

OBEDIENCE IS MANDATORY

by Kamron Klitgaard

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OBEDIENCE IS MANDATORY

A Dramatic One Act

by **Kamron Klitgaard**

SYNOPSIS: What kind of world exists where obedience is mandatory? And everyone is forced to be good? In this dystopian community an Enforcer and her Drones make sure that everyone's actions are in compliance with good; not through mind control or threat of blackmail, but by physically moving their bodies to comply with goodness. Jack and Red test the boundaries by being good without being forced, threatening the Enforcer's power. Other citizens are intrigued by their actions and soon a rebellion begins.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 female, 1 male, 6 either, 5-20 extras)

RED (f) An adventurous citizen. *(94 lines)*
 JACK (m)..... A rebellious citizen. *(96 lines)*
 LUCY (f)..... The enforcer. *(66 lines)*
 DRONE 1 (m/f)..... Assistant to the enforcer. *(26 lines)*
 DRONE 2 (m/f)..... Assistant to the enforcer. *(24 lines)*
 HARP (m/f)..... A curious citizen. *(29 lines)*
 STALK (m/f) A cautious citizen. *(24 lines)*
 BEAN (m/f) An intrigued citizen. *(11 lines)*
 GOOSE (m/f)..... A convinced citizen. *(1 line)*

EXTRAS:

CITIZENS (m/f) 5 to 20 extra citizens. *(Non-Speaking)*

DURATION: 30 minutes.

SETTING: A town square.

TIME: Anytime.

SET

A bare stage with three blocks for standing on. One higher than the other two.

STAGING

When the Citizens walk in the town square, they can exit and enter to look like a bustling center of town. A different idea was to have them walk in an oval around Lucy and the Drones. Other productions have had them walking in random directions, even into the audience to indicate that they are on their way to work. The key is to have them all onstage when Lucy orders the “Halt!”

The blocks could be set Center. The two Drone blocks slightly Downstage of Lucy’s taller block.

COSTUMING

ALL CITIZENS – Drab greys, browns, blacks, and whites.

THE DRONES – Uniforms. They should look militaristic.

LUCY – The same uniform as the Drones but with an animal fur.

PROPS

- small bag of groceries
- items that Citizens would take to work (Lunchboxes, briefcases, backpacks, etc.)
- book (Jack and the Beanstalk)
- watch
- coin
- three small sleeping devices to hold against foreheads (could be just a small box)
- ropes
- two blindfolds

SOUND FX

There are two different Sound Effects: The sound of the siren, which is a warning that there is one minute to curfew. And the sound of a gong, which indicates that curfew has begun. These sounds could be substituted with a bell or buzzer; it really doesn't matter, as long as the sound represents those two events.

PRODUCTION NOTES

When directing the acting, remember that the Citizens are not robots. However, they have never had the freedom to choose for themselves. They've also never had to take responsibility for anything. They have never been punished, for they have never done anything wrong, nor have they been rewarded, for they have never done anything right. This is a dystopian society. Whether in this year, or a hundred years hence, on this planet or perhaps out amongst the stars, the old argument rages on: Freedom versus Force.

AT START: *It's a busy day in the town square. CITIZENS walk the square. They all wear drab grey tones. DRONE 1 and DRONE 2 are perched up on blocks in uniforms. LUCY, also in a uniform and wearing some sort of fur, stands between them, perched even higher. They observe. JACK enters and walks with the extras. RED enters with a small bag of groceries and walks. RED trips and falls, spilling her groceries. JACK freezes. The CITIZENS keep walking until...*

LUCY: Halt! No one move!

RED and CITIZENS freeze.

LUCY: Citizens, you are good. There has been an incident. It is the duty of citizenship to execute righteousness. I, Lucy, your enforcer, will randomly select one of you for this honor. The drones shall assist you. *(Scans the crowd and then points at JACK.)* That one.

DRONE 1 and DRONE 2 step off their blocks and approach JACK. They grab his arms.

DRONE 1: Here is the selected citizen.

DRONE 2: What is your designation?

JACK: Citizen 1-Xray-3-2-Bravo-Delta-4-3-2-6.

LUCY: You have been selected to execute righteousness.

JACK: Thanks, but you don't really need—

LUCY: Execute.

DRONE 1 and DRONE 2 physically force JACK to RED. They first force his arms and hands to help her up. Then they force his hands to gather her groceries and then force him to hand them to her. DRONE 1 grabs JACK'S chin and forces his mouth open and shut as LUCY speaks for him like a puppet.

