

# **The Worst Law Firm in Merry Old England**

**by Leon Kaye**

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**The Worst Law Firm in Merry  
Old England**

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS:**

<b>Sir William Clayton</b>	<i>A pompous senile attorney who relies much on his knowledge of process. He can barely remember his own name.</i>
<b>Marshall Parsley</b>	<i>A good natured able attorney, that ponders the larger questions in life. He is a recovering alcoholic.</i>
<b>Nells</b>	<i>A lifetime aid to both Parsley and Clayton; fiercely loyal</i>
<b>David Nells</b>	<i>He is young and inexperienced; tries to harness his emotions and his conscience in effort to become a good prosecutor.</i>
<b>Avery</b>	<i>Scheming and political; Believes law is a tool to an end.</i>
<b>Lucia San Mateo</b>	<i>Young and pretty; she is unfeeling, materialistic and willing to do anything to accomplish her goals.</i>
<b>Keira Laughlin</b>	<i>Young and pretty; she is romantic and emotional, but not willing to boldly grasp what she desires.</i>
<b>Mrs. Laughlin</b>	<i>A level headed, pragmatic older woman.</i>
<b>Judge Justice</b>	<i>Pompous and used to getting his way. He will speak over others and interrupt as he sees fit.</i>
<b>Mann</b>	<i>Not very intelligent but happy-go-lucky just the same.</i>
<b>Mrs. Mann</b>	<i>Good natured and animated, albeit, a heavy-set man wearing a dress.</i>

## ACT ONE

*(A well-manicured cozy office. There are desks facing each other, one far stage left and one right. In front of each desk there is a chair for a client to sit. Far right there is a back door. Up stage there is a fireplace, a large picture window that looks onto the street, and the main entrance door, left. There is a painting of an elderly man hanging above the fireplace mantle. At rise, David helps his father, Nells, carry wood to the fireplace. Both are dressed for office work.)*

DAVID: I do not want to get my good suit full of soot so I will leave you, Father, to do the dirty work.

*(Nells kneels in front of the fireplace, crumbles paper, prepares the fire.)*

NELLS: Just think, Lad, in two months time you shall be married. And one day in the not too distant future you too will have your own law practice just like Mr. Parsley and Sir William.

DAVID: *(Laughing)*: I would hope not.

NELLS: Why not, Son?

DAVID: Well a law practice, yes--but Sir William and Mr. Parsley are hardly examples of what I would want—

NELLS: They were both fine lawyers years ago, both of them...fine lawyers. Before the drinking Mr. Parsley was an excellent advocate.

DAVID: Yes and Sir William--you do not fault him for his age.

NELLS: Son, there are times that he does recognize me.

DAVID: He should not be practicing, Father. He holds people's futures in his hands and the man cannot even remember where he lives.

NELLS: We are all helping him realize his limits. It will take time for him also to realize he cannot practice law forever.

*(A knock at the main door and Mrs. Laughlin peeps in carrying a tray of muffins.)*

MRS. LAUGHLIN: Hello—Hello, Sirs.

DAVID: Mrs. Laughlin.

NELLS: What is she doing here?

DAVID: *(Quietly)*: Father, please.

MRS. LAUGHLIN: I do not mean to interrupt, but I have baked some muffins and I thought possibly Sir William would enjoy having a muffin or two.

NELLS: Sir William does not need your kind of muffins, Madam.

DAVID: Father.

NELLS: I venture they are poisoned.

DAVID: Excuse me, Mrs. Laughlin... *(Pulls Nells aside.)* What are you saying?

NELLS: She is a witch, Son. I do not make accusations lightly, but the last time she came in to this office, she made a comment that my hair had a wonderful texture...and look.

DAVID: Your hair is still adequate.

NELLS: Yes, half of it is falling out and the other half is unmanageable and dry.

MRS. LAUGHLIN: Excuse me. I believe you want me to leave, yes?

NELLS: Yes. That would be the case.

MRS. LAUGHLIN: All right, I will see you at the wedding then.

DAVID: Yes.

MRS. LAULHLIN: Lucia is a lovely girl. She has been best friends with my Keira for years and years. Keira is so happy for both of you.

DAVID: Yes, Keira is a lovely girl.

NELLS: Yes, I do admit this grudgingly. (*Quietly*): If her Father is mortal then she is only half-witch.

DAVID: Father!

(*Sir William marches in.*)

MRS. LAUGHLIN: Ah, Sir William...

(*Sir William takes a muffin--shoves the entire thing into his mouth.*)

NELLS: Sir William, no.

MRS. LAUGHLIN: Sir William it is--

(*Sir William takes the garbage pail--spits the entire muffin out.*)

MRS. LAUGHLIN: Sir William I made you muffins but I--

SIR WILLIAM: What are you trying to do, woman?

MRS. LAUGHLIN: You need not eat the entire muffin at once.

SIR WILLIAM: Then why make them so large? In the future please make smaller muffins, Madam. These muffins are obscene, fat, grotesque, horrible wads of dough. (*Pauses, looks at Mrs. Laughlin*) Good day, Madam. (*He leaves.*)

MRS. LAUGHLIN: (*Confused*): Good day.

DAVID: Father, I must be leaving as well. The prosecutor's office opens at 9. Good day Mrs. Laughlin.

MRS. LAUGHLIN: Good day.

(*She turns to Nells, smiles. Angry, he scowls, looks away.*)

MRS. LAUGHLIN: I just want to say, Mr. Nells, I have never seen you looking so healthy and full of life.

NELLS: Leave me, witch! Why don't you get out?

(*He chases her to the door and she rushes out. Just then, Mr. Parsley enters from the other entrance, holding a satchel. Nells steps back--seems surprised.*)

NELLS: Mr. Parsley?

PARSLEY: Good morning, Nells.

NELLS: Why are you here?

PARSLEY: I work here.

NELLS: Yes, but it is not yet noon.

PARSLEY (*As he nods, heads to the door, stage right, fiddles with papers.*): True. I have not made acquaintance with the morning for many months now.

NELLS: Years.

PARSLEY: Has it been years? (*Shakes his head, looks at his desk.*)

NELLS: Did you want me to get you anything?

PARSLEY: What is it I once did here? (*Looks at the portrait above the mantle.*) My father died one year ago yesterday. I spent the entire day in the pub. I drank an ale with a teaspoon. It took me over an hour. I ordered another and another and it took me nine hours to drink 9 ales and I was never intoxicated.

NELLS: That is very good, Sir, I think.

PARSLEY: I love the smell of it, the taste of it, beer, ale, whiskey. Do you not hear the word whiskey? Listen to it. It is just like poetry. *(Beat)* I need not be drunk. I should be able to function.

