

Trifles by Susan Glaspell

A Production Design by Mackenzie Trowbridge

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Susan Glaspell, Herself

Susan Glaspell was born in 1876 in the small, poor, and very religious town of Davenport, Iowa (Gainor 515). Her parents, Elmer and Alice, were a feed dealer and a teacher respectively (Gainor 516). Growing up, she liked to sing and work in the garden with her father. But she “struggled to balance her need to please her parents with her urge for independence and her vocation to write” (Ozieblo 14). Her mother was very protective of her, as being a write was a job that only the social elite and the wealthy could partake in. Because of this, she always respected her mother, but did not see her as a role model for her, being a strong and independent female. Her first writing job came in the form of a magazine editor. She was hired to work for Charles Eugene Banks at his new magazine entitled *The Weekly Outlook* (Ozieblo 20). But she needed more.

Glaspell was accepted and admitted as a junior to Drake University in 1897 to study philosophy. She was very popular and did extremely well in college, after which she was immediately hired to write about state legislation for the *Des Moines Daily News* (Ozieblo 27). It was here that she covered the story of the Hossack murder, which would later serve as her inspiration for both *Trifles* and her short story version of the same plot entitled, “A Jury of Her Peers”.

The first report came on December 3, 1900 and Susan Glaspell continued to follow the story until the jury’s final conclusion of the trail in April of 1901. Mrs. Hossack was charged with killing her husband with an axe in his sleep. Glaspell went into the neighborhood and conducted interviews, through which she discovered that Mr. Hossack often beat his wife. She was mortified to discover this key detail, so she wrote to sway the public’s opinion regarding the

case in its entirety. Unfortunately, her writings didn't do as much good as she had hoped, and Mrs. Hossack was sentenced to life in prison, with hard labor, but she was released after only 2 years (Ozieblo 28).

Deeply impacted by the happenings with the Hossack case, Glaspell moved back to Davenport to focus more on her fictional writing. She wrote often but most of her work was returned with rejection letters from major publishing companies. She believed "in the oneness of humankind's experience and the vital importance of the spirit of truth" (Ozieblo 31), thus acknowledging the similarities between her own life and her writing. Readers can often see points in the main character's lives that mimic Glaspell's own choices or shortcomings throughout her literary career.

It wasn't long after her move back to Davenport that she began to be accepted into the more elite writing circles of the area. News of her success had traveled with her and the other members of those societies included her in their meetings and literary discussions. She became involved with a literary rebellious group called the Monist Society. It was at those meetings that she met George Cram Cook, who would later become her husband. He was then divorced, but engaged to be married to Mollie Price, an actress from Chicago. He was infatuated with her, yet Cook and Glaspell could not escape each other's energies. They flirted endlessly, yet Cook finally left Davenport to marry Mollie in New York. To forget about George Cram Cook, or Jig as she lovingly called him, Glaspell moved to Paris with her best friend from college, Lulu Huffaker. It was during her time there that her first novel was published. On March 12, 1909, "The Glory of the Conquered" was finally accepted and published in America (Ozieblo 48).

Glaspell did move back to Davenport, in hopes of continuing her publication of stories. Upon her return, Jig and Susan reconnected and, despite Mollie having given birth to his first child, his daughter named Nilla, and having another child on the way, the two were constantly together working on novel ideas and writings, until finally they both established that their love was still alive. “George had come to realize that he had been in love with Susan all along, without knowing it” (Ozieblo 50). In her later biography of her husband entitled *The Road to the Temple*, Glaspell discusses this chapter of her life in very strong ways:

“Love may be strong as death. Death you will face easily for love, for that somehow does itself. Even more than disgrace you will face for love. You will risk hurt and shame to those you love. You will violate your own sense of fairness and right. In a world that is falling around you love dwells as sure, as proud, as if life had come into being that this might be” (Ozieblo 50).