LUCY: *(As JACK.)* Here you are, miss. I hope you didn't hurt yourself.

DRONE 2 grabs RED'S chin and forces her mouth open and shut as LUCY speaks for her.

LUCY: (As *RED*.) Thank you, kind sir. You are good. (As *JACK*.) You are good as well. Have a nice day.

DRONE 1 and DRONE 2 return to their blocks.

LUCY: The cause of righteousness has been fulfilled. Citizens: You are good. You may now resume your business.

CITIZENS begin walking again. JACK and RED exchange a look and then go on their way. CITIZENS thin out until they have all exited. LUCY steps down and exits. DRONE 1 and DRONE 2 follow LUCY. Lights dim. RED enters and stops at the spot where she had tripped. JACK enters.

JACK: You're out pretty late.

RED: Oh! You startled me. Yes, I was just heading home. (*Hurries past JACK.*)

JACK: Hey, it's you.

RED: (*Stopping.*) What?

JACK: You're the one I helped today.

RED: Oh, yes. Thank you for that.

JACK: Come on; they're not forcing your speech right now. I didn't help you. They did.

RED: Maybe so, but technically you helped me. So, technically I thank you.

JACK: Ha! I like that. What's your designation?

RED: I'm Citizen 1-Xray-4-5-Bravo-Delta-2-5-5-9.

JACK: Oh, I love that designation.

RED: Funny. And what's yours?

JACK: Just call me Jack.

RED: That does not comply with righteousness.

JACK: Fine. 1-Xray-3-2-Bravo-Delta-4-3-2-6

RED: What's Jack?

JACK: It's a name I got from a book.

RED: A book? There are no more books. They do not comply with righteousness.

JACK: Being out after curfew does not comply with righteousness either.

RED: It's not curfew yet.

JACK: It's getting close. The streets are empty. Even the drones are gone.

RED: We still have time.

JACK: You like to walk the line.

RED: What do you mean?

JACK: Everyone else is inside. They don't want to get too close to that curfew line and risk being caught outside.

RED: No one has broken curfew since... well, I don't think anyone has ever broken curfew.

JACK: Who would risk it?

RED: You're walking the line too.

JACK: It's exciting, isn't it?

RED: Maybe a little.

JACK: Just think, if we get inside now, we'll be fine. If we stay out here five more minutes we'll be taken away; whatever that means. Yeah, you're right. It's not that exciting. Staying out until one minute to curfew; snooze.

RED: You know of something more exciting?

JACK: Maybe.

RED: What? Tell me!

JACK: I better not. You might be one of them.

RED: One of who?

JACK: (*Monotone.*) "All citizens will report any noncompliance of righteousness."

RED: We have to.

JACK: Just what I thought; you're one of them.

RED: A citizen? We all are.

JACK: You're right. We have no choice. We're citizens no matter what. And with citizenship comes the abandonment of all choices.

RED: We have choices.

JACK: Like what?

RED: Well... I chose what clothes I wore today.

JACK: Black, white or grey? Some choice.

RED: What else is there?

JACK: In my book, the people wear bright colors: Blue and yellow and the main character wears a dark green.

RED: This book describes these colors?

JACK: It not only describes them, it has pictures.

RED: Pictures? Like in the olden days?

JACK: That's right. You wanna see it?

RED: You'll get in trouble.

JACK: Are you going to tell?

RED: I have to.

JACK: "All citizens will report any noncompliance of righteousness."

RED: We have to.

JACK: What if we didn't?

RED: We do.

SFX: siren sounds.

JACK: That's it. One minute.

RED: *(Heading off.)* I have to go.

JACK: *(Jumping in front of RED.)* You're going to tell.

RED: I have to.

JACK: If those drones hadn't forced me to help you this afternoon, I would've helped you anyway.

RED: *(Heading off again.)* I have to go.

JACK: *(Stopping RED again.)* What if you don't make it inside in the next 45 seconds?

RED: *(Pushing passed JACK.)* I will. I live right there. Goodbye.

JACK: *(Jumping in front of RED.)* What if I hold you here?

RED: Why would you do that?

JACK: To make you miss curfew.

RED: But that wouldn't be my fault.

RED pushes passed JACK but he wraps his arms around her and holds her tight.

JACK: You're right. It will be my fault.

RED: Stop it! Let me go.

JACK: What's the worry? It's going to be my fault!

RED: It doesn't matter! There are no exceptions! Please, let me go!

