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DOUBLE DREAMBURGER

by **ALAN ROSSETT**

a nostalgic comedy about two vanished eras, the early 1950's and the late 1960's.

**The play takes place in the mid-West
in a living room
and in dreamland.**

Ron

Milly

Vera

Harvey/Harri (double role)

Walt/Ward (double role)

“DOUBLE DREAMBUGER” also known as “High Time” and “Pique-Soleil”

PARIS 2002

Alan Rosseft always put the maximum charge of humour into unusual tales of zany people who personify the most typical and excessive characteristics of their times. The collision of different generations is both abrasive and explosive. A delightful evening full of surprises and crackling with vitality. France 3,

A really tasty comedy opening onto some new horizons in the theatre. One wonders if “serious” drama of Brechtian cloning has so well captured the microscopic churning of the modern world, its intimate moral metamorphosis. Here comedy has the last word on the subject.

ESPRIT

Alan Rossett - author of superb, pertinent plays - offers an ironic vision of the changing fashions of the Western world. A retro show served up by five perfect actors.

ACTUALITE JUIVE

PARIS 1975

Total Theatre. The most irresistibly wild play of the season. This writer keeps his caustic eyes open and his caricatures plausible: there’s not a drop of irony without a moment of truth. One can hardly describe a show so bursting with exuberance, lighting a sparkler of the unexpected on the tip of each laugh.

QUOTIDIEN DE PARIS

A little crazy, sad, wicked, always funny. And I got the message without having it shoved down my throat. “Double Dreamburger” has a place of its own outside the run of the mill. An unexpected delight. FRANCE SOIR

What could be merely a sordid anecdote, when told by Alan Rosseti, becomes a first-rate fun show. NOUVEL CBS

One would have to be made of marble not to be entertained by this “family chronicle”. The audience was held breathless. L’ECONOMIE

ELLE Magazine’s Selection of the week.

An excellent evening in the theatre can be had at this audacious, unpretentious play which begins like a Frank Capra comedy... before exploding. Funny from beginning to end despite its often corrosive bitterness. PANORAMA

Violent and pessimistic, “High Time” is also extremely outré and essentially makes one laugh. The cast is very adept at keeping a set of quite extraordinary characters completely believable. PARISCOPE

Alan Rossett traces the evolution from 1950 to 1970 of one of the most knockabout families imaginable. Funny at first glance, the play is quite ferocious.

TELE 7 JOURS

SYDNEY 1974

Full of promise and high intensity. Normally the bastion of Australian playwrights, the Australian breaks with tradition to stage this play and deserves subsequent credit

MANLY DAILY

Whatever the exact meaning of the term black comedy the latest show at the Australian Theatre illustrates it. Such gay spirits are infectious and the imaginative absurdity of the piece was discriminately played up in Richard Murphet's direction.

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

LONDON 1972

Colour this cartoon black and funny! A razor-edged evening, sharpened by some fine-honed comic performances.

DAILY MAIL

An absurdist comedy tinged with surrealism and some very good jokes.

SUNDAY TIMES

Considerable comic dexterity

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

Very amusing, acutely observed with a quick eye for clichés of thought, speech and behaviour. Brisk crackling dialogue and brisk crackling acting to go with it.

FINANCIAL TIMES

Alan Rossett has written some sparkling dialogue and wrapped it around some funny ideas.

JEWISH CHRONICLE

Farcical in tone, very funny indeed, lunatic outrageousness dominates the play.

EVENING STANDARD

Always entertaining, often witty and compelling, Mr. Rossett does drive home his satirical points, and he creates fascinating characters.

STAGE AND TELEVISION TODAY

ACT ONE
Scene 1

(A neutral zone. RON is dumped onto the stage by the other actors.)

RON (to audience)

I hope you'll accept that as a sign of my goodwill. For I want you all to know that I'm deeply truly sorry it took me so long! Why did it take me so long? Why - how - when?

MILLY

Why did today -

HARVEY

- become tomorrow -

VERA

- Ron -

WARD

- and tomorrow yesterday -

VERA

- Ron?

ALL

Huhhh?

(MILLY has left.)

RON

You know I think the whole thing started on that fine spring afternoon in the old house so many years ago. I come from a very ordinary family. We lived in an average neighborhood...

(A middle-class living room. Whether done practically with walls and doors or as a simple abstraction, the set should give the clue that the play is not a naturalistic one.

Exits to VERA's quarters, the kitchen, MILLY's bedroom, RON's bedroom.

A front door, slightly ajar. A large bay window. A couch. A table with a chemistry set and a plate of brownies.)

I was seventeen then; a nice boy. I wore my hair different.

(the others remove his jacket and exit)

I was kind of cute!

I lived with my sister.

(MILLY appears, primly dressed, curtsies to the audience

Milly was nearly eighteen and just about to get out of high school.

MILLY (longingly)

What am I going to do with the rest of my life?...drink coffee at counters...walk up and down Central Avenue window-shopping, what am I going to do...

RON (brightly)

If I were you I'd find me a nice strong man and make wee little -

MILLY

If-Mother-hears!

RON

So what? Nothing wrong with fluffy babies coming out of my -

MILLY

RON SHUSHI I'm upset enough as it is!

RON

What is the matter with you tonight?

(Pause.)

MILLY

I've fallen in love with a peculiar boy.

RON

Ah, how is he, I mean who is he and where?

MILLY

This boy is remarkable, He's barely getting through school yet I feel he's around the corner from something extraordinary. I met him on a street. He was just staring at me. So I stared at him. It was raining, he blew his nose, took the handkerchief and laid it at my feet, so I wouldn't get my shoes wet! I was so touched I found myself walking together...with Harvey! Harvey! Oh Ron, Harvey sees things I don't see!

RON

What?

MILLY

I don't know, I don't see them, And he has the most incredible way of saying things, When he talks I feel I'm being blown high up to the clouds. **Oh** Ron, he wants to take me out on a date! What'll I do?

RON

I don't see the problem.

MILLY (darkly)

Our mother does not allow me to leave this house with anyone but Ward Ganyag down the block.

RON (angrily)

is that why you're always running around with that jerk?

MILLY

Mother says she doesn't trust other young men. She made me promise not to tell anyone, especially you. Deep inside she knows she's crazy.

RON

And you promised?

MILLY

She is Mother, But don't tell her I told you. (darkly) How it's made me hate Ward Ganyag down the block,

RON

Frankly he's not acceptable anywhere else.

MILLY

Try explaining that to her.

RON

Milly, with Mother explanations are useless. Simply put your foot down. Assert yourself – tonight.

MILLY

Tonight?

RON

She's in a good mood, she always is when Daddy goes away on business.

(VERA, in her late forties, come in, humnrning gaily).

VERA

I'm in such a good mood tonight!

RON (to audience)

That's my mother!

VERA (regarding MILLY and RON affectionately)

Dear little children!

RON

I guess she was no worse than most of the mothers that were going then - just as I was no worse than most of the sons. (resentfully) I hated her, hated her like poison.

VERA (hovering over them)
What are the dear children up to?

MILLY
Ron's helping me with chemistry!

RON (handing MILLY a pipette)
Put this in your mouth.

VERA
Wash it off first, Milly.

RON
(handing MILLY a beaker of liquid)
I *am* her brother.
Stick it in this guck and start sucking,

VERA
Ron, I'll never know how you get through it!

RON
I've got to be good at something!

VERA
You're not good, you're brilliant. When Mother thinks of the complicated things you keep up there in your clever head she's simply flabbergasted. You're a brilliant scholar, you know that, don't you?

RON (politely proffering pipette)
Why don't you try a suck, Mom, you might be good at it too?

VERA
No no dear, that's a man's job. (vaguely pats hair as:)

RON: (to audience)
The only time I stopped hating her was when once during a family shindig, some distant cousin slipped her a big glass of red wine. She took me aside and told me confidentially that she often heard voices coming out of her. I was astonished! I wanted to hear them too! The she gently burped and said:

VERA (disapproving)
I thought this was lemonade.

RON
She never mentioned her voices again.

(VERA's voice comes out of her!)

VERA'S INNER SELF

You're stupid and ugly, Vera Whitetree. Your children are stupid and ugly, this house is stupid and ugly.

(WALT, in his fifties, wheezing unhealthily, enters with a heavy suitcase:)

And as for the father of your two children - he's beneath contempt.

VERA (proffering the plate of brownies to WALT)

Have a brownie before you go, Walt dear - not too many, dear, I baked them for the girls. Don't swallow so fast, Walt dear, or Dr. Adelman says you'll have a you-know-what attack.

(A newspaper is slung onstage:)

WALT (clutching heart)

Aaah!

MILLY

It's just the newspaper, Daddy.

(she gets it, he opens it.
The headline: LIFE'S GREAT - BUT!)

WALT (nearsightedly peering; darkly)

My God every time I relax - his name.

VERA

Whose?

WALT

Pinskikrupov. They oughtta run that red off to the cornfields! Now he wants to get into city council, son of a –

VERA

Walt the children -

WALT

If he gets in you can say goodbye to the children. Ron will be murdered of course and Milly ra -

VERA

Walt. The way you read! (affectionately) If you don't break down and get glasses you'll go blind. (taking the newspaper) That's enough newspaper for a man who's going blind. (checking watch) It's time for you to get behind a steering wheel, Walt dear.

WALT

It's not so late -

VERA (getting his suitcase)

Now Daddy don't hang around like you had all the time in the world to drive me to the maj club instead of making Gertrude go out of her way! Milly, kiss your father goodbye.

