

The Thirty-Seven Basic Dramatic Situations and Their Sub-Classes

On this and the following pages will be found a complete list of the thirty-seven original dramatic situations with their sub-classes which have appeared in Fiction and Drama. Accompanying many of the sub-classes are concrete illustrations of their application as well as suggestions for other variations.

Situation Number One

"Rescue"

The elements necessary to constitute this situation are three in number. A Threatener, the Unfortunate, and the Rescuer. In most modern dramas the first is the villain; the second, the heroine; and the third, the hero. This does not signify, however, that there are not numerous other variations that could be used. The Threatener may be given a hundred different motives for persecuting the unfortunate. In fact he may be embodied in as many different guises himself. The same is true of the other two characters. No modern story seems to be complete without this situation.

Sub-classes of this situation which have appeared in the past in Drama and Fiction are:

- (a) THE CONDEMNED SAVED BY A RESCUER.
Scores of variations are possible under this head.
 - (b) RESCUE BY FRIENDS FROM A PREDICAMENT.
"Friends" here might mean relatives or a sweetheart.
 - (c) RESCUE BY STRANGERS WHO ARE GRATEFUL FOR FAVORS GIVEN THEM BY THE UNFORTUNATE ONE.
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Situation Number Two

"Lost Loved Ones Recovered"

This is really a happy situation. It might be confused by the unanalytical mind with situation Number One (Rescue), but a careful study will disclose the fact that while they might both occur at the same time, we have two different situations. To the loved one who is delivered, the situation is Number One, while it comes under the head of Two to the one who effects the rescue.

- (a) THE RECOVERY OF A LOST ONE WHO IS LOST, IMPRISONED, DISEASED, OR IN DANGER OF ANY KIND WHATEVER.

Situation Number Three*"A Miracle"***An Act of Providence**

This is the added classification which the Author of this work has placed by the side of the Original Thirty-six Dramatic Situations compiled by other writers. An effort to place it under Number One (Rescue) or Number Nineteen (Vengeance) has not resulted in a satisfactory conclusion, hence its addition to the thirty-six. A miracle of God constitutes such an awe-inspiring situation that it can hardly be classified with any other form of Deliverance or Vengeance.

- (a) THE DELIVERANCE OF ONE FROM DEATH OR MISFORTUNE BY AN ACT OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.
 - (b) VISITATION OF PUNISHMENT BY AN ACT OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.
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Situation Number Four*"Entreaty"*

The necessary elements or characters to constitute this situation are: The Supplicant, or one who pleads for something; The Persecutor, or the person or thing from which relief is sought; and the Power to whom the plea is made. There may be a fourth character present in the person of The Intercedent, or friend who pleads for the Supplicant.

Any situation in which some one pleads or makes an appeal for anything would come under this head. A man pleading with the woman he loved, for a return of his affections; an attorney making a plea to a jury for his client who is charged with a crime; a vanquished enemy begging his victorious adversary for mercy; a fallen woman pleading with the man who brought about her downfall for a chance to regain her self-respect; and many others that could be suggested, come under the head of Situation number four.

Sub-classes of situation number four which have appeared in drama and fiction in the past are:

- (a) AN APPEAL TO ONE RELATIVE IN BEHALF OF ANOTHER.
- (b) THE LOVER OF A WOMAN APPEALED TO BY HER DAUGHTER OR SON.
To save the reputation of the mother, the plea is made to the lover to cease his attentions to her.
- (c) THE APPEAL OF ONE POWER TO ANOTHER IN BEHALF OF THE SUPPLICANT.
Example: Where the ruler of one country intercedes with that of another for executive clemency for a subject who has been convicted of an offense.
- (d) AN APPEAL FOR REFUGE BY THE SHIPWRECKED.
Example: The appeal of one who is lost or stranded in any manner would come under this sub-head.

- (e) AN APPEAL FOR CHARITY FROM ONE WHO HAS DISGRACED HIS OWN PEOPLE AND BEEN CAST OFF BY THEM.

Example: The most common illustration of this situation used in modern literature is probably that of the girl who has been betrayed by her lover and consequently been driven from home by an irate father and who then appeals to some one for refuge.

- (f) PARDON, HEALING OR DELIVERANCE SOUGHT.

Example: Pardon sought from the Law, for a crime committed; or from a friend for an offence. Healing of either body or spirit sought from a Healer. Deliverance from any manner of predicament sought by the supplicant.

- (g) THE SOLICITATION FOR THE SURRENDER OF A CORPSE OR RELIC.

Example: The case of a woman who has been convicted of a crime and imprisoned, pleading with the authorities for permission to see the corpse of her baby; or a wife who pleads with the minions of the law for a photograph of her husband who is to be executed.

- (h) AN APPEAL MADE BY A FUGITIVE FOR REFUGE AGAINST AN ENEMY.

This situation is susceptible to numerous variations.

- (i) SEEKING ASSISTANCE TO FACILITATE THE PERFORMANCE OF A PIOUS DUTY WHICH HAS BEEN FORBIDDEN.

Example: A person who has been forbidden to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience and who appeals for a place of refuge in which to do so.

- (j) A REFUGE IN WHICH TO DIE SOUGHT.

Example: A warrior who is mortally wounded seeks refuge in the cabin of a frontiersman.

Situation Number Five

"Love's Obstacles"

While this situation probably in its more serious aspect is a dramatic one, it is the one which affords more material for straight comedy than any of the others. Reference is made here to the always interesting love affair between a young couple which has to contend with a gruff old daddy, a stern mamma, or an old maid aunt. It is the subterfuges invented by the loving couple to outwit the opposition, and the ludicrous positions in which they place themselves, that affords the comedy. The dramatic versions that have been used are:

- (a) A UNION BETWEEN LOVERS PREVENTED BY THEIR INEQUALITY OF RANK.
- (b) A UNION BETWEEN LOVERS PREVENTED BY THEIR INEQUALITY OF FORTUNE.
- (c) A UNION BETWEEN LOVERS PREVENTED BY ENEMIES.
- (d) A UNION BETWEEN LOVERS PREVENTED BY A PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT OF THE GIRL.

