

# Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

*Dramatic Publishing*



---

A One-Act Play

# **The Girl in the Mirror**

By  
**BRUCE JACOBY**



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

---

\*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\*

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalogue and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed anytime it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to:

DRAMATIC PUBLISHING  
P. O. Box 129., Woodstock, Illinois 60098

***COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES.*** This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved. *On all programs this notice should appear:*

"Produced by special arrangement with  
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois"

©MCMLXXX by  
BRUCE JACOBY

Printed in the United States of America  
*All Rights Reserved*

(THE GIRL IN THE MIRROR)

ISBN 0-87129-317-X

**MY THANKS TO MS. MELANIE GALLO  
OF FITCHBURG (MASS.) HIGH SCHOOL  
FOR HER HELP IN PREPARING  
THIS ONE-ACT VERSION.**

# THE GIRL IN THE MIRROR

*A One-Act Play  
for Six Men, Five Women, Extras*

## CAST OF CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

SUSAN CONNORS .seventeen years old, bright, poetic, depressed  
MOTHER . . . . .early forties, lonely, embittered, alcoholic  
DOCTOR. . . . .around thirty, male  
The SPEAKER . . . . .mid-thirties, male  
Susan's FATHER . . . . . mid-forties  
MRS. DOUGLAS . . . . .kindly woman in her fifties, maternal  
SAMANTHA . . . . . Susan's friend, eighteen, blonde, pretty  
BRYAN. . . . .late teens, good-looking, athletic  
Bryan's FRIEND. . . . . late teens, male  
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, DR. ALLEN, DR. RICHARDS and Bryan's FRIEND may be used as extras if necessary.

TIME: The Present  
PLACE: A Hospital Room

## 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.

---

## The Girl in the Mirror

---

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, making notes.

After the audience has had ten seconds to absorb the scene, a bright spotlight reveals the SPEAKER, sitting on a stool DL.

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, and on the morning of April eleventh, Susan swallowed the contents of a bottle of sleeping pills she'd found in her mother's bathroom. (SUSAN moves slightly. MOTHER says, "Doctor," and 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

discovered Susan unconscious and telephoned the police. (Lights begin to come up on the hospital scene.) Susan was rushed to the hospital, where she lapsed into a coma. Throughout the evening, Susan's condition worsened until it appeared that she would not live through the night. But early the next morning, while making his scheduled rounds, a doctor 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. Susan, can you hear me? (He checks her pulse. 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. Would you mind going back to the waiting room again? We'll let you know if there's any change. (The DOCTOR 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.) 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.)

SUSAN. I'm not dead?

SPEAKER. Not yet.

SUSAN. Am I going to die?

SPEAKER. That's up to you.

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? (The SPEAKER nods affirmatively.)

SPEAKER. What did you try to say to them when they were calling you?

SUSAN. 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. Are you some kind of shrink?

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

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 came through that door, he'd still see you lying in a coma and he wouldn't see me at all.

SUSAN. What are you, a magician?

SPEAKER. Something like that. I can show you 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

speaking.) 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. 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. Whenever you want. There's a machine hooked up to you. 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. I'm what?

SPEAKER. The alarm is about to go off.

SUSAN. But . . .

SPEAKER. Don't worry. 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.)

(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 near the office.

MOTHER (looking up momentarily and then going back to her television 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. Pour me a drink, will you? Shut up and pour me a drink.

FATHER. Gail, we have to talk.

MOTHER. What about?

FATHER. The kids. (MOTHER gets up, pours herself a drink, and returns to the sofa.)

MOTHER. Don't worry. I won't make you take them with you.

FATHER. I'd better tell them.

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

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. So young.

FATHER (interrupting). Susan, I'm calling you!

SPEAKER. It was six years ago. Your parents were about to tell you that they were getting a divorce. Do 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. (SUSAN hesitates and then crosses to the living room. The light on the SPEAKER dims and he stands in the shadow.)

SUSAN (entering). Yeah?

FATHER. Sit down, Susan. (SUSAN sits.) Finish your homework?

SUSAN. I was working when you called me. 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.

SUSAN. It keeps me awake at night.

MOTHER. It keeps me awake, too.

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.

FATHER. 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. 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! (She is near hysteria.)

SPEAKER. *Susan!* (He shakes SUSAN by the arms and she quiets down, then 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. He doesn't love me.

SPEAKER. 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. How was I to know?

SPEAKER. So they were divorced. (SUSAN nods.) Is that when you started writing poetry?

SUSAN. Not quite. That was when I was thirteen.

SPEAKER. Remember this? "I hate my mother, I hate my father. I think all parents are one great bother."

SUSAN. Don't embarrass me. That was the first thing I ever wrote.

SPEAKER. At least it rhymes. (Lights come up on a classroom scene, UR. MRS. DOUGLAS stands. Some STUDENTS sit. As MRS. DOUGLAS speaks, SUSAN crosses to the scene and takes a seat. The SPEAKER remains on his stool as the light dims on him.)