WALT (pathetically)

If I drop dead while you're doing it, pick me up and bury me.

(MILLY recoils, horrified.)

Never mind, you may never see your old Daddy again. (MILLY nervously kisses him.)

VERA

Your turn, Ron!

WALT

I think he's old enough to shake hands.

RON (shaking)

It's been good knowing you.

(VERA waits at the door, lips puckered.)

WALT (pushing her aside)

It's late, Vera, I gotta get out of here (exit.)

VERA (shaking head tolerantly)

Your father... (checks watch) I'd better hurry. (goes off, talking:) You'll never believe what I found in the supermarket today! (comes back with two innocuous hats.)

RON

I believe it!

VERA

I'll have to take them off when I walk past Mrs. Murdoch's Millinery Center but aren't they worth it! (gaily) I'll give you a little show!

(She puts a hat on, takes it off and puts on the other)

Children: which one should I wear tonight?

MILLY

They're both so lovely!

RON

Personally I prefer the navy blue one, (taking one with a veil) The one that hides your face really isn't so...

(puts it on his head; seriously

...really isn't so...

(slowly goes off into the kitchen.)

VERA

Sometimes I think Ron is trying to tell me something. (calling) Ron, don't leave your homework to do any of that strange cooking.

RON (calling back)
I'm washing up the dishes.

MILLY
It's my turn.

RON'S VOICE (stubbornly)
I like washing dishes. Tell Mother what you told me, Milly, A little guts.

VERA
How can he say that word? What is it, Milly?

MILLY
I wanted to ask,..before I dared..

VERA
Dared?

MILLY (nervously)
Mother for once would you possibly let me.....pack the brownies for the girls?

VERA (bewildered)
Of course...pack away while I finish my pretty face...(taking hat and going) I still haven't made up my mind which hat...

HER INNER VOICE
Doesn't matter. They're all stupid and ugly,

(VERA. disquieted stops, regards MILLY, lightly rubs her ear and goes off. MILLY dumps the brownies into a cardboard box. A young man bursts in through the front door -)

HARVEY (breaking out into song)
Schlackkkbroop-dang flack s – l - i - igh

MILLY
HARVEY! WHAT?? OH? HOW?

HARVEY
Space Man is in his bubble...whizzing through Cosmos...suffering sardines, what is that speck burning so bright on the planet Radia-Zor? I'd better investigate! Oh flack it's shoving itself through my forehead and planting a thousand brain suns which are popping out of me in radiance through my nostrils! IS THIS BAD? (to MILLY) You are that speck! You are a thousand suns! You must be a Mih-Mih-Millicent Whitetree! As reward I shall plant a space station on her. (advances.)

MILLY
Please don't - (gestures) Mother -

HARVEY

TROUBLED TUNA FISH! The planet of Radia-Zor is polluted as well with my long time foe - Maternal Micromiasma!!! And I left my Mother-Murder Machine on Earth! I'll fly down quickly and get it. Better take her with me - (trying to lead MILLY out of the house.)

MILLY

No no –

HARVEY

Come on, honey, I'll show you the sights: earth streets crawling with earth people -

MILLY

Oh Harvey Harvey -

HARVEY

I'd better be careful. She's not used to close contact with the heat of earth body. She's melting. I'll coat her with Resistant Jello!

MILLY (as he "sprays" some invisible substance)

I just don't know, Harvey -

HARVEY

It's a good thing you don't. I have such dark problems. (falling on his knees)
Oh my better angel sigh help me, my guiding light! Serene and one hundred per cent -
(VERA has entered)
sun bitch!

VERA

Millicent! What is this?

HARVEY (startled)

Fearful frankfurters!!

MILLY

He's just a boy I go to school with, Mother!

HARVEY

Lucky I brought my dust bazooka. (as if shooting at VERA.) You'll soon turn to dust!...my bazooka turned to dust...she must be made of something else. What? I have it! I'll disarm her with my likeable other personality: my earth disguise.. (slipping behind couch)

MILLY

Mother I'd like you to meet...where are you, Harvey Eisenfarb?

HARVEY:(slipping out, "friendly")

Harvey Earthbound Eisenfarb. Powerless to meet you, Ma'am.

VERA (regally)

How do you do, Mr. Eisen-find.

HARVEY

I'm doing all right, Mrs. Weiss-tree,

VERA (glacially)

The name is Whitetree, Mr. Icefind.

HARVEY

No offense meant, Mrs. Weissbaum. You can't fool me!

VERA

I beg your pardon. Millicent, have you offered your guest a brownie before he leaves?

HARVEY

Bluch.

MILLY

Harvey make an effort.

HARVEY

Don't get me wrong. I meant to try the specialities of Radia-Zor..but I'm not sure my delicate earthbound system can support those.

(Pause)

VERA (ominously)

What is this man doing in my house?

MILLY

He wants -

HARVEY

- to get Milly out of your gaseous sphere - fast!

MILLY

ON A DATE!

VERA (suspiciously)

What grade is he in?

MILLY

The 12B.

VERA:

My daughter's in the 12A. I don't think it's going to be convenient for you, Master Harvey.

HARVEY

I'm older than her!

VERA

All the more reason, Mister Harvey, that I don't find you desirable.

It's not you I'm after!

HARVEY
(leers fixedly at MILLY. (Outside: car horn.))

There's Gertrude, I have to go now. (Gets Box; pointedly)
I'm off. (starts to door; he's still leering fixedly.)
You-are-planning-to-leave-aren't-you-Harvey-dear-yes?
(Nothing; she taps him.)
How did you get here?

HARVEY
I came in a bubble. You wouldn't understand.

VERA
I hate to think of you waiting outside for a bus. We shall drop you in the car.

HARVEY
Car? You want me to step into one of those unsafe old things when I could take a bubble?
Haven't you ever been in a car accident?

VERA
No.

HARVEY
You don't even know about smashed fenders, slit throats, blood gushing into seat covers on which you and Gertrude are wrapped together in eternal slumber with broken glass for a blanket by the light of a broken lamp post??? (Car horn: VERA starts in terror.)
Whitetree, tonight for you, on his wing, Space Man will say his prayer. (to MILLY)
Bah-bah—byel (starting his motor) Vrrrom vroom –
(puts his arms out as if flying and leaves:)
Vlaaaaaaam—it!

(Pause: MILLY waits in suspense, VERA walks away from her.)

VERA'S INNER SELF (panting)
He's exciting!

VERA
Just don't mention the boy again and we won't have to speak of it. Bye dear, have a nice evening by yourself!
(exit.)

(Sound of car parting.)

MILLY (in frustrated rage)
SSHSSHSIT! (horrified) I meant to say sugar! Milly, you're on the brink!

(HARVEY leaps through the window, MILLY stifles a scream.)

HARVEY (seething, aggressive)
Millicent Whitetree - Space Man loves you.

MILLY (points to kitchen, whispers)
My brother.

(He adroitly but silently flings her on the couch.)

MILLY
Ouw! aah! no...not here..

HARVEY (pulling her up)
Where?

MILLY:
Where what?

HARVEY
I presume you have a bedroom on this planet?

MILLY
Yes, over here. (completely bewildered) What on earth for?

HARVEY (backing her toward it)
Cur-shack bang schlunk –

MILLY
Cur-shack bang schlunk?

BOTH (chanting)
Cur-shack bang schlunk.
Cur-shack bang schlunk.

HARVEY (to audience)
Sigh.

Scene 2

(Sentimental music...
MILLY, sleepwalking. Her eyes open.
The silhouette of a man appears.)

MILLY
Where am I?

In. a. dream.

MAN

Who are you?

MILLY

(Dream lighting reveals HARVEY.)

HARVEY:

Millicent's little nightmare!

MILLY

Ah yes...I do love you, Harvey...but I can't help wondering if I want to spend year after year with you in the house.

HARVEY

House?

MILLY

The house you'll buy me...

HARVEY

Harvey doesn't buy houses, he grows galaxies.

MILLY

Seriously...you are just a boy, we'll have to find someplace to settle down..

HARVEY

Harvey doesn't settle down, he floats away. You too.

MILLY

Harvey, I'm frightened..

HARVEY

If you love Harvey, you'll float!

(He "floats out of sight.)

MILLY

Do I really...enough? Do I love him as much as Mommy loved Daddy??

VERA (appearing)

That depends on what's meant by love. (inquisitively) Tell me about it. What was it like?

MILLY

It?

VERA

It.

MILLY

Oh that was nice, Morn, real nice.

VERA

Everything you thought it was going to be?

MILLY

It wasn't quite as...momentous..

VERA (nicely)

I know, dear. We are both women. But I hope it was at least pleasant.

MILLY

Oh yes it was a real pleasant letdown.

VERA

It would've been better with Ward Gonyak.

MILLY

Mother -

VERA

I just don't see how you can resist hirni Look how he landed that wonderful job -

MILLY

With his father.

VERA

Ward's a loyal man, Milly. He's been chasing you since you were seven years old.

MILLY

Yes and he was twelve and I was frightened.

VERA

Your father's a couple years older than me Milly. that doesn't stop me from loving him.

MILLY

Do you love Daddy...Really? (VERA beams coquettishly.)

What is it like with you and Daddy?

(VERA'S face falls in horror.)

Is it momentous? You must've enjoyed it, there are only nine and a half months difference between Ron and me... Mother...hey Mother, talk to me...We are both women... please say something...anything...Mother?

