

# [PG]

TEN MINUTE PLAY

**By Nat Gruca**

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**SYNOPSIS:** A freshly deceased woman suffers the shock, horror, and incompetence of a hastily-ordered fate after breaking several movie theater taboos. Under the decree of three shadowy individuals, her past crimes are recalled and amends are attempted in this comedy about posthumous consequences, illicit sweets, and the mother of a Very Important Prophecy.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**  
*(1 FEMALE, 3 FLEXIBLE)*

- ALICE (f)..... Young woman, early 30s. Well into pregnancy. Wears a white tattered dress and has an overly pale, ghost-like face. Her hair is coiffed into a very tall updo.
- HOOD 1 (m/f)..... First Member of the High Council, wears intimidating black robes with a very large hood obscuring part or all of his face.
- HOOD 2 (m/f)..... Second Member of the High Council, wears intimidating black robes with a very large hood obscuring part or all of his face.
- HOOD 3 (m/f)..... Third and final Member of the High Council, wears intimidating black robes with a very large hood obscuring part or all of his face.

**PROPERTIES**

- Long list on parchment
- Boom box
- Cell phone
- 10-Key Number Pad (to be suspended from above)

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**AT RISE:**

*Curtain rises to reveal a stark stage, completely bare save for a very tall desk. It resembles a courtroom podium that a judge might sit behind, long enough to comfortably seat the three hooded individuals who sit behind it lengthwise. There is one severe spotlight that points directly down over them, giving them a sort of ethereal glow. The HOODS are silent and have folded their arms within their expansive sleeves. Suddenly, the crash of a gong sounds, and out of the darkness ALICE enters. Another smaller but equally harsh spotlight now blinks into existence, providing a small circle of light for her to stand in.*

**HOOD 1:** Step forward.

*The spotlight inches a few steps closer to the podium. Alice, bewildered, carefully waddles into the middle again.*

**HOOD 3:** *(Reading from a long parchment.)* Alice Elaine Archibald.

**ALICE:** Um. Yeah.

**HOOD 1:** Ms. Archibald, you have a clear understanding of why you have been summoned before the Council, have you not?

**ALICE:** Not in the least. You're a what now?

**HOOD 2:** Alice Elaine Archibald, you have been summoned before the Council for a myriad of reasons, the majority of which you will presently have the opportunity to hear through the medium of a catchy show tune number complete with choreographed dance moves.

*HOOD 2 brings out from underneath the podium a small boom box and sets it on the table.*

**HOOD 3:** You also have the option of foregoing the catchy show tune number and proceeding directly to us listing out the reasons in a rather bland yet highly informative way.

**ALICE:** Er, the latter, please.

*HOOD 2 is visibly disappointed as HOOD 3 swipes the boom box and replaces it hastily under the podium again.*

**HOOD 1:** Then so be it, Alice Elaine Archibald.

**HOOD 2:** Please be courteous and turn off all pagers and cell phones now.

*The HOODS lean forward expectantly and wait, staring down the befuddled ALICE. She slowly extracts a cell phone and turns it off. The irritating "switch off" tune the cell phone makes causes the HOODS to visibly flinch. Once finished, they continue as if nothing has happened at all.*

**HOOD 1:** *Alice Elaine Archibald.* You have been summoned here by the members of the High Council of the Board of Film Censors due to the somewhat . . . *precipitous* execution of your prior punishment. It is our duty as members of the Council to make the appropriate adjustments, author these annotations, and successfully affix the readjusted claims onto your soul. If you agree with these conditions and wish to proceed, please press one now.

*In an instant, a small 10-key number pad descends from above to swing directly in front of ALICE. She ducks to avoid it hitting her in the face. Timidly, she takes hold of it and presses a number.*

**HOOD 3:** Usted ha seleccionado el número - -

**ALICE:** Whoops, sorry.

*ALICE re-enters a number, causing HOOD 3 to twitch slightly and continue speaking.*

**HOOD 3:** You have selected number one. Thank you.

*The keypad ascends swiftly into the air and out of sight.*

**HOOD 3:** (*Begins reading from parchment.*) The events in question are as follows: On May the fifth, at approximately 2:57 PM, you were charged with speaking loudly at a moving projection within a local cinema house. Do you confirm or deny these facts?