NELLS: Yes, you can, Sir.

PARSLEY: What kind of life is this, Nells? Sleepwalking, dreaming my life and waking up and finding myself in mid-life? My father built this practice and here I am, a pathetic squanderer of my birthright. I have become sick just thinking of it.

*(The sound of sirens outside; Nells looks out the window.)*

NELLS: It seems a man was hurt. There is an ambulance. I think the carriage must have clipped him.

PARSLEY: Shame.

NELLS: But such good fortune for us. A client.

PARSLEY: I think not. I find no good fortune in the misfortune of others.

NELLS: Oh Sir! It is a case right in front of our office--an ambulance! Oh Sir, let us run!

PARSLEY: No no, no.

NELLS: They are old horses, Sir. I can outrun them.

PARSLEY: No, I think it is time we were again a respectable law firm, a place where clients can come and expect to receive competent legal service.

*(Sir William marches in.)*

SIR WILLIAM: Nells, I believe I misplaced the only copy of Mr. Wilson's Last Will and Testament.

NELLS: Where Sir?

SIR WILLIAM: If I knew where I would have it now, would I not?

NELLS: I will search in the cafe and coffee shop. *(He leaves.)*

PARSLEY: Good morning, Sir William.

SIR WILLIAM: Who are you, Sir?

PARSLEY: Yes, well...I am but a humble practitioner of the law seeking truth and hoping to learn from you, my good man.

SIR WILLIAM *(Nods)*: Very well, very well indeed. First precept of the law--speak loudly, clearly and know what you are saying...and if you do not know what you are saying--believe it entirely.

PARSLEY: And argue your case with fervor and enthusiasm.

SIR WILLIAM: *(Looks again at Parsley, squints.)*: There was once a young man that worked here that spoke much like this. What was his name?

PARSLEY: Marshall Parsley.

SIR WILLIAM: Yes I believe that is it so. *(Looks at Parsley, smiles.)*: You have killed Mr. Parsley and skillfully taken on his personality traits.

PARSLEY: No, Sir William. It is I. I am back. *(He stands.)* I am practicing law. I am a lawyer.

SIR WILLIAM: I was not aware that you left. Well in any case, welcome back. There were muffins before. I should have saved one for you.

*(In rushes Keira and Lucia.)*

LUCIA *(To Sir William)*: Uncle, have you heard the news?

SIR WILLIAM: Good morning, Dear.

KEIRA: Good morning, Sir William, Mr. Parsley.

PARSLEY: Good morning, ladies.

SIR WILLIAM: Good morning to you Miss Laughlin. Your mother was in earlier.

KEIRA: Yes she was baking muffins.

SIR WILLIAM: Baking, whatever she did, they were gargantuan. The woman clearly wants me to die with my mouth full of her muffins. My Lord, that sounds obscene.

*(He sits--proceeds to open mail with an opener while others speak.)*

LUCIA: Did you hear the news, Uncle? Yesterday evening, Scotland Yard arrested Mr. Louis Mann.

PARSLEY: The banker...the recluse?

LUCIA: Yes. He has embezzled millions of pounds. Entire family fortunes wiped out.

KEIRA: It is so horribly sad.

LUCIA: Half of the city wants him hanged. The police have him segregated because it is widely known that any prisoner that kills Mr. Mann will be lauded by everyone in the city. His family will be showered with gifts. *(Laughing)* I would kill him myself if it would mean free dinners and fresh produce.

KEIRA: Oh Lucia, you would never--

LUCIA: After David and I are married, we will need thousands of pounds for travel, jewelry, clothing, furnishings.

PARSLEY: Need?

LUCIA: Well...not need. Need is a strong word. But it would be rather nice.

SIR WILLIAM: Worth committing murder?

LUCIA: Oh... *(She waves her hand as if it's nothing.)*...nothing overly violent but a good bludgeoning. *(She shrugs.)* Poisoning is rather easy. I am sure most can do it. *(Ponders)* A senior prosecutor will handle this. I am afraid they would never give such a large case to David.

KEIRA: Mr. Parsley, I rarely see you in the office anymore.

PARSLEY: Well yes. I am ready for business, legitimate business. But first I am off to the pub. I am planning to make arrangements with Mr. O'Leary to have one-fourth of a mug of ale every hour.

SIR WILLIAM: One-fourth? Is it worth the bother?

PARSLEY: I am being weaned, good Sir, like the young babe. To withdraw quickly would shock the system such that I could not function.

SIR WILLIAM: I was not aware you had been functioning.

PARSLEY: Well, I am off. *(He exits. Nells enters with the documents in hand.)*

NELLS: Ah, Lucia, so good of you to visit. *(He hugs Lucia.)*

LUCIA: Father Nells, I cannot wait until we are all one big family.

KEIRA: Mr. Nells, so good to see you.

NELLS: Good day to you, Miss Laughlin.

SIR WILLIAM: Nells, what do you make of this? *(He holds a piece of mail he has just opened, hands it to Nells.)*

NELLS: It is another eviction notice, Sir.

SIR WILLIAM: Throw it in the fire, would you?

NELLS: Yes, Sir *(He does.)*

KEIRA: Eviction notice?

SIR WILLIAM: I have been here 37 years and these ridiculous landlords still want money from me. I have paid for the building many times over.

NELLS (*Quietly to Lucia*): I pay them, but sadly we have not had any clients for several months.

LUCIA: Perhaps you can offer a discount?

NELLS: My Dear, we are a laughing stock in the city--the butt of bad legal jokes.

(*Sir William stands, heads across the room. Nells hands Sir William the document he is holding.*)

NELLS: I retrieved this from the cafe.

SIR WILLIAM: (*Takes the Will, throws it into the fire*): I told you to throw this into the fire.

(*Nells tries to grab the Will from the fire--pulls his hand away from the heat.*)

NELLS: That was the Will! Mr. Wilson's Last Will and Testament--in the fire.

SIR WILLIAM: I aver that Mr. Wilson should be more careful with his documents.

NELLS: He is dead! He is dead, Sir William.

SIR WILLIAM: Well then I would think that he has no further need for papers. (*To Keira*): So my Dear, you are marrying David Nells, yes?

(*Keira blushes.*)

LUCIA: No, Uncle, it is I, Lucia, your niece. I am marrying David Nells.

SIR WILLIAM: (*Stares lovingly at Keira*) Ah yes, well (*To Lucia*): My Dear, David Nells is a fine young prosecutor. I wish you all the best.

LUCIA: Thank you, Uncle.

KEIRA: I am sorry, everyone. I am going to take my leave. (*Affected, she rushes out.*)

LUCIA: She has been acting strangely all week.

NELLS: I can understand. Her mother is a witch, you know.