(MILLY has fled. Now VERA. sleepwalks.

She opens her eyes; the silhouette of a man: HARVEY.)

VERA (nicely)
Why don't you like me?

HARVEY
I never said...

VERA
But you thought it! I'm not so stupid. I do my best, Harvey! After all, before I had Ron and Milly I'd never been a mother before. I had to play the whole thing by ear and by imitating my own mother, a truly lovely lady. Sometimes when I see how my children don't want to do what I was taught to make them do, I get so discouraged I'd like to take the mother part of me and throw it out the window...run off... and go dancing again like when I was Milly's age.

HARVEY (awed in admiration)
Flabbergasted flamingoes - you dance as well?

VERA
That was my passion!

HARVEY (gallantly offering arm)
And my pah-pah-pleasure!

(They begin to waltz.)

VERA
No no, not the waltz, Harvey! I like young type dances!
(She begins to Charleston.)
Come on you kid!

(They Charleston as if together but each are in their separate spotlight. VERA dances with energy and girlish joy.)
I was a real dancer when I was young!

HARVEY (gallantly but winded)
You still are young! S-i-i-gh.

VERA
Oh Harvey! Not anymore!

HARVEY
But yes: Millicent can't hold a candle to you.

VERA: (flattered)
Really?

HARVEY
She worries. She's got wrinkles. Girls who dance over the bad years, the poor years, the war years, girls like you dance away their wrinkles

VERA
You're very flattering but I have a few!

HARVEY (gesturing magically)
Be gone!

(He disappears. RON appears in VERA's dream. Wearing a woman's hat and a feather boa, he exquisitely dances across the stage.)

RON
Poop-poop-ee-doop! (he's gone.)

VERA (puzzled)
What are you trying to tell me, son?

Scene 3

(Afternoon lighting. Holding her tummy, disquieted, MILLY enters through the front door. VERA comes out of her quarters, hat and purse in hand.)

MILLY: (fearfully)
You're not going out?

VERA
Zelma's dropping by to take me to a Keep This Town Clean Committee Meeting. Is something wrong?

MILLY
NO NO! Mother...

VERA
What?

MILLY
Nothing.

VERA
Milly, you're looking tired.

MILLY
I am! (longingly) Mother...

VERA
What?

NOTHING!

MILLY (over-brightly)

(VERA regards her in confusion; mutual embarrassment.)

Zelma's late.

VERA (regarding watch)

So am I!

MILLY

Late for what?

VERA

Just...late!

MILLY
(giggles inanely)

(VERA giggles as well - then suspicion dawns on her features, MILLY's face is frozen in a bright smile. VERA goes over to MILLY.)

VERA

Millicent Whitetree, is this your way of trying to let me in on the fact that if I have any finer feelings they should be feeling - ECH?

It's like this, Mom –

MILLY (delicately)

Keep talking.

VERA

MILLY

You remember that boy who was here, the one you couldn't stand? The night he was here, after he left...he stayed!

(Long pause.)

VERA (in a rage of frustration)

Why. didn't, you. use. any. preventives.

What do you mean?

MILLY (blankly)

VERA

There are ways of preventing it!

Nobody told me!

MILLY (stunned)

VERA

Is that my fault?? Millicent Whitetree, haven't you ever heard of SELF CONTROL?

MILLY (brighter)

No no you don't understand!

VERA (falling on her in relief)

Ah!

MILLY

It was he who was out of control! (VERA pulls away.) Gee Mom he was in a real state.

VERA

IS THAT MY FAULT?

MILLY

Well it was and somehow we didn't have the time to think before he took the plunge – hey! he did ask if I had any cellophane is that what you meant by preventive Morn? as I didn't he moulded some chewing gum into this little circle and -

VERA (incredulously)

You're feeble-minded.

MILLY

HOW SHOULD I KNOW MY MOTHER NEVER TOLD ME ANYTHING!

VERA

THAT'S ME YOU'RE SLANDERING! (begins to strangle MILLY:)
I do everything a mother's supposed to do! And when I get my hands on him!

MILLY

Mother it's him for your hands!

VERA

So don't you stand there -

MILLY

I'm on the floor -

VERA

Where you belong you dirty rotten liar. How dare you insinuate that my own sweet precious rosebud of a virgin daughter is P R E G N A N T ???!

MILLY (hysterically)

That's me, Mommy!

VERA (in horror)

And any minute Zelrna will be here! She'll know! She'll be able to read it on my facet SHE'LL RUN US ALL OFF TO THE CORNFIELDS! Milly, Milly, dear, tell me what to do.

MILLY (trying to calm her)
I suppose you ought to marry Harvey .I mean I should do it with him///if it's so.

VERA
What do you mean, if?

MILLY
I'm only three hours late, it might be a false alarm, I might not really be -.

VERA
You are, you are. If you'd been married fifteen years and putting up with some awful man's bump every night with a prayer on your lips and despair in your heart for the sole purpose of squeezing out one wee premature babe that would prove to your friends you weren't sterile and make Uncle Marvin, who's a bachelor and therefore likes little boys, come up with a five thousand dollar inheritance - it wouldn't be so. In your position, believe me, it's so.

MILLY
Mother -

VERA
I know the world! Where is this young man now? in South America, that's where -

MILLY (huffily)
He is not, he's at Anderson's Pharmacy and he'll be here at 12:15 to discuss the situation.
(Pause.)

VERA
What time is it now?

MILLY (looking at VERA's watch)
12:05.

VERA: (tidies her hair; optimistic:)
That gives us ten minutes to straighten out the rest of your life! (officiously) Millicent! I'm your mother! I ought to throw you out but being your mother my friends would know. So I'm not going to throw you out! What I mean is: where is the mother that doesn't love her own child? Now God in his infinite goodness...I believe in God by the way.

MILLY
Gee, Mom, that's nice.

VERA
GOD GRANT ME WARD GUNYAK!
(dashes to the phone and dials; MILLY starts to violently hiccough.)
Hello Waaaaaaaaaaaaarde.this is Vaeeeeeerra, Mrs. Whitetree, little Milly's little mother, you know, down the block a little! Now Waaaaaaaaard Milly's a very saaad girl!
(takes the phone, goes over and covers MILLY's mouth.)

At the moment she's coming out, I mean...a whole new life is coming out of her...I mean she's getting out of hand, I mean out of school, graduating, Ward! and waiting for a certain Ward Gunyak down the block if you know who I mean to step in and - do the honors, to get the ball rolling, (slaps MILLY's back, her hiccoughing stops:)
to take the rap, to ask her to join hands with him and go to to - THE SENIOR PROM!!

MILLY (incredulously)

Senior prom?

VERA: (covering phone)

Haven't you ever heard of subtlety? (alluring) So come over and ask, we're only four houses away! Why, to the senior prom, dear! (looking to heaven) Another imbecile!
(in phone) Ask her anything you like! A little imagination, Ward!...see you soon...honey!

(hangs up, delighted)

That takes care of that! I'm pretty clever, aren't I?

MILLY

You're amazing.

VERA

Aren't we lucky Daddy went out of town this week for the fourth time this week!

MILLY

Yes! Why?

VERA

He need never know! By the time he comes back my little girl will be a June bride!

MILLY (slowly)

Wait a minute, Mother. I don't even like Ward Gunyak.

VERA

You will.

MILLY

Mother....I love Harvey.

(VERA automatically slaps her.)

VERA (nicely)

That was for your own good.

MILLY (dashing to door)

Harvey! Harvey!

(She recoils. A man bursts in. He looks exactly like her father at the age of 23, a resemblance abetted by the part being played by the same actor wearing the same suit jacket. He's adjusting his tie but hasn't had the time to put on trousers.)

Ward Gunyak!

MILLY: (horrified)

Slap her, Ward, she needs it bad.

VERA (grabs MILLY)

Huh?

WARD

Slap her, she'll thank you for it!

VERA

(He gives MILLY a resounding slap.)

Drag her into her room, tie her and gag her with a nice clean pillowcase!

VERA (putting one of his hands over MILLY's mouth)

(The doorbell rings. Calling gaily)

No thank you, we don't want any!

(WARD drags MILLY halfway across the room.)

Mrs. Whitetree, what am I doing?

WARD

I'll explain the little details a little later! (soothing to the struggling MILLY) I know, I know, a mother's your worst enemy... (MILLY bites WARD.)

VERA (brightly)

Yikes!

WARD (letting go)

We love each other!

MILLY

You've worked her into quite a state, Ward!

VERA

(pushes them into MILLY's room.
Stamping and kicking have joined the ringing.)

He's going to get in, Vera. (looks to bedroom)

Ward. Harvey. Don't put those two together!

(to bedroom, decisively:)

Ward Gunyak, that's enough for a start!

(sheepishly he emerges - hustling him:)

I got my timing a little wrong. There's someone out there I've got to let in. You leave by the window and return later by the door. And remember this above all: when I need you be ready to come! Bye bye, Ward!

(He leaves by the window. By now thunderous pounding and kicking outside the front door: VERA gently opens it and HARVEY falls in.)

HARVEY

She can't see me, I'm invisible.

VERA: (coldly looking down on him

You seem bent on proving yourself a most impatient young man. Now listen to me, Harvey Eisenfarb -

HARVEY

She sees me!

VERA

I'm telling you again and this will be the last time - it will not be convenient for Millicent to go out on a date with you! So I want you to stop pestering her. Now I'm sure you're a nice boy once the army straightens you out but you made me say that.

