

MURDER ON THE HIGH SEAS

by Josh Nichols



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This murder mystery can be adapted to various settings but was originally written as a dinner theatre with some interaction by audience members.

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2020

CAST OF CHARACTERS

JUDGE HANDY: 30 - 50, male. A no nonsense judge and the quintessential pirate captain. He has a “hook” that will turn into other items as the show progresses.

SALLY JONES: 20 - 40, female. A nice girl with a complicated life. Dressed as though she works in a pirate tavern. Though sweet, she can be vicious when provoked.

PETE THOMPSON: 20 - 40, male. Public defender. A regular old everyday lawyer thrown into a pirate world. Wears a suit and tie, shiny shoes and has a briefcase. Not particularly confident in himself but has a desperate determination to win.

THE HIGH SEAS BUTCHER: 20 - 40, male. A hulking, grizzly beast who never talks (almost never). He is dressed in tattered clothes and is filthy. Has a demented look in his eye and clearly is not one to cross.

WALLY QUILLS: 20 - 40, male. An idiotic and buffoonish pirate. Dressed as a pirate but definitely not a highly respected one. A bit of a pig and says whatever crosses his mind without a filter.

MR. SQUAWKS: 20 - 40, male or female. Lost on an island and raised by parrots and now thinks he is a parrot. Dressed in bright colors and a colorful wig to mimic the colors of a macaw. Speaking pattern mimics a parrot with some squawks in between.

BAILIFF: 20 - 40 female. A deadpan employee of the judicial system. Can be dressed in pirate garb or a more traditional bailiff costume to insinuate “it’s just a job” to them. Matter-of-fact in speech and follows orders, within reason.

WILBUR SEAWORTH: 30 - 60, male. An old-timer sailor with an imaginative mind and a kooky personality. Dressed in pirate garb.

PRE-SHOW NOTES:

This script was originally performed as a dinner theatre. Prior to the show starting and while the meal was being served, various characters were able to mingle throughout the audience welcoming them to the “tavern.” These interactions were in character and helped in establishing some character traits for the audience. This can be a very entertaining portion of the evening if you choose to implement it.

ACT I

SALLY is heard giggling offstage. The noise gets louder as she bursts in giggling when she notices the AUDIENCE that is there to watch the trial. SALLY composes herself pretending that nothing is going on. JUDGE is heard offstage.

JUDGE: (offstage) Where are ya my sweet! Are ye ready for my verdict! I've a surprising punishment!

SALLY is embarrassed and reacts nervously to the AUDIENCE as JUDGE continues to speak.

JUDGE: (as he enters) Who wants to be tickled! (JUDGE bursts into the room with a feather duster instead of a hook. He notices the AUDIENCE and quickly tries to cover his actions). Oh what a filthy room! (begins dusting anything in reach and coughing). It's hard to find good help these days.

SALLY: Oh my! Please forgive me Judge. I must have forgotten to clean there!.

JUDGE: (playing along) Well don't let it happen again! I'm not paying ye for nuttin! (being flirtatious) Lest ye want to be flogged.

SALLY: (trying to shut him up) Nooooo!!!

JUDGE: (tries to be inconspicuous) Have it yer way wench!

JUDGE turns to leave and SALLY is relieved. JUDGE turns back before exiting.

JUDGE: (pathetically) Not event a quick flog?

SALLY: Nooooo!!!

JUDGE exits followed by Sally. Murmuring is heard offstage. PETE opens the door to allow BUTCHER to enter. PETE speaks offstage to an unknown person. BUTCHER never speaks but rather just stares or grunts in reaction to any line.

PETE: *(while entering)* My client has rights you know?! We haven't had a moment to speak and the trial is about to start. Okay, let's get down to it mister... *(flipping through files)* mister, mister... what is your last name? All I have down here is *Butcher? Is that supposed to be Butch?*

BUTCHER just stares at him.

PETE: Your last name?...*(slow as though he is taking to an idiot)* The.... name... that... comes... after... your... first....name? Commonly known as your last name.

BUTCHER walks over menacingly. PETE cowers a bit and then quickly adds some distance between them.

PETE: Great! I have no time to prepare... a nutjob who doesn't know his own name... and if I don't win this case I'll probably be fired. Just because I'm a good lawyer who won't be bought, I get sent off to this hell hole. I don't know anything about maritime law! *(directs himself back to BUTCHER)*. Okay look, I'm trying to help you here but I really need to win this. Please... help me... help you!

