

# *Three Naked Chairs*®

A Triptych Of Three Women

By

Emma Kershaw

Contact the author at:

[Publisher@modernplaywrights.com](mailto:Publisher@modernplaywrights.com)

# Three Naked Chairs - First Chair

A One Act taken from  
A Triptych For Three Women  
By Emma Kershaw

## **The Characters**

**BLACK** - Black hair, late thirties to early forties, a firm build. Cautious and audacious with women and herself.

**RED** - Red hair, late twenties to early thirties, an ample, strong figure. Destructive to her opponents and herself.

**BLONDE** - Blonde hair, young. Hiding and revealing her secrets, she is a victim, dangerous to everyone.

## **Setting**

A stark, empty room with three hard chairs.

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**THREE NAKED CHAIRS - FIRST CHAIR**

*From a triptych of play for three women*

By Emma Kershaw

**ACT ONE - SCENE ONE**

*A taut faced woman in her middle years, BLACK, enters a starkly bare room. Three wooden chairs are the only furnishings. Black shakes and folds her umbrella and sits in the center chair. A bell rings. Startled, she moves one chair right.*

*An ample figured red haired woman in her prime, RED, enter. She wears a red suit and carries a file folder.*

RED

Oh, hello. Your time doesn't start for another twenty minutes, you know that?

BLACK

I was nearby and I didn't have anywhere else to wait, so...

RED

It's fine. There's a girl ahead of you, but after I've finished with her, we can start again.

BLACK

Again?

RED

Pick up from last time, when you were telling me about... Um, I'll go over your file before I see you again.

BLACK

Again? I've never been here before.

RED

Yes, last week, it was your fourth, fifth time, I think, wasn't it?

BLACK

No. It wasn't. I'd remember if... The fifth time?

RED

It's not unusual to block some thoughts after a traumatic event. Things can become difficult to remember, even confused and mixed up.

BLACK

Nothing happened to me. I just came in because it was raining outside and my shoes, they're new and I don't want them ruined.

RED

I've shoes like that. Don't know why I bought them, can't wear them when it rains. Better going with my feet naked.

BLACK

Naked?

RED

Ah, barefoot.

BLACK

I couldn't do that. Not in the crosswalks.

RED

Well, you know how it is here.

BLACK

No, I don't.

RED

When it rains here, it really rains, doesn't it?

BLACK

I don't know, I don't live here.

RED

On the forms you filled out, you put down a local address so I would imagine that you do live here.

BLACK

My address, here? No, I live somewhere else, not here.

RED

I didn't mean here, as in here, upstairs, in this room. I meant your condo.

BLACK

It's a loft. High ceilings, lots of...empty space.

RED

You said that on your last visit, said you lived in, what was it, a deserted warehouse, fixed up of course, and now its filled with artists lofts.

BLACK

They're all empty. Just chairs and empty space.

RED

They're all empty?

BLACK

There is a puppy.

RED

A puppy? Does it belong to you?

BLACK

It thinks it lives there but it doesn't, not really.

RED

But the puppy thinks it does?

BLACK

Should I care what the puppy thinks?

RED

Do you think you should care?

BLACK

What the puppy thinks? Do you care what the puppy thinks?

RED

No, I don't care what the puppy thinks, I care what you think and you think they're all the lofts are empty?

BLACK

Empty, except for the chairs and, sometimes, the puppy.

RED

No one else? No one else lives in any of them?

BLACK

My husband used to live in one.

RED

The same one you lived in, with him?

BLACK

Where else would he live? We were married...weren't we?

RED

Last time we met you told me that you were. You said you were married to an artist. You remember?

BLACK

I remember he made me sit for his paintings.

RED

You were his artist model?

BLACK

He made me pose for him. In the... in the... you know.

RED

Without clothes?

BLACK

He made stand on a chair, naked, for hours and hours in his cold empty loft until my skin turned blue. Just me and the chair...and the puppy.

RED

Then puppy belonged to your husband?

