

FROM RETROSPECT TO MILLIE'S WAR:

WRITING A CONFIGURATIVE PLAY

by

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ABSTRACT

Millie's War is a configurative play written as an experiment in form, an exercise exploring the possibilities of a more suitable structure for the content of an earlier written play.

In 1990, I wrote Retrospect, a play about a woman who discovers the answer to a mystery in her past: the death of her father in World War II. The story becomes a murder mystery, but in the end, Retrospect answers all the protagonist's questions about the death of her father. Retrospect is a linear play with horizontal movement. It tells a complete story. Traumatic memory rarely works in this way. Since the original play, Retrospect, failed to handle the issues of war, loss, and suffering in a manner that satisfied me, I wrote a new play.

The motivation for the new play was to take the internal traumatic experience of a young girl who lost her father in war, and see if I could represent dramatically how the mind goes through trauma. With Millie's War, I was interested to see if, by changing the shape of the play, I could better express the traumatic experience. With Millie's War, I explore what happens when logical, causal structure is transformed into a structure shaped by image, chance, juxtaposition, and movement.

A successful Millie's War shall mirror the pre-narrative stage of traumatic experience dramatically through a configurative structure. The play shall thus embody the chaos of a traumatized mind: it shall be repetitious and illogical as it replays snatches of

memory in a circular fashion. Rather than presenting a story, meaning and significance shall come through the power of its symbolic associations, like a dream.

Additionally, in the Millie's War script, I feel an audience response should be measured in a Brechtian sense rather than an Aristotelian sense. In other words, an audience, instead of empathizing with Millie, should be enlightened to the experience of trauma caused by war.

I provide a dramaturgical analysis of Millie's War to place it within the context of current playwriting practice. I explore elements of configurative form and their relationship to Samuel Beckett's Eh Joe, Bill T. Jones's Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land, Caryl Churchill's Top Girls, Robert Wilson's Einstein on the Beach, Suzan-Lori Parks's Imperceptible Mutabilities of the Third Kingdom, Joseph Chaikin with Jean-Claude van Itallie's The Serpent, and Joseph Chaikin with Susan Yankowitz's Terminal.

Additionally, I chronicle my writing process from the inspiration of the first play, Retrospect, through the writing and production processes of the new play, Millie's War.

Finally, I evaluate how well the new script held up as a tool for communicating my vision of the play, and I explore possible solutions for revisions.

INTRODUCTION

I am a white, middle class, heterosexual female. I am forty-two years of age, and I spent the first seventeen of those years in Dallas, Texas. Although I have returned to Dallas several times over the years, I have spent most of my life since childhood studying and working in various parts of the United States and abroad. I have lived in San Diego, California; Austin, Texas; Colorado Springs, Colorado; London, England; Boston, Massachusetts; New Orleans, Louisiana; Nantucket, Massachusetts; Lubbock, Texas; and Lynn, Massachusetts. For the past five years, I have taught high school English in Lynn, a diverse urban community just outside Boston.

I was raised in a politically active home where political and social issues were constantly debated. I am married to a New Zealander, and we continue this tradition of open discussion of global politics. On United States' policy, my political stance falls on the liberal end of the scale, and I have strong anti-war sentiments. These sentiments, I believe, come partly from my liberal political upbringing, partly from my diverse experience living, studying, and traveling in various parts of the world, and partly from my mother's story. My mother's father was killed in World War II when she was seven years old. And although she lives a successful and productive life, she is traumatized by the war and its direct impact on her life – the loss of her father. Her loss has also impacted my life by being an important influence on my political views.

The two plays in this dissertation, Retrospect and Millie's War, involve a subject close to home, but draw from my experience of people and their complex and often

conflicting views on war and patriotism. The event that shaped both plays is the death of my grandfather. I often imagine what my mother's childhood was like because it involved the mystery of my war-hero grandfather. What was compelling to me was that her loss was not worn outwardly, but a grief borne deep within her soul, a loss that she has spent a lifetime trying to comprehend. To lose a father at such a young age seems a cruel twist of fate to me. At the same time, I hold an utter fascination for this mysterious, mythical, handsome grandfather I never met. Up until August of 2004, three months before the first production of Millie's War, I knew of only one photograph of him: dressed in his United States' Army Captain's uniform, my grandfather stands on the front porch of a Cape Cod summer home, looking stoic and ready for anything; a young child, partially in the frame, out of his vision, reaches her arm out to him. My grandmother took the photo in March of 1943, the morning he shipped out. He was killed on the shores of Italy six months later, after he secured the beach for his fellow soldiers. To me, the image speaks volumes about the conflicting emotions surrounding the issues of duty, sacrifice, heroism, and loss. The loss of my grandfather therefore brought together for me my family attachments and my political viewpoints.

I wrote two plays, Retrospect and Millie's War, based on the germinal idea of my mother's loss of her father in war. Retrospect replaces my mother's story with a traditional, linear, causal plot, but fails to handle the issues of war, loss, and suffering effectively. I rewrote the play to better evoke the complex emotional experience of losing a loved one in war. Instead of telling a traditional story in a linear form, Millie's War arranges images, movement, and words in a configurative, vertical structure. To me, this

form better matches the experience I want to convey because it allows for the juxtaposition of verbal and non-verbal communication to capture the complex role perception plays in the experience of trauma and war.

CHAPTER I
THE PROJECT AND THE PROCESS

At a time when all sands are shifting, the search is automatically a search for form.

Peter Brook

Millie's War is a configurative play written as an experiment in form, an exercise exploring the possibilities of a more suitable structure for the content of an earlier written play.

In 1990, I wrote Retrospect, a play about a woman who discovers the answer to a mystery in her past: the death of her father in World War II. The story becomes a murder mystery, but in the end, Retrospect answers all the protagonist's questions about the death of her father. Retrospect is a linear play with horizontal movement. It tells a complete story. Traumatic memory rarely works in this way. Since the original play, Retrospect, failed to handle the issues of war, loss, and suffering in a manner that satisfied me, I wrote a new play.

The motivation for the new play was to take the internal traumatic experience of a young girl who lost her father in war, and see if I could represent dramatically how the mind goes through trauma. I took portions of the material of Retrospect and created Millie's War, a configurative play with vertical movement. (These two scripts, Retrospect and Millie's War, are included as appendices of this dissertation.) With Millie's War, I was interested to see if, by changing the shape of the play, I could better express the

traumatic experience of war. This chapter provides a structural analysis of Retrospect as it relates to the structural goals of the new script, Millie's War.

Retrospect presents the story of an adult woman who remembers a traumatic event from her past. Through its main character, Millie, Retrospect emphasizes characterization, especially in terms of psychological motivation. The action explains how Millie's chaotic state of mind is a result of a suppressed childhood memory. The memory involves a murder mystery that, once solved, allows Millie to heal. In the new play, Millie's War, the internal mind of the main character appears in isolation, without an external story explaining the traumatic situation. Therefore, Millie's War is designed to represent the chaotic emotional anxiety of a traumatized mind, and this difference required a new structure.

I changed the form of the play to mirror the *pre-narrative* stage of traumatic experience, a time before recovery begins. In her classic book, Trauma and Recovery, Judith Lewis Herman, Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and Director of Training at the Victims of Violence Program at Cambridge Hospital, describes traumatic memory in this stage:

...Normal memory is "the action of telling a story." Traumatic memory, by contrast, is wordless and static. The survivor's initial account of the event may be repetitious, stereotyped, and emotionless. One observer describes the trauma story in its untransformed state as a "pre-narrative." It does not develop or progress in time, and it does not reveal the storyteller's feelings or interpretation of events...[but proceeds] as a series of still snapshots or a silent movie.... (175)

Prior to recovery, survivors take fragmented images from their traumatic event, mix them with other memories from other events, and add them to related events throughout their

life. Traumatic memory is chaotic and illogical. Understanding of the traumatic events may not come until the survivor can "tell the story of the trauma...completely, in depth and in detail" (Herman 175). A logical narrative cannot emerge until a more evolved point in the recovery process. Retrospect exemplifies this later stage in the recovery process. Thus, Retrospect presents a story, while Millie's War depicts images of the traumatic memory prior to recovery.

These elements of the pre-narrative stage of traumatic memory (lack of story, fragmented images, fragmented characters, and repetitive random structure) lend themselves to a configurative structure. The term, "configurative," is taken from Sam Smiley's book Playwriting: The Structure of Action. Here, Smiley divides dramas into "two basic sorts of graphic form: one is *linear* and the other is *configurative*" (74). The term describes works "that have curved patterns of activity, broken episodic action, and asymmetrical or random arrangements" (Smiley, Rev. ed. 97-98). Configurative form is abstract, circular, and rhythmically repetitive, like a dream. Although it is not a commonly used term in theatrical critical theory, the phenomenon is well known. Richard Schechner refers to it as "open" form, in his book Public Domain, a collection of articles from The Drama Review. And configurative form follows the inspiration of the French surrealist Antonin Artaud's nonverbal, presentational form with an appeal to the senses rather than to rational thought. Therefore, I changed the form of Retrospect to mirror the pre-narrative trauma experience in its untransformed state; Millie's War was constructed configuratively to imitate the chaos of the traumatized mind. To examine this process, I focus on three areas of configurative dramatic structure: suppression of story,

fragmentary characters, and repetitive, non-naturalistic dialogue. In the following paragraphs, I explain each of these elements, how they differ from Retrospect, and how they work in Millie's War.

The first element of configurative structure is suppression of story. That is, “connections between people and other people, or between events and other events, are often more surreal than real; the relationships depend on imaginative association rather than causal progression” (Smiley, Rev. ed. 97). Suppression of story, in this sense, is tied to Marinetti’s 1924 Futurist Manifesto entitled “Anti-Psychological Abstract Theatre of Pure Forms and Tactilism” where abstractionism represented “the denial of copying external, materialistic appearances on stage and anti-psychology represented the opposite of Naturalistic drama” (Innes 1).

I discuss three devices used to suppress story including episodic plot structure, vertical movement, and the creation of images. First, in his Poetics, Aristotle defines an episodic plot as “one in which the sequence of episodes is neither necessary nor probable” (17). Smiley describes such action as *vertical*, meaning “the events are sequential in that they follow each other in performance, but they do not make up a causally connected series (73). Second, such vertical movement “deviates from logical progression of story, and instead creates suspense from tension, either from turmoil within characters or through juxtaposition” (Smiley, Rev. ed. 95-96). A third device used in configurative plays is the creation of images. In his book Off-Off Broadway Explosion: How Provocative Playwrights of the 1960's Ignited a New American Theatre, David Crespy explains:

The book Theatre and its Double, by French surrealist Antonin Artaud, persuaded many artists, particularly those associated with the Living Theatre, to work with Artaud's playwriting experiments that explored language in visceral ways, moving beyond linear meaning to drama that excited the five senses and created an emotional truth beyond the logic of traditional dramatic structure. (23)

Physical, non-verbal theatre, like pantomime, improvisation, and dance, are used to emphasize image versus story. For example, “the acting exercises out of which [Joseph] Chaikin’s Open Theatre pieces grew were direct explorations in non-verbal expression of somatic experience” (Innes 17).

In a linear plot, incidents are arranged in causal progression in a single line of successive events to tell a clear and comprehensible story with a causal beginning, middle and end. Retrospect is a full-length psychological drama in two acts involving a middle-aged woman, Millie, as she steps back in time to re-live the traumatic events leading up to her father's death.

Millie suffers from nightmares and seeks answers at the house where she lived as a child, the last place she saw her father alive, and the setting of her recurring nightmares. Triggered by her visit to the house, Millie goes back in time to confront not only the people and events from her past but also the child she was at the time. When the adult woman sees her nightmares within the context of her childhood memories, she realizes what she could not face as a child: she was the only witness (besides the killer) to the murder of her father’s best friend, a murder her father was blamed for. On the night of the murder, Colonel Hatfield has sent Millie’s father, Randall, to a meeting far from home, leaving Irene, Millie’s mother, and Millie home alone. Having had a past love affair with Irene and wanting to rekindle the affair, Colonel Hatfield makes his move. But Mick,

Randall's best friend, anticipates Hatfield's plan and confronts the Colonel before he enters the house. They fight and Mick is killed. The Colonel lays the blame on Randall and sends him into combat overseas in lieu of turning him in. This plan allows Hatfield to attempt to regain the love of Irene. When Randall is killed in battle, Irene escapes Hatfield by moving away with Millie. Had Millie revealed that she witnessed Hatfield murder Mick, Randall might have been spared.

Together, the child and the woman re-live the past. The child reveals to the woman the guilt that festers in her soul, and the woman teaches the child to understand all the tragic events she was too young to comprehend fully at the time. The guilt, from not having the courage to tell anyone, kept the answers suppressed in her subconscious. At the end of the play, once she understands the events of her past, she is content with her discoveries, makes peace with her father's ghost, and believes she can heal.

I like the story of Retrospect, but it does not tell my mother's story, nor does it tell the story I wanted to tell. Instead of being about loss and grieving, Retrospect tells a story about a mystery hidden in a woman's childhood. I created a complex plot that made logical sense. It is a story about a murder and about a little girl's guilt; however, it does not address the loss of a father to war. The war is merely a backdrop to the murder mystery. I wanted to write a new play that focused more on the traumatic experience itself: the emotional event of losing a loved one to war, the haunting, disturbing, lifelong process of pain, grief, confusion, anger, and struggle.

Consequently, to suppress story in Millie's War, I exchanged the linear plot structure of Retrospect for a configurative plot structure. The episodic scenes in Millie's

War move randomly with no adherence to a linear timeline or a complete story of Millie's life. The action takes place inside the mind of Millie on the eve of burying her soldier son, but this event is only revealed in pieces through a series of imagistic scenes. The play starts with a dance scene where Millie's mother and father meet, then moves to an improvisational scene with a baby doll and a symbolic character, half Uncle Sam, half Grim Reaper. The next scene depicts a meeting between Millie and her dead soldier father, and so on. Rather than telling Millie's story, the episodic series of images depicts the chaotic nature of her subconscious as it deals with yet another traumatic loss.

Next, to suppress story in Millie's War, the horizontal movement of Retrospect was disposed of in favor of vertical movement. The action of Retrospect is horizontal, with each incident leading to a logical objective. Millie's War, on the other hand, utilizes vertical movement. In Retrospect, suspense is created from the conflicts that arise as events unfold leading to the murder and Millie's discovery of her own role in it. In Millie's War, however, suspense is created through tension arising from the stress, anxiety, and anguish of Millie's traumatized mind. In defining vertical movement, Sam Smiley explains in his Playwriting: The Structure of Action that "conflict is a clash of forces, and tension is created through the stress, anxiety, dread, and anguish within characters" (73). Incidents occur for their own sake; one follows another in sequence, but is not causally related. Techniques such as ironic juxtaposition of iconic characters also create tension. In Last Night on Earth, dance/theatre artist Bill T. Jones discusses the ironic juxtaposition of iconic characters found in his dance theatre piece, "Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land." Jones explains "the resulting disorientation

[that results from such techniques] creates tension through a complex matrix of meanings between the real world and the world of the theatre” (208). In Millie's War, tension is created through iconic characters like Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper, who embodies such ironic juxtaposition. He also acts as a symbolic antagonist to Millie, representing both her nemesis and her escape from pain. Separating suspense from conflict allows the action to separate from story.

A third device used to suppress story in Millie's War is the creation of images to replace story. In a linear play like Retrospect, the causal progression of events lead logically to the end of the play when Millie understands what happened in her past and she can cope with this past. In a configurative play like Millie's War, images replace story. Scenes focus on an image rather than the text's connection to the action. Millie's War explores the emotional truth of the traumatic experience by distancing logical connections between text and image. For example, the Lullaby Scene creates an image of a woman rocking a baby and laying the baby down to sleep. Uncle Sam as the Grim Reaper steals the baby. Lyrics to an ancient lullaby create the only text. The lyrics add to the mood of the scene but do not connect to the action. In Millie's War, instead of a story about Millie, the collection of scenes creates a surreal picture of her troubled mind.

Thus, in Retrospect, story controls the play; situation is important and presents a rational reality; but in Millie's War, story is suppressed and incomplete. There is merely movement from one scene to another that is disconnected and transformational, creating, instead of story, a series of intermittent images.

The second element of configurative structure as it relates to Millie's War is the utilization of fragmentary characters. In a configurative play, connections between characters have little or no causal relationship to the action: "fragmentary characters relate to each other and to events either symbolically or through association" (Smiley 75). Instead of a causal relationship, they have a surreal relationship to each other and to events, as if in a dream: like dream characters, they are not fully developed. Another way to describe the fragmentary characters of Millie's War is through Augusto Boal's description of character as object. In his book Theatre of the Oppressed, Boal explains that instead of motivation driving the action, "the Marxist poetics of Bertolt Brecht ... [asserts] that the character is ... the object of economic or social forces to which he responds and in virtue of which he acts" (92). Characters in Millie's War act according to their purpose: to demonstrate the traumatized mind of Millie, a condition brought on, in part, by social and political forces.

Millie's War exchanged the fully developed characters of Retrospect for fragmentary characters. In Retrospect, characters appear in psychological perspective, are recognizably lifelike, and are causally related to the action. Each of the characters is seen in relation to his role in the murder or in relation to his role in helping Millie in her quest to find answers. In Millie's War, however, no character is fully developed. Rose, for example, acts as a symbol of hope for Millie, a reason to live. Father's actions are determined by his role as a loving father and husband, but ultimately by his duty as a soldier. He is a spokesperson for patriarchy and war; he is dutiful to his family by fulfilling his duty as soldier. Father is a loving father, a loving husband, but ultimately a

military captain, a war hero. He repeats, "I loved being a father," and Millie responds, "But you loved being a soldier more." Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper acts according to his role as military/death recruiter; and as such, he promotes patriotism, dispenses propaganda, and guides souls.

Thus, the characters in Millie's War are distorted as surreal characters in a dream. Boal describes the Brechtian hero as "dissected, disassembled, and reassembled. There is no realism here. It is an almost scientific demonstration carried out through artistic means" (99). All of the characters in Millie's War exist as figments of Millie's imagination for the purpose of depicting her traumatized mind. The characters are merely fragments connecting through association instead of causality.

Third, configurative plays use repetitive and non-naturalistic dialogue to create rhythm. With repetitive dialogue, pattern emerges to create thematic associations and rhythm. In her book The America Play and Other Works, playwright Suzan-Lori Parks writes about repetition: "we accept it in poetry and call it 'incremental refrain.' For the most part, incremental refrain creates a weight and a rhythm. In dramatic writing it does the same..." (9). With non-naturalistic dialogue, lines often have no motivation within the conversation. Text is chosen more for rhythm and beat than logical realistic reasons. Rhythm forms from the relationship between the text and the structure of the play.

In place of Retrospect's naturalistic dialogue, Millie's War utilizes repetitive, non-naturalistic dialogue to create rhythm. Characters in Retrospect engage in natural conversation with the dialogue always aiming to reach its goal, the solution of the puzzle of who murdered Mick and why. The play searches for answers to questions of guilt and

blame. The plot reveals to Millie things she could not understand as a child, such as her mother's affair with Colonel Hatfield. In the end, the truth is exposed and Millie understands better the death of her father and her own misplaced guilt. Each line of naturalistic dialogue, therefore, acts as a means to an end, a direction toward a goal. In Millie's War, however, surreal characters often respond to each other with motivationally irrelevant dialogue. Returning to Augusto Boal's idea of character as object helps explain the lack of motivation behind the dialogue of the characters in Millie's War. They speak and act according to the social forces surrounding their role in society (father, husband, soldier) rather than to satisfy their wills. For example, Father often responds to Millie by snapping into another time period, answering her with a line from one of his letters to Mother (his wife) during the war, as if he, as soldier and husband, is trapped forever in the time just before his death. Also, repetition of certain lines like Father's refrain, "You always said you loved me in these boots, Baby!" echoes throughout the entire play as a thematic reference to the attraction of his military uniform and the irony of the tragic outcome. The repetitive, non-naturalistic dialogue in Millie's War creates rhythm. The repetition takes the dialogue out of a natural pattern and highlights the dreamlike world of the play. Instead of working with the action toward a logical goal, this pattern of non-naturalistic dialogue contributes to the play's circularity.

All of these facets of configurative structure (suppression of story, fragmentary characters, and the rhythm of repetitive, non-naturalistic dialogue) work together to create a structure organized like a dream. In Millie's War, the structure works to create a subjective world of a mind traumatized by the overwhelming loss of loved ones in war.

Configurative structure aims to "penetrate to the reality of existence beneath the level of sensory reality" (Smiley 75). Thus, a configurative structure better suited my needs for Millie's War.

A successful Millie's War shall mirror the pre-narrative stage of traumatic experience dramatically through a configurative structure. The play shall thus embody the chaos of a traumatized mind: it shall be repetitious and illogical as it replays snatches of memory in a circular fashion. Rather than presenting a story, meaning and significance shall come through the power of its symbolic associations, like a dream. Augusto Boal explains that in Brecht's view "the artist's duty consists not in showing true things but in revealing how things really are" (112). With Millie's War, I am not interested in depicting any one true story or a possible account of someone's life, but in revealing how things really are by depicting how a mind goes through the initial stage of trauma after losing a loved one in war.

Also, in the Millie's War script, I concentrated on getting the experience true through the structure of the play, rather than with an expectation of an audience's response. Once the script is completed to my satisfaction, however, I feel an audience response should be measured in a Brechtian sense rather than an Aristotelian sense. In other words, an audience, instead of empathizing with Millie, should be enlightened to the experience of trauma caused by war. The creation of images, fragmentary characters, and repetitive, non-naturalistic dialogue demand interpretation on the part of an audience. The audience must decide upon meaning; it is not given. Thus, Millie's War demands decision rather than arousing empathy through the story of Millie's life.