BUTCHER approaches him. PETE is a bit guarded unsure if he will be attacked. BUTCHER stops gives his version of a smirk and then burps/farts loudly. He turns away and distances himself.

PETE: Great.. No help from you... *(frantically looking through the case files)*. Okay okay... we can do this... charges, charges, what are the charges.... *(looking at file and near the bottom of a page)* ah here! Okay, the defendant is hereby charged with littering. Littering?! This is kids stuff! *(runs over and hugs the defendant)* Littering! They have you shackled up like some sort of madman and you're charged with littering *(turns page)* the dismembered bodies of an unknown number of victims in the high seas *(becomes more somber as he reads)*... dozens of body parts were collected by locals while countless more sank to the bottom of the sea. The ocean ran red for days after the High Seas Butcher had his rampage.

PETE looks at BUTCHER who just glares at him. PETE backs away slowly.

PETE: Well at least that clears up the name thing... last name "Butcher," first name "the High Seas."*(trying to stay positive)* Well, it could have been someone else... I mean... how do they know it was you. I'm sure there's something in here that can help. Let's go see what evidence they have on file. We can talk strategy *(realizing)*... I mean... I can talk strategy while you stare in my general direction.

PETE and BUTCHER exit. At the same time the WALLY enters yelling followed by SQUAWKS.

WALLY: Be gone ya stupid bird!

SQUAWKS: *(makes random squawking sounds occasionally and mimics a parrot's vocal pattern)* He can help! He can help! *(squawk)*!

WALLY: Listen SQUAWKS! I don't need your help! You are just a dumb parrot and I can handle the Butcher by me own self. I'm going to lock up that madman! He's even more crazy than you ya bird brain!

SALLY enters.

SQUAWKS: Kiss my *(squawk)*!

SALLY: Squawks where have you been? I've been looking everywhere.

SQUAWKS: *(squawk)* Here he is! Here he is! He's a pretty bird! *(squawk)*

SALLY: *(sincerely and cheerful)* Yes you are a pretty bird but you need to go eat something before the trial begins the judge has seeds for you in his chamber!

SQUAWKS: *(squawking and flapping wings)* He loves seeds! Thank you pretty lady, thank you pretty lady! *(exits)*.

WALLY: Yea get out of here you loon!

SALLY: Don't call him that!

WALLY: What?! That's what he is! A loon!

SALLY: He's not a loon!

WALLY: Oh wells pardon me my lady, I guess your right, he technically isn't a loon, he's a breed of macaw, the rare batshit variety!

SALLY: (*approaches upset*) You leave him alone or I'll cut you from navel to nose! Sure, he's a little slow but that don't mean you need to call him names.

WALLY: He thinks he's a parrot! (*imitates*) I'm a loon (*squawk*) I'm a loon (*squawk*).

SALLY: Oh yea! Well I think you are an ASS! (*starts to exit*)

WALLY: (*brays like a donkey*) Eee-aaaah! (*laughs*) Hey listen, I was only kidding. Why don't we kiss and make up?

SALLY: Ha! In your dreams!

WALLY: Come on! You know I've always fancied ya! I knows how to treat a wench. You may be a sassy minx but you are quite the looker!

SALLY: You're a pig.

WALLY: From an ass to a pig... me thinks I'm growing on ya. What'ya say we go back to my quarters and I'll show you the meaning of all hands on deck!

SALLY: You couldn't pay me to sleep with you!

WALLY: Well that's not what I heard. Does the ol Judge pay in doubloons or did you open up a line of credit for him.

SALLY: I'm going to kill you!

SALLY chases WALLY out and follows him. Just then PETE enters trying to wrap his head around the case.

PETE: They have no evidence against him! Well, that I know of... it's not like I've had more than 5 seconds to look over this stupid case but who cares... innocent until proven guilty right?! I'm gonna lose.... I'm gonna lose... and then get disbarred and then I'll lose my house and car and all my worldly possessions but fear not! I'll become a fry cook at the local greasy spoon and that'll last until I screw things up like I did here and then I'll be homeless and hungry but look at the bright side, it couldn't get worse than that!

Just then SALLY enters yelling thinking she is still chasing WALLY.

SALLY: (*while entering*) You filthy pig, I'll kill you!

PETE lets out a yelp and does karate hands as SALLY approaches.

SALLY: (*nervously laughter*) Hello! I'm Sally... I'm sorry, I didn't mean to ... that is to say you're a very clean pig... not a pig! A man, a handsome man, just a regular man! Just a regular normal average everyday man.

