



## **Thrilling Tales, A Storytime for Grownups presents: “A Jury of Her Peers” by Susan Glaspell**

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[00:00:40] Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to Thrilling Tales Seattle Public Libraries, Storytime for Grownups, Thrilling Tales generally happens the first and third Monday of every month. My name is David. I'm a librarian here. I work in the Reader Services Department up on the third floor. We have one story today and it's a classic story. It was first created as a one act play back in 1916 and then was rewritten as a story. And the writer's name is Susan Glaspell.

[00:01:15] And the title of the story is “A Jury of Her Peers”. When Martha Hale opened the storm door and got a cut of the north wind, she ran back for her big woollen scarf as she hurriedly wound that round her head and her eye made a scandalized sweep of her kitchen. It was no ordinary thing that called her away. It was probably further from ordinary than anything that had ever happened in Dixon County. But what her I took in was that her kitchen was in no shape for leaving her bread already, for mixing half the flour sifted and half unassisted. She hated to see things half done, but she had been at that when the team from town stopped to get Mr. Hale. And then the sheriff came running in to say his wife wished Mrs. Hale would come to adding with a grin, that he guessed she was getting scary and wanted another woman along. So she dropped everything right where it was. Martha now came her husband's impatient voice. Don't keep folks waiting out here in the cold. She again opened the storm door and this time joined the three men and the one woman waiting for her in the big two seated buggy. After she had the robes tucked around her, she took another look at the woman who sat beside her on the back seat.

[00:02:38] She had met Mrs. Peters the year before. At the county fair. And the things she remembered about her was that she didn't seem like a sheriff's wife. She was small and thin and didn't have a strong voice. Mrs. Gorman, sheriff's wife, before Gorman went out and Peters came in, had a voice that somehow seemed to be backing up the law with every word. But if Mrs. Peters didn't look like a sheriff's wife. Peters made it up in looking like a sheriff. He was to adopt the kind of man who could get himself elected sheriff. A heavy man with a big voice who was particularly genial with

the law abiding, as if to make it plain that he knew the difference between criminals and non-criminals.

[00:03:22] And right there, it came into Mrs. Hale's mind with a stab that this man, who was so pleasant and lively with all of them, was going to the rights now as a sheriff. How the county is not very pleasant this time of year.

[00:03:39] Mrs. Peters at last ventured as if she felt they ought to be talking as well as the man. Mrs. Hale scarcely finished her reply, for they had gone up a little hill and could see the right place now, and seeing it did not make her feel like talking. It looked very lonesome. This cold March morning, it had always been a lonesome looking place. It was down in a hollow, and the poplar trees around it were lonesome looking trees.

[00:04:04] The men were looking at it and talking about what had happened. The county attorney was bending to one side of the buggy and kept looking steadily at the place as they drew up to it. I'm glad you came with me, Mrs. Peters said nervously as the two women were about to follow the men in through the kitchen door.

[00:04:23] Even after she had her foot on the doorstep, her hand on the knob, Martha Hale had a moment of feeling that she could not cross the threshold. And the reason it seems she couldn't cross it now was simply because she hadn't crossed it before. Time and time again it had been in her mind. I ought to go over and see Mini Foster still. She thought of her as Mini Foster, though for twenty years she had been Mrs. Wright.

[00:04:47] And then there was always something to do, and many Foster would go from her mind.

[00:04:52] But now she could come.

[00:04:55] The men went over to the stove. The women stood close together by the door. Young Henderson, the county attorney, turned around and said, Come up to the fire, ladies. Mrs. Peters took a step forward and then stopped.

[00:05:08] I'm not cold, she said. And so the two women stood by the door at first, not even so much as looking around the kitchen.

[00:05:18] The men talked for a minute about what a good thing it was that the sheriff had sent his deputy out that morning to make a fire for them. And then Sheriff Peters stepped back from the stove, unbuttoned his outer coat, and leaned his hands on the kitchen table in a way that seemed to mark the beginning of official business. Now, Mr. Hale, he said, in a sort of semi-official voice, before we move things around, you tell Mr. Henderson just what it was you saw when you came here yesterday morning.

[00:05:47] The county attorney was looking around the kitchen, by the way, he said. Has anything been moved? He turned to the sheriff. Things just as you left them yesterday. Peters looked from cupboard to sink from that to a small worn rocker, a little to one side of the kitchen table. It's just the same. Somebody should have been left here yesterday, said the county attorney yesterday, returned the sheriff with a little gesture, as if yesterday had been more than he could bear to think of.

[00:06:15] When I had to send Frank to Morris Center for that man who went crazy. Let me tell you why I had my hands full yesterday. I knew you could get back from Omaha by today, George, and as long as I went over everything here myself.

[00:06:28] Well, Mr. Hale, said the county attorney, in a way of letting what was past and gone. Go tell just what happened when you came here yesterday morning.

