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Dramatic Publishing

A Play in One Act

by

ANNE COULTER MARTENS

You, the Jury



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(YOU, THE JURY)

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YOU, THE JURY

A Play in One Act

For Seven Men, Eight Women, and Extras*

CHARACTERS

BILL.....*a college student*
MRS. HUGHES.....*his mother*
BECKY.....*a friend*
MISS TOWNLEY.....*a TV personality*
EMMA BAIRD.....*her maid*
WYLIE.....*a state policeman*
LYNCH.....*a car salesman*
MRS. MATTHEWS.....*a neighbor*
HANSEN.....*a store manager*
JUDGE VANCE
SLATER.....*Prosecutor*
DREXEL.....*defense lawyer*
NARRATOR
COURT CLERK
COURT ATTENDANT
STENOTYPE GIRL (no lines)
PHOTOGRAPHERS (optional)
COURT OFFICER (if needed)

PLACE: *A courtroom.*

TIME: *Before the end of a college semester.*

*The roles of the Narrator, Court Clerk, and Court Attendant may be played by either male or female actors.

PRODUCTION NOTE

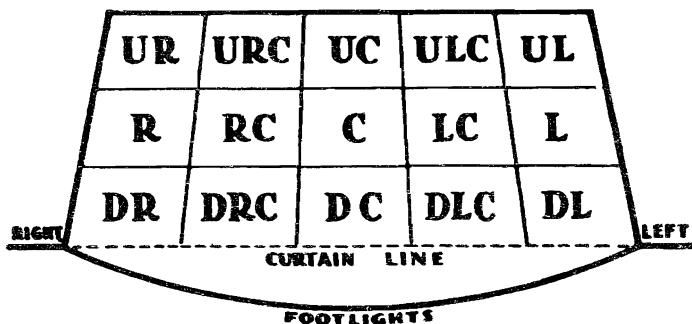
Although this play is the usual length for a one-act, choosing a jury and swearing in witnesses will make it run longer. An optional choice is to make it a two-act play by breaking at the point where the prosecution rests and having the Judge declare a recess. The second act may then begin with the same preliminaries (all rise, etc.) and then proceed with the defense.

TEMPO

Nothing adds more to the polish of a production than the quick picking up of cues. Unless there is a definite reason for a pause, train your actors to come in with their speeches "on the heels," so to speak, of the preceding speeches. When a production lags, audience interest likewise will lag.

It is always advisable during the last week of rehearsals to hold one or more sessions during which the actors merely sit around in a circle and go through lines only, with the express purpose of snapping up cues.

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: UR for *up right*, RC for *right center*, DLC for *down left center*, etc. A territory designated on the stage refers to a general area, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

PROPERTIES

GENERAL: Judge's bench (chair, table, gavel); chairs for jury; two long tables, with chairs for witnesses and attorneys; table, chair, and stenotype machine for court stenographer; box containing numbered slips; witness chair; American flag; small red cabinet and package containing a pair of work pants near Prosecutor's table; small red table near defense table. Envelopes containing numbers and slips of paper, to be handed out to prospective jurors (see page 7).

SLATER: Brief case containing papers and documents.

DREXEL: Brief case.

CLERK: Tags for labeling exhibits.

JURORS: Pens or pencils.

You, the Jury

BEFORE RISE OF CURTAIN: House lights dim, then come on. The NARRATOR addresses the audience.

NARRATOR

Please consider yourselves seated in a courtroom where a jury trial is soon to begin. To expedite this program we have condensed some of the proceedings. As you entered, twenty-five of you were handed a white envelope.

(Or fifty, or any desired number)

You people are our panel of prospective jurors, duly summoned according to law. Twelve of you will be chosen to serve on the jury and asked to reach a verdict on the guilt or innocence of the accused. Will those who hold white envelopes please come forward now and take seats reserved for you in the front rows?

(As the audience entered, two people have passed out the desired number of envelopes, in each of which is a slip of paper with a number. This should be done in a pre-arranged manner, as: one to every fifth person who enters. No one should be pre-selected. These people come forward and take front seats)

NARRATOR

Thank you. Please open your envelopes and you will find a slip of paper with a number. The court attend-

ant will draw numbers from a box. If your number is called, you are to take a seat in the jury box, where you will be questioned briefly. If for any reason you do not wish to serve on the jury, state your reason to the judge, who will rule upon it. But please remember that jury duty is one of the privileges of a free country, and the Bill of Rights guarantees the right to a jury trial. For the purpose of this program we will assume that you are all over twenty-one years of age.

(Moves to far L)

SCENE: A courtroom. There are a raised dais for the judge, seats for the jury at L, two long tables for witnesses, a table and chair for the Stenotype Girl, a box containing numbered slips on a table, and a witness chair. An American flag is displayed.

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: The STENOTYPE GIRL is seated at a small table, her back to the audience, with her "machine" in front of her. The ATTENDANT stands R beside a box with a slit large enough to admit her hand. The CLERK comes in R.

CLERK

His honor, Judge Vance. Will all present please rise.
(All in the auditorium rise)

(JUDGE VANCE, wearing a black robe, comes in R and goes to his chair on the raised dais)

CLERK

Be seated.

(Everyone sits down)

ATTENDANT

(Drawing a number from box)

Number 17.

(Or whatever number is drawn. The prospective juror who has this number goes on stage, directed to a seat in the jury box by the CLERK)

(SLATER, the Prosecutor, and DREXEL, the defense lawyer, come in L with brief cases and go to seats at separate long tables. They may take turns at questioning the prospective jurors, asking more questions if they wish)

SLATER

State your name and occupation, please.

