

TARA MEDDAUGH'S
**THE VICTORY
GARDEN PLAYS**

A FULL-LENGTH PLAY IN ONE ACT
&
SEVEN PARTS

EXCERPT



THE VICTORY GARDEN PLAYS

By Tara Meddaugh

A Full-length play in
Seven Movements

EXCERPT

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EXCERPT

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The Victory Garden Plays

Character Breakdown: No doubling (1 female child, 7 female, 4 male)

| | |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| RUBY | A girl of around 9 years old. |
| MILLIE | A young woman of around 18 years old. |
| RUTH | A woman in her mid-20s. |
| HARRY | A man in his mid-20s. |
| GRACE | A woman of around 55. |
| FRANK | A man in his 50s. |
| JERRY | A man in his 50s. |
| ALICE | A young woman of around 18 years old. |
| DOROTHY | A young woman in her 20s. |
| JOHN | A young man in his 20s. |
| OLDER RUBY | A woman in her early 60s. |
| OLDER MILLIE | A woman in her late 60s. |

Setting

Setting remains in and outside of homes (apartment rooftop, kitchen, study, front yard, community garden) in Westchester County, NY, in the 1940s to the 1990s. The set may be minimal, merely an impression of locations, if needed, flowing one into another.

Doubling Options

Cast: 1 female child, 4 female, 3 male

| | |
|--------------|---|
| RUBY | A girl of around 9 years old. |
| WOMAN 1 | Around 17-20 years old, playing MILLIE, ALICE |
| WOMAN 2 | Around mid-20s, playing RUTH, DOROTHY |
| WOMAN 3 | Around 50s-60s, playing GRACE, OLDER RUBY |
| OLDER MILLIE | A woman in her late 60s. |
| MAN 1 | Around 20s, playing HARRY, JOHN |
| FRANK | A man in his 50s. |
| JERRY | A man in his 50s. |

Cast: 1 female child, 2 female, 2 male

| | |
|---------|--|
| RUBY | A girl of around 9 years old. |
| WOMAN 1 | A woman playing: MILLIE, ALICE, RUTH, OLDER RUBY |
| WOMAN 2 | DOROTHY, GRACE, OLDER MILLIE |
| MAN 1 | HARRY, JERRY |
| MAN 2 | FRANK, JOHN |

NOTE ABOUT THE EXCERPT

As this play contains 7 individual stories, the excerpt will consist of brief excerpts from each of the 7 stories. As such, the excerpt will not be the first 10-20 pages of the entire play, but will move from story to story.

For the complete play, visit:

<https://www.tameddaugh.com/the-victory-garden-plays>

EXCERPT FROM

**Movement 1:
RUBY AND MILLIE
&
The Dying Cucumbers**

AT RISE: Summer of 1943, on an apartment building rooftop in White Plains, NY. Night time. There are crates of dirt with vegetables, small fruits and herbs growing. RUBY, a girl of about 9 years old sings to the plants *The Andrew Sisters* song, “Shoo-Shoo Baby,” and might even dance around a little bit.

RUBY

(sings)

“Shoo, shoo, shoo baby. Shoo, shoo, shoo baby. Bye, bye, bye baby. Do-dah do-day. Your papa’s off to the...”

Oh, look at you, my darling. The cutest cucumber leaves in the whole wide world, I’d say!

(sings)

“Off to the seventh seas! Don’t cry baby. Don’t sigh baby. Bye, bye, bye baby.”

You have such pretty little spots, doncha? Keep growing. Keep growing for your mama. I’m your mama, aren’t I? I may look like a child, but I’m much more than that. You know that, doncha? I never forget about you and I never will! I’ll sneak you inside tonight if it’s too cold so you’ll be just perfect for Papa. Millie won’t see. Is it too cold for you? Little one? Are you getting a chill? Here. I’ll breathe on you. My “carbon dioxide.”

(breathes a “huff” onto the plant.)

You like that, right? Papa told me that you would. You’re his little cucumbers too. Now, you breathe on me.

(sticks her mouth right next to the plant again and breathes in deeply)

Mm! The best oxygen in all of White Plains! You want another gulp of mine?

(breathes out onto the plant again)

There. I’m gonna do this for you every night from now on, just like Papa says!

(holds onto her tiny pot. Sings)

“Do-dah do-day. When I come back—”

(MILLIE, around 17, and Ruby’s older sister, dashes in.)

