Ohmmmmmmmmmm.

BILL
What is she doing?

JUDY
Meditating. Ohmmmmmmmmmm.

RAY
You got nothing to worry about, Bill. Barrows' bark is far worse than his bite.

CALVIN
I told you the company wouldn't like this. But does anybody listen to me?

RAY
They're afraid of what they don't know. Nobody liked the lightbulb when it was first invented.

RONALDO
Really?

RAY
Oh, hell, I don't know.

CALVIN
Where's Isela?

RAY
You mean she ... damn! Can't she stay in her chair for longer than ten minutes? I didn't even see her leave!

JUDY

Ohmmmmmmmmmm.

RONALDO

Do you HAVE to do that?!

CALVIN

Leave her alone.

RONALDO

It's just so annoying.

RAY

(Picks up the phone, dials) It's Ray. She's gone again.

INTERCOM

Will Isela Hernandez please report to bill-painting.
Isela Hernandez please report to bill-painting.

BILL

Where does she go?

RONALD

Malaysia. I believe it's located in the Disorient.

CALVIN

We're not sure. She just ... disappears.

RAY

She better stop it.

JUDY

Ohmmmmmmmmmm.

RONALDO

(Sings, like he's finishing the song "Home on the Range") ♪ Ohmmmm on the range ... ♪

JUDY

Drop dead, Mary.

RONALDO

That's MISTER Mary to you.

(ISELA enters.)

ISELA

You called me?

RAY

How about painting some bills today?

ISELA

I've been painting.

RAY

Oh? How many?

ISELA

I don't know ...

RAY

Do you remember what the new quota is?

ISELA

Si. Four hundred.

RAY

And how many are YOU up to per day?

ISELA

I don't know - four hundred?

RAY

Fifty. You painted fifty when the quota was one hundred and you're painting fifty now that the quota is four hundred. Do you understand the difference between fifty and four hundred?

JUDY

Ray, stop it.

RAY

I will not! You know why? Because Isela is a nothing! She's been doing this nothing job for so long that she's become nothing!

ISELA

Do not fire me, por favor.

RAY

Fire you?! That would be the easy way out! I won't fire you, and you know why? Because you've been here too long to be so useless. I won't let you do that, Isela. I won't let you become a nothing. It's time to become something, Isela! It's time to do something! It's time to act like ...

(RAY passes out and falls to the ground. ISELA, as during RAY's yelling at her, stands motionless with a blank expression.)

BILL

(Jumping to the rescue) Oh my God! Ray!

CALVIN

(Right behind him) Ray! What is it! Ray!

RAY

(Stirs) What happened?

CALVIN

You passed out.

RAY

What? You're crazy.

BILL

No, he's not. You hit the floor like a bag of wet socks. Are you alright?

RAY

I'm just fine. Now, everybody get back to their seats. Show's over.

CALVIN

Everything is NOT fine. Can you stand?

RAY

Get away from me, Calvin.

(RAY tries to stand but can't. BILL and CALVIN help him to the chair. ISELA is still blanked-out. JUDY and RONALDO are a bit stunned.)

BILL

Someone call an ambulance.

RAY

No.

RONALDO

Who, me?

BILL

Ronaldo ...

RONALDO

Okay, okay. 9-1-1 here I come. (calls)

CALVIN

Ray, buddy, what happened?

RAY

Nothing. I'm just tired. (winces)

(JUDY starts fishing around
in her numerous bags.)

RONALDO

An ambulance is on its way.

RAY

Calvin, you're in charge while I'm out.

CALVIN

Aw Ray, I'd really rather not ...

RAY

Goddamnit, Calvin! This is not the time to act like a
wuss.

CALVIN

I am NOT a wuss.

RAY

Then take command. Four hundred per day. Got it?

CALVIN

Can't Bill take over?

RAY

You've got seniority. It's either you or Isela.

ISELA

(She heard her name) Yes?

RAY

Paint! (grimaces in pain) Christ!

(JUDY takes something small
out of her bag and runs to
RAY, pressing the item into
his hand.)

JUDY

Take this.

CALVIN

Not now, Judy.

JUDY

This will protect him.

RONALDO

Oh Christ, not another one of your New Age mystical pieces of junk ...

JUDY

How can you expect us to accept your lifestyle when you can't bring yourself to accept other's ...

