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# **Teen Court**

**(Somewhere Between Justice and Third Period)**

By

**WILLIAM GLEASON**

**Dramatic Publishing Company**

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# Teen Court

## (Somewhere Between Justice and Third Period)

### CHARACTERS

TAWNY LINKLETTER: the defendant, a prominent senior.

ARCHER ATTAWAY: Tawny's appointed attorney, a fameless senior.

ODESSA PERMIAN: the prosecutor, an ambitious litigator and student.

TEDDY PHELPS: assistant prosecutor, a sophomore.

NORVELLA WATSON: the judge and a member of the school faculty.

HARLEY HOOPER: the football coach and witness for the prosecution.

EVELYN HINGLEMEYER: the elderly music teacher and witness for the prosecution.

BOBBY FINCH: a student, president of the Future Television Detectives of America Club and witness for the prosecution.

### SETTING

A classroom that is set up like a small courtroom:

Judge's bench is UC, elevated and faces the audience

Witness chair (also elevated) is R of the judge

DL is the table and chairs for defense counsel

DR is the table for the prosecutor and assistant prosecutor

The counsel tables should face each other and be angled toward the audience.

## Teen Court

(Somewhere Between Justice and Third Period)

*(Lights to black. Intense, dramatic music rises. Lights up to reveal ODESSA PERMIAN and TEDDY PHELPS seated at the prosecutors' table, which should be angled toward the audience. They both wear dark suits and ties. Their table is covered with thick, legal-looking books and notepads. ARCHER ATTAWAY is on top of the defense counsel table, fast asleep on his back. His head is resting on a backpack. He wears a mixed bag of clothing, including a sports coat that is way too old and way too large for him. While the music continues, ODESSA and TEDDY both scribble furiously on their notepads. Every few seconds, they pause and look at each other. On cue, they begin to write furiously again, then pause again to look at each other, which continues a few times as the music fades out.)*

ARCHER *(begins to toss and turn, moaning in his sleep and reaching out in fear)*. No! No!

ODESSA *(to TEDDY)*. Is Coach Hooper here yet?

TEDDY. All witnesses present except for Mrs. Hinglemeyer.

ODESSA. Where is Mrs. Hinglemeyer?

TEDDY. She said she would be here after choir practice. Shouldn't be long.

ARCHER *(flailing)*. It's getting dark in here, Mommy. Mr. Bojangles is in my closet!

ODESSA. This is ridiculous.

*(ODESSA rises and crosses to ARCHER. She shakes him violently.)*

ARCHER *(sits up quickly with a stifled scream)*. What? What?

ODESSA. You were dreaming and moaning like a wounded hog. Teddy and I have work to do.

ARCHER *(still sitting, rubs his face, yawns and stretches. He watches as ODESSA crosses back to sit at her table)*.

Actually, it was a nightmare. I was dreaming about that class field trip we took to the state fair in sixth grade.

ODESSA. Shut up, Archer.

ARCHER. Remember, Odessa?

TEDDY. Remember what?

ODESSA. Nothing. It's none of your business, Teddy.

ARCHER. It's part of the public record and Teddy has a right to know. *(He slides off the table onto his feet and approaches TEDDY.)* Odessa and I were madly in love.

ODESSA. Lie number one.

ARCHER. She called me "sweet cheeks" back in those days, and I called her "twinkles."

TEDDY *(looking at ODESSA)*. I had a dog named Twinkles.

ODESSA. Archer is lying, Teddy.

ARCHER. Anyway, she begged me to go on that spinning ride, the scary one ... *(To ODESSA.)* What was it called, honey?

ODESSA. It was called "The Octopus." And don't call me "honey."

ARCHER *(spinning)*. We just went 'round and 'round and 'round and 'round again. We were holding on tight and laughing like two happy hyenas. And then, tragedy struck.

TEDDY. Tragedy?

