

The Last American Hammer

A New American Chamber Opera

Music by Peter Hilliard

Libretto by Matt Boresi

Setting: The National Toby Jug Museum, a cozy gallery located in a collapsed industrial town in rural Ohio. The present.

Personaggi

Milcom Negley

Conspiracy theorist, militia man, unemployed hammersmith

Tink Enraught

Dedicated curatrix of figural vessels

DeeDee Reyes

Rookie FBI field agent

Recit and Aria: *“Now, I understand/ It is the God’s honest truth...”*

(In the blackout – a disgruntled baritone declaration:)

MILCOM:

Now, I understand you might find this alarming
But it is crucial
That I be heard

*(Lights up on a white man.
His style of dress implies pursuits somewhere between venatics and
paramilitarism – there are many threatening pouches.)*

MILCOM:

It is the God's honest truth
That our federal government
Can assassinate you
A private citizen
They can assassinate you
From the air
With a remote control drone
They can blow you up on American soil
With a robot
Whensoever they choose
([And] do it) legally

That is the country
We live in now
That is the low to which these United States
Have fallen
And I ask you
Is that freedom?
Is that freedom?
When bureaucrats
Can settle a rhubarb
By exploding your body
From their full-grain leather office swivel chairs
A thousand miles away
Is that freedom?
Naw, That ain't freedom
That is some bullshit

And as long as we live in a country like that

I will fight
I will take a stand
I will equip myself
With the tools required
To ensure the freedom
The founding fathers wanted
When they framed the Constitution
Which I always carry on me
Underneath my Kevlar
Near my heart

And that Constitution
Is about We the People
You and I the People
Not just Hollywood the people
Or Wall Street the people
Or them Google people the people
and their one percent collusion
To deny us
The blessings of liberty
We hold dear

So, yes, I'm sympathetic
That you might find this alarming
But today I make my voice heard
Today I dig my heels in!
Today I'm locked and loaded!
To restore dignity and honor
To the patriots
of the land of the free!

(Lights to full on an impossibly twee museum – the walls crowded with “Toby Jugs” – ceramic pitchers shaped like people, largely British and 18th and 19th century in origin. At a small table for reading about the collection is a well-kempt woman of a certain age with a pot of tea, four cups, and a plate of shortbread cookies. To the side are shipping boxes and jugs to be appraised and catalogue.)

Scena: “Milcom, you should really have a cookie.”

TINK:

Milcom, you should really have a cookie.

MILCOM:

This is not a time for cookies, Ms. Enraught.

This is a time for revolution.

(pauses - finally acquiesces and takes a cookie)

Thank you, Ma'am.

TINK:

You're welcome, Milcom.

(They wait a moment.)

TINK:

Tea?

MILCOM:

Is it caffeinated?

TINK:

Have you given up caffeine?

I see you at the Minute Man with a hogsheads of coffee every morning.

MILCOM:

If I'm holding the line against a Federal onslaught

I need my hands steady and my head on straight.

TINK:

Rooibos.

(a beat)

Decaf.

Your hands will be steady.

I can't speak for your head.

MILCOM:

Thank you, Ma'am.

(She pours. They wait.

She is patient. He is agitated, looking at multiple military timepieces he both wears and carries. On the table is an ominous black case with latches.)

MILCOM:

They didn't tell you
When they was getting here?

TINK:

I only spoke to the police.
The sheriff spoke to the Joint Terrorism Task Force.

MILCOM:

Terrorism!
That's what patriotism gets you in this so-called America today -
Put on a watch list.
Labeled a terrorist.
As if I'm one of them guys
Who gets on an airplane
Wearing sneakers full of acetone peroxide!

TINK:

Triacetone triperoxide, Milcom.
Acetone peroxide they'd pick up in a second.

MILCOM:

I know you're very learn-ed, Ms. Enraught,
But my question is, ain't they got any
Clear and present threats to the Republic
They should be dealin' with
Instead of persecutin' the workin' man
Who just wants freedom
From unfair taxes
And to build up
A well-stocked arsenal
As is his right?

TINK:

You're the one who had me make the call.
(She rises to busy herself with curatorial matters.)
In the meantime
I've got boxes of donations to catalog
Curation waits for no man.

MILCOM:

You should leave, Ma'am.
You won't want to be here when canisters of CS gas

Are fired in through those windows
If the SEAL teams aren't man enough
To bust in with their HK416s
And their L-3 four-tube night vision goggles!

TINK:

It's the middle of the afternoon.

MILCOM:

(suddenly quieter, scanning the room) They're prob'ly list'nin' to us now
Blasting microwaves at 30 to 100 Gigahertz
Through the wall
(even quieter) They can pick up what we're saying
From vibrations on our clothing
(growing louder) Then they enhance the feed
And turn it back to English
Using tech designed by NASA
(loud) Well, bring it on boys,
You can kill me
But you cannot shut me up

TINK:

That is perseverance.

NEGLEY *(Gesturing to the black case on the table)* :

They will learn to appreciate the contents of this case.

TINK:

I've registered my conscientious objection
to the contents of that case, Milcom.

MILCOM:

...of course they might just call in an airstrike.
Then they could make us
Crispy critters/

TINK *(moving case over to supplies):*

I'm moving this case
THIS thing has no business here

NEGLEY and TINK:

/with a remote control drone

MILCOM:

Yeah, you get it!
I am sorry about your dishes, ma'am.

Sometimes the tree of liberty/

TINK:

/Must be refreshed with the dust of antique curios?

Recit and Duet: *“Ms. Enraught, God Bless You/My Poor Little Museum”*

MILCOM:

Ms. Enraught

God Bless You

But where are you headed with all ‘a this?

I mean everybody loves mugs

I got a million of ‘em

“I Heart Bowhunting”

“World’s Greatest Dad”

But this is...

This is a lot of mugs

Doubtful they’re even microwave safe

TINK:

Jugs, Milcom.

Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Figural Vessels

Objets d’art

Beauty and history

Frangible whimsey

Something to gingerly hold and behold

MILCOM:

It’s a whole lot of fuss.

TINK:

A whole lot of fuss.

TINK

My poor little museum.

A lot of fuss?

I suppose.

But without it

What’s left around here?

NEGLEY

The downtown hollowed out twenty years ago

Beaten down

Hollowed out

Beaten down by big boxes

Selling gallons of pickles for under three dollars

Fifty dollar bicycles

Made in China

How could we compete?

Beaten down

The downtown hollowed out twenty years ago

Save for the dollar stores

Taverns and dollar stores

Taverns and dollar stores

Taverns and dollar stores

The appeal of beer

Is logical

But how many things can you possibly need

That only cost a dollar?