(*The background goes dark as Lucia heads off stage. Foreground is lit. In walks David following prosecutor Avery.*)

DAVID: Sir, the man they arrested is not Louis Mann.

EVERY: What is your point, Mr. Nells?

DAVID: My point? We arrested the wrong man.

EVERY: Yes.

DAVID: And we are trying him...

EVERY: Yes.

DAVID: ...for embezzlement.

EVERY: Is this conversation going to go on much longer because I have a meeting in half--

DAVID: Why? Why would we not let this man, this innocent man, free? He is not Louis Mann.

EVERY: We cannot let this person free. (*Beat*) Listen, Louis Mann knew of his impending capture. He withdrew most of the embezzled money in cash and left the country a week before his arrest.

DAVID: So, the police arrested the wrong man on purpose?

EVERY: No, by accident.

DAVID: I do not follow.

EVERY: Louis Mann is a recluse. His wife has been abroad for more than a year. Police had no good description of him. When the Manns left their home, common thieves ransacked the residence. The police came to arrest Mr. Mann and arrested the thieves thinking they were Mr. and Mrs. Mann.

DAVID: So one thief was female?

EVERY: No. *(Beat)* It is all quite distressing...*(Shakes his head)*...but then it was thought--is it better to have the wrong embezzler in custody than to admit he left the country, outwitting the police and getting away with all in the embezzled money--that would be a worse admonition.

DAVID: So the police are keeping this man and this woman?

EVERY: No. Two men. One of the men took a fancy to Mrs. Mann's dresses and make-up. After some thought, Mrs. Mann...or the alleged Mrs. Mann was released.

DAVID: Oh. What a sad world we live in.

EVERY: Yes.

DAVID: And why would not these two thieves reveal their identities?

EVERY: There was a deal made. They both must play along with the charade. Mr. Mann must be prosecuted and sentenced. Then the public will be satisfied.

DAVID: And then--

EVERY: And then the pseudo Mr. Mann will be released receiving a very handsome reward and a promise he will never reveal this rouse to anyone.

DAVID: There is one problem, Sir. To be prosecuted these thieves must have legal counsel. And no law firm in the city would ever represent such a case.

EVERY: Actually no, there is one.

DAVID: *(Ponders)*: Oh you do not mean--

EVERY: You will stand by and say nothing. Stand by quietly or lose your position.

DAVID: I cannot do that. They are my friends. I must--

EVERY: I would not normally be so stern but this is very serious business. I am sorry. You must say nothing.

*(David ponders--then rushes offstage. Avery sighs, exits after David. Background lights come up. Parsley sits at his desk and eats from a bowl. Nells enters with a newspaper and hands it to Parsley.)*

NELLS: It is all a strange business--this arrest of Louis Mann. I have spoken to pages and associates and no one is representing the banker or even attempting to do so.

PARSLEY: Public disdain, Mr. Nells. They feel that representing such an unpopular client will discourage future business. *(He raises a cloth and inhales it. Nells eyes him strangely.)* I spilled beer on this cloth two hours ago. Some men are intoxicated by women, others by ambition. For me it is a good stout dark ale, with a fragrant head. *(He inhales again.)*

*(In walks a very large man dressed as a woman. Mrs. Mann tries to be genteel as any rough shod beast can attempt to be.)*

MRS. MANN: Good day to you. I am looking for Mr. Marshall Parsley.

PARSLEY: Yes, may I help you?

MRS. MANN: I am Mrs. Louis Mann.

PARSLEY: Oh... *(He stands)*...We were just speaking about this business with your husband. I take it that is why you are here.

MRS. MANN: Yes, of course.

PARSLEY: Please, sit down.

*(Nells stares at Mrs. Mann, unable to move.)*

PARSLEY: Mr. Nells, please take Mrs. Mann's coat.

NELLS: Yes, *(He does)* let me just say that we are not interested in representing your husband.

PARSLEY: Mr. Nells?

NELLS: Yes. Well, you could not possibly entertain--

PARSLEY: Please leave Mrs. Mann and me to speak. I do not know if I can help the Manns or not, but I will know in a few minutes.

NELLS: We need a retainer--10,000 pounds--(*Parsley prods Nells to the door.*)

PARSLEY: Thank you, Mr. Nells. Please go quietly.

NELLS: Remember the eviction notice.

PARSLEY: I am aware.

NELLS: Drive a hard bargain, Sir. (*Nells leaves.*)

PARSLEY: Now then, please sit. I have heard a little around the town about your husband. So tell me, is he innocent?

MRS. MANN: No, I am afraid to say he is as guilty as Satan. (*She laughs heartily.*)

PARSLEY: Where is the money now? Can he give it back?

MRS. MANN: All spent.

PARSLEY: Spent on what?

MRS. MANN: Cake.

PARSLEY: Cake?

MRS. MANN: And chocolate and fudge. (*Laughs*)

PARSLEY: We are talking million of pounds. You could not have eaten up that much cake and chocolate now, could you?

MRS. MANN: No, (*Smiles widely*) although I have been eating something. (*Laughs*)

PARSLEY: Obviously. No--what I meant to say...

MRS. MANN: My husband is guilty. We just need someone to represent him and he will confess and then this entire business will be over.

PARSLEY: You seem to be very intent on getting rid of him.

MRS. MANN: Yes. I just want him to serve his sentence--take his medicine as it were.

PARSLEY: Yes of course. What wife does not want her husband to admit his guilt and go away to prison for possibly the rest of his life?

MRS. MANN: Yes, Jolly good. (*Stands, offers his hand, shakes Parsley's hand very assuredly and vigorously.*) So there is much money in this for you if you just do your part.

PARSLEY: Yes, I just want to make certain you understand that I represent your husband.

MRS. MANN: Right.

PARSLEY: You might seek out your own representation.

MRS. MANN: My representation? (*He laughs a manly laugh.*) I am sorry, frog in my throat,

PARSLEY: Yes, frogs...awful.

MRS. MANN: My representation? I have done nothing to be... I am not even charged with any crime.

PARSLEY: Things might be revealed. Things you do not want.

MRS. MANN: Oh what fun! I cannot wait to hear them.

(*In walks Sir William.*)

PARSLEY: Ah...Sir William. This is Mrs. Louis Mann.

(*Sir William takes a look at Mrs. Mann--does a double take.*)

SIR WILLIAM: Good God Madam, have you grown?

MRS. MANN: I suppose so. Yes. Do I know you?

SIR WILLIAM: No, but I imagine you were once much smaller, were you not?

MRS. MANN: In my youth as a young lad, yes I was quite--

PARSLEY: Lad?

MRS. MANN: Lad, did I say lad? (*Laughs heartily.*)

PARSLEY: Frogs again?

