

# **The House on Geoffrey Street**

**A Play in One Act**

**by**

**John F. Green**

# THE HOUSE OF GEOFFREY STREET

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## THE HOUSE OF GEOFFREY STREET

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*The House on Geoffrey Street* premiered at Durham  
Shoestring Performers, Oshawa, ON, Canada  
Subsequently chosen for *On the River's Edge*  
*Festival of One-act Plays*, 2011, Battlefords, SK

The action takes place in the invitation room at  
Havenwood,  
a long-empty pre-Victorian manor house.  
The time is the present.

Characters in order of appearance

Mr. Evans, a real estate agent, about 50

Rachel Wakefield, about 30

Donald Wakefield, Rachel's husband, about 30

Mr. Godfrey, a moving man, about 65

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*Havenwood, an empty Victorian manor house, stands at number 27 Geoffrey Street. At rise, the large and completely empty invitation room is bathed in a diluted late afternoon glow that comes in through two large arched windows. One window is partially covered with a limp and dusty torn drape; the other is bare. The windows frame an imposing stone fireplace set into the up-centre wall. At left is a set of French doors leading to a sitting room; at right, another entrance leads to an outside porch. Wallpaper has begun peeling in places and there are water stains where the ceiling and walls meet. The room contains a single high-backed chair just right of centre. It faces the fireplace. A large ornate chandelier, minus several lamps, hangs crookedly from the ceiling.*

*An overly large oil painting of a young woman in her late 20s or early 30s hangs over the fireplace. The woman is sitting in a chair very much like the one that occupies the room; in fact, it might be the same chair. Her hands are folded neatly in her lap. Wearing a full-length blue dress buttoned tightly at the neck and her blonde hair tumbling to her shoulders, she presents a dominating presence in the room.*

## SCENE ONE

*A car approaches and stops. Doors open and close. There are voices off.*

**MR. EVANS.** Here we are, number 27 Geoffrey Street. Watch your step.

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**DONALD.** Jeez, look at the size of this place.

**MR. EVANS.** She's really impressive, isn't she. They don't build them like this anymore.

**RACHEL.** It's gorgeous, Donald. I just love it!

**DONALD.** Hang on, you haven't seen it yet.

**RACHEL.** I know, but I'm going to love it. It's so—so—

**DONALD.** In need of paint, a lot of paint.

**RACHEL.** Elegant! Yes, that's it—elegant!

**DONALD.** When was the last time the grass was cut? I mean, look at it!

**RACHEL.** Let's go in, Donald. I want to see inside.

**DONALD.** All right, darling, all right. Can't I look at the yard?

**MR. EVANS.** I can always show you around the grounds after you've been inside, Mr. Wakefield. They're quite extensive. This way, careful now. (*There is the sound of a key in a lock. MR. EVANS, RACHEL and DONALD enter R.*) I left instructions at the office to have the power turned on...let's see. Ah, here we are. (*He flips on a light switch just inside the door bringing the overhead chandelier to life.*)

**RACHEL.** (*Crossing to centre, she removes the sweater from her shoulders and places it over the back of the chair.*) Oh, Donald, look at this! Can you imagine this room with the right decorations and furniture?

**DONALD.** My God, you could play basketball in here.

**RACHEL.** And these wonderful French doors. They are splendid! Have you ever seen such a magnificent fireplace?

**MR. EVANS.** It needs a good cleaning. (*crosses to window, opens it*) The musty smell will go, been closed up quite a while.

**DONALD.** Just how long has it been empty, Mr. Evans?

**MR. EVANS.** Several years I suspect. The bank finally got tired of carrying the place and turned it over to us. That's probably why the grounds have been let go.

**DONALD.** It's been empty the whole time?

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**MR. EVANS.** As far as I know. I've only had the listing for three months. Actually, you're the first people to take any interest in it.

**DONALD.** Whose place was it? Who lived here?

**MR. EVANS.** To tell the truth, I never took much interest in finding out. There's a story some wealthy chap bought the place for his wife. Then there was an accident of some kind or a disease—something like that. She didn't survive. I don't think they actually moved in. The bank might know more about it.

**DONALD.** Seems a little odd being empty this long.

**MR. EVANS.** It's a big house, big responsibility.

**DONALD.** I suspect it's going to need a lot of work.

**MR. EVANS.** There's bound to be some expenses; but remember, it's not built the way they build things today...you know, start to fall apart a few years after they're up. I'll bet this place is good for another hundred years or more. And you'd certainly be getting it at a good price.

**DONALD.** As I've made you are aware, Mr. Evans, price is not an issue. It's just that, well, there's an awful lot of space here for two people.

