

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



UNSPOKEN FOR TIME

A Play in Two Acts

by

JEFF BARKER



Dramatic Publishing

*** 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 any time 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 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"

©MCMXCVI by
JEFF BARKER

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(UNSPOKEN FOR TIME)

Cover design by Susan Carle

ISBN 0-87129-646-2

And her brother Absalom said to her, "Hath Amnon thy brother been with thee? But hold now thy peace, my sister: he is thy brother; regard not this thing."
So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house.

-II Samuel 13:20

...you will know the truth,
and the truth will make you free.

-Jesus

Acknowledgements

I want you to get some idea of the weight of assistance behind this work.

First, thanks to Professor Karen Bohm Barker, who inspired and encouraged and worked for this project all through its birth process.

Then, thanks to Professor Kenn Robbins who nurtured the original draft at the University of South Dakota (along with the helpful input of fellow playwrights DeAnna, Paula, Cara, Bruce, Diane, and Peter).

Thanks to Amy and Crissinda who first played the roles of Diane and Samantha in acting class at USD.

Thanks to Professor Eric Hagen who facilitated the script's staged reading at USD (and to the cast members: Amy, Pris, Lynnette, Ron, Kelly, Kimberlee Soc, David, Beth, Lana, Laurie, David, Aaron, Chris, and Natasha). Thanks to the audience members who provided verbal and written feedback to the reading, especially Professor Linda Wigley Scribner and Sharon Smits (family counselor), who each provided me extended personal interviews in the week following the performance.

Thanks to my professional scene designer friend, Dan Ostling, who read the script and gave me the passionate, encouraging, exacting criticism I have come to expect from him.

Thanks to legal professionals Mark Schouten (State's attorney) and Del Wallinga (Sheriff's department sexual abuse investigator) for their careful readings of the text and detailed written responses.

Thanks to Tracey Kreiten Prichard (social worker), Professor Andy Johnson (psychology), and Dr. Don Lindskoog (psychologist) for helpful data and commentary.

Thanks to John, Kari, Paul, Mary Ann, Doris, Kathy, Joe, and Richard for reading the play in early drafts. Thanks to Dr. Robert Swier and the summer research grant program of Northwestern College for providing the writer's most precious commodity: time.

Thanks to Professor Julia Pachoud for her loving and complete commitment to the play in preparation for her "new play in progress" production at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Thanks to her cast (Jenny S., Jenny G., Jason, Aaron Walters, Cari, Mary Beth, Julie V., Julie M., Rachel, Kerri, Mike, Aaron Wimmer, Wendy, and Stephanie) and her wonderful production staff, with special thanks to Tim, Sarah, Diane and Christian.

Thanks to the beloved cast and production team at Northwestern College who gave the completed play its premiere production (Danyale, Joy, Scott, Ryan, Daniel, Sarah, Paul L., Kris, Kira, Eileen, Tina, Kenda, Jennifer, Angela, Josh, Jason, Craig, Sally, Paul B., Jeff, Heidi, Shad, Amy, Toby, Lisa, and Jill). By the way, "completed" should have been in quotes. I change my plays nearly every time I look at them again. And I encourage directors to make whatever changes are necessary to make the play work for the immediate production circumstances.

Thanks to Professors Keith Allen and Jeff Taylor for their help in preparing the text for the premiere at Northwestern College.

Special thanks to Sarah Yocum Ellis, a fellow playwright and the dramaturg of the Northwestern College production, who read many drafts and held countless discussions with Karen and me. Sarah's mark appears all over this play. Thanks to playwright Dan Plato for his excellent feedback following the Northwestern College production. Thanks to Mary Ann Blezien, Deb Menning, and Stage Two director Tim

For Suzee

AFTERWORD

It was in 1990 that I began to hear the stories in a new way. This was no longer a program on television or a film. This was not something I was reading in a magazine or book. I, for the first time in my life, heard the stories from real women who were an ongoing part of my own day-to-day existence. They varied in age, personality, and response to the hidden horrors of sexual abuse in their personal pasts. Two facets of their stories were strikingly recurrent:

- 1) The abuse occurred in a place of supposed safety.
- 2) Those closest to the victim were shielded from the full truth of the event. This included family members and, often, the victim herself via subconscious altering of the memory.

The characters of *Unspoken for Time* are fictitious, but the stories in this play are indebted to women who have courageously formed the images of their memories into words and given those words breath.