(RUBY is startled and almost drops the pot.)

MILLIE

There you are!

RUBY

You almost made me drop it, Millie!

MILLIE

I was walking all over Main Street!

RUBY

You shoulda looked up here on the roof first.

MILLIE

I should have?

RUBY

Well, that's where I am.

MILLIE

Don't you talk wise to me. Last I knew, you were outside skipping rope with those younger girls.

RUBY

Don't get yourself in such a tizzy.

MILLIE

Well, of course I'm in a tizzy! I didn't know if you were dead, Ruby!

RUBY

Well, I'm not. Everything's in the groove.
(walks around to check on the plants)

MILLIE

Oh, look at you—calm and collected.

RUBY

You shouldn't yell around the vegetables.

MILLIE

You shouldn't be up here with the vegetables at this hour!

RUBY

They don't like loud voices.

MILLIE

They're not alive, Ruby.

RUBY

They are alive! Don't you understand Science?

MILLIE

You get my drift. They don't have feelings.

RUBY

Papa wrote me that you have to talk to them every night. Treat them nice. Or they won't grow.

MILLIE

Well, Papa wrote me you should go to bed when it gets dark.

RUBY

He did not!

MILLIE

Look, you've talked to them enough. I have to get up early for work tomorrow and can't have circles under my eyes on your account!

(grabs Ruby's arm)

RUBY

Don't pull me!

MILLIE

Then stop fighting me!

RUBY

If you make me drop my cucumber before Papa sees it, I'll hate you forever!

MILLIE

So dramatic, Ruby. You're the next Bette Davis.

RUBY

Go without me! I can come back on my own! I know how to go down the stairs.

MILLIE

I'm not leaving you on the rooftop! It's late! Mama would—

RUBY

Mama is still awake.

MILLIE

Mama is working. That's different.

(MILLIE pulls her. RUBY still holds the cucumber plant in the pot.)

RUBY

Well, I'm working too! Giving the plants company helps them breathe! Papa said so! Didn't you read his letter today? "I'm sure you have the best Victory Garden in all of the United States of America, my Ruby!" he wrote to me. Didn't you read?

MILLIE

I read it.

RUBY

Papa said my garden is feeding us in the city, so we can save the rest of the food to send to the soldiers!

(MILLIE stops pulling her)

MILLIE

It is a good thing you're doing, with the garden, but—

RUBY

So how are the soldiers gonna have enough food to give them strength if my plants all wilt because I don't talk to them tonight? And how are the soldiers gonna set Papa free if they don't have their strength?

MILLIE

Ruby...

RUBY

This is my job. I'm gonna do this every night now. I gotta help with the war.

(she shakes Millie's grip off her arm)

Until Papa comes back.

(she takes a step backwards away from Millie and stares her down)

END OF EXCERPT FROM MOVEMENT 1

Continue on next page for Excerpt from Movement 2: Ruth and Harry & The Dinner Party

EXCERPT FROM

**Movement 2:
RUTH AND HARRY
&
The Dinner Party**

AT RISE: 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?

RUTH

You wanted to serve in the war, didn't you?

HARRY

But I couldn't because of my feet.

(pause)

RUTH

And you serve a much needed role managing at the factory.

(pause)

HARRY

You saying you can't have kids, Ruth?

(pause)

Ruth?

RUTH

What?

HARRY

Are you saying you can't have kids?

(pause)

Answer me.

(pause)

Ruth.

END OF EXCERPT FROM MOVEMENT 2

Continue on next page for Excerpt from Movement 3: Grace and Peter & His First English Words

EXCERPT FROM

**Movement 3:
GRACE AND PETER
&
His First English words**

AT RISE: GRACE is a woman around 50-60. She speaks out to the audience.

GRACE

Children are supposed to pick up languages quickly. At least that's what the Hebrew Orphan Asylum tells me and they're the ones that placed this little Jewish German boy with me some time ago. They say this child, Peter is his name, they say it won't be long before he starts to speak English. That I shouldn't worry that he only says, "*Ich will nach hause gehen,*" which he says so many times that I write it down and bring it to the HOA and they tell me it means "I want to go home."

(pause)

He wants to go home.

(pause)

Well.

