

Side #2

Arthur
+
Prosecutors

(The lighting changes so that ARTHUR's desk becomes a witness stand. At the same time, the light over the judge's portrait comes on. In effect, the living room of the townhouse transforms itself into a courtroom. A murmur of spectator voices heats up—instantly silenced by three sharp raps from a gavel. ARTHUR crosses to the witness stand and raises his right hand.)

Start

ARTHUR. *(continued)* I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

(He settles himself comfortably in the chair. The PROSECUTOR enters from limbo. He is a stolid bulldog of a man in a rumpled, off-the-rack suit. He approaches ARTHUR. For a long moment the two men measure each other. Then:)

PROSECUTOR. State your name and occupation, please.

ARTHUR. My name is Arthur Jamison. I practice law.

PROSECUTOR. Come now, sir, you hardly do yourself justice. Isn't it a fact that you're one of the most prominent criminal attorneys in the state, if not the country?

ARTHUR. Guilty.

PROSECUTOR. Beg pardon?

ARTHUR. You make it difficult to be modest, counselor. Since I'm under oath, I'm simply agreeing with you.

PROSECUTOR. Ah. I see . . . Mr. Jamison, would you be good enough to tell the jury—*(indicates the audience)*—of the events of the night of June 15th.

ARTHUR. Certainly. I had been invited to speak to a group of graduating Columbia Law School students. In

my spare time I teach several courses there. Each June they have something of a celebration — they throw a dinner and invite three of their teachers.

PROSECUTOR. But not their wives?

ARTHUR. No, it's all male. In clear violation of Title Two and the Fourteenth Amendment.

PROSECUTOR. And did you go to this dinner?

ARTHUR. I did.

PROSECUTOR. Where was it held?

ARTHUR. The students took a small banquet room at the Hotel Pierre.

PROSECUTOR. How was your wife when you left her?

ARTHUR. I'm not sure I understand. Are you asking me about her mood, her character — ?

PROSECUTOR. I was referring to her physical state.

ARTHUR. Then I suggest you say so. The function of the advocate is to clarify, not obscure.

PROSECUTOR. Mr. Jamison — with all due respect — I would appreciate a less patronizing attitude.

ARTHUR. And I would appreciate — with all due respect — questions of a more pertinent nature.

PROSECUTOR. Thank you for the lecture on the art of cross-examination, sir. I'll certainly try to do better. As for your wife —

ARTHUR. As for my wife — in answer to what I think you're asking me — her physical state was one of being alive. When I left her she was having something to eat in the kitchen. If you'd care to know the menu —

PROSECUTOR. That won't be necessary. Please go on.

ARTHUR. I walked to the hotel and we all sat down to dinner at eight. At ten I made some brief remarks and I was followed by the other two guests.

PROSECUTOR. Who were they?

ARTHUR. Professor Lewis Haig and Sy Deitrich. Both of them teach at Columbia.

PROSECUTOR. When did the evening end? I hate to keep harping on the time—

ARTHUR. Perfectly understandable. I'd say eleven o'clock. Then some of us went into the hotel bar for a nightcap. Professor Haig and I shared a cab and he dropped me off.

PROSECUTOR. What did you find when you arrived home?

ARTHUR. The police.

PROSECUTOR. We've heard testimony that your wife called them at ten-thirty. She reported a prowler in the house. When they arrived on the scene they found that she had been—forgive me, Mr. Jamison, I know this is difficult for you—they found she had been shot and killed.

ARTHUR. (*lowering his head*) Yes.

PROSECUTOR. They tried to reach you but they didn't know where you were. According to their report, you came home at . . . ah . . .

ARTHUR. 12:06.

PROSECUTOR. 12:06. That's right. Thank you, sir. You're a very precise man. Most people would have said—"around midnight."

ARTHUR. You don't have most people on the stand, counsellor. You have me.

PROSECUTOR. Yes, sir, I'm very aware of that. In any event, when the police told you what had happened you reacted with shock and outrage.

ARTHUR. I wanted to find the man responsible and kill him.

PROSECUTOR. I'm sure we all sympathize with you. You must have loved her very much.

ARTHUR. Yes I did.

PROSECUTOR. Of course, and that's why I'm puzzled that in the weeks before her death she told me of

← End

