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**Narrative Essay**

**(The tour of The Twist of Social Inequality & Greed**

**Presented in Lillian Hellman’s The Little Foxes)**

Grown up in a harmonious and loving family, the idea that the family members intrigue against each other is like pie in the sky to me. I never gave a second thought to why people would not love or disrespect their families except for they are born to be inscrutably evil human beings. Not until I look into this curated exhibit did I realize how superficial and naïve my understanding was about family dramas---something I am not familiar with but common in society.

As soon as I walked into the exhibition room, the dim glow of light provides a sense of mystery and history. The decorative pattern in the background also leaves me witan impression of morbidezza---the symmetric flowers along the margins of page are mellow at just the right level. The title of the exhibit is in a white, bolded, introverted font which differentiates these words from the rest of the text. The different, and more prominent, text implies the importance of this title in relation to the entire exhibit. “Twist” stands out to me and sparks my curiosity that it never crossed my mind what social inequality has to do with greed. Rather than combination or relationship, “twist” describes a more intense connection between the two. Neither the author Lillian Hellman nor the novel The Little Foxes are familiar to me.

But then the sight that immediately met my eyes is a photo of woman. A kind of established disposition, naturally penetrating the stationary portrait, which can be described as uncompromising and accomplished attracts my attention. I suddenly become interested and take a wild guess on the identity of the woman---she is Lillian Hellman. The label on the right proves that my guess is right. Instead of moving down to read more about the portrait, I go back to the top and notice that the creator of the founder of the exhibition has his/her name appears in black---a low-key form, makes me wonder if it reflects his/her own personality.

The caption below the picture is noted to have a delicate brown color that matches the background pattern. The creator used not only the difference in font size but color as well to distinguish between the description of the picture and the main body paragraph for the entire exhibition. The design of having a portrait of the author of the play before the official start in the exhibit also makes a lot of sense. It grabs the audience’s interest by giving fair amount of background information about a memoir of Lillian Hellman and introduces her to be one with extraordinary personality who seemed to have broken the traditional stereotype for women at her time. Who can be not curious in rebellious character?

The introduction is concise and only offers the essential idea of the play *The Little Foxes* without having repetitious details that are unnecessary. Direct connection is made from the content of family drama in *The Little Foxes* to the social concern that is still prevalent after 70 years since the play was created. I can tell that creator interprets the play completely in her own understanding that it would be hard to believe any critics before link the gender inequality with an avaricious family. At this point, however, I still hardly know anything about *The Little Foxes* except for it is about a complicated family.

But I just cannot stop being curious about the rest of the exhibition as I moved down the next section which the creator starts to acknowledge the audience with the history of the Great Depression and how gender inequality day by day was shaped to be a more prominent social problem. The analysis of the gender roles naturally leads me to look upon the nowadays division of household labor in a more objective way. Not until I read though the context did I realize that though the social stereotype imposes more pressure to raise the family on men, the women, in fact, are the ones expected to undertake not only the housework but also jobs outside. The introduction is paving the path for the audience to further gain empathy of the positions of women back in time. I started to get a little sense of where the hatred and rage came from. At the end of the intro, the theme of the exhibition is clearly revealed. I am ready to learn more about how the characters in *The Little Foxes* could microscope the social concern I care about as well.

The creator could’ve have a better format for the upcoming picture if there’s not gap between the picture and the background. But still the use of a page of an antiquated newspaper with picture of a woman occupying half of the sheet implies the advent of more intriguing historic stories, which keep me hooked. The title on the newspaper page “‘Working Wife’ Loses U.W Faculty Berth” is apparently lampooning the social value opposite to “working wife”. Under the picture of the dismissed female university professor, it said protests were triggered by the unemployment. Captions below provides more detailed introduction of the author of the article---a male professor who chose to stand up for his co-worker. I cannot stop admiring his braveness to be a firmed minority who did not follow the mainstream idea and held on to what he thought was right, very similar to Lillian Hellman.