This dissertation is an account of my experiment with form. In subsequent chapters I first provide a dramaturgical analysis of Millie's War to place it within the context of current playwriting practice. Next, I will chronicle my writing process from the inspiration of the first play, Retrospect, through the writing and production processes of the new play, Millie's War. Finally, the project will evaluate how well the new script held up to my intentions as set forth here in the introduction and explore possible solutions for revisions.

CHAPTER II
CURRENT PLAYWRITING AND THEATRE PRACTICE
RELATED TO MILLIE'S WAR

The building process of Millie's War was a search for form, a search for a better way to express the traumatic experience of losing a loved one to war. Millie's War is a representation of the fragmented, chaotic, and irrational spectacle of the traumatized subconscious, and therefore, is not concerned with wholeness, unity, or logical probability. It follows the inspiration of the French surrealist Antonin Artaud's nonverbal, presentational form with an appeal to the senses rather than to rational thought; however, my search for form blossomed, not as rejection of a more literary theatre, but from a playwright's need to express theatrically what I could not express textually.

From Artaud and the Futurists, Millie's War inherits a rejection of storytelling and a desire to "communicate through 'the visual and plastic' *mise en scène*" (Innes 5). In this respect, Millie's War shares the experimental nature of artists who find it necessary to express ideas in whatever form best suits their needs. Influenced by artists whose works blend narrative and non-narrative form, the text creates a network of images more than it tells a story. One of these experimental artists, Bill T. Jones, exemplifies this Artaudian appeal to the senses through his ability to convey authentic profound emotional experience. Jones, particularly in his trance-like solo dance performances, incarnates Artaud's ideal of performance: "a dynamism of action... in which violent images crush and hypnotize the sensibility of the spectator seized by the theater as by a whirlwind of

higher forces" (Artaud 80). To harness such power Millie's War employed certain elements of configurative structure.

In this chapter, I focus on the same three areas of configurative structure examined in the previous chapter: suppression of story, fragmentary characters, and repetitive, non-naturalistic dialogue. This chapter explores these elements of configurative form and their relationship to works by Samuel Beckett, Bill T. Jones, Caryl Churchill, Robert Wilson, Suzan-Lori Parks, and Joseph Chaikin with Jean-Claude van Itallie and Susan Yankowitz. I handle each element by defining it, then illustrating how it works in particular works by these artists, and then explaining how Millie's War utilizes the element.

The first element of configurative structure examined here involves suppression of story. I discuss three devices used to suppress story. The first device involves an episodic plot structure. An episodic plot has a start, a center, and a stop, but the sequence is random and events are not causally related. The second device is vertical movement. Vertical movement deviates from direction, or logical conclusion of story. Instead of conflict, vertical movement creates suspense from tension, either from the juxtaposition of iconic characters or the "stress, anxiety, dread, or anguish within characters" (Smiley 73). A third device used in configurative plays to suppress story is the centrality of images. Physical, non-verbal theatre, created through pantomime and improvisation, works to emphasize image over story.

Episodic plot structure is story-less in that its incidents unfold randomly without logical pattern or causality. Episodic plot structure is illustrated by Samuel Beckett's first

television play, Eh Joe. Written for the BBC in the spring of 1965, the play's text is emotionally wrought with descriptions of what sounds like a woman's suicide, yet a fully developed story never unfolds. A Woman's Voice provides the only text. The only visible actor, Joe, responds with eye movement. It is impossible to determine the exact nature of the event or to rationalize a clear relationship of the event to the characters. The answers are not in the play. The text merely provides a partial description of some event in a randomly arranged series of statements followed always by the question, "Eh, Joe?" Any answers of how all the pieces are connected are created in the mind of the spectator.

Episodic plot is also seen to suppress story in Bill T. Jones's Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land. As a dance theatre artist, Jones considers himself "a performing artist who uses choreography as a primary language" (Koch 10). Originally performed in 1990, Last Supper connects personal events from Jones's life, personal histories of some of the actors, and iconographic events from public history in an episodic stream of performance segments. To deconstruct narrative form, Jones's production uses the original story of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel Uncle Tom's Cabin as a starting point, "a place of reference to which layers of personal experience, movement, and political iconography are added, transfused, and mutated" (Jones 208). Jones's biological mother performs an improvisational Gospel each night, reminiscent of his childhood; R. Justice Allen, who plays one of the Uncle Tom characters, performs a rap song he wrote about himself; and reversed fragments of Martin Luther King's "I have a Dream" speech repeat throughout the performance. Last Supper produces a disorientation that comes "through a complex matrix of meanings between the real world and the world

of theatre" (Jones 208). Events are not causally related. Consequently, instead of a story about Jones's life, Last Supper creates a dialogue with the audience about their own personal connection to the content of the play.

Millie's War utilizes episodic plot structure to suppress story as follows. In Millie's War, incidents are randomly arranged and are not causally related to the action. For example, Millie remembers the night before her father left for the war and when her mother received the telegram announcing his death, but no other events from her past with her father are portrayed. She relives these two events over and over. Millie's War does not tell Millie's story. Millie's history is revealed only in the random fragments of traumatic events she relives within the context of her nightmare.

A second device used in configurative plays to suppress story is vertical movement. Vertical movement is characterized by creating suspense through tension rather than through conflict. Samuel Beckett's Eh Joe illustrates vertical movement. To create effective tension in this play, Beckett incorporates a juxtaposition of opposing forces (silence/sound and movement/stillness) instead of story. In Eh Joe, a Woman's Voice asks a series of brutal questions, interrupted by measured pauses. The visible actor, Joe, sits silently, responding only during the pauses with minimal eye movement. The strength of this repetitive pattern of pauses is found in its ability to create tension. The repeated pauses allow, almost force, a spectator to question what is happening. No story unfolds. The characters provide incredibly little information about themselves or the incident. Joe's silences, combined with his facial movements, produce suspense without logical conclusion of story or any comfort of resolution.

Caryl Churchill's Top Girls also illustrates vertical movement used to suppress story. First performed at London's Royal Court Theatre on 28 August 1982, Top Girls is a configuratively structured play. The play utilizes juxtaposition, where contrasting scenes and characters are set against each other, as a structural device to create tension allowing the audience to make its own connections and judgements. For example, events from the first scene connect to the remainder of the scenes in the play through association. During the first scene, the main character, Marlene, hosts a dinner party with famous women of the past who recall the prices they had to pay for asserting themselves in a man's world. The remainder of the play involves a sequence of scenes revolving around Marlene and her contemporary work companions, women still caught in the rat race of a male-dominated society. Thus, first, Marlene is seen in the context of famous women who have asserted themselves in a man's world. Then, in the scenes that follow, Marlene is seen in the context of the struggle for her own attempts to succeed. Tension arises from the connections required of the spectator to associate the two different halves of the play. The juxtaposition poses the question: was Marlene's success worth the price she paid? The play does not resolve the question.

Another example of verticality in Top Girls is set up through the juxtaposition of the successful career woman, Marlene, and her pathetic daughter. For example, one of the questions raised in Act Two is what Marlene can do with her hopeless niece, Angie. By the end of the play, however, it is revealed that Angie is not Marlene's niece, but her daughter whom she gave up to her sister when she was a baby. When the facts are revealed, all the questions about what Marlene should do with Angie must be re-

examined. The play juxtaposes the ironic and dysfunctional relationship of Marlene and Angie: Angie lives with Marlene's drab sister in the dreary working-class suburbs, and knows Marlene as her business-savvy Aunt who lives in the exciting hub of London. This raises the question: can a successful businesswoman take on the responsibility and challenges of a witless daughter and still make it to the top? Top Girls employs this juxtaposition to create tension for which no comfortable solutions are offered. The play does not answer any questions. Thus, its vertical movement helps the play resist a logical conclusion of story.

Millie's War utilizes vertical movement to suppress story as follows. Long monologues by Millie occur together with silent stage activity by Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper, a character who speaks only through movement. He counters her stillness with movement and her verbosity with silence. This juxtaposition creates a suspenseful tension. Also, in Act II, Scene 3, Millie recounts her grappling with her son, Bobby, when he was a child. She remembers trying to curb his disturbing obsession with being a soldier. At the same time as Millie's recounting, Bobby and Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper enter the stage with Rose. They proceed to lead Rose through a series of activities such as marching in formation and carrying, aiming, and firing a gun. The image depicts Rose's military training while the text discusses Bobby's military training. The resulting juxtaposition between text and image creates tension by depicting the anguish of Millie's psychological experience: Millie's subconscious has substituted Rose for Bobby; Millie's fears of her granddaughter becoming a soldier mirror her fears she once had for her son. Consequently, tension from the emotional turmoil within Millie creates suspense.

A third device used to suppress story is utilizing physical theatre to replace more literary elements of story. Joseph Chaikin's Open Theatre illustrates how the creation of images is used to suppress story. Historically, suppression of story has been tied to physical theatre and improvisation. Experimentation with physical theatre exploded in the 1960's and '70's. During this time, artists shifted focus to physical expression through pantomime and improvisation to move away from the power of the text in defining a play. Having performed with the Living Theatre, Chaikin formed his Open Theatre in 1963. The Open Theatre worked with improvisational exercises that then developed into theatre pieces. The Serpent is one of these collective projects. Developed between 1967 and 1968 by Joseph Chaikin and Jean-Claude van Itallie, The Serpent utilizes iconistic events such as the assassinations of Martin Luther King and John F. Kennedy together with pre-existing text from the Bible. Together, the events and text create an episodic series of images shaped by words, music, rhythm, and physical improvisation. In The Serpent, five actors speak the role of the Serpent, each representing one of the five mouths. Together with the text, the physical bodies form the serpent itself, "five intertwined actors, with flickering tongues and sinuous arms, offering apples in their hands" (Innes 20). Text and physical theatre are used together to focus on the creation of images rather than the telling of a story.

Using the centrality of images to suppress story is also illustrated in another of Chaikin's collective projects, Terminal, created by the Open Theatre Ensemble with text by Susan Yankowitz (1971). Here the physical construction of the images is so much a part of the piece that the text "cannot be fully understood apart from its production"

(Sainer 82). In Terminal, words evoke images, and the images become physically represented on stage, both enhancing the image and commenting on the text. For example, in Terminal's "The Dying Imagine Their Judgment Scene," the Judge sits on a ladder and broadcasts the judgments "in a continuous, repetitive loop" (Sainer 105). At the same time, the Dying enact physical images:

Judge

Did you sit on another's head or were you sat upon? Either way, you will never be free of the one who is above or he who is below. The judgement of your life is your life.

Image

One man sits on another's shoulders. The man below strains and struggles to get free, but cannot.

(Sainer 106)

In pantomime, the Dying physically enact the picture of what is described in the judgments as they hear about their lives from the Judge. The focus is on the image and its relationship to the text, not on story.

Robert Wilson's Einstein on the Beach also illustrates the device of creating images to suppress story. Having designed masks and life-size puppets for van Itallie's America Hurrah, which toured Europe with La Mama in 1965, Robert Wilson was no doubt influenced by Chaikin and the Open Theatre's experimentation with physical theatre. Einstein, a collaboration with the minimalist composer Phillip Glass, premiered in 1976 at the Festival d'Avignon, in Avignon, France. The original production featured spoken texts by Christopher Knowles, Lucinda Childs, and Samuel Johnson, choreography by Andrew de Groat, and lighting by Beverly Emmons. The principal cast included Lucinda Childs, Sheryl Sutton, and Samuel Johnson. Revived in 1984 and 1993, the opera featured new choreography by Lucinda Childs. The opera's innovative structure

combines an "almost mathematical precision" with a "dreamlike and allusive" content that is a "non-narrative and sometimes surrealistic meditation on Einstein's place in popular consciousness" (Wilson 1). This non-narrative structure of images involves improvisational physical movement. Wilson left the innovation of the movements up to the actors. Wilson said to the actors, "'Do what you like and then we will choose.' But what we kept, [the actors] repeated so often, counting in time, that they began to be able to do it automatically, without a big outlay of energy or strain" (de la Falaise, qtd. in Wilson 1). Text and physical theatre work together to form a series of images around the idea of Einstein rather than tell a story about his life or work.

Millie's War utilizes images to suppress story as follows. Millie's struggle with her mother in the Mother Scene occurs in their dialogue, but also with an underlying pantomimed competition for Father's attention. This physical battle with Mother ends in Millie's wordless act of putting a toy gun in her mouth; she is ready to kill herself to be with Father. Rose, Millie's granddaughter, removes the gun and hands her a baby doll. Millie then holds the doll and rocks it peacefully. Rose, therefore, physically and symbolically saves Millie from suicide. In this same scene, the Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper character works in pantomime and improvisation to incite the competition for Father. If he succeeds, he wins Millie's soul in addition to Mother's. The physical images are not motivationally connected to the dialogue and compete for the focus of the scene.

Another moment in Millie's War where physical actions work to suppress story is at the end of Bobby's Scene (Act II, Scene 3). Here the actors create a picture of Millie's inner turmoil by physically forming an ever-diminishing circle around Millie. As the

group encircles and captures Millie with their increasing volume and chaotic chant, she withers in the center until she assumes the fetal position. The physical bodies of the actors enact the mental chaos of Millie's mind, creating the dominant image of the scene.

To summarize, the works of Samuel Beckett, Bill T. Jones, Caryl Churchill, Robert Wilson, and Joseph Chaikin with Jean Claude Van Itallie and Susan Yankowitz are similar to Millie's War in that they utilize configurative structure that includes episodic plot, vertical movement, and the creation of images to suppress story. Instead of story, Millie's War creates disorientation through the episodic overlap of times and events from the histories of various characters. The structure of the play mirrors the structure of traumatic memory; incidents unfold randomly without logical pattern or causality. Its vertical movement creates suspense through tension, and separating suspense from conflict allows action to separate from story. Juxtapositions of silence/sound and stillness/ movement create this tension. The physical images formed by the actors along with the improvisational movement of the Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper character work to emphasize image over story. Configurative structure works outside of the "ten elements of story - balance, disturbance, protagonist, plan, obstacles, complications, sub-stories, crisis, climax, and resolution" (Smiley 60). In place of unity and causal progression, text works to create images through the physicality of the actor's pantomime and improvisational techniques, and the *mise en scène* works to enhance those images or counter them in a thematic juxtaposition of word to image.

The second element of configurative structure discussed here involves the creation of fragmentary characters. In a configurative play, connections between

characters have little or no causal relationship to the action. Fragmentary characters do not behave motivationally. Instead, characters may take on iconographic significance, or have a surreal relationship to each other and to events, as if in a dream.

Fragmentary characters are pieces of an elusive whole. Bill T. Jones's Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land illustrates the use of fragmentary characters in configurative structure. Jones creates disorientation through juxtaposition of fragmented iconographic characters. For example, Jones interprets the characters from Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin. He finds Eliza to be a "compellingly flawed character, [and his response] was to recreate her as a multidimensional polemic" (211). In Last Supper's "Part Two: Eliza on the Ice," the personifications of Eliza appear in various parts of a whole. They appear in the form of an historical Eliza, a man-in-drag Eliza, a dominatrix Eliza, an exotically pretty, coquette Eliza, and a small Jewish Eliza whose own personal monologue about anger is included in the scene. Instead of any causal relationship to the action, the fragmented character of Eliza raises questions about Eliza as an iconographic image of the black slave woman.

Caryl Churchill's Top Girls also draws fragmentary characters. Set in the early days of Margaret Thatcher's reign over Parliament, Top Girls examines the social issues of women's rise to power in British society and the sacrifices that come along with it. The famous women from the past in Act One are all successful women, and they celebrate Marlene's promotion over a man, but the scene is somewhere from Marlene's fantasy future. The surreal characters include Isabella Bird, Lady Nijo, Dull Gret, Pope Joan, and Patient Griselda. All of the characters in this scene are ghosts from the past except for

Marlene and the waitress. The scene occurs outside of time and outside of any other connection to the rest to the action. Other than Marlene, the characters from the first scene do not connect motivationally to the rest of the play. Their connection to the play is, therefore, elusive. The resolution is left up to the audience.

Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom by Suzan-Lori Parks presents another example of fragmentary characters. First produced in 1986, Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom is Suzan-Lori Parks's first play. Parks refers to her fragmentary characters as "ghosts" who "take up residence in a corner" and "sing to [her] their stories from PastLand" (12). Some characters, such as Mona and Chona from "Part 1: Snails" and Mrs. Sergeant Smith from "Part 4: Slugs," come across as real and natural, while Us-Seer, Kin-Seer, Shark-Seer, Over-Seer, and Soul-Seer are much more elusive and surreal; but even the more realistic characters repeat their lines and certain sounds in such a rhythmical singsong way that the characters seem more like ghosts passing through our consciousness for the fleeting moments of the play instead of someone we could get to know. Thus, the fragmentary characters in Mutabilities have a surreal relationship to each other and to the rest of the play.

Millie's War utilizes fragmentary characters as follows. In Millie's War, the Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper character is an icon more than a complete character. This dual icon is used to balance Millie's anti-war sentiment, and to symbolize the seduction of patriotism and death; yet it is the very strength, resolve and determination Uncle Sam embodies that Millie must find in herself to deal with her own loss and fight off the Grim Reaper. Instead of an iconographic story like Uncle Tom's Cabin, Millie's War uses my mother's

personal story as a place of reference, but Uncle Sam, the Grim Reaper, and World War II have some iconic meaning for everyone.

Also, fragmentary characters in Millie's War connect with each other, but not in a way that provides a complete history. The fragmentary characters of Mother and Father in Millie's War seem to be in the action for themselves and not connected motivationally to the rest of the play. This is reflected in the way Mother and Father often respond to Millie with pieces from one of their letters from the past instead of answering Millie directly. The characters reveal incomplete stories. Some seemingly important characters, Millie's husband for example, do not appear in the play. The elusive and surreal quality of the characters thus becomes consistent with the dream-state of the entire play; they hint at character without fully developing character.

To summarize, like the works of Bill T. Jones, Caryl Churchill, and Suzan-Lori Parks, Millie's War utilizes a configurative structure that includes fragmentary characters. In Millie's War, character "motivations are often missing, ...and they are seldom causally related to the action" (Smiley 75). As playwright, Suzan-Lori Parks explains, "To call them [characters] could be an injustice. They are *figures, figments, ghosts, roles, lovers* maybe, *speakers* maybe, *shadows, slips, players* maybe, maybe *someone else's pulse*" (Parks 12). Fragmentary characters in Millie's War form dreamlike characters, surreal pieces of a mind under duress.

The third and final element of configurative structure examined here involves repetitive, non-naturalistic dialogue used to create rhythm. With repetitive dialogue, text is chosen more for rhythm and beat than for logical realistic reasons. Rhythm forms from

repetition like a refrain, and pattern emerges to create thematic associations through rhythm. With non-naturalistic dialogue, lines often have no motivation within the conversation. Instead, the lines seem scattered like shards of broken glass.

Chaikin and Yankowitz's Terminal illustrates repetitive dialogue. The repetition of "lines, sounds, and gestures recur as a means of suggesting associations between seemingly unrelated passages and evoking resonances which enrich meaning" (Sainer 83). The program notes state that the text involves "visual and verbal patterns [that are] interwoven; word, sound, and image reinforce and elucidate each other" (Sainer 82). For example, in the opening Dance on the Graves of the Dead, the line "We come among the dying/We call upon the dead" (Sainer 84-87) repeats like a chant, an incantation. The repetition creates a thematic refrain that echoes throughout the entire play as an "investigation of human mortality" (Sainer 82).

Suzan-Lori Parks's Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom also illustrates repetitive dialogue to create rhythm. Within the configurative structure of Mutabilities, repetition incorporates strong rhythmical language and a device Parks calls Rep and Rev, or Repetition and Revision. Parks explains this device as a "concept integral to the Jazz esthetic in which the composer or performer will write or play a musical phrase once and again and again; etc. --with each revisit the phrase is slightly revised" (8-9). Certain lines are repeated throughout the play, but not necessarily by the same character or in regards to the same issue. The repetition becomes a refrain, not just of a scene, but of the whole play. In Mutabilities, Parks composes scenes that do not seem to connect except through repeated language. In "Part 1: Snails," Molly, distraught

over her job prospects, considers jumping out of the twelfth-floor window. Molly asks, "Hhh. What should I do Chona should I jump should I jump or what?" Then in "Part II: Third Kingdom," Kin-Seer reiterates the line, "Should I jump? Shouldijumporwhut?" And the line appears again in "Third Kingdom (Reprise);" Kin-seer says, 'should I jump? Should I jump? Should I jump shouldijumporwhut?" The repetition threads through each scene like a familiar echo, and the refrain becomes a theme linking scenes that otherwise stand in isolation. Mutabilities is a rhythmical, patterned creation of words, written to behave as notes in a musical score. Text as score in Parks's play is a kind of physical theatre reminiscent of van Itallie, Yankowitz, and Beckett. Yet Parks controls the beat of the play, not through the improvisations of the actors, or through timed measured pauses, but through the language of the play, the words themselves. Words are lengthened, doubled, run together, overlapped, fragmented, broken apart, repeated, slashed, and dashed. As the title of her play suggests, they are mutable. The repetition connects each character to another time, another place, another character. Together, these connections develop themes of origin, pride, struggle, hope, and defeat.

Millie's War utilizes repetitive dialogue in Act One, Scene 2 when Millie keeps repeating that she wants to stay and play with Father. Father keeps repeating his line, "This is no place for little girls." His response never answers her question directly or logically. It works instead to highlight the point that Millie will never get to be with her father in a way she finds satisfying. The repetition of lines accentuates the disturbing image of a grown woman wanting to play with her dead father. The repetition creates an image of the trap Millie's subconscious suffers, an uncomfortable image due to its

inability to resolve itself logically. The rhythm of the repetition evokes thematic resonance throughout the play. These connections develop themes of patriotism, betrayal, honor, duty, and the trauma of loss.