Glaspell lived in New York for work, and Cook was living in Chicago as a writer for the *Chicago Evening News*. Readers can find the stories of their early relationship sprinkled in throughout Glaspell’s short story “Fidelity”, which many believe she wrote to help her mediate and process what her marriage to Cook meant. She broke up a family to create her own, but the more troubling thing was the seemingly hypocritical choice to settle into marriage, when she had been so independent for so long.

George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell married on April 14, 1913 and moved to Cape Cod, after the birth of their stillborn child. They bought a house at 564 Commercial Street which became a central location for the artistic elite of Provincetown. Glaspell fell in love with the view from their bedroom window, but she developed a heart lesion that stopped her from being

able to climb the stairs. Being the loving husband that he was, Cook did not let a health condition stop Glaspell from experiencing that view. He cut a hole in the bedroom floor and built a homemade elevator so that Susan could get up to the second floor and look out over the water (Ozieblo 56). They then painted the house every color possible, with red window frames, orange and yellow walls, and purple and blue doors, thus gaining their home the nickname “The Gay House.”

During this early part of her marriage to Cook, Glaspell did what every new spouse does: learns what living with their new significant other is really like. Unfortunately, she learned fairly quickly that George Cram Cook suffered from terrible mood swings and long bouts of anger would compel her to flee to New York to continue her work. This happened often, but things always settled back eventually.

It was in between one of these times when Jig decided to form of theatre group in Provincetown. The first evening of performances consisted of two shows, written by friends, with their close circle cast as the characters, and a lengthy post-show discussion. The members of the group used the veranda of a house for the set of one show, and the front room for the next, with Robert Edmund Jones, then freshly back from studying stage design in Europe, as their scenic designer. It was so well received that it kept growing and growing until eventually Cook came up with the idea to have it at a pseudo-theatre space. The wife of one of the actors loved the plays so much that she volunteered one of their fish-houses on the wharf as the new Wharf Theatre.

“Everyone lent a hand to move the boats, tackle, and rubbish accumulated over years of disuse to clear an acting space. (A patron) rummaged through her past

and came up with a stage curtain from her childhood days...The lighting of the fish-house presented certain difficulties because of the hazard of fire. Bobby Jones placed four people with lamps in the wings and arranged lanterns with tin reflectors in front of the stage...The problem of seating was not even considered. 'Let each bring his own!', bellowed Cook" (Ozieblo 74).

During the winter months following the incredibly successful run at theatre, the Cooks moved to New York along with all of their friends. They would migrate to Provincetown each spring and summer, when the weather was better, and continue to build up a theatre scene in the small beach town.

Cook's new idea for a flexible stage and an American theatre was strong, and it was only a matter of time before Glaspell got sucked in. Cook "saw her as a playwright, and she recognized that she would have to conform to his vision if she wanted to retain a sense of dignity and equality in this marriage that she had desired so intently and sacrificed so much to achieve" (Ozieblo 82). Cook asked his wife to write a play quickly for the second season of their theatre productions, so she wrote "Suppressed Desires", which was such a hit that she wrote, "Trifles", which became her claim to fame. In that same season, Glaspell met a young Eugene O'Neill and, after much prodding, convinced Cook that O'Neill's "Bound East for Cardiff" would make a great addition. She was absolutely correct, because the play was presented in the Wharf Theatre space, with the loading door open so that the audience could smell the water and see the lake in the background of this story set on a ship (Ozieblo 87).

Following the success of that second summer season of 1916, the community that formed the theatre group officially became the Provincetown Players, which holds its official founding

as September 4th, 1916. The official constitution reads that their “purpose shall be the production of plays written by active members or by others in whose work the active members may be interested...It is the primary object of the Provincetown Players to encourage the writing of American plays of real artistic, literary, and dramatic - as opposed to Broadway merit. That such plays be considered without reference to their commercial value, since this theatre is not to be run for pecuniary profit” (Ozieblo 90). Shortly after this official decree was released, Cook decided to move it all to the city in hopes of competing with the mainstream Broadway theatrical performances of the time, and 139 Macdougall Street in the Greenwich Village came to be.

