

# Ruth and Harry & The Dinner Party

BY TARA MEDDAUGH

EXCERPT

A photograph of a light-colored wooden surface. In the top right corner, there is a bunch of fresh green herbs, possibly basil. In the bottom right corner, there is a slice of rustic, golden-brown bread with a porous interior. The text 'A 10-minute play' is centered at the bottom of the image.

A 10-minute play

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# EXCERPT

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*Ruth and Harry & The Dinner Party* was first performed as part of Tara Meddaugh's *The Victory Garden Plays* on February 17, 2019, in New Rochelle, NY with the following cast:

Ruth *Ali Rose Harton*

Harry *Alex Wade*

Directed by Billie Tucker

# EXCERPT

*Ruth and Harry & The Dinner Party*

Character Breakdown

(1 female, 1 male)

RUTH                      A woman in her 20s.

HARRY                     A man in his 20s.

Setting

1940s, during WW2. A dining room in a house in Harrison, NY (suburbs of NYC). The set may be minimal, merely an impression of location. Summer.

\*See playwright and production notes, on page 16, for more information on the time period, setting, victory gardens, and *The Victory Garden Plays*, from which this 10-minute piece comes.

**EXCERPT**

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AT RISE: Early 1940s, during WW2. Summer. HARRY and RUTH, both around 25 years old, are in their dining room, in Harrison, NY. They're preparing for friends to arrive for a dinner party that evening. HARRY sits at the table drinking lemonade. RUTH is setting the table.

HARRY

Oh, Ruth. I'm the luckiest man alive.

RUTH

Well, it's freshly squeezed. That's the difference. That's what you're tasting.

HARRY

Is that it?

RUTH

Well, of course it is, Harry. You can't compare anything really to homemade lemonade from homegrown lemons. Just leave enough for The Carsons. They should arrive in less than half an hour.

HARRY

I just can't get over that you grew lemons in Harrison!

RUTH

Well, it takes an awful lot of care, Harry. They're not natural to this region.

HARRY

I understand that.

RUTH

I've really garnered a green thumb these past few years.

HARRY

You have.

RUTH

Everyone on Halstead knows my garden is the most plentiful. Now, that's not bragging, Harry. You'd know I'd never brag. I'm not crass like Betty with that perfumed hair at church and muttering those cuss words in the powder room.

HARRY

Of course you're not crass.

RUTH

It's just the truth and if I can't speak the truth to my own husband, who can I?

HARRY

Exactly right, Ruth.

RUTH

Some of the girls are resentful though. It comes with the territory of being the best at anything, shame as it is. I've encountered this all my life

HARRY

And you remain so sweet.

RUTH

Well, I try to be. I always look at those less fortunate than myself and gosh, so many girls in school had such a hard time with Math although I can't see why, but I never said that to them because I was raised to be gracious. And don't you know I let Betty cheat off of me even though it really didn't matter if she did well in Math or not because even then, I just knew she was going to get pregnant before she finished High School, and well, don't you know that's exactly what she did.

HARRY

Not everyone is as educated as you.

RUTH

Oh, I know this, Harry, and that's what I'm trying to say. You know I've always extended myself to everyone asking for nothing in return, so you can imagine this burden of others' jealousies toward me can be a bit trying.

HARRY

Well, you can ignore them.

RUTH

Absolutely, Harry. You're always so wise in your advice. Ignoring them is absolutely the way to go when they show these resentments. I mean, what else can I do? With my garden, well, can I help it that I've read books and know the best ways to raise the best produce in our area? I'm only trying to be a good citizen. Help out the troops and our neighbors here, as well.

HARRY

You're very generous with your vegetables.

RUTH

I am, aren't I? You know I only keep five yellow squash a week, unless we're having company over, like tonight, and I want to make a salad or a nice zucchini bread, then I might keep a few more. But on a typical week, I give the rest to that elderly couple down the street and that family on Park. You know the one? With those 7 children? My goodness that's a lot of children. Thank God we're not Catholic.

HARRY

Well.

(pause)

RUTH

Would you like to be Catholic, Harry? Your mother! Think of your mother! Remember how she agreed only to marry your father if he'd let her raise all of you Protestant. She was very firm about that.

HARRY

I know.

RUTH

You can't turn your back on your mother's wishes just because she's gone to be with the Lord, God rest her soul.

HARRY

That's not what I'm saying.

RUTH

Well, I hope it isn't because there is no way I'm putting the real flesh and blood from a body into my mouth for communion. You know I like all the blood cooked out of my steak. I'm just fine with crackers and grape juice.

HARRY

I'm talking about the children, Ruth.

(pause)

RUTH

What children?

HARRY

The family on Park. The seven children.

(pause)



RUTH

Oh.

(pause)

I gave them a pumpkin yesterday too. I saw the kids chewing on the seeds just this morning when I walked to Betty's house.

HARRY

I don't mean the vegetables. I mean, having kids. Don't you think it would be nice to have a big family?

RUTH

Oh, dear, I didn't see this spot on the glass this afternoon. Can you pass me that cloth, Harry?

(HARRY passes her a cloth on the table. RUTH rubs at the glass)

HARRY

What do you think of that idea, Ruth?

(pause)

I don't mean we'd have to have seven children. I just mean, well, maybe three or four or five. Lots of families have five. Your friend, Betty. Doesn't she have four already and she's 25, same age as you.

(pause)

RUTH

Should we pour the wine in the decanter now? How long should it sit?

HARRY

Ruth, you always said you wanted children.

(RUTH continues to set the table)

RUTH

We want a lot of things in life, don't we, Harry?

HARRY

I suppose we do. But. Is this something you don't want anymore? You're supposed to be truthful with me, aren't you, Ruth?

RUTH

Harry...

HARRY

Have you changed your mind? I know you're a very fine teacher and maybe...Is that what you want to do instead of having children?

RUTH

No...

HARRY

Because when we got married, I supported you being a teacher, but I thought there would come a time when you wanted to be a mother more.

RUTH

It's complicated.

HARRY

How is wanting to be a mother complicated?

END OF EXCERPT

For the complete play, *Ruth and Harry & The Dinner Party*, visit:

<http://www.tameddaugh.com/ruth-and-harry-the-dinner-party>