With non-naturalistic dialogue, the conversation between voice/text and actor/movement works against a rational concept of dialogue. Samuel Beckett's Eh Joe utilizes non-naturalistic dialogue. Beckett's play uses text to create a kind of anti-dialogue where two characters supposedly in dialogue with one another should be responding to each other, but do not, at least not in any usual or logical way. What happens is an interesting juxtaposition of unanswered dialogue. Joe's eye movements respond to the dialogue, but these movements do not work naturally as answers: the dialogue and eye movements merely happen in a particular order.

In Millie's War, Millie's dialogue works in a non-naturalistic way with her ghosts, Mother and Father. Millie speaks to them and they speak back, although not necessarily to her, or in answer to her. Mother and Father merely respond. This stifles the usual expectation of conversation. Millie wants to connect to her ghosts but cannot because she is alive and not part of their world. Also, the letters provide a fragmented dialogue between two ghosts who were once lovers writing to each other during World War II. Often, when both Mother and Father are on stage, they will respond to Millie with a recitation of a letter once written to the other in another time, not in conversation, but as if lost in memory. Segments of the letters are randomly mixed throughout the play with no logical or motivational connection to the scene they are a part of. Mother and Father, for example, may respond to something Millie referred to earlier in her dialogue, or they

may interrupt her thought with another irrelevant thought, or they may continue speaking as if to someone else altogether when logically they should be in dialogue with Millie.

All of the characters in Millie's War are representations of memory. Their conversations are sometimes clear, sometimes elusively irrelevant, as if in a dream.

To summarize, like the works of Yankowitz, Parks, and Beckett, Millie's War utilizes a configurative structure that includes repetitive and non-naturalistic dialogue to create rhythm. The action of the play depicts a traumatic memory, and so Millie's memory is repetitive and illogical. Particular lines, images, and sounds are designed to repeat throughout the play to provide thematic connections, thereby creating a pattern through motif in an otherwise random collection of scenes.

In conclusion, Millie's War shares with the theatrical works discussed here an Artaudian appeal to the senses through a configurative structure. The elements of this structure incorporate suppression of story, fragmentary characters, and repetitive, non-naturalistic dialogue to create rhythm. In a configurative play, an appeal to the senses does not require the logical structure of storytelling. Random, illogical series of images, formed to create suspense through tension, speak to the emotions rather than to rational thought. Using pantomime and improvisation, bodies communicate with physical movement as well as, or instead of, words. A configurative structure also utilizes fragmentary characters who don't always behave motivationally. Characters in a configurative play do not need to behave like people: they can be surreal; they can be arranged like furniture; they can represent allegorical concepts. Repetitive, non-naturalistic dialogue creates a pattern of circularity and thematic connection through

rhythm. In my opinion, these are the elements of configurative structure that allow Millie's War to be the kind of story-less, sensual, physical theatrical experience inspired by Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, a primal scream from amidst the flames of the traumatic experience of loss due to war.

CHAPTER III

THE WRITING PROCESS

My creative path from Retrospect to Millie's War was a long journey. The journey is incomplete because I am not yet satisfied with Millie's War. Here, however, I recount my writing process from the initial impulse for Retrospect in 1987 through Draft Five of Millie's War, the script produced at Texas Tech Laboratory Theatre in November 2004.

Throughout the writing process, I struggled to get the complex experience of loss to ring true. Instead of a story explaining how or why someone loses a loved one to war, I wanted to depict an experience of how it feels to lose someone to war. How or why necessitates cause and effect. How something feels is more elusive, fragmented, and emotional. Millie's War is the result of a long process of experimentation with form and style. Both plays deal with the tragedy of loss, but Retrospect utilizes a traditional, linear structure while Millie's War employs a non-linear, configurative structure.

Retrospect began in 1987. I was attending graduate school in Boston, Massachusetts, and searching for an idea for a play. My mother came to visit me, and she was searching for the house she lived in with her family before World War II. It was the last place she had seen her father before he left for the war. He was killed in action six months later. We went on a mission to find the house, the one shown in the only photograph I knew of my elusive grandfather. The visit to the house brought back emotional memories for my mother. Her memories and subsequent conversations about her childhood and the loss of her father started me on a path to dramatize her story. Thus,

the germinal idea for the first play in this project took root. The resulting play, Retrospect, was completed in 1990.

Retrospect tells the story of Millie as she steps back in time to re-live the traumatic events leading up to her father's death. Millie is plagued by nightmares, and seeks answers at the childhood home where she last saw her father alive. The story becomes a murder mystery as each successive clue is revealed through Millie's nightmares. When the adult Millie sees her nightmares within the context of her childhood memories, she realizes what she could not face as a child: she was the only witness to the murder her father was blamed for. The guilt, from not having the courage to speak out and possibly save her father from being sent off to battle, keeps the answers suppressed in Millie's subconscious. Retrospect, however, was not my mother's story, nor did it confront the issues of loss and war.

Consequently, soon after the completion of Retrospect in 1990, I began work on revisions that culminated in a new version of the first play. I began by reshaping the structure. I felt the play answered too many questions. All the loose ends, factual and psychological, wrap up and create a neat package, and yet I felt an experience of this magnitude, the death of a father, required a certain amount of chaos and fragmentation. Thus I began to reshape the structure away from a linear plot. This part of the process led me from Retrospect (1990), to Retrospect (2000), the version of the play I took to the Women's Playwrights International Festival in Athens, Greece in the fall of 2000. Retrospect (2000) thus became an important interim step between Retrospect (1990) and Millie's War (2004).

Certain influences helped me shape the structure of Retrospect (2000). These influences included dance classes, Bill T. Jones's dance/theatre productions, research and production of a Samuel Beckett play, and viewing new works at a theatre conference in New Zealand. The first of these influences came in 1997 with Diana Moore at Texas Tech University (TTU). Moore's dance classes gave me a tangible method of understanding theoretical ideas concerning shape, movement, and stage space. Choreographers use the whole space, cubical opposed to square footage. I was taken by the ways movement communicated what words could not. I decided to integrate dance into the structure of my new play to expand the means by which to impart the desired experience.

Also, Diana Moore introduced me to the work of Bill T. Jones, a postmodern choreographer/dance-theatre artist. I watched a video of the making of Jones's Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land, and the encounter convinced me to explore a non-narrative structure. Stories make logical sense, and to convey a traumatic experience, I felt the play needed to be more illogical, random, and fragmented. Like Jones's work, my play needed various methods of expression to create the necessary complexity: a mixture of dance, music, non-narrative, and text elements.

In 1998, I researched, directed, and acted in a student production of Samuel Beckett's Eh Joe. The work culminated in delivering a paper, "Playing the 'Woman's Voice' in Beckett's Eh Joe," at the AustralAsian Drama Studies Association (ADSA) Conference: Bodies in Question held at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand. My paper discussed what I call Beckett's use of the unanswered. In Eh Joe, only

a Woman's Voice is heard; the body of the woman is never seen. To me, this conjured the dreamlike world of emotion and angst created by a desperate need to connect to something you cannot—the dead, the lost. I also liked the unsettled mood the disembodied voice created. So, for Retrospect (2000), I utilized the women characters from the first script (Millie's mother, Millie, and Young Millie). And, I created a father character as an unseen voice, providing a connection point for the women but without his physical presence appearing on stage.

Another important influence on Retrospect (2000) was the production of new works at the ADSA Conference in New Zealand. I felt the plays performed there focused more on the body and on movement than most plays I had seen. They incorporated space like dance productions and seemed to be much more choreographed than blocked. Certain performances intrigued me with how they incorporated movement, sound, and visual images in space. Focus shifted rapidly, and sometimes I did not know where to look. One such performance was 3 Days, 5 Hours and 36 Minutes, directed by Richard Huber and David O'Donnell and written by a group of design students at the University of Otago. Huber and O'Donnell's abstract explains that the performance considered "whether theatrical subjectivity (character) could be decentered from a body image and be embodied by the material aspects of performance (objects, space, light and sound)" (7). The performance showed a filmed scene from a Melbourne café while the same scene was acted out live onstage. Using disorientation techniques, they created a performance montage. A firm grasp of the story was kept at bay through techniques such as repetitive dialogue and cut-up (a method popularized by the literary author William S.

Burroughs by which fragmented lines, words, sounds, or film clips are literally cut up and then rearranged randomly). For example, during the scene a couple of pretentious filmmakers drink coffee and talk about the city, its artists, and whether or not their next film should be shot in Melbourne. The sound design consisted of taped portions of the same dialogue. The taped voices panned from one loudspeaker to another. The taped voices thus became characters in the performance. Live actors spoke as well, but they spoke in non-naturalistic dialogue that was repetitive and circular, and overlapped the taped voices. In the same way that the taped voices were disembodied from their sources, filmed images of the Melbourne café and the staged café were disconnected from their sources. For example, the naked body of one of the actresses appeared on one screen, while another film played on the naked body of the live actress. Only occasionally did text connect to the action of the scene. In this way, text was not privileged; movement, sound, rhythm, image, and text held equivalent importance in the overall experience.

Another influence on Retrospect (2000) came in 1999 when I had the opportunity to see Bill T. Jones's work in live performance. As the Event Manager for the Majestic Theatre in Boston, I watched a number of rehearsals and performances where Bill T. Jones incorporated narrative and non-narrative elements into his dance/theatre creations. His performances, which integrated words, images, movement, music, and ironic juxtaposition, moved me emotionally in ways no straight text performance ever had. I worked to incorporate these elements into my play.

Later in 1999, I had an excellent opportunity to try out these ideas when Retrospect was accepted to the International Women Playwrights' Festival in Athens,

Greece. I rewrote Retrospect and took the new script, Retrospect (2000), to Athens. This new script became the trial run for Millie's War. Retrospect (2000) depicted the three women from Retrospect (1990): Young Millie, Millie, and Millie's Mother. I experimented with dialogue from the original script using cut-up method, randomly arranging cut-up bits of dialogue to see what came together. I used only the voices of the women but could not shut out the presence of my grandfather. I played with the arrangement of the actors on stage, but failed to take the leap into choreography. The script more closely depicted the emotion of trauma with its random, non-naturalistic dialogue; but without motivation for action or choreography that created images, movement stagnated, and the overall effect dampened the spirit of the play.

Dissatisfied with Retrospect (2000) and unsure how to improve it, I tried to note what made other performances at the festival so intriguing. In the most impressive performances, from a one-woman interpretation of Medea (in French) to an African birthing ritual, words and the text's connection to the action seemed to be taking a back seat to movement and rhythm. With the lackluster reading of my play and the thrilling performances of other artists, I left Athens knowing my play needed to be more rhythmical, musical, and ritualistic. It needed to be more physical and emotional. And it needed my grandfather.

The experience with Retrospect (2000) in Greece led to new ideas for another new script. I changed the name of the play to Millie's War because I wanted the focus to be on Millie. I wanted to go inside her head and depict a mind in trauma. Millie did not see combat, yet she was traumatized by war just the same. In Millie's War, I moved

further away from Retrospect. In its initial creation Millie's War deconstructed the real-life event of my mother's story, taking apart the narrative whole and incorporating only some of its parts. I continued using various methods of narrative cut-up and added various sorts of choral response, a chorus leader, and a radio voice that provided war news and commentary. I gathered material for an audio/video montage made up of 1940's love songs, film clips, propaganda, newspaper headlines, and schoolroom chants. I wrote a narrative, linear story for dance—the story of my grandmother and grandfather.

These first ideas for Millie's War fell into three groups: Millie scenes, choral commentary, and dance scenes. First, the Millie scenes, a random patchwork of memories, included disconnected incidents in which the older Millie reflected on and struggled with her past. These episodic scenes had varying forms of accessible logical relevance, like a dream. They were mixed with commentary from a chorus, who represented a more public view of World War II than Millie's personal struggle.

The second group, the choral commentary pieces, included a collage of radio broadcasts, songs, nursery rhymes, movie scenes, government announcements, and various responses to World War II. Sometimes the chorus represented the views of Millie's mother and father. Of these choral commentary pieces, only the comments of the mother and father remained in the final draft.

The third group of ideas for Millie's War, the dance scenes, portrayed pieces of Millie's parents' tragic love story. First, Mother and Father meet and fall in love. Then, Father leaves for war and is killed in battle. Finally, when Mother dies, the two lovers reunite in death. The costumes were period. The music was period. In contrast to the

Millie scenes and choral elements that portrayed a nightmarish traumatic experience, the dance scenes told a romantic love story tainted by the tragedy of war.

By early 2003, Millie's War emerged as a possibly producible script, and it was time to get the play into draft form for submission to TTU's Laboratory Theatre's 2004/2005 season. Although very excited about what I wanted the play to be, I realized there were many new skills I would need to translate my ideas into a workable script. As my writing process evolved, the initial conception changed. Millie's War began to take on a configurative structure. I felt the episodic plot structure with vertical movement approached the psychological heart of the play in an attempt to depict the chaos of emotion that comes when one is forced to struggle with the casualties of war. With each draft, certain problems arose and were dealt with in the subsequent draft. Draft Five is far different than my first ideas presented above. A map of its progress follows.

Draft One

During the spring and summer of 2003, I worked to formalize a draft of Millie's War. Distinct text-based scenes and dance scenes emerged. To connect the dance scenes with the text scenes, I created a Grim Reaper character who interacts with both. He speaks with movement using dance, music, pantomime, and improvisation. Although he has no lines in the play, he is on stage nearly the entire performance.

The text-based scenes focused around Millie, a woman traumatized by war and loss. I wanted the play to be more about the experience of losing a loved one in war, not about one particular war; so I created the event of Millie burying her soldier son, an event

that triggers past traumatic experiences of losing first her father and then her husband in previous wars.

The 1940's period-styled dance scenes were divided into three sequences. The first dance scene, where Mother and Father meet, established the 1940's feel, a time when war, at least to Millie, seemed more romantic. Next, the telegram scene, where Mother receives news of Father 's death in battle, turned the tables on Millie's view of war. Finally, the scene where the two lovers reunite in death ends the story of the lovers.

Even at this early stage, I realized Draft One needed a reading. It was sketchy and barely held together, but I needed to hear it. The writing group I met with in Lynn, Massachusetts agreed to be my reading cast.¹ We read and discussed the script. The group's input was invaluable and helped me decide which problems to focus on in the next draft: Millie dominated the script too much, Father needed to be a stronger pro-war voice, all of the characters needed more distinct voices, and we needed to meet Millie's soldier son.

In September 2003, Draft One went out to Dr. Norman A. Bert, my dissertation committee chair and playwriting professor at Texas Tech University. He suggested a full scenario to help me clarify the action of the play. The full scenario established a much firmer grip on the structure, my characters, the setting, and the action. Dr. Bert made another interesting suggestion. He saw the Grim Reaper as Uncle Sam. I really liked this

¹ Reading Group in Lynn, Massachusetts consisted of the following talent: Joseph Upton, Shannon Gardner, Kerry Basterache Hayward, Larry Lowe, and Karen Krolak.

idea because it created a dual iconic character infused with symbolism and allegorical significance.

Draft Two

After completing a full scenario, I returned to the script and wrote Draft Two. This draft seemed, at first, much more organized and developed than the first draft. I added and developed characters and reorganized the plot. I improved the dance scenes by describing specific elements (setting, mood, rhythm, style, etc.) of what I expected to see happen on stage. This helped increase the dance scenes' ability to communicate to a choreographer. I also clarified the script's setting and action.

Draft Two added the following characters: the Uncle Sam half of the Grim Reaper character, and Bobby, Millie's soldier son. In addition, the script called for two performers (actor and dancer) for each of the Mother and Father characters. First, the Grim Reaper character from Draft One became the dual character of Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper. This character uses physical theatre, dance, music, and symbolism, helping keep the play in a surreal world. As an icon, Uncle Sam is a symbol of the United States. Uncle Sam symbolizes the federal government and the United States Army. Uncle Sam is recognized throughout the world as a symbol of American resolve, strength, and determination. Combined with the iconic significance of the Grim Reaper, this character, therefore, embodied the focal issues of the play. As the male counterpart to Lady Liberty, he symbolizes freedom and its opposite. He shouts at us from his posters, "I want YOU!" He recruits us to fight, to be American, to fly our flag, to wear red, white and blue, to

give our lives for our country, and to give our children's lives for our country. To some, he is a friendly Uncle who will take care of them and their families. To others, he is an evil seducer used to lure their families into certain danger. Uncle Sam is an icon of both patriotism and propaganda.

Uncle Sam's other half represents death. The Grim Reaper has its own duality. Death is loss. Death is escape. Death is both a sentence to be endured and an inviting escape from the harsh reality of life. Death is feared. Death is a solution. Millie changes her opinion of the Grim Reaper over the course of the play. The Grim Reaper steals her child. He takes her father's life. The Grim Reaper threatens to take her granddaughter, Rose; yet, Millie also falls for his charms. Millie sees the Grim Reaper as a means to be with her father again. She sees Death as a way out of the misery of burying her son. Millie dances with Death at one moment and fights with Uncle Sam at another. In Millie's mind, Rose's determination to become a soldier means certain death for Rose and for the family.

In creating this dual character, I kept in mind the "spectre-devils and the clown devils" of the Early Middle Ages (Oreglia 56). Like the title character in the medieval drama Everyman, Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper is an active allegorical character. He is both hero and villain. Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper seduces the living (Millie and Rose) as much as he controls the dead. Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper needed more physical involvement and a clearer role in the play; yet, without any experience in choreography, mime, pantomime, or improvisation, I had difficulty knowing how to get what I wanted out of this character. Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper speaks through movement, so I consulted a local

professional choreographer. Karen Krolak is a New England-based choreographer whose company, Monkey House, specializes in dance theatre. Krolak advised me to begin by writing lines for Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper as if the character had a speaking role. This process helped me understand what the character was capable of. I found this to be a very helpful technique. The lines were taken out later, but they helped me visualize his movement. I scripted Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper's dialogue in the stage directions, at least for a draft or two, to further describe how I wanted the character to play. I wanted the character to develop through improvisation. He could respond to or guide the action of a scene through physical movement, or by playing any sort of musical instrument like a tambourine, bells, flute, or recorder. I wanted the textual information written in the stage directions to guide the director, choreographer and actors through the improvisational exploration of his character.

I also added the character of Bobby, Millie's soldier son. Bobby acts as a foil character to Father. Bobby's views represent a more rash, harsh side of military over-enthusiasm, while Father's views, in contrast to Bobby's, come across as more rational and humble. Bobby is an extremely gung-ho soldier type whose views on war and army life are exactly opposite his mother's. According to Bobby, Millie sees Father as a hero from a heroic war and Bobby as a pawn in a war for oil. Bobby shows bitterness over the comparison, whereas Father shows conviction to justify his reasons (and his grandson's reasons) for leaving his family to fight. The addition of Bobby helped balance Father's strength and conviction to Millie's anti-war sentiment. Instead of Millie's views solely contrasting Father's view of war, Bobby opposes Millie and sides with Father. The two

soldiers become brothers in their experience with war, together with Uncle Sam, and against Millie, who cannot understand how a father could leave his family to fight a war.

Other characters added in Draft Two included dancer performers of the Mother and Father characters. I thought having two sets of Mother and Father performers (dancers and actors) would help free up possibilities of blending past and present on stage. For example, the dancer Mother and Father couple could pass through any scene like an active memory.

In regards to changes in plot, Draft Two organized the scenes into two acts. I placed nightmarish imagistic scenes in between two realistic scenes set in the present. In the imagistic scenes, the action occurs in Millie's mind. In the more realistic scenes, placed at the beginning and end of the play, the action sets up the story of Bobby's burial at Arlington Memorial Cemetery. The opening scene introduces Millie and Rose, her granddaughter. The event of Rose losing her father to war at about the same age as Millie lost her father, combined with the problem that Rose wants to join the military, trigger the traumatic memories and dream sequences that make up the bulk of the play. The dance scenes were placed at the opening of each act and at the end of the play.

To help the dance scenes communicate to a choreographer, Krolak suggested I write a summary of the action for each dance and include notes regarding where a scene resonated with other dance scenes or other parts of the play. The summary included a description of the setting, mood, tone, tempo, and climax. It also included a visual montage of what I wanted to see happen on stage during these scenes. I described the

images as I saw them happening on stage, and plotted the arc of the scene as well as the overall arc of the compiled scenes.

Draft Two also clarified the setting. I framed the play in real time at the burial of Millie's son, Bobby. I set the action of the first and last scenes in Arlington Memorial Cemetery. During the middle portions of the play, Millie visited with her ghosts outside of any real time or place. The dance scenes were decidedly more realistic in style with period costumes, for example, while the imagistic scenes flowed in a surreal world of Millie's memories.

Draft Two was more organized, more logical, and more linear, and told more of a complete story than the initial concept or the first draft; but clarification of action and story were precisely the elements I wanted to avoid with my new script. I needed to move away from logic and more toward the imagistic structure of a configurative play.

At this point in the writing process, spring 2004, the script was accepted for production at Texas Tech Laboratory Theatre. The show was set to open November 8, 2004. Two drafts had been submitted to Dr. Bert. A production team was chosen, and a copy of Draft Two was sent to them in preparation for our first production meeting to be held later that summer.

Draft Three

In Draft Two I tried too hard to make logical sense of the story. With Millie's War I did not want to tell a different story from the one told in Retrospect; I wanted instead to convey an emotion. I wanted to go inside a mind traumatized by the casualties of war. So

in Draft Three, I addressed concerns of character confusion, exchanged a realistic setting for a more surreal setting, removed the linear frame of action, and worked to create a series of random images as opposed to a logical flow of scenes. Draft Three was due in three weeks, just prior to auditions.

Draft Three addressed concerns over character confusion expressed by Dr. Bert and the production team. I first removed Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper's dialogue, which had been described in the stage directions. Instead, I added brief descriptions of Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper's objective for each scene.