(pause)

Now whenever he says those German words, you know what I do? I bring him right into my dining room where I have my fine candles on the table, in the silver holders my mother gave me and her mother gave her. And I use a match and I light those candles and I look into the flames and I say, "*hause*"—because I assume that's the word which means house or home in both English and German, and I point to the flames and I say it again, "*hause. Hause.*" And he starts to put his finger in the flame—every time she does this—and I pull him back and give his hand a little slap. And I said "*nein hause*" this time, and I shake my head, and point to the flame and say again "*nein hause.*"

(pause)

I don't know if he understands his whole city has been burned to the ground. I blow the candle out.

(pause)

I don't want to scare him, but I don't know how to handle children. I've never raised them myself. But doesn't he know why his parents put him on that boat all by himself to New York City? Did anyone at the HOA explain to him why a 55-year-old Catholic widow from Chappaqua is taking him in?

(pause)

I don't speak German. I don't know any Jewish customs. Or even what children like to play with. Mine all died before they could even crawl.

(pause)

I'm simply trying to do something good. Because I can. So I should. And I have no one else to pass my silver candleholders onto. And no child should—Jewish or Polish or...--no child should ever...*(shakes her head)* No...no...

(pause)

So I look for a way to make him talk. To say something besides “*Ich will nach hause gehen.*”
(pause)

We’re at the library this morning. Books with pictures. This is a good start, I believe. I find *The Little Engine that Could*, a train carrying toys and food to good little girls and boys. He’ll like this, I think. We’re on our way to sit down, we’ll read it together here, and he sees a poster. This is one of those patriotic posters with a drawing of Uncle Sam—you know, red and white striped slacks, with a blue blazer, and top hat with white stars on it. And he’s standing by a kind of farm, rows of vegetation, and there’s a pile of tomatoes and peppers and such in the right hand corner. The poster has writing telling us that gardens will cut food costs or some such phrasing by the department of agriculture and I recall something similar to this from the last war. And Peter, he’s...

(pause)

Well. My my. He’s riveted. He’s staring at the poster and touches the tomatoes with his palm. I nod and tell him, “It’s a garden. See? Tomatoes? Lettuce?” Then I take a step to move, but he doesn’t follow me, so I put my hand on his shoulder to turn him to walk, but he won’t move. So I hold his arm and pull him a little, but he shakes me off, staring at this picture. So I...I stare at it too.

(pause)

“You like the garden?” He looks up at me.

(pause)

“*Garten,*” he says. “*Mein garten.*”

(pause)

“You have a garden?” I ask him. He now touches the rows of dirt in the poster. “*Mein garten,*” he says.

(pause)

“You had a garden,” I say. “In your home. *Garten. Hause.*”

(pause)

He nods. “*Ich will nach hause gehen.*” He puts his cheek to the tomatoes in the corner. “*Mein garten.*”

(pause)

“I can’t take you home, Peter. No home. *Nein hause. Nein hause.*”

(pause)

Then I think for a moment.

END OF EXCERPT FROM MOVEMENT 3

Continue on next page for Excerpt from Movement 4: Frank and Jerry & The Chemical Plant

EXCERPT FROM

**Movement 4:
FRANK AND JERRY
&
The Chemical Plant**

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

FRANK

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

JERRY

Frank.

FRANK

What is it?

JERRY

You've asked me that five times.

FRANK

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.

FRANK

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?

FRANK

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

JERRY

No.

FRANK

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

But she still has one of those Victory Gardens?

FRANK

She does. So many people here don't have the land for gardens at all, but we have so much land, and the community can see it, so I think she feels guilty if she doesn't use it. Even if she kills half the vegetables she tries to grow.

JERRY

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

FRANK

There's nothing in here I want to read.

(leafing through the newspaper)

Invasions, bombings – it's all, oh—Charlie Chaplin got married again. 4th 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.

FRANK

Is this good news or not?

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

JERRY

This amount at FAO Swartz, Frank—

FRANK

Why do I even open this?

(puts the newspaper down)

What?

JERRY

FAO Swartz?

FRANK

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

JERRY

Which children?

FRANK

All of them.

JERRY

All of them—where? Your children are grown.

FRANK

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.

FRANK

Anna gets so excited come December 1st. 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.

FRANK

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

JERRY

Frank.

(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?

FRANK

No one else challenges me at tennis.

JERRY

Frank.

FRANK

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

JERRY

Frank.

