

**DON**, rises, backs up onto platform, grabs downstage left post.  
God! Now what?!

**JILL**: Oh damn—a false eyelash. Takes the eyelash from him and puts it in her pocket.

**DON**: Don't you have eyelashes?

**JILL**, kneels downstage arm of sofa: Of course, but these are longer than mine. They make my eyes look bigger. Didn't Linda wear them?

**DON**: No.

**JILL**: She probably has naturally long lashes. I hate her. Places his hand on her cheek: Go on.

**DON**: This is scaring hell out of me.

**JILL**: It's all right. Everything's real from now on. Don runs his fingers across Jill's mouth. Am I not the image of Elizabeth Taylor?

**DON**: I've never felt Elizabeth Taylor.

**JILL**: We look exactly alike. Especially if you can't see. Jill smiles at Don, oddly, as his fingers explore her throat. She takes his hand and places it on her breast. That's my breast. All mine. Both of them. Gently, she pushes him down on the table. She kisses him full on the mouth. Don twists his head away from her and gets off table. Suddenly, anguished, crosses above upstage end of sofa. What's the matter?

**DON**: What do you think is the matter?

**JILL**, between sofa and coffee table: If I knew, I wouldn't ask.

**DON**: Why are you doing this? Is it Be Kind to the Handicapped Week or something? Don't patronize me! And don't feel sorry for me!

**JILL**, hotly: I'm doing it because I want to do it! And I'll be God damned if I feel sorry for any guy who's going to have sex with me!

*They kiss and sink onto the sofa.*

## THE DARK AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS

by William Inge

### ACT I

The setting for Inge's family drama is the home of Rubin Flood, his wife, Cora, and their two children. The time is the early 1920s and the place is a small Oklahoma town. The Floods' daughter, Reenie, is an overly shy teenage girl who spends more time practicing the piano than socializing with her friends. Her mother, Cora, is worried about her. Without telling her husband, Cora has purchased an expensive dress for Reenie to wear to a local dance. When Rubin is told about the dress by a gossiping shopkeeper, he is furious. He enters the house and confronts Cora just as she is trying to encourage Reenie to attend the dance. The ensuing argument between the couple snowballs into an airing of grievances that ends with Rubin threatening to leave and Cora accusing him of adultery. (Reenie's brief entrance and Cora's response to her at the beginning of the scene may be omitted for scene-study purposes, as may the later entrance of her brother Sonny.)

**RUBIN**, bursting into the house: What the hell's been goin' on behind my back? Sees the innocent dress lying on a chair: There it is!

**CORA**: Rubin!

**RUBIN**, displaying the dress as evidence: So this is what ya wanted the extra money for. Fine feathers! Fine feathers! And ya buy 'em when my back is turned.

**CORA**: Rubin, we were going to tell you. . . .

**RUBIN**: A man has to go downtown and talk with some of his pals before he knows what's goin' on in his own family.

**CORA**: Who told you?



RUBIN: That's all right who told me. I got my own ways a findin' out what goes on when my back is turned.

CORA: You didn't leave town at all. You've been down to that dirty old pool hall.

RUBIN: I got a right to go to the pool hall whenever I damn please.

CORA: I thought you were in such a hurry to get out of town. Oh, yes, you had to get to Muskogee tonight.

RUBIN: I can still make it to Muskogee. *Finds the price tag on the dress.* \$19.75! Lord have mercy! \$19.75.

CORA, *approaching Rubin*: Did Loren Delman come into the pool hall while you were there? Did he? Did he tell you? If he did I'll never buy anything in that store again.

RUBIN: That'd suit me just fine.

CORA: Oh, why couldn't he have kept his mouth shut? I was going to pay for the dress a little at a time, and . . .

RUBIN: "The finest dress I had in the store," he says, walking into the arcade with a big cigar stuck in his mouth, wearin' a suit of fine tailored clothes. "I just sold your wife the finest dress I had in the store."

CORA: Oh, that makes me furious.

RUBIN: Jesus Christ woman, whatta you take me for, one of those millionaire oil men? Is that what you think you're married to?

REENIE, *pokes her head in through parlor door, speaking with tears and anxiety*: I told you he'd be mad, Mom. Let's take the dress back, Mom. I don't want to go to the party anyhow.

CORA, *angrily impatient*: Get back in that parlor, Reenie, and don't come in here until I tell you to. *Slams parlor doors shut.*

RUBIN: See there! That girl don't even want the dress. It's you, puttin' all these high-fallutin' ideas in her head about parties, and dresses and nonsense.