Glaspell went with her husband to New York, but he was always in the theatre, building and renovating it for the upcoming season to begin. She was miserable because she was looped into the future of the Provincetown Players, which gave her little-to-no time to continue writing her own novels. To aid in the beginning of the Players’ success in New York, she was continuing to write new plays along with even acting a few times, despite her complete distaste for acting as a craft, as it took her away from her typewriter. Although New York was not completely terrible to Susan Glaspell. She managed to get her plays produced by many different theatre companies, including The Washington Square Players (Ozieblo 121).

Glaspell’s time in New York slowly became less and less about her own work and more about Jig’s success, although she would never have admitted to that. She once defensively said “From 1915 to 1922 I gave up practically everything else, though I had an established position as a novelist. I wanted to do this, and I am glad I did” (Ozieblo 139). During this time she also felt the pressure of the suffrage movement. She believed in many of the things that the feminist movement preached, but she also knew what could happen when conventions were challenged.

When asked about her lack of action on the socially progressive front, she said “I am interested in all progressive movements, whether feminist, social or economic...but I can take no very active part other than through my writing. One can’t work with too many things...When one has limited strength one must use it for the thing one feels most important” (Ozieblo 138). This thing ended up being Cook, more often than not. It was around this time that her first full-length play was written, and a production was done by the Provincetown Players from March 21-27, 1919. Her play *Bernice* focuses on examining how women can best cope with men’s need to prove themselves to be superior to women, which is surely a thought to have crossed her mind during her tumultuous times with Cook. It was a huge success with audiences and critics alike, continuing her success in the theatrical world (Ozieblo 142).

Susan decided that it was time to take a sabbatical with her husband and head back to Provincetown for a cooling period, as he seemed to be stressed. He was turning to alcohol, or Ida Rauh a woman who fancied him a bit more than Glaspell approved of, and their original house could provide the escape they needed to reconnect (Ozieblo 151). After the success of that time away from the city, Cook returned to the city with full gusto, which ended in a game changer for the Provincetown Players. They decided to move Eugene O’Neill’s play *The Emperor Jones* to Broadway, which was the exact opposite of everything that the original motto stood for. Broadway was Cook’s dream for so long, but when O’Neill got there, he slighted Cook and his efforts were unnoted in the success of *The Emperor Jones* (Ozieblo 170).

The lack of support from his friends and company members broke the spirit of George “Jig” Cook, and so he decided that he would go to Greece to recover and become re-inspired, with Susan Glaspell always along for the ride. Cook’s primary goal was to get his play *The*

Athenian Woman to be published in Greek. Before their departure the board members of the Players met to discuss what to do with the company in the absence of its president, and the final decision was to put the Players on a hiatus until the return of Cook and Glaspell. With that settled they left for Greece on March 1st, 1922 (Ozieblo 196).

Upon their arrival they traveled through the country and made their way to a small town in the southern part of Greece, where Jig immediately learned Greek “to deprive [Susan] of the power of the word” (Ozieblo 203) and to make his ego feel superior in a new land.

Unfortunately, this worked and she fell into a quiet lifestyle, whilst her husband ran around the town making friends with everyone at the local pub. She contemplated and spoke often of writing about the refugees that were flocking to Greece from Smyrna, but never did.

Unfortunately, Cook fell very ill and died on January 14th 1924 of Glanders, which he presumably got from the dog he adopted from the street (Ozieblo 223). Glaspell left to return to America on February 21, 1924, only after securing a Greek publishing of *The Athenian Woman* (Ozieblo 225).

