

FREEDUMB
By BK Wells

Contact:
BK Wells
wells@bkwells.com

CHARACTERS :

SMITH
JOHNSON
SUPERVISOR
WILLIE

Characters may be played by any age or gender.

PLACE :

JACME Corporation

TIME :

The present

FREEDUMB

Two WORKERS: SMITH and JOHNSON stand in front of tables. A sign in front of each table reads: JACME CORPORATION. The men hold rubber mallets. They seem to be asleep. In a corner of the stage stands the SUPERVISOR. The SUPERVISOR is elevated from the workers. He's in a cage of sorts. He has a small megaphone.

There's a terrible noise - grinding metal, crunching, an awful industrial buzz. The SUPERVISOR sees the WORKERS are idle. Holds up the mini-megaphone.

SUPERVISOR

Keep working. Keep working.

SMITH and JOHNSON automatically awake and pound their mallets. They pound fat pegs into a pegboard. When the pegs have been hammered through, they flip the board over and hammer through the other way, again and again. The pounding creates an erratic, but noticeable rhythm.

SMITH

Johnson.

JOHNSON

Yes?

SMITH

You know our jobs?

JOHNSON

Yes.

SMITH

What is it we do, anyway?

JOHNSON

Your question is about our jobs?

Yes. SMITH

You want to know what we do? JOHNSON

Yes. SMITH

Oh! I don't know. JOHNSON

SMITH is satisfied with that answer.

But it helps keep the country free. JOHNSON

And safe? SMITH

And safe. JOHNSON

Then our jobs are important? SMITH

Quite important. JOHNSON

JOHNSON bangs his mallet.

Keeps the country free. JOHNSON

SMITH pounds his mallet.

And safe. SMITH

JOHNSON bangs his mallet.

Keeps the country free. JOHNSON

SMITH pounds his mallet.

And safe. SMITH

JOHNSON bangs his mallet.

JOHNSON
Keeps the country free.

SMITH pounds his mallet.

SMITH
And safe.

JOHNSON
And safe.

SMITH
Free.

JOHNSON
Safe.

SMITH
Free.

JOHNSON
Safe.

SMITH
Free.

JOHNSON
Safe.

SMITH
I heard something today.

JOHNSON
Do tell.

SMITH
Tell what?

JOHNSON
What you heard?

SMITH
Um...Do you remember that man? It was a long time ago. Do you remember him? He was a bad man. He hurt people. He did something very bad. It was a long time ago.

He had a mustache?
JOHNSON

Yes. A mustache.
SMITH

No. I don't remember him.
JOHNSON

Do you think our Presiment is like that?
SMITH

A mustache, you mean?
JOHNSON

No. Bad. Is he bad?
SMITH

Keep working.
SUPERVISOR

He can't be bad, Smith.
JOHNSON

He can't?
SMITH

Of course not.
JOHNSON

Well, why?
SMITH

Because he's the Presiment!
JOHNSON

Oh!
SMITH

He's on our side. He's doing all he can to keep us free.
JOHNSON

And safe?
SMITH

And safe.
JOHNSON

Keep working.
SUPERVISOR

The SUPERVISOR leaves his cage. He enters the main stage. He rolls another table with a peg board and mallet on it. He wheels a task chair onto the stage with WILLIE in it. As soon as WILLIE reaches the table, he picks up his mallet and pounds the pegboard.

SUPERVISOR

This is the new guy.

The SUPERVISOR returns to the cage.

SMITH

Hello, new guy.

WILLIE

My name's Willie.

JOHNSON

Nice to meet you, Mr. Willie.

WILLIE

Willie's my first name.

SMITH

What?

JOHNSON

First name? No one here uses their first name.

WILLIE

Is there something wrong with it?

JOHNSON

No, I suppose not. It just hasn't been done that way!

WILLIE

Things change.

JOHNSON

No they don't. Look, I've worked with Smith here for ten years. I don't know a thing about him. And I don't want to know. I don't even know his first name. Smith, what's your first name?

SMITH

Hmmm. I forget.

WILLIE

Work does that to you.

SMITH

Does what?

WILLIE

Beats you down. So nothing matters. It's not truly forgetting. More of a brain death, really.