- (e) A UNION BETWEEN LOVERS PREVENTED BY AN IMAGINARY MARRIAGE OF ONE PARTY.
 - (f) A UNION BETWEEN LOVERS PREVENTED BY THE OPPOSITION OF RELATIVES.
 - (g) A UNION BETWEEN LOVERS PREVENTED BY A LACK OF CONGENIALITY BETWEEN THEM.
 - (h) CONGENIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE MADE IMPOSSIBLE BY PARENTS-IN-LAW.
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Situation Number Six

"Rivalry of Unequals"

This situation is not only susceptible to dramatic development but to comedy and pathos. What is more pathetic than the struggle of a hero or heroine against apparently overwhelming odds? Still the manner in which the handicapped one "puts it over" on his adversary may be made very amusing. Here we have comedy-drama. While rivalry between equals, might be said to be a situation, it is not a dramatic one. It is the fact that one appears at a disadvantage that makes it a dramatic situation. We have had:

- (a) RIVALRY BETWEEN A RICH MAN AND A POOR ONE.
- (b) RIVALRY BETWEEN A MAN WHO IS HONORED AND ONE WHO IS SUSPECTED.
- (c) RIVALRY BETWEEN A MAN OF POWER AND A PRETENDER.
- (d) RIVALRY BETWEEN A MONARCH AND ONE OF INFERIOR RANK.
- (e) RIVALRY BETWEEN ONE WHO HAS BEEN CONQUERED AND THE CONQUERER.
- (f) RIVALRY BETWEEN ONE WITH SUPERNATURAL POWERS AND AN ORDINARY MAN.
- (g) RIVALRY BETWEEN AN IMMORTAL AND A MORTAL.
- (h) RIVALRY BETWEEN TWO WHO ARE EQUAL WITH THE EXCEPTION THAT ONE HAS BEEN GUILTY OF A CRIME.
- (i) RIVALRY BETWEEN TWO MEN, ONE OF WHOM HAS NOT THE RIGHT TO LOVE.
- (j) RIVALRY BETWEEN TWO MEN, BOTH OF WHOM HAVE BEEN THE HUSBAND OF A DIVORCED WOMAN.
- (k) RIVALRY BETWEEN A "VAMPIRE" AND A MODEST WOMAN.
- (l) RIVALRY BETWEEN A VICTORIOUS WOMAN AND ONE WHO IS A PRISONER.
- (m) RIVALRY BETWEEN A WOMAN OF HIGH POSITION AND A LESS FORTUNATE ONE.

- (n) RIVALRY BETWEEN ONE OF ROYAL BLOOD AND A SLAVE.
 - (o) RIVALRY BETWEEN ONE OF ROYAL BLOOD AND A SUBJECT.
 - (p) RIVALRY BETWEEN ONE WHO IS IMMORTAL AND THE OTHER A MORTAL.
 - (q) RIVALRY BETWEEN THE TWO WIVES OF A POLYGAMOUS HUSBAND.
 - (r) RIVALRY BETWEEN THE MEMORY OF A SUPERIOR WOMAN AND A PRESENT WIFE OR MISTRESS.
 - (s) RIVALRY BETWEEN TWO IMMORTALS, ONE OF WHOM IS MORE POWERFUL THAN THE OTHER.
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Situation Number Seven

"Rivalry Between Kinsmen"

Rivalry between kinsmen might lead to enmity (No. 16) thence to a crime by one and revenge at the hands of another (No. 19). Here we would have a combination of three situations.

- (a) ANY SITUATION WHERE THERE IS RIVALRY BETWEEN TWO MEMBERS OF A FAMILY, FOR ANY CAUSE WHATEVER, COMES UNDER THIS HEAD.

It might be for the love of a woman or man, for position, for authority, for a desired object, or for an accomplishment.

Situation Number Eight

"A Mystery"

All situations where there is a mystery involved come under this head. Detective stories, psychological problems, lost treasures, etc., introduce the enigma. In stories where the enigma is to play an important part, it should be introduced early in order to sustain interest and suspense. Its solution should be reserved for the climax. Examples that have been used:

- (a) BEING CONFRONTED WITH DEATH UNLESS A LOST PERSON IS FOUND.
- (b) BEING CONFRONTED WITH DEATH UNLESS A PROBLEM IS SOLVED.
The problem may consist of any one of a hundred things.
- (c) THE LOVER OF A WOMAN IS REQUIRED BY HER TO FIND THE SOLUTION TO A PROBLEM.
- (d) EFFORTS PUT FORTH TO DISCOVER THE NAME OR IDENTITY OF ANOTHER.
- (e) EFFORTS MADE TO DISCOVER THE SEX OF ANOTHER.
These last two enter into the case where a mysterious person whose identity or sex is unknown, is introduced into the story.
- (f) BEING CONFRONTED WITH THE PROBLEM OF DISCOVERING THE TRUE MENTAL CONDITION OF ANOTHER.

Situation Number Nine

"Loving an Enemy"

The first thing that comes to our mind when this situation is named is the story of Romeo and Juliet. As will be seen from the number of variations below, which have been used, a wealth of plot material is offered by Number Nine.

