

Chrissy

A one act play of about 30 minutes duration.

by B E Turner

DEDICATION: To Lorraine Burton. In memoriam. For a debut.

CAST: **CHRISSY:** A pretty young lady
 LADY: A middle-aged housewife
 MAN: Her husband.
 JOHN: A young hoon.
 NURSE:

SET: There are four areas. Photographic realism is not required.

- 1) A Drawing Room. Stage right (*or left*). Table, three chairs, tea service.
- 2) A Car. Centre upstage. A car seat.
- 3) Free area. Centre downstage.
- 4) Hospital. Stage left (*or right*) . White cabinet, glass of water, bottle of pills.

SOUND: Thunder at start, then sound of rain throughout. Car noises are not required.

(Stage in darkness. Chrissy is in gesture of supplication in free area. Rest of cast in their space with backs to the audience. Lightning. Chrissy starts up. Thunder. Man and lady turn and walk downstage. The rain starts. Man holds out his hand.)

MAN: Heaven's wells burst forth,
an abundant cataract.

LADY: See how it rains
and water flows down drains.

MAN: Jupiter Pluvius reigns.

CHRISSEY: Look at it pour down,
so dim and dismal and grey.

I hate it.

It reminds me of unhappy times,
but it's nice inside

warm and cosy in front of the heater,
safe from the wet and the cold.

I like this room;

there are pictures on the walls,

boats in the bright sunset,

sweet young girls;

and little chintzy things around.

Cups of tea and social sympathy

harbour me for a time

and make me forget

where I've been,

and where I'm going.

LADY: What can we do for her,
the poor thing?

MAN: Offer sweet sugar for the acrid soul.

LADY: Let us sit down to tea.

(They sit down around the table and lady pours.)

CHRISSEY: Isn't it raining heavy?

LADY: It's far too wet to go back in the bus. Are they coming to get you?

CHRISSEY: I don't know. They didn't say.

MAN: They usually don't.

LADY: *(To him)* They never have yet. *(To her)* I thought if they thought it was going to rain they might make some arrangements.

MAN: If the car was going I could take her back.

LADY: Well it's not going is it?

CHRISSEY: It doesn't matter. I'd just as rather stay here for a while.

LADY: Well you'll have to go back sooner or later dear.

CHRISSEY: Yes, I suppose so.

MAN: She has to be back by five o'clock. That's what they said at the office.

LADY: Trust you to have to go and ask. You know what time you have to be back don't you Chrissy?

CHRISSEY: Yes, I have to be back by five o'clock.

MAN: That's what I said.

LADY: Yes alright then. If you'd taken the car to the garage like I told you you'd be able to take her back.

MAN: I told you Jack was going to fix it. He said he'd do it for nothing.

LADY: Yes and take a month of Sundays to do it. Would you like another cup of tea dear?

CHRISSEY: Yes thank-you please.

LADY: Let me pour it for you.

(Lady pours.)

CHRISSEY: Thank you.

MAN: How about a piece of cake?

LADY: She's got to watch her figure.

MAN: Yes, along with the rest of the boys.

(Chrissy titters.)

LADY: That's only because she's got a little will power. She doesn't let things get away from her the way you do. Look at your pot belly. The minute you come home you're into the biscuit tin... I don't know I'm sure.

CHRISSEY: Too many carbohydrates are bad for the figure.

LADY: It wouldn't surprise me if you had a corony *(not coronary)* the way you eat. It's disgusting. You should be ashamed of yourself.

(Man leaves table: moves downstage and directs his comments to the audience. When he speaks the other two freeze and vice versa.)

MAN: Silly woman. It's not the carbohydrates that have given me a pot belly, it's the beer I drink. A man has got to have a little bit of pleasure sometimes.

LADY: Don't take any notice of his comments dear. He's just a man. They're all the same.

CHRISSEY: I know.

LADY: Still I suppose if you've got such a nice figure you must get a lot of attention from men. I don't know.

MAN: I was pretty fit when I was young. You had to be if you played rugby football as well as I did.

