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*Dramatic Publishing*



# The Girl in the Mirror

A Full-Length Drama

by

BRUCE JACOBY



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



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(THE GIRL IN THE MIRROR)

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For Kit and Chris; for Mom and Dad;  
and most especially for Diane.  
Because their faith in me was  
greater than my own.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**  
*(in order of appearance)*

SUSAN CONNORS seventeen years old, bright, poetic, depressed  
Susan's MOTHER . . . . . early forties, lonely, embittered, alcoholic  
DOCTOR . . . . . around thirty, male  
NURSE . . . . . mid-twenties, female  
The SPEAKER . . . . . mid-thirties, male  
Susan's FATHER . . . . . mid-forties  
TEACHER . . . . . kindly woman in her fifties, maternal, concerned  
SAMANTHA . . . . . Susan's friend, eighteen, blonde, pretty  
BRYAN . . . . . late teens, good-looking, athletic  
Bryan's FRIEND . . . . . late teens, male  
GIRL ON THE STREET . . . . . high school age  
MRS. HALE . . . . . Susan's guidance counselor, late thirties  
DR. ALLEN . . . . . warm, gentle, wise, in her forties  
DR. RICHARDS . . . . . clinical, condescending, in his forties  
EXTRAS . . . . . minimum of four for classroom, party, street scenes

*Note:* The DOCTOR, NURSE, Bryan's FRIEND and the GIRL ON THE STREET can be used as extras if needed.

PLACE: A hospital room.

TIME: The present.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

The key to a successful production of this play is timing. The play is a very verbal piece, with quick-changing scenes, numerous and oft-times subtle lighting shifts, dramatic in a psychological, rather than physical, way.

Cues, both the actors' and the lighting, must be prompt. The energy level of the performers must not lag, even in the more subdued scenes. There must be tension throughout.

The **SPEAKER** must remain controlled throughout the play. His is the voice of reason, of strength. His attitude must reflect calm in the midst of confusion.

There are very few set changes. The restaurant in Act I becomes an office in Act II. A television must be struck from the living room between Act I, Scene 2 and Act I, Scene 6. The hospital room, the Speaker's stool, and the classroom remain throughout the entire play. Certain props, such as the party paraphernalia, can be carried on and off by the actors.

# Act One

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## SCENE ONE

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: We see, in a very dim light, a hospital room at R. The room consists of a bed, a small nightstand left of the bed, a chair slightly DR, positioned so the user can talk to the patient, and various pieces of life-support machinery. All the audience sees are shapes. There is a person in the bed, SUSAN, a person in the chair, her MOTHER, and a DOCTOR and NURSE conferring in whispers.

After the audience has had ten seconds to absorb the scene, a bright spotlight reveals the SPEAKER, sitting on a stool, DL. Throughout the second half of his speech, the light on the hospital scene increases until it is brightly lit.

SPEAKER. Of course, there was a lot more going on inside Susan Connors' head than anyone ever knew, or even suspected. There had to be, or else her suicide attempt wouldn't have surprised anyone. That she was depressed was known by her mother and some of her closer friends; that she was suicidal no one even considered. But suicidal she was, and on the morning of April eleventh, after her mother had gone to work and her brother and sister had left for school, Susan locked herself in her room and swallowed the contents of a bottle of sleeping pills she'd found in her mother's bathroom. (SUSAN moves slightly. The NURSE says "Doctor." The MOTHER sits up, alert. The DOCTOR checks Susan's pupils and makes a note on the chart. The SPEAKER had turned to watch the action and now faces the audience again.) Arriving home earlier than usual, Mrs. Connors found Susan's door locked, with no one answering her calls. Using a screw-

driver, she opened the door and discovered Susan unconscious, the empty bottle of pills on the nightstand. She telephoned the police, who, in turn, dispatched an ambulance for Susan. (Lights begin to come up on the hospital scene.) Susan was rushed to the hospital, where she lapsed into a coma. Doctors administered oxygen, pumped her stomach, gave her injections. Throughout the evening, Susan's condition worsened until it appeared that she would not live through the night. Doctors allowed her mother to come in and sit by the bedside. Early the next morning, while making their scheduled rounds, a doctor and a nurse saw Susan twitch slightly. For a few seconds, her pulse seemed to normalize, but then it reverted to its slow, dangerously slow, rhythm. (Lights are now full on the hospital scene. The Speaker's light dims. He turns to watch the action.)

DOCTOR (loudly, close to Susan's ear). Susan. Susan, can you hear me? (He checks her pulse.) Susan . . . can . . . you . . . hear . . . me? (To the NURSE.) Check her blood pressure. (To the MOTHER.) Did she move at all during the night?

