

THE ORDER

by

David Schreiber

THE ORDER

by

David Schreiber

David Schreiber
dave@davidshreiber.net
davids@truedave.com

Copyright ©2007 by David Schreiber.

Cast:

DannyMale, 25-30. An office worker.

FredMale, 35-45. A janitor.

Time:

The present

Place:

The break room in a high-security government office.

This play is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. Please visit the Creative Commons website to get a full description of what rights this Licenses grants you:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

Note that this license **does not include production rights**. Please contact David Schreiber for information on licensing this play for production or for a reading.

(Lights up on a break room in a government building. Danny is sitting at table with a laptop. Fred enters, carrying a broom, but stops at the doorway. Danny does not see him.)

DANNY

(On cell phone)

Hey, Carlos. Yeah...it's a go...yup, same as always...right...okay. I'll look forward to it...okay...bye.

(Hangs up phone)

FRED

Good evening, Mr. Jones.

DANNY

Jesus!

FRED

Are you all right?

DANNY

Damn it, Fred, do you have to sneak up on people like that?

FRED

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to startle you.

DANNY

Yeah, well...make a little more noise next time. Is what's-her-name done cleaning the bathroom yet?

FRED

I don't think so.

DANNY

Damn. I guess I can hold it.

FRED

It shouldn't be too long.

DANNY

Oh, Fred, I've been meaning to tell you...there's a black gunk in the refrigerator. Take care of it, will you?

FRED

Of course, sir.

(Fred starts cleaning out the refrigerator)

DANNY

I think someone spilled something. It's been sitting there for, well, six months at least.

FRED

Yes, I see.

(Beat)

How are you tonight, otherwise, sir?

DANNY

Same as always. Man, I hate working nights.

FRED

You get used to it.

DANNY

That's fine for you, but I don't want to get used to it.

FRED

So, sir...have you caught any terrorists tonight?

DANNY

No, I'm afraid not. Every flight coming in was authorized.

FRED

That's good. Let's just hope everyone on board was authorized.

DANNY

Oh, I wouldn't worry too much about that. If only you knew.

FRED

Knew what?

DANNY

Well...we can.

FRED

Can what?

DANNY

Stop an individual

FRED

Really.

DANNY
You don't believe me.

FRED
Of course I do, sir.

DANNY
I'll show you.

FRED
Oh, I don't know. Computers confuse me.

DANNY
Come on, they make it really easy. Even for someone like you.
(Referring to laptop)
Look at this.

FRED
What's that?

DANNY
This is how we execute banning orders.

FRED
Banning orders.

DANNY
Yeah! With this screen, I can ban someone from entering the country.

FRED
That's how it works?

DANNY
You've heard of this?

FRED
Uh, sure. Banned lists of foreign nationals.

DANNY
Well, yes, foreign nationals. And Americans, too. If need be.

FRED
You mean citizens?

DANNY

You catch on quickly! Citizen or not, it doesn't matter. Someone goes out the country, and if they're on the list, they don't get to come back!

FRED

And...what happens to someone who's been banned?

DANNY

Oh who cares. Anyone who leaves the country isn't a real American anyway.

FRED

I see.

DANNY

Go ahead.

FRED

What?

DANNY

Ask the question.

FRED

What question?

DANNY

The question everybody always asks: why have I never heard about it?

FRED

Why have I never heard about it?

DANNY

It's a classified program. We wouldn't want just anyone to...wait a minute...

FRED

Sir?

DANNY

You do have a security clearance, don't you?

FRED

Of course I do, sir.

DANNY

Of course. Yes, well...

FRED
It must be complicated.

DANNY
What?

FRED
Doing it. On the computer.

DANNY
Oh, no. It's easy. Let me show you.
(Turns to computer and starts typing. Fred watches)
Okay. Here we go. First we pick a country. Let's pick...Thailand. Everyone who goes to Thailand just goes to have sex with kids anyway. See, here's a list of every American who's in Thailand right now.

FRED
How do they get this list?

DANNY
Passport tracking. Or something. I don't know. But see, you can click on each name. Pick a name.

FRED
Uh...okay...how about this one: "Phillip Simonton."

DANNY
"Phillip Simonton", let's see...oh. No, that won't work. See the little American flag by his name?

FRED
Yeah.

DANNY
That means he's a VIP.

FRED
A VIP?

DANNY
See! Simonton is...oh, wow, he's a nephew of the Vice-President himself. Well, we definitely can't ban him.

FRED
But what if—

DANNY

Doesn't matter. If you get an order for someone like that, you bump it back up. Otherwise, well...you might end up working the night shift.

FRED

All right, how about this one: "Jonathan Smith".

DANNY

Ha! "John Smith". Probably a made-up name. He could be a terrorist, don't you think?

FRED

If you say so.

DANNY

Damn right. So we click here, here, click on "OK"...and there we go! Done!

FRED

That's it?

DANNY

Yeah!

FRED

So he's banned from entering the country?

DANNY

Yup.

FRED

For real?

DANNY

Oh, yes!

FRED

You...you can do that by yourself? Don't you need an actual banning order from somewhere?

DANNY

Not technically.

FRED

But this would need to be confirmed, right?

DANNY

By who?

Your supervisor?

FRED

They trust me.

DANNY

But this John Smith guy...he hasn't done anything wrong!

FRED

How do you know?

DANNY

Well...innocent until proven guilty? Doesn't that apply?

FRED

Whatever.

DANNY

How do you undo it?

FRED

Undo it? Feh. We should just let him stew for a year or two. "John Smith": what sort of name is that?