(Number 17 does so)

Are you personally acquainted with the defendant in this case, William Hughes?

(Number 17 answers truthfully)

Have you formed any opinion as to his guilt or innocence?

(If the answer is "no," and Number 17 is acceptable to both sides:)

This juror is accepted.

(If it is "yes," he is excused. This procedure is repeated until twelve jurors are seated. If any asks to be excused, he states his reason and the JUDGE rules on it)

JUDGE

Any challenges?

(If either Prosecutor or defense lawyer is dissatisfied with any juror, he may say, "I ask that _____ (name of juror) be excused." A few such challenges may

be allowed. If so, additional numbers are drawn from the box until the jury numbers its quota of twelve)

Is this jury acceptable to both the prosecution and the defense?

SLATER

It is, your Honor.

DREXEL

Yes, your Honor.

NARRATOR

(To audience)

Perhaps the judge would call a recess here. Let us assume he has done so and it is now over.

(Witnesses for the prosecution come in R and sit at the Prosecutor's table. They are: MISS TOWNLEY, a charming and warm-hearted TV personality; EMMA, her rather colorless maid; WYLIE, a state policeman in uniform; and LYNCH, an indifferent man of any age. Optional: As MISS TOWNLEY enters, photographers in the audience may move to the aisles and take flash pictures. She gives them a charming smile. At the same time the defense witnesses come in L. They are: BILL, a nice-looking fellow of about twenty; MRS. HUGHES, earnest, plainly dressed; BECKY, a pretty girl of about nineteen; MRS. MATTHEWS, a good-natured woman of any age; and HANSEN, the sturdy type. They sit at the defense table L)

JUDGE

(Optional)

No pictures while court is in session. Any violation of this order will result in eviction from the courtroom.

(The photographers, if any, take their seats)

This court is now in session. Will the defendant, William Hughes, please come to the bench.

(BILL, with DREXEL, goes to stand before the JUDGE)

William Hughes, you are accused of larceny. How do you plead?

BILL

Not guilty.

JUDGE

Be seated. Mr. Slater?

(SLATER rises)

You are the State Prosecutor?

SLATER

I am.

JUDGE

Proceed.

SLATER

Your Honor, and members of the jury. The State charges that William Hughes, on the _____ (date, a Friday) of _____ (month), did willfully steal from Miss Clarissa Townley an envelope containing the sum of three hundred dollars. We will present evidence that he had both opportunity and motive for the theft. We will show that he had plans for the use of the money. And because a cabinet beside Miss Townley's desk had recently been painted, we will present tangible evidence that he was in close proximity to

that cabinet at the time of the theft.
(He sits at his table again)

JUDGE

Mr. Drexel.
(DREXEL rises)
You are counsel for the defense?

DREXEL

Yes, your Honor.

JUDGE

Proceed.

DREXEL

Your Honor, and members of the jury. Young Bill Hughes, a college student with no blemish on his record, is innocent of this crime. When you consider all the evidence, I'm convinced you will find him not guilty.

(Sits down)

JUDGE

Prosecution, call your first witness.
(The STENOGRAPHY GIRL presumably takes down the testimony)

SLATER

(Rising)

Miss Townley.
(MISS TOWNLEY comes forward to be sworn by the CLERK)

CLERK

Raise your right hand. Do you solemnly swear that what you are about to relate is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

MISS TOWNLEY

I do.

(She sits in the witness chair)

SLATER

Your name and occupation, please?

MISS TOWNLEY

Clarissa Townley. I have a morning television show, the interview type of thing. Fascinating work, but it keeps me so busy that the only time I can relax is week ends.

(Smiles brightly, then gives a little shiver)

SLATER

Possibly you're a little nervous. This isn't quite the same as facing the TV cameras.

MISS TOWNLEY

Hardly. But nervous? No, because I'm doing what I consider right.

SLATER

You made the charge against the defendant, William Hughes?

MISS TOWNLEY

Yes, because he stole an envelope containing three hundred dollars from the desk in my study.

DREXEL

Objection! Conclusion of witness.

JUDGE

Sustained.

SLATER

How long have you known this young man?

MISS TOWNLEY

Six months. Maybe it's closer to a year.
(Looks toward her maid)

Do you remember, Emma?

EMMA

I'd say about a year.

SLATER

I must ask you not to consult with anyone on your testimony.

MISS TOWNLEY

He goes to the local college and has done odd jobs for me, garden work and such.

SLATER

Was that the case on the _____ (date) of _____ (month)?

MISS TOWNLEY

Yes. Bill had no classes that afternoon, so he was doing whatever you do to shrubs and things. Since it was sunny, and I had no program to prepare for Saturday, I sat out on the patio talking to him now and then.

SLATER

Go on.

MISS TOWNLEY

He told me he was doing a report on--something or other. What was it, Emma?

SLATER

Please!

MISS TOWNLEY

Oh, sorry. Anyway, I offered to loan him a good reference book from my study.

SLATER

Where is your study located in relation to the patio?

MISS TOWNLEY

Just a few steps down the hall. He went inside to get the book, and even at the time I thought it was taking him quite a while, although I had told him exactly where it was. Then he came out with the book, thanked me, and since I didn't need him any longer, went home.

SLATER

About what time was this?

MISS TOWNLEY

Two or three o'clock, maybe.

(Consulting EMMA)

Emma?

JUDGE

Miss Townley--please!

MISS TOWNLEY

Sorry!

SLATER

Now tell us about the money.

MISS TOWNLEY

I was just terribly upset. The envelope was gone from my desk!