

Rage Against The Machine

A New Short Comedy by Jack Gilhooley

FACTOID: In August, 2015, Hitchbot, a hitchhiking robot dedicated to world peace was destroyed by unknown vandals in Philadelphia, The City of Brotherly Love. The scoundrel/s has yet to be apprehended but this is the story of the crime and the dastardly criminal (as determined by the playwright).

Chantel is in need of a lawyer since she is willing to turn herself in to the authorities. She wishes to engage reluctant Gerald. When she reveals her self-defense scenario, Chantel manages to convince him that she's a righteous underdog. He will come to her defense since he has taken a personal interest in the attractive young woman despite her dubious character. Chantel has learned the lesson of her past mistakes – Robbie The Robot was not one of them -- and is resolved to fly right, ideally with a responsible partner.

Cast of Characters

GERALD.....a proper, youngish lawyer.

CHANTEL.....a very tough – nonetheless attractive – broad. Dressed like a hooker (for good reason).

THE TIME: The present

THE PLACE: Gerald's law office. A sign on the back wall: Smith & Franklin, Attorneys-At-Law

Gerald is seated at his desk surveying docs. The intercom buzzes.

GERALD

Yes, Doris... Oh, very good. Send her in... Pardon? ... Yes, I'm sure I'll be perfectly safe. She's only a woman... Speak up, Doris. No need to whisper... I don't need your value judgments, Doris. Geno The Snake was in here just last week. Without incident. In fact, he's a perfect gentleman... The murders have yet to be proven. He's got an iron-clad alibi... He was in church. And he's a family man. Every weekend he visits his sons in prison. I have no reason to fear a mere young wom--...She's not "mere". We'll see about that. Send her in.

He hangs up. Momentarily, Chantel enters. She carries what looks like a mechanical limb or prosthesis. Gerald rises with some trepidation, to greet her.

GERALD

Ah yes, Ms. Chantel, I presume. Very happy to meet you.

He extends a hand to shake but he's ignored.

CHANTEL

Don't jump to conclusions, Mr. Barrister. That's what they call you guys, huh? Barristers?

GERALD

Well, sort of. It's a British term for lawyer.

CHANTEL

Does that mean you can only lawyer in England?

GERALD

Why no, of course not. I'm licensed to practice in the U.S. So, how may I help—

She tosses the mechanical devise on his desk. He defenses.

CHANTEL

I'm here to 'fess up. I need legal representation. I'm the killer but I'm innocent.

GERALD

I see. Well, actually I don't see. This calls for elaboration.

CHANTEL

I'm the one they're looking for.

GERALD

"They"? Law enforcement?

CHANTEL

Of course, the cops. Would I be confessin' if the cops weren't looking for me? Though I'm ratting myself out, it was self-defense.

GERALD

(Pointing to the device) Is this the weapon?

CHANTEL

It's the remains.

GERALD

Of the weapon?

CHANTEL

Of the victim.

GERALD

Who is it you killed? An amputee? It will be hard to find a jury to empathize with the killer of an ampu—

CHANTEL

"Who is it"? You mean, "Who was it?" Actually, what was it I killed? Don't you read the papers? It's all over the TV news. Everyone's talkin' about it. I just left the mall. It's all the buzz in the food court. A geezer got so angry he hurled his cheesesteak.

GERALD

You killed the African lion? I'll represent you even though I'm an animal rights advocate. I'm also a human rights advocate. Open and shut case. You were attacked. You defended yourself against the lion. We'll plead imminent danger.

CHANTEL

That's what I like to hear. Even if it's wrong. I didn't kill no lion. I'da run if I seen a lion. Actually, I killed the robot.

GERALD

You're the killer of ROBBIE THE ROBOT???

CHANTEL

Damn right. And proud of it.

GERALD

Good god!!! That's one of the most heinous crimes I've ever come across. It goes against all standards of humanity. It's positively... well, "Mansonian".

CHANTEL

It's what?

GERALD

That's only something Charles Manson would do.

CHANTEL

Who's Charles Manson?

GERALD

Never mind. You're too young.

Are you proud of the fact that the nation is aghast at your act of incivility? You're Public Enemy numbers one-through-ten. Do you think you'd survive prison?

CHANTEL

You were just gonna get me sprung.

GERALD

Not now that I know the severity of your—

CHANTEL

It's only a robot, fer Chrissakes!!!

GERALD

A beloved member of the community. A benevolent, kindly, generous communicator.

CHANTEL

Dude, you got that wrong.

GERALD

I'm embarrassed to have you in my office. As soon as you leave, I'm having it fumigated.

(He gets on the internet)

Doris, call the exterminator. Emergency service. I'll pay extra. Load up on the vermin extinguisher.

