

CITIZEN'S ARREST

By Bobby Keniston

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CHARACTERS

(6 males, 14 females, 20 total)

DENNIS, an average guy. When first placed under citizen's arrest, he simply wants to appease everyone. As events spin out of control, he becomes increasingly annoyed.

DANA, a self-proclaimed “concerned citizen” who catches Dennis littering and places him under citizen's arrest. She enjoys acting like a tough cop and a “star witness”.

MONICA, is an out of work actress who acts as the “district attorney” at the “citizen's trial”. Likes the idea of prosecuting criminals.

MIGUEL, a coffee shop employee, who relishes the opportunity to be the defense attorney. Idealistic, but befuddled.

BERTHA, a short tempered, sassy office temp, who becomes the judge at the citizen's trial.

CASEY, made the “court stenographer” because she's got a lap top. Has trouble typing and keeping up with the proceedings.

STU, a construction worker, roped into being the bailiff. He is obsessed with Jane Austen, and a bit flirty with the ladies.

ALICIA, a young, idealistic student reporter, who decides to report on this “citizen's trial” because she was kicked out of a real courthouse.

THE JURY

LUANNE, an overly cheerful, and fake, tour guide. Becomes forewoman of the jury.

MRS. MARTINEZ, one of the tour group, visiting the city for the first time. Thinks the trial is a fun attraction.

MR. MARTINEZ, Her husband. Doesn't like the tour or being on vacation. Bickers with his wife.

ALOE WISHES, a flower child on the tour. Loves nature. Only agrees to be on the jury because the crime is littering.

GREGOR, a very prim, uptight man with a camera around his neck. Has been on two juries before and feels like an expert juror.

MILDRED, an old woman who keeps complaining about her feet, and the heat.

MIKEY, a tall “little boy”, but looks more like a grown man in little boy clothes. Exaggerated “little boy” mannerisms and voice.

TAMMY, Mikey's babysitter who tries to keep him in line.

TRACY, NANCY, LISA, and MARY KATE, are four young ladies who have formed an all-female Johnny Cash cover band. Join the jury to get inspiration for writing their own songs.

PROPERTIES

CANDY BAR WRAPPER
(Dennis)

PURSE WITH LIPSTICK
(Monica)

PURSE (Bertha)

GAVEL (Bertha)

LAP TOP COMPUTER (Casey)

LUNCH BAG (Stu)

JANE AUSTEN BOOK (Stu)

NOTEPAD AND PEN (Alicia)

CAMERA (Gregor)

CHECKBOOK WITH CHECK
AND PEN (Dennis)

PRODUCTION NOTES

“Citizen's Arrest” is a very simple play to stage. It takes place in a public park. You will need three park benches, one center stage, one stage left, and one stage right. Any “park-like” decoration is left to the discretion of the director, though some shrubbery, or potted trees and such would look very nice, and may give a more “park-like” impression. There are two trash cans in-between benches.

During the “trial” within the play, all 20 characters are on stage at the same time. It is vital that every actor stay in character and react to the events going on. This will keep the trial very interesting for the audience.

It is recommended that Miguel and Dennis, the defense, be kept to stage left area during the “trial” and Monica and Dana, the prosecution, be kept stage right. Bertha, the judge, will be sitting at the center Stage bench, which can be moved downstage for the “trial”. Stu and Casey will be on either side of Bertha. The jury, as indicated in the script will take up a park bench, some sitting on it, some standing behind, and some sitting in front of it. Special care should be taken to make sure that no one turn their backs to the audience when addressing the Judge or the Jury.

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SETTING: A Public Park. There are three park benches on stage. One of them is stage center, one is stage left, and one is stage right. There are two trash cans on stage as well, one between stage right and stage center benches, and one between stage left and stage center benches. Set dressing such as potted trees, etc., is optional, but could help give the appearance of a pleasant park atmosphere.

AT RISE: *DENNIS, an average guy, walking across the stage, eating a candy bar. DANA, a good citizen, is sitting on stage right park bench. LUANNE and her tour group walk across the stage silently, and exit. As he crosses the stage, Dennis finishes his candy bar and absentmindedly drops the candy bar wrapper on the ground and keeps walking. Dana sees this and immediately rises from the bench.*

DANA: Hey!

DENNIS: *(stops in his tracks, startled)* Are you talking to me?

DANA: You bet your sweet candy bar I'm talking to you! Don't you see that there are two trash cans right in your general area?

DENNIS: Uh... yes.

DANA: But you still choose to de-beautify our public park by throwing your trash on the ground?

DENNIS: *(friendly)* Oh, gosh, you're right. I wasn't even thinking. I'm sorry.

(DENNIS leans over to pick up his wrapper in a good natured fashion.)

DANA: Stop!

(DENNIS freezes in place.)

Just what do you think you're doing?

