

ONE

THE PLAY BEGINS WITH SOUNDS OF RAIN AGAINST GLASS, A DISTANT ROLL OF THUNDER. LIGHTS COME UP, BUT TO VERY MODEST REGISTER, FOR SUPPOSEDLY WE ARE IN GEOFFREY'S UNOCCUPIED AND TOTALLY DARKENED FLAT. ASSUME THAT GEOFFREY IS THE BENEFICIARY OF A TRUST FUND, AND WHILE THE FLAT IS NOT OPULENT, NEITHER SHOULD IT BE A BACHELOR PAD, A STUDENT HOVEL. THERE ARE CHAIRS, A SOFA, ENDTABLES, AND TOO, SINCE EMILY IS ABOUT TO MAKE THIS HER HOME AND HAS LED THE WAY IN ITS DECORATING, THE FURNISHINGS MIGHT WELL BE IN KEEPING WITH SOMEONE HER AGE AND HER STATION.

PERHAPS DOWNSTAGE, STAGE-LEFT, WE SEE A WOODEN TABLE WITH FOUR CHAIRS. TO THE LEFT OF THE TABLE IS SOMETHING MEANT TO REPRESENT A WINDOW, UPTSTAGE PERHAPS. UPSTAGE, STAGE-RIGHT, THIS DIMLY LIT AS WELL, IS A KITCHEN COUNTER, A KITCHEN CABINET, A KITCHEN AREA, IN OTHER WORDS, AS WELL AS A WALL WITH HOOKS FOR OUTER GARMENTS--IF SO, THERE ARE SEVERAL ITEMS OF CLOTHING TO BE SEEN THERE, INCLUDING A WIDE BRIMMED HAT WHICH BELONGS TO EMILY. ON THIS SIDE OF THE STAGE IS THE DOOR TO THE FLAT, OPENING ONTO A CORRIDOR, APPARENTLY.

FARTHEST UPSTAGE, STAGE-LEFT, WE FIND A BED, THIS KEPT IN A LOWER KEY LIGHT THAN WHAT WE FIND DOWNSTAGE, UNTIL WE SEE IT OCCUPIED IN THE PLAY'S DENOUEMENT. BUT IT IS NEVER OUT OF VIEW, NOT FROM MOMENT ONE, AND PERIODICALLY--THOUGH LOGICALLY THERE IS A WALL BETWEEN THE BEDROOM AND THE REST OF THE FLAT--IT SEEMS TO BE IN THE VIEW OF THE CHARACTERS THEMSELVES.

THE FIRST CHARACTER WE MEET IS JUDAH, WHO IS ENTERING GEOFFREY'S FLAT SURREPTITIOUSLY. JUDAH FUMBLES WITH THE KEY AS HE TRIES TO UNLATCH THE DOOR, SEEKS AS IF BY BRAILLE A LAMP OR A WALL SWITCH, HAVING ONLY LIGHT FROM THE BUILDING'S HALLWAY--APPARENTLY--TO ILLUMINATE THIS TASK. TO JUDAH, THIS FLAT IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A LOVE NEST, HIS WIFE'S AND HER PARAMOUR'S, AND JUDAH'S INSTINCTS THIS EVENING ARE PRIMAL, FOR INSTINCTIVELY HE'D LIKE TO LIFT HIS LEG TO THE OTTOMAN, SNIFF THE CUSHIONS AND BRAY AT THE SKY. JUDAH'S NOT THE SORT OF MAN TO BE AT EASE WITH HIS INSTINCTS, HOWEVER. WHAT HE DOES INSTEAD IS TO TRY IT ON FOR SIZE, THIS FLAT. JUDAH SITS IN VARIOUS PIECES OF FURNITURE, IN VARIOUS POSITIONS, TRIES THE BED, WIPES HIS MUDDY FEET ON THE CARPET, THEN COMES DOWNSTAGE TOWARD SOMETHING WHICH HAS CAUGHT HIS ATTENTION IN THE COURSE OF HIS SURVEY, A FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH OF HIS DAUGHTERS. HE PICKS IT UP, FROM A MANTEL OR ENDTABLE PERHAPS, EXAMINES IT CLOSELY. HIS IS A SELF-INFLICTED WOUND, WHICH ARE AMONG THE MOST PAINFUL. HE SITS NOW AS IF DEFLATED, DEFEATED, SHOT THROUGH THE HEART.