While listening to these survivors, their family members, and their friends, I became aware that there are many stages in the journey. Some survivors are ready to see this play, and for them, it hopefully will be a healing moment. For others, it would be too difficult.

Directors of this play are encouraged to determine an excellent means to inform potential audiences about the content of the play. I used to have the following subtitle on the play: "a compassionate journey into the nightmare of sexual abuse." I took it off, because *Unspoken for Time* is not simply a "sexual abuse" play. It has many other, more universal themes, such as love, friendship, family, and our responsibility to care for others.

Nevertheless, I want potential audiences to have some advance notice of the play's content so they can better decide whether or not this is an experience they wish to have at this particular point in their personal journeys.

Unspoken for Time is written with hope for those who have yet to speak and those who have yet to listen.

Jeff Barker
Orange City

PRODUCTION NOTES

SETTING:

The space presents various locations in the present (a farm kitchen, college dorm room and hallway, library, and various locations to which Clare places phone calls) as well as locations in Diane's memory.

The play uses time and space fluidly. Scenes overlap with one another, and there is never a blackout except at the ends of the acts.

The action on the farm and at the college all occurs on a raked, elliptical platform which occupies most of the down center area. A few furniture pieces represent the kitchen, dorm, and library. Some pieces are shared between the three rooms, allowing an efficient, theatrical overlapping of the spaces. The kitchen contains an island/counter, two stools, and a window seat. The library uses the window seat from the kitchen and an additional, square lounge seat. The dorm uses a bed, a small table, one of the stools in the kitchen, and the lounge seat from the library. The kitchen is stage R, the library DC, and the dorm stage L. There are no literal doors or walls anywhere.

The McCall's house is represented by a small telephone table off the platform at stage R. Gil carries a portable phone, and Joseph carries a desk phone, both at stage L.

The support group world is represented by six identical chairs. Each woman carries a chair onstage to sit in during her monologue. She then leaves the chair at the side of the elliptical platform, turning it in to face the action.

Diane's memory is represented by a U, raked platform leading up to a scrim. In front of the scrim hang several individual swaths of gauze. Characters can trace through them, as if through a maze.

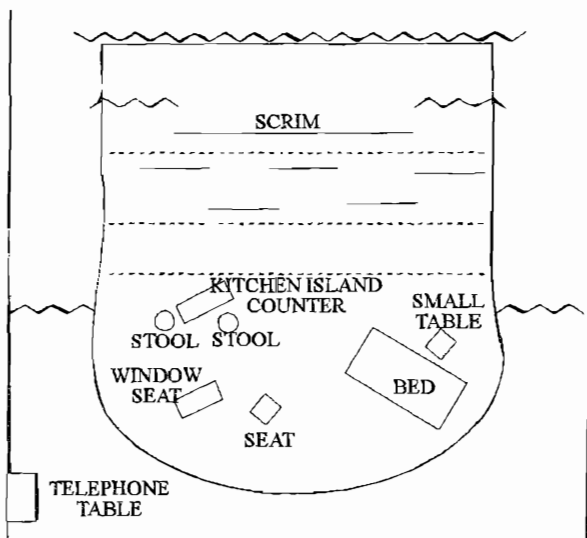
The scrim and the swaths of gauze are used to reveal, through light, various images that are part of Diane's memory. These images should be evocative and not completely understood until later in the play when they become clearer to Diane herself. Some images are supplied in the text as possibilities for the design team's consideration.

The images upstage of the fabric are called **BLANKS-EFFECTS** in the body of the script. This is simply a shortcut term used for this play. The term refers to blank spots in Diane's memory that are suddenly filled in, at first in brief, puzzling increments. With each **BLANKSEFFECT**, there is a sound cue accompanying a light cue. Sometimes the sound is startling. Othertimes, it may be more subtle, perhaps resembling the rumble of a heavy truck going past on the highway during the night. The light and sound of each **BLANKS-EFFECT** last as long as the memory is being revealed.

Because of the fluid scene changes, Diane seldom leaves the stage. This means that her basic costume must remain the same with only slight adjustments in the costume occurring while she is onstage.