MRS. MANN: Not a lad, no. I meant to say...

SIR WILLIAM: Latin princess?

MRS. MANN: Yes, in fact yes.

SIR WILLIAM: I perceive you once were a princess, a very beautiful Latin princess that could dance the fandango.

MRS. MANN (*Laughs*): Oh you know me so well, Willy.

PARSLEY: Please address him as Sir William. He has been knighted.

MRS. MANN: I will bet you were. (*Laughs*)

(*Mrs. Mann laughs heartily as she leaves through the front door. David Nells rushes in through the back door.*)

DAVID: Sir William, Mr. Parsley...was that Mrs. Mann who just left?

PARSLEY: We cannot comment on our clients, David. You know that.

DAVID: I just wanted you to know that... she is a man.

PARSLEY: Well obviously.

DAVID: So you know.

SIR WILLIAM: Well her husband is a Mann. She would be as well, would she not?

DAVID: I did not mean that. That...person is not Mann but is a common thief.

PARSLEY: I am on to her game, David; you do not have to spell it out for me.

DAVID: That is good to know. I was afraid you believed the story.

PARSLEY: No, no, no.

SIR WILLIAM: You should know I am too sharp for that.

PARSLEY: You must wake up pretty early in the morning to fool us.

SIR WILLIAM: Four a.m. Four thirty latest. We are not fools, David. Our minds are still are sharp as tacks. Knock on wood. (*He knocks on his desk.*) Is someone at the door?

PARSLEY: It is very obvious to me...her little charade.

(*David nods.*)

PARSLEY: How she has framed her husband to take the fall for her embezzlement of bank funds.

DAVID: No.

PARSLEY: And how she and maybe her young male escort will dash off to another country while her husband is taken to the tower.

DAVID: No! Absolutely no.

(*Angry, Avery opens the door, enters.*)

AVERY: David! What are you doing?

DAVID: These are good people. It is not right that they be used as pawns--

AVERY: If you care anything about your career in the prosecutor's office, you will not offer any more information to opposing council.

DAVID: Mr. Parsley, do not take this case.

PARSLEY: I am sorry to disappoint you David... (*Takes his towel, inhales.*)...but our counsel has been secured.

(*Beaten David marches out. Avery nods to Sir William and Parsley also exits.*)

SIR WILLIAM: What was David prattling on about?

PARSLEY: I think he was trying to protect us from taking on an unpopular client. His heart is in the right place.

SIR WILLIAM: He is a good young lad. He will be marrying some young woman very soon, I think.

PARSLEY: Your niece.

*(Sir Williams looks confused.)*

PARSLEY: Your niece, Lucia. They are to be married in two months time.

SIR WILLIAM: And I was not told of this?

PARSLEY: You were told; you are invited to the wedding. You have just forgotten.

SIR WILLIAM: So in this case of the Manns, what is your plan?

PARSLEY: When Mr. Nells returns, I will have him contact Takimora.

SIR WILLIAM: Ah, you are using Takimora? Very good.

PARSLEY: Yes. And I plan to visit Scotland Yard and speak to the notorious Louis Mann.

*(Lights dim.)*

SIR WILLIAM: Parsley, why is there suddenly no light?

PARSLEY: Sh-h-h.

*(Affected, Keira rushes on stage, Lucia, a few steps behind.)*

LUCIA: Keira? Keira Laughlin? What has happened to you?

KEIRA: It is nothing. I just...you are getting married and I am not and...and...I will...I will miss you.

LUCIA: Oh. *(Hugs Keira)* You will not miss me. You may come to visit David and me whenever you wish.

KEIRA: Thank you. *(Shakes her head)*

LUCIA: I believe you once liked my David. You did not? ...is it because his father and your mother do not get along?

KEIRA: Yes. Yes, that is it. I am being foolish and a silly old maid. I think I will go away soon...to...live in a nunnery or maybe a farm.

LUCIA: Nu... nunnery? What kind of talk is this? You must take stock of your prospects and act accordingly. David Nells will become a very able prosecutor. Although I am marrying beneath my station, with my father's connections, David should attain lead prosecuting attorney or even hold public office.

KEIRA: I fear I cannot offer such promise to anyone. I would not be able to...

LUCIA: All right. But, possibly a butcher...that owns his own shop? Or an importer or silversmith? There are many able young men if you would just open your eyes and set your sights on one.

KEIRA: I fear it is too late.

LUCIA: Nonsense. Do not give up so easily.

*(Keira smiles sadly. Heads off stage. Exacerbated Lucia groans, follows. Avery leads Mann and Mrs. Mann from stage left. Two chairs are down stage center; David follows.)*

VERY: Now then...Mr. and Mrs. Mann, have a seat. *(They remain standing.)* You are Mr. and Mrs. Mann...have you forgotten?

MANN: This is true.

MRS. MANN: It is like a costume party. *(They sit.)*

VERY: Your lawyer will be here in a few minutes, so let us go over the process, shall we?

MANN: I thought you were our lawyer.

EVERY: I am the opposing attorney.

MRS. MANN: Then we don't stand a chance.

*(Mann and Mrs. Mann erupt with laughter.)*

EVERY: Stop, this is a very serious business. Mr. Parsley has no idea about any of this.

MANN: Nor do we. *(Laughs)*

EVERY: Keep in mind that you must act as if in grave danger.

DAVID: Mr. Avery? Mr. Parsley is coming in to the office.

EVERY: All right then, settle down, remember you will be set free after the trial if you do not reveal your real identities. You will tell Parsley you are guilty. You are sorry, but will not return the money.

*(Parsley enters.)*

PARSLEY: Good day to all.

MR. and MRS. MANN: Good day, Mr. Parsley.

PARSLEY: I would caution you not to speak to Mr. Avery.

MANN: Oh, do not worry. We will not.

MRS. MANN: Not another word.

PARSLEY: If you will, David, Mr. Avery--I would like to interview my client privately.

EVERY: Yes, we are leaving. Come, David. *(David and Avery leave.)*

MRS. MANN: I thought they would never leave. Scoundrels.

PARSLEY: Yes, well. *(Sits)* There are a few questions I must ask. This should not take very long.

MRS. MANN: Do not rush, Mr. Parsley.

PARSLEY: The money?

MANN: Yes?

PARSLEY: You took other people's money.

MANN: Yes, guilty as charged. *(Put his hands up as if guilty.)*

MRS. MANN: Yes. My husband is guilty as sin. I am a witness to that.

MANN: We already signed confessions.

MRS. MANN: Oh, very good. So, off to prison then.

PARSLEY: Right. But...if you will, I need to ask...where is the money now?

MANN: Now?

PARSLEY: Yes.

MANN: You mean right this minute?

