

# Defending Insanity

A play in one act

by John Scavone

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**Characters** (in order of appearance)

Andrew Morrison, 40's

Gilbert Grundy, 19

Jack Grundy, 40's, Gilbert's father

Bobby Morrison, 18, Andrew's son

Guard / Police Officer

**Setting:** A prison conference room, containing a table and two chairs, a door with a small window in it. There may or may not be walls; if so, entrances other than the door should be provided for Jack and Bobby, and these should be hidden. Having entered, Jack and Bobby remain on stage until their exits are indicated near the end of the play.

**Time:** The present.

## Defending Insanity

*At rise, Andrew and Gilbert sit opposite each other at the table, on which are Andrew's open briefcase and a digital recorder. He takes occasional notes on a legal pad as they talk. Gilbert's wrists are shackled to a chain that circles his waist. His face and arms show minor cuts and bruises, and a gauze bandage is taped on his forehead. He rubs at the gauze, starts peeling the tape.*

ANDREW

Don't, the bandage needs to stay on to keep the wound clean.

GILBERT

It's itchy.

ANDREW

That means it's healing. The itching will stop soon if you leave it alone.

GILBERT

You sound like my mom.

ANDREW

Most mothers are pretty smart people.

*Andrew fixes the tape. Gilbert starts rubbing the bandage again, Andrew takes his hand away.*

Try thinking about something else instead. Concentrate on what you did that night.

GILBERT

It's hard. Thinking is very- hard.

ANDREW

Would you like something cold to drink? I'll have the guard-

GILBERT

No, not the guard!

ANDREW

Alright, we don't have to call him. I'll go get you a soda from the machine in the recreation room. You can wait here.

GILBERT

I'm not thirsty.

ANDREW

Why don't we start over again, can we do that?

GILBERT

Start over.

ANDREW

You said you remember being at home that night.

GILBERT

Home. I don't know what you mean.

ANDREW

You were at your house, where you live.

GILBERT

Home. No, I don't think I was, I- it's too hard.

*Andrew takes a folder of  
photographs from the briefcase.*

ANDREW

This is a picture of your house. Do you recognize it?

GILBERT

That's my house.

ANDREW

Yes, and you were at home that night, is that right?

GILBERT

Every night, I have to be.

ANDREW

You don't go out sometimes?

GILBERT

To work, to my job.

ANDREW

Your job at the Walmart.

GILBERT

I work there.

ANDREW

During the day you work there. And sometimes do you go out at night? After dinner?

GILBERT

Sometimes I used to, but now I don't.

ANDREW

Even on a Friday or Saturday night, when you don't have to work the next day?

GILBERT

No.

ANDREW

Why not? Don't you have friends you like to spend time with?

JACK

*(entering)*

No! You're still on probation.

GILBERT

They told me probation's over, I'm allowed to go out.

ANDREW

But you don't want to?

JACK

The court's probation is over, mine isn't. I still want you here immediately after work and all night and weekends, until you prove to me that you're ready to go out again.

GILBERT

That's not fair.

ANDREW

What isn't?

JACK

As long as you live in this house, you're under my rules.

GILBERT

Yes, sir.

ANDREW

Yes, what?

JACK

Those no-good bastards you call friends are the ones who got you into trouble in the first place. How am I supposed to face my own friends after what you did?

GILBERT

I don't know, sir. I'm sorry.

ANDREW

Gilbert, what is it?

GILBERT

He- what is what?

ANDREW

Why are you sorry? What are you trying to tell me?

GILBERT

Who are you? Why do you keep asking me questions?

ANDREW

Oh, dear God. My name is Andrew Morrison, I'm from the Public Defender's Office. I'm here to help you.

GILBERT

Why do I need help?

ANDREW

You've been charged with a very serious crime. I explained that to you. Don't you remember?

GILBERT

That's why they're keeping me here? In these clothes, with these chains? What did I do?

ANDREW

Do you not understand the charges against you?

GILBERT  
I don't understand any of this!

ANDREW  
Good, that's good.

GILBERT  
It can't be good!

ANDREW  
No, I'm sorry, that was a poor choice of words. It's not good. I meant that if you can't understand, you can't be put on trial. If you do come to trial, it will help our case.

GILBERT  
Case, that means I'm— something, it means—

ANDREW  
It's okay, you don't have to think about that now.

GILBERT  
It's too hard. Thinking is very—

ANDREW  
Hard. I know it is. Let's just talk about that night, and we'll go very slowly.