For Glaspell though, the bad luck had not completely run out. Upon her return to America, she discovered that the Provincetown Players had been completely redone and turned into a stock company, along with almost completely writin George Cram Cook out of the history of the company, with his work being non-existent. Unbelievably distraught over the complete betrayal of their friends, Glaspell refused to work for the Players any longer and removed herself from the board (Ozieblo 229). She began focusing once more on her own writings, with the biography of George Cram Cook, entitled *The Road to The Temple*, at the front of her brain. She

also met and began seeing a younger man named Norman Matson, who was an arrogant, rising member of the artistic elite.

In 1929, Glaspell wrote the Nobel Prize-winning play *Allison's House*, which was based on both her own experiences and those of Emily Dickinson (Ozieblo 239). A few years later, Matson ended their relationship to be with a 19-year-old. He blamed Susan for their demise and expected her to continue to support him in his artistic endeavors, along with a monetary care that Glaspell was not willing to give. She never once viewed her time with Norman as a mistake, though. She writes "Then Norman came, and loved me, and instead of seeing life from death, again I saw it from life. I was again in life. That I owe to Norman. And never will I forget it" (Ozieblo 247).

The final chapter of Susan Glaspell's life was a busy one. Single once again, she was recruited by the Federal Theatre Project in 1936 to be the organizer and director of the Midwest Play Bureau (Ozieblo 252). Her tasks whilst with the FTP included presiding over public functions, giving speeches, and promoting the Federal Theatre to make its presence known in Chicago, which she resided in (Ozieblo 262). She held that position until April of 1938, when she felt that the projects were becoming corrupt. The Federal Theatre was shut down the following year. She published a few more novels, including *The Morning Is Near Us* and *Spring's Eternal*, but many of her original plates for publishing were surrendered to the war effort, and thus were lost (Ozieblo 269). Susan Glaspell, feeling the pressures of old age, retired back to her forever home in Provincetown, where she lived with her maid Francelina. After working to dispose of paperwork and journals so as to remain private as she was in life, Susan Glaspell died of viral pneumonia and an embolism on July 27th 1948 (Ozieblo 277).

Trifles: A Summary of the Plot

The show opens to the untidy kitchen of John Wright, with a fire burning in the stove. The Sheriff, County Attorney, and neighbor Mr. Hale enter with two women, the wives of the Sheriff and Mr. Hale. The men begin to discuss the happenings of the prior day. Mr. Hale tells the story.

While on his way to town, he decided to stop at the Wright's to talk to John Wright about buying a telephone. When he knocked on the door, no one answered. When he opened the door, Mrs. Wright sat silently rocking in her rocking chair. When he asked to see John, she laughed. She said that he was indeed home but that Mr. Hale couldn't possibly see him because he was dead. He paused on his way up the stairs to ask how he died, to which Mrs. Wright replied, "A rope around his neck". He went upstairs with his friend Harry to see for himself. The men ask Mrs. Wright if anyone had been called and she said "No". When asked who did it, she said "I don't know." She said that she didn't wake up because she sleeps sound. Mr. Hale ran to a neighbor's house to call the police, and then tried to make small talk with Mrs. Wright while they waited. She laughed at the idea of getting a phone, but then all of a sudden looked incredibly scared. That's when the Sheriff arrived himself.

In his quick look around the kitchen, the attorney only finds broken jars of preserves, which the women say that Mrs. Wright was worried about. The men laugh and mock the women for worrying about a trifle so small.

The men head upstairs to look for more evidence, leaving the women to gather things to bring for Mrs. Wright in prison. The women note that there is a loaf of bread laid oddly next to the bread box, not in it. Mrs. Hale thinks about putting it away but stops. They move on to

talking about her preserves. The only ones that didn't crack and freeze were her cherries. Mrs. Hale thinks about sitting in the rocking chair but she remembers the story they have just heard. Mrs. Peters needs to go into the cold front room to gather clothes but doesn't want to go herself, so Mrs. Hale goes with her. They return pretty quickly and talk about Mrs. Wright's secretive nature. Mrs. Hale thinks it was because John Wright was stingy and would not let her spend money on nice things. She remembers Minnie Foster, before she married John and became Mrs. Wright, and how lively she used to be when she was singing in the choir.