And the library's closed on weekends

The post office is next

The movie theater

Gone

The restaurants

Gone

The doctor's office

Gone, gone

The municipal band is gone

Their gazebo in the park's been overrun
by honeysuckle and raccoons

Instead of pastoral Sundays

Sitting on the lawn

Listening to the Dayton Light Guard March

Next to the restaurateur or the doctor

Taverns and dollar stores

Taverns and dollar stores

Honeysuckle and raccoons

Honeysuckle and raccoons

No more dances at the VFW

No more Masons

No more Lions

Eagles

Moose

No more Knights of Columbus

No more Knights of Columbus

Fields full of driverless robot combines

Nary a Future Farmer in the high school

And I don't have to tell you what happened to the plant

And all its jobs

Oh, I know what happened to the plant

But if you're lookin' for a meth lab

We're full up on meth labs

Send a postcard from our scenic meth labs

"Wish you were here"

"Wish you were here"

Scenic meth labs

Which if you count as commerce

This town's in clover

Clover, taverns,

Dollar stores

Honeysuckle and raccoons

Honeysuckle and raccoons

Robot combines

Robot combines

Scenic meth labs

Scenic meth labs

Taverns and dollar stores

Taverns and dollar stores

Honeysuckle and raccoons

Honeysuckle and raccoons

You want to hold the line, Milcom?

I'm holding the line, Ma'am

I'm holding the line, Milcom!

With my poor little museum

A lot of fuss

I suppose

But après this little museum

Le deluge!

(She defiantly moves his case to a less prominent place on the table, makes her cookies more prominent. Eats one with equal defiance.)

Scena: *"I respect your perseverance..."*

MILCOM:

I respect your perseverance

But I cannot ensure your safety

When the black helicopters

Rain down destruction

With their deadly payload!

*(In contrast to his bombast, the delicate tinkle of a shopkeeper's bell.
Every molecule of MILCOM's body screams fight or flight.)*

TINK *(paraphrasing Emerson):*

Here once the embattled conservator stood
And listened to the chime heard round the world.

(Enter AGENT REYES. She is younger than expected, but doing all she can to radiate gravitas.)

REYES:

Tink Enraught?
I'm Agent Reyes,
Federal Bureau of Investigation.

NEGLEY *(steeling himself):*

Today I make my voice heard
Today I dig my heels in!/

REYES:

Milcom Negley, I presume?

MILCOM:

Tell your people to hold their fire!

REYES:

Mr. Negley, I'm not sure what you/

NEGLEY *(oblivious to her sarcasm, he gestures to the table):*

You need to see what's in this case
The country needs to see what's in this/

(NEGLEY moves toward the case on the table, forcing REYES to pull her gun.)

REYES:

(aside - deeply frustrated) Damn it.
(now commanding) Stop right there, Mr. Negley!
Don't touch that case!
Keep your hands where I can see them!

MILCOM:

Tell your people to hold their fire

You may take me down in a hail of bullets
But not until I've said my piece

TINK:

Well that was fast.
I hadn't even offered any tea yet
Perhaps we do introductions again?
Perhaps we can all calm down?

(A harried crescendo!

Finally, equilibrium is reached, and everyone stands in tense silence.)

TINK:

Yes, Agent Reyes, this is Milcom Negley.
The local - spirited fellow - I called you about.

REYES:

You said he wasn't armed.
You told us this wasn't a hostage situation!

TINK:

Do I look like a hostage to you?

MILCOM:

You'd love it if I was armed
You think a man's weapons
Are a forfeiture of his human rights

TINK:

I told him
"No guns in our museum."
There's a sticker on the door.
Yours is an exception, I suppose.
And Milcom is a man of his word.

(REYES lowers her gun.)

REYES:

I realize this may be disappointing
Mr. Negley

But I'm really not here to kill you
...despite your best efforts

(REYES holsters her gun. They remain with their eyes locked, their bodies taut from adrenaline and mistrust.)

TINK:

How about a tour?

AGENT:

No, thank you.

MILCOM:

No, thank you.

(a beat)

TINK:

Cookies?

AGENT:

Maybe.

MILCOM:

I could deal with a cookie.

TINK:

It's a start.

Shall we be seated?

REYES:

I'll stand.

MILCOM:

I'll stand.

TINK:

Still - cookies!

It's something.

(She starts to pour tea and get cookies.)

MILCOM:

You got a dossier on me in the Hoover building?

REYES:

They barely have room for desks in the Hoover building.

And I'm from Cleveland.
But I have seen some of your work on YouTube
You're very passionate
Though it undercuts your argument
When your dogs get in the shot.

NEGLEY (*smelling a rat*):
Where's your partner?

REYES:
I'm sorry?

MILCOM:
Field agents don't fly solo.
How you gonna play Good Fed/Bad Fed.
Without a Bad Fed?

REYES:
You think I'm the Good Fed?
As for your question.
I'm assuming he's halfway into a plate of
Something called (*with revulsion*) "sauerkraut balls."

TINK:
(*they find this pleasant*)
Sauerkraut balls!
Must've gone to Zoltán's
Sauerkraut balls.
He'll love them.
Local delicacy.

Neither.

Sauerkraut balls
They're very popular.

REYES:
Your sheriff said my partner just HAD to try them!

MILCOM:

Sauerkraut balls!
Must've gone to Zoltán's
Sauerkraut balls.

Local delicacy.
German.
Polish maybe.

Ain't that the way?
My day fin'ly came
The Feds are fin'ly here
And they're taking their time eating
Sauerkraut balls!

So they left me to deal with the - what is this?
Armed/unarmed hostage/non-hostage situation.

TINK:

I'm really not a hostage.

NEGLEY(*annoyed*):

If he went to Zoltán's
Hope he brought some cocktail sauce
Got to go all the way to Akron for
Any decent sauerkraut balls.

REYES (*chagrined*):

And there it is.

TINK:

There is what?

MILCOM:

There what is?

REYES:

The boys at the office.
Picking on the rookie.
“A militia making demands”
“In a museum”
Kind of thing that could put me on the map.
Shoulda known that wasn't a realistic get
And as we're headed out
The details get clearer
The mileage gets higher
The story gets weirder
And then Bob goes out for “sauerkraut balls”
Shoulda realized I was being hazed

TINK:

Hazed?

MILCOM:

National news?
So will there or won't there be
Armored vehicles?

REYES (*quite exasperated now*):

Armored vehicles?
Armored vehicles?!
In here?
I don't know where the hell I am.
But it's the daintiest goddamned place I've ever been!

TINK:

Thank you.

MILCOM:

“Militia making demands!”

That’s got a ring to it!

That’ll look great scrolling by on the news.

A call to arms!

A call to action!

Don’t be disappointed, Agent Reyes.

Milcom is very serious about his cause.

I’m sure he’ll make the exchange worth your trip.

And I for one am thrilled this was not an armored assault.

We’re not insured for that, for one.

You’re mocking me!

(she is)

(To REYES, getting her a chair) You do sit, don’t you?

They let you sit?

REYES:

Let me?

TINK:

Protocol.