MRS. DOUGLAS. (As she reads, the STUDENTS write. Then, one by one, they approach the desk and deposit their sheets of paper. SUSAN is the last to do this.) "Some say the world will end in fire/ Some say in ice/ From what I've tasted of

desire/ I hold with those who favour fire/ But if I had to perish twice/ I think I know enough of hate/ To say that for destruction ice/ Is also great/ And would suffice.” (SUSAN remains standing at the desk. The other STUDENTS return to their chairs. The light dims on the classroom scene but remains strong on SUSAN and MRS. DOUGLAS.) Susan, this is . . . interesting. Do you mind telling me how you see nuclear holocausts and the destruction of the ozone layer in this poem?

SUSAN. I thought you said poetry is subjective.

MRS. DOUGLAS. I didn’t say you were wrong. I’m just curious as to your thought process.

SUSAN. I wrote a poem about Frost’s poem. Would you like to hear it?

MRS. DOUGLAS. Yes, I’d like that.

SUSAN (reading from a notebook). “I sit in a dark, dingy classroom, while strangers around me dissect a dinosaur. They seem more interested in where a comma is placed than in how I feel.”

MRS. DOUGLAS. Do you call that a poem?

SUSAN. Yes.

MRS. DOUGLAS. It doesn’t even rhyme!

SUSAN. Does it have to?

MRS. DOUGLAS. When you begin to study poetry, yes, it must rhyme. It’s the only way to learn form.

SUSAN. I’ll try again. (SUSAN returns to her desk and the lights come up full on the classroom.)

MRS. DOUGLAS. Class, Susan Connors has decided to express her thoughts about Robert Frost with a poem of her own. Susan, would you read it to us, please?

SUSAN. Mrs. Douglas, I don’t think —

MRS. DOUGLAS (interrupting). Now, Susan, there’s nothing to be embarrassed about. Does your new version rhyme?

SUSAN (hesitant but amused). Yes, it rhymes.

MRS. DOUGLAS. Well, I'm sure your friends would love to hear what you've written.

SUSAN (shyly). "Some folks say that Robert Frost/ Would write a poem for any cost/ Some folks say that "Fire and Ice"/ Would have been cheap at twice the price/ I say, though, that tho' a hit/ This poem of his/ Just ain't worth sh. . ."

MRS. DOUGLAS. *Susan!* (The STUDENTS laugh.)

SUSAN. I'm sorry, Mrs. Douglas. I was going to write "garbage," but it wouldn't have rhymed. (The STUDENTS file out. SUSAN remains at her desk.)

MRS. DOUGLAS. I'm very disappointed with you, Susan.

SUSAN. Why should you be? I made it rhyme. Mrs. Douglas, please, this stuff is so boring. Can't we study a real poet?

MRS. DOUGLAS. Robert Frost isn't real?

SUSAN. Maybe for you, but he's not real for me.

MRS. DOUGLAS. You're serious about poetry, aren't you?

SUSAN (brightening). Yes, ma'am.

MRS. DOUGLAS. Why don't you go to the library and find someone you'd like to study. We'll do it as a special project.

SUSAN. Really?

MRS. DOUGLAS. Yes, really. (A pause.) You think I'm a stuffy old lady, don't you, Susan?

SUSAN. No, Mrs. Douglas.

MRS. DOUGLAS. Susan . . . do you?

SUSAN. Yes, Mrs. Douglas. (She starts to exit R.)

MRS. DOUGLAS (laughing gently). Never mind. Oh, and Susan . . .

SUSAN (turning). Yes?

MRS. DOUGLAS. If you think I'm upset about your use of language, you're correct. But not because of your rhyme. (She pauses, then smiles at SUSAN.) You used the word "ain't." I detest that word. You should have written "isn't." "Isn't worth . . . garbage."

---

SUSAN (taking a step toward the door, pausing, then turning and smiling). Too many syllables, Mrs. Douglas. (SUSAN exits. The lights go out on the classroom scene and come up on the SPEAKER on his stool, DL.)

SPEAKER. A kind of friendship was formed between Susan and Mrs. Douglas. In Susan, the teacher found a willing young student, one to whom she could impart her love of poetry. In Mrs. Douglas, Susan found, for the first time, an adult who treated her like a person instead of a little kid.

(SUSAN enters DR and stands in a pool of light.)

SUSAN. You're trying to say that she became my surrogate mother, aren't you?

SPEAKER. How old were you?

SUSAN. Fifteen.

SPEAKER. What was going on in your life?

SUSAN. The usual stuff: too many pimples, not enough dates.

SPEAKER. What about your father?

SUSAN. He remarried that year.

SPEAKER. Your mother?

SUSAN. She drank. I'd rather not talk about her.

SPEAKER. Bryan?

SUSAN. Let's talk about my mother.

SPEAKER. Why not Bryan?

SUSAN. I'd rather not.

SPEAKER. You've been avoiding him.

SUSAN. So?

SPEAKER. Okay. Have it your way. Did you have friends?

SUSAN. A few. One in particular.

SPEAKER. Who was that?