

No One Returns

A 10-Minute Play

By Keith Eckert

*"The clay steals clay."
-- Lazarus*

Contact
Keith Eckert
107 Penn Street
Ridley Park, PA 19078
kaxeckert@gmail.com
(717) 609-5410

CAST LIST

Nowen (rhymes with Owen) – A young man in his mid 20s wearing an army coat, as well as sunglasses hiding his eyes.

Dr. Elamir – A woman 40-plus years old; may speak with a slight Indian accent, typical white coat; could also be played by a man.

Lyssa (pronounced LISS-uh) – An imaginary woman seen and heard only by Nowen; her voice sounds as if it comes from a box or a hole but is strangely soothing and sympathetic.

Police Officer – A woman or man under 40 years old.

TIME/PLACE

Contemporary

A City in the United States

SCENE

The Psychiatric Observation Room in the
Emergency Department of Bethany Hospital

NOTES

This play is inspired by Euripides' *Heracles* and Seneca's *Hercules Furens*, in which Hercules successfully returns from Hades with the three-headed dog, Cerberus, but he's made mad by Hera as punishment for defying the law barring anyone from returning from the land of the dead.

In Greek mythology, Lyssa is the spirit of mad rage and frenzy in people, and rabies in animals. Lyssa was used by the gods as a tool to punish humans.

(Scene: A small exam room off of a hospital emergency room, with a typical exam table with a paper covering the top, and a small stool on wheels. Nowen sits on the table, Dr. Elamir sits in front of him filling out information on a form.)

ELAMIR

You said you came back – from where?

NOWEN

I came from the last estate.

ELAMIR

The last estate?

NOWEN

Hell. I've come from hell – the third and last estate.
I rode there 'top the panting dogs of war –
To see – to see if it were like the legends tell.
And I saw. I saw the foul pool where the bodies
Decompose; I saw the dead trees shudder
With the bodies of the tortured, the feverish illness cling
To the smoky sky, the children lying
With wasted jaws, and the mothers coming too late,
Their tear-burdened faces hid behind their hands.
It was so different than the tales I was told.

ELAMIR

Were you in combat? What happened there? Can you tell me?

NOWEN

Can I tell you? Would it make any sense? Here
In this light and pristine pageant? This cloistered stage?
Could you understand the god-like pity – ah, the pity!
Could you know what it's like to sit atop a tank like Minos
In judgment of this distempered world? And then to stretch
And gaze into the well of infinite pity and see yourself
Reflected in your tears and the tears of the hundred million?
Tears enough to disinfect this world and cure it
Of its syphilitic disease, mankind? And to find in your fists
The arrows of a greater compassion and empathy,
Freedom, equality and peace than here you'll ever know?
And use them, one by one by one with feverish pity.
With so much love. Yes, it was love. Wasn't it?
Would that make sense to you? Back here? I don't know.

ELAMIR

It's okay, Nowen. I'm not judging you.

NOWEN

Then someone better damn well start.

ELAMIR

It's okay now, you're back home. That's over.

NOWEN

Is it over? That's what I thought, but I was wrong.
It came back with me, you see? Something
Came back – the chaos, the fear.
Escaping death's hold, I returned. But unknown to me,
She came back with me.

ELAMIR

She? What – who – came back with you?

NOWEN

Lyssa.

ELAMIR

Lyssa? Is that your wife or –?

NOWEN

No! She is madness –

ELAMIR

Lyssa.

NOWEN

Yes. She came with me from hell. Unknown, carried
In my mouth. A disease. An infection – boiling
In my blood and spreading 'cross my eyes, my ears, my –

*(The sound of a vibrating cellphone. Elamir
pulls out her phone and looks at it.)*