REYES:

If Bob can eat “sauerkraut balls”

I can sit.

(TINK pulls out a chair and REYES sits, peeved.)

TINK:

Welcome, by the way,
to the National Toby Jug Museum

REYES:

Are there other Toby Jug Museums?

MILCOM:

Not in **this** Nation.

TINK:

We are uniquely positioned.
But that should not cast any aspersions
As to the substance of our endeavours!
It is precisely our national standing
Which drew Mr. Negley here

MILCOM:

To ping your radar, Agent,
I had to lay siege
To something federal authorities hold dear
It ain't exactly a nuke plant
Or the Grand Coulee Dam
But it **is** brought to you by
The **National** Endowment for the Arts

TINK:

Which I very much appreciate.
We received a very generous grant
-I wrote it myself if you don't mind me bragging-
to "provide a civic anchor
through the restoration and display"
of Sir Oswyn!

REYES:

Sir Oswyn?

TINK:

Sir Oswyn Codpox
The pride of our collection!

MILCOM:

He's a mug.

TINK (*offended*):

Milcom, I have provided you with an altar
for your self-immolation.
You can at least allow me
some measure of exposition

MILCOM:

Apologies, Ma'am.

(*to Reyes*) He's a very old mug.

TINK:

Jug, Milcom.

(*to REYES*) Toby jugs are figural pitchers.

For pouring.

Mugs are for drinking.

Although we have those, too.

Antique, of course.

Most are British.

Those cabinets are French and Belgian.

Germany and Austria are over there.

MILCOM:

And yet generously underwritten

by U.S. dollars

Some deal!

Observe, for instance

This Martha Gunn

1840 - though you'd never know

From the underglaze oxide color

Bursting blue and ochre

Historically, Martha pushed bathing machines

In and out of the water

An undersung woman

Captured here, hale and husky

And rare

A Royal Worcester

Mephistopheles

1760 - and still full of mischief

Fifty percent calcium phosphate from bone

And 22 karat gilding

Or this Onnaing Majolica

Gurgling Fish

1880 - but so little crazing

Never immediately appreciated

But a treasure to those in the know

Behold this Lord High Executioner!
Stafford and Sons, D'Oyly Carte, 1949
Or here - awaiting appraisal
Two Fake Japanese Hearty Goodfellows
A Sgt. Pepper Paul
There, a Doctor Who
Each one chin up!

(heading over to Sir Oswyn's special perch):

(AND) Here in the catbird seat.

The pride of our collection.

Dating back to the 1760s

The splendid work of Staffordshire potters

Painstakingly refreshed

A jolly Restoration Falstaff

Immortalized in brown salt glaze

MILCOM:

This is where she sings you a song.

TINK:

Do you know Sir Oswyn's song?

Some people say they sang it

in elementary music

an 18th century air

"The Ballad of Sir Oswyn Codpox"

"The Ballad of Sir Oswyn Codpox"

We never sang it.

REYES:

I think I would have remembered.

MILCOM:

She's going to sing it, regardless.

TINK *(an 18th century air, a la Gay):*

"How now Sir Oswyn Codpox

Old profligate and pander

Purloiner of the poorbox

Thou drunkard and philander

Renounce the brash iniquities
For which you daily hanker
Or yield thy ripened tallywags
To syphilitic chancre”

REYES:

Yeah, I would have remembered that.

TINK:

There may be other Toby Jugs
but in all of the world there is only one
Sir Oswyn Codpox
and he is right here.
Many pilgrims have crossed the ocean to see him!

REYES:

Many?

TINK:

Several.

(TINK returns Sir Oswyn to his case. REYES rises. Rallies herself back to business.)

REYES:

So now I know where I am
But there is still the question of why
If you are not, in fact, armed
And she is not, in fact, a hostage
And this is not, in fact, the Grand Coulee Dam

NEGLEY (rising):

You are here because I must be heard, Agent.

TINK (entreating gently):

She’s here, Dear.
She’s listening.

MILCOM:

She doesn't have a ride.

REYES:

I can walk.

They let me do that.

I'll flag down a combine

And hitchhike back

Whether you've "said your piece"

Or not.

MILCOM:

You are escalating the tension here, Agent.

I do not think you're s'posed to be
escalating the tension!

TINK:

It does seem counterproductive.

REYES:

I don't know why you think you know

How this is supposed to go down

But I think I'm going.

Thanks for the cookies.

Thanks for not being armed I suppose.

Enjoy the "figural pitchers".

(REYES starts to leave.)

MILCOM *(stopping her with an outburst):*

TONA.

TONA! TONA!

REYES *(turning):*

TONA?

MILCOM:

The Titles. of. Nobility. Amendment.

The Thirteenth Amendment.

That is why I am here!

TINK (*offering REYES return to her chair*):

This is where he gives you a speech.

(REYES and TINK hunker down. MILCOM loosens and centers himself, preparing to be a warrior-professor in front of a long wished-for student body. He could even have a little presentation ready - visual aids, etc.)

Recit and Aria: “Now, I understand...*The Thirteenth Amendment* ”

MILCOM:

Now, I understand

You might believe the Thirteenth Amendment

Freed the slaves

Which is the kind of thing an amendment ought to do

It's just not true

That Thirteenth Amendment

Was not the *first* Thirteenth Amendment

And it's the *real* Thirteenth Amendment

(My) Patriotic duty demands

I introduce to you

The Founding Fathers were forward thinking men

They saw the looming spectre of globalism

Perched on the horizon

So they tossed their little tailcoats back

And grabbed a pen

(Or a feather, or whatever they wrote with back then

Cuz this went down around about 1810)

They needed a rule to keep American free

Free from royals and lords and protected classes

Like everywhere else in the world

And noblemen still pissed off

About their tea

(And the crown did burn down the White House soon after

So it's fair to say we needed some kind of decree)

An amendment where intrigue was clearly addressed

In papers and logs which have since been suppressed

Such as the one I keep pressed against my chest

(Realizes he needs to take it out to read it)

...under my vest ...

(he struggles to get his Constitution from under his protective layers)

(spoken) Sorry, I've got plate protection against gunfire but then there's a textile matrix for stab and slash wounds and ice pick penetration and it's effective as hell but it makes it really difficult to get out your... *(Takes out Constitution)* Ah, here it is.

It's a century old and a record of note
Which contains the original words that they wrote
In the actual Thirteenth Amendment which says
...and I quote...

(spoken) "If any citizen of the United States shall accept, claim, receive or retain any title of nobility or honour or any present, pension, office or emolument"

... that means pay...

"of any kind whatever, from any emperor, prince or foreign power,
such person shall "

...and this is important...

"cease to be a citizen of the United States
and shall be incapable of holding any office of trust!"

(He looks to REYES, perhaps expecting a Damascene moment, but instead getting only annoyed confusion.)

