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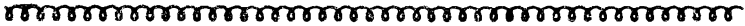
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*Dramatic Publishing*



A One-Act Farce

# Oh, What a Tangled Web

BY

JOHN R. CARROLL



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



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OH, WHAT A TANGLED WEB  
*A Farce in One Act*  
For Four Men and Four Women

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C H A R A C T E R S

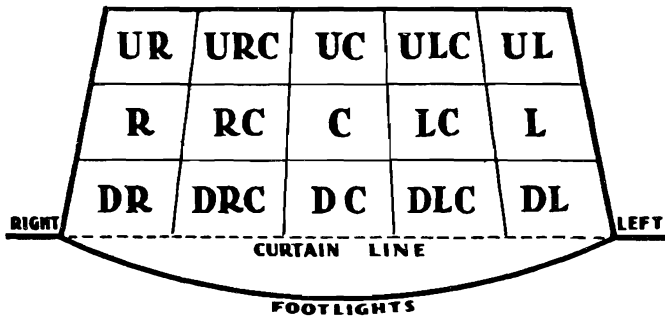
JAN WILSON . . . . . *a flighty fifteen-year-old*  
CHRIS WILSON . . . . . *her older sister*  
FRANK WILSON }  
SHIRLEY WILSON } . . . . . *their parents*  
MR. QUIGLEY . . . . . *Chris's employer*  
MRS. QUIGLEY . . . . . *his wife*  
TIM SCARLOTTA . . . . . *a friend of Chris's*  
STAN GLOWACKI . . . . . *from the City Shelter*

PLACE:     *The living room of the Wilson home.*

TIME:      *One summer day.*

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## CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



## STAGE POSITIONS

*Upstage* means away from the footlights, *downstage* 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: UR for *up right*, RC for *right center*, DLC for *down left center*, etc. A territory designated on the stage refers to a general area, rather than to a given point.

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NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

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# Oh, What a Tangled Web

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SCENE: The living room of the Wilson home is a very bright room in the summer. There are three doors: DR leading out, UC leading to other rooms, and UL leading to the kitchen. There is a sofa L, with a small table beside it. At R, above the front door, is an armchair, and against the upstage wall is a small desk with a telephone on it. Also in this wall, to the right of the UC door, is a small closet. At rise, Chris's sweater, lunch, and other items if desired, are scattered about the room.)

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: It is early morning. JAN is sitting on the sofa reading a book and occasionally wiping her nose. CHRIS runs in UC. Chris is about eighteen and in a hurry. Jan is fifteen.)

CHRIS. I know I'm going to be late for work. I just know it!

JAN. Then why rush? If you're late, you're late.

CHRIS (at desk, looking through her purse). Yeah, but old Skinflint Quigley is out to murder me. I was late two weeks ago.

JAN. Wasn't that the day your car broke down by the lake and you had to hitchhike back into town?

CHRIS. Yeah. I was twelve minutes late.

JAN. He sure is a meany. (Sniffs.)

CHRIS. Oh, I hate this job. I hate it, hate it,

hate it.

JAN. You know, somehow I get the feeling you're not really happy with your present employment situation. At least you got a summer job. All I got was a summer cold!

CHRIS. That Quigley is really a tyrant. He makes us clean the counters, wash the windows, wait on people, weed the back, paint new signs, mop the floors . . .

JAN. In other words, he makes you work for your money.

CHRIS. Jan, you know I don't mind work. But Quigley is taking advantage of kids out on summer jobs.

JAN. You don't have to tell me. Everyone knows Quigley's Five and Dime rates right up there with the Alaska pipeline and the salt mines for vacation spots of the world. (Thinks a moment.) Five and ten? Who's he kidding? There's not a thing in there under two-fifty! (CHRIS has been dashing about getting ready for work, getting her sweater, lunch, etc. which she puts on table by couch.) Hey, why'd you take the job in the first place?

CHRIS. Why else? Money. Unless I wanted to start college this fall looking like Cinderella before, I had to work. To top it off, I'm not making that much.

JAN. Well, at least it's close by, right down the block.

CHRIS. It may seem like a block when you walk it, but for me every day, it's the last mile. Mom and Dad back yet? (She exits UC.)

JAN. No. They're still at the police station. I think Mom's gone bananas, reporting a missing cat.

(CHRIS re-enters with book, putting it on table by couch.)