RAY

It's okay. Thanks, Judy. Calvin, call Barrows. Tell him you're taking over for a few days.

CALVIN

Ray ...

RAY

Not another word. Nothing's gonna happen, okay? Everybody will work with you this time.

BILL

We're right behind you, Cal.

RONALDO

You're the boss.

CALVIN

Where's that damn ambulance?

ISELA

Can I do something?

RAY

Yeah, PAINT THOSE BILLS!!! (moans loudly, then passes out again)

Blackout

SCENE 3

(The clock shows a little after 10:00. Everyone sits at their stations, working. The chart on the wall shows everybody's output rising except CALVIN's, whose remains steady, and ISELA's, whose line still goes straight across the bottom. RAY dials the phone.)

RAY

(Into the phone) Hello, is this Peggy? This is Ray Ellis, the day supervisor. It seems that we're having a problem with your locker.

(beat)

Yes, I understand. But we don't have enough lockers for everyone so some of you have to share with the day shift.

(beat)

Of course I like you. I never said ...

(beat)

Peggy, don't cry ...

(beat)

No, that's not necessary ...

(beat)

Nobody hates you. I never said ...

(beat)

Please stop crying.

(beat)

It can't be helped. You have to share.

(beat)

This isn't personal, Peggy. You've got to ...

(beat)

Look, you're going to share your locker and ...

(beat, looks at the receiver)

(Not into the phone) She hung up on me.

CALVIN

There's one on every shift.

JUDY

And what is THAT supposed to mean?

CALVIN

Oh ... nothing.

RAY

Sorry Bill, I tried.

BILL

That's okay. I'm getting used to styrofoam cups.

RAY

It's still not right. Everyone shares a locker. That still doesn't give her the right to throw your stuff out whenever you leave something in there.

BILL

It's okay.

RAY

And I say it ain't. What happened to ethics?

CALVIN

(Quietly, to BILL) Billy, remember what the doctor said.

BILL

Okay, Ray. You win.

RONALDO

I need paint.

RAY

That's what I wanna hear! I want everyone to know that Mister Santos here is finally meeting his quota.

JUDY

(Sarcastically) Hooray for Ronaldo.

RAY

You're still behind, Miss Bloom.

JUDY

I'm going as fast as my aura allows me to.

RAY

Can we boost the aura?

JUDY

No ... I don't think ... maybe ...

RAY

Look into it.

(SAUNDERS enters with
BARROWS in tow.)

BARROWS

See? Just like I told you.

SAUNDERS

Yes. Thank you Albert. Go annoy somebody else.

RAY

Ms. Saunders! To what do we owe the pleasure?

BARROWS

That's right, Ellis. Start sucking up to the boss.
Your ass is in SUCH a sling ...

SAUNDERS

That will be quite enough, Albert. Why don't you go
check up on eye-painting?

BARROWS

If you need me ...

SAUNDERS

Yes, yes. Shoo.

(BARROWS exits.)

BILL

(Quietly, to CALVIN) Oh my God! It's Paula!

CALVIN

No it's not. That's Kathryn Saunders. She the CEO of
the company.

BILL

No, no ... her name is Paula.

SAUNDERS

Ray. How are you feeling?

RAY

Just fine, Ms. Saunders. Thank you.

SAUNDERS

What did the doctor say?

RAY

The test results should be in sometime today.

SAUNDERS

Good. Ray, Mr. Barrows is apparently very upset about
something in this department.

RAY

It's his imagination, I assure you.

SAUNDERS

Barrows is a remarkable man but, yes, sometimes he does get a little paranoid. According to our records productivity in the bill-painting department has more than doubled.

RONALDO

(Triumphant) Wooooooo!

(RONALDO and JUDY "high-five.")

RAY

That's right ma'am.

SAUNDERS

Well, by looking around I can see why. This is remarkable! What did you do?

RAY

I raised the daily quota from one hundred to four hundred.

SAUNDERS

The quota was set by me at only one hundred.

RAY

I know, ma'am. But for the benefit of the workers and applying a stronger ethic I saw it necessary to raise the quota.

SAUNDERS

And the workers went along with it?

RAY

Somewhat. They're coming around.

SAUNDERS

Remarkable. What kind of incentive did you offer?

RAY

Just a little pride.

(SAUNDERS walks down to the work area. BILL conspicuously keeps his face hidden from her.)

SAUNDERS

Outstanding, Ray. Outstanding. Good morning, Calvin.

