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# HIT AND MISDEMEANOR

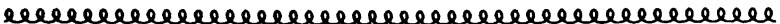
A Full-Length Play

By

**WILLIAM GLEASON**



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



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WILLIAM GLEASON

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(HIT AND MISDEMEANOR)

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*HIT AND MISDEMEANOR*

A Full-Length Play  
for Seven Men, Eight Women, Extras

*C H A R A C T E R S*

HOWARD HUGHES . . . . .the director  
YOLANDA . . . . .the stage manager, aka FBI agent Midge Tilley  
STRANGE PERSON . . . . . aka Velma Oriole and Laverne  
STACY TRAVERS . . . . . actress who plays Twinkletoes  
CONNIE LEWIS . . . . . actress who plays Tarpley  
MARY MULDOON . a paid hack, aka private eye Mickie Hammer  
MEL PURNELL . . . . . the producer  
BOB FELDMAN . . . . . actor who plays Flowers  
CHARLIE GROVES . . . . . actor who plays Vince  
EDDIE FOZO . . . . . actor who plays Vinnie Vito  
JUNIE LEWIS . . . . . Connie's sister  
SUE NIVENS . . . . . actress who plays Monique the Freak  
BELINDA PURNELL . . . . . Mel's fourth wife  
ARLIN RINKLER . . . . . audience member and psychopath  
OFFICER CHURCHILL . . . . . studio security guard  
STAGEHANDS, TECHNICIANS,  
CAMERA OPERATORS, PARAMEDIC . . . . . extras

TIME: The Present  
PLACE: The set of *Hit and Misdemeanor*,  
a detective show sit-com.

my car keys? My sword, Emile. Quickly. Merci. (And later.) Testing . . . Testing . . . Soon the show will begin. Millions of people will be watching what we do here tonight. Millions. I can make them laugh. Or I can make them cry. Amazing. Coffee, please. Black and three aspirin.

(YOLANDA enters with her checklist after the audience is seated. She crosses to the CREW.)

YOLANDA. Okay, okay, okay. We better be wrapping it up. Time to clear the set.

(A STRANGE PERSON walks up from the audience, carrying some flowers, and steps up onstage behind YOLANDA.)

YOLANDA. And don't leave any tools on the floor. You know what happened last time.

HOWARD (quietly, over the microphone). Strange person on set. You've got a bogie at three o'clock, Yolanda.

YOLANDA (turning to confront the STRANGE PERSON). Can I help you?

STRANGE PERSON (in a strange voice). Yes, please. I'm looking for a dressing room. I'm looking for the dressing room of Miss Connie Lewis.

YOLANDA (nodding). You and twenty million other guys.

STRANGE PERSON. I had no idea . . .

YOLANDA. It's down the hall . . . (She gestures off.) . . . but I'm afraid you can't go down there. It's off limits. I'll take the flowers to her if you'd like.

STRANGE PERSON (holding the flowers close). That's out of the question. I was asked to deliver these personally. And there is a message — a very important message to go with them.

HOWARD (over the microphone). What seems to be the problem, Yolanda?

YOLANDA (looking out over the audience to address HOWARD). This . . . uh . . . person wants to deliver . . . (The STRANGE PERSON crosses R.) . . . some flowers to Miss Lewis. (She looks around.) Hey, you! Stop! (The STRANGE PERSON disappears offstage. YOLANDA starts to follow.) Hey! You can't go back there!

HOWARD (over the microphone). Yolanda?

YOLANDA (stopping and looking up). Yes, Howard?

HOWARD (over the microphone). Let Security take care of it. We have a show to put on.

YOLANDA. Right. I just thought in light of recent events – the threats and all – that perhaps we shouldn't let every weirdo with a crush go running around backstage.

HOWARD (over the microphone). Security has been notified, Yolanda. At this very moment, they are closing in on the culprit. Trust me. (He sighs.) Have you ever been up on Mulholland Drive at midnight, Yolanda? When the Santa Anna winds have blown the smog away and the city lights glisten away to the horizon like an earth-bound constellation? Have you ever done that, Yolanda?

YOLANDA. No.

HOWARD (over the microphone). Neither have I. Perhaps sometime we can go there together, you and I. Would you like that?