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DENNIS: (*still in a bent over crouch*) I'm picking up my candy bar wrapper like you suggested.

DANA: You can't!

DENNIS: Why not? You pointed it out to me, and I agree with you, so I just want to pick it up and throw it away. (*stands*) I don't usually do that, you see, I just wasn't thinking...

DANA: Do you know that littering is a crime?

DENNIS: Yes, I do, and that's why...

DANA: You committed a crime sir, punishable by a hefty fine, community service, and even jail time.

DENNIS: Jail time? For a candy bar wrapper? (*leans over to pick up the wrapper again*)

DANA: Leave it! That wrapper is now evidence!

DENNIS: For what?

DANA: For your trial!

DENNIS: (*still pleasant*) Now, now, there's no need for any trial. I'll just pick it up and throw it away... no harm done.

DANA: No harm done? Are you insane? Do you plan to plead insanity, is that it?

DENNIS: Ma'am...

DANA: Don't you condescend to me! How often would you say that you just throw trash on the ground when you're "not thinking"?

DENNIS: (*on the spot*) I...I...

DANA: Just as I thought! And you'll do it again, if this instance goes unpunished.

DENNIS: Excuse me... what is your name?

DANA: I don't see how it's relevant, but my name is Dana, and more importantly, I am a concerned citizen of this fine city, who does not like to see our environment polluted by non-thinkers!

DENNIS: Dana, my name is Dennis, and I assure you, I am also a concerned citizen, and I myself am very much against littering, so please, just let me pick up this wrapper and throw it away, and we'll be done with it. What do you say?

DANA: I'm sure you're a nice guy, Dennis, but I'm afraid you are under a Citizen's Arrest.

DENNIS: (*trying not to laugh*) A Citizen's Arrest? Do people really do that?

DANA: I don't know about anybody else, but I do it, and I'm doing it now. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be held against you in a court of...

DENNIS: No offense, but this is a little silly. (*HE leans down, picks up the wrapper and tosses it into one of the trash cans, and then begins to exit.*)

DANA: (*very loud*) STOP! STOP RIGHT THERE! STOP THAT MAN!

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(DENNIS quickly turns around and moves closer to DANA.)

DENNIS: What are you doing? Are you crazy?

(DANA takes off one of her shoes and holds it up.)

DANA: If you try to flee the scene of your crime again, I will be forced to throw my shoe at your head.

DENNIS: You don't need to assault me with your footwear, okay? What is it you want me to do? I threw the wrapper away. What more is necessary?

DANA: I have placed you under Citizen's Arrest. You have to answer for your crimes.

DENNIS: Are you a police officer? A Park Official? A Security Guard? Any kind of person even indirectly related to law enforcement?

DANA: No. I am a concerned citizen.

DENNIS: I'm sure you are. And clearly, my actions have caused you great concern, and I apologize, I do. But don't you think you're being a little excessive?

(DANA, still with only one shoe, walks over to the trash can where DENNIS disposed of the wrapper. SHE takes a little plastic baggie out of her purse, fishes out the wrapper, and puts it in the baggie, all while saying...)

DANA: The laws of the land represent the will of the people. As I am one of the people of the land, I have the right and the duty to stop criminals from committing their crimes. It's called civic responsibility.

DENNIS: You carry evidence bags in your purse?

DANA: No, I reuse sandwich bags for my lunch. I care about the environment, unlike some people I could mention.

(At this point, MONICA can enter and sit on bench stage right. SHE is an out of work actress, pretty, young. SHE starts to put on some lipstick. DANA and DENNIS don't notice her yet.)

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DENNIS: I do care about the environment, I just made a mistake. And I don't see how making a mountain out of a molehill helps anything.

Seriously, what do you expect to accomplish? Are you going to call the police and tell them you've picked up a litter bug? I mean, they don't hold trials for this sort of thing, so I really don't think...

DANA: Well they should! In fact, that's exactly what I'm going to do! We're going to have a Citizen's Trial!

DENNIS: That's the most ludicrous thing I've ever heard.

DANA: And I'm going to be the arresting officer AND the star witness!

DENNIS: Come on...

(DANA approaches MONICA.)

DANA: Excuse me, miss? Are you a citizen of this city?

MONICA: I sure am.

DANA: Well, I've just placed this criminal under Citizen's Arrest, and I was wondering if you would be interested in helping me hold a Citizen's Trial for him.

MONICA: What did he do?

DANA: He littered!

(MONICA gasps, horrified.)

I told you he was a criminal!

DENNIS: I am not a criminal!

MONICA: *(rising from the bench)* He's right, every person is innocent until proven guilty. This is America after all.

DANA: Do you want to be his Defense Attorney, then?

MONICA: No way! I hate law breakers. I want to be the District Attorney so I can prosecute the dirtbag.

