

PLAY

# DIRECTOR'S MANUSCRIPT

## The Drama

A Farce-Satire in One Act

By

FREDERICK KARINTHY

STAGED BY NATHANIEL EDWARD REEID



LONGMANS, GREEN & CO.

55 FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK

LONGMANS

SERIES

THE DRAMA  
A Farce - Satire in One Act  
by

FREDERICK KARINTHY

Translation from the Hungarian by Edmond Pauker.

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55 FIFTH AVE., NEW YORK

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Act of March 4, 1909.

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# SUGGESTIONS TO THE DIRECTOR

## A Statement of Stage Principles and Position Plots

With the gradual disappearance of the professional road troupe, the responsibility of presenting good drama to the community rests with the amateur. It is a great responsibility, and carries with it a wonderful opportunity. Believing the amateur worthy of his trust, if the means are at hand, we have undertaken to place before him the best of plays arranged in the most intelligent manner. A careful study and rehearsal of these plays should lead to remarkable presentations.

But the successful presentation of any play depends largely upon the director. The primary qualification of this director, we believe, is absolute domination of the players, based upon their confidence in him. To assure him this domination, we have purposely omitted all stage direction from the books of the players, and reserved it wholly for the director's manuscript. Likewise, we have reserved for the manuscript the discussion of the STAGE PRINCIPLES and the POSITION PLOTS. Thus armed with exclusive knowledge, the director may produce the play as he sees fit, unhampered by a questioning cast. But the confidence of the cast will be quickly destroyed if this knowledge be used indefinitely at rehearsal. The professional director usually assures himself in advance, by drawing scene plots and reviewing all action of the play with buttons named for characters. Perhaps the amateur director would do well to follow his example.

We would especially urge that the play be given two performances with two different casts. The use of the double cast will permit the training of twice as many players, place in the hands of the director a competitive club, allow each player to observe his part played by another, guard against the cancellation of the play when some one drops out, and in all cases greatly increase the box office receipts with little additional cost.

### STAGE PRINCIPLES

The following principles constitute the infallible guide of the producing director. When trouble develops in any scene, they should not only indicate to him what is wrong, but also point the way out.

I. MAINTAIN THE STAGE PICTURE---The proscenium arch and front curtain line constitute a frame. The audience, looking into that frame, should see always a well balanced picture, with the background supporting the foreground, all keyed to certain dominant points. This

balance must include line, mass, and color, and have to do with scenery, furnishings, and players. The players are the only movable element in the picture; and when one moves, it is frequently necessary to shift others to keep balance.

II. MOVE ONLY WITH A PURPOSE, ACCOMMODATING ALL ACTION TO AUDIENCE

No one should move, either to go stage or to cross the stage, unless that movement means something--interprets the play--and is clearly understood by both actor and audience. Too often the amateur shifts about aimlessly, suggesting nervousness. Generally the movement must come only from the one speaking; the listener never moving except as a response to what he sees or hears, unless his movement is intended to bring out a thought independent of the topic of conversation. All movement, including gestures, positions, turns, crosses, entrances and exits, must be made with reference to the audience, though no player ever speaks to or recognizes the audience.

III. LEADING CHARACTERS TAKE STRONGEST STAGE POSITIONS--The lead for the moment is that character who carries forward the plot of the play and dominates the situation. Since the situation continually changes, the lead also may change. But during his brief period of dominance, he must occupy the strongest stage position, that position which faces both the main point of interest and the audience at the same time. Equal characters should occupy equal positions, while the less important characters must be placed more and more out of the picture.

IV. PRESENT ONE POINT OF INTEREST AT A TIME, AND FOCUS ATTENTION ON IT THROUGH MOVEMENT---The audience can focus upon but one thing at a time, and always it is that thing with the largest movement. The player in largest movement, therefore, must be the lead for the moment and have to do with the main point of the situation; and all other players should accord their action with his. Should others move independently, they would attract undeserved attention to themselves, and thus lead the audience astray on plot. Amateurs especially are guilty of this practice, since many try to do something funny on the side. Both stage courtesy and the art of acting demand that all remain cogs in the wheel.

V. MOVE AND SPEAK IN THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE SITUATION--Everything in the world has its own atmosphere, to which we intuitively respond when in its presence. It is this atmosphere that determines the tempo and pitch of the player in any situation. As the situation changes, creating new atmosphere, the tempo and pitch of the player must change to correspond. Hence, we may say that the mind, voice, and body of the player must harmonize with any situation in which he plays.