PETE: Thank you?

SALLY: Sorry I thought you were someone else. I was chasing someone...

PETE: That you wanted to kill?

SALLY: Yes. No! I didn't want to kill him, I mean I'm repulsed by him. He's a filthy pig.

PETE: (*jokingly*) I believe you've mentioned that.

SALLY: I'm an idiot.

PETE: I don't think you're an idiot... (jokingly) a psycho killer... maybe? Oh don't me wrong, you're an adorable psycho killer. But...

SALLY: (*giggly*) Oh stop it! Can we start over?

PETE: I would love nothing more.

SALLY: Hello, I'm Sally

PETE: Hello, I'm Pete.

SALLY: Not to sound crazy again but you are very clean... (*circles him doing a visual inspection*), no dirt or grime, groomed hair, your clothes are well intact. Do you have all of your teeth. (*approaches him to check*)

Both are caught in a slightly awkward meet-cute embrace.

SALLY: It's good to meet you Pete...

WALLY bursts in.

WALLY: Well well well...

SALLY and PETE quickly back away from each other.

WALLY: You must be the fancy schmancy defense attorney for this case! I be your competition... Wally Quills. (*extends hand for a shake but pulls away*) Are you ready to lose?

PETE: I have nothing to say to you.

SALLY: Wait... you're the defense!?

WALLY: Oh is the little baby scared!? *(baby talk)* Is the witty bitty baby scared?!

PETE ignores him.

WALLY: *(makes baby crying noises)* I want my mommy cuz I'm a wittle baby!

PETE ignores him. Meanwhile, the BAILIFF has entered with the BUTCHER. SALLY scurries out. BAILIFF says very flirtatious things to PETE but in a stern almost scary way.

BAILIFF: *(speaking to PETE)* Excuse me hot buns... did you happen to lose something?

PETE: Yes, thank you, my next stop was the lost and found!
(laughs)

BAILIFF: *(just stares)*

PETE: I was just.... Thank you for bringing him back.

BAILIFF: *(continues to stare).*

PETE: *(referencing BUTCHER and BAILIFF)* Are you two related? Both pretty quiet...

BAILIFF: Mmmmm mmm mmmmm, aren't you just a yippy little thing. And you ain't missing no teeth either...mmmmm mmmmm mmmmm.

PETE: (confused) Missing any teeth? Is that like... a pretty big deal around here? Not the first time I've heard that today.

BAILIFF: I don't need all my chompers to eat you up and spit you out little man.

PETE: Okie Dokie...

PETE goes to BUTCHER and escorts him to his seat.

BAILIFF: Settle down! Now listen up and listen good. This court is in order, now give a hearty HUZDAH for the dishonorable Judge Handy!

Judge enters. If the audience does not participate in the HUZDAH the Bailiff/Judge can ad lib to get them involved. Ex. Judge "Bailiff, am I in the right courtroom?! When he says HUZDAH you better HUZDAH!"

JUDGE: Worms and scallywags, let's begin with a round of grog for the lot of ye!

BAILIFF: Huzzah! (*encourages audience to join in*)

SALLY enters with drinks for the group and begins to serve them. Pirate themed music will play and the cast will ad lib various lines until the drinks are served. With the exception of PETE and BUTCHER, everyone should be loud and enjoying the drinks and encouraging the audience to have fun as well. Throughout the scene SALLY will collect the used glasses.

JUDGE: Enough with the pleasantries, The High Seas Butcher is charged with the most heinous of crimes. Signal yer verdict

with a thumbs down for lifelong imprisonment and a thumbs up for death by walking the plank!

BAILIFF signals to the audience to give a thumbs up or thumbs down. WALLY can encourage as well.

PETE: Woah woah! Hold it! What's going on?!

JUDGE: Who's this bilge-sucking swine?

PETE: Your Honor, I'm the public defender for The High Sea... That is... Mister...Butcher. I'm here to defend my client and to prove his innocence!

JUDGE: *(pause)*... Nope. *(to audience)* What say ye, thumbs up or down?

PETE: I must insist that we give this man his day in court.

JUDGE: *(mockingly)*... "I must insist that we give him his day in court". There HIM is, we are in court, it is a day! Happy? *(to audience)* Thumbs up or down?

PETE: *(throwing a mini tantrum)* Would you shut up and do your damned job!?

Room goes silent. PETE realizes what he has said.