[00:06:39] Mrs. Hale, still leaning against the door, had that sinking feeling of the mother, whose child is about to speak of peace. Lewis often wandered along and got things mixed up in a story she hoped he would tell this straight and plain and not say unnecessary things that would just make things harder for many foster.

[00:07:00] He didn't begin at once, and she noticed that he looked queer, as if standing in that kitchen and having to tell what he had seen there yesterday morning made him almost sick.

[00:07:10] Yes, Mr. Ham, the county attorney, reminded Harry and I started the town with a load of potatoes.

[00:07:18] Mrs. Hale's husband began. Harry was Mrs. Hill's oldest boy.

[00:07:22] We come along this road.

[00:07:24] Hale was going on with a motion of his hand to the road over which they had just come.

[00:07:29] And as we got inside of the house, I says to Harry, I here to see if I can get John Wright to take a telephone. You see, he explained to Henderson, unless we can get somebody to go in with me, they won't come out to this branch road except for a price I can't pay. I spoke to write about it once before, but he put me off saying folks talked too much anyway, and all he asked was peace and quiet. Well, I guess you know about how much he talked himself. But I thought maybe if I went to the house and talked about it before his wife and said all the women folks like the telephone's that in this lonesome stretch of road, who'd be a good thing? Well, well, I said to Harry that that was what I was going to say, although I said at the same time that I didn't know is what his wife wanted made much difference to John.

[00:08:20] Now, there he was saying things he didn't need to say.

[00:08:24] Mrs. Hale tried to catch her husband's eye, but fortunately, the county attorney interrupted with, well, let's talk about that a little later, Mr. Hale. I do want to talk about that, but I'm anxious now to get along to just what happened when you got here.

[00:08:37] When he began this time, it was very deliberately and carefully.

[00:08:41] Well, I didn't see or hear anything. I knocked at the door. Still, it was all quiet inside. I knew they must be up. That was past eight o'clock. So I knocked again louder than I thought. I heard somebody say, come in. I wasn't sure. I'm not sure yet. But I opened the door.

[00:08:59] This door jerking a hand toward the door by which the two women stood. And there in that rocker pointing to it. SAT Mrs. Wright. Everyone in the kitchen looked at the rocker. It came into Mrs. Hale's mind that the rocker didn't look in the least like mini foster, the mini foster of 20 years before it was dingy red with wooden rungs up the back and the middle rung was gone and the chair sagged to one side. How did she look? The county attorney was inquiring. Well, Ted Hale, she looked queer. I you mean queer, she as he asked it. He took out a notebook and pencil. Mrs. Hale did not like the sight of that pencil. She kept her eyes fixed on her husband, as if to keep him from saying unnecessary things that would go into that notebook and make trouble. Hale did speak guardedly, as if the pencil that affected him too well, as if she didn't know what she was going to do next, and kind of done up. How did she seem to feel about your coming? Well, I don't think she minded one way or the other. She didn't pay much attention. I said, how do Mrs. Right. It's cold, ain't it? And she said, is it? Went on pleating at her apron. Well, I was surprised she didn't ask me to come up to the stove or to sit down. But you just sat there, not even looking at me. So I said, I want to see John. And then she laughed. I guess you would call it a laugh.

[00:10:37] I thought Harry had a team outside, so I said a little sharp. Can I see John?

[00:10:42] No, says she kind of doesn't like Amy Holmes as I. And then she looked at me. Yes. Is she? He's home. Well, then why can't I see him? I asked her out of patients with her now. Cause he's dead. Say she just as quiet and dull and fell a pleating. Or Aprin dances like you do when you can't take in what you've heard. She just nodded her head, not getting a bit excited, but rocking back and forth. Well, where is he? Says I. Not knowing what to say. She just pointed upstairs like this, pointing to the room above.

[00:11:26] I got up with the idea going up there myself. By this time I didn't know what to do. I walked from here to there. And then I said, Well, what did he die of?

[00:11:37] He died of a rope around his neck. Says she. And just went on pleat in her apron. Hale stopped speaking and stood staring at the rocker as if he were still seeing the woman who had sat there the morning before. Nobody spoke. It was as if everyone were seeing the woman who had sat there the morning before. And what did you do then? The county attorney at last broke the silence, Well, I went out, called Harry, I thought I might need help. I got Harry and and we went upstairs and his voice fell to almost a whisper. And here he was lying over that way. I think I'd rather have you go

into that upstairs. The county attorney interrupted. Well, you can point it all out just to go on now with the rest of the story. Well, my first job was to get that rope off it. Look, he stopped his face twitching, but Harry, he went up to him and he said, no, he's dead. All right. And we better not touch anything. So we went downstairs and she was still sitting that same way. Has anybody been notified? I asked. No, said she, unconcerned. Who? Who did this? Mrs. Right, said Harry. He said it business-like. And she stopped pleating at her apron. I don't know. She says. You don't know, says Harry. Weren't you sleeping in the bed with him? Yes, she. But I was on the inside. Somebody slipped a rope around his neck and strangled him and you didn't wake up, says Harry. I didn't wake up said she after him. Well, we might have looked as if we didn't see how that could be for after a minute, she said. I sleep sound.