ODESSA *(rises angrily)*. You're pathetic, Archer. *(To TEDDY.)* I got sick on his tennis shoes. Motion sickness. *(To ARCHER.)*

What? Six years ago, Archer? And he still can't let it go. Still can't be a gentleman. (*To TEDDY.*) And you know what, Teddy? You know why he brings it up at least once a year? Because it the most exciting thing that ever happened to him in his otherwise miserable and empty life.

ARCHER. My life is not miserable and empty. It's just boring and senseless.

TEDDY. Don't you see what he's trying to do, Odessa?

ODESSA. What are you talking about?

TEDDY. He's trying to get under your skin before the trial. He's trying to derail your legal instincts by annoying you.

ARCHER. How dare you! Slander me at your peril, Teddy Phelps.

ODESSA (*pulling herself together*). Well now, Teddy. I used to think that you were incapable of psychological analysis, but you have nailed his motive exactly. To upset and distract me. And he almost had me falling into his trap. Sorry, Archer. I am a highly trained legal advocate, a seasoned prosecutor with her eyes on the prize and nothing you can do or say will take my eyes off that prize. Get ready for the fight of your life.

ARCHER. I apologize. (*Opens his arms.*) Hold me.

ODESSA. Oh, I do Archer. I hold you in contempt. (*She rises and confronts him.*) I told the faculty legal committee that they were making a very big mistake. I told them that Tawny Linkletter needed an attorney with brains, skill and true grit because that attorney would be up against the most in your face, undefeated, two-time state finalist Teen Court prosecutor in the history of this school.

ARCHER. And that would be?

ODESSA. That would be me. But no! They stuck their hands in the proverbial hat and pulled out your name. The biggest Teen Court trial of the decade, and who does Tawny have to



rely on to defend her very life? Sad but true. (*Gestures.*) In this corner, representing the most unlucky defendant in the history of Teen Court. Archer Attaway.

ARCHER. Since when did you even care one teenie-weenie, itsy-bitsy bit about Tawny Linkletter?

ODESSA. It's not Tawny Linkletter I care about, Archer. I care about justice.

ARCHER. Me too. Justice is cool.

ODESSA. Archer, listen to me. Pull out the eleven pounds of bubble gum you've had in your ears since third grade and listen. Tawny Linkletter has been "Miss Everything" in this town since first grade. She owns it. All of it. Her daddy has more money than most third world countries, and her mother is a member of every civic club in the city. I will be fighting with everything I've got to take her down and take her down hard. That's the way I roll. I was hoping she would get a decent attorney because I will be measured by the skill of my competitor. If you get out here and make a fool of yourself and make a mockery of the verdict then my efforts will have been for naught.

ARCHER. So, you want to win this case but you don't want me as her attorney because you think that if I'm her attorney ... you'll win. Makes sense.

ODESSA. People are going to be interested in this trial. Important people. And I want to shine, Archer. I want to blaze my way into the annals of high-school jurisprudence. But I can't rise to the level of performance I want so desperately to achieve if my opposing counsel is nothing more than an incompetent dweeb, a slipshod, stumbling law dork. I won't get all the glory I deserve because you will get all the blame. And you will wind up at the end of this trial as you have wound up at the end of every endeavor you have undertaken in your pitiful, inauspicious life ... you will once again be ... the loser.

ARCHER. Ouch!

ODESSA (*pats him on the shoulder*). Nothing personal.

(*ODESSA crosses back to her desk. TEDDY pulls out her chair, and she takes a seat.*)

*TAWNY LINKLETTER enters and crosses to ARCHER's table.*)

ARCHER. I was beginning to get worried.

TAWNY. What do you have to worry about? You're not the one on trial. You're not the one with your reputation on the line. You're not the one who's going to have to face the consequences if convicted. Are you sure you're ready for this trial?

TEDDY (*laughs*). Ready. That's a good one.