VI. PICK UP CUES INSTANTLY WITH VOICE OR BODY OR WITH BOTH--The play begins when the curtain rises and must run continuously until the curtain falls. It may be carried forward either with the



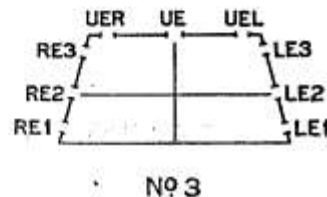
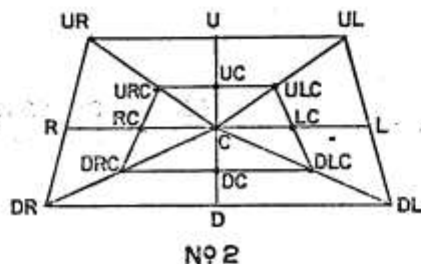
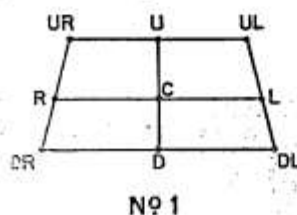
speech or with the action. But if either the voice or the body picks up cues slowly, the continuity of the play is broken. This broken continuity, coupled with indifference, is the cause of all dragging found in plays.

VII. PLAYERS IN A GIVEN SITUATION MAINTAIN THE SAME CONTRAST LEVEL, BOTH DIRECT AND IN RESPONSE--A character stands out only by contrast. All the contrasted elements, therefore, among the several characters playing opposite each other, must be brought out with equal strength; otherwise, some characters will attract the whole attention of the audience while others make no impression whatever. Usually amateurs show strength only while speaking, lapsing into indifference while listening. But the listener's response must be as strong as the direct speech, which requires that the attention be kept riveted on the topic of conversation.

VIII. "GET OVER" BY ENLARGING THE FOUR FORMS OF EMPHASIS, SUPPORTED FROM WITHIN--"Getting it over" means making the desired impression. A small photograph "gets over" only to those nearby. To impress an audience at a distance, it must be enlarged, vertically and horizontally, into a great stage curtain. An ordinary conversation may be compared to the small photograph and, to "get over" must follow the same principles of enlargement. It may be enlarged vertically by Pitch, horizontally by Pause and Prolongation, and then swelled out in every direction by Force. This enlargement, or emphasis, occurs always and only upon the important word. It is produced wholly by more intense thinking or feeling--an enlargement of the soul--and is accompanied by a proportionately larger movement of the body. Beginning players usually fail utterly to "get over", because they lack the power of strong emphasis; or else they emphasize only by Force, which results merely in yelling their lines on monotonous. It is fundamentally necessary that they first catch fire within, and then, like eruptive volcanoes, using the four forms of emphasis as explosives, hurl the flames of their personalities far out into the audience.

#### POSITION PLOTS

All stage directions are given from the standpoint of the actor, not the audience. R means right; L left; U up or back; D down or front; RE right entrance; LE left entrance; and UE upper entrance. The combination of two or more positions is indicated by the initial letter of each; for example. DLC is down left center. These positions are illustrated below. The first plot shows the five cardinal positions and the four corner positions; the second adds the eight midway positions; and the third shows entrances and exits.