BAILIFF: Mmmmm mmmm mmm, when you gonna put me in my place stud?

PETE: What I meant to say is that I would simply like to present a case so that the jury of... *(referencing audience)* a

large, loud and random assortment of peers... can make an informed decision.

JUDGE: (*begrudgingly*) Alright! If you “insist” on a trial than so be it but if you don’t make it quick you might walk the plank as well! (*Judge pauses a moment waiting*) Well? On with it!

PETE: Your Honor typically the prosecution gives an opening statement.

JUDGE: (*irate*) Are ye telling me how to do me job?! I said ON WITH IT!

PETE: May it please the court!... my client may have had a past ... I say may because I’m not entirely sure... but that does not make him guilty of this crime. What may be more egregious than the alleged crimes is his treatment by the authorities and this court. The defendant was not mirandized, he was given limited time to meet with his public defender to prepare for this case and has yet to be provided with a presumption of innocence. During this trial the defense will show you that though the book may have a rough cover the story inside is that of a gentle man wronged by the system. The lack of evidence in this case will prove beyond a reasonable doubt that my client should be set free from the chains that bind him. Don’t listen to your heart but listen to the voice of justice that is screaming a song of innocence for my client. Thank you.

JUDGE: Well, that was something. Wally, your up.

WALLY: Judge, what was that jibber jabber? This landlubber ain’t not hardly even making any no sense... aaaaaand WHO be Miranda?

PETE: What?

WALLY: Don't play stupid, stupid. Ya said that yer client wasn't Miranda!

PETE: I said he wasn't mirandized...

WALLY: (*condescending*) Oooooooo, me don't use yer fancy talk but that there dog ain't no Miranda or Mirandized or whoever else you think he is. He's a dirty, rotten, filthy, scurvy, scaly, two-timing, blimey, salty, spineless cuttlefish. He's a worm. A snake in the grass. He's soon to be shark bait and I say we string him up and watch him squeal like pig! (*to audience*) Huzzah!!!! (*if the audience doesn't say it automatically he can encourage them*).

The AUDIENCE should be involved and agreeable with the WALLY through most of the trial. Showing their pirate nature.

JUDGE: Well it seems like an open and shut case!

PETE: We haven't called any witnesses yet!

JUDGE: Aaaaarrrggghhh!!!! Fine!

PETE: I'll remind the court of the typical proceedings. The prosecution calls witnesses, the defense calls witnesses, we have closing arguments. There is still much to do.

JUDGE: Then shut your trap and let's be on with it. Wally, I guess you call witnesses first.

WALLY: Ahoy Judge, the prostitution rests!

PETE: That's prosecution you idiot and what do you mean?! You haven't done anything yet! You've presented no evidence, called no witnesses, and have said very little except Huzzah!

WALLY: Huzzah!

The BAILIFF, JUDGE and WALLY yell Huzzah and get the audience to say it as well.

PETE: I've never seen anything more ridiculous in my life! This court is crazy!

SQUAWKS enters just in time.

SQUAWKS: (*squawk*) Crazy court! Crazy court! (*squawk*)

PETE: You have got to be kidding me! Who is this now!?

JUDGE: Well that's Squawks..

PETE: Why is he acting like a parrot?

JUDGE: Many years ago, while I was pillaging an island I stumbled upon a flock of parrots. I also noticed this scrappy lad who had apparently been washed ashore years ago and raised as one of the macaws. I was lonely before I met him. He's the best parrot a captain could ask for. He has opposable thumbs and doesn't take a doodee on your back. Smartest bird I've ever had, he can repeat anything he hears. Isn't that right Squawks?

SQUAWKS: (*squawk*) He has thumbs (*squawk*) doesn't doodee on your back! (*squawk*)

JUDGE: (*laughs*) See, smart as a whip! Well mister fancy pants, I guess it's yer turn. Not lookin too good for yer client eh?!

PETE: (*has an episode of complete confusion and outrage waving hands around*) but...I What... you Why... when do... can't we... !

JUDGE: Do you need a medic me boy?

WALLY: Oh is the baby sick?!

PETE: (*baby tantrum*) Quit calling me a baby! I'm not a baby! I'm a big boy! ... I mean a grown man!

WALLY: Thar she blows!

SQUAWKS: (*squawk*) There she blows! There she blows! (*squawk*)

JUDGE: Mister... "Pete" is it? Are you going to call a witness or not?

PETE: Yes! YES! I'm going to call a witness. (*frantically looking through files and tries to stall*) Um... the... defense... calls... a... witness... who... is... named...