DENNIS: Hey, now, I am not a dirtbag...

MONICA: Sir, I would advise you to not speak without the presence of your attorney. I want this to be a fair trial after all.

DANA: Miss District Attorney, I will be your star witness. I'm the arresting officer.

MONICA: Good. We'll need to go over your testimony. And please, call me Monica. We're on the same side, after all.

DENNIS: Wait a minute... miss, are you trained to be a lawyer?

MONICA: No. But I am an actress, and have appeared in several courtroom dramas. I think I know what I'm doing.

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(At this point, MIGUEL starts to make his way across the stage, unnoticed for the time being.)

DENNIS: Just because you've played a lawyer doesn't mean... oh, what does it matter? There isn't going to be any trial!

MONICA: Oh yes there is! *(sees MIGUEL and addresses him)* Excuse me, sir.

MIGUEL: Are you talking to me?

MONICA: Yes. Are you a citizen of this city?

MIGUEL: Born and raised! I work at the coffee shop down the street...

DANA: Well, my name is Dana, and this is Monica...

MIGUEL: Hi.

DANA: Hi. I have just placed this man *(indicating DENNIS)* under citizen's arrest. I am the arresting officer and the star witness against him. Monica is the District Attorney. We need to find a defense attorney for him, and we were wondering...

MIGUEL: Say no more! I have always thought of myself as a modern day Atticus Finch!

DENNIS: You just said you worked in a coffee shop.

MIGUEL: Yes, but I love that book! *(getting dramatic)* Listen, my friend, I have always been one to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. I have dedicated my humble existence to righting wrongs, to bringing justice to those who face injustice, to serving...

DENNIS: *(cutting him off)* Coffee to the coffee-less?

MIGUEL: Yes! And I am honored to be your attorney! My name is Miguel, and I will do everything in my power to fight for your freedom.

DENNIS: That's touching, it is, but I don't really need an attorney.

MIGUEL: My friend, a man who represents himself in court, has a fool for a client. If you are worried about money, have no fear. I will take this case pro bono.

DENNIS: All I did was throw a candy bar wrapper on the...

(MIGUEL covers his ears quickly.)

MIGUEL: It doesn't matter! I don't want to know if you're guilty or not. I want to give you the best representation you deserve under the laws of our great land! I took an oath!

DENNIS: They make you take an oath when you're learning to brew espresso?

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(At this point, BERTHA, a rather large and mean-looking lady enters. DANA sees her immediately and goes to her.)

DANA: Excuse me, ma'am, do you live in this city?

BERTHA: Yup. What do you want?

DANA: We are holding a trial for this man (*indicates DENNIS*), and we need a judge. I am the arresting officer.

MONICA: I'm the District Attorney.

MIGUEL: (*very dramatic*) And I will be representing the accused!

BERTHA: Heck, folks, I'm just an office temp. (*beat*) But I do have a lot of opinions, and I can be downright sassy like those judge ladies on TV! Oh, why not? You twisted my arm. I'll be the judge.

DENNIS: But you just said you're an office temp!

BERTHA: (*to MIGUEL*) I would recommend you keep your client under control, or he's going to find himself in my personal contempt, and contempt of this court!

MIGUEL: Yes, your honor. (*to DENNIS*) Let me handle this.

MONICA: Your honor, the prosecution is ready to begin.

BERTHA: Oops, just a minute. (*SHE sits on bench stage center, and rummages through her purse*) I think I've got my gavel in here somewhere. (*SHE finds it*) I was on my way to my quilting circle... it gets a little out of hand. (*beat*) Oh, and we can't start until we get ourselves a court stenographer, in case I need some facts read back to me.

(CASEY, a pretty young lady, enters carrying a lap top computer. BERTHA sees her and calls to her.)

Excuse me, miss? What's your name?

CASEY: (*a little startled*) I'm Casey.

BERTHA: Casey, I'm giving you a chance to exercise your civic duty.

CASEY: (*after a beat*) 'Kay.

BERTHA: I am appointing you to be our court stenographer. All you need to do is listen to the trial, and write down everything everyone says. Can you do that?

CASEY: Um... I guess. But I'm not the fastest typist in the world or anything. Just sayin'.

BERTHA: That's fine. You come and sit next to me over here.

CASEY: (*after a slight pause*) 'Kay.

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(CASEY goes and sits next to BERTHA, her lap top ready.)

MONICA: Now, your Honor, if we are ready...

BERTHA: Wait. We gotta have a Bailiff. Just in case.

MIGUEL: Your honor, I assure you that my client poses no threat whatsoever. *(to DENNIS)* Right?

DENNIS: This is the stupidest thing I have ever had to deal with.

(STU, a big construction workers enters, unseen for the moment.)