[00:13:23] Harry was going to ask her more questions, but I said maybe that weren't our business, maybe we ought to let her tell her story first to the coroner or the sheriff. So Harry went as fast as he could over the high road. The river's place where there's a telephone.

[00:13:35] And what did she do when she knew you had gone for the Cordner? The attorney got his pencil in his hand already for writing.

[00:13:42] Well, she moved from that chair to this one over here. Heyo pointed to a small chair in the corner, and just sat there with her hands held together and looking down.

[00:13:52] I got a feeling that I ought to make some conversation, and so I said I'd come to see if John wants to put in a telephone. And at that she started to laugh.

[00:14:02] And then she stopped and looked at me scared. At the sound of a moving pencil, the man who was telling the story looked up what I. I don't know. Maybe it wasn't scared, he hastened. I wouldn't like to say it was. Soon Harry got back and then Dr. Lloyd come. And you, Mr. Peters. So I guess that's all I know that you don't. And he said the last with relief, and moved a little as if relaxing. Everyone moved a little. The county attorney walked toward the stair door and I guess we'll go upstairs first, then out to the barn and around there. He paused and looked around the kitchen. You're convinced there was nothing important here? He asked the sheriff. Nothing that would point to any motive. The sheriff looked all around as if to re convince himself. Nothing here but kitchen things, he said with a little laugh. For the insignificance of kitchen things. The county attorney was looking at the cupboard, a peculiar, ungainly structure, as if it's queerness attracted Amy, got a chair and opened the upper part and looked in. After a moment, he drew his hand to a sticky. Oh, here's a nice mess, he said resentfully. The two women had drawn nearer, and now the sheriff's wife spoke. Oh, her fruit, she said, looking to Mrs. Hale for sympathetic understanding. She turned back to the county attorney and explained she worried about it when it turned so cold last night. She said the fire would go out in, her jars might burst. Mrs. Peters husband broke into a laugh.

[00:15:37] Oh, can you beat the woman? Hell for murder and worrying about her preserves.

[00:15:45] The young attorney set his lips. And I guess before we're through with her, she may have something more serious than preserves to worry about. Oh, well, said Mrs. Hale's husband with good natured superiority, women are used to worrying over trifles.

[00:16:01] The two women moved a little closer together. Neither of them spoke. The county attorneys seemed suddenly to remember his manners and think of his future.

[00:16:10] And yet, said he, with the gallantry of a young politician. For all their worries were, would we be without the ladies?

[00:16:19] The women did not speak, did not unbend. He went to the sink and began washing his hands. He turned to wipe them on the roller towel, whirled it for a cleaner place. Dirty towels. Not much of a housekeeper, would you say, ladies?

[00:16:33] He kicked his foot against some dirty pans under the sink. There's a great deal of work to be done on a farm, said Mrs. Hailes stiffly.

[00:16:42] Well, to be sure. And yet, with a little bowed to her. I know there are some Dickson County farm houses that do not have such roller towels.

[00:16:50] He gave it a pull to expose its full length again. Those towns get dirty awful quick. Men's hands aren't always as clean as they might be.

[00:17:00] Loyal to your sex lasi. He laughed. He stopped and gave her a keen look. But you and Mrs. Wright were neighbors. I suppose you were friends to Martha. Hale shook her head. I've seen little enough of her in late years. I've not been in this house more than a year. And why was that? You didn't like her? Well, I liked her well enough, she replied with Spirit. Farmer's wives have their hands full, Mr. Henderson. And then she looked around the kitchen. Yes. He encouraged, and never seemed a very cheerful place, said she, more to herself than to him. No, he agreed. I don't think one could call it cheerful. I shouldn't shouldn't say that she had the home making instinct. Well, I don't know his right had either, she muttered. You mean they didn't get on very well? He was quick to ask. Oh, no, I don't mean anything, she answered with decision, as she turned a little away from them, she added. But I don't. Don't think a place would be any cheerful, or for John writes being in it. I'd like to talk with you about that a little later, Mrs. Hale. He said, I'm anxious to get the lay of things upstairs now. He moved toward the stair door, followed by the two men.

[00:18:15] I suppose anything Mrs. Peters does will be all right? The sheriff inquired. G was to take some clothes for an hour. A few little things. We were in such a hurry.