CALVIN

Good morning, Ms. Saunders.

SAUNDERS

How many bills do you paint a day?

CALVIN

One hundred, ma'am. Just like YOUR quota says.

SAUNDERS

(To RONALDO) And you?

RONALDO

Four hundred and climbing.

SAUNDERS

The quota is only one hundred. Why are you producing so much?

RONALDO

Well, Ray asked us to ... and we thought it was a good idea.

SAUNDERS

Ray, I'm going to inform the board of directors about this. It's this kind of spirit that we need around here.

RAY

I'm honored.

SAUNDERS

Everybody, I want you to know that lately Consolidated Duck has admittedly not stood behind their employees. Sometimes we make choices that everybody doesn't win from, but they serve the company best. But you have sparked a new life into the heart of the corporation. The repercussions from this will be monumental.

RAY

Yes!

SAUNDERS

By the way, who is "plebe?"

RAY

Excuse me?

SAUNDERS

Mr. Barrows told me you should ... oh, how did he put it ... "fire the plebe." Who's "plebe?"

BILL

That would be me.

SAUNDERS

(Surprised) Bill?

BILL

Hi, Paula.

SAUNDERS

(Suddenly nervous) Uh ... that's Kathryn. Paula is ... uh ... well ...

BILL

But you told me your name was "Paula."

SAUNDERS

(Quietly, to BILL) Please, Bill, can't we just forget about that?

BILL

What happened? Why didn't you ever call?

SAUNDERS

We'll talk about this later. We'll have drinks.

(Louder, not just to BILL anymore)

Fine. All taken care of. Come to my office tomorrow morning, Ray. I'll have you sign my report. And I can assure you, it will be a glowing one.

RAY

What about plebe ... I mean Bill?

SAUNDERS

Mr. Barrows is mistaken, as expected. The issue has been dropped. Good day, people. (she exits)

(Extremely long pause as
BILL goes back to work but
EVERYBODY stares at him.)

CALVIN

Well?

BILL

(Trying not to pay attention) Well what?

(RONALDO leaps out of his
seat and holds BILL in a
half-nelson.)

RONALDO

Alright, Billy-boy. TALK!

BILL

About what?!

CALVIN

About Paula.

BILL

It was nothing.

RONALDO

Start the tickling.

CALVIN

The tickling shall commence.

(CALVIN starts tickling
BILL, who squirms and
laughs.)

BILL

Stop! Stop it!

RONALDO

Not until you talk!

JUDY

Guys, come on.

CALVIN

Don't listen to the sympathizer!

BILL

Alright, alright. I'll talk! I'll talk!

(RONALDO releases him.)

RONALDO

Well?

BILL

It's kind of a long story ...

RONALDO

That's okay. We lo-o-o-o-ove long stories.

BILL

Well, it was back when I was in Advertising. One night
we were working late and we went for a drink afterwards
...

(Phone rings. RAY answers.)

RAY

Consolidated Duck.
(beat)
Hello, Peggy.

RONALDO

Oh my God ... you picked her up in a bar!

BILL

She said her name was Paula.

RAY

It's okay, Peggy. Please stop crying.

RONALDO

(Bursts out laughing) That's the funniest thing I've ever heard in my life! Kathryn Saunders cruises the bars under an alias!

CALVIN

Well? How was she?

RAY

Nobody hates you, Peggy.

BILL

Just fine. We went out a few times -- we kind of lost touch ...

JUDY

You didn't call her! You jerk!

BILL

No, no! I called her -- she kind of, well ...

RONALDO

Snubbed you?

BILL

Yeah. In a way.

RAY

You don't have to take everything out of your locker. Just don't throw away Bill's things.

BILL

She just kept putting me off. She was civil to me and all ...

CALVIN

She's old enough to be your mother.

BILL

She is?!

JUDY

Only if she gave birth when she was twelve.

BILL

She's not THAT old, is she?

CALVIN

I hope you didn't pay for the dates.

BILL

Come to think of it, I did.

RONALDO

She's worth ten mil - not counting bonuses and kick-backs!

BILL

Ooooh, I'm gonna be sick.

(Phone rings.)

CALVIN

I'll get it.

(answers phone)

Consolidate Duck -- Bill painting ...

RONALDO

Still, she's got to be, what, oh, eight years older than you? Ten years?