BERTHA: *(to MIGUEL)* Counsel, have you considered the ramifications of your client mentally snapping if you lose his case? You could very well be the first target of his rage.

(MIGUEL looks nervous. HE sees STU and points to him.)

MIGUEL: I recommend him for Bailiff!

MONICA: *(crossing to STU, flirting)* Excuse me, sir, but how would you like to be the Bailiff for a Citizen's Trial we're holding here in the park? You look very strong.

STU: Well, that depends. What's your name?

MONICA: Monica.

STU: Are you single? And do you like Jane Austen?

MONICA: Yes. And yes.

STU: Well, I'm Stu. And sure, I'll be a Bailiff for you.

BERTHA: Very good. Come stand here by my bench.

STU: All right, but I only got an hour for lunch, and I want to finish "Persuasion" before I go back, so...

BERTHA: Don't worry, this won't take long.

(STU goes and stands by BERTHA's bench.)

DENNIS: Listen, everyone, this has gone on long enough. Too long, in fact. You can all play your little parts, but it doesn't change the fact that this is not a legal trial. It's a farce! No matter what any of you decide, it doesn't matter! It wouldn't hold up in any court, any where, any day. So why don't we all just forget it?!

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BERTHA: *(to MIGUEL, brandishing her gavel)* Counsel, I will not warn you again!

MIGUEL: *(to BERTHA)* Yes, your Honor. *(to DENNIS)* Dude, seriously, chill out! She means business.

DENNIS: That's it. I'm leaving. *(starts to exit.)*

BERTHA: Bailiff! Stop him!

(STU goes over to DENNIS and drags him back to where HE was standing next to MIGUEL.)

STU: Sir, why don't you just stick around? It's your day in court.

DENNIS: This isn't court!

STU: Hey, don't make me go all Jane Austen on you!

DENNIS: What does that even mean?

BERTHA: *(brandishing her gavel, to DENNIS)* Silence! Any more outbursts from you, and I will have you removed from this court!

DENNIS: Promise?

MIGUEL: Zip it!

DENNIS: But...

MIGUEL: Zip it!

DENNIS: But...

MIGUEL: One more time, just one more time... I dare you.

(DENNIS rolls his eyes, but remains silent.)

BERTHA: All right. Stenographer, what have we got so far?

CASEY: *(looks at lap top, points to MONICA)* Okay, she said, "Now, you're honor, if we are ready..." and you said, "Wait. We gotta have a bailiff just in..." *(CASEY types slowly, then says:)* ... "case".

BERTHA: That's all you have?

CASEY: I told you I wasn't a fast typer. Geez.

BERTHA: Very well.

(ALICIA enters with a notepad. SHE is a student reporter, and very eager to write a story.)

ALICIA: Excuse me, my name is Alicia, and I am a student journalist. I was just kicked out of the court house because I didn't have a press

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pass, and I heard there was a trial going on here. Are there any objections to me being your court reporter?

MIGUEL: Your honor, I think under the circumstances, this should be a closed trial.

BERTHA: Overruled! I will allow the reporter!

ALICIA: Yes! Thank you, your honor.

(STU approaches ALICIA.)

STU: Hi, I'm Stu, the Bailiff. I would be happy to give you an exclusive later on.

ALICIA: That would be great!

STU: Do you like Jane Austen?

BERTHA: Bailiff!

(STU goes back to his post next to BERTHA's bench.)

ALICIA: Have I missed anything?

CASEY: Not really.

DENNIS: If you want to be a real reporter, there is nothing for you here.

This is nonsense. *(beat)* Wait, how did you hear...

MIGUEL: I said zip it, so just zip it! Dude, I can't help you if you don't help yourself. And I am committed to getting you your freedom... but I can't do that if you won't meet me halfway. We've gotta be a team. Are you with me?

DENNIS: *(rolling his eyes)* Sure.

MIGUEL: Go team "Not Guilty"!

(HE raises his hand for a high five with DENNIS. DENNIS ignores it.)

MONICA: It looks like all we need now is a jury.

(At this point, a tour guide named LUANNE, who is overly smiley and fake, enters, followed by her tour group of eleven. The TOURISTS include MRS. MARTINEZ, visiting the city for the first time, and looking very happy, snapping pictures. Her husband, MR. MARTINEZ, who does not look as happy to be on the tour. ALOE WISHES, a flower girl in

a flowing summer dress is part of the tour, as is GREGOR, a prim-looking man in a shirt that is all buttoned-up, followed by MILDRED, an old lady who complains about everything, MIKEY, an annoying "little boy", who looks more like a grown man in little boy clothes. TAMMY, MIKEY's babysitter. LISA, NANCY, TRACY, and MARY KATE, an all female band that performs Johnny Cash cover songs. THEY wear "I love Johnny Cash" t-shirts, and speak in Southern accents.)

