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OSCAR

I'll bet we've got the show in the wrong theater.

PETER

Will you tell him to come in?

JANE

Yes, sir.

[Opens the door.]

OSCAR

It couldn't be something you did before this, huh?

[MR. PATTERSON and his brief case return. If possible, MR. PATTERSON looks even more formidable than he did before. For a moment he faces PETER and OSCAR, boring them with his eyes. OSCAR shifts, uneasily. PETER finally breaks the silence.]

PETER

Did you want to see me?

PATTERSON

BEGIN

[A voice of steel.]

Which is Mr. Peter Jones?

OSCAR

[With vast relief.]

He is.

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PETER

I'm Mr. Jones.

PATTERSON

Is this Mr. Oscar Fritchie?

OSCAR

[The jig is up.]

Yep.

PATTERSON

I called on you gentlemen earlier and left word that I would return.

OSCAR

Yah? I wish I'd known.

PATTERSON

You have my card?

PETER

Yes.

PATTERSON

My name is Patterson.

PETER

[Consults the card.]

That's right.

PATTERSON

I'm an attorney-at-law.

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OSCAR

[Trying to be friendly.]

A lawyer, huh?

PATTERSON

[With emphasis.]

An attorney-at-law.

OSCAR

Oh!

PETER

Is there something we can do for you, Mr. Patterson?

PATTERSON

There is. May I—

[Indicates with a gesture that he would like to use the desk.]

PETER

Certainly.

[PATTERSON goes to the desk, opens the brief case, and takes a package of documents out of it. He puts the package down on the desk in a businesslike manner, at the same time shooting a glance at PETER and OSCAR. He brings out a second package and slaps it down beside the first—gives another glance at PETER and OSCAR. Then a third bundle—

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a third glance. He adjusts a pair of glasses on his nose; clears his throat; takes up one of the documents and unfolds it. You gather, from a look at PETER and OSCAR, that they would much rather be somewhere else. JANE, standing quietly in the background, seems thoroughly possessed, however.]

PATTERSON

[With the air of a man trying a case in court.]

You are the owners of Lehmac Productions, Incorporated, Fourteen Hundred and Sixty-eight Broadway, New York, New York.

[A second's pause; he reads the next few words as though they constituted deadly evidence.]

A New York corporation.

PETER

[Much impressed; raises his right hand on high.]

We are.

OSCAR

[Still hoping to get out of it.]

He owns most of it.

PATTERSON

Said corporation being the producers of a dramatic composition, or play, entitled "Her Lesson."

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PETER

Is it—something about the play?

PATTERSON

[Ignoring the question and taking a magazine out of the brief case.]

In November, Nineteen Hundred and Sixteen, there appeared in this magazine, "Peppy Tales," published in New York City, an article of fiction, or short story, entitled "A Woman's Honor." Said story having been written by my client, Mr. Rodney Rich, of Northampton, Massachusetts.

[A deadly pause.]

And, as we shall duly prove in court—

OSCAR

Court?

PATTERSON

In court.

OSCAR

I thought you said court.

PATTERSON

The said story was, on January eighth, Nineteen Hundred and Seventeen, accepted as the basis of a play by one Harley Thompson, since deceased.

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PETER

[*To OSCAR.*]

Dead.

PATTERSON

Subsequently, as we shall prove, the said play was purchased or acquired by one Joseph Lehman, and by him duly produced.

[*He takes a breath.*]

It will be shown that the said dramatic composition, or play, is similar to the aforesaid short story at—one hundred and forty-six points.

PETER

One hundred and forty SIX?

PATTERSON

And that no less than six characters in the aforesaid play bear the same names as those in the aforesaid short story.

PETER

Well, was the aforesaid—

PATTERSON

One moment, please.

[*An impressive pause.*]

My client, Mr. Rodney Rich, has received no payment for this play, nor has his permission been sought

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in any way. It is, gentlemen, a clear case of plagiarism, and one of the most flagrant that it has ever been my privilege to encounter.

END

OSCAR

But—but—but—look here—

PETER

We didn't know anything about it. I bought it from Mr. Lehman, and then Mr. Fritchie here—

PATTERSON

Unfortunately—

OSCAR

That's a bad word.

PATTERSON

My client cannot take that matter into account. His composition has been produced in dramatic form without his permission. Not unnaturally, he seeks redress.

OSCAR

Seeks what?

PATTERSON

Redress.

PETER

Money.