CORA: Rubin, of course Reenie doesn't want to go to the party. She never wants to go any place. All she wants to do is lock herself in the parlor and practice at the piano, or go to the library and hide her nose in a book. After all, she's going to want to get married one of these days, isn't she? And where's she going to look for a husband? In the public library? *Rubin goes to his corner, downstage left, sits in his big leather chair, and draws a pint of whiskey out of his desk drawer.*

RUBIN: I bought her a fine dress . . . just a little while back.

CORA: Oh, you did?

RUBIN: Yes, I did.

CORA: That's news to me, when?

RUBIN: Just a few months ago. Sure I did.

CORA: I certainly never saw it. What'd it look like?

RUBIN: It was white.

CORA: Rubin Flood, that was the dress you bought her three years ago when she graduated from the eighth grade. And she hasn't had a new dress since then, except for a few school clothes.

RUBIN: Why couldn't she wear the white dress to the party?

CORA: Because she's grown three inches since you got her that dress, and besides I cut it up two years ago and dyed it black and made her a skirt out of it to wear with a middy.

RUBIN: Just the same, I ain't got money to throw away on no party togs. I just ain't got it.

CORA: Oh no. You don't have money when we need something here at home, do you?

RUBIN: I'm tellin' ya, right now I don't.

CORA: But you always have money for a bottle of bootleg whiskey when you want it, don't you? And I daresay, you've got money for a few other things, too, that I needn't mention just at present.

RUBIN: What're ya talkin' about?

CORA: *You* know what I'm talking about.

RUBIN: The hell I do.

CORA: I know what goes on when you go out on the road. You may tell me you spruce up for your customers, but I happen to know better. Do you think I'm a fool?

RUBIN: I don't know what you're talkin' about.

CORA: I happen to have friends, decent, self-respecting people, who tell me a few things that happen when you visit Ponca City.

RUBIN: You mean the Werpel sisters!

CORA: It's all right, who I mean. I have friends over there. That's all I need to say.

RUBIN: Those nosey old maids, the Werpel sisters? God damn? Have they been runnin' to you with stories?

CORA: Maybe you don't have money to buy your daughter a



new dress, but it seems you have money to take Mavis Pruitt to dinner whenever you're over there, and to a movie afterwards, and give her presents.

RUBIN: I've known Mavis . . . Pruitt ever since I was a boy! What harm is there if I take her to a movie?

CORA: You're always too tired to take *me* to a movie when you come home.

RUBIN: Life's different out on the road.

CORA: I bet it is.

RUBIN: Besides, I din ask her. She came into the Gibson House one night when I was havin' my dinner. What could I do but ask her to join me?

CORA: She went to the Gibson House because she knew you were there. I know what kind of woman she is.

RUBIN: She's not as bad as she's painted. The poor woman's had a hard time of it, too.

CORA: Oh, she has!

RUBIN: Yes she has. I feel sorry for her.

CORA: Oh, you do!

RUBIN: Yes, I do. Is there any law that says I can't feel sorry for Mavis Pruitt?

CORA: She's had her eye on you ever since I can remember.

RUBIN: Oh, shoot!

CORA: What happened to the man she left town with after we were married?

RUBIN: He run off and left her.

CORA: For good reason, too, I bet. I also heard that she was seen sporting a pair of black-bottom hose shortly after you left town, and that you were seen buying such a pair of hose at the Globe Dry Goods Store.

RUBIN: By God, you got yourself a real detective service goin', haven't you?

CORA: I don't ask people to tell me these things. I wish to God they didn't.

RUBIN: All right, I bought her a pair of hose. I admit it. It was her birthday. The hose cost me sixty-eight cents. They made that poor woman happy. After all, I've known her ever since I was a boy. Besides, I was a li'l more flush then.

CORA: How do you think it makes me feel when people tell me things like that?

RUBIN: Ya oughtn'ta listen.

CORA: How can I help it?

RUBIN, *he has to think to call her by her full name, to keep you from presuming too much familiarity between them:* There's nothing 'tween me and Mavis . . . Pruitt . . . Mavis Pruitt, nothin' for you to worry about.

CORA: There's probably a woman like her in every town you visit. That's why you want to get out of town, to go frisking over the country like a young stallion.

RUBIN: You just hush your mouth. The daughter'll hear you.

CORA, *indulging a little self-pity:* A lot you care about your daughter. A lot you care about any of us.

RUBIN: You don't think I care for ya unless I set ya on my knee and nuzzle ya.