JUDGE: Let's go!

PETE: Yes, yes! Wilbur Seaworth! I call Wilbur Seaworth!

JUDGE: Bailiff, fetch tha first witness!

WILBUR enters slowly and oddly with various ailments.

BAILIFF: Please raise your right hand.

WILBUR is missing a right hand. Raises nub and then shrugs at the Bailiff.

BAILIFF: Okay, just sit I guess.

PETE: Could you please state your name for the court?

WILBUR: Wilbur.

PETE: Wilbur... *(waving hand wanting the last name)*

WILBUR: *(repeats)* Wilbuuuurrrrr....

PETE: No sir, what's your last name?

WILBUR: I never had one before Wilbur.

PETE: What?

WILBUR: Who?

PETE: You!

WILBUR: Me?

PETE: Yes!

WILBUR: Why?

PETE: What?

WILBUR: Judge! This jerk's cheese has slid off his cracker.

PETE: You know what, never mind, let's just move on. Now Wilbur...

WILBUR: That's Mr. Seaworth to you.

PETE: (*rubs temples and composes himself*). MISTER SEAWORTH! You are the only person I have listed down as having witnessed the alleged crime.

WILBUR: (*dramatically*) Bodies everywhere! Blood and heads and feet and appendages, that I can't even mention in mixed company, floating on the water!

PETE: THAT'S ENOUGH! Mr. Seaworth, please, let me first ask a question before you start answering with so many details. Is that okay with you?

WILBUR: Yep. The stench of dozens of corpses bloated with the salty sea water!!

PETE: What did I just say!?

WILBUR: You said to let you ask a question before I started answering.

PETE: Exactly!

WILBUR: Well make up your damn mind!

PETE: I didn't ask anything!?

WILBUR: Yes you did!

PETE: No I didn't!

WILBUR: Yes!

PETE: No!

JUDGE: Bailiff, would you please read back what was said.

Bailiff looks at notepad.

BAILIFF: Defense "please, let me first ask a question before you start answering with so many details. Is that okay with you" question mark.

WILBUR: Told ya! Blood blood blood!!

PETE: Okay! Had you ever seen the defendant before in your life.

WILBUR: Nope, I never done saw him.

PETE: So the first time you saw him (*references files*) was on the night in question when you saw him at the scene.

WILBUR: Nope.

PETE: So when did you see him?

WILBUR: I told you I didn't.

PETE: No you didn't!

JUDGE: Bailiff...

BAILIFF: Defense “Had you ever seen the defendant before in your life.” Response “Nope, I never done saw him.”

BAILIFF puts notepad back down. Throughout much of the trial the BAILIFF will also seem to be doing court sketches as well.

PETE: So are you telling me that you “never” saw the defendant.

WILBUR: Yep.

PETE: So, to be clear the “yep” is an affirmation of the “nope” that was in response to the inquiry of identification that you attested was false, are you positive of that?

WILBUR: Nope.

JUDGE: My patience is growing thin, ye better be rowing this boat along toot suite. Wilbur, did ya have anything further to add?

WILBUR: Did I say the part about the blood and heads and feet and appendages?

PETE: Judge, clearly this witness is committing perjury, he is stumbling over his answers repeating what appears to be scripted details and there is a good chance he has never seen my client before today. I’ve already stated the injustices that have been thrust upon my client thus far

WALLY: *(laughs)* He said thrust!

BAILIFF: Mmmmmmm... I heard that.

PETE: Judge, the only form of “justice” this case will produce are miscarriages and obstructions **of** justice.

JUDGE: That’s enough! The court will take a short recess!

PETE: We’ve only had one witness so far, I thought you wanted us to (*imitating in pirate speak*) “be moving dis ting along”. Arrrghh!

JUDGE: Yer a lippy little cuss aren’t ye?!

WALLY: Actually judge, I could really use a recess too, I have to make a delivery.

PETE: A delivery?

WALLY: You know... drop some friends off at the pool....

PETE: (*looks puzzled*) Huh?

WALLY: Bake some brownies, lay some cable, pop a squat, pinch a loaf, see a man about a dog...release the chocolate hostage!

PETE: (*looks puzzled*) What are you talking about!?

WALLY: I HAVE TO TAKE A SHAT!

PETE: Okie dokie...

