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*Dramatic Publishing*



A Drama in One Act  
by  
ANNE COULTER MARTENS

# A Certain Just Man



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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# A Certain Just Man

*A Drama in One Act*

FOR THREE MEN AND FOUR WOMEN

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## CHARACTERS

JOSIAH BANCROFT.....	<i>a just man</i>
MOLLY.....	<i>his daughter</i>
MISS ALLEN.....	<i>his secretary</i>
MR. KENNEDY.....	<i>a minister</i>
MRS. WILKINS.....	<i>a neighbor</i>
THE KEEPER.....	<i>of the King's Gate</i>
THE GUIDE.....	<i>of the King</i>

PLACE: *At the King's Gate, and in the office of Josiah Bancroft's secretary.*

TIME: *The present. A morning in January.*

## SYNOPSIS

PROLOGUE: *Outside the King's Gate. The present. A morning in January.*

THE PLAY: *The office of Josiah Bancroft's secretary. An hour before the Prologue.*

EPILOGUE: *Outside the King's Gate. Immediately after the preceding scene.*

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## NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

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**JOSIAH:** He is a strong man of about forty-five, well built and well tailored. He holds his head high, and there is pride and confidence in his bearing at first; later his manner gradually changes to one of abject humility.

**MOLLY:** She is hardly more than a girl, in her early twenties, very pretty, though shabbily dressed in a winter coat and hat. There is pride in her bearing that belies the rather desperate look in her eyes.

**MISS ALLEN:** She is a serious, dependable young woman of about thirty. She wears a dark business dress, and her hair is combed simply.

**MR. KENNEDY:** He is a gentle-faced man of about forty-five. He wears an overcoat over a clerical suit, and carries his hat in his hand.

**MRS. WILKINS:** She is a frail little woman of about sixty-five. She is plainly but neatly dressed, wears a coat and hat, and carries a worn pocketbook.

**THE KEEPER:** He is a tall man, dressed in the uniform of a guard. He has a fine, resonant voice.

**THE GUIDE:** She is a young woman, very simply dressed in a white gown which falls to her feet.

### PROPERTIES

**MISS ALLEN:** Notebook; paper; typewriter.

**MR. KENNEDY:** Letter, in pocket.

**MRS. WILKINS:** Worn pocketbook.

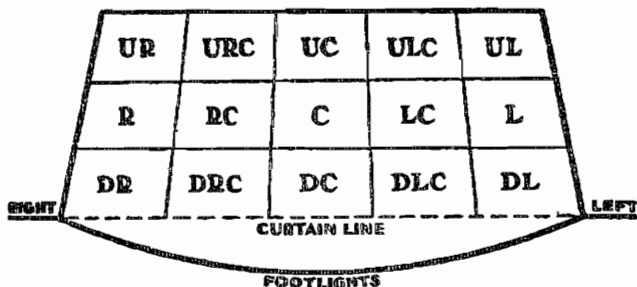
**MOLLY:** Handkerchief.

### NOTES ON STAGING

The play may be staged very simply, in curtains. The Prologue and Epilogue are played in front of the curtain.

If the play is used as part of a church service, it is suggested that before the play begins, the Beatitudes be read, up to and including "Blessed are the merciful." The service might close with the singing of "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy."

### CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



### STAGE POSITIONS

*Up stage* means away from the footlights, *down stage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

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## Prologue

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SCENE: *Outside the King's Gate. The scene may be played in front of the curtain. Before the play begins, the lights in the auditorium go out. From the darkness comes the sound of an organ playing some solemn, impressive religious music. A record may be used here effectively.*]

AT OPENING OF SCENE: *A pale blue spotlight lights the King's Gate. To the left of the King's Gate, but in the spotlight, stands THE KEEPER. He is a tall man, dressed in the uniform of a guard. He has a fine, resonant voice. JOSIAH enters R, and approaches in the dark, confidently, with a firm stride. JOSIAH is a strong man of about forty-five, well built and well tailored. He holds his head high. There is pride and confidence in his bearing.*]

KEEPER [*as JOSIAH enters*]. Who comes to the King's Gate?

JOSIAH [*in a clear voice*]. Josiah Bancroft. [*He draws near and stands in the circle of light, waiting.*]

KEEPER. From what place do you come?

JOSIAH. Berwick City, New Jersey.

KEEPER. I know you now. An icy road, a careless motorist . . .

We had not expected you at the portals of eternity for many years.

JOSIAH. It is through no fault of mine that I come. An accident, and unavoidable. [*Confidently.*] Open the gate!

KEEPER [*quietly*]. No, it was no fault of yours.