Don't you see?
You don't see
I can tell from that look you don't see
What those words were intended to guarantee
A path to potential prosperity
A republic for you and for her and for me
Through a rule that was quickly concealed by the powers that be

Cuz if you're in a scheme
With a foreign regime
With some Baron or Pasha or King
Then it's baked right into the Constitution
You are begging for prosecution
For that sort of thing

So don't get declared
To be Lama or Laird
Or Raja or Count or Emir
We simple can't trust you if you've been beknighted
And might even have you indicted
To make ourselves clear

And here's where you learn just who is rigging the game
Of the twisted, hissing viper's nest
In which every single reptile
Has a TransAtlantic title
After their name

It's the lawyers! Who, soon as they conquer the bar
Like a just-minted Caesar or Kaiser or Tsar
Declare themselves Esquire! To shout
Just what traitors they are!

(below speech also cuttable)

(spoken) And if you call yourself Esquire, like every lawyer does, then per the Thirteenth Amendment, you are renouncing your citizenship and ability to hold an office of trust!

Understand?
Understand!
I get it – you don't understand!
If the Thirteenth states that the lawyers are banned
Then every subsequent law of the land
Was drawn by a self-proclaimed Esquire's hand
And thus by the will of the Framers
Unable to stand!

(below speech also cuttable)

(spoken) You want to talk about emancipation? *This* Thirteenth Amendment is the ultimate emancipation - freedom from every property-grubbing, soul-crushing law and ordinance and order since 1810!

Every bullshit tax
That our government backs
Each entitlement dollar they steal
Each intrusive mandate
By our vast nanny state

Made illegal, undone, and unreal

So, no wonder they lie
It makes sense they would try
To put accurate docs to the flame
These historic contracts
Lead you right to the facts
Not the alternate truths people claim

There's paranoid thinking but this is not that
I'm not some crank in a Reynolds Wrap hat
I didn't call you for snacks and a chat
...there's a foe to combat...

So that's my concern
That world has to learn
The promise of 1810
And once we've kicked the thieves out
And once we've thrown our chains off
We'll finally take our towns back
We'll finally have our lives back
And at last enjoy a hands-off, self-respecting, god-fearing,
European-distrusting democratic country again!

Scena: "So, slavery is still legal?"

REYES (*bothered*):
So, slavery is still legal?

MILCOM:
No system is perfect.
But we can write new amendments!

TINK:
We will or we won't move to let women vote?

If it's still something they're interested in
And everyone's okay with it.
Of course.

REYES: **TINK:**
Hmm Hmm

But lawyers with titles beholden to the crown
Shouldn't hold sway over our lives anymore!
If the Parliament of Norway
Places laurels on a so-called President
That President should not enjoy
the same citizenship as you or me!

REYES:
How did the Parliament of Norway
Enter into this?
(*to TINK*) Should I even ask?

TINK:
The Nobel Peace Prize.
It's a very sore subject.

We're living with blinders on.
In an illegal state.
Once you know the truth
How can you not fight to set it right?
How can you...

(*Restless again, he goes to the door - looks out.*)

REYES:
A trick?

This is a trick, isn't it?

A brand new tactic out of Quantico
To get me to lower my guard
You!

Oh, you mean
(*creeping towards him*)
Send in a decoy?

Who seems like an intern

Then up rolls the SWAT team

Out comes the CNU
(*crouching down, peeking out the door*)

The HRT

And in comes a THU

Incoming THU

Incoming THU
An alphabet soup of injustice!

(A beat. He feels real fear. Is she kidding? Is he right?)

REYES *(puts out a hand to him):*

Get up, Mr. Negley.

I promise to give you a shout

If a squad of ninjas

Is about to deploy

For now it's just you and the intern.

(Her hand remains out. He is hesitant. She is insistent. He takes her hand.

She helps him to his feet. He lets go quickly and briefly reacts in a defensive stance.

She shrugs a bit, as she means him no harm.

He regains his dignity and eyes her warily to remind her he is still suspicious of a set-up.)

So what now, Mr. Negley?

Am I supposed to bring your message

Back up the chain?

Melt the hearts of my commanders?

Enlighten the ignorant masses?

Please say, "no".

You lost me somewhere around 1810.

MILCOM:

You were supposed to bring some muscle

You were supposed to defend

This smug advertisement

For old world arrogance

This insulting waste of the taxman's plunder

This goblet-filled shrine

To arugula-munching oligarchs

This federally funded heap

of prissy elitist crap!

Leave it to the government

You can't even get oppression right

Recit and Aria: How many years... The value of delicate things.

TINK (*deeply offended*):
Milcom Cephus Negley.

How many years have I known you?
How many times have I let you in here
To grind your ax?
How many times have I heard your spiel
About “You and I the People”?
I let you stage the world’s most obtuse TED talk
Bring **that** in here (*referring to the case on the table*)
I even called the sheriff
Not my favorite call to make
And did it on your behalf.

But I will not let you call
My poor little museum
“A waste.”

Everything you cannot understand
Everything you cannot shout down
Or shoot at
Everything that is not square jawed
And plain-spoke
And two-fisted
Is not a waste

(turning to REYES)
This kind of attitude
Is my cross to bear,
Agent Reyes,
As the keeper of
sophisticated artifacts
in a town full of sauerkraut balls

It’s a difficult product to market -
the value of delicate things -
Since the gold-plated rich
Are the idols to which
Our grasping society clings

When there’s no calculating the payout
A graceful fragility brings
It’s a challenge attracting investors

To the value of delicate things

At a glance, this assemblage of relics
Might seem like a waste
When our appetites run
To immediate fun
There's no time for acquiring taste

But slow down! See the craft! See the history!
Every face, every curve is distinct!
Yes, they're odd and they're old
Perhaps can't be resold
But their tales should be told
Don't you think?

We're a dwindling breed - those who cherish
The value of delicate things
No stranger to fire
We gather the ire
Of the brutish
And suffer their slings

When stillness is seen as a weakness
And Mars and Mammon are kings
A resistance must carry the standard
of the value of delicate things
We must set up our gentle defenses
Entrench our eccentric defenses
And stand tall in defense of the value of delicate things

Scena: And there was no way you two could've hashed this out?

REYES:

And there was no way you two could've hashed this out
Without a call to law enforcement?

MILCOM:

How have we broken a law?
We are well within
our first amendment rights!

REYES (*packing up*):

Ohio code two nine one seven point three two

TINK:

Making false alarms?

REYES:

A misdemeanor of the first degree

You can expect a heavy fine

And if Bob ate more than a thousand dollars

In sauerkraut balls

It's a felony of the fifth degree

TINK:

One can't really eat a thousands dollars in sauerkraut balls.

TINK:

Not at Zoltan's .

MILCOM:

Not at Zoltan's.

REYES:

And it's time for me to get back to him

Let him have his laugh

At my famous siege

Of the Ohio Bric-a-brac Depository.