(*NORVELLA enters wearing a judicial robe.*)

NORVELLA. All rise. (*They do.*) Teen Court is now in session, the honorable Norvella Watson presiding. That's me. (*Proceeds to the bench with paperwork and is seated.*) Please be seated. (*They do.*) I see everybody is present. Ms. Permian, any remarks before we get started?

ODESSA (*stands*). I just want to say I consider it a great honor to be able to try this case in front of a jurist of your caliber, Judge Watson.

NORVELLA. Your attempt to suck up to the court is duly noted, Ms. Permian. Please be seated. (*Looks to ARCHER.*) Anything you wish to add before we get started, Mr. Attaway?

ARCHER (*rises*). Your honor, these charges represent a justice system run amok, a world gone mad, a prosecutorial vendetta that should shock the conscience of the civilized world.

NORVELLA. Your outrage is duly noted. Now, sit down. (*ARCHER sits.*) This case is set for a trial on the merits. I'm calling case number F2292, \_\_\_\_\_ High School versus Tawny Linkletter. What says the prosecutor?

ODESSA (*rises*). We are ready, your honor. (*Sits.*)

NORVELLA. What says the defendant?

ARCHER (*rises with TAWNY*). We are totally, absolutely and completely ready, your honor.

NORVELLA. Tawny Linkletter, you are charged with the school infraction of plagiarism of the second degree, which is alleged to have occurred on or about the 15th day of March, 2018. (*Or preferred date.*) To that charge, how do you plead?

TAWNY. I plead guilty, your highness.

ARCHER. Guilty? You're supposed to plead NOT GUILTY.

ODESSA. You can't plead guilty. What about my trial?

TEDDY. Me too. One more conviction and I letter.

ARCHER. My client enters a plea of NOT guilty, your lordship.

NORVELLA. I'm getting mixed signals here.

TAWNY. A lot of people in this school think I did it. And more than that hope I did it. With Archer as my attorney, Odessa is probably going to prove I did it, so why put everybody, especially me, through all this drama? Guilty. Punish me as you please, Judge Watson.

ARCHER (*to judge*). Your eminence? May I have a moment with my client?

NORVELLA. Please be brief, Mr. Attaway. I would like to finish this trial before I retire.

*(ARCHER escorts TAWNY DR. They stop, and he looks over his shoulder as if to make sure ODESSA isn't listening in.)*

ARCHER. Tawny, how long have we been friends?

TAWNY. We've never been friends. We've known each other since elementary school, but we've never been friends. We've never been close. We have never confided in each other or danced. We've never laughed at the same joke or shared a bag of chips. We have never ...

ARCHER. OK, OK, I get it. You've gone one way, and I've gone another. You chose the path to the honor roll, fame and popularity while I chose the path to ... the path to ...

TAWNY. Obscurity. Invisibility. I don't know you any better now than I did in second grade, Archer. You lack presence. There just isn't any "there" there. You refuse to invest in a commitment to anything or anyone because it would require an emotional effort which you are unwilling or incapable of providing.

ARCHER. What? Would you say that again?

TAWNY. Nope.

ARCHER. Well, at least I'm funny. Just ask my friends.

TAWNY. What friends? Name one.

ARCHER (*looks like he's trying to think of one; starts counting on his fingers with his thumb; finally gives up and shrugs*). Well then, just ask my acquaintances or casual classmates. I am one funny dude.

TAWNY. Just because people laugh at you doesn't necessarily mean you're funny. And just because you might be able to put "class clown" on your résumé some day doesn't give me any comfort or confidence in your ability to help me through this mess. I'm willing to concede the obvious, Archer. And, it's obvious that I will be found guilty.

ARCHER. I won't let you do it. I've put a lot of work into this case. I have investigated. I have actually spoken to actual people, for gosh sakes. I have conversed with persons!

TAWNY. I can't tell you how secure that makes me feel. My attorney has conversed with persons.

