

MISTAKEN IDENTITY
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*For this short drama, the platform is set up as a courtroom. The audience sees the same view as spectators in a trial. There is a **judge's** bench, facing the room. There is a gavel and very large book on this podium, empty as the drama begins. A chair to one side is a witness stand. In front of these, sitting with their backs to the audience at one table are the **defendant** and **her attorney**. . The **prosecuting attorney** is at the other table. Various paraphernalia such as note pads, briefcases, water glasses, etc. can be on or around the tables. As lights come up on this scene, the **prosecuting attorney** is checking his notes. The **defendant** whispers to her **defense attorney**, who is shaking his head. A **bailiff** stands to one side.*

Defense: *(Gets up from the table and paces back and forth, frowning. He stops to one side and behind the defendant, who turns to him. Both are in view of the audience. He is angry)* Why are you so confident? Acting like you've nothing to worry about? I tell you. They've got an open and shut case against you.

Defendant: *(Smiling)* Don't worry, Friend. I have a secret weapon you don't know about.

Defense: *(Incredulous)* You think you're gonna appeal this to a higher court?

Defendant: *(Frowns)* Well, no. I was under the impression this court is the highest one.

Defense: Exactly right. No appeals from here.

Defendant: *(Shrugs)* Well, I wasn't exactly counting on that, anyway. How about pleading ignorance of the law?

Defense: *(Goes back to pacing)* Not even applicable with you. You know it, the court knows it, and besides. That defense was abolished two thousand years ago. No, I don't think so.

Defendant: Have you applied for a change of venue?

Defense: Based on what? The integrity of the judge?

Defendant: *(Laughs)* Guess that's out of the question too, huh?

*She is still laughing as the **judge** comes in from the side door. He wears a white robe. **Bailiff** asks all in the courtroom to rise until the judge is seated, then all follow suit. The **Judge** adjusts his robes, picks up the gavel, and raps it sharply.*

Judge: This court will come to order. *(Opens the book, flips several pages, and runs his finger down the page before looking up again)* This court is convened to hear evidence and pass sentencing. In the case of Mrs. Tip Acal. The prosecution presented its case before our recess. Does the defense wish to further examine evidence before moving on? Or ask any more questions of the prosecution?

Defense: *(Stands)* No, you're Honor. It seemed pretty clear and factual. Down to every word and even the thoughts of my client.

Judge: (*Frowns*) Don't you intend to defend your client?

Defense: Yes, you're Honor. If the court would permit, I'd like to call Mrs Tip Acal to the witness stand.

Judge: (*Looks at the **prosecuting attorney***) Any objections?

Prosecutor: (*Sits back laughing*) Of course not. This should be amusing.

Judge: (*Stern*) There is no cause for levity here, Counselor. Just a sad duty to perform. (*Stares at the **prosecuting attorney** for a moment before motioning to the **defendant***) You may step forward, Ma'am.

*The **defendant** primly goes forward, takes her place on the witness stand, and raises her right hand ... The **judge** winces...*

Judge: Ma'am! That is not necessary. It's not possible to lie in this court. You should know that.

Defendant: (*Lowers hand and smiles*) Yes, Dear. (*The **judge** frowns*) I forgot.

Defense: (*Hastily*) Well, let's get started. You heard all of the evidence of your crimes? Brought by the prosecution?

Defendant: Oh, yes.

Defense: Understood it all?

Defendant: Oh, yes.

Defense: Do you want to say anything in your defense?

Defendant: (*Smiles as the **defense attorney** starts to turn away*) Oh, I don't really think that'll be necessary.

Defense: (*Turns back sharply*) Ma'am! This is ridiculous. I'm fighting for your future here. If you have information that can help your case, I need to know. Do you understand? The penalty for your crimes is death?

Defendant: Oh, yes.

Defense: I am trying to establish innocence on your part, but

Defendant: (*Leans forward, surprised*) But I'm guilty. (***Defense** tries too late to hush her*) Like you said earlier, why pretend otherwise? Everyone knows it. Even the judge. Right, Honey?

Judge: Yes! I do!

Defense: (*Looks back and forth between the two*) What's going on here? What am I missing?

Defendant: The judge knows!

Judge: *(To the **defense attorney**)* Do you have any other questions?

Defense: *(Throws hands up in the air)* No! I guess not! *(He walks discouraged, back to the table, and sits down)*

Judge: *(Clears throat)* Well, given the admission of guilt, we can move right to the passing of the sentence.

*.... At this point, the **woman** stands and sharply interrupts him...*

Defendant: Excuse me, but you can't. Not to me!

*.... Both the **prosecution** and the **defense** have risen to their feet.*

Prosecution: Ma'am! Sit down! You're out of order!

Judge: What are you talking about? No one has as much right to judge you as I do.

Defendant: *(Somewhat wildly)* But I'm your wife!

*Pandemonium erupts in the courtroom. **All** ad lib briefly here as all talk at the same time. Finally the **Judge** rises to his feet and angrily pounds the podium....*

Judge: Enough! Sit down! Everyone! *(As they are seated, he turns to the **woman**, still angry)* How dare you come in here? Make such a preposterous claim? That I am your husband?

Woman: *(Begins talking rapidly, desperately. As she speaks, **the judge's** face changes from anger to compassion)* Don't you remember all the time I spent at your house? *(The **judge** shakes his head)* All the times I worked and sacrificed, just for you? Night and day, I spoke with you. *(Still shaking his head)* I spoke of you in glowing terms to my friends. Why, I was always singing your praises. What about all the gifts that you gave me? Oh please remember, my love, I conducted business with your name. *(By now, she's angry and scared. The **judge** lowers his head)* For heaven's sake, what does it take to be considered your wife?

*The **judge** cuts her off with a hand movement, There is frozen silence in the room.*

Judge: *(Slowly)* I am so sorry, Madam. That you did not understand. I've never lived in the house you described. I too, only visit from time to time. It's true you worked for me. But you were well paid for those sacrifices. Many people compliment me. Because I deserve those accolades. But I am not married to everyone with something nice to say about me. As for my power of attorney. I gave it to every not-for-profit organization or individual, needing it to help others. *(Here the judge pause, slowly rubbing his forehead and a tear away)* And before all creation, I'm sorry, Madam. That you are not my wife. That you never took time to learn about true marriage to me. I would've enjoyed you as my bride. I know you had a copy of the marriage contract. I wish you'd read it yourself. Not

depended on others to explain it to you. I've never sought more acquaintances. I have plenty. I wanted a bride. To share Life with. Have children with. Hold, love, and rejoice with. Talk with at any time with, share my concerns with. Be loved by them in return. A bride to live with me now. And for all of eternity. You are correct in your assumption. I would grant you immunity from the law if we were married. In fact, I'd take the punishment for you, were you my wife. But Madam? You never were! *(Here he turns and motioned the **prosecuting attorney** forward)* No! With all of my heart, I wish I did not have to say this, but, I never even *knew* you.

*The **woman** is lead away, crying. The sound is cut off by the slamming of a door. The **Judge** lowers his head to the table, puts his hands over his ears .. and weeps. When there is once again silence, the door opens and the **prosecuting attorney** steps back in.*

Prosecutor: Uh, Sir? Whenever you're ready, we'll hear the next case.

Judge: *(Quietly)* We'll take a brief recess. These cases of mistaken identity really get to me.

*The **Judge** stands. As he leaves, the **prosecuting attorney** speaks again.*

Prosecutor: How could they not know the difference between friendship and marriage? God knows how many more we'll run into today.

Judge: *(Turns to him, very sad)* Yes, I'm afraid I do *(He exits as the lights go down)*