[00:18:23] Yesterday, the county attorney looked at the two women whom they were leaving alone there among the kitchen things. Yes, Mrs. Peters, he said, his glance resting on the woman who was not Mrs. Peters, the big farmer woman who stood behind the sheriff's wife.



[00:18:40] Of course, Mrs. Peters is one of us. He said, in a manner of entrusting responsibility. And keep your eye out. Mrs. Peters, for anything that might be of use. No telling you women might come upon a clue to a motive. And that's the thing we need. Mr. Hale rubbed his face after a fashion of a show man getting ready for a pleasantry, but would the women know a clue if they did come up on it? He said. And having delivered himself of this, he followed the others through the stair door. The women sat motionless and silent, listening to the footsteps first upon the stairs and then in the room above them.

[00:19:24] Then, as if releasing herself from something strange, Mrs. Hale stood and began to arrange the dirty pans under the sink, which the county attorney's disdainful push of the foot had deranged.

[00:19:35] I'd hate to have men coming into my kitchen, she said testily, snooping around and criticizing.

[00:19:41] When, of course, it's no more than their duty, said the sheriff's wife in her manner of timid acquiescence duties. All right. Seems mean to talk about it for not having things slicked up when she had to come away in such a hurry. She looked around the kitchen. Certainly it was not slicked up. Her eye was held by a bucket of sugar on a low shelf. The cover was off the wooden bucket, and beside it was a paper bag half full. Mrs. Hale moved toward it. She was putting this in here. She said to herself slowly. She thought of the flower in her kitchen at home. Half sifted, half not sifted. She had been interrupted, had left things. Half done what it interrupted many foster why had the work been left? Half done? She made a move as if to finish it unfinished. Things always bothered her. And then she glanced around and saw that Mrs. Peters was watching her.

[00:20:39] It's a shame about the fruit, she said, and walked toward the cupboard that the county attorney had opened and got on a chair murmuring, I wonder if it's all gone. It was a sorry enough looking site, but here's one. That's all right. She said at last, and she held it toward the light. All this is cherries, too. She looked again. I declare I believe that's the only one with a sigh. She got down from the chair and went to the sink and wiped off the bottle. Now she'll feel awful bad after all her hard work in the hot weather. Remember the afternoon I put my cherries that of my cherries last summer? She set the bottle on the table, and with another sigh, started to sit down in the rocker.

[00:21:18] But she did not sit down. Something kept her from sitting down in that chair. She straightened, stepped back, and half turned away, and stood looking at it, seeing the woman who sat there, Peten, at her apron. The thin voice of the sheriff's wife broke in upon her. I must be getting those things from the front room closet. She opened the door into the other room, started in and stepped back. Are you coming with me, Mrs. Hale? She asked nervously. You you could help me get them.

[00:21:49] They were soon back. The stark coldness of that shut up room was not a thing to linger in mind, said Mrs. Peters, dropping the things on the table and hurrying to the stove. Mrs. Hale stood examining the clothes. The women who was being detained in towns had said that she wanted.

Wright was close. She exclaimed, holding up a shabby black skirt that bore the marks of much making over. I think maybe that's why she kept so much to herself. You don't enjoy things when you feel shabby. She used to wear pretty clothes and be lively when she was Mini Foster, one of the town girls singing in the choir.

[00:22:28] But that was 20 years ago. With a carefulness in which there was something tender, she folded the shabby clothes and piled them at one corner of the table. She looked at Mrs. Peters and there was something in the other woman's look that irritated her. She don't care. She said to herself. Much difference it makes to her whether Minnie Foster has pretty clothes when she was a girl. Then she looked again and she wasn't so sure.

[00:22:56] In fact, she hadn't at any time been perfectly sure about Mrs. Peters. She had that shrinking manner, and yet her eyes looked as if they could see a long way into things.

[00:23:09] This was all you was to take in? Asked Mrs. Hale. No, said the sheriff's wife. She said she wanted an apron. Funny thing to want. She ventured in her nervous little way. There's not much to get your dirty in jail. Goodness knows. But I suppose just to make her feel a little more natural. If you're used to wearing an apron, she said they were in the bottom drawer of this cover. Oh, yes. Here they are. And then her little shawl that always hung on the stair door. She took the small gray shawl from behind the door, leading upstairs and stood a minute looking at it. Suddenly, Mrs. Hale took a quick step toward the other woman.

[00:23:46] Mrs. Peters. Yes, Mrs. Ham.

[00:23:50] Do you think she did it? A frightened block blurred the other things in Mrs. Peters eyes were hacked. No, she said in a voice that seemed to shrink away from the subject. Well, I don't think she did. Affirmed Mrs. Hale stoutly, asking for an apron and her little shawl worrying about a fruit. Mr. Peters says footsteps were heard in the room above, she stopped looking up and then went on in a lowered voice. Mr. Peters says it looks bad for her. Mr. Henderson is awful sarcastic in a speech, and he's gonna make fun of her saying that she didn't wake up. For the moment, Mrs. Hale had no answer. Then I guess John Wright didn't wake up when they were slipping that rope under his neck.