- (a) HATRED OF THE LOVED ONE BY THE KINSMEN OF THE LOVER.
 - (b) BROTHERS OF THE WOMAN PURSUING HER LOVER.
 - (c) HATRED OF THE MAN BY THE FAMILY OF HIS SWEETHEART.
 - (d) HATRED OF THE FATHER OF THE MAN BY THE FAMILY OF HIS SWEETHEART.
 - (e) THE MAN IS THE ENEMY OF A PARTY TO WHICH HIS BELOVED BELONGS.
 - (f) THE MAN IS THE SLAYER OF HIS SWEETHEART'S FATHER.
 - (g) THE WOMAN IS THE SLAYER OF THE FATHER OF HER SWEETHEART.
 - (h) THE WOMAN IS THE SLAYER OF THE BROTHER OF HER SWEETHEART.
 - (i) A WOMAN WHOSE HUSBAND HAS BEEN SLAIN AND WHO HAS SWORN TO AVENGE HIM, FINDS HERSELF IN LOVE WITH THE MAN WHO COMMITTED THE MURDER.
 - (j) A WOMAN WHOSE LOVER HAS BEEN SLAIN AND WHO HAS SWORN TO AVENGE HIM, FINDS HERSELF IN LOVE WITH THE SLAYER.
 - (k) THE MAN IS THE SLAYER OF THE KINSMAN OF HIS SWEETHEART.
 - (l) THE WOMAN IS THE DAUGHTER OF THE MAN WHO SLEW HER LOVER'S FATHER.
 - (m) FORGIVENESS TO A PERSON WHO HAS BROUGHT MISFORTUNE TO ONE.
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Situation Number Ten

"Sacrificing One's Self for an Ideal"

In the opinion of the author this is the most noble impulse that ever animated a human being, with the exception of that which prompted the Savior to give up his life for the salvation of the world. Such a sacrifice is unattended by selfish motive.

- (a) LIFE SACRIFICED FOR THE SAKE OF ONE'S WORD.
- (b) LIFE SACRIFICED FOR THE SUCCESS OF ONE'S PEOPLE.

- (c) SACRIFICE OF LIFE FOR FILIAL PIETY (Duty to God or parents).
 - (d) SACRIFICE OF LIFE FOR ONE'S FAITH (Christian martyrs).
 - (e) SACRIFICE OF BOTH LOVE AND LIFE FOR ONE'S FAITH.
 - (f) SACRIFICE OF BOTH LOVE AND LIFE FOR A CAUSE.
Example: The physician who voluntarily contracts a loathsome disease in order to help rid humanity of its terrors.
 - (g) LOVE OR LIFE SACRIFICED TO INTERESTS OF STATE (Patriotism).
 - (h) SACRIFICE OF WELL BEING TO DUTY.
Example: The nurse or physician who ministers to the victim of a contagious disease.
 - (i) THE SACRIFICE OF HONOR FOR FAITH.
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Situation Number Eleven

"Sacrifice of One's Self for Kindred (or loved one)."

This situation is replete with possibilities for dramatic plots. Herein lies the glorious example which never fails to stir a responsive chord in the human heart, no matter how hardened it may have become. There are certain motion picture stars who almost invariably show a preference for stories containing this situation, for the reason that it enables them to enlist every bit of sympathy that the spectator is capable of giving them. It was this situation in "Tess of the Storm Country" that made Mary Pickford famous.

- (a) THE SACRIFICE OF LIFE FOR THAT OF A RELATIVE OR FRIEND.
- (b) THE SACRIFICE OF LIFE FOR THE HAPPINESS OF A RELATIVE OR FRIEND.
- (c) THE SACRIFICE OF AMBITION FOR THE HAPPINESS OF THE LIFE OF A PARENT.
- (d) THE SACRIFICE OF LOVE FOR A PARENT'S LIFE.
- (e) THE SACRIFICE OF LOVE FOR THE SAKE OF A CHILD.
- (f) THE SACRIFICE OF HAPPINESS FOR THE SAKE OF A LOVED ONE WHERE THE SACRIFICE IS CAUSED BY UNJUST LAWS.
- (g) THE SACRIFICE OF LIFE AND HONOR FOR THE LIFE OF A LOVED ONE.
- (h) LIBERTY SACRIFICED FOR THE SAKE OF A LOVED ONE.
- (i) HONOR SACRIFICED FOR THE SAKE OF A LOVED ONE.
- (j) LOVE AND HONOR SACRIFICED FOR THE SAKE OF A FRIEND.

Situation Number Twelve

"Possessed of an Ambition"

Webster's definition of ambition is, "Eager desire of superiority, power, honor, or fame." This is a dramatic situation on account of its tendency to precipitate disaster for the one affected or for his or her friends and loved ones. While it spurs some to deeds of glory, it also hardens the heart of others to the point of cruelty toward their fellow man. There is always present one or more obstacles to the achievement of an ambition. Hence the presence of this situation invites many others which quickly shape themselves into a dramatic plot. An example of this is shown in the case of the Kaiser who became possessed of a desire to rule the whole world, and which resulted in the greatest drama in the history of the earth, with the exception of the life and crucifixion of our Savior. Thus we have had:

- (a) THE DISASTROUS RESULTS OF A DANGEROUS AMBITION WATCHED AND GUARDED AGAINST BY A KINSMAN.
 - (b) THE DISASTROUS RESULTS OF A DANGEROUS AMBITION WATCHED AND GUARDED AGAINST BY A PATRIOT FRIEND.
 - (c) THE DISASTROUS RESULTS OF A DANGEROUS AMBITION WATCHED AND GUARDED AGAINST BY ONE WHO IS UNDER OBLIGATION TO THE AMBITIOUS ONE.
 - (d) OPPOSITION TO A DANGEROUS AMBITION BY A MEMBER OF A PARTY WHICH WILL BE AFFECTED.
 - (e) ONE WHO IS POSSESSED OF A REBELLIOUS AMBITION TO OVERTHROW EXISTING AUTHORITY.
 - (f) CRIME BEING HEAPED UPON CRIME BY AN AMBITION AND COVETOUSNESS.
 - (g) POSSESSED OF AN AMBITION TO MURDER A PARENT IN ORDER TO INHERIT WEALTH OR POWER.
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Situation Number Thirteen

"Fatal Indiscretion"

Indiscretion means imprudence, lack of good judgment. When any character in a story commits an act or takes a step of any kind, which on its face is unwise and which gets him or her into a complication, we have the situation of Fatal Indiscretion. The girl who likes to "take a chance," the clerk who "borrows" the bank's funds for a promising speculation, the fool who points the "I didn't know it was loaded" gun at a friend, and the fellow who "steps on the throttle" to see just how fast an auto will go, are all inviting this situation. Curiosity plays an important part in this situation.

The effect of fatal imprudence as shown by past drama and fiction are:

- (a) MISFORTUNE OF THE IMPRUDENT ONE.
- (b) DISHONOR OF THE IMPRUDENT ONE.

