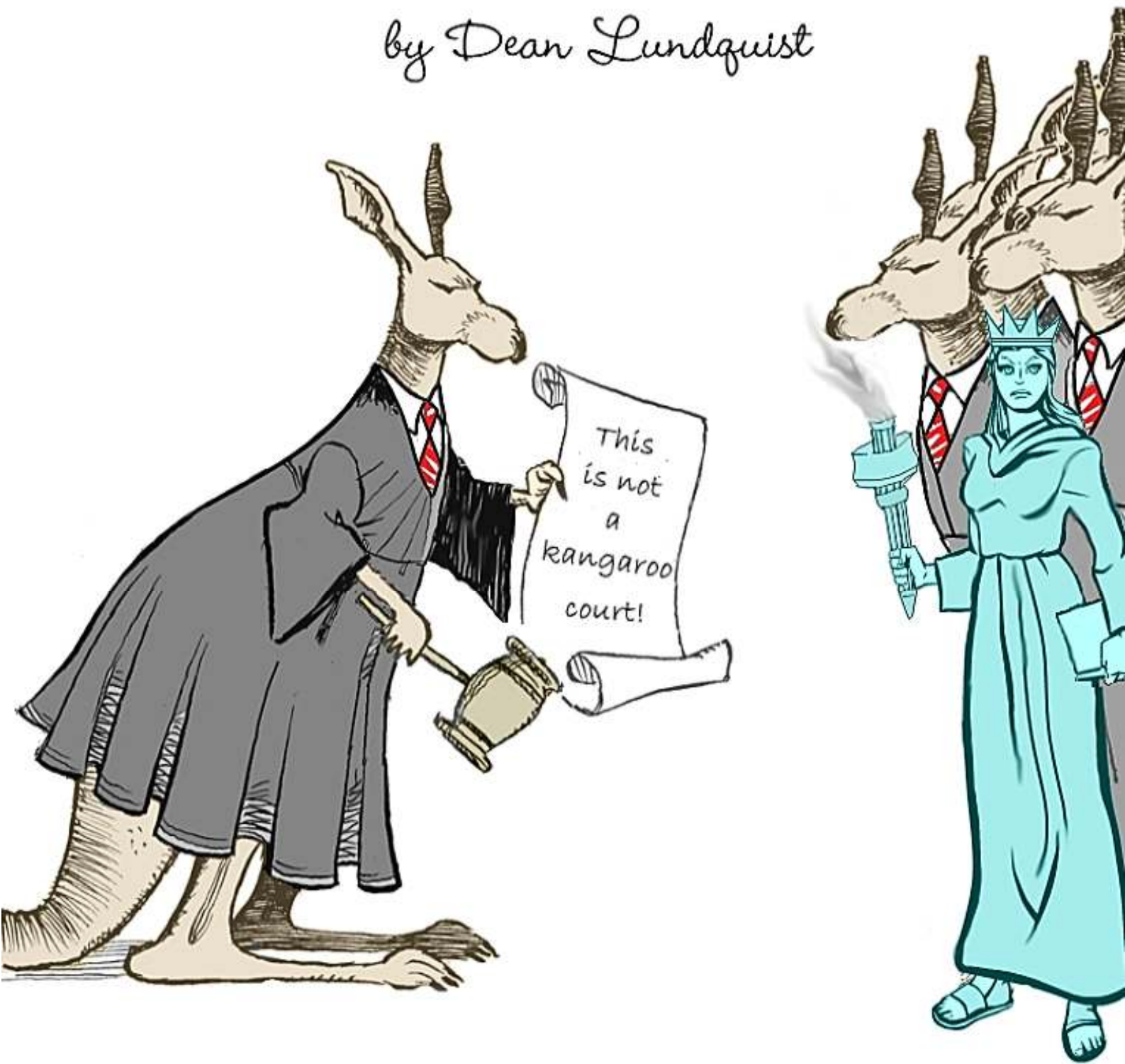


KANGAROO COURT

by Dean Lundquist



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A short play
by
Dean Lundquist

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MEMBER The playwright is a member of the Dramatists Guild of America, Inc.

KANGAROO COURT

CHARACTERS

RUSTY, A BAILIFF

CHIEF JUSTICE LONG A. HOP

LADY LIBERTY

ATTORNEY GENERAL HOP E. T. HOP-HOP

TIME

The present.