SET PLOT

UNSPOKEN FOR TIME



ACT ONE

AT RISE: *Harmonica starts to play "Love's Old Sweet Song." House lights out. As the last notes of the harmonica sound, the first BLANKSEFFECT occurs. [The term BLANKSEFFECT is explained in the Production Notes at the back of the script.] Three men (BLAINE, JIMMY, and PAUL SCRIBBE) are seen as silhouettes walking U through the strips of fabric while a startling sound like the rumbling, scraping closing of a heavy, sliding metal door is heard. A radio on the kitchen counter plays a religious Christmas carol. Lights up in kitchen area. RONNIE dashes through from R to L carrying books and putting on his jacket as he goes.*

CLARE (*from off R*). Ronnie! Don't forget your lunch.

(CLARE is, of course, too late with this remark, but she does not yet know this. After a beat, CLARE enters, finishing a morning drink of coffee. She sits. The song ends.)

VOICE ON RADIO. The temperature started droppin' over-night. The high today'll be thirty-two. If the temperature stays down there, it looks like a white Christmas. Did you see the fog last night? Santa might need Rudolph this year. We've got the morning markets comin' up in a bit.

(A medley of Christmas carols begins to play. We hear from offstage the sound of dogs barking. A truck door slams. GILBERT stays offstage during the entire following conversation.)

GILBERT. Clare! *(CLARE moves to look out the door.)* I forgot my lunch. *(CLARE gets his lunch box off the floor and crosses to the door. The dogs bark.)*

CLARE. Here.

GILBERT. Just throw it, hon.

CLARE *(throws the lunch off stage, then sees Ronnie's lunch sack)*. Gil, wait! *(She runs to get the sack.)* Drop this by the high school for Ronnie. *(She throws it.)*

GILBERT. What is it?

CLARE. It's his lunch.

GILBERT. Why didn't he take it?

CLARE. He forgot it.

GILBERT. Here. *(The lunch sails back onto stage.)* Let him go without. He'll remember it next time.

CLARE. Toss me your lunch too, then. Besides, he'll just waste money on a bought lunch. He needs every cent to pay off that car.

GILBERT. All right, all right. *(CLARE throws the lunch back off stage.)* You're gonna wake up your daughter.

CLARE. She's your daughter too!

(Fade out. Sound of dogs barking. CLARE turns the radio down to mutter level. She returns to the chair and sits to have her daily devotions from a small devotional pamphlet. She reads the Bible verse for the day and then begins to read the pamphlet page, drinking her coffee. After a few moments, DIANE enters, dressed for the day. CLARE puts the pamphlet and Bible aside and turns off the radio.)

CLARE (*pleasantly*). Good morning, honey. Did it feel good to get back to a familiar bed?

DIANE. It was fine.

CLARE. What would you like for breakfast?

DIANE. I don't usually eat breakfast.

CLARE. Don't you like the food at the college?

DIANE. It's fine.

CLARE. You pay for breakfast, you should eat it. You're no better than your father and Ronnie. They both almost forgot their lunches today.

DIANE. What was all the yelling about?

CLARE. That's your father's way of protecting your sleep.

DIANE. Oh. Thanks a lot, Dad.

CLARE. Did you hear the phone ring this morning?

DIANE. No.

CLARE. I was hopin' it didn't wake you. Grandma Swanson called to see if you were home yet. "Is my Annie home yet?" she said. Said she was reading her John's gospel this morning, and got to thinking about Poppy love. "Annie's got Poppy love," she said.

DIANE. Why'd she say that?

CLARE. You were Poppy's favorite. He used to call you Annie, remember? I'd say, "Grandpa Swanson, don't confuse the girl." But he went his own way, an' that. Mornsie's lost without him.

DIANE. When I went to see her last summer, she couldn't remember who I was half the time I was there.

CLARE. She's goin' downhill fast. Just be ready for her to talk a lot about Poppy, an' that. She lives in the past. I don't blame her for missing Poppy, an' that. He was so full of life and love. Poppy always had something good to say. And always playin' his harmonica. You remember that, don't you? (*DIANE shakes her head.*) You don't? (*DIANE*

looks blank.) You used to sing with him. So cute, an' that. *(CLARE sings the first line of "Love's Old Sweet Song.")* "Just a song at twilight, when the lights are low." You don't remember? *(DIANE shakes her head.)* "And the flickering shadows..." *(Pause.)* Are you sure you got enough rest, honey? Ronnie said your light was still on when he came home last night.

DIANE. When did he get home?

CLARE. He said it was shortly after midnight. I fell asleep in the Lazy Boy waitin' for him.

DIANE *(laughing)*. If I'd have come in that late on a school night, I would have been grounded for a week.

CLARE. He was just bein' safe. He had to drive ten miles an hour. He said it got real foggy, an' that.