**ALICE:** Wait, *what?* Who charged - - just a second here! All I remember is going to a movie, *minding my own business*, and then being forcefully thrown from my seat into a bright light. A little *too* forcefully considering my condition . . .

*ALICE rubs her pregnant belly and glares at the HOODS.*

**ALICE:** Next thing I know I'm down here, in this . . . this sorry excuse for a maternity muumuu being forced to listen to you three whatever-you-ares drone on about "charging" me with God knows what. I'm confused, my feet are killing me and I'm probably missing the last half of my movie. Ugh . . . I should've taken the song.

**HOOD 2:** (*Rather hopefully.*) It's not too late.

**HOOD 3:** Yes, it is. Ms. Archibald, it seems you have failed to comprehend the true consequences of your crimes.

**ALICE:** Crimes? I was watching a movie in a movie theater! What kind of crime is that?

**HOOD 1:** Do not attempt to mock us, Ms. Archibald. It is clearly stated here that you willfully attempted a crude communiqué with several of the characters presented on the screen on *multiple* occasions. Is this correct?

**ALICE:** Excuse me?

**HOOD 1:** And prior to these offenses, you had vocally made known your personal opinions on the actions of these characters numerous times as well. Do you willfully deny these accusations?

*ALICE takes a beat for this to finally sink in.*

**ALICE:** I told her not to go into the room is what I did. Is that what you guys are talking about? Because she was in *high heels*, she had heard screams *coming* from behind that door, and you tell me she's just gonna waltz right in and see what's going on? She was going to get herself killed!

**HOOD 3:** You *are* aware that despite the volume of your warnings, this character was physically unable to hear anything you wished to inform her.

**ALICE:** Well, duh.

**HOOD 2:** Then you are admitting guilt.

**ALICE:** I screamed at her not to go in. I don't know what you're talking about, "admitting guilt."

**HOOD 1:** Records also show that you were in possession of several individually-wrapped confectionaries and proceeded to unwrap each one loudly before ingesting them with unrestrained smacking.

**ALICE:** Look, if I had a craving for peppermints, that's none of your business.

**HOOD 1:** Unfortunately for you, Ms. Archibald, when the purchase of these so-called "peppermints" is not carried out within the sole authorized snack vendor situated conveniently in the lobby, but instead within the highly questionable petrol station *down the road*, it *becomes* our business.

**ALICE:** (*Overly sarcastic.*) Hmm, let's see. Sav-Mart: \$2.99. You guys: \$7.99. I rest my case.

**HOOD 2:** All pedantries aside, Ms. Archibald, your hair also appears to have exceeded the designated height restrictions, drastically reducing the enjoyment levels of one Mr. Samuel Alan Fairmont seated directly behind you.

**HOOD 1:** Ms. Archibald, these collected misdemeanors have been swiftly counted against you.

**HOOD 3:** However, at the time of our initial ruling, your current state had not come to our attention. Thus, considering that you are with child, the High Council of the Board of Film Censors has agreed to reassign a more appropriate punishment befitting you and your innocent child.

**HOOD 1:** Therefore, we will commence with retracting our earlier ruling of capital punishment directly after we proceed in giving you your redefined penalty.

**ALICE:** Wait, wait, wait. Hold on just a second. You *killed* me? I'm dead?

**HOOD 2:** Presently, yes.

**ALICE:** You killed me because I talked during a movie?

**HOOD 1:** As stated before, we are currently endeavoring to lessen this sentence.

**ALICE:** Because I'm pregnant.

**HOOD 1:** Correct.

**ALICE:** And if I wasn't?!

**HOOD 3:** We take our profession very seriously, Ms. Archibald. The enjoyment of a film in a crowded cinema house does not come without a price.

**ALICE:** That's horrible.

**HOOD 2:** We merely enforce the law, Ms. Archibald.

**ALICE:** By killing people? You know, some people just feel they need to express themselves openly when they enjoy a movie.

**HOOD 2:** Which is fundamentally wrong. Punishable by death.

**HOOD 3:** As you experienced firsthand.

**HOOD 1:** However, concerning your previously undocumented pregnant state, the board has come to only one conclusion.

**HOOD 2:** You see, the board does not easily miss one's pregnant status. If one becomes pregnant, we often are the first to know. However.