**RACHEL.** *(During the exchange between MR. EVANS and DONALD, she has been standing for several moments staring at the painting over the fireplace. She has become oddly distant.)*

Who is she?

**DONALD.** What was that, darling?

**RACHEL.** The woman, who is she?

**MR. EVANS.** Don't have any idea. I'd be surprised if anyone knows now. Looks like she got left behind some time ago.

**DONALD.** How many rooms are there?

**MR. EVANS.** *(consults his listing sheet)* Well, let's see...main floor, there's this room, of course, the sitting room through there, a dining room, living room and kitchen. Then there's six bedrooms upstairs and four bathrooms. I believe there's also a billiard room with a bar and second fireplace off the dining room.

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**DONALD.** Absolutely nothing you can buy today is going fit this place. Everything will need to be custom made—windows, doors, hardware.

**MR. EVANS.** True enough, but there's a millwright just on the east side of town...been there for years. Does excellent work and he's quite reasonably priced.

**RACHEL.** She lived here.

**DONALD.** Who?

**RACHEL.** She did. She lived here.

**DONALD.** Well, perhaps you're right, darling, but you heard Mr. Evans, nobody's lived here for several years.

**RACHEL.** I'm sure of it. She's been here, in this room. Right here.

**MR. EVANS.** (*exchanges a glance with DONALD*) Would you like to see the rest of the house, Mrs. Wakefield?

**RACHEL.** Yes, that would be fine. Are there many rooms?

**MR. EVANS.** (*once again exchanges glances with DONALD*) It will take a few minutes.

**DONALD.** Are you all right, Rachel?

**RACHEL.** Yes, of course...I'm...fine. Oh dear, my purse. I've left my purse on the front seat of the car. Will you get it for me Donald, please.

**DONALD.** Just leave it, we'll be back in the car shortly. (*a beat*) Are you sure you're all right? You seem...preoccupied.

**RACHEL.** Yes, quite all right, thank you.

**MR. EVANS.** You're not ill, are you, Mrs. Wakefield?

**DONALD.** Too much house hunting for one day, that's what it is. Probably a little stressful.

**MR. EVANS.** I can rearrange a few appointments so we can come back tomorrow if that's convenient. It's not a problem.

**RACHEL.** No, no, that won't be necessary, not at all. I'm quite all right.

**MR. EVANS.** Yes, well, onward then. These doors here lead to a lovely sitting room, quite sunny. It would make a wonderful den—

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**RACHEL.** *(She has turned back to the painting.)* She died here.

**MR. EVANS.** I beg your pardon?

**RACHEL.** The woman in the painting. She died in this house.

**DONALD.** Now, Rachel, you're tired. I think we'd better call it a day.

**RACHEL.** Donald, why don't you let Mr. Evans take you out and show you around the grounds. I'll be fine browsing by myself.

**DONALD.** But—

**RACHEL.** I'd prefer it, actually.

**DONALD.** But, if you're not feeling well—

**RACHEL.** Oh, but I am quite well. *(taking DONALD'S arm, she walks him and MR. EVANS to the door)* Take your time. I'm sure there's lots to see. Are any of the doors locked, Mr. Evans?

**MR. EVANS.** I don't believe so, everything should be wide open.

**RACHEL.** Good, that's settled then. I'll meet you back here in say, twenty minutes.

**DONALD.** Well...all right, darling...if that's what you want. Please be careful. *(They exit. RACHEL exits through the French doors. A moment passes before she reappears, comes back into the room slowly and stops beneath the portrait as if summoned. As she reaches out to touch its surface, there is a voice—a woman's voice. Ethereal, it floats through the room, lingering. It calls Rachel's name. Rachel...the house, Rachel...it's not yours, not mine...no, he gave it to her...the house...to her... RACHEL turns, looking for the source of the voice. There is no one in the room. The voice stops abruptly. A BLACKOUT and the lights come back up almost immediately to an empty room. MR. EVANS and DONALD enter right.)*

**MR. EVANS.** So...property values around here haven't exactly made anyone rich for quite some time, and it doesn't appear the market's going to change, not in the near future, anyway.

**DONALD.** I have no problem with the price, Mr. Evans, it seems fair enough.

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**MR. EVANS.** Well, that being the case, even as an investment, I don't see how you can go wrong. Mrs. Wakefield seems quite taken with the place.

**DONALD.** Yes, it looks that way and I have difficulty refusing her anything—and she knows it. Label me guilty.

**MR. EVANS.** I understand completely, you want to make her happy.

**DONALD.** Exactly, but, well...it makes little sense. I just can't see us living in a house this size. I only hope I can persuade her to understand that.

**RACHEL.** (*breezes through the French doors displaying all her original vitality and enthusiasm.*) Oh, Donald, I've been through the whole house and it *is* divine, absolutely!

