

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY, WANDA JUNE**

by

Kurt Vonnegut

**ACT ONE**

**SCENE ONE**

SILENCE. Pitch blackness. Animal eyes begin to glow in the darkness. Sounds of the jungle climax in animals fighting. A SINGER is heard singing the first bars of "All God's Chillun Got Shoes." HAROLD, LOOSELEAF, PENELOPE, and WOODLY stand in a row in the darkness, facing the audience. They are motionless. A city skyline in the early evening materializes outside the windows.

The lights come up on the living room of a rich man's apartment, which is densely furnished with trophies of hunts and wars. There is a front door, a door to the master bedroom suite, and a corridor leading to other bedrooms, the kitchen and so on.

**PENELOPE**

How do you do. My name is Penelope Ryan. This is a simple-minded play about men who enjoy killing--and those who don't.

**HAROLD**

I am Harold Ryan, her husband. I have killed perhaps two hundred men in wars of various sorts--as a professional soldier. I have killed thousands of other animals as well--for sport.

**WOODLY**

I am Dr. Norbert Woodly--a physician, a healer. I find it disgusting and frightening that a killer should be a respected member of society. Gentleness must replace violence everywhere, or we are doomed.

**PENELOPE**

(to LOOSELEAF)

Would you like to say something  
about killing, Colonel?

**LOOSELEAF**

(embarrassed)

Jesus--I dunno. You know. What  
the heck. Who knows?

**PENELOPE**

Colonel Harper, retired now,  
dropped an atom bomb on Nagasaki  
during the Second World War,  
killing seventy-four thousand  
people in a flash.

**LOOSELEAF**

I dunno, boy.

**PENELOPE**

You don't know?

**LOOSELEAF**

It was a bitch.

**PENELOPE**

Thank you.

(to all)

You can leave now. We'll begin.

**WOODLY**

(to the audience,  
making a peace sign)

Peace!

All but PENELOPE exit.

**PENELOPE**

(to the audience)

This is a tragedy. When it's done,  
my face will be as white as the  
snows of Kilimanjaro.

(hyena laughs)

My husband, who kills so much, has  
been missing for eight years. He  
disappeared in a light plane over  
the Amazon Rain Forest, where he  
hoped to find diamonds as big as  
cantaloupes. His pilot was Colonel  
Looseleaf Harper, who dropped the  
bomb on Nagasaki.

(hyena laughs)

I should explain the doorbells in

this apartment. They were built by Abercrombie and Fitch. They are actual recordings of animal cries. The back doorbell is a hyena, which you've just heard. The front doorbell is a lion's roar.

(to the wings)

Would you let them hear it please?

(lion roars)

Thank you.

PAUL, her twelve-year-old son, enters from corridor, a sensitive, neatly dressed little rich boy.

**PENELOPE**

And this is my son, Paul. He was only four years old when his father disappeared.

**PAUL**

(radiantly, sappily)

He's coming back, Mom! He's the bravest, most wonderful man who ever lived.

**PENELOPE**

(to audience)

I told you this was a simple-minded play.

**PAUL**

Maybe he'll come back tonight!  
It's his birthday.

**PENELOPE**

I know.

**PAUL**

Stay home tonight!

**PENELOPE**

(ruefully, for they  
have been over this before)

Oh, Paul--

**PAUL**

You're married! You've already got a husband!

**PENELOPE**

He's a ghost!

**PAUL**

He's alive!

**PENELOPE**

Not even Mutual of Omaha thinks so anymore.

**PAUL**

If you have to go out with some guy--can't he be more like Dad?

(sick)

Herb Shuttle and Norbert Woodly-- can't you do better than those two freaks?

**PENELOPE**

(resentfully)

Thank you, kind sir.

**PAUL**

A vacuum cleaner salesman and a fairy doctor.

**PENELOPE**

A what kind of doctor?

**PAUL**

A fairy--a queer. Everybody in the building knows he's a queer.

**PENELOPE**

(knowing better)

That's an interesting piece of news.

**PAUL**

You're the only woman he ever took out.

**PENELOPE**

Not true.

**PAUL**

Still lives with his mother.

**PENELOPE**

You know she has no feet! You want him to abandon his mother, who has no husband, who has no money of her own, who has no feet?

**PAUL**

How did she lose her feet?

**PENELOPE**

In a railroad accident many years ago.

**PAUL**

I was afraid to ask.

**PENELOPE**

Norbert was just beginning practice. A real man would have sold her to a catfood company, I suppose. As far as that goes, J. Edgar Hoover still lives with his mother.

**PAUL**

I didn't know that.

**PENELOPE**

A lot of people don't.

**PAUL**

J. Edgar Hoover plays sports.

**PENELOPE**

I don't really know.

**PAUL**

To only exercise Dr. Woodly ever gets is playing the violin and making that stupid peace sign.  
(makes the peace sign  
and says the word effeminately)  
Peace. Peace. Peace, everybody.

Lion doorbell roars.

**PENELOPE**

(cringing)  
I hate that thing.

**PAUL**

It's beautiful.

He goes to door, admits WOODLY, whom he loathes openly.

**WOODLY**

(wearing street clothes, carrying a rolled-up poster under his arm)  
Peace, everybody--Paul, Penelope.

**PAUL**

You're taking Mom out tonight?

**WOODLY**

(to PENELOPE)

You're going out?

**PENELOPE**

Herb Shuttle is taking me to a fight.

**WOODLY**

Take plenty of cigars.

**PENELOPE**

(an apology, secret  
from PAUL)

We made the date three months ago.

**WOODLY**

I must take you to an emergency  
ward sometime--on a Saturday night.  
That's also fun. I came to see  
Selma, as a matter of fact.

**PENELOPE**

She quit this afternoon.

**PAUL**

We don't have a maid any more.

**WOODLY**

Oh?

**PENELOPE**

The animals made her sneeze and cry  
too much.

**WOODLY**

I'm glad somebody finally cried.  
Every time I come in here and see  
all this unnecessary death, I want  
to cry.

(winking at PAUL,  
acknowledging PAUL's  
low opinion of him)

I don't cry, of course. Not manly,  
you know. Did she try antihistamines?

**PENELOPE**

They made her so sleepy she  
couldn't work.

**WOODLY**

Throw out all this junk. Burn it!  
This room crawls with tropical  
disease.

**PAUL**

Everything stays as it is!

**WOODLY**

A monument to a man who thought  
that what the world needed most was  
more rhinoceros meat.

**PAUL**

(hotly)  
My father!

**WOODLY**

I apologize. But you didn't know  
him, and neither did I. How's your  
asthma?

**PAUL**

Don't worry about it.

**WOODLY**

How's the fungus around your  
thumbnail?

**PAUL**

(concealing the thumb)  
It's fine!

**WOODLY**

It's jungle rot! This room is  
making everybody sick! This is  
your family doctor speaking now.  
(unrolling the poster)  
Here--I brought you something else  
to hang on your wall, for the sake  
of variety.

**PENELOPE**

(reading)  
"War is not healthy for children  
and other living things." How lovely.

**WOODLY**

No doubt Paul thinks it stinks.

Lion doorbell roars.

**WOODLY**

I hate that thing.

**PAUL**

(going to the door)  
Keeps fairies away!

He admits HERB SHUTTLE, who carries an Electrolux vacuum cleaner.

**SHUTTLE**

(to PAUL  
affectionately,  
touching him)  
Hi kid.  
(seeing WOODLY)  
Would you look what the car dragged  
in.

**WOODLY**

I'm glad you brought your vacuum  
cleaner.

**SHUTTLE**

Is that a fact?

**WOODLY**

That maid just quit. The place is  
a mess. You can start in the  
master bedroom.

**PENELOPE**

Please--

**SHUTTLE**

He's not anybody to tell somebody  
else what to do in a master bedroom.

**PENELOPE**

I'll get ready, Herb. I didn't  
expect you this soon.  
(to all)  
Please--won't everybody be nice to  
everybody else while I'm gone?

All freeze, except for PENELOPE, who comes forward to  
address the audience. Lights on set fade as spotlight comes  
on.

**PENELOPE**

Most men shunned me--even when I  
nearly swooned for want of love. I

might as well have been girdled in a chastity belt. My chastity belt was not made of iron and chains and chickenwire, but of Harold's lethal reputation.

SHUTTLE comes into the spotlight.

**SHUTTLE**

I keep having this nightmare--that he catches us.

**PENELOPE**

Doing what?

**SHUTTLE**

He'd kill me. He'd be right to kill me, too--the kind of guy he is.

**PENELOPE**

Or was. We haven't done anything wrong, you know.

**SHUTTLE**

He'd assume we had.

**PENELOPE**

That's something I suppose.

**SHUTTLE**

All through the day I'm so confident. That's why I'm such a good salesman, you know? I have confidence, and I look like I have confidence, and that gives other people confidence. People laugh sometimes when they find out I'm a vacuum cleaner salesman. They stop laughing, though, when they find out I made forty-three thousand dollars last year. I've got six other salesmen working under me, and what they all plug into is my confidence. That's what charges them up.

**PENELOPE**

I'm glad.

**SHUTTLE**

I was captain of the wrestling team at Lehigh University.

**PENELOPE**

I know.

**SHUTTLE**

If you want to wrestle, you got  
Lehigh. If you want to play  
tennis, you go to Vanderbilt.

**PENELOPE**

I don't want to go to Vanderbilt.

**SHUTTLE**

You don't wrestle if you don't have  
supreme confidence, and I wrestled.  
But when I get with you, and I say  
to myself, "My God--here I am with  
the wife of Harold Ryan, one of the  
great heroes of all time--"

Pause.

**PENELOPE**

Yes?

**SHUTTLE**

Something happens to my confidence.

**PENELOPE**

(to the audience)

This conversation took place,  
incidentally, about three months  
before Harold was declared legally  
dead.

**SHUTTLE**

When Harold is definitely out of  
the picture, Penelope, when I don't  
have to worry about doing him wrong  
or you wrong or Paul wrong. I'm  
going to ask you to be my wife.

**PENELOPE**

I'm touched.

**SHUTTLE**

That's when I'll get my confidence  
back.

**PENELOPE**

I see.

**SHUTTLE**

If you'll pardon the expression,  
that's when you'll see the fur and  
feathers fly. Good night.

**PENELOPE**

Good night.

Blackout.

**SCENE TWO**

SHUTTLE and WOODLY argue in pitch darkness, with PAUL  
listening, and lights come up gradually to full on the  
living room the same evening.

**SHUTTLE**

You've got to fight from time to time.

**WOODLY**

Not true.

**SHUTTLE**

Or get eaten alive.

**WOODLY**

That's not true either--or needn't  
be, unless we make it true.

**SHUTTLE**

Phooey.

**WOODLY**

Which we do. But we can stop doing  
that.

The lights are full. SHUTTLE and WOODLY are bored with each  
other, WOODLY looks out the window, speaks to an imaginary  
listener who has more brains than SHUTTLE. PAUL hates them  
both, but prefers SHUTTLE's noisy manliness.

**WOODLY**

We simply stop doing that--dropping  
things on each other, eating each  
other alive.

**SHUTTLE**

(calling)  
Penelope! We're late!

**PENELOPE**

(off, in master

bedroom suite)  
Coming.

**SHUTTLE**

(to PAUL)  
Women are always late. You'll find  
out.

**WOODLY**

(thoughtfully)  
The late Mrs. Harold Ryan.

**SHUTTLE**

I'm sick of this argument. I just  
have one more thing to say: If you  
elect a President, you support him,  
no matter what he does. That's the  
only way you can have a country!

**WOODLY**

It's the planet that's in ghastly  
trouble now and all our brothers  
and sisters thereon.

**SHUTTLE**

None of my relatives are Chinese  
Communists. Speak for yourself.

**WOODLY**

Chinese maniacs and Russian maniacs  
and American maniacs and French  
maniacs and British maniacs have  
turned this lovely, moist,  
nourishing blue-green ball into a  
doomsday device. Let a radar set  
and a computer mistake a hawk or a  
meteor for a missile, and that's  
the end of mankind.

**SHUTTLE**

You can believe that if you want.  
I talk to guys like you, and I want  
to commit suicide.

(to PAUL)  
You get that weight-lifting set I  
sent you?

**PAUL**

It came yesterday. I haven't  
opened it yet.

**WOODLY**

(musingly, attempting  
to find the idea  
acceptable, even  
funny, in a way)  
Maybe it's supposed to end now.  
Maybe God wouldn't have it any  
other way.

**SHUTTLE**

(to PAUL)  
Start with the smallest weights.  
Every week add a pound or two.

**WOODLY**

Maybe God has let everybody who  
ever lived be reborn--so he or she  
can see how it ends. Even  
Pithecanthropus erectus and  
Australopithecus and Sinanthropus  
pekensis and the Neanderthalers are  
back on Earth--to see how it ends.  
They're all on Times Square--making  
change for peepshows. Or recruiting  
Marines.

**SHUTTLE**

(to PAUL)  
You ever hear the story about the  
boy who carried a calf around the  
barn every day?

**WOODLY**

He died of a massive rupture.

**SHUTTLE**

You think you're so funny. You're  
not even funny.

(to PAUL)  
Right? Right? You don't hurt  
yourself if you start out slow.

**WOODLY**

You're preparing him for a career  
in the slaughterhouses of Dubuque?  
(to PAUL)  
Take care of your body, yes! But  
don't become a bender of horseshoes  
and railroad spikes. Don't become  
obsessed by your musculature. Any  
one of these poor, dead animals  
here was a thousand times the  
athlete you can ever hope to be.

Their magic was in their muscles.  
Your magic is in your brains!

PENELOPE enters from the bedroom, dressed for the fight.  
She wears barbaric jewelry HAROLD gave her years ago, a  
jaguar-skin coat over her shoulders.

**PENELOPE**

(brightly)  
Gentlemen! Is this right for a  
fight? It's been so long.

**SHUTTLE**

Beautiful! I've never seen that coat.

**PENELOPE**

Seven jaguars' skins, I'm told.  
Harold shot every one. Shall we go?

**WOODLY**

(sick about the slain jaguars)  
Oh no! Wear a coat of cotton--wear  
a coat of wool.

**PENELOPE**

What?

**WOODLY**

Wear a coat of domestic mink. For  
the love of God, though, Penelope,  
don't lightheartedly advertise that  
the last of the jaguars died for you.

**SHUTTLE**

She's my date tonight. What do you  
want her to do--bring the poor old  
jaguars back to life with a bicycle  
pump? Bugger off! Ask Paul what  
he thinks.

(to PAUL)

Your mother looks beautiful--right?

(PAUL pointedly  
declines to answer)

Kid?

(PAUL walks away from him)

Doesn't your mother look nice?

(he goes to PAUL,  
wondering what is wrong)

Paul?

**PAUL**

(smolderingly)

I don't care what she wears.

**SHUTTLE**

Something's made you sore.

**PAUL**

Don't worry about it.

**SHUTTLE**

You bet I'll worry about it. I  
said something wrong?

**PAUL**

(close to angry tears)  
It's my father's birthday--that's  
all.

(facing everybody,  
raising his voice)  
That's all. Who cares about that?

**SHUTTLE**

(horrified, raising  
his hand to swear an oath)  
I had not the slightest inkling.  
(to PENELOPE, feeling betrayed)  
Why didn't you say so?

**PAUL**

(bitterly)  
She doesn't care! She's not  
married any more! She's going to  
have fun!

(to PENELOPE)  
I hope you have so much fun you can  
hardly stand it.