Next, to help with the flow of scenes and to lessen possible confusion with identity, I combined the dancer and actor roles of Mother and Father. Also, Young Millie and Rose were now each played by separate actresses; so, in Draft Three, these character adjustments resulted in a cast of seven: Millie, Young Millie, Rose, Mother, Father, Bobby, and Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper, with additional dancers as needed.

In regards to plot, Draft Three aimed to get out of the real world and a linear frame. Dr. Bert suggested avoiding any reference to realism or mimetic style. Cutting the Rose and Millie scenes in Arlington Memorial Cemetery at the beginning and ending of the play allowed the whole play to work in a surreal world instead of trying to span both worlds. During the entire writing process, I tried to move away from any sense of real time, wanting instead to portray the nightmarish internal struggle of coping with loss. Without the frame of scenes in real time at Bobby's burial, the action could now flow freely within Millie's symbolic, nightmarish world.

Dr. Bert also suggested I play more freely with time. He recommended I read Caryl Churchill's Top Girls as an example of random plot structure. He also suggested I experiment with time in the play by varying random arrangements of scenes. I wrote the name of each scene on index cards, and placed the cards randomly in varying patterns until I came up with an arrangement I liked. This experiment with random arrangement of scenes followed in line with my previous cut-up method. I had applied the cut-up method to text within a scene, but I had failed to apply the same chance arrangement exercise to the pattern of whole scenes in relation to each other. This exercise resulted in dance scenes opening and closing each act. This arrangement required an additional dance scene. The dance scene added at the end of Act One depicted Mother and Father enjoying their last dance before Father leaves for war. The arrangement of scenes now seemed much more balanced rhythmically than previous drafts, yet still arbitrary enough to keep the play in a surreal world.

Draft Three also changed the setting. To leave no doubt from the beginning what kind of world we are in, the set needed to be decidedly surreal. The setting now called for the dance scenes to evoke the time period but retain a surreal quality. For example, I wanted the opening dance scene, where Mother and Father meet and fall in love, to recognizably evoke Lubbock, Texas, circa 1930. Yet, I wanted the scene to maintain a stylized quality suitable to exist with the rest of the play. This scene is the beginning of Millie's version of her parents' love story: the romanticized, idealistic image she has created in her subconscious from hearing their story long ago. I needed traces of realistic detail immersed in a surreal scene. I sought the help of George H. Nelson, a 1958

graduate of TTU. Nelson, through a history of his Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity, had done extensive research on the time period. Nelson's information led me to set the location of the first dance scene at the Lubbock Hotel Ballroom and Wyley Jarrett's Drugstore, located across the street from the hotel and frequented by hotel partygoers in search of a late-night bite to eat. From researching pictures at the Southwest Collection, I felt a simple design motif from the Hotel or a sign from the Drugstore would be unique enough to evoke the local period and feel without burdening the setting with too much realism.

For all other scenes, the script called for a surreal combination of youth and death—part playground and part graveyard. The set description included a rocking chair, a small table and two chairs, a gravestone, a pair of World War II army boots, a radio (circa 1943), a tattered United States flag, a stars-and-stripes top hat, a baby doll, and some sort of playground equipment (a jungle gym, a swing set, a teeter totter, a merry-go-round, or monkey bars).

In Draft Three I also worked to alleviate problems with the action. For example, the Mother Scene continued to be too talky, and too long, and provided no clear action. Millie's text depicts her anger towards Mother for her handling of her father's death. Mother's text is non-naturalistic in that it does not answer Millie or engage her in active conversation. Mother speaks as if from a subconscious state, repeating statements like: "Too painful. Much too painful," or "Your father was a good man." The women do not speak *to* each other. They speak *at* each other, undermining any clear action tied to the text. So I created action that highlighted the underlying theme of the scene, Millie's jealousy of Mother: the women physically battle for Father's attention during the scene,

using Father as a prize. Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper's role is to act as a catalyst for the battle as he tries to win Millie's soul and ending with Millie attempting suicide. Thus the action, separate from the text, creates its own image for the scene.

Draft Four

Auditions, the first cast reading, and responses from Dr. Bert brought about Draft Four. The consensus was that Draft Three needed character work, particularly for Millie, Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper, and Rose; also, the script needed to improve its imagistic qualities.

The first character concern was Millie. Draft Three seemed to have the exact opposite problem to Drafts One and Two: instead of Millie overpowering Father, Bobby and Father overpowered Millie. Therefore, in Draft Four, I worked to strengthen Millie. For example, in her battle for Rose, Millie stands up to Bobby. Bobby's death makes her suicidal. At one point, Bobby points a gun at her face and Millie faces down the gun he has pointed at her. This action symbolizes her realization that she has the strength to live. Thus, by choosing life, Millie defeats Bobby, Uncle Sam, and the Grim Reaper.

Next, I worked on how to communicate Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper's character more effectively. I asked a member of my committee for advice. Dr. Marks, head of Acting and Directing, explained that I was trying to script a non-scriptable character like those found in the *Commedia dell'Arte* tradition, who use improvisation and physical theatre in their performance techniques. I found some of these characters helpful in drawing the Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper character. For example, like Harlequin, Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper

represents the “leader of a gang of infernal beings, a king of the devils” (Oreglia 56). I used Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper to control the movements of the dead within the context of Millie’s nightmare, particularly the ghosts entrances and exits. Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper has Pantalone's "unseemly lust" (Oreglia 78). His behavior toward Rose intends to be uncomfortably sexual, particularly in the Recruitment Scene, to highlight the seduction of youth into the military. Like Brighella, Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper's job is to "guide the action, stir it up with intrigues, and give it movement" (Oreglia 71). Dr. Marks suggested that I discuss my ideas with my director and then let her take the ideas and work with them. In the script, I added overall action statements at the beginning of the scenes that give the director, choreographer, and actor freedom to do what works best.

Rose's character also changes significantly in Draft Four. In his response to Draft Three, Dr. Bert pointed out that "Rose’s imaginary shooting of her grandfather seems to be the event that triggers her decision not to go into the military. But she expresses her epiphany as a realization that she’s going to have to 'kill people.' This doesn’t ring true" (2004). In Draft Four, Rose performs the role of Sniper in the reenactment of Father's death. It is at this moment that Rose puts her military training to use and realizes the goal of the practice drills taught to her by Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper and Bobby. In Draft Four, however, the shooting makes her aware of the human side of war. Her speech reveals her awareness that the enemy has a face, a history, and a life beyond the war. This realization makes Rose question her career path as a soldier. Her ultimate choice is not made within the action of the play. Millie realizes that Rose will make her own decision.

Plot changes in Draft Four included newly discovered letters written by my grandmother and grandfather during World War II. These letters provided insights into my characters and the time period, helped tremendously with Mother and Father's voices, and improved the imagistic qualities of the plot. I liked the personal history created by using the actual letters and decided to use the language in the letters as is. To me, the letters create a time-period feel I could not create on my own. The letters depict a symbol of American resolve, both on the home front and on the battlefield. The letters replaced the choral commentary from my initial concept of the play because they help paint a picture of the feelings of anxiousness, longing, and bravery that all families and soldiers must feel. I also like the way the letters provide a choppy but continuous connection between Mother and Father and the dance scenes. By using the cut-up method to randomly place bits and pieces of these letters in various places throughout the script, the fragmented images stand alone at times and connect at others, but the story told through the letters collapses.

Draft Four also included the addition of scenes to improve the imagistic style of the play. Most of the scenes in my play still depended too heavily on text and that text's connection to the action. The Raven Scene in Act Two portrayed the balance between word and image that I aimed for: imagistic language not directly tied to the action of the scene. The text used in the Raven Scene, an ancient ballad about a slain soldier, provides rhythm, mood, tempo, and theme; but the action of the scene, Millie dancing with Uncle Sam and courting the Grim Reaper, does not follow the action of the text. Instead, the action of the text is shown as a backdrop or sideline action to the main action of Millie's

dance with Death, Father and Mother silently perform the roles of the slain knight and the woman who buries him. To balance the Raven Scene in Act Two, I added the Lullaby Scene to Act One. In this simple scene, music and symbolism collide in ironic juxtaposition. Millie enters carrying a baby doll. She sings a lullaby about keeping her baby safe. Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper enters playing the tune of the lullaby. Millie lays the baby down to sleep and exits. Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper steals Millie's baby. This shows Millie as a loving mother. It shows the seduction of Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper and his thievery of young innocents. The addition of this scene helped focus the action of the scene on the creation of an image rather than the text's connection to the action.

Draft Five

Draft Five, the draft used in production at Texas Tech Laboratory Theatre in November of 2004, elucidated the setting's connections to the play and further fine-tuned the plot in Act Two.

As for the set design, my director and scene designer did not think the idea of the playground was supported in the script. My idea was to create an ironic juxtaposition between the events in the play and the setting. The idea came from a playground built as a memorial in a World War II cemetery in Normandy, France; the playground inscription reads "built for the youth of tomorrow on the sacrifice of our youth lost in the war." For me, the image held both positive and haunting connotations. The dialectic between the cemetery and the playground depicted exactly the ironic juxtaposition I was looking for. I worked to connect the surreal quality of the playground/graveyard, youth/death theme

more thoroughly throughout the play by increasing the number of motifs relating to this theme. For example, Millie repeats her desire to play with Father. For Millie, it is a desire to be young again, a desire to return to youthful innocence when her father was alive. To play with her father again would bring her back to a time when she knew nothing of the pain to come, his death in war. Millie recalls the memories of her father swinging her in the swing he built for her. She remembers games of tag, her father's animated bedtime stories, and she dances in her father's arms. Millie also refers to the playground where she and her son, Bobby, played until his own loss of innocence, the death of his father in war. The events of the play, death in war, the toll it takes on the mental fortitude of those left behind, and the youthful innocence of a playground combine to create an ironic juxtaposition between event and image, a relationship that more deeply portrays the chaos of Millie's traumatized mind.

The final plot changes in Draft Five responded to complaints from the director that Act Two was too cumbersome. The act moved much more slowly than Act One and the events ran together confusedly. To alleviate this bulkiness, I divided the action in Act Two into more clearly delineated, shorter scenes. To accomplish this, I moved some of the letters, read by Mother or Father, around in the scene to break up some of the longer moments in each scene. I also restructured the Reenactment Scene into two separate scenes: Bobby's Scene, where he is introduced and confronts Millie, and the Reenactment Scene, where Father's death battle is recreated. The scenes in Act Two thus proceeded as follows: The Telegram Dance Scene, The Raven Scene, Bobby's Scene, and The Reenactment Scene, which included the final dance scene ending the play.

To summarize, the germinal idea for Millie's War is the same as for Retrospect (1990); so, the idea to write a play about my mother losing her father to war came in 1987. The idea of how to create a play that depicted the experience instead of a story came in the mid-1990's. Exposure to dance and a variety of theatrical artists, including Bill T. Jones, Samuel Beckett, and new works at the AustralAsian Theatre Conference in New Zealand in 1998, helped show me new structural possibilities. The initial attempt at a new structure came two years later with Retrospect (2000) created for the International Women's Playwright's Festival in Greece. Three years later, Draft One of Millie's War was completed. One year later, in the fall of 2004, Draft Five was completed and performed at TTU Lab Theatre. Millie's War began to take shape after the reading of Retrospect (2000) in Greece. Consequently, it took four years to complete the changes and produce the play. The overall changes from its first formal draft in 2003 to Draft Five in 2004 were as follows. Draft One was all talk without enough images. Characters and action were not developed, and the main character overpowered the script. Drafts One and Two were too story-based. Drafts Three through Five brought about the balance of power between the characters with additional characters and further character development. Also, the play stayed in a surreal world and became more imagistic, with shorter scenes focusing on image more than action's connection to text. Overall, Draft Five better integrated elements of dance, rhythm, music, physical theatre and language in a configurative structure.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRODUCTION PROCESS: MILLIE'S WAR

The production process of Millie's War was a valuable step in the creation of my new script. The production process tested the script's effectiveness as a tool to convey my vision of the play; and although the TTU production failed in some ways to communicate my vision of the Millie's War script, I was able to extrapolate ideas for improving the production process of a new play in an educational environment.

In this chapter, I first provide a brief synopsis of the Millie's War production schedule. I then discuss the effectiveness of the script as a communication tool for my vision of the play. Beyond the script, I elucidate the Millie's War production process, both what helped and what hindered the production's communication of my vision. Finally, I suggest tools and techniques to improve the process of producing a new script in an educational environment.

A brief timeline of the Millie's War production process is as follows. Production began in the spring semester of 2004 when TTU Theatre accepted Draft Two of the script. Millie's War was then scheduled to open the following season in their student-run Laboratory Theatre. The assignment of the production team took place before the end of spring. The production team consisted of students from various graduate programs offered through TTU's Department of Theatre and Dance. Prairie Endres, an MFA student in the Performance and Pedagogy program, accepted the director's position. Seung-Joo Park, also a student in the MFA Performance and Pedagogy program,

accepted the position of choreographer. Ginger Angstadt, a PhD student in the Design program, accepted the position of lighting designer. In July 2004, I traveled to Lubbock from my home in Lynn, Massachusetts, to meet with these first few members of the production team. This gave us time to work on ideas over the summer. The following draft, Draft Three, was in the director's hands by the end of August, just in time for auditions. Cast assignments were finalized by September 5th. After rehearsals began, further changes were made, resulting in two more drafts: Draft Four, completed September 20th and Draft Five, the draft used in production, completed October 3rd. The show opened November 8th and continued through November 14, 2004. The following weekend, the show traveled to El Paso, Texas, to participate in the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival.

Certain aspects of the Millie's War script made it an effective tool for communicating my vision of the play in production, while some aspects diminished the script's effectiveness. I wanted the chaotic, surreal world of a traumatic mind to reveal itself through the configurative structure of the play. Particular elements of the script's configurative structure, the repetitive dialogue and imagistic scenes, helped communicate a surreal quality. The use of linear storytelling, the cumbersome nature of Millie's lines, and the script's failure to solidify structure and style prior to production, however, diminished the script's effectiveness.

The first element that made the script an effective tool for communicating my vision of the play in production was its utilization of repetitive dialogue. Rather than developing character motivation, the repetition of random selections of dialogue created

rhythmical pattern. There are no motivational reasons why certain lines are repeated. Rather, the rhythm of the repetition helped create the world of the dream where characters do not behave naturally. Thus, their dialogue became symbolic of their ghostly existence. More than character action, history, or motivation, their speech patterns create character motifs. The repeated dialogue compelled the actors and director to focus on the motif rather than an explanation for the dialogue. For example, Mother and Father have many lines that are out of step with each other. Sometimes the characters speak more to themselves than to each other. At times they speak to a character not on stage. Sometimes they answer a question with an irrelevant fragment from a past experience, out of step and out of time, like characters in a dream, for that is what they are. At other times the same line is repeated often, like a refrain. In a configuratively structured play, intentions and connections are seldom a part of the dialogue. By steering the actors and directors away from motivational methods of line delivery, the repetitive dialogue created a non-naturalistic quality in production. Rhythm and movement are the continuous thread, and the repetitive dialogue helped force this issue in production, helping communicate the surreal style of the play.

Another way the script helped communicate my vision of the play was through its use of imagistic scenes. In production, the Lullaby, the Recruitment, and the Raven scenes combined rhythm, music, dance, and verbal imagery closer to my vision for the play than the other scenes.

The Lullaby Scene (Act I, Scene 2) and the Raven Scene (Act II, Scene 2) helped communicate my vision by utilizing the lyrics of traditional ballads to conjure images of

lost warriors. The text of the songs juxtaposed against the symbolic actions of the Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper character to create a picture of Millie's inner turmoil. In The Lullaby Scene the lyrics to an ancient Welsh folk song provide thematic imagery of a mother longing to keep her baby safe. Millie sings the lullaby while rocking a baby doll. As Millie lays the "baby" down to sleep, Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper, who has been lurking about throughout the song, waits for his chance and then steals the baby. The Lullaby Scene communicated the nightmare imagery for the entire play: Uncle Sam, as the Grim Reaper, stealing away the lives of children, and a mother, full of worry and love, lamenting over her ultimate inability to save the child she so longs to protect. In the Raven Scene, "Child Ballad #26," also known as "The Three Ravens," provides the text that tells about the burial of a slain knight. While Millie speaks the verse lines of the song, she dances with Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper. The Raven Scene depicts Millie's complex relationship to Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper in that she both despises Uncle Sam for taking the lives of her son, husband, and father, and also longs to be with Death, so she can be with her father again, a return to innocence. Although a lot of what is written in these two scenes did not make it onto the stage in the TTU production, the eeriness and the other-worldliness of the scenes remained intact. I believe this was due to the scenes' presentation of images that relay Millie's tumultuous relationship with the ideas that Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper represents.

The Recruitment Scene (Act I, Scene 4) also helped communicate my vision of the play through images. There is no dialogue in this scene, only a pantomime of Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper trying to recruit Rose into the military. I felt this scene successfully

portrayed the connection to Millie's subconscious by showing what Millie is really afraid of: Rose being seduced by Uncle Sam without recognizing the finality of Death.

These image-based scenes projected my vision of the play as a complex series of images from a traumatic mind. After having seen the production, I would, therefore, incorporate more image-based scenes and reduce or eliminate the story-telling scenes of the play.

On the other hand, failure to solidify structure and style prior to production diminished the script's effectiveness as a tool for communicating my vision of the play in production. First, the script's use of linear storytelling diminished the script's effectiveness by detracting from the play's configurative structure. Next, the expository nature and sheer abundance of Millie's lines negatively affected the imagistic style and rhythm of the play. Finally, the slow evolution of the script invited misrepresentation of style and caused confusion in production.

The script's use of linear storytelling diminished the script's effectiveness by detracting from the play's configurative structure; but other, more linearly structured, storytelling scenes produced confusion. By Draft Five, imagistic scenes, such as the Lullaby Scene, were beginning to assert themselves as the dominant style of the play. For example, in Bobby's Scene (Act II, Scene 3), Millie confronts her son about his military influence upon his daughter. There are surreal moments within the scene, such as when Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper and Bobby train Rose in military drills. There are surreal elements in the scene, such as the fact that Bobby is a ghost and can only be confronting Millie as a figment of her subconscious; but these surreal qualities fail to change the

linear structure of the scene. The overall action necessitates the direct confrontation between Millie and Bobby regarding their opposing views on how to raise Rose. The action moves forward from Millie weakly confronting the ghost of her dead son to Millie standing up to his bullying and declaring she has the strength to raise Rose. The motivations of the characters are clear: Bobby wants Rose to be a soldier; Millie wants Rose to stay out of the military. All of the action occurs in Millie's mind. The arguments are merely battles within her subconscious, but the way in which the action is presented begs the rest of the story to be told, and it never happens. For example, Millie often refers to Charles, Bobby's father, but we never meet him or gain an understanding of him from anyone else's perspective. Thus, the use of linearly structured scenes resulted in a play that revealed a story with a lot of holes in it instead of a configuratively structured surreal nightmare.

Another element of the script that diminished its effectiveness was the weighty abundance and expository nature of Millie's lines. Overall, Millie's lines took up most of the play. They presented too much exposition and not enough imagery. Millie came across in performance as whiny, over-dramatic, and extremely long-winded. She became an unsympathetic character in the first five minutes of the play. Most importantly for me, I found that the information presented in Millie's lines showed itself through images in other parts of the play. Instead of creating pattern through repetition, Millie's lines became redundant and therefore boring. Configurative plays generally present little, if any, exposition, and most of Millie's lines involve exposition exclusively. Through the production I learned that this expository information was not needed to convey Millie's

traumatic mind. Millie's cumbersome lines added to the talkiness of the play, slowed the rhythm, and provided too much expository information, thus weakening the imagistic and surreal qualities of the play.

Also, the fact that the script was still evolving late in the production process worked to diminish its effectiveness as a communication tool. Draft Two was considerably more realistic than Draft Five. Draft Five, the draft used in production, was significantly more configurative and surreal; but ideas from the earlier drafts stuck in the minds of the production team and were hard to change. For example, despite the more surreal setting in Draft Five, the set design incorporated the realistic setting in Arlington Memorial Cemetery from Draft Two. Also, certain traits of configurative scripts (randomness, repetition, lack of character motivation, and non-naturalistic dialogue) make memorization and blocking difficult. These difficulties were made worse when dialogue and scenes were continually moved around. The production seemed to improve throughout the run of the show as the cast became comfortable with the final arrangement, but the initial performances lacked rhythm and flow and the production, seemed stylistically confused. This was due, in part, to significant stylistic script changes coming so late in the production process.

Therefore, the overall problem of the script that diminished its effectiveness to communicate my vision of the play was its failure to solidify structure and style prior to production. The mixture of linear and configurative elements caused confusion about how to present the play. The mixture of motivational and non-motivational elements within the characters left actors trying to clarify their roles. The narrative storytelling

elements of linear form created enough story to beg history and thematic resolution, but the random nature of configurative form resisted these elements of story. Thus, the mixture of the two helped produce an ungrounded production.

Beyond the script, certain aspects of the production process helped communicate my vision of the play. First, the creation of a local play-reading group in Massachusetts helped alleviate the problematic distance between my producing agency and me. Second, our first production meeting in Texas introduced me to some of my production team and allowed me to re-associate myself with the production space. Finally, the respondents' feedback session brought about a positive turn in the production, bringing it closer to my vision of the play.

During the production process, the creation of a local play-reading group helped communicate my vision of the play. During the writing process, I assembled a group of local actors, including a professional director and choreographer, for readings of the script. By holding regular meetings to read through script changes, I was able to hear the script, even if I was not able to see it in rehearsal. This local team helped me with the script by reading drafts, providing feedback and support, and helping me articulate my ideas for the script's unspoken portions. This was one solution to the problem of developing a script while being 2000 miles away from the producing agency.