DIANE. I still can't believe you let him get a car.

CLARE. He's a boy.

DIANE. That's why I'm worried.

CLARE. You can't do nothin' about boys and cars. It's a fact of life. *(Pause.)* Last night, I had a dream about Jimmy's crash. I always thought I was good at gettin' over things, but I guess there's some kinda pain you never get over. Just becomes part a livin', an' that. Are you still sleepin' with the light on? *(No response.)* Why don't you go back to bed for a while, honey? *(She exits to get the newspaper.)* I sometimes need you to help me get some decorations, an' that, out of the storage closet off your bedroom. All the men around here think Christmas just happens. Your father said to tell you the electric bill's been cut in half since you went to college.

DIANE *(standing)*. Very funny. *(Begins to exit quickly to her bedroom.)*

(CLARE reenters.)

CLARE. Diane, sit still for two minutes and drink some orange juice.

DIANE (*calling as she exits*). I need to get something in the mail before it goes.

CLARE (*raises her voice as DIANE is now off*). This newspaper's gotten so expensive. I don't know why we still get it. Oh, Paul Scribe is retiring. He delivered all three of you kids. You remember Jimmy's friend Blaine? His wife left him and went to North Dakota, so he's moved back home, an' that. He's gettin' a divorce. It's in the court column this morning. It was a have-to marriage, so I'm not surprised. I don't wanna fault Ruth Ann, with eight kids and a virtual ghost of a husband, but those McCalls needed some parentin' growin' up, and they maybe wouldn't a turned out so bad, an' that. They just let 'em go. They were over here six days out of seven the whole time you were in grade school.

(*DIANE reenters with a piece of paper in her hand.*)

CLARE. You remember?

DIANE. No.

CLARE. I swear, Di, you got the shortest long-term memory I ever saw. (*Handing her orange juice.*) Do you still like your eggs sunnyside? Or don't you remember?

DIANE. Do you have a pen? I don't want any eggs.

CLARE. What's that?

DIANE. It's part of my application for a job as an R.A. at the college next year.

CLARE. What's an R.A.?

DIANE. Resident assistant. You get free room and board and part of your tuition paid. The applications were due already, but my friend Samantha says they never do anything

with them until after Christmas, so I shouldn't have any trouble as long as I get it in the mail before Christmas.

CLARE (*looking at the form*). What does your friend Samantha know about it?

DIANE. She's my R.A. this year. She says they don't usually hire people who are only going to be sophomores, but she's a sophomore, and she thinks I'll be great for this.

CLARE. This job is to be in charge of the other girls in the dorm?

DIANE. They're women, Mom.

CLARE. They're girls. (*Laughs.*) Believe me, they're girls. You may be in college, an' that, but you don't know what a woman is until you've been slave to some man.

DIANE. You're funny, Mom.

CLARE. Is that what it is?

DIANE. Is what is?

CLARE. That job. To be in charge of the other girls?

DIANE. There's a hall director in charge of the whole dorm. The resident assistant job is so they have somebody there on the floor.

CLARE. But you would still be responsible for that floor?

DIANE. Well, yeah. Well, not completely. There's a whole staff to help you out.

CLARE. But if there's some emergency, an' that, you're the one they're gonna come to first?

DIANE. Well, yeah.

CLARE. Do you think you're ready for that?

DIANE. I think so. (*Pause.*)

CLARE. Honey.

DIANE. What?

CLARE (*drops the form back in front of DIANE*). You know what that is?

DIANE (*patronizingly*). It's part of my application for a job as an R.A. at Jordan College next year.

CLARE. No, honey. Do you know what it is?

DIANE. Yes! It's a medical release form.

CLARE. Honey, we can't, I can't sign that form. (*Pause.*)

DIANE. You've been naggin' and naggin' at me about payin' my own way next year.

CLARE. Honey, I have not.

DIANE. You can't say three sentences without making some comment about money.

CLARE. Diane, things are tight an' that, but that doesn't mean I'm blamin' you.

DIANE (*overlapping*). Then why don't you want me to work?

CLARE. I never said I didn't want you to work. If it's the right job, an' that, you can get a job.

DIANE. This is the right job. It's like a scholarship. There is no way that I can get a job that pays as much as this is gonna pay toward my bill.

CLARE. There have got to be other jobs.

DIANE. There are no other jobs that pay even close to this much at college.

CLARE. Well, we'll just have to pray for something better.