(to WOODLY)  
Dr. Woodly--I hope you make up even  
better jokes about my father than  
the ones you've said so far.

**SHUTTLE**

(reaching out for PAUL)  
Kid--kid--

**PAUL**

(to SHUTTLE)  
And I wish you'd quit touching me  
all the time. It drives me nuts!

**SHUTTLE**

(reaching out again)  
What's this?

**PAUL**

(recoiling)

Don't!

**SHUTTLE**

(aghast)

You sure misunderstood something--  
and we'd better get it straight.

**PAUL**

Explain it to them. I'm bugging  
out of here.

He grabs a jacket from a chair. SHUTTLE is in his way.

**PAUL**

Don't touch me. Get out of the way.

**SHUTTLE**

Men can touch other men, and it  
doesn't mean a thing. Haven't you  
ever seen football players after  
they've won the Superbowl?

**PENELOPE**

(to PAUL)

Where will you be?

**PAUL**

Anywhere but here. I'd just sit  
here and cry about the way my  
father's been forgotten.

**SHUTTLE**

I worship your father. That  
stuffed alligator your mother gave  
me--the one he shot? It's the  
proudest thing in my apartment.

**PAUL**

(at the door)

Everybody talks about how rotten  
kids act. Grownups can be pretty  
rotten, too.

He exits through front door, slams it.

**SHUTTLE**

(heartbroken)

Kid--kid--

**WOODLY**

It's good. Let him go.

**SHUTTLE**

If he'd just come out for the Little League, the way I asked him, he'd find out we touch all the time--shove each other, slug each other, and just horse around. I'm going to go get him--

**WOODLY**

Don't! Let him have all the privacy he wants. Let him grieve, let him rage. There has never been a funeral for his father.

**PENELOPE**

I never knew when to hold it--or who to ask, or what to say.

**WOODLY**

Tonight's the night.

**SHUTTLE**

If he'd just get into scouting, and camp out some, and see how everybody roughhouses around the fire--

**WOODLY**

What a beautiful demonstration this is of the utter necessity of rites of passage.

**SHUTTLE**

I feel like I've been double-crossed.

(to PENELOPE, peevishly)

If you'd just told me it was Harold's birthday--

**PENELOPE**

What then?

**SHUTTLE**

We could have had some kind of birthday party for him. We could have taken Paul to the fight with us.

**WOODLY**

Minors aren't allowed at fights.

**SHUTTLE**

Then we'd stay home and eat venison or something, and look through the scrapbooks. I've got a friend who has a whole freezer full of striped bass and caribou meat.

(going to the front door)  
I'm going to bring that boy back.

He exits through front door.

**WOODLY**

(going to PENELOPE)  
This is very good for us.

**PENELOPE**

It is?

**WOODLY**

The wilder Paul is tonight, the calmer he'll be tomorrow.

**PENELOPE**

As long as he keeps out of the park.

**WOODLY**

After this explosion, I think, he'll be able to accept the fact that his mother is going to marry again.

**PENELOPE**

The only thing I ever told him about life was, "Keep out of the park after the sun goes down."

**WOODLY**

We've got to dump Shuttle.  
(pointing to the vacuum cleaner)  
He brings his vacuum cleaner on dates?

**PENELOPE**

That's the XKE.

**WOODLY**

The what?

**PENELOPE**

It's an experimental model. He doesn't dare leave it in his car,

for fear it will fall into the hands of competition.

**WOODLY**

What kind of a life is that?

**PENELOPE**

He told me one time what the proudest moment of his life was. He made Eagle Scout when he was twenty-nine years old.

(clinging to him suddenly)

Oh, Norbert--promise me that Paul has not gone into the park!

**WOODLY**

(pause)

If you warned him against it as much as you say, it's almost a certainty.

**PENELOPE**

(petrified)

No! Oh no! Three people murdered in there in the last six weeks! The police won't even go in there any more.

**WOODLY**

I wish Paul luck.

**PENELOPE**

It's suicide!

**WOODLY**

I'd be dead by now if that were the case.

**PENELOPE**

Meaning?

**WOODLY**

Every night, Penelope, for the past two years, I've made it a point to walk through the park at midnight.

**PENELOPE**

Why would you do that?

**WOODLY**

To show myself how brave I am. The issue's in doubt, you know--since

I'm always for peace--

**PENELOPE**

I'm amazed.

**WOODLY**

Me, too. I know something not even the police know--what's in the park at midnight. Nothing. Or, when I'm in there, there's me in there. Fear and nobody and me.

**PENELOPE**

And maybe Paul. What about the murderers? They're in there!

**WOODLY**

They didn't murder me.

**PENELOPE**

Paul's only twelve years old.

**WOODLY**

He can make the sound of human footsteps--which is a terrifying sound.

**PENELOPE**

We've got to rescue him.

**WOODLY**

If he is in the park, luck is all that can save him now, and there's plenty of that.

**PENELOPE**

He's not your son.

**WOODLY**

No. But he's going to be. If he is in the park and he comes out safely on the other side, I can say to him, "You and I are the only men with balls enough to walk through the park at midnight."

(pause)

On that we can build.

**PENELOPE**

It's a jungle out there.

**WOODLY**

That's been said before.

**PENELOPE**

He'd go to a movie. I think that's what he'd do. If I were sure he was in a movie, I could stop worrying. We could have him paged.

Lion doorbell roars.

**WOODY**

I hate that thing.

He opens the door, admits SHUTTLE, who carries a bakery box.

**PENELOPE**

Did you see him?

**SHUTTLE**

Yeah.

**PENELOPE**

Is he all right?

**SHUTTLE**

Far as I know.

**PENELOPE**

Is he coming home?

**SHUTTLE**

He ditched me. He started running, and I started running, then he lost me in the park.

**PENELOPE**

The park!

**SHUTTLE**

It's dark in there.

**PENELOPE**

And that's where he is!

**SHUTTLE**

I figure he ducked in one place and ducked out another.

**PENELOPE**

(disgusted with him)  
You figure!

**SHUTTLE**

Then I saw this bakery store that was still open, so I bought a birthday cake.

**PENELOPE**

A what?

**SHUTTLE**

For Harold. When Paul comes home, we can have some birthday cake.

**PENELOPE**

How nice.

**SHUTTLE**

They had this cake somebody else hadn't picked up. It says, "Happy Birthday, Somebody Else."

**WOODLY**

"Happy Birthday, Wanda June!"

**SHUTTLE**

We can take off the "Wanda June" with a butter knife.

**PENELOPE**

Did you talk to Paul?

**SHUTTLE**

Before he started to run. He said his father carried a key to this apartment around his neck--and someday we'd all hear the sound of that key in the door.

**PENELOPE**

We've got to find him.

(preparing to exit  
through front door)

I want you to show me exactly where you saw him last.

(to WOODLY)

And you stay here, Norbert, in case he comes home.

(to SHUTTLE)

That's all he said--the thing about the key?

**SHUTTLE**

He said one other thing. It wasn't very nice.

**PENELOPE**

What was it?

**SHUTTLE**

He told me to take a flying fuck at  
the moon.

Blackout.

**SCENE THREE**

DARKNESS. Lights come up on living room. WOODLY is alone,  
asleep on the couch.

HAROLD lets himself and LOOSELEAF in through the front  
door--quietly. HAROLD has a full beard and a paunch.  
LOOSELEAF is skinnier. He has a handlebar moustache. Both  
wear new sports clothes and smoke expensive cigars. HAROLD  
is calm. LOOSELEAF is nervous, confused. They prowl the  
room cautiously, checking this and that. HAROLD awakens  
WOODLY by playing with his feet.

**WOODLY**

(startled)

Ooops.

**HAROLD**

(to LOOSELEAF, very amused)

Ooops.

**WOODLY**

Can I--uh--help you gentlemen?

**HAROLD**

(moving downstage,  
feeling at home)

Gentlemen--that's nice.

**WOODLY**

(to LOOSELEAF)

You startled me.

**LOOSELEAF**

Yeah. We just got here.

**WOODLY**

I thought you might be burglars--  
but you're not, I hope.

**LOOSELEAF**

Nope.

(idiotically,  
incapable of deception)  
I got a lot of stuff.

**WOODLY**

(looking at him closely)  
You do?

**HAROLD**

The door ws unlocked. Is it always  
unlocked?

**WOODLY**

It's always locked.

**HAROLD**

But here you are inside, aren't you?

**WOODLY**

You're--you're old friends of  
Harold Ryan?

**HAROLD**

We tried to be. We tried to be.

**WOODLY**

He's dead, you know.

**HAROLD**

Dead! Such a final word. Dead!  
(to LOOSELEAF)  
Did you hear that?

**LOOSELEAF**

Yup.

Telephone rings. WOODLY answers, keeping his eyes on the  
bizarre guests.

**WOODLY**

Hello? Oh--hello, Mother.

**HAROLD**

(to LOOSELEAF)  
Hello, Mother.

**WOODLY**

...Who?... Did she say how far  
apart the pains were?... When was  
that?... Oh dear.

**HAROLD**

Oh dear.

**WOODLY**

Call her back--tell her to head for the hospital. Tell the hospital to expect her. I'll leave right now.

He hangs up, faces the intruders.

**WOODLY**

Look--I'm sorry--I have to go.

**HAROLD**

We'll miss you so.

**WOODLY**

Look--this isn't my apartment, and there isn't anybody else here. Mrs. Ryan won't be home for a while.

**HAROLD**

Oh, oh, oh--I thought it was your apartment. You seemed at home here.

**WOODLY**

I'm a neighbor. I have the apartment across the hall. I have to go to the hospital now. An emergency.

HAROLD is unstirred.

**WOODLY**

I mean--I can't leave you here. You'll have to go. I'll tell Mrs. Ryan you were here. You can come back later.

**HAROLD**

Ahh--then she's still alive.

**WOODLY**

She's fine. Please--

**HAROLD**

And still Mrs. Harold Ryan?

**WOODLY**

Will you please go? An emergency!

**HAROLD**

She still has just the one child--

the boy?

He moves slowly toward the front door, with WOODLY trying to hustle him and LOOSELEAF out.

**WOODLY**

Yes! Yes! The boy! One boy!

**HAROLD**

(stopping)

And what, exactly, is your relationship to Mrs. Ryan?

**WOODLY**

Neighbor! Doctor! I live across the hall.

**HAROLD**

And you come into Mrs. Ryan's apartment as often as you please, looking into various health matters?

**WOODLY**

Yes! Please! You've got to get out right now!

HAROLD moves a little more, stops again.

**HAROLD**

Just her neighbor and doctor? That's all?

**WOODLY**

(at the end of his patience, blurting)

And her fiancé!

**HAROLD**

(delighted)

And her fiancé! How nice. I hope you'll be very happy--or is that what one says to the woman?

**WOODLY**

I've got to run!

He turns out the overhead light.

**HAROLD**

You wish the woman good luck, and you tell the man how fortunate he is. That's how it goes.

**WOODLY**

(holding open the  
front door)

I've literally got to run!

**HAROLD**

I won't try to keep up with you.  
I'm not as fast on my feet as I  
once was.

All three exit. A moment later, HAROLD lets himself and  
LOOSELEAF in again with a key. He turns on the light again,  
roams the room, reacquainting himself with his beloved  
trophies. LOOSELEAF is jangled by the adventure. HAROLD  
chucks a lioness under her chin.

**HAROLD**

Miss me, baby?

**LOOSELEAF**

I dunno, boy.

**HAROLD**

Hm?

**LOOSELEAF**

It's a bitch.

**HAROLD**

(quietly)

A bitch.

**LOOSELEAF**

Didn't recognize you.

**HAROLD**

We've never met.

**LOOSELEAF**

I wonder who'll recognize us first?  
They'll wet their pants.

**HAROLD**

I hope the men do. I would rather  
the women didn't.

**LOOSELEAF**

I'm gonna wet my pants.

He laughs idiotically.

**HAROLD**

(looking around himself)  
Home, sweet home.

**LOOSELEAF**

One thing, anyway--at least  
Penelope didn't throw out all your  
crap. I bet Alice threw out all my  
crap after I'd been gone a week.

**HAROLD**

We'll see.

HAROLD, who wants to savor the early moments of his  
homecoming alone, now tries to get the very jumpy LOOSELEAF  
out of the apartment.

**HAROLD**

It appears that we're going to have  
to wait awhile for any more action  
here, Colonel. Why don't you run  
on home while the evening's young.

**LOOSELEAF**

Home. Jesus.  
(makes his hands tremble)  
I'm like this. Home!

**HAROLD**

Home is important to a man.

**LOOSELEAF**

You know what gets me?

**HAROLD**

(absently)  
No.

**LOOSELEAF**

How all the magazines show tits today.

**HAROLD**

Um.

**LOOSELEAF**

Used to be against the law, didn't it?

**HAROLD**

(fed up with LOOSELEAF)  
I suppose.

**LOOSELEAF**

(making no move to leave)  
Must have changed that law.

Silence, while HAROLD attempts to be alone, even though  
LOOSELEAF is still present.

**HAROLD**

(thoughtfully hefting  
a broadsword,  
admiring its balance  
and strength)

Home.

**LOOSELEAF**

You know what gets me?

HAROLD does not respond.

**LOOSELEAF**

You know what gets me?

**HAROLD**

(to himself)  
Oh, shit.

**LOOSELEAF**

(finding enough  
encouragement in this)  
How everybody says "fuck" and  
"shit" all the time. I used to be  
scared shitless I'd say "fuck" or  
"shit" in public, by accident. Now  
everybody says "fuck" and "shit,"  
"fuck" and "shit" all the time.  
Something very big must have  
happened while we were out of the  
country.

**HAROLD**

(flatly)  
Looseleaf--will you get the hell home?

**LOOSELEAF**

At least we found the diamonds.

**HAROLD**

At least!

**LOOSELEAF**

I'd really feel stupid if we didn't  
bring anything back home.

**HAROLD**

It's enough that you've brought  
yourself home!

**LOOSELEAF**

I wish you'd tell Alice that. And  
that Goddamn Mrs. Wheeler.

**HAROLD**

(hotly)  
Tell them yourself!

**LOOSELEAF**

You don't know my mother-in-law, boy.

**HAROLD**

After eight years in the jungle  
with you, I know Mrs. Wheeler  
better than I know anybody in the  
universe!

**LOOSELEAF**

I didn't tell you everything.

**HAROLD**

The time we were in a tree for  
fourteen days, you certainly tried  
to tell me everything about Mrs.  
Wheeler.

**LOOSELEAF**

I didn't even scratch the surface.  
You're lucky, boy. You come home,  
and nobody's here. When I go home,  
everybody's going to be there.

**HAROLD**

This room is full of ghosts.

**LOOSELEAF**

You're lucky, boy. My house is  
gonna be filled with people.

HAROLD ignores this, attempts to savor the ghosts in the room.

**LOOSELEAF**

You know what gets me?

**HAROLD**

Go home!

**LOOSELEAF**

Thank God we found the fucking diamonds!

**HAROLD**

The hell with the diamonds!

**LOOSELEAF**

You were rich before. This is the first time I was ever rich.

**HAROLD**

Go home! Show them how rich you are for a change!

**LOOSELEAF**

Can I have the Cadillac?

**HAROLD**

Take the Cadillac and drive it off a cliff, for all I care.

**LOOSELEAF**

What'll you do for transportation?

**HAROLD**

I'll buy a hundred more Cadillacs. Go home!

**LOOSELEAF**

You know what gets me about that Cadillac?

**HAROLD**

Go home!