MOTHER. No.

DOCTOR. Were you awake all night?

MOTHER. Yes.

DOCTOR. And she didn't move, not once? Eyes fluttering, hand twitching, anything?

MOTHER. I didn't see anything.

DOCTOR. Susan, can you hear me?

MOTHER. What does it mean?

NURSE. Ninety over sixty, Doctor.

DOCTOR (to the NURSE). Look at this, will you? (He refers to the EKG readout.) There's something there, dammit. Her heartbeat sped up for a moment. (To the MOTHER.) Are you *sure* she didn't move during the night?

MOTHER. Yes, I told you. Please, what does it mean? Is she going to die?

DOCTOR. I'm afraid that whether she lives or dies now is largely a matter of her own will. We've done everything we could. Would you mind going back to the waiting room again?



We'll let you know if there's any change. Nurse, check the EKG readout for the night. See if there was any other arrhythmia. (The DOCTOR, NURSE and the MOTHER exit. There is a long pause and a subtle lighting change. The Speaker's light comes up a little and the hospital light dims a little until they are equal in intensity. Both lights are a little murky.)

SPEAKER. Susan. (A pause.) Susan . . . can you hear me? (He gets up and crosses to the bed.) Susan, I know you can hear me. Tell me you can hear me, Susan.

SUSAN (weakly, tentatively). I can hear you.

SPEAKER. That's better. Sit up now. Come, I'll help you. (He helps her sit up, propped on pillows.) And you can take that tube out of your nose. (SUSAN does so.) There now, that's a lot better, isn't it?

SUSAN. I'm not dead?

SPEAKER. Not yet.

SUSAN. Am I going to die?

SPEAKER. That's up to you.

SUSAN. But the other doctor said . . .

SPEAKER. I'm not a doctor, Susan.

SUSAN. The other doctor said I wasn't going to make it. I heard him. That was just before I heard my mother talking to me, reading me the letter.

SPEAKER. You heard all that?

SUSAN. Yes, but it sounded so far away. I tried to answer, but I couldn't. They were so far away. It was like I heard them through the wrong end of a telescope. Does that make any sense?

SPEAKER. Perfect sense. Everyone listens through telescopes.

SUSAN (laughing). You know what I mean, don't you?

SPEAKER. Yes, I know what you mean.

SUSAN. Who are you? You said you weren't a doctor.

SPEAKER. No, I'm not. What did you try to say to them when they were calling you?

SUSAN. I tried to say that I heard them.

SPEAKER. What would you have liked to tell them?

SUSAN. I wanted to tell them . . . I wanted to tell them to . .

SPEAKER. To leave you alone?

SUSAN. Yes, that's right. I wanted to tell them to leave me alone, to go away and let me die.

SPEAKER. Why?

SUSAN. Who are you?

SPEAKER. Do you always answer a question with another question?

SUSAN. Do *you*? (She laughs, catches herself, stops.)

SPEAKER. You have a very nice laugh. Did you know that?

SUSAN (suddenly serious). A lot of people used to say that.

SPEAKER. Why did you stop yourself?

SUSAN. I don't know.

SPEAKER. It's okay to laugh. I wouldn't have told anyone.

SUSAN. Are you some kind of shrink?

SPEAKER. Something like that. I've come to talk to you.

SUSAN. Did my mother send you?

SPEAKER. No.

SUSAN. Who sent for you?

SPEAKER. You did. Do you want to get out of bed?

SUSAN. Can I? I thought you said I was going to die.

SPEAKER. I said it was up to you.

SUSAN. I don't understand.

SPEAKER. Don't you? I'm not a doctor, Susan, and I'm not a psychologist. If the doctor and nurse came through that door, they'd still see you lying in a coma and they wouldn't see me at all. Now, do you understand?

SUSAN. No, I don't.

SPEAKER. Watch. (He helps her out of bed, removing the tubes from her arm. They stand on the left side of the hospital scene.)

(The DOCTOR and NURSE enter from R. They stand near the bed and look down.)

NURSE. There was nothing on the EKG, Doctor.

DOCTOR (to the bed). Susan, can you hear me? (A pause.) All right, it was a false alarm. At least her condition hasn't gotten worse. Keep her on the same medication.

NURSE. Yes, Doctor. (The DOCTOR and NURSE exit.)

SPEAKER. Now do you see what I mean?

SUSAN. Are you some kind of magician?

SPEAKER. Something like that. I can show you things you never saw before.

SUSAN. What kind of things?

SPEAKER. Things that happened in your life. Things that might happen if you let yourself die.

SUSAN. You mean like Scrooge and the ghosts? And don't say "Something like that." (The SPEAKER smiles but does not speak.) You're even crazier than I am.

