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## **Family Plays**

# THE JEWEL IN PAPA'S CROWN

Comedy/Drama by  
E.P. Conkle

# THE JEWEL IN PAPA'S CROWN

Similar to nearly all his plays, *The Jewel in Papa's Crown* is in the E.P. Conkle tradition of folk drama. With the same insight that has made his *No Time for Heaven* an important and poignant work, Conkle develops the theme of love versus greed in this gem of a short play.

**Comedy/Drama. By E.P. Conkle. Cast:** 6w., 1 either gender. The five daughters of Wardour Grassmere, deceased, have gathered to hear the lawyer read their father's will. Full of greedy anticipation, each is afraid that the others will receive more than their share of his estate. Over in a corner sits a young girl, perhaps 12 to 15 years old. The sisters stare at her, wondering why she's here. The first bequest is \$500 cash for the girl. Well, that's a paltry sum, the sisters agree—but why would he leave it to her? ... Who is she anyway? As the rest of the will is read, it seems that each daughter has shared equally in their father's considerable wealth. Each expresses her love and joy as fabulous legacies are announced. But then—an unexpected development! Mutual hatred flares when they realize their father died penniless—except for the \$500. The girl, daughter of his long-time housekeeper, is helped from the room by the lawyer who calls her “the jewel in Papa's crown.” *Set: meeting room. Time: the present. Perfect for all-women casts. One or more parts may be played by men. Approximate running time: 35 minutes. Code: J60.*

## Family Plays

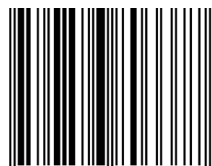
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The Jewel in Papa's Crown

# **THE JEWEL IN PAPA'S CROWN**

**A Play in One Act**

**By**

**E. P. CONKLE**

**Family Plays**

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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“Produced by special arrangement with  
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*Dedication*

**To Virginia**

# **THE JEWEL IN PAPA'S CROWN**

## *Cast*

*For 7 women (some roles may be played by men)*

**Lawyer**

**Woman A**

**Woman B**

**Woman C**

**Woman D**

**Woman E**

**Girl**

**Δ**

**Place: A living room**

**Time: Today or yesterday**



## ABOUT THE PLAY

E. P. Conkle wrote "The Jewel in Papa's Crown" and several other all-women scripts for his wife, Virginia, when she was directing plays for a women's club, hence the all-female cast.

"He said he dedicated them to me, but he never told me," she commented as this book was being prepared for publication. The manuscripts were stuck in a trunk—literally lost to the world until we urged the venerable playwright to search through his archives for some unpublished works.

E. P. Conkle's name is a distinguished one in the literature of American theatre. Many anthologies include at least one of his plays. He was born in Nebraska, the heart of the nation, and his works portray the heartbeat of America. After receiving a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska, he did graduate work at Yale University and spent a year in Europe as a Guggenheim fellow. He took his Ph. D. degree at the University of Iowa—"the first doctor's degree ever given in the U. S. for playwriting," according to Mrs. Conkle.

Dr. Conkle's *Prologue to Glory*, one of the best of the many plays about Abraham Lincoln, was included in Burns Mantle's volume of the 10 best Broadway plays of 1937-38. His first Broadway production was *200 Were Chosen*. His *No Time For Heaven* was published by I. E. Clark, ■■■, in 1972, and has had innumerable productions throughout the U. S. and Canada.

Like nearly all his plays, "The Jewel in Papa's Crown" is in the Conkle tradition of folk drama. The playwright knows America and Americans well, and he has a genius for digging the humor out of our hearts and the wretchedness out of our souls.

Although "The Jewel in Papa's Crown" was written for his wife's all-woman casts, the Lawyer can obviously be played by a man, and few if any dialogue changes would be needed to change two or three of the sisters into greedy, self-serving brothers.

Playing time is about 30 minutes.

**PRODUCTION NOTES***Properties*

Unopened envelope containing Papa's will and a \$500 bill—on table  
Letter opener—on table  
Eye glasses—Lawyer

*Costumes*

The **Sisters** are over-dressed, each trying to outdo the others; however, there is some indication that they are in mourning. The **Lawyer** wears a dark suit. In contrast to dark colors of the other costumes, the little **Girl** should wear something brightly colored—a little jewel.

*The Set*

"An old-fashioned living room, highly ornamented with doo-dads and mementoes" is the author's description of the set. Essential pieces are five chairs facing a table and chair. Behind the five chairs is another chair, for the little **Girl**. Other furniture may be added as desired.