Also, as part of the production process, our first production meeting in Lubbock, Texas helped me communicate my vision of the play. The meeting introduced me to some of my production team and allowed me to re-associate myself with the production space. This meeting helped establish a positive working relationship between playwright

and production team. I sent Draft Two to my newly formed production team in June and traveled to Texas from Massachusetts in July. In Lubbock, I met with my director, Prairie Endres, my choreographer, Seung-Joo Park, and my lighting designer, Ginger Angstadt. They seemed willing and eager to be involved with such an experimental project. I explained that Millie's War was my first attempt at a non-linear play. I also explained my inexperience with incorporating choreography, physical theatre, and music into a script. I talked about how I wanted the script to develop, and where I was struggling. Prairie organized a reading of Draft Two in the Lab Theatre, where the production would take place, and then we all shared notes and responses in a relaxed discussion. Having not seen the space in five years, I was now better able to visualize the action in the space. The main concerns about the script that came from the post-reading discussion were how to stage certain scenes with multiple actions going on at the same time and how to approach the amount of repetition in the dialogue. I wanted the action to be chaotic at times, with multiple focal points, and I wanted the repetition to create a rhythmic, sometimes hysterical, sometimes hypnotic effect. I knew I still had a lot of work to do to get these elements across in the script so that it could effectively stand on its own without my explanations; but at this point, the face-to-face meeting allowed me to explain what was not yet clear in the script, and hearing the script read in the performance space helped all of us understand more about where the script was moving in its development.

Finally, respondents' feedback during the run of performances also helped communicate my vision of the play. After Thursday night's performance (of a Tuesday through Sunday run), local theatre professionals gave the cast received feedback on their

performance. The performances after this feedback session took a decidedly positive turn. The post-show discussion featured two respondents from Lubbock Christian University: Laurie Doyle, PhD, Associate Professor of Fine Arts and Don Williams, PhD, Dean of the Hancock College of Liberal Arts and Education. They suggested ways to emphasize the rhythmical nuances in performance to intensify the surreal quality of the play. For example, Prairie had indicated to me that Mother's lines in Act II were "the hardest thing I ever encountered to work with when I think about intentions and connections and blocking. The actors, all of them, are having a hard time with the lines because so many of them sound the same" (Endres 2004). In a configuratively structured play, rhythm and movement, not intentions, are the continuous thread, and the respondents' feedback reinforced this point with the cast. The actors really seemed to listen to what the respondents had to say. After Thursday night's discussion, each subsequent performance improved. Work by the cast captured more of the repetitive rhythm of the play and helped to define the play's surreal style.

On the other hand, certain aspects of the production process hindered the communication of my vision of the play. First, the distance between the producing agency and me created some problems in communication. There were problems where communication broke down or was not as thorough as it should have been. Prairie and I communicated solely through phone calls and emails. We decided that for some of the more imagistic scenes set to music, it might work best if the rhythmical nuances were worked out in rehearsals rather than the script. I put together what I thought sounded best in the script, but if they needed to change it, I would rework it. Not being able to see or

hear the scene in rehearsals greatly reduced my ability to adjust these elements. Problems may have been eased with better methods of communication, but I believe the main obstacle was the fact that I worked on rewrites of the script in Massachusetts in response to the production team's rehearsals in Texas. Given the collaborative nature of the script, I needed to be present at rehearsals to address the production team's concerns, as well as keep the integrity of my ideas.

Also, the creation of the local play-reading group in some ways hindered the communication of my vision of the play. Although the local readings helped me hear the dialogue, the readings gave me a different perception of characterization and rhythm than what developed in Lubbock. In turn, my perceptions of characterization and rhythm from both Prairie and the local group guided my rewrites. Consequently, during rehearsals and rewrites of the script, these different perceptions caused Prairie and me to have trouble understanding each other's concerns. Not until I experienced the production first-hand did I understand these misconceptions and the problems that they may have caused. For example, my local reading of Bobby created a biting sarcastic, gung-ho soldier who, more often than not, provided comic relief. On the other hand, the Lubbock portrayal of Bobby created a serious soldier whose childhood relationship with his mother (Millie) he considered much more traumatizing than his life as a soldier. His seriousness about his career and his seething resentment of his mother completely changed the dynamic of the play. I enjoyed the new perceptions of a character I thought I knew, but the experience taught me that my creation may have been too vague, or else I let a well-executed reading of the character muddy my vision of what the character could be. Either way, the local

play reading group consequently hindered my perception of the direction the production took in Lubbock.

From the Millie's War production experience I elicited ideas for improving the production process of a new play in a similar educational environment. I divide these ideas into techniques to improve the process prior to casting and tools to improve the process during the rehearsal process. Prior to casting there may be several techniques that could be used to improve the production process of a new script, particularly in an educational environment where students may have limited professional experience to draw on. The first of these ideas is to increase the amount of time the core production team has to work together on the script before casting the show. Depending on the play, this core team may include the director, playwright, dramaturg, composer, and choreographer. With a student-run production, this collaboration time could be used to familiarize everyone with the script, the playwright's ideas, and the other team members' concerns regarding the production qualities of the script. This core production team may want to collaborate as the script develops. For example, each member of the production team could use the script-writing project as an independent study class with a professor. A group of actors and/or dancers could then workshop the script scene by scene. This script development workshop could take place a semester prior to casting. The workshopping process would give at least the core production team more time to work through a new script. Also, workshopping a new script a semester in advance would increase participation in the new-play development process by offering more ways for students to become involved in the development process. In this way, the production

process of a new script becomes more encouraging because student artists have more time to bring a specific project to conclusion.

A second suggestion to improve the production process of a new script is to finalize the script prior to casting. Minor changes may be necessary after the rehearsal process begins, but before the show is cast, the script should be at least in its final stages where style and structure are set. This allows the director and the cast to focus on production instead of script changes. An exception to this may be if there is an acting class interested in collaborating on a script with the previously mentioned core production team of playwright, director, choreographer, and dramaturg, or some combination thereof. Configuratively structured plays have a strong history of collaborative development. Working with a cast through improvisation, for example, can help create images for the script.

Finally, prior to casting, the production process of a new play could benefit from the extensive use of a dramaturg committed to the production of new works. A dramaturg can be a helpful tool in the production process of a new play. A dramaturg's skill lies in her experience in getting a new work to the stage. The dramaturg can help the playwright clarify her vision of the play; and, possibly more importantly, a dramaturg can help articulate the playwright's vision to the director so that the initial production of a new play portrays the vision of the playwright more than it portrays the vision of the director.

The production of a new play may also benefit from techniques to improve the process after rehearsals have begun. During the rehearsal period it is important for the playwright to understand the direction the play is taking. Is the script communicating the

playwright's vision of the play? Communication can be difficult even when the playwright is on location, but when a playwright is not able to witness the rehearsal process, communication problems may be compounded. I offer four suggestions to improve communication during the rehearsal period of a new play. These ideas include: providing audio/visual feedback of rehearsals, including the playwright in the production schedule, expanding the use of a dramaturg, and increasing the amount of professional feedback.

First, providing audio/visual feedback to the playwright during rehearsals may improve the communication process during rehearsal period of production. When it comes to a playwright being able to understand the direction her production is taking, attending rehearsals is the best-case scenario. Next to being present at the rehearsal, audio/visual feedback may provide the next best option. Audio/visual communication could have helped the rewriting process of Millie's War, particularly with complicated image-based scenes with a complex mix of elements involving improvisation, music, dance, and physical theatre.

A second technique to improve the production process of a new play during the rehearsal period is to have a set production schedule that includes the playwright. In the case where the playwright is offsite, or not able to be present, the production meeting may allow the playwright to participate with a conference call, the meeting may be taped, or director's notes may be emailed to the playwright. This is particularly important in the production of a new play. It is important to include the playwright in as much of the production process as possible so that the playwright can be aware of the direction her

work is taking, understand this path, and be able to respond accordingly to ensure her vision of the play translates to the stage.

Third, the production process of a new play may also benefit from more extensive use of dramaturg during the rehearsal process. A dramaturg working with the development of a new play can provide another perspective of the rehearsal process. This third-party perspective can help improve communication between playwright and director. In this way, the dramaturg helps ensure that the playwright's vision unfolds during the rehearsal process, and therefore makes it to the stage.

The fourth and final suggestion to improve the production process of a new play, particularly in an educational environment, is to add professional feedback earlier in the process. Professional response during performance works well to improve and tighten the production, but most of the production elements (blocking, lighting, and design) are already set by that point and cannot be changed. The actors may benefit most from feedback this late in the process, but no one else has time to change anything. The entire production may benefit by having professional feedback earlier (before design deadlines, etc.) so that changes can be discussed and/or made. As a playwright, I may want feedback during the script development process. I believe that in an educational setting, the focus should be on the process, and therefore, respondent feedback earlier and more often during the production process, particularly in the development of a new play, would be informative, useful, and beneficial to all involved in the production process.

In conclusion, although the TTU production of Millie's War in some ways failed to communicate my vision of the play, the production process succeeded in that it helped

me understand ways to improve both my script and the production process of a new play. As a student playwright working through the production process of a new play in an educational environment, I enjoyed the privilege to work with other students on my new script, however, the production process of a new play is different from that of a known work: a new script needs more time in the production process. In an educational environment, the development of a new script can be a new experience for most of those involved. More time spent in production offers more opportunities for more students to involve themselves in the development of a new script.

CHAPTER V
AN EVALUATION OF THE SUCCESS
OF MILLIE'S WAR

This final chapter evaluates Draft Five of Millie's War as an example of a configurative play. I examine problems in terms of structure and possible solutions for revisions. As stated in my introductory chapter, I will consider Millie's War to be a success if it mirrors the pre-narrative stage of traumatic experience dramatically through a configurative structure. A successful finished play will embody the chaos of a traumatized mind in that it will be repetitious and illogical as it replays snatches of memory in a circular fashion. Rather than presenting a story, meaning and significance will come through the power of symbolic associations, like a dream. With Millie's War, I am not interested in depicting any one true story or an account of someone's life, but in revealing how a mind goes through the initial stage of trauma after losing a loved one to war.

Also, at this stage in the writing process, I am more concerned with getting the experience true through the structure of the play, rather than with an expectation of an audience's response. However, once the script is completed to my satisfaction, I believe an audience response should be measured in a Brechtian sense rather than an Aristotelian sense. In other words, an audience, instead of empathizing with Millie, should be enlightened to the experience of trauma caused by war. I believe that a configurative structure, through the creation of images, fragmentary characters, and non-naturalistic

dialogue, demands interpretation. An audience must decide upon meaning; it is not given. Thus, a successful Millie's War would be a configurative play that demands decision rather than arousing empathy through the story of Millie's life.

In reading the script and viewing the production, I believe that where the script succeeds in being configurative, it successfully depicts the chaotic, illogical, dreamlike turmoil of a traumatized mind. Conversely, where it fails to be configurative, it does not. To be a successful example of a configurative play, first, it should suppress story through episodic plot structure, vertical movement, and the creation of images. Second, it should utilize fragmented characters. Third, the script should utilize repetitive, non-naturalistic dialogue to create rhythm. Finally, with "image theatre," Augusto Boal contends, "...the spectator starts acting" (119): images demand spectator interpretation and therefore, demand action. Thus, the success of Millie's War is determined by its soundness of an image-based configurative structure. Although Millie's War served my purposes better than Retrospect, it still fell short of my hopes.

Millie's War moves toward a configurative structure, but it fails to completely suppress story, either through an episodic plot, vertical action, or the creation of images. These elements are utilized, but they are not extreme enough to suppress story in the play. And it is this failure that keeps the play from its objective of depicting a mind in the pre-narrative stage of trauma. I evaluate each of these elements separately.

First, Millie's War fails to suppress story through an episodic plot. Some scenes in Millie's War successfully appear as randomly organized sequence of incidents in that the cyclical plot presents random arrangements of Millie's imagination as a dreamlike

state. Overall, however, the episodic plot should mirror the pre-narrative stage of recovery of a traumatized mind by being a randomly arranged, fragmented, series of images rather than a logical series of events. There should be no story, and "movement from one action to another is likely to be disconnected, transformational, and intermittent" (Smiley 74). In Millie's War, there is too much story, making any lack of story seem like there are holes in a story that is supposed to reveal itself but never does. The play is too linear. For example, the Dance Scenes tell the tragic love story of Mother and Father. The imagistic abstract nature of dance fails to effectively offset this linearity. With the text scenes, too much effort was made, both in the script and in the production, to make logical sense of the events on stage. Thus, the random arrangement of the plot fails to completely suppress story and create a central image for the play.

To create an episodic plot structure that suppresses story I need to incorporate the following solutions. The dance scenes, because of their inherent imagistic qualities and lack of text, could retain the story of the Mother and Father as their central image because the story is a broken and interrupted sequence of only certain events. The order of these events, however, needs to be more mixed up in sequence to keep story at bay. I thought, that having the Dance Scenes tell a story would highlight the chaos of the other scenes, but the opposite is true: once story can be deduced, story becomes expected in the rest of the play. I need the dance scenes to be more a part of the chaotic mix of Millie's traumatized mind. For example, the TTU production's casting included interracial couples, something not appropriate to the World War II era, especially in Texas. This would not have been an issue if, by opening with a period-style dance scene, the play had

not set up the rule of a period play. I had thought that the period detail of these scenes, in contrast to more surreal abstract scenes, would better accentuate the strange other worldliness of the dance sequences as a whole. This idea failed. Like the realistic scenes that opened and closed the play in Draft Two of the script, the realistic style and linearity of the dance scenes detracted from the abstract qualities of the play. One suggestion is to take the dance scenes out of their current linear sequence. Another idea is to interrupt the music with projected text combined with read text and stylized movements within the dances to further alleviate their linearity.

Also, to create an episodic plot structure to suppress story in the text scenes, I need to create each scene with a clear action and then arrange the scenes more randomly. For example, I could significantly cut references made to Millie's past, and instead, dramatize individual incidents without worrying about logical connections to tie the events together. For the most part, the actions of the scenes can remain, but the dialogue should be pared down so that each action appears in isolation. Then cut up the play, literally, into pieces and arrange each scene around a central image of the play. It is Millie's play, and it is her son being killed in war that triggers her traumatic reaction, complete with past traumatic events connected to war and loss and fears of future destruction to her family. A central scene needs to be created to incorporate this statement. All other scenes then must be randomly scattered around the central image forming an imagistic collage. Thus, the structure of the play works like memory or dreams in that connections are made through associations.

Millie's War also fails to suppress story through vertical movement. It creates tension from turmoil within characters and through ironic juxtaposition instead of through conflict, but fails to suppress story completely. First, the play creates tension from within Millie because it is Millie's nightmare. The play creates suspense through tension from the turmoil within Millie, but the stress, anxiety, dread, and anguish as it manifests in Millie's troubled mind is not clear. She comes across as too reflective, stubborn and angry for the stage of trauma I was attempting to depict. For the pre-narrative stage of trauma, "[the victim] is not simply describing what she felt in the past but is reliving those feelings in the present" (Herman 177-178). Millie needs to appear at times in control and at others completely out of control. The mix of rational and irrational behavior needs to be shown more through her actions than through her words. Millie should be pulled, pushed, torn, and turned through scenes. She needs to experience physically her world as chaotic in order to depict accurately her traumatized state. I need to connect physically all events to Millie's mind. For example, I could add a Homecoming Scene where soldiers come home, all but her father. It is a scene with hugs, tears, and joyous reunions juxtaposed with Millie, as a young girl, and her mother left devastated and alone. Millie picks up strewn pieces of paper, the confetti that falls during the welcome home party. On the strewn confetti are bits and pieces of letters, written by her mother and father during the war. Millie begins reading whatever piece of letter she happens to pick up, and then Mother or Father appears to finish speaking the text of the letter. The random piece of letter Millie picks up in subsequent scenes determines the text during performance. Only the act of picking up a letter, and it being read, are scripted.

Thus, the random placement of letters within the script connect the letters to Millie's inner turmoil by imitating the random nature of a traumatized mind, instead of seeming to be more a part of Mother and Father's story.

Second, the Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper character creates suspense through tension with the ironic juxtaposition of an iconographic character; but, Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper must be recognizable as a dual symbolic iconic character for the symbolism to work effectively. For example, in the TTU production, the only clue of the character being Uncle Sam was found in the program where he was listed as "Uncle Sam" with no mention of the Grim Reaper character. The only hint of Uncle Sam in his costume was a top hat, but it was solid black. The Grim Reaper side of his character may have been more identifiable than the Uncle Sam side because the character was dressed in black, but even this role was unclear. His iconographic, allegorical, and symbolic nature depends upon the recognition of both halves of his character for the tension through juxtaposition to work effectively. As an object of interpretation, his actions and reactions must revolve around who he is as a recognizable icon, not only to the characters within the play but to the audience as well. The script needs to note this importance through name, description, costume, makeup, and through the improvisational work within each scene.

Third, the setting creates suspense through tension with its ironic juxtaposition of graveyard and playground, but it may still be too realistic to convey tension in a surreal style. In the TTU production, for example, the setting did not completely convey a surreal world. To solve this problem, I need to create the setting as a clear structural thematic element. In Joseph Chaikin and Susan Yankowitz's Terminal, the setting reflects the

presentational style of the piece; it is a "theatrical arena, a hospital ward, a graveyard, a nameless home to which people come to die and, perhaps, to be transformed" (Sainer 84). Millie's War requires a similar theatrical arena to accommodate both its presentational style and the surreal nature of Millie's world. The stage space is a dance hall, a nursery, a recruitment office, a childhood home, a playground, a military academy, a battlefield, and a graveyard. In Millie's War, as in Terminal, the setting is a place where the living interact with the dead and the immortal change shape. All props should be visible and used in the varying contexts of each scene. As is done in Terminal, it should be noted in the Millie's War script that, "nothing is hidden or disguised, but everything can be transformed. Everything is part of the theatrical world and derives its functions from the needs of that world" (Sainer 82-83). Used in this way, props help drive the surreal quality of the play, for, like a dream, meaning changes as those who perceive them change. The setting of the play is therefore tied thematically and structurally to the whole of the play. To improve this effect in Millie's War, Dr. Pamela Turner, Director of Theatre and Film at Ben Franklin Academy-Emory, suggests I set the entire play on a playground. The simple juxtaposition of the action with the set would therefore play with each scene as it was enacted. All characters use the playground and are serious about it as a real world: they relate death to aspects of the playground and child play to emphasize horror. Also, a playground sets an audience's mind in a place of innocence. Thus, a playground makes ideas in the play metaphorical, ironical, horrific, and surrealistic.

Finally, the verticality fails to suppress story because suspense is created through conflict. Millie fights Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper for Rose. Millie fights Bobby for Rose.

Millie fights Mother for Father. Millie fights her attraction to death. Bobby fights Millie for Rose and for his own recognition as a war hero. These conflicts connect the scenes to each other through story. The play has both horizontal and vertical lines of action. This takes away from an accurate depiction of a traumatized mind. Connections between scenes need to be through association and tension between these associations, not through conflict. The lines of activity do not run in deviation from a center, like an explosion; instead they run in a direction toward an end. For the chaos to reflect trauma accurately, each scene needs to have exact action within itself and the lines of action need to run vertically instead of progressing from one scene's action to the next.

Another way to suppress story in a configurative play is through the creation of images. Millie's War utilizes elements of physical, non-verbal theatre, such as pantomime, improvisation, and dance, to emphasize image versus story, but some scenes are more effective at creating images than others. The Lullaby, Recruitment, Raven and Dance Scenes work best to create images because image is privileged over text; however, these scenes do not make up the bulk of the play. For the remainder of scenes, there are several major problems with the creation of images. First, most scenes lack an identifiable focal center. To solve this problem, I need to cut the lengthier scenes into shorter scenes, and each scene needs a clear focal image to improve the episodic isolation and the impact of each scene. For example, in Bobby's scene, Millie talks about her suicidal reaction upon finding out about Bobby's death. In his book The Playwright's Handbook, Jean Claude van Itallie's Workshop Ten: "Dreams and Ceremony: The Theatre and its Double" suggests that "extreme events should occur on stage" (105). In

this workshop, Van Itallie gives the example of a Japanese Tea Ceremony "performed to quiet the mind in the midst of chaos" (110). To capture the imagistic clarity of the event, the incident of Millie's suicidal reaction to Bobby's death must be extracted from Bobby's scene and be made into its own scene. For example, in the middle of the chaos surrounding the event of Bobby's death, Millie performs a calming ritual of taking a bath. The chaos of the event is represented with projections of images, radio sounds, television sounds all depicting different war news. Officers, dressed as toy soldiers, march to her front door bearing a United States flag as if it is a casket. The doorbell rings and rings. The phone rings and rings. The cacophony of chaos builds as Millie calmly prepares her bath. The action culminates in her "tea ceremony" where she serves herself a bottle of pills. Millie relaxes, deaf to the noise, until she goes under the water: a suicide ceremony. The focal image of suicide in response to Bobby's death portrays Millie's utter inability to cope with her son's death, a clear sign of a traumatized mind.

Another problem with the creation of images in Millie's War is the Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper character. Even though he works through improvisation and pantomime, this character fails to supply a clear and sustainable action in each scene and throughout the play. His role needs to be clarified in each isolated scene. His meaning will be determined by how each spectator views his actions. Do they see Uncle Sam or do they see the Grim Reaper? In the suicide ceremony scene described in the previous paragraph, if Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper were to prepare Millie's bath and serve her the bottle of pills, is he Uncle Sam consoling her over the loss of her son, or is he the Grim Reaper taking advantage of her vulnerability to capture another soul? Once each scene

has a clear focal image, the actor needs to play with different possibilities to use his allegorical and symbolic nature to its fullest ability. He is crucial in determining a variety of meanings for each incident. He is the mirror who reflects our ideas of patriotism and fear.