SPEAKER. Neither of us is crazy, Susan, and neither of us is real. You're really lying in that bed, dying, and I really don't exist.

SUSAN (after a pause). What do you want to show me?

SPEAKER. What do you want to see?

SUSAN. This is ridiculous. Let me just lie down again and you go away.

SPEAKER. Are you afraid you might see something that will change your mind about wanting to die?

SUSAN (defensively). No, of course not.

SPEAKER. Then what are you afraid of?

SUSAN. Nothing.

SPEAKER. Then why not give it a try?

SUSAN. No obligation? No risk?

SPEAKER. There's plenty of risk. You might decide to live.

SUSAN. Can I come back here whenever I want?

SPEAKER. There's plenty of risk. You might decide to live.

SUSAN. Can I come back here whenever I want?

SPEAKER. Whenever you want. There's a machine hooked up to you that registers your heartbeat. If your pulse stops, an alarm goes off and doctors will rush in here to try to revive you. You're about to have a heart attack, Susan.

SUSAN. I'm what?

SPEAKER. The alarm is about to go off.

SUSAN. But . . .

SPEAKER. Don't worry, Susan. We won't be away long. In fact, you can be back in bed before the first person sets a foot through that door. I'm a magician, remember? (A buzzing

alarm sounds loudly as the lights shift. The hospital scene blacks out and lights come up full in the Connors' living room at UL. SUSAN and the SPEAKER move DR and stand in a dim, dim light to watch the action.)

## SCENE TWO

The Connors' living room. There is a sofa, an easy chair, a television set, a small table with liquor bottles, glasses and an ice bucket. Susan's MOTHER sits on the sofa, facing C, and watches television. She has a drink in her hand. Susan's FATHER stands next to the television with his back to the audience. We hear the sounds of a quiz show in progress.)

FATHER. I've found an apartment in town near the office.

MOTHER (looking up momentarily and then going back to her TV show). So?

FATHER. So I'll be leaving soon. Next week.

MOTHER. What's wrong with tonight?

FATHER. You don't care at all, do you?

MOTHER. Not a whole lot, Tom. Not a whole hell of a lot.

FATHER. Would you turn that down so we can talk?

MOTHER. We've talked enough.

FATHER. I don't want to leave.

MOTHER. You're just scared. You'll get over it.

FATHER. I mean I don't just want to walk out on fifteen years.

MOTHER. Pour me a drink, will you, Tom? Shut up and pour me a drink.

FATHER. You've had enough.

MOTHER. I haven't even started. Oh, it's going to feel so good not hearing "You've had enough" all the time. (A long pause. The sounds of the quiz show continue.)

FATHER. Gail, we have to talk.

MOTHER. What about?

FATHER. The kids.

MOTHER. (She gets up, pours herself a drink and returns to the sofa.) What about them?

FATHER. Do you want them?

MOTHER (laughing). You talk about them like they were pieces of furniture. Like you can take them back where they came from and get your money back. It doesn't work that way, Tom. (A pause.) Don't worry, I won't make you take them with you.

FATHER. You don't have to worry about money. The house is almost paid off . . .

MOTHER. And you'll pay me well, right? That's real big of you. (A pause.)

FATHER. I'd better tell them.

MOTHER. Leave them alone. They're in bed.

FATHER. Susan should still be up, shouldn't she? It's not her bedtime yet, is it?

MOTHER. You even argue with yourself.

FATHER (calling out). Susan! Susan, come down a minute! (The lights come up a little on SUSAN and the SPEAKER.)

SUSAN. They look so different.

SPEAKER. So young?

SUSAN. Yeah, that's it. They look like they did years ago. My mom's hair, the old television set . . .

FATHER. Susan, I'm calling you!

MOTHER. Oh, leave her alone.

FATHER. *Susan!*

SPEAKER. Your father's calling you, Susan. Aren't you going to answer?

SUSAN. Should I?

SPEAKER. They're your parents.

SUSAN. But that was a different time. This is me, now, not then.

SPEAKER. They'll see you as you were then - - eleven years old.

SUSAN. When is this?

MOTHER. Will you kindly shut up and let me watch my show?  
FATHER (angrily shutting off the television). The hell with your show. *Susan!*

SPEAKER. Don't you remember, Susan? It was six years ago. Your parents were about to tell you that they were getting a divorce. Don't you remember?

MOTHER (softly, sarcastically). Susan, come down. Your father has some wonderful news for you.

SUSAN. Oh, my God, I remember.

FATHER. Are you coming down or do I have to come up and get you?

SUSAN. What should I say?

SPEAKER. Don't you remember what you said that night?

SUSAN. No.