SQUAWKS: (*squawk*) Chocolate hostage! (*squawk*)

JUDGE: Alright, go hit the head. Bailiff, take the prisoner out in case he needs a drinkle or a tinkle. I best go meself... I gots a

rumbling in my tumbly, too much grog me thinks. Wilbur, you can go now.

WILBUR leaves the stand. JUDGE, SQUAWKS and WALLY exit.. BAILIFF starts get the BUTCHER ready to leave. WILBUR approaches SALLY.

WILBUR: Okay where's my 50 doubloons

SALLY: *(trying to shut him up)* I'll get you your money.

WILBUR: You trying to skip out with my money wench?!

PETE approaches the pair.

SALLY: I'll get you your money. All of it, 50 doubloons. Now leave me alone.

WILBUR grumbles and exits.

PETE: What's that about?

SALLY: Oh nothing.

PETE: So how do you think I'm doing?

BAILIFF starts to escort the BUTCHER out but goes slow enough so SALLY can finisher her next line.

SALLY: *(nervously looking at BUTCHER and speaking oddly loud)* Yes yes, you are doing very well trying to maintain the freedom of this innocent man who has done nothing wrong to anyone. Godspeed on your journey for justice and more importantly truth.

PETE: (*finding her kind yet peculiar*) Um... thank you? I'm glad you think I'm doing okay but I can't help to think this is a losing battle.

SALLY: (*remains loud*) Not a losing battle at all! The truth will prevail! An innocent man will not be charged.

BAILIFF: Petey baby, I'd keep my distance, that wench be crazy!

When the *BUTCHER* is out of sight *SALLY* returns to normal

SALLY: This has been quite a day.

PETE: You're telling me.

SQUAWKS bursts in.

SQUAWKS:(*squawk*) Hershey squirts, hershey squirts!
(*squawk*) Must be the grog! (*squawk*)

PETE: Well I think I'm going to sneak out. To be honest I really have to go to the restroom myself. When I get nervous I drink a lot and when I drink a lot I gotta... well. (stops).

SQUAWKS:(*squawk*) Take a tinkle!

PETE: Now that I think about it probably too much information for you. I'm a little embarrassed I went down that route. I'm an idiot.

SALLY: (*mirroring their previous conversation*) I don't think you're an idiot... a dork... maybe? Oh don't me wrong, you're an adorable dork. But...

PETE: You know, this may sound crazy... I don't normally do this but... I was wondering if you would like to maybe...

WALLY reenters and cuts off PETE.

WALLY: Well that's a load off! Speaking of... maybe the little baby man should take a potty break too so he doesn't mess his diaper!

PETE: I really really hate you.

WALLY: *(baby talk)* What's wong wittle baby?! Do you need a bottle? Huh? Do you need to go pee pee.

PETE: No!

SALLY looks at him and giggles to herself knowing he does need to go.

PETE: *(pause)* If you'll excuse me, I need to go do some preparation for trial related things... you know... for the case. *(starts to walk slowly off and then speeds up having to go to the restroom).*

SALLY ensures he is out of the room before speaking.

SALLY: Listen here you twit, I hate you, you're an idiot, you smell..

WALLY: Oooooo... is this foreplay?!

SALLY: SHUT IT!

WALLY stops joking as he realizes she's serious.

SALLY: You are messing everything up here! You need to get yourself together if you want to win this thing.

WALLY: Oh I'm gonna win this thing! I needs to be gettin rid of my competition.

SALLY: What have you done so far! You've literally grunted and picked your nose for a half hour and thrown in the occasional "huzzah!" You need to start taking this thing seriously or I swear on everything sacred to me that I will end your pathetic little existence. Do you hear me!

WALLY: *(meekly)* Yes.

SALLY: I said do you hear me?!

WALLY: Yes ma'am!

SALLY: Okay, I've heard that most cases come down to closing arguments. If you can just pull your head out of your arse for five minutes you can give a great closing argument and clinch this thing. What do you have so far?

WALLY: Umm... oh ...nothing really..

SALLY: You have nothing?!

WALLY: Well... I mean... I do but I don't think you will like it.

SALLY: Just tell me so I can help you!

WALLY: *(pulls out a paper and puts on reading glasses, clears throat)* Wenches and Germs, in the words of that great

pirate.... Captain Johnny Cochran, if words of guilt I did sang
then that means the dog must hang!

The two remain silent looking at each other awkwardly.

SALLY: That's it?!

WALLY: Oh no....um....(trying to find his spot) in the
words...did sang...um.... The dog must hang!...Huzzah!

SALLY: Well that changes everything!