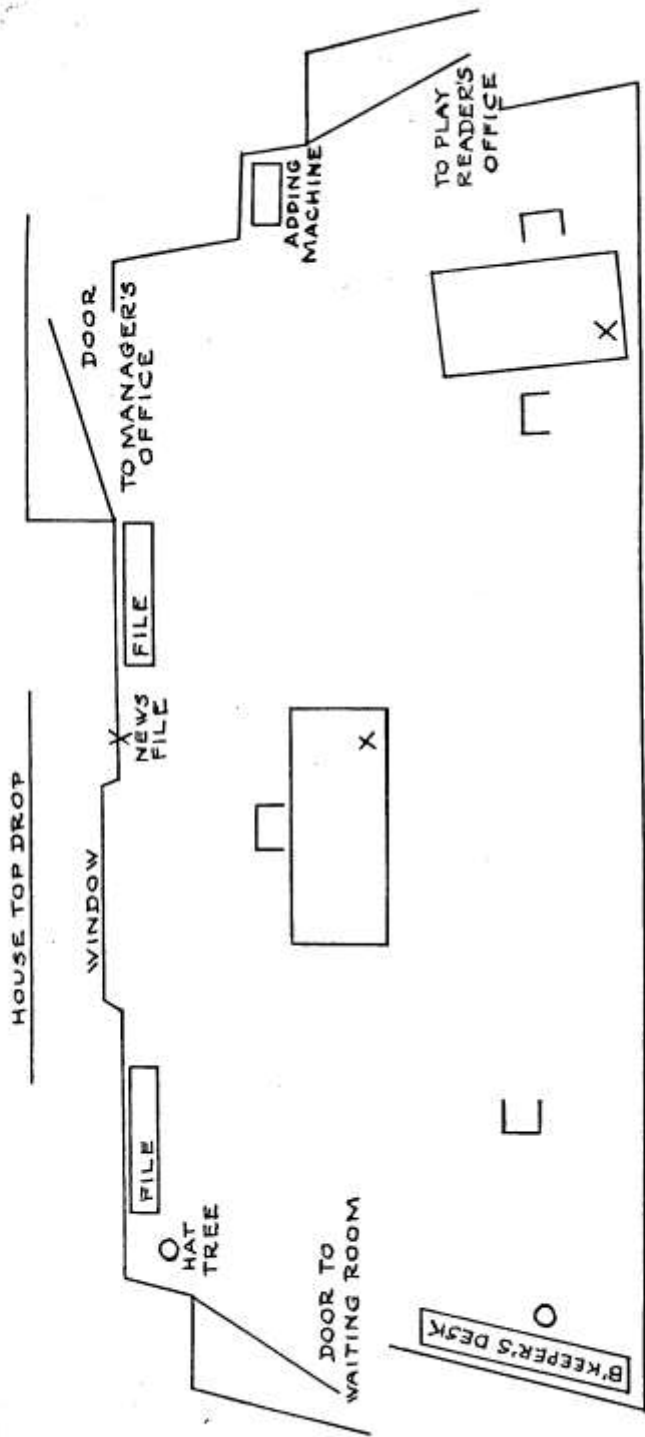


These designations are used by all professional directors. Accordingly, we have used them in arranging the present manuscript. It is advisable, therefore, before giving stage business, to drill each player in these positions. Later, when the business is given, the player should underscore the word on which the action begins, and then in the margin directly opposite note it down according to position; thus: X DL sit; URC via L; X U of table to R face L. He may then glance at his book during rehearsal and see exactly when his actions come and what they are.

Directing is usually a nerve-racking task for amateurs, due frequently to lack of preparation. But the above suggestions point the way; and their aim is professional presentation. To reach the goal, hard work may be necessary; but in the end, the pleasure of work well done will far outweigh any pains experienced by the way-side. Write us of your experiences in the present production, and make any suggestions you see fit. And in the meantime, good luck.

NATHANIEL EDWARD REEID

LONGMANS' PLAY SERIES  
LONGMANS, GREEN & CO., Publishers, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York City.



STAGE SET for  
**THE DRAMA**  
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### CHARACTERS, COSTUMES, AND MAKE-UP

MANAGER--is a man of forty-five, tall, stout, and of the "four flusher" type. He is exceedingly energetic and seems always to be in a hurry. His haste gives the impression of rudeness and impatience. Any culture he may possess is entirely on the surface and has been acquired by social contact only. Inwardly he is vulgar and common. His costume is the morning walking suit, somewhat overdone, with spats, gloves, and cane, together with either a derby or a silk hat. His make-up is of rugged complexion, with positive lines and gray temples.

PLAY READER--is about thirty, slender in size, and a college type of man. He is positive in speech and action, and his bearing is that of a gentleman. When aroused, however, he is capable of either defence or aggression--a self-assured young business man. His costume is a fashionable business suit. His coat, however, hangs on the rack and he is wearing an office jacket. His make-up is a healthy complexion, with a dainty cropped mustache.

RECEPTION CLERK--is about forty, thin of chest, hump-shouldered, and worn out--a "has been" of the business world. He is slow quiet, and unobtrusive in his natural bent. But when aroused he becomes exceedingly nervous and impatient--in an emergency, a ranting coward. His costume is that of an office uniform, rather the worse for the wear, with a large collar and an unmatched tie. His make-up is sallow and pasty, with thin hair or a tupee.

MRAZ--is about forty-five, thin, feverish, and of a nervous temperament--the artist type carried to extreme. His effort to be polite and gracious is upset always by his fear of doing the wrong thing. His uncertainty is his nemesis. From this uncertainty results numerous mannerisms, and a peculiar, hesitant, freak voice. His costume is a short Prince Albert, well worn, with colored vest, and large flowing Windsor tie. He wears a pair of large horn-rim nose glasses attached to a thick cord. His make-up is sallow, with blue lips, long hook nose, shaggy eyebrows, and long stringy hair falling to his shoulders.

### HAND PROPERTIES

#### ON STAGE

Sheets of paper  
pencil  
ledgers, etc.  
street coat  
"Manager" sign  
"Clerk" sign  
book

#### OFF STAGE

note book  
pencil  
manuscript

CHARACTERS

MANAGER

PLAY READER

RECEPTION CLERK

AUTHOR

TIME: Any morning.

SCENE: A theatrical manager's office.