**LOOSELEAF**

When I drive it, I feel like I'm in the middle of a great big wad of bubblegum. I don't hear anything, I don't feel anything. I figure somebody else is driving. It's a bitch.

**HAROLD**

Go home.

**LOOSELEAF**

I'm liable to find anything!

**HAROLD**

That's the point! Walk in there and find whatever there is to

find--before Alice can cover it up.

**LOOSELEAF**

I know, I know. I dunno. At least she's in the same house. Sure was spooky, looking in the window there, and there she was.

**HAROLD**

So long, Colonel.

**LOOSELEAF**

You know what gets me?

**HAROLD**

(taking hold of  
LOOSELEAF and  
steering him to the  
front door)

Let's talk about it some other time.

**LOOSELEAF**

How short the skirts are.

**HAROLD**

(opening the door)  
Good night, Colonel. It's been  
beautiful.

**LOOSELEAF**

Something very important about sex  
must have happened while we were gone.

HAROLD shoves him out of the apartment and shuts the door.  
HAROLD starts to roam the room again, but the lion doorbell  
roars.

**HAROLD**

(going to the door)  
Hell!

HAROLD opens the door. LOOSELEAF comes in.

**LOOSELEAF**

You know what gets me? Those guys  
who went to the moon! To the moon,  
boy!

**HAROLD**

Leave me alone! After eight years  
of horrendously close association,  
the time has come to part! I crave

solitude and time for reflection--  
and then a reunion in privacy with  
my own flesh and blood. You and I  
may not meet again for months!

**LOOSELEAF**

Months?

**HAROLD**

I'm certainly not going to come  
horning back into your life  
tomorrow, and I will not welcome  
your horning back into mine. A  
chapter has ended. We are old  
comrades--at a parting of the ways.

**LOOSELEAF**

(bleakly, shrugging)  
I'm lonesome already.

He exits.

**HAROLD**

(roaming the room again)  
The moon. The new heroism--put a  
village idiot into a pressure  
cooker, seal it up tight, and shoot  
him at the moon.

(to his portrait)  
Hello there, young man. In case  
you're wondering, I could beat the  
shit out of you. And any woman  
choosing between us--sorry, kid,  
she'd choose me.

(pleased with the room)  
I must say, this room is very much  
as I left it.

(sees the cake)  
What's this? A cake? "Happy  
Birthday, Wanda June"? Who the  
hell is Wanda June?

Blackout.

**SCENE FOUR**

MUSIC indicates happiness, innocence, and weightlessness.  
Spotlight comes up on WANDA JUNE, a lisping eight-year-old  
in a starched party dress. She is as cute as Shirley Temple.

**WANDA JUNE**

Hello. I am Wanda June. Today was

going to be my birthday, but I was hit by an ice-cream truck before I could have my party. I am dead now. I am in Heaven. That is why my parents did not pick up the cake at the bakery. I am not mad at the ice-cream truck driver, even though he was drunk when he hit me. It didn't hurt much. It wasn't even as bad as the sting of a bumblebee. I am really happy here! It's so much fun. I am glad the driver was drunk. If he hadn't been, I might not have got to Heaven for years and years and years. I would have had to go to high school first, and then beauty college. I would have had to get married and have babies and everything. Now I can just play and play and play. Any time I want any pink cotton candy I can have some. Everybody up here is happy--the animals and the dead soldiers and people who went to the electric chair and everything. They're all glad for whatever sent them here. Nobody is mad. We're all too busy playing shuffleboard. So if you think of killing somebody, don't worry about it. Just go ahead and do it. Whoever you do it to should kiss you for doing it. The soldiers up here just love the shrapnel and the tanks and the bayonets and the dum dums that let them play shuffleboard all the time--and drink beer.

Spotlight begins to dim and carnival music on a steam calliope begins to intrude, until, at the end of the speech, WANDA JUNE is drowned out and the stage is black.

#### **WANDA JUNE**

We have merry-go-rounds that don't cost anything to ride on. We have Ferris wheels. We have Little League and girls' basketball. There's a drum and bugle corps anybody can join. For people who like golf, there is a par-three golf course and a driving range, with never any waiting. If you

just want to sit and loaf, why that's all right, too. Gourmet specialties are cooked to your order and served at any time of night or day...

Sudden silence.

**WOODY WOODPECKER VOICE**

Ha ha ha ha ha!  
(pistol shot)  
You got me, pal.

Silence.

Spotlight comes up on LOOSELEAF HARPER, who wears the clothes he will wear in the next scene--new sports clothes, a shirt open at the neck. As always, he is friendly and embarrassed.

**LOOSELEAF**

When Penelope asked me to say something about dropping the bomb on Nagasaki, I didn't give a very good answer, I guess. It's a very complicated question. Jesus--you know? You have to explain what it's like to be in the Air Force and how they give you your orders and all that. What it feels like to be in a plane, what the world looks like down there. After I got home from the war, the minister of my church asked me if I would speak to a scout troop that met in the church basement. So I did. They met on Thursday nights. I used to belong to that troop. I never made Eagle Scout. But you know something? It's a very strange kind of kid that makes Eagle Scout. They always seem so lonesome, like they'd worked real hard to get a job nobody else cares about. They get a whole bunch of merit badges. That's how you get to be an Eagle Scout. I don't think I had over five or six merit badges. The only one I remember is Public Health. That was a bitch. The Boy Scout Manual said I was supposed to find out what my town did about sewage.

Jesus, they just dumped it all in  
Sugar Creek.

(laughs idiotically)

Sugar Creek! That was a long time ago, but it's all coming back to me now. There was another merit badge you could get for roller skating. There used to be a roller rink at a bend in Sugar Creek, up above where the sewage went in. I got in a fight there one time. I had on roller skates, and the guy I was fighting had on basketball shoes. He had a tremendous advantage over me. He was a little guy, but he beat the shit out of me. I had to laugh like hell. Don't ever fight a guy when you've got on roller skates.

(silence)

Jesus--I remember my mother used to make me chew bananas for a full minute before I swallowed--so I wouldn't get sick. Makes you wonder what else your parents told you that wasn't true.

Blackout.

## **SCENE FIVE**

SPOTLIGHT comes up on HAROLD. He sits on the front seat of an imaginary car. The seat is covered with zebra skin.

### **HAROLD**

The night I met Penelope, I had no beard--so imagine me, if you can, without a beard. Actually, I wasn't as good-looking then as I am now. And, if anything, my health has improved. At any rate--I had just come home from Kenya--to discover that my third wife, Mildred, like the two before her, had become a drunken bum. In my experience, alcoholism is far more prevalent among women than men. So I got into my automobile--

He pantomimes turning the ignition key. The sound of a starter and a powerful engine responds. He pantomimes putting the car in gear and driving away from the curb.

Appropriate sounds are heard.

**HAROLD**

I drive through the night, until I  
was attracted by a sign which said--

Spotlight comes up on PENELOPE, who wears a skimpy carhop  
outfit she has had on under her coat in the previous scene.

**HAROLD**

"Hamburger Heaven."

**PENELOPE**

Heaven.

HAROLD pantomimes swerving into Hamburger Heaven. Tires  
squeal. He pantomimes a stop, kills the engine. He blows  
his imaginary horn. A real horn blows the bugle call for  
"charge." PENELOPE crosses to HAROLD.

**PENELOPE**

Can I help you, sir?

**HAROLD**

I think so, daughter. How old are  
you?

**PENELOPE**

Eighteen--  
(pause)  
and a half.

**HAROLD**

A springbok, an oryx, a gemsbok--a  
gazelle.

**PENELOPE**

Sir?

**HAROLD**

Raw hamburger, please--and a whole  
onion. I want to eat the onion  
like an apple. Do you understand?

**PENELOPE**

Yes, sir.

(to the audience)

It was a very unusual automobile.  
It was a Cadillac, but it had water  
buffalo horns where the bumpers  
should be.

(to HAROLD)

And what to drink?

**HAROLD**

What time do you get off work, my child?

**PENELOPE**

I'm sorry, sir, I'm engaged to be married. My boyfriend would be mad if I went out with another man.

**HAROLD**

Did you ever daydream that you would one day meet a friendly millionaire?

**PENELOPE**

I'm engaged.

**HAROLD**

Daughter--I love you very much.

**PENELOPE**

You don't even know me.

**HAROLD**

You are woman. I know woman well.

**PENELOPE**

This is crazy.

**HAROLD**

Destiny often seems that way. You're going to marry me.

**PENELOPE**

What do you do for a living?

**HAROLD**

My parents died in an automobile accident when I was sixteen years old. They left me a brewery and a baseball team--and other things. I live for a living. I've just come back from Kenya--in Africa. I've been hunting Mau Mau there.

**PENELOPE**

Some kind of animal?

**HAROLD**

The pelt is black. It's a kind of

man.

Blackout.

**SCENE SIX**

CURTAIN rises on empty living room. PAUL lets himself in with a key.

**PAUL**

Mom?

(silence)

Herb?

(silence)

Dr. Woodly?

(advances into room uneasily)

Hello?

(sees the cake)

A cake? Who's Wanda June?

HAROLD enters quietly from the kitchen, holding a can of beer.

**PAUL**

Anybody home?

**HAROLD**

As a matter of fact--

**PAUL**

(nearly jumping out  
of his skin)

Sir?

**HAROLD**

As a matter of fact--I am home.

**PAUL**

(thinking HAROLD may  
be a burglar)

Hello.

**HAROLD**

(simply)

Hello.

**PAUL**

Are you--

His voice fails him.

**HAROLD**

(hoping to be recognized)

You were about to ask a question?

**PAUL**

Are you--do you--

**HAROLD**

Ask it!

**PAUL**

(blurting)

Do you know who Wanda June is?

**HAROLD**

Life has denied me that thrill.

**PAUL**

Do you mind if I ask who you are?

**HAROLD**

Mind?

(aside)

God, yes, I mind.

(to PAUL)

I'm your father's friend. A man claiming to be the family physician let me in a while ago.

**PAUL**

Dr. Woodly.

**HAROLD**

Dr. Woodly. I should make a little list.

**PAUL**

Is anybody besides you here now?

**HAROLD**

The doctor was called away on an emergency. I think it was birth.

**PAUL**

Where's Mom?

**HAROLD**

You don't know where your mother is? Does she put on a short skirt and go drinking all night?

**PAUL**

She went to the fight with Herb Shuttle, I guess.

**HAROLD**

You think you could find me a pencil and paper?

**PAUL**

I'll see.

He rummages through a drawer.

**HAROLD**

And you've been roaming the streets while your mother is God-knows-where?

**PAUL**

I was going to a funny movie, but I changed my mind. If you're depressed, laughing doesn't help much.

(gives HAROLD pencil  
and paper)

When did you know my father?

**HAROLD**

Man and boy.

**PAUL**

Everybody says he was so brave.

**HAROLD**

Even this--"Herb Shuttle", you said?

**PAUL**

He worships Father.

**HAROLD**

(pleased)

Ah! And what sort of man is this worshiper?

**PAUL**

He's a vacuum cleaner salesman.

**HAROLD**

(deflated)

I see.

(recovering)

And he came into the apartment one day, to demonstrate his wares, and your mother, as it happened, was charmingly en deshabille--

**PAUL**

She met him at college.

**HAROLD**

(startled)

College!

**PAUL**

They were in the same creative writing class.

**HAROLD**

College?

**PAUL**

She has a master's degree in English literature.

**HAROLD**

What a pity! Educating a beautiful woman is like pouring honey into a fine Swiss watch. Everything stops.

(pause)

And the doctor? He worships your father, too?

**PAUL**

He insults him all the time.

**HAROLD**

(delighted)

Excellent!

**PAUL**

What's good about that?

**HAROLD**

It makes life spicy.

**PAUL**

He doesn't do it in front of me, but he does it with Mother.

(indicating HAROLD's portrait)

You know what he called Father one time?

**HAROLD**

No.

**PAUL**

"Harold, the Patron Saint of Taxidermy."

**HAROLD**

(measuring his opponent)  
What does he do--of an athletic nature?

**PAUL**

Nothing. He plays a violin in a doctors' quartet.

**HAROLD**

Aha! He has a brilliant military record, I'm sure.

**PAUL**

He was a stretcher-bearer in the Korean War.

(pause)

Were you in a war with Father?

**HAROLD**

Big ones, little ones, teeny-weeny ones--just and otherwise.

**PAUL**

Tell me some true stories about Dad.

**HAROLD**

(unused to the word)

"Dad?"

(accepting it)

Dad.

(to himself)

The boy wants tales of derring-do.  
Name a country.

**PAUL**

England?

**HAROLD**

(disgusted)

Oh hell.

**PAUL**

Dad was never in England?

**HAROLD**

Behind a desk for a little while.

(contemptuously)

A desk! They had him planning air raids. A city can't flee like a coward or fight like a man, and the

choice between fleeing and fighting was at the core of the life of Harold Ryan. There was only one thing he enjoyed more than watching someone make that choice, and that was making the choice himself. Ask about Spain, where he was the youngest soldier in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. He was a famous sniper. They called him "La Picadura"--"the sting."

**PAUL**

(echoing wonderingly)  
"The sting."

**HAROLD**

As in "Death, where is thy sting?"  
He killed at least fifty men,  
wounded hundreds more.

**PAUL**

(slightly dismayed at  
such murderousness)  
"The sting."

**HAROLD**

Ask about the time he and I were  
parachuted into Yugoslavia to join  
a guerrilla band--in the war  
against the Nazis.

**PAUL**

Tell me that.

**HAROLD**

I saw your father fight Major  
Siegfried von Konigswald, the Beast  
of Yugoslavia, hand to hand.

**PAUL**

(his excitement rising)  
Tell me that! Tell me that!

**HAROLD**

Hid by day--fought by night. At  
sunset one day, your father and I,  
peering through field glasses, saw  
a black Mercedes draw up to a  
village inn. It was escorted by  
two motorcyclists and an armored  
car. Out of the Mercedes stepped

one of the most hateful men in all  
of history--the Beast of Yugoslavia.

**PAUL**

Wow.

**HAROLD**

We blacked our hands and faces. At  
midnight we crept out of the forest  
and into the village. The name of  
the village was Mhravitch.  
Remember that name!

**PAUL**

Mhravitch.

**HAROLD**

We came up behind a sentry, and  
your father slit his throat before  
he could utter a sound.

**PAUL**

(involuntarily)

Uck.

**HAROLD**

Don't care for cold steel? A knife  
is worse than a bullet?

**PAUL**

I don't know.

**HAROLD**

The story gets hairier. Should I  
stop?

**PAUL**

Go on.

**HAROLD**

We caught another Kraut alone in a  
back lane. Your father choked him  
to death with a length of piano  
wire. Your father was quite a  
virtuoso with piano wire. That's  
nicer than a knife, isn't it--as  
long as you don't look at the face  
afterwards. The face turns a  
curious shade of avocado. I must  
ask the doctor why that is. At any  
rate, we stole into the back of the  
inn, and, with the permission of

the management, we poisoned the wine of six Krauts who were carousing there.

**PAUL**

Where did you get the poison?

**HAROLD**

We carried cyanide capsules. We were supposed to swallow them in case we were captured. It was your father's opinion that the Krauts needed them more than we did at the time.

**PAUL**

And one of them was the Beast of Yugoslavia?

**HAROLD**

The Beast was upstairs, and he came running downstairs, for his men were making loud farewells and last wills and testaments--editorializing about the hospitality they had received. And your father said to him in perfect German, which he had learned in the Spanish Civil War, "Major, something tragic seems to have happened to your bodyguard. I am Harold Ryan, of the United States of America. You, I believe, are the Beast of Yugoslavia."

