

A History

A Ten-Minute Play

By Susan Hansell

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SYNOPSIS:

A brief and partial history of the judicial world as it is known to some of us.

CHARACTERS:

MAN

(played by a male-identified actor, or by a female-identified actor playing a committed male role, or by a female-identified actor playing a female role if she is also wearing a judge's robe)

WOMAN

(played by a female-identified actor)

SET AND TECH:

None, but if the physical demands of the performances are not feasible, a ladder or scaffolding or the like may be employed to create a reasonable facsimile of the play's imagery

PROPS:

Duct-Tape, a gavel, a cigar

A History

MAN, with a GAVEL in one hand and a CIGAR in the other, sits on top of WOMAN's shoulders, or on her back, piggy-backed.

WOMAN wears strips of DUCT-TAPE all over her chest and abdomen in patterns like X's, though one strip of tape needs to be placed where MAN can reach it and eventually tear it off.

MAN appears hot, sweaty and agitated.

WOMAN appears calm, if fatigued.

A brief pause at opening to allow audience to absorb this duo.

MAN suddenly gavels forcefully into the air.

MAN

BANG BANG BANG. BANG BANG BANG.

WOMAN

(straining to be heard over MAN and drawing out the word)

WE.

MAN

(shouting over WOMAN in short clipped bursts)

BANG BANG BANG.

WOMAN

(straining to be heard over MAN and drawing out the word)

THE.

MAN

(shouting over WOMAN in short clipped bursts)

BANG BANG BANG.

WOMAN

(straining to be heard over MAN and drawing out the word)

PEOPLE.

Pause.

MAN

(shouting again in short clipped bursts)

BANG BANG BANG. BANG BANG BANG.

MAN grabs CIGAR in his FIST and gestures wildly with his fist in the air.

WOMAN staggers under the movements of MAN.

WOMAN regains her balance and tries to rest, breathing hard.

MAN

WHOA HORSEY.

WOMAN has to hold onto MAN's legs in order to maintain her balance.

WOMAN regains balance, but must hold onto MAN.

Beat.

MAN

That's better.

WOMAN sighs loudly.

MAN

This is nice.

WOMAN rolls her eyes in disgust.

MAN

(louder)

I SAID THIS IS NICE.

Beat.

MAN kicks woman; WOMAN winces but makes no sound.

MAN

Right?

Beat.

MAN kicks WOMAN again; WOMAN winces but makes no sound.

Right?

MAN

WOMAN
(straining to be heard over MAN and drawing out the word)

HOLD.

MAN
(shouting over WOMAN in short clipped bursts)

RIGHT? RIGHT?

WOMAN
(straining over MAN and drawing out the word)

THESE.

MAN
(shouting over WOMAN in short clipped bursts)

RIGHT? RIGHT?

WOMAN
(straining over MAN and drawing out the word)

TRUTHS.

MAN
(shouting over WOMAN in short clipped bursts)

RIGHT? RIGHT? RIGHT?

Beat.

WOMAN bends forward ever so slightly and looks down.

THEY BOTH breathe heavily.

Beat.

MAN puts CIGAR into his mouth, reaches down with that now-free hand and rips a piece of DUCT-TAPE from WOMAN's body.

WOMAN groans.

MAN slaps a piece of DUCT-TAPE over
WOMAN's mouth.

WOMAN
(loudly attempting to be heard, though muffled)

TO BE.

MAN takes CIGAR out of his mouth with the hand
that ripped the DUCT-TAPE, then laughs
raucously for a long time.

MAN
AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA.

WOMAN waits for MAN to stop.

WOMAN
(loudly attempting to be heard, though muffled)

SELF.

Beat.

WOMAN huffs under the duct-tape gag.

MAN then chuckles for a long time.

MAN
Heheheheheheheheheheheheheh.

Beat.

WOMAN grunts angrily under the duct-tape gag.

Beat.

MAN
(derisive)
No, you weren't gonna say anything.

WOMAN
(loudly attempting to be heard, though muffled)

EVIDENT.

Beat.

You never do.

MAN
(dismissive)

WOMAN glares forward, staring forward,
resting, thinking.

Beat.

WOMAN bends forward as far as she can. This
forces MAN to slide down WOMAN's back until he
is almost falling off.

Beat.

WOMAN attempts to shake MAN off. It doesn't
work but MAN has to work to stay on.

MAN
(annoyed, sarcastic)

This is fun.

Beat.

WOMAN now drops to her knees.

MAN is forced to grip onto her.

WOMAN lunges forward and comes to rest on her
hands and knees.

MAN is momentarily disconcerted, but is
nevertheless still on top of WOMAN.

WOMAN is breathing hard under the DUCT-
TAPE.

Beat.

MAN kicks WOMAN in an attempt to "ride" her.

MAN
(shrieking)

THIS IS FUN THIS IS FUN THIS IS FUN THIS IS FUN.

WOMAN does not move.

MAN kicks WOMAN again.

MAN

GO GO GO GO.

WOMAN does not move.

MAN

(inexplicable hooting)

ORANGES! ORANGES! ORANGES! ORANGES!

WOMAN does not move.

MAN

(through gritted teeth)

I said go.

(after a beat, furiously)

I SAID GO.

A long silent and motionless stand-off.

WOMAN then lunges completely, ending up sprawled out, flat on the floor and face down, with MAN on top of her.

MAN is shocked.

MAN looks down at WOMAN.

WOMAN is completely still.

Long pause.

MAN begins to cry, then blubbers like a child.

This goes on for some time.

MAN

WaaaaaaaaaWaaaaaaaaaWaaaaaaaaaWaaaaaaaaaWaaaaaaaaaWaaaaaaaaaWaaaaaaaaaWaaaaaaaaa.

After a while, MAN wipes his face with his arms, still holding the GAVEL and the CIGAR.

Beat.

MAN looks all around, searchingly.

Pause.

MAN suddenly sits up as straight as possible while remaining seated on motionless WOMAN.

MAN

(calling out, off, as an imperious command)

I NEED ANOTHER ONE.

Silence.

MAN looks all around again, angrily.

MAN

(calling out again)

I SAID I NEED ANOTHER ONE.

Beat.

MAN, sitting on WOMAN, holding GAVEL in one hand and CIGAR in the other hand, crosses his arms tightly over his chest, and makes a pouty mean face.

Pause.

BLACKOUT. END OF PLAY. OR:

ALTERNATE EXTENDED ENDING:

After the long pause, WOMAN suddenly opens her eyes, glaring up, and out, into the audience. WOMAN remains motionless, except for her eyes, her face, and then one of her hands, which she carefully stretches out and clenches into a raised fist.

WOMAN might, or might not, then move her eyes, and her face, slightly, glaring up toward MAN, carefully stretching out her other hand into a raised fist.

END OF PLAY