HARVEY (politely)

Why don't you let Milly speak for herself?

VERA

She can't. Your prank left her speechless. To be brutally honest, Mr. Eisenfarb and I'm sure you'll agree with me, what you did passes a joke.

HARVEY

I don't agree with you.

VERA

Well I agree with me and so would the police, do you understand?

(HARVEY heads to MILLY's bedoom, Blocking the way.
Dramatically:)

THERE'S NO USE PERSISTING! MILLICENT IS ALREADY THOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY!

HARVEY

W - A - A - T!! Buh-buh-but - my telepathic commands!?

VERA

Out of order. Goodbye, Mr. Eisenfarb.

(She stands, arms folded, waiting for him to leave.)

HARVEY

Why she's just a decrepit queen of the bees! I won't waste good weapons on' her!
Supotoc dakarrankar livlit cronehagphooey!! arkark.

VERA

I assume that's your way of telling me you think you don't like me very much. I assure you when you've reached my age you'll -

HARVEY

- be positive I don't like you very much. Whenever I fly cheerfully off to find angelic Millicent - I crash into you - a Thing that throws her own pink children - along with me - down ocean paths of unspeakable evil!

VERA

Then let's not talk about it -

HARVEY

You mom you! You know what you are? Oh wowey is this going to surprise you! (importantly) A - Matriarch!!!

(VERA slaps him hard.)

VERA

That'll teach you to mind your language in the presence of a Mother!

(HARVEY lunges to slap her back. She adroitly sidesteps him and punches him.)

VERA

I hope that taught you something else

HARVEY

Yes, how did you do it?

VERA

Like this —

(punches him again; the gesture is seen by RON, entering from the back yard with a bunch of leeks. Stunned pause from VERA..Turning the punch into a dance gesture and grabbing HARVEY:)

Charleston Charleston la la la...we're just dancing a little, Ron !

RON: (to HARVEY)

Why hello!

HARVEY (seizing and violently shaking VERA)

What've you done to her, what've you done -

VERA (shaking)

i want to shimmy like my sister Kate!

HARVEY throws her her away, into RON's arns. Grabbing RON and trying to dance him off-stage:)

La la la la la -

HARVEY

Oh dismal goldfish. I've tried to do the right thing but.she's too much for me. She's plunged me into a state of p-a-a-r-al-y-sisl (He freezes.)

RON
 Mother, what is this?

(Outside: car horn)

VERA
 ZELMA! SHE'LL FIND OUT! THE CORNFIELDS! We've got to keep her out of this house! Bye bye boys, I'm afraid I have to go!

VERA'S INNER VOICE:
 Vera Whitetree, your behavior is beneath contempt.

VERA (looks at the petrified HARVEY)
 Ron I do think it's his way of suffering. I'm sure somewhere inside, there's a nice boy. Could you help him out with a good strong... cup of...milk?

RON (completely bewildered)
 Of course!

VERA (relieved)
 You are a darling: you've set Mother's mind at ease! I've got my face, my hat, my... (regards MILLY's bedroom.)
 Oh. (goes to room and locks the door; on her way out, gaily.)
 Don't you little boys set the house on fire! (exit.)

HARVEY (plaintively)
 Ooh why won't she let me go through that door with her daughter Millicent Whitetree...

RON
 You must be Harvey 1

HARVEY
 Part of me is -

RON
 Please relax, Harvey! she's gone!

HARVEY
 Even absent she pervades the atmosphere!

RON
 Believe me, when Mama's around, she makes her absence felt!

HARVEY
 How very nice. Someone else hates her too. That makes me feel better. I can be myself. Still, she is the legal guardian of...sigh...Millicent. (gags.)

RON
 Are you going to vomit?

HARVEY

I can't. I haven't eaten in two days.

RON

Let me whip you up something in the kitchen.

HARVEY

It's nice but,...

RON (firmly)

Before we can figure out a way for you and Milly to go out together - we've got to settle your stomach, right?

HARVEY

You're right.

Harvey's terribly grateful!

(flashing him a charming smile:)

RON (perturbed by it)

I won't be a minute. Make yourself at home. (quickly stumbles off to the kitchen.)

HARVEY

Cur-shack,..tch I can't get it going,..oh shut up, Harvey, be yourself.

(RON enters, rolling a small table set for an exquisite candlelight dinner.)

RON

...just whipped up a little amourettes de veau composes a la crème garnies d'une pyramide de poireaux à l'huile (lighting it) ...flambée.

HARVEY: (amazed)

Who do you get to sell you wine?

RON

I made it myself. Chemistry is my strong subject! I've got a fine fruity selection hidden in the back of the garage. (serving; sits on the couch.) Eat...before it gets cold!

(HARVEY delicately takes a bite; his face lights up. Amazed, takes more.)

HARVEY (firmly)

It's the best thing I've ever eaten.

RON (watching him with serene satisfaction as he wolfs it down)

I hoped it would please you.

HARVEY

How nice, how awfully nice,

RON

It's nothing. I always have a little something going on the stove. Usually I end up being forced to eat it myself when the family's not around. It's me that takes pleasure in seeing someone else eat it!

HARVEY

Welll You must be Space Man's friend - Space Lad.

RON

Huh?

HARVEY

Did you learn to cook in chemistry - Space Lad?

RON

Noooo at Seldon's Book Shop, silly. Seldon's my chum. (chattily) He puts away things for me he's got that no one else in this town wants. So he saved a book on French cooking. . I've always dreamed of getting out of this town and going to France and I was in the mood to try something different too. Course most of the ingredients you can't get in this town so I started a garden in the back yard, Mom's always complaining about what the neighbors must think of seeing me growing in the back yard. I don't care. When I get out of high school I'm going to France, out of this town, you know.

HARVEY (vaguely)

France is that.

RON

Life's different there, you can get the ingredients and I so want to eat what they eat.

HARVEY

I'd eat anything to get out of this town,

RON

How amazing!

HARVEY

What?

RON

To meet someone else who wants to get out of this town! Most people in this town think the world drops off at the cornfields, You want to travel too?

HARVEY

Oh traveling yes! I must admit I haven't done much inside our solar system but the Mediterranean is not to be sniffed at!

RON

You've been there!?

HARVEY (vaguely)

We are there...it's so calm, the water, we could throw away our aqua suits and swim to shore. (indicating candles) Comforting though to have two lighthouses nearby...Think uh Space Lad, if we dogpaddled in that direction (indicating wall) we'd run into the wall of the Alps...what bliss...We've swum through murderous maternal muck but here the air is clear...and the stars, when we were close enough to touch them, they never seemed so far. S-i-i-gh!

(In his enthusiasm, HARVEY has firmly placed his arm around RON's shoulder. RON registers the descending pressure with amazed dismay. He sits frozen, not knowing whether the hand that holds him is a mistake. HARVEY seems oblivious.)

RON (lifting shoulder slightly)

Uhm...

(Nothing from HARVEY. RON's other hand considers taking HARVEY'S off. HARVEY automatically puts RON's hand down.)

HARVEY (still holding RON's hand.)

You have such a nice hand. Let me see the other.

(RoN queasily gives him his other hand.)

It's the same as the other one! (They hold hands.) ...friendly.

RON (almost unable to speak)

You're...incredible!

HARVEY (depreciatively)

Ah...

RON

But you are, I felt, from the moment I saw you that you were just around the corner from something - extraordinary!

HARVEY

And you - Space Lad -

RON:

What?

HARVEY

You are a million moons - Space Lad.

RON

Aw gee...

HARVEY (frowning)

Who else was a million moons? Troubled tuna fish -. Millicent Whitetree was a thousand suns (accusatory) You're not Millicent Whitetreet

RON
We're related!

HARVEY
Why you're just an innocent boy! Horrors Harvey everything I touch I have to touch! The mother was right about me. (He adroitly slaps himself.)
I'll thank myself for that! (going quickly to front door)
Out of my sight, Harvey! into your bubble! (exit.)

RON (following him with the table)
HARVEY! HARVEY!

Scene 4

(Night. Vera comes from her quarters in a bathrobe, goes to phone and dials.)

VERA
Hello Waaaaaard?

WARD (his head rises outside the window)
(gently waves at her) Do you need me now?

VERA (hangs up, gestures to WARD to come in which he does...pointing to MILLY's room)
Go in there like a dear boy, untie her, rub her back, make her comfy, above all, make her - never you mind!
(WARD creeps into MILLY's room. VERA paces, checks her watch...)

How's it coming, Ward?

WARD (reappearing)
Mrs. Whitetree, she's unconscious.

VERA
What more could anyone want? As for me, I can finally go to bed with a clear conscience.

WARD
Have a nice time, Mrs. Whitetree.

VERA
Call me mother.

(WARD goes back in and VERA creeps off.)

Romantic music as RON appears in pajamas, sleepwalking:)

RON
Oh Harvey I've waited for you all my life!!

(Dream lighting: VERA, in her dress.)

VERA
Ron, you're looking terrible.

RON
To be honest I'm in a real state.

VERA
It's that Harvey isn't it?

RON
Mother! You know!

VERA
Of course, dear, how stupid do you think Mothers are?

RON
You're not shocked?

VERA
There's nothing to be shocked about. You're both very attractive boys.

RON
Gee, Mom.

VERA
Shocked isn't the word. I'm worried.

RON
But why?

VERA
I'm afraid that one day later you'll regret having missed something so important.

RON
What's that?