SMITH

Um...what were we talking about?

WILLIE

Freedumb.

SMITH

Oh yes. Freedumb. Freedumb's terrific!

JOHNSON

The best!

SMITH

Outstanding!

WILLIE

Yeah, think how terrific it would be if any one of us were really free.

JOHNSON

What are you talking about?

WILLIE

The way things are.

SMITH

Oh, I saw that. With the singing and the canoodling and the movie stars!

JOHNSON

Of course you saw that movie. Because we live in a free country. You can see any movie you want, even the lousy ones. Because you're free.

(to Willie)

You must be thinking about some other place.

SMITH

Is it the zoo?

WILLIE

I'm not thinking about the zoo! What I'm thinking about is: CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY!

WILLIE says the next three words with a smash of the mallet.

WILLIE

CRIMES! AGAINST! HUMANITY! The Native American holocaust. Rwanda, Darfur, Cambodia, Bosnia. The holocaust holocaust. They go on and on. Don't you ever think about these things?

JOHNSON

Thinking about those things doesn't get the pegs pounded. Right, Smith?

SMITH

Huh?

WILLIE

Hell in a handbasket, that's what. We used to stand for something. Now we're as bad as the Knock-seeds.

JOHNSON

I can't say we're all that bad.

WILLIE

Yes. We're just like the Knock-seeds. Hitslur. It's just like we're living under the hand of Hitslur!

SMITH

Who?

WILLIE

Hitslur! Don't you remember Hitslur?

JOHNSON

Hitslur...Hitslur Hitslur Hitslur....

SMITH

Did he have a mustache?

WILLIE

Yes, he had a mustache!

SMITH

Did he do something bad?

WILLIE

Yes he did something bad. He killed 6 million Yous.

SMITH

6 million Yous? But there's only one you. And you're here.

WILLIE
And poles, political prisoners, homos.

JOHNSON
Are you sure?

WILLIE
Yes, I'm sure.

JOHNSON
Well, why'd he do that?

SMITH
Had they done something bad?

JOHNSON
The only thing they'd done bad was being different.

JOHNSON
Oh. Well, maybe they should have learned to be more the same.

SMITH
Yes, that would have solved it, wouldn't it.

WILLIE
They couldn't change who they were.

SMITH
You can if you work at it.

WILLIE
It's a crime! A crime against humanity! We've got our own
Hitslur and he's stealing our rights!

JOHNSON
Now that's just silly. I still have all my rights.

WILLIE
Yes, yes you have. You have lost it. You've lost plenty. You've
lost your right to privacy and to chit-chat! Don't forget about
chit-chat.

JOHNSON
Was this because of that bomb? Some buildings fell down...

SMITH
Someone did something bad.

WILLIE
Yes, someone did something bad. But you didn't do anything bad.

SMITH

I might've...and not known about it.

JOHNSON

He might do something bad in the future.

SMITH

Good point.

WILLIE

Can't you see it? Can't you see what's going on?

JOHNSON

Well it's still the best place in the world to live.

SMITH

Hands down.

WILLIE

You agree with me then. You've lost rights?

JOHNSON

I might have lost some of my rights.

SMITH

You should look under the table. I found a quarter there once.

JOHNSON

And I don't mind losing a few rights as long as it helps keep the country free.

SMITH

And...what's the other thing?

JOHNSON

Safe.

SMITH

Yeah, safe. Free and safe.

WILLIE

It's not keeping the country free. It's making the country a fascist state.

SMITH

You can't make the country a state... the states make the country, ya big ding-dong.

SMITH taps his head, indicating to JOHNSON that WILLIE is a little tetched in the head.

WILLIE

Don't you have dreams? What's your dream for your life, for the future? What's your dream, man, what's your dream?

JOHNSON indicates his work.

JOHNSON

Well, this is!

SMITH

We're keeping the country free.

WILLIE

How are you doing that?

JOHNSON

We're making ... these.

WILLIE

What do they do?

JOHNSON

These...help keep the country free.

SMITH

And safe.

WILLIE

But what do they do?

SMITH

I'm not 100% sure, but they keep the country free. And safe. And our Presiment needs them.