PARSLEY: If you took the money obviously you were planning to use it.

MRS. MANN: Obviously.

MANN: Yes, I must have had plans.

MRS. MANN: It would follow that the money must be somewhere.

MANN: Yes, millions of pounds. It must be somewhere. *(Looks about as if to spot it)*

PARSLEY: Three and a half million pounds.

MRS. MANN: That much?

PARSLEY: Yes, you do not know the extent of your theft?

MANN: Oh, I know. Of course I know, all about the money. I did steal it, of course.

MRS. MANN: Of course you know, Darling.

MANN: Darling? Darling, yes, yes, Darling, of course I do...Dearest...my Big Heavy Wife.

PARSLEY: So where is the money now? Is there any way you could retrieve even--

MRS.MANN: Big Heavy Wife--is that the name you have chosen for me?

MANN: Well, yes...I am not a poet, woman,

MRS. MANN: You could call me Kitten or Pumpkin or some kind word.

PARSLEY (*Stands*): Perhaps I should leave.

MANN: No, no!

MRS. MANN: Please no.

PARSLEY: I'm interrupting your privacy.

MANN: Oh, no. Do not mind him.

MRS. MANN: Her!

MANN: Yes, her! Do not mind her. Besides, after all this is over, we are going our separate ways.

PARSLEY: After prison you mean?

MANN: Prison? Oh, yes, I am going to prison, right.

PARSLEY: How did you steal this money?

MANN: Oh, in a bag.

PARSLEY: You are saying you put all the money into one bag?

MANN: Ah...you said three and a half million pounds...

PARSLEY: Very difficult to fit into one bag.

MANN: He has many bags.

MRS. MANN: She!

MANN: She has many bags, my wife.

MRS. MANN: Several bags then...and my socks.

PARSLEY: Well... (*Though his hand is trembling, he grabs and holds it under his other armpit to steady himself.*) One...very large gesture that will help your cause immensely--

MANN: Yes?

PARSLEY: Would be to--

MRS. MANN: Yes?

PARSLEY: Return the money.

MRS. MANN: Yes, a good gesture.

PARSLEY: Because right now, there are several people in the community that mean to do you harm.

MANN: Do me harm? Why?

PARSLEY: You stole their fortunes.

MRS. MANN: Oh...I did not think of it that way.

MR. MANN: Yes, they would be angry. Wouldn't they?

PARSLEY: And if they knew you, Mrs. Mann, were benefactor of this ill deed, I would not spend any time on the streets. It is a marvel that you have not been approached yet. Are you not a well known member of society?

MRS. MANN: Yes, but...but I have changed my hair.

MANN (*To Mrs. Mann*): If we are released, we could be killed.

MRS. MANN: More you than me. But still, an angry mob is quite disquieting.

PARSLEY: You might have public opinion shift to your side.

MANN: Yes, that would be nice. How?

PARSLEY: As I said before, by returning the money.

MRS. MANN: Returning the money, I see.

PARSLEY: And with community service and--

MANN: Service to others.

MRS. MANN: Yes, good.

PARSLEY: A remorseful plea to the judge.

MRS. MANN: Very good. Right.

PARSLEY: We might be able to get you a short jail sentence. A fine perhaps.

MANN: I like that, yes.

MRS. MANN: A fine. It sounds so noble. Like fine wine.

PARSLEY: And as I said, some service to the community possibly helping those just starting in business.

MANN: I like the sound of that.

MRS. MANN: Helping young couples.

PARSLEY: Yes. You can advise them and guide them.

MRS. MANN: Altruism.

MANN: All very true.

PARSLEY: So that the entire situation is left better than how it started.

MANN: He is a very good lawyer, I can see that now.

MRS. MANN: You did not see it at first?

MANN: Yes I did actually. (*Moves his chair.*) When I looked at him from this angle, yes.

MRS. MANN: Yes.

MANN: So you are saying if we do community service, we need not return the money?

PARSLEY: No. Returning the money is paramount.

MRS. MANN: He uses such fine words. Very educated, this one.

PARSLEY: So you must return the money.

MANN: Yes.

PARSLEY: So...where is it?

MANN: The money...right...Well it is...

MRS. MANN: There was just so much of it all over the place.

MANN: Here, there.

PARSLEY: Yes, so it is...

MANN: Lost.

PARSLEY: Lost?

MANN: Yes. (*Shrugs.*)

PARSLEY: Lost how?

MRS. MANN: Expenses.

PARSLEY: Impossible.

MRS. MANN: Lots of expenses, and...and...

MANN: Bad investments.

MRS. MANN: Yes! Bad investments. That sounds plausible.

MANN: And then the robbery.

MRS. MANN: Yes, we were robbed--it was awful.

MANN: And ironic.

PARSLEY (*Looks at the two with sadness*): Mr. & Mrs. Mann, I am your lawyer. I am your attorney.

MANN: We haven't forgotten.

MRS. MANN: You will be paid as such.

PARSLEY: Whatever you tell me will not leave this room. You must trust me. (*Looks at both of them.*) Sadly if you are not willing to return the money, I believe my hands are tied.

MANN: Tied? How?

PARSLEY: Well I cannot break the law. I am an officer of the court. You admit your guilt; you will not return the stolen money. So all that can be done at this point is negotiate the jail sentence.

MANN: You make it sound so terrible and final.

PARSLEY: I do not know what you expect of me. Even if there was some reason that you took the money...you have no desire to return so--

MANN: What if we were to return--

MRS. MANN (*Prods Mann*): Remember Darling, we do not say...you know--

MANN: Yes, my Darling, but I do not know if I like the idea of being killed by an angry mob.

MRS. MANN: C'est la vie, my Sweet One.

MANN: No, because you will be free and I will be no more la vie.

MRS. MANN: That is the deal my Dear Brainless One.

MANN: I know.

PARSLEY: Well, I am off. (*Stands*)

MANN: You are leaving?

PARSLEY: Yes, I have a medical condition and I need a drink. I mean I need TO drink. I need to hydrate myself. I need hydration. Just a little bit of hydration.

MANN: Oh, please do not leave now. I am in grave danger.

PARSLEY: I really need to leave.

MANN: But what of my defense?

PARSLEY: I have another meeting I must attend.

MANN: You do not wish to ask me more probing questions?

PARSLEY: I really must go. (*Parsley, rushes off stage right. Avery and David rush in from left.*)

AVERY: What happened?

MANN: He left. Right in the middle of our discussion, he left.

MRS. MANN: Scoundrel.

DAVID: Why would he leave so quickly? He could not have gathered any information.

AVERY: Did he ask of your arrest?

MANN: No.

DAVID: That is not like Mr. Parsley: The man has his faults but he is no fool.