Also, the creation of images fails to suppress story because too many thoughts are described instead of dramatized, substantially minimizing the episodic impact of the images created. In describing configurative structure, Smiley suggests that “exposition [is] generally absent” (75). The Father and Mother Scenes in Act I consist of too much exposition. To solve this problem I would pare down the dialogue and isolate the actions. For example, I would cut the Mother Scene in Act I down to only the text immediately surrounding the actions where the telegram is delivered and Millie attempts suicide. The remainder of the Mother scene can be cut, mostly because it brings to light too many other issues in Millie’s life. The dialogue consists almost entirely of exposition, exposition that does not apply to the central image of Millie reacting to her son's death.

Finally, for the creation of images to successfully suppress story, the center image of the play needs to be clear. The explosion outward in a configuratively structured, imagistic play needs to be traceable backward to a central image. Millie's War has too many centers, and as such, is trying to be too many plays. The focal center of the play needs to be clear. If Millie's reaction to her son's death is the focal center of the play, then only those events and images related to Millie's reaction should be kept in the script. For instance, the Mother Scene raises too many side issues: Millie's childhood relationship to her mother and Millie dealing with the death of her mother at the same time she is

dealing with the death of her son. Therefore, most of this scene should be cut. The final cut of events and images should then be scattered around the central scene, the central image. Once each scene becomes more clearly focused on its own isolated image, transitions and connections to causal story line must be removed to successfully allow episodic plot, vertical movement, and the creation of images to replace story.

Overall, Millie's War fails to suppress story, and therefore fails to be a successful example of a configurative script. To depict the pre-narrative stage of trauma accurately, the structure needs to be pre-narrative as well. That is, it needs to be an illogical, random, and story-less, series of images.

The second element of configurative structure I evaluate in Millie's War is the creation of fragmentary characters. The most successful fragmentary characters in the script have little or no causal relationship to the action and are objects of social and political forces. For example, Rose is effectively fragmentary because she is more a symbol of hope and fear for Millie than her own person with a will of her own. She has a choice to join the military or not, but the choice is not made within the play. Rose only exists in the play as representative of the importance of saving her from being another casualty in the family line, and the irony that this time it will be a woman. We lose our fathers, sons, and now our daughters --a horror of equality. Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper is also successfully fragmentary because, as an allegorical and symbolic character, he relates to other characters and to the spectator as an active embodiment of the social and political forces that make it possible for such a character to exist, instead of through his individual will.

Other characters are less effectively fragmentary. Bobby, for example, is too causally related to the action. Even though he is one of my favorite characters, his actions are too motivationally driven. To alleviate this problem, I would pare down the dialogue of the current Bobby scene, isolate images, and break the isolated images into separate scenes. I would add scenes depicting Bobby as a dead soldier acting out scenes from his childhood. For example, Millie and Bobby's last visit to the playground, where he breaks away from her and abandons his mother and his youth, would show his hurt after the death of his father. Specific care needs to be taken to relate all images to Millie's trauma, not create a side story about Bobby and his life.

Mother also needs to be more fragmentary. The Mother Scene brings up too many side issues and creates too much story through her relationship with Millie. As discussed earlier, most of this scene needs to be cut. Mother needs to remain in the play, but her associations to Millie and to the issues of the play need to be more symbolic. She represents the connection to the home front in the Reenactment Scene. This representation works effectively for a fragmentary character. To move the Mother character further toward objectification, I would also create a scene to raise the issue of Mother being representative of the wartime widow left to care for young children. As "Mother," she is not merely Millie's mother, but representative of any mother involved in the struggle with loss due to war.

Also, Millie is not fragmentary enough: her actions are too overt, not reactionary enough, and too much led by her own will. Norman Bert's comments, conveyed in his post-show notes, represent the majority of reactions to Millie: "She is too whiny, too

long-winded, and when she does say something I want her to say, it is too late. I don't care anymore because I just want her to be quiet." According to Herman, "the survivor [of trauma] often stands mute before the emptiness of evil, feeling the insufficiency of any known system of explanation" (178). Millie talks too much, tells too much of her story. To fix these problems, Millie needs to be caught up in the chaos of her trauma. Scenes need to show Millie as a mother, daughter, grandmother, and wife. Exposition needs to be severely trimmed. And her commentary would work better if juxtaposed against images showing her torn, distraught, and lost. Each reference she makes to an incident from her past needs to be portrayed. It may work to create rules within the text, such as whenever Millie says: "Rose," Rose appears on stage. Rules that work through association instead of causality would keep the chaos in play and depict a more surreal world.

Generally, connections between characters and events are surreal because all scenes occur in Millie's subconscious mind; however, the surreal world of the play needs to be more intense to illustrate a traumatic mind. The script would be improved if each character clearly related to a focal scene through association. For example, the surreal style could be better emphasized if set up at the start of the play. Pamela Turner suggests opening the play with a scene where the Father, Son, and Husband (Millie's men lost to war), all on stage at the same time, reenact their moments of death. This would replace most of the Reenactment Scene at the end of the play. It would be difficult to know which character to focus on, listen to, or hear. Focus may shift from one soldier to another as bits and pieces of dialogue are heard and assimilated. This confusion places the spectator

in the chaotic confused mind of Millie. Then Rose could appear on the playground and dance with Uncle Sam/Grim Reaper, presenting the idea that it may be a young woman who is lost next. These are the things on Millie's mind, tormenting her. Their symbolism, as dead soldiers, fathers, sons, and husbands, relates to Rose, a daughter and granddaughter, who now flirts with their same fate. Thus, the characters become objects, symbols up for interpretation.

The final element of configurative structure that I wish to evaluate in the Millie's War script involves non-naturalistic dialogue and whether or not this style of dialogue creates rhythm and pattern in the script. Millie's War utilizes non-naturalistic dialogue effectively in that the repetition forced performers to deal with the lack of motivation and this helped to create a surreal world; however, much of the dialogue in the play remains too motivationally driven, logically connecting the dots of a story it is trying to suppress. The repetition also failed to accentuate the rhythm of chaos or serenity where intended. Millie's mind, the world of the play, is in a state of trauma. The rhythm of the dialogue failed to create an accurate image of this state. To make the non-naturalistic (non-motivational, imagistic, repetitive, and rhythmical) dialogue more prominent in the script, I need to cut or drastically reduce the amount of motivationally driven dialogue. For example, Millie's lines need to be cut drastically but carefully. It may help to change the style of her dialogue. The dialogue about past events (passive expository memories) could be written in verse to add to the non-naturalistic quality of her memory. This would make the exposition more imagistic, less natural, and more surreal. Millie's dialogue that speaks in the present (active memories) could be kept in prose. With the prose style, I

could use the cut-up method (randomly arrange bits and pieces of the dialogue) to lessen causality and story connections.

Additionally, repetition needs to work more effectively to create the rhythm of a traumatized mind. Respondents Don Williams and Laurie Doyle wanted the rhythm to become out of control at times, hypnotic at others, like a nightmare. They suggested contrasting the precise rhythm of the military actions to chaos of other actions. The dialogue could be used to accent this contrast. For example, dialogue matching the military actions could be short, staccato lines with a strong forceful beat, while the chaos of other actions could be highlighted with dialogue that is random and sometimes nonsensical. Using the cut-up method is one technique to capture the chaos. Writing exercises based on creating rhythm may help create the necessary contrasts. In his book Playwriting in Process, Michael Wright suggests working on a particular scene while listening to random selections of instrumental music. Wright recommends “choosing pieces that really clash in style and rhythm. [He concludes that] with the variations externally imposed the scenes’ rhythm may effectively reflect the changes in rhythm” (39-40). For example, marches may help to get the desired effect for the military actions. For the desired chaotic rhythm, extremes in mood and style like selections from David Bowie's intense and chaotic Outside mixed with selections from Brian Eno's contemplative and atmospheric Thursday Afternoon.

Overall, the non-naturalistic dialogue of the play fails to reflect the chaotic illogical world of Millie’s traumatized mind. The will of the characters is not in play: the dialogue therefore needs to be more non-motivational. The dialogue of an image-based

play needs to be imagistic: the language needs to create pictures of the world the play is trying to depict. For the language to depict an image of a traumatic state of mind the repetition of the dialogue needs to create the rhythm of the traumatic experience with sharp contrasts of mood, style, and intensity –such as the nightmarish world it represents.

The last element of configurative structure I evaluate in the Millie's War script is in regards to audience response. Referring back to the Brechtian idea of decision, imagistic theatre demands decision in that images must be interpreted: possibilities are given and choice lies with the spectator. This is why I feel that if the play adheres to and embraces configurative structure, it will demand interpretation, and therefore, action on the part of the spectator. The spectator will be forced to interpret the images presented and relate those images to the spectator's own views about war and loss. As it stands, I feel the script, the production team, and thus, the audience became too focused on the story of Millie and mostly, if not completely, missed the experience of trauma caused by war. There was too much story in the script to accurately depict an imagistic play or a traumatized mind. At its most successful, Millie's War reminded certain World War II era veterans of their experiences during that horrific time. One audience member, Virginia Kershner, said, "That's how it was then; Taps [being played] over and over and over. It felt like the death would never end." Audience member and respondent Laurie Doyle found the play "difficult and disturbing" because her son was entering the military during wartime: a moment when she "wanted answers and the play only raised more questions." There seemed to be more recognition of the traumatic experience from those who had been through it themselves, particularly those who had been through the experience of

World War II and those dealing with the current situation in Iraq or Afghanistan. I am unsure if I consider this result a success or a failure. Does recalling trauma demand decision? On the other hand, when audience members did not or could not recognize the traumatic experience, they were often offended by the content, the text, particularly, Millie's anti-war sentiment. I feel this reaction is a sign of success for the production, in part, because the issues do not resolve themselves easily. Offended spectators were forced to confront the issues because they had to make an interpretation of the play; and this is why the play was made.

In conclusion, I believe the change in form from a more traditional, linear structure to a configurative structure better expresses the traumatic experience of loss experienced in connection to war. Even with its failures as a configurative play, Millie's War is better than Retrospect in this respect. All through my writing process, I struggled with the problem of how to get words on a page to create a nightmarish experience. Since the exact, true experience can be suffered only in real life and not on stage, I wanted to see how many simulations of the experience I could produce, not through empathy but through contrived devices: plot structure, movement, images, disorientation, character as objects, and rhythmic word patterns. In his poem "The Raven," Edgar Allen Poe succeeds because he creates a hypnotic rhythm of alliteration and rhyme that can lull the reader into the same sort of delusional state expressed by the poem's speaker. Just like the speaker, I begin to hear the raven speak because the repetitive rhythm has drawn me into his world. For a moment, I see inside the mind of the speaker. "The Raven" defies logical reason: events do not make sense, yet they demand interpretation. I do not hope to bring

the trauma of loss due to war to everyone. I only want the understanding of the experience of that particular trauma to be understood in a new way.

After a production, I am eager for another, not because of its successes, but because of its failures. I learned that I need to be present at the production site while the play is developing. Seeing the action take place in time and space helps me see time and space on the page more readily. Additionally, I need to work with a choreographer at my side throughout the writing process to help me create the movement I am looking for. I need a group of artists willing to work ideas out on stage. For me, in order to write a configurative play and stay true to the form, I need to work collaboratively, in 3D so to speak, to test the images as they are formed. The images must be vivid and haunting, not logical and satisfying, but puzzling and disturbing like the trauma itself. As Peter Brook explains in his book, The Empty Space:

...When a performance is over, what remains? ...When emotion and argument are harnessed to a wish from the audience to see more clearly into itself --then something in the mind burns. The event scorches on to the memory an outline, a taste, a trace, a smell --a picture. It is the play's central image that remains, a silhouette, and if the elements are rightly blended this silhouette will be the essence of what it has to say. (136)

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APPENDIX A

RETROSPECT

RETROSPECT

A PLAY

BY

ELIZABETH G. TERRY WINTOUR

Copyright 1990

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MILLIE	a middle-aged Woman with an unsettled past
YOUNG MILLIE	MILLIE when she was a little girl
GERALD	MILLIE'S husband
CAPTAIN RANDALL	MILLIE'S father
IRENE	MILLIE'S mother
CAPTAIN MICK BOOSTER	RANDALL'S best friend
COLONEL CHES HATFIELD	RANDALL and MICK'S Commanding Officer

SETTING

PLACE: A vacant turn-of-the-century Cape Cod Summer home.

TIME: The Present

RETROSPECT

ACT I

ACT ONE
Scene 1

(MILLIE and GERALD ENTER stage right and walk up to the front of a somewhat dilapidated turn-of-the-century Cape Cod summer home.)

GERALD

This must be it: 486 Parker Road. And just in time, if I had to look any further in this damn heat I'd pass out. Do you recognize it, honey? *(Beat. No response.)* This is the house, isn't it?

MILLIE

It never had a front deck.

GERALD

It's been 40 some-odd years since you've been here, Millie, somethin's bound to have changed.

(GERALD sits down exhausted on the porch steps.)

MILLIE

It looks so ... changed.

GERALD

This has got to be the house. Look closely. Besides, didn't you live here through a winter when you were here? Seasons change more drastically in the North. Maybe it's the summer heat you don't remember. Heat can change a lot of things. The address is the same so this has got to be the one. Look closely.

(MILLIE looks around the side of the house.)

The tree's gone!

GERALD

What tree?

MILLIE

It was right here.

(MILLIE kneels. GERALD shakes his head.)

MILLIE, cont.

It was right here. The branches were huge and hung low to the ground. They made a little hollow in the snow. Sarah and I used it as a fort and would stay there for hours pretending we were Artic Spies. Sometimes I could even get Daddy to play.... It's too bad. It was a lovely old tree.

GERALD

So this is the place! Thank God, we can rest a minute. I wouldn't be so tired if you hadn't insisted we leave the car in town. One mile? Ha! It seemed more like five. Who's Sarah?

MILLIE

Sarah was my doll, sort of an imaginary friend. We moved around a lot so I kept Sarah for my best friend.

(MILLIE walks up to the windows and looks into the house.)

It's not at all like it was, Gerald.

GERALD

Things change you know, always have, always will. Did you really expect it to be the way you left it?

MILLIE

No, I guess not. It's just so...I don't know... empty.

GERALD

It's probably been a rental for years and a pretty shabby one, I'd say, at that. It could use a paint job, doesn't look like anyone's been in it for years. Well, are we going inside, or what?

(MILLIE walks around to the side of the house and stares into the woods. GERALD joins her once he notices she is gone.)

Don't tell me you're changing your mind already? This house is supposed to change our lives remember? That's what your doctor said. Hell, if I know what he means, though. But we've come all this way. Don't you think it's worth a try?

MILLIE

I'll go in. I've got to go in. It's really weird, but out of all the places we lived when I was a child, we probably lived in this house the shortest amount of time. And yet, it's the place I remember the most.

GERALD

It's the last place you saw your father, Mil, is prob'ly why. On that, I agree with the Doctor. You're fixated on this house because of your father. Do you want me to stay with you? I could just hang out here or wander over to the golf course.

MILLIE

No, Gerald, I'll be all right. I need to be alone. It's my past.

(They walk to the front door.)

You know, I left Sarah in my closet when we moved from here...there was a huge spider in there with her... (*Smiles nervously*) You don't suppose she's still in there, do you?

GERALD

(Puzzled)

Look, Mil, if it's going to be tough being back here, I want to be with you.

MILLIE

Please don't worry. I'll be fine. I just need some time alone to get some things straight in my head. Now go on, and don't get lost sightseeing and forget to pick me up!

GERALD

Okay, you go look for your doll. I'm going to go look for a beer. I'll be back before dark. I love you.

MILLIE

You too.

(GERALD EXITS.)

MILLIE is at the front door with the key in the lock. When she opens the door, the LIGHTS go black on all areas outside the house as the LIGHTS go up inside the house, and the house turns 180 degrees so that MILLIE is seen entering the house from upstage.

A radio news report on WWII plays. The house is lavishly decorated in 1930's decor. MILLIE turns back to the door as if to leave, somewhat frightened by what she sees. RANDALL, IRENE, and MICK are seated at the dinner table.

There are no walls in the house, only a dining area, living area, and a set of stairs leading up to two small bedrooms. These areas are kept dim except the area the characters are in. When the characters move from area to area the LIGHTS fade where they have been, and rise where they are going in order to create a dream-like flow of action. There is a consistent SPOT on MILLIE.

These scenes should contrast sharply to the scenes with MILLIE and GERALD.)

RANDALL

Millie! Millie, hurry up! Our dinner's getting cold and your Uncle Mick's making us wait for you!

YOUNG MILLIE

(From upstairs.)

Coming Daddy!

MILLIE

Daddy?

(YOUNG MILLIE ENTERS from the stairs carrying her doll, Sarah.)

IRENE

Turn the radio off on your way, please! I don't want to hear war news while we're eating. (YOUNG MILLIE runs past MILLIE and turns off the radio, then walks into the dinner area and takes her seat at the table.

MILLIE follows her and stands in the doorway looking on in amazement.)

MICK

Sounds like our Italy invasion might come sooner than we expected, eh Randall? And how's my favorite little girl doing, Millie? You're looking chipper tonight. What's up?

IRENE

Mick, please, can't we talk about something besides the war?

RANDALL

At least it's not in our back yard. That's exactly what we have to prevent, an invasion on American soil, all the bombing and destruction. Europe is being wiped out, we've gotta move now before they start bombing over here.

YOUNG MILLIE

We won't have school tomorrow if it snows some more and it's supposed to snow all night. The man on the radio said so. So me and Sarah are going to play Artic Spies. Will you play with us Uncle Mick?

MICK

Since your father's going into the city, I'll have to come by and check on my girls, now won't I?

IRENE

That's sweet of you, Mick, but we'll be okay.

YOUNG MILLIE

But Mother!

RANDALL

Mick's right; Italy's going to be a hell of a lot sooner than we all expected. The Colonel's all worked up over the new plans. It seems as though Churchill has a bit of a different outlook than we do, so things are changing at a pretty rapid rate. Colonel Ches wants me to make sure the meeting in Boston goes according to his plan but somehow I don't think anything any of us have to say right now is going to make the least bit of difference.

IRENE

I'm glad you think it's so god-awful important to go out in this blizzard. And of course, if the Colonel wants it, it's got to be done. What can he be thinking?!

MICK

I know what he's thinking.

RANDALL

He's got it in his head that we have some sort of input on this mission, and the fact is we're just going to get it from the top at the last minute and have to execute it no matter what we think. But Ches won't listen to me. (*Bellowing*) "Randall, we need you in Boston, and we need you now!"

MICK

Hey, are you going to test-drive that new Buick of yours on the way up? Boy, what a car! I hear they're not going to make them like that after the War. I don't know why 'cause it's a beauty!

IRENE

In this weather, he shouldn't be driving at all.

RANDALL

Irene's right; the roads are going to be too icy for a test drive. Let's take it out when the weather clears. I've been wanting to take her up on that road behind the Kings' place where...

(A knock at front door.)

Bet that's the Colonel with more last minute instructions.

YOUNG MILLIE

I'll get it!

IRENE

No, that's okay, honey. I'll get it.

(IRENE gets up but is too late. YOUNG MILLIE runs to open the door; when she does, COLONEL CHES is standing all bundled up and covered with snow. IRENE is right behind YOUNG MILLIE. MILLIE follows.)

YOUNG MILLIE

Hi Colonel Hatfield.

(MILLIE, unbelieving, walks over to the door, trying to feel the cold.)

CHES

"Ches," please, little one.

(Both MILLIES cringe.)

Where did you learn all that formality stuff anyway?

IRENE

(To CHES)

Did you really think it necessary...

CHES

(Interrupting. To YOUNG MILLIE)

Perhaps you could get me a little brandy to get my blood flowing again. Whoa, is it cold out there!

YOUNG MILLIE

Yes, sir.

(YOUNG MILLIE turns to get the brandy)

but MILLIE stands listening to IRENE and CHES.)

CHES

Don't you think I can handle the situation?

IRENE

Maybe I can't! Did you consider that?

CHES

(To IRENE, overly formal)

Good evening, my dear. (*Kisses her hand.*) Are you keeping warm in this hoarfrost? (*Loudly*) I'm not interrupting your dinner am I?

MICK

No, Chester. Come on in!

CHES

Well! Captain Booster, what a surprise.

IRENE

He was invited to dinner.

(IRENE starts clearing the dishes loudly then exits to kitchen.)

RANDALL

Have more instructions for the meeting tomorrow? Come sit down Colonel. Millie, you want to get us some brandy?

YOUNG MILLIE

I already have it.

(YOUNG MILLIE hands the brandy to her father. MICK scruffs her hair and smiles. MICK takes the brandy from RANDALL and pours himself a drink.)

MICK

How're you doing, Chester? The snow's comin' down pretty hard, ain't it?

CHES

It's a regular winter wonderland, and so damn early in the year, too! I wonder how us southern folk are gonna survive in this frigid hell.

MICK

Bet it was pretty tough getting all the way over here from your place. Getting Randall to this meeting must be pretty damn important.

CHES

Say, Randall, what's that pretty little wife of yours doing? Doesn't she have time for company anymore? Or are you chaining her to the kitchen?

(A dish smashes in the "kitchen" off-stage.)

RANDALL

You all right, Irene? She'll be out in a minute. Millie you want to go check on your mother?

CHES

Maybe I should check on her.

IRENE

(Off-stage.)

Fine. Everything's just fine.

MICK

(*Smiles & drinks his brandy.*) So, Chester, you don't think your influence would be better than Randall's at this meeting tomorrow?

CHES

You know. Captain Booster, a man of my position sometimes has to take a back seat when trying to get his ideas across; send a scout out, so to speak, to feel out the area for snipers before cramming your ideas down their throats! And you're the perfect man for the job, Randall. I'll rest easy knowing you're sitting at their table.

RANDALL

Good thing I'm the one going. One whiff of your ego and it'd be all over.

MICK

(Rolling a cigarette)

Ain't that the truth.

CHES

They'll come around. I have faith in you, Randall.

MICK

And don't you think they know that Randall's just your front? The meeting's useless, I say! The General's mind's made up, and he's already got enough opposition from

MICK, cont.