WILLIE holds up his pegboard.

WILLIE

Look at this! Look at it! What the hell is it we're doing anyway?

SMITH is shocked at this question.

SMITH

What?

WILLIE

What the hell are these things?

SMITH is in shock.

WILLIE

You don't know?

JOHNSON

They're important! They keep the country free!

SMITH

(not so sure)

And safe....?

JOHNSON

Yes, safe.

WILLIE

This is the stupidest thing I've ever done! And we're doing it over and over and over! This doesn't make the country free! We're just wasting time. We're screwin' around! It's just fooling you into thinking you're doing some good.

SMITH has stopped pounding. He's horrified.

JOHNSON

Don't listen to him. He's "special".

SMITH

Oh, he's special!

JOHNSON

That's it, isn't it, Willie. You're one of those "special" people? The ones who can't keep a job so the guvnamant puts them in a job?

SMITH

Special!!

SMITH looks at WILLIE and smiles, really big.

SMITH

Are you a tart-head, Willie?

JOHNSON

He's a tart-head.

SMITH

We'll be nice to you Willie.

JOHNSON

We'll watch out for you.

SMITH

Just stick with us.

SMITH smiles again.

JOHNSON

I'm not special! I'm not a tart head!

BOTH SMITH
AND JOHNSON

Uh huh.

WILLIE

I'm just not gonna waste my life doing anything so stupid!

WILLIE slaps his pegboard then kicks the
table over.

WILLIE

This isn't work! It's slavery! Slavery of the spirit! Slavery of
the mind! Slavery of the —

The SUPERVISOR places an unfriendly hand on
WILLIE'S shoulder. The SUPERVISOR removes
WILLIE and his table.

JOHNSON

Uh oh!

SMITH and JOHNSON share a chuckle about
WILLIE'S trouble. They talk as WILLIE is
removed.

SMITH

(indicates pegboard)

Tell me about these things again.

JOHNSON

They keep the country free.

SMITH

And?

JOHNSON

Safe.

SMITH

Good.

The lights adjust and the SUPERVISOR returns to his cage.

Morning. SMITH

Morning. JOHNSON

SMITH looks at where WILLIE used to sit.

Didn't there used to be? SMITH

What? JOHNSON

Somebody... another.... SMITH

I don't think so. JOHNSON

Yeah, there was a.... SMITH

Did he have a mustache? JOHNSON

Dunno. SMITH

The SUPERVISOR replaces their pegboards and mallets with keyboards and headsets. SMITH and JOHNSON continue to hammer until the keyboard is in place, then they pick up typing as if it's what they've always done.

Jacme corporation. JOHNSON

Jacme corporation. SMITH

Jacme. JOHNSON

Jacme. SMITH

Jacme. JOHNSON

Johnson? SMITH

Yes? JOHNSON

What did we do before this? SMITH

What do you mean? JOHNSON

There was...um. I think it was...uh... SMITH

You've always done this Smith. JOHNSON

Oh. SMITH

Keep working. SUPERVISOR

Didn't there used to -- ? SMITH

SMITH points where WILLIE used to sit.

What? JOHNSON

Hmph. Can't remember. Didn't we used to? SMITH

SMITH bangs the air with an imaginary mallet.

I don't know WHAT you're talking about. JOHNSON

Hmph. Well, our jobs are important, right? SMITH

You bet your bottom dollar! JOHNSON

What?
SMITH

You bet your sweet bippy!
JOHNSON

Huh?
SMITH

You bet your ass.
JOHNSON

Uh... so they're important?
SMITH

Yes.
JOHNSON

And we're free, right?
SMITH

Yes.
JOHNSON

What are we free from again?
SMITH

You're not free from anything. It's rights. It's privilege. Like the right to speak.
JOHNSON

Keep it down!
SUPERVISOR

And the right to think things.
JOHNSON

Keep working.
SUPERVISOR

The right to assemble...
JOHNSON

Stuff!
SMITH

SMITH goes to hold up his peg board, but it's gone.

JOHNSON

There's a lot of other ones. So many I can't remember.

SMITH

I'm glad we weren't born in one of those countries that isn't free.