## THE DRAMA

- TIME: About ten o'clock in the morning. Any day.
- SCENE: Office of a theatrical manager. The set is plain and with ordinary furnishings, showing the usual carelessness of the theatrical office. At R. there is a door that leads to the waiting room and the street. In the back wall, R of U, a window looks out over the tops of office buildings. At UL, in the back wall, a door leads to the manager's private office. Another door at L leads to the Play Reader's private office. At DR, below the door, is a bookkeeper's high desk, with a stool beside it. At UR, above the door, is a hat tree. At UR, against the back wall, stands a filing case. Another filing case stands between the window and the UL door. Hanging on the back wall, L of the window, is a file of newspaper clippings. An adding machine stands in the jog at L, above the door. A flat top desk, extending up and down stage, is placed at DLC, with chairs R and L of it. A "MANAGER" sign is on the lower end of it. Another flat top desk, extending R and L, is placed at UC, with a chair U of it. A "CLERK" sign is on the L end of it. A chair stands at DRC, facing L. However, any of the most difficult furniture around the wall may be changed or eliminated.
- LIGHTS: ON STAGE--Whites in foots and borders full up.  
OFF STAGE--White floods on the doors at R, UL, and L.  
Yellow sun flood focussed on the back drop.
- AT RISE: The Play Reader is sitting above desk at UC, working on manuscripts. The Reception Clerk is standing at the UR corner of the DLC desk, with his back turned to the Reader. He is leaning on the desk figuring over some bills. After a moment, the Manager enters the R door hurriedly. He X UR and begins to remove overcoat and gloves. He speaks.

- 1 -

MANAGER

(At UR)

Tell me, Gournot, when will we have ready the first performance of "The Radio Beetle"?

READER

It will be ready in three weeks.

MANAGER

(Wheels around excitedly)

"In three weeks"? That's it! As soon as I leave the office for a couple of days, you ball up everything -- everything!

READER

But, Mr. Manager, it's quite impossible to bring that play out earlier.

MANAGER

"Impossible?"

(Slams hat on rack and X R of UC desk)

How is it impossible? Where did you hear that you could postpone a play that has already been announced?

READER

But, Mr. Manager, they are not ready yet.

MANAGER

They aren't ready yet! Why aren't they ready yet? Must I do everything? Isn't four weeks long enough for them, I'd like to know?

READER

Sure, the actors are ready. But you know, we haven't the third act yet.

MANAGER

(X one step down and speaks to the Reception Clerk)

Haven't we that third act yet, Pomuc?

(Clerk does not move. Manager  
X LC, near Pomuc)

- 2 -

MANAGER

Pomuc, didn't you hear me?

CLERK

(Turns around calmly)

Sure I heard you. But why should I wear myself out answering questions like that? You know very well, Mr. Manager, that I'm not going to write that third act myself.

MANAGER

Don't get fresh, Pomuc. You know just what I'm talking about. You were told to go to the author every morning and ask for the third act until you got it.

(Clerk shrugs his shoulders and turns again to his work.  
Manager bows sarcastically)

I beg your pardon. I had the audacity to criticise my own clerk.

CLERK

(Over his shoulder)

Yes - I noticed it.

MANAGER

MANAGER and READER

Pomuc, didn't you hear me?

Pomuc!

CLERK

(Turns around calmly)

(Manager X above to L of desk  
and faces Pomuc as if to speak)

Sure I heard you. But why should I wear myself out answering questions like that? You know very well, Mr. Manager, that there's no use talking so much. You know, Mr. Manager, where the author always wished you were every morning when I came to ask him for the manuscript.

Don't get fresh, Pomuc. You know just what I'm talking about. You were told to go to the author every morning and ask for the third act until you got it. (X DR. sits on high stool, and works on his books)

MANAGER

(Wheels and X impatiently to ULC. Then X L of UC desk and speaks to Reader)

I beg your pardon. I had the audacity to criticise my own clerk. I don't understand why you're bothering me with that third act. It's a mighty poor excuse. You could have gotten ready anyhow.

CLERK

(Over his shoulder)

READER

Without the manuscript?

MANAGER

For heaven's sake, let that third act go! It's not a manuscript we want, it's a hit. That's more important than the manuscript. The big thing isn't the play, it's the performance. So, leave the manuscript to the author and go ahead and produce the play.

(X UL to door)

READER

(Desperate)

Without a manuscript?

MANAGER

(Threatening)

Are you starting in again about that manuscript?

(X UL corner of UC desk)

Don't you understand that --

CLERK

(Over his shoulder)

Of course he doesn't.

READER

(To Clerk)

Listen, Pomuc, you're getting entirely too fresh.

CLERK

And without a manuscript!

READER and MANAGER

Pomuc!

CLERK

(Facing them)

Why talk so much, the secretary really doesn't understand things. No shame for him, he's been with us only a year. I've been here twenty-seven now.