CORA: What you need for a wife is a squaw. Why didn't you marry one of those Indian women out on the reservation? Yes, she'd make you rich now, too, wouldn't she? And you wouldn't have to pay any attention to her at all. *Sonny is seen coming onto porch, right.*

RUBIN: All right. Maybe that's what I *shoulda* done.

CORA: Oh. So you want to throw it up to me!

RUBIN: Throw what? *Sonny quietly enters room carrying a sack of groceries. Cora and Rubin are too far into battle to notice him.*

CORA: You know what, Rubin Flood.

RUBIN: I don't know nothin'.

CORA: You never *wanted* to marry me.

RUBIN: I never said that.

CORA: It's true, isn't it?

RUBIN: I'm tellin' ya, it ain't.

CORA: It is. I've felt it all these years. *Sonny crosses and enters parlor, upstage center, still unobserved by Rubin and Cora.*

RUBIN: All right, If you're so determined to think it, then go ahead. I admit, in some ways I din wanna marry nobody. Can't ya understand how a man feels, givin' up his freedom?

CORA: And how does a woman feel, knowing her husband married her only because . . . because he . . . *(Cora now spots Reenie spying between the parlor doors, upstage center. She screams at her.)* Reenie, get away from there!

RUBIN: None of this is what we was arguin' about in the first place. We was arguin' about the dress. Ya gotta take it back.

CORA: *I won't.*



RUBIN: *Ya will.*

CORA: Reenie's going to wear her new dress to the party, or you'll have to bury me.

RUBIN: You'll take that dress back to Loren Delman, or I'm leavin' this house for good and never comin' back.

CORA: Go on. You're only home half the time as it is. We can get along without you the rest of the time.

RUBIN: Then that's what you're gonna do. There'll be ice cream parlors in hell before I come back to this place and listen to your jaw. *Bolts into the hallway now, far right.*

CORA: Get out! Get out and go to Ponca City. Mavis Pruitt is waiting. She's probably getting lonesome without you. *Sonny enters quietly from dining room upstage left and watches.*

RUBIN: By God, Cora, it's all I can do to keep from hittin' you when you talk like that.

CORA, *following him into hallway right, taunting him. Here they are both unseen by audience:* Go on and hit me! You wouldn't dare! *But he does dare. We hear the sound of his blow which sends Cora reeling back into parlor. Rubin! Reenie watches from parlor.*

RUBIN: I'll go to Ponca City, and drink booze and take Mavis to the movies, and raise every kind of hell I can think of. T'hell with you! *He bolts outside.*

CORA, *running to the door:* Don't you ever set foot in this house again, Rubin Flood. I'll never forget what you've said. Never! Don't you ever come back inside this house again!

## THE TENTH MAN

by Paddy Chayefsky

### ACT II, SCENE 1

*The Tenth Man*, loosely based on Sholom Aleichem's *The Dybbuk*, is the story of an exorcism through love. It takes place in a rundown storefront synagogue in Mineola, Long Island—a syn-

agogue whose congregation consists of a handful of old men who rarely are able to muster the quorum of ten needed for the traditional religious service.

Evelyn (referred to in the script as "The Girl"), eighteen years old and diagnosed as schizophrenic, has been kidnapped by her grandfather just before she was to be returned to a sanatorium. His own diagnosis is quite different: "She is possessed. She has a dybbuk in her. A demon!" He has brought her to the synagogue for an exorcism so that she might be released from the possession of the angry and homeless soul that has invaded her body.

Enter Arthur Brooks—a man for whom "life is utterly meaningless." He had had the American dream life: success as an attorney, a proper wife, proper children, and "a handsome home only three blocks from the Scarsdale Country Club." Yet the loneliness and boredom that had always plagued his life persisted. He sought escape from despair and disillusionment in liquor, sordid affairs, and unsuccessful suicide attempts. Soon his wife and children were gone and his practice was failing; all that remained of his "American nirvana" was his perpetual psychoanalysis.

This morning, on the tail end of his latest binge, Arthur found himself banging on the front door of his ex-wife's home in Mineola. As he sought his way back to the railroad station, he was stopped on the street by one of the old Jews in search of a tenth man to complete the quorum. When asked if he was Jewish, he answered yes, and was immediately shuffled off into the synagogue. Against both his will and his finely honed cynicism, Arthur gets caught up in the magic of the exorcism and the plight of the young girl. Through her he discovers a compassion he thought was unattainable and a reason to continue living.

In the scene that follows the congregation is at prayer. Arthur watches them, leaning against a wall near the rabbi's office where the girl has been hidden. He has already seen the girl and become aware of her strange behavior. She comes out of the office and speaks to him. Her manner is normal now.