JACK: Only twenty seconds to curfew! If you're still outside, I'm afraid I'm going to have to report you!

RED: *(Panicking.)* No! Please, let me go! Let me go!

JACK: “All citizens will report any noncompliance of righteousness.”

RED: You’re forcing me to break the rules!

JACK: Just like they forced me to comply?

RED: Help! Help!

JACK: Ten seconds! Nine! Eight!

RED screams and JACK releases her. RED runs offstage. JACK watches her and then runs offstage the other direction. SFX: gong sounds. The space is empty. Lighting change. LUCY enters followed by DRONE 1 and DRONE 2.

LUCY: The surveillance system caught some interesting activity last night.

DRONE 1: A curfew violation?

LUCY: Ever since our civilization chose to be forced, I make sure that there are no violations. But it was close.

DRONE 2: We should take the citizen away.

LUCY: There was no violation.

DRONE 1: Perhaps we should take the citizen away so that there will be no risk of a future violation.

LUCY: It may come to that. But you have lost sight of my purpose.

DRONE 2: Your Highness?

LUCY: My purpose is not to punish. It is to enforce.

DRONE 2: We will enforce.

DRONE 1: We will enforce.

LUCY: The problem may be that I have been leaving the square early because there is never anyone on the street. There has not been anyone to enforce. Tonight I will stay until curfew.

DRONE 2: We will enforce.

DRONE 1: We will enforce.

LUCY: And if the problem persists, I will take the citizen away.

LUCY, DRONE 1, and DRONE 2 take their places on the blocks. CITIZENS begin walking through the square. RED enters. JACK enters from the opposite direction. They catch each other’s eyes and stop while the CITIZENS move passed them. LUCY, DRONE 1, and DRONE 2 watch them intently.

JACK: Hello, Citizen 1-Xray-4-5-Bravo-Delta-2-5-5-9.

RED: Hello, Citizen 1-Xray-3-2-Bravo-Delta-4-3-2-6.

RED tries to push passed him but JACK jumps in front of her.

JACK: I see you made it.

RED: As did you.

JACK: Yes. And so, I'm out for a walk on this glorious morning.

RED: And why is this morning a... good one?

JACK: Because I'm still here. And I still have my you-know-what?

Because you-know-who didn't you-know-what me to the
you-know-who's, you-know-when!

RED: I don't know what you're talking about.

JACK: Thank you.

RED: Please, whatever you do, don't mention it.

JACK: Of course! Maybe we could get together sometime and... look
at things from a different perspective.

RED: (*Feeling the stare of LUCY, DRONE 1, and DRONE 2.*) Maybe.
I've got to go.

*RED rushes passed him but in her haste she trips and falls in the same
place as before.*

LUCY: Halt! No one move!

CITIZENS freeze.

LUCY: Citizens, you are good. There has been an incident. It is the
duty of citizenship to execute righteousness.

JACK: Don't sweat it. I got it!

JACK helps RED up.

LUCY: Halt! Citizen, you will stop your movements!

DRONE 1 and DRONE 2 seize JACK and pull him away from RED.

JACK: Hey, I'm executing righteousness on my own!

LUCY: That is a violation of righteousness. Return that citizen to the ground.

DRONE 1 holds JACK in place. DRONE 2 grabs RED and forces her back down to the ground.

DRONE 1: What about this one?

LUCY: Citizen 1-Xray-3-2-Bravo-Delta-4-3-2-6, you will remain there until righteousness is executed. I, Lucy, your enforcer, will randomly select one of you for this honor. The drones shall assist you. *(Scans the crowd then points to HARP.)* That one.

DRONE 1 and DRONE 2 approach HARP and grab her arms.

DRONE 1: Here is the citizen you have selected.

DRONE 2: What is your designation?

HARP: Citizen 1-Xray-7-9-Tango-Foxtrot-9-1-6-1

LUCY: You have been selected to execute righteousness. Execute.

DRONE 1 and DRONE 2 force HARP to RED. They force HARP'S arms and hands to help RED up. DRONE 1 grabs HARP'S chin and forces her mouth open and shut as LUCY speaks for her.

LUCY: *(As HARP.)* Here you are, miss. I hope you didn't hurt yourself.

DRONE 2 grabs RED'S chin and forces her mouth open and shut as LUCY speaks for her.

LUCY: *(As RED.)* Thank you, kind citizen. You are good. *(As HARP.)* You are good as well. Have a nice day.

DRONE 1 and DRONE 2 release them.

LUCY: The cause of righteousness has been fulfilled. Citizens: You are good. You may now resume your business.