Blackout.

**SCENE SEVEN**

SILENCE. Pitch blackness. The sounds of a Nazi rally come up slowly: "Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!" Spotlight comes up on MAJOR SIEGFRIED VON KONIGSWALD, and officer in the dreaded SS. He is in full ceremonial uniform. The sounds fade.

**VON KONIGSWALD**

(sadly, resignedly, remembering)

Ja ja. Ja ja.

(pause)

I am Major Siegfried von Konigswald. They used to call me "The Beast of Yugoslavia," on account of all the people I had tortured and shot--and hanged. We'd bop 'em on the head.

We'd hook 'em up to the electricity. We'd stick 'em with hypodermic syringes full of all kinds of stuff. One time we killed a guy with orange juice. There was a train wreck, and two of the freight cars were loaded with oranges, so we had oceans of orange juice. It was a joke--how much orange juice we had. And we were interrogating a guy one day, and he wouldn't talk, and the next thing I know--somebody's filling up this big syringe with orange juice.

(pause)

There was a guerrilla war going on. You couldn't tell who was a guerrilla and who wasn't. Even if you got one, it was still a civilian you got. Telling Americans what a guerrilla war is like--that's coals to Newcastle. How do you like that for idiomatic English? "Coals to Newcastle."

(laughs)

That Harold Ryan--he says he spoke to me in perfect German? He talks German like my ass chews gum. I'm glad to hear the wonderful thing he said before he killed me. I sure didn't understand it the first time around. I figured he was a Lithuanian or something, which will give you an idea of how wrong you can be. All I knew was he was very proud about something, and he had a machine pistol, and it was aimed at me. The woods were full of all kinds of nuts who were proud of some damn thing or other, and they all had guns. They were always looking for revenge. You find a way to bottle revenge--that's the end of Schnapps und Coca-Cola.

(pause)

Harold Ryan said he killed maybe two hundred guys. I killed a hundred times that many, I bet. That's still peanuts, of course, compared to what that crazy Looseleaf did. Harold and me--we was doing it the hard way. I hope

the record books will show that. There should be a little star or something by the names of the guys who did it the hard way.

(pause)

I'm up in Heaven now, like that little Wanda June kid. I wasn't hit by no ice-cream truck. Harold Ryan killed me with his bare hands. He was good. My eyes popped out. My tongue stuck out like a red banana. I shit in my pants. It was a mess.

(pause)

When I got up on the day I died, I said, "What a beautiful day this is. What a beautiful part of the world." The whole planet was beautiful. Up here I meet guys from other planets.

(laughs)

We got some really crazy-looking guys up here. Their planets weren't anywhere near as nice as Earth. They had clouds all the time. They never saw a clear blue sky. They never saw snow. They never saw an ocean. They had some little lakes, but you couldn't go swimming in them. The lakes were acid. You go swimming, you dissolve. We got some guys up here who got shoved in them lakes. They dissolved.

(pause)

Harold Ryan stopped talking German to me there in Yugoslavia. He switched to English, so I finally got some kind of idea what he was so burned up about. He wanted revenge for the guy we killed with orange juice. I don't know how he ever found out about it. There was just three of us there when we did it--me and two regular military doctors. Somebody who cleaned up afterwards must have squealed. If I'd lived through the war, and they tried me for war crimes and all that, I'd have to tell the court, I guess, "I was only following orders, as a good soldier should.

Hitler told me to kill this guy  
with orange juice."

Blackout.

### **SCENE EIGHT**

DARKNESS. Lights come up on living room. HAROLD has just finished telling his true war story to PAUL.

**HAROLD**

Mhravitch. Remember that name.

**PAUL**

Mhravitch.

**HAROLD**

The name will live forever. It was there that Harold Ryan slew the Beast of Yugoslavia. Mhravitch.

**PAUL**

When I grow up, I'm going to go to Mhravitch.

**HAROLD**

It's rather a disappointment these days. It isn't there any more.

**PAUL**

Sir?

**HAROLD**

The Germans shot everybody who lived there, then leveled it, plowed it, planted turnips and cabbages in the fertile ground. They wished revenge for the slaying of the Beast of Yugoslavia. To their twisted way of thinking, your father had butchered an Eagle Scout.  
(abruptly)  
Play lots of contact sports?

**PAUL**

I wanted to go out for football, but Mom was afraid I'd get hurt.

**HAROLD**

You're supposed to get hurt!

**PAUL**

Dr. Woodly says he's seen hundreds of children permanently injured by football. He says that when there's a war, everybody goes but football players.

**HAROLD**

Does it bother you to have your mother engaged to a man like that?

**PAUL**

They're not engaged.

**HAROLD**

He seems to think they are. He told me that were.

**PAUL**

Oh no, no, no, no, no. It can't be. How embarrassing.

**HAROLD**

(unexpectedly moved)

You're a very good boy to respond that way.

**PAUL**

No, no, no, no, no.

**HAROLD**

I'd like to use the sanitary facilities, if I may.

**PAUL**

Go ahead.

(as HAROLD exits)

No, no, no, no.

PENELOPE and SHUTTLE enter through front door. They are tremendously relieved to see PAUL.

**PAUL**

Thank God!

**SHUTTLE**

What a relief!

**PENELOPE**

(going to PAUL)

My baby's safe!

PAUL angrily avoids her touch.

**PENELOPE**

What's the matter now?

**SHUTTLE**

We got a birthday cake, kid. Did you see the cake?

**PAUL**

Are you and Dr. Woodly engaged?

**PENELOPE**

(stunned)

Who have you been talking to?

**PAUL**

What difference does that make? Is Dr. Woodly going to be my father now?

Pause.

**PENELOPE**

Yes, he is.

**PAUL**

(a stifled, gargling cry)

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaah!

**SHUTTLE**

(sick)

That goes double for me.

**PAUL**

I don't want to live any more.

**SHUTTLE**

I feel like I want to yell my head off--just yell anything.

(yelling)

Bullllllllllllllllll-dickey!

**PAUL**

I'll kill myself.

**SHUTTLE**

The wife of Harold Ryan is going to marry a pansy next? This is the end of Western Civilization as far as I'm concerned. You must be crazy as a fruitcake.

**PENELOPE**

Possibly.

**SHUTTLE**

How long has this been going on?

**PENELOPE**

A week. We were waiting for the right time to--

**SHUTTLE**

I feel as though I had been made a perfect chump of.

**PENELOPE**

I'm sorry.

**SHUTTLE**

Marry me instead.

**PENELOPE**

Thank you, Herb. You're a wonderful man. You really are. Everybody respects you for what you've done for scouting and the Little League.

**SHUTTLE**

You're saying no.

**PENELOPE**

I'm saying no--and thank you.

**SHUTTLE**

I didn't make my move fast enough. That's it, isn't it? I was too respectful.

**PENELOPE**

You were wonderful.

**SHUTTLE**

What's so wonderful if I lost the sale?

(turning to PAUL)

You poor kid.

**PAUL**

Don't touch me.

**SHUTTLE**

Wouldn't you rather have your mother marry me than him?

**PAUL**

No.

**SHUTTLE**

(moving dazedly  
toward the front door)

All my dreams have suddenly  
collapsed.

(pause)

We did have a lot of laughs  
together, Penelope.

**PENELOPE**

It's true.

**SHUTTLE**

Well--it was nice while it lasted.  
Thanks for the memories.

He exits.

Silence. A toilet flushes loudly and complicatedly.

**PENELOPE**

Is Norbert still here?

**PAUL**

No.

**PENELOPE**

Then who flushed the toilet?

**PAUL**

Father's friend.

**PENELOPE**

What's his name?

**PAUL**

Don't know.

**PENELOPE**

For Heaven's sakes!

HAROLD enters, still adjusting his trousers.

**PENELOPE**

How do you do?

**HAROLD**

How do you do, Mrs. Ryan? I'd

heard you were beautiful, and so  
you are. Am I intruding here?

**PENELOPE**

Not at all.

**HAROLD**

I couldn't help overhearing that  
you were about to get married again.

PENELOPE has now recognized him, but attempts to protect  
herself from shock by pretending that she has not.

**PENELOPE**

Our family physician has asked me  
to marry him. Paul needs the  
guidance and companionship that  
only a man can give. He isn't at  
all like Harold. But then again,  
I'm not the woman I was eight years  
ago.

She slumps into a chair, buries her face in her hands.

**PAUL**

Mom?

**PENELOPE**

(pointing weakly)  
That man is your father.

**PAUL**

What?

**PENELOPE**

There stands the loins from which  
you've sprung.

**PAUL**

I don't get it.

**PENELOPE**

It is you, isn't it, Harold?

**HAROLD**

(enjoying the drama hugely)  
Yes, wife, it is.  
(to PAUL)  
Come here, boy. Your father is home.

**PAUL**

Sir?

**PENELOPE**

Go to him.

PAUL goes to HAROLD dazedly. They embrace clumsily.

**HAROLD**

Son, son, son...

**PAUL**

Father, father, father...

They part, unsatisfied and confused. HAROLD goes to PENELOPE, his arms outstretched.

**HAROLD**

Wife, wife, wife...

PENELOPE struggles to her feet, her face blank. HAROLD embraces her, finds himself wrestling with a rigid, unresponsive object.

**HAROLD**

Wife, wife, wife...

HAROLD lets go, backs away from her.

**HAROLD**

What's the matter?

**PENELOPE**

(tearful)

Give us time.

**HAROLD**

Like hugging a lamp post.

**PENELOPE**

Give us time, Harold--to adjust to your being alive.

**HAROLD**

You were well adjusted to my being dead?

**PENELOPE**

We adjust to what there is to adjust to. Perhaps Paul, being young, can adjust to joy or grief immediately. I hope he can. I will take a little longer. I'll be as quick as I can.

**HAROLD**

What sort of time period do you

have in mind? Half an hour? An hour?

**PENELOPE**

I don't know. This is a new disease to me.

**HAROLD**

Disease?

**PENELOPE**

Situation.

**HAROLD**

This reunion isn't what I imagined it would be.

**PENELOPE**

A telegram--a phone call might have helped.

**HAROLD**

Seemed the most honest way to begin life together again--natural, unrehearsed.

**PENELOPE**

Well--enjoy the natural, honest, unrehearsed result--surgical shock.

**HAROLD**

You feel that you're behaving as a woman should?

**PENELOPE**

Every fuse in my nervous system has been blown.

Lion doorbell roars.

**PENELOPE**

Who's that? Teddy Roosevelt?

PAUL answers the door, admits WOODLY.

**WOODLY**

(to PAUL)

Safe and sound, I see.

(to HAROLD)

Oh--you came back.

**HAROLD**

I came back.

**PENELOPE**

You know each other?

**WOODLY**

We met here earlier this evening.

**PENELOPE**

How neat. How keen.

**HAROLD**

How was the emergency, Doctor?  
Profitable, I hope.

**WOODLY**

A policeman delivered the baby in a  
taxicab.

**HAROLD**

Tough luck. You'll have to split  
the fee.

**WOODLY**

(puzzled by PENELOPE's  
mood)

Are--are you crying, Penelope?

**HAROLD**

She's crying because she's so happy.

**PENELOPE**

That's why I'm crying.

**PAUL**

Dr. Woodly?  
(indicating HAROLD)  
You know who this is?

**WOODLY**

I didn't get his name. A friend of  
your father?

**PAUL**

He isn't any friend of Father.

**WOODLY**

He isn't?

**PAUL**

He is my father.

**WOODLY**

No!

**PENELOPE**

Eeeeeeeeeeee-yup. Dr. Woodly--I would like you to meet Harold, my husband. Harold, this is Dr. Woodly, my fiancé.

She crosses to the door of the master bedroom, kissing each male lightly as she passes.

**PENELOPE**

Good night, dear. Good night, dear.

She stands in the doorway.

**PENELOPE**

Stay or go, talk or sulk, laugh or cry--as you wish. Do whatever seems called for. My mind is gone. Good night.

She exits into bedroom, closes the door firmly, locks it audibly.

**WOODLY**

(dazedly)

I feel the same way. What next?

**HAROLD**

What next? You leave promptly, of course. There is no question as to whose home this is--

**WOODLY**

None.

**HAROLD**

Whose son this is, whose wife that is. A fiancé is the most ridiculous appurtenance this household could have at this time. Good night.

**WOODLY**

(crushed, without any possible comeback)

Good night.

He exits through the front door. HAROLD goes at once to PENELOPE's door, tries it, finds it locked.

**HAROLD**

Penelope! God damn it! Penelope!

He considers kicking down the door, thinks better of this, turns away.

**HAROLD**

Wants to fix up her makeup, no doubt.

**PAUL**

Is Looseleaf Harper alive?

**HAROLD**

Alive and hale. He's throwing a little surprise party for his own family. Is your mother often this unstable?

(not waiting for an  
answer, calling again)

Penelope!

**PAUL**

She's a real heavy sleeper sometimes.

**HAROLD**

Why don't you go to bed--son.

**PAUL**

I can't take my eyes off you.

**HAROLD**

Tomorrow's another day.

**PAUL**

You know what my English literature teacher said about you?

**HAROLD**

Can't it keep till morning?

**PAUL**

She said you were legendary. I wrote a theme about you, and she said, "Your father is a legendary hero out of the Golden Age of Heroes."

**HAROLD**

That's nice. You thank her for me. Go to bed and get lots of sleep, and then you thank her in the morning.

**PAUL**

Tomorrow's Saturday. Anyway, she's

dead.

**HAROLD**

Penelope!

**PAUL**

She was killed in the park two months ago--in the daytime.

**HAROLD**

Penelope!

**PAUL**

She was on her way home from a meeting of the African Violet Society, and they got her.

**HAROLD**

(sharply)

Will you go to bed?

**PAUL**

(stung)

Yes sir. If you can't wake Mom up, I've got double-decker bunks.

**HAROLD**

(stamping his foot)

Scat!

PAUL exits hastily down the corridor to his room. HAROLD goes to PENELOPE's door, attempts to woo her through it.

**HAROLD**

Penelope--darling--can you hear me?  
Wife--you know what kept me alive  
all these fevered, swampy,  
nightmare years? Your heavenly  
face, Penelope, my wife--shimmering  
before me, coaxing me up from my  
knees, begging me to stagger one  
step closer to home. Has love ever  
reached so far? Has love ever  
overcome more hardships than mine?

(silence)

Has love ever asked more manliness  
of a man, more womanliness of a  
woman? Has ever a man done more  
for a woman's reward?

The bedroom door opens, revealing PENELOPE.

**PENELOPE**

(hollowly, to the  
world at large)  
There is no one in here of any  
earthly use to anyone tonight.  
Tomorrow is another day.

She closes the door and locks it.

**HAROLD**

(to audience)  
End of Act One.

Blackout.

**ACT TWO**

**SCENE ONE**

DARKNESS. PAUL, alone in the living room, hammers on his  
mother's door. He wears pajamas.

**PAUL**

Mom! Mother! Mom!

Toilet flushes. Lights come up on the living room. It is  
morning.

**PAUL**

Dad's got jungle fever, Mom.  
What'll I do? Mom!

**HAROLD**

(a moment of exhaustion)  
Damn.

**PAUL**

Mom?

Door to the master bedroom suite opens. PENELOPE appears in  
the doorway. She has decided during an almost sleepless  
night that she owes it to PAUL and to her own self-respect  
to explore the possibility of beginning her life with HAROLD  
anew. She is terrified of him. She hopes that if she can  
keep calm and open, her fears will diminish. Perhaps she  
can love him again.