LUANNE: *(to her tour group)* Now this is the world-famous Idyllic Park, the pride of our city. If you look to your left...

MR. MARTINEZ: I don't see what's so great about it.

MRS. MARTINEZ: Hush. Don't you ruin this vacation for me like you ruin everything else.

GREGOR: Excuse me, but I'm having a difficult time understanding the historical significance of this place.

LUANNE: I'm sorry, but let's leave all questions until the end, all right, Sugar?

GREGOR: Please don't call me Sugar. Or hon. Or sweetie. My name is Gregor. And I'm a diabetic.

ALOE: Who needs to know the historical significance? This is nature, man, nature! Let loose. Unbutton that top button.

GREGOR: No thank you. That would leave my Adam's Apple vulnerable to the elements.

MIKEY: I want to play on the swings!

TAMMY: Not now, Mikey! We're listening to the fake, nice lady.

MILDRED: This heat is killing me! I need to rest!

TRACY: It is like a burning ring of fire, isn't it? *(beat. Turns to LISA, NANCY, and MARY KATE)* Get it, girls?

MARY KATE: Good reference, Tracy!

NANCY: Love it!

LISA: We are the best all-female Johnny Cash cover band ever!

(LISA, NANCY, TRACY and MARY KATE give each other high fives and laugh.)

BERTHA: Excuse me, folks! We're trying to have a trial over here! And I am the honorable Judge Bertha, presiding.

LUANNE: Well now, sweetie, I am just so sorry! I didn't know the courthouse was having their trials outside these days. We'll go on ahead and quiet down.

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DENNIS: This isn't a real trial. I'm still waiting to see if I'm on one of those hidden camera prank shows. And if I am, I warn you all right now that you're going to have to bleep out my reaction.

BERTHA: Don't listen to him! He is the accused, who is coming dangerously close to being in contempt. *(to LUANNE)* So what is it you folks are doing?

LUANNE: Well, my name is Luanne, and I am an official tour guide of our great city! And this is my tour group. I always save Idyllic Park for last, 'cause it's just so darn much fun!

MR. MARTINEZ: Yeah, a real blast.

MRS. MARTINEZ: Quiet, you!

BERTHA: Well, I hate to impose on you fine folks, but I am going to ask you all to perform your civic duty... Nay, your duties as AMERICANS, and act as our jury for this Citizen's Trial!

MRS. MARTINEZ: Now that sounds like fun!

LUANNE: *(turning to her group)* Well, gang, what do you all say? You want to be part of this trial thingy they got going on? Could be a good way to see the city's system of justice in action.

GREGOR: I will have you all know that I am a very experienced juror. I have served on two juries previously, and am well-versed in appropriate jury behavior.

MIKEY: I want to play on the swings!

TAMMY: No, Mikey, we have to be on a jury!

MIGUEL: Your Honor, I must strenuously object! Clearly that boy is far too young to be serving on any jury!

BERTHA: *(to MIKEY)* Young man, how old are you?

MIKEY: *(holding up seven fingers, exaggerated "little boy" voice)* I'm this many. One, two, free, four, five, six, seven! I'm seven.

DENNIS: How can he be seven? He's like six feet tall and has a five o'clock shadow.

MIGUEL: Cool it.

BERTHA: *(to MIKEY)* Young man, do you know the difference between right and wrong?

MIKEY: Yes. I think so.

TAMMY: Your Honor, if I may: my name is Tammy, and I am Mikey's babysitter. I can assure you that Mikey is very intelligent for his age, and well-behaved.

MIKEY: Yes! I'm a big boy! I can put together all of my train set all by myself!

(EVERYONE but DENNIS says "Awwwwwwww.")

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BERTHA: I'll allow the young man as a juror!

DENNIS: *(under his breath)* Of course. Why not?

ALOE: You can all count me out!

BERTHA: And what is your name, young lady?

ALOE: My name is Aloe Wishes. And I do not follow the laws as handed down by any oppressive government. I follow the laws of Nature and of Love.

BERTHA: But what about your duty as a citizen?

ALOE: I don't even know what this man is charged with!

DANA and MONICA: *(together)* Littering.

(EVERYONE, except for DENNIS and MIGUEL, gasp, horrified.)

MIGUEL: *(whispering to DENNIS)* That doesn't bode well. But keep your chin up!

ALOE: I will serve on this jury! I will set aside my personal opinions about the law for the greater good of Nature!

BERTHA: Terrific. What about the rest of you?

MR. MARTINEZ: I didn't come on vacation to serve on a jury!

MRS. MARTINEZ: No, of course not! You came on vacation to torture me, just like you do at home!

MR. MARTINEZ: Here we go!

MRS. MARTINEZ: Well, maybe we wouldn't have to be on a jury if we had gone to Bermuda like I wanted!