THIS PRIVATE MOMENT IS INTERRUPTED BY THE SOUNDS OF GEOFFREY'S RETURN. JUDAH PUTS THE PHOTOGRAPH DOWN, FACE DOWN, LOOKS ABOUT, HURRIES TO RETRIEVE AN UMBRELLA WHICH HE HAS HUNG ON A HOOK WHEN HE ENTERED, HURRIES TO TURN OFF THE LIGHTS. FLATTENS HIS BACK AGAINST A WALL PERHAPS, LURKS IN THE

SHADOWS, WATCHES FURTIVELY AS GEOFFREY FUMBLES WITH THE LOCK HIMSELF (SINCE JUDAH HAS NOT LOCKED THE DOOR ONCE HE ENTERED, GEOFFREY IS ACTUALLY LOCKING THE DOOR WHEN HE THINKS HE IS UNLOCKING THE DOOR). FINALLY GETTING IT RIGHT, GEOFFREY ENTERS.

ALL OF THIS SHOULD BE IN KEEPING, BOTH IN TIMBRE AND TONE, WITH THE STAGECRAFT OF POPULAR MYSTERIES; WE COULD BE ABOUT TO WITNESS A MURDER, AN ASSAULT OF SOME SORT.

ENTER GEOFFREY, WEARING A RAINCOAT. HE HAS JUST COME FROM A RAINY EVENING'S GROCERY SHOPPING DONE IN ANTICIPATION OF EMILY AND HER CHILDREN. HE TURNS ON A LIGHT, STRUGGLING WITH THE BAGS HE'S CARRYING AS HE TAKES HIS KEY FROM THE DOOR; HE'S A YOUNG MAN, USED TO SHOPPING FOR ONE, NEVER FOR MORE THAN TWO, CERTAINLY NOT FOR A FAMILY, AND HE HAS MORE IN HAND THAN CAN BE MANAGED FROM PRACTICE. PERHAPS GEOFFREY LEAVES SOME OF HIS SHOPPING IN THE HALL, TAKES SOME OF IT TO THE KITCHEN, MAKES SEVERAL TRIPS BACK AND FORTH, PUTS SOME OF IT AWAY BEFORE RETRIEVING THE REST--THE LONGER THIS TAKES, THE BETTER, FOR WE SHOULD BE WAITING FOR THE MOMENT WHEN HE COMES UPON JUDAH.

GEOFFREY STARTS AT THE SIGHT OF HIM AS HE TURNS ON LAMP; SO SHOULD WE. THERE IS SOMETHING GHOST LIKE ABOUT JUDAH INITIALLY, AS THERE IS TO ANYONE SUFFERING A SHOCK TO THEIR SYSTEM, AND NO MATTER HOW SOPHISTICATED WE MAY THINK WE ARE ABOUT SUCH THINGS, OUR INSTINCTS TELL US THERE'S SOMETHING TO FEAR FROM A GHOST.

JUDAH:

Do you know who I am?

GEOFFREY:

Yes. I've been to your house. We met at that party. Last Christmas or something.

JUDAH:

Close the door. I won't be staying. I mean, I want to be leaving before Emily comes.

GEOFFREY:

What's that?

JUDAH:

This?

GEOFFREY:

In your hand, the umbrella.

JUDAH:

It's Emily's umbrella, not mine. It's raining. I thought she ought to have it. She hates getting caught in the rain.

GEOFFREY:

When did you get here?

JUDAH:

I sat outside in the car in the rain. I was sitting in my car when you left to do your shopping. Then I let myself in with a key.

GEOFFREY:

What do you mean, You *let yourself in*?

JUDAH:

I spoke to your landlord. He gave me his key.

GEOFFREY:

He forked it right over?

JUDAH:

No.

GEOFFREY:

You made up a story.

JUDAH:

Yes, I made up a story. Emily probably has a key as well.

GEOFFREY:

Yes.

