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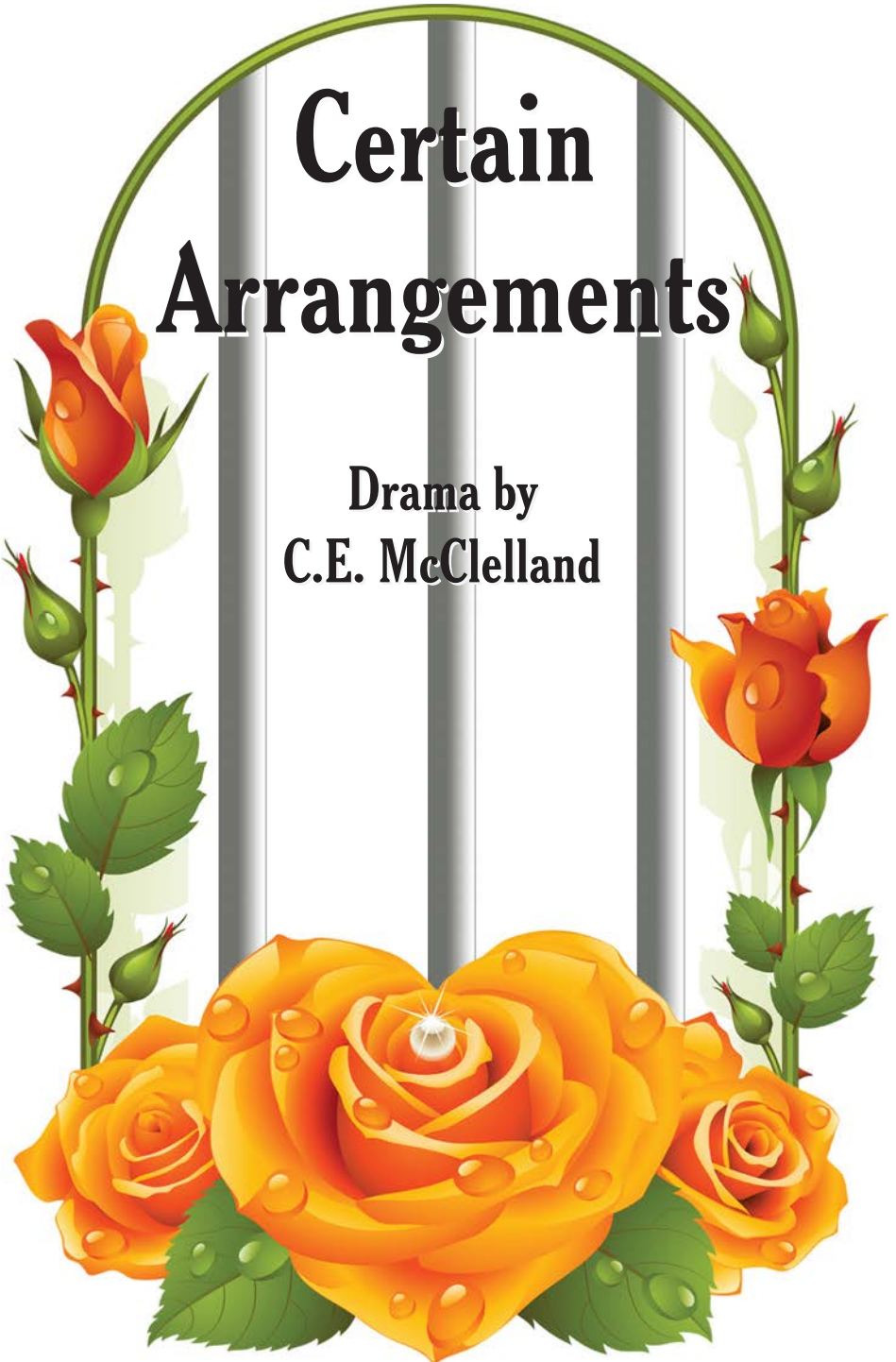
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## **Family Plays**

