

FREE EXPRESSION

By Leon Kaye

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CHARACTERS

QUIGBY: Fifty, stout. Though grouchy and temperamental, HE is dedicated to his cause.

HOWLE: About forty, sleek, attractive. HE falls to fits of bravado to make his point.

JONES: Thirties, short, unexceptional. His mood turns easily to rapturous adoration.

SETTING

A colonial style room, possibly in an inn. A fireplace with painting hanging above, UPSTAGE. One window also on the back wall. One window STAGE LEFT. A small table, CENTERSTAGE, with three plain chairs. There can even be a bed. (This is not a grand room in a fine hotel or estate.)

AT RISE: QUIGBY sits facing the audience. JONES and HOWLE approach to sit to QUIGBY's left and right. Possibly QUIGBY ushers them to sit as the curtain rises. As QUIGBY speaks, the others sit.

QUIGBY: Now then, for the record, the first meeting of this delegation of our newly formed nation, the United States of America, for the purpose of creating new words, expressions and phrases that denote a free and unbridled society will come to order. I respectfully recognize my colleagues, Mr. Rolph Jones, representative of the Southern States of Georgia, North and South Carolina, Virginia and Maryland; Mr. Melville Howle, representative of New Jersey, Delaware, Rhode Island and Connecticut; and I, Mr. Adolph Quigby, of New York, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, will act as moderator.

JONES: One moment, sir. You said New York, New Hampshire...

QUIGBY: Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.

JONES: And you are moderator?

QUIGBY: Yes. Having been appointed by Mr. Samuel Adams himself, I did not see any difficulty in chairing this meeting. But what does it matter, sir? We are all free men discussing ideas freely and without bonds. Mine is merely a ceremonial title.

JONES: Should I be writing this?

QUIGBY: No, it is not necessary.

HOWLE: If I may, sir, there are certain expressions, dare I say those of British origin, that most free men find terribly repugnant.

QUIGBY: Ah, now this is the stuff for which we are assembled. Proceed, sir.

HOWLE: For example, the term "servant." It denotes such... servitude. And who amongst us is servant to another? We are all free men, after all - free under the eyes of God. I suggest a more unfettered term.

QUIGBY: Good. Good. This is very good. Have you a suggestion?

HOWLE: Yes. I propose the new word, wah-wah-wah-wiya.

QUIGBY: (**stares at HOWLE for a long time**) Wah wah...

HOWLE: Wah-wah-wah-wiya, if you please.

QUIGBY: Yes, that is what I supposed. What does it mean?

HOWLE: It means... one free man helping another free man to fulfill a task.

JONES: It is like a servant only without the class distinction.

HOWLE: Precisely.

QUIGBY: What I meant, sir, is where did you find this word?

HOWLE: It is a word of my own origin.

JONES: Brilliant, sir. (**to QUIGBY**) Should I be writing?

QUIGBY: Not yet. (**to HOWLE**) Let me understand. There is no basis for this word?

HOWLE: Actually, yes, a very sound one. My son, John, in process of learning to climb stairs, and upon achieving his task, proudly mumbled this word, almost imperceptively. But I heard him, thank the Almighty God, and I immediately wrote the word down lest I forget it.

JONES: Very resourceful, sir.

QUIGBY: Wah-we-we...

HOWLE: Wah-wah-wah-wiya.

QUIGBY: Let me understand... there is no root in Latin or Greek?

JONES: Latin? Ancient tongues for ancient thoughts, sir.

HOWLE: We are free men. What need we with such anachronistic tongues? French? Latin? Poppycock!

JONES: Oh, how my heart beats to hear so free a sentiment!

(QUIGBY looks strangely at JONES, lifts his chair and moves it a few inches away.)

HOWLE: Mr. Quigby, sir?

QUIGBY: Yes. I was saying, there is no real need for root in... well, in a real word. It is just that it does lend credibility to our cause.

HOWLE: Credibility, sir? Here my son, knowing no language but that of a free man, uttered these words. He knows nothing of French, Russian, or the Gaelic tongues. He knows nothing of the bonds of Colonialism and the unjust taxes that have choked us for more than a hundred years. These words came from within, from his soul. These are the only words worth stating.

JONES: Bravo, sir. I have already written your marvelous word and have committed it to memory!

QUIGBY: Please, do not write yet, Mr. Jones. We are not yet finished with the -

JONES: Have you become my master, Mr. Quigby, sir?

QUIGBY: No. I only meant to say -

JONES: Then I write, sir. I write because I am.

HOWLE: You, sir, are a cheeky one. A cheeky ram-a-sak-a-lack, if I have ever met one.

QUIGBY: What was that? Another word?

HOWLE: It just poured out of me. I had no control. It is a term of unusual naturalism and splendor.

QUIGBY: Before we continue, can we please concur on not just the purpose of this assemblage, but also its legitimacy. If we create a bevy of ridiculous words and phrases -

HOWLE: Ridiculous?

QUIGBY: Yes. If we create words based on whims and cacophonous utterances, we will become the laughingstock of Europe. How fragile our Union is, sirs. We must agree upon sound, appropriate words if we are to come up with a great body of useful expressions.

JONES: I agree wholeheartedly and do have some excellent suggestions I wish to impart to you, fine sir, and to the finest land on God's earth.

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