

RUBY and MILLIE
&
The Old Chemical Plant

by Tara Meddaugh

A photograph of gardening supplies including soil, trowels, twine, and seedlings. The scene is set on a dark surface, possibly soil. In the foreground, two metal trowels with wooden handles are filled with dark soil. To the left, there is a bundle of light-colored twine. To the right, there is a piece of burlap fabric. In the background, several small black plastic trays and brown pots contain young green seedlings. The word "EXCERPT" is overlaid in a white box in the center of the image.

EXCERPT

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A Note About *Ruby and Millie & The Old Chemical Plant*

Ruby and Millie & The Old Chemical Plant was originally written and performed as part of the full-length play, *The Victory Garden Plays*. *The Victory Garden Plays* is a 7-piece collection of short individual plays encompassing journeys of individuals on the American home front during WW2.

The opening movement of *The Victory Garden Plays* portrays sisters, Ruby and Millie, as a child and teenager, struggling to maintain their rooftop garden, while their father is a prisoner of war overseas.

In the 4th movement, *Frank and Jerry & The Chemical Plant*, we experience the story of a wealthy chemical plant owner whose factory is requisitioned by the government and used for war purposes. In an effort to create his own meaningful legacy during war times, the plant owner decides to offer up some of his land to be used by the community for growing fruits and vegetables.

Five decades later, the chemical plant is gone, but the allotment of a community garden, in that space, still remains. And here, in *Ruby and Millie & The Old Chemical Plant*, now in their 60s, we meet Ruby and Millie again, fifty years after their rooftop garden. This is the final piece from *The Victory Garden Plays*. It may also stand alone as its own complete short play.

If you would like more information about the entire play, *The Victory Garden Plays*, please visit: www.tameddaugh.com/the-victory-garden-plays

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Ruby and Millie & The Old Chemical Plant

Character Breakdown

(2 female)

RUBY A woman in her early 60s, sister of Millie.
MILLIE A woman in her late 60s, sister of Ruby.

Setting

Hastings-on-Hudson, New York State. A community garden near senior living apartments.

Time Period

Summer in the 1990s.

**Ruby and Millie
&
The Old Chemical Plant**

Hastings-on-Hudson, New York State.
Summer in the 1990s. RUBY, in her early
60s, and MILLIE, 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?

I don't.

RUBY

You should get a spare pair.

MILLIE

Well, I'll get this pair replaced.

RUBY

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

MILLIE

But it might not.

RUBY

You should be prepared.

MILLIE

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

RUBY

Listen to me, Ruby—

MILLIE

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

RUBY

Do you still think they have feelings?

MILLIE

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

RUBY

Suit yourself but you'll regret it.

MILLIE

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

RUBY

Fair enough.

MILLIE

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

RUBY

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...

END OF EXCERPT

For more information or to purchase the entire play, *Ruby and Millie & The Old Chemical Plant*,
visit:

<https://www.tarmeddaugh.com/ruby-and-millie-the-old-chemical-plant>

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES
About *The Victory Garden Plays*

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 home front during WWII.

If you would like more information about the entire play, *The Victory Garden Plays*, please visit: www.tarameddaugh.com/the-victory-garden-plays

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.