In a quiet moment, Mrs. Hale asks Mrs. Peters if she thinks that Mrs. Wright did it, as she doesn't think so herself. Mrs. Peters shares that the case doesn't look good for her since she didn't wake up. She also shares that what the men are actually looking for is some kind of motive, some sign of sudden emotion or anger. The women take their coats off to dry and stumble across a sewing box, which has many pieces prepped for a quilt. They begin to talk about whether the quilt was to be knotted or sewn when the men come back in, mocking them again for their insignificant worries. The men then go outside to the barn to check for clues there.

The women look through the sewing box and discover the most recent stitching is erratic and different than the rest. They silently recognize that this is evidence. Mrs. Hale suddenly pulls out the messy stitches and begins to re-sew them. They say that perhaps she was nervous, hence the messy stitching. The next discovery is that of an empty but broken birdcage. They try to figure out what happened to the bird, because Mrs. Peters notes Mrs. Wright's fear of the jail cat. The door to the cage is missing a hinge, implying foul play.

Mrs. Hale has a moment of sadness and regret for not coming to visit Mrs. Wright as much as she could have. They discuss Mr. Wright's good reputation but stoic and impersonal

nature. The topic of the bird emerges again when Mrs. Hale compares Minnie Foster to a caged bird. She asks that Mrs. Peters bring the sewing to Mrs. Wright in prison to liven her spirits. Whilst packing up the box, the women stumble upon a small gift box. Inside is the dead bird, with a broken neck. They hear the men coming and quickly hide the bird in the quilting.

The attorney asks about the bird and said that he didn't see a cat. Mrs. Peters suggests that perhaps the cat ran away because they are suspicious creatures. The men establish that the rope belonged to the Wrights and that there was no forced entry, and head back upstairs for a final walkthrough. The women deduce that Mrs. Wright must have really liked the bird and planned to bury it in the giftbox, and that Mr. Wright surely didn't like the bird because it sang beautifully. Mrs. Hale insinuates that he most likely killed the bird, but Mrs. Peters doesn't like discussing it. They argue back and forth about who killed the bird and who killed John Wright. Mrs. Hale again feels guilty for her lack of presence in the house and asks Mrs. Peters not to tell Mrs. Wright that her fruit has spoiled. Mrs. Peters jokes that the men would laugh at their concern for the bird. Hale sharply disagrees as the men return, remarking that they still didn't find anything pointing to a motive for the rope. The women's eyes silently meet.

The men go into another room to discuss the proceedings and the women are left alone, in silence. Mrs. Peters goes to hide the gift box in her coat, but cannot bring herself to touch the dead animal. Hearing the doorknob turn and the men coming in one last time, Mrs. Hale stuffs it into her jacket just as they enter. The men come in joking about the quilting again. Mrs. Hale says, with her hand on her pocket, that they think she was going to knot it.

Text and Subtext: An Analysis of the Script

The analysis of the text should begin at the title. *Trifles* is a play about the undermining of women. A trifle is a small insignificant thing and by using that word as the single title for the play, Susan Glaspell is equating the women to small insignificant beings, just as the men in the play view them, along with society at that time.

Trifles is set in a farmhouse in Dickson County, Tennessee. “The Coming Nation” was a highly socialist newspaper that was printed out of Dickson County from 1895-1922. This is an interesting choice when taking into consideration Glaspell’s own background with politics and journalism, even more so because the play is based upon a story that she herself reported on. Placing the events in a shabby looking farmhouse during very cold months adds to the tension and creates an eerie feeling upon first entering.