DIANE. There isn't anything better.

CLARE. Don't say isn't. (*The next two lines are at the same time.*)

DIANE. What is wrong with this job?!

CLARE. You don't know what God knows. God always has something better in store.

DIANE. I said, what is wrong with this job!

CLARE. Nothing, I just think there's something better.

DIANE. There is nothing better. I want this job. You want me to be a little girl all my life.

CLARE. That is not true. I just don't want you to get hurt.

DIANE. So you don't think I'm old enough to handle it.

CLARE. It's not that I don't trust you, Di. Last night I dreamed that I was riding in the car when Jimmy hit that truck, and when I woke up, I couldn't catch my breath.
(Pause.)

DIANE. Mom.

CLARE. I think I would die if I lost another child.

DIANE (embraces CLARE). You're not gonna lose me, Mom. I was just a kid. You said yourself it was just a phase. It's behind me now. It was three years ago. It's over.

CLARE. Do you have those kinds of feelings anymore?

DIANE. No.

CLARE. Do you know why you did it?

DIANE. No. I don't know. I was a kid, and it's over. I just want to get on with my life.

CLARE. Do you ever think, do you think it would be, ever be possible for it to happen again?

DIANE. No. No.

CLARE. You're happy now?

DIANE. I'm fine.

CLARE. Sometimes I wonder how we got this far, and then I think about the McCalls. I don't know how Ruth Ann survives at all. I look in the paper and see Blaine McCall's name. Divorce. People don't think how that affects Ruth Ann, an' that. They don't think about the fact that her only granddaughter's all the way out in North Dakota. She called me and cried for an hour last week. That little girl's named after Ruth Ann's own mother. People don't think about that. All it is is a piece in the paper to them. (A BLANKSEFFECT sound has started to creep in at a very low level. There is not yet an image, but the sound will continue throughout the following.) But newspapers don't care what the people they're writin' about might be feelin',

an' that. If you wanted to come back and live at home for a while, I could probably get you a really good job down at the factory. At least then you'd be startin' from the ground up instead of diggin' a hole. Do you like college?

DIANE. I am not quitting college.

CLARE. Well, that's good. We didn't raise you to be no quitter. We'll get you a good job this summer, and then we'll find the money somehow. I can ask for more overtime, an' that.

DIANE. I'm going to apply for that job, Mom.

CLARE. Diane, you can't.

DIANE. You can't stop me.

CLARE. I will not sign that form.

DIANE. Then I'll move out and be on my own.

CLARE. You don't mean that. *(The next two lines are at the same time.)*

DIANE. And I won't need your signature anymore to do whatever I want.

CLARE. You don't mean that.

DIANE. I do mean it. Yes, I do. I'll pack everything up after Christmas. I'll pack it up right now, if you want. But I am not going to be your little girl forever.

CLARE. You can't stop me from being your mother, Diane.

DIANE. Yes, I can.

CLARE *(out of sheer desperation)*. Diane, do you want everyone in the world to know what you did?!

(BLANKSEFFECT image and sound crash in startlingly—suddenly alive. We catch a glimpse of JIMMY standing U of the farthest scrim with a magazine in his hand. He unfolds a barely discernible, nude centerfold, holding it up to show it to DIANE. We hear a young female voice scream, "Please kill me!" Then the sound and light are out. This

has taken but a moment to occur. DIANE cannot get her breath.)

CLARE. I'm sorry, Diane, I didn't mean that. *(Pause.)* Di? Di? Diane? Honey, are you okay? Honey, what's wrong? *(DIANE gasps air.)* If you really want that job, I'll sign the form. *(DIANE reaches over and tears the form and then crumples it in her hand.)* I'm sorry, Di.

DIANE *(smiling)*. It's all right. I'm just being silly. It wasn't that big a deal. *(After a beat, a clock chimes eight o'clock. CLARE reaches out her hand and picks up the crumpled form. She stands.)*

CLARE. I better get on with the chores.

(CLARE crosses to exit. As CLARE stops in the doorway, PENNY enters at far L with a chair and sits.)

CLARE. It's gonna be all right, Di. I don't want to run your life, an' that. But I don't want you to go through things that you don't have to. Like Poppy used to say, "You can do or not do what you're gonna do but you can't not do what you did."

(CLARE goes out. DIANE stays seated on the kitchen stool. Lights crossfade to PENNY. Light on PENNY is quite bright with a tight focus.)