(pause)

FRANK

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

(pause)

JERRY

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

FRANK

I haven't even told Anna.

(pause)

JERRY

What do they want to use it for?

FRANK

Photographic development. For the Signal Corps.

JERRY

Okay. So. Are you worried about your own production? They're gonna take care of you, I'm sure.

FRANK

It's not the money.

JERRY

What is it then? We all gotta make sacrifices. My 19-year-old son is over there.

FRANK

Anna prays for Richie every night. He's on her list.

JERRY

Thank you.

(pause)

FRANK

It's not just for the Signal Corps though. What they want to do.

(pause)

JERRY

So what is it?

FRANK

I can't...uh...Jerry, they want to make something else here.

JERRY

Well.

(pause)

Well, then you make it.

(pause)

FRANK

(quietly)

Our government says we're not using chemical warfare. The Nazis are. They're killing people with it. Children too, you know that? But we're not like them. We're not supposed to be like them.

JERRY

And we aren't. Frank, we are nothing like the Nazis.

FRANK

I know we're not really like them.

JERRY

Nothing like them.

FRANK

But, Jerry...our government, they want to... You're my oldest friend and I'm not allowed to tell you. And I need to tell you.

END OF EXCERPT FROM MOVEMENT 4

Continue to next page for excerpt from Movement 5: Alice and Richard Ayers & The Adventure of the Seed

**Movement 5:
ALICE AND RICHARD AYERS
&
The Adventure of the Seed**

ALICE

I'm mailing this seed today, and it will go on a greater adventure than I have ever been on. It'll start right here, in New Rochelle. A seed I've taken from a watermelon I've grown in our backyard victory garden and dried over two weeks. It's sealed in an envelope and it'll be picked up tomorrow morning by Mr. Parker, our mailman. It will ride in a US Postal truck to New York City, then it will find a good long rest on a boat, or maybe a plane, which will cross the Atlantic Ocean to France. From there, it will bump along in a military vehicle, until it reaches its final destination and infantry division, and into the warm, fair hands of Mr. Richard Ayers.

(pause)

Richard is most likely in the trenches, because he's 19, and in the army. The trenches often fill with mud, and it's hard to sleep because he hears the bombs in the distance and he wonders if the sounds are getting closer or he is just imagining it. It's getting harder to tell what is really happening anymore, because none of it seems real when he thinks about it.

(pause)

A year ago, when we fell in love, he was in High School, hoping to become a university professor one day. He liked English literature courses and playing the clarinet, and he had never killed anyone, or thought of killing anyone before. Then they bombed Pearl Harbor, and this caused him to be filled with a new kind of hatred he had only read about, and it made him put his books down and begin his own, real, journey that maybe he will write about one day.

END OF EXCERPT FROM MOVEMENT 5

***Continue to next page to read Excerpt from Movement 56: Dorothy and John & The Wooden
Crate with Splinters***

EXCERPT FROM
Movement 6:
DOROTHY AND JOHN
&
The Wooden Crate with Splinters

AT RISE: DOROTHY, a woman around 20 years old, is outside her small house in Pelham, NY, not too long after WWII has ended. There are wooden crates which used to house Victory Gardens, but are now no longer in use. JOHN, a man around the same age, is lifting one of these crates which he has emptied.

DOROTHY

Careful with your back, please! Aren't you supposed to—didn't you learn to bend at the knees when you're lifting?

JOHN

It's not that heavy.

DOROTHY

Well it's certainly not light.

JOHN

I've done this at a dozen houses in Pelham.

DOROTHY

All the more reason you should protect your back.

JOHN

All the more reason I know what I'm doing.

DOROTHY

Fine. Survive the war to die at home.

JOHN

I won't die in your backyard. I promise you.

(pause)

DOROTHY

I don't like promises from men.

(pause)

They're rarely kept.

(pause)

JOHN

I'm sorry for your loss, Mrs. Rogers.

DOROTHY

Oh. Thank you. Of course, I'm just one of many.

JOHN

That doesn't—that doesn't make it any less—sorrowful. I should have said something the minute I got here.

DOROTHY

Well, I put you right to work, didn't I? That's not your fault.

JOHN

Still. My manners are poor. You don't—you don't deserve that—that—disrespect.

DOROTHY

It's okay.