The choices for character names throughout this play are also subtextually relevant. For Mr. and Mrs Wright, this is the only reference point we have for their character, as we never see them in the play. The last name “Wright” comes from British descent and means “worker”, which implied that Mr. Wright was a hard worker, which is supported by Mrs. Hale’s description of him as being “close”, and stingy with his money. His first name, John, is Hebrew for “Jehovah has been gracious”, but has almost a comedic feel in contemporary cultures, as an unidentified body is often coined the name “John” whilst the identification is being established. Mrs. Wright is often mentioned as her past self, Minnie Foster, which has a different relevance. Minnie is also a Hebrew name, but her’s means “wished-for child; rebellious; bitter”, which ties to her future with John Wright. Her last name, Foster, comes from the English word “forester” and means “one who keeps the forest.”

The men of the law, as mentioned in this play, are not referenced by their names. They are merely called Sheriff and County Attorney, which continues forward into the focus on the women in the story. By giving the women more solidified identities, the audience connects with them and sees that the story is their. It is worth noting that the Sheriff is said to be in his middle-aged years and the County Attorney is younger, which suggests an interesting commentary on new law versus old law. Mr. and Mrs. Hale's surname is English and means "lives in the hall", which connects to Mrs. Hale's constant guilt about not visiting the Wright home before this terrible event. Their name refers to their lack of a presence in the Wright's home, as a hallway is what is right outside of a door. Mrs. Peters' last name has a Biblical context, meaning "a stone or rock". She is the stoic woman in the opening of the play, but by the end she has unraveled into a nervous girl who cannot decide the difference between right and wrong.

Many of the props throughout the show have important purposes within the text, with their basis being both practical and filled with implication and subtext. When retelling the story of how he stumbled into the situation, Mr. Hale tells his listeners that he wanted to try to convince John Wright to pitch in for a party line between their two homes. The irony in this being the topic of discussion is that this is the exact object that Mr. Hale later used to call for help when he found the dead body in the Wright's bedroom. Mrs. Wright is said to have been found sitting in her rocking chair rocking back and forth, while silently pleating her apron. The imbalance of a rocking chair works well with the instability of Mrs. Wright's emotional state. The symbolism of the apron continues throughout the play as it is often referenced as a tie to

Mrs. Wright's guiltiness, as well as another point to continue the gender issue through the events preceding and occurring during the play.

There is something to be said about the fact that the death of Mr. Wright was done by rope, not the gun that is mentioned to be in the house. The strangulation is connected to the death of the bird by strangulation and thus the stifling of Minnie Foster by John Wright. Whenever Minnie Foster is spoken of, it is implied that she was free spirited, sweet, and innocent. Mrs. Hale even says that Mrs. Peters "should have seen her standing in the church with her white dress and blue ribbons". The image that comes to mind is that of a small girl with not a care in the world, which unfortunately is not the life that Mrs. Wright ended up leading.

Another important prop to examine is the broken fruit jars, but more specifically the surviving jar of cherries. There are two ideas that come to mind. The first is that it is representative of her want to have children, in order to provide company in such a barren and saddening life. Another connection can be made to her previously discussed innocence. Cherries are often symbolic of the first sexual experiences of a young and naive girl, so it can be said that Mr. Wright married her young and took her innocence, thus leading her to want to break free from the saddening life that she has gotten herself into. The final prop to analyze is the quilt that Mrs. Wright is working on. The women find the poorly done quilt and discuss whether or not she would have quilted it or just knotted the pieces together, much to the surprise of the men who mock them for their concerns. In the end the women decide to say that she was going to knot it, speaking to the crude nature of the male opinion of women along with connecting back to the rope that was found around John Wright's neck.

The last part of the text that should be examined are the words of the women themselves. There are three quotes that require some further looking into for subtext analysis. When Mr. Hale asked Mrs. Wright how she didn't wake up when he husband was being killed, she says "...but I was on the inside. I didn't wake up...I sleep sound." Upon looking at the other examples of proof that Mrs. Wright was indeed guilty, this is as strong an example as the rest. By saying that she sleeps fine, she insinuates that she has no regret for what she did.