BLACK

I didn't care about god damned puppy. It had fur and I was naked, standing on a hard chair, cold and naked.

*A bell rings. Black retreats into herself. A young blonde haired woman, BLONDE, enters. She wears a plaid skirt and school blazer.*

BLONDE

I came back like you told me.

RED

Came back? I'm sorry, but...do I know you?

BLONDE

That stuff I did, you know, you wanted me to write about it.

BLACK

Do you have a ladies?

RED

It's downstairs, next to my room. You'll need my key.

*Red unpins a key from inside her lapel and gives it to Black who exits. Red opens the file folder.*

RED

I'm sorry I didn't recognize you. You looked different, like another girl who used to come here.

BLONDE

Am I late?

RED

I have to see someone else soon, but we have a few minutes to go over what you wrote. Come, sit next to me and let's take a look.

BLONDE

I don't want to sit.

*Blonde takes a folded sheet of paper from her pocket.*

RED

You didn't write very much.

BLONDE

I don't want to write about him.

RED

We talked about that.

BLONDE

It's hard.

RED

You know you have to. And I have to as well. It'll be easier if you just do it, easier for everyone.

BLONDE

It was so long ago, can't I forget it ever happened?

RED

But it did happen. Three years isn't so long. But I know at your age it seems like forever. Still, this has to be reported. There's your baby, you can't forget about her.

BLONDE

I haven't seen her for months and months.

RED

We'll fix that. You write down everything that happened, describing what he did to you, and we'll see if we can get you and your baby back together, at least for visits anyway. Wouldn't you like that, visits?

BLONDE

It was my fault. I'm the one who started it, not him and I'm not telling on him.

RED

I still have to report him. You were only fifteen and it wasn't your fault.

BLONDE

I wanted him to do it. I made him do it.

RED

But he was a grown up. He knew it was wrong.

BLONDE

Even if I wanted it?

RED

Some things are wrong even if you want them. What happened to you, your baby, wasn't your fault. You're the victim, you understand that, don't you?

BLONDE

Do I have to write everything? I don't know all the words to say some of the stuff. I know the bad words, but I can't write that, can I?

RED

There are ways to say things that don't use crude language.

BLONDE

What's the right way to say the "F" word, doing it, you know?

RED

One word would be, "intercourse". That's when two people lie down and...

BLONDE

We didn't always lie down. Sometimes he wanted me to...

RED

It's still the best word.

BLONDE

Even with his mouth, when he...

RED

*(Raises hand to stop her)* No, that's another word. We can maybe skip that for now and you just write "with his mouth" and I'll put in the right word in my notes.

BLONDE

I want to know the word. If that's what happened to me, I want to know how to say it...in good words.

RED

Some things people do don't really have any "good words".

BLONDE

How do you say stuff like, you know, stuff.

RED

There are certain terms we professionals use, Latin words, I'll write those in my notes and you just write what you think...

BLONDE

Why won't you tell me?

RED

I feel awkward here. Why don't you take this file and write down everything you can remember. Use the bad words if you can't think of another way to say something, then I'll fix it, put in the Latin words, alright?

BLONDE

I don't want anybody to think I'm bad because I write bad words.

RED

No one will think you're bad.

BLONDE

There's nobody watching me is there? You know, like through a peephole or something?

RED

No peepholes, no two way mirrors. You're safe in here.

*(Gives her the file and a pen.)*

And sweetie, I've probably heard all the bad words you can think of.

*Black Haired Woman returns.*

BLACK

I didn't find any soap.

RED

The girl who used to live downstairs must have taken it.

BLACK

Did she steal things?

BLONDE

Was she the girl who...?

*A bell rings*

RED

Excuse me. I've got to take that.

*Red exits. Black sits near Blonde.*

BLONDE

Can I have the key?

BLACK

There isn't any soap.

BLONDE

I don't need that, just the key. Hold my stuff?

*Black takes the file and gives Blonde the key. Black glances at the file while Blonde removes her jacket.*

BLACK  
Somebody made you do this?