JUDY

I think it's great.

RONALDO

You would. You date High School kids.

RAY

Please, relax. Everything is okay.

JUDY

I do not. (beat) Only that once.

CALVIN

Huh?

(to the room, waving for them to be quiet)

Shh! I can't hear.

(into the phone)

Yes, what was that?

RONALDO

Who is it?

RAY

Have you spoken to the night supervisor about this?

CALVIN

(Puts his hand over the receiver, speaks quietly so RAY can't hear him) Ray's doctor.

(Everyone is suddenly quiet and interested.)

RAY

I think if you talk to him you'll be able to work this out. Please stop crying.

CALVIN

Yes. Yes. I understand. What exactly does this mean?

RONALDO

What is it?

CALVIN

(Waves him quiet) Yes, I see. Thank you.

RAY

Peggy, there's no need ... Peggy will you get a grip ...

CALVIN

Yes. Thank you. (hangs up)

RONALDO

Well?!

CALVIN

Oh my God. It's Ray.

BILL

It's Ray what?

RAY

Peg ... will you listen ... NOW YOU LOOK HERE, YOU
PSYCHO -- I DON'T CARE WHAT YOUR PROBLEM IS, YOU DON'T
TALK TO ME THAT WAY!

CALVIN

Ray!

RAY

IF YOU WERE ON MY SHIFT I'D MAKE YOU REGRET THE DAY YOU
DECIDED TO ACT LIKE A LUNATIC ...

CALVIN

RAY!

RAY

STAY OUT OF THIS, CALVIN!

CALVIN

RAYMOND ELLIS YOU HANG UP THAT PHONE RIGHT NOW BEFORE I
RIP IT OUT OF YOUR HAND!!!

(RAY calmly hangs up the
phone, stews for a second,
and explodes.)

RAY

WHO THE FUCK DO YOU THINK YOU ARE, YOU BIG FAT PIECE OF
SHIT?!!

CALVIN

CALM DOWN, RAY!

RAY

I WILL NOT CLAM DOWN, YOU LAZY, GOOD FOR NOTHING ...

CALVIN

IF YOU DON'T CALM DOWN ... you'll die.

RAY

(Stops) Who called?

CALVIN

Your doctor.

RAY

And?

CALVIN

Your tests came back. He says it's not good.

RAY

I see.

BILL

What's not good?

CALVIN

All I know is that the doctor says that if he overdoes it he could drop dead right on the spot.

RAY

It's not all that bad ...

CALVIN

Ray, we've been together a long time. What's going on?

RAY

Thank you for the phone message, Calvin. Everybody get back to work.

CALVIN

No. Ray ...

RAY

It's hereditary, okay?! There's nothing that can be done.

RONALDO

What's hereditary?

JUDY

I don't know. Calvin ...

CALVIN

Ray?

RAY

It's my blood pressure. Way outta control. Hardening of the arteries, too.

CALVIN

Ray ... pal ...

RAY

Don't "Ray Pal" me. What do you want me to do, retire? Tuck my tail between my legs and run?

CALVIN

At least you could take some precautions.

RAY

Like what?

CALVIN

Not yell so much. Take it easy. Not work so hard.

RAY

No can do.

JUDY

What about your wife? What about your kids? You have to think of them.

RAY

Don't tell me how to treat my family.

CALVIN

That's what this is all about, isn't it. It has nothing to do with your son.

RAY

Well, now that you know -- I knew this was comin.' That's why I never pushed. That's why I was always happy goin' with the flow. But knowing you could go at any moment ... you tend to look back at your life and realize that you ain't done shit. Jesus, Calvin, we went to Art School together. We were gonna paint masterpieces. What happened? What happened to the masterpieces?

CALVIN

This is a good job.

RAY

We sold out. We sold our soul for a few pieces of gold. Well, you can just sit back and gain weight and be bitter about it or you can do something. If I'm goin' out, I'm goin' out with a bang -- and some dignity. I'd rather leave my family with that.

CALVIN

But you can't go screaming at people ...

RAY

Why not? Are you my mommy? Are you gonna tell me what I can and can't do?

CALVIN

But your doctor said ...

RAY

(Interrupting) I pay my doctor. It's his job to tell me to take it easy, and I appreciate it. But I can't live my life that way. I can't fade out to nothing. I have to finish that masterpiece, and sittin' around on my butt isn't the way to do it. How's your masterpiece comin', Cal?

