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*Dramatic Publishing*

# **Trio**

by  
Mark Smith-Soto

From...

## **35 in 10**

Thirty-Five Ten-Minute Plays

Compiled and Edited

KENT R. BROWN



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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# **TRIO**

By  
Mark Smith-Soto

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**Trio** (originally entitled **Deal With This: Trio From the Holocaust Museum**) was first produced by Theatre Orange of the Arts Center of Carrboro/Chapel Hill as one of the winners of the 2003 “Ten by Ten in the Triangle” Competition. It was directed by Thomas (TeKay) King, and featured David Byron Hudson, Donald Shenton and Larry Evans.

### CHARACTERS

SOLDIER: In his early 20s. Thin, dark, nervous.

CAPTAIN: In his late 30s. A precise and controlled man.

PRISONER: In his 40s. Thin, dark, intense.

SETTING: A Nazi camp. The theatrical space should be filled with an impressionistic use of light and sound, the shadow of barbed wire, background echoes of metallic voices and muffled grief. The specific details do not matter, just the nightmare sense that pervades those awful moments when our humanity is tested beyond its limits, and even God seems to turn His face away.

TIME: 1941...2001... Anytime.

## TRIO

AT THE CURTAIN: *Shadows and light.*

SOLDIER.

Why me? Was it merely an accident  
he found me alone for a moment, I stooping  
to hike up my boot, he the last of the group  
to leave the room? Or had he planned ahead:  
this is the one, he's my best shot? I caught  
him staring at me twice, and twice I held  
his eye to teach him how to give, to force  
my will like when a boy must train a dog  
to stay. He must have misunderstood, I  
don't know what he imagined he saw,  
maybe pity for the blonde and her two girls,  
I did speak gently to them before I  
felt his eyes on me, almost forgot for  
a moment why they and I were here. Didn't  
really forget, who could, but fell into  
a place inside myself where these faces  
repeated like words that somehow mattered...  
What were they saying? Nothing my own wife  
and daughters said, as I got up from breakfast  
months ago, hanging in play from my belt  
and holster, kissing my neck goodbye at the door.  
That was the language of home; now a different  
language ordered things along...

PRISONER.

...And so I watched

him check the bodies one by one, touching us  
as little as possible and pushing us on,  
afraid to feel the muscle and the bone  
move under clothes already turning rags.  
I saw him talk too much so his lip would  
not tremble, I noted the way his eye  
lingered on the woman ahead of me,  
her voice soft in her girls' ears explaining  
that the trip would go on for just a while longer,  
that they were almost there...

SOLDIER.

...I moved them by  
and passed on to the next, and this was him:  
a shapeless jacket torn at the lapels,  
stony eyes behind those dirt-smeared glasses,  
and had the thought, not much lost here,  
and shoved him to the left. But later then,  
my watch almost over, his face appears,  
me hunched over my boot, he hunched over  
his words, hands together like they were glued,  
mouth moving softly, quickly, whispering  
his pleases, shooting looks like a frightened bird...

PRISONER.

...They hate it when  
you beg; it makes them feel. I'd seen it before,  
could count on that recoiling fear to fall  
all over me and make the world stop.  
It is important that you understand.  
Death was the only freedom that could matter  
to a man who'd stood and watched from somewhere  
outside his skin, his sister picked up by

the arm and flung against a wall. The stain of that sound ran down my throat into the pit of my body, and the look she turned on me stuck and hardened; I was a stone myself. She screamed and ran at the man who took her to the next room and made her quiet at last, but very slowly...

SOLDIER.

Some sixty years have passed, and still I see him crouched in front of me, his dark intense smell in my face, his sudden body scaring me to my feet so I almost fell. They know how to shrink their shoulders and beg in that aggressive way— I don't know what he saw in my face, why choose me to wheedle with his yellow eyes?

CAPTAIN.

All wrong, the way he lost all pride. scrambling to his feet like a frightened dog, the way he held his head stiff listening to the Jew jabbering away, face gone blank, dry mouth ajar. Even from the other side of the yard, through the open window, I could see him breathing hard, could feel him tremble in his uniform, saw how he was listening. I almost yelled, but felt compelled to let them show me what could happen between the two of them, the way any nakedness demands to be watched.