JUDAH:

(GEOFFREY CLOSES THE DOOR, COMPOSES HIMSELF AND SETTLES IN, REMOVES A BIT OF THE SHOPPING FROM ONE OF SEVERAL BAGS, SAY, ALL OF THIS IN SILENCE, THEN COMES TO THE GENERAL AREA WHICH JUDAH NOW OCCUPIES, AS IF EXPECTING AN EXPLANATION OF WHAT JUDAH THINKS HE IS DOING, BREAKING INTO ANOTHER MAN'S HOME. WHAT HE GETS INSTEAD IS BUT A BREAK FROM THE SILENCE) Emily says you went to university--somewhere. She says you're well-to-do. (BEAT. BEAT.) We're not well-to-do, that is I'm not well-to-do. (BEAT) She says you went to university at Oxford. (JUDAH LOOKS UPSTAGE TOWARD THE UNMADE BED, HIS WIFE'S LINGERIE, THE WARM AND RUMPLED LOOK OF A BED WHERE SEX IS COMMON; JUDGING BY JUDAH'S EXPRESSION IT IS AS IF THE BED IS LOOKING AT JUDAH AS WELL, RATHER FIERCELY)

GEOFFREY:

Cambridge, actually, not Oxford.

JUDAH:

Oh. (SITTING, DEPLETED, APPARENTLY LOST TO HIS OWN THOUGHTS)

GEOFFREY:

(WITH BRAVADO, TRYING TOO HARD TO MAKE HIMSELF APPEAR AT EASE AS HE LEAVES JUDAH WHERE HE SITS, UNINVITED. GEOFFREY GOES TO THE HALF-MADE BED UPSTAGE AND BEGINS PUTTING IT BACK IN ORDER, NEATLY, SPEAKING TO JUDAH AS HE TIDIES, SO THAT FOR THIS SEQUENCE IT IS AS IF THERE IS NO IMAGINARY WALL BETWEEN THEM, WITH GEOFFREY GETTING EVERYTHING TUCKED AWAY BY THE END OF THE SPEECH BUT A NIGHTGOWN OF SOME SORT, WHICH REMAINS IN VIEW THROUGHOUT THE PLAY.

THE SPEECH SHOULD BE TIMED TO COINCIDE WITH THE SEVERAL STEPS IT TAKES TO MAKE A BED, THAT IS, GETTING THE PILLOWS OUT OF THE WAY, SMOOTHING THE SHEETS, ETC. IN THE SILENCE BETWEEN STEPS HE LOOKS TO JUDAH IN ORDER TO GAUGE THE IMPRESSION HE'S MAKING ON HIS LOVER'S HUSBAND. JUDAH SHOULD BE DEADPAN THROUGHOUT, PERHAPS BE FACING THE AUDIENCE THROUGHOUT, A CONCENTRATED AVOIDANCE OF PRECISELY THE KIND OF EYE-CONTACT THE YOUNG MAN BOTH SEEKS AND EXPECTS) Managed two full terms before chucking it in. I wasn't really keen on being a student, or I should have stayed on.

I don't mean I was cowed or anything. I just wasn't much of a *trier*. Never saw any point in it.

I knew full well what I was doing when I left dear old Cambridge. Once you're in they don't bounce you out, money or no. Leave. Stay. It was nothing to me one way or the other. Why stay though, if that's the case?

Upset the more respectable relatives though. You don't want to hear about my father--Wanted to shake me till my teeth rattled, and he would have too--If I'd given him the chance.

Bummed around for a year or so. Won a Vespa in a card game and rode it till I rode it to death. Leaked oil. Ran fine otherwise. Stylish little number. Wish I had it back.

Spent time on the Costa Del Sol and sampled a *senorita* or two--up and down those wonderful Spanish beaches. Had myself quite a time, I must say. Nothing to do but to lap up the vino and soak up the rays.

Once I was broke I wrote home for forgiveness. You know the story, I'M HOME DAD, IT'S ME--return of the prodigal whatever. Demanded to know where I'd been, and what I'd been up to. You can bet I spared him nothing.

Some of it I had to make up, just to be certain he'd believe me. We did this over tea. He had tea. I had coffee. I was trying to make a point, I suppose.

He'd always thought of me as the featherbrain, so he couldn't have been as surprised as he pretended to be. Reversion to type, I suppose.

