

Justice for 3

The brainchild of Eliza Davis

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Characters

1 (witness)

2 (witness)

3 (prosecutor)

4 (witness)

Helen Van Buren (defendant)

Judge Hymnal McVerse

Defendant's Lawyer

Prosecutor's Lawyer

Setting

The Courthouse

The Courthouse

(A quiet stage set in a courtroom. Number 3 walks on stage anxiously but with intention. Number 3 does full circle of the room as Prosecutor's Lawyer enters)

Prosecutor's Lawyer

Hi. How are you feeling, old timer?

3

Okay, I guess. It's hard to believe the day has finally come. We've been working on this for years now and I'm anxious I guess. What if they don't- *(she's cut off by Lawyer)*

Prosecutor's Lawyer

Hey, hey, that's why you have me. And our character witnesses and our deposition is prepped to go. We've been working nonstop for the last few months. We're ready.

3

I guess all I have left to say is thank you then.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

Well then what are we waiting for? Let's go get 'em.

(They exit stage as the scene transitions into a full courtroom. The "jury" is the audience, with the judge seat elevated above them. Number 3 is seated with the Prosecutor's Lawyer on Stage Right while Defendant's Lawyer is seated Stage Left. Chatting has commenced among the group)

Prosecutor's Lawyer

All rise for the honorable Judge Hymnal McVerse.

(Chatter quiets down as everyone rises. Judge enters and takes seat at head of the courtroom)

Judge

Thank you.

(All sit)

This trial is now in session. We will begin with the opening statement from the Prosecution.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

(Standing and taking center stage)

Thank you, your honor. We are here today to consider the exclusion my client has endured from the defendant, represented here today by Miss Helen Van Buren. But first, I'd like to tell you a little about my client.

My client is a gentle soul, quiet but thoughtful. 3 dances to the beat of her own drum, some might say. 3 has been part of the camp community since 2007. And yet, she's been excluded from the majority of every hymn, every single Hymn Sing, since she joined us 13 years ago. Every Sunday, she sits quietly in the back of the lodge, hoping to hear her name called with the others, and yet, Sunday after Sunday, summer after summer, she is left unsung. And so, the question I pose to you today is: How is this fair? How does this fit in with our values in this community? Where is the justice for 3?

(After a long dramatic pause, she moves to back to her seat)

Thank you for your attention.

Judge

Thank you. And now, the opening statement from our defendant.

Defendant's Lawyer

Thank you, your honor.

(Standing to address the audience, center stage)

Good evening, people of the Jury. It is my privilege to stand in front of you today, representing the defendant, the one and only Miss Helen Van Buren. Miss VB founded camp back in 1919, believe it or not. She fought tooth and nail as a woman in the early 1900's to get the beautiful plot of land on which Kiniya still stands, because she had a dream. She had a dream to open a camp for young women that would uphold traditions and values such as kindness, courage, and inclusion. And she is the epitome of these characteristics. It goes against everything Miss VB worked for to exclude any member of our community, especially such a longstanding member *(Gestures towards 3 and the prosecution team)*. As we proceed with the trial, I'd like you to keep in mind the institution that she has built from the ground up and the values that it stands for.

Thank you, members of the jury.

(Sits. Directors clap for Miss Helen Van Buren.)

Judge

Thank you, defendant. Let's proceed to the presentation of the evidence. We will start with the prosecutor.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

2, can you please take the stand?

(2 sits in the witness stand.)

State your name for the record.

2

2.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

(Hands an open hymnal to 2)

I'd like to introduce into evidence exhibit 392743b. Can you please read the yellow highlighted text?

2

(Deadpan)

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide Thee, though the eye of sinful man. Thy glory may not see, Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee, perfect in power, in love, and in purity.

Defendant's Lawyer

Objection! Relevance?

Prosecutor's Lawyer

It'll become clear, your honor.

Judge

Overruled.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

Thank you. And can you tell me what that text is, 2?

2

That would be 3's verse in Holy Holy Holy.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

Have you ever heard that verse before?

2

Not that I can remember, no.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

And can you read the blue highlighted text, please?