But I'll pass along both of your lectures

I'm sure the boys at Bureau

Will be interested to know

That the government is illegitimate

And all about

The healing power of porcelain

Now if you'll excuse me...

(REYES begins to leave. NEGLEY springs towards the case on the table.)

MILCOM:

Hang on, there, Agent.

I don't feel I been heard.

And you ain't really gonna leave

Before you seen

What I got here?

REYES (*again reaching for her sidearm*):

Mister Negley,

You should really

Quit while you can

TINK:

Milcom

Milcom

Milcom

(MILCOM unlatches the case, which is a cozy cradle for an supremely solid framing hammer with a curved hickory handle. He produces a hammer as though it is a relic of great mystery and power.)

REYES:

Where are you going with that, Mr. Negley?

You need to talk to me right now.

You need to tell me what you're doing.

This could go very badly very quickly.

TINK:

Didn't you hear a word I said, Milcom?

That's doesn't belong in this room.

That doesn't have any business in here.

Can't you take this outside?

Recit and Aria: Such proper examination... The Last American Hammer

MILCOM:

Such proper examination

Of delicate things

So much

Procedure

Politeness

And tea

I'm way beyond tea.

I am holding the last American hammer

A product of freedom and muscle and sweat

The final tool to come rolling off

A respectable American line

Quality checked and walked to the door

By a doomed American man

An underpaid, and overlooked, and doomed American man

Look in the perfect face of this hammer

Thirty-two ounces of Bethlehem steel
When you grip the gunstock contour handle
You're wielding a national treasure
Clutch the Tennessee Valley hickory handle
and you're swinging a soulful machine
The last of its kind, productive, destructive, essential, soulful machine

We don't make a goddamned thing in this country anymore
We don't make light bulbs
We don't make TVs
Not even the tiniest piece
of a Coke machine
We don't make blue jeans
Or little red wagons
Little red wagons get put together by tiny yellow hands in big red countries
Not in this country
We make nothing whatsoever in this country
We don't even make baseballs
We don't even make baseballs!

And how 'bout the man who made this hammer?
What did he say to his wife and his kids
When they shuttered the plant and they sent him home
And said good luck paying for medicine
When they shipped off his job and he crawled back home
With this hammer, which, by the way, he stole
This last-of-a-kind, loving-crafted, overpriced hammer he stole

I'm left holding the last American hammer
That can only frame what I can't afford
It reminds me of all the leverage I've lost
The force I could wield if I raised my arm
It make me wonder what blows I could strike
Of all that we've lost and what blows we should strike
Because when you're holding the last American hammer
Everything looks like a nail

Scena: Your hand tool is tragic...

REYES:

Your hand tool is tragic, Mr. Negley.
No one is doubting that.
But I have to ask
What are you planning on doing with it?

TINK:

I'd like to know the same thing.
And can I reach for your cup or will you nail my hand to the table?

MILCOM:

I didn't bring any nails!

TINK:

Well then you don't need a hammer.
And for someone who is beyond tea,
You sure drink a lot of tea.

MILCOM:

Both of you confuse me
Ms. Enraught, I know you're snooty
But you also went to college
And anti-establishment leanings
Are what college students do!
And if I have anything in common
With a girl named Reyes from Cleveland
It ought to be that we hold
A shared resentment for The Man
But here I am with Reyes outta Cleveland
And she IS The Man

REYES:

You didn't answer my questions about the hammer.

MILCOM:

It's not illegal to hold a hammer.

REYES:

Depends on why you're holding the hammer.

MILCOM:

So says The Man.

REYES:

Don't.

Don't don't don't don't don't.

Do not.

I know you better than you know me, Mr. Negley.

MILCOM:

That's what I'm saying.

I don't know you at all.

I don't know why you'd want to enforce the rules

Of a government that shoots unarmed civilians

And tears parents from children and deports them

And locks up a population the size of a small country

So they can outsource the prison labor to long-distance companies

No. I don't know you at all.

Aria: I try not to make assumptions....

REYES:

I try not to make assumptions.

About the people I meet

I try to judge them by their actions

It's not an easy thing

I try not to assume for instance

That a town with only one gas station

(Only one still in business)

[A gas station that sells live bait

Next to the chewing tobacco]

I try not to assume

That such a town

Might have a problem with me

Because I'm not a local

Or because I season my food

Or because I have all my teeth.

(You see, it's not nice to assume)

(NEGLEY is suddenly self-conscious of his teeth.)

And likewise I wouldn't want anyone

To assume that how I look

Or how I talk
Or how I season my food
Means I'm there to steal their jobs
Or their husbands
Or their live bait
I wouldn't want that

But I tend to be disappointed
Because assumptions tend to be made

Everyone appreciates law enforcement
Mister Negley
(Most of the time)
Because most of the time it's keeping you safe
Whether from a guy with a suitcase bomb
Or maybe a guy with a hammer

And everyone needs a job
Mister Negley
Even girls named Reyes from Cleveland
(Incidentally, I'm from the suburbs
Not from wherever you've pictured
Where roving gangs wear neck tattoos
And the women are covered in babies)
But I do have to work
So why not work
Stopping a guy with a suitcase bomb
Or maybe a guy with a hammer?

Because nobody wants to be scared
Whether they're growing up in the suburbs
Or looking for work in Cleveland
Or buying bait
Next to to the chewing tobacco
In a town with only one gas station

So I don't see a problem
Mister Negley
With a girl named Reyes
Working for The Man

And keeping people safe

But I do see a problem
With making assumptions
Because incorrect assumptions
Lead to people getting hurt

You assume I don't like
Working for the Man
I'm assuming you're going to
Put that hammer down

Perhaps we shouldn't assume

Scena: Thank you for your discretion...

(MILCOM lowers the hammer. REYES holsters her gun. TINK serves NEGLEY more tea. He sits, confused and disappointed, contemplating his next move.)

TINK:

Thank you for your discretion, Milcom.

REYES *(examining the hammer):*

I won't pretend I'm a connoisseur of hammers
But this does look very sturdy.
You weren't really going to smash all these things
Were you, Mister Negley?

MILCOM:

I thought *you* were going to smash them, Agent.
When the insertion team arrived
On an MH-6 Little Bird
With M134 mini-guns!

TINK:

Mini-guns are only on the AH-6
And you know it.
Bless you, Milcom,
But you're a chicken-fried crank

Not a warlord in Mogadishu.

NEGLEY (*choosing to ignore her*):

It would have brung me no personal joy
to see Ms. Enraught's efforts

Blown to bits

But I did figure for a fair amount of collateral damage

To this Eurotrash... cuckery

If fascism hadn't decided to send in the C team today.

REYES:

C-team?

TINK:

Eurotrash?

REYES:

Cuckery?

TINK:

He says that a lot.

Milcom, you'll help me with the boxes

Before you go, yes?