CALVIN

(Tries to laugh) It's still sketches.

RAY

Yeah, well I got tired of the sketches. Time is running out and, ready or not, it's time to put the brush to the canvas ... get my ducks in a row (aside) so to speak.

CALVIN

What can we do?

RAY

I guess you could try to not get me upset. That and paint some bills.

CALVIN

Bills? Sure. Whatever you want, buddy. How many was that, four hundred and ten or a four hundred and twenty per day?

RAY

Now you're talking.

JUDY

Calvin?

CALVIN

You heard the man. Let's paint some ducks!

Blackout.

SCENE 4

(The clock says 9:00 on the dot. RAY, BILL, CALVIN and JUDY are already in position and painting - RONALDO and ISELA are absent. The chart now shows everybody, led by CALVIN, in the 400 and over mark, except JUDY who is just under and ISELA who is still at 50. RONALDO bursts in with a flourish.)

RONALDO

Good morning, fellow bill-painters!

(Everybody says "good morning" back. He puts on his smock and moves about the room, kissing everybody - yes, everybody - on the cheek.)

RONALDO (cont'd)

I gotta say I've never slept better in my life!

BILL

So I'm not crazy.

RONALDO

No, my plucky cohort. I actually feel good! I feel good about my job, I feel good about my life -- I actually WANT to come to work in the morning.

RAY

Feels great, don't it?

RONALDO

It does! For once I feel I have a purpose! For once I have a sense of accomplishment! Now I sleep better, I eat better, I clean better -- even Michael says the sex is better.

CALVIN

Aw, we didn't have to hear that.

JUDY

I think it's sweet. You're just bitter because you live alone.

CALVIN

It has it's advantages.

RONALDO

So does being with someone you love.

CALVIN

(Squirming) Oh, cut it out!

BILL

I never pegged you for homophobic.

RONALDO

Oh, Cal's not homophobic. He's just a little conservative.

CALVIN

Thank you.

RONALDO

Unless ... come out of any closets lately?

(All laugh.)

CALVIN

Stop it.

RONALDO

Oh, come on. We've always suspected.

JUDY

Don't worry. He's straight.

(All stop suddenly and stare at JUDY.)

RONALDO

Oh? And how do YOU know?

JUDY

A girl just knows these things.

CALVIN

What else do you know?

JUDY

I know that I have no respect for you.

RONALDO

Uh-oh.

CALVIN

Why not?

JUDY

Because you're smarter and better than this, but you refuse to do anything about it.

CALVIN

Don't you judge me, too.

JUDY

It's true! You have the talent and the tools and you choose not to use them. I have no respect for that.

CALVIN

You have no idea why I do what I do.

JUDY

Sure I do.

CALVIN

Oh?

JUDY

Sure. It's a textbook fat thing. Picked on as a kid ... don't want to draw attention to yourself ... it's all very cut and dry. You should try therapy.

BILL

I'd hate to hear what you think of me.

JUDY

You're right. You'd hate to hear it.

RAY

Girls, let's retract the claws.

JUDY

I wasn't saying anything wrong, was I?

RAY

You were a little callous, yes.

JUDY

I'm sorry. I just can't help it that I'm smarter and more in-touch with my feelings than all of you.

RAY

Is that a fact?

JUDY

And I always knew that this job was a stop-gap before I got that acting job ...

RONALDO

This is getting good.

JUDY

... but I'm almost respecting you people now.

RAY

I'm so relieved.

BILL

What about the never-present Isela -- I'm afraid to ask ...

RAY

Where is she? Time clock shows she was here before you.

JUDY

Isela is a doll. I don't know why you guys are always on her case.

RAY

Because she does no work.

JUDY

She works very hard!

RAY

Then why does she still painting only fifty ducks a day?

JUDY

She does so many other things!

RAY

Like what? She's either on the phone or she disappears all the time.

JUDY

Isela is a model employee.

RAY

Oh please! She got a citation in her first year and hasn't busted a sweat since!

JUDY

I don't like how you treat her.

CALVIN

I never realized how twisted you are?

JUDY

I am NOT twisted, Calvin. I can see reality quite clearly.

RONALDO

You're no better than us.

JUDY

I'm MILES better. I at least KNOW that this is a temporary, unimportant job. Do people need rubber duckies? Will someone die if they don't have a rubber ducky? Will nations feud and economies falter because the bill on a rubber ducky isn't painted just right?