- (c) LOSS OF A LOVED ONE.
 - (d) DEATH OF THE IMPRUDENT ONE.
 - (e) THE DEATH OF A RELATIVE, LOVER OR FRIEND.
 - (f) MISFORTUNE TO A LOVED ONE.
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Situation Number Fourteen

"Pursuit"

Three elements are present here: Punishment, the fugitive who is fleeing from same, and the object of the pursuit.

- (a) UNDER THIS HEAD COMES THE SITUATION WHERE ANY ONE IS PURSUED BY ANOTHER FOR ANY REAL OR FANCIED REASON.
- (b) PURSUIT OF ANYONE IN ORDER TO PERSECUTE THEM BECAUSE OF THEIR INFLUENCE AGAINST A MALIGNANT POWER, ALSO COMES UNDER THIS HEAD.

Example: The case of a reformer who is pursued by immoral interests, or a secret service man who is pursued by a band of robbers.

Situation Number Fifteen

"Rebellion"

Our elements here are: A tyrant, the conspirator and obstacle, or one who revolts. This situation must necessarily begin with a conspiracy, which leads to action—revolt. The sub-classes are:

- (a) CONSPIRACY BY ONE INDIVIDUAL.
In which he plans with himself to revolt.
- (b) THE CONSPIRACY OF SEVERAL INDIVIDUALS.
In which more than one are engaged in the plot.
- (c) THE REVOLT OF THE ONE INDIVIDUAL.
Whose influence or example involves others.
- (d) THE SIMULTANEOUS REVOLT OF MANY.
As in the case of a labor strike.

Situation Number Sixteen***"Enmity Between Kinsmen"***

At first glance this situation would appear to be similar to number twenty, "Kinsman Avenged Against Kinsman." It is very different, as we shall see. In the case of number twenty the kinsman who is the avenger is an innocent party, whereas under the heading of "Enmity Between Kinsmen," both parties may be equally guilty. And again, there may be enmity, and no revenge taken.

- (a) UNDER THIS HEAD COMES ANY SITUATION WHERE ONE MEMBER OF A FAMILY HATES ANOTHER, ONE IS HATED BY SEVERAL OTHERS OR WHERE THE ENMITY IS MUTUAL BETWEEN TWO MEMBERS.
 - (b) INFANTICIDE, OR THE MURDER OF AN INFANT, IS CLASSIFIED UNDER THIS HEAD.
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Situation Number Seventeen***"Effort to Obtain"***

Any situation where an effort is made to secure a concession of any kind through other means than entreaty, comes under this head. It differs from that of entreaty in that ruse, force or eloquence may be used as a means of obtaining the desired end. The supplicant is one who bares his heart and occupies a position of abject humility, or, in other words, throws himself on the mercy of the one to whom the appeal is made. The intentions of the Solicitor, who seeks to obtain, may on the other hand, be questionable.

- (a) RUSE OR FORCE USED IN AN EFFORT TO OBTAIN AN OBJECT.
- (b) PERSUASIVE ELOQUENCE USED IN AN EFFORT TO OBTAIN AN OBJECT.
- (c) ELOQUENCE USED UPON A THIRD PERSON OR ARBITRATOR IN AN EFFORT TO GAIN AN OBJECT WHICH IS POSSESSED BY AN ADVERSARY.

Example: Two persons fall into a dispute over the possession of an object and a disinterested party is called in to be the judge.

Situation Number Eighteen***"Daring Effort"***

This heading is self-explanatory. Under it comes all situations where one or several individuals set out to perform some hazardous undertaking.

- (a) AN ADVENTUROUS EXPEDITION.
Example: Into the wilds of a forest for big game.

- (b) DARING EFFORT TO OBTAIN A BELOVED WOMAN.
 - (c) A DESIRED OBJECT OR PERSON BEING CARRIED OFF.
 - (d) RECAPTURING A DESIRED OBJECT.
 - (e) ENGAGING IN A COMBAT OR FIGHT.
 - (f) ENGAGING IN WAR.
 - (g) EXPLORATION PARTY.
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Situation Number Nineteen

"Vengeance"

The elements are three in number: The Criminal or Guilty One, the Avenger, and the Crime Committed. This situation very frequently is combined with number one in the drama. The two must not be confused, however. Vengeance is often meted out to the criminal at some time after his intended victim has been rescued.

Sub-classes having been used include:

- (a) A SLAIN PARENT OR ANCESTOR AVENGED.
- (b) A SLAIN CHILD OR DESCENDANT AVENGED.
- (c) A SLAIN WIFE OR HUSBAND AVENGED.
- (d) A SLAIN MISTRESS AVENGED.
- (e) A SLAIN OR INJURED FRIEND AVENGED.
- (f) A DISHONORED CHILD AVENGED.
- (g) A DISHONORED OR INSULTED WIFE AVENGED.
- (h) A SISTER WHO HAS BEEN SEDUCED AVENGED.
- (i) INTENTIONAL INJURY AVENGED.
- (j) AN ATTEMPTED SLAYING AVENGED.
- (k) THE VICTIM OF A FALSE ACCUSATION AVENGED.
- (l) VIOLATION AVENGED.
- (m) ONE WHO HAS BEEN ROBBED AVENGED.
- (n) REVENGE UPON A WHOLE SEX OR CLASS FOR A DECEPTION BY AN INDIVIDUAL.

Example: Under this head comes the case of the man or woman hater who, having been disappointed in a member of the opposite sex, seeks revenge upon the entire sex.

- (o) CRIMINALS PURSUED BY THE LAW.
- (p) FEUDALISM.

Situation Number Twenty

"Kindred Avenged Against Kindred"

Without careful analysis this situation would appear to be almost a duplicate of number nineteen. The case of one member of a family being punished by another for a crime or offense against still another member of the same family, certainly constitutes a situation which demands a classification of its own.

The elements which comprise this situation are A Guilty Kinsman, The Avenging Kinsman and the Memory of the Victim, a relative of both.