**DONALD.** You sound as if you've had quite a time.

**MR. EVANS.** She is a grand old lady, isn't she?

**RACHEL.** Donald, it's so perfect, the whole house, every room! Buy it for us, Donald. Buy it for us! Please.

**DONALD.** Really, Rachel, you can't be serious. It's far too big for the two of us. There are so many other places that are more practical.

**RACHEL.** I want you to buy it for us, Donald, I want you to buy it for us today.

**DONALD.** Rachel, I haven't seen anything beyond this room, nothing, not the rest of the house.

**RACHEL.** It's so beautiful, the view from the upstairs balcony, so still, so peaceful, not a breath of wind.

**DONALD.** This is not a decision to be made hastily. We can't jump in blindly without at least taking time to discuss it.

**MR. EVANS.** It might be the buy of a lifetime, Mr. Wakefield—

**DONALD.** Please, Mr. Evans.

**RACHEL.** What is there to discuss? We both like the house.

**DONALD.** *You* like the house.

**RACHEL.** Don't you?

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**DONALD.** No—I, I don't know, I... ( *There is a pause while DONALD walks to the window, stares into the yard.*)

**RACHEL.** Do you remember what you said at our wedding, Donald? In front of everyone you said it..."whatever your heart desires, 'til death do us part."

**DONALD.** ( *turning back to her, reluctantly*) Yes, yes, I remember. ( *a beat*) Are you absolutely sure this is what you want?

**RACHEL.** More than anything!

**DONALD.** ( *to MR. EVANS, conceding*) What can I say. It looks like you've sold your house, Mr. Evans.

**MR. EVANS.** Well, that's fine, just fine. Congratulations to both of you.

**RACHEL.** ( *throwing her arms around his neck*) I know this is the right house, Donald, we're going to be deliriously happy here.

**DONALD.** Time will tell, I'm sure.

**RACHEL.** I want to move in right away, I can't wait!

**DONALD.** Oh now, hold on, it's not quite that simple. We'll need to close up the other house and get a hotel for a few weeks until the details are finalized. There's legal work to be done.

**MR. EVANS.** I can get the papers drawn up and ready for you in a couple of days, Mr. Wakefield. Do you have a lawyer?

**DOANLD.** Yes, my company's attorney assured me she would look after the transaction.

**MR. EVANS.** Well, I guess that's it for now then—unless you want to spend a little more time looking around.

**DONALD.** No, I think we've had enough for one day.

**MR. EVANS.** Fine, I'll give you two a moment. When you're ready I'll drive you back to your car. Just flip the light when you come out. The door will lock if you just pull it behind you. ( *exits*)

**RACHEL.** ( *gliding around the room*) I have so many ideas.

**DOANLD.** Yes, darling, no doubt. But let's be sensible about this, shall we?—and not rush into things.

**RACHEL.** Of course. Sensible. ( *A car door opens. An engine starts.*)

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**DONALD.** Are you ready? We probably shouldn't keep Mr. Evans waiting. (*He flips the light switch before they exit, arm in arm.*)

**RACHEL.** (*off*) Oh, dear, my sweater, I've left my sweater. (*re-enters*) I'll be right there.

**DONALD.** (*off*) Don't forget the light. (*RACHEL enters, turns on the light then crosses to the chair to retrieve her sweater. As she turns to exit, there is a sudden rush of air through the room causing the drape to move and the chandelier to rattle. It is followed by the same voice, louder this time, a warning, pitifully pleading voice calling Rachel's name...Rachel... I'm here, Rachel...here...I've been waiting for you...I know what you want to do, Rachel...I know you want change the house ...she won't let you...won't let you stay...you must not, cannot touch the house...please, Rachel...once again RACHEL searches the room looking for the source of the voice and realizes suddenly that it is coming from the painting...you must leave the house, Rachel... tell him you cannot stay... As the voice trails away, RACHEL grabs her sweater and rushes from the room, slamming the door behind her. A car door closes and the car moves away. Blackout.*)

### Scene Two

*The invitation room two weeks later. It is early evening. There are a few boxes scattered throughout the room. RACHEL sits in the high back chair facing the painting which she stares at intently. She is dressed in a bright yellow sun dress with a flowered pattern. There is a sheer red scarf tossed loosely around her neck. Her sweater lies across one of the boxes. MR. GODFREY, a moving man, enters and exits several times piling boxes in one corner of the room. Rachel seems completely unaware of him. Finally he stops in the doorway.*

**MR. GODFREY.** These look like bedding, Mrs. Wakefield. Up or down? (*a beat*) Mrs. Wakefield?

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**RACHEL.** What? Oh, yes, I'm sorry. In there will be fine. I'll move them later.