- 4 -

READER

Listen, Pomuo!----

CLERK

(Unembarrassed)

You weren't with us when we played the "BLOODY DRAGON"  
to standing room - isn't that so, Mr. Manager?

(Manager X U and stands R side of  
window looking out, with hands  
twitching behind him impatiently)

And the author only found out after the third performance that  
he had forgotten to write the play.

MANAGER

(Over his shoulder)

But nobody noticed it.

CLERK

And then the author came to the theatre, took down the  
play in shorthand and published it.

READER

(Rise)

All right, what do I care about that? It's not just the  
third act. Miss Pataky doesn't want to play the part of Marie.

MANAGER

( X R of UC desk)

What's that? Miss Pataky doesn't want to play the part of Marie.  
She must! She is the only one who can play it. There isn't  
any one else.

READER

What can I do? I don't know anybody else for that role  
either.

MANAGER

(With hands to his head, he X below UC desk and above  
DLC desk to L of it)

And things like that always come up at the last minute!  
What shall we do about that part?



- 5 -

READER

I don't know what to do.

(Follows Manager to UR corner  
of DLC desk)

CLERK

Miss Dombovary can play Marie's part.

MANAGER and READER

(Turning quickly)

Pomuc!

MANAGER

Be kind enough, Pomuc, not to butt into everything.  
(Pomuc returns to his work. The  
Manager X DL, then back to chair  
L of DLC desk, thinking. He  
speaks to the Reader)

Hm,--really Miss Dombovary could play it. I've just  
thought of it. That part suits her much better than it  
does Miss Pataky. I wonder I didn't give her the part in the  
first place.

(Sit L of desk)

READER

Yes, the part suits her exactly.

(Site R of DLC desk)

MANAGER

But won't Miss Pataky be angry?

CLERK

(Over his shoulder)

Give her Biri's part in "The Gentleman's Kimono"

READER

Listen, Pomuc, can't you keep to yourself? We can't think  
with these constant interruptions.

(To the Manager)

Say, Mr. Manager, we could give Miss Pataky the part of Biri in  
"The Gentleman's Kimono"

- 6 -

MANAGER

Yes, that will be all right. Hm--but then she can't play Mrs. Steger in "Her Nineteenth Husband".

READER

That's right. The role in "Her Nineteenth Husband" is too long.

MANAGER

Well, what can we do?

READER

Hm, Hm -- I don't see that we can do anything.

MANAGER

Then, we can't make that change.

(pause)

CLERK

(Facing them)

What are you breaking your head over! Cut out the part of Mrs. Steger. Then the play will be shorter and Miss Pataky can play Biri.

MANAGER

Pomuo!

READER

Pomuo!

(Pomuo turns back to his work)

MANAGER

Hm,--I have an idea. We could cut out the part of Mrs. Steger and make the play shorter.

READER

You're right. And then we could give the part of Biri to Miss Pataky.

MANAGER

Certainly!

- 7 -

R

READER

(Rise gayly)

Well, we are all right now.

MANAGER

(Rise)

Yes, that will be fine. You see, all you have to do is to think a little.

(X UL of UC desk)

READER

That's all.

(X below to DL corner of  
DLG desk)

CLERK

Yep, that's all.

MANAGER

(Manager and Reader who have their backs on Pomuc, now wheel)

Listen, Pomuc, must you stick in this room all the time? Why don't you go outside in the waiting room, where you belong.

CLERK

I'll go, but only when Mraz isn't outside any more.

MANAGER

Mraz?

READER

Who's Mraz?

CLERK

(To Reader)

You ought to know that better than I do. He doesn't come to see ME! He's been sitting out there since nine o'clock this morning.

- 8 -

READER

(X to chair L of DLC desk)

I suppose that's why you sat in here all day yesterday!

CLERK

He was there all day yesterday too. He is there every day.

READER

Since when?

CLERK

Since eight months.

MANAGER

Who is this fellow Mraz?

CLERK

He's an author.

MANAGER

(Thinking)

I know now. He has some play here.

(X U of DLC desk)

Have you read it?

READER

I? I never even heard about it.

MANAGER

I promised him to read it and then forgot to give it to you. Well, you'll have to fix it up with him somehow.

(X UL door)

READER

But I haven't got the slightest idea of that play.

MANAGER

That makes no difference. Tell him anything. We can't let him wait any longer. Just think out something.

(Exit UL)

- 9 -

READER

But, Mr. Manager --

(X ULC)

CLERK

(With malicious joy, X R door -- hand on knob)  
Shall I let him in?

READER

(X L of UC desk)

Wait a minute. Don't be in such a hurry.

(Staring before him)

What the deuce shall I tell him!

CLERK

Well, tell him you've read the play.