AVERY: Did he ask if any other bank employees had access to the funds?

MANN: No.

DAVID: Maybe he can interview some of the bank employees.

AVERY: No. David, he cannot. They have all been removed from the country.

DAVID: What?

AVERY: For their own good...for their own safety.

DAVID: So Mr. Parsley has no person that can testify...that has seen the real Mr. Mann.

AVERY: I am afraid the deck is stacked against him.

MRS. MANN: He asked where the money is.

MANN: That's all he wanted to know.

DAVID: No questions about others that could have contributed in this scheme?

MANN: No.

DAVID: That is very irksome. He will offer no legal defense. He will not offer discovery or find grounds for corruption of the evidence.

MANN: He said that the entire city is looking to kill me.

EVERY: He is exaggerating. No more than 5,000 or so.

MANN: 5,000 people?

MRS. MANN: Well, many are poor old women and children. You can crush them with one hand.

MANN: (*Beat--while he takes it all in*) ...I am not so happy with this...you did not tell me of this, Mr. Avery.

EVERY: You do not have many choices, do you? Do you want to be prosecuted as a thief?

MANN: Not particularly.

MRS. MANN: And not even a successful thief. What will the other thieves say?

DAVID: Mr. Avery, why would Parsley not spend more time gathering information from his client? Why would he rush off like this?

EVERY: Perhaps he is playing with us.

DAVID: I do not think so, Mr. Avery.

EVERY: Yes, he knows far more than we have given him credit.

DAVID: Mr. Parsley is...was...a fine lawyer once but I do not think--

EVERY: Who are the lawyers for Mr. and Mrs. Mann?

MRS. MANN: Our lawyer, why, of course--

EVERY: No, the real Mr. and Mrs. Mann.

MANN: I forgot that we are not the originals.

MRS. MANN: We must be better.

EVERY: Do you not see, David? Do you not see?

DAVID: No, I am afraid not.

EVERY: Mr. Parsley is their attorney.

DAVID: I do not believe it.

EVERY: Think of it. No one else in London is representing the Manns or has a relationship with them--and we have brought him into the middle of this. Oh, how sinister.

DAVID: Honestly, Mr. Avery, I do not give Mr. Parsley quite that much credit.

EVERY: He knew these were impostors because he knows the real Mr. Mann. His only interest is if they know where the money is located.

MANN: It is true. That is all he was interested in.

MRS. MANN: Very money-hungry that one.

EVERY: When he was satisfied they knew nothing, his work was done, and he left.

MANN: He wanted us to return the money.

EVERY: No. He is fishing. He wants to know if you know anything at all.

MANN: Oh, we know nothing.

Mrs. MANN: We are quite clueless.

MANN: It is very obvious to anyone with a brain.

Mrs. MANN: Even to us.

EVERY: The true Mr. and Mrs. Mann are now abroad and possibly Mr. Parsley is watching over the 1 million pounds that was stolen.

MANN: Three and a half million pounds.

DAVID: No. It was roughly one million pounds.

MRS. MANN: Mr. Parsley did say three and a half million pounds.

DAVID: It must have been an error on his part. Although I do not believe Mr. Parsley could be that much mistaken.

EVERY: Diabolical.

DAVID: But, there is not three and a half million pounds. We know that.

EVERY: It was a test. *(To Mann)*: Did you contradict Parsley when he said three and a half million pounds?

MANN: The number sounded very high to me.

Mrs. MANN: I told him it was stolen in a robbery.

DAVID: I know Mr. Parsley. I tell you he is a good-natured man and he does not have the reputation to gather a client so large as Mr. Mann.

EVERY: You must speak with your father David. I need you to learn all that goes on in that office.

DAVID: You mean spy on Parsley and Sir William? I have known them since childhood. I would never do such a thing.

EVERY: There can be a place for your father here, David. I do not see how Parsley and Sir William can keep their practice going much longer.

DAVID: I am not a spy. Excuse me. I have an appointment. I must go. *(Leaves)*

MANN: I must say this is great fun.

EVERY: Quiet.

Mrs. MANN: Do not speak to my husband like that.

EVERY: He's not your husband. You are both men.

MRS. MANN: It is true, sometimes I forget that.

MANN: Maybe because of this.

*(Points to the dress. Mrs. Mann smacks his hand. Lucia rushes in.)*

LUCIA: Oh. I'm sorry Mr. Avery. The associate told me David was here. *(To others)*: Excuse me.

MRS. MANN: Anytime my Dear, anytime.

EVERY: Oh, Miss San Mateo--may I have a word?

LUCIA: A word with me? Oh, I have very little to do with David's business.

EVERY: And that is a terrible pity is it not? Especially when you can perform a task that would help David's career immensely.

LUCIA: Help David's career? There's really something I can do?

EVERY: Oh yes! *(To Mr. and Mrs. Mann)*: All right then--inside, the lot of you.

*(They stand, head towards off stage right.)*

MRS. MANN: A true man would defend my honor.

MANN: Yes and a true man would not be wearing women's undergarments.

*(All exit. Nells enters stage left, he seems ill. David rushes in from the back door of stage right.)*

DAVID: Father?

NELLS: Oh, David.

DAVID: What is the matter?

NELLS: Do you remember what she said to me?

DAVID: Who said something to you?

NELLS: That witch, Mrs. Laughlin, she cursed me.

DAVID: Sit down, Father. Have some water.

NELLS: She said I have never looked so healthy. She said I look years younger. All evening, I have not been able to swallow my saliva. My heart is racing and I have terrible pains under my arms from...you know.

DAVID: It must be from over-exertion.

NELLS: No, it's the pins, the pins, David.

DAVID: Pins?

NELLS: The pins she inserts into the doll she has conjured in my image. The devil.

DAVID: Oh Father, you must stop all this.

NELLS: I did not bring this on. I did nothing to cause this.

DAVID: We are living in a time of science, not superstition and ignorance. This is all nonsense. I am sorry, but it is all coming from your head.

NELLS: Because she has put pins in my head, and immersed it under water.

DAVID: Oh Father.

NELLS: I am drowning. I feel like I cannot breathe.

*(Keira enters.)*

DAVID: Miss Laughlin?

KEIRA: David, Mr. Nells, I am glad you are both here. There is something I must say. *(Pause)* I have accepted a position as governess in Liverpool. I should be leaving in about 4 days.

DAVID: 4 days?

KEIRA: Yes. It is...I was...there is a large family with a very large estate and I accepted the position.

NELLS: You will miss the wedding then?

KEIRA: Yes. It is sad but it cannot be helped. This is for the best.

DAVID: Yes.

KEIRA: And the family needs a good cook as well. So, my mother will be coming with me.

