

**I'M HERBERT. PAGES 57-63. OLD MAN-OLD WOMAN. Two old people sitting on front porch rocking chairs, trying to remember who they are.**

## **I'M HERBERT**

*A very old man is sitting in one of two rocking chairs on a side porch. It is summer. He is bird-watching, his binoculars to his eyes.*

HERBERT. Baltimore oriole. (He shifts his glasses, scanning.) Bobolink. (Shifts again.) Rose-breasted grosbeak. (Shifts again and gets a little excited.) A black-billed cuckoo. (He speaks louder, to someone offstage.) Grace, I saw a black-billed cuckoo.

MURIEL. (A very old woman, dressed with faded elegance, comes onstage carrying a rose.) My name is Muriel, foolish old man. (She sits in the other rocker.)

HERBERT. I know your name is Muriel. That's what I called you.

MURIEL. You called me Grace. Grace was your first wife.

HERBERT. I called you Muriel. You're just hard of hearing and won't admit it . . . Grace . . . Grace . . . That's what I said!

MURIEL. There! You said it.

HERBERT. What?

MURIEL. Grace. . . . You called me Grace.

HERBERT. Silly old woman. You call me Harry. But I call you Grace.

MURIEL. Can't you hear yourself?

HERBERT. What?

MURIEL. I said can't you hear yourself?

HERBERT. Of course I can hear myself. It's you that can't hear. I say you call me Harry. Sometimes. Your second husband . . . and sometimes George . . . your first.

MURIEL. I never did. You're saying that because you call me Grace . . . and once in a while Mary.

HERBERT. You just don't hear.

MURIEL. What's my name?

HERBERT. Silly question . . . Muriel. You're Muriel . . . Grace was my first wife. Mary was . . . way long ago.

MURIEL. Mary was before Grace.

HERBERT. No she wasn't.

MURIEL. She was.

HERBERT. I should know who was my first wife, God damn it, woman.

MURIEL. That's safe. Just call me "woman." . . . We won't get confused. It's not very flattering, but it's better than being called the names of your other wives. My name's Muriel. Your name's Harry.

HERBERT. Did you hear? You called me Harry. Pot calling the kettle black.

MURIEL. You got me confused, that's all. You always could mix me up. Back then when we were going to Europe. . . .

HERBERT. We never been to Europe. That was Harry.

MURIEL. You and I went to Europe.

HERBERT. We did not. Grace and I went to Europe on our honeymoon. That's when I had money, before women had taken it all.

MURIEL. I've been to Europe with you.

HERBERT. You and Harry went to Europe.

MURIEL. I went to Europe with George, too.

HERBERT. Yes. Well, I'm Herbert.

MURIEL. We never been to Europe?

HERBERT. Singly, not together.

MURIEL. I think we have. You've forgotten.

HERBERT. I've got a perfectly good memory.

MURIEL. You can't even remember my name. (*Herbert looks at her and blinks.*) You and I were in Venice together. You're ashamed to remember it because of the scandalous good times we had. You loved me then.

HERBERT. I didn't love you when you were in Venice having a scandalous good time with whichever one it was . . . George or Harry. Which was it?

MURIEL. It was you.

HERBERT. I've never been to Venice in my life.

MURIEL. Yesterday you said you'd never been to Chicago . . . and I proved you wrong on that. Your second daughter by your first wife died there. We went to the funeral.

HERBERT. Grace?

MURIEL. The daughter's name?

HERBERT. No. Grace's girl.

MURIEL. Grace wasn't your first wife. Mary was.

HERBERT. Were you there? . . . I tell you, one was enough.

**THREE ONE ACT PLAYS.**

**IT'S A SIN TO TELL A LIE. PAGES 7-15. OLD MAN-OLD WOMAN**

**Characters are sitting in a doctor's office sharing thoughts from their**  
**lives.**

*The scene is a doctor's waiting room, somewhere in Northeastern Pennsylvania. The set need not be realistic, a few pieces of suggestive furniture and properly subdued lighting will create the desired effect. At curtain we see two people waiting for the doctor to come in. The Old Man, near eighty, wears an old tweed jacket, he has a well-trimmed Van Dyke beard and he is reading a book of poetry. Although he is dressed in neat clean clothes, one is immediately aware of the color clash between his shirt and coat. His most noticeable piece of clothing is a short green scarf wrapped loosely around his neck. The Old Woman should be dressed in muted pastels. Perhaps she has on a blue shawl and a lavender silk blouse. The effect of the color of their clothing should suggest the colorful but fading plumage of two old Irish birds nesting in old age.*

OLD MAN. (Closing his book, attempting to make conversation.)  
Ungodly, this heat is.