VERA
Being married to a sweet loving woman...,a woman like me.

RON (delicately)
Well, you know, Mom...

VERA
Seriously, Ron, what is wrong with me? Have you really given me a chance? I was good enough for your Daddy! Think of a woman like me. She gives her very soul and all she asks

from the man is an eensy-weensy little house.

A whole house??
RON

I'll need it for the children.
VERA

Children?
RON

You do want children don't you...
VERA

I'm not so sure really..
RON

Oh Ron you tease, everybody wants children! They're so sweet! so noisy, the scamps...
and so expensive...ah the little rascals...
VERA

Look, Mom, maybe you've got the wrong man -
RON

Oh a frown! Let Mother kiss it away! I know what you're thinking: you give give and what do
you get? Why, lot of things...a wonderful job...so that you can make me lots and
lots of money! Getting intrigued?! No more Harvey now? hm? Well.
VERA

Frankly, Mom, you're just not my type. Actually I have a date with Harvey and I'm a little late.
RON

I see. Have a good time. Oh dear... (cries a little, staggers off:)
VERA (bitterly)

That's right, shed a few tears for one of us.
RON: (pleased)
(HARVEY appears, beckoning.)

Harvey...at last!

(A ways apart, they walk in place as if together.
They stop and look out as over an expanse:)
Oh the air is so fresh up here. I never thought such a blissful place could exist....
and you found it!

I am a little cold.
Your coat.

In the air, HARVEY's arm designs a great question mark.)
(lifts shoulders as HARVEY mimes slipping a coat over them.)

I am a little hungry.

(Another question mark from HARVEY.)

(HARVEY mimes shooting; they watch something fall.)
 You're such a good shot. I'll cook it, can you make a little fire...
 (putting hand up)
 I felt a drop too...It's a regular storm...A HURRICANE!
 (HARVEY points; RON peers.)
 Yes, there is a log cabin way down there in the valley - oh darn it! I sprained my ankle!
 (HARVEY mimes lifting; RON being lifted.)
 You're so strong! (Looks around) Why it's quaint and cosy in here. I'll...fix myself up while you get a log fire going...don't know how you manage...without matches. Yes I'm warm now, I might even thank the storm...for this! Oh Harvey you're so wonderful...it's getting downright...hot... (disturbed) We'd better get out of here...
 (flails as at smoke) THE WHOLE FOREST HAS CAUGHT ON FIRE!
 (HARVEY disappears)
 Harvey! Harvey! Where are you??
 (groping, Ron leaves.)

Scene 5

(The following morning. MILLY enters, closely followed by VERA, jutting a bottle of milk at her:)

VERA
 Drink it down, dear.

MILLY
 No thank you, Mother.

VERA
 You've got to build yourself up, dear.

MILLY
 I'm sick to the tummy!

(As RON enters, still in pajamas, and discreetly picks up the phone:)

VERA (alarmed)
 Already? when did you first feel sick? in the morning?

MILLY
 This is the morning and I woke up fine. That was before my mother poured three quarts of cold milk into me.
 (starting to front door)
 I'd better get some air.

VERA (grabbing her)
NO! WAIT! What would people say if they saw a woman walking down the street without a hat?
(notices RON) Who are you calling, dear?

RON (flummoxed)
The weather? (hangs up; MILLY dashes to the door:)

VERA (violently yanking her back)
Not so fast!! Think of your condition!! Ward Gunyak I need you!!

WARD (quickly steps in through front door; he has a letter placed between two fingers)
Hi everybody! Aren't I lucky to catch you in! Milly, you look so great! You all look so swell!

RON
What's that coming out of your fingers?

WARD (looking at it)
A letter marked special delivery.

ALL
Special delivery?

WARD
The mailman put it my hand a while ago...

RON MILLY (together, lunging)
Give it to me - It's for me -

WARD (playfully holding it back)
It's addressed to "The Whitetree Family - all of you."

VERA:
Just imagine. Open it and read it, Ward,

RON MILLY (together)
DON'T LET HIM - Mother really —

VERA
Children, I feel Ward is part of the Whitetree Family all of us! (clutches RON and MILLY)
Come, dear, give us a little show! (politely claps.)

WARD
If you insist! (clears throat, reads the letter very prosaically)
After I have licked this envelope and mailed you my spit -

RON and MILLY
HARVEY!

WARD

This is what I'm gonna do. Get on a freighter, dingy horrible, which will bounce me away from you Whitetrees over the great vale of tears: the Atlantic Ocean.

RON and MILLY (breathlessly)

Harvey.,,

WARD

After a storm-tossed week I shall be woken by the setting moon and rising sun through my porthole. Then I shall lean on the railing while electro-magnetic light spreads in front of me the first sight of the golden green shores of France. Sigh vision.

RON and MILLY (sighing)

Harvey...

WARD

Then I'm going back in my cabin...hard to make out his handwriting...and I. am. going to ker-flack-shick, commit suicide. blaah.

RON, MILLY and VERA: (hysterically)

H A R V E Y!!

VERA: (desperate gaiety)

Aren't you supposed to see Paris and die? Oh what a funny boy)

RON

Hilarious and you killed him0 (dashing to door) I've gotta get out of here -

VERA

Where are you off to?

RON

If I take a plane I can meet the boat!

VERA

- A plane I Just a minute -

RON

You can't stop me -

VERA

I can try. What is this all about?

RON

Get out of the way you hag I love him I

VERA: (staggered)

You...what?

RON (traumatically)

I love him I love him so there!

VERA (holding her ears)

What are you trying to tell me?? RONALDI N000 After what I've endured with her don't tell me that for my sweet joyful son as well it has to be -ECH?

RON

That's right ech! - and he loves me!

(Pause.)

VERA:

I think I didn't hear you properly, dear. Let's start this conversation again and do it another way.

RON

You heard me.

VERA: (a plaintive moan)

Oh what a disappointment. How could this happen to me? me who did everything a mother is supposed to do to her son? In all honesty, did I leave something out?

MILLY (puzzled)

I don't understand, Mom. How can Ron and Harvey love each other?

VERA:

Slap him, Ward.

(She seizes RON as WARD automatically slaps MILLY who falls to floor.)

No him this time, dear. Just help me hold on! Get him in his bedroom quick, do to him what you did to Milly -

WARD (shocked)

Mrs. Whitetree!

RON

You can't keep us apart! I love Harvey love!

MILLY

But no, it's me who loves Harvey!

(As they all struggle with each other:)

WARD (vexed)

What's this Harvey got?

VERA

Something a nice boy doesn't need to know about. I know, Ron, a mother's your worst enemy.

(Violently, RON manages to push them all off-stage.)

RON

HARVEY! (dashes out through front door.)

HARVEY! MILLY (dashes to front door)

(VERA pulls MILLY back by her hair:)

VERA
Life certainly doesn't turn out the way you expected, does it?

(The Wedding March. MILLY accepts being pushed offstage to her destiny and VERA addresses the audience as if it were her daughter:)

At your age you expect too much.

(WARD and HARVEY, in moving men's caps change the set:)
That's what mothers are for, dear. We see to it that you accept the way things are. One thing I can assure you. In years to come when you look back on this tragic week, you'll only remember it as the one in which you got married!

(going off, chirping dementedly)

You'll never believe what I found at the supermarket!! You'll never believe what I found at the supermarket!! You'll never believe!!

ACT TWO (Scene 6)

(Milly's house. 18 years later. The basic structure is the same but the usage of the entrances suggest the house is a different one. The front door could have a bar-lock attached to it. Another exit directly into the garage. A freezer. A large overnight bag on the floor.

MILLY enters from the garage with two wire supermarket baskets brimming with goods. She's in her mid-thirties and considerably more stylish, albeit her vagueness suggests a profound boredom.

She opens the freezer and dumps the contents of one basket into it.)

MILLY: (vaguely mutters)

... oh shit.. (absentmindedly slings the whole other basket in.)
 ...oh shit... Now what...

HER MALICIOUS INNER SELF gets hold of her:
 Well take off your coat - stupid.

HER REAL SELF
 (She takes off her long winter coat; underneath she's in a nightgown.)
 Yeh...yeh...
 Now what?

HER INNER SELF: (slyly)
 Hey Milly....how about...

HER REAL SELF
 (vaguely looks around...finds a bottle of whiskey...)
 ...Oh...

HER INNER SELF
 You've got to build yourself up, Milly. Drink it down.

(She takes a good swig with professional aplomb:)

HER REAL SELF
Aaaah (pause) Now what?

HER INNER SELF
 Build yourself up, Milly! Drink it down!

HER REAL SELF: (desperately)
 Oh please please. How 'bout something new!?

(The front doorbell rings)
 Who on earth could that be? Just a minute!
 (takes another swig, produces a gun, goes to door and points gun at it. Very socially bright:)

Who is it?

RON
 Is that you, Milly? it's Ron!

MILLY:
 RON! Whitetree? Ron from Paris? Why you must be my brother! I must be your sister! I must be Milly! Oh oh yippee! (shots pistol in air.)

RON
 WHAT WAS THAT?

MILLY
 I have a gun in my hands.

Why?

RON

MILLY

For the front door I have to. (sentimentally) Oh Ron it's just so grand seeing you after all these years!

RON

You haven't! Open up!

MILLY

Oh Ron, oh brother...

You're looking marvelous!
How do I look after all this time?