**PENELOPE**

(attempting to behave  
mechanically as a  
good wife should)  
What are his symptoms?

**PAUL**

Shivers and sweats and groans. His  
teeth chatter. What'll we do?

**PENELOPE**

What does he say to do?

**PAUL**

He can hardly talk.

**HAROLD**

(responding to a last  
twinge of nausea)

Bluh.

**PENELOPE**

You'd better get Dr. Woodly.

**PAUL**

Really?

**PENELOPE**

It is an emergency, isn't it?

**PAUL**

(uncertainly)

Yeah.

**PENELOPE**

Then get him.

**PAUL**

(thinking she has  
made a mistake)

Okay.

He exits through front door, leaves door open. We hear him  
knocking on a door in the hallway.

**PAUL**

Dr. Woodly?

HAROLD enters, drained but recovering. He chews on a root.  
He has slept in the shirt and trousers he wore the night  
before. He is barefoot. PAUL knocks again.

**PAUL**

Dr. Woodly?

There is the sound of WOODLY's door opening. WOODLY and  
PAUL speak unintelligibly, WOODLY evidently inviting PAUL in

for a moment. WOODLY's door closes.

**HAROLD**

What's that all about?

**PENELOPE**

We thought a doctor might help.

**HAROLD**

Your old beau?

**PENELOPE**

We thought it was an emergency.

**HAROLD**

I don't want that chancre mechanic  
in here.

**PENELOPE**

He's a very decent man, Harold.

**HAROLD**

We all are.

**PENELOPE**

Shouldn't you lie down?

**HAROLD**

When I'm dead--  
(throwing it away)  
or fucking.

**PENELOPE**

Paul said you were awfully sick.

**HAROLD**

I was, I was. It never lasts long.

He hears WOODLY's door open, is alert to WOODLY's approach,  
continues to speak to PENELOPE absently.

**HAROLD**

The Indians call it "Zamba-  
keetya"--the little cloudburst.

WOODLY and PAUL enter. WOODLY is correctly professional and  
carries a little black bag.

**WOODLY**

Ah! You're ambulatory!

**HAROLD**

What a brilliant diagnosis!

**PENELOPE**

You know what I want?

(all look at her)

I want you both to be friends. I know you both, respect you both. You should be friends.

**HAROLD**

Nothing would please me more.

**PENELOPE**

(believing him)

Thank God!

**WOODLY**

(pleased but careful)

Well now--what seems to be the trouble with the patient today? A touch of malaria, perhaps?

**HAROLD**

I know malaria. Malaria isn't caused by the bites of bats.

**WOODLY**

You've been bitten by bats?

**HAROLD**

Colonel Harper and I once shared a treetop with a family of bats. There was a flash flood. There were piranha fish in the water. That's how Colonel Harper lost his little toe.

**WOODLY**

You have chills?

**HAROLD**

Chills, fevers, sweats. You can describe it and name it after yourself: "the Woodly galloping crud."

WOODLY enjoys the joke and the blooming friendship.

**HAROLD**

You can also describe its cure. I'm eating its cure.

**WOODLY**

I was going to ask.

**HAROLD**

Pacqualinincheewa root.

**WOODLY**

Would you say that again?

**HAROLD**

Pacqualinincheewa root. Means  
"cougar fang." Cures anything but a  
yellow streak down the back.

**WOODLY**

I've never heard of it.

**HAROLD**

Congratulations. By crossing  
twenty-eight feet of cockroach-  
infested carpet, you've become the  
third white man ever to hear of it.

**WOODLY**

(fascinated)

Are you've seen it work cures?

**HAROLD**

Hundreds.

**PENELOPE**

I'm so glad you like each other. I  
was so scared, so scared.

**HAROLD**

(breaking off a  
piece, offering it)

Have some.

**WOODLY**

Thank you. Thank you very much.

**PENELOPE**

I believe in miracles now.

**HAROLD**

Wasn't that sweet of me?

**WOODLY**

More and more we find ourselves  
laying aside false pride and  
looking into the pharmacopoeias of

primitive people. Curare,  
ephedrine--we've found some amazing  
things.

**HAROLD**

We have, have we?

**WOODLY**

That's an editorial we, of course.  
I haven't turned up anything  
personally.

**HAROLD**

Everything about you is the  
editorial we. Take that away from  
you, and you'd disappear.

**PENELOPE**

Harold!

**HAROLD**

I could carve a better man out of a  
banana!

**PENELOPE**

Please--

**HAROLD**

You and your damned bedside manner  
and your damned little black bag  
full of miracles. You know who  
filled that bag for you? Not  
Alice-sit-by-the-fires like  
yourself. Men with guts filled it,  
by God--men with guts enough to pay  
the price for miracles--suffering,  
ingratitude, loneliness, death--

**WOODLY**

(off balance)

Good Lord.

**HAROLD**

I can just hear the editorial wee-  
wee-weeing when Looseleaf and I  
start flying in pacqualinincheewa  
root. I can hear the Alice-sit-by-  
the-fires now: "We discovered it in  
the Amazon Rain Forest. Now we  
cure you with it. Now we lower our  
eyes with becoming modesty as we  
receive heartfelt thanks."

HAROLD suddenly goes to WOODLY, takes his hand and pretends  
abject gratitude.

**HAROLD**

Oh, bless you, Doctor, bless you--  
oh healer, oh protector, oh giver  
of life.

WOODLY withdraws his hand, examines it as though it were  
diseased.

**PENELOPE**

He doesn't deserve this! You don't  
know him. It isn't fair!

**HAROLD**

He thought he could take my place.  
It is now my privilege to give an  
unambiguous account of why I don't  
think he's man enough to do that.

**WOODLY**

I thought she was a widow.

**HAROLD**

You were wrong, you quack!

**PENELOPE**

Awful.

(approaching WOODLY,  
but not getting too close)  
I can't tell you how sorry I am.

**HAROLD**

Say hello to your mother.

**PENELOPE**

(fervently)  
Do say hello to your mother.

**WOODLY**

I'm taking her to the airport a few  
minutes from now. She's going to  
East St. Louis--to visit an aunt.

**PENELOPE**

Tell her to have a nice trip.

**WOODLY**

(moving towards the  
front door)

Thanks.

HAROLD laughs. This stings WOODLY to a cold, peace-loving anger.

**WOODLY**

I'm going to have to report you to the Department of Health.

**HAROLD**

What for?

**WOODLY**

Quarantine, possibly. You may be suffering from a loathsome disease which the American people could do without. Goodbye.

He exits instantly.

**HAROLD**

Now that's what I call fun.

**PENELOPE**

Ghastly, cruel, unnecessary.

**HAROLD**

You'll get so you enjoy twitting weaklings again. You used to eat it up.

**PENELOPE**

I did?

**HAROLD**

We were one hell of a pair--and we'll be one again. What we need is a honeymoon. Let's start right now.

**PENELOPE**

A trip, you mean?

**HAROLD**

I had a trip. We'll honeymoon here.  
(to PAUL)  
Go out and play.

**PAUL**

Play?

**HAROLD**

Your mother and I do not wish to be disturbed for three full hours.

**PENELOPE**

He hasn't had breakfast yet.

**HAROLD**

Buy yourself breakfast.  
(takes his billfold  
from his hip pocket,  
hands PAUL a \$100 bill)  
There we go.

**PAUL**

A hundred dollars!

**HAROLD**

The smallest thing I've got.

**PAUL**

Can I get dressed first?

**HAROLD**

Make it fast.

PAUL exits to his bedroom. HAROLD turns to PENELOPE.

**HAROLD**

Honeymoon! Honeymoon! Say it:  
Honeymoon!

**PENELOPE**

It's so--so stark.

**HAROLD**

You used to like it stark!

**PENELOPE**

Just--bang--we have a honeymoon.

**HAROLD**

(beginning to stalk  
her cunningly)  
I'm not going to strike you. I am  
going to be as gentle as pie--as  
lemon meringue pie. You mustn't  
run away now. This is your loving  
husband approaching. I'm your  
husband. Society approves!

PENELOPE wants to run, but doesn't.

**HAROLD**

Good! You held your ground.

HAROLD is very close now, but not touching her.

**HAROLD**

Now--turn around, if you would.

**PENELOPE**

Turn around?

**HAROLD**

(laughing)

I'm not about to introduce to you a jungle novelty. What I have in mind is massage--a perfectly decent massage. Turn around, turn around.

PENELOPE obeys.

**HAROLD**

I'm going to touch your shoulders very gently now. You mustn't scream.

(touches her

shoulders gently, expertly)

So tense, so tense.

**PENELOPE**

You shouldn't have talked to Norbert that way.

**HAROLD**

You're thinking with your brain instead of your body. That's why you're so tense! Forget Norbert. Relax. It's body time.

**PENELOPE**

I have a brain.

**HAROLD**

We all do. But now it's body time. Relax. Ideally, the body of a woman should feel like a hot water bottle filled with Devonshire cream. You feel like a paper bag crammed with curtain rods. Think of your muscles one by one. Let them go slack. Relax. Let the brain go blank. Relax. That's the idea--that's my girl. Now the small of

the back. Let those knots over those kidneys unsnarl.

**PAUL**

(entering, dressed to go out and play)

Dad--

**HAROLD**

(hanging on to PENELOPE, but knowing the mood has been broken)  
Couldn't you have vanished quietly out the back door?

**PAUL**

A hundred dollars for breakfast?

**HAROLD**

Leave a tip.

**PENELOPE**

(suddenly twisting away, having been nearly hypnotized)  
I have some change!

**HAROLD**

Ram it up your ass!

He realizes at once that his violent side has severely damaged the side of him which is the great seducer. PENELOPE and PAUL are straight as ramrods.

**HAROLD**

I do beg your pardon.  
(sincerely)  
Those words were illy chosen. There is tension in all of us here. Something you must both understand, however, is that the head of this household is home, and he is Harold Ryan, and people do what he says when he says it. That's the way this particular clock is constructed.

Lion doorbell roars.

**HAROLD**

Sometimes even I hate that thing.

PAUL goes reeling to the door in terror, admits LOOSELEAF,

who has also been sleeping in his clothes.

**LOOSELEAF**

(walking right in)  
I've been looking at motorcycles.

**HAROLD**

Go home!

**LOOSELEAF**

You ever own a motorcycle?

**HAROLD**

(to PENELOPE)  
You're right! We'll take a trip.  
A trip is what we'll take.

(to LOOSELEAF)  
I don't want to talk about  
motorcycles. I don't want to talk  
about tits. Go home!

**LOOSELEAF**

Haven't got one.

**PENELOPE**

(to LOOSELEAF)  
And you went home unannounced, too?

**LOOSELEAF**

I dunno. Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! I did.

**HAROLD**

And how were things?

**LOOSELEAF**

Let's talk about something else.

**PENELOPE**

(to HAROLD)  
Alice got married again.

**LOOSELEAF**

She did?

**PENELOPE**

You didn't even find that out?

**LOOSELEAF**

There was so much going on.

**PENELOPE**

She married an accountant named

Stanley Kestenbaum.

**LOOSELEAF**

So that's it! "Kestenbaum,  
Kestenbaum." Everybody was yelling  
"Kestenbaum, Kestenbaum." I thought  
it was some foreign language.

**HAROLD**

Otherwise, how are things?

**LOOSELEAF**

I sure didn't expect her to drop dead.

**PENELOPE**

Dead!

**LOOSELEAF**

Jesus.

**PENELOPE**

(sick)  
Alice is dead?

**LOOSELEAF**

No, no--shit no.  
(stops short)  
Excuse me, Penelope.

**PENELOPE**

For what?

**LOOSELEAF**

For saying "shit." Or is that okay  
now?

**PENELOPE**

(shrilly)  
Who's dead?

**LOOSELEAF**

My mother-in-law. Fire engines,  
pulmotors, doctors, cops, coroners--

**PENELOPE**

What happened?

**LOOSELEAF**

Well--I walked up to the front door.  
I was still alive. Big surprise.  
I rang the doorbell, and old Mrs.  
Wheeler answered. She had her

Goddamn knitting. I said, "Guess who?" She conked right out.

**PENELOPE**

How horrible.

**LOOSELEAF**

Yeah--cripes. I never did get any sense out of Alice. She found me holding up the old lady, dead as a mackerel. It was a bitch. You know--maybe Mrs. Wheeler was going to die then and there anyway, even if I'd been the paper boy. Maybe not. I dunno, boy. That's civilian life for you. Who knows what kills anybody?

**HAROLD**

Could have happened to anybody.

**LOOSELEAF**

First Nagasaki--now this.

**HAROLD**

How about breakfast, wife?

**PENELOPE**

Breakfast?

**HAROLD**

(as though to a waitress)  
Scrambled eggs, kippered herring,  
fried potatoes--and a whole onion.  
I want to eat the onion like an  
apple. Do you understand?

PENELOPE turns away.

**HAROLD**

And lots of orange juice--oceans of  
orange juice.

**PENELOPE**

Mrs. Wheeler is dead.

**HAROLD**

All right--bring me a side order of  
Mrs. Wheeler.

(regarding LOOSELEAF,  
resigning himself to  
being stuck with his

company for a little  
while longer)  
Oh, hell--sit down, Colonel.  
Penelope will bring you some chow.

**PENELOPE**

That is the most heartless  
statement I ever heard pass between  
human lips.

**HAROLD**

(honestly mystified)  
Which one?

**PENELOPE**

(chokingly)  
"Bring me a side order of Mrs.  
Wheeler."

**HAROLD**

She's up in Heaven now. She didn't  
hear. She is experiencing nothing  
but pure happiness. There's  
nothing nicer than that.

(suddenly, angrily,  
slamming a table with  
his fist)  
Chow! Harold Ryan wants chow!

**PENELOPE**

What a honeymoon.

**HAROLD**

Honeymoon temporarily canceled.  
(catching sight of  
PAUL, whose physical  
appearance really  
offends him)  
The boy should still go out and  
exercise. I have the impression he  
never gets any exercise. He simply  
bloats himself with Fig Newtons and  
bakes his brains over steam radiators.

**PENELOPE**

You're wrong.

**HAROLD**

Then let me see him go out and get  
some exercise.  
(explosively)  
Right now!

PAUL goes reeling in terror to the front door, opens it.

**PAUL**

(to HAROLD, abjectly)  
What kind of exercise?

**HAROLD**

Beat the shit out of someone who  
hates you.

PAUL exits. HAROLD pounds on a table.

**HAROLD**

Chow, chow, chow! God damn it--  
nutriment!

**PENELOPE**

We're all going to have to go out  
for breakfast. The cook quit  
yesterday.

**HAROLD**

You're a woman, aren't you?

PENELOPE nods.

**HAROLD**

Then we have a cook.

PENELOPE hesitates.

**HAROLD**

Cook, by God! Cook! You're the  
nigger now.

**PENELOPE**

People don't use that word any more.

**HAROLD**

Don't lecture me on race relations.  
I don't have a molecule of  
prejudice. I've been in battle  
with every kind of man there is.  
I've been in bed with every kind of  
woman there is--from a Laplander to  
a Tierra del Fuegian.  
If I'd ever been to the South Pole,  
there'd be a hell of a lot of  
penguins who looked like me. Cook!

**PENELOPE**

You leave me so--so without--  
without dignity.

**HAROLD**

People now have dignity when frying  
eggs?

**PENELOPE**

They don't have to feel like slaves.

**HAROLD**

(grandly)

Then go now--and fry with dignity--  
sunnyside up.