MR. MARTINEZ: It's too hot! I sweat when I'm standing still, for crying out loud! What do you want from me?

MRS. MARTINEZ: Maybe a little spirit of fun for a change!

MR. MARTINEZ: Fine, I'll be on the jury! Are you happy?

BERTHA: Okay, that's settled. *(to MILDRED)* What about you?

MILDRED: I don't give a tinker's cuss, so long as I can sit down and rest my tootsies! I'm not as young as the rest of you, you know! It would be nice if someone could appreciate that.

BERTHA: Thank you. Why don't you go rest your "tootsies" on that bench?

(Indicates bench stage left. MILDRED goes there and immediately sits. SHE takes her shoes off. MR. and MRS. MARTINEZ sit on the bench with her, and GREGOR goes and stands behind the bench. ALOE sits in front of the bench, cross-legged, almost in a meditation pose.)

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TAMMY: What do you say, Mikey? Want to do your civic duty like a big boy, and serve on the jury?

MIKEY: *(nodding his head in an exaggerated manner)* Oh boy!

(MIKEY and TAMMY sit in front of the bench, next to ALOE.)

BERTHA: *(to LISA, TRACY, NANCY and MARY KATE)* And you four ladies? What do you say?

TRACY: *(to the OTHERS)* I don't know. What would Johnny Cash do?

LISA: He always stood up for what was right.

NANCY: He was a good man.

MARY KATE: And besides, this might give us inspiration! We've been talking about writing our own songs!

TRACY: You're right! How about this: "My Heart is on Trial, and it Holds You in Contempt"?

NANCY: I like it! Or: "In the Jury of My Heart, Your Objection's Out Of Order"?

MARY KATE: Or how about this: "Walk the Line"?

LISA: No, dear, that's an actual Johnny Cash song.

MARY KATE: Oh, right!

TRACY: We're in!

(The LADIES go around the bench with the OTHERS, standing together.)

BERTHA: And you, Luanne? Miss Tour Guide?

LUANNE: *(smiling her big, fake smile)* Well, I'd be pleased as punch, hon! Just one thing: since I'm the tour guide in charge, could I be the forewoman on the jury? Why, it would just tickle me to death, and give me so much to talk about on my other tours!

BERTHA: Fine with me, forewoman of the jury.

(LUANNE squeals and goes over to the bench with the rest of the "jury". BERTHA speaks to MONICA.)

Miss District Attorney, do you approve of this jury?

MONICA: I have no objections to this jury, your Honor.

BERTHA: *(to MIGUEL)* Defense?

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MIGUEL: I have no objections to this jury, your Honor.

DENNIS: Are you serious?

MIGUEL: Don't worry, I know what I'm doing. It's all about the big pretty speeches. Trust me.

BERTHA: Fine, let's proceed. Stenographer?

CASEY: My name's Casey.

TRACY: Hey, my name's Tracy! Casey and Tracy! We rhyme!

CASEY: *(after a beat)* 'Kay.

BERTHA: Are you ready to proceed, Casey?

CASEY: I guess.

BERTHA: Can you read back the last thing you have to me?

CASEY: *(looks at her lap top, points to MIKEY)* He said, "I want to play on the swings." And then she said *(pointing to TAMMY)* "Not now, Mikey, we have to be on a..." *(types out slowly)* ... jury."

BERTHA: Close enough. Let us begin! Bailiff!

(STU takes a book out of his lunch bag, and then addresses the "court.")

STU: Ladies and Gentlemen, this court is now in session, the honorable Judge Bertha presiding. All rise.

(THEY do.)

Raise your right hand.

(THEY do.)

Now put your right foot in.

(THEY do.)

And take your right foot out.

(THEY do.)

Now put your right foot in and you shake it all about...

BERTHA: Bailiff!

STU: Sorry. Okay, I don't have a Bible with me, but I do have this: the complete works of Jane Austen. So, repeat after me: I solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

EVERYONE: (*except BERTHA*) I solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

STU: Just as Jane Austen tells the truth about the dreams and hopes that live in a woman's heart, and challenges us to be better people through her exquisite prose and depth of vision.

(*NO ONE says anything. There is a pause. Finally.*)

BERTHA: You may be seated.

(*The JURY sits.*)

Is the prosecution ready?

MONICA: Yes your Honor. (*beat*) Ladies and gentlemen of the Jury, as District Attorney, it is my solemn duty to uphold the laws as laid down in the Constitution of the United States.

DENNIS: You're not a district attorney!

MONICA: (*continuing*) I will admit that there are some crimes that do not seem as heinous as others. But ladies and gentlemen, crime is crime! And if we allow so-called "small crimes" to go unpunished, then society as a whole suffers! The prosecution will prove beyond any reasonable doubt that this man (*indicates DENNIS*) has committed the crime of littering, and, furthermore, shows no respect for the laws of the land, no respect for this very court, and even more shocking, shows not one iota of remorse for his actions. And the proof lies in the testimony of a highly decorated officer of the peace, and the very candy bar wrapper the accused so callously disposed of on this very ground, a ground known for its beauty, and the joy it gives to all who visit here. Thank you.