BLONDE  
She made me write it, the stuff he did, stuff I did.

BLACK  
You did that to a man?

BLONDE  
Is there a good word to write when, you know, you do it like that...to him?

BLACK  
The "F" is right, but there's more letters after that.

*Blonde takes folder back to write.*

BLONDE  
What letters?

BLACK  
"F", "E", "L"... No, I...I don't remember the rest. Just leave it.

BLONDE  
Tell me. I want to do this right. I fucked up, Oh, no, I'm sorry. "F", "E", "L". Spell the rest of it.

BLACK  
"L", "A", "T", "I", "O".

BLONDE  
Is that one "L" or two in the middle?

BLACK  
Two in the middle.

BLONDE  
Is that Latin or something?

BLACK  
I think they do it everywhere. I mean the word is used everywhere. Not in China, but they probably have their own word for it.

BLONDE  
Is this right?

BLACK  
I think so. How old was he? The boy?

BLONDE  
Old. Almost forty.

BLACK  
A grown man? That horrible, horrible man.

BLONDE  
I made him do it.

BLACK  
Where was your father?

BLONDE  
He was my father.

BLACK  
Your father did this? They should put him in jail.

BLONDE  
Then he couldn't look after my baby.

BLACK  
You had a baby with your father and he's got custody?

BLONDE  
They said I was too young to keep her. That's when I ran away. I don't want to write about him. I'd rather die.

*Blonde runs off.*

BLACK  
Wait, you left... (*looks at file*) She spelled it right.

*Red comes back and confronts Black.*

RED  
You used the key to go into my room didn't you?

BLACK  
I was looking for the soap.

RED  
If you took anything from me I'm going to be very angry with you. Understand? Very angry. Give me the key.

BLACK  
The young woman has it.

RED  
Where'd she go?

BLACK

She didn't want to write more bad words.

RED

She has to, even if I have to make her stand on a chair and turn blue, she's writing what I tell her to write.

BLACK

You know what he made her do?

RED

I haven't read everything yet.

BLACK

You're going to do something aren't you?

RED

Well, something, yes. I have to.

BLACK

Even though she says no?

RED

She's too young. It's not her choice.

BLACK

That's what her father said.

RED

What's her father have to do with anything?

BLACK

Her father made her do this, (*points at the word*) "fellatio".

RED

You can't read that, it belongs to the girl. It's private. (*Take the file*)

BLACK

Nothing's private when you die. They open you up and take it all. That's what they did to my little girl.

RED

She was an organ donor, we talked about it, remember?

BLACK

They didn't ask me. They said they'd already cut her open, taken what they wanted and I couldn't change it.

RED

They did it for a good reason, to help someone.

BLACK

You'd like to have your little girl living inside a stranger? Not knowing where she is? Who she is? My little girl could even be in you. She could be you.

RED

I'm not your little girl.

BLACK

That scar on your forehead, that's where they put her inside you, isn't it?

RED

No, I think it was a car that hit me while I was crossing the street.

BLACK

Don't lie to me.

RED

I'm not sure. I was little. Maybe I banged into somebody and their teeth cut me. I don't know, it just happened.

BLACK

That's how I killed it. It just happened.

RED

Yes, let's talk about that, about what you told me the last time you were here.

BLACK

The last time?

RED

You thought you killed someone?

BLACK

I didn't see the red light.

RED

What did you do?

BLACK

I didn't know I'd hit it.

RED

You hit someone... killed someone?

BLACK

I didn't know I killed it. I was driving and I didn't feel it.

RED

You keep referring to the person you hit as "it", as if "it" wasn't actually a person. Why do you supposed you're choosing that word?

BLACK

It's bad if I killed a little girl. Killed a bad word.

RED

But if you killed an "it", then it doesn't seem so bad?

BLACK

That's why they put me in that place. Because I ran over a someone instead of an "it".

RED

You realize what you did, don't you? Why they took you to that place?

BLACK

Why did I have to go there?

