

# **LESTER AND JERRY & THE CHEMICAL PLANT**

**BY TARA MEDDAUGH**

**EXCERPT**



**A ONE-AT PLAY**

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## EXCERPT

For the [complete play, visit:](#)  
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**LESTER AND JERRY  
&  
THE CHEMICAL PLANT**

a one-act play  
from

[The Victory Garden Plays](#)

by Tara Meddaugh

**EXCERPT**

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Character Breakdown

(2 male)

LESTER                      Male. 50s-60s. The wealthy owner of a chemical plant. Old friends with Jerry.

JERRY                        Male. 50s-60s. An accountant, although not Lester's accountant. Old friends with Lester.

Setting

Hastings-on-Hudson, New York. 1940s. The study inside of a large house/estate.

Time

Early 1940s, during WW2. Spring.

**\*See playwright and production notes**, on page 18, for more information on the time period, setting, victory gardens, and [\*The Victory Garden Plays\*](#), from which this one-act play comes.

## EXCERPT

AT RISE: Hastings-on-Hudson, 1940s. The study inside the house of LESTER, a wealthy businessman in his 50s, and owner of a large chemical plant. JERRY, an old friend of Lester's, around the same age, sits at a table with a ledger. LESTER stands behind him, with a drink and a newspaper. He paces a bit. Takes a sip.

LESTER

You're sure you wouldn't care for a drink?

JERRY

Lester.

LESTER

What is it?

JERRY

You've asked me that five times.

LESTER

Have I? Well, I'll leave the counting to the accountant.

JERRY

Then it's five and a half times, to be exact. One time you started to ask, but the maid came in with the newspaper and interrupted you.

LESTER

It's hot, that's all. And after our tennis match this morning, I should think you'd want a drink.

JERRY

Your cook gave me that lemonade. Why do I need whiskey?

LESTER

Did you know she made it from lemons our niece gave us?

JERRY

No.

LESTER

She grew them in Harrison. Can you believe what this war has people growing? Lemons? In New York state? Now Anna wants to grow them. She doesn't have a green thumb, Jerry.

JERRY

Kinda nice she still wants a Victory Garden.

LESTER

Nice or...obligated maybe. So many people in town don't have the land for gardens at all, but we have so much land, and everybody can see it...I think she feels guilty if she doesn't use it.

JERRY

Guilt is a motivator.

LESTER

I just feel bad for all the vegetables she tries to grow but kills.

JERRY

Will you stop pacing? Why are you so nervous? Maybe read that newspaper in your hand, why don't you?

LESTER

There's nothing in here I want to read.

(leafing through the newspaper)

Invasions, bombings – it's all, oh—Charlie Chaplin got married again. 4<sup>th</sup> wife. Huh. Look at that, Jerry. Look at that photograph.

(shows him the paper)

His wife's a teenager! Chaplin's, what, our age?

JERRY

In his 50s, I think.

LESTER

Is this good news or not?

(JERRY looks at the ledger and turns a page and compares.)

JERRY

This amount at FAO Swartz, Lester—

LESTER

Why do I even open this?

(puts the newspaper down)

What?

JERRY

FAO Swartz?

LESTER

Oh, that's Anna. She, she buys Christmas gifts for the children.

JERRY

Which children?

LESTER

All of them.

JERRY

All of them—where? Your children are grown.

LESTER

All of the children here. In Hastings. Most of their parents don't have two nickels to rub together. We do.

(pause)

So.

JERRY

Okay.

LESTER

Anna gets so excited come December 1<sup>st</sup>. She even wears a Mrs. Claus costume into the toy store to pick out the items. Thank God she doesn't make me go with her, but it's awfully swell seeing her get dressed. It makes her happy, so. Why not?

JERRY

Why not. If money is no object.

LESTER

Well, that's what you're going to tell me, isn't it?

JERRY

Lester.

(puts books down)

You've had this chemical plant for a long time. I can talk about the pensions and healthcare you give your employees, your income, your expenses. But you know all this. You're very generous, but you're very successful. And you have many other accountants whom you pay to make sure you stay that way. You don't need me to tell you any of this.

(pause)

Why did you really ask me here?

LESTER

No one else challenges me at tennis.

JERRY

Lester.

LESTER

I missed you! You move to New Jersey and I never see you.