YOLANDA. Probably not.

HOWARD (over the microphone). We'll meet in a crowded cafe. You'll be waiting for me, sipping one of those fruity little drinks with umbrellas in it. I'll watch you for several minutes before I approach.

YOLANDA. How will I recognize you, Howard?

HOWARD (over the microphone). I'll be wearing a carnation, a pink carnation.

YOLANDA. Whatever you say, Howard.

HOWARD (over the microphone). Would you go tell Stacy that

I would like to talk to her, Yolanda? Tell her it's relatively important.

YOLANDA. She won't come for that. Relatively important won't get it.

HOWARD (over the microphone). Then tell her it's a matter of life and death. Tell her that the future of mankind hangs in the balance.

YOLANDA. She doesn't care about that, either.

HOWARD (over the microphone). Then tell her it involves money.

YOLANDA. Now you're talking. (She crosses.) She'll be right out.

(OFFICER CHURCHILL, a security guard, enters with the STRANGE PERSON in tow, walking meekly and still carrying the flowers.)

YOLANDA (stopping and shaking her finger at the STRANGE PERSON). I told you not to go back there! I warned you. (She exits R as OFFICER CHURCHILL brings the STRANGE PERSON DC.)

OFFICER CHURCHILL. I got him, Mr. Hughes. He was tryin' ta get in Miss Lewis' dressing room. What you want I should do with him? You want I should call the cops?

HOWARD (over the microphone). That won't be necessary, Officer Churchill.

OFFICER CHURCHILL. You want I should throw him out?

HOWARD (over the microphone). I think we can avoid such an extreme reprimand. You may return to your post, Officer Churchill.

OFFICER CHURCHILL. I ain't got no post. I wander aimlessly.

HOWARD (over the microphone). Don't we all. Leave him,

Officer Churchill.

OFFICER CHURCHILL. Whatever you say. (As he backs away, turns and exits, leaving the STRANGE PERSON alone at C.)  
Whatever you say, Mr. Hughes.

HOWARD (over the microphone). House lights out, please. (The house lights go out.) Stage lights out, please, except for center stage spot. (The stage lights go out, leaving the STRANGE PERSON in a spot at C.) Well, now, weren't you the naughty one! Weren't you just the little Sneaky Pete! I'll bet you gave your mommy a hard time of it, didn't you? (The STRANGE PERSON nods and smiles shyly.) What is that? Is that a smile I see? Did I finally get a smile out of that old sourpuss face? (The STRANGE PERSON gives a bigger smile.) There . . . that's better. What's your name?

STRANGE PERSON. None of your business.

HOWARD (over the microphone). And where are you from?

STRANGE PERSON. None of your business.

HOWARD (over the microphone). How long have you had this thing for Connie Lewis?

STRANGE PERSON. None of your business.

HOWARD (over the microphone). When you first came to Hollywood, a name that is synonymous with glamour, style and glitz, were you disgusted to find that this once-proud peacock of a city had degenerated into the smarm capital of the sunbelt? Did you walk the once-clean streets in a state of shock and disillusionment? Were you like totally grossed out at the whole scene? And did you say to yourself, "How can people live like this? What kind of decomposed intellect could call this compost heap home?"

STRANGE PERSON. I love Hollywood.

HOWARD (over the microphone). So do I.

STRANGE PERSON. Hollywood is like the kidney of California, the oil filter of western civilization. It smells like death and

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tennis shoes. The funeral homes look like carwashes and the carwashes look like castles and nobody looks up except the cops. It gets in your blood, this place – a vile intoxicant as potent as the lure of easy fame and as cheap as original sin. Can I go now? I have an appointment with destiny.

HOWARD (over the microphone). Say hello for me, will you? (The STRANGE PERSON nods.) And best of luck to you. You'll find the exit at the end of the aisle. Could we have the house lights up, please? (The house lights come up.)

STRANGE PERSON (crossing down off the stage and starting up the aisle). Tell Connie I dropped by. And tell her that I hope she gets what she deserves.

HOWARD (over the microphone). Would you like to leave her the flowers?