RED

You went to jail because you hit a school girl with your car and you drove away. It wasn't the accident, or for using bad words, it was for running away.

BLACK

I didn't know it was dead, I left before it was dead.

RED

She wasn't dead when you left her. The people who found her said she was screaming and clawing at the lines in the crosswalk.

BLACK

I wish it had been me. God, make me dead too.

RED

I would make you dead if I could, but for you, living is better. It hurts longer.

BLACK

Why do you want me to hurt?

RED

Because you are a horrible, horrible bitch and I hate you.

BLACK

Who are you? What are you...

*The bell rings.*

RED

Who's ringing my bell? I don't have any appointments.

BLACK

Is it time to go downstairs and get into the line? I'm not ready. I have to get ready.

*Black gets up, takes her chair to the farthest corner and slowly removes her jacket and shirt. Bell rings.*

RED

Who's ringing my bell?

*Blonde returns.*

BLONDE

I wrote what you made me.

RED

Of course you did.

BLONDE

I used bad words.

RED

Read it to me. All of it, even the bad words.

BLONDE

Then you can help me with the right...

RED

Yes, I will, but you have to stand on this chair.

BLONDE

I don't want to.

RED

I said, stand on the chair. Now!

BLONDE

No, I won't.

RED

I'll punish you again. I will, you know I will.

*Blonde gets on the chair, reads aloud.*

BLONDE

I saw the car coming around the corner. It was going fast.

RED

That's good, but you don't need to put in all the details. Just say what your father did to you.

BLONDE

It was going fast and it didn't stop.

RED

"He" didn't stop for you?

BLONDE

It didn't stop. You stood there, seeing it, coming at you. You wanted it to hit you. To kill you.

RED

To kill you, you mean? Not me?

BLONDE

He hit me, in the crosswalk, he hit me.

RED

Your father hit you with his car?

BLONDE

It hit me and knocked me down. Then it ran over you. First the front tires, then the back. You screamed. You screamed because you were alive. You didn't die.

RED

What are you doing? This isn't about you. Let me see.

*Red reaches for the folder, but Blonde draws it back.*

BLONDE

No.

RED

No? I want to read it. Give it to me.

BLONDE

You can't read it down there. You have to be up here.

RED

No.

BLONDE

Get on the chair.

RED

It's too small for both of us.

BLONDE

We have to be up here, both of us.

*Blonde starts tearing up the paper.*

RED

Don't. I'll get up there with you.

*Red crowds onto the chair. Blonde puts her arms around her.*

BLONDE

Read it loud, so I can hear it too.

RED

"I screamed as each tire ran over my..." This is very disturbing.

BLACK

Shh. Quiet.

BLONDE

It hurt me.

RED

"Then I screamed and clawed at the white lines. It hurt so much. Then it didn't. It didn't hurt anymore."

BLACK

Stop. I don't want to hear that.

BLONDE

That's not true.

RED

Of course it's not true.

BLONDE

It's not true that it doesn't hurt anymore. It still hurts you doesn't it?

RED

Hurts me?

BLONDE

It hurts your head, there, where you have the scar.

RED

We're not talking about me. We're talking about how your father made you...

*Blonde gets off chair, points at Black.*

BLONDE

That woman did it.

BLACK

I didn't see it. I wasn't there.

RED

You wrote... "fellatio"? Who told you that word?

BLONDE

The woman who hurt you spelled it for me. It means...

RED

I know what it means.

BLONDE

How do you know? Did your mother tell you?

BLACK

I didn't tell her. I didn't.

RED

My mother was a good woman, and she raised me right, then...

BLONDE

Then she was run down by a car and your father committed suicide. Fourteen years old and you were alone, living on the streets and bad things, bad words, happened to you.

RED

Latin words. That's all that happened.

BLONDE

That scar on your head. That's when you got that.

RED

Father made you do horrible things.

BLACK

Fellatio.

*Red gets off the chair.*

RED

It was my fault.

BLONDE

She ran over you with her bad Latin word, her fellatio, with her tires that left a scar.