READER

Keep quit, Pomuc. Let me think this out.

(X U of DLC desk, thinking)

CLERK

All right

(X ER and sit on tall stool)

READER

(Stands thinking)

Now what shall I tell him!

(Clerk doesn't move)

Why don't you say something?

CLERK

No, I'll keep quiet. You can think this out yourself.  
I wasn't hired to do your work.

READER

(After a pause, X C)

Say, you just start talking to him, and I'll -- then I'll come in later.

CLERK

Well, what do you want me to tell him?

READER

Anything you like. You know what these authors like to hear. Just tell him you've read the play -- then I'll come in.

(X L door)

CLERK

(Rise)

But, suppose you don't come?

READER

But I will. don't be afraid. I only want to look at his play a minute so I can say something about it.

(Opens door)

CLERK

(X C, showing his uniform)

At least give me a regular coat.

READER

There's my street coat on the hook.

CLERK

(Calls after him.  
X UR)

Come back now, because I'm not hired to ---

(Reader exits L.  
Clerk puts coat on and stands quietly awhile, then with a show of authority, he opens R door and steps back)

Please step in!

- 11 -

MRAZ

(Appears in the door)

How do you--excuse me-- or beg your pardon -- I wanted to say nevertheless --

CLERK

(Waves hand toward L with big gesture)

Take a seat, sir.

MRAZ

(X DR corner of UC desk and glances at the signs on the two desks)

Beg your pardon, as a very humble -- may I ask you -- have I the pleasure of speaking to the manager?

CLERK

Yes, you have the pleasure --

(X above and picks up "Clerk" sign on L end of desk, reads it and turns it down. Then X L of DLC desk, reads and adjusts "Manager" sign)

Yes, I am the manager.

MRAZ

I dared to hope --

(Drops hat on desk. Takes chair at RC and unconsciously drags it to DLC)

CLERK

Because you see me in the anteroom all the time? That suit I wear is my office uniform. It is my disguise -- to keep so many people from bothering me when I am busy.

(Sits L of DLC desk grandly)

MRAZ

Yes, but --

(Half sits in the chair he has brought down. Then he rises and looks at it and the chair R of the desk. He then takes the first chair back to RC, then X DLC)



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MRAZ (continued)

Yes, but --

(He half sits in the chair R of the desk, then rises, looks at the two chairs again, and X RC to the first chair)

CLERK

(To himself)

I wonder when that bird's going to light!

MRAZ

(Half sits in RC chair, then rises)

I beg your pardon --

CLERK

It's all right. Sit down.

MRAZ

(Sits on edge of the chair timidly)

Thank you, thank you -- that is, I mean to say --

CLERK

What can I do for you, my dear Mr. - er - Mr --

MRAZ

Mraz! Mraz!

(Rises, bows, and sits)

CLERK

Mraz! What can I do for you, Mr. Mraz?

MRAZ

(Rises and X C)

I have been bold enough to come here the last few months --

CLERK

Sit down, sit down.

- 13 -

MRAZ

I beg your pardon.

(X RC and sits)

Thank you, thank you. I have been bold enough to come here these last few months, because eight months ago you were kind enough to promise me that you would read my play. Then four months later you were kind enough to promise me that you would read it within two weeks. When I called at the close of two weeks, you were kind enough to tell me that you were reading it and I should come to see you again. When next I called, you were kind enough to be busy and therefore you let me know through the Reception Clerk that you had read the play and would see me the next day! But the next day you were kind enough to be busy again. That was five weeks ago. (Rise X C) So to-day I ask you: What is your opinion about my play?

CLERK

Yes, yes, I know -- hum --

(He gropes for a thought)

I already let you know that I had read it.

MRAZ

H - yes! H - yes!

(He half sits at C. Then realizes there is no chair under him)

I beg your pardon.

(X RC and sits)

Yes, you said you had read the play.

CLERK

Well -- if I said I did, then -- I must have read it.

MRAZ

(Rise gleefully)

H-- yes, you were kind enough --

(Coughs and sits in embarrassment)

I beg your pardon.

- 14

CLERK

Well, I read that play.

(Rummages through papers on the desk)

Where did I put it? I don't know where I put it.

MRAZ

(Quickly)

Doesn't matter if it is lost. I can write it again.

CLERK

Makes no difference. You are interested in my opinion, and not the play, aren't you? Well, my dear friend --

(He frowns. Mraz, becoming fearful, recoils)

CLERK

You know, there are some things in your play.

MRAZ

(X DLC gayly)

There are? There are? Aren't there?

CLERK

Well -- One couldn't say that there are not. There are.

MRAZ

(Takes out note book and pencil)

That's right. One couldn't say that. I knew you would see them. Other people don't see.