LADY: I saw a lovely piece of material in Silverbergs the other day. It would suit you.

CHRISSEY: Oh would it? What could I make out of it?

LADY: It was a nice mauve with a dark border and it had little flowers printed on it. You'd have to see it for yourself, but I'm sure you'd love it.

CHRISSEY: I would have to be sure that it would suit me.

LADY: I'm sure it would. I'll get you a small piece if you like.

CHRISSEY: Oh would you? That would be lovely. I don't have much opportunity to get to Silverberg's now'days.

LADY: No you don't do you?

MAN: I always had a few beers after the game, with the rest of the boys. It was part of the thing. Good healthy exercise gives a man a thirst.

CHRISSEY: Could I make a skirt out of it?

LADY: Yes I thought you could make a skirt out of it and perhaps a top to go with it.

CHRISSEY: Oh neaty. What sort of material was it?

LADY: It was a sateen velveteen of five percent wool, thirty-four percent polyester and sixty-two percent allotropic iodide.

CHRISSEY: Oh that would be ideal.

LADY: Yes that's what I thought.

MAN: You should have felt my stomach in those days. You could hit me with your fist, as hard as you liked, and I wouldn't flinch. My body sure was in good condition then.

LADY: I saw Myra Harbottle wearing one just like it the other day and I thought it would look nice on you.

MAN: My God, I was pretty fit in those days. I could stand all sorts of weather. Blizzards, snow, you name it. We played in the rain Saturday after Saturday one season and I never even noticed I got wet.

CHRISSEY: I wish you wouldn't talk about the rain. It reminds me of bad things.

(Transition. Lights up on car. John turns to face audience. Lady and Chrissy stand.)

LADY: There, look what you've done.

MAN: My words have brought to mind
the pain within the soul.

(Chrissy and lady no longer freeze on man's lines.)

LADY: It's the rain that reminds her of pain.

CHRISSEY: I have to go. I have an appointment.

JOHN: Come on, come on,
I can't wait all day.

(Chrissy puts on her coat and moves towards the car.)

CHRISSEY: It's raining,
it's all wet,
and the road is full
of muddy puddles.

JOHN: I love me car,
I love me car,
I love me big old bad black car,
I'm the king of the road in me car,
and she's hotted up and roaring to go.

(Chrissy will now be in the car area. Drawing room area will no longer be illuminated. Man and lady will return to original positions with back to the audience.)

CHRISSEY: It's still raining;
the headlights of the dark car
gleam in miserable puddles of water
and I don't want to get all wet.

JOHN: She's my woman
and she does what she's told.

CHRISSEY: What aren't you my big brave Walter Raleigh
who threw down his coat for the Queen?
Instead you just sit there,
smug in the angry car.
Cuddle me, coddle me,
look after me;
I've made myself look pretty
just for you.

(End of transition. John sits in car. Driver's side. Chrissy is waiting on the footpath under shelter.)

JOHN: Are you coming?

CHRISSEY: It's raining.

JOHN: I know it's raining. Are you coming?

CHRISSEY: If I have to run through the rain to the car I'll get my hair all wet.

JOHN: You've only got ten yards. Your hair won't get wet in that distance.

CHRISSEY: I'll get my feet all wet in the puddles.

JOHN: You don't have to walk in the puddles. Just look where you're going.

CHRISSEY: I've got my new shoes on.

JOHN: What's the matter?

CHRISSEY: I'll get all wet. Come here and get me. Cover me with your coat.

JOHN: Look if you're coming come, if you're not coming don't come. Make up your mind, I'm not stuffing around here all day.

CHRISSEY: But it's raining John.

(John makes to drive off.)

JOHN: All right, get stuffed.

CHRISSEY: No wait, I'll come.

JOHN: OK. That's better.

(Chrissy runs to car.)

CHRISSEY: My feet are all wet. My shoes have got holes in them.

JOHN: Why do you wear shoes with holes in them?

CHRISSEY: That's how they're made. It's the fashion.

