

THE ROCKING CHAIR DETECTIVE

A workshop exercise written by

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Shoebox Theatre
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CHARACTERS

Rocking Chair Detective
Butler (Snodgrass)
Housekeeper (Mrs. Witherspoon)
Newsboy
Businessman(woman)
Bank Teller
Mother (Father)
Child
Robber
Pretty Girl
Waitress (Waiter)(Blanche/Bob)
Cook
Policeman (Harry)
Market Owner
Old Lady (Man)

SCENARIOS

The Newsstand
The Bank
The Diner
The Market

STORYLINE

Detective relates the story of the life of a \$20 bill. Money passes from Newsstand to the Bank to the Diner to the Market and finally to the wallet of the Rocking Chair Detective. Butler appears in transitions with Detective.

CLASS FOCUS

Characterizations and motivation for dialogue.

What is my character like?

Why does my character use the language and phrasing he uses?

What causes my character's reactions?

How does my character's dress influence his actions?

What body language does my character use to show his personality?

What could I do to give my character personality?

ACT I

SCENE I

SETTING: A parlor.

AT RISE: MUSIC CUE/THEME SONG/ALFRED
HITCHCOCK. R CHAIR DETECTIVE
is seated in his (ahem)
rocking chair. Lights up.

R. DETECTIVE

(Looks up from book as lights come up)

Oh, hello there. I suppose you're here for a story. Everyone always is. Good enough.
We might as well get right to it. You see. . .

(Enter BUTLER with BUSINESSMAN)

BUTLER

Sir?

R. DETECTIVE

Yes, Snodgrass?

BUTLER

Sir, we have a guest.

DETECTIVE

(Points to AUDIENCE)

I see that, Snodgrass.

BUTLER

No sir, I mean, your neighbor is here to collect the remainder of your contribution.

DETECTIVE

How much do I owe?

BUTLER

Twenty dollars, sir.

DETECTIVE

Then by all means, pay him, Snodgrass.

(Takes \$20 bill from his wallet and gives to BUTLER who walks to door and pays BUSINESSMAN. AUDIENCE can see BUSINESSMAN who thanks BUTLER and exits)

BUTLER

Do you require my services then, Sir?

DETECTIVE

I don't know, Snodgrass. Hold on.

(To AUDIENCE)

Would anyone care for a cold drink or a cup of tea? Well, perhaps later. That's all, Snodgrass.

(SNODGRASS turns to leave)

Oh, Snodgrass.

BUTLER

Sir?

DETECTIVE

Has Mrs. Witherspoon gone out?

BUTLER

Yes, sir. To market, I believe, sir.

DETECTIVE

Good. We can begin then.

(Exit SNODGRASS)

DETECTIVE (Cont'd)

Now, let me begin with a question. Have you ever wondered what happens to money? I mean, when you spend it, where does it go? Surely money has a history, a life of its own, so to speak. Today's story traces the life of a \$20 bill. It all began the day before Halloween. I remember because it was the day of my annual Halloween party.

(Enter SNODGRASS with Halloween decorations.
Begins putting them up as DETECTIVE speaks)

The newspapers were alive with news, not the least of which was about my annual event. . .

(Lights fade on PARLOR and up on . . .

ACT I

SCENE II

SETTING: The Newsstand

AT RISE: NEWSBOY is hawking papers

NEWSBOY

Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Rocking Chair Detective schedules Annual Halloween Party. It's the event of the year! Extra! Extra!

(Enter BUSINESSMAN)

BUSINESSMAN

I'll take a paper.

NEWSBOY

You got it, pal. That'll be 50 cents.

BUSINESSMAN

(Looks in pants pocket. No change)

All I've got is this \$20 bill.

NEWSBOY

I don't have change for that.

(HOUSEKEEPER walks by. Buys a paper. Exits)

BUSINESSMAN

Well, I don't have 50 cents.

NEWSBOY

I guess we're both outa luck.

BUSINESSMAN

Look here, I come by here everyday. I'll owe you the 50 cents. Surely you can spare a paper.