SPEAKER. You will. Now, you'd better answer. (SUSAN hesitates and then crosses to the living room. The light on the SPEAKER dims and he stands in shadow.)

SUSAN (entering). Yeah?

FATHER. Sit down, Susan. (She does.) Finish your homework?

SUSAN. I was working when you called me.

MOTHER (baiting). Your father wants to tell you something, Susan.

SUSAN. What?

FATHER. This might confuse you, Susan, but you have to try to understand. Okay?

SUSAN. Okay. Why were you fighting again?

FATHER. That's what we wanted to talk to you about, honey. You see, sometimes married people don't get along too well, and they fight a lot. Mommy and I have been fighting much too much recently and, well, we don't think it's a very good thing for us or for you.

SUSAN. It keeps me awake at night.

MOTHER. It keeps me awake, too.

FATHER. I'm sorry, Susie. Mom and I have been trying to think of a way to stop fighting all the time, but we can't come up with a good answer. Do you understand so far?

SUSAN. Don't you love Mom anymore?

MOTHER. Hah!

FATHER (looking directly at MOTHER). Yes, Susan, I still love your mother. But we don't want to live with each other anymore.

SUSAN. I don't understand.

MOTHER. Your father is moving out, Sue. He's leaving us.

FATHER. That's not true! Susan, I'm leaving Mommy. I'm *not* leaving you, or Eddie, or Janice.

MOTHER. I stand corrected. Your father is leaving *me*. He's leaving *me* next week.

SUSAN. Daddy . . . ?

FATHER. That's right, Susan. I'm going to live by myself for a little while.

SUSAN. But what about me?

FATHER. You'll stay here and help Mommy take care of your brother and sister.

SUSAN. But I want to be with you.

FATHER. You'll have to stay here. I know it's not . . .

SUSAN. Don't you love me?

FATHER. Of course I love you. Oh, Susie . . . (He reaches for SUSAN but she runs off R.) Susie, come back here. Susan, where are you going? (The lights go out on the living room and come up full on the SPEAKER who waits at R. SUSAN runs R until she is stopped by the SPEAKER.)

SPEAKER. Susan, where are you going?

SUSAN. Leave me alone!

SPEAKER. Tell me where you're going!

SUSAN. Leave me alone! Please leave me alone! (She is near hysteria.)

SPEAKER. *Susan!* (He shakes SUSAN by the arms and she quiets. She stops struggling.) How do you feel? (A pause.

SUSAN does not reply.) Talk to me, girl! How do you feel?

SUSAN (after a pause, quietly). Hurt.

SPEAKER. Hurt how?

SUSAN (beginning to panic again). Hurt! Alone. Deserted. Oh, I don't know. Please . . .

SPEAKER. Susan, calm down. (She does.) Tell me how you feel.

SUSAN. He doesn't love me.

SPEAKER. That's not what he said. (A pause. He speaks louder.) That's not what he said!

SUSAN. Mom's a drunk and he never loved me.

SPEAKER. Your mother is an alcoholic?

SUSAN. Look at her!

SPEAKER. Didn't you know that before?

SUSAN (quietly). No. No, I just saw it now for the first time.

SPEAKER. Does it surprise you?

SUSAN. No. No, I guess not.

SPEAKER. She always drank a lot, didn't she?

SUSAN. Yes.

SPEAKER. But you didn't think she was an alcoholic?

SUSAN. How was I to know?

SPEAKER. Go back, Susan. Go back and talk to them.

SUSAN. I can't. No, please, I can't. Please, I want to talk to someone, but not them . . .

SPEAKER. Who, then? Go to them. Tell them how you feel.

SUSAN. No, I can't tell them.

SPEAKER. Yes you can, Susan. (SUSAN turns as lights come up on the living room scene. Susan's parents are still there; in their last positions. SUSAN crosses L and enters the scene. The Speaker's light goes out and he returns to his stool.)

SUSAN. Daddy . . . ?

FATHER (opening his arms as SUSAN runs to him and hugs him). Oh, Susie, oh, my poor baby! I'm so sorry . . . There now, stop crying.

SUSAN. Daddy, do you have to leave?

FATHER. Yes, Susie, I have to.

SUSAN. I don't care if you fight. I don't want you to go.

FATHER. Hey, come on, now. It won't be that bad. We'll still see each other on weekends.

SUSAN. Every weekend? Do you promise?

FATHER. Yes, baby, I promise. Every weekend.

MOTHER. Susan, I think it's past your bedtime.

FATHER. Let her stay up a little longer, Gail. Just this once.

SUSAN. Let me stay a little, please, Mom? Please let me stay?  
(The lights black out on the living room scene.)