In the early part of the show, the county attorney is taking a look around the Wright's kitchen. He discovers a mess of broken glass jars of preserves that have gone bad but gets his hands dirty. After he rinses his hands, he comments on the dirtiness of all of the towels in the kitchen. Mrs. Hale, in defence of the absent Mrs. Wright, says "Men's hands aren't always as clean as they might be". This implies that the Attorney himself is not completely innocent in his life, but also alludes to her judgement towards the character of John Wright. By saying this, she is hinting at the fact that he may have deserved what happened to him.

When the women are working to gather items to send to Mrs. Wright in prison, they decide to send the jar of cherries in, but not to tell her about the rest of her fruit that spoiled, as she will never know that this is a lie. Mrs. Hale says that they should keep the truth from her because "she'll feel awful bad after all her hard work in the hot weather." This can be seen as both a remark on the messiness of the house and on the Wright's marriage, since presumably Minnie worked really hard to stifle her hard feelings towards her husband and to just ignore the bad things, but there was a breaking point and unfortunately she crossed it. Her response to the "hot weather" moment of the death of her pet canary sparked the murder of her husband and her own personal downfall.

Scenic Design Concept Statement

Throughout my study of the histories of both *Trifles* and Susan Glaspell, I ran into a strong visual draw towards Glaspell's tie to the Provincetown Players. They were a very important beginning to American theatre and their origins in Cape Cod served as my inspiration for the scenic design. One of the original theaters used by the Players was lovingly called the Wharf Theatre, as it was originally a boathouse which belonged to a loyal patron. With the theater being on a pier over the ocean, the group had the ability to create a realistic setting for shows based near the water, such as *Bound East for Cardiff* by Eugene O'Neill, with something as simple as opening the loading doors to show the sun setting outside.

I wanted to place the very specific world of *Trifles* within those walls. What would it have looked like if the original production occurred in that space? My concept will consist of treated wooden walls, extending into the audience to make everyone feel a part of this world, including benches like those that patrons would have sat in at the original Wharf. The play is very specific in what it calls for and those period appropriate appliances and furniture will be placed on stage.

A key factor in houses during the early 1900s was the small size of the rooms. Each room, based on my research, felt packed to the brim with furniture, with not much moving space. This works nicely with a play like *Trifles* in which the entire play is based on an ever-present tension between the characters as they are surrounded by the probability of a murder. Playing with the amount of acting space available will help make that clear and I hope palpable enough for all to feel.

Properties List

Pg. #	Prop	Quantity	Notes
/	Shoe mat	1	At door leading “outside”
/	Rocking chair	1	
/	Hook on door to upstairs	1	Shawl hung on offstage side
/	Kitchen table	1	Square top; ½ dirty ½ clean
/	Kitchen chairs	2	Actors stand on them
/	Coatrack	1	Near front door
/	Stove	1	Period; front opening door for fire
/	Cabinets	?	High enough for actor on chair to see
/	Sink	1	Period;
/	Bucket	1	Filled with water; set in sink
/	Ladel	1	Preset with bucket of water
/	Countertop	1	Period; must have drawers
/	Cooking pans	4	Dirty; preset under sink
/	Bread box	1	Period; preset on counter
/	Loaf of bread	1	Preset outside of the breadbox
/	Hand towels	2	Dirty; 1 set on table, 1 near sink
10	Notebook (County Attorney)	1	
10	Pencil (County Attorney)	1	
11	Blackberry goop	1	Preset for County Attorney to touch
11	Roller-Towel	1	On wall near sink; long; dirty
14	Jar of preserved cherries	1	Preset on top shelf of cupboard; dirty (actor will clean during show)
14	Dress (Mrs. Peters)	1	Belonging to Mrs. Wright