People ship me more jugs every day.

Donations.

Appraisals.

Mostly none of value.

Reproductions.

Star Trek.

But I try to give each one a moment.

(MILCOM, looking intense, begins to move the shipping boxes. As REYES speaks with TINK.)

Duet: I Should Know...Isn't That Always the Way

REYES (*producing notepad, taking TINK aside*):

I should know

Before I leave

Do you think you are safe here,

Ms. Enraught?

TINK:

I won't be hammered to death by Milcom
If that's what you mean.
As to the surety of my sanity
In a moribund factory town?
Stay tuned.

I'll keep fighting the good fight
I'll keep being told I'm wasting my time
I'll keep being told I'm frivolous
I'll be told a lot of things
By people with ample opinions
About a world they've never explored

And we haven't
Scarred you for life?
You've survived this initiation,
Agent Reyes?

REYES:

I'll soon be dispatched to another fiasco
That's just the job
As to whether or not I'm accepted
Into a deeply entrenched boys' club.
We'll see

I'll keep plugging away
I'll keep working twice as hard as the next guy
I'll keep getting looked at skeptically
I'll have things explained to me slowly
By people with no more experience
But claims to expertise nonetheless

REYES:

Isn't that always the way?
Isn't that how things go?
A lot of authority in who you are
And less in what you actually know

TINK:

Isn't that always the way?
Isn't that how things go?
A lot of authority in who you are
And less in what you actually know

It takes some self-assurance
That you must admit
To always speak your mind

Such confidence

To fearlessly commit
I wish I had the balls
To be totally full of shit

It takes some self-assurance
That you must admit

And never think it's time to quit

Or ignorance
To fearlessly commit
I wish I had the balls
To be totally full of shit

Scena: Oh, you needn't spread all those out...

(TINK sees NEGLEY is making a mess.)

TINK: Oh, you needn't spread all those out, Milcom.
Let's just make some sense of the boxes.

REYES:

One last thing I'm wondering
I'm sure you'll indulge me
You made the call for Mister Negley
You say you aren't a hostage

So, what do you get out of letting
A bull
Run wild in your china shop?
Other than a possible misdemeanor
Publicity?
Help me out, here.

TINK:

That's not the kind of publicity
I'd be proud of.
And I'm sure you know I try to keep to myself.

REYES:

So, why, Ms. Enraught?
We're going to need to know
Why we made this trip.
And we need to know you aren't getting mixed up

In another dangerous scene

MILCOM (*chuckling*):

Ms. Enraught's hippie dippy days

Are behind her.

I don't think that freak flag flies much anymore

No offense.

REYES:

Is that what you think of your friend, here?

A former peacenik?

MILCOM:

Everyone in town knows

Tink Enraught

Was a wild child.

Inspired by Bolshevik professors

She spent her daddy's money

On every flakey cause she came across

No offense.

REYES:

"Hippie Dippie"

"Freak Flag"

"Wild Child"

You've got an awfully thick file

For a flower child.

MILCOM:

File?

Ms. Enraught

Has a rap sheet?

REYES:

Wow.

I guess you can go home again.

You've really reinvented yourself, Ms. Enraught.

Fair enough.

MILCOM:

What's she talking about?

TINK (*to REYES*):

Why did you bring this up?

REYES:

I had to know
If you were his muse.
His consigliere.
If you were some kind of extremist guru.

REYES:

You're not.

TINK:

I'm not.

MILCOM:

What?

TINK:

You never wondered, Milcom,
Why a lady who spends her days
Dusting glazed pottery
Knows so much about triacetone triperoxide?

MILCOM:

I figured you read a lot.

Recit and Aria: I'm a terrorist... There Used To Be a Sentiment

TINK:

I'm a terrorist, Dear.
I mean not really
Or, at least, not lately.
But I carried more than a hammer
In my angriest of days.

MILCOM:

A terrorist?
A terrorist?
You used to be a terrorist?
Wait.
Is this part some kind of trick?

TINK:

Not a trick, Milcom.

A trip perhaps, for you.
But not a trick.

There used to be a sentiment
Simple, but revolutionary
Stop the wars
Ban the bombs
Help the poor
And the forgotten
And a lot of people made a lot of noise
It made the news every night
For a while
But the White House was never yipped to the sky
And three days of peace and love
Just made a lot of mud
And the sixties passed
And the seventies passed
And the message was gobbled up by
Pac Man

NEW ALT:

I was far too young
For peace and love and drugs and mud
But a compassionate revolution?
The sentiment stuck

But I felt that forgotten sentiment So when I was old enough to be trouble
So I “spent my Daddy’s money”
His robber baron money
Traveling the world
Digging wells
Building houses
Tuning in
While wars kept raging
Bombs kept dropping
Wells kept running dry
Houses kept caving in
And back on the home front
Plagues we couldn’t talk about
Hollowed out our cities

And Daddy kept on making money
Money on American Hammers
Used to build bombers
~~And the houses that the bombers caved in~~
And houses a half a world away

That's when I met a fellow traveller
Complex and revolutionary
He hated wars
Hated bombs
Loved the poor
And the forgotten
And he wanted to make a lot of noise
That made the news every night
And he planned
Planned to send messages that blew things to the sky
To freak out the Gordon Gekkos
With their robber baron money
So we gathered up a troupe
In a townhouse in the Village
Full of youth and manifestos
Pipes and wires
And dynamite and nails
And one day I took a walk to **buy some**
Books

I don't remember what the books had to say

And when I got back to the town house
There were clouds of smoke in the air
And Feds on the sidewalk
News trucks on the street
And in the house
In the basement
In pieces
Fellow travelers
Revolutionaries
Gone
Gone
Dynamite and nails

Smoke and bricks
Dynamite and nails
Dynamite and nails

And I ran

While bricks kept falling
And cameras kept rolling
I kept running home
Both my houses caved in
When back on the homefront
Larger forces than my father
Gobbled up the Tool plant
From my dear departed robber baron Daddy
And I got a lot of money
Money from American Hammers
And I used it to build a museum
Full of delicate things
Something of value
In a hollowed out town
And I've tried to move past
The house that the bombs caved in

Scena: This is a man with a message...

TINK (*to REYES*):

Milcom is a man with a sentiment
It is terribly confused but he feels it very deeply
It reminds me of sentiment I've lost
And I'd like his noise to be heard
Before he's raised up his arm
With an American Hammer
Against HK416s
Or buried himself in a basement
With a pipe full of dynamite and nails

MILCOM:

So, it's you on the watch lists,
Ms. Enraught?
It's you getting pulled aside in the airport
Not me

TINK:

I suppose that's true.

REYES:

There wasn't enough evidence
To convict her
And her problem with authority
Mellowed over the years

TINK:

Truth is the daughter of time, Agent,
Not of authority.

REYES:

William Ayers?

TINK:

Francis Bacon.

