

Beer Boy of Freedom

A Short Play

by

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CAST: THOMAS JEFFERSON, Declaration signer
SAMUEL ADAMS, Declaration signer
BEN FRANKLIN, Declaration signer
WILLIAM WHIPPLE, Declaration signer
EDWARD RUTLEDGE, Declaration signer
JERRY, beer boy

TIME: July 4, 1776, around 2 a.m.

PLACE: Independence Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Several members of the First Continental Congress are seated throughout the large room, some are sleeping along walls, some are intimately chatting. THOMAS JEFFERSON and SAMUEL ADAMS, both quite disheveled and quite tired, sit at a large table near the front of the room, pouring over several sheets of parchment, their hands spotted and shirts blotched with Indian ink. BEN FRANKLIN sits at a nearby desk, writing with quill pen into a small tablet. WILLIAM WHIPPLE and EDWARD RUTLEDGE stand in the center of the room, a few paces apart, reading sheets of parchment. The heavy stench of wax candles and bad breath fills the air. Some snoring.

WHIPPLE

I see nothing wrong with the discourse. The meaning of the passage is clear.

RUTLEDGE

Hootenanny! I say, hootenanny!

WHIPPLE

The meaning of the passage is clear, Mr. Rutledge.

RUTLEDGE

Bolderdash! Bolderdash upon bolderdash!

FRANKLIN

(to no one in particular)
The pen is mightier than the oxcart. Hmmm.

WHIPPLE

It is aligned with the spirit of the decree!

RUTLEDGE

Coon eyes! Coon eyes make you blind!

WHIPPLE

Sir, I resent your manner of speech!

RUTLEDGE

I talk as the good Lord deemed me to talk and these words are muck. My friends from the great state of South Carolina will have none of this "equality."

(reading)

"And the King has waged a cruel war against human nature by assaulting a distant people and captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere." Hootenanny!

WHIPPLE

It is a necessary passage! Slavery against any people is a cruel tyranny!

RUTLEDGE

Not for South Carolina, it ain't!

WHIPPLE

The passage must remain!

RUTLEDGE

The passage has got to go or I ain't signing!

JEFFERSON

Gentleman, please, please. I'm trying to apply a sufficient degree of concentration.

FRANKLIN

The pen is mightier than the pumpkin tossed from a bridge.
Hmmm.

RUTLEDGE

I ain't going to be congress to such hootenanny, Mr. Jefferson

WHIPPLE

What in God's creation does "hootenanny" mean, sir?

ADAMS

There are more pressing matters at hand, Mr. Whipple.

RUTLEDGE

Mule's ass!

WHIPPLE

Mule's ass?

JEFFERSON

Good sirs, please refrain!

WHIPPLE

Must I continue to suffer his insufferable strangulation of the King's English?

ADAMS

Gentlemen, please. We shall apply redress to your concerns at hand. Be still a moment.

FRANKLIN

Pardon me, Mr. Adams, but wherefore is your beer boy?

RUTLEDGE

I have a right mind to take you outside for a whipping.

WHIPPLE

How dare you sir!

RUTLEDGE

That's how we settle matters in South Carolina.

WHIPPLE

Mr. Jefferson, I will not suffer this indignity. I will not remain part of a congress where such affrontery is wielded willy nilly.

RUTLEDGE

When my black boys get out of line, they get righted. Maybe you need to get righted, Mr. Whipple.

WHIPPLE

Mr. Jefferson!

JEFFERSON

I cannot work like this. I must depart.

ADAMS

Nay, stay. We need to push on.

FRANKLIN

Excuse me, Mr. Adams.

JEFFERSON

I must relieve myself. Both of bodily fluids and of this body.

JEFFERSON exits.

WHIPPLE

Most unpleasant manners if I do say.

RUTLEDGE

He needs to get some righting, too. Take him out to the trees and get him some lashes.

ADAMS

Mr. Rutledge!

FRANKLIN

Mr. Adams, a moment.

ADAMS

Mr. Rutledge, may I remind you that we are gentlemen here, charged with a noble and difficult task. I must ask you to refrain from antagonizing the proceedings. It is late and we must push on to reach an agreement.

RUTLEDGE

I am a gentle man. But sometimes a man needs to get righted.

WHIPPLE

Mr. Adams, I will not suffer this indignity further. I vote for the absolution of Mr. Rutledge from his duties at this congress.

RUTLEDGE

You can't boot me out.

WHIPPLE

As a matter of principle and sacred honor, I feel it is my duty to put forth a matter of removal in re: Mr. Edward Rutledge.

FRANKLIN

Please, Mr. Adams. Wherefore is your beer boy?

ADAMS

Pardon, Dr. Franklin?

FRANKLIN

Your beer boy. When is he nigh?

WHIPPLE

Mr. Adams, please consider the matter of Mr. Rutledge.

RUTLEDGE

You can't boot me out, you skinny mule ass law man.

WHIPPLE

Mr. Adams.

ADAMS

Mr. Whipple and Mr. Rutledge. We are not savages.

FRANKLIN

Haste makes waste, Mr. Adams. The beer boy?

ADAMS

One moment, Dr. Franklin. Now, Mr Whipple, Mr. Rutledge represents over half the plantation owners of South Carolina. He cannot be removed. We are united colonies and we must remain united, despite our differences.

The back doors of the hall open and enter JERRY, the beer boy, rolling a large wooden cask of beer in a wheel barrel.

FRANKLIN

Ah ha! The beer boy has arrived!

WHIPPLE

This is preposterous!

FRANKLIN

Good sir, fortune smiles upon your arrival.

JERRY

Sorry about the time. The barrel straps broke.

RUTLEDGE

I come all the way from South Carolina to hear this mule ass!

FRANKLIN

I have an invention to handle such egregious matters.

JERRY

No kidding.

ADAMS

Please, sirs, enough of this tomfoolery. We have important matters to decide. The cock must crow upon an agreement.

FRANKLIN

I jest not. But that is for another time. Please tap the beer barrel with zest and zeal forthwith.

JERRY

Right away.

JERRY taps the keg.

RUTLEDGE

I ain't no party to a congress that says I can't right my black boys and calls them equal to me. I'd be hog-tied and hung from a bridge first.

WHIPPLE

Mr. Adams, it behooves you to remove Mr. Rutledge. For the sake of our sacred duty here.

RUTLEDGE

Don't be calling it sacred. It's about money and land.

WHIPPLE

You sir, have the brain of a gnat.

ADAMS

Please, Mr. Whipple.

RUTLEDGE

At least I don't have the face of a mule's ass.

ADAMS

Please, sirs. I beg you to cease this childish pandering.

JERRY has tap the keg and pours a generous stein for FRANKLIN

JERRY

They're you go Dr. Franklin. Mr. Sam Adams best brew!

FRANKLIN

(gulping)

Ah! Sweet nectar of mother's milk.

(ringing a bell)

Hear ye, hear ye. Gentlemen of congress. The beer boy has brought us sustenance! Hear ye, hear ye. Awake, arise! Come forth and replenish your hearts and minds in the golden ale of Mr. Samuel Adams!

A general stir among the sleepy throng, as a few "congress men" make their way to the keg.

ADAMS

About time. Perhaps, gentlemen, a little ale will clear our minds.

RUTLEDGE

Now, I'm all for that.

WHIPPLE

At least we agree on one thing, Mr. Rutledge.

Wonder what happens next?

For a copy of the full script, email me at:

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Thanks!