## THE JEWEL IN PAPA'S CROWN

*[An old-fashioned living room of a house in B City. Highly ornamented with doo-dads and mementoes. A group of five chairs arranged in front of a table. On these chairs sit five middle-aged, over-dressed WOMEN in a fashion of mourning. On a sixth chair at the back sits a young GIRL, perhaps around 12 or 13, alone. Behind the table sits a WOMAN in a suit, and on the table before her is an envelope, unopened. She is adjusting her glasses preparatory to opening the envelope. The FIVE WOMEN sit straight and apart as if they do not like each other, although they are quite obviously sisters. They are waiting as patiently impatient as they can. The WOMAN AT THE DESK looks up after slitting the envelope open with a letter-opener. This woman is a lawyer. The contents of the envelope is a will]*

LAWYER. *[Clearing her voice]* A-hem. *[The SISTERS all clear their throats. The little GIRL sits quietly interested]* A-hem. *[Unfolding the document inside the envelope; studying it]* The handwriting . . . is a bit hard to . . . make out.

WOMAN A. Please git on with the reading. *[The other SISTERS nod, restless. They edge forward on their seats]*

OTHER SISTERS. Yes, pl-ease!

LAWYER. I shall get on as fast as I can make things out.

GIRL. I can make Mr. Grassmere's handwriting out very well, ma'am. *[The SISTERS all turn toward the girl. She goes on, explaining shyly]* I've been doing it all my life for Mr. Grassmere.

WOMAN B. *[As all the SISTERS turn back to the Lawyer]* Who is she?

WOMAN C. Nobody knows. She's been living here with Papa.

WOMAN D. Probably the housekeeper's child.

WOMAN E. Please get on with Mr. Grassmere's will!

LAWYER. *[Smiling]* I . . . will. *[The LAWYER readjusts her glasses, then adjusts her mouth, then reads out loud]* "The Last Will and Testament of Wardour Grassmere." *[Reading again to make sure]* Yes. "The Last Will and Testament of Wardour Grassmere."

WOMAN B. We know, we know. You read it once.

WOMAN C. He was our dear Papa.

WOMAN A. We are interested in what he left each of us.

LAWYER. I understand. Let me see . . . ah, yes . . . [*Following the will with her index finger*] "Being of advanced age, but of sound mind, as will be attested to by the signatories of this document . . ."  
[*The LAWYER starts to turn to the end to see who the witnesses were*]

WOMAN D. Please get on.

WOMAN E. Who cares who they were?

WOMAN C. I'm sure they were sound of mind!

LAWYER. [*After having examined the signatures of the witnesses*] Yes, yes. It was signed before a notary. Benjamin Smithers of B City here . . .

WOMAN A. For the Lord's sake, for the Lord's sake, for the Lord's sake . . .!

WOMAN C. Read the will, won't you?

LAWYER. Coming to it. Ah . . . yes. "Being of advanced age . . ."  
[*She stops, removes her glasses*] Just how old was Mr. Grassmere when he died?

WOMAN D. [*Practically shouting*] Of advanced age, obviously!

LAWYER. Obviously, probably. "Being of advanced age and of sound mind, as will be attested to by the signatories of this document, and placing my mortal, immortal, and unmortal bodily remains in the hands of my Maker and the earthworms . . ."

GIRL. Poor Mr. Grassmere! So sweet! [*The SISTERS all turn, viciously*]

WOMAN E. Hush!

WOMAN A. [*To Woman E*] Shut up, please!

LAWYER. I will go on when you ladies stop this going-on.

WOMAN B. We were not going-on.

WOMAN C. It was her!

WOMAN D. She!

WOMAN B. It was the girl.

LAWYER. I thought I heard the rest of you, too. Well . . . as I was reading . . . Mr. Grassmere to the worms and, I suppose, his soul to God.

WOMAN E. Amen.

WOMAN C. Now that that's over, let's see what he did about his worldly remainders.

WOMAN B. You mean his household goods, his earthly possessions . . .

WOMAN A. That's just what she meant.

WOMAN C. That's exactly what I meant.

WOMAN B. Being the leading banker of B City I suppose he left us a great deal!

WOMAN D. I suppose he left it evenly divided amongst us, his only living relatives.

WOMAN E. His loved ones, as it were.

WOMAN A. Though I may say none of us has seen Papa in ten years.

WOMAN E. Nine-and-a-half.

WOMAN C. Only eight.

WOMAN B. *[To the Lawyer]* Go on, go on. It makes no difference.

WOMAN D. We are the only ones he could leave his things to.

WOMAN E. His only loved ones. *[They ALL nod. Wait, silently. The LAWYER re-adjusts her glasses and bows her head and index finger to the will]*

LAWYER. "I do hereby bequeath to little Annie X the sum of \$500 . . ."

WOMAN A. Who is "Little Annie X"?

WOMAN B. No one ever heard of her.

GIRL. *[Standing up]* Here I am. I am little Annie X. *[The SISTERS all turn]*

WOMAN C. Well, who is she?

WOMAN E. Someone said she was the former housekeeper's child.