PENELOPE attempts to respond to this, but is too enraged.  
She exits, making a tiny mosquito-like hum.

**LOOSELEAF**

I dunno, boy.

**HAROLD**

The educational process.

**LOOSELEAF**

I guess. You're lucky you don't  
have any old people around here.

**HAROLD**

She was about to get married again.  
She locked me out of the bedroom  
last night.

LOOSELEAF starts to laugh. HAROLD shuts him up.

**HAROLD**

What's funny about that?

**LOOSELEAF**

(apologetically)

You know me, boy.

PENELOPE enters from the kitchen with a question on her lips.

**HAROLD**

I should have torn that door off  
its hinges. Should have scrogged  
her ears off. Should have broken  
the bed.

(seeing PENELOPE)

What do you want?

(words fail her)

Well?

**PENELOPE**

I--I was wondering--is there anything you shouldn't eat--because of jungle fever?

**HAROLD**

I could eat a raw baby crocodile.  
(turning to LOOSELEAF crassly)  
The way to get your wife back is in bed. Do such a job on her that she'll be lucky if she can crawl around on all fours.  
(to PENELOPE)  
We're starving. Do you mind?

PENELOPE exits dumbly, detesting the word "scrog," which she has never heard before.

**HAROLD**

She had two lovers, by the way.

LOOSELEAF starts to laugh again, stops the laugh as HAROLD glowers.

**LOOSELEAF**

Excuse me.

**HAROLD**

One of them is the doctor, whose weapons are compassion, unselfishness, peacefulness--maudlin concern.

**LOOSELEAF**

Huh.

**HAROLD**

He and his love are like a retiarius. Do you know what a retiarius is?

**LOOSELEAF**

He's a kind of gladiator who fights with a knife and a net and doesn't wear anything but a jockstrap.

**HAROLD**

(amazed)  
How do you know that?

**LOOSELEAF**

You told me.

**HAROLD**

When?

**LOOSELEAF**

When we were up in the tree so long--with the bats.

**HAROLD**

Oh. I'd forgotten.

**LOOSELEAF**

Fourteen times you told me. I counted.

**HAROLD**

Really?

**LOOSELEAF**

You'd get this funny look in your eyes, and I'd say to myself, "Oh, Jesus--he's going to tell me what a retiarius is again."

**HAROLD**

(acknowledging a flaw  
in a manly way)

Sorry.

PENELOPE enters, is about to speak. HAROLD stops her with a raised finger.

**HAROLD**

Let me guess--breakfast is served?

**PENELOPE**

No.

**HAROLD**

What then?

**PENELOPE**

I do not wish to be scrogged--ever. I never heard that word, but when I heard it, I knew it was one thing I never wanted to have happen to me.

**HAROLD**

That's what you're supposed to say.

**PENELOPE**

This is not a coy deception. I do not want to be scrogged. I want love. I want tenderness.

**HAROLD**

You don't know you want. That's the way God built you!

**PENELOPE**

I will not be scrogged. I remember one time I saw you wrench a hook from the throat of a fish with a pair of pliers, and you promised me that the fish couldn't feel.

**HAROLD**

It couldn't!

**PENELOPE**

I'd like to have the expert opinion of the fish--along with yours.

**HAROLD**

(shaking his head)  
Fish can't feel.

**PENELOPE**

Well, I can. Some injuries, spiritual or physical, can be excruciating to me. I'm not a silly carhop any more.  
(an unexpected, minor insight)  
Maybe you're right about fish. When I was a carhop, I didn't feel much more than a fish would. But I've been sensitized. I have ideas now--and solid information. I know a lot more now--and a lot of it has to do with you.

**HAROLD**

(sensing danger)  
Such as?...

**PENELOPE**

The whole concept of heroism--and its sexual roots.

**HAROLD**

Tell me about its sexual roots.

**PENELOPE**

It's complicated and I don't want to go into it now, because it's bound to sound insulting--even though nobody means for anybody to be insulted. It's just the truth.

**HAROLD**

I like the truth. I wouldn't be alive today if I weren't one of the biggest fans truth ever had.

**PENELOPE**

Well--part of it is that heroes basically hate home and never stay there very long, and make awful messes while they're there.

**HAROLD**

Go on.

**PENELOPE**

(blurting)

And they have very mixed feelings about women. They hate them in a way. One reason they like war so much is that they can capture enemy women and not have to make love to them slowly and gently. They can scrog them, as you say--

(pause)

for revenge.

**HAROLD**

You learned this in some college course?

**PENELOPE**

I learned a lot of things in college. Actually--it was Norbert who told me that.

**HAROLD**

(darkly)

The doctor.

**PENELOPE**

Yes.

**HAROLD**

And what is his most cherished possession?

**PENELOPE**

(not sensing the  
drift of the conversation)  
His most cherished possession? His  
violin, I guess.

**HAROLD**

And he keeps it in his apartment?

**PENELOPE**

(still at sea)  
Yes.

**HAROLD**

And no one's there now?

**PENELOPE**

I don't think so.

**HAROLD**

That's too bad. I would rather  
have him at home--to see what I'm  
going to do.

**PENELOPE**

(suddenly catching  
on, sick with fear)  
What are you going to do?

**HAROLD**

He did his best to destroy my most  
precious possession, which is the  
high opinion women have of me. I'm  
now going to even that score. I'm  
going to break in his door and I'm  
going to smash his violin.

**PENELOPE**

No you're not!

**HAROLD**

Why not?

**PENELOPE**

Because if you do--I'll leave you.

**HAROLD**

(promptly and emotionlessly)  
Goodbye.

Blackout.

**SCENE TWO**

SPOTLIGHT comes up on VON KONIGSWALD and WANDA JUNE, dressed as before. They have become close friends.

**WANDA JUNE**

We have this new club up here in Heaven.

**VON KONIGSWALD**

Yes, we do.

**WANDA JUNE**

We only have two members so far, but it's growing all the time.

**VON KONIGSWALD**

We have enough for a shuffleboard team. In Heaven, shuffleboard is everything. Hitler plays shuffleboard.

**WANDA JUNE**

Albert Einstein plays shuffleboard.

**VON KONIGSWALD**

Mozart plays shuffleboard.

**WANDA JUNE**

Lewis Carroll, who wrote Alice in Wonderland, plays shuffleboard.

**VON KONIGSWALD**

Jack the Ripper plays shuffleboard.

**WANDA JUNE**

Walt Disney, who gave us Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, plays shuffleboard. Jesus Christ plays shuffleboard.

**VON KONIGSWALD**

It was almost worth the trip--to find out that Jesus Christ in Heaven was just another guy, playing shuffleboard. I like his sense of humor, though--you know? He's got a blue-and-gold warm-up jacket he wears. You know what it says on the back? "Pontius Pilate Athletic Club." Most people don't get it. Most people think there really is a Pontius Pilate Athletic

Club.

**WANDA JUNE**

We're going to have jackets, aren't we?

**VON KONIGSWALD**

You bet! "The Harold Ryan Fan Club." Pink, eh? With a yellow streak up the back.

(both laugh)

We got very good tailor shops up here. They'll make you any kind of uniform, any kind of sweatsuit you want. Judas Iscariot--he's got this black jacket with a skull and crossbones over the heart. He walks around all hunched over, and he never looks anybody in the eye, and written on the back of his jacket are the words, "Go take a flying--

WANDA JUNE punches him in the ribs.

**VON KONIGSWALD**

leap at the moon."

MILDRED, HAROLD's third wife, enters. She is voluptuous, blowzy, tough--about forty-five. She has trouble with alcohol. VON KONIGSWALD is expecting her.

**VON KONIGSWALD**

Aha! Hello! You're Mildred, right?

**MILDRED**

I heard you were looking for me.

**VON KONIGSWALD**

You were Harold Ryan's third wife. Right?

**MILDRED**

Yes.

**VON KONIGSWALD**

You want to join the Harold Ryan Fan Club? Wear a pink jacket with a yellow streak up the back?

**MILDRED**

Do I have to? Who's the little girl?

**WANDA JUNE**

Mr. Ryan just borrowed my birthday cake. I don't really know him.

**MILDRED**

Thought you were another wife, maybe.

**WANDA JUNE**

I'm only ten years old.

**MILDRED**

That's what he wanted--a ten-year-old wife. He'd come home from a war or a safari, and he'd wind up talking to the little kids.

**WANDA JUNE**

Won't you please join our club?  
Please?

**MILDRED**

Honey--Alcoholics Anonymous takes all the time I've got--and Harold Ryan is an individual I would rather forget. He drove me to drink. He drove his first two wives to drink.

**VON KONIGSWALD**

Because he was cruel?

**MILDRED**

(covering WANDA  
JUNE's little ears)  
Premature ejaculation.

**VON KONIGSWALD**

Ach sooooooooooooo.

**MILDRED**

No grown woman is a fan of premature ejaculation. Harold would come home trumpeting and roaring. He would the kick the furniture with his boots, spit into corners and the fireplace. He would make me presents of stuffed fish and helmets with holes in them. He would tell me that he had now earned the reward that only a woman could give him, and he'd tear off my clothes. He would carry me into

the bedroom, telling me to scream and kick my feet. That was very important to him. I did it. I tried to be a good wife. He told me to imagine a herd of stampeding water buffalo. I couldn't do that, but I pretended I did. It was all over--ten seconds after he'd said the word "buffalo." Then he'd zip up his pants, and go outside, and tell true war stories to the little kids. Any little kids.

**VON KONIGSWALD**

That is sad.

**MILDRED**

(blankly)

Is it?

(pause)

I have this theory about why men kill each other and break things.

**VON KONIGSWALD**

Ja?

**MILDRED**

Never mind. It's a dumb theory. I was going to say it was all sexual..but everything is sexual...but alcohol.

(making peace sign)

Peace.

**VON KONIGSWALD**

(making peace sign)

Peace.

**WANDA JUNE**

(making peace sign)

Peace.

Blackout.

**SCENE THREE**

SILENCE. Darkness.

**WOODY WOODPECKER VOICE**

Ha ha ha ha!

(pistol shot)

You got me, pal.

Silence. A baby cries. Silence. The lights come up.

**LOOSELEAF**

Go to the funeral?

**HAROLD**

Of course! Not only go to it but go to it in full uniform! Rent a uniform!

**LOOSELEAF**

That's against the law, isn't it? I can't wear a uniform anymore.

**HAROLD**

Wear your uniform and every decoration, and let them despise you, if they dare.

**LOOSELEAF**

Alice would be absolutely tear-ass.

**HAROLD**

When I was a naive young recruit in Spain, I used to wonder why soldiers bayoneted oil paintings, shot the noses off of statues and defecated into grand pianos. I now understand: It was to teach civilians the deepest sort of respect for men in uniform-- uncontrollable fear.

(raises his glass)

To our women.

**LOOSELEAF**

I didn't know we had any women left.

**HAROLD**

The world is teeming with women-- ours to enjoy.

**LOOSELEAF**

Every time I start thinking like that I get the clap.

Lion doorbell roars.

**HAROLD**

(going to the door)

This could be my next wife.

He admits HERB SHUTTLE, who carries a bouquet of roses.

**SHUTTLE**

(puzzled by HAROLD)

Hello.

**HAROLD**

How are you, honeybunch?

**SHUTTLE**

Is Penelope in?

**HAROLD**

The posies are for her?

**SHUTTLE**

I wanted to apologize.

**HAROLD**

You've come to the right man.

**SHUTTLE**

I forgot my vacuum cleaner.

**HAROLD**

I forget mine for years on end.

**SHUTTLE**

(suddenly realizing  
who HAROLD is)

Oh my God--

(pause; points)

And you are Looseleaf Harper.

**LOOSELEAF**

Hi.

SHUTTLE faints.

**HAROLD**

(crowing)

It's what I've dreamed of all my  
life, Looseleaf! To have a grown  
man realize who I was--and faint!

(to audience)

End of Act Two.

Blackout.

### **ACT THREE**

#### **SCENE ONE**

MILDRED enters drunkenly up aisle, sits precariously on  
apron of stage and speaks to audience.

**MILDRED**

Two days later. The afternoon of the day of Looseleaf Harper's mother-in-law's funeral. You got it? Two days later.

(pause)

You know what happened in Heaven today? There was a tornado. I'm not kidding you--there was a Goddamn tornado. Tore up fifty-six houses, a dance pavilion and a Ferris wheel. Drove a shuffleboard stick clear through a telephone pole. Nobody got killed. Nobody ever gets killed. They just bounce around a lot. Then they get up--and start playing shuffleboard.

(pause)

I never saw a tornado when I was alive, and I grew up in Oklahoma. There's this big, black, funnel-shaped cloud. Sounds like a railroad train without the whistle. I had to come to Heaven to see a thing like that. A lot of people got photographs.

(pause)

After the tornado was over, a man had some film left and he wanted to take pictures of me--to use up the roll. I don't like people who go around taking pictures of everything. Nothing's real to some people unless they've got photographs.

(pause)

Two days later--right?

She exits clumsily, the way she came. Silence. Lights come up on the living room, which has become a pigpen. LOOSELEAF, HAROLD, SHUTTLE and PAUL sit around a dinner of nearly raw beefsteak set on the coffee table. LOOSELEAF wears an ill-fitting uniform, which he has rented.

**LOOSELEAF**

I told you the uniform wouldn't help.

**HAROLD**

It helped more than you know. Down deep, people were deeply affected.

**LOOSELEAF**

You keep on saying "deep" and

"deeply." I wish something good  
would happen on the surface sometime.

**SHUTTLE**

I can't get over how you guys are  
my friends. Harold Ryan and  
Looseleaf Harper are my friends.

**HAROLD**

Our pleasure.

**SHUTTLE**

Eight years you guys were together--  
through thick and thin.

**HAROLD**

For seven and a half of those years  
we were heavily drugged--or we  
would have been home long before  
now, believe me. We were saved  
from starvation by the Lupi-Loopo  
Indians, who fed us a strange blue  
soup.

**SHUTTLE**

Blue soup.

**HAROLD**

It sapped our will--made us  
peaceful and unenterprising. It  
was a form of chemical castration.  
We became two more sleepy Indians.

**LOOSELEAF**

(to PAUL)

So, kid--how they hanging? Or  
don't you say that to a little kid?

**HAROLD**

He's a man.

(to PAUL)

Tell him you're a man.

**PAUL**

I'm a man.

**HAROLD**

We've got to do something to make  
this boy's voice change. I wonder  
if we couldn't get bull balls  
somewhere, and fry 'em up.

(to PAUL)

Still miss your mother?

**PAUL**

(weakly)

No.

**HAROLD**

You're free to go to her, if you want. If you'd rather be a woman and run with the women, just say the word.

**SHUTTLE**

Are we really going to find out where the elephants go to die?

**HAROLD**

I'd rather go to Viet Nam.

**SHUTTLE**

Would somebody please pass me the catsup?

**HAROLD**

What you say is, "Pass the fucking catsup."

**SHUTTLE**

Pass the fucking catsup.

LOOSELEAF gives it to him. SHUTTLE dumps catsup on his steak.

**SHUTTLE**

I keep thinking about Africa--and the elephants.

**LOOSELEAF**

I don't think I'll go.

**HAROLD**

Of course you'll go! You're going to fly the helicopter.

**LOOSELEAF**

I dunno.

**HAROLD**

You're so low! Look at that beautiful red meat. You haven't touched it.

**LOOSELEAF**

Sorry. At least you've got a place to come back to. I don't have a place to come back to anymore.

**HAROLD**

All the more reason to go to Africa.

**LOOSELEAF**

I dunno. You know.