- (a) THIS SITUATION EMBRACES ANY CASE WHERE ONE MEMBER OF A FAMILY PUNISHES ANOTHER FOR A CRIME OR OFFENSE AGAINST ONE WHO IS A RELATIVE OF BOTH.
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Situation Number Twenty-one

"Mistaken Jealousy"

The question might occur to some: "If mistaken jealousy is a situation, what about jealousy which has real provocation?" True, the latter is a situation but not necessarily a dramatic one. In the case of mistaken jealousy, the simple fact that the suspected one is innocent, makes the situation dramatic. This is a situation which is so frequently utilized by the dramatist to bring about other complications. Through it the hero may be estranged from his heroine or vice versa, thus making way for other dramatic situations and sustaining suspense until the big climax, when all misunderstanding is cleared away and they are united.

- (a) MISTAKEN JEALOUSY ORIGINATED BY THE SUSPICIOUS MIND OF A JEALOUS PERSON.
- (b) MISTAKEN JEALOUSY CAUSED BY AN UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT.
- (c) MISTAKEN JEALOUSY CAUSED BY MALICIOUS RUMORS.
- (d) MISTAKEN JEALOUSY CAUSED BY SUGGESTION OF A TRAITOR WHO SEEKS REVENGE.
- (e) MISTAKEN JEALOUSY CAUSED BY SUGGESTION OF A TRAITOR WHO IS HIMSELF JEALOUS.
- (f) MISTAKEN JEALOUSY CAUSED BY SUGGESTION OF A TRAITOR WHO HAS SOME OTHER PURPOSE IN VIEW.
- (g) PLATONIC LOVE (AN INNOCENT FRIENDSHIP) THE CAUSE OF MISTAKEN JEALOUSY.
- (h) AN UNKNOWN RELATIVE OF THE LOVED ONE MISTAKEN FOR A SUITOR.

Situation Number Twenty-two

"Involuntary Criminal Love"

A situation which requires very delicate handling. The majority of the variations shown below and which have been used in the past would absolutely fail to secure presentation now.

- (a) DISCOVERY THAT ONE HAS MARRIED HIS OWN MOTHER (very illogical).
 - (b) HAVING HAD AS A MISTRESS AN UNRECOGNIZED SISTER.
 - (c) HAVING MARRIED AN UNRECOGNIZED SISTER.
 - (d) HAVING THROUGH THE VILLIANOUS INSTIGATION OF A THIRD PERSON TAKEN A SISTER FOR WIFE.
 - (e) DISCOVERY THAT ONE IS ABOUT TO TAKE A SISTER AS MISTRESS.
 - (f) DISCOVERY THAT ONE IS ABOUT TO VIOLATE, UNKNOWNINGLY, A DAUGHTER.
 - (g) DISCOVERY THAT ONE IS ABOUT TO COMMIT ADULTERY UNKNOWNINGLY.
 - (h) DISCOVERY THAT ONE HAS COMMITTED ADULTERY UNKNOWNINGLY.
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Situation Number Twenty-three

"Struggle Against a God"

This is a situation which has seldom been touched in the photoplay. One reason is because of its unusual nature which requires skillful handling. Another is that most of the dramas which have dealt with the conflict between an Immortal and a Mortal have been myths, which are not yet considered good photoplay material. Film producers demand modern stories, principally for the reason that the public does not appear to take mythological stories seriously. And again they are difficult and expensive to produce if the desired effect is to be secured. There are possibilities of modern stories in this situation, however, which have been overlooked by screen dramatists. Those which we have on record are:

- (a) THE STRUGGLE OF A MORTAL AGAINST A DEITY.
- (b) CONTEST WITH THE FOLLOWERS OF A GOD.
- (c) ENGAGING IN A CONTROVERSY WITH A DEITY.
- (d) BEING PUNISHED FOR CONTEMPT OF A GOD.
- (e) BEING PUNISHED FOR PRIDE BEFORE A DEITY.
- (f) THE RIVALRY OF A PRESUMPTUOUS MORTAL WITH A GOD.
- (g) RIVALRY OF AN IMPRUDENT MORTAL WITH A GOD.

Situation Number Twenty-four

"Abduction"

Here we have three elements or characters: The Guardian, the Abducted and the Abductor. Webster's definition of *Abduction* is: "to take away unlawfully," therefore, we have a different situation here from any which come under number eighteen.

- (a) AN UNWILLING WOMAN ABDUCTED.
 - (b) A CONSENTING WOMAN ABDUCTED.
 - (c) THE SLAYING OF THE ABDUCTOR AND THE RECAPTURE OF THE WOMAN.
 - (d) THE WOMAN RECAPTURED WITHOUT THE SLAYING OF THE ABDUCTOR.
 - (e) A CAPTIVE FRIEND RESCUED.
 - (f) A CAPTIVE CHILD RESCUED.
The kidnapping of children comes under the head of *abduction*.
 - (g) A SOUL IN CAPTIVITY RELEASED.
Example: The daughter of a pagan chief is about to be a willing sacrifice and is rescued against her will.
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Situation Number Twenty-five

"The Sacrifice of all for a Passion"

Under this head comes the situation where one throws self-denial to the wind and gives up everything else in order to indulge in a passion such as drink, gambling, adultery, drugs, unnatural vices, etc.

- (a) THE BREAKING OF RELIGIOUS VOWS OF CHASTITY FOR A PASSION.
- (b) BREAKING A VOW OF PURITY FOR A PASSION.
- (c) THE LOSS OF LIFE TO GRATIFY PASSION.
- (d) DESTRUCTION OF MIND AND HEALTH BY A PASSION.
- (e) RUINING A FUTURE BY THE INDULGENCE OF A PASSION.
- (f) THE LOSS OF POWER CAUSED BY A PASSION.
- (g) LOSS OF HONOR FOR A PASSION.
- (h) LOSS OF FORTUNE BY A PASSION.
- (i) THE SENSE OF JUSTICE, DUTY, PITIY, ETC., SACRIFICED FOR A PASSION.