STRANGE PERSON. I'll give them to her myself. I didn't get where I am today by taking no for an answer. I'll be back. You may rest assured of that. (He crosses out the door.) I'll be back.

HOWARD (over the microphone). Stage lights up, please. (The stage lights rise.)

(STACY enters in a robe, her makeup and hair already fixed. She has a vibrant, sultry quality about her and moves DC like a fashion model, then squints up over the audience.)

STACY. What is it, Howie? Howie?

(MARY, in the audience, rises, gasps and points to STACY.)

MARY. Look! It's her! It's really her! It's Stacy Travers. Twinkletoes! (She jumps up and down, applauds and waves.) Yooo-whooo!

STACY (ignoring MARY). Howie? Howie, it's me. What do

want? (There is no response.)

MARY (running down the aisle toward the stage with an autograph book, then running up toward STACY, who takes a step back so she won't get trampled). Oh, Miss Travers, could I please have your autograph? Please? I just love your work and it would just thrill my little boy to death to have your autograph sitting on his dresser with his collection of beetles of the great Southwest and the picture postcard of Epcot Center that his second cousin sent him. Please!

STACY. Well, we're not supposed to before the show, but I guess it will be all right this once. (She starts signing.) What is your little boy's name?

MARY. I lied. I'm sorry. I don't even have a little boy. I'm not even married. I live alone. That's why your autograph would be so important to me. It would be a comfort to me in my old age.

STACY. Well, then, what's your name?

MARY. My name is Mary.

STACY. Okay, Mary. Is there anything special you'd like me to say?

MARY. You are such a dear . . . and so beautiful.

STACY. Thank you.

MARY. Just sign it like this. Say, "To my best and dearest friend, Mary Muldoon. (STACY begins to write.) Your courage in the face of adversity has been a source of great inspiration to me. There is not a day goes by that I don't thank the dear Lord for giving me a friend like you. (STACY scribbles fiercely.) And in times of strife, when darkness descends on my soul and desperation claws at my heart, I know that I can always call on you for a good recipe or an ethnic joke. (STACY continues to scribble wildly.) Bless you, Mary Muldoon. May good fortune cuddle you tighter than a wet baby seal. I am, as usual, your loving and devoted friend, for ever and ever and

always. Stacy Travers, M.D.”

STACY (still scribbling). I'm not a doctor.

MARY. Who cares?

STACY (finishing with a flourish and handing the autograph to MARY). There you go. I hope that will suffice 'cause I'm not writing another darn word.

MARY (clutching the autograph to her heart). This, I will treasure. (She crosses back toward her seat.) You'll always have a fan in Mary Muldoon.

STACY (bored). Yeah, yeah, yeah. (She squints.) Howie? Howard, are you up there? (She waits for a beat, then starts to cross.)

HOWARD (over the microphone). No. (STACY stops.)

STACY. Howard?

HOWARD (over the microphone). What?

STACY. Why didn't you answer me? I've been calling you. Now, what is it you want? Yolanda said something about money. Do you want to talk to me about money, Howard?

HOWARD (over the microphone). Have you ever been up on Mulholland Drive at midnight, Stacy?

STACY. I live on Mulholland Drive, Howard.

HOWARD (over the microphone). Could I visit you one night, Stacy? Could I sit on your back porch and watch the city twinkle below me?

STACY. The city stopped twinkling years ago, Howard. There is no twinkle left. It is all twinkled out. However, you are welcome to watch it smolder if you'd like.

HOWARD (over the microphone). Be expecting me, Stacy. I'll arrive after sunset one night when you least expect me.

STACY. How will I know you? How will I know it's you?

HOWARD (over the microphone). I'll be wearing a pink carnation.

STACY (bored). I can hardly wait.

HOWARD (over the microphone). But don't go to any trouble.

Don't fix dinner for me. If I know that you've had to go to any trouble, it would spoil my fun.

STACY. I'll open a can of bean dip, Howard. And we can drink out of the water hose.

HOWARD (over the microphone). Perfect. I'll bring the chips.

STACY. What do you want of me, Howard?

