

THE DARKEST HOUR

A Dramatic Reading
From the one act drama

by
Charles George



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The scene of this play is the prison cell of young John Madison, who is to be executed for murder.

At rise, John is discovered, pacing up and down the cell. The attendant comes outside the barred door. He is a big, burly man.

JOHN: (Hopelessly) Four more hours—has the Warden sent any word?

ATTENDANT: I'd be the first to let you know, if he had. I'm afraid the jig's up, friendly.

JOHN: Yes—yes—I know.

ATT.: You might as well take your medicine like a man. It's too bad fellers don't think of all this ahead of time.

JOHN: (Hysterically) But I'm innocent—I never killed him I tell you.

ATT.: None of 'em ever does—to hear them tell it.

JOHN: But I didn't—I swear it. They're killing an innocent man.

ATT.: Well, I reckon you won't be the first one.

JOHN: (In a dazed murmur) I suppose not.

ATT.: (Looking off R) There's somebody at the door. (Starts to go)

JOHN: (Frantically) Maybe it's some word—Hurry. (Joyously) Mother!—Mother, darling! I knew you'd come. I knew you wouldn't forsake me.

MRS. MADISON: (Rushes to John's arms) John, my baby!

ATT.: Fifteen minutes is all, lady. (Locks cell door and leaves)

MRS. M.: (Sobs) Oh, my darling, they can't do this to you. You are innocent!

JOHN: Yes, Mother, but the whole world believes me guilty.

MRS. M.: But you're not. My mother's heart tells me that my boy could never be guilty of such an act. (Weeping)

JOHN: (Lifting her head) Hush, Mother dear. You must be brave—just as I'm going to be. You must help me.

MRS. M.: (Makes effort to smile) Yes, John, I'll help you to be brave.

JOHN: Some day I hope you'll be able to forget this disgrace I've brought upon your good name.

MRS. M.: You haven't disgraced my name. You never killed Winton Ames.

JOHN: But the jury found me guilty...

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