[00:24:42] She muttered. No. It's strange, breathed. Mrs. Peters.

[00:24:48] They think it was such a funny way to kill a man. She began to laugh, as if the sound of the laugh abruptly stopped. That's just what Mr. Hale said. Said Mrs. Hale in a resolute plea, natural voice. It was a gun in the house. He says that's what they can't understand. Mr Henderson said coming out that what was needed for the case was a motive, something to show anger or a sudden feeling. Well, I don't see any signs of anger around here, said Mrs here at home. She stopped. It was as if her mind tripped on something. Her eye was caught by a dish towel in the middle of the kitchen table. Slowly she moved toward the table. One half of it was wiped clean, the other half messy. Her eyes made a slow, almost unwilling turn to the bucket of sugar and half empty bag.



[00:25:43] Things begun and not finished.

[00:25:48] After a moment, she stepped back and said in that manner of releasing herself, I wonder how they're finding things upstairs. I hope she had a little more spruced up up there.

[00:25:58] You know, she paused and feeling gathered seems kind of sneaking, locking her up in town and coming out here to get her house to turn against her. Well, but Mrs. Hale said the sheriff's wife, the law is the law. And I suppose it is, answered Mrs. Hale shortly. She turned to the stove, saying something about that fire not being much to brag of.

[00:26:24] She worked with it a minute, and when she straightened up, she said aggressively, Why don't you know the law is the law, and a bad stove is a bad stove.

[00:26:31] How do you like to cook oddness pointing with a poker to the broken lining. The thought of many foster trying to bake in that oven year after year and the thought of her never going to see many foster.

[00:26:46] She was startled by hearing Mrs. Peters say a person gets discouraged and loses heart.

[00:26:55] The sheriff's wife had looked from the stove to the sink to the pail of water, which had been carried in from outside. The two woman women stood there, silent above them the footsteps of the men who were looking for evidence against the woman that had worked in that kitchen. That look of seeing into things, of seeing through a thing to something else was in the eyes of the sheriff's wife. Now, when Mrs. Hale next spoke to her, it was gently better loosen up your things. Mrs. Peters will not feel them when we go out. Mrs. Peters went to the back of the room to hang up the fur. Tippet that she was wearing. A moment later she exclaimed when she was piecing a quilt. And held up a large sewing basket piled high with quilt pieces. Mrs. Hale spread some of the blocks on the table. It's a log cabin pattern. She said, putting several of them together.

[00:27:47] Oh, pretty, isn't it? They were so engaged with the quilt that they did not hear the footsteps on the stairs just as the stair door opened. Mrs. Hale was saying, do you suppose she was going to quilt it or just not it?

[00:28:02] The sheriff threw up his hands. I wonder whether she was going to quilted or just not it.

[00:28:11] There was a laugh for the ways of women, a warming of hands over the stove.

[00:28:17] And then the county attorney said briskly, Well, let's go right to the barn and get that cleared up. I don't see as there's anything so strange.

[00:28:27] Mrs. Hale said resentfully after the outside door had closed on, the three men are taking up our time with little things. While there, we're waiting for them to get the evidence. I don't see if there's anything to laugh about.

[00:28:40] Of course, they've got awful important things on their minds, said the sheriff's wife apologetically. They returned to an inspection of the blocks for the quilt. Mrs. Hale was looking at the fine, even sewing, and preoccupied with thoughts of the woman who had done that sewing when she heard the sheriff's wife say in a queer tone, Why? Look at this one. She turned to take the block, held out to her the sewing, said Mrs. Peters, in a troubled way. All the rest of them have been so nice and even. But this one looks as if she didn't know what she was about. Their eyes met. Something flashed to life passed between them. And then, as if with an effort, they seemed to pull away from each other a moment, Mrs. Hayles sat there, her hands folded over that sewing, which was so unlike all the rest of the sewing. And then she had pulled a knot and drawn the threads. Oh, what are you doing, Mrs. Hale? Asked the sheriff's wife, startled. I'll just pulling out a stitch or two. That's not so very good, said Mrs. Hale mildly. Well, I don't think we ought to touch things, Mrs. Peters said a little helplessly. Now I'll just finish up this and, answered Mrs. Hale. Still, in that mild matter-of-fact fashion, she threaded a needle and started to replace bad sewing with good. For a little while she sewed in silence, and then in that thin, timid voice she heard. Mrs. Hale.

[00:30:14] He asked Mrs. Peters.

[00:30:16] What do you suppose that she was so nervous about? I don't know, said Mrs. Hale, as if dismissing a thing.

[00:30:25] Not important enough to spend much time on. I don't know of issues. She was nervous. I so awful queer sometimes when I'm just tired.