JOHNSON

Damn straight! Jacme corporation.

SMITH

Jacme.

JOHNSON

Jacme.

SMITH

Guess what that one just said?

JOHNSON

What?

SMITH

Odd bless our mirrorcle. Does he?

JOHNSON

Does he what?

SMITH

Does Odd bless our mirrorcle?

JOHNSON

Of course.

SMITH

Does Odd bless anybody else's mirrorcle?

JOHNSON

No!

SMITH

Why not?

JOHNSON

He's very, very busy. Plus, he wants to be on the winning side. And that's always us.

SMITH

Odd's pretty smart. Omni, omni, omnipipipipent. Yeah. Omnipippipent. He's like omnipippipent. Yup. But did you ever wonder, like when a baby dies, why doesn't Odd stop it?

JOHNSON

What?

SMITH

A baby. If it died. Like, let's say Santa Claus was on a chimney and we wanted to make sure it was safe to go down and so he took a baby and pushed it down the chimney but it wasn't safe, it wasn't safe at all, the family had built a hearty fire and the baby fell right into it and burned to pile of cinders. Or, let's say, there's an oversized mixing vat, with a --

JOHNSON

I get it.

SMITH

So the baby dies. Odd could have stopped it, but he didn't stop it. He just stood by and watched. Why doesn't he stop it?

JOHNSON

Well, Odd loves a good train wreck just like the rest of us.

SMITH

Oh! That's why! I always wondered. That crazy Odd. He's a real card!

SUPERVISOR enters with a box.

SUPERVISOR

Good news! We're being automated.

JOHNSON

Terrific.

The SUPERVISOR takes the keyboards and places one button in front of each.

SUPERVISOR

Look how easy this is - you just press the button.

JOHNSON and SMITH are impressed. SUPERVISOR puts blindfolds on them.

JOHNSON

What's this for?

SUPERVISOR

So you can concentrate on your work.

JOHNSON

Fair enough.

SUPERVISOR

Oh, and these. They'll block out the noise.

SUPERVISOR pulls out heavy duty headphones.

SMITH

If we can't hear you, how will we know to keep working?

SUPERVISOR

Oh, we've solved that.

The SUPERVISOR pulls out a big probe. SMITH and JOHNSON look at each other warily.

SUPERVISOR

It's a gentle sort of shock. After a while it feels just like a massage.

JOHNSON

How would you know?

The SUPERVISOR doesn't answer.

SMITH

Where's that big thing gonna go?

SUPERVISOR

No worries. Stand up, Smith.

SMITH stands.

SUPERVISOR

Drop your pants.

SMITH does. The SUPERVISOR puts the probe up his ass. SMITH reacts.

SUPERVISOR

Does it hurt?

SMITH

(barely able to speak)

Yes.

SUPERVISOR

Now THIS is gonna keep our country free.

SMITH

(still struggling to speak)

In that case, you can shove it half an inch higher.

SUPERVISOR does. SMITH is in agony.

SUPERVISOR

Let's give 'er a try.

SUPERVISOR presses his remote. SMITH reacts to the shock.

SUPERVISOR

Now that's not bad, is it?

SMITH

(up an octave)

Surprisingly tender.

The SUPERVISOR presses the remote again. SMITH reacts again, but it seems less jarring.

SUPERVISOR

Now you.

JOHNSON

Are you sure we have to do this?

SUPERVISOR

This is very important. It'll keep the country -

JOHNSON

Free.

SMITH

And safe.

SUPERVISOR shocks SMITH; he reacts.

SUPERVISOR

Atta boy.

SUPERVISOR shocks the both of them. He puts the eargear on them.

SUPERVISOR

Oh, one last thing.

The SUPERVISOR puts a bubble gag into SMITH'S and JOHNSON'S mouths. The SUPERVISOR returns to his cage.

SMITH and JOHNSON sit: blind, deaf and mute. SUPERVISOR presses his remote. JOHNSON presses his switch. SUPERVISOR presses his remote. SMITH presses his switch. SUPERVISOR presses his remote. JOHNSON presses his switch. SUPERVISOR presses his remote. SMITH presses his switch.

LIGHTS.