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Dramatic Publishing



A Play In One Act

a gazebo for my lady

O'Henry's story
adapted by
BILL MAJESKI



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



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BILL MAJESKI

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(A GAZEBO FOR MY LADY)

A GAZEBO FOR MY LADY

(adapted from the O. Henry short story
Lost on Dress Parade)

by

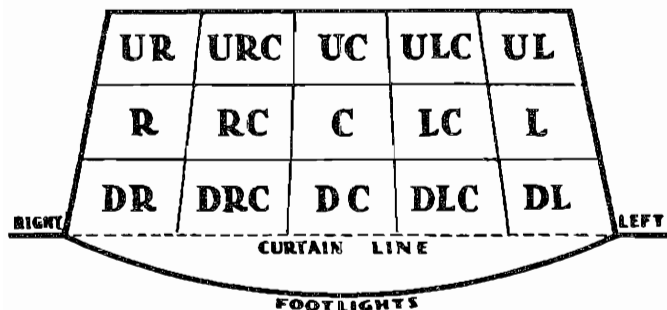
BILL MAJESKI

CHARACTERS

CHANDLER TOWERS	personable architect in early 20's
STANDISH FREEBNER	his boss, a forceful, crusty, cranky man, maybe 50 or so
MARIAN COLBY	pretty girl in her early 20's
AUNT EDNA COLBY	Marian's aunt. Attractive, wise, mature. Maybe 42
WAITER	an energetic young man

TIME: The Turn of the Century

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.

SCENE ONE

AT RISE: Only a rather narrow strip in C stage is lighted. Stage L and R are dark. We see CHANDLER TOWERS seated at his desk, a container of coffee at hand. CHANDLER is seated under an identifying sign which reads: *STANDISH FREEBNER, ARCHITECT*. Chandler is working and taking an occasional sip of his coffee as SANFORD FREEBNER enters.

FREEBNER. How long have you been here, Towers?

CHANDLER. Long enough to ruin three drawings of Mrs. Gladstone's foyer, sir.

FREEBNER. Good. I like punctuality. But remember to use both sides of the paper. You know what I always say.

CHANDLER. Yessir. A stitch in time saves nine.

FREEBNER. Right! No. I never said that in my life. It's a penny saved is a penny earned. (He strides out.)

CHANDLER (unaware FREEBNER has gone). Speaking of pennies, sir . . . (Now notices his boss has left. He turns and speaks to audience.) I could use some pennies. Can't do much on \$14.50 a week. I may ask for a raise. Will he fire me? Jobs are hard to get. He's no fun to work for. No sense of the future. Everything he does comes out like the House of the Seven Gables.

(CHANDLER shrugs, takes a sip of his coffee. FREEBNER comes back into the office suddenly, behind CHANDLER's back. Suddenly, CHANDLER, thinking he is still alone,

stands and flings his pencil down on the desk.)

CHANDLER. I don't care what anybody says. I think the Flatiron Building is an abomination.

FREEBNER (shocked, strides over angrily). You what!? That's heresy! It has strength, solidity, structure . . .

CHANDLER. But there's no grace, no scope, no sweep . . .

FREEBNER. That reminds me, there's been no sweeping here for two nights. You have broom duty this week. Clean up. And as far as your opinions on architecture, who needs 'em? I've done all right and so have you. You can make big money here. Free enterprise. The ambitious individual can go right to the top.

CHANDLER. That reminds me. May I have a raise?

FREEBNER (shocked). A raise!? What are you, a radical or something?

CHANDLER. Sir, if only I could enhance my pecuniary attainment with a slight increment in remuneration. After all, I'm a young man. I like the bright lights. Women! Song!

FREEBNER. So sing. That's cheap enough. More money? You're not married. You know, you *ought* to get married. Settle down. Keeps you from doing foolish things -- like asking for a raise and risking your job. Marriage is responsible for my success. I married and worked night and day at my job. And do you know why?

CHANDLER. You wife?

FREEBNER. Right. Couldn't stand that old bat. Worked all day and night just to keep away from her. One day, poor thing . . . she was killed by a runaway beer truck. A Thursday afternoon . . . but the thing I *really* remember was that out of respect I closed the office and sent

everyone home after I had paid them all for a full week. Yes . . . everything happens to me. It's always the good who suffer. Get married, Towers, and I'll consider a raise.

CHANDLER. Ever think of marrying again, sir?

FREEBNER. Bite your tongue, Towers. (He moves near CHANDLER's desk, gazes at Chandler's work and absently reaches for the container. He takes a sip. It has an immediate effect on him. He chokes, sputters, lets out a strangled squawk before being able to talk.) What *is* that stuff?

CHANDLER. Coffee, sir.

FREEBNER. Coffee! Coffee!?!? You know I don't allow coffee here. And you know what it does to me. Drives me crazy. You know what coffee is? The brew of the witches. The devil's drink. It brings hallucinations, frenzies and the galloping shrieks. No coffee in here. No coffee. No coffee! Is that clear?

