

# COVER UP

Phil Lewis

A Crime Story

## SHORTENED **SAMPLE** VERSION

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*Approx: 15 minutes*

### Cast

<b>RICHARD LEES</b> (Reporter)	20+
<b>MARTHA DOONAN</b> (aging widow)	60+
<b>VOICE</b> (Broadcast over the site's loud speaker system)	Any age

### Programme Notes

New York.

**Cover-Up** is based on a rumour which started the late 60's and was covered up by the US government.

**DDT** is a broad spectrum pesticide, basically kills multitudes of insects at any stage in metamorphosis. But it is also one of the strongest, most durable, long-lasting compounds known to man. Its lifespan, that we know of, is from when it was first used in 1939 to the present and may well endure until the planet is completely destroyed.

### Production Notes

American accents if possible.

Non-practical big red button front of stage.

## COVER UP

(OPEN SET WITH TWO CHAIRS)

(MARTHA DOONAN IS SEATED AND CRYING UNCONTROLLABLY, WITH HEAVING SHOULDERS. THE SMALL HANDKERCHIEF IS NO PROTECTION, NEITHER IS THE COMFORTING ARM OF A STRANGER AROUND HER SHOULDERS. MARTHA IS LETTING GO EMOTIONS THAT HAVE BUILT UP FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS.)

HER COMPANION, RICHARD LEES, DOES NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO. AS A JUNIOR REPORTER FOR THE HERALD, HE HAS NO IDEA HOW TO STOP HER CRYING.

RICHARD STANDS AND WAITS. HER SHOULDERS ARE STILL HEAVING, BUT SHE IS SILENT NOW. THE SOFT, ALMOST ANIMAL WHIMPER HAS CEASED. HE PULLS A CHAIR BESIDE HER AND SITS ON IT. HE WAITS.)

**R:** Can I get you anything, Mrs. Doonan?

(SHE SHAKES HER HEAD. HE FUMBLES IN HIS POCKETS.)

A mint?

(ANOTHER SHAKE. HE MOVES FORWARD TO LOOK OUT OF THE WIDOW – TOWARDS THE AUDIENCE)

Wayne Thomas Inc.

(MAKES A NOTE IN HIS NOTEBOOK)

Huge building. Nicely carved from the red stone of the walls and painted bright white. The name looks dull and out of place now.

**M:** Perhaps I will. If I may?

(HE GIVES THE WHOLE ROLL TO HER.)

Thank you. Most kind.

**R:** Please keep them. Feeling better?

**M:** Yes thank you. How embarrassing!

**R:** Not at all. It's an emotional day for you. We all understand. I'd do the same if I was.....

(SHE WIPES HER EYES AND LOOKS OUT OF THE WINDOW.)

**M:** Ugly. Isn't it?

**R:** Yep. In a beautiful kind of way. Hard to believe it's only sixty-years old. How they built them so ugly....I just don't know.

**M:** It's not just the building that's ugly. It's everything it stood for.

(RICHARD LOOKS AGAIN. NOT SEEING WHAT SHE WAS SEEING.)

You came for the story didn't you?

**R:** Yes. Yes of course.

**M:** Let me tell how ugly that place really is.

**R:** I'm all ears. Just ...don't start crying again. Please.

(SHE HANDS HIM A FOLDER WITH OLD NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS)

**M:** Read these.

(RICHARD READS OUT LOUD)

**R:** The old Thomas building had been in use since it was built in the mid forties. It had always been a factory. Initially a wool mill, with tall wide-open rooms housing huge looms. Providing work for the locals and slowly improving the area's economy. The trade died, most of it going to 'developing' countries.

Small streams ran through the woodlands and trails wound themselves through the lush undergrowth. On a sunny day the air could be filled with butterflies and soft humming insects. The aroma from the shrubs and wild flowers wafted across the land and could be smelt by the small community to the south. During the period when the building lay neglected, the woodlands encroached, covering the pathways and filling the streams.

In the late sixties a new company bought the site and refurbished the building. Adding several floors and offices and a new modern production area. A recruitment campaign started that got the locals excited. Two thousand people were needed to fill this monstrous building.

**M:** Jerome Doonan, my husband, was one of them. He threw himself into his work and spent long hours at Chrome Chemicals Inc.

After two years they had expanded to take up all the available space on the site. Employee figures exceeded three thousand.

**R:** Your husband worked here?

**M:** For several years. Jerome's first hint that problems were approaching on the horizon was when he was asked to give an interview for the local TV station. He was flattered and agreed readily. We were both excited at his short moment of fame and looked forward to the TV crew coming to our home.

The interview lasted under an hour and comprised of a series of questions directed at Jerome. He answered them truthfully. At the end of the session the questioner relaxed and took off his jacket. They talked in a relaxed manner and went over some of the responses Jerome had made to the financial questions. It was all very casual, but it was also fully recorded.

(SHE HANDS HIM ANOTHER FOLDER)

**M:** This is all about DDT.

**R:** (READING) DDT was mainly designed to kill the mosquito. Every 30 seconds, a child somewhere in the world dies of Malaria. It was cheap and easy to produce, but the eco lobby got it banned. Now..... Malaria is undergoing resurgence, worldwide.

Today there are once again millions of cases of Malaria in India, and over 300 million cases worldwide. Only those countries that have persevered with DDT production, such as Ecuador, have contained, or reduced Malaria. Cases of Malaria in South Africa have risen by over 1000 percent in the past few years.

**R:** I never suspected any of this.

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**M:** You're probably too young to understand.

**R:** Too young to understand what

**M:** The sixties and seventies. Corruption in industry and the government.

**R:** Well...I'm a reporter. I have to do research. You may be surprised to know how much.... I know.

**M:** I doubt it.

(SHE POINTS OUT OF THE WINDOW AT THE BUILDING.)

They grew so big with government support they became a law unto themselves. At their height, they were devious and dangerous bastards. To prevent themselves from getting shut down they launched a real dirty tricks programme. They culled ten percent of their staff. Anyone they thought was being disloyal.

**R:** Your husband was one of them. Right?

**M:** Right. Just one of them. They wanted to expand. They ignored the ground swell of opinion that DDT production was dangerous. Even the government was pulling out of funding them and many of the other

production factories. But they were on a mission. They wanted to expand even more. Past this area behind us. They wanted to demolish the small town less than a mile away. Keep building. Keep expanding.

The media were on to them. More like grabbing a tiger by the tail. All employees were forbidden to talk to anyone outside of the company. They became so paranoiac, they bought a fleet of taxis to ferry workers to and from work. Just so they wouldn't get questioned by the media.

**R:** You're joking!

**M:** No I'm not. Do your research. They even disguised them by painting them to look like New York taxis.

**VOICE:** (LOUD SPEAKER ECHOING AROUND THE SITE)

I think we're just about ready. Two minutes everyone. Security and safety to your posts.

**R:** How do you know all these facts?

**M:** I've been fighting my husband's cause for all this time. I know the facts, Mr. Lees.

**R:** Where is your husband now?

**M:** You really must do a research before you interview your subject, Richard. He's gone. Long gone.

**R:** Dead?

**M:** We must assume so.

**R:** What happened?

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