NELLS: OH! *(He clasps his hands together, smiles.)* Can it be true?!

KEIRA: There is a large kitchen and many children and--

NELLS: Yes, yes. It is a perfect situation. I feel better already, David.

KEIRA: Are you happy for me, David?

DAVID: Happy? Well no, I am not happy. We have grown up together, Keira. You are almost like a sister to me

KEIRA: A sister? *(Nods)* Yes. A sister. That is how it should be. I was a bit ambivalent about making this decision, but now, I feel much more at ease.

NELLS: Good. Very good. I am happy we are all happy.

*(Sir William enters, heads to his desk.)*

NELLS: Sir William, Keira Laughlin will be leaving in a few days. She has a new position in Liverpool.

SIR WILLIAM: Liverpool? How sad.

KEIRA: I will be leaving with my mother in a few days.

SIR WILLIAM: Were you not betrothed to David Nells?

DAVID: No, Sir William. You are confusing Miss Laughlin with Miss San Mateo.

SIR WILLIAM: Then my Dear, it seems you will not be missed. Good luck to you. *(Sits)*

KEIRA: I do not know what is wrong with this office! *(She storms out.)*

NELLS: If I did not know Miss Laughlin's very kind disposition, I would suggest she was a bit angry.

DAVID: Yes, more than a bit.

*(Mr. Parsley walks in.)*

NELLS: Good day, Mr. Parsley.

PARSLEY: Good day, Nells, David...

DAVID *(Preoccupied with Keira)*: Yes...

PARSLEY: Good day, Sir William.

SIR WILLIAM: Yes?

PARSLEY: I said good day,

SIR WILLIAM: You look quite familiar to me.

PARSLEY: It is I, your partner, Mr. Marshall Parsley.

SIR WILLIAM: Yes, I know that, but your face looks oddly familiar as if I had seen it on the body of others...how grotesque.

PARSLEY: Perhaps I was wearing another suit.

SIR WILLIAM: Yes or maybe in another location--perhaps I have seen you at the bank offices.

PARSLEY: I know *(He goes to his desk--puts on his white wig.)*

SIR WILLIAM: Yes that is it. He used to wear the wig at some point.

PARSLEY: I understand, Sir William...I have not been to court in quite some time. This is what disturbs you.

SIR WILLIAM: No, I do not like the wig on you. It makes you look pale and sickly.

*(Exits stage right with papers in hand.)*

PARSLEY *(Takes it off)*: Mr. Nells, David, can I confide in you?

NELLS: Yes, of course, Sir.

PARSLEY: The most important thing in my life is getting myself back into form...and with the pressure of this trial, I have found it more difficult than I could imagine. I may have to recuse myself from the Mann case.

NELLS: I can understand that.

PARSLEY: In times of great stress, when I think of the stakes...I find myself yearning for relief...to lose myself in the quiet, back table of a small pub. But then I think of my father.

NELLS: Your father would not approve.

PARSLEY: Which is why I am thinking I must recuse myself from this trial. It is leading me back toward my weakness. And I must avoid this at all costs.

DAVID: Mr. Parsley, how would this look? You would bring a mark of dishonor to your firm and to your father's name.

PARSLEY: Also true. It is a dilemma on which I must spend some time.

*(Lucia rushes into the room.)*

LUCIA: Oh...Good day to you, gentlemen. Mr. Parsley?

PARSLEY: Yes, hello Lucia.

LUCIA: Mr. Parsley I just saw you at Doyle's Pub.

PARSLEY: Yes, I am afraid it is true.

LUCIA: And you rushed out very quickly.

PARSLEY: No, not quickly. I had...

LUCIA: You met a man there.

PARSLEY: No, I did not. I went there--

LUCIA: You met a man there. I saw him in a gray suit. He was thin and wearing a gray coat.

PARSLEY: No...No, I did not go into the pub to meet someone. I must confide...this is difficult to say. I have a drinking problem.

LUCIA: The gentleman was waiting for you. He handed you the satchel and you looked inside as if to find something or to count what was there.

DAVID: Lucia, you were spying?

LUCIA: Why, yes. I was breaking no law.

PARSLEY: I am weaning myself so I spend time at the pub to have a small drink. Not to meet people.

LUCIA: Yes, but you had a satchel and where is it now?

NELLS: Lucia, do you not see that Mr. Parsley is attempting to be discreet about his--

DAVID: Yes, it is true. He is contemplating recusing himself from the Mann case.

LUCIA: Recusing? How can you do this? When the trial is beginning in less than one week?

PARSLEY (*Agitated*): It will do no one good if the pressure of the trial leads me back on the wayward path and I am of no use to anyone. (*He storms out.*)

(*Upstage lights go down. Downstage, Avery leads Mann and Mrs. Mann out to the center stage.*)

MANN: Our deal remains, you cannot imprison us as if we are thieves!

EVERY: You are thieves.

MANN: You made a promise.

EVERY: Quiet.

MRS. MANN (*To Mann*): You should have had the deal written down.

MANN: I will go to the newspapers if you turn on me.

EVERY: Before or after you spend 20 years in prison.

MANN (*Looks worried then continues happily*): Maybe they will cut off my head.

MRS. MANN: Oh. Lovely.

MANN: I will lose those 10 pounds I've been meaning to lose.

MRS. MANN: You will look years younger. (*They laugh*)

EVERY: You have no idea how serious this matter has become. Lucia followed Mr. Parsley to the pub. There, Parsley met a well dressed man who gave Parsley a large bag.

MRS. MANN: Big bag--full of money?

EVERY: Possibly. Parsley might be getting paid very handsomely. Possibly by the real Mr. Mann.

MRS. MANN: But this is good news. Is it not? Mr. Mann would want things to go as planned. He would want us to be found guilty so that he may rest easy.

EVERY: You may think that, but I think differently. I think Mr. Mann wants to make us look like fools.

MANN (*Quietly*): That should not be so difficult.

MRS. MANN: Hardly. (*They laugh*)

EVERY: Mr. Mann wants the public to know he got away--to know he's sitting on a beach drinking champagne and laughing at us all. Away...while the foolish police have captured and tried the wrong man.

MANN: My goodness, how awful that would look.

MRS. MANN: More awful than Mr. Avery's teeth.

EVERY: And to be outwitted...by someone so base as Mr. Parsley--a common drunk. A bad joke in the legal community.

MANN: So what do we do?

AVERY: I must know every detail of Parsley's case.

MRS. MANN: Yes.

AVERY: I must know his thoughts.

MRS. MANN: O-o-oh...

AVERY: Monitor his movements.

MRS. MANN: Yes yes...every little movement.

MANN: What if you arrest him?

AVERY: Arrest him?

MANN: For making advances to my wife.