RAY

You can tell she's never had children.

CALVIN

I think you've eaten one too many bean sprouts.

JUDY

And that's another thing. Just because you all choose to destroy your bodies by ingesting disgusting flesh of animals that were once living, breathing creatures of God, you all see fit to criticize my choice to live a healthy life when I'm CLEARLY right and you're CLEARLY wrong.

RONALDO

You poor, poor child.

BILL

Does your therapist know about this?

JUDY

We talk about it all the time. I'm looking for a new one, though. I can never do anything right for her. She's always telling me that I'm wrong about this and I'm wrong about that -- I pay her to help me, not ... not ... criticize me.

RONALDO

You poor, confused child.

(BARROWS enters. He's a little more calm.)

BARROWS

Ray? A word, please.

RAY

Sure. What is it?

BARROWS

First of all, I'm sorry I accused you of trying to snow me. Turns out you guys were doin' one hell of a job after all.

RAY

Thank you, Albert.

BARROWS

And I'm sorry I came down of the plebe. I hear he's your top producer.

BILL

That's okay. Thanks.

BARROWS

You should all be proud of yourselves. And I want you to know that I'm on your side one hundred percent.

RAY

Whoa, wait a minute. On our side?

BARROWS

Well ... it seems that the other departments have been a little uncomfortable with your sudden efficiency. Eye-painting is pissed off because they can't paint eyes fast enough to keep up with you, so they feel like assholes. Then packaging is pissed because they've been snowed under with the amount of ducks coming out of here. We've already moved three eye-painters to packaging, which pissed off shipping because now THEY'RE snowed under. So shipping is working overtime and, well, the ducks are selling as usual so nobody's buying the extra ducks produced, so they're backed up in the warehouse, which makes them all bogged down and the overtime budget is too high and we don't want to increase the advertising budget to increase the sales and ... well ... there's a whole domino reaction.

RAY

What are you trying to say, Al?

BARROWS

Aw, this isn't easy. What I'm tryin' to say is ... can you ... you can't ... would you ... have you thought about trimming some fat maybe?

RAY

Like who?

(ISELA enters pensively.)

ISELA

Sorry ... (takes her seat)

BARROWS

All I'm saying is that you need to do something.

RAY

Like what? Slow down? Be inefficient again?
Compromise our ethics?

BARROWS

(Still to RAY) You said it, I didn't.

RAY

Then I'm un-saying it.

BARROWS

Ellis ... Ray ... we've worked together for a long time. Please, don't make Saunders have to come up here again. She's not the most merciful person, and she's not at all happy about this.

RAY

Is that so? Last we heard she was thrilled about it. I have the written commendation to prove it.

BARROWS

Well, now she's not so thrilled. Don't cross her, Ray. She'll eat you alive.

RAY

I'll take my chances.

BARROWS

Oh ... and Ray ... I meant what I said. I'm behind you one hundred percent. If it ever comes between your way and her way, I'm with you.

RAY

Thanks, Al. Thanks.

(BARROWS leaves.)

CALVIN

I don't wanna say "I tol'ja so," but ...

JUDY

It's not his fault. It's Bill's fault.

BILL
What?!

JUDY
Well, YOU'RE the one who came in here and bulldozed
over all of us.

BILL
What?! No!

RAY
The only thing Bill did was remind me of what Work is.
If anyone has a problem with that -- then tough shit.

RONALDO
Hallelujah!

CALVIN
You're rocking a mighty big boat.

RONALDO
Yeah, but you're rockin' it too, big guy.

(SAUNDERS, as expected,
finally enters.)

RAY
Ms. Saunders. We've been expecting you.

SAUNDERS
I'm sure Mr. Barrows gave you fair warning.

RAY
Barrows is okay.

SAUNDERS
Yes, he is. So are you. And so are all of you. I
can't tell you how impressed I am with your performance
and ethic. If we had more people like you this company
would be a monster. I'm very pleased with what you've
done.

RAY
Well, now that you've kissed me it's time to fuck me.

SAUNDERS
Not one to mince words, I see. Very well -- from now
on the daily quota of bills painted per employee is to
be fifty ducks a day.

RONALDO
WHAT?!

SAUNDERS

You folks have disrupted the balance around here so severely that a temporary quota of fifty is necessary to achieve that balance once again. Once we are back on track, we'll discuss raising the quota again.