(Half sits R of DLC desk)

I beg your pardon.

(Rises and X RC and half sits)

CLERK

That's all right. Sit here, and let's talk this thing over together.

- 15 -

MRAZ

( X DLC and sits)

Thank you, thank you.

CLERK

(Modestly)

If a man reads as many plays as I do, he gets used to judging them quickly.

MRAZ

Well, did you notice?

CLERK

Eh? -- Oh, sure I noticed.

(He looks at the L door nervously)

Especially in the middle of the second act -- not quite in the middle - kind of between the beginning and the middle.

MRAZ

(Overjoyed. Rises enthusiastically)

Great! You noticed it!

(Violently swinging his fists about)

Those fools, those crooks!

CLERK

Who?

(Rises in alarm)

MRAZ

My friends -- who read my play.

CLERK

Oh!

MRAZ

They said that the idea doesn't come out around the middle of the second act -- that it cannot be seen.

- 16 -

CLERK

It certainly can be.

(Looking toward the L door)

It can be very well. That isn't the trouble that it can't be seen.

(Sits)

MR. AZ

(Afraid - feverishly)

No? Then what's the trouble?

(Sits)

CLERK

Well -- You know what it is, don't you? - there in the first act? Well?

MR. AZ

(Hopelessly)

Mr. Manager, I wouldn't have believed that you could have read my play so deeply, so searchingly. You're right. At the end of the first act, believe me, I also felt that it can't be.

(He twitches his hands between his knees)

CLERK

You see! But don't let that put you out.

MR. AZ

(Feverishly)

What can we do? If the Count doesn't know that Amanda was in the hold of the vessel - then what can I make Palfalvy say?

CLERK

(Perspiring)

Palfalvy! Must Palfalvy say something? Isn't it simpler if Palfalvy doesn't say anything? Palfalvy should make believe he doesn't know anything about it.

(He looks at the L door.)

- 17 -

MRAZ

(Thinking deeply)

Hm - and the Captain shouldn't find out till the third act that Geza didn't mean it that way?

CLERK

Certainly.

MRAZ

(Rises, thinking intently with a growing thought)

That's right! That's right! This way it will be quite clear why Iuliska didn't jump out of the second story window!

CLERK

(Rise)

Exactly.

MRAZ

Great! Simply great!

(X RC excitedly. Clerk quickly wheels and knocks on L door, then X UC above desk. Mraz begins writing furiously.

I'll make those very changes. I knew I was bringing my work to the right man. But I wouldn't have believed that you'd read it so carefully, so deeply, so understandingly.

CLERK

Oh, those things, it seems to me, are on the surface. They are self-evident. It is perfectly clear that Palfalvy shouldn't say a word.

(Sits U of UC desk)

MRAZ

(X R of UC desk, dragging the RC chair with him)

You see, everyone who read the play --

(He half sits)

I beg your pardon.

(He returns the chair to RC)

- 18 -

CLERK

That's all right. Sit here.

MRAZ

(He returns the chair to R of desk)

Thank you, thank you. You see --

(He starts to sit and drops his pencil)

I beg your pardon.

(He picks up pencil and starts to sit again)

You see --

(He drops his note book)

I beg your pardon.

(He starts to pick up note book and the chair topples over on him. With profuse apologies, he recovers the note book and sits)

You see, everyone who read the play didn't see what you saw right away -- that Palfalvy's confession is not important, considering the fact that they have already carried the trunk to Tulop.

CLERK

(Wagging his head knowingly)

Oh, that's understood.

MRAZ

(Writing in note book)

Simply great! And what do you think, Mr. Manager, of Margaret? Please talk to me sincerely -- the opinion of a critic cannot but be useful to me.

CLERK

Margaret? Well -- (He looks at the L door)  
--that Margaret -- that Margaret --  
(Looks at the L door again)

MRAZ

You're afraid, I see, that I will not understand you. I am not sensitive. Just you tell me the truth.



- 19 -

CLERK

(Suffering)

Hm -- I would like her -- that Margaret -- only she -- well -- you know.

MRAZ

You mean that she doesn't divorce Antalfi?

(Painfully)

Honest now, Mr. Manager, tell me, isn't she right? Can she do that? Think it over. The Count knows everything. And Margaret knows that Kazmer was there in the bathtub when the explosion happened.

(He leans his head in his hand and thinks intensely, talking to himself)

Now can she divorce him and know of the explosion too!

CLERK

(To himself)

If that crook doesn't come in soon, there's going to be another explosion too.

MRAZ

(Turning to the Clerk)

How can she when she already knows of the explosion?

CLERK

That's just it, Margaret should not know about the explosion.

MRAZ

(Rises, dumbfounded)

Shouldn't know about the explosion? But she is the very one --

CLERK

(Jumps up, pounding the desk impatiently)

Yes, Yes, I know that she is the very one.