MRS. MANN: You have a wife?

MANN: You!

MRS. MANN: Ah.

AVERY: Now he is threatening to get off of the case...which would cause a mistrial and ruin everything. Parsley is a riddle. He is either a drunken buffoon, or a legal genius.

MRS. MANN (*Looking at his dress*): Do you think this dress makes me look rather large?

MANN: They all do.

AVERY: We must force him to stay on this case.

MANN: Does he owe money?

AVERY: Yes, very good. I believe that David had said as much. I will threaten to have the landlords throw Parsley into debtor's prison.

MANN: Oh, debtor's prison! We have many friends there.

MRS. MANN: Yes we had good times there.

MANN: Jolly good prison; the best one we ever stayed at.

MRS. MANN: Four stars.

AVERY: I have even thought of murder as a last resort. The things one must do to preserve justice.

(*Nells walks out stage right; he sees Mrs. Laughlin, who enters stage left.*)

MRS. LAUGHLIN: Mr. Nells?

NELLS: Stay away from me.

MRS. LAUGHLIN: I am leaving in two days.

NELLS: The best news I have heard since King Richard's return.

MRS. LAUGHLIN: Yes, right...I do have a question for you.

NELLS: You stay away from me you witch!

MRS. LAUGHLIN: Are you serious?

NELLS: Yes of course, I wish you to be far, far away. Liverpool is not far enough.

MRS. LAUGHLIN: I did not mean that. I mean to ask, how did you know?

NELLS: Know?

MRS. LAUGHLIN: Yes. Did someone tell you?

NELLS: Tell me what?

MRS. LAUGHLIN: You know, Sir, do not play games with me.

NELLS: I...I...

MRS. LAUGHLIN: You stated that I am witch. I want to know if someone told you this or did you come by this knowledge on your own?

NELLS: I...what?

MRS. LAUGHLIN: I've been trying to kill you for years with my spells so that my darling girl could be happy--so that David would marry her and be free of your interference and unfounded hatred for me.

NELLS: Unfounded? You just admitted that you tried to kill me.

MRS. LAUGHLIN: Yes, after I have tried to befriend you many times. But every time I did, you cursed me. Every good intention on my part was not accepted with any appreciation--only derision and remarks.

NELLS: But David never had feelings for Keira.

MRS. LAUGHLIN: Are you blind? Do you not see how the only joy he has is when he is in her company? The poor boy will turn into a dour, unfeeling vulture in time, with Lucia prodding him to make a career for himself...with Mr. Avery piling on more cases for which any young man could possibly prepare. And he'll be up half the night, reading by candlelight, destroying his eye sight, spending no time with his children...

NELLS: What children?

MRS. LAUGHLIN: I am imagining life in the future, Old Man.

NELLS: My grandchildren?

MRS. LAUGHLIN: Yes...well I trust you will not repeat what you know about me. One day someone will take you seriously, and then I will have serious problems.

NELLS: You are a witch, you admit it

MRS. LAUGHLIN: Yes, please keep it quiet.

*(Nells seems to feel more at ease)*

MRS. LAUGHLIN: What is wrong?

NELLS: It all makes more sense now, these illnesses, I thought I was losing my mind at times but I was not. I feel so much better as if none of this is my fault.

MRS. LAUGHLIN: It is your fault, all of it.

NELLS: I never said a bad word against your daughter. Keira is a wonderful girl. You on the other hand--

MRS. LAUGHLIN: So why could you not hold your tongue? Why could you not see that your words were wounding two young hearts? Why?

NELLS: I am not certain what you say is entirely...although there were times that I did believe David--

MRS. LAUGHLIN: It was obvious

NELLS: Maybe I...should not have said some of the things, but it is too late now, I am afraid.

MRS. LAUGHLIN: Luckily my daughter is young. She will forget and I am certain she will find another young man that will appreciate her many traits.

*(She turns--exits stage right. Avery bursts into Parsley's office stage right. Just then, a man in a trench coat and hat sees Avery and rushes out the back door. David enters behind Avery; Parsley sits at his desk.)*

AVERY: Who is that?

PARSLEY: Who is what?

AVERY: David, run after that man. Arrest him.

DAVID: On what charge?

AVERY: We will think of that later. Go, find the constable.

*(David rushes out. Nells hurries in from the main door, stage right.)*

NELLS: What is going on in here?

EVERY (*Turns to Nells*): Have you heard of a person called Takimora? (*Nells looks to Parsley for prodding.*)

PARSLEY: You do not have to answer that question truthfully, Nells. You are not under oath.

NELLS: It is all right. No need to lie, Mr. Parsley. I have heard of Takimora. But I doubt you will ever catch this person,

EVERY: No matter, the entire business is well in hand.

PARSLEY: Is it really? Well then...I believe this would be a good time to recuse myself from the case.

EVERY: You cannot do so.

PARSLEY: I know it is rather last minute, and I do apologize...

EVERY: Apologize, Sir? You are denied your request.

PARSLEY: This was a rather difficult decision for me. And Mr. Avery, you do not have the right to deny my--

EVERY: You will defend Mr. Mann, Sir. No judge would allow you off of the case on this late date.

PARSLEY: Justice cannot be served if I am Mann's lawyer.

EVERY: Very well put...you leave me no choice. You are under arrest, Sir.

PARSLEY: Under arrest?

EVERY: Obstruction of justice. Your partner, Sir William, will have to stand with the Manns on trial.

PARSLEY: Sir William? But he cannot!

NELLS: No, Mr. Avery, Sir William cannot be allowed to speak in open court. We do not even allow him to speak to the chimney sweep.

EVERY: He will, or he too will be thrown into prison.

(*David enters out of breath.*)

EVERY: So, were you unsuccessful?

DAVID: I entered a woman's dress store no more than a minute after this Takimora ran inside, and there was no sign of him; he vanished.

NELLS: Do not feel badly David. This is Takimora's gift.

EVERY: In any case, Mr. Parsley is our prisoner.

DAVID: Prisoner?

EVERY: There is no need for me to call the constable to manacle your wrist, is there Mr. Parsley?

Mr. PARSLEY: No, I will come peacefully. (*They head out the main door.*)

DAVID: But why prison?

EVERY: Quiet, David! You come along!

(*Upstage Mann enters--paces. Stage left, Parsley enters as if pushed in.*)

MANN: Ah, Mr. Parsley. Are you here to interview me?

PARSLEY: No, sir. I am a prisoner as well.

MANN: You? A lawyer in prison? Finally, justice.

(*Judge Judice walks on stage.*)

JUDGE: Parsley?

PARSLEY: Judge Judice.

JUDGE: I heard you are with us. What charge?

PARSLEY: Obstruction, Your Honor.