

RUTLEDGE, ADAMS, JEFFERSON

RUTLEDGE: Mr. President, although we in South Carolina have never seriously considered the question of independence, when a *gentleman* proposes it, attention must be paid. However—we in the Deep South, unlike our friends in New England, have no cause for impatience at the present time. If, at some future date, it becomes the wish of *all* our sister colonies to effect a separation, we will not stand in the way. But for the time bein', South Carolina will wait—and watch. The vote is Nay.

RUTLEDGE:

Jefferson, I can't quite make out what it is you're talkin' about. Mr.

JEFFERSON: Slavery, Mr. Rutledge.

RUTLEDGE: Ah, yes. You're referrin' to us as slaves of the King.

JEFFERSON: No, sir, I'm referring to *our* slaves. Black slaves.

RUTLEDGE: Ah! Black slaves. Why didn't you say so, sir? Were you tryin' to hide your meanin'?

JEFFERSON: No, sir.

RUTLEDGE: Just another literary license, then.

JEFFERSON: If you like.

RUTLEDGE: I don't like at all, Mr. Jefferson. To us in South Carolina, black slavery is our peculiar institution and a cherished way of life.

JEFFERSON: Nevertheless, we must abolish it. Nothing is more certainly written in the Book of Fate than that this people shall be free.

RUTLEDGE: I am not concerned with the Book of Fate right now, sir. I am more concerned with what's written in your little paper there.

JOHN: That "little paper there" deals with freedom for Americans!

RUTLEDGE: Oh, really! Mr. Adams is now callin' our black slaves Americans. Are-they-now?

JOHN: They are! They're people and they're here—if there is any other requirement, I've never heard of it.

RUTLEDGE: They are here, yes, but they are not people, sir, they are *property*.

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JEFFERSON: No, sir! They are people who are being treated as property. I tell you the rights of human nature are deeply wounded by this infamous practice!

RUTLEDGE: (*Shouting*) Then see to your own wounds, Mr. Jefferson, for you are a—*practitioner*, are you not? (*A pause. RUTLEDGE has found the mark*)

JEFFERSON: I have already resolved to release my slaves.

RUTLEDGE: Then I'm sorry, for you have also resolved the ruination of your personal economy.

JOHN: Economy. Always economy. There's more to this than a filthy purse-string, Rutledge. It's an offense against man and God.

HOPKINS: It's a stinking business, Mr. Rutledge—a stinking business!

RUTLEDGE: Is it really, Mr. Hopkins? Then what's that I smell floatin' down from the North—could it be the aroma of *hypocrisy*? For who holds the other end of that filthy purse-string, Mr. Adams? (*To everyone*) Our northern brethren are feelin' a bit tender toward our slaves. They don't keep slaves, no-o, but they're willin' to be considerable carriers of slaves—to others! They are willin', for the shillin'—(*Rubbing his thumb and forefinger together*)—or haven't y'heard, Mr. Adams? Clink! Clink!