JOHN: You should wear more sensible shoes in wet weather.

CHRISSEY: My pantyhose are all wet too.

JOHN: Take them off then. That'll save me a bit of trouble later.

(Takes off pantyhose. Mime it as nowhere to hang.)

CHRISSEY: That's better.

JOHN: Hang them on the heater.

CHRISSEY: Where?

JOHN: There stupid.

CHRISSEY: I can't see very well. It's dark inside the car.

JOHN: Huh.

(The car drives off.)

CHRISSEY: Where are we going?

JOHN: Bill's place.

CHRISSEY: Why are we going there?

JOHN: He's got a new rod.

CHRISSEY: I thought we were going to the movies.

JOHN: Not tonight. I want to have a look at Bill's rod.

CHRISSEY: We always go to some place and you talk about hot rods. Can't we go somewhere else for a change?

JOHN: It's an old V8 Chev. Two seater. He's going to give it a valve grind and adjust the carbs. Should be a beauty when it's tuned up.

(There are many hesitations in the conversation especially later when it becomes difficult for both of them.)

CHRISSEY: Will Anne be there?

JOHN: Expect so.

CHRISSEY: Oh good. I can tell her about my new handbag with the leather strap.

JOHN: You women talk a load of shit.

CHRISSEY: Oh no, we discuss quite, reasonable things.

JOHN: Yeah.

CHRISSEY: It's warmer now.

JOHN: Yeah, heaters working.

CHRISSEY: I hope my pantyhose doesn't catch fire.

JOHN: Take them off the heater then. *(Pause)* Car needs a bit of a tune up. I think I'll take it to the garage and let them look at the timing when the weather clears up.

CHRISSEY: It seems to be going quite well.

JOHN: What would you know about it?

CHRISSEY: No, I suppose not.

JOHN: I've got to get the engine tuned up.

CHRISSEY: *(Pause)* John?

JOHN: Yeah?

CHRISSEY: *(Pause)* I'm having a baby.

JOHN: *(Pause)* Eh?

CHRISSEY: I'm having a baby.

JOHN: Aw yeah? *(Pause)* You're having a baby?

CHRISSEY: Yes John.

JOHN: *(Pause)* Whose baby are you having?

CHRISSEY: *(Pause)* It's your baby John.

JOHN: Go on, it's not my baby, it must be someone else's baby.

CHRISSEY: No John.

JOHN: Go on, you've been screwing someone else. Who is it? It's not my baby.

CHRISSEY: *(Tears coming up under the surface)* No John. I haven't been with someone else.

JOHN: I bet you have.

CHRISSEY: No John, it's only been you.

JOHN: *(Reflective)* Aw. *(Pause)* Yeah.

CHRISSEY: I've never been with anyone else since I knew you.

JOHN: OK.

CHRISSEY: I don't know what to do.

JOHN: No. *(Pause)* I think I'll get bigger jets for the carbs, that should hot it up a bit.

CHRISSEY: I think I'll go away somewhere and have it. It'll be a nice place with clean sheets and all that.

JOHN: I've never had a son before.

CHRISSEY: I'll look after it as well as I can. I'll knit it little booties and embroider a little white gown with tiny flowers on it so it will look beautiful. I'll be a good mother to it.

JOHN: I could teach him all I know about cars. We could strip down the engine and give it a valve grind.

CHRISSEY: I don't know what to do.

JOHN: No.

CHRISSEY: You don't have to take responsibility. I won't tell them who the father is so you won't have to pay maintenance.

JOHN: No.

CHRISSEY: Just help me with things 'till I've had it and I won't bother you about it any more.

JOHN: No. It would be good to have an apprentice in motor vehicle maintenance.

CHRISSEY: I promise to be a good mother to it and give it a good home.

JOHN: No. *(Pause)* We got to get married.

CHRISSEY: What?

JOHN: I said we got to get married.

CHRISSEY: Why?

JOHN: Because *(Pause)* Because I said we got to get married.. No son of mine is going to go through life without a father that's why.