JERRY

Lester.

(pause)

LESTER

The government has requested to use my chemical plant. For the war.

(pause)

JERRY

Aw, gee, Lester. I didn't know.

LESTER

I haven't even told Anna.

(pause)

JERRY

What do they want to use it for?

**END OF EXCERPT**

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## PRODUCTION NOTES

*Jerry and Lester & The Chemical Plant* is a one-act play which is also part of a full-length piece entitled, [The Victory Garden Plays](http://www.tameddaugh.com/the-victory-garden-plays). [The Victory Garden Plays](http://www.tameddaugh.com/the-victory-garden-plays) is comprised of 5 10-minute plays and 2 monologue plays. You may find that full-length piece here:

[www.tameddaugh.com/the-victory-garden-plays](http://www.tameddaugh.com/the-victory-garden-plays)

## PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

In the early 1940s, "Victory Gardens" sprang up around the US in an effort for Americans at home to lend their support to armed forces and allies fighting overseas in WWII. These gardens of vegetables and fruits, grown anywhere from city rooftops and vacant lots to baseball fields and school yards, contributed an estimated 9-10 million tons of produce to Americans on the homeland, making up around 40% of all fruits and vegetables eaten in the US by 1942. By consuming produce grown within their own communities, not only were Americans able to supplement their rations and eat better, but more commercially grown and canned produce was now freed up to be shipped to the troops overseas. Westchester County in New York State had a very successful Victory Garden program, where in Pelham alone, there were around 1000 Victory Gardens and the community produced 88 tons of produce in 1943. When the war ended, so did the push for community gardens which were often left abandoned as the baby boom era began and neighborhoods returned to more pre-war structures.

When I began researching Victory Gardens as the backdrop for a play, I was drawn in by their momentum of purpose, success, loss and new beginnings. While the gardens went through these phases, so too did the personal lives of their caretakers during the war. From children to newlyweds, from widows to fathers—a Victory Garden could embody empowerment, guilt, connection, death. In this play, I give voice to seven short stories, chronicling a moment in time of men, women and children on the Homefront during WWII.

## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT



Tara is an award-winning playwright whose work has been performed and published around the world, from Alaska to South Africa, from New York to England. She's holds her MFA in Dramatic Writing from Carnegie Mellon University and is a member of the Dramatists Guild. She is the recipient of numerous theatrical awards, including The Sloan Screenwriting Fellowship, The Bradford Gromelski Jury Award, The Shubert Fellowship in Dramatic Writing, The New Works for Young Women [Actors] Award, The Write Stuff Award, and The Arts Alive Recovery NY Regrant Award. Her work has been published by YouthPLAYS, Smith & Kraus, Oxford Press South Africa, the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA), Limelight Editions/Applause Acting Series, The Hunger Journal, Meriweather Publishing, Applause Theatre & Cinema, Performer Stuff and Ace-Your-Audition. Tara's plays have been presented by theater companies such as Fusion Theatre, Mosaic Theater Company of DC, The Directors Company, Le Petit Theatre de Terrebonne, Theatre One, Tutti Bravi Productions, Westchester Collaborative Theater, Possibilities Theater, Tagragg Productions, One Armed Man, Oracle Theatre, Inc, The Acme Theatre Company, The Harlequin Players, Woman Seeking..., and countless universities, colleges and schools. Her work has showcased at festivals such as the Artists of Tomorrow Festival in NYC, The Bangkok Community Theatre Fringe Festival, the Pittsburgh New Works Series and the Last Frontier Theatre Conference in Alaska. Tens of thousands of teachers, actors and students worldwide have utilized her monologues for competitions, course material, auditions, performances, and showcases. Additionally, she has script consulted on several animation and VR projects and once wrote monologues for a receptionist robot long before AI was commonplace. Tara has taught Playwriting at Carnegie Mellon, the Pittsburgh Public Theatre, The Westport Country Playhouse, and numerous Theater workshops for children. She lives near NYC with her creative husband and kids, and fluffy cat, Kiwi.

For more information about Tara Meddaugh or her work,  
visit her website at [www.tameddaugh.com](http://www.tameddaugh.com).

For permission to perform, contact [tmeddaugh@gmail.com](mailto:tmeddaugh@gmail.com).