(*BERTHA and the JURY applaud. MONICA bows.*)

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ALICIA: (*writing in her notebook*) This is going to be a great story! I can see it now! "Dirtbag Litter Bug Prosecuted to the Full Extent of the Law"!

MIGUEL: (*to DENNIS*) Don't worry. Watch this. (*HE clears his throat, addresses the JURY.*) Ladies and Gentlemen: I agree with my learned council on many issues. All crime is crime, and must be dealt with in the appropriate manner. But what is Justice? Justice is a kind of... (*loses his train*)... well, Justice is like a cup of coffee. Sometimes it is too hot, and you have to blow on it so it won't burn your tongue. Other times, Justice may be too sweet or not sweet enough. (*really has no idea what to say*) Uh... you cannot just drink your Justice if it is not the right Justice for you. But one thing I do know for certain: Justice goes great with cheese danish. Thank you.

(*EVERYONE looks very confused by MIGUEL's opening statement, except for DENNIS, who looks very angry*)

DENNIS: (*whispering fiercely*) Was that your idea of a pretty speech, Atticus?!

MIGUEL: (*whispering*) I got thrown. It happens to the best. Don't worry, we'll get them on the cross examination.

BERTHA: The Prosecution may call their first witness!

MONICA: I call Dana to the stand!

(*DANA goes and stands near BERTHA's bench.*)

Please state your name.

DANA: My name is Dana.

MONICA: And you are the arresting officer in this case, are you not?

DANA: I am. I have been a concerned citizen all of my life. I have made fourteen Citizen Arrests in my career, all of which led to convictions.

(*The JURY, BERTHA, and STU and ALICIA ooh and ahhh at this.*)

MONICA: Please describe the events leading up to the arrest.

DANA: I was sitting here in the beautiful Idyllic Park, keeping an ever watchful, vigilant eye. Suddenly, that man (*indicating DENNIS*)

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walked by eating a candy bar, chewing loudly and with his mouth open!

DENNIS: That's not true!

(BERTHA bangs her gavel on the bench.)

BERTHA: Silence!

MONICA: *(comforting, to DANA)* I know this must be very emotional for you, but please, go on.

DANA: After he finished his candy bar, I saw him throw his wrapper right on the ground. He laughed an evil laugh and continued walking. When I stopped him, and kindly pointed out that he had littered, he came up to me calling me crazy. I had to use my shoe as a weapon to keep him at bay.

(The JURY gasps! ALICIA takes her notes quickly and with excitement.)

MONICA: How awful that must have been for you!

DANA: Yes. He not only littered, but resisted arrest! He claimed I had no authority over him, that he was above the law. *(mimicking DENNIS)* "Why don't we just throw the wrapper away and move on!"

MIGUEL: Objection, your Honor! Heresay!

DENNIS: Good call.

BERTHA: *(to DENNIS)* Say something right now.

DENNIS: What? What do you want me to say?

BERTHA: *(to MIGUEL)* Overruled. She does a very good impression of him, so I'll allow the testimony.

MIGUEL: But your Honor...

BERTHA: Don't make me bang my gavel in a threatening manner! *(to DANA)* You may continue.

DANA: After I placed the defendant under Citizen's Arrest, he picked up his wrapper and threw it away. I have it here as evidence. *(SHE takes the wrapper in its baggie from her purse, and hands it to MONICA)*

MONICA: This is Exhibit A. The offending wrapper.

(SHE hands it off to LUANNE, who passes it around the JURY.)

As you can all see, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury, this is in fact litter. No question about it. It is not decoration, it is not beautification, it is DESTRUCTION! *(beat)* No further questions, your honor. *(To MIGUEL)* Your witness.

MIGUEL: *(clears his throat, approaches DANA)* Dana, you say that you saw the defendant, my client, drop a “so-called” candy wrapper on the ground, is that right?

DANA: Yes.

MIGUEL: Are you saying you saw him littering with your own eyes?

DANA: Yes.

MIGUEL: And you're sure it was him? No tricks of light, nothing like that?

DANA: It was definitely him.

MIGUEL: My client is a very average looking man. Are you 100 percent certain that it couldn't have been someone else?

DANA: I am 100 percent certain that your client, the defendant, is the man I saw, with my own eyes, littering, and then resisting arrest.

MIGUEL: I see. *(beat. HE doesn't know what to say)* I see. *(another beat. HE thinks. Gives up.)* No further questions.

(MIGUEL walks back to DENNIS.)