PLACE

The Supreme Court of The People of the Wholely Unified, Independent and Most Totally Awesome, Fair, Just and Freedom-Loving Nation of Kangapoor.

KANGAROO COURT

A court room. There are two tables and a judge's bench. At the defense table sits Lady Liberty with a very large book. At the prosecutor's table sits Attorney General Hop-Hop, a Kangaroo in a suit. The Bailiff, a heavily armed-kangaroo enters. The stage is arranged as if the audience were in the jury box.

BAILIFF

All rise. The Supreme Court of "The Wholely Unified, Independent and Most Totally Awesome, Just and Freedom-Loving Nation of Kangapooora" is now in session. Chief Justice Long A. Hop presiding.

Justice Long, dressed as a kangaroo with complete with a judge's wig and robe enters and sits on the bench.

LONG

Be seated. Rusty, what's on today's docket?

BAILIFF

The first, and only case today judge is The People of the Wholely Unified, Independent and Most Totally Awesome, Fair, Just and Freedom-Loving Nation of Kangapooora versus Joe Downs Publishing, publishers of that bad-bad-nasty -bad and disreputable trashy-poo-poo-ka-ka-doodie tabloid newspaper that is not fit to wrap fish in, The Partition Road Chronicle on one count of contempt of court.

Lady Liberty, clad in her customary robes, rises to address the court.

LIBERTY

Your honor, I'd like to move for an immediate mistrial!

LONG

Who are you?

LIBERTY

My name's Liberty, council for the defense.

LONG

I see. This is no fancy dress party, you know.

LIBERTY

Yes, your honor, I know. This is how I always dress.

LONG

I see. And you want to move for a mistrial?

LIBERTY

Yes, your honor.

LONG

But we haven't even really started yet.

LIBERTY

That's exactly my point, your honor. Let's not delude ourselves here. What's really at stake is that my client's newspaper is accused of effectively calling this a "kangaroo court". So...I'd like to move for an immediate mistrial.

LONG

On what grounds?

LIBERTY

Well, your honor, you are a...kangaroo.

LONG

No I'm not.

LIBERTY

I can see your ears, your honor—sticking out from under your wig. And I can only assume you have a marsupial pouch under your robe.

LONG

No you can't.

LIBERTY

This is absurd.

LONG

No it's not.

LIBERTY

And why is there no court reporter?

LONG

Oh, we don't like reporters.

LIBERTY

Isn't someone going to keep a transcript of the trial?

LONG

There's no need for that. Motion denied. Now, please take a seat and let's proceed with opening statements.

Flustered, Lady Liberty reluctantly sits down as Hop-Hop rises and addresses the court.

HOP-HOP

If it pleases the court, Attorney General, Hop E. T. Hop-Hop for the People of Kangapoorra.

LONG

Please proceed.

HOP-HOP

What we have here, your honor, is a bunch of nasty-nasty-nincompoopies who have a really bad-bad-nasty-bad-bad newspaper, who printed meanie-mean-mean defamatory... "things" about this totally awesome and completely just and super-duper court.

LIBERTY

Objection!

LONG

What's the problem now, Miss Liberty?

LIBERTY

Your honor, council just referred to the defendant as, "a bunch of nasty-nasty-nincompoopies".

LONG

So?

LIBERTY

So isn't council guilty of exactly what the defendant is accused of?

LONG

No. And where is the defendant?

LIBERTY

Well, your honor, since you banned members of the media from attending today's proceeding and my client is a member of the press, he was unable to attend.

LONG

Oh, yes, of course. Objection overruled. Please proceed.

HOP-HOP

As I was saying your honor, in two editorials and a letter to the editor, the nasty-nasty-nin-com-poopie newspaper printed that this highly-esteemed and totally awesome beyond reprehension and completely and totally just court was...corrupt. Therefore, in the interest of keeping our nation unified, awesome and totally, totally very much cool and killer-diller beyond all others, the defendant should be found in contempt of court.

LIBERTY

Objection. I'd like to renew my motion for a mistrial.

LONG

On what grounds?

LIBERTY

Conflict of interest, your honor.

LONG

Who has a conflict of interest?

LIBERTY

Um, you do, your honor.

LONG

No I don't.