Churchill's bunch. The last thing he wants is our coming up tomorrow screwing everybody up again. No sir, I think the Colonel here has other reasons for Randall going to Boston.

CHES

Randall can be mighty persuasive when he wants to be.

MICK

Yeah, if he wants to be.

(MICK pours himself another drink.)

CHES

You'll be back day after tomorrow, Randall?

RANDALL

Tomorrow, maybe, depending on the snow.

(IRENE ENTERS from "the kitchen.")

IRENE

Why are you sending him out in such weather? Can't they put the meeting off until this blows over?

CHES

(Looking her over.)

You know I don't want to send Randall out in this weather, Irene, but the meeting's going to go on with or without him, and this may be our last chance to have any say in the Italy matter.

MICK

(Finishing his drink.)

We never had any say in the matter!

RANDALL

Now Mick...

IRENE

No, I agree with Mick on this one.

(Gives CHES a hard look.)

Come on Millie, time for bed.

(LIGHTS go dim on everyone as they freeze their positions; all except MILLIE and YOUNG MILLIE.)

Do you like Colonel Hatfield?
MILLIE

Who are you?
YOUNG MILLIE

I'm Millie.
MILLIE

My name's Millie too!
YOUNG MILLIE

I know. You see, I am you, in another time. Or rather, you are me, in another time. I mean I am you when you grow up, and you are me when I was little. Do you understand?
MILLIE

I'm not little.
YOUNG MILLIE

I'm sorry. I didn't mean... I mean, I used to be your age. I used to be you.
MILLIE

Are you visiting us for a while?
YOUNG MILLIE

Yes, I guess I am.
MILLIE

How long are you staying?
YOUNG MILLIE

I don't know.
MILLIE

This is Sarah.
YOUNG MILLIE

Hello Sarah.
MILLIE

If you were me, then did you know who Sarah was before I told you?
YOUNG MILLIE

MILLIE

Yes. And I know all the others too.

YOUNG MILLIE

You mean you had the same family?

MILLIE

Back then, yes.

YOUNG MILLIE

Sarah and me don't like Colonel Hatfield, and neither does Uncle Mick. Did you?

MILLIE

I'm not sure I remember. Why don't you like him?

YOUNG MILLIE

He's creepy.

MILLIE

That's right, I remember now. He always called me "little one" and I hated it! He was always patting me on the head, too, and giving funny looks to Mother. Uncle Mick used to drink a lot whenever the Colonel was at our house. I used to hate it when he would come over, especially when Dad or Uncle Mick wasn't around. Mother always acted so strange when he was around.

(MILLIE wanders through the others.)

The memories in this house! I haven't thought about Colonel Hatfield in...in...in... I can't remember the last time. And Mother, she looks so pretty.

(Walks over to Randall.)

This is how I remember Daddy. Sitting right here in his favorite chair. I don't remember much of the time right before he left... or even the time before we moved up here. It's the way he looks right now that sticks in my mind, so strong and handsome, about to give me a huge bear hug...

YOUNG MILLIE

What's he look like now?

MILLIE

Uh...I don't know...he's...uh...I haven't seen him in a long, long time.

YOUNG MILLIE

You look like Mother. Am I going to look like Mother, too?

MILLIE

You're going to look like me.

YOUNG MILLIE

Good. I think you're pretty.

(YOUNG MILLIE spins around with Sarah as the lights come up on the scene again and the characters resume.)

RANDALL

How about a goodnight hug? (*YOUNG MILLIE obliges*) Mmm, that's good! Now you be good and look after your Mother while I'm gone and I'll see you in a couple of days.

YOUNG MILLIE

Okay. I love you.

RANDALL

I love you, too, sweetie. Now run along to bed.

MICK

Don't I get one of those?

YOUNG MILLIE

Sure!

(Hugs Mick)

IRENE

Come on, Millie.

YOUNG MILLIE

Goodnight!

(YOUNG MILLIE exits with IRENE Up the stairs.

As they ascend, the LIGHTS go up in YOUNG MILLIE'S bedroom and grow dim on the men in the living area.

MILLIE takes one last look at RANDALL then follows IRENE and YOUNG MILLIE up the stairs as the house turns a 1/4 turn revealing a side view of YOUNG MILLIE'S room where her window looks out onto the wooded area beside the house.)

YOUNG MILLIE

Mother, how come Uncle Mick doesn't like Colonel Hatfield?

IRENE

Whatever makes you say a thing like that, honey? Uncle Mick likes Ches just fine. Now hop into bed.

YOUNG MILLIE

Will he be coming over while Daddy's gone?

IRENE

What? What makes you say...No, of course not. Well, to check to see if we're all right, maybe, but you don't need to worry about that honey. Now, come on, let's go to bed.

YOUNG MILLIE

Will Daddy be back before tomorrow night?

IRENE

I hope so, Millie. I don't like staying here without him either.

YOUNG MILLIE

Can I sleep with you tomorrow night if he's not home yet?

IRENE

Of course you can. But don't you worry; he'll be back on time unless the snowstorm keeps him there longer.

YOUNG MILLIE

Aren't you gonna sing me to sleep?

IRENE

Not tonight, honey, we have company waiting downstairs.

YOUNG MILLIE

It's just the Colonel and Uncle Mick, they won't mind, I know it!

IRENE

Okay, okay. A short one, which one would you like? "Lullaby?"

YOUNG MILLIE

That's Sarah's favorite!

(YOUNG MILLIE hugs her doll tight.)

MILLIE sits in a rocking chair and rocks while IRENE sings.)

IRENE

Lullaby and goodnight
Close your tired eyes and dream
Through the fairyland you'll sleep
Till the morning shows her light
Lullaby, lullaby
Lullaby and goodnight
Lullaby and goodnight
Close your tired eyes and dream
Through the fairyland you'll sleep
Till the morning light shines bright
Lullaby, lullaby
Lullaby and sleep tight

(IRENE exits.

The stage goes DARK briefly. Then the LIGHTS come up in YOUNG MILLIE'S bedroom and in IRENE'S bedroom. YOUNG MILLIE and Sarah are in bed. MILLIE stands looking out the window.

A dim SPOT follows the COLONEL as he enters from the "wooded area." He stops as he notices the light in IRENE'S window. He stands staring up at the window while IRENE ENTERS his view undressing. As he watches her, MICK, who is leaning against a tree out of the COLONEL'S view, lights a cigarette and watches the COLONEL.

During this scene, the two men act out their scene in pantomime. Their scene ends when the two MILLIES finish their scene.)

MILLIE

I always felt so safe in this room. I used to have the other room. I can't remember when I switched...or why.

YOUNG MILLIE

This room's not scary. The tree doesn't scrape the window like it does in the other room.

MILLIE

Oh yeah, I remember! Daddy tried his best to make me not afraid of that dumb tree. I thought it would come through the house and get me and take me out into the woods and leave me screaming.

YOUNG MILLIE

That tree is evil and it tries to get in that other room at night. Sarah said she wouldn't sleep with me if we had to stay in there. So I made them let us switch.

MILLIE

You sure use Sarah a lot to hide behind your fears.

YOUNG MILLIE

What do you mean?

MILLIE

I mean that you talk to Sarah more when you're scared.

YOUNG MILLIE

Or when I'm mad?

MILLIE

Yes, or when you're mad. I didn't remember till now how much I relied on my doll.

YOUNG MILLIE

Most people only listen sometimes. Sarah listens all the time. And she always believes me no matter what.

MILLIE

Who doesn't believe you?

YOUNG MILLIE

Mother and Daddy.

MILLIE

Why don't they believe you?

YOUNG MILLIE

Oh, they believe me most times, but sometimes they don't.

MILLIE

I don't remember. When?

YOUNG MILLIE

Sarah thinks she hears something outside. Do you hear it, too? Maybe it's the tree.

MILLIE

(Looking out the window.)

It sounds like voices, but I can't see anything.

YOUNG MILLIE

Maybe it's burglars!

MILLIE

No, come to the window and look.

YOUNG MILLIE

It's cold and I don't want to get out of bed!

MILLIE

I think it's the Colonel.

YOUNG MILLIE

The Colonel? What's he doing? Why do I have to see?

MILLIE

Just come look! I don't know what he's doing; there might even be someone else. I can't make out who. It's too dark. There're two people, though. Come here and look!

YOUNG MILLIE

You're scaring Sarah! Get away from the window! Will you sing to me?

(MILLIE goes over to the bed and sings
YOUNG MILLIE to sleep.)

MILLIE

Lullaby and goodnight
Close your tired eyes and dream
Through the fairyland you'll sleep
Till the morning shows her light
Lullabye, lullaby
Lullaby and goodnight
Lullaby and goodnight
Close your tired eyes and dream

Through the fairyland you'll sleep
Till the morning sun shines bright
Lullaby, lullaby
Lullaby and sleep tight.

MILLIE, cont.

(During this scene, CHES and MICK perform in VERY DIM LIGHT and in pantomime. They start when MILLIE says: "I always felt so safe in this room," Page 15. They stop when MILLIE leaves the window just before the lullaby, Page 17, even if they are not finished.

If needed for timing, the dialogue for this fight occurs in ACT TWO.

MICK stays purposely out of CHES'S view.

CHES motions toward the window.

MICK comes around the tree to face CHES and takes a last long drag of his cigarette. MICK tosses his cigarette and mashes it under his boot.

Agitation mounting, CHES takes off his uniform jacket.

MICK dances boxer-style in front of CHES stumbling as he does so.

MICK lands a hard punch to the mouth.

Wiping blood from his lip, CHES grabs MICK by the collar shaking him violently.

CHES jumps on MICK. They fall to the ground.

Inside, IRENE goes to the window and looks out while MILLIE sings Lullaby.

Barely dressed, IRENE runs downstairs, opens the side door, and searches the darkness.

MICK falls hard, hitting his head on the tree. He doesn't move.

Getting to his feet, CHES notices MICK has not moved.

Car HEADLIGHTS flash across the stage.

As IRENE and CHES drag MICK in from the side door, RANDALL ENTERS through the front door.

The stage LIGHTS fade and MILLIE is heard humming her lullaby.

The LIGHTS come up and YOUNG MILLIE and MILLIE are in the living area. YOUNG MILLIE is sitting in front of the radio coloring. Sarah, her doll, sits beside her. MILLIE stands looking out the window.)

MILLIE

How pretty this view is... all those woods to play in. I haven't lived near the woods since we lived here. I tried to go camping in the mountains once, but the woods frightened me too much. I had horrible nightmares.

YOUNG MILLIE

Why did you come here?

MILLIE

To see how it was when I was your age. It's been such a long time; sometimes I have trouble remembering it all. My Doctor said it might do me some good to retrace some personal history so I decided to find this house and visit. I'm surprised I'm able to remember so much. It must be this house. I just wish I could keep things straight for when I get back home.

YOUNG MILLIE

You don't live here?

MILLIE

No, I moved away when I was about your age.

YOUNG MILLIE

To where?

MILLIE

Texas. You used to live there. Do you remember?

YOUNG MILLIE

Yeah, a little, we had running water inside our house.

MILLIE

Ha! Ha! That's right, I forgot this place didn't have indoor plumbing! I was always teased in school for talking funny and not ever having the right clothes for the cold. Everyone thought it was so funny to be from some weird place called Texas. All I wanted to tell them was that at least we could get water and go to the bathroom inside our houses!

YOUNG MILLIE

Can you make cocoa?

MILLIE

I try 'cause my kids love it, but I always burn the milk. Why, would you like some?

YOUNG MILLIE

Yeah, but I burn the milk, too.

MILLIE

I guess I haven't learned much even with thirty years of practice.

YOUNG MILLIE

I have kids?

MILLIE

Three: a boy and two girls.

YOUNG MILLIE

What are their names?

MILLIE

Randall, June, and Jennifer.

YOUNG MILLIE

Randall is my father's name!

MILLIE

That's who he's named after, silly.

YOUNG MILLIE

Do they like to color like me and Sarah?

MILLIE

Yes, sometimes, but they like to watch T.V. more than anything else. I can't keep them away from it!

YOUNG MILLIE

What's T.V.?

MILLIE

Oh, I forgot! Life without T.V....how shall I explain? Well, it's like listening to the stories on the radio, but there's a picture that goes with it so you can see the people telling the story.

YOUNG MILLIE

It sounds real good. Why do you want them away from it?

MILLIE

Sometimes the stories and the pictures are real good, and then it's okay for kids to watch, but some of the pictures are too scary for children so I turn those shows off.

YOUNG MILLIE

Like the war news Mother makes me turn off the radio.

MILLIE

Yes, sort of like that.

YOUNG MILLIE

Me and Sarah don't always color. We do lots of fun things here like skating on the pond and playing Indians in the woods. Do you remember?

MILLIE

With Biff and Bang. Yes, I remember, the boys with the barn and the stacks of hay. We'd climb all the way to the top and jump deep down into that scratchy straw.

YOUNG MILLIE

And it didn't even hurt! Do you remember the blowfish? Do our kids like to play with blowfish?

MILLIE

Somehow, I don't think they'd find the same thrill.

YOUNG MILLIE

Blowfish are so funny to watch; when you tickle their bellies, they blow up like this...

(Both MILLIES puff out their cheeks as hard as they can and then burst out laughing.)

Don't they have a beach to play at?

MILLIE

No, no, I've only taken them to the beach once, and we didn't see any blowfish. Randall stepped on a jellyfish, though, and his foot and ankle swelled up bigger than any blowfish ever did, and bright red, too! *(They both puff out their cheeks.)* You like it here in Osterville, don't you?

YOUNG MILLIE

Oh yes!

MILLIE

But it's so far from home. Don't you miss Texas?

YOUNG MILLIE

No, it's much better here. We have woods, and beaches and blowfish... *(They puff out their cheeks.)* and Uncle Mick taught me how to ski on the golf course hills. There is no place to ski in Texas. There's not even snow!

MILLIE

It sounds like you'd be sad to leave.

YOUNG MILLIE

We won't leave. Daddy's work's here now, and we won't move again. Do you ski?

MILLIE

No, I haven't skied since I was your age.

YOUNG MILLIE

WHY? It's the most fun of all! Uncle Mick says there's mountains not far from here that are even more fun than the hills at the golf course, and he's promised to take me there when he finishes with the war.

MILLIE

That's an interesting way of putting it.

(IRENE ENTERS into dining area and begins laying the table for dinner.)

IRENE

Millie? Millie, can you come here a minute please?

YOUNG MILLIE

Coming Mother!

(YOUNG MILLIE picks up Sarah, spins around then goes into the dining area with IRENE.

MILLIE hangs back.)

IRENE

Will you help me with the dishes?

YOUNG MILLIE

Sure.

(YOUNG MILLIE and IRENE set the table for dinner.

MILLIE looks out at the woods.)

MILLIE

Uncle Mick's ski trip to the mountains! We used to plan it nearly every day. I don't know who was more excited about it, him or me... *(Pause - during which her expression changes)* Uncle Mick would have never left me behind to go to the mountains. He promised he'd take me with him! Did they honestly think I would believe their ridiculous lies? They were always trying to protect me. I wish they'd have told me he was dead from the beginning. At the time I think it'd been easier to know that instead of thinking he'd broken his promise to me.

(MILLIE ENTERS the dining area.

RANDALL ENTERS the dining area at the same time and sits down for dinner with YOUNG MILLIE and IRENE.)

A little girl's mind works in strange ways.

RANDALL

How was school today, Millie?

(YOUNG MILLIE does not answer.

RANDALL addresses Sarah who is sitting at the table next to YOUNG MILLIE.)

RANDALL, cont.

Is Millie still not speaking to us, Sarah?

(MILLIE stands behind the doll and speaks as Sarah for YOUNG MILLIE.)

MILLIE

Millie won't talk till Uncle Mick comes back and I'm not allowed in school so I don't know how it was, but Millie told me it was okay.

IRENE

Don't you think we've had just about enough of this nonsense? Now, Millie you talk for yourself and quit going on like this. You are about to drive me crazy!

RANDALL

Let her be, Irene. After all, it has only been a few weeks since...

IRENE

Shh! No more about it. Okay? I don't want to discuss it right now.

(There is silence while everyone eats.)

RANDALL

I got a letter today.

IRENE

From who?

RANDALL

(Not looking at her)

I'm going overseas.

IRENE

WHAT?! No. It can't be! He couldn't have!

RANDALL

He did. I checked it out and it's all legitimate. He's got us, and he's covered all the outs.

IRENE

But we had everything taken care of! We had a deal! How can he do this to us? He can't just go off and send you overseas, damn him! He promised! I'll fight him! I'll scratch his bloody eyes out! I'll...

RANDALL

Irene, I know. Here, read it for yourself. There's nothing we can do.

IRENE

Like hell! Let me see that!

(IRENE snatches the letter out of Randall's hand and reads it to herself while shaking her head. YOUNG MILLIE and MILLIE stare at IRENE. RANDALL stares at his food.)

MILLIE

(As SARAH)

Millie wants to know if we are going with you.

RANDALL

No, honey, I'm afraid they only want me to go over. Besides, someone's got to take care of the house 'till I get back. You'll do that for me won't you, honey?

IRENE

He couldn't have! Randall, there's got to be something we can do!

RANDALL

He did, and there isn't. You really think he would have pulled a stunt like this with a way for me to get out? He's a lot of things, but he's not stupid.

IRENE

We could go to the General, report the whole incident like it really happened. He wouldn't have as much weight as you. He's even said so. The whole thing would probably go to court, but hell, we'd have to win! We have the truth on our side. It'd be rough, but we could do it! We have to do it!

RANDALL

Have you forgotten what he knows? Have you forgotten what we've ALL done? Have you forgotten the War? Who's gonna listen to my story at the time of the Italy invasion? Hell, the General probably thinks I should go anyway, regardless of the Colonel.

IRENE

I won't let this happen!

RANDALL

I'm stuck, and Ches knows it.

(IRENE EXITS.)

There is a long pause while RANDALL eats his food and both MILLIES stare at RANDALL.)

YOUNG MILLIE

Why do you have to go away?

RANDALL

It's the War, honey. They need me in Italy for a while, but then I can come back here.

YOUNG MILLIE

Soon? Will you come back soon?

RANDALL

Yes, honey, real soon.

YOUNG MILLIE

Is Italy far away?

RANDALL

I showed it to you on the globe. Do you remember?

YOUNG MILLIE

Sort of. Is it further than Texas?

RANDALL

Yes, and it's the other direction. It's across the Atlantic Ocean and what Sea?

YOUNG MILLIE

Oh yeah, the Mediterranean?

RANDALL

What a memory! You are a whiz at geography.

YOUNG MILLIE

Will Mother and Sarah and me get to come visit?

RANDALL

No, there's too much fighting going on for it to be safe, and besides I won't be there long. I'll be back before you get a chance to miss me.

(YOUNG MILLIE runs around the table and

gives Randall a huge hug.)

RANDALL, cont.

It'll be all right, honey, don't you worry. Now go finish your supper. I'm going to go check on your mother.

(RANDALL EXITS.

MILLIE takes Sarah's seat at the table and sits Sarah on the table.)

MILLIE

Pretty hard to take for a child your age. It's going to be rough growing up without a father.

YOUNG MILLIE

What do you mean? My daddy's gonna be a hero.

MILLIE

A hero? Where did you get an idea like that? You don't even know what a hero is.

YOUNG MILLIE

Sure I do: *(as if she rehearses it daily)* any soldier who goes to War to fight for his country comes home a Hero. Everybody knows that.

(YOUNG MILLIE marches Sarah on the table and makes her salute.)

MILLIE

Where did you learn that one?

YOUNG MILLIE

At school.

MILLIE

Of course, at school, I remember it now. The War was sooo romantic...heroes, flags, bombs bursting in air, movie stars. The crap they laid on us...no wonder I didn't think anything was wrong with him leaving. I was going to be a little girl with a hero for a daddy.

(YOUNG MILLIE continues marching Sarah.)

YOUNG MILLIE

A hero, a hero, my daddy's gonna be a hero!

MILLIE

But he's an officer, a married officer with a child. He shouldn't have had to go overseas. I knew there was something else, some other reason why he was leaving, and it wasn't a good one.

YOUNG MILLIE

Daddy's going to help fight the Germans 'cause they're bad.

MILLIE

Is that another catch phrase you learned at school?

YOUNG MILLIE

No, that's what Daddy told me.

MILLIE

But he shouldn't be going. There's got to be some reason. What were they talking about at the table? Who's making him go? And why? Why can't I remember? Maybe they never told me why. Maybe I'm remembering everything all wrong. I know Uncle Mick would have told me what was going on, but he had already left. Or was he already dead? I'm getting all mixed up! It was all too long ago. Why can't I remember!

(YOUNG MILLIE gets up from the table and spins with Sarah around and around.)

Poor thing. She has no idea what being a hero really means.

(YOUNG MILLIE EXITS the dining area, goes upstairs, and sits outside RANDALL and IRENE'S bedroom door.

As MILLIE follows, the LIGHTS go out in the dining area and come up inside the bedroom where IRENE and RANDALL are getting ready for bed.)

MILLIE

You shouldn't listen outside Mother and Daddy's door! That's private conversation they're having, if they meant for you to hear, they would have left the door open.

YOUNG MILLIE

You can't make me leave. I heard it!

MILLIE

What if you hear something you don't want to? It might be painful.

YOUNG MILLIE

SHH! I want to hear!

MILLIE

Well I don't!

YOUNG MILLIE

Then leave.

(MILLIE does not move.)

IRENE

What are we going to do? I don't think I'm going to be able to take this.

RANDALL

I'll be back before you know it!

IRENE

This is no time to be cute, Randall. Isn't there some way to let someone know what he's trying to pull? We can tell everything, and he'll just have to go along with us. We'll do to him what he's trying to do to us!