[00:30:33] She cut a Fred, and out of the corner of her I looked up at Mrs. Peters. The small, lean face of the sheriff's wife seemed to have tightened up. Her eyes had that look of peering into something. But the next moment she moved and said in her thin, indecisive way, I must get these clothes wrapped. They may be through sooner than we think. I wonder where I could find a piece of paper and string in that cupboard. Maybe, suggested Mrs. Hale after a glance around. One piece of the crazy sewing remained unwrapped. Mrs. Peters back turned Martha Hale now scrutinized that piece, compared it with the dainty, accurate sewing of the other blocks. The difference was startling. Holding this block made her feel queer, as if the distracted thoughts of the woman who had perhaps turned to it to try to quiet herself were communicating themselves to her. Mrs. Peters voice roused her. Here's a bird cage, she said. Did she have a bird? Mrs. Hale. Why? I don't know whether she did or not. She turned to look at the cage Mrs. Peters was holding up. I've not been here in so long. She sighed. There was a man round last year selling canary's cheap, but I don't know if she took one. Maybe she did. She used to sing real pretty herself. Mrs. Peters looked around the kitchen. Seems kind of funny to think of a bird here. She half laughed, an attempt to put up a barrier. She must have had one. Or why would she have a cage? I wonder what happened to it. I suppose maybe the cat got it, suggested Mrs. Hale, resuming her sewing. Well, no, she didn't have a cat. She's got that feeling that some people have about cats being afraid of them when they brought it to our house. Yesterday my cat got into the room and she was real upset and asked me to take it out. My sister Bessie was

like that, laughed Mrs. Hale. The sheriff's wife did not reply. The silence made Mrs. Hale turn around. Mrs. Peters was examining the bird cage.

[00:32:41] Look at this door, she said slowly, it's broke. One hand has been pulled apart. Mrs. Hale came nearer. It looks as if someone must have been rough with it.

[00:32:56] Again, their eyes met, startled, questioning, apprehensive for a moment. Neither spoke nor stirred. Then Mrs. Hale turning away, said Russki. They didn't find any evidence. I wish they'd be about it. I don't like this place. I'm awful glad you came with me, Mrs. Hale. Mrs. Peters put the birdcage on the table and sat down. It would be lonesome for me sitting here alone. Yes, it would, wouldn't it? Agreed Mrs. Hale, a certain determined naturalness in her voice. She picked up the sewing, but now it dropped in her lap, and she murmured in a different voice. But I tell you what. I do wish, Mrs. Peters. I wish that I had come over sometimes when she was here. I wish I had. Well, but of course, you were awfully busy, Mrs. Hale, your house and and your children. I could have come, retorted Mrs. Hale shortly. I stayed away because it weren't cheerful. And that's why I ought to have come. I. She looked around. I've never liked this place. Maybe it's down in a hollow and you don't see the road because I don't know what it is, but it's a lonesome place, and it always was. I wish I'd come over to see Minnie Foster sometimes. I can see now. And she did not put it into words. Well, you mustn't reproach yourself, counseled Mrs.

[00:34:15] Peters. Somehow we just don't see how it is with other folks until something comes up. Not having children makes less work, mused Mrs. Hale after a silence. But it makes a quiet house and right out to work all day and no company when he did come in. Did you know John right? Mr. Peters? Well, not to know him. I've seen him in town. They say he was a good man. Yeah. Good, conceded John, writes Neighbor grimly. He didn't drink, and he kept his word as well as most, I guess, and paid his debts. But he was a hard man, Mrs. Peters, just to pass the time of day with him. She stopped and shivered a little like a raw wind. It gets to the bone. Her eye fell upon the cage on the table before her, and she added almost bitterly. I should think she would've wanted a bird. Suddenly she leaned forward, looking intently at the cage. What do you suppose went wrong with it? I don't know, returned Mrs. Peters, unless it got sick and died. But after she said it, she reached over and swung the broken door. Both women watched it as if somehow held by it. You didn't know her? Mrs. Hale asked a gentler note in her voice. Not till they brought her in yesterday, said the sheriff's wife.

[00:35:38] She, you know, come to think of it, she was kind of like a bird herself, real sweet and pretty, but kind of timid and fluttery. How she did change that held her for a long time.

[00:35:55] Finally, as if struck with a happy thought and relieved to get back to everyday things, she exclaimed. I tell you what, Miss Peters, why don't you take that quilt in with you? It might take up her mind. Well, I think that's a real nice idea. Mrs. Hale agreed. The sheriff's wife, as if she, too, were glad to come into the atmosphere of a simple kindness. It couldn't possibly be any objection to that, could there? Now just what will I take? I wonder if her patches are in here and to her things. They turned to the sewing basket. Well, here's some read, said Mrs. Hale, bringing out a roll of cloth underneath.