DANNY

But—

FRED

If he's innocent, it'll get cleared up eventually.

DANNY

Oh, I get it!

FRED

Yeah, it's a pretty good system.

DANNY

Yes, I see. You're not authorized to remove him.

FRED

What?

DANNY

That makes perfect sense.

FRED

DANNY
No, no, I—

FRED
We wouldn't want just anyone to have that sort of authorization.

DANNY
I could remove him.

FRED
Ah. Yes. Of course you could, sir.

DANNY
I could!

FRED
Yes, sir. I'm sure you you're allowed to.

DANNY
Fine. I'll prove it.
(Danny operates the computer)

FRED
You don't need to do that.

DANNY
There, see? All the banned people. In alphabetical order.

FRED
That's a long list.

DANNY
Not as long as it should be, if you ask me. So we scroll down and...oh.

FRED
What?

DANNY
There are, like, eight, no...nine Jonathan Smiths.

FRED
Which one is the one you just banned?

DANNY
How should I know? The system just uses names.

FRED

Well, how do you—?

DANNY

I'll just select all of them. Click here, click "OK", and there we go.

ROBERT

That's it?

DANNY

Yeah, though it takes a little while to finish. Unbanning is really slow.

FRED

It's amazing what computers can do.

DANNY

Though if a John Smith blows up a building, it'll be your fault.

FRED

I'm sure that won't happen.

DANNY

Yeah, I trust the President to keep us safe, too.

FRED

Of course.

DANNY

God, this always takes forever. And I can't do anything until it finishes.

(Danny stands)

Let's see if the bathroom's done yet.

FRED

How long?

DANNY

Excuse me?

FRED

How long does it take?

DANNY

I dunno. At least two to three minutes.

(Danny exits, left)

FRED

(To himself)

Well, of course it takes three minutes. If the idiots in computer center got themselves someone who knew how to build a proper database, that wouldn't be a problem.

(Looking at laptop)

Let's see if I can cancel this by pressing escape...yup! Thought so. Okay, let's try the "A"s.

(Starts looking through list)

Adams...Alexander...Anderson! Okay, uh...Beatrice, Christopher, Charles, Diane, Ethan...oh...my God. There he is. Damn it, there he is. Okay...select the name, click, click "OK"...come on...come on. Hold on Dad, we're almost there.

(Stands. Dials on cell phone)

Mom? It's Robert. Go. Yes, I did it. Go! Now!

DANNY

(Enters from left)

Where is it?

FRED

(Hangs up)

Mr. Jones!

DANNY

I left my badge...

FRED

It's right here!

DANNY

(Looks at laptop)

What's this? Ethan Anderson?

(Beat)

Fred, did you do this?

FRED

Do what, sir?

DANNY

Unban an "Ethan Anderson"?

FRED

Me, sir?

I'd better put him back on the list.

DANNY

No!

FRED

What?

DANNY

Please don't.

FRED

You did do this.

DANNY

It's not what it seems.

FRED

Who the hell is Ethan Anderson? And why are you messing around with my computer?

DANNY

He's my father!

FRED

What?

DANNY

Ethan Anderson...he's my father. He got banned. He's not a terrorist. My mom and I...we've tried everything, but we can't get him back into the country!

FRED

What?!?

DANNY

He's been sitting in Windsor, Ontario for the last five years, waiting to come home.

FRED

Oh come on. The system is designed so that can't happen.

DANNY

What are you talking about? You just banned someone for no reason at all!

FRED

John Smith? He was suspicious!

DANNY

FRED

No he wasn't!

DANNY

If your father has been banned for five years...he must be a terrorist. Wait a minute...

FRED

Danny, listen, don't—

DANNY

You're a terrorist too!

FRED

No I'm not!

DANNY

To get a job here...it can't be a coincidence! How could you have gotten a job here, being the son of a terrorist?

FRED

I had to use a fake name—

DANNY

You've planned it. My God, a terrorist operation right here!

FRED

I'm not a terrorist.

DANNY

I'm calling security right now.

FRED

I know who Carlos is.

DANNY

Excuse me?

FRED

I know who Carlos is.

DANNY

I don't know what you're talking about.

FRED

He flies planes across the border. Late at night.

I don't know—

DANNY

FRED
And you authorize it. So his planes aren't intercepted.

DANNY
No I don't!

FRED
My friends and I have been watching you. We know.

DANNY
You don't know anything!

FRED
He's a drug runner, you know.

DANNY
No he's not! He...he...

FRED
It would be shame if people found out.

DANNY
Oh, come on, man! I'm not hurting anyone!

FRED
That's not for me to decide.

DANNY
Do you know how hard it is to pay off eighty grand of student loans on a government salary? What was I supposed to do?

FRED
That's your responsibility.

DANNY
Come on, man. What do you want?

FRED
(Looks at laptop)
Two things. The first I already have. In half-an-hour, assuming you don't do anything stupid, my Dad will be back in the country. Tomorrow, I'll quit this job and go home. The only other thing I want from you is silence.

Silence? DANNY

That's all. FRED

But if he's...your father's a terrorist— DANNY

No, he's not. FRED

How can I trust you? DANNY

Danny, do you know what the penalty is for aiding and abetting drug smuggling? FRED
(Beat)

Twenty years. (Beat)

Goodbye, Danny. (Beat)

Wait. Wait! DANNY

Remember: silence. FRED

Damn. DANNY
(Sits. To computer...)

Damn damn damn! (Beat)

(Lights down)

THE END