



## RICK, CLELIA, WALDGRAVE & AXEL

RICK. (*Studying his egg. Philosophically.*) It's hard to believe, you know? (*The others look at him.*) Just a little while ago, these were all inside some birds. (*Everybody succinctly finds a place to deposit his or her egg for the remainder of the evening. Axel tosses his gracefully into the fireplace. Rick thoughtfully eats his, but no one is really able to watch.*)

WALDGRAVE. (*To Willum.*) You were saying something?

WILLUM. I don't remember. (*Pause. Some people put aside their nearly-untouched plates.*)

RICK. Is everything okay?

WILLUM. Fine. Fine.

RICK. Okay.

CLELIA. Well.

WILLUM. So—uh, fill us in, Rick. What have you been doing these last—however many years it's been?

RICK. (*Who, we discover, is blessed with total recall.*) Oh. Okay—let's see. (*He rolls his eyes upward to help himself remember, and recounts in droning singsong.*) Nineteen seventy o-o-one, March, I g-e-et out of the Army, I go-o back to work at my old place where I used to work, the same factory, y'know—and, it's really pretty much the same as it was, you know? I mean, okay, there are some new things, okay, granted—but basically it's really, uh, the same. Pretty much. 'Kay, then, uh, in April, I mo-ove in with my brother at my brother's place 'cause he lives right near there, and I'm still—still workeen' at the factory. Okay. Uh, Ma-ay—

WALDGRAVE. Jesus.

RICK. Huh?

WALDGRAVE. Nothing.

RICK. 'Kay. May of 1971, I'm sti-i-ll workeen' at the factory—

WILLUM. Uh, Rick—maybe—maybe you could give us, like, an overview of the whole time.

AXEL. For those of us who didn't bring our pajamas.

WILLUM. I mean, like—okay, what sort of job is it that you do, again? I remember your saying your factory made something interesting, but I—uh, what was it again?

RICK. Chalk.

WILLUM. (*Trying to find something fascinating in this revelation.*) Oh? Chalk?

RICK. Yeah. (*Shrugs.*) We make chalk.

WILLUM. Uh-huh? Uh-huh? And anything else? Or just—?

RICK. Just the chalk.

WILLUM. Just the chalk. Uh-huh? Well, so, what's your part in that process?

RICK. Inspector.

WILLUM. Yeah? So—uh, what does an inspector do?

RICK. (*Shrugs.*) Sit there and watch the chalk.

WILLUM. Uh-huh? Uh-huh?

RICK. The loaders put the chalk in the crates, then the crates come through, and I check 'em out.

WILLUM. And you—what is it that you look for? (*Rick looks puzzled.*) Is it—uh, color variations, or broken pieces, or what?

RICK. (*Shrugs.*) I just make sure there is some.

WILLUM. Some what?

RICK. Some chalk in the crates.

WILLUM. Oh! Oh, I see—so, what, is there sometimes no chalk in the crates?

RICK. There's always chalk in the crates. They're crates of chalk. We don't just send out some crates with no chalk. Why would we do that?

WILLUM. So—uh, what is it that you do?

RICK. What do I do? I make *sure* there's chalk in the crates.

WILLUM. Oh.

RICK. It sounds neat but it's really not. (*Rick, to everyone's dismay, takes another devilled egg.*)

WILLUM. So you still live with your brother?

RICK. My brother Bob, yeah. Him and his wife.

WILLUM. Big place?

RICK. Yeah. Couple of rooms, you know.

WILLUM. Oh!

RICK. Yeah. It's nice, though. They don't really come around that much, lately. Less and less.

WILLUM. Really? Where do they go?

RICK. (*Frowns slightly.*) I'm not sure. Taken' the kids for a walk, stuff like that, I guess.

WILLUM. Kids? They've got kids?

RICK. Oh, yeah. Little Bob junior, and little Richard the third.

WILLUM. (*Laughing.*) Richard the third?

RICK. (*A trifle put off by Willum's laughter.*) Yeah. My dad was Richard Steadman, and I'm Richard junior, really. It's a family name. Richard.

WILLUM. (*Still smiling.*) Makes sense.

RICK. It's not that unusual of a name in Wisconsin.

WILLUM. No, I'm sorry. Then—so, are you on vacation now, or what?

RICK. Yeah. And I was just gonna, you know, hang around the house, but my brother—I don't know how he did it, but he gave me all this money, like *mucho dinero*, y'know, and all these credit cards. And said why didn't I just go anywhere I wanted to? So that's what I'm dooen', just travelleen' around. . . .

WILLUM. Well, that was generous of him.

RICK. You know it. Especially since he hasn't got a job, or anything.

WILLUM. No?

RICK. No. He's on that welfare. He used to work at the chalk factory, but he got laid off.

WILLUM. Why?

RICK. Well, I came back from the army. They gave me my old job back.

WILLUM. Oh!

RICK. Yeah, they had to. That was the law. Too bad for old Bob, though.

WILLUM. Gee—well, I'm sure you help out with the household expenses, don't you?

RICK. (*Rubbing his nose.*) Oh . . . prob'ly.

WILLUM. Is, uh—is Bob okay about it all? I mean, is he happy with the situation?

RICK. Oh, sure. He has his interests, you know, like—oh, his headphones, and . . . and walkeen' down by the river . . . and tryeen' to find places to put things. And recently he's gotten interested in guns. . . . (*He tries to think of something else Bob enjoys.*)

AXEL. I'll bet.

RICK. Lots of stuff.

CLELIA. You were never married?

RICK. Aw, no. The only time I ever proposed was 'way back, I still remember, we were all out on the playground one time at

Reever Hadley Elementary School, and we were playeen'— .  
(*He smiles shyly, which proves surprisingly, if momentarily, disarming.*)  
I don't think I ever told anybody this— .

CLELIA. (*With a mother's smile.*) What happened?

RICK. Aw, there was this real pretty little girl, you know. I'll never forget, her name was Tina Patsavas, and she—one day I gave her this little necklace that I made myself out of Cheerios—you know, you paint the Cheerios and you string 'em all together? (*Clelia nods.*) I thought she'd like it; what did I know, right? So, I gave her that, and then I asked her if she'd marry me.

CLELIA. (*Genuinely touched.*) Ohhh. . . .

RICK. And she was real nice, but she said she couldn't. You know.

CLELIA. (*Smiling.*) Oh, how sad.

RICK. Then she told her folks, and they got all mad. It was pretty dumb of me, I guess.

CLELIA. Oh, it wasn't. It was very sweet.

RICK. You think?

CLELIA. Of course it was.

RICK. Really?

CLELIA. Yes.

RICK. I mean, what the heck, she was only about eight, or somethen'.

CLELIA. And how old were you?

RICK. Thirty.

CLELIA. (*Horried.*) Oh!

RICK. Boy, I wish I'd had you there to tell her folks that it was so sweet. They didn't think it was sweet, boy. They wanted to put me in jail.

CLELIA. Oh!

RICK. But no, that really makes me feel better, though, that you thought it was sweet. I have to remember that next time.

(*Tansy enters with the spaghetti.*)

TANSY. Spaghetti!

CLELIA. (*Jumping up and whispering to Tansy.*) Tansy, could I—do you think I could have another—? (*She gestures toward the saucers.*)

TANSY. (*Whispering.*) Oh. Sure. (*Clelia surreptitiously grabs a saucer and disappears into the kitchen.*)

WALDGRAVE. What was all that?