OLD WOMAN. (Pause.) Too hot to be wearin' that green scarf.

OLD MAN. (Pause.) Do you know if the doctor is in?

OLD WOMAN. August of Thirty-three it was worst.

OLD MAN. What was worst?

OLD WOMAN. August, 1933, it was a hundred and five on this day.

OLD MAN. (Pause.) You're blessed with a good memory.

OLD WOMAN. Droppin' like flies they were. In that bone-meltin' heat. Droppin' like September flies.

OLD MAN. (Pause.) This doctor'll be late for his own funeral.

OLD WOMAN. George was six months grown in me and I fainted on the street in the hot sun . . . nearly lost him.

OLD MAN. Ungodly, heat like this.

OLD WOMAN. Always waitin', waitin'. If it's not for doctors it's buses, if it's not letters it's elevators. Always waitin'.

## LOVERS AND OTHER STRANGERS

**MIKE AND SUSAN. PAGES: 23-24. MALE.** A young man about to get married is having a panic attack and wakes up his bride to be 4:00 am to get it off his chest.

### MIKE AND SUSAN

*As the CURTAIN rises, we come up on a girl's studio apartment. She is in bed sleeping. A MAN comes to the door, somewhat disheveled in appearance, obviously upset and begins to knock on the door.*

HE. Susan . . . Susan! . . . Susan, open the door!  
. . . Open the door, Susan! . . . Susan, open the door!  
Who's in there? Open the door, Susan! Susan!

SHE. Who is it?

HE. Who is it? It's me!

SHE. Oh, just a second. *(She starts taking curlers out of her hair.)*

HE. Who's in there? Who's in there, Susan? Open up!

SHE. *(She crosses Right to door.)* All right! All right!

*(She opens the door. He enters, crosses Left below sofa, to bedroom, then to kitchen, looking around.)*

HE. What were you doing? Who's there?

SHE. Nobody's here.

HE. Then what were you doing?

SHE. I was taking the curlers out of my hair.

HE. Why, who's coming? Huh?

SHE. It's four o'clock in the morning. Who would be coming at four o'clock in the morning?

HE. You tell me who would be coming at four o'clock in the morning. *(He starts looking around.)*

SHE. What?

HE. I'll tell you "what." A friend of mine caught his girl friend with some guy in the back seat of a car two days before the wedding. You know what he did, he just

## NAOMI IN THE LIVING ROOM

**DMV TYRANT. PAGES 79-83. MALE-FEMALE ANY AGE. A man has a frustrating conversation with a DMV agent.**

*Scene: A window at the Division of Motor Vehicles. Sign on desk reads "Division of Motor Vehicles."*

*A Woman at a window (DMV Lady), approached by a Customer.*

CUSTOMER. Is this Window 7?

DMV LADY. Yes?

CUSTOMER. I'm afraid something rather complicated has happened with my driver's license.

DMV LADY. I'm sorry to hear that. What happened? *(With great disinterest she begins to read a book.)*

CUSTOMER. Well, you see, I moved here from another state, and I let my driver's license lapse ... and.... *(Waits.)*

DMV LADY. *(Looks up.)* Yes?

CUSTOMER. Should I wait until you finish?

DMV LADY. I don't think so. It's a very long book.

CUSTOMER. But ... are you listening to my problem?

DMV LADY. I can read and listen at the same time. Go on. *(Goes back to reading.)*

CUSTOMER. Oh. Well. Uh, anyway, I took the driving test again, and I passed it and got this temporary license, which has now expired, and I've never gotten my permanent one, and when I called about it, they said they had lost me in the computer, and they had no record of my taking the test, and so they couldn't send me my license even though I did take and pass the test. *(Pause.)* Your turn to say something.

DMV LADY. Wait a minute. *(Reads some more. Looks up.)* I wanted to finish the paragraph. Now what seems to be the matter?

CUSTOMER. Well...

DMV LADY. In one sentence.

CUSTOMER. I haven't received my drivers license.

DMV LADY. Let me see if you're on the computer.

CUSTOMER. I'm not on the computer.

DMV LADY. What is your name?

CUSTOMER. I'm not there.

DMV LADY. How do you spell that?

CUSTOMER. I'm not on the computer. I went to Window 3, and they told me there was no record of me on the computer.

DMV LADY. I am not Window 3, I am Window 7, and I need to know your name.

CUSTOMER. James Agnes.

DMV LADY. Is that a as in aardvark, g as in *gesundheit*, n as in nincompoop, e as in excruciating, s as in seltzer water, pause pause, j as in Jupiter, a as in Agnes, m as in Mary, e as in excruciating, and s as in slow, lingering death?

CUSTOMER. Yes.