(She lets him in. He's dressed in black and wearing gloves.)
(arranging herself and thus cocking her gun at him:)

RON (terrified)

PUT THAT THING AWAY I

MILLY

Oh...

(laughs in embarrassment, vaguely wanders and chucks the gun in freezer. Muffled explosion.)

This is just so great, whatcha doin' here, why've you come, I'm so glad to see you!

RON (bewildered)

Milly...Daddy!

MILLY

What about him?

RON

You mean you don't know yet? You'd better sit down. This is going to be a terrible shock.
(She sits, bewildered.)

Our father is dead.

MILLY (blankly)

So?

RON (nonplussed)

Did you hear what I said? Daddy died.

MILLY

Sure, twelve years ago.

RON

TWELVE YEARS!

MILLY

Between the two of us, Morn though it'd upset you at the time - and she didn't want the neighbors to see you and Harvey at the funeral!

(Pause.)

RON (whipping a paper out of his pocket:
This telegram arrived in Paris last night -

MILLY (reading)
- "Dear Son, Your fucking father died."

RON
An obvious typing mistake -

MILLY
"Come home immediately, Mother." She musta really wanted to see you, huh? She was so thrilled to finally get a birthday card from you. with that Arch of Triumph on its backside!

RON
She'll never get another! Well, I'll consider the whole thing an unusual experience and take the first plane back to Paris. (heading to front door) If you'd be good enough to call me a cab -

MILLY
You're not just going to leave! You're my brother, it's been eighteen years, at least let's have a chat...

RON
Milly, I have a job to go back to...I hardly have any clothes,

MILLY
Anything you need we can unfreeze I Oh please - just for a few days - let it be an occasion! (tragically) We'll have such fun. Fun. Fun. I've never had a house guest before, I've never had anyone in this house but Ward, Harriet and Mother!

RON
You've got neighbors!

MILLY
Those creeps -

RON
Your old friends -

MILLY
Friends? We all moved so far out in different directions, I haven't seen anyone since the senior prom! Stay with me. Chat. Drink. I'll wait on you hand and foot!

(Pause.)

RON
You'll what?

MILLY
I will, I will! You won't have to lift a finger!

RON
Is that a promise?

MILLY
Cross my heart!

RON
Aw...what the hell - just for a few days!

MILLY
Brother!

RON
Sister!

MILLY
We'll start our fun with a drinkie!

(She brings out a bottle and a glass, pours herself a drink:)
Now I want to know all about you, all about your work, your hopes, your plans, your.....how's
Harvey by the way? (nervously gulps down her drink. During the following,
pours herself another, finishing the bottle)

RON (defensively
He's fine, Milly, fine!

MILLY
What does he do - professionally I mean.

RON
At the moment - and this time I am positive - he is just around the corner from something -

MILLY
Extraordinary!! Oh! I always felt he was! So what's he doing with himself !?

RON
What I just said...around the corner...

MILLY
He hasn't gotten there yet? I seeeee. What do you do in Paris to keep Harvey going?

RON
...What haven't I done? (Very sticky pause) And you, Milly?

Me? MILLY

You're a mother! RON

So? MILLY

That must be the most satisfying thing in the world! RON

MILLY
Oh. Children. Yes. They fill a gap. I mean they don't really. You realize after a while, nothing can fill a gap. (Very sticky pause.) Don't get me wrong! I...I...keep my day filled! (looks at her glass) I need a refill! How about you?

I haven't had a fill! RON (embarrassed)

MILLY
Sorry...I'm still Silly Milly! (sees the bottle's empty.)
Oh I polished that one off...but I know I had another bottle... (finds another empty one) . . .
Wait a minute... (looking around)

HER INNER SELF
C'mon on now, Milly, where'd'ja hide it?
(goes behind couch; sound of numerous empty bottles falling over.)

MILLY (emerges, clutching several. Coyly:)
Hey now, don't start thinking your l'il sis has a drinking problem!

HER INNER SELF
Did you hide it in your little girl's room!?

MILLY (shrieking)
Harriet, do you have one of my bottles in there?
(sees overnight bag)
Oh! Lamb-pie's overnight bag! She must have a bottle in there!
(She reaches in, gets what seems to be the handle of a bottle, pulls out an elaborate hookah with enough tubes to accommodate several smokers of marijuana.)

She must be taking a course in Turkish art - tell me it isn't what I know it is! (Sound of a car roaring into the garage)
Oh my God oh my God.

WARD (enters, carrying an attaché case. In his early forties now, as bemused and unaware as ever, albeit exhausted.)
(sees RON and stretches out on freezer)

Hi honey
and who the hell is this?

MILLY

My brother Ron, just barged in from Paris, and our little girl is a dope addict.

WARD

Hold on, honey, one thing at a time. Gee, fellow, it sure has been ages.
(seizing RON's hand)

Aren't you Frenchies always shaking hands on television?

RON (suffering)

Sometimes we kiss cheeks!

WARD (sees hookah)

Ah honey Milly my God no. Ech!

MILLY

Ech?

WARD

Ech. How'd it start? Who gave her this stuff?

(Another car roars into the garage:)

Who gave her this stuff? What monster?
(VERA bounces in:)

What unspeakable thing?

(VERA's held together very well: wildly died hair, pounds of makeup, tastefully extreme clothes. She crosses to HARRIET's room in an enthusiastic trance; holding in front of her, her usual cake box:)

VERA

Helloooooo kiddies and I've got a present for Granny's little girl!
(vaguely sees RON)

Welcome home.
(goes into HARRIET's room.)

RON (stunned)

Is that my mother?

WARD

Yep...I gotta get out of here -

MILLY

You just came back -

Milly, I'm sick - WARD

Lie down - MILLY

I recover when I step outta this house!
 (A newspaper is thrown onstage. Terrified:)
 What's that, a revolution? WARD

It's just the newspaper, Ward! MILLY
 (to RON) He's so brave, that boy on the bike!
 (opens the paper in front of WARD; the headline: YOUTH!
 WAR! DRUGS! SEX! COPS! CRIME!)

Oh Pinskikrupov help me in my hour of need - WARD

Pinski's running for mayor! MILLY

He's gotta win, he'll clean up this town, he promised to arrest all those ugly people like my daughter!
 (grabs his case)
 It's late, Milly, I gotta get back to work! WARD

Ward, I'm angry! Somebody has to at least have a little talk with our daughter and you're supposed to be her father! MILLY

The father talk is when the problem's sex. WARD:

Only when it's a boy! MILLY

Well, homosexuality - WARD

Only when it's a girl! RON

You have the little talk! You must know all about it - you were such a whiz at chemistry! MILLY (gaily)

Not that kind of chemistry! RON

MILLY

Ron, you're the best one in this room. You're sophisticated, you know the world, you're a pervert. For your darling sister, Ron -

WARD

That's right, boy! You've got it in you! See you 'round, fellow.

(exits. Sound of car tearing away as MILLY crosses to HARRIET's room)

MILLY

Harriet? It's your Uncle Ron!

HARRIET'S VOICE (off)

Uncle Ron from Paris? Schlackkbroop-dang flack!

(A teen-age girl languidly enters. Aside from her ample bosom, she looks exactly like HARVEY: she is played by the same actor wearing the same costume and the same make-up.)

MILLY

My little girl, Harriet! Harri, your Uncle Ron!

HARRI

Oh cool sigh!

RON (stunned)

She looks exactly like her father!

HARRI

Gee, Uncle Ron, you're the first person who's ever said I look like Daaadt

MILLY (delicately)

I hear something that had better be boiling over in the bathroom! I'll leave you two alone. Uncle wants to have a little talk with you!

(She gets away.)

RON

Harriet dear, let me state immediately that the position I've been put in is not the most comfortable ones But what going to say will be for your own good -

HARRI

Uncle dear, if we're gonna have a little talk - take off those gloves. An uncle doesn't wear those. The Killer wears those - like you know?

RON

I have my reasons - Harriet dear. I've...worked in a chemistry lab every day for the last eight years and my hands are not what they used to be!

(Pause. HARRI deftly pulls his gloves off and examines his hands. They are sitting together as RON and HARVEY were in

the first act.)

HARRI

What's your problem?

RON

That yellow spot. And the small hole over there -
(puts on his gloves)

HARRI

That's nothing - that hole's part of . Oh Ron, all her life Harri's been dreaming 'bout her Paris Uncle 'cause she thought he'd be cool cool but he's as turned off as the rest of 'em,.. 'side from his real cool hands. Quaint square Uncle Ron. You turned-off yummy!
(going after him)

Bur-rum burrum!

RON (dodging her)

This is not the conversation I'm supposed to be -

HARRI

Everything possible!

RON

It's not! It's not possible!

HARRI

It is! Something about me has ice rolling down your neck, what is it hm hm hm?
(enticingly stretches out on the freezer)

RON (hardly able to speak)

You're just like your father!

HARRI

Gee, was Daddy like that in his youth. It opens up horizons.
(She's got hold of him)

RON (stopping her)

You're Harvey's daughter!

HARRI

And I look just like he looks - that's pretty cool huh?

RON

No. You look like he looked eighteen years ago...

HARRI

That must be even better. Cur-shack bang schiunk?

RON (desperately)

Harvey, where are you!?

MILLY (peeks in, brightly)
How's it going, kids?

RON
We haven't got around to pot yet but -

VERA (entering with a phone:)
Helloooo?

HARRI
Sigh sigh!

RON
I've had a hard day, where can I collapse?