CHANDLER. No coffee, sir.

FREEBNER (calming down). That's it, Towers. Coffee turns the meek into madmen. It causes temporary insanity. Tea's the drink. Only tea. You got that, Towers?

CHANDLER. Tea's the drink, sir.

FREEBNER (back to normal, studying CHANDLER's work). Right. Hmmm . . . you've done all right with Mrs. Gladstone's foyer. But I don't like what you're trying in her bedroom. Too much modern trash. And in the living room, I want style. Lots of 18th Century items with shells, scrolls, falling leaves, you know.

CHANDLER. But, sir, that's just not my cup of rococo.

FREEBNER (puzzled for a second, figuring it out). Hmmmm? Cup of rococo . . . Oh, I see. A little joke . . . a play on words. Cup of rococo. Might go well in a smart supper club, Towers, but it dies here. Forget the jokes and stick to work. And don't worry about getting rich overnight. We'll talk about a raise when you get married.

CHANDLER (feeling now is the time to speak up). Sir, I must stand up for my principles. I'm a growing boy. I need a raise and I just cannot do Mrs. Gladstone's living room in such a flashy, florid, tasteless manner.

FREEBNER (thinking that one over). Towers, I admire a man of principle; a man with a sense of honor who stands up for what he believes. We're going to miss you around here. See Jenkins in Payroll. I'm giving you two hours' dismissal notice . . . with pay.

CHANDLER. But, sir . . .

FREEBNER. Two full hours. With pay! Call me softly if you will, but that's my nature. Now clear out . . . and Towers . . . a bit of advice . . . no coffee.

(**FREEBNER** gathers up drawings off desk and leaves, muttering. **CHANDLER** starts to protest then decides against it. He slips into his jacket. He takes out his wallet and quietly counts its contents.)

CHANDLER. Who needs him? I'll go out and have some fun and then get a real job. One that pays twenty dollars a week!

(Center Stage goes black as lights come up on Stage Right. As we can see from a street sight, Stage Right is "Main Street.")

(MARIAN, carrying a picket sign, walks back and forth. She is leading a band of imaginary followers whose occasional sounds of "Unfair to Workers" can be heard from off-stage. CHANDLER, moving onto Main Street, passes MARIAN. He eyes her and slows. Then he notices the sign she's carrying. It reads: FAIR PLAY FOR THE WORKING MAN. CHANDLER is impressed by MARIAN. He stops, turns and furtively checks the contents of his wallet again. In his mood, she is quite irresistible, looking for adventure. MARIAN is dressed in raggedy old clothing. She stops her shouting about the mistreatment of workers when she becomes aware that she is being stared at by CHANDLER. She eyes his fancy clothes and his unblinking gaze. She turns on him.)

MARIAN. When you've filled your eyes, fill your pockets. Which is just what your type does anyway. Fancy clothes, snobbish look . . .

CHANDLER (ignoring remark). My, you are the most charming sign-carrying maiden I've seen all day. Your sign is fine . . . but it's your eyes and beauty that made me stop. And such trim ankles.

MARIAN. Is it your intention to make feeble jests while we fight to uphold the dignity of the working man?

CHANDLER (haughtily). Work!? Work is an invasion of privacy!

MARIAN (to imaginary followers offstage). Did you hear that, my fellow humans? An invasion of privacy. And what do you do for a living, my haughty pest?

CHANDLER. I count my dividends daily . . . a wearying procedure, really, but then, life isn't all peaches and cream,

is it? Dad insists I do the counting myself. Says it gives me backbone.

MARIAN. Your life is easy because of fortunate circumstances. You have wealthy parents. What of these men and women whose parents work to eke out their meager earnings?

CHANDLER. They should have exercised more selectivity in choosing their parents. On the other hand, class will tell. I was destined for my role in life.

MARIAN. You, sir, are nothing but a common, ordinary fop!

CHANDLER. Wrong. I am no ordinary fop. I have been voted Fop of the Year. Teddy Roosevelt should be so foppish.

MARIAN. Fops are sterile, unproductive, vain, narrow and insular.

CHANDLER. Sounds like my law firm. Not that I want to, but I must admit you have a certain sense of charm - - for a working girl. Of course, those clothes could be replaced. And, ugh . . . that raucousness in your voice when you shout.

MARIAN. Never mind that! You're content to strut around in garish finery while some of these people haven't eaten for days. Oh, but what do you rich care?

CHANDLER. My vast wealth has not distorted my sense of fair play. You may have something else besides sparkling eyes, fine forehead, and svelte figure under that tattered get-up, if I'm any judge at all. I would consider it a challenge to explain to you the psychology of the rich.

MARIAN (sarcastically). Sounds like a fun evening.

CHANDLER. I may be able to help you. I have friends in high places. Join me for dinner. We'll exchange philosophical credos. That's democracy in action. Of course, if you're afraid . . .