CHRISSEY: But, I didn't think you'd want to marry me John. I don't want to get married.

JOHN: Listen here, that's my baby you've got there just as much as yours. I've got as much right to him as you have. We'll get married. No arguments.

CHRISSEY: I never thought about being married to you.

JOHN: It'll be good to have a son. I'll teach it the things my father never taught me.

CHRISSEY: I thought that if I ever I did get married it would be to someone who was tender. I only ever went out with John because I needed someone strong, who would know what to do in all, circumstances.

JOHN: I'll lam it into him if I have to. No son of mine is going to be a weakling.

CHRISSEY: If I ever did get married it would have to be a nice place. Maybe I could put my name down for a unit in a block of flats.

JOHN: I said we're going to get married.

CHRISSEY: Well we haven't decided defiantly yet have we?

JOHN: Now don't you be difficult about it.

CHRISSEY: I'm not being, difficult. I just don't know what I think.

JOHN: Well you're a dumb fool if you don't know that when you have a baby you have to get married.

CHRISSEY: Is that what you think?

JOHN: Of course it is. it's what anyone who wasn't stupid would think.

CHRISSEY: Oh yes. Perhaps we should get married. If you promise to be a good husband.

JOHN: I'll look after that boy. I'll teach him how to be a man.

CHRISSEY: A woman does need a man about the house.

JOHN: There's not going to be any weakness in our household.

CHRISSEY: It looks like I don't have much say in the decision.

JOHN: A woman should look after her man and a man should look after his son. I've got no time for lily livered queers.

CHRISSEY: I'll be married to John.

JOHN: I'll teach him how to drive as soon as he is old enough.

CHRISSEY: I'll get him to the church on time.

(Transition to hospital scene. Chrissy and john get out of car. Nurse turns to face the audience.)

NURSE: I live in the hospital and manipulate bodies,
completely detached
from the warmth and the pain.

JOHN: I'll teach him how to drive
my big bad black Buick.
He'll know all about cars.

CHRISSEY: I don't like the hospital.
They've kept my baby here
and they won't let me have it,
and John goes out every night
and neglects me.

NURSE: I can prescribe medicine
for the body only.
Let the priest prescribe
balm for the soul,
and dispense it in bottles

marked "Heaven".

(John goes back to position. Back to audience.)

CHRISSEY: I hate this place, it's so dreary and cold
with it's white-starched sheets
and everything so efficient
and impersonal.

(End of transition.)

NURSE: Your coat is wet. Here let me take it.

CHRISSEY: Thank you. It's raining very hard outside. My hair is all wet too.

NURSE: *(Hangs it up out of the way. Can be mimed.)* I'll just hang it here. If you wore a hat your hair wouldn't get wet.

CHRISSEY: Thank you very much. When can I see the doctor?

NURSE: The doctor's gone out.

CHRISSEY: Oh.

NURSE: He was called a way to a railway accident.

CHRISSEY: O dear. I hope no one was hurt.

NURSE: The doctor asked me to see you.

CHRISSEY: It's a pity he isn't here. I liked the doctor.

NURSE: He would have seen you if he could.

CHRISSEY: Yes. I suppose he would.

NURSE: We now know what was wrong with your baby.

CHRISSEY: Oh, can I take him home now?

NURSE: Your baby had Spiral Malignancy of the Cervoid Region.

CHRISSEY: Spiral Malignancy, is that serious.

NURSE: It's terminal.

CHRISSEY: Terminal?

NURSE: Yes.

CHRISSEY: What's "terminal"? Its it like a bus stop.

NURSE: "Terminal" means, your baby has passed on.

CHRISSEY: Passed on? Do you mean dead.

NURSE: I'm afraid to have to tell you.

CHRISSEY: I suppose not.

(Chrissy is very wooden. No emotion.)

NURSE: The doctor left a prescription for you and some pills to take now.

(Nurse gives Chrissy a bright pink pill and a glass of water. Chrissy swallows it down.)