The caption goes deeper into listing the poor jobs women were illegally offered at the time. Seeing the jobs being described as low-paid and exhausting, sympathy and anger are accumulating inside of me as I picture myself to be the women’s plight. It becomes evident that the evil sides in human nature will eventually be released. Shortly after, the first character of *The Little Foxes* is introduced---the greedy Regina. She must be the villain in the drama. But the creator the exhibition has already laid out all the information to speak for her avaricious characteristic that I almost feel sorry for her instead of simply holding loath.

A paragraph of connection between the pictures kicks in again as the exhibition continues. To my little surprise, it does not go on with more introduction about Regina. Instead, her brother Oscar is then introduced, to be an even worse character, which leads me to unconsciously pull down the corner of my mouth to express the pity for the hopeless family. Oscar is set to reinforce the stereotypes of the society that he is the extreme representative of male domination. The use of the term “nothing but…” subtly describes the ruthlessness of Oscar. The curator used the most concise words to account the purpose of Oscar marrying Birdy which is obtaining her family property.

As if the curator feels like the audience is not yet exposed to enough of how incurable the Giddens family is, the video coming subsequently shows a petulant scene of Oscar yelling and punishing his wife, vividly presents the contrast between violent Oscar and innocent Birdy. From my perspective, the video clip is not from a delicate play and it is not shown in high quality. However, it does its job of presenting the ridiculous family drama. The attitude of Oscar treating Birdy is astonishing in the video that my outlook and sense of value does not accept it at all. Not being able to catch every line the actors said, I move on to reading the captions from which I am acknowledged with more refreshing melodrama. Oscar and Regina was not satisfied with screwing up their own lives and wanted to set up marriages for their children to gain whatever they want. Up to this point, nothing can exculpate the head of this conspirator Regina, not even the cruel condition for women. Upon the irreversible greed within Giddens family, the curator concludes her compassion for the bad guy that their lives will be forever lack of the most precious thing to us---love.

The transition paragraph afterward brings up a relatively new term to me called “intimate partner violence” (IPV). The literal meaning of IPV as I understand, accurately captures what happened in the plot of *The Little Foxes* presented above. But unfortunately, just like I never heard the term before I read this paragraph, this issue was not in the range of public discussion eighty years ago. The growing pain of feeling the unspeakable abuse continue to hit me.

The proceeding photograph renders visual impact with the face of a lost woman holding two children. Her face self-explains the hard life she is living. All I see is hopelessness in her confused eyes. The curator uncovers the background story of this photo taken in 1936, revealing the ugly social trend during which countless men unscrupulously applied violence to their partners. By presenting the fact that countless unplanned or undesired children became huge burden of the women who got raped by irresponsible husbands, the curator draws the audience to the derivation of the desperate situation of women---the seamy side of human nature. Therefore, the theme of greed in *The Little Foxes* is well explained by the accumulated gender inequality. I am impressed by the connection the curator created between the social issue in reality and the “barely related” twisted personality of the characters in the play.

After the information boom accompanied by the completely new concepts, I am feeling a little bit overwhelmed. As if the curator foresees my exhaustion, she designs to have the last coming up artifact being a gentle on. It is the front cover of  the version of *The Little Foxes* came out in 1967 she found at Emory’s Rose Library. Reading through her comparison between the original version and the 1967 version of the play, I get the idea of her choosing it among the numerous editions in particular---it mixed the prominence of character design and the historical background to an upgraded level. The simple picture of a “random” cover carries the curator’s meticulous filtration and consideration.

The exhibit ends with the summary of the final destiny of characters in the play. It is somehow relaxing to see that Regina though gained everything she desired—power and money, lost the whole world---love, respect and family. It’s a relief to know that most of us are still wealthier than Regina, spiritually and emotionally. With the appreciation to the loving friends and families I have, I start to take gender inequality a serious problem as well. The very last sentence of the exhibit is a question with great felicity. “How can we outdo our bit to fight against gender inequality?” ---the exhibit is just put to a pause and will be continued whenever audience raise this question to themselves.