Situation Number Twenty-six

"Adultery"

This is the situation that is worked overtime in the large number of "sex plays" that we see on the screen today. Just why the search for a dramatic situation should suggest this one to so many writers to the exclusion of all others is difficult to comprehend, unless it is a lack of information concerning the many other possibilities. Its number is 26 but it should be 23 for it, by the beginner in dramatic construction.

- (a) THE BETRAYAL OF A MISTRESS FOR A YOUNG WOMAN.
- (b) THE BETRAYAL OF A MISTRESS FOR A YOUNG WIFE.
- (c) THE BETRAYAL OF A WIFE FOR A SLAVE WHO DOES NOT LOVE THE BETRAYER.
- (d) THE BETRAYAL OF A WIFE FOR A MARRIED WOMAN (being a double adultery).
- (e) THE BETRAYAL OF A WIFE FOR DEBAUCHERY.
- (f) THE CRIME OF BIGAMY, OR POSSESSING TWO WIVES.
- (g) BETRAYING A WIFE FOR A YOUNG GIRL WHO DOES NOT LOVE THE BETRAYER.
- (h) A YOUNG GIRL WHO IS IN LOVE WITH A MARRIED MAN ENVIOUS OF HIS WIFE.
- (i) THE BETRAYAL OF A WIFE BY A PROSTITUTE HUSBAND.
- (j) BETRAYAL OF AN UNLOVING WIFE FOR A CONGENIAL MISTRESS.
- (k) RIVALRY OF A LOVING WIFE AND AN IMPASSIONED GIRL.
- (l) THE SACRIFICE OF AN UNCONGENIAL HUSBAND FOR A LOVER WHO IS THE OPPOSITE.
- (m) BELIEVING HER HUSBAND LOST, THE WIFE GIVES HIM UP FOR A RIVAL.
- (n) A SYMPATHETIC LOVER GIVEN PREFERENCE OVER A COMMONPLACE HUSBAND.
- (o) AN INFERIOR RIVAL GIVEN PREFERENCE OVER A GOOD HUSBAND.
- (p) THE BETRAYAL OF A GOOD HUSBAND FOR AN INFERIOR RIVAL IN ORDER TO MAKE A TOOL OF THE LATTER.
- (q) A WIFE OR HUSBAND KNOWING THE INFIDELITY OF THE OTHER REMAINS PASSIVE FOR THE SAKE OR SOME CAUSE.
- (r) THE PERSECUTION OF A HUSBAND BY A REJECTED RIVAL.

Situation Number Twenty-seven

"Adultery with Murder"

This situation is about a hundred degrees worse than "Adultery" and a great deal more melodramatic. It is simply adultery with the crime of murder added. Adultery reaches the state of murderous adultery when through a desire of either one or both of the adulterers to remove a husband, wife or lover who is an obstacle, murder is committed. This is a mighty good situation to pass by, as the example that it sets is apt to be disastrous. Exceedingly delicate handling will be necessary to get it by the National Board of Review. We have had:

- (a) A HUSBAND SLAIN BY A PARAMOUR.
 - (b) A HUSBAND SLAIN BY A WIFE TO MAKE WAY FOR A PARAMOUR.
 - (c) A WIFE SLAIN BY A MISTRESS.
 - (d) A WIFE SLAIN BY THE HUSBAND TO MAKE WAY FOR A MISTRESS.
 - (e) A TRUSTING LOVER SLAIN TO MAKE WAY FOR A NEW LOVE.
 - (f) THE VICTIM OF AN ADULTERER SLAIN BY HIM TO COVER UP HIS GUILT.
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Situation Number Twenty-eight

"Criminal Love"

The difference between this situation and Number 22 lies in the fact that the parties thereto are willing violators. From a moral standpoint this is the most evil of all the thirty-seven. It is sad to be compelled to admit that a human being, the masterpiece of all God's creations, could be guilty of committing the crimes which constitute this most degrading of all situations, but as it is one of the facets of Life, it must be included among the thirty-seven dramatic situations on which is founded the drama. It is probable that only two, or possibly three, of the variations below which have been used before, are available for presentation in the drama of today.

- (a) A MOTHER CRIMINALLY IN LOVE WITH HER SON.
- (b) A FATHER OR DAUGHTER CRIMINALLY IN LOVE WITH ONE ANOTHER.
- (c) IN WHICH A DAUGHTER IS VIOLATED BY HER FATHER.
- (d) CRIMINAL LOVE BETWEEN STEPMOTHER AND STEPSON.
- (e) A FATHER AND SON, WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF EACH OTHER, ACCEPT THE SAME MISTRESS.
- (f) CRIMINAL LOVE BETWEEN A MAN AND HIS WIFE'S SISTER.
- (g) CRIMINAL LOVE BETWEEN A BROTHER AND SISTER.

Note: There are two other revolting situations recorded but as they are of no value to the drama of the present day, they are omitted.

Situation Number Twenty-nine

"Loved Ones Lost"

This situation differs from Number 33 (Obligation to sacrifice loved ones) in that the loser here has no hand in the shaping of events which cause the loss.

- (a) BEING THE WITNESS TO THE MURDER OF A KINSMAN OR FRIEND AND POWERLESS TO PREVENT IT.
 - (b) COMPELLED BY PROFESSIONAL SECRECY TO BRING MISFORTUNE UPON ONE'S LOVED ONES. (This situation is classified by Polti under the above head, but it appears to the author that it should come under number thirty-three.)
 - (c) FORETELLING THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE THROUGH SOME SUPERNATURAL POWER.
 - (d) BEING ADVISED OF THE DEATH OF A RELATIVE OR FRIEND.
 - (e) THE LOSS OF REASON THROUGH THE DISCOVERY OF THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE.
 - (f) LEARNING OF A SERIOUS ACCIDENT TO A LOVED ONE.
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Situation Number Thirty

"Falling a Prey"—to Misfortune or Cruelty.

An unfortunate, the misfortune and the cause of the misfortune constitute the elements in this situation. Under this head the sub-classes that have been used in drama and fiction are:

- (a) AN INNOCENT PERSON MADE THE VICTIM OF INTRIGUE OR PLOT.