CHRISSEY: Thank you.

NURSE: Just sit down for a moment. Do you feel all right.

CHRISSEY: Very well thank you. I'm very brave under the circ, circumstances.

NURSE: Yes, you are.

CHRISSEY: Are you sure my baby is dead?

NURSE: Yes, quite sure.

CHRISSEY: Are you sure you couldn't have made a mistake?

NURSE: One doesn't make a mistake over things like that.

CHRISSEY: No, I suppose not. You see I need that baby because my husband wants him.

NURSE: You know it was a girl.

CHRISSEY: That's why he married me in the first place. Because he wanted a son to ride in his car.

NURSE: You will have to learn to live with it.

CHRISSEY: But I want my baby back.

NURSE: You can have other babies. The doctor said that you were perfectly healthy.

CHRISSEY: But John will go away.

NURSE: Talk it over with your husband. I'm sure you will reach some conclusion.

CHRISSEY: His only conclusion is that I am stupid. He blamed me for not having a baby boy but I'm sure it was. I can distinctly remember seeing it's little penis.

NURSE: If there is anything I can do to help please let me know.

CHRISSEY: Can't you give me someone else's baby, if they don't want it. There are plenty of babies here. I'm sure there would be some mother who wouldn't mind, if she wasn't married.

NURSE: We can't do anything like that.

CHRISSEY: Oh please try.

NURSE: I'll speak to the doctor.

CHRISSEY: Oh would you?

NURSE: I'll see what I can do. Perhaps something can be arranged. Perhaps you can adopt a child.

CHRISSEY: Oh, do you think so.

NURSE: I don't know, perhaps it is not policy to permit adoption in such cases.

CHRISSEY: Oh dear, I hope it is.

NURSE: Here, put on your coat. it's time to go.

(Transition.)

CHRISSEY: I have to go now
to my inevitable destination.

NURSE: I have prescribed sweet pills
to salve the body.
That is the limit
of my ministrations.

(John turns to face the front as Chrissy enters his area but does not move downstage. Nurse goes back to original position. Back to audience.)

JOHN: Stupid bitch. She's killed my son.
She should be put in jail for that.
I've got a better woman now
but that's no consolation.

CHRISSEY: I can't take any more
of life's stings and arrows.

JOHN: When I get my hands on her
she won't deserve to live.
I'll kick her,
I'll punch her.
That will teach her a lesson.
That will ram it home for sure.

(John turns back to original position. Man and lady turn and face audience. Chrissy moves to drawing room.)

CHRISSEY: Give me shelter in a storm.

LADY: She's coming back to us.

MAN: She's been off in a daydream.

LADY: Welcome to our parlour
with dainty butterfly cakes
on little silver dishes.

(End of transition. They all sit around the table.)

MAN: I think it's letting up a bit.

LADY: How are you my dear?

CHRISSEY: I'm all right thank you.

LADY: That's nice.

MAN: I rang them up and they said they would come and get you.

LADY: Anyone would think you wanted to get rid of her the way you act.

CHRISSEY: It's all right, it's too wet to go back in the bus.

MAN: They should be here soon.

LADY: Would you like another cup of tea?

CHRISSEY: Yes, I'd love one thanks.

(Nurse moves into the free area. Knocks on the door.)

MAN: That will be them now.

(Lady goes to free area and admits nurse.)

LADY: Come in nurse.

NURSE: Thank you.

LADY: She's just having a cup of tea.

NURSE: I'll wait until she's finished.

LADY: She's been very good.

NURSE: That's good.

(Man leaves the table and goes into the free area.)

MAN: She went off into a bit of a daydream and recalled some events from her past.

NURSE: The Freudians would probably say that that was very therapeutic.

LADY: She wasn't any trouble at all.

NURSE: No, she's not much trouble now-a-days.

LADY: You've fixed her up.

NURSE: Yes we've fixed her up and she's very quiet. She doesn't make any trouble at all.

LADY: Not like she did before?

NURSE: No.