NEWSBOY

Sorry, but I can't do that.

BUSINESSMAN

A measely 50 cents won't break you. Come on now, I'm late for work.

NEWSBOY

If it's all the same to you, I'll take the \$20 and on your way by here you can get a paper every day, say for, the next month.

BUSINESSMAN

(Thinks)

Hmmmmm.....It's a deal.

(They shake hands. BUSINESSMAN gives NEWSBOY \$20 bill and BUSINESSMAN takes paper)

BUSINESSMAN (Cont'd)

You'll go far, young man. See you tomorrow!

(Exits)

1-2-5

NEWSBOY

See ya in the funny papers, Mister! Wow, I'm rich!

(Lights fade on NEWSSTAND and lights up on. . .

ACT I

SCENE III

SETTING: The Parlor

AT RISE: DETECTIVE turns the page of
a book he is reading.

R.DETECTIVE

A simple exchange of currency. What clearly began as a \$20 problem became a 30 day solution in the end. The \$20 bill went from the businessman's pocket into the bank account of the Newsboy. . .or did it?

(Lights fade on PARLOR and up on. . .

ACT I

SCENE IV

SETTING: The Bank

AT RISE: TELLER is behind counter.
HOUSEKEEPER finishes
transaction and exits.
MOTHER and CHILD step
up to bank window.

TELLER

May I help you?

MOTHER

Yes, I'd like to deposit \$100.

TELLER

All right.

CHILD

Mommy, can I have some candy?

MOTHER

(Ignores the CHILD)

What does that make my balance?

CHILD

Mommy. I want some of that candy.

(Points across stage. Enter ROBBER. Dressed in mask. Nervous. OBVIOUS)

TELLER

That comes to one thousand five hundred dollars!

MOTHER

Really!

CHILD

Mommy, that man is dressed funny.

MOTHER

Now now, honey. Now, I need a few traveler's checks. Can I get those here?

TELLER

You most certainly can. How many do you need?

(ROBBER is sneaking, sneaking. Notices CHILD is watching. Tries to get CHILD to look away)

CHILD

Mommy, that man is talking to me.

MOTHER

NOT NOW!

(To TELLER)

About five hundred dollars.

TELLER

Can do. If you'll just fill out these forms. . .

(ROBBER comes up behind CHILD)

CHILD

MOMMY!

(ROBBER puts his fingers to his lips to shush CHILD)

CHILD

(Whispers)

Mommy. . .

ROBBER

This is a hold-up!

MOTHER

(Ignoring the ROBBER)

Where do I sign?

ROBBER

I said, put your hands up and give me the money!

TELLER

(Ignoring the ROBBER)

On the top and bottom lines.

ROBBER

THIS IS A STICK-UP!

CHILD

He has a gun, Mommy!

MOTHER

No gum, honey. You'll spoil your lunch.

(To TELLER)

Maybe another hundred.

ROBBER

Isn't anybody listening?

CHILD

I am. . .

(Enter NEWSBOY, proud of his \$20 bill)

ROBBER

HEY!!!!!!

(EVERYBODY looks at him)

DOESN'T ANYBODY HAVE ANY MONEY?

NEWSBOY

I've got \$20.

ROBBER

(Takes \$20 bill and exits)

Thank you!

(NEWSBOY, MOTHER, CHILD and TELLER talk at once)

NEWSBOY

Hey! Give me my money!

MOTHER

Who WAS that masked man?

TELLER

Well, I never!

CHILD

(Crying)

MOMMY!

(Lights fade on BANK and up on . . .

ACT I

SCENE V

SETTING:

The Parlor

AT RISE:

DETECTIVE turns another page.

DETECTIVE

Never put too much stock in money. Or too much money in stocks, for that matter. . . So you see that wealth can be fleeting. Our little \$20 bill has already seen the streets of downtown Manhattan and the inside of a bank. I wonder where it will travel next? Snodgrass, do we have any pie?

(From offstage)

BUTLER

I'll look in the fridge, sir.

(Lights fade on PARLOR and up on . . .

PLAY CONTINUES ...