JUDAH:

(GEOFFREY LEAVES THE BEDROOM, COMES DOWNSTAGE, WHERE JUDAH IS SITTING. JUDAH MAKES A POINT OF BEING UNIMPRESSED, UNFAZED, A MAN TALKING TO A BOY) You don't mind if I sit down, Geoffrey. Can I call you Geoffrey?

GEOFFREY:

Yes. Of course.

JUDAH:

What is it you do with my wife?

GEOFFREY:

What?

JUDAH:

At work.

GEOFFREY:

Oh. I thought you meant—

JUDAH:

Yes. I could tell what you thought. You're in some kind of training program?

GEOFFREY:

I help her with her case load.

JUDAH:

(*THINKING ALOUD, REALLY*) It's what I get for marrying my student, I suppose: Stands to reason she'd want a student of her own.

GEOFFREY:

Except in your case--You were her instructor, right, at university?

JUDAH:

No doubt she sees in you what I thought I saw in her: a kindred spirit—or something--Emily, I mean. (*BEAT, A CHANGE IN TONE, AND EYE-CONTACT AT LAST, IF ONLY MOMENTARILY*) I don't really think of myself as a case.

GEOFFREY:

Sorry.

JUDAH:

Emily's always coming home talking about people she's met in the

course of her day as her cases.

GEOFFREY:

She gets involved. It's hard not to get involved. At work.

Emotionally.

JUDAH:

(AS IF FINISHING THE THOUGHT SO THAT IT HAS TO DO WITH BECOMING EMOTIONALLY INVOLVED WITH HIS WIFE) With Emily.

GEOFFREY:

What?

JUDAH:

Nothing. Forget it. Which scheme, Welfare and Youth?

GEOFFREY:

Children's Protective.

JUDAH:

We have children.

GEOFFREY:

Two girls, I know. I've met them, you see.

JUDAH:

(WITH THE FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH IN HIS HANDS NOW) Yes, two girls. Amy, she's the youngest, the baby of the family, and Jessica. Jess is more like me. She was the first one. The birth order, it makes a difference. She's still the center. But I think it's been hard for her in some ways. Sharing the attention after she had it all to herself. (HANDING IT TO GEOFFREY) This is Jess, this one here.

GEOFFREY:

She looks more like you than Emily.

JUDAH:

Don't let her hear you say so. She's right at that age.

GEOFFREY:

We're in love, Judah.

JUDAH:

Love's a nice-to-have. In these things.

GEOFFREY:

Did you hear what I said?

JUDAH:

Not a have-to-have necessarily, but, you know, a nice-to-have.

GEOFFREY:

Why don't you put this over there. Where it's kept. (*EXTENDS THE PHOTOGRAPH TO JUDAH, WHO REMAINS LOST TO HIS OWN THOUGHT, OUT OF THE YOUNG MAN'S REACH, APPARENTLY*)

JUDAH:

The problem with having kids...what I was thinking to myself a moment ago...I mean, you discover in your children what you like least and fear most about yourself and your spouse. You love your children so much more than you love yourselves, after all. It strikes home so much deeper. It hurts all the more. Do you know what I'm saying?

GEOFFREY:

Yes, I think so. (*RETURNS THE PHOTO TO ITS PLACE IN THE FLAT*) You weren't to bring the girls by until later this evening. Emily said you'd be bringing them by *your house*, I mean. That she'd be meeting you there. After work. Then she'd be bringing them here.

JUDAH:

(*LOOKING AROUND THE ROOM, PERHAPS THINKING EVIDENCE OF EMILY'S TASTE IS VERY MUCH PRESENT, IN ANY CASE NOT LISTENING*) Who?

GEOFFREY:

We'll be looking for a bigger place. The girls will have rooms of their own.

JUDAH:

Did Emily talk about us a lot?

GEOFFREY:

(*FINISHING HIS THOUGHT*) I mean, you probably want to see where

they'll be.

JUDAH:

(*FINISHING HIS THOUGHT*) The way you and I are speaking of the children--as if we have them in common. The way we're--What's the word?--*Sharing*.

GEOFFREY:

I'm not sure what you mean.

JUDAH:

You know. Emily and myself. The two of us. Did she share? Well, me. Did she talk about *me*, I'm wanting to know.

