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54/10/23 But Who Will Speak for Marilyn?

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But Who Will Speak for Marilyn?

It's perfect, you think at first, as you look over the setting for the Big Trial.

The courtroom is just the size to give a feeling of coziness and to put the actors close enough to each other so that in moments of stress the antagonists can stand jaw to jaw and in moments of relaxation can exchange soft words of camaraderie.

Modern enough for this "See-Hear" age, with the microphone, the loud speakers on the walls, and the blazing lights for the TV cameras before and after court sessions.

Yet somberly dignified enough to carry the authentic decor of the traditional court of justice.

Almost inadequate, old-fashioned hanging light fixtures. Dark furniture. A high bench for his honor, the judge. So high that if he slouches a bit just his head is visible.

A bit of plaster has fallen from the ceiling over the clerk's desk. The unrepaired spot gives a touch of the dignity of age.

And on the floor at the end of the trial table—a cuspidor.

Ah, you think, only a master arranger would have remembered that.

"The cuspidor. Put it here."

Perfect, you think at first, a masterpiece of setting the stage for the dramatic action of the Big Trial.

Then it hits you. No, there's something missing.

What?

* * *

Can what seems to be missing be found in the cast of characters.

Ah, the cast. Superb, you think at first.

And complete. Not a character missing.

And so real, you think. Just like you would expect to see.

Why if you didn't know these were people and this was a real setting you would think you were watching a drama on television or a mystery play at a theater.

His honor, the judge. A quaint Welsh accent. Quick, mobile features that can pass so rapidly through sternness, annoyance, patience and charming friendliness.

And the chief counsel for the defense. Granite faced, shaggy haired. Now disdainful, now quizzical, now disbelieving, now coaxing, now threatening, now bored.

These provide the perfect background for the most perfect character of all—the accused. Was there ever more perfect typing? Was there ever a more perfect face for the enigma that is the Big Trial?

Study that face as long as you want. Never will you get from it a hint of what might be the answer when the curtain rings down on this setting and on these characters. Is he

the one? Did he do it?

Plus, of course, the other characters. The accused's two brothers. Prosperous, poised. His two sisters-in-law. Smart, chic, well-groomed. His elderly father. Courtly, reserved. A perfect type for the patriarch of a staunch clan.

Yes, you think. They wouldn't be more true-to-life if this Big Trial were a television drama.

Then it hits you again. No there's something—and someone missing.

What is it? Who is it. Who's still off stage? Waiting perhaps for a cue to come on.

* * *

In the hallway outside the courtroom you stop to talk to Detective Chief James McArthur. He's an old timer at Big Trials. So you ask him. Isn't there someone, something missing?

"Sure," says the detective chief. "There always is. I'll tell you.

"It's the other side, the representatives of what in this case will be officially known as the corpus delicti, in other words, the body of the crime, in still other words—Marilyn Reese Sheppard.

"There is no grieving mother—she died when Marilyn was very young.

"There's no revenge-seeking brother nor sorrowing sister. Marilyn was an only child.

"Her father is not here. Why he isn't, is his own personal business."

What then, you wonder, will be the other side.

It will be there, Inspector McArthur reassures. He opens a thick brief case he carries daily to the courtroom.

"Here," he says, "are the statements and resumes of testi-

mony that will be given by state's witnesses. Here are the theories and details of the evidence found by dozens of detectives in weeks of work.

"Here is the complete story of Marilyn Reese Sheppard. How she lived, how, we think, she died. Her story will come into this courtroom through our witnesses. Here is how it starts: Marilyn Sheppard, nee Reese, age 30, height 5 feet, 7 inches, weight 125 pounds, brown hair, hazel eyes. On the morning of July 4 she was murdered in her bedroom. . . ."

* * *

Then you realize how what and who is missing from the perfect setting will be supplied.

How in the Big Case justice will be done.

Justice to Sam Sheppard.

And to Marilyn Sheppard.