LIBERTY

Begging your honor's pardon, if my client's newspaper printed something that was of a defamatory nature towards the court, then it is a conflict of interest for the court to pass judgment on whether or not the remarks printed were in fact defamatory, and therefore, your honor should recuse himself based on these ethical grounds.

LONG

Nope.

LIBERTY

Nope?

LONG

No. I am the Chief Justice of this court, and if I can't rule on this matter, then no one can. There simply is no higher authority.

LIBERTY

What about the people, your honor?

LONG

What about them?

LIBERTY

Is not the court and its officials answerable to the citizens?

LONG

No.

LIBERTY

In the interest of justice wouldn't it be more prudent to have a trial by jury?

LONG

A trial by jury? What's that?

LIBERTY

A trial decided by a group--a cross-section of society if you will--of one's peers. Should we not let them decide?

LONG

And where would we find such a group?

LIBERTY

Right here, your honor.

She gestures towards the audience.

LONG

Are you serious?

LIBERTY

Yes, your honor.

LONG

Don't you know that these citizens elect a government to make decisions for them because they can't be bothered and have no concept of such things as democracy, civil liberty and free speech? They aren't the court's peers. The court is peerless. Besides, they know that the government always has their best interest at heart and will look after them like a sweet and caring mother who carries them around in their marsupial pouch.

LIBERTY

Begging your honor's pardon, but—

LONG

That's enough! One more interruption and I will hold you in contempt! Now, council for the people, please proceed.

Liberty reluctantly sits down.

HOP-HOP

Thank you, your honor. In order to expedite these proceedings, I'd like to present to the court these aforementioned meanie-mean-mean defamatory things as printed in the defendant's really bad-bad-nasty-bad-bad newspaper.

LONG

Proceed.

Hop-Hop produces some documents. The Bailiff fetches them and distributes them to Liberty and Justice Long.

HOP-HOP

I'd like to draw your attention to people's exhibits A, B and C. I will read from People's exhibit A, an editorial printed on 26 June 2008 entitled "Democracy in Kangapoor". Drawing your honor's attention to the highlighted section I quote, "in a damages hearing in a defamation case brought and won by former Kangapoor Prime Minister Roo Gar Kang against opposition politician Chyans Got Noh, the court found in favor of Mr. Roo. This is not surprising as Mr. Roo, and the members of his political party, have never lost a libel case."

LONG

Ah yes, I can see the penumbra of a meanie defamatory statement implying that the court is corrupt.

LIBERTY

I object.

LONG

Quiet! Please continue.

HOP-HOP

People's exhibit B, a letter to the editor published on 5 July 2008 from opposition politician Chyans Got Noh, where he alleges judiciary corruption by stating, and I quote, "Mr. Roo and his son, current prime Minister Mr. Roo Gar Kang Jr., obtained a summary judgment from the courts despite our defense, in which we cited disputes of fact and law... The summary judgment meant that we were found guilty without being given the chance to call witnesses and cross-examine the plaintiffs."

LONG

Ah, yes, I can see the emanations of meanie-mean defamatory statements.

Liberty rises again.

LIBERTY

I strenuously renew my objection!

LONG

That's enough! Sit down Miss Liberty.

HOP-HOP

And finally, people's exhibit C, another editorial published on 15 July 2008 alleges that, and I quote, "The International Bar Association finds that Kangapoorra limits political speech and assembly and exercises strict controls on the media... The 72-page report also describes "concerns about the objective and subjective independence and impartiality" of the judiciary. In cases involving litigants from the ruling People's Optimum Outstanding Party or P-O-O-P, when matters of POOP interest are brought before the court, the IBA finds "concerns about an actual or apparent lack of impartiality and/or independence, which casts doubt on the decisions made in such cases."

LONG

Thanks you, Mr. Hop-Hop. Definitely, meanie-mean-mean! I think we've heard enough. Miss Liberty?

LIBERTY

Yes, your honor?

LONG

Do you deny that your client published these statements?

LIBERTY

No, your honor.

LONG

Very well. It is the decision of this court—

LIBERTY

Just a moment, your honor.

LONG

What?

LIBERTY

Don't I get to speak on behalf of the defendant?

LONG

What evidence could you possibly have to counter the implacable, irrefutable, undeniable, ironclad can't-ever-be-challenged case made by the representative of the people?

LIBERTY

This, your honor.

She produces a mirror from under her robe.

LONG

A mirror? Is this some kind of a joke?

