

TEARING DOWN THE WALLS

By Patrick Gabridge

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ISBN 1-931000-29-8

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CAST: JERRY and LINDA

*** For competition purposes, all props may be mimed.**

A room under construction. Three bare walls fence off the stage with no windows, doors, or other exits. JERRY is in the process of drilling the last sheet of drywall onto the studs. LINDA holds the sheet against the wall. On the floor nearby is a lunchbox and a thermos. They finish and the walls are complete. They both admire the new wall.

JERRY: Not bad, huh?

LINDA: Now that's a wall. Just beautiful.

JERRY: We're really getting the hang of this do-it-yourself stuff.

LINDA: So now what?

JERRY: We fill the holes and tape the joints. Why don't you grab the mud and the tape?

(LINDA turns around and seems a little confused.)

LINDA: I can't.

JERRY: What's the matter?

LINDA: I think you made a little mistake.

JERRY: What are you talking about?

LINDA: I'm sure this happens to lots of people.

JERRY: What does?

LINDA: You forgot to leave a door.

JERRY: What? **(HE turns around quickly.)** Wait a second. I thought we put one over there. **(pointing towards the audience)**

LINDA: I don't see one.

JERRY: All right. All right. So we made a small mistake.

LINDA: We can get out, right? I mean, we can definitely get out?

JERRY: Sure, I just have to reverse the drill and take off this sheet of drywall. What a couple of dopes, huh? **(HE picks up the drill and slips the head into a screw-head and turns on the drill. It makes a sudden screech.)** Shoot.

LINDA: What?

JERRY: The bit broke.

LINDA: It broke?

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JERRY: Snapped right off.

LINDA: But you have another.

(JERRY searches his pockets.)

JERRY: I think so. But...I left it in the other room.

LINDA: In the other room.

JERRY: With the rest of the tools.

LINDA: Tools that you would need to—

JERRY: —get through the wall. Right. **(beat)** We were doing so well.

LINDA: We were.

JERRY: I'm sure this happens to everybody.

LINDA: Once.

JERRY: Yeah.

LINDA: And then they die.

JERRY: Don't panic.

LINDA: I'm not panicked. I'm concerned. When we planned to spend the next five or six years in this house, we didn't mean in just this room.

JERRY: Relax, will you? I'll break through the wall.

LINDA: With what? Your head? It's hard enough, but-

JERRY: Hey.

LINDA: I don't like being closed in.

JERRY: It's a big room. It's not like we're stuck in a closet.

LINDA: It's starting to feel a little close. There's not enough ventilation.

JERRY: We have more than enough air.

LINDA: It feels stuffy.

JERRY: **(picking up the thermos)** Want a drink?

LINDA: No. I don't want a drink, I don't want cheese and crackers. I just want to get out of here.

JERRY: Don't get hysterical.

LINDA: I am not hysterical. You will know when I become hysterical. You will certainly know, and you're going to know soon if you don't get me out of here.

JERRY: **(under his breath)** Boy, you really learn about people under stress.

LINDA: What?

JERRY: Nothing.

LINDA: Don't 'nothing' me.

JERRY: I've never seen you like this before.

LINDA: Well, now you have.

JERRY: I mean, we've been married almost a year, and I've never seen you so-

LINDA: Don't say it. Just don't. I have a small fear of being closed in and left to die. Thanks to Edgar Allen Poe. I must have been about eight

when I read “The Cask of Amontillado” and then I saw the movie.
Scared me stupid, really hit a nerve, you know.

JERRY: No, I didn't know. That's the whole point.

LINDA: I'm sure there are lots of things I don't know about you. It just never came up before, okay? I didn't figure you would ever completely seal us off in our future basement. It didn't come up in the prenuptial discussion.

JERRY: What do you mean, I walled us off. You were here too.

LINDA: Whatever, let's get out.

JERRY: No, hold on. I don't want all the blame for this.

LINDA: Fine. I accept partial responsibility. Now can we please get out of here?

JERRY: All right. I just don't feel like this is completely my fault.

LINDA: It's not. I'm a little tense. I'm sorry. **(beat)** How are we going to break through? **(HE holds up his fist.)** You're kidding.

JERRY: It's just wallboard. Arnold Schwarzenegger does it all the time.

LINDA: This is real life.

JERRY: I can do it with my eyes closed. **(JERRY walks up to the wall, puffing up his chest.)** You were here, witness to this awesome feat of strength.

LINDA: Go ahead, Hercules. **(HE slams his fist into the wall. HE screams and instantly grabs his hand, in extreme pain. HE dances around the room.)** What happened? What happened?

JERRY: I...think...I...hit...a...stud...

LINDA: Oh no.

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