WALLY: Do you really like it!

SALLY: NO, YOU IDIOT! Okay listen to me very closely you
pig! I know it must be hard for you to understand what feelings
are but that is what you need to make everyone do "feel." They
need to care about the family of the victims they need to feel
like they want nothing more then to string somebody up! You
got that!

WALLY: *(meekly)* Yes ma'am.

SALLY: I'm sorry, did you say something!?

In the meantime PETE walks in.

WALLY: *(loudly)* Yes ma'am!

SALLY: Now go get yourself together and figure out a way to
send that scum to the bottom of the sea.

*PETE has heard the last few lines. WALLY scurries away from
her. SALLY exits where she does not see PETE.*

PETE: *(confused and hurt)* Send that scum to the bottom of the sea?

BAILIFF enters. Wilbur enters and is seated in the witness box.

BAILIFF: Here he is again, Judge Handy!

JUDGE enters and is seated.

JUDGE: Alright alright sit.

PETE: Your honor, I would...

JUDGE: Whadya think yer doin scab?! I won't be listening to another word of your dribble without a bit of ale to settle me mind! Bailiff! Another round of grog!

SALLY enters with drinks for the group and begins to serve them. Pirate themed music will play and the cast will ad lib various lines until the drinks are served. With the exception of PETE and BUTCHER, everyone should be loud and enjoying the drinks and encouraging the audience to have fun as well.

JUDGE: Alright, Mr. Fancy Pants lawyer man. What's next.

PETE: I have no more questions for Mr. Seaworth.

WILBUR: Tough, this is the best seat in the house.

PETE: *(sighs)* Final arguments Judge.

JUDGE: Final arrrguments! Final-ly! (*chuckles to himself and then signals the Bailiff to demand more laughs*). WALLY yer up!

PETE: Oh this should be good!

WALLY: What was that?

PETE: (*condescendingly*) Oh nothing... nothing, please do proceed!

WALLY is stalling as he hasn't quite figured out what to say.

WALLY: What can I say... um... to.... Well... make you feel....and care... what words to say to make you understand....um... Family. (*has an idea*) Family! That, germs and wenches, is what this trial is really about. The families that were ruined when that man... nay... that butcher... when he decided his evil desires were more important than those families he tore apart. It rips me heart asunder to think of the carnage left in his path. You may think that the seas of his life were rough to have caused his callused exterior but nay it was his choice as it is all of our choices to do what is right. What is just! What is human! I ask you fair people, the brothers and sisters in the family we call humanity to convict this monster. Convict him so that the seas of his destruction may calm. As still as those seas may become, it will always remain high tide with the tears that continue to flow from those who have been wronged. (*walks away somberly*)

During this closing all are enthralled by the speech. At the conclusion there is not a dry eye in the house except for PETE who has his jaw on the floor. A slow clap is initiated by the

Judge with the other cast joining in (except for the public defender).

PETE: *(perplexed)* How... why.... what?!

BUTCHER: *(cuts the celebration short with a loud groan)*

Everyone in the courtroom begins to look around at the source of the noise. BUTCHER continues to grunt and grumble. He has been poisoned and is nearing the end. Everyone in the courtroom becomes silent.

PETE: What's wrong!?

The defendant continues to groan and starts to stumble around in an elaborate death scene. He stumbles over to various people pointing at them, first SALLY then to SQUAWKS then to WILBUR.

BUTCHER: *(in a high pitched voice)* POISON!!

BUTCHER collapses dead on the floor. PETE runs to him to check his pulse.

PETE: He's.....he's.... DEAD!

ALL: GASP! *(yell the word)*

SQUAWKS: *(squawk)* He's Dead! He's Dead! Poison! Poison! *(squawk)*

JUDGE: Well that moves things along! PETE, you lose! Court adjourned! Bailiff more grog!

PETE: Whoa whoa!! I can't lose, hold on ... we um... how can I lose if he's dead?!

JUDGE: Well he kicked the bucket, I wouldn't say he's a winnaaargh! Get it?! (*laughs at himself and then directs the Bailiff to encourage others*).

Everyone begins to start to exit.

PETE: I can't lose... I'll lose my jobI need to win... I CAN STILL WIN!!!

Everyone stops and looks at him.

PETE: That is to say... not all is lost for Mr. Butcher! We can still catch his killer! We need to find justice for him!

WILBUR: I'd kind of like to see where the boy takes this one.

WALLY: Well, now that the Butcher is dead I don't care what we do!