LIBERTY

No, your honor.

LONG

Then what's the meaning of this?

LIBERTY

Begging the court's pardon, if you wouldn't mind, would you kindly look into this mirror and tell me truthfully that you are not a kangaroo?

LONG

Of course. Bailiff.

The Bailiff hops over and retrieves the mirror hops back and hands it to Long. Long looks at it.

I am not a kangaroo.

LIBERTY

Your honor, can't you see that just saying something doesn't make it true?

LONG

I'm sorry, but if you keep on in this line of questioning, the court will find you in contempt for wasting its time.

LIBERTY

Oh, this is futile.

LONG

Very well. It is the decision of this court that in the matter of The People of the Wholly Unified and Independent and Most Totally Awesome, Fair, Just and Freedom-Loving Nation of Kangapoorra vs.

(MORE)

LONG (CONT'D)

Joe Downs Publishing, publishers of that bad-bad-nasty-bad and disreputable trashy-poo-poo-kaka-doodie tabloid newspaper that is not fit to wrap fish in, The Partition Road Chronicle, the court finds in favor of the people. Therefore, because the defendant is a repeat offender, the court hereby imposes a fine of \$25,000.

While Justice Long speaks, Lady Liberty produces a torch from under her robe and attempts to light it with an oversized cigarette lighter produced from her book that says, "This Lighter belongs to Lady Liberty".

LIBERTY

Your honor, if I may address the court.

LONG

Bailiff, arrest her, she has a weapon!

Justice Long and Hop-Hop jump away and hide. The Bailiff pulls his gun and aims it at Liberty.

LIBERTY

No, your honor, this is no weapon, it's my torch. I was just going to light it in hopes that its light might illuminate this dark cavern that masquerades as a hall of justice.

LONG

Arrest her! She'll burn the whole place to the ground!

The Bailiff hops over and takes the torch from Liberty and puts it on the table and then handcuffs her.

LIBERTY

But your honor, I wasn't going to burn anything. I was going to shine its light and show us the path to freedom and democracy—

LONG

You have an accent! Where are you from?

LIBERTY

I don't see the relevance—

LONG

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

LIBERTY

Originally from France, but I've been living in the United States.

LONG

That's what I thought. A foreigner. That explains everything. You see Miss, here in Kangapura, we have one rule that we hold above all others: The Golden Rule.

LIBERTY

Ah, yes, I know it well, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

LONG

No. That's not it. The Golden Rule is: "Whoever has the gold makes the rules!" Do you have any gold, Miss Liberty?

LIBERTY

Gold, your honor?

LONG

You know. Gold? Money? Cash? Moolah?

LIBERTY

Why no, your honor, I've no need for that—I don't take money for my services. Liberty has always been free.

LONG

I see. Then, this court finds you in contempt. And I hereby sentence you to a fine of one million dollars for endangering the lives of the officers of this court.

LIBERTY

Endangering them with the light of liberty?

LONG

Are you able to pay?

LIBERTY

Of course not, your honor.

LONG

Such a pity. Well then, I have no choice but to hereby sentence you to jail until you can pay the aforementioned fine. If you, or someone else pays the fine on your behalf, we will then reconvene to determine if you have paid your debt to society in full on a date to be determined by the discretion of this totally just and fair court, i.e. me, at a date and time when the honorable, fair and bestest justice of them all, or in other words, me, doesn't have a tee time. Bailiff, take her away.

BAILIFF

Your honor, are you sure you want to do this? It will create an international incident.

LONG

Nonsense. No one will know. As her client stated earlier, we control the media. If anything does leak to the press, I don't really think she'll be missed by anyone. Take her away. Court is adjourned.

The Bailiff hops and takes Lady Liberty off.

HOP-HOP

Very well done, judge.

LONG

Thanks, Hop-Hop. What time have you got?

HOP-HOP

It's about 10 after.

LONG

Jolly good, we can still make our tee time. They just never learn, do they?

HOP-HOP

Nope, they just don't understand why Kangapura is called a "Wholely Unified and Independent and Most Totally Awesome, Just and Freedom-Loving Nation".

HOP-HOP

BECAUSE WE SAY
IT IS!

LONG

BECAUSE WE SAY
IT IS!

They hop away and exit as lights begin to fade leaving Lady Liberty's torch alone on the table, lit in a spotlight before snapping to complete darkness.

END.