(pause)

I used to really love that Alice. Do you know that?

**HAROLD**

You know her for what she is now-- garbage.

**LOOSELEAF**

I dunno.

**HAROLD**

She was always a rotten wife! She was against everything manly you ever wanted to do.

(to SHUTTLE)

He was the most daring test pilot in the country at one time, and his wife made him quit. She made him become a life insurance salesman instead.

**SHUTTLE**

I'd think any woman worth her salt would be proud to be married to a test pilot. I know I would.

**LOOSELEAF**

She tried to like it. She was a very nervous woman.

**SHUTTLE**

I could tell that at the funeral.

(to PAUL)

Would you please pass the fucking catsup again? Was it dangerous testing planes?

**LOOSELEAF**

I dunno. Who knows? You know-- you're up there, and you're in some plane nobody ever flew before. You put her into a dive, and everything

starts screaming and shaking, and maybe some pipe breaks and squirts oil or gasoline or hydraulic fluid in your face. You wonder how the hell you ever got in such a mess, and then you pull back on the controls, and you black out for a couple of seconds. When you come to, everything's usually fairly okay--except maybe you threw up all over yourself. It's just another job, but you try and tell Alice that.

**HAROLD**

Insurance!

**SHUTTLE**

You actually sold insurance!

**LOOSELEAF**

I tried.

(indicating HAROLD)

I sold him some. That was the only insurance I ever sold.

Hyena doorbell laughs.

**SHUTTLE**

What an awful sound!

**HAROLD**

Get used to it.

(to PAUL)

Back door, Paul.

PAUL exits to the kitchen.

**HAROLD**

(to SHUTTLE)

It's possible, of course, that you'll die in Africa.

**SHUTTLE**

I've considered that.

**HAROLD**

Selling vacuum cleaners isn't the best preparation you could have.

**SHUTTLE**

I just want one true adventure before I die.

**HAROLD**

That can be arranged.

PAUL appears at the mouth of the doorway. He has something amazing to announce.

**PAUL**

Dad?

**HAROLD**

Who was it?

**PAUL**

It's Mom.

He steps aside. PENELOPE appears. HAROLD and SHUTTLE stand, HAROLD angrily.

**LOOSELEAF**

(openly, cheerfully)

Hi, Penelope.

**HAROLD**

(to LOOSELEAF)

Shut up, you ninny!

(to PENELOPE)

You were never to come here again--  
for any reason whatsoever!

**PENELOPE**

I came for my clothes.

**HAROLD**

Sneaking in the back door.

**PENELOPE**

I rang. It seemed like the proper  
door for a servile, worthless  
organism to use.

**HAROLD**

Your clothes are at the city dump  
by now. Perhaps you can get a map  
from the Department of Sanitation.

**PENELOPE**

I came for Paul as well.

**HAROLD**

If he wants to go.

**PENELOPE**

You took him to the funeral, I hear.

**HAROLD**

He'd never seen a corpse. He's seen a dozen now.

**PENELOPE**

A dozen?

**HAROLD**

It's a big and busy funeral home.

**PENELOPE**

(to PAUL)

Did you like it, dear?

**HAROLD**

It isn't a matter of liking. It's a matter of getting used to death--as a perfectly natural thing. Would you mind leaving? No woman ever walks out on Harold Ryan, and then comes back--for anything.

**PENELOPE**

Unless she has nerve.

**HAROLD**

More nerve than the doctor, I must admit. He hasn't been home for two days. Has he suddenly lost interest in sleep and color television--and the violin?

**PENELOPE**

He knows you shattered his violin.

**HAROLD**

I'm dying to hear of his reaction. The thrill of smashing something isn't in the smashing, but in the owner's reactions.

**PENELOPE**

He cried.

**HAROLD**

About a broomstick and a cigar box--and the attenuated intestines of an alley cat.

**PENELOPE**

Two hundred years old.

**HAROLD**

He feels awful loss--which was precisely my intention.

**PENELOPE**

(moving toward the violin, and, incidentally, placing herself much closer to SHUTTLE)

He had hoped that someone would be playing it still--two hundred years from now.

**HAROLD**

(echoing, expressing the futility of such long-term expectations)

Hope.

He spots the vacuum cleaner, probes it with his toe, asks SHUTTLE with seriousness.

**HAROLD**

Do you hope with all your heart that someone will be using this vacuum cleaner two hundred years from now?

SHUTTLE starts to answer, but stops, supposing that he is being made sport of.

**HAROLD**

Fifty years?

**SHUTTLE**

You're making a joke.

**HAROLD**

(not joking)  
I'm interested in long-term expectations.

**SHUTTLE**

(flatly, protecting his dignity)  
It's engineered to last about fifteen years.

**HAROLD**

(downstage center,  
addressing the  
civilized world)

Things. Oh--you silly people and  
your things. Things, things, things.

**PENELOPE**

(to SHUTTLE, as  
HAROLD reflects  
majestically on the  
emptiness of materialism)

You and Harold are friends?

**SHUTTLE**

(revealing how mixed  
and worried his  
feelings are)

He's the most wonderful guy I ever  
met, Penelope. He's the most  
complicated guy I ever met. I  
can't believe it, but he's going to  
take me to Africa with him.

**HAROLD**

Things.

**PENELOPE**

You feel I've done a dreadful  
thing--leaving him?

**SHUTTLE**

(almost hypnotized)

If I were married to him, I sure  
wouldn't walk out.

**HAROLD**

(directly to the audience)  
Never mind the condition of your  
body and your spirit! Look after  
your things, your things!

**PENELOPE**

(to LOOSELEAF)

And you, Colonel? Let me guess:  
You don't know.

**LOOSELEAF**

I dunno.

**HAROLD**

(to the audience)

Go live in a safe-deposit box--with your things.

**LOOSELEAF**

Jesus--I wouldn't want to be married to him. You know?

**HAROLD**

What's this?

**LOOSELEAF**

I wouldn't want to be married to me. We're too crazy. You know?

**HAROLD**

In what way, pray tell?

**LOOSELEAF**

I didn't like that violin thing. That was sad.

**HAROLD**

Tit for tat--as simple as that.

**LOOSELEAF**

You never played a violin.

**HAROLD**

You did?

**LOOSELEAF**

Yeah. I practically forgot. But after you busted that thing, I got to thinking, "Jesus--maybe I'll start the violin again." That didn't just belong to Woodly. That belonged to everybody. Maybe he would have sold it to me, and I could have some fun. After you busted the violin, boy, and Penelope walked out, I thought to myself, "Jesus--who could blame her?"

**HAROLD**

Maybe it's time you got out.

**LOOSELEAF**

Me?

**HAROLD**

You.

**LOOSELEAF**

Okay.

(pause)

Okay.

**HAROLD**

You're an imbecile.

**LOOSELEAF**

I know you think that.

**HAROLD**

Everybody thinks that.

**LOOSELEAF**

Anybody who'd drop an atom bomb on a city has to be pretty dumb.

**HAROLD**

The one direct, decisive, intelligent act of your life!

**LOOSELEAF**

(shaking his head)

I don't think so.

(pause)

It could have been.

**HAROLD**

If what?

**LOOSELEAF**

If I hadn't done it. If I'd said to myself, "Screw it. I'm going to let all those people down there live."

**HAROLD**

They were enemies. We were at war.

**LOOSELEAF**

Yeah, Jesus--but wars would be a lot better, I think, if guys would say to themselves sometimes, "Jesus--I'm not going to do that to the enemy. That's too much." You could have been the manufacturer of that violin there, even though you don't know how to make a violin, just by not busting it up. I could have been the father of all those people in Nagasaki, and the mother, too, just by not dropping the bomb.

(pause)  
I sent 'em to Heaven instead--and I  
don't think there is one.

**HAROLD**

Goodbye, Looseleaf.

LOOSELEAF walks around and gathers his things.

**LOOSELEAF**

So long, you guys.

**PENELOPE**

What will you do, Colonel?

**LOOSELEAF**

I dunno. Marry the first whore  
who's nice to me, I guess. Get a  
job in a motorcycle shop. So long,  
you guys.

PENELOPE kisses LOOSELEAF. Everybody but HAROLD acknowledges  
his departure is some way. HAROLD turns his back. LOOSELEAF  
exits, closes door. Silence.

**SHUTTLE**

Who's going to fly our helicopter now?

**HAROLD**

(blackly, tautly)  
What?

**SHUTTLE**

We got to get another pilot.

**HAROLD**

For what?

**SHUTTLE**

For Africa.

**HAROLD**

Do you really think that Harold  
Ryan would go to Africa with a  
vacuum cleaner salesman?

**SHUTTLE**

You invited me.

**HAROLD**

To make an ass of yourself.

**SHUTTLE**

What went wrong?

**HAROLD**

We're ahead of schedule, that's all. You're finding out here what you would have found out in Africa-- that you are a rabbit, born to be eaten alive.

**SHUTTLE**

Gee whiz--

**HAROLD**

It would have been fun to see you drop your rifle and run the first time an elephant charged us.

**SHUTTLE**

I wouldn't drop my gun.

**HAROLD**

You're hollow, like a woman.

**SHUTTLE**

I'm smarter than Looseleaf.

**HAROLD**

He can shoot! He can hold his ground! He can attack! You're in your proper profession right now-- sucking up dirt for frumpish housewives, closet drunkards every one.

**SHUTTLE**

(close to tears)

How do you know how I'd act in Africa?

**HAROLD**

Look how you're acting now! This is a moment of truth, and you're almost crying. Slug me!

**SHUTTLE**

You're my buddy.

**HAROLD**

Out! Out!

**SHUTTLE**

No matter what you say to me, I

still think you're the greatest guy  
I ever knew.

**HAROLD**

Out!

**SHUTTLE**

You--you aren't going to have any  
friends left, if you don't watch out.

**HAROLD**

Thank God!

He propels SHUTTLE out the door and slams it. He faces  
PENELOPE and PAUL, speaks with malicious calm.

**HAROLD**

Well--what have we here? A family.

**PENELOPE**

Almost a Christmas scene.

**HAROLD**

Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye.

**PENELOPE**

Just one favor.

**HAROLD**

Money? There's plenty of that.  
Mildred got the brewery. You'll  
probably get the baseball team.

**PENELOPE**

I want you to tell me that you  
loved me once.

HAROLD is about to dismiss this request majestically, but  
PENELOPE cuts him off with a sharp, dangerous warning.

**PENELOPE**

I mean it! I must have that, and  
so must Paul. Tell him that he was  
conceived in love, even though you  
hate me now. Tell both of us that  
somewhere is our lives was love.

HAROLD experiments inwardly with responses of various kinds,  
obviously saying them to himself, directing himself with his  
hands. Nothing quite satisfies him.

**HAROLD**

Testimonials of that sort are--are  
beyond my range. I don't do them  
well.

(sincerely, not  
liking to fail in any way)  
That's a failing, I know.

**PENELOPE**

(accepting this ruefully)  
I see.

**PAUL**

I don't care. I don't care if  
there was love or not. That's all  
right. I'm going to go to my room  
and close the door. I don't want  
to hear any more.

PAUL exits wretchedly to his room.

**HAROLD**

See how you've upset him. He was  
so merry and hale before you came  
home.

**PENELOPE**

How unhappy he's going to be--alone  
in his room.

**HAROLD**

He'll play with his rifle, I expect.  
That will cheer him up.

**PENELOPE**

Rifle?

**HAROLD**

I bought him a twenty-two  
yesterday--on the way home from  
Hamburger Heaven. And where is the  
good doctor? Have you two  
feathered a love nest somewhere?

**PENELOPE**

He's in East St. Louis with his  
mother--visiting an aunt.

**HAROLD**

Last I heard, his mother was going  
alone.

**PENELOPE**

He's afraid of you, Harold. He knew you'd want to fight him. He doesn't know anything about fighting. He hates pain.

**HAROLD**

And you, a supposedly healthy woman, do not detest him for his cowardice?

**PENELOPE**

It seems highly intelligent to me.

**HAROLD**

What kind of a country has this become? The men wear beads and refuse to fight--and the woman adore them. America's days of greatness are over. It has drunk the blue soup.

**PENELOPE**

Blue soup?

**HAROLD**

An Indian narcotic we were forced to drink. It put us in a haze--a honey-colored haze which was lavender around the edge. We laughed, we sang, we snoozed. When a bird called, we answered back. Every living thing was our brother or our sister, we thought. Looseleaf stepped on a cockroach six inches long, and we cried. We had a funeral that went on for five days--for the cockroach! I sang "Oh Promise Me." Can you imagine? Where the hell did I ever learn the words to "Oh Promise Me"? Looseleaf delivered a lecture on maintenance procedures for the hydraulic system of a B-36. All the time we were drinking more blue soup, more blue soup! Never stopped drinking blue soup. Blue soup all the time. We'd go out after food in that honey-colored haze, and everything that was edible had a penumbra of lavender.

**PENELOPE**

Sounds quite beautiful.

**HAROLD**

(angered)

Beautiful, you say? It wasn't life, it wasn't death--it wasn't anything!

(anger still mounting)

Beautiful? Seven years gone--

(snapping his fingers)

like that, like that! Seven years of silliness and random dreams! Seven years of nothingness, when there could have been so much!

**PENELOPE**

Like what?

**HAROLD**

(becoming dangerously physical, seizing a battle-ax)

Action! Interaction! Give and take! Challenge and response!

He splits a coffee table with the ax.

**PAUL**

(rushing in with his .22 rifle at a high port arms)

Mom?

**HAROLD**

What's this?

PAUL wilts instantly, attempts to make his rifle inconspicuous, harmless, meaningless.

**HAROLD**

What's this?

**PAUL**

Nothing.

**HAROLD**

That's a rifle you have?

**PAUL**

No.

**HAROLD**

Of course it is. Is it loaded?

**PAUL**

No.

**HAROLD**

Open the bolt!

PAUL obeys. A cartridge pops out.

**HAROLD**

That's a cartridge, if I'm not mistaken. Gunpowder, bullet, cartridge case, and fulminate of mercury percussion cap--all set to go.

**PAUL**

I was cleaning it.

**HAROLD**

Pick up that cartridge and slip it back into the chamber--where it belongs.

**PAUL**

Gee whiz, Dad--

**HAROLD**

Welcome to manhood, you little sparrowfart! Load that gun!

**PAUL**

(bleatingly)

Dad--

**HAROLD**

Too late! It's man to man now. Protecting your mother from me, are you? Protect her!`

**PENELOPE**

He's a child!

**HAROLD**

With an iron penis three feet long. Load it, boy.

**PENELOPE**

You're begging him to kill you?

**HAROLD**

If he thinks he's man enough.

**PENELOPE**

(amazed by sudden insight)  
That's really what you want. You become furious when people won't make you dead.

**HAROLD**

I'm teaching my son to be a man.

**PENELOPE**

So he can kill you. You hate your own life that much. You beg for a hero to kill you.

**HAROLD**

I plan to live one hundred years!

**PENELOPE**

No you don't.

**HAROLD**

If that's the case--what's to prevent my killing myself?

**PENELOPE**

Honor, I suppose.

**HAROLD**

What a handsome word.

**PENELOPE**

(wonderingly)  
But it's all balled up in your head with death. The highest honor is death. When you talk of these animals, one by one, you don't just talk of killing them. You honored them with death. Harold--it is not honor to be killed.

**HAROLD**

If you've lived a good life, fought well--

**PENELOPE**

It's still just death, the absence of life--no honor at all. It's worse than the blue soup by far--that nothingness. To you, though, it's the honor that crowns them all.