# **Certain Arrangements**

**Drama by  
C.E. McClelland**



# Certain Arrangements

**Certain Arrangements - Drama.** By C.E. McClelland. Cast: 1m., 1w., 2m. African-American teenagers. In *Certain Arrangements*, a troubled teenager learns of his own abilities and confronts the choice of his young life in a moving story of our time. On probation for stealing a car, an African-American teenager is apprenticed to an elderly Italian American immigrant woman who runs a flower shop in urban South Philadelphia. The old woman, who longs to win first prize for flower arranging at the annual flower show, places heavy demands on the teenager. He, in turn, puts up with her discipline as he longs for the end of his probation period. Just as he is coming to respect the old woman, a gang member who got him into trouble in the first place, pressures him into a scheme to use the shop as a front for drug-dealing. At a critical moment, the teenager must choose between the values of the street and those the old woman has tried to instill in him. *Setting: a flower shop. Contemporary costumes. Approximate running time: 45 minutes. Code: CH1.*

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By

C.E. MCCLELLAND

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To Kitty, with thanks  
for her love and support

CERTAIN ARRANGEMENTS  
won  
the 7th annual CATSPAW AWARD  
of the Comtra Cultural Center of Pittsburgh.

It was awarded first place  
in the 1993 Mark Twain Masquers  
8th Annual Playwriting Competition  
of Hartford, Connecticut.



**CERTAIN ARRANGEMENTS**

**Presented by Comtra Cultural Center, Pittsburgh, February 2,  
1992**

**Woman - Sylvia Hanna**

**Boy 2 - Shaun Rolly**

**Boy - Mark Domensic**

**Priest - Bill McKaly**

**Director - Ed Sipes**

**Stage Manager - Barbara Fleming**

## **CAST**

WOMAN,	MID- 60'S
BOY 1,	16
BOY 2,	17
PRIEST,	LATE 20'S

## **SETTING**

A FLOWER SHOP IN SOUTH PHILADELPHIA

## **TIME**

THE PRESENT

## Scene 1

January

A modest, well-kept storefront flower shop in South Philadelphia. Colorful planters line the shelves. Most eye-catching of all are the attractive flower arrangements dotting the premises. A door SR leads to the living quarters. A radio on a counter, DSR, plays Italian opera softly in the background.

*(AT RISE: A WOMAN in her 60's is at the counter making a flower arrangement. A sweater droops over her shoulders, and a pair of large glasses attached to a cord dangles from her neck. Dissatisfied with the design, SHE fusses with the arrangement, moving this spray here and that spray there with her arthritic hands. SHE talks to HERSELF in a heavy Italian accent.)*

WOMAN: This will not do. It looks just likea last year's. *(talking to her hands)* Whatzamatter with you? You lost your touch?

*(The WOMAN wrings her hands then removes a number of sprays and starts over. A bell sounds as the shop door opens. An Afro-American BOY about 16 enters. HE wears a gang jacket with the word "BROZ" emblazoned on the back. The WOMAN stops momentarily, looks at the BOY, then resumes her work, occasionally looking up at the BOY suspiciously. The BOY, hands in the pockets of his gang jacket, moves about the shop looking vaguely at the planters and flower arrangements. HE looks up at the WOMAN when HE feels SHE is not looking at HIM. Finally, the WOMAN speaks.)*

I helpa you with something maybe?

*(The BOY does not answer. Instead HE looks back at the door as though seeing if the coast is clear. Then, his hands still in his pockets, HE saunters over to the counter. As HE takes one hand out of his pocket, the*

*WOMAN gasps silently and takes a step backward. But instead of a weapon, HE holds out a piece of paper.)*

WOMAN: *(still frightened)* Whatza that? A holdup note? I don' have a lotta cash.

*(Still the BOY does not speak. HE gestures with the paper for the WOMAN to take it, which SHE does reluctantly. SHE puts her glasses on, unfolds the paper, and reads it.)*

*(suddenly relieved)* Ah, Santa Maria, thanka God! This is froma the reverend father. You one-na the boys in the a new program. And it says here you been assigna to me, no? It za good program the younga father has started up, yes?

BOY: *(unenthused)* Yeah, I been assign' to you, momma, and no, it's a crappy program.

WOMAN: I don' like that kinda language in my shop. And it eez a good program, a fina program, Wha'da they call it?

BOY: *(almost inaudibly)* Green Thumbs or some crap like that.

WOMAN: Wha' you say?

BOY: *(a little louder)* I said Green Thumbs.

WOMAN: I still cannot hear you? You gonna wait on customers, you gotta talka louder.

BOY: *(shouting)* GREEN THUMBS!

WOMAN: That za better. As I was a sayin', Greena Thumbs she is a fine a program, no? It take a the delinquents offa the streets an' give 'em jobs.

BOY: Hey, I ain't no deliquent.

WOMAN: No?

