

FANTASY ON A PET PEEVE
By Thomas Mitchell

PLAYERS:

Judge
Defendant
Six Jurors
Counsellor
Prosecutor
Mrs. Sahra Ringwater (housewife)
Mr. Jake Mullins (old man)
Mr. Bill Chatery (young man)
Two police officers.

THE PLAY:

Voice: Can you recall talking to someone lately, who seemed to be listening, but who suddenly said hello to a friend as though you didn't even exist? or interrupted you with something completely irrelevant to what you were saying? And have you ever found yourself doing the same thing? It may not seem like much to worry about...but...it could be a sign...a warning...

(Defendant is dragged into the courtroom by two officers.)

Defendant: (struggling) No! No! I'm innocent! What've I done. Let me go, please!

Jury: (shouting, pointing) Guilty! Hang him! (They shout various obscenities.)

Def: No!

(Officers push Def. onto chair in front of Judge.)

Judge: What do you have to say for yourself?

Def: Say? But, I don't know...

Judge: (cutting him off) Guilty or not guilty!

Def: Not guilty! I haven't done anything.

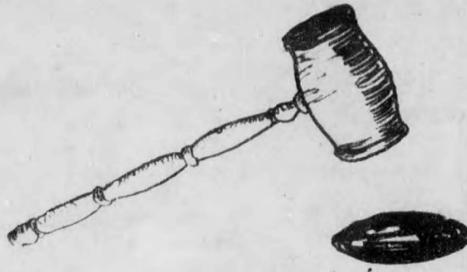
Jury: Lies!

Judge: (to Def.) You have the right to counsel. (to Counsellor, who sits with briefcase in lap - arranging papers - fishing rod and tackle box on either side.) Counsellor, you have a client.

Counsellor: (rising) But, I was just about to go fishing!

Judge: Then make it fast. (Half raises arm with one finger pointing upward.) The Defendant will not be deprived of his democratic rights.

Coun: (resigned, shrugs, walks over to Jury) Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I'm going to prove to you, in the next few minutes, beyond any trace of doubt, that that man over there (points to Def) is entirely free of guilt and must be found innocent. (struts, Jury yawns).



Prosecutor: Not if I can help it! (Jury cheers)

Judge: (pounding with gavel) Order! Order! (Jury silent) Counsellor, do you have any witnesses?

Coun: Hmm...yes...I suppose we should have some witnesses. All right then, for my first witness I call upon Mrs. Sahra Ringwater.

(Fat, housewife-type enters - sworn in as Coun. speaks to Jury.)

Coun: Now, you'll hear about the indisputable innocence...the undeniable, golden, gleaming goodness, and moral impeccability of my client. (Jurors yawn - Coun. ends his speech by pointing into Def.'s face - walks to witness.) Mrs. Ringwater, in your own words tell us that my client is innocent.

Mrs. Ringwater: (looking about) Which one is he?

Coun: (points to Def.) Him.

Mrs. R.: Oh, my God! That's him! He's the one! It's him. Oh, mercy!

Jury: No mercy!

Judge: Order! Get her out of here. (Mrs. R. exits with officer - Judge looks at watch, looks at Coun.) We're running out of time, Counsellor - do you have any more witnesses?

Coun: Yes, Your Honour; I call upon Mr. Jake Mullins to take the stand.

(Mr. Mullins enters - sworn in while Coun. speaks to Jury.)

Coun: Bear with me, ladies and gentlemen of the Jury. My client is innocent...right, Mr. Mullins?

Mr. Mullins: Well, I can't say for sure. Hmm. Well, my guess is...he's the one alright. Yeah, I'll say that he's the one.

Jury: Hang him!

Mr. M.: But I could be wrong.

Jury: Hang the witness!

Mr. M.: Yeah, he's the one. (Jury cheers.)

Judge: Order! Get him out of here. Counsellor?

(Mr. M. exists with officer.)

Coun: One more witness, Your Honour. I call Mr. Bill Chatery to take the stand.

(Young, neatly dressed man enters - sees Def. - stops, horrified - points at Def.)

Mr. Chatery: That's him! That's him! He's the one!

(Loud applause and cheers from Jury.)

Judge: Order! Blast it! (to Prosecutor) Do you have any witnesses? (Coun. sits. Prosecutor rises.)

Prosecutor: Yes, Your Honour, I call upon Mrs. Ringwater, Mr. Mullins, and Mr. Chatery. (enter witnesses - Chatery takes oath.) (to witnesses) Tell it like it is.

Witnesses: He's the one!

(Short burst of applause from Jury.)

Pros: (to Judge) Prosecution rests.

Judge: Counsellor, you may address the Jury.

Coun: (walking to Jury) My friends, the man you see sitting over there (points to Def.) must receive a verdict of nothing other than not guilty! (sits down)

Judge: Prosecution. (motions to Jury)

Pros: (walking to Jury) How can he be innocent if he's guilty? (Jury cheers) There can be only one verdict - guilty! (Jury cheers) He must be hanged!

Jury: Hanged!

Pros: Hanged!

Jury: Hanged!

Judge: Han...uh, ladies and gentlemen of the Jury, I hope that you give an honest verdict - based on...(looks at watch) based on...what you've heard - go to it.

(Jury exits - some shake fists at Def. - as last Juror disappears, first one to leave enters followed by rest - they seat themselves - sit with blank faces.)

Judge: We will now have the verdict.

Juror: (stands) We find the Defendant guilty.

(Jurors turn to Def. and smile.)

Judge: (to Def.) Approach the bench.

(Def. approaches bench in horror with officer on either side.)

Judge: I sentence you to be hanged did you hear that?

Jury: Serves you right.

Pros: Your own fault.

Coun: I'm going fishing.