GIRL. I was. I also kept Mr. Grassmere's house for him when my mother died two years ago.

LAWYER. *[Reading]* ". . . I do hereby bequeath to little Annie X the sum of \$500, which is herewith enclosed." *[The LAWYER looks into the envelope and draws out a \$500 bill. The SISTERS all turn up their noses]*

WOMAN E. I doubt if she earned it.

WOMAN C. The little she probably did.

LAWYER. Well, Annie X, come up and get your bequest.

GIRL. *[Flustered, uncertain]* Should . . . I? I . . . don't . . . know!

WOMAN D. Go and get it so we can go on with the bulk of Papa's estate. *[The GIRL slips shyly up to the table]*

GIRL. But . . . what shall I . . . do with it? I've never had so much—

WOMAN B. Oh, pshaw!

GIRL. I've never even *seen* so much!

LAWYER. I'll help you with it.

WOMAN A. Take it, take it, and get back where you belong. And thank Papa for his generosity.

GIRL. [*Taking the bill*] Oh, I will, I will! Thank you!

LAWYER. Don't thank me.

GIRL. I wasn't. I was thanking dear Mr. Grassmere! [*The GIRL slips back to her seat and sits in wonderment, clutching the \$500 bill. The LAWYER starts to read on*]

LAWYER. "To my beloved first daughter I hereby bequeath my home and all its belongings."

WOMAN A. Oh, happy day! [*She stands, crying out*] To me! [*The OTHER SISTERS sit sullen and silent*] I am about to . . . bawl!

WOMAN B. By all means, don't! You may not want to when you hear what we . . . [*nodding to the OTHERS, who nod back*] . . . hear the other bequests.

LAWYER. "To my beloved second daughter I bequeath my yacht . . .

WOMAN B. His . . . yacht?

WOMAN C. I hadn't heard of the yacht for years.

WOMAN E. It was that \$100,000 one he used to roam the seas in with mama.

WOMAN A. I think my property is worth at least \$100,000. So, we are even, thank goodness . . . so far.

WOMAN B. But . . . where is the yacht?

LAWYER. It says here it is in the B City River marina.

WOMAN B. [*Elated, jumping up*] I saw it the other day! It was the huge one with the blue pennons! Riding there so serenely. I'll sell it, for it must be more than \$100,000 now! Glory be, I am better off than you!

WOMAN A. Not after deterioration, dear sister—all the barnacles on her bottom. Almost as many as on yours, probably.

WOMAN B. When I saw her she had not deteriorated and I'm sure I saw no barnacles on her bottom, nor on mine. Oh, glory be to dear old Papa!

LAWYER. If you will hush up I will go on.

WOMAN C. By all means do! I am his third daughter.

LAWYER. "To my third beloved daughter I bequeath my bank ac-

count, including all monies in my checking account, all existing bonds, mortgages, etc."

WOMAN C. That is enough for me! I know Papa was a very rich man and I'm sure there are at least \$100,000 funds in the bank at my personal disposal!

WOMAN E. Yes, I am sure of that. We are all doing very well.

LAWYER. "To my fourth beloved daughter I leave my wife's and my complete solid gold service including all flatware, forks, spoons, teapots, epergnes, plates, and all the rest of the solid gold 542 different pieces."

WOMAN D. [*Leaping up*] Just what I wanted! Gorgeous, gorgeous golden tableware on my linen Irish tablecloth! Oh, joy, oh, joyous joy! [*Then she thinks of something*] But where is it?

WOMAN E. I'm sure it must be here in the house somewhere!

WOMAN B. Probably packed away in the attic.

WOMAN D. Papa would never have used it with . . . [*motions her head toward the girl*] . . . her and her mother around.

LAWYER. "And now, for my fifth beloved daughter, I bequeath my museum of old cars, all 75 of them as they stand in the garage."

WOMAN E. Old cars? [*Indignant*] What can I do with old cars?

WOMAN A. "What can you do with old cars?" You can sell them. You can show them. You can run them up and down the city with everyone looking at you, that's what you can do with them!

WOMAN E. I . . . can? Will . . . they run?

WOMAN B. Papa always kept them in fine shape.

WOMAN E. I'd like that . . . running them around for people to look at me in! I don't really need to sell them although I do suppose they're valuable.

WOMAN A. At least \$100,000 . . . maybe.

WOMAN D. Perhaps a wee bit more, even. [*The SISTERS all turn to look at each other. They ALL give out a happy, relieved sigh*]

SISTERS. [*Ad lib*] Papa did very well by all of us, indeed! [*They start to get ready to leave*]

WOMAN A. Maybe we should see more of each other somewhere sometime.

WOMAN B. It's been seven years since I've seen one of you.

WOMAN C. Of course we all live across town from each other and we're all busy about lots of things.