SQUAWKS: (*squawk*) Give him a chance, give him a chance! (*squawk*)

JUDGE: Ooooooh, I do have a soft spot for you bird. Okay, we'll hear your piece after a short recess. I'm guess'n we best get rid of the beast before he starts to stink...well more than he does already.

The body must be removed. See staging notes. Everyone except PETE and SALLY exit. PETE notices SALLY.

PETE: (*upset*) Oh... hey...

SALLY: Hey, well that was crazy.

PETE: (still upset) Ya... real crazy

SALLY: Are you okay?

PETE: Oh I'm just peachy!

SALLY: Oh okay.

PETE: You know what! NO! I'm not just peachy! What is your problem? I thought we liked each other!

SALLY: What are you talking about?

PETE: I heard you talking to that insufferable little twerp Wally! You wanted him to win! And thus, me to lose. Are you following so far?

SALLY: It's not like that.

PETE: You want to sentence an innocent man to death!

SALLY: (*scary*) I SAID IT'S NOT LIKE THAT!

PETE backs down a bit.

SALLY: Look, I do like you but there's things about me that you don't know.

PETE: You must not like me as much as Mr. Quills since you were helping him.

SALLY: Trust me, I want as little to do with him as possible. It's... it's just complicated. I'll prove it let me help **you** now!

PETE: I'm not sure you can help me. My clients dead and you don't have a law degree.

SALLY: Hey buddy, I may not have book smarts but I have street smarts. See this is part of your problem you act like your law degree and your fancy dressing means anything here. Have you looked around, these scum don't care much about that. They like violence, they like drink, they like women!

PETE: Well I like women!

SALLY: *(playfully teasing)* Oh I know, a big ladies man you are. *(laughs)* Listen, you just need to try to fit in here. When in Rome they say.

PETE: Yea. Yea! If I can just fit in and be one of the gang then maybe I can salvage what's left of this case and my career. *(approaches her)* Thanks.

SALLY: You're welcome, "ladies man". *(playfully laughs while exiting)*

WALLY and BAILIFF enter

WALLY: Oooooooo I bet you got some good ones this time!

BAILIFF: Get away from me.

BAILIFF begins to hang up drawings on the walls so the audience can view them later.

WALLY: Hey Pete, come look at these! Our Bailiff here is also the court reporter and a sketch artist. These sketches are the best!

PETE: Wait... is that supposed to be me!?

BAILIFF: I draw what I see big boy.

PETE: And what's with this, you made my client look plain evil!

WALLY: So who do you think killed the bugger?

PETE: I wish I knew.

BAILIFF: My money is on the bird. He's fifty shades of crazy (to PETE) and not the kind I'd like to show you. We don't know where he came from or who he is. I wouldn't be surprised if he's been lying in wait and is gonna start bumping us off one by one like some horror movie.

BAILIFF leaves.

WALLY: I never did trust that there bird. Things are making a lot of sense now. Hey Pete, sorry I had to swab the deck with you earlier, I'm just a natural talent that way.

PETE: Get away from me.

WALLY: Awwwww can't we just be friends!?! (*laughs*)

PETE: (*realizing he could fit in*) Yes. YEA! We can be friends, how about you and me get some grog!

WALLY: Now that's the spirit! Hey maybe you can be my wingman. Me think I gots a good chance with Sally now that her hubby's dead.

PETE: Wait, Sally has a husband?!

WALLY: HAD a husband. You saw the him die mate.

PETE: The Butcher?!

WALLY: You mean your client didn't tells ya who his wifey was? Ah well it doesn't much matter. He's gone now and I hope to be knockin boots with the lass soon enough! *(steals a drawing from the wall where SALLY is depicted.)* I think I'll save me this one for later. Let's go get that drink!

PETE: I may need a couple.

PETE and WALLY exit.

INTERMISSION

In a dinner theatre setting the characters were able to return after a few minutes to mingle around and interact with the audience answer questions and trying to throw off suspicion. In our showing this was a time were dessert was served. We also allowed the audience to make guesses at this time and they were entered into a prize drawing if they made the correct guesses. The winner was announced at the conclusion of the show.

This portion of the evening is not necessary, but the audiences seemed to enjoy interacting with the actors in character and some who were mystery fans would be very inquisitive of the characters and try to figure out who done it.

END OF ACT I SAMPLE

Murder on the High Seas continues in Act II, where the case gets solved.

Request the complete script free at
joshnichols.me/murder-mystery-scripts/

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