Example: One falls prey to a conspiracy between several others, as in the case of a man who is ruined by his political opponents.

- (b) AN INNOCENT ONE VICTIMIZED BY THOSE WHO SHOULD PROTECT THEM.

Example: One of the most common illustrations of this situation that we find in modern stories, is that of the villain who lures the woman or girl into a compromising position and then robs her of her virtue. The student is advised to seek other variations.

- (c) ONE OF POWER FINDS POSSESSION AND HAPPINESS GONE.
Example: The loss of position, financially, politically or socially.

- (d) FINDING ONE'S SELF FORSAKEN BY AN INTIMATE FRIEND.

- (e) AN UNFORTUNATE ONE BEING ROBBED OF THEIR ONLY HOPE.

Example: The "only hope" might be savings, an invention, a position, a loved one, liberty or one of many other things.

From the standpoint of story or dramatic value those situations which come under the head of number thirty, while not as spectacular, are worth more than those of situation number thirty-one. Heart interest is what is desired in the drama, and it is the problems which beset the individual, rather than the multitude, that touch the vibrant chords of the human heart. Situation number thirty is, however, in many cases, the direct result of number thirty-one. They may, therefore, be woven together very logically.

Situation Number Thirty-one

"Disaster"

Webster's definition of Disaster is "a calamity." In other words, something of a greater magnitude than a simple misfortune. It therefore must be given a different classification from number thirty.

- (a) THE DEFEAT OF AN ARMY.
 - (b) THE FALL OF A NATION.
 - (c) HUMANITY LOST.
 - (d) A NATURAL CATASTROPHE SUCH AS AN EARTHQUAKE, FLOOD OR FIRE.
 - (e) THE OVERTHROW OF A MONARCH.
 - (f) GREAT INGRATITUDE SUFFERED.
 - (g) UNJUST PUNISHMENT OR ENMITY SUFFERED.
 - (h) THE SUFFERING OF AN OUTRAGE.
 - (i) BEING ABANDONED BY A LOVER OR HUSBAND.
 - (j) PARENTS HAVING LOST THEIR CHILDREN.
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Situation Number Thirty-two

"An Innocent Suspected"

In which one is the victim of a mistake which throws suspicion on him. This situation and "Mistaken Jealousy" are probably more similar than any two others. Still there is sufficient difference to warrant separate classification. "Mistaken Jealousy" might be classified under "An Innocent Suspected," but the reverse operation would not work. The former must necessarily be a situation between two lovers, who are supposedly equal in the affections of a member of the opposite sex and the nature of the offence suspected can be nothing else than a betrayal of love. In the latter the victim may be suspected by any one, and of any kind of an offence.

- (a) SUSPICION THAT IS WITHOUT FOUNDATION.
- (b) FALSE SUSPICION OF A MISTRESS CAUSED BY A KNOWLEDGE OF HER PAST.
- (c) SUSPICION AROUSED BY MISUNDERSTOOD ATTITUDE OF A LOVED ONE.
- (d) SUSPICION AROUSED BY INDIFFERENCE OF A LOVED ONE.
- (e) DRAWING FALSE SUSPICION UPON ONESELF TO SAVE A FRIEND.
- (f) FALSE SUSPICION FALLS UPON AN INNOCENT WHO HAS A GUILTY INTENTION.
- (g) FALSE SUSPICIONS FALL UPON AN INNOCENT WHO BELIEVES HIMSELF GUILTY.

- (h) A WITNESS TO A CRIME COMMITTED BY A LOVED ONE OR THEIR RELATIVE PERMITS SUSPICION TO FALL UPON AN INNOCENT PARTY.
 - (i) A WITNESS TO A CRIME PERMITS SUSPICION TO FALL UPON AN ENEMY.
 - (j) FALSE SUSPICION IS THROWN UPON ONE BY AN ENEMY.
 - (k) FALSE SUSPICION IS THROWN UPON ONE BY A RELATIVE.
 - (l) SUSPICION THROWN UPON THE GUILTY ONE BY AN ENEMY WHO DOES NOT ACTUALLY KNOW OF THE GUILT.
 - (m) FALSE SUSPICION THROWN UPON AN INNOCENT ONE BY THE GUILTY.
 - (n) FALSE SUSPICION THROWN UPON THE LOVED ONE OF A PERSON AGAINST WHOM REVENGE IS DESIRED.
 - (o) FALSE SUSPICION THROWN UPON AN INNOCENT ONE BY A RIVAL.
 - (p) FALSE SUSPICION THROWN UPON AN INNOCENT ONE BECAUSE THEY HAVE REFUSED TO BE A PARTY TO THE CRIME.
 - (q) FALSE SUSPICION THROWN BY A MARRIED WOMAN UPON A LOVER WHO HAS DESERTED HER RATHER THAN DECEIVE HER HUSBAND.
 - (r) A MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE IN THE COURTS.
 - (s) STRUGGLE TO REGAIN ONE'S SELF RESPECT AND TO AVENGE A MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE IN THE COURTS WHICH HAS BEEN PURPOSELY COMMITTED.
 - (t) FALSE SUSPICION THROWN UPON AN INNOCENT ONE BECAUSE OF THE COMPANY THEY KEEP.
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Situation Number Thirty-three

"Obligation to Sacrifice a Loved One (or Friend)"

This is a situation which in the opinion of the author is difficult to be made to appear logical. It is at least one in which very little sympathy will be enlisted from the spectator for the one who makes the sacrifice. Of course there may be exceptions, but they are rare. Self sacrifice is by far the more commendable. For example, compare the two Biblical incidents: Where Abraham was called upon by the Almighty to sacrifice his son Isaac, and that of Christ giving up his own life to save a sin lost world. Only an accomplished dramatist should attempt to handle this situation.

- (a) BEING FORCED TO SACRIFICE A DAUGHTER FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD.
- (b) BEING COMPELLED TO SACRIFICE A DAUGHTER IN FULFILLMENT OF A VOW TO GOD.
- (c) THE SACRIFICE OF BENEFACTORS OR LOVED ONES TO ONE'S FAITH.

