

# The Trial

By Lori Lee Triplett

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## STORY OF THE PLAY

**ACT I:** Judge William Marley, already in trouble with the ACLU for allowing the Ten commandments to be displayed in his courtroom, has invited a Victim's Rights class to attend his court to learn about litigation. He decides to use the murder case of Jesus Christ, State v. Judas Iscariot, Joseph Caiaphas, and Pontius Pilate, as a teaching tool. Debra Radison, an experienced assistant DA, and Tracy Woodward, a new member of the bar and law librarian, represent the state. Debra is furious with Tracy for submitting this case, and worries about the effect on her career. She even wonders if she should quit. With the jury seated, John Roberts, an atheist and a brand-new attorney, files for a continuance to give him time to learn about the case.

Judge Marley, concerned about John's limited religious knowledge, asks Roger Jensen, an ex-minister and successful defense attorney, to help represent the defense. He and Debra agree to a gag order to keep the press and the ACLU from getting involved. John is thrilled to be working with such a talented defense attorney, although he is curious why a minister would become an attorney. Roger says he has "no regrets" and is primarily interested in establishing their strategy as well as helping John learn all the facts. After working non-stop, Roger quits for the day. But John is driven to learn more, and reads the Bible into the night, where he is puzzled to learn that God would give up the life of His only Son.

The next day the litigation begins. A guardian, Attorney Clark, is called to represent Matthew, writer of the first gospel, to give his version of the events. The prosecution continues its case with Attorney Harrison, representing Mark, and Attorney Shore, representing the gospel of John. When Linda Cooper, from the ACLU shows up to file an amicus brief, it is clear that John intended this surprise to end the litigation.

**ACT II:** Tracy has doubts about even being an attorney after yesterday's debacle, and talks things over with God. John overhears her talking, and after teasing her, asks more questions about "her God." The prosecution rests, and defense must now call Attorney Ress (Judas), Attorney Locke (Caiaphas), and Attorney Wilk (Pilate) to explain their side of the events. After closing arguments, the attorneys agonize as they wait for the verdict. The prosecution prevails, and Debra decides to run for District Attorney. John loses his first case, but finds something more important, God.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(3 m, 6 w, 8 flexible roles, 12 extras as the jury)*

STEVE (or Stephanie) BECK: Judge Marley's law clerk and bailiff.

JUDGE WILLIAM F. MARLEY: a long respected member of the bench.

DEBRA RADISON: prosecuting attorney for the district.

KIM RICHARDSON: law clerk and assistant to Debra.

SUSIE: secretary to Judge Marley.

JOHN H. ROBERTS: new attorney for the public defender's office.

LUCILLE WATKINS: flamboyant, one of the substitute court reporters.

TRACY WOODWARD: law librarian for the district court.

ROGER JENSEN: a successful defense attorney who is a former minister.

ATTORNEY CLARK: guardian, representing Matthew.

ATTORNEY HARRISON: guardian, representing Mark.

ATTORNEY JONES: guardian, representing Luke.

ATTORNEY SHORE: guardian, representing John.

LINDA COOPER: attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union.

ATTORNEY RESS: guardian for Judas.

ATTORNEY LOCKE: guardian for Caiaphas.

ATTORNEY WILK: guardian for Pilate.

JURY: twelve peers. (One serves as foreman.)

### **SETTING**

The set consists of three areas. The main area is the district courthouse, done in the usual gleaming wood and brass. The area stage right is the nicely-appointed judge's chamber (office). Area stage left is John Roberts' extremely messy and cheaply- furnished office.

**TIME:** Present day.

### **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

#### **Act I**

Scene 1: Monday morning at the district courthouse.

Scene 2: Later that morning at John's office.

Scene 3: Monday night at John's office.

Scene 4: Tuesday at court.

#### **Act II**

Scene 1: Wednesday morning at court.

Scene 2: Thursday morning at court.

Scene 3: Friday at court.

### **PROPS**

Gavel, briefcases containing files for Judge and Attorneys; Bible, coffee cup, nail polish, newspaper, jury questionnaires.

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: The courtroom. STEVE, the law clerk, is busily working at his computer on his desk outside the judge's chamber. The JUDGE enters walking quickly to his office.)*

JUDGE: Good morning, Steve!

STEVE: *(Stops working and immediately stands.)* Good morning, Your Honor, sir!

JUDGE: *(Still walking.)* One or the other will be fine, Steve.

STEVE: Excuse me, Your Honor, Sir?

JUDGE: *(HE stops.)* You can call me either Your Honor or sir. Both are not necessary in one sentence.

STEVE: Oh, right. Sorry, Your Honor.

JUDGE: Would you please notify the staff that I am here. Then come into my office and we'll get the day started.

STEVE: Yes sir, right away, Your Honor. *(HE leaves quickly.)*

JUDGE: *(Grimaces at the double salute, then continues on to his office. He takes off his coat, stores his briefcase, and then sits at his desk to pray.)* Dear God, As I once again adjudicate these cases, please give me the wisdom of Solomon to know your will, and give me the guidance you gave Moses to follow your will. In your son's name I pray. Amen. *(STEVE enters the Judge's office.)* Addendum, please give my new law clerk wisdom and guidance also. He needs it. Amen.

STEVE: Amen. Your Honor, I notified the staff, as you requested, sir.

*(DEBRA and her law clerk, KIM, can be seen entering the courtroom. They begin to unpack files and get set for the day.)*

JUDGE: Steve, if you only do one thing for me this morning, please stop the double salutation.

STEVE: Oh right. I'm sorry, Your Honor, I'm still a little nervous. It won't happen again.

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JUDGE: Thank you. Now, if you'll help me get my robe on and find my files for today's docket.

*(STEVE helps the JUDGE put his robe on and sort files. SUSIE dashes through the courtroom to the Judge's office.)*

SUSIE: Morning, Debra! Hello, Kim!

DEBRA: Morning, Susie.

SUSIE: Nancy won't be here today.

KIM: Judge Marley's court reporter?

SUSIE: Yes, she was in an accident. Broken leg.

DEBRA: Oh that's too bad. Who's the court reporter on call?

SUSIE: Lucille!

DEBRA: *(Horrified.)* Lucille? Does Judge Marley know yet?

SUSIE: I have to go tell him right now. *(SHE stops.)* Would you like to go tell him?

DEBRA: No thank you!

SUSIE: *(SHE has reached the office.)* Excuse me, sir.

JUDGE: Yes, Susie? Is everything ready to start?

SUSIE: Almost, except that Nancy's husband called. She was in a car accident. Suffered a broken leg. She won't be here for at least a week.

JUDGE: I see. Well, please send her some flowers in my name.

SUSIE: Yes, sir.

JUDGE: We'll just have to make the best of it. Who's the court reporter on call?

SUSIE: *(Almost whispers.)* Lucille Watk—

JUDGE: *(Yelling.)* Lucille Watkins?

SUSIE: Yes, sir.

JUDGE: Dear God, please no. What did I do to deserve Lucille? I'm canceling court. We'll reschedule the cases.

SUSIE: Excuse me sir, but you have a Victim's Rights class scheduled this week. They're already in the courtroom.

STEVE: What Victim's Rights class?

JUDGE: It's a new program to help crime victims and their families learn about court proceedings.

## **End of Freeview**

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