(As MILLY and HARRI help him off)

VERA
Oh hello Paris, this is Vera. Reverse the charges? Sure, go ahead, I don't live here. Harvey? I don't know any Harvey in Paris...oh Harvey how are you...Ron...? Ron...oh he's fine! Harriet's trying to pin him down. How should I know who's going to cook your dinner? Come over and have dinner with us. Well, breakfast tomorrow...whenever you like, we're very casual now. Of course bygones are bygones, we're very liberal now. Oh I was sad at first. Ron is my own little boy...and all these years that little boy's been so far from me...getting fucked by you when he could be getting fucked by a good sweet fucking woman like me. Oh Harvey, I still get so fucking sad, oh Harvey fuck. Are there other words? None of the neighbors use them anymore, dear. And if you don't use what the neighbors use, you might as well be fucking dead! That's where it's at, I know the world, baby, and, thank you, I'm still alive!

(slyly as MILLY steps out of the bedroom:)

Yes this call must be costing them a fortune! Well then, I can hardly wait to see you, dear!
Fuck-fuck! (hangs up. To MILLY:)
That was Harvey. He's on his way!

MILLY
Harvey - here?! Harri - there! Ron Mother Ward - that?! Ech!...Ech?...Eek?

HER INNER SELF
Stop sniveling you miserable hypocrite! Here's the chance to try something new!!

MILLY
Oh I couldn't!

INNER VOICE
Go on, Milly, nobody gives a shit.

MILLY
...Aw what the hell... (puts mouthpiece in her mouth.)

It doesn't do a thing. (as HARRI emerges from bedroom:)

VERA
(helping her) You've got to give it time, Milly.

HARRI (has taken her overnight bag, going out the window:)
Little family... buh-buh-bye.

VERA
You've got to give it time.

WARD (enters in pajamas, sleepwalking)
Ward?

(Dream lighting and cool music:)

MILLY
Where am I?

VERA
In. A. Dream?

WARD
Ward Gunyak? You can come out now.

MILLY:
Well am I or aren't I?

VERA
I don't know, dear, it's getting harder and harder to tell!

WARD
Nobody's looking, Ward.

MILLY
Oh! Flowers in pretty gardens! Fountains with changing colors! Sweet little hat shops!

VERA
Poor Ward, you work, you work and what do you get? Come on over to me, dear.

WARD
Anything you say, Mrs. Whitetree!

VERA
Call me Mother!
(shoves a mouthpiece in his mouth)

MILLY

Earth streets crawling with earth people! I'm window-shopping downtown! I'm 18 years old again!
(VERA throws WARD at MILLY:)

WARD (to MILLY)

Hi there!

MILLY

A masher!

VERA

It's your own little husband, dear;

MILLY:

NO!

(She begins to run in place:)

VERA

Yes!

MILLY

Harvey...Harvey...wait for me...This time I'll get to you...

WARD (running after her in place)

Slow down, Milly -

MILLY

I can't! Help! Pull me back -

WARD

I'm stuck -

MILLY

Pull me!

(VERA pulls. The pulling turns into a rowing gesture, moving her as in a boat.)

WARD

Where're ya going, Mom?

VERA (the three are rowing)

Millicent is already thousands of miles away from Harvey...

MILLY(breaks away)

Think so, huh. I'm hiding out at the old county carnival!

VERA and WARD (like sentries on the track)

Milly...? Milly...?

MILLY

Harvey said to meet him by the roller coaster!

VERA: (playing the barker)

Step right up, everybody, onto the roller coaster!

(MILLY joins them. VERA clutches her)

Gotcha!

(They move as on a roller coaster:)

We're getting higher! Higher! Higher!

(A sudden halt. Deathly silence.)

MILLY (terrified)

Look down!

WARD

I don't dare.

MILLY

What planet is that one over there?

WARD

I don't think it's in our galaxy. I see a speck - bright - pure!

(RON has entered in the shadows)

VERA

Steer the bubble to it.

WARD

It's coming at me! Radiance! A thousand brain suns! It's you, Millicent, you!

MILLY (suddenly)

NO! You're not Harvey!

(breaks away)

VERA

Grass has made even Ward a little poet!

RON

Harvey used to talk like that without grass!

(The lighting of reality returns.)

Where is he? When is he coming? What did he say on the phone? Did he take a boat, a plane, what?

VERA

For two weeks like a broken record. Come to Mother, son. Have some fucking pot, son.

RON

I don't want your fucking pot.

VERA

I don't want your fucking pot, thank you. Don't let it out so quick, Uncle Izzie! What would people say?

RON

Uncle who?

VERA:

...oh yeh...we didn't let you know Uncle Izzie, he was a character! You didn't know Aunt Esther either, Cousin Sid or Gisela Mzofski, our friend. Oh we had good times before your time, after we never talked, you didn't know. We used to sit around, laugh...

MILLY

Smoke pot?

VERA

Naw we didn't have the opportunities you kids have today. We thought the end of the world was drinking sweet wine and telling dirty jokes. Oh yeh we had a ball in the old days after the old country. We were people too you know!

RON

Why did you stop?

VERA (resentfully)

You had to get born so there was a depression.

MILLY (uncomfortably)

Mother, that sounds a little hhhh...

VERA

No nothing hostile, who me? how could I be when I finally have my family back? You darling children, I love Millicent and I love Ward, I'd even love that square if he'd smoke some grass, I never had such a warm family feeling for years, years, nearly fifty years! not since - since -

HARVEY'S VOICE!

It's Harvey!! It's Harvey!!

(VERA, WARD and MILLY charge to the door, shoving RON out of the way. But HARVEY staggers in from the garage, disheveled, grimy. Under this, he has aged more than RON, is indeed completely washed-out. He collapses into RON's arms.)

RON (trying to bring him round)

Harvey Harvey speak to me!

HARVEY (effete)

Hi fellahs!

VERA and MILLY

That's not Harvey.

WARD

I don't know him, why not? Because he looks familiar...

RON

What've they done to you

HARVEY

Ooooooh...

VERA, MILLY, WARD

"Ooooooh."

RON

What happened?

HARVEY

Ouw...

VERA, MILLY, WARD

"Ouw."

RON

Why did it take you so long?

HARVEY (petulantly)

The first mistake was getting on that freighter!

VERA, MILLY, WARD

Freighter?

(They watch him as if he were a television set:)

HARVEY

I thought it'd be so sweet to come back the way I left...but I left during the spring season and I guess I was a little younger and I came back in the winter and I kept getting sick to my tummy!

MILLY

Oooooo Harvey sick to the tummy...Oooooo extraordinary!

HARVEY

It was - ma chère! When I finally landed, as there's no longer any train service to this dump, I took a bus -

MILLY

Extraordinary! What did it say?

HARVEY

I did keep hearing this popping sound -

PCH!!
VERA (points her finger like a gun)

HARVEY
It seemed to be coming from inside some of the houses we passed... "Etrange"!

PCH!!
VERA

HARVEY
Suddenly all our tires blew and everybody was lying in the aisle with chattering teeth. As we weren't going anywhere I got out!

(MILLY, VERA, WARD applaud.)

MILLY
Terrific - this is where it gets scary! Then what?

HARVEY
I just started to walk.

MILLY
Walt! Walk! (hystericaly) Without a gun?!! Oh stop stop!! no go on go on! I love this part! I'm scared! Whad'ja see?

HARVEY
Nobody! Not a single restaurant comme ii faut!

VERA
This must be his way of trying to tell us he's hungry. Granny'il take care of that.
(shoves a mouthpiece at him:)

RON
NO! Harvey darling, we're leaving for Paris immediately -

HARVEY
Not before I've had something to eat!

RON (lowering voice)
We've got to get out of here! They've gone mad!

VERA
We're high!

WARD
We're happy!

MILLY

You too!

HARVEY:

I don't agree - cher ami! I think Vera looks better than she used to!

VERA

You have had enough of that square! You are ready to try his mother! (jiggles seductively)
She's still hot stuff - huh?

HARVEY (taken aback)

Last time I saw you, didn't you have brown hair - weren't you telling me it wasn't convenient for Milly to go out on a date? Or was that all a dream?

VERA (dangerously)

You don't like the color.

MILLY

It's lovely, Mother, so intense!

VERA

Maybe it's a little too hot!

(whips off her wig; underneath her real hair is kept flat by a stocking; HARVEY shrieks at the effect. Corrosively)

The last time I saw you - weren't you a beautiful boy - or was that all a dream?
(shrieks as well.)

HARVEY

I'd look more seductive if I had something to eat!

WARD (heads for freezer)

I'll fix you a cocktail, feilah. You'll get your appetite back -

RON (jumping on freezer)

Even the ice is full of hash!

HARVEY (petulantly)

And now I'm thirsty! Will one of you bastards at least get me a glass of water!? Ron?

(At the command, Ron runs out to kitchen - to VERA's derisive chuckle.)

MILLY (to HARVEY)

Hellooooo...

VERA (a knowing look)

Come along, Ward.

(leads WARD off to kitchen.)

(MILLY grabs HARVEY and begins to dance with him.)

HARVEY (going round and round)

Ouille now I'm getting sick again!

MILLY

From your own radiance! Oh Harvey you're a million suns!

HARVEY

What?

MILLY

Do you remember our sex, Harvey?

HARVEY

I beg your pardon!

MILLY

Our first sex,..oh Harvey it was good huh good mmmm Harvey it was interplanetary fire! ooooo ah ooooo ah remember remember?

HARVEY

I don't really - but it wasn't that good. Nothing's that good!