GILBERT  
That night, it was night.

ANDREW  
The night of April first.

GILBERT  
April Fools Day.

ANDREW  
April Fools Day, and you were at home.

GILBERT  
I always go home after work.

ANDREW  
Were you there all night?

GILBERT  
Twice I was there.

ANDREW

Twice?

GILBERT

I went out, I wanted to go away. I came back.

ANDREW

I see what you mean. After the police found you, they brought you back to the house.

GILBERT

The police?

ANDREW

Do you remember that?

GILBERT

No.

ANDREW

Let me show you another picture. This is a room in your house. Do you know what room this is?

GILBERT

It looks kind of like— but it's all messed up. My mom never lets anything— she won't like it, she'll be so mad. Then my dad gets mad. Did I mess it up like that?

ANDREW

This was taken right after you— right after something terrible happened. Do you know what happened?

GILBERT

Something. I— did— I—

ANDREW

What? What did you do?

GILBERT

I don't know! I think— I think I was asleep, and I had a dream, like I was there, but not— not there. It got loud, very loud, people screaming at me, like music playing.

ANDREW

Music?

GILBERT

They were screaming at me in music. I don't know. The drums,



bang, bang! I was dreaming.

ANDREW

You were having a nightmare?

GILBERT

A dream. It wasn't scary, I wasn't scared. I was just there, doing what they told me.

ANDREW

Who?

GILBERT

Who?

ANDREW

Who told you?

GILBERT

Told me what?

ANDREW

Who told you to do such a horrible— who told you to do what you did. That night, I mean.

GILBERT

Night, it was night. I remember it was cold, not real cold, not freezing, more like chilly, I felt chilly when I was walking. I was walking, at night.

ANDREW

They said you were running.

GILBERT

Who said?

ANDREW

The police. They found your car stopped on the road, and you were running through the brush along the creek. That's how you got those cuts on your face and arms. You ran away from them.

GILBERT

I don't remember.

ANDREW

You don't remember being arrested?

GILBERT

That's why I'm here? What am I arrested for?

ANDREW

I told you, something very serious.

GILBERT

What? Tell me again, you have to!

ANDREW

You were arrested for first degree murder.

GILBERT

That's wrong, it has to be wrong. I'm a peaceful person, I only want to live and let live. They won't let me, they just won't let me!

ANDREW

Who won't? Your parents?

GILBERT

They don't ever hear it, only I do.

ANDREW

Hear what?

GILBERT

Voices, all the time yammering in my ears, when I try to sleep or eat or watch television or anything.

ANDREW

What do the voices say?

GILBERT

I don't know! Anything, everything, all the time, just yammering, I can't make sense. I want it to make sense. I bang on the walls, I yell at them, but they won't stop.

JACK

Gilbert, take these pills.

GILBERT

I don't want to, they make me not feel good.

ANDREW

The voices?

JACK

They're only sleeping pills, you need to rest. Your mother and I do, too. Take them, or I'll shove them down your throat.

GILBERT

I take them, and I dream, and then the noise slows down, and I can hear it, I understand what they want me to do.

ANDREW

What who wants you to do?

GILBERT

Them, I don't know who.

ANDREW

You heard them tell you to do something that night?

GILBERT

Loud, it was all of a sudden so loud, the drums, bang, bang! And people screaming music at me, screaming at me to do something. So I did— something.

ANDREW

What did you do?

GILBERT

Something, I did something.

ANDREW

Do you remember what?

GILBERT

I walked. No, ran, I had to run away, I couldn't be there.

ANDREW

Why?

GILBERT

Why?

ANDREW

Why couldn't you be there? Why did you run away?

GILBERT

*(starts pacing)*

I can't think with all this— why do you keep asking me?

ANDREW

I'm trying to help you.

BOBBY

*(entering)*

Then please just leave me alone!

ANDREW

I can't, I'm your father.

GILBERT

He doesn't believe me. Both of them don't.

BOBBY

But you don't understand.

ANDREW

Help me!

GILBERT

You never hear it. I keep telling you.

BOBBY

I've told you a hundred times. You won't listen!

ANDREW

I'm listening now, please tell me.

GILBERT

*(grabs the recorder)*

What's this thing for?

ANDREW

Give me that!

GILBERT

Tell me what it is!

ANDREW

A digital recorder.

GILBERT

I know what it is. Why is it here?

ANDREW

I'm only using it so I can review our conversation later.