**HOOD 1:** However.

**HOOD 3:** *However*, yours was left undetected. Why?

**HOOD 1:** Why?

**HOOD 2:** *Why?*

**ALICE:** I *don't* - -

**HOOD 3:** Rhetorical question for dramatic purposes. We will tell you why.

**HOOD 2:** You see, the only possible conclusion is that the child now residing in your womb is destined to be none other than . . . (*In a hushed tone.*) *The One*.

**ALICE:** Excuse me?

**HOOD 2:** It has long been foretold of the glorious coming of a Filmic Savior. His long-prophesized arrival will bring about a veritable Cinematic Renaissance.

**HOOD 1:** *The One* will curse the incompetency of poor narrative.

**HOOD 3:** *The One* will cast away the lukewarm blockbuster.

**HOOD 1:** *The One* will crush fakey-looking computer-aided imagery.

**HOOD 3:** He will pound the prequel.

**HOOD 1:** He will smite the sequel.

**HOOD 3:** He will thrash the threequel.

**HOOD 2:** And there will be much gnashing of teeth in the vicinity of Holly-Wood.

**HOOD 3:** Truer than Truffaut.

**HOOD 1:** Greater than Griffith.

**HOOD 3:** He will be Godardlier than Welles.

**HOOD 1:** He will be Hitchcockier than Kurosawa.

**HOOD 2:** And with good reason, too.

**HOODS 1, 2, 3:** For he will be *The One*.

**HOOD 2:** We trust the conception was immaculate?

**ALICE:** I beg your pardon!

**HOOD 2:** Any recent sightings of seraphim and/or cherubim bearing divine decrees from above?

**ALICE:** No!

**HOOD 2:** Experiencing a halo effect around the vicinity of your virgin head?

**ALICE:** (*Quickly becoming irate.*) You were saying something about un-killing me?

*The HOODS sober quickly.*

**HOOD 3:** Er, yes. That.

**HOOD 1:** This is correct. We have arranged a reawakening into your corporeal being at 3 o'clock p.m. sharp. However.

**HOOD 3:** However.

**HOOD 2:** How - -

**ALICE:** (*Suddenly enraged.*) IT IS NOT WISE TO TEASE A WOMAN WITH CRAZY HORMONES, GENTLEMEN.

*There is a very awkward, humbled silence.*

**HOOD 2:** . . . Er, because of your earlier offenses, you will still be required to carry out a punishment, albeit a lesser one than the aforementioned death.

**ALICE:** Which would be?

**HOOD 1:** You know that really horrible stinker of a series chronicling the antics of misanthropic secret agent Rick Stockard where he has to go back to elementary school and teach art class?

**HOOD 3:** And in doing so learns the ultimate lesson of helping others?

**ALICE:** What, you mean *Mr. Finger Paint*? Ugh, *don't* remind me.

**HOOD 2:** (*Procures a giftbox set of DVDs from underneath his robe and tosses it to ALICE.*) Yes, well, we hereby sentence you to sixty hours of the "Play All" option. Enjoy!

*The HOODS chuckle deviously, obviously enjoying ALICE's horror.*

**HOOD 3:** However, you are not entirely without our sympathy. Once your soul and body have successfully reunited, you will find in your pocket a paid ticket for one adult to the 3:30 showing of *The Human Mind*.

**HOOD 2:** A sexy thriller set in Victorian London in which four teens discover their true potential as they face their greatest fear of all. Themselves.

**HOOD 1:** If you hurry, you will only miss about half of the previews. Please accept our apologies.

**ALICE:** A free matinee and an apology for "accidentally" killing me and then claiming my baby is some kind of Movie-World Messiah?

**HOOD 2:** The High Council has spoken!

*HOOD 1 slams a gavel down and the spotlight around ALICE begins to fade quickly.*

**ALICE:** Can't I have a lifetime supply of Milk Duds or something . . .  
or . . . Hey! Hey, and I'm *not* a virgin! I've had *lots* - -

**HOOD 3:** Three o'clock approaches. FAREWELL, ALICE ELAINE  
ARCHIBALD!

*ALICE disappears from view as the last of the spotlight goes out. There is a brief silence amongst the COUNCIL. HOOD 1 makes a quick groan of regret.*

**HOOD 2:** Oh, pooh. You know what would've been good? "Fellinier than Scorsese."

*HOODS 2 and 3 murmur their agreement, thoroughly impressed.*

**HOOD 1:** No matter, we will use it on the baby shower e-vites.

*CURTAIN.*

**THE END**