JOSIAH [*a bit put out*]. Then why is the gate not open to admit me? And who are you to question me?

KEEPER. I am the Keeper of the King's Gate. It is my duty to admit only those who are ready to come in.

JOSIAH [*with gruff impatience*]. I am not accustomed to be kept waiting.

*[There is a short pause.]*

KEEPER. Josiah Bancroft, are you ready to approach the judgment seat?

JOSIAH [*proudly*]. I am ready. My life has been an honorable one, and I have no fear of the judgment.

KEEPER. But, even as all men, you have made mistakes?

JOSIAH. If I have, they were so few that I have no recollection of them.

KEEPER. Perhaps, like all men, you would wish undone some things which you have done?

JOSIAH [*after a short pause*]. No, I cannot say that. All that I have done has been fair and right. I have been a just man always.

KEEPER. You are sure?

JOSIAH [*firmly*]. Very sure.

KEEPER. You have wronged no man?

JOSIAH. I have never knowingly wronged any man, nor taken what did not belong to me.

KEEPER. That is good.

JOSIAH. I have built up a successful business, based on integrity and fair dealing. I have given freely to the poor and to the church.

KEEPER. You gave to the church?

JOSIAH [*proudly*]. A tenth of all I earned. Not many men can say that.

KEEPER. No, not many men.

JOSIAH. I have dealt justly with all who came my way.

KEEPER. Were any tears shed at your passing?

JOSIAH [*annoyed*]. Tears! I am not a man who cares for tears and sentiment!

KEEPER [*slowly*]. No, you are not such a man.

JOSIAH [*impatiently, taking a step toward L*]. Then why do you keep me waiting? Open the Gate!

KEEPER. I hesitate for your own sake.

JOSIAH [*confidently*]. Then you need hesitate no longer. I demand that you let me enter, to be judged by my Maker with



the same justice that I meted out to my fellow men!

KEEPER. You are not ashamed of your life?

JOSIAH [*with the same confidence*]. Review each hour of it, and I shall not be ashamed.

KEEPER. Even the last hour?

JOSIAH. Even the last hour. [*He stands straight and proud, a man conscious of his own rectitude.*]

KEEPER. Josiah Bancroft, before I open for you the gate of eternity, go back and review the last hour of your life.

[*THE GUIDE enters L and approaches the circle of light. She is a young woman, very simply dressed in a white gown which falls to her feet. She comes partly into the circle of light and extends her hand toward JOSIAH.*]

GUIDE [*to JOSIAH*]. Come!

JOSIAH [*puzzled*]. Where do you want me to go?

GUIDE. I will guide you back to the last hour of your life.

[*As THE GUIDE speaks, the spotlight grows dimmer. THE GUIDE moves L. JOSIAH walks L, toward her. The spotlight goes out, leaving the scene in total darkness. Solemn organ music begins again. The curtain opens on The Play.*]

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## The Play

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SCENE: *The office of Josiah Bancroft's secretary. There is a window U C. A door in the L wall, up stage, leads to the private office of Josiah Bancroft. A door in the R wall, down stage, leads to the hall. There is a desk U C, with a chair behind it, facing down stage. On the desk are several papers, notebooks, pencils, a typewriter, and a telephone. There is a*

*chair R C, and a filing cabinet D L. The time is an hour before the Prologue.]*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: MISS ALLEN *sits at the desk U C, looking over her notes. She is a serious, dependable young woman of about thirty. She wears a dark business dress. Her hair is combed simply.* JOSIAH and THE GUIDE *enter U L and pause at the door. The organ music stops.* MISS ALLEN *does not look up or react in any way to JOSIAH and THE GUIDE. Quite evidently, she is unaware of their presence.]*

GUIDE. We shall wait here.

JOSIAH. I see now where we are. This is the office of my secretary.

GUIDE. The date is the eighteenth of January.

JOSIAH. My last day.

GUIDE. The time is ten o'clock.

JOSIAH. My last hour.

GUIDE. We shall review it together.

[MISS ALLEN *continues to work, neither hearing nor seeing them. They watch her a moment.*]

JOSIAH. A very efficient secretary, Miss Allen.

GUIDE. Yes.

JOSIAH. I could always depend on her. She never violated an order of mine, and she never presumed to advise or criticize.

[MISS ALLEN, *having finished her perusal of the notes, now puts a sheet of paper in the typewriter and is about to begin her typing. The telephone on the desk rings. She answers it.*]

MISS ALLEN [*into the telephone*]. Mr. Bancroft's secretary speaking. . . . No, I'm sorry, Mr. Bancroft is in his private office and will not be disturbed. . . . I'm sure he has given you his final word on the subject.