JOHN

I'm very sorry for your loss, and grateful for the sacrifice your husband made to keep our country and the entire world safe.

DOROTHY

Oh.

(pause)

Well.

(pause)

Thank you for that.

(pause)

Thank you for your service, as well.

(pause)

JOHN

I'm gonna bring the crate to my truck.

DOROTHY

Of course.

(JOHN exits with a crate.)

(DOROTHY walks to the remaining crate and touches it gently with her hand, lost in her thoughts)

(JOHN returns and looks at her for a moment)

JOHN

You could get a splinter, Mrs. Rogers.

DOROTHY

Pardon me?

JOHN

You could get a splinter if you run your hand along the crate like that.

(DOROTHY backs away from the crate)

DOROTHY

You must be thirsty. It's so hot today.

JOHN

Hotter than usual for Autumn. Yes.

DOROTHY

Would you care for a drink?

JOHN

Wouldn't mind a 7Up if you got one.

DOROTHY

Right in the kitchen. I'll just be a moment.

JOHN

Thank you.

(DOROTHY exits)

(JOHN moves to another crate. He picks up a shovel and begins shoveling dirt out of it and spreading it on the ground.)

(DOROTHY returns with a bottle of 7Up)

DOROTHY

Here.

(hands him the bottle)

Just got a new refrigerator. GE. It's pink. Walt would never have let me get a pink refrigerator in his house, but what the hell? He's not here, right.

(pause)

What do you think?

(JOHN drinks)

JOHN

Ice cold. Thank you.

(pause)

Don't you want something?

DOROTHY

I only drink water and tea.

JOHN

But you keep 7Up in your pink refrigerator?

(pause)

DOROTHY

There are...kind men who help me out from time to time. I should be prepared, shouldn't I?

JOHN

You're a good hostess.

DOROTHY

I'm lonely.

JOHN

I'm sorry.

DOROTHY

I'm being horrible in admitting that, aren't I?

JOHN

Half the world is lonely now.

DOROTHY

Yes, but we shouldn't mention it to our best friend—let alone a...I was going to call you a stranger. Isn't that odd?

JOHN

Do I feel like a stranger to you?

END OF EXCERPT FROM MOVEMENT 6

Continue to next page for Excerpt from Movement 7: Ruby and Millie & The Old Chemical Plant

EXCERPT FROM
Movement 7:
RUBY and MILLIE
And the Old Chemical Plant

Hastings-on-Hudson, Summer in the 1990s.
RUBY, now in her early 60s, and MILLIE,
now in her late 60s, are outside in a
community garden adjacent to the Senior
Apartments where they live. MILLIE is
working near a fig tree.

MILLIE
Hand me those clippers.
(points)

RUBY
Where are they?

MILLIE
Next to the gloves on the ground over there.

RUBY
I can't see them.

MILLIE
Well, put on your glasses!

RUBY
I can't.

MILLIE
Why can't you, Ruby?

RUBY
I was watching Seinfeld last night.

MILLIE
Yes...

RUBY
And the phone rang.

MILLIE
Okay.

RUBY

I wasn't sure if I should pick it up. I don't mind picking up the phone if it's a repeat, but this was a new episode last night. Did you see it, Millie?

MILLIE

No, I didn't. I was talking with Adrian last night.

RUBY

How nice he called all the way from England. Well, you missed a good one. But they're all good ones. That sense of humor, I tell you, Millie, that Jerry Seinfeld knows how to bring out the humor in everyday life.

MILLIE

What happened to your glasses?

RUBY

I had a spot on my glasses that was driving me crazy. I had cut up a tomato right before Seinfeld. Stanley gave me the tomato from his garden, but wouldn't you know, the tomato juice sprayed right up on my glasses.

MILLIE

You didn't throw them out because of that, of course.

RUBY

Of course not. I wanted to wait for a commercial break to clean them, but the spot was irritating me so. I couldn't keep watching with that tomato juice in my way. So I began cleaning them on my blouse when the phone rang. I set them down on the couch, got up to go to the phone, because I decided it might have been you calling and maybe you were in trouble.

MILLIE

What kind of trouble do I get in? I was fine last night.

RUBY

Well, I didn't know that at the time. Of course, the phone call was only someone trying to sell me a Sunday newspaper. But the Senior Apartments gets the Sunday paper anyway. It's in the Rec Room. What do I need my own copy for?