That was a box. Oh, here may be her sister. Your scissors are in here and her things. And she held it up. What a pretty box, a warrant, it was something that she had a long time ago when she was a girl.

[00:36:47] She held it in her hand a moment and then with a little sigh, opened it. Instantly, her hand went to her nose. Mrs. Peters drew nearer and then turned away.

[00:37:03] There's something wrapped up in this piece of silk, faltered. Mrs. Hale. This isn't her scissors, said Mrs. Peters in a shrinking voice. Her hand not steady. Mrs. Hale raised the piece of silk. Oh, Mrs. Peters! She cried.

[00:37:18] It's Mrs. Peters, bent closer. It's the bird, she whispered.

[00:37:24] But Mrs. Peters cried. Mrs. Hale, look at it at its neck. Look at his neck. It's all the other side, too. She held the box away from her. The sheriff's wife again bent closer.

[00:37:41] Somebody wrung its neck, said she, in a voice that was slow and deep.

[00:37:48] Then again, the eyes of the two women met, this time clung together in the look of dawning comprehension of growing horror. Mrs. Peters looked from the dead bird to the broken door of the cage. Again, their eyes met, and just then there was a sound at the outside door.

[00:38:04] Mrs. Hale slipped the box under the quilt pieces in the basket, and sank again into the chair. Before it, Mrs. Peters stood holding to the table. The county attorney and the sheriff came in from the outside. Well, ladies, said the county attorney. As one turning from serious things to little pleasantries, have you decided whether she was going to quilt it or not at. We think began the sheriff's wife in a flurried voice that she was going to. Not it. He was too preoccupied to notice the change that came into her voice on that last. Oh, that's very interesting, I'm sure. He said tolerantly. He caught sight of the bird cage. Is the bird flown? We think the cat got it! Said Mrs. Heyo in a voice.

[00:38:55] Curiously, even he was walking up and down, as if thinking something out. Is there a cat? He said absently. Mrs. Hale shot a look up at the sheriff's wife. Well, not now, said Mrs. Peters.

[00:39:08] They're superstitious, you know. They leave. She sank into her chair.

[00:39:13] The county attorney did not heed her. No. No sign at all of anyone having come in from the outside. He said to Peters, in the manner of continuing an interrupted conversation. Their own rope. Let's go upstairs again and go over it piece by piece.

[00:39:26] It would have to have been someone who just knew that the stair door closed behind them and their voices were lost.

[00:39:37] The two women sat motionless, not looking at each other, but as if peering into something and at the same time holding back when they spoke. Now it was as if they were both afraid of what

they were saying, but as if they could not help saying it. She liked the bird, said Martha Hale Low. And slowly she was gonna bury it in that pretty box.

[00:40:02] When I was a girl, said Mrs. Peters under her breath, my kitten. It was a boy, took a hatchet, and before my eyes before I could get there, she covered her face for an instant. If they hadn't held me back, I would. She caught herself, looked upstairs where footsteps were heard and finished, weakly hurt him.

[00:40:28] Then they sat without speaking or moving.

[00:40:31] I wonder how it would seem, Mrs. Hale, I blast began as if feeling her way over strange ground. Never to have any children around her eyes made a slow sweep of the kitchen, as if seeing what that kitchen had meant through all the years. No. All right. Wouldn't like the bird, she said. After that, a thing that sang, she used to sing. He killed that, too. Her voice tightened. Mrs. Peters moved uneasily. Of course, we don't know who killed the bird.

[00:40:58] I knew John Wright was Mrs. Hale's answer. It was an awful thing done in this house that night, Mrs. Hale said the sheriff's wife killing a man while he slept, slipping a thing around his neck like that, and choking the life out of him. Mrs. Hale's hand went out to the bird cage his neck. Choke the life out of him. We don't know who killed him. Whispered Mrs. Peters while we talked. No.

[00:41:29] Mrs. Hale was not moved if there had been years and years of nothing. And then a bird to sing to you. It would be awful. Still, after that bird was still. It was as if something within her, not herself had spoken, as if it found in Mrs. Peters something that she did not know as herself. I know what stillness is, she said in a queer, monotonous voice when we homesteaded in Dakota. After my first baby died. And he was 2 years old. And with me, no other than. Mrs. Hale stirred. How soon do you suppose they'll be through looking for evidence? I know what stillness is, repeated Mrs. Peters, in just that same way. And then she, too, pulled back. The law has got to punish crime. Mrs. Hale, she said in her type that away.

[00:42:29] I wish that you'd seen many Foster was the answer when she wore a white dress with blue ribbons and stood up there in the choir and sang. The picture of that girl, the fact that she had lived. Neighbor to that girl for 20 years and it let her die for lack of life was suddenly more than she could bear.