CHANTEL

You may not be the right lawyer for me.

GERALD

Have you got any money?

CHANTEL

Gimmee a few hours and I'll get you a down payment.

GERALD

How much?

CHANTEL

Uh... five hours.

GERALD

How much money?

CHANTEL

Uh... five hours. A thousand dollars.

GERALD

You're on.

CHANTEL

Swell. Are you Smith or Franklin?

GERALD

Franklin. Gerald Franklin.

CHANTEL

(Pointing to the sign) The plural of attorney is a-t-t-o-r-n-i-e-s.

GERALD

Huh?

(Surveying the sign)

Well, that's ... uh, just the way it is.

CHANTEL

I dropped outta the tenth grade but the nuns banged that into us.

GERALD

Well, uh... it's just tradition, I guess.

CHANTEL

I gotta wonder if I want a lawyer who can't even spell.

GERALD

I'll have Doris change it. Now, your full name, Ms. Chantel.

CHANTEL

Chantel.

GERALD

What Chantel?

CHANTEL

Just Chantel. Like Cher... Madonna.

GERALD

I need your full name.

CHANTEL

Chantel's as full as it gets.

GERALD

The name on your birth certificate.

CHANTEL

I've never seen my birth certificate.

GERALD

Someone must have it.

CHANTEL

My parents?

GERALD

No doubt. Get it from them.

CHANTEL

Not hardly. They're dead.

GERALD

They must have left it somewhere.

CHANTEL

No help there. Momma was always leavin' stuff behind. Maybe they took it with them. Are you suggestin' we dig 'em up?

GERALD

Not hardly. Jeez, I'm talking like you, now.

CHANTEL

What's wrong with that?

GERALD

Perhaps a relative has it.

CHANTEL

I don't have relatives.

GERALD

Surely you're related to someone.

CHANTEL

Nobody who admits to it.

GERALD

I can't represent you without a full name.

CHANTEL

OK, Chantel Chantel.

GERALD

That's more like it. Now, middle name.

CHANTEL

Chantel. Whata ya expect?

GERALD

Chantel Chantel Chantel. That'll do. Now Chantel –

CHANTEL

Ms. Chantel, Mr. Franklin. Don't get familiar. We're not at that point.

GERALD

I doubt if we'll ever be.

CHANTEL

Your loss, Law-man. You're not exactly Bradley Cooper.

GERALD

Alright, can you tell me how the murder—

CHANTEL

I killed. I didn't murder.

GERALD

Let's not get into semantics.

CHANTEL

Watch it, Franklin. I'm one-quarter Jewish.

GERALD

Do you have a profession?

CHANTEL

Absolutely.

GERALD

Do you dress this way at work?

CHANTEL

Of course not. I figgered I'm seein' a lawyer. I could dress down. Way down.

GERALD

How do you ordinarily dress for work?

CHANTEL

In a dress.

GERALD

It sounds like you have a proper, respectable job.

CHANTEL

Not at all. It's just that work is quicker and faster in a dress.

GERALD

What is it you do?

CHANTEL

You need a road map?

I'm a fashionista.

GERALD

That's a job?

CHANTEL

It is the way I do it.

GERALD

Say, aren't you one of those women who pose topless for the tourists?

CHANTEL

That's my daytime job. And they're not all tourists. In fact, you look like one of the picture-takers. And I'm not topless. I'm painted over. In red, white and blue, in fact.

GERALD

I think your posing days are over. The police will shut down your little enterprise.

CHANTEL

Doubtful. They're very supportive of our enterprise. And we compensate them to keep the peace.

GERALD

Paint is not clothing.

CHANTEL

Who's to say what clothing is? Lady Gaga wears meat. So do you.

GERALD

What??? I never heard of anything so ridic—

CHANTEL

You're wearing shoes?

GERALD

Of course.

CHANTEL

Made of cowhide?

GERALD

I think we're off track. So please present your side of the murd---uh, killing.

CHANTEL

OK, Mr. Franklin. I was on a park bench—

GERALD

What were you doing on the park bench?

CHANTEL

Sitting. Duh!

GERALD

On a break from your job?

CHANTEL

I was preppin' for my job. I'm a free-lance. The bench is sorta my office. It was my lunch hour.

GERALD

You ate for lunch...?

CHANTEL

Nothin'. I'm dieting.

GERALD

Not needed. You look fine. Scrumptious, in fact.

CHANTEL

Never been called scrumptious before. Anyway, I'm sittin' there mindin' my business when this little guy slithers up and sits next to me. Uninvited.

GERALD

Free country. Public bench. Describe him, please.

CHANTEL

Well, he was about three feet tall. I figgered at first he was a little boy. That is somethin' I don't do. Capital D.

GERALD

So you ignored him?