CHRIS. You know how much she loved Juliet.  
(Telephone rings.) Get that, will you, Jan?  
I have to find my scarf. If it's Quigley, tell  
him I left already. (JAN goes to telephone as  
CHRIS leaves UL.)

JAN (on telephone). Hello? . . . Oh, hi, Tim. . . .  
Uh -- no, she's -- she's kind of in a rush. Can I  
take a message? . . . Uh huh. . . .O.K. Sure  
thing. I'll tell her. . . . 'Bye. (JAN hangs  
up and calls excitedly.) Chris! Chris? Guess  
who that was?

(CHRIS enters, putting scarf around head.)

CHRIS. Who?

JAN. Tim Scarlotta.

CHRIS. Tim! What did he want?

JAN. He says he has something to ask you and  
he'll drop by later.

CHRIS. Something to ask me? (Thinks.) Hey, I  
bet he's going to ask me to the dance at the  
Country Club next week. His father's a member.

JAN. What else? You're in like Flynn!

CHRIS (hesitating by table). But I have to go to work.

JAN. Call in sick.

CHRIS. I couldn't do that.

JAN. Why not? Look, I'll breathe on you. Maybe  
you'll get my cold. (Breathes on her.)

CHRIS. In ten minutes? No, what I need is a  
wonder disease.

JAN. Who's going to know if you call in sick this  
once?

CHRIS. Look, last month a girl wanted a day off



and called in sick. Quigley found out and fired her.

JAN. Yes, but she probably didn't have a good excuse why she took the day off.

CHRIS. She was getting married.

JAN (disappointed). Oh. Well, look. I'll call for you and make it sound really convincing.

CHRIS. I can't lie to Mr. Quigley.

JAN. I can. Look, I hate to see you throw this opportunity away. Tim said he's going down to the beach for the weekend and won't be back till Monday. He has to see you today.

CHRIS. How about after work?

JAN. Too late. Think! The Country Club!

CHRIS. Besides, we start inventory next week and we have to get organized.

JAN. Tuxedos. Long dresses!

CHRIS (weakening). But there is Mrs. Quigley to take my place.

JAN. That's the spirit! Look, why don't you get ready for Tim, and I'll call.

CHRIS. What will you say I have?

JAN. I dunno. I'll think of something.

CHRIS (deciding). O. K. I'm going to run down to Julie's house and borrow her electric curlers. (Starts toward door DR.) No good is going to come of this.

JAN. Relax. What could possibly go wrong? (CHRIS runs off.) But go around the long way so you don't pass Quigley's! (Telephone rings.) O. K., Mr. Quigley, get ready for an Academy Award performance. (She goes to the telephone.) Hello? . . . Oh, Mr. Quigley. . . . I . . . What . . . Well, she . . . What . . . Now, calm down, Mr. Quigley. . . . She . . . as a matter of fact, sir, she won't be in at all today. . . . You see. . . . Yes, sir, I heard about the girl

who wanted the day off to get married. . . .  
No, I don't think it was a ridiculous excuse.  
. . . . But -- but---- (Getting upset.)  
Mr. Quigley, she is not faking it. . . .  
She is! . . . Look, I don't like that tone. . . .  
She is not faking it! . . . She's -- She's----  
(Groping for an answer, and then brightly:)  
She's dead! Yes, so you see, Mr. Quigley,  
she couldn't be faking it. Yes, she was a  
kind girl. . . . (Sniffs.) Well, I have to go.  
The mortician is coming. . . . Thank you. . . .  
Good-bye. (She hangs up, then realizes what  
she has done.) Oh, my gosh. Why did I say  
that?

(CHRIS runs in DR.)

CHRIS. Forgot my car keys. (Hurries UC.) Did  
you call Quigley? (She goes off.)  
JAN (hesitantly). Uh, he called here.  
CHRIS (offstage). What did you say?  
JAN. Well, you got the day off.

(CHRIS reappears, car keys in hand.)

CHRIS. Great. What did he say?  
JAN. Nothing. He got me a little flustered, but  
after I told him he got very quiet.  
CHRIS. What excuse did you give?  
JAN (cagily). Well, you see . . .

(The door DR opens and FRANK and SHIRLEY  
enter. JAN, anxious to change the subject,  
greet them.)

JAN. Oh, hi, Mom and Dad. (Returns to sofa.)  
FRANK. I still think you're over-reacting, Shirley.