

A LITTLE BIT OF TEXAS

a theatrical fable

by

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CAST

[this play can probably be done with a cast of 10 with some doubling and tripling]

DIRECTOR, a gregarious eccentric genius
PLAYWRIGHT, a lean distinguished academician

OTTO, an old German electrician

BLACK DEATH-ROW INMATE

TEXAS STATE TROOPER

ISRAELI COMMANDO

JUDAS ISCARIOT

{Inmate, Trooper, Commando, and Judas may be quadrupled}

SOME NUNS

DOROTHEA EVANS-EVANS, an ageing little theater diva
and president of the Little Theatre
and

VARIOUS CAST MEMBERS of A Christmas Carol
{which of the cast of A Christmas Carol at the discretion
of the production}

MOST OF THE ACTION OF THE PLAY TAKES PLACE ON THE SET OF A
LITTLE THEATER'S PRODUCTION OF A CHRISTMAS CAROL IN
MEADOWFIELD, MA
NOT TOO LONG AGO

Needed is a small turning platform on which a Working
Electric Chair can be placed.

A LITTLE BIT OF TEXAS

ACT I

Scene 1 ... Off-off Broadway

Scene 2 ... Off-off-off Broadway

Scene 3 ... Off-off-off-off Broadway

Scene 4 ... The Port Authority

Scene 5 ... The Little Theater of
Meadowfield, Massachusetts

ACT II

A Bar
The Little Theater

A LITTLE BIT OF TEXAS

Scene 1

["ISCARIOT!!!" in large shimmering silver-sequined cardboard letters pinned to the closed curtain. A Man, JUDAS, in First Baptist Nativity Pageant garb comes running on to some Public Domain chase music. He stops center stage, directly below the shimmering letters. He is being pursued. He rushes off, only to reappear opposite, now desperate. He runs off only to return again, obviously falling behind in his attempt to escape from... he runs off again... dancing silver coins. Who enter and, well, dance. Judas returns but cannot escape as more coins have followed him. Musical climax as they dance around him until he collapses into a heap. BLACKOUT.]

Scene 2

[Before the Curtain as a Stagehand removes the Letters, the Playwright, his head in his hands. The Director, reading a newspaper.]

PLAYWRIGHT

Why? Why? Why? My three act drama, "The Life and Times of Judas Iscariot" after one rehearsal becomes simply ISCARIOT three exclamation marks!!!

DIRECTOR

No building ever fell down from too many nails.

PLAYWRIGHT

And after three weeks it's a musical and in two acts. The middle act? Just gone.

DIRECTOR

It needed something.

PLAYWRIGHT

It needed a second act!

DIRECTOR

No, it needed flash and pizzazz.

PLAYWRIGHT

It didn't need thirty dancing silver coins chasing Judas through Jerusalem's lower east side and out of town. Where he hung himself. He was the lucky one.

DIRECTOR

Hey, look at this: the coins got great notices.

PLAYWRIGHT

Why do I do it?

DIRECTOR

Do what?

PLAYWRIGHT

Continually entrust my work to you!

DIRECTOR

Because, in your mind, each time we've failed these past years, its been because of me, because of the way I have chosen to interpret your work.

PLAYWRIGHT

And so you're saying that I do it because I want to fail?

DIRECTOR

I'm saying that you haven't yet conquered your fear of success. I know that in the back of your mind you're thinking that if it doesn't work out, you can always go back. Don't forget where I found you. Doing your little one-acts at the university using your own students both as cast and audience. And then assigning them to write the reviews. What courage! You were a sniveling effete tenured Lord of a pathetic and secure little fiefdom. Lecturing on Miller and Albee and Wilder and Shaw all the time thinking that you could do as well if not better but too terrified to step off campus, leaving behind your steaming and sheltered cup of hot coffee for the real world where it's possible and indeed likely to fail, to be told "you stink!", but where there's something at stake, a price to be paid for failure - yes!... but a treasure to be won for success. Yet if you succeed. If you...achieve. If you...reach the masses. Then you know you can't go back.

PLAYWRIGHT

Well, there's no danger of that as we're about as far from success as it's possible to be.

DIRECTOR

But I'm not satisfied with that. And, sadly, I think you are. [*looking into the rafters*] Hmmm, I wonder: [*grandly theatrical*] What if Judas could fly?

Scene 3

[As the curtain parts, they exit.
Darkness. Before a scrim we can make
out Some Nuns holding onto a giant
Rosary made of coconuts. They accompany

themselves on crudely-made coconut
drums. Sister Enunciata stands apart.]

NUN ONE:

Please lead us, Sister Enunciata

SISTER ENUNCIATA:

We believe in Olio

NUN ONE:

We believe in Olio

NUNS [*variously*]

Oh so holy Olio

We believe in Olio

We believe in Olio

Oh so holy Olio.

[Nuns repeat this in counterpoint
until...]

[Sister Enunciata holds aloft a Coconut
Chalice]

SISTER ENUNCIATA:

Vino

NUNS:

we know

SISTER ENUNCIATA:

From Reno

NUNS:

Re-nooo.

SISTER ENUNCIATA:

We know Reno Vino

NUNS:

we know Reno Venno

SISTER ENUNCIATA:

Know we Reno Vino?

NUNS:
we know Reno Vino.

SISTER ENUNCIATA:
know we Reno Vino?

NUNS:
No Vino we no read no
Novino weno readno

SISTER ENUNCIATA:
I belive in Olio

NUNS [*variously*]
I believe in..
I believe in. . .
I believe in. . . .
I believe in

ALL:
Olio. Oh so holy Olio!

