

DIS-ORDER IN THE COURT!

By Pat Cook

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STORY OF THE PLAY

First came Judge Wapner. Then Judge Judy. Now comes Judge Clapham. But his court is a little more, shall we say, colorful than most. People come to court to bring announcements of car washes, to hold quilting bees and to drop off their mortgage payments. "Next week, I'm taking in washing!" he yells.

And what starts out as just another lazy day suddenly changes when shyster lawyer E. Z. Miles has the Judge marry two people madly in love...only to find out later that the groom is on trial for embezzlement and the only witness against him is his new bride. "A wife cannot testify against her husband, right, Judge?" Miles taunts, setting the stage for a fast and furious farce, complete with a golf-playing preacher, inept court officers, bumbling assistant district attorney, teenage reporter and a clown with a gun.

Is it any wonder Titus carries a bag of rocks around with him? "I should've taken over my dad's embalming service," he moans. This chicken-fried play is guilty of laughs in the first degree!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7 m, 6 w, extras)

JUDGE TITUS CLAPHAM: A quarrelsome man in his late 60s.

JUNIOR PITT: A rather large court bailiff, around 30.

CAROLINA MOON: Court stenographer, in her 40s.

REVEREND LEON WRIGHT: A golf-playing preacher.

BOBBIE SUE CLAPHAM: Titus' teenage granddaughter and school reporter.

LYDIA ROTHSCHILDE: A sweet lady, around 60.

E. Z. MILES: A shyster lawyer.

LEROY DANGERFIELD: A rather dense crook.

SHEILA PONTOON: A marriage-crazy woman, a bit dim.

WALLACE SOPWORTH: A new, naïve assistant district attorney.

DARLA CLAPHAM: Titus' other granddaughter, around 20.

HARVEY PANGBORNE: Darla's fiancé, a real clown.

MARGE THROMBECKER: A county bigwig, around 35.

EXTRAS: As courtroom spectators in Scene 1.

TIME: The present.

PLACE: A court in the deep South.

SETTING

The setting for this farce in jurisprudence is the courtroom of the Honorable Judge Titus Clapham. His Honor's bench occupies the SR side of the stage, DS of which sits the witness booth. The bench is flanked by two doors. The first door, DSR leads into his chambers; the second door, USR leads into the bailiff's chambers. A third door, located on the UPS wall, leads to the outside hall; and the fourth door, DSL, is located near the spectator section. There are two small tables with accompanying chairs for the opposing attorneys located CS, facing the bench.

PROPS

PRE-SET: Small canvas bag of rocks, gavel, small black book at Judge's bench; trash can near bench.

LEON: Bible, loud golf clothes, golf clubs.

CAROLINA: Judge's robes, notepad, purse containing a very colorful tie and rice, kite.

TITUS: Sheets of paper.

JUNIOR: Notes, handkerchief, watch, official book, holster.

LYDIA: Purse, envelope.

BOBBIE SUE: Notepad and pen, large brown sack full of sandwiches, etc., list, document.

MILES: Briefcase, marriage license, ring, watch, business cards.

WALLACE: Briefcase, file folder, sheaf of paper.

HARVEY: Complete clown costume with oversized shoes, rubber rat, starter gun, ring.

MARGE: Piece of paper.

SHIELA: Purse containing ledger books.

ACT I

(AT RISE: LIGHTS come up DSL, where TITUS sits quietly in a chair, looking out. He is dressed in a plain shirt and black pants. JUNIOR is standing near him and is looking at his watch. REV. LEON WRIGHT is kneeling near Titus and looking up at him.)

LEON: *(Reading from the Bible.)* "And yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil. Thy rod and thy staff will comfort me. And surely..." *(HE closes his Bible.)* Well, you know how the rest of it goes. *(HE stands.)*

TITUS: Don't I get the whole service, Reverend?

LEON: Well, I'd like to, but...hey, we're outta time. My tee-off time at the country club is in an hour.

TITUS: Sorry if I stalled you some. *(HE rises and looks at JUNIOR.)* No word from the authorities, then?

JUNIOR: Naw.

TITUS: I was afraid a'that.

JUNIOR: 'Course the phones is out again.

TITUS: You could go down to the filling station, I'll give you a quarter.

JUNIOR: *(Appalled.)* It's thirty-five cents now.

TITUS: *(To LEON.)* You got a dime?

LEON: What's the point?

TITUS: Brother, the milk of human kindness has sure soured around here. *(LEON starts to speak.)* I know, I know, your tee-off time.

LEON: And I jist got a new putter, too.

TITUS: I am so happy for you.

LEON: Come on, Titus. Time to go.

TITUS: Well? I ain't got no regrets, if that's what you're waiting for! I knew what it meant when I got into this. Time to pay the piper.

LEON: Ooh, that's good! I gotta remember that for next time.

TITUS: Oh, let me make you a note.

JUNIOR: Well...let us go. *(HE exits USR.)*

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TITUS: Time to walk that last mile.

LEON: Good man. *(HE calls off.)* Carolina?

(CAROLINA enters from SR holding TITUS' judges robes.)

CAROLINA: Right here.

(SHE helps the JUDGE put his robes on and they exit SR. DS LIGHTS dim out. COURTROOM CAST, including LYDIA, BOBBIE SUE and any EXTRAS, enter and sit in spectators' section. AREA LIGHTS come up. JUNIOR enters through the USR door and walks into the courtroom.)

JUNIOR: *(In a loud nasal voice.)* Hear ye, hear ye! To all and sundry, be it known you are now in the court of the Honorable Judge Titus Clapham, and you will act accordingly as written in the charter of this state, county and township. Ever'body get up on your hind legs, why don't'cha.

(EVERYONE in the courtroom rises as TITUS enters through the DSR door and moves behind his desk.)

TITUS: Sit down, sit down, sit down, it's too hot. *(ALL sit. JUNIOR stands nearby and CAROLINA takes her place near the bench with her notepad.)* 'Sides, I got a headache, so watch it! *(HE sits.)* Now, for those of you who ain't been in my courtroom before, I got a few rules. First, and I don't want to have to say this again: nobody uses my bathroom! *(HE points to the DSR door.)* Second, since we is in the midst of a heat wave of epic proportions, all speeches will be short. Or subsequently shortened by me. I don't want nothing beginning with "Notwithstanding," "Hitherto" or the ever popular, "Let me read from the *Congressional Record!*" Which brings me to rule three; there will be no politicians allowed in the court.

JUNIOR: Can you do that, Judge? *(Moves up behind bench.)*

End of Freeview

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