MILLIE

Where are your glasses?

RUBY

I got off the phone and went to sit down to resume my show, and wouldn't you know I sat right on top of those glasses.

MILLIE
Oh, Ruby. Do you have a spare pair?

RUBY
I don't.

MILLIE
You should get a spare pair.

RUBY
Well, I'll get this pair replaced.

MILLIE
But get a spare, as well. This might happen again.

RUBY
But it might not.

MILLIE
You should be prepared.

RUBY
I'm not going to waste my money having two pairs of glasses at the same time.

MILLIE
Listen to me, Ruby—

RUBY
Don't raise your voice in front of the vegetables.

MILLIE
Do you still think they have feelings?

RUBY
You go on and get two pairs of glasses you don't need. And let me stick with one pair I do need.

MILLIE
Suit yourself but you'll regret it.

RUBY
You and I don't always regret the same things.

MILLIE
Fair enough.

RUBY

You may not believe me, but I've always been perfectly happy with no husband and no children.

MILLIE

I've never judged you for taking a different path than I.

RUBY

No?

MILLIE

No. I just enjoy being able to see clearly.

RUBY

(finds the clippers)

Here are the clippers. I managed to find them even without my glasses. Fancy that!

MILLIE

I suppose I should prune the fig tree since you don't have your glasses.

RUBY

I can see reasonably well up close. I could do it.

MILLIE

Just in case...I wouldn't want you to cut your finger.

RUBY

But you have those bad knees.

MILLIE

I'm 8 years older than you. I've earned those bad knees.

RUBY

It's not age—it's all that dancing you did with boys!

MILLIE

Well, that, I don't regret for a moment!

RUBY

We'll take turns pruning the tree.

MILLIE

I'll start. You can weed.

(MILLIE starts pruning. RUBY starts weeding.)

RUBY

How was your phone conversation with Adrian last night? Has he seen the Queen of England lately?

MILLIE

(chuckles)

No. But he's still loving London.

(pause)

He did tell me some news though.

RUBY

What news? Did he lose his job?

MILLIE

Heavens no! This is good news.

RUTH

A promotion? Although I can't imagine what role is higher than his.

MILLIE

There is always a role higher. But no, this is better than that.

RUTH

What is it, Millie? I can't possibly weed anything with this news hanging over me!

END OF EXCERPT FROM MOVEMENT 7

End of excerpts from *The Victory Garden Plays*

For the complete play, visit :

<https://www.tarmeddaugh.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 a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University's MFA program in Dramatic Writing. Her work has been presented by Fusion Theatre, The Directors Company, Le Petit Theatre de Terrebonne, Theatre One, Westchester Collaborative Theater, One Armed Man, Oracle Theatre, Inc, the Bobik Theatre Ensemble, The Acme Theatre Company, The Harlequin Players, *Woman Seeking...*, and numerous schools, universities and colleges including Gardner-Webb, Prince Williams, and Colgate. Her work has also showcased at 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. Students, teachers and actors world-wide have utilized her plays and monologues for competitions, Directing, Acting and Dramatic Literature courses and workshops in schools, colleges and theatres. Serial monologues she wrote were performed for two years by the internationally recognized receptionist-robot, Valerie. She has taught Playwriting and Screenwriting at Carnegie Mellon, the Pittsburgh Public Theatre, and for The Westport Country Playhouse, and she has led Creative Dramatics Workshops for children in underserved areas throughout New York and New Jersey. Additionally, she toured in a Children's Theatre Troupe, which she wrote for, co-directed, and performed in. Tara's work has been published by YouthPLAYS, Oxford Press South Africa, the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA), The Hunger Journal, Meriweather Publishing and Applause Theatre & Cinema. She is a two-time recipient of the Shubert Fellowship in Dramatic Writing, the Sloan Screenwriting Fellowship, the New Works for Young Women [Actors] Award, The Write Stuff Award, and is a member of the Dramatist's Guild. Tara has written children's books, short stories, a novel, and writes and records music in the chick-core rap band, [Girl Crusade](#). She has a knack for spotting four-leaf clovers, can recite all 50 states in less than 30 seconds and can't help but do different character voices when reading children's books (or really, any books!) out loud. She lives in Westchester County, NY, with her husband and two creative kids.

For more information about Tara Meddaugh or her work,
visit her website at www.tameddaugh.com.