RED

She hurt me?

BLACK

I didn't kill it.

RED

God damn her! She did this to me. God damn her to hell.

*Red runs to Black, drags her forward.*

BLACK

Let me go. I have to go downstairs. I have to get in the line. Let go.

*Bell rings. Blonde stands between them.*

BLONDE

It's time for your medicine.

RED

Not the bad words. My mother doesn't want me to use bad words. She punishes me and she hurts my scar.

BLONDE

It's time for your medicine. Both of you need to go downstairs and take your place in the line.

RED

Do I have to?

BLONDE

You have to. It's what we do and then you'll feel better. You know where to go and you both need to go there now, before they punish you.

RED

I don't want to be punished. Not again.

*Red exits.*

BLACK

I'm going. But promise me one thing. One thing.

BLONDE

What do you want me to promise?

BLACK

Promise you won't let them cut me open and steal everything.

Blonde

You're safe in here. When you're in here, no one can steal from you. Look. I have the key.

BLACK

The key? I want it. It's mine. I'll fight you for it.

BLONDE

I'm in charge here and the key belongs to me.

*Bell rings.*

BLACK

Can I be the first in line?

BLONDE

If you do everything they tell you.

BLACK

Will they make me be naked? She doesn't like being naked, does she?

*Black exits. Blonde turns to the audience.*

BLONDE

That went rather well, don't you think? I know this exercise is unorthodox, but it does get to the essence, the nub of their reality...and their delusions. I only wish the effect was more lasting. Unfortunately, this remains a daily, sometimes hourly, exercise. It's almost become a ritual. First there is denial, then remembering, then blaming and so forth, repeating itself, with variations, over and over again. If I didn't think it was beneficial, it would almost seem like needless torment. One colleague even went so far as to say my methods were "torture" and dubbed me the "queen of mean". But, contrary to their allegations, a female participant was not strangled to death during one of my exercises. Yes, she died, but it is more likely that the girl choked because of a negative drug interaction, and not at the hands of these women. Beyond the one unfortunate death, there are a few questions about the history of these women that you may want answered. What of the little girl? Was someone killed or injured in a car accident. And the puppy? What about the puppy? I wish I could see your faces directly instead of talking to you through this two way mirror.

*(Bringing a chair forward)*

While we know that one woman was injured by a hit and run driver, we have no reason to believe that it is linked to another woman in our custody. And what of the girl sexually assaulted by her own father? That really did happen. Oh, not to me, of course, I'm the professional and can't reveal elements about my own life. That story, drawn from the file of the dead girl I mentioned, was used as a pathway for our subjects to face their own painful experiences.

*(Adjusting the chairs so that two chairs face one chair)*

Again, I'm only sorry that you have to watch from behind your mirrored peepholes.

(MORE)

BLONDE (cont'd)

If you were inside, as I am, you'd be able to clearly read the intimate facial expressions and the nuances of their body language that is so clinically vital to understanding them. In here, with our subjects, I have even seen them embrace their torment, revel in their pain and in some of the exercises exude, what I can only describe as, "erotic exaltation".

*(Shading her eyes to look at the audience)*

I wish I could see you as well. I know you're in there, all of you, and I know you're watching. But I would have liked to have seen the expressions on your face when I read about my father, my fictional father, and what I did, he did. You're still in there, aren't you? You're watching me aren't you? God this is so fucking, ooh bad word, I'm sorry, it's so frustrating being alone in here and not knowing if you're really watching me...or not.

*(the bell rings)*

Is that for me? You want to meet me downstairs with the other women. Me?

*(bell rings)*

You know I am in charge here. See, I have the key.

*(bell rings)*

I don't take medication. I don't need it.

*(bell rings)*

I don't want to go. No, I don't like the shocks. Please, not the shocks. They make me forget things. Then...then I remember them again. Don't make me, don't make me live those terrible things over and over again. Not again!

*Black out. Pause. The bell rings.*

BLACK OUT

**THE END**