2

(Sings)

Holy, holy holy! Lord God Almighty! All Thy works shall praise Thy Name, in earth and sky and sea, Holy Holy Holy! Merciful and mighty! God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Prosecutor's Lawyer

And whose verse is that, 2?

2

4's.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

And do you know that verse?

2

Probably by heart at this point. We sing it every time.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

And how about verse 1 and 2? Do you know those?

2

Of course. We all do.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

(With a meaningful look at the Jury)

The prosecution rests.

(Prosecutor's Lawyer return to their seats)

Judge

Let's continue to hear from the witnesses. Defendant?

(Defendant's Lawyer stands)

Defendant's Lawyer

I'd like to keep 2 on the stand. Where were you the Sunday night of July 21st, at approximately 7:48pm.

2

In the lodge for Hymn Sing.

Defendant's Lawyer

You witnessed the campers singing verses 1, 2, and 4 during Holy, Holy Holy?

2

I did.

Defendant's Lawyer

And how did that make you feel, 2?

(2 shrugs)

Can you please make a statement for the record?

2

.... It's how we've always done things.

Defendant's Lawyer

Is that all?

2

(After a long dramatic pause, looking unsure)

That's all.

Defendant's Lawyer

Thank you, 2.

(Defendant's Lawyer looks disappointed and 2 return to their seats)

Judge

Prosecutor?

(Prosecutor's Lawyer stands)

Prosecutor's Lawyer

(Standing and walking towards center)

I'd like to call 1 to the stand. 1, if you would?

(1 sits in the witness stand.)

Would you please state your name for the record?

1

1.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

Were you present on the Sunday night in question?

1

I was.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

Can you tell me what you remember about the singing of Holy, Holy, Holy that evening?

1

We sang my verse first, of course. Then we moved to 2's.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

And what happened next?

1

Well, after we finished 2's verse, we began to sing 4's verse.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

And what happened to 3's verse?

1

We didn't sing it. We never sing it.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

And how does that make you feel?

Defendant's Lawyer

Objection! Leading.

Judge

Overruled.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

How did it make you feel, 1?

1

Really bad for 3. I feel like 3 is always getting ignored, and there's no good reason for it! Her verses are great too, ya know?

Prosecutor's Lawyer

Do you feel that not singing 3's verse upholds camp values?

Defendant's Lawyer

Objection, your honor!!

Judge

Overruled, defendant.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

Does it uphold camp's values, 1?

1

No way! We're all for inclusion at Kiniya.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

Thank you, 1. That's all.

(1 and Prosecutor's Lawyer return to their respective seats.)

Judge

Defendant?

(Defendant's Lawyer stands)

Defendant's Lawyer

I'd like to call 4 to the stand.

(4 rises and takes the stand)

Please state your name for the record.

4

4.

Defendant's Lawyer

4, can you please tell us if you were present in the night in question?

4

I'm.... not sure.

Defendant's Lawyer

Have you been present for any Hymn Sings since the summer of 2007?

4

I... yes. Yeah, of course.

Defendant's Lawyer

And you've witnessed the exclusion of verse 3?

4

Um. I guess so.

Defendant's Lawyer

And how does it make you feel?

4

(Super uncomfortable)

I guess it never really bothered me? 3 is really quiet and stuff, ya know? I just figured they weren't really into the whole Hymn Sing thing.

Defendant's Lawyer

Have they shown interest in being part of Hymn Sing before?

4

Not that I've been aware of. I wasn't really paying attention, I don't know.

Defendant's Lawyer

So you feel it's not exclusion if they weren't interested in being included in the first place?

Prosecutor's Lawyer

Leading!

Judge

Sustained.

Defendant's Lawyer

(Can tell she isn't getting anywhere)

I have nothing further, your honor.

(4 and Defendant's Lawyer sit)

Judge

Prosecution?

Prosecutor's Lawyer

I'd like to call 3 to the stand.

(3 takes the stand)

Can you state your name for the record?

3

3.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

3, were you present on the night in question?

3

Sort of.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

Can you expand on that?

3

I was there. But they never sang a single one of my verses. I was just in the back, by myself.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

When was the last time you remember one of your verses being sung, 3?

3

I'm really not sure. Years ago?

Prosecutor's Lawyer

And how does that make you feel, 3?