ARCHER. Witnesses. Coach Hooper, Mrs. Hinglemeyer. Bobby Finch.

TAWNY. Well, Archer. You haven't spoken to me about the case. It's \_\_\_\_\_ High School versus Tawny Linkletter. The case is all about me, and I'm apparently the only PERSON you haven't had the time or inclination to CONVERSE with. Strange but true.

NORVELLA. My patience has limits, Archer.

ARCHER. Your madam honor, my client seems to be inclined to make a bad decision based on school whispers, idle gossip, trivial innuendo and the unsubstantiated presumptions of those not worthy of presumptiveness. *(To TAWNY.)* Did I say that right? *(She shrugs.)*

TEDDY. What does that mean? *(To ODESSA.)* That sounded important.

ARCHER. I, on the other hand, am urging her to do the right thing. It is the prosecution that bears the burden of proof in this matter. It is the prosecution that is required to prove her guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. And the only presumption anyone should be concerned about in this legal proceeding is the presumption that everyone seems to have discarded like a four day old slice of green pizza. The presumption of innocence!

*(ARCHER glances to TAWNY, who nods as if to say "not bad.")*

ODESSA *(rises)*. Objection! It's a presumption, not a fact. Our evidence will whittle that presumption down until there's nothing left to presume about her innocence but a lack thereof.

ARCHER. Then, Miss Prosecutor, it is time to unleash the dogs of war, because the plea of the defendant in this case is (*Looks at TAWNY, who nods.*) not guilty!

*(All are seated.)*

NORVELLA. We'll dispense with opening arguments since you both seem to have given them already. Prosecution, call your first witness.

ODESSA. Our first witness is the legendary Coach Harley Hooper. (*Calls.*) Coach!

TAWNY. You almost came close to nearly impressing me, Archer.

ARCHER. One quick question, Tawny. Your parents are incredibly influential in this town. Why didn't your father intervene with the school board and threaten to take his football stadium back?

TAWNY. I suggested that, but Mom and Dad said I was guilty and needed to work out a plea deal and take my medicine. They said it would help build my character.

ARCHER. That makes me feel a whole lot better.

*(COACH enters wearing coach clothes and is pointed to the witness chair by NORVELLA.)*

COACH. Looks like I'm in the right place.

NORVELLA. Be seated. You will tell the truth in this proceeding as directed in the Teen Court manual. (*He nods.*)

ODESSA. State your name and occupation, please.

COACH. I'm Harley Hooper, physical education teacher, head football coach and instructor of remedial wood skills class.

ODESSA. Do you know the defendant in this case, Tawny Linkletter?

COACH. I do.

ODESSA. Were you on the committee to select a new fight song for our school?

ARCHER (*leaps to his feet*). Objection, leading question.

NORVELLA. Overruled.

ARCHER. Objection. Assumes facts not in evidence.

NORVELLA. Overruled.

ARCHER. Objection. Calls for speculation.

NORVELLA. Overruled.

ARCHER. Objection. She's badgering the witness, your honoree.

ODESSA. He's my witness, Archer. Why would I badger him?

NORVELLA. Mr. Attaway, I'm about to badger you out of this courtroom if you don't sit down right now. (*He sits.*)

TAWNY. You're off to a great start, counselor.

ARCHER. There's a method to my madness, I think.

ODESSA. Now, where were we? Who was on that committee with you?

COACH. It was me, Mrs. Hinglemeyer and a student representative. We were supposed to review the songs and come up with the top three. Then the student body would vote on the winner out of the top three entries.

ODESSA. And why was the decision made for the school to have a new fight song?

COACH. Nobody liked the other song ... "We're the bulldogs not French poodles. We will chew you up like noodles." Nobody would sing it, and the other schools laughed at us.

ODESSA. How many songs were entered in the contest?

COACH. Fifteen or twenty.

ODESSA. And was one of those songs submitted by Tawny Linkletter?