GEOFFREY:

Just in passing. Not often. Why?

JUDAH:

I'm curious. I have the right to be curious, don't I? Wouldn't you be curious if things were the other way around this evening, and I were moving in with your wife instead of you moving in with mine? Wouldn't you be bloody well curious, Geoffrey?
(*BEAT. AN UNSETTLING CHANGE OF TONE; JUDAH COULD BE A BRITISH AIR STEWARD*) Are you sure you don't want something, tea or coffee or something?

GEOFFREY:

Yes--I mean, No, I don't--I could always get something for you, if you wanted.

JUDAH:

No. Don't bother. Tell me one thing she said. About me. Will you do that?

GEOFFREY:

You never came up.

JUDAH:

I'm sure she said something. She runs off at the mouth, once you--(*A GRAPHICALLY CARNAL GESTURE*). Well, you know.

GEOFFREY:

She said you were distant.

JUDAH:

What do you suppose she meant? That I was under-expressive?

GEOFFREY:

Not under-expressive.

JUDAH:

Silent? I'm not very talkative, I suppose. I've never seen the point in taking part in everyday, simple talk. Odd. You don't

suppose that led her to believe I loved her any less, do you?
I suppose we never know how we appear to others.

GEOFFREY:

She said you'd always been a distant person. By which she meant an undemonstrative person. (*IN LIGHT OF JUDAH'S PREFERENCE FOR GESTURE, WORTH REPEATING*) Undemonstrative. I think I'll have something after all. I think I'll put on a pot. For coffee. All I've got is Nescafe at the moment. I can make us a cup of instant though.

JUDAH:

Stay right where you are.

GEOFFREY:

Why should I?

JUDAH:

Why--That's what Emily would want you to do-- I assume. Well? Didn't she explain why she's kept us apart? Didn't she say, "One day the time will come for the two of you to meet and"--I mean, didn't she tell you that I can only be pushed so far, that I'm giving up my daughters not for my sake but for *their* sake--that I've been--What?--A little *Mental*--lately--That I could fight her for the girls and drag this out forever. The girls are the love of her life, you realize.

GEOFFREY:

Yes.

JUDAH:

I'm trying to fathom the width of the breach between us, you see. Emily, me. It's a wonder I could have missed it. (*BEAT. BEAT. DIGESTING WHAT HE'S BEEN TOLD*) Distant? After you'd--(*AS BEFORE, JUDAH'S GRAPHICALLY CARNAL GESTURE*)

GEOFFREY:

She said I'm everything you're not.

JUDAH:

Would you like to put the rest of your shopping away?

GEOFFREY:

No. That can wait.

JUDAH:

Is there nothing that can spoil?

GEOFFREY:

No.

JUDAH:

You have quite a lot there. Who are you expecting?

GEOFFREY:

I think you know very well.

JUDAH:

Things go faster and faster, once the kids come along. It's hard to set a table for a meal. You become overextended. You don't have time to take a walk, or to have a conversation about some book you've been reading together. You don't have time to read a book, to begin with. You start to feel your life accelerating to warp speed, you see.

GEOFFREY:

I see.

JUDAH:

Do you? I doubt it. Does any of this make sense? Or are you just saying that?

GEOFFREY:

It's perfectly clear. You're on ice so thin that it won't bear your weight.

JUDAH:

(AS IF ANIMATED AT THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING UNDERSTOOD) Yes. Go on.

GEOFFREY:

All you can think to do is skate faster and faster.

JUDAH:

Yes, that's what I meant exactly! I mean, it takes a certain amount of leisure in your schedules before you realize all that's happened, time-wise. I'm surprised you got the point. I was afraid that you wouldn't.

GEOFFREY:

No. I mean it. I understand completely. You don't have time for one another, so of course you grow apart.

JUDAH:

Yes. What's Emily's best feature, in your opinion?

GEOFFREY:

Best feature?

JUDAH:

You must have some opinion, I'd think.

GEOFFREY:

Yes.

JUDAH:

You know, when she walks into a room, where do you look, where do your eyes fall?

GEOFFREY:

(ON TO JUDAH; IN AVOIDANCE OF A TRAP) She has a very striking smile.