**HAROLD**

May I continue with the rearing of  
my son?

(to PAUL)

Load that gun!

PAUL shakes his head.

**HAROLD**

Load it!

PAUL refuses.

**HAROLD**

Then speak, by God! Can you fight  
with words?

**PAUL**

I don't want to fight you.

**HAROLD**

Get mad! Tell me you don't like  
the way I treat your mother! Tell  
me you wish I'd never come home!

**PAUL**

(weakly)

It's your house, Dad.

**HAROLD**

(throwing up his hands)

Everybody simply evaporates!

(including the

audience, inviting it

to share his indignation)

There are guest issues to be fought  
out here--or to be argued, at least.  
The enemy, the champion of all who  
oppose me, is in East St. Louis  
with his mother and his aunt! I  
have so far done battle with a  
woman and a child and a violin.

**PENELOPE**

The old heroes are going to have to  
get used to this, Harold--the new  
heroes who refuse to fight.  
They're trying to save the planet.  
There's no time for battle, no  
point to battle anymore.

**HAROLD**

I feel mocked, insulted, with no

sort of satisfaction in prospect.  
We don't have to fight with steel.  
I can fight with words. I'm not an  
inarticulate ape, you know, who  
grabs a rock for want of a  
vocabulary. Call him up in East St.  
Louis, Penelope. Tell him to come  
here.

**PENELOPE**

No.

**HAROLD**

(emptily, turning away)

No.

Pause. He contemplates PAUL.

**HAROLD**

And my son, the only son of Harold  
Ryan--he's going to grow up to be a  
vanisher, too?

**PENELOPE**

I don't know. I hope he never  
hunts. I hope he never kills  
another human being.

**HAROLD**

(to PAUL, quietly)

You hope this, too?

**PAUL**

I don't know what I hope. But I  
don't think you care what I hope,  
anyway. You don't know me.

(indicating PENELOPE)

You don't know her, either. I  
don't think you know anybody. You  
talk to everybody just the same.

**HAROLD**

I'm talking to you gently now.

**PAUL**

Yeah. But it's going to get loud  
again.

**PENELOPE**

He's right, Harold. To you, we're  
simply pieces in a game--this one  
labeled "woman," that one labeled

"son." There is no piece labeled  
"enemy" and you are confused.

Lion doorbell roars. PAUL goes to answer it.

**HAROLD**

There won't be anybody out there.  
That's the new style: nobody anywhere.

PAUL, aghast, admits NORBERT WOODLY. WOODLY is high as a  
kite on his own adrenaline.

**PENELOPE**

(aghast, chokingly)  
Get out of here.

**WOODLY**

It's really that bad?

He comes farther into the room, bravely.

**PENELOPE**

You fool, you fool.

**WOODLY**

Oh--look at the poor, crucified  
violin, would you?

**HAROLD**

It died for your sins.

**WOODLY**

This little corpse is intended as a  
lesson?

**HAROLD**

There's a certain amount of  
information there.

**WOODLY**

Lest we forget how cruel you are.

**PENELOPE**

(moving to the telephone)  
I'm going to call the police.

**HAROLD**

(frighteningly)  
Don't!

**WOODLY**

I agree.

WOODLY closes the door. PENELOPE backs away from the phone, drifts toward PAUL, who still holds his rifle.

**HAROLD**

This is man to man.

**WOODLY**

It's healer to killer. Is that the same thing?

**HAROLD**

What brought you back?

**WOODLY**

The same hairy, humorless old gods who move you from hither to yon. "Honor, " if you like.

**HAROLD**

(to PENELOPE)

He's a champion after all.

**WOODLY**

Of the corpses and cripples you create for our instruction--when all we can learn from them is this: how cruel you are.

**PENELOPE**

This is suicide.

(to PAUL)

Go get the police.

**HAROLD**

Stop!

PAUL stops.

**HAROLD**

There's going to be no bloodshed here. I know how he'll fight--the only way he can fight: with words. The truth.

(to WOODLY)

Am I correct?

**WOODLY**

Yes.

**HAROLD**

I can defeat him with anything from flavored toothpicks to siege

howitzers. But he got it into his little head that he could come here and demolish Harold Ryan with words. The truth! Correct?

**WOODLY**

Correct.

**HAROLD**

What an hallucination!

(laughs)

Oh, dear, dear, dear, dear. Oh dearie me.

**WOODLY**

You haven't heard me yet.

**HAROLD**

You intend to crack my eardrums with your voice? Will I bleed from my every orifice? Who will clean up this awful mess?

**WOODLY**

We'll find out now, won't we?

**PENELOPE**

No, we won't. No matter how it begins, it will end in death. Because it always does. Isn't that always how it ends, Harold--in death?

**HAROLD**

There has to be a threat of some sort, nobility of some sort, glamour of some sort, sport of some sort. These elements are lacking.

**WOODLY**

You're a filthy, rotten bastard.

**HAROLD**

(pretending to be wounded)

Oooooo. That hurt.

**WOODLY**

You're old--so old.

**HAROLD**

Now who's being cruel?

**WOODLY**

A living fossil! Like the  
cockroaches and the horseshoe crabs.

**HAROLD**

We do survive, don't we? You're  
going to have to apologize, of  
course, for calling me a bastard.  
That's a matter of form--not  
allowing you or anybody to call me  
a bastard. No rush about that.  
Just remember to apologize sometime  
soon.

PENELOPE takes the rifle from PAUL.

**WOODLY**

You're a son of a bitch.

**HAROLD**

Yes--well--uh--that's another one  
of those statements which more or  
less automatically requires an  
apology. Whenever you feel like it.  
It's sort of like turning off an  
alarm clock that's ringing loudly.  
Your apology turns off the alarm.

**PENELOPE**

(leveling the gun)  
I'm turning off the alarm. I'm  
turning off everything.

**HAROLD**

Ah! The lady is armed.

**PENELOPE**

I want you to get out of here,  
Norbert. Harold--I want you to sit  
down in the chair, and not lift a  
finger until Norbert is gone.

**HAROLD**

(to WOODLY)  
Whoever has the gun, you see, gets  
to tell everybody else exactly what  
to do. It's the American way.

**PENELOPE**

I mean it!

**HAROLD**

Then you'd better fix your bayonet,

because there aren't any bullets in  
the gun.

**PENELOPE**

(to PAUL)

Where's the bullet?

PAUL makes no move to help.

**HAROLD**

Help your mother find the bullet.

**PENELOPE**

(to PAUL, pointing to  
the floor)

There it is. Give it to me.

PAUL obeys.

**PENELOPE**

How do I load?

**HAROLD**

(to PAUL)

Load it for her.

PAUL shakily obeys.

**HAROLD**

Cock it, too.

PAUL obeys.

**HAROLD**

Give it to her.

PAUL obeys.

**PENELOPE**

All right! Am I exceedingly  
dangerous now?

**HAROLD**

The National Safety Council would  
be appalled.

**PENELOPE**

Then listen to me.

(angrily)

You're both disgusting--with your  
pride, your pride.

(to WOODLY)

I hate you for coming here--like a federal marshal in a western film. I loved you when you stayed away. But here you are now--high noon in the Superbowl! You fool, you fool.

**WOODLY**

Everything's going to be beautiful.

**PENELOPE**

You fake! You're no better than the dumbest general in the Pentagon.

(pause)

You're not going to beat Harold. You're not going to beat anybody. You're not going to stay here, either--yammering and taunting until you're most gloriously killed. Go home!

**HAROLD**

She's right, Norbert--go home.

**WOODLY**

I haven't said all I have to say.

**PENELOPE**

Out!

**WOODLY**

I haven't told you, Harold, how comical I think you are.

**HAROLD**

(hit squarely,  
absolutely unable to forgive)  
Comical?

**PENELOPE**

(to HAROLD)

Sit down or I'll shoot!

HAROLD goes over to her, easily takes the gun away)

**HAROLD**

Give me that Goddamn thing! Now get out of here, or I might kill you. Who knows?

**PENELOPE**

(terrified)

You've killed women?

**HAROLD**

Seventeen of them--eleven by  
accident. March! Move!

(to PAUL)

You, too!

PENELOPE and PAUL move toward the front door.

**PENELOPE**

Norbert--you come, too.

(to HAROLD)

Let him go, Harold. Let him go.

**HAROLD**

Of course he can go--if he'll just  
go down on his hands and knees for  
a moment--and promise me that he  
does not find me comical in the  
least degree.

**PENELOPE**

Do it, Norbert.

**WOODLY**

Hands and knees, you say?

**HAROLD**

And terror, if you don't mind.

**PENELOPE**

Do it!

**WOODLY**

(to PENELOPE, simply,  
decisively, unafraid)

Goodbye.

**HAROLD**

(before she can  
protest any more)

Goodbye! Goodbye!

He bellies and bullies PENELOPE and PAUL out the front door.

**HAROLD**

Get the police! No time to lose!

He slams the door, turns to WOODLY.

**HAROLD**

You're in one hell of a jam. You  
realize that?

**WOODLY**

I'm high as a kite.

**HAROLD**

Glands. You're supposed to be happy when you die. Call me comical again.

**WOODLY**

You're a clown. You're a clown who kills--but you're a clown.

**HAROLD**

I love you! Have a cigar!

**WOODLY**

(ignoring the cigar)  
Evolution has made you a clown--with a cigar. Simple butchers like you are obsolete!

**HAROLD**

I'm to be left behind--in primordial ooze?

**WOODLY**

If you're at home in the ooze, and nowhere else.

**HAROLD**

This is going to become very physical. Are you prepared for that?

**WOODLY**

You're not such a creature of the ooze that you'd hurt an unarmed man.

**HAROLD**

I'm an honorable clown?

**WOODLY**

King Arthur.

**HAROLD**

You hope.

**WOODLY**

In any event, I will not beg for mercy.

**HAROLD**

No quarter asked.  
    (taking a sword)  
No quarter given.

**WOODLY**

Don't you laugh even inwardly at  
the heroic balderdash you spew?

**HAROLD**

    (offering sword)  
Cut me open. Find out.

**WOODLY**

I've struck my blow.

**HAROLD**

With spittle?

**WOODLY**

I've poisoned you.

**HAROLD**

    (pointing at WOODLY  
    in horror)  
Lucretia Borgia?  
    (looking around frantically)  
Something I drank or touched?  
    (understanding)  
You refused a cigar. That's it!  
Potassium cyanide in the humidior!  
Tracherous lover of peace!

**WOODLY**

I put a poisoned thought in your  
head. Even now that poison is  
seeping into every lobe of your  
mind. It's saying, "Obsolete,  
obsolete, obsolete," and, "Clown,  
clown, clown."

**HAROLD**

Poison.

**WOODLY**

You have a very good mind, or I  
wouldn't have come back. That mind  
is now asking itself, cleverly and  
fairly, "Is Harold Ryan really a  
clown?" And the answer is, "Yes."

**HAROLD**

    (touching his  
forehead experimentally)

I--I really must congratulate you.  
Something is happening in there.

**WOODLY**

You can never take yourself  
seriously again! Look at all the  
creatures you've protected us from!  
Did you shoot them on the elevator,  
as they were on their way up here  
to eat us alive?

**HAROLD**

(blankly, as though  
in a dream)

No.

**WOODLY**

The magic root you gave me--I had  
it analyzed. It was discovered by  
a Harvard botanist in 1893! He  
explored your famous jungle for  
five years, armed with nothing but  
kindness, a talent for languages,  
and a pocketknife.

**HAROLD**

(blankly)

I see.

**WOODLY**

You aren't going to hurt me. You  
aren't going to hurt anybody any  
more. Any violent gesture will  
seem ridiculous--to yourself!

**HAROLD**

(quietly)

Don Quixote.

**WOODLY**

My violin is avenged!

**HAROLD**

Something seems to have happened to  
my self-respect.

**WOODLY**

And the hell with it. It was so  
tragically irrelevant, so  
preposterously misinformed.

**HAROLD**

The new hero is you.

**WOODLY**

I hate crowds, and I have no  
charisma--

**HAROLD**

You're too modest.

**WOODLY**

But the new hero will be a man of  
science and of peace--like me.  
He'll disarm you, of course. No  
more guns, no more guns.

**HAROLD**

Was I ever of use?

**WOODLY**

Never. For when you began to kill  
for the fun of it, you became the  
chief source of agony of mankind.

HAROLD picks up the rifle, considers it, offers it to WOODLY.

**HAROLD**

Here. Finish the job.

**WOODLY**

I'm utterly satisfied.

**HAROLD**

You're making a mistake. Obsolete  
old carnivores like me are most  
dangerous when wounded. You've  
wounded me.

**WOODLY**

More clowning! Don't you see?

**HAROLD**

We never quit fighting until we're  
dead.

**WOODLY**

You'd be killing a friend. Don't  
you know how much I like you?

**HAROLD**

I'm going to shoot you now.

**WOODLY**

No!

**HAROLD**

My self-respect is gone--and my soldier's honor with it. It is now very easy for me to shoot an unarmed man.

**WOODLY**

New dignity can be yours--as a merciful man. You can change!

**HAROLD**

Like the saber-toothed tiger.

**WOODLY**

(sickened)

Oh God--you're really going to kill me.

**HAROLD**

It won't hurt as much as the sting of a bumblebee. Heaven is very much like Paradise, they say. You'll like it there.

**WOODLY**

Can I beg for mercy--on my knees?

**HAROLD**

If you want to be found that way.

**WOODLY**

What is this thing that kills me?

**HAROLD**

Man, as man was meant to be--a vengeful ape who murders. He will soon be extinct. It's time, it's time.

**WOODLY**

Don't shoot.

**HAROLD**

I've enjoyed being man.

He aims the rifle tentatively.

**WOODLY**

No.

(goes down on his knees)

No.

**HAROLD**

Get up.

**WOODLY**

No.

**HAROLD**

Have it your way. We'd both be better off dead now.

HAROLD begins to squeeze the trigger, falters, lowers the rifle.

**HAROLD**

Can't do it.

**WOODLY**

Thank God.

**HAROLD**

Crawl home.

He turns his back on WOODLY, who stands shakily.

**WOODLY**

Thank you--for my life.

**HAROLD**

It's trash now, like mine.

**WOODLY**

New lives begin!

**HAROLD**

Somewhere in this city. Not here, not here. Tell Penelope I loved her--in my clownish way. And Paul. Tell him to be a healer, by all means.

**WOODLY**

What are you going to do?

**HAROLD**

Use the sanitary facilities, if I may.

**WOODLY**

Leave the rifle here.

**HAROLD**

I'll put it in Paul's room, where it belongs.

**WOODLY**

Give me your word of honor that  
that's all you're going to do.

**HAROLD**

For what it's worth now, Harold  
Ryan, the clown, gives his sacred  
word.

HAROLD exits into corridor. WOODLY looks after him  
helplessly, apprehensively. Silence.

**WOODLY**

Harold?

VON KONIGSWALD, MILDRED, and WANDA JUNE enter from the side  
stealthily. VON KONIGSWALD, pantomimes that his companions  
are to be quiet and to listen for something wonderful. All  
ghosts cup their hands to their ears.

**WOODLY**

Harold?

There is a shot offstage. VON KONIGSWALD is delighted.  
MILDRED is sickened. WANDA JUNE is dazed. WOODLY collapses  
in grief. HAROLD enters from the corridor, shaking his head.

**HAROLD**

I missed.

VON KONIGSWALD expresses disappointment. MILDRED covers her  
face. WANDA JUNE sucks her thumb.

**HAROLD**

The end.

Curtain.