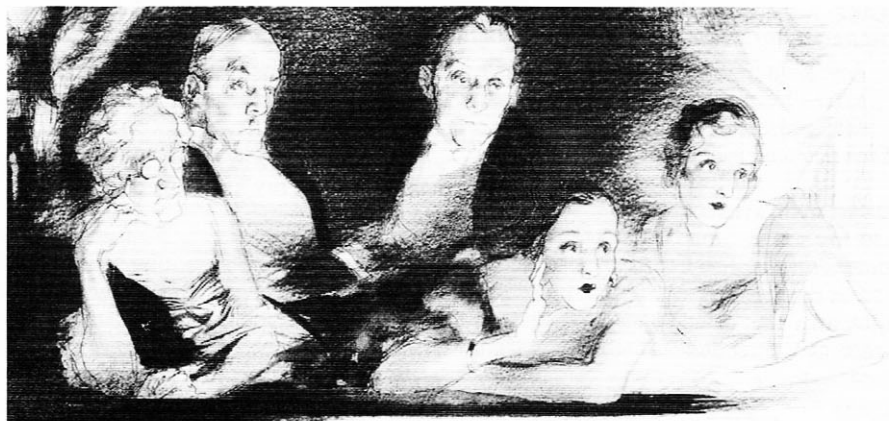


## PERSPECTIVES IN PLAY

by Ellen Tame McKnight



One-act play set in a darkened theater during the last act of an evening performance. Three strangers are seated next to each other facing forward with their attention fixed just above the audience as if watching a play there.

On the left is a **MAN** in his 30s with dark rumpled hair, wearing a loose jacket and no tie. He is slumped down in his chair with his legs stretched out and his ankles crossed and he has a scowl on his face.

In the middle is a **WOMAN** around forty, dressed ultra fashionably and clutching an evening bag in one hand, a Kleenex in the other. She is leaning forward and her face is expressive, empathetic, and deeply concerned.

On the right is a stolid-looking 50-year-old **MAN** in a business suit, sitting upright with his elbows on the arm rests.

**DARK MAN:** [*As if thinking out loud.*] So predictable. I know just where this is going. Postmodern neo-revisionism all the way. And look at that pseudo-progressive technique. Strange costumes and some spray paint on the set and they think they're taking risks. I must've seen over a dozen like this.

[*Counting off on fingers.*] New York, London, Toronto... and now Chicago. Bit of a connoisseur if I do say so myself. Never seen anything I couldn't figure out. [*Woman sniffs slightly, he glances over, then frowns even more.*] Good God, what's she sniveling about? [*Returns attention to stage in disgust.*]

**WOMAN:** [*Thinking out loud.*] I see myself in this and it scares me. Am I so angry too? Am I so obsessive? How can

people stand me? See how they look at her. She's going to lose everything. I must be different somehow. Oh, why do I come to these things! Maybe I'm meant to learn from this, to see myself as I really am, to change before it's too late. I can't stop crying. I know just how she must feel. [*Bites lips, fixes troubled look back on the stage.*]

**STOLID MAN:** [*Thinking out loud.*] Not bad, not bad. Nothing like a decent little show to get your mind off things. [*Looking at his watch.*] Let's see, another few minutes to wind things up...just might make that train after all. Pretty hairdo on that gal. Wonder if it's a wig.

**DARK MAN:** [*Thinking out loud.*] You know, the psychology of this one is kind of intriguing. There's also a certain tension

developing toward the end here. Shame I can tell where it's got to end up. That lady clearly stands for the duality of good and evil in a classic sense brought into the predominantly amoral character of contemporary times. Obviously the author's going for an ironic statement on timelessness and temporality. *[Smiles smugly.]* Just what you'd expect.

**WOMAN:** *[Thinking out loud.]* Why do I feel so powerless? I feel like I'm being swept away. Got to fight it, got to get hold of myself. Can't she see what's about to happen? It all seems so hopeless, so futile. I've got to get out of here. My chest is so tight I can't breathe. It's not me, it's not me! Oh God it's me.

*[Looks despairing, sits even more tensely.]*

**STOLID MAN:** *[Thinking out loud.]* You know, I think I've seen that actress somewhere before. *[Flips through Stagebill.]* Yes, yes, she was in the play I saw last year! How about that. What a small world. *[Looks pleased.]*

*[Suddenly there's a sob and a loud shot, then a cry of gladness and some delighted laughter. All three playgoers sit up and look completely surprised and then smile, bursting into enthusiastic applause.]*

**DARK MAN:** Well, I'll be—that was brilliant.

**WOMAN:** I feel whole again!

**STOLID MAN:** Not bad, not bad. Glad I didn't take off.

*[Lights go up. Audience gather things. The three strangers make ready to side-step down the row of seats and, inadvertently jostling each other, give each other a polite smile in brief acknowledgement.]*

**WOMAN:** Nice play.

**DARK MAN:** Nice play.

**STOLID MAN:** Nice play.

*[Turning their attention back to side-stepping and their own thoughts—DARK MAN with a considering look, WOMAN looking uplifted, STOLID MAN appearing mildly amused—they exit the theater.]* ■