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, PENEOPE, 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.

PENEOPE

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.

PENEOPE

(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.

**WOODY**  
(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 boys.

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

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.

You've got to fight from time to time.

Not true.

Or get eaten alive.

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

Phooey.

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.

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

(calling)
Penelope! We're late!

(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.
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.

**WOODLY**

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 was 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 intrudors.

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 un stirred.

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
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)
Aaaaaaaaaaaaah!

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)
Bullllllllllllllllllllll-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.

PENELlope
It's true.

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

He exits.

Silence. A toilet flushes loudly and complicately.

PENELlope
Is Norbert still here?

PAUL
No.

PENELlope
Then who flushed the toilet?

PAUL
Father's friend.

PENELlope
What's his name?

PAUL
Don't know.

PENELlope
For Heaven's sakes!

HAROLD enters, still adjusting his trousers.

PENELlope
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                      PAUL
Son, son, son...             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?

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

    HAROLD
Disease?

    PENEOPE
Situation.

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

    PENEOPE
A telegram--a phone call might have
helped.

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

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

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

    PENEOPE
Every fuse in my nervous system has
been blown.

Lion doorbell roars.

    PENEOPE
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!

**PENELLOPE**

Eeeeeeeeeee-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.

**PENELLOPE**

Good night, dear. Good night, dear.

She stands in the doorway.

**PENELLOPE**

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 **PENELLOPE'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 PENEOLOPE'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 PENEOLOPE.
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 PENELLOPE)
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.

**PENELLOPE**
(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.

**PENELLOPE**
(to HAROLD)
Alice got married again.

**LOOSELEAF**
She did?

**PENELLOPE**
You didn't even find that out?

**LOOSELEAF**
There was so much going on.

**PENELLOPE**
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, pulmutors, 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.

**PENEOLOPE**
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?

**PENEOLOPE**
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?

PENEOLOPE turns away.

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

**PENEOLOPE**
Mrs. Wheeler is dead.

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

*(regarding LOOSELEAF, resigning himself to being stuck with his*
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
(covers WANDA JUNE's little ears)
Premature ejaculation.

VON KONIGSWALD
Ach sooooooooo.

MILDRED
No grown woman is a fan of premature ejaculation. Harold would come home trumpeting and roaring. He would 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 WANDA JUNE
(making peace sign) (making peace sign)
Peace. Peace.

Blackout.
SCENE THREE

SILENCE. Darkness.

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


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

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.

   PENELlope
   (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.

   PENELlope
   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.

   PENELlope
   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?

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

   HAROLD
   Last I heard, his mother was going alone.

   PENELlope
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.
PENELlope

(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, 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 humidor! Treacherous 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.