HOWARD (over the microphone). Your constant feuding with Connie is a source of great consternation to both myself and the other members of the cast and crew. If you two hyenas want to disembowel each other on your own time, that's fine with me, but I'm getting sick and tired of this horrendous inter-necine squabbling. Mel has told me confidentially that if the constant bickering and backstabbing doesn't let up he will seriously consider hiring two new actresses next season — actresses with a little grace, charm and intellect. In short, Little Miss Hot Stuff, any more ego puffing and you'll be lucky to get a job straining sauerkraut at a German restaurant in this town. We will destroy you.

STACY (speechless at first, then stammering). I don't have to take that off you, Howard. And I'm not going to take it! (She starts to cross.)

HOWARD (over the microphone). Would you care to bet on it?

STACY (stopping, angrily). It's her fault, Howard, and you know it. She's the one! Why don't you have this conversation with *her*?

HOWARD (over the microphone). I already have. Not more than an hour ago. And she was about as receptive as you are.

STACY. She thinks she's better than the rest of us peons, Howie. She thinks because her big daddy owns twenty banks and she went to all the right schools and la-dee-dahd her way out here in her very own Rolls while the rest of us were fighting for table scraps makes her some kind of royalty. The rest of us

were taking acting classes and scrambling for roles and waiting tables and living in squalor, working our fingers and our feelings to the bone for a chance at a decent part. She gets set up in her own Malibu mansion and her father buys her any part she wants. She wouldn't know what real talent was if it walked up and broke her kneecap. She's a punk.

HOWARD (over the microphone). That will be enough, Stacy.

STACY (taking a deep breath, then looking out to the audience).

I'm sorry, ladies and gentlemen. I didn't mean to lose my temper like that. It's just that . . .

MARY (from her seat). We understand, honey. We certainly do.

STACY. Will that be all, Howard?

HOWARD (over the microphone). Do you trust me, Stacy? Do you trust my judgment? Three and a half years now we've been working together on this show and I've directed every episode and every episode has been in the top five in the ratings. Nobody wanted you for the part of Twinkletoes, did they? Nobody wanted you. Nobody. Except me. I had faith in your abilities to overcome those nagging little handicaps which you carried around like so many chips on your petite little shoulders. You couldn't act, they said. You couldn't sing or dance. You had an irritating, nasal Chicago honk of a voice and were about as graceful as a sea slug on roller skates.

STACY. I was a model, Howard. (She becomes subdued.)

HOWARD (over the microphone). You were a child model. Nobody had hired you in the last two years.

STACY. How about the commercials?

HOWARD (over the microphone). You don't have to be a great actress to dress up like a tooth. You don't have to be multi-talented to drop a pizza on a linoleum floor. Nobody wanted you, Stacy. You had nothing to offer. Your resume was amusing, nothing else. Bit parts and a bad attitude. You would have been out on your ear in half-a-heartbeat but I saw something the others didn't see. I saw the spark.

STACY (quietly, her head bowed). At least I was beautiful. Wasn't I beautiful, Howard?

HOWARD (over the microphone). Sure. But so is everybody else in this town. Every dewey-eyed girl that gets off every gritty bus at the terminal is beautiful. Every waitress at every restaurant on every street in this town is beautiful. The cops are beautiful. The robbers are beautiful. And sometimes, Stacy, I'm even beautiful. But not everybody has the spark, Stacy. You've got the spark. I fought for you because of it and I took more than a little abuse. But I got you the screen test and I coached you. I coached you enough to let some of the spark show and you got the job. And you've grown into a competent actress with potential.

STACY. Thank you.

HOWARD (over the microphone). It wasn't a compliment. I think that is all you'll ever be. You're too petty to achieve greatness on the stage or screen, as is Connie. Connie is even more limited than you in that respect. I may be wrong. I've been wrong before. But this I do know. I know that neither one of you deserves to be temperamental or high-handed. You don't deserve to act like you're something extremely special because you're not . . . That is all. (STACY, her head bowed, snuffs her nose once, turns slowly and crosses L. Just before she exits, HOWARD calls out softly.) Stacy? (STACY stops and squints into the light.) Break a leg. (STACY starts to say something, decides against it and exits.)

MARY (from her seat, starting to weep loudly). That poor, sweet girl.

HOWARD (over the microphone, after several beats). Shut up, Mary. (MARY stops crying.)

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