

# The Third Person

---

by Dan Borengasser

CAST

Karen: Female, early 40s

Man: Male, early 40s

SET REQUIREMENTS

A wharf-like area, possibly with three or four stanchions and ropes connecting them.

SCENE 1

*Dusk.*

*A harbor area with the sound of a foghorn in the background.*

*A woman, KAREN, early-40s, wearing a trench coat, steps out on stage, glances around expectantly, then goes over to a railing, leans on it and nervously waits.*

*After a moment, the voice of a MAN, early-40s, is heard.*

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

The harbor. A lonely spot. (beat) Darkness nears. With it? - a hint of mystery. An intimation of intrigue. An unearthly quiet--

(At that moment, a seagull squawks raucously.)

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

An occasional seagull. (beat) Like all harbors - a refuge. A place to seek shelter. Away from the bright lights. Away from the clamor of the city. Away from prying eyes.

(KAREN glances uneasily offstage, from where the MAN's voice comes.)

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

A fog rolls in. Obscuring details. Blurring edges. Keeping secrets.

(As that moment, a fog floats onto the stage.)

KAREN is even more nervous.)

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

She waits. Nervous yet excited. Uncertain. About the present. Even more - about the future.

(With this, KAREN steps away from the railing and toward the sound of the voice, peering closely.)

KAREN

(calling)

Hey, you.

(Beat.)

KAREN

Yeah, you. What're you doing?

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

She calls out blindly, into the inky night.

KAREN

It's not inky night yet. I can see you. I asked what you're doing.

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

Confused and unsettled, she haies a figure she imagines she sees in the gloom.

KAREN

You better get the hell out of here, or I'll call the cops. I swear it.

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

She seeks an answer. For a question she doesn't know how to ask.

(Beat.)

KAREN

Question? What question?

(Beat.)

KAREN

Did Brad hire you? Is that what you're talking about?  
(beat) He did, didn't he? I should've guessed.

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

She begins making wild accusations.

KAREN

It won't do him any good. (beat) And stop talking in that weird way. (beat) How long have you been following me?

(HE is quiet, and SHE squints into the dimness.)

KAREN

Come nearer. Where I can see you better. So I'll recognize you next time you're stalking me. So I can describe you to the cops.

(The MAN steps onto the stage. HE wears a dark trench coat.)

KAREN

That's close enough.

(As HE stops, SHE plunges her hand into her coat pocket and points something in the pocket toward the MAN.)

KAREN

I've got a gun.

MAN

Worried and a little desperate, she acts as if she has a gun in her pocket.

KAREN

I do have a gun. Which you'll find out if you take a step closer.

MAN

She continues to maintain the obvious falsehood of having a firearm--

KAREN

Hey!

MAN

She exclaims--

KAREN

Can you talk like a normal person?

MAN

She asks--

KAREN

Directly to me? Or is that too much trouble?

(Beat.)

MAN

Yes, I can.

KAREN

Thank, God. Whoever you are, you're irritating as hell.  
(beat) A private investigator, right?

MAN

No.

KAREN

But ... but you are working for Brad?

MAN

No.

KAREN

Then - who the hell are you?

MAN

The narrator.

KAREN

The narrator? The narrator of what?

MAN

Your life.

KAREN

Oh, God. Just when I think things can't get any more screwed up ...

MAN

He's not going to show up.

KAREN

Who's not going to show up. What are you talking about?

MAN

Randall. Randall's not going to show up.

KAREN

How do you know about ... You are working for Brad. You know what? - tell him. Just tell him. I don't care anymore.

MAN

I'm not working for Brad.

KAREN

How else do you explain--

MAN

You came to meet Randall Billings. You were going to tell him that unless he splits with his wife, it's over--

KAREN

Only an investigator--

MAN

I'm not an investigator. You're carrying a friendship ring Randall gave you six weeks ago in your left pocket. You only wear it when you two meet--

KAREN

How did you know--

MAN

You decided not to wear it tonight so you won't weaken in your resolve to demand a divorce.

KAREN

This ... this is too much--

MAN

Careful!

KAREN

Wh ... what?

MAN

You're going to collapse.

KAREN

That's ridicu--

(KAREN sways, about to pass out, as the MAN hurries over to steady her.

After a moment, she seems to recover.)

KAREN

No ... no one could have known ... about the ring. No one.

MAN

I know.

KAREN

But how did you--

MAN

I'm the narrator.

KAREN

That's not possible. It's crazy talk ...

(During the following dialogue, the MAN describes what KAREN is going to do a fraction of a second before SHE does it.)

MAN

You're so nervous, your hands begin shaking. You look down at them, then clasp them together to steady them. Glancing back and forth wildly, almost as if you're trapped in a cage, you frantically reach in the coat pocket where your imaginary gun was and rattle your keys anxiously.

(Beat.)

MAN

Believe me?

KAREN

The narrator?

MAN

Yes.

KAREN

Of my life?

MAN

Yes.

KAREN

Narrators tell stories. My life isn't some kind of story.

MAN

Oh, but it is.

(Beat.)

KAREN

This is nuts. Why am I talking to some ... some lunatic?--

MAN

To keep yourself distracted. To keep from thinking--

KAREN

About my life being a story. A story? Seriously?

MAN

Even this - here ... now - is a story. It's got all the components.

(Beat.)

KAREN

Components? What ... components?

MAN

Characters, setting, plot, conflict, and resolution. You, Randall and Brad are the characters. The wharf is the setting. The plot is your attempt to escape a loveless marriage. The conflict is your wedding vows versus your infidelity, your present misery versus possible future happiness.

(Beat.)

KAREN

What happened to resolution?

MAN

It's the resolution I'm concerned about. It's the resolution that made me make my presence known. To speak out for the first time.

KAREN

Well, what is it? What is the resolution?

MAN

Every story has a beginning, a middle and an end. In the story of your life, you're in the middle.

KAREN

Fine. I'm in the middle--

MAN

I want to make sure this stays the middle of your story. And doesn't become the end.

(Beat.)

KAREN

(realizing)

Wait! You don't think I would have actually considered ...

MAN

After waiting and waiting and then getting a text? ...

(Her phone makes a tone to indicate a text. SHE takes it out and reads it.)

SHE closes her eyes in anguish and begins to tear up.

The MAN hands her a handkerchief.)

MAN

Yes, you would have considered--

KAREN

The bastard.

MAN

And it would have been easy. Right here on the wharf? ... next to the water?

(Beat.)

KAREN

I ...I don't know--

MAN

Believe me - you would have thought about it.

(Beat.)

KAREN

Maybe.

MAN

But, thanks to the intervention of the narrator, no longer an issue.

(SHE doesn't respond.)

MAN

Right? No longer?

(Beat.)

KAREN

No longer.

MAN

Come on. I'll walk you home.

KAREN

All right.

MAN

We'll take the long way.

KAREN

Okay.

(THEY exit.)

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

They walk off into the night, their footsteps echoing softly on the wooden planks. Soon they're nothing but a hazy outline against a moonless sky--

KAREN (OFFSTAGE)

Stop that.

MAN (OFFSTAGE)

Sorry. It's what I do.

CURTAIN