(Regains his control and speaks calmly)

And it is a little funny, that she shouldn't know about it, since she is the very one. But the playwright must be brave, my dear friend!

- 20 -

CLERK (Continued)

(Pushes his chair under the desk  
and X ULC restlessly)

MRAZ

(Dragging his chair after him, he X below desk  
and to ULC. He stands R of Clerk)

But, Mr. Manager, then Alajos cannot go up the tower!

CLERK

(Violently)

Well he mustn't go up. Why must he go up? I don't understand,  
why he goes up! He must stay down! That's all!

(X below Mraz and above UC desk  
to R savagely)

MRAZ

(Wrought up, he X above desk to RC, dragging  
the chair with his L hand)

But, Mr. Manager! If he doesn't go up the tower, then  
there's no use telling Bela that he knows all.

CLERK

(X RC to Mraz)

Bela! Bela! What does that Bela want? Bela shouldn't  
want so much! Bela should keep quiet! Nobody is anxious  
about Bela! Bela --

(He wipes his forehead)

MRAZ

(Listening)

Yes? Bela?

CLERK

Let Bela go to --

(He catches himself, coughs  
and makes the correction)

uh, ah -- to Margaret, I mean to say.

- 21 -

MRAZ

(Astounded, he drops the chair from his L hand and steps back. He is now standing above the chair. He almost screams)

To Margaret?. Bela to Margaret? Bela?

CLERK

Certainly.

(With a frantic gesture of disgust, he X below Mraz and the desk, and on to the L door)

MRAZ

How can he --

(With both hands out in appeal, he starts to follow the Clerk, but stumbles over the chair lying below him and falls in a sprawl on the floor. At the same moment the Clerk hammers violently on the L door adding to the noise, then X below the DLC desk to the chair R of it)

I beg your pardon.

(He rises, picks up the chair quickly, and drags it to DLC)

But what I meant to say was: How can Bela go to Margaret?

CLERK

How can He? Very simply - he just goes -

(Sits in chair R of DLC desk in great irritation)

MRAZ

All right, Suppose he goes back.

(He throws his chair directly opposite that of the Clerk's, and sits. The two men are close together and squarely face to face)

Then you think that Margaret shouldn't go down to the viaduct, don't you?

CLERK

(All mixed up)

Why shouldn't she go? She can go, why not? She isn't crippled you know.

MRAZ

Yes, but there is Palfalvy. When would Palfalvy see her?

CLERK

(Rocklessly)

Palfalvy? Why, Palfalvy could call on Margaret at the viaduct.

MRAZ

(Rises, gasping for air and backs behind his chair)

For heaven's sake, Mr. Manager, what about Bajligethy?

CLERK

(Seeing he has lost out - jumps up waving his hands before Mraz's nose)

Bajligethy? Bajligethy can go hang himself!

(X U of DLC desk, throws a book violently into the L door.  
X ULC gestures violently, X above to URC, another gesture, and then X DRC. In the meantime, Mraz has thrown his hands to his head and stands transfixed, facing the audience, thinking out this new suggestion. Then the light dawns and he sees the great value of it)

MRAZ

Natur-ally-y! Natur-ally-y! Bajligethy can go hang himself!!!

(X DRC and shakes Clerk's hand vigorously)

Mr. Manager, you're a great man. I have wondered for five years what Bajligethy should do. You have lit a light in my brain.

(Shakes hands again)

Thank you, thank you!

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MRIZ (Continued)

(Takes hat from UC desk, X R door,  
and clutches his head. Clerk X  
R of UC desk in amazement)

That's great! And I didn't think of that till just now!  
Bajligethy should hang himself!

(X RC and shakes hands again)

Thank you, thank you very much. I must run home and write  
it down.

(Exit R)

CLERK

(Flops into chair at UC)

READER

(Enter L quickly, carrying the manuscript. X LC)

Where is Mraz? Where is that Mraz?

CLERK

He went.

READER

(X below to RC)

Send somebody after him. This is the best play I've been  
in years. We must produce it.

CLERK

Fine! Especially if Bajligethy hangs himself!

READER

What's that?

CLERK

The author told me just now that he is changing the play.  
Bajligethy is going to hang himself at the end.

READER

Wha-a-a-t!! Is that man crazy!! Then the whole play is  
the rankest nonsense.

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READER (Continued)

(He throws the manuscript on the floor and X below to L door)

And that's the kind of thing they bother us with.

(Turns at the door)

If the man puts his foot inside this door again, kick him out into the middle of next week.

(Exits L, slamming the door behind him. The Clerk settles back in his chair, with feet on desk, as curtain falls)

C U R T A I N