BERTHA: You may step down, Dana. Thank you for your testimony.

(The JURY applauds DANA, and SHE bows to them.)

DENNIS: *(to MIGUEL)* You call that a cross-examination!?

BERTHA: Any other witnesses, Monica?

MONICA: No, your Honor, the prosecution rests.

BERTHA: Defense?

MIGUEL: Your Honor, I'd like to take a brief recess to... uh... to let Mikey go and play on the swings!

MIKEY: Oh boy!

BERTHA: Denied.

MIKEY: Oh, shucks!

BERTHA: Are you able to continue, Defense?

MIGUEL: The thing is, your Honor...

DENNIS: That's it! You're fired, Miguel!

MIGUEL: But I'm working on my closing in my head right now...

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DENNIS: Why don't you work on closing your mouth, and go make me a latte? I'm speaking for myself, here on out. *(to JURY)* Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury, I admit, I tossed the candy bar wrapper on the ground!

(The JURY gasps.)

ALICIA: I can't believe it! A confession!

DENNIS: But how many of you can honestly say that you've never made a mistake? I am a good person, who was a little distracted walking through the park. I did not litter out of malice, or out of spite. I, too, am a concerned citizen of this city, and care about keeping it beautiful. I admit, I was in the wrong. But as soon as this lady *(indicates DANA)* pointed out that I had dropped my wrapper without thinking, my instinct was to pick it up and throw it away. I never would have just left it there on the ground. As a jury of my peers, it is your duty to temper justice with understanding. I had no evil motive, no sinister intent. I ask you all to look into your hearts and into your common sense, and find me not guilty. Thank you.

(There is a long pause. MIGUEL begins to applaud, but NO ONE joins him, so HE stops. The JURY looks at each other. BERTHA looks at CASEY.)

BERTHA: Stenographer, please read back what the defendant just said.
CASEY: *(looking at her lap top)* 'Kay. *(SHE points to MARY KATE)* She said, "Or how about this: 'Walk the Line'", and then she said...
BERTHA: Thank you. Just as I thought. Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury, this man has just confessed to the crime of littering. You are all witnesses?

(The JURY all nod their heads, say "yes", "I heard him", and the like.)

TRACY: He is completely guilty. Maybe we should send him to Folsom Prison!

MARY KATE: Good one, Tracy!

LISA: I think we should perform at Folsom Prison!

NANCY: Are you nuts? In front of all those prisoners?

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TRACY: Johnny Cash did it...

NANCY: Well, yeah, but still...

BERTHA: (*cutting them off*) Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury, in lieu of the defendant's confession, you are all dismissed. Thank you for completing your civic duty.

(*MILDRED, who has fallen asleep, wakes up amongst the ensuing hubbub.*)

GREGOR: Your Honor, if you need any help in sentencing, I have served on juries before, and am quite experienced with the swift hand of justice...

MR. MARTINEZ: When is the tour over? I want to go back to the hotel and watch the game!

MRS. MARTINEZ: Of course, because you never watch TV at home!

MIKEY: I'm going to go play on the swings! (*runs off*)

TAMMY: Mikey, no running! (*runs off after him*)

ALOE: Wow, I've never been part of justice being served before! I think I'll become a Republican! (*SHE exits*)

LUANNE: If any of you sweeties are still interested in the tour, just follow me this way.

MILDRED: Where am I? Who are you people?

LUANNE: Just come with me, hon.

(*LUANNE exits with MILDRED.*)

TRACY: OOOH! I just got an idea for a song: "In the Jury of my Heart, I Can't A-Quit You!"

MARY KATE: Oh, that's perfect!

(*TRACY, LISA, NANCY and MARY KATE exit, excited. ALL of the JURY has filtered off now.*)

BERTHA: Well, now! Time to pass sentence.

MIGUEL: Your Honor, my former client requests leniency in sentencing.

BERTHA: Denied! It is the opinion of this court that the defendant shows no remorse for his actions, and that is why I give him the maximum fine of \$5700!

DENNIS: What? \$5700 for throwing a candy bar wrapper on the ground! That's too much! I won't pay it! No way I'll pay that!

BERTHA: If you do not pay the fine, sir, you will be remanded here to Idyllic Park, with the bailiff as your guard, until you do pay the fine.

STU: (*approaching DENNIS*) I will guard you as Jane Austen guards the hopes and dreams of all of her characters, like Charles Darcy guards his true feelings for...

BERTHA: So what's it going to be, defendant?

ALICIA: Oh, I hope you choose to be a prisoner here in the park! That would make a great headline... otherwise, a confession and paying a fine for littering isn't much of a story.

DENNIS: Wait. Are you saying if I just pay the fine, you'll keep this out of the papers?

ALICIA: Yeah. No one wants to read about a boring litter case. Now, if you choose to be a prisoner here in the park...

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