RAY

Why won't they meet the challenge?

SAUNDERS

This is not a sporting event, Mr. Ellis, this is a factory - a factory in which I own and am answerable to the stockholders for - a factory in which over three thousand people, including yourselves, are employed.

RAY

Maybe if some of them broke a sweat once in a while there wouldn't be this balance problem.

SAUNDERS

Are you insinuating that I don't know how to run my company, Mr. Ellis?

RAY

I'm *insinuating* that most of the people who "work" here wouldn't know REAL work if it fell out of the sky and bit them on the ass. It's worse than a Union shop around here. So you move some of the eye-painters to packaging. Did it ever occur to you that Eye-painting is the biggest bunch of goof-offs on God's green earth? They're not only milking the company for undeserved paychecks, but they've nailed you on every loophole they can find. Two of them were on disability for the past year - did you know that? I got news for you -- they're faking it! And if they're not taking vacation days they're faking sick! The last time the entire department showed up was over three years ago! And Packaging isn't much better - though they do sponsor one hell of a craps game on company property. And then there's Shipping. Check the mileage on those trucks sometime. Have you ever noticed it takes them all day to do a half-hour drop?

SAUNDERS

Apparently there is a lot you don't know about running a company.

RAY

You keep telling me that but you haven't sold me. I got the most swingin', happenin' department in the company. We're generating more heat than the vats of polymers downstairs. WHAT am I doing that's wrong?

SAUNDERS

Have you considered reducing your department?

RAY

Oh no. Not my staff.

SAUNDERS

(Looking at the chart) There's an obvious imbalance.

(ISELA nervously drops
whatever she is working on.)

SAUNDERS

(Notices ISELA) Hello, Isela. How are you doing?

ISELA

Fine, ma'am.

SAUNDERS

How is Ray treating you?

ISELA

Just fine, ma'am.

SAUNDERS

He isn't doing anything ... unorthodox?

BILL

No! Ray is as on the level as you can get!

SAUNDERS

I'm talking to Isela. (to ISELA) Ray isn't pressuring
you, is he?

ISELA

Well ...

RONALDO

Isela ... no --

SAUNDERS

"No" what?

RONALDO

Huh? What? Me? I didn't say anything.

SAUNDERS

(Back to ISELA) Tell me what he does.

ISELA

He ... wants me to work faster.

SAUNDERS

Why?

ISELA

Because he is going to die.

SAUNDERS

WHAT?

CALVIN

Damn!

SAUNDERS

Isela, what do you mean?

ISELA

Por favor, déjeme sola.

SAUNDERS

Ms. Bloom? What does she mean?

JUDY

I think she wants you to leave her alone.

SAUNDERS

Mr. Ellis, this is not the place to work out personal agendas. As of this very moment the quota is back to fifty for good. I suggest you adhere to it.

RAY

Or what.

SAUNDERS

Or you're all fired.

RONALDO

No! Ray, she can't do that! I can't lose this job!

RAY

It's okay, Ronaldo. She can't do that. If you fire us you'll have to take down Eye-painting, and Packaging, and Squeakers, and Shipping, and every employee in the house.

SAUNDERS

You heard me, Ray.

RAY

You can't fire someone for doing a good job. It'll never hold up in court.

SAUNDERS

Don't challenge me.

RAY

I'll challenge you alright. I challenge you to get the rest of the company up to OUR level. We've reset the standard. Now it's YOUR job to keep up.

SAUNDERS

And why should I step to your beat?

RAY

Higher profit margins? Tighter operations?

RONALDO

A good night's sleep!

SAUNDERS

Look. I promoted Barrows to deal with departments like this one. I hate coming around here because, frankly, I have better things to do than worry about what goes on from day to day in the fringe departments. Order is important here, as I'm sure you know since you've maintained good order for so long. But this department has become a rock in my shoe and I don't like it anymore. Do you understand?

(beat)

Fifty ducks a day. That's final.

(starts to exit)

I'm not the bad guy here, you know.

(exits)

BILL

Ray?

ISELA

Perdóne me, Ray.

RAY

It's okay. It's okay. But now it's personal. Come on, everybody, let's get to work.

JUDY

But what's the quota?

CALVIN

The quota stands. Four hundred ducks per day.

Fadeout.

* END OF ACT I *