BOY: Naw. Delinquents is for pansies. Spray-paintin', strippin' cars, rollin' drunks, an' crap like that. I gave that up a long time ago.

WOMAN: I tole you to watcha your mouth in my shop. (Pause.) So you no juvenile delinquent, huh? You no delinquent, than what you doin' in da Greena Thumbs? Answer me that.

BOY: (*proudly*) Shoot, momma, I'm a lot better than some juven-ile delinquent. I'm what you call a juven-ile offender.

WOMAN: Oh, that makes you, whatcha call it, bigga stuff, no?

BOY: Big stuff, yeah. You just ask the Broz - that's my gang - they'll tell you.

WOMAN: And wha' you do to make a yourself Mista Bigga Stuff? Beat somebody over da head maybe?

BOY: Naw, nothin' like that. Shoot, they won't let you in the program if you violent-like.

WOMAN: Then how you get in? Don' tell me; letta me guess. Was a shop-liftin' maybe?

BOY: Shoot.

WOMAN: Was it drugs? And for the lasta time, I'm tellin' you to watcha your mouth.

BOY: Drugs - naw. I'm clean. A nudder thing you gotta be to get in the program.

WOMAN: Well, if you didn' hit nobody over da head and you didn' do no drugs, what else coulda you have a done?

BOY: Well, if you wanna know . . .

WOMAN: No, no. I want guess. Let me see. Ah, you robba a

store.

BOY: Naw.

WOMAN: No? Ah, then you robba a bank.

BOY: Naw.

WOMAN: No? Ah, let me think. You a . . . You a . . . *(Pause.)* I canna think of nothin' else. I give up. Wha' you do?

BOY: *(proudly)* Me an' my friend, we got busted for stealin' a car.

WOMAN: You steala automobile?

BOY: Yeah, that's what I just said.

WOMAN: You steala automobile. Is that all?

BOY: Whadaya mean is that all?

WOMAN: In thae ole country, stealin' automobile is what yuvenile delinquents do. No bigga stuff.

BOY: Whadaya mean no big stuff? In this country, mamma, stealin' a car's a ser-ri-yous crime.

WOMAN: In ole country you not be such a bigga stuff; you just be little stuff yuvenile delinquent.

BOY: Hey, mamma, this is the U-S-of-A we're talkin' about. An' I'm tellin' you that stealin' a car's a serious o-fense. Me an' my friend we stole a Mer-ce-des-Benz right offa the street in 'ciety Hill. The cops had to chase us through three counties 'fore they caught us. I was drivin', of course. We made the 'leven clock news an' everythin'.

WOMAN: You notta make a 'leven o'clock a news in ole country.

BOY: 'cause you prob'bly don't even have no TV in yer stupid old country.

*(SHE dismisses his insult with a wave of her hand.)*

WOMAN: Fandonie! Also, you steala expansive automobile in ole country you notta worry about police a catch you; you have Mafia to worry about, if a you know what I mean.

BOY: Yeah, like if I stole some drug dealer's Caddy offa my block.

WOMAN: If you sucha a Mista Bigga Stuff, why not the judge he throwa all a the books at you?

BOY: The judge he said he'd let me slide this time, seeing it was my first o-fense an' all. So, he put me on probation. Only, I hadta sign up for this here bull . . .

*(SHE gives HIM the eye.)*

. . . this bull program.

WOMAN: See. What I say? It za a good a program, no?

BOY: We'll see about that.

WOMAN: An' wha' happen to other boy?

BOY: My friend? He still in the whata-they-call-it.

WOMAN: Uh, the a Studying Center?

BOY: Yeah, Youth Study Center, that's it. Only, we call it jail. You don't see no studyin' goin' on in there. Anyway, my friend he had what they call pri-yor arrests an' stuff. They can't decide what to do with him. They might even send him up to the joint.

WOMAN: The joint?

BOY: You know - Gratefor', Holmesburg. Prison. He almost 18.

WOMAN: I a see. Your friend even bigger stuff.

*(The BOY walks around the shop, examining various objects on the shelves.)*

BOY: So, what am I s'pose to do aroun' here anyhow?

WOMAN: *(massaging her hands)* My hands they notta what they used to be, so I wanta you to clean up a the shop every day.

BOY: Shoot, I could be doin' crap like that back at the Center.

WOMAN: Only here I a pay you to do it. Mimimum a wage. Bigga difference, no? Afta you cleanin' uppa the shop, I wanta you to clean uppa your mouth. I notta tell you again. Then maybe I letta you answer the phone, take a the orders, wait on customers like a me.