REYES:

So you helped Mr. Negley
Share his manifesto
With lucky me
As a latter day act of civil disobedience
And a random act of kindness?

TINK:

I can't help feeling
That Milcom,
In his way,
Means well...Ish.

Recit and Trio: *I do not need the pity... I started the day...*

MILCOM (*suddenly furious*):

I do not need the pity
Of a frustrated commie
Or the ear of a rookie Gestapo
Who doesn't command
The respect of her peers.

REYES:

Antagonize public servants
Get blown up.

I started the day
with a very clear agenda

Speak truth to power!

You have steamrolled
My freedom of expression
Between her sentimental stories
And your chatty persecution

The truth has been ignored!

REYES:

Truth, truth, truth.
You use that word a lot
But “truth” doesn’t mean
“The way you want to world to be”

MILCOM:

The way it’s meant to be
The way things really are
“Truth will ultimately prevail
Where there is pains to bring it to light!”

That’s George Washington!

REYES:

Well, I’ve got a quote
I don’t know who it’s from
“A thing is not necessarily true
Because a man dies for it.”

My father told me that
My first week in the field
So I wouldn’t get killed
For someone else’s busted truth

TINK:

The quote was Oscar Wilde.

REYES:

Your truth involves conspiracy
Out-of-print documents
Societal upheaval
And plenty of sour grapes

MILCOM:

My truth is pure:
Live free!

REYES:

Yeah, well, mine is simple:
If a dude waves a hammer
Around a museum
It's your job to stop him!

TINK:

As long as we're quoting Oscar Wilde:
"The truth is rarely pure and never simple."

REYES:

Truth, truth, truth.
You use that word a lot
But "truth" doesn't mean
"The way you want to world to be"

TINK:

Rarely pure
Never simple

MILCOM:

The way it's meant to be
The way things really are
"Truth will ultimately prevail
Where there is pains to bring it to light!"
Never simple
Rarely pure

REYES:

A thing is not necessarily true
Because a man dies for it.

TINK:

The truth is rarely pure
And never simple

MILCOM:

Truth will ultimately prevail
Where there is pains to bring it to life
Live free.
The truth

The truth

The truth

Scena: *I think we're done here with the sharing and caring...*

MILCOM (*frustrated and unable to hear any more discussion*):

Aaaaaaugh!

I think we're done with the sharing and caring!
How about we *climb out*
of our own asses
And get down to the *actual* truth!

REYES:

"Actual truth"!

TINK:

Whose truth, Milcom?

MILCOM:

We don't all get a truth!
I'm talking the God's honest truth!
The way the world works!
Not your truth
Or my truth.
The real deal.
And we're not gonna find it
With notepads and tea.

REYES:

How are we going to find it then,
Mr. Negley?

In a court of law!

(On the table he has arranged a number of Toby Jugs into a courtroom scene.)

On trial is the entire damn government
The charge is tyranny!
The charge is illegitimate power!
Subversion of law
Perversion of values
And strangling the soul of its people!

TINK *(referring to the jugs on the table):*

Those aren't for playing with, Milcom.

MILCOM:

I'm not here to play!
This is the People versus
the United States of America!

(He shows which jugs are standing in for each role in the courtroom.)

Your Lord High Executioner
presiding!

TINK *(worried)*:
Koko!

MILCOM *(referring to himself)*:
Representing the people
Milcom C. Negley
Not Esquire!

And representing the defence
Agent Reyes!

REYES:
I didn't come here to play, either, Mr. Negley!

But the jury's already been sworn in!

TINK *(nervously noting what he's messing with)*:
Undersung Martha Gunn
Gilded Mephistopheles
My art nouveau poisson
and three Doctors Who **(that is not a typo, it's DOCTORS WHO)**

REYES:
He's short 6 angry jugs.

MILCOM:
Bailiff! (That's also me.)
Bring in the defendant!

(He goes and gets Sir Oswyn from its special case.)

TINK:

REYES: Sir Oswyn!
Mr. Negley Milcom this is not okay!
If that thing's as valuable
As she seems to think it is
You're probably walking right past
Misdemeanor!

MILCOM:
The perfect representation
Of our corrupt Republic:
Bloated.
Cracked.
Overvalued.
And manipulated
By European hands!

Mr. Prosecutor, you have the floor!

TINK:
Can't you stop him?

REYES:
Would you like me to tackle him into your cabinet?
Would you like me to open fire?

MILCOM:
Thank you, Little Ax Guy.
(*orating*)
The American Dream, Mr. Government Jug
The most powerful myth in history
The idea that anybody
Can be anything!

Any dishwasher
Any coal miner
Any assembly line hammer manufacturer
Can be a hot shot
Can be a hand tool mogul
Can be President
How appealing!

You'd trade an awful lot
To keep a dream like that alive .

But it's just that
Isn't it Mr. Jug man?
A dream!

Because you can't live a dream
When you know you can't retire
From your factory?
And you can't get sick
In your coal mine!
And the only jobs
That pay any money
Are the jobs where you move
Money around
For people who already
Have all the money!

That's a pretty bad dream.
And this is a town is exhibit A.

And it's all your fault,
Mr. Jug.

TINK:

That's a lot for one jug to hold, Milcom.

MILCOM:

Ms. Enraught it is not your turn!
Do you want to be held in contempt?

REYES:

You hold a lot of people in contempt, Mr. Prosecutor.

MILCOM:

That's cute, Defense.
It's time for your opening statement.

REYES:

I don't want to make a statement.
I want you to go home.

MILCOM:

You are not defending your client very well, Agent!
The floor is yours!

REYES:

Well, then:

The prosecution has flaws in his argument
He's attributing every bad day he ever had
To some cabal of globalists and lawyers
Citing as evidence
A poorly edited
Pocket Constitution.

Can the defense please rest?

MILCOM:

The prosecution calls its first witness!
Tink Enraught!
Fallen daughter of an industrial dynasty
Former comrade to counterculture agitators

Alt. inclusion if you go with the cuts:

TINK:

I resent this characterisation!

MILCOM:

...and Curator of a very specific museum

TINK:

Thank you.

MILCOM:

Ms. Enraught,
What is it you hate most about the government?
The corruption
The unchecked capitalism
Or the imperialistic leanings?

REYES:

Objection!

Leading the witness!

MILCOM:

Ms. Enraught

Is the middle class shrinking in this country?

REYES:

Mr. Negley, please leave Ms./

TINK:

Yes.

Oh no.

MILCOM:

Did investment groups

Buy your family's company

Squeeze out every dollar

Leverage every asset

Kick every worker to the curb

And sell off the business in parts?

REYES:

You don't have to answer him, Ms/

TINK:

/Yes.

Damn it.

MILCOM:

And has this country

Done a thing for this town

As the jobs went away

And the drugs kicked in

And the vets came home

From their oil wars

All messed up?

TINK:

No they haven't.