JUDAH:

Yes. She has very white teeth. Some women have very white teeth, but they don't have very straight teeth, but Emily's are very white, like her mother's, and very straight. And they're also very sturdy.

GEOFFREY:

So she's not in any danger of losing her teeth, is what you're saying.

JUDAH:

Of course what really matters in that regard are one's gums, not one's teeth, as I understand it. That's how you understand it too, Geoffrey?

GEOFFREY:

Yes. That's what I've been told. (BEAT. *THIS IS SO BIZARRE, NO LONGER COMPLETELY CERTAIN OF WHAT JUDAH IS UP TO*) She's never mentioned having gum trouble.

JUDAH:

Who? Emily? No, no, she's perfectly fine.

GEOFFREY:

Yes.

JUDAH:

In that regard.

GEOFFREY:

Yes.

JUDAH:

Periodontally speaking, Emily's a *knockout*, in fact.

GEOFFREY:

You're making a joke.

JUDAH:

Yes. I'm making a joke.

GEOFFREY:

I thought so.

JUDAH:

She's allergic to bees, of course.

GEOFFREY:

How so? Not fatally.

JUDAH:

No. Unless she's stung by some killer bee, I imagine. It might be fatal then. You're not?

GEOFFREY:

No. I'm not allergic to anything. That I know of.

JUDAH:

Neither am I.

GEOFFREY:

(BEAT, JUST TO GET ON WITH THIS) Is she often stung? By the non-killing kind?

JUDAH:

No. Not often. Fortunately. They can puff her up though.

GEOFFREY:

Puffs her up, getting stung?

JUDAH:

Oh my yes, and her face in particular. We were away on holiday once and she got stung on her cheek. Here. Right here. It formed a welt the size of a football, then it swelled and it swelled and it swelled. I mean, it was really quite something. It was like her face was growing a face, or something. There was Emily's face, her ordinary face, I mean, and then this other face off to the side that her ordinary face was producing. Do you remember that movie, *The Elephant Man*? She insisted on seeing a doctor. *(PATTING GEOFFREY, STROKING GEOFFREY PERHAPS, WHATEVER THE GESTURE A GESTURE MEANT TO BE A MOCK OF INTIMACY, ONE JUDAH WILL EMPLOY LATER--AS HE DOES HERE--TO MAKE THIS YOUNGER MAN UNCOMFORTABLE)* She was something of a-Freak!

GEOFFREY:

You're joking again, aren't you.

JUDAH:

(DEADPAN)No.

GEOFFREY:

No?!

JUDAH:

(IMMEDIATELY, ALMOST OVERLAPPING. JUDAH MEANS TO CHANGE THE DIRECTION OF THE CONVERSATION) What was it about Emily that you liked?

GEOFFREY:

I just like her for who she is.

JUDAH:

Oh, like her for who *she pretends to be*, dear boy, you'll be much

better off in the long run (REALIZING THAT GEOFFREY HASN'T FOLLOWED THIS, DISMISSING THE JOKE)--Never mind--I was asking what you liked first about Emily, what caught your attention? Can't you remember?

GEOFFREY:

I can remember.

JUDAH:

I suppose you think I already know as much as I need to, without having to be told. But I don't, I'm afraid. What was it you liked best, *initially*, is what I'm asking.

GEOFFREY:

(AGAIN TRYING TO AVOID A TRAP, BUT LESS CERTAIN NOW THAT THIS IS THE WAY TO DO IT) Her compassion. For the helpless. That she is who she is. So caring. (BEAT,BEAT,BEAT)

JUDAH:

Yessss? (DEMANDING THAT GEOFFREY CONTINUE HIS THOUGHT, AS IF PRYING A LID FROM A TIN)

GEOFFREY:

(REALIZING JUDAH IS GIVING HIM TURNS TO SPEAK JUST TO FORCE HIM IN TO TAKING THEM, SO, TO FILL THE SILENCE WITHOUT COMMITTING HIMSELF TO ANYTHING JUDAH CAN USE AGAINST HIM) She can light up a room at a party.

JUDAH:

Yes, she's always been an easy mixer. We know that now, the two of us.

GEOFFREY:

You're twisting my words. She said she'd never been with anyone apart from her husband.