Pg. #	Prop	Quantity	Notes
14	Skirt (Mrs. Peters)	1	Belonging to Mrs. Wright
14	Pair of women's shoes	1	Belonging to Mrs. Wright
15	Apron	1	Preset in top drawer
15	Shawl	1	Hung on door leading upstairs
16	Serving basket	1	Large; holds quilting supplies
16	Quilting fabrics	?	Multiple bright colors; some red
16	Piece of completed quilt	1	"Log cabin pattern"; 1 rigged square with bad sewing
17	Needle	4	To be thread onstage
17	Spools of thread	2	To be stitched with onstage
18	Birdcage	1	For small bird; rusty; broken doorhinge
21	Small box	1	Holds bird; beautiful looking
21	Silk piece	1	Bird wrapped in it; put in small box
21	Dead canary	1	Small; broken neck

Costume Design Concept Statement

The costume design featured here for *Trifles* serves to convey both period and economic class, as those are the two most prominent things apparent in this play.

The female silhouettes of this period were varied but had a very masculine feel to them. As the men were sent off to war, the women remained at home to run things and their clothing reflects that. There were overcoats that were inspired by men's jackets, and shoes were dark and multipurpose. Waists were high, and patterns were more popular with the working classes, as their clothes were handed down and worn to work on farms. The male silhouette was drastically different depending on economic status. The wealthier members of society had thigh-length suit jackets and vests. The working class had khaki pants and button up shirts for their everyday life.

The other factor of costuming that is utilized in this design is the use of color. Overall, the color choices for all of the characters are muted and dull, as the show takes place in a small country town. Throughout the story, the audience sees the men brushing aside important information and being very focused on looking for what they believe will get them results. They are not thinking outside of the box to find smaller hints of the crime. For this reason, the men are in black, brown, and dirtied white clothing.

The women on the other hand have a bit more color in them, although still muted. Blues and purples were added into their costumes to hint at their ability to see more than what meets the eye. They are more in-tune with the ways in which the scene of the crime is set up, which leads them to make the important discovery of the dead bird.

Sound Design Concept Statement

In most theatrical works, sound design has an incredibly crucial task in simultaneously setting up the scenes and yet fading into the background and not stealing focus. My concept for *Trifles* is a unique way of doing both of those things, and more.

The death of John Wright within the play is the main event in question. What the women discover when gathering Mrs. Wright's things is a dead bird with a broken neck. A connection is silently made between Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters, as they think that they have found the sign of motive that the men have been looking for. A throughline for the remainder of the piece is the importance of music and how the lack of it can drive a person to do things they wouldn't normally do.

Using this as a jumping off point, I would like to play with silence. There are two points of importance within this design that will play off each other in a very important way, beginning as soon as the audience members enter the building. The speakers in the main lobby of the theatre itself will be playing period-appropriate songs, which tend to focus on the beauty and innocence of love and life. They will then enter the theatre, in which it will be shockingly quiet, with nothing playing except the sounds of a faint wind blowing outside and the crackle of the dwindling fire in the stove.

Through this, I hope to set the same tension that the scenic design is working towards, as quiet makes people uncomfortable. It will point to something being not right, and force the audience members to notice where they are, along with spring them into the world of the play's off-putting situation.

Sound Design Track Listing

Preshow Music (Played in the Lobby)

1. A Broken Doll - Al Jolson
2. Good-Bye, Good Luck, God Bless You - Henry Burr
3. I Sent My Wife to the Thousand Isles - Al Jolson
4. Listen to the Mockingbird - Alma Gluck
5. Somewhere A Voice is Calling - John McCormack
6. St. Louis Blues - Prince's Band
7. The Lights of my Home Town - The Peerless Quartet
8. Watching the Trains Come In - Jack Pleasants
9. There's A Little Bit of Bad in Every Good Little Girl - Billy Murray
10. There's Someone More Lonesome Than You - Frederick Wheeler & Reed Miller
11. Turn Back the Universe and Give Me Yesterday - Henry Macdonough & The Orpheus Quartet

Environmentals & Show Cues

12. Outdoor Wind (Sample)
13. Fire in Stove (Sample)
14. Dog Bark 1 (Basset Hound)
15. Dog Bark 2 (Border Collie)
16. The men walking upstairs

Works Cited

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