JACK tries to walk away with the rest of the CITIZENS but DRONE 1 and DRONE 2 grab his arms and take him to LUCY. RED watches.

LUCY: Citizen 1-Xray-3-2-Bravo-Delta-4-3-2-6, you were in violation of righteousness.

JACK: By helping the poor girl to her feet?

LUCY: A Citizen cannot be relied upon to prevent unrighteousness on his or her own. The enforcer must conduct him or her to righteousness.

JACK: Why?

LUCY: You know our laws. If Citizens are left to be righteous on their own some will choose unrighteousness. Our society has chosen collective righteousness. All will be righteous. You are righteous. Citizen 1-Xray-3-2-Bravo-Delta-4-3-2-6, you are good.

DRONE 1 and DRONE 2 release JACK. JACK looks around and sees RED watching. RED exits. JACK then sees that HARP is also looking at him. HARP exits. JACK realizes that the DRONES are releasing him and he exits. CITIZENS thin out and soon only LUCY and the DRONES remain.

DRONE 1: The square is quiet.

DRONE 2: Everyone has gone home.

LUCY: We must remain to execute righteousness.

DRONE 1: I enjoy executing righteousness.

DRONE 2: Me to. There is a kind of supremacy in executing righteousness.

DRONE 1: We should have taken away Citizen 1-Xray-3-2-Bravo-Delta-4-3-2-6.

LUCY: He is good.

HARP and STALK enter. LUCY, DRONE 1, and DRONE 2 watch them.

STALK: We better hurry. Only five minutes to Curfew. You kept us out later than I've ever been out.

HARP: Sorry, I don't know why but lately I've felt... wait!

STALK: We should be inside!

HARP: This is where it happened! There was an incident today and I was chosen.

STALK: So? We've all been chosen thousands of times. I was chosen three times today in my office building.

HARP: I know but this time was different.

STALK: Different? How? It's never different.

HARP: There was this man. He tried to be the chosen without being chosen.

STALK: What are you talking about?

HARP: This woman fell. And he helped her up without being chosen?

STALK: I don't understand. How could he do that?

HARP: I'm not sure. It all happened so fast.

STALK pulls a watch out of his pocket, but as he does, a coin drops out onto the ground. STALK does not notice it but HARP does.

STALK: Let's go. It's almost curfew.

STALK starts walking. HARP looks at the coin and then at LUCY.

HARP: *(Bending to pick it up.)* Wait. You dropped—

LUCY: Halt! No one move!

HARP and STALK freeze.

LUCY: Citizens, you are good. There has been an incident. It is the duty of citizenship to execute righteousness. I, Lucy, your enforcer, will assist you in selecting righteousness.

LUCY points to HARP and DRONE 1 and DRONE 2 approach.

DRONE 2: What is your designation?

HARP: Citizen 1-Xray-7-9-Tango-Foxtrot-9-1-6-1

LUCY: You have been selected to execute righteousness. Execute.

DRONE 1 and DRONE 2 grab HARP'S arms. They force her to pick up the coin. Then DRONE 1 grabs her chin and DRONE 2 crosses to STALK and grabs his chin. LUCY speaks for them as the DRONES move their mouths.

LUCY: (As HARP.) Citizen, you have dropped your coin. (As STALK.) Oh, I didn't notice. (As HARP.) I will return it to you to execute righteousness.

DRONE 1 forces HARP'S hand out as DRONE 2 forces STALK'S hand out. DRONE 1 forces HARP to put the coin in STALK'S hand. Then they move their mouths for LUCY.

LUCY: (As HARP.) There. The coin has been returned to its proper owner. (As STALK.) Thank you, Citizen. You are good. (As HARP.) You are welcome, Citizen. You are good. (As LUCY.) The cause of righteousness has been fulfilled. Citizens: You are good. You may now resume your business.

SFX: siren sounds. DRONE 1 and DRONE 2 return to their places.

HARP: One minute to curfew!

STALK: Run!

STALK and HARP exit running.

DRONE 1: I have a question.

LUCY: What is your question?

DRONE 1: What if the warning siren had sounded while we were assisting them to execute righteousness?

LUCY: What do you mean?

DRONE 2: I see where you're going with this. What if assisting them to execute righteousness caused them to break curfew and thus violate righteousness?

LUCY: It did not.

DRONE 1: What if it did?

LUCY: That's why we have a warning siren before curfew.

DRONE 2: Yes, but—

SFX: gong sounds.

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