[00:42:48] I wish that I had come over once in a while. She cried. That was a crime. That was a crime. Who's going to punish that?

[00:42:56] We mustn't take on, said Mrs. Peters, with a frightened look toward the stairs. I might have known that she needed help.

[00:43:03] I tell you it's clear, Mrs. Peters. We lived close together. We lived far apart. We all go through the same things. It's just a different kind of the same thing. If it weren't, why would you and I

understand. Why do we know what we know this minute? She dashed her hand across her eyes and then seeing the jar of fruit on the table, she reached for it and choked out. If I was you, I would tell her that fruit was. Tell her it's all right. All of it. Here, take this and improve your. I mean, she she may never know whether it was broke or not.

[00:43:40] She turned away, Mrs. Peters reached out for the bottle of fruit as if she were glad to take it, as if touching a familiar thing, having something to do could keep her from something else. She got up, looked about for something to wrap the fruit in, took a petticoat from the pile of clothes that she had brought from the front room, and nervously started winding that round bottle.

[00:43:59] My. She began in a high false voice. That's a good thing that the men couldn't hear us getting all stirred up over a little thing like a dead canary.

[00:44:08] She hurried over that, as if that could have anything to do with. Well, why wouldn't they laugh? Footsteps were heard on the stairs. Maybe they would, muttered Mrs. Hale. Maybe they wouldn't know. Peters, said the county attorney incisively. It's all perfectly clear, except her reason for doing it.

[00:44:29] But you know juries when it comes to women. If there was some definite thing, something to show, something to make a story about, a thing that would connect up with the clumsy way of doing it in a covert way.

[00:44:41] Mrs. Hale looked at Mrs. Peters. Mrs. Peters was looking at her quickly.

[00:44:46] They looked away from each other. The outer door opened and Mr. Hale came in. I got the team around now, he said. Pretty cold out there. I'm going to stay here awhile by myself. The county attorney suddenly announced. You can send Frank out for me, can't you? He asked the sheriff. I want to go over everything. I'm not satisfied that we can't do better again.

[00:45:06] For one brief moment, the two women's eyes found one another. The sheriff came up to the table. Oh, do you want to see what Mrs. Peters was going to take in? The county attorney picked up the apron. He laughed. I guess they're not very dangerous things that the ladies have picked out.

[00:45:25] Mrs. Hale's hand was on the sewing basket in which the box was concealed. She felt that she ought to take her hand off the basket. She did not seem able to. He picked up one of the quilt blocks which she had piled on the cover of the box. Her eyes felt like fire. She had a feeling that if he took up the basket, she would snatch it from him.

[00:45:45] But he did not take it up with another little laugh.

[00:45:48] He turned away saying, no. Mrs. Peters doesn't need supervising, for that matter. A sheriff's wife is married to the law.



[00:45:56] You ever think of that, Mrs. Peters? Mrs. Peters was standing beside the table. Mrs. Hale shot a look up at her, but she could not see her face. Mrs. Peters, it turned away when she spoke. Her voice was muffled. Not just that way, she said. Married to the law, chuckled Mrs. Peters husband, he moved toward the door, into the front room and said to the county attorney, I just want you to come in here a minute, George. We ought to take a look at those windows up windows, said the county attorney, scoffing Lee. We'll be right out, Mr. Hale, said the sheriff to the farmer, who was still waiting by the door. Hale went to look after the horses. The sheriff followed the county attorney into the other room again for one moment. The two women were alone in that kitchen. Martha Hale sprang up, her hands tight together, looking at that other woman with whom it rested. At first she could not see her eyes, for the sheriff's wife had not turned back. Then she turned away at that suggestion of being married to the law. But now Mrs. Hale made her turn back. Her eyes made her turn back slowly, unwillingly. Mrs. Peters turned her head until her eyes met the eyes of the other woman. There was a moment when they held each other in a steady burning look in which there was no evasion nor flinching. And then Martha Hale's eyes pointed the way to the basket in which was hidden. The thing that would make certain the conviction of the other woman. That woman who was not there. And yet who had been there with them all through the hour. For a moment, Mrs. Peters did not move. And then she did it with a rush forward. She threw back the quilt pieces, got the box, tried to put it in her handbag.

[00:47:47] It was too big. Desperately she opened it, started to take the bird out. But there she broke. She could not touch the bird. She stood helpless, foolish.

[00:47:58] There was a sound of a knob turning in the inner door. Martha Hale snatched the box from the sheriff's wife and got it into the pocket of her big coat just as the sheriff and the county attorney came back into the kitchen.

[00:48:12] Now, Henry, said the county attorney facetiously, at least we found out that she was not going to quilted. She was going to have. What was it you called it, ladies?

[00:48:25] Mrs. Hale's hand was against the pocket of her coat.

[00:48:29] We call it, not it.

[00:48:32] Mr. Henderson.

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