SISTER ENUNCIATA:

oh

[BLACKOUT]

Scene 4

[Suitcases in tow, Playwright and
Director enter, down in the dumps]

DIRECTOR
---before the recriminations begin... let me remind you
what you gave me to work with: "Nuns on a desert island in
the wake of thermonuclear holocaust." What's a director
supposed to do with that?

PLAYWRIGHT
Do? Do? Do?! Why did you have to do anything?

DIRECTOR

Nuns sitting around saying the rosary? It needed something.

PLAYWRIGHT

It didn't need the washed-ashore case of wine it didn't need the coconuts and it certainly didn't need a hunchbacked rabbi!

DIRECTOR

That's hindsight!

PLAYWRIGHT

It made my play tasteless and obscene.

DIRECTOR

It had pathos and irony.

PLAYWRIGHT

It had the hierarchies of two major religions out to get us. I was excommunicated and I'm not even Catholic! It's a good thing I'm not Jewish because they wanted their circumcision back. Talk about painful reviews! Just once I would like opening night and closing night to be on different nights. Is that too much to ask?

DIRECTOR

You should be asking for infinitely more.

PLAYWRIGHT

Oh, let's not get into that failure thing again. On second thought, let's get into it. [*picks up his suitcase*] Because, according to your theory, I can go back, and that's exactly where I am going.

DIRECTOR

True...you've been a miserable failure which will commend you but you did run off with the custodian of the performing arts building: Me. True, I am a genius. But the unfortunate thing is that I never bothered to obtain my certification. I am an uncertified genius. How will that go

down? You'd have been better off marrying the school mascot. Actually, that would have gotten you an Endowed Chair. Or saddle.

PLAYWRIGHT

I'm willing to chance it.

DIRECTOR

On that you're willing to gamble...?

PLAYWRIGHT

It's a moot point now. I don't think there are any theaters left open to us. [*starts out*] Call me when...on second thought, don't call me. [*stops, almost off*] Hmmmm...last line, last line.... Got it: "He sets the suitcase down. Sets his feet firmly. Picks the suitcase up. 'Good-bye'. And exits." [*he exits*]

DIRECTOR

[*almost immediately*] "He sets the suitcase down. The sound of a helicopter from above. A great crashing of glass. He looks up. A blinding light followed by a rope ladder. He laughs fiendishly. 'Good-bye'! And he climbs up and is taken up and away."

[He rushes over to the spot of the "ascension". Shielding his eyes from the radiance, he pulls out a manuscript from his coat {"Objection Overruled" in big block letters}.]

But what about--? Your latest....? [*opens the script*]

Hmmmm...I think I can do something with this.

[Lights dim as Director exits. The scrim disappears revealing a STAGEHAND or STAGEHANDS sweeping the stage and tidying the set of what looks like a Little Theater production of Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol. That's

because it is. Only the SET has been not too skillfully, creatively, or carefully adapted to be a Courtroom.]

Scene 5

[Entering from the rear of the audience are the Director and Dorothea Evans-Evans, the President of the Little Theater. She is a formidable woman of ample girth, always a bit out of breath, who never thinks she is out of her depth. Oh, and she speaks in a *highly italicized* manner. They approach the stage.]

DIRECTOR

Now Ms. Evans...

DOROTHEA

It's Evans-Evans. Or *Dorothea*.

DIRECTOR

Well, Dorothea... I would like to thank you again for the Little Theater's hospitality and cooperation and I do apologize for the secrecy and the closed rehearsals.

DOROTHEA

Say no more say no more! Though this is indeed *the wilds* of rural Massachusetts, I am completely attuned to *the business*, if you will. And what a small price to pay for a *World Premiere*. Besides the town is all abuzz... and not without reason, *I might say*. Did you say the Playwright will be arriving today?

DIRECTOR

Yes.

DOROTHEA

I hope he won't be too shocked when he walks in and sees the set for A Christmas Carol.

DIRECTOR

He loves surprises. They form the basis of our long and...interesting collaboration.

DOROTHEA

It is a *fine set* and it was a *successful production*.

[They are onstage now. The Stagehand has swept himself off.]

DIRECTOR

The more I think about it, the more I believe that portraying this intense exposé of our legal system on the set of A Christmas Carol will be interpreted to be a stroke of uncertified genius.

DOROTHEA

And since this is a *new play*, this will certainly help the audience by providing them a source of *familiar comfort*. If this works, it will *revitalize* and *revolutionize* contemporary American Theatre. Imagine *Angels in America* on the set of *The Sound of Music*. Now, this particular production of A Christmas Carol, I adapted and directed myself, *to some acclaim* I might add. And I was unanimously praised as *the definitive Mrs. Fezziwig*. Which brings me to *one little thing*... despite the use of the set and the privilege of a *World Premiere*, some of the Board are still...*nervous*. So --- we must insist that the cast of *A Christmas Carol* be standing by, *so to speak*, tomorrow night for the Opening. Just in case... Well, *I know* you will understand and when the Playwright arrives we *must* have a drink together ta-ta! [*she leaves*]

DIRECTOR

Yes, a drink. Perhaps several. Make that...many. [*he fiddles with the placement of a chair*] Otto? Are you there?

[A heavily German-accented voice comes over the sound system]

OTTO

Ja. I am here.

DIRECTOR

This area will be the Jury Box and over here...will be the Witness Stand. See if you can get this in a sort of highlight.

OTTO

Ja, I will do eet.

DIRECTOR

[*checking his watch*] No! Wait! Otto! On second thought, take a break. Kill the lights for now.

OTTO

Ja-ja, mit pleasure I kill dem.

[The stage lights die. Director pulls curtain closed, sits on the edge of the stage. A moment of uncertainty. How will he pull it off this time? The Playwright enters from the rear of the audience, coming down the aisle. He "presents" himself to the Director.]

PLAYWRIGHT

Well---? Aren't you going to ask if I was properly humbled?