**DARK AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS**by William Inge *LOTTIE*

Cora, did you hear what the old maid said to the burglar? You see, the burglar came walking into her bedroom with this big, long billy club and...(she is laughing so hard she can hardly finish the story)...and the old maid...she was so green she didn't know what was happening to her, she said...(stopped by Cora, and a bit shamed and embarrassed) Shucks, Cora, I don't see what's wrong in having a little fun just telling stories. Oh, Mama and Papa, Mama and Papa! I know the way they brought us up. And maybe they didn't know as much as we gave them credit for. Do you remember how Mama and Papa used to caution us about men, Cora? My God, they had me so afraid of ever giving in to a man, I was petrified. So were you until Rubin came along and practically raped you. (chuckling at the memory) My God, Cora, he had you pregnant inside of two weeks after he started seeing you. I never told. I never even told Morris. My God, do you remember how Mama and Papa carried on when they found out? And Papa had his stroke just a month after you were married. Oh, I just thought Rubin was the wickedest man alive. Maybe I shoulda married a man like that. I don't know. Maybe it was as much my fault as Morris'. Maybe I didn't...respond right...from the very first. Cora, I'll tel you something. Something I've never told another living soul. I never did enjoy it the way some women...say they do. Why are you so surprised? Because I talk kinda dirty at times? But that's all it is, is talk. I talk all the time just to convince myself that I'm alive. And i stuff myself with victuals just to feel I've got something inside me. And I'm full of all kinds of crazy curiosity about...all the things in life I seem to have missed out on. Now I'm telling you the truth, Cora. Nothing ever really happened to me while it was going on. That first night Morris and I were together, right after we were married, when we were in bed together for the first time, after it was all over, and he had fallen asleep, I lay there in bed wondering what in the world all the cautioning had been about. Nothing had happened to me at all, and I thought Mama and Papa musta been makin' things up. So don't come to me for sympathy, Cora. I'm not the person to give it to you.