

2<sup>nd</sup> January 2022

## Scenes

**"My soul, sit thou a patient looker-on;  
Judge not the play before the play is done:  
Her plot hath many changes; every day  
Speaks a new scene; the last act crowns the play."  
Francis Quarles, Emblemes, 'Respice Finem' (1635)**

Do I have advice to offer at the beginning of a New Year? Yes, I do, and I'll come to that in a moment. But first, a criticism ...

Why did we make "New Year Resolutions"? Making *resolutions* is fine. We all need to take stock from time to time, make decisions, change some things and resolve to do better. I get that. And "New Year"? Well, the start of a New Year is as good a time to take stock as any, so why not? But it's when we put "resolutions" with "New Year" that I worry, especially if the expectation is that these resolutions will be for a *whole* year. The truth is, it's too much, and too long, and is doomed to failure. How many of us have made our own "New Year Resolutions", only to find that, today, January 2<sup>nd</sup>, we've already failed? Not a great start to the New Year, eh?

So, here's the advice – make resolutions if you will, but "judge not the play before the play is done". Take it in smaller stages. "Every day speaks a new scene". Manage what you can in a shorter timeframe. Hold on to your dreams. Make plans if you wish. But recognise that there are times when we are no more than a "patient looker-on", with no control over the unfolding plot of our living. So, take each scene as it comes. Build it into a bigger picture. And recognise that you can't see it all – not yet.

In my bereavement support work, people often talked about taking things "a day at a time" as they sought to process their grief and loss. But in one group, a participant suggested that for her, even *that* was too long a timeframe. "It's a morning or an afternoon at a time," she said. "And sometimes even an *hour* at a time is enough." She was right. Managing the shorter scenes was as much as she could put her mind to.

It's OK for your soul to sit and be "a patient looker-on". Don't judge what you don't yet know. There are many changes to come in 2022. Enjoy, cope with and learn from each new scene. I'm sure that for you, the play and plot of your life will unfold as it should.

### **A prayer for today**

*Lord, help me leave "the last act" to you, as I appreciate each scene as it unfolds. Amen*

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