LADY: She caused her husband and lots of other people all that trouble carrying on the way she did.

NURSE: Yes.

LADY: She should be ashamed of herself.

NURSE: She is.

LADY: Shouting and screaming for her baby back.

NURSE: A sad case.

LADY: She should be sorry, acting like that and disturbing innocent people.

NURSE: It's all right now. it's all under control.

LADY: I'm sure it is.

NURSE: We've got her on the correct medication and we don't let her get out of hand.

(John turns and moves into the free area. They are standing in a semi-circle. Chrissy at the table still) .

MAN: Modern science is marvellous.

JOHN: I'm sure it is.

MAN: What are you doing here?

JOHN: Just came to see you nice people who take that bitch out of the bin on rainy Sunday afternoons.

(There are two disjoint conversations.)

LADY: I am sure you are doing the right thing.

NURSE: We would like to dig into the brain and pull out the soul with a pair of tweezers and preserve it in formaldehyde.

MAN: Those eggheads are really on the ball.

JOHN: Not in my consideration. They can't even make a car that goes right.

MAN: Aw I don't know. Lots of things they do are pretty good. I'm the foreman in a plastics factory myself and you'd never believe some of the things they come up with.

JOHN: The other thing is hospitals. They can't fix cars in garages and they can't fix babies in hospitals. Don't talk to me about modern technology.

LADY: I'm sure the things you do now'days are absolutely marvellous. When I was a little girl they just put you to bed with a thermometer and hoped for the best.

NURSE: Yes, things were a little primitive in those days. Not now though. The advances of the last hundred years have been greater than any other time in history.

LADY: I'm sure they have.

NURSE: Soon we shall have dominion over the whole of mans livelihood.

MAN: We make plastic whatsits for inserting in the gismo. A highly essential part of industry. I take pride in my work. The economy wouldn't survive without it.

JOHN: They break too easily, I've used them in my car.

MAN: Not our product. We have very stringent production control techniques. Any unit that not meet complete specifications is rejected.

JOHN: You must have a lot of rejects.

LADY: Do you think it is good to have all that power?

NURSE: Somebody's got to take responsibility for mankind. He's too childish to take care of himself.

LADY: I suppose you're right. I understand how you feel. I always wanted to mother my children but I never had any so I wasn't able to.

NURSE: Frustrated motherhood is highly undesirable. You should compensate for it in some way.

LADY: What should I do?

NURSE: Become a social worker.

MAN: Half the trouble with the unions is they're not prepared to get off their fat bums and do an honest day's work.

JOHN: Don't say that about the unions. I'm a union member myself.

MAN: I'll say what I like about the unions, and I don't care who's a member.

JOHN: I won't punch you in the mouth because I'm a guest in your house, but if we were in the pub and I'd been drinking I'd invite you to come outside and I'd kick your head in.

MAN: I'm glad the youth of today is prepared to pay respect to its betters.

(They repeat their lines all at once over and over in a crescendo of gabble.

Chrissy leaves the table and flops down on the floor in front of john. Gabble cut off.)

CHRISSEY: *(To John)* Can't you help me?

JOHN: I thought I would have a boy to ride in my big black car,

but you tricked me

and now all I can offer

is a closed fist

and a steel capped boot.

(John returns to his original place. Back to audience.)

CHRISSEY: *(To Lady)* Can' you help me?

LADY: Cups of tea are my speciality, dispensed with sanctimonious care,
but I cannot tolerate
antisocial behaviour.

(Returns to original place.)

CHRISSY: *(To Man)* Can't you help me?

MAN: I've played the game and I work hard at my job.

What else can society
expect from me?

I'm as honest as the day is long.

(Returns to original place.)

CHRISSY: *(To Nurse)* Can't you help me?

NURSE: You have to obey our rules

take our pills
and act in a proper manner.

Then you're a fit person

to live in society.

(Returns to original place.)

Chrissy turns to the audience.)

CHRISSY: Can't you help me?

(The same tableau as at the start of the play.)

CURTAIN.