- (d) SACRIFICING AN UNACKNOWLEDGED CHILD CAUSED BY NECESSITY.
 - (e) SACRIFICING AN UNACKNOWLEDGED FATHER, WIFE OR HUSBAND CAUSED BY NECESSITY.
 - (f) NECESSITY OF SACRIFICING A SON-IN-LAW FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD.
 - (g) NECESSITY OF BECOMING THE OPPONENT OF A RELATIVE OR FRIEND FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD.
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Situation Number Thirty-four

"To Learn of the Dishonor of one who is loved"

A dramatic situation replete with strength and suspense. Here we have an opportunity for our players to display very strong emotions. The question of the attitude that will be taken by the one who makes the discovery is an all absorbing one, and plenty of latitude is given to him or her to exhibit their magnanimity or bigness of heart. "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone," was what the Savior said, when he was confronted with this situation. This is mentioned to illustrate the dramatic power of forgiveness.

- (a) TO LEARN OF THE DISHONOR OF A MOTHER, FATHER, DAUGHTER OR SON.
- (b) TO LEARN OF DISHONOR IN THE FAMILY OF A FIANCEE.
- (c) TO LEARN OF THE VIOLATION, BEFORE MARRIAGE, OF ONE'S WIFE.
- (d) TO LEARN THAT ONE'S WIFE HAD PREVIOUSLY COMMITTED SOME OTHER SIN.
- (e) TO LEARN THAT ONE'S WIFE HAD FORMERLY BEEN A PROSTITUTE.
- (f) TO LEARN THAT ONE'S LOVER IS DISHONORABLE.
- (g) TO LEARN THAT A FALLEN WOMAN WHO IS LOVED HAS RETURNED TO SIN.
- (h) TO LEARN THAT ONE'S WIFE IS DISHONORABLE.
- (i) TO LEARN THAT A SON IS A MURDERER.
- (j) A FATHER PLACED IN A POSITION WHERE HE HAS TO PUNISH HIS SON WHO IS A TRAITOR TO HIS COUNTRY.
- (k) A FATHER PLACED IN A POSITION WHERE HE IS COMPELLED TO PUNISH A SON FOR THE VIOLATION OF A LAW WHICH HE HAS MADE.
- (l) A SON HAVING MADE A VOW TO PUNISH A TYRANT, LEARNS THAT THE SAME IS HIS FATHER.
- (m) BEING COMPELLED TO PUNISH A BROTHER WHO IS A MURDERER.
- (n) TO LEARN THAT ONE'S FATHER HAS MURDERED ONE'S MOTHER (OR VICE VERSA).

Situation Number Thirty-five

"Mental Derangement"

Insanity, Sonambulism, Hypnotism, etc.

Under this head comes any situation where one's mind is deranged or affected, either temporarily or permanently by insanity, sonambulism (sleep walking), hypnotism, passion, lunacy, intoxication, dual personality, drug poisoning, loss of memory or any other cause which might dethrone the reason. This situation has a place in the drama for the reason that many crimes are committed both by and against the victim of such a condition, to say nothing of the unfortunate circumstances that may arise as a cause thereof.

Examples that have been used:

- (a) A KINSMAN SLAIN BY A MADMAN.
 - (b) A LOVER SLAIN BY A MADMAN.
 - (c) AN INNOCENT PERSON SLAIN BY A MADMAN.
 - (d) DISGRACE TO ONE CAUSED BY MADNESS.
 - (e) ONE'S LOVED ONES LOST BECAUSE OF MADNESS.
 - (f) THE FEAR OF HEREDITARY INSANITY CAUSING MADNESS.
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Situation Number Thirty-six

"To Kill a Kinsman or Friend before Recognition"

Here is one of the most tragic situations of the entire thirty-seven. Yet it is said to be one which Shakespeare entirely overlooked in all his writings. Other authors, however, have realized its potential strength, with the following variations:

- (a) BEING UPON THE POINT OF SLAYING A SON, DAUGHTER, BROTHER, LOVER, OR MOTHER BEFORE RECOGNIZING THEM.
Note: The danger of a tragedy constitutes just as much of a situation as the actual happening. Indeed, it may be said to be stronger because of the suspense that is present.
- (b) THE CAUSES LEADING UP TO THESE NEAR-TRAGEDIES ARE LISTED AS FOLLOWS:
The command of a Divinity or Oracle, political necessity, rivalry in love, hatred of the lover of the one about to be slain, professional duty. Mistaking them for an enemy is also a logical cause.
- (c) BEING UPON THE POINT OF SLAYING A KINSMAN OR FRIEND CAUSED BY MALICIOUS INSTIGATION.
Where the plot to bring about the tragedy has been instigated by a third party whose aim is to use an innocent party as a tool to commit murder against his own relative or friend.
- (d) THE REFUSAL TO RESCUE A RELATIVE OR FRIEND WHO IS IN DANGER OF DEATH BECAUSE OF UNRECOGNITION.
This constitutes slaying as much as the actual voluntary act would.

Situation Number Thirty-seven

"*Remorse*"

While remorse is said to be the most poignant emotion that is experienced by a human being, it is difficult to portray on the screen effectively. Its greatest value in the drama is the motivation which it furnishes its victim to involve himself in other dramatic situations, and the introduction of the situation which led up to the crime.

- (a) SUFFERING REMORSE FOR AN UNKNOWN CRIME.

Example: One may have in a fit of madness or insanity committed a crime, the nature of which they may not be aware, and still suffer the pangs of remorse.

- (b) REMORSE FOR THE MURDER OF A PARENT.
- (c) REMORSE FOR THE MURDER OF ANY OTHER PERSON.
- (d) REMORSE AFTER THE MURDER OF A WIFE OR HUSBAND.
- (e) REMORSE FOR HAVING COMMITTED A FAULT OF LOVE.
- (f) REMORSE FOR HAVING COMMITTED AN ADULTERY.
- (g) REMORSE FOR HAVING INVOLUNTARILY CONTRIBUTED TO A DISASTER.