**MR. GODFREY.** (*carries the boxes through the French doors and returns, moping his brow*) Well, that takes care of that load. The rest of the furniture is on a different truck, won't be at the warehouse here 'til tomorrow sometime. My men and I will need to get an early start the day after.

**RACHEL.** Yes, of course, come when ever you're ready. (*MR. GODFREY starts to exit*) Do you live around here?

**MR. GODFREY.** Yes, ma'am, just the next concession over. Me and the missus have been here since we were childhood sweethearts—45 years in the same house. Got two young'uns, both married. Got four grandchildren—little devils—love 'em to death. You see, I was in the army—that's where I met my wife, Marybelle—and when the war ended—

**RACHEL.** What do you know about this house?

**MR. GODFREY.** The house? Well...been here a long time, been empty most of it.

**RACHEL.** No one has lived here?

**MR. GODFREY.** There's been one or two over the past few years. None of them stayed very long.

**RACHEL.** Why was that?

**MR. GODFREY.** This is a big place, cost a lot of money to look after it, I suppose.

**RACHEL.** (*She has moved up to the painting and stands facing it.*) Do you know who this woman is?

**MR. GODFREY.** No ma'am, don't have any idea. But I can tell you it isn't Lady Alden.

**RACHEL.** Alden?

**MR. GODFREY.** That's right. You see, she and her husband came to the house about twenty years ago. He was a big U.S. oil baron from Texas. He came up here when the lady's health went bad—some kind of disease. Probably intended to rebuild the place.

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**RACHEL.** Oh yes, the real estate agent mentioned them. He thought something happened, that they never actually moved in.

**MR. GODFREY.** Oh, he moved in alright. I was the one did the movin'. He wanted everything set up before he sent for her. I remember it plain as anything because two months after she arrived, I was movin' everything back out again, including a big oil painting of the lady herself. I took it right off that wall and packed it into the truck myself. You see, Lady Alden died and her husband gave everything in the house away to charity and disappeared, probably back to Texas. Nobody ever heard from him again. The bank took the place over.

**RACHEL.** Don't you think it odd that a picture should be left hanging here?

**MR. GODFREY.** Could be nobody ever bothered to take it down. You know how people are when they move...if there's anything they have not use for, they just leave it. Pretty little thing, isn't she? (*a beat*) Do you have some interest in her?

**RACHEL.** No, no...just curious.

**MR. GODFREY.** At the time there were all kinds of rumours about what happened to Lady Alden.

**RACHEL.** I thought you said she was in bad health.

**MR. GODFREY.** She was. But that didn't stop the rumours. When people don't know what really happens—or don't care—they just make it up.

**RACHEL.** Yes, of course.

**MR. GODFREY.** There's one story, though, kind of stuck more than the others. Some people say they know for sure she was murdered, right here in this house. Police went on a tip from a young woman the baron hired as a house keeper. She swore up and down that Lady Alden and her husband had a violent argument one night and that's the last time she ever saw her. At least that's what she told the police. Rumour was Lady Alden was buried on the grounds somewhere, but the police dug the whole place up, never found nothing. Couldn't find the husband and couldn't pin

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anything on the maid. That's probably what started the rumour. Now if you ask me, I'd guess those two had something going, you know, not having his wife around, and she persuaded him that Lady Alden, being sick and all, was just getting in the way—

**RACHEL.** —(*A horn sounds.*) Ah, I expect that will be my husband. (*A car approaches, stops, a door slams.*)

**MR. GODFREY.** I expect so. I'd better be on my way, the missus will be putting supper on the table. (*DONALD enters.*) Afternoon Mr. Wakefield.

**DONALD.** Mr. Godfrey. How did things go today?

**MR. GODFREY.** Just fine, sir, just fine. Your missus and I have been having quite a talk about the history of this place.

**DONALD.** Well, that's encouraging. You've been quite curious about that, haven't you darling? (*crosses to RACHEL, kisses her*) Did you find out who the mysterious woman in the painting is?

**RACHEL.** No, but Mr. Godfrey was telling me about Lady Alden who lived here more than twenty years ago. He says she was murdered and buried on the grounds somewhere.

**MR. GODFREY.** Oh, now that's just a rumour, Mrs. Wakefield, there's nobody knows for sure. Nothing was ever found.

**DONALD.** Murdered, eh. Well, I guess that makes the place officially haunted then, doesn't it.

**RACHEL.** (*her glance moves to the painting*) Yes...haunted.

**DONALD.** (*sitting on one of the boxes*) Whew! That's one hell of a jaunt out here. It's been a hectic two weeks in the office and I'm just not used to the drive yet. Did the booze make it? I need a drink.

**RACHEL.** I'll get you a scotch.

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