

## OPERATION FREAKY MONKEY CELEBRATORY GALA

Alright. Okay. Quiet down, please. If I could get your attention for a moment... Yes, right. Okay, then.

I'd like to thank everyone for coming. Welcome to the first ever 'We May Not Be Winning, But There Have Been Positive Strides' banquet dinner commemorating the modicum of progress we've recently made against our humorless and justice-crazed Arch Nemesis.

It's great to see you all dressed to the nines and smiling amongst friends and family.

Goodness, Hendricks! Your young ones have certainly grown since last I saw them. When was that? '89? The Minions' T-Ball Picnic, wasn't it?

Anyway, I know that this was all incredibly short notice, but again: thank you for coming to our gala event. We've plenty of words and awards to go around and after dinner, we have a special, musical guest. You may have already guessed after reading the headlines today, but Justin Beiber is backstage, as I speak. In a bit, we'll untie him and perhaps we can convince that androgynous fellow to perform a few ditties off his latest LP.

We haven't had much to celebrate recently, I admit, but I am legitimately teary eyed just even at the thought of the massive and prolonged commitment you have all made, as henchfolk, to the Cause. At long last, that effort and sacrifice has congealed into some small victory.

I know we're all thinking it, but this needs saying, right here, right now, as we sit in padded folding chairs around white-clothed tables with our individual choice of chicken or fish as low-budget, last minute caterers – No offense, guys. You've been great! – as these commendable food service professionals clink plates from place to place, and I'm going to say it, for the first time, out loud, in public and for the record: Operation Freaky Monkey was a success!

*[Wait for applause to subside]*

Gosh. I'm gushing.

Who cooked up this goose, anyhow? It was you, wasn't it, Steinhammer? You're always throwing those crazy, simian schemes into the brainstorm. I bet no one expected a Steinhammer shot-in-the-dark to succeed.

Where's ol' Steiny, now? There he is!

Operation Freaky Monkey was your baby and I believe I speak for all in attendance when I say: thank you for not shooting it in the face like you did during Operation Steal Some Jewelry.

Remember that? Oh, dear God, how could we forget?

I know, Steiny. I know. Your finger slipped. That's your story and you're sticking to it. We were so young back then; green as grass and twice as wet behind the ears. And not nearly so creative at naming our nefarious plots, but we sure had fun, didn't we?

In any case, that was years ago. Steiny: you're now older and wiser and hatching heinous schemes of your own.

Come on up here, Steiny! Come on; don't worry. This'll be nothing like last time. There's been no time to install trap doors – permits and all that – we're actually going to congratulate and heap accolades upon you. Come on! Yes, that's right. Could you guys scootch your chairs aside and let Steiny through?

*[Allow Steinhammer to mount stage and catch breath]*

My, you've grown, Stienhammer! Really packed on the pounds, haven't you? Would you like to say a few words? No? Awww, he's blushing! Alright, Steiny, take your trophy and your seat. I won't torture you any longer.

Let's hear it for Steinhammer!

*[Wait longer for louder applause]*

Thank you, Steinhammer, and thank you all for bringing his spark of genius to marvelous fruition.

We may not have won the war, but we have introduced a deep and unyielding fear into the bleeding heart of our fervently law-abiding Enemy! We can use this. Yes, that's right: cheer. Let it out. Rejoice!

*[Toast crowd until merriment wanes]*

You deserve it. Oh, God, can you see this? Can you see this single, glistening tear of joy oozing from the side of my left eye? Can you see that glinting, saline distillation of my happiness and appreciation at how our collective hard work has coalesced and been codified into this joyous occasion?

Oh, God. I'm all choked up. I can't... I can't even really read my notecards at this point. I'm just going to wing it...

*[Take moment to regain composure]*

Okay, so, in addition to thanking everyone here – that's right, wives and girlfriends and assorted offspring, legitimate and otherwise: your dear, doting henchmen have pulled off a truly miraculous feat – in no small part due to your loving support – and all this was done in a modern hero-villain conflict landscape that – let's be honest – is heavily skewed against the doers of morally ambiguous and/or slightly off-kilter-in-terms-of-sanity acts.

To you: thanks and such.

And I'd like to thank my mother. Without whose upbringing I never would have ended up where I am now. I'm sorry about that business with the transmogrification gun, Ma. It was for your own good. You're in a better place, now. And no one really misses you, anyway.

And Rodney...? Ah, there you are! Thank you, Rodney, for your help with wardrobe. And you, Clarence, with your uncannily on-point makeup advice. No armada of evildoing lackeys is complete without fear-inspiring accouterments.

You may have noted by now that our gracious overlord, Assistant Professor Unpleasant, is sadly not in attendance. While we revel in our success, He sits alone in the throes of tortured inspiration, considering how we might turn this positive stride into an absolute leap. Merchandising will play a major role, I should think.

As you well know, the Assistant Professor is the driving force behind the work we do. Yet it is here, on the floor and on foot that His grand schemes are played out.

Perhaps this unprecedented success will suffice in propelling Him up the ranks of evildoing academia!

Though it...

Yes. Cheer! Let it out for the dreaded Assistant Professor...

*[Pause for jubilant adulation]*

Though it is our hard work that lends credence to His vaguely sinister plans, without His single-minded drive and poorly-timed maniacal laughter, none of this would have come to pass.

Alright, let's see. Who else...

Tim! Where's Tim? Timothy! I must find Tim. Tim! Thank you so much for your help with my conversational French. *Je suis un poulet.* Ha! That's just a little, inside joke that Tim and I have. Mostly me, though, but Tim, without you, I never would have met Marie.

Yes, that's right, that sparkling gem and work-of-art, right there? That's my wife. Uh oh! I've embarrassed her. Even though she doesn't understand a word I'm uttering, she gets the gist. She gets it.

*Je t'adore, ma chère.*

But, again, to all of you: thank you. This long awaited achievement was made possible only by your combined efforts. For generations we have lived in fear of prosecution and bodily harm at the hands of our brightly spandex-clad and cape-wearing Nemesis, but now, there is a light of promise in our suburban basement dungeon of hopelessness.

Oh, jeez... Guys, I'm sorry... I've got to sit down. This is all too much. The streaming tears of happiness are overwhelming. Thank you so much for helping to make this happen.

I'm going to hand it over, now, to our own Mimi Rodriguez. MiRo? Where have you gone, MiRo? Ah, she's over by the salad bar. Come on up here, Mimi. Bring your plate of marinated artichoke hearts and baby corn.

Come on up here, Mimi.

I bet she's as good at MC'ing as she is at organizing your timecards. Mimi...?