BOY: Yeah, and what are you gonna be doin' while I'm s'pose to be doin' all your stuff?

WOMAN: I a work onna my flower arrangements. Gotta get ready for flower show in a March. Every year I winna a prize for a my arrangements, but never firsta prize. Every year, florist in big hotel, the Foura Seasons, he winna firsta prize. This year I gonna winna firsta prize if it a kill me.

BOY: Whatcha get? A coupla thousan' dollars or somethin'?

WOMAN: No, you notta get any money, you getta blue ribbon. It great a honor.

BOY: No money?

WOMAN: Si.



BOY: Momma, you crazy. Me, I don't do nothin' 'less I get paid for it.

WOMAN: Someday maybe you learna there some a things you can notta get with money.

BOY: That day ever come, momma, I'm gonna be dead.

*(SHE dismisses HIM again with a wave of her hand.)*

WOMAN: Fandonie! Maybe someday I show you how to make a the best a flower arrangements in the city. Show you tricks of da trade. Learn a you honest business, so you stoppa bein' a yuvenile delinquent.

BOY: Juven-ile offender. How many times do I have to tell you? An' if you think I'm wanna work in a dump like this the rest of my life, you crazier than I thought you was. In nine months I'm outta here.

WOMAN: Then you become Mista Bigga Stuff again, yes?

BOY: Right-on, momma.

*(SHE hands HIM a broom.)*

WOMAN: While a you wait to become Mista Bigga Stuffa again, this willa help a you passa the time. Now I fix a the lunch.

BOY: You goin' home?

WOMAN: *(going to door SR)* My home back a here.

BOY: Your whole fam'ly live back there?

WOMAN: No family. Only me. My husband he die two year ago. We had no a children. What about your a family?

BOY: Fam'ly? Just my mom 'n' me.

WOMAN: Ah, your father he a die. How a sad.

BOY: No, he didn't die; he ran away years ago.

WOMAN: Even a sadder. At least you have a your mother.

BOY: Hardly see her. She work two jobs.

WOMAN: No father, no mother. No a wonder so many young people wanta be bigga stuff. You watcha the store while I makea the lunch.

*(SHE exits. The BOY takes off his jacket. HE puts on a pair of earphones, then begins sweeping the floor, rapping to HIMSELF as HE goes. The outside door opens quietly behind HIM. Another BOY, also Afro-American, 17, and wearing the same gang jacket as BOY 1, enters. HE sneaks up quietly behind BOY 1 and pokes an object in his back.)*

BOY 2: *(in a deep voice)* DON'T SAY A WORD! DO LIKE I TELL YA AND YA WON'T GET HURT. TAKE THEM PHONES OFF!

*(BOY 1 does so.)*

NOW PUT YOUR HANDS UP!

*(BOY 1 drops the broom and puts his hands up.)*

CLOSE YOUR EYES AND TURN AROUND!

*(BOY 1 turns around slowly.)*

NOW OPEN YOUR EYES!

*(BOY 1 opens his eyes slowly.)*

BOY 2: *(suddenly friendly)* What's happenin', bro?

BOY 1: *(not believing his eyes)* It's you! What you wanna go

scarin' me like that for?

BOY 2: Had you goin' there for a minute, didn't I?

BOY 1: Hey, I thought you was still at the Center.

BOY 2: They let me go.

BOY 1: Say again.

BOY 2: They let me go. Center's overcrowded, so they had to let some of us less violent mothers go.

BOY 1: You mean you gets to go and I gets probation?

BOY 2: Yeah. Ain't justice boss? The Broz said I'd find you here. Said you was in some kinda do-good program.

BOY 1: Yeah, they call it Green Thumbs.

BOY 2: *(raising his fist)* Person'lly, I prefer black fist. What kinda program is it?

BOY 1: It's bullshit, man. I gotta get tutorin' in the mornin' with this priest, see, then I work in the aftanoon for an ol' momma who own this joint.

BOY 2: Fadder in the mornin', momma in the aftanoon. Sounds cozy - - like home.

BOY 1: Yeah, ol' I-talian momma. *(pointing to apartment)* She live alone back there.

BOY 2: That's even better. Maybe me an' you can work out a deal.

BOY 1: What kinda deal?

BOY 2: I don't know yet, but she prob'bly too ol' to catch on. I figger somethin' out. Whadaya say, bro?