DMV LADY. (*Types into computer; looks.*) Well, you're not on the computer.

CUSTOMER. I told you I wasn't.

DMV LADY. Fine. I will give you an award at the end of the day. How else may I help you?

CUSTOMER. I ... I would like to get my permanent license.

DMV LADY. I'm sorry. There is no record of you on the computer.

CUSTOMER. Yes, but I have my temporary license. (*Hands it to her.*)

DMV LADY. This temporary license has expired.

CUSTOMER. Yes, I know it's expired.

DMV LADY. It is no longer a valid license.

CUSTOMER. I know that. That's why I want my permanent one. I hadn't noticed it hadn't come in the mail until this one had already expired. I had presumed everything was all right.

DMV LADY. What a funny thing to do. (*Suspicious.*) If you do not have a valid driver's license, how did you get here to the Division of Motor Vehicles?

CUSTOMER. I took a taxi.

DMV LADY. Can you prove that to me?

CUSTOMER. What?

DMV LADY. Did you keep a receipt from the taxi?

CUSTOMER. No, I didn't.

**THE MATCHMAKER.**

**PAGES 109-110. FEMALE MIDDLE AGE.** Mrs. Levi has a personal conversation with her late husband concerning her upcoming marriage.

*(MINNIE rises and starts to waltz, trance-like, across below Left sofa.)*

MISS VAN HUYSEN. Come along, everybody. We'll all go into the kitchen and have some coffee

*(CORNELIUS joins MRS. MOLLOY and exits with her to kitchen. MALACHI and CAEMAN follow. AMBROSE follows them. MISS VAN HUYSEN takes VANDERGELDER out.)*

*(As they go.)* Horace, you'll be interested to know there are two Ermengardes in there—

*(MINNIE continues her waltz round the Left sofa and out to the kitchen. MRS. LEVI, left alone, comes to front of Right sofa, addressing an imaginary Ephraim down Right.)*

~~Ephraim Levi, I'm going to get married again. Ephraim, I'm marrying Horace Vandergelder for his money. I'm going to send his money out doing all the things you taught me. Oh, it won't be a marriage in the sense that we had one—but I shall certainly make him happy, and—Ephraim—I'm tired, I'm tired of living from hand to mouth, and I'm asking your permission, Ephraim—will you give me away? *(Now addressing the audience she holds up the purse, crosses to below pouffe and sits.)* Money, money, money—it's like the sun we walk under: it can kill and it can cure. Horace Vandergelder's never tired of saying most of the people in the world are fools, and in a way he's right, isn't he? Himself, Irene, Cornelius, myself! But there comes a moment in everybody's life when he must decide whether he'll live among human beings or not—a fool among fools or a fool alone. As for me, I've decided to live among them. *(Crosses and sits down Right end of sofa L.)* I wasn't always so. After my husband's death I retired into myself. Yes, in the evenings, I'd put out the cat and I'd lock the door and make myself a little rum toddy; and before I went to bed I'd say a little prayer thanking God that I~~

was independent—that no one else's life was mixed up with mine. And when ten o'clock sounded from Trinity Church Tower I fell off to sleep and I was a perfectly contented woman. And one night, after two years of this, an oak leaf fell out of my Bible. I had placed it there on the day my husband asked me to marry him: a perfectly good oak leaf—but without color and without life. And suddenly—I realized that for a long time I had not shed one tear; nor had I been for one moment outrageously happy; nor had I been filled with the wonderful hope that something or other would turn out well. I saw that I was like that oak leaf and on that night I decided to rejoin the human race. On that night I heard many hours struck off from Trinity Church Tower. You and I have known lots of people who've decided—like Horace Vandergelder—like myself for a long time—not to live among human beings. Yes, they move out among them, they talk to them, they even get married to them; but at heart they have decided not to have anything to do with the human race. If you accept human beings and are willing to live among them you acknowledge that every man has a right to his own mistakes. (*Rises to down Centre.*) Yes, we're all fools and we're all in danger of creating a good deal of havoc in the world with our folly; but the one way to keep us from harm is to fill our lives with the four or five human pleasures which are our right in the world: *and that takes a little money.* Not much, but a little. The difference between a little money and no money at all is enormous and can shatter the world; and the difference between a little money and an enormous amount of money is very slight and that, also, can shatter the world. Money—pardon my expression—money is like manure: it's not worth a thing unless it's spread around encouraging young things to grow. (*Sits on pouffe Centre.*) Anyway, that's the opinion of the second Mrs. Horace Vandergelder.

~~VANDERGELDER. (*Enters up Centre with two cups of coffee. With his back, he closes both doors. Coming Left of her.*) Miss Van Huysen asked me to bring you this.~~