3

(breaking down)

It's not fair! It's not!! We sing everyone else's verses in every single song, and you never hear mine! I was made for Hymn Sing, and I'm not part of it! I've always wanted to be in it, but no one has ever let me, and I can't even figure out why! What am I, if not a verse for Kiniya to sing??!

Prosecutor's Lawyer

Thank you, 3. Nothing further.

(Comforting 3 as they both return to your seat)

Judge

Defendant?

Defendant's Lawyer

I'd like to call Miss Helen Van Buren to the stand.

(Helen Van Buren takes the stand.)

Can you state your name for the record?

Helen Van Buren

Helen Van Buren.

Defendant's Lawyer

Thank you. Miss VB, were you present on the night in question?

Helen Van Buren

Unfortunately, I was not.

Defendant's Lawyer

How do you feel about the evidence that has been presented thus far?

Helen Van Buren

I would just like to say... I am so sorry to 3 for everything that she has endured.

*(Whispering in the courtroom, surprise from everyone, especially Defendant's Lawyer.
Helen Van Buren continues on, emotional and genuine)*

I truly had no idea such extreme exclusion had occurred at the camp that I created. I would do anything to make it up to you, 3, but I know how much harm this has already caused you. I can only hope that in the future, you are able to overlook these discretions and give us a second chance. Your verses are lovely, 3, and I can only hope to hear them at every future Hymn Sing.

Defendant's Lawyer

(Shocked and disappointed)

That's.... That's all, your honor.

(Everyone returns to their seats, Defendant's Lawyer knowing she's lost the case)

Judge

I believe that's all of the witnesses. Let's continue to closing statements. Prosecution?

Prosecutor's Lawyer

(Standing)

Actually, I'd like to recall a witness.

(Big gasps from everyone in the courtroom)

Defendant's Lawyer

Objection!

Judge

Overruled.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

2, if you could please take the stand?

(2 takes the stand)

2, where were you on the morning of August 3rd, 2007?

2

I forgot my water bottle in the lodge, so I got up early for Sunday Morning sleep-in breakfast, and then I went to the lodge straight away to find it.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

And when you got to the lodge, who was there?

2

4 was there, talking with some campers.

Prosecutor's Lawyer

And what was 4 saying?

2

4 told the campers that 3 didn't want to be part of Hymn Sing. 4 said that 3 was embarrassed, that she didn't like all the attention, and that we should stop singing her verses. And convinced them to spread the word to the rest of camp, and she said that 3 would really appreciate it. 4 lied! 4 wanted the spotlight all to herself! She wanted to skip right to her verses, even if that meant making everyone forget about 3!!

(Chaos erupts in the courtroom. 4 tries to deny it, everyone is arguing- they are shocked and outraged.)

Judge

(Banging gavel)

Order, order! Order in the court!!

(Everyone settles down)

Anything to add, Prosecutor?

Prosecutor's Lawyer

Judge, I think you understand what you must do. I rest my case.

(Prosecutor's Lawyer and 2 sit)

Judge

Defendant?

Defendant's Lawyer

No your honor, I have nothing more to add.

Judge

I've reached a verdict.

(Standing)

I, Judge Hymnal Mcverse, find 4 guilty of Exclusion of the First Degree. I sentence 4 to the isolation cabin for the rest of the summer.

4

NOOOOO!!!!!!

Judge

Thank you, ladies and gentleman, for your service to the camp of Kiniya. Court dismissed.

(She bangs the gavel one last time. Everyone stands for the Judge to exit, then they all begin to filter out, shaking hands and congratulating each other. Only 3, Prosecutor's Lawyer, 1 and 2 are left)

Prosecutor's Lawyer

Well, 3, how do you feel?

3

Amazing. Thank you so much for everything, you were great! It just feels so good to know why everyone has been ignoring me all this time.

1

We're really sorry about all of this, 3. I can't wait to sing some of your verses next Sunday.

3

Thanks guys. But honestly? I know I won this trial, but it's not all about me. It's about all of us, coming together to make one full song. Maybe we could sing something altogether? It's been a while since I've heard that.

2

Ohhh, maybe Jacob's ladder?

1

Great idea!

(They sing Jacob's Ladder together.)

Fin.