MILCOM:

No, they haven't.

REYES:

What does this have to do with

Imaginary amendments?

NEGLEY (*rage*):

It is **not** imaginary!

It is published right here!

Does the defense wish to

Cross-examine or not?!

REYES:

Ms. Enraught is your museum

In any way beholden

To foreign powers

Bent on destroying our

Wholesome American ways?

TINK:

Not that I'm aware of.

MILCOM:

Have you even been listening?

Federal funding!

It's all beholden to foreign powers

Every last dime since/

REYES:

1810

Yes, we heard

TINK:

1810

Stop this, please

MILCOM:

This is important!

This America we live in

Is not the America they promised!

I've worked my whole life

Making good solid hammers

And getting paid less every year

As the bills go up

And the bennies go away

And the pinch in my shoulder

Ticks like a clock

Towards a day when I can't earn any more

And when I come home and say

No more hammer plant

My wife's eyes flash

With disappointment and fear

And I tell her it's them Esquires

And Mexico and China

But before I can explain it [all](#)

Even my wife and daughter disappear!

Even my wife and daughter disappear!

Are you gonna get them back, Agent?!

Is brown salt glaze gonna get them back, Tink?!

I've worked my whole life
Making good solid hammers
With nothing to show
But a stack of bills
And an empty house
And the last look I got...

Was disappointment and fear.

(collects himself... sort of)
So ladies and gentlemen and fish
Of the jury
I ask you to declare
That America is guilty
Of abandoning its people
Of closing down the places
Where people used to make things
But funding little vases from England

The prosecution rests

TINK:

A powerful closing statement,
Mr. Prosecutor
The entire courtroom was moved.
So, while the jury deliberates
Perhaps we bring Sir Owyn
Back to holding...

MILCOM:

The defence hasn't made
Her closing statement yet!
If she was even paying attention
If she even heard me at all.

Aria: *Oh, I heard you, Mr. Negley...*

REYES:

Oh, I heard you, Mr. Negley.
I heard every word you said
I listened
Oh, I listened
- I'm professionally patient -
So, I stood here and I listened
But I've heard all of it before
And I'm sure I'll hear it all again.

You're offended
And you're wounded
Cuz you've fallen through the cracks
After decades of faith in society
You learned the fix is in
Now you've got these insights
That no one understands
So you'll stop world from turning
Shake every person on it
And shout until your message
Is in everybody's heads

But rage isn't always proportional to rightfulness
Saying something loudly does not make it true
Yet at the heart of these encounters
There's always a man
With a list of villains
and some metal in his hand
Yelling "This feeling that I'm feeling
Earns me dispensation
To disrupt the lives of those around me
Until I've worked it through."

And everybody's grievance
Is, of course, the most important
And everybody's tantrum
Is, of course, their final stand
And while your feelings are your feelings
And the world is absolutely crooked
We still have to live together
And so - I get a call
Some dude's eyes are opened
To the universal screwjob
And they get hot and bothered
And that's when I get a call

Cuz every swamp rat thinks his shack is the new Harper's Ferry
Every yahoo counts his rifles and pictures another Wounded Knee
And every one of you drama seekers has the same tired macho fantasy
"Make this another Waco
Make this another Ruby Ridge
Prove my point in a hail of gunfire
Make me famous!
Make me a martyr!
Make me matter!
...Make them see"

But I
Will not be
Your Pontius Pilate
I am not "Big Government"
"Big Brother"
Big anything
I'm here protecting her from you
And you from yourself
And then I go home
And I wash it all off
Tell myself, "Good Job"
I take a breath
Then I suit back up
Return to work
And wait for the phone to ring

So you won't be making headlines tomorrow
I'm sorry
You won't be going to glory
You won't be on TV
You won't be wearing a sniper's bullet stigmata
You won't be committing suicide by me

Keep pushing and
You'll probably get arrested
But you won't be sent to Valhalla
Not by me

Scena: The jury has finished deliberations...

MILCOM:

The jury has finished deliberations.
Mr. Foreman, do you have a verdict.

(He picks up a jug, I'm not sure which one is the foreman. - MB)

"We do, your honor."

TINK:

Milcom.

Milcom.

Don't do this.

REYES:

You can still go home, Mr. Negley.

Mr. Negley

Don't do this.

Milcom

Don't do this.

For the charges of tyranny

Illegitimate power

Subversion of law

Corruption of values.

And strangling the soul of a people!

We find the defendant

Guilty as charged.

The sentence, your honor?

Stop.

Stop.

Stop it.

The sentence is destruction

By thirty-two ounces of Bethlehem steel
a Tennessee Valley hickory handle
The last of its kind...

(He brings his hammer down on Sir Oswyn repeatedly, obliterating the jug in a feral display of brutality.)

Ah!

Ah!

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

(After the spasm of violence, there is an emptiness in the room.)

(NEGLEY pitches the hammer to the side. REYES picks it up.

TINK gingerly steps around him and closes the Sir Oswyn case. She moves the other jugs from the table.

REYES puts the hammer in the case. Checks her phone to see her partner's progress. Moves to leave.)

REYES:

Thank you for the tea, Ms. Enraught
The Sheriff will be coming around.
I suggest neither of you go very far.

MILCOM:

And still you don't shoot.

REYES:

Shoot who?
An unarmed vandal?
A man who makes nuisance calls?
Your friend, there,
And her claims adjuster
And the boys in blue
Can determine just how much trouble you're in.

I've got a long ride back to the office
With a dude full of sauerkraut balls

I'm glad the mug can't hurt you any more, Mr. Negley.

(REYES takes the last cookie.

(TINK is too embarrassed about everything to do anything but give her a sad nod.)

(REYES starts to leave - stops at the door and turns around.)

I try not to make assumptions.

About the people I meet

I try to judge them by their actions

It's not an easy thing.

(REYES EXITS.)

(TINK sweeps up.)

MILCOM:

And the last look I got

Was disappointment...

TINK:

The pride of our collection.

My poor little museum.

A lot of fuss.

But without it

What's left around here?

And what's left for you, Milcom

Now that you've restored dignity and honor

To the land of the free?

Maybe you can burn down the Minute Man

Or trample someone's flower bed?

MILCOM:

It's still a nice museum.

TINK:

Oh, I don't plan on abandoning

This repository of delicate virtù

But it won't be the same, will it?

There'll be a scar

Even if it's not always obvious

Some breaks can't really be repaired.

(NEGLEY is like a guilty little boy. He looks around for some way to help.)

(She keeps sweeping.)

TINK *(stops sweeping):*
And that will restore Sir Oswyn?

MILCOM:
You're out of cookies.

I can get more.
I can go and get more cookies.

MILCOM:
No.
No.
But it's something
In case we have tea again.
Some time.
If we do.

TINK *(truly meaning maybe - not yes):*
If we do.

(She sweeps.)

CURTAIN
END OF OPERA