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Dramatic Publishing



Film Noir

by
Bathsheba Doran

From...

35 in 10

Thirty-Five Ten-Minute Plays

Compiled and Edited

KENT R. BROWN

This excerpt contains strong language.



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FILM NOIR

By
Bathsheba Doran

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Film Noir was produced in 2004 by Point B at the Blue Heron Arts Centre in New York City as part of “States of Undress: An Evening of Ten-Minute Bedroom Plays.”

CHARACTERS

WOMAN:

The classic guy and girl from film noir—
The Maltese Falcon look.

MAN:

AUTHOR’S NOTES: This play was inspired by film noir of the 1940s. When writing it, I saw movement against those filmic locations—a rainy street under a lamppost, a private dick’s office, a nightclub. The play is also about the limitations of roles, for actors and, relatedly, for men and women. In some ways, therefore, the play seems to take place on a film set and in a bedroom.

I do not specify any one of these locations, but encourage a non-realistic design that allows an audience to experience the piece on a number of levels, and affords the actors the possibility of moving through different spaces during the performance. At the very opening, however, the evocation of classic 1940s film noir should be absolutely clear, at least from the costuming.

Finally, above all, we are in a theater. While I specify no particular places in the text, the actors should play with addressing some lines to the audience, as well as to each other.

FILM NOIR

WOMAN. What'cha doin' under that lamppost?

GUY. Thinkin'.

WOMAN. About what?

GUY. 'Bout how sordid the underground is. Gambling, gangsters, women who'll destroy you to get at their husband's money.

WOMAN. You wanna light my cigarette? (*He does.*)

GUY. Nice stems.

WOMAN. I grew them myself.

GUY. I gave birth to the rain. I looked up at the weather and it didn't suit my mood, so I thought of rain.

WOMAN. I thought of stockings. I thought of what a man would want to see on my legs if he wanted to come between them. I thought of the hair I hadn't shaved off them. And then I thought of stockings. (*A beat.*)

GUY. You want to fight?

WOMAN. You want to fight and fuck?

GUY. You wanna solve a crime?

WOMAN. You want me guilty at the end or innocent? Or retrospectively understood?

GUY. How 'bout I'm jealous.

WOMAN. How 'bout it's my fault.

GUY. And mine.

WOMAN. Yeah, I play around 'cause you treat me like shit.

GUY. It beats pizza. (*A beat.*)