MILLY

You're horrible. But I know you can still be wonderful! Be Harvey!

HARVEY

Don't know him anymore.

MILLY (looking around)

It's all these awful people...perhaps you'd feel more yourself someplace...intimate...right, space-ace? (going after him) Cur-schack bang schlunk?

HARVEY

N000!

MILLY

You still feel exposed? We'll find someplace private!

(opens the freezer and begins to stuff him in.)

HARVEY

R000N HEEEEELLP SAVE MEEE!

(RON dashes in, being pulled back by VERA and WARD.)

RON (politely)

Sister, please get off of Harvey.

MILLY (desperately)

Oh God you wore my first lover at the age of' seventeen you've to love me you've to love me, love me -

(RON pulls her off' and slaps her.)

RON

I hope that taught you something!

MILLY

Yes! Harveys' more wonderful than ever! Ward, do you know what Harvey taught me?

WARD

Whad'ja teach her? You look so familiar - are you sure you're not a distant relative of my wife's daughter?
(looks to MILLY, to HARVEY, then pleasantly)

Yeh yeh I get it.

MILLY and VERA

Yippee!

WARD

That's all right honey - I'm not hostile!

MILLY

Go on! Be hostile!

WARD

Too long ago, honey, and I always thought my daughter was nuts - now I know why!

MILLY

Harvey still loves me, Ward!

(As RON and HARVEY sneak to the front door:)

Ward, he wants me to escape with him to Paris! What do you think of that!?

WARD

So escape, escape already!

VERA

No. Ron's escaping with our bubble!

MILLY (drawing a gun)

I guess we'll have to shoot Ron.

RON

SISTER!

VERA (drawing a gun)

It's for your own good, dear.

RON

MOTHER!

WARD (drawing one)

Ready. Aim -

VERA:

Wait. My son deserves another chance. Break down, son.

(They all aim at HARVEY)

Take a puff.

HARVEY (terrified)

Yes! For once in your life stop thinking of self! Smoke - smoke - think of me!

(HARVEY takes all the mouthpieces and frantically, demonstratively smokes.)

MILLY

Oh? Harvey's high?

HARVEY

Flack.

MILLY (sceptical)

What'd he say?

HARVEY

I said flack.

(smokes. Now he is high) Broom dang schiack!

RON

Harvey no!

HARVEY

Schlock why not – I - (dumbfounded) I am not around the corner from anything extraordinary!
Blush.

RON

Harvey darling you are..

HARVEY

I wanted to be extraordinary. I'm not. Double klutz!

MILLY

When he speaks, I'm still blown to the clouds!

HARVEY

I used to work the showy bits from comic books into my conversation - and you let yourself be blown up? Bluch scluch. I never read a real book in my life! blah.

MILLY

It was understandable. You were young.

HARVEY

I'm not now. I couldn't even memorize the showy bits now. Murf durg. I've never done anything, been anything brop droop.

RON

You have -

HARVEY

What? Sitting around a room for 20 years wanting to be! You've done the dishes...the bed, board. Everything.

RON

No -

HARVEY

"Harvey darling don't lift a finger, leave it to me. G'bye darling Harvey, I'm off to work! Hello Harvey Harvey, I'll press your shirt." De Trop! Harvey Harvey Harvey. Who's Harvey? Nothing at all. Schlick schlack...Schluck.

RON

Please....even if there's nothing special about you, you can't stop now.

MILLY

He's right. You're too far gone. We all are.

(HARVEY looks at her the way she is for the first time.)

HARVEY

Millicent Whitetree.

(They embrace with compassion and despair. RON holds on to HARVEY. VERA joins them. WARD watches the agonised four-way embrace with a strained benign smile. He slowly goes to join it - but VERA automatically pushes him away.)

WARD: (aiming his gun at MILLY and the others)
(backing down)

If I dood it I det a whipping!!

WARD's INNER VOICE

They're happy. They love each other. Love is fucking lovely.

WARD

..so I've heard.
We're almost out.

(He looks to the hookah for consolation.)

VERA

Call Larry. He's always got a barrel.

WARD (aims at them with the phone and sticks the gun at his own mouth)

“Hello Larry this is Ward Guniyak we’re having a grass party and man we’re really high. We got every gun in the house on my brother-in-law and his boy friend’s started to smoke! Groovy huh! We’ve almost run out so why don’t you drop by - with some refills.” They’re coming right over. (pause) I called the cops. Why did I do that?

(Distant sirens - the groups breaks up hysterically.)

VERA (shaking WARD as RON tries to hold down a spasmodic HARVEY)

Why do you do anything, you stupid stupid jerk! What will the neighbors say when they find out we brought the police?? did you think of that of course not! This finishes it between you and me, Ward Guniyak, and don’t try crawling back. I always said Milly should’ve married Harvey. Why did you marry this nitwit?

MILLY

You conned me into it!

VERA

What are you, gullible? I only have one son and one son-in-law! (desperately to RON and HARVEY) Boys - get me outta here!

WARD

Don’t turn edgy, we’ll simply go for a little drive till it blows away. (to MILLY, spasmodically jerking one arm up, the other down.) What’re you doing?

MILLY

Putting on my coat.
Whoops wrong door.

(tries to jump into the freezer)

VERA

Just a minute where’s my -

MILLY

Hurry up, Mother -

VERA

I can’t go out like that - (getting wig) What would the neighbors say?

MILLY

Mother, get a move on.

(MILLY shoots; the wig falls out of VERA’s hand.)

VERA

I thought you liked the color.

MILLY

Quick, everybody into the cars! (They spin around like carnival cars; HARVEY bolts to join them)

RON (grabbing him)

Don’t panic! I’m not high! You only took a puff!

WARD

One at a time, one at a time, one at a -

(They bang into each other.)

MILLY

Oh shit! All our cars had an automobile accident!

VERA

Thank God we bought the boat.

VERA, WARD, MILLY (rowing out)

Buh-buh-bye! We'll get you high yet!

(RON pulls HARVEY to an exit; from behind the other:)

A "GRUFF" VOICE (VERA)

OPEN UP!

ANOTHER (MILLY)

IN THE NAME OF THE LAW!

ANOTHER (WARD)

Hands up you guy. Against the wall.

(Vera, Ward, Milly have entered, playing cops. Backs to them, RON and HARVEY hold up their hands.)

We got a report that everybody in this house is on dope. Except for one person.

RON

And Harvey only took a puff!

WARD (cordially)

You must be the one person who hasn't smoked!

RON

That's right, Mr. Officer!

WARD

Well you'd better start smoking buddy - and fast.

(RON sees who it is, backs away horrified. VERA, WARD and MILLY encircle him...HARVEY joins the group. WARD hands a mouthpiece to MILLY who hands it to HARVEY who hands it to VERA. She maternally sticks it in her son's mouth. RON's struggling subsides.)

The neutral zone.

RON (expressionless)

I hope you'll take that as a sign of my goodwill...I'm deeply truly sorry...I think the whole thing started on a fine spring evening in the old house so many years ago. We lived in an average neighborhood. I come from a very ordinary family.

The OTHERS

He's high!

(The lighting is focused on RON and MILLY; the others become dark silhouettes:)

RON: (expressionless)

I've wasted my life keeping a bubble afloat and now I know it. I'm high. I'm happy. Oh Harvey. Oh. Harvey.

MILLY

Harvey? Harvey? Who?

(as she wanders off:)

...What am I going to do with the rest of my life? Drink coffee at counters...doesn't matter . . . I'm high...I'm happy...am I happy? am I high?

(she's gone)

(In the shadows, the others are harsh impersonal hospital guards:)

HARVEY

He needs a shock.

WARD

He's a hopeless case.

VERA

You can only have five minutes.

(MILLY enters in a long coat and high heels.)

MILLY (bright attempt at chattiness)

Hey there, Ron, it's Milly, me, your sister! remember? Ron...

(He doesn't seem to hear her. During the following, each character steps forward slightly, then backs into the shadow:)

Ward says hello too! Our divorce came through the other day! Ward...he's still at the house, he wouldn't leave, said he couldn't somehow... he's already got some girl with him...so I left! I'm in town! With...a job!! I'm serving coffee at counters. And hamburgers, you know...and just watching the people chewing...sipping...nobody notices me at all...it seems right for now...I got a card, Ron, from Harri the other day...she's no longer with those religious people! She's living with some guy. She's pregnant again! Nice of her to keep writing. I never expected that. Guess I really didn't know her.

RON

Oh? Harvey.

MILLY

Long gone, Ron. Gone off looking for Harri; Oh, he sends cards every now and then. "Dear Milly, haven't found Harri yet but I will." But he never leaves an address so I can't tell him I know where Harri is and he can stop looking. Ron..Ron?

WARD

He's a hopeless case.

HARVEY:

He needs a shock.

MILLY (touching him)

Mother died last night. Her bones were powder, she went fast and bad, Every day after work I was at the hospital...she didn't seem to know me...she just kept talking about some long lost love...from her school days I thought..then I began to put her words together and realized she was going on about us - all of us - but like one person to her. She said it was a thwarted love and obviously the fault of those people, those other people, those damned people none of us had ever met. It gave me the creeps, to hear her...I could hardly believe I was listening to mother. She's dead, Ron. (pause. Harshly) So you can snap out of it! Like me!

(A long moment. RON slowly begins to look at her.
She takes him in her arms as if her own life depended on it.)

VERA

Amen.

End of play,

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