RANDALL

It's too late. There isn't time. But knowing Ches, I don't think it will ever be over, even when I get back...

IRENE

What do mean?! He can't do any more to us than he's already done. I won't let him!

RANDALL

Just listen to me a minute. Mick said Ches started this whole thing to get me out of the picture so he could go after you. I wouldn't listen to him, and look what has happened so far: first Mick, now me. This has evolved into some kind of sick plan. What if I come back only to find a Court Marshall? What if he comes after you? He could blackmail you into being with him. And what about Millie?

IRENE

Millie! You're right. Oh, God, you're right! What have I done?!

RANDALL

It's not your fault, things just happened and he's taken them to his advantage.

IRENE

No! You don't understand! I...

RANDALL

Don't say it! I know, baby. I know what you're going to say, but we can't think about all that now. I can't think about all that right now. It's over. It's done. Let's just try to deal with all this. We need each other right now.

IRENE

Stop it! I can't stand any more of this!

RANDALL

We've got to work this out! I can't leave without some kind of security in knowing that we've at least got a plan to fight him. We've already let him get this far. I have no intentions of letting him get any further with it. Now, where are you going to go when I leave?

IRENE

I've got to get Millie out of here, don't I?

RANDALL

I know we didn't want to move her this soon. The poor thing needs some friends. Maybe wait till school's out then you both go back to Texas. Can you handle the move okay by yourself?

IRENE

Do I have a choice?

(RANDALL takes IRENE in his arms as she begins to cry.)

RANDALL

It'll be all right. Come on, honey, please don't cry... let's spend our last night being happy...

IRENE

It's hard to, ...really hard to. I still can't believe all this is happening...losing Mick and now you...all so fast...

RANDALL

It's all right...shh...just hold me...

(YOUNG MILLIE gets up and raises her hand to knock on RANDALL and IRENE'S door. She pauses, then lowers her arm and sits down again.)

MILLIE

What were you going to do?

YOUNG MILLIE

I was going to tell them something, but I'm not going to anymore.

MILLIE

What were you going to tell them?

YOUNG MILLIE

It's a secret.

MILLIE

You can't keep secrets from me! I am you!

(YOUNG MILLIE doesn't look at MILLIE, but picks up Sarah and spins around.)

Damn it! Tell me!

(LIGHTS go out briefly. Then the LIGHTS come up in living area with MILLIE sitting in RANDALL'S armchair and YOUNG MILLIE sitting with Sarah staring out the window.)

MILLIE

Do you miss your Daddy?

YOUNG MILLIE

Yeah, but he'll be home soon.

MILLIE

I guess you're thinking about the move. Are you excited about moving to Texas? You'll be leaving soon, won't you?

YOUNG MILLIE

Daddy doesn't want us to move, but Mother's making us.

MILLIE

She wouldn't move if he didn't want you to, would she?

YOUNG MILLIE

Why don't you ask Sarah? I don't feel like talking anymore.

(IRENE ENTERS.)

IRENE

You didn't talk much after your father left.

MILLIE

Why? Because I missed him?

IRENE

I think so. And you missed your Uncle Mick. And we were moving. Facing all those things in such a short period of time, it was no wonder you reacted so strongly. But there was something else, something I could never put my finger on. It was like you were feeling guilty, guilty over something you'd done wrong, like it was all your fault. I tried and tried to talk to you about it, about everything, but whenever I asked you about it you'd give me the same answer...

YOUNG MILLIE

Why don't you ask Sarah. I don't feel like talking anymore.

(YOUNG MILLIE spins around with Sarah.)

IRENE EXITS.

The LIGHTS go out on all areas except for a dim spot on YOUNG MILLIE and MILLIE.

MILLIE follows YOUNG MILLIE to the window and they both look out onto the wooded area.)

MILLIE

What's going on out there?

YOUNG MILLIE

I don't know.

MILLIE

What do you see?

YOUNG MILLIE

I can only see shapes and a light.

MILLIE

Is it people?

YOUNG MILLIE

Maybe I should wake up Mother.

MILLIE

It is people! And there're three of them. What are they doing? Can you see?

YOUNG MILLIE

I don't see anything.

MILLIE

Yes you do! If I can see them, you can see them. Maybe you should go wake Mother.

YOUNG MILLIE

Maybe it's a nightmare. I've had nightmares about the evil tree trying to get in my room.

MILLIE

This is not a dream! They've got something! What is it? It looks like... like a body. Oh, my God... what are they doing? Who's out there? Shouldn't we do something?!

YOUNG MILLIE

It's okay. I'll wake up in a minute, and it will all be over.

MILLIE

They're dragging a body into the woods! We've got to do something! Hold on, I can almost make out who...

YOUNG MILLIE

If I scream, it'll all go away and Mother will come sing me to sleep, (*singing*) Lullaby, Lullaby...

MILLIE

I can see! They're digging... they're burying a body!

YOUNG MILLIE

Maybe it's a dog. Daddy hurried Charlie in the woods after he got hit. He howled and howled and howled. He sounded like he was screeching. He was all bloody and he just kept howling and howling and howling. He wouldn't quit howling. Daddy took him behind the house and shot him dead. The horrible noise stopped then, and Daddy buried him in those woods. We put a cross. Daddy made a cross out of sticks and rope, and we put it on top of the grave, on top of Charlie's grave, out there, right out there in the woods. I picked flowers and put them under the cross.

MILLIE

That body is too big to be a dog. Who's out there? Why don't you go wake Mother?

YOUNG MILLIE

It's a nightmare! It's MY nightmare!

MILLIE

I'm looking at it right now, and if I see it, then you see it. Why are you doing this to me?

YOUNG MILLIE

It's okay, Sarah. Don't be scared. I'll wake up in a minute... and everything will be okay. We'll just open our eyes and it will all go away. Do you want me to sing to you?

MILLIE

But it's there! I see it! I'm seeing it happen and so are you! Why can't you see it?
(YOUNG MILLIE spins around with Sarah as the LIGHTS go dim.)

When the LIGHTS come up again, YOUNG MILLIE is parading Sarah back and forth in front of IRENE who is sitting in RANDALL'S armchair with the lamp low. IRENE is reading a letter. MILLIE is observing the scene.)

IRENE

(Reads)

Dearest Irene, I send my deepest regrets for Randall's death. Though I cannot reveal to you the where or how it happened because our situation is still very risky, I felt it my duty to write you a note and tell you, Irene, he died a hero. He saved all of us. Be strong for him. All my love and sympathy, Phil (*Beat.*) He died a hero... is that supposed to make it all okay? DAMN HIM! Damn Ches! Damn the War! Damn everything!

YOUNG MILLIE

Mother? What's wrong? Why are you crying?

(IRENE takes YOUNG MILLIE in her lap and rocks her.)

Is Daddy dead?

IRENE

Your father's a hero, honey. We should be strong for him.

YOUNG MILLIE

He's not coming back?

IRENE

He'll always be with us.

YOUNG MILLIE

He's not coming back? Why can't he come back? He said he'd come back!

(MILLIE sits down at the bottom of the stairs.

LIGHTS go out inside the house and up in the area outside the house. It is a memorial service.

YOUNG MILLIE is with IRENE. CHES and a few others are in Military uniforms. The PREACHER is giving the service as MILLIE observes.

The PREACHER's voice is not the main voice. Memorial service is from YOUNG MILLIE'S point of view, a confused memory. People are talking all at once with first one prominent, then another.)

PREACHER

Friends, we are gathered here to give last respects to one of God's children. This unexpected tragedy has shocked us all. No one has had time to grieve, but we know that Captain Booster would want us to remember him at better times in his life...

YOUNG MILLIE

Where is Uncle Mick?

IRENE

He's gone away to a very wonderful place where he'll be happy.

(CHES moves over to stand next to IRENE. IRENE and CHES start having an argument trying hard to keep the volume and stress level down to avoid notice.

YOUNG MILLIE keeps interrupting.)

YOUNG MILLIE

Is he ever coming back?

CHES

A lovely service. Captain Booster would be pleased.

IRENE

You bastard! How can you be so callous? You sound close to liking all this, too close.

YOUNG MILLIE

The mountains? Has Uncle Mick gone to the mountains?

IRENE

There could be mountains where he is.

CHES

Were you surprised I managed to have this arranged?

IRENE

Nothing you do would surprise me now.

YOUNG MILLIE

Is he ever coming back?

IRENE

Not as Uncle Mick, but in spirit as something else.

YOUNG MILLIE

Like what? What do you mean?

CHES

I also planned for the discovery of the body. A tricky feat, I must add, to provide the discovery with the appropriate clues.

IRENE

Shh! Would you show some common decency, if you can possibly muster some up, for Millie's sake if for no one else's! We hadn't even told her he was dead yet! Listen to the Preacher, Millie. He's saying things that you might like to hear about your Uncle Mick.

YOUNG MILLIE

When will he come back from the mountains? He promised me he would take me skiing. You said he just went away for a while, now you say he isn't coming back. He's dead. Why did you say he went skiing? Why did you tell me that? Why isn't Uncle Mick skiing? He promised me he would take me with him.

PREACHER

...we can rejoice in knowing Captain Booster's soul is finally at rest in Heaven...

YOUNG MILLIE

If Uncle Mick is in Heaven, then who's in that box?

IRENE

His body, baby, his bones are going to stay in the box, but his spirit will rise up into Heaven. That's what the Preacher means. Now listen to the service. *(To CHES)* Why don't you just leave us alone!

CHES

As you wish, my dear.

(CHES moves back to where he was, but continues to stare at IRENE.)

YOUNG MILLIE

Is Daddy in a box?

IRENE

Yes, they would have put Daddy's body in a coffin.

YOUNG MILLIE

Is Daddy in Heaven?

IRENE

Yes, Daddy's in Heaven.

YOUNG MILLIE

Is Daddy ever coming back?

(YOUNG MILLIE walks over to the casket and stares. No one seems to notice her actions except MILLIE who is obviously upset at YOUNG MILLIE'S confusion.)

YOUNG MILLIE

Who's in there? Where's my Daddy?

MILLIE

Oh my God!

(YOUNG MILLIE knocks on the casket.)

YOUNG MILLIE

Uncle Mick? Are you in there?

(MILLIE comes over to her.)

MILLIE

Come here, honey, your Uncle Mick's not in that box, baby, and neither is Daddy. They're both dead. Their souls are in a very joyful place where they can look at you and be happy forever.

YOUNG MILLIE

Why can't I see them?

MILLIE

That's what's wrong with being dead. You can't see them again except for in your memory.

YOUNG MILLIE

But Mother said he was coming back.

MILLIE

I'm sure Daddy and Uncle Mick are somewhere near because they love you very much.

YOUNG MILLIE

Maybe they're together.

MILLIE

I wouldn't be surprised.

YOUNG MILLIE

Where are they? Where do you think their spirits are?

MILLIE

I don't know, but I'm sure they're watching you right now.

YOUNG MILLIE

I know where they are! They're in the tree out front! They know that's my favorite place to play. I'll go see!

(YOUNG MILLIE EXITS, running.)

MILLIE

NO! That's not what I meant! Come back!

(MILLIE EXITS running after YOUNG MILLIE.)

YOUNG MILLIE ENTERS running from the opposite direction and stops in front of the house turned back to the front-door-upstage position.)

YOUNG MILLIE

(To Tree)

Daddy? Can you see me, Daddy? I'm right here.

(MILLIE ENTERS from the same direction YOUNG MILLIE came from.)

Can you hear me Daddy? It's me, Millie.

(IRENE opens the side door.)

MILLIE

I didn't mean...

IRENE

Millie, it's time to come inside.

YOUNG MILLIE

No. I am going to wait for Daddy.

(IRENE joins YOUNG MILLIE.)

IRENE

Baby, please come inside. Daddy's not out here.

YOUNG MILLIE

I know. He's dead. Everyone's dead.

(YOUNG MILLIE walks into the house. IRENE follows, then MILLIE.

YOUNG MILLIE goes upstairs to her room.)

MILLIE

Is she going to be okay?

IRENE

I don't know. Isn't that something you should be telling me?

MILLIE

I've never handled death very well.

IRENE

I suppose this is probably why. It was hard enough on me. I only wish you had been older when it happened.

MILLIE

Would that have helped?

IRENE

I don't know. I didn't know what to do. We had to move right away. It was a difficult time. Millie! Millie, hurry up! The car's loaded and everything's set to go. Are you ready, Millie? Do you need any help?

(YOUNG MILLIE comes down the stairs with a few bags.)

YOUNG MILLIE

I don't need any help.

MILLIE

My God, I look pathetic.

IRENE

Is that all your things? Where's Sarah?

YOUNG MILLIE

Sarah's dead. She can't come with us.

IRENE

Are you sure you want to leave her behind? Think about it, Millie, because we have to go now, and we might not ever be back. Do you really want to leave Sarah behind?

YOUNG MILLIE

I buried her. I can't ever see her again. Can we go now?

(YOUNG MILLIE looks up at MILLIE, spins around, and runs upstairs.)

MILLIE stands staring after her.

YOUNG MILLIE comes downstairs very carefully carrying Sarah in her arms.)

MILLIE

I remember.

YOUNG MILLIE

Mother, I need a box.

IRENE

What kind of box? Is Sarah, okay?

YOUNG MILLIE

Sarah's dead. I need a box to hide her in.

IRENE

Hide her? You mean bury her. It needs to be a special box, then.

(IRENE begins looking for a box, whenever she finds one. She holds it up to Sarah to see if she will fit.)

Is it all right if I come to the funeral?

YOUNG MILLIE

No, she only wanted me to be there. She told me.

IRENE

How about if I give her some flowers to remember me by?

YOUNG MILLIE

Sarah would like that. I like that box.

IRENE

I'll go pick some flowers.

(IRENE EXITS.)

MILLIE

Can I come to the funeral?

YOUNG MILLIE

Do I have a choice?

MILLIE

Don't be angry with me. I was trying to help you understand.

YOUNG MILLIE

I don't want your help.

MILLIE

Where are you going to put her?

YOUNG MILLIE

I'm hiding her in the closet.

MILLIE

Who are you hiding her from?

(YOUNG MILLIE places Sarah gently in the box and kisses her.

IRENE ENTERS with the flowers.

YOUNG MILLIE takes them and EXITS upstairs to her bedroom.

MILLIE follows.)

Why do you have to hide her?

YOUNG MILLIE

Because she's dead.

MILLIE

You don't have to hide her. No one is going to come get her.

(The closet door is open and a floorboard has been removed. YOUNG MILLIE hands the flowers to MILLIE and lays the box in the hole. YOUNG MILLIE kneels over the box and sings.)

YOUNG MILLIE

Lullaby and goodnight
Close your tired eyes and dream
Through the fairyland you'll sleep
Till the morning shows her light
Lullaby, lullaby
Lullaby and goodnight
Lullaby and goodnight
Close your tired eyes and dream
Through the fairyland you'll sleep
Till the morning sun shines bright
Lullaby, lullaby
Lullaby and sleep tight.

(MILLIE hands the flowers to YOUNG MILLIE who places them on Sarah's box.

YOUNG MILLIE takes the board and covers the hole.)

MILLIE

(Agonizing)

What have I done?

(YOUNG MILLIE gets up and runs down the stairs. MILLIE follows. They stop when there is a knock at the door.

IRENE answers it.

COLONEL HATFIELD ENTERS.)

CHES

I just heard. I'm so sorry.

IRENE

So why did you come over here? So you could gloat over it?! You are really sick. Get out of my house.

CHES

That's not fair, Irene. You know how I felt about Randall. He used to be my best friend. (CHES comes. He plans to stay awhile.)

IRENE

Not fair? What the hell are you doing here? You have no right! You haven't been Randall's friend since you and I... (*Looks at YOUNG MILLIE*) ...for many years, Ches, So tell me what you're trying to pull by coming here like this and pretending to be sorry for what you've done.

CHES

Irene, listen to me. I never meant for it to turn out like this. Everything happened so fast. I wasn't thinking right. I should have realized something like this could have happened. I didn't mean it, Irene. I'm sorry. What can I say to make you believe me?

IRENE

Like hell you didn't mean it! What did you "mean" to have happen then? Go ahead: inform me of your entire scheme. Why don't you tell me all about Randall's trip to Boston? Why don't you tell me all about why you were here that night! Then maybe you can explain Mick's "accident"! And when you're done with all that explaining, and I haven't killed you yet, you can tell me all about why you sent my husband away! Did you have some sort of sick fantasy, thinking I would be glad my marriage was ended so

IRENE, cont.

easily and come to you bubbling over in my excitement to finally be able to be yours? Is that what you planned all along? You're sick, I tell you, SICK!

CHES

Now, now, Irene, you're getting hysterical. Calm down, for Christ's sake, Millie's watching... let's not get carried away... I know you're upset..,

(IRENE loses control and pounds violently on CHES.)

IRENE

Get out! Get out!

CHES

Irene! Irene, calm down, it's okay, I'm here now. I'll take care of everything. Don't you worry.

IRENE

You get the hell away from me you bastard! I'll kill you! Get out of my house!

(IRENE grabs his coat and hat, opens the front door, and throws the clothes out. She waits by the door for CHES to follow.)

Get out!

(YOUNG MILLIE stands looking at them not knowing what to do. MILLIE steps toward them. Everyone freezes positions except MILLIE.)

MILLIE

There was something else! I knew it! Come on, (*Grabs YOUNG MILLIE.*) start your little spinning dance. We've got to go back to the other night. I think I missed something!

(YOUNG MILLIE and MILLIE spin around then run back upstairs to YOUNG MILLIE'S bedroom.)

END OF ACT ONE

RETROSPECT
ACT II

ACT TWO

(The house has returned to its original position with the door downstage. GERALD is knocking at the door.)

GERALD

Where can she be?

(GERALD begins to look in the windows.)

Surely she wouldn't have left. Millie? Millie!

(MILLIE opens the front door. The interior of the house has changed back to summer rental, bare as it was at the beginning of ACT ONE.)

Where were you, the attic? I've been out here in this heat for ages!

MILLIE

I'm sorry. I was upstairs. You sure did some awfully fast sight seeing. What's the matter, Osterville too boring for you?

GERALD

Boring? No. Small? Yes. Hot? Yes. Are you ready for P-town yet?

MILLIE

Not exactly. Come on in and rest your feet. Gerald, this place... how can I explain? It's really more than I ever expected. I mean, it's got me thinking. I'm caught between leaving right now, never thinking about it again, and staying to see what happens. I just never expected it to be like this. It's kinda funny when you think about explaining it all to someone. You might really think I'm mad!

GERALD

Are you okay. Mil?

MILLIE

Yes, it's not that I am mad, you see, I feel much better already, now that your here. Actually, it's just when I think it all over that I get a little scared. I mean...

GERALD

No, you do look a bit shaken up, but I mean physically. It's so hot outside I'm sweating bullets, and you're cooped up in this old house with your jacket on.

MILLIE

I guess I didn't notice.

(MILLIE takes her jacket off and feels the heat for the first time since she entered the house.)

GERALD

We could come back tomorrow, and spend tonight in Provincetown. We have reservations at a place with a view of the ocean, supposed to be real nice. I figure it'll take about an hour to get there which will be just about dinnertime. Are you hungry?

MILLIE

No, not really. I feel like I have been in a time warp! Maybe I should just leave for good.

GERALD

Is it gettin' to ya, Mil? I'll have to admit this house looks pretty creepy on the inside. It smells damp and old and, I hate to say it, but it does feel kind of chilly in here.

MILLIE

It's all so confused.

GERALD

You look all tensed up. I can't tell if being here's good or bad for you. I could stay here with you if you want. I'm game.

MILLIE

In a way, I want to run and never come back. (*Beat*) I'll tell you what, come back around dinnertime. I know this great little restaurant in Hyannis. Can you call the hotel, and tell them we'll be a little late?

GERALD

Sounds good. I can't say as I understand, but as long as it's what you want and you think it'll help.

MILLIE

Do you think I should?

GERALD

I don't know if you should stay or not, dammit! I can't figure this one out for you.

MILLIE

I'm staying.

GERALD

Well, I'm getting out of here quick before you change your mind. I'll be back in a while.
(Gets ready to leave.)

MILLIE

I saw my father.

GERALD
(sitting)

You what?

MILLIE

My father, I saw my father, and my mother, everyone that was here then. I saw so much.

GERALD

Do you want me to stay?

MILLIE

I don't want to be a prisoner to all this. I know now that something happened. I'm close to finding it now. And the only way to do that is to stay here and face it.

GERALD

I'm afraid, Millie, what am I gonna find when I come back?

MILLIE

I don't know! But maybe, just maybe, you'll find a better Millie, a Millie without a sick haunting feeling that clings to her like fleas and makes her itch, itch to get rid of them! I've got to go back, Gerald, I've got to see what's there.

GERALD

I guess that's my cue.

(GERALD starts to leave.)

MILLIE

Convinced so easily?

GERALD

I didn't say I think you're doing the right thing, I just don't think I can talk you into doing something else.

MILLIE

Don't worry. Bye love...

GERALD

I'll see you soon.

(GERALD EXITS.)

As the door closes the house begins its revolve 180 degrees. Moving boxes are scattered around.

MILLIE feels the cold again and puts her jacket back on.

YOUNG MILLIE ENTERS with a suitcase.)

YOUNG MILLIE

You're still here?

MILLIE

My work's not finished yet.

YOUNG MILLIE

Well, if it has to do with me, you'd better hurry because we are leaving.

MILLIE

Where are you going?

YOUNG MILLIE

We're leaving today, packing up everything and moving away, away from here, away for good.

MILLIE

For Texas? Are you moving back to Texas?

(YOUNG MILLIE starts loading one of the boxes.)

YOUNG MILLIE

Yeah. I told Mother I wasn't going, but she's making me go. She said she wants us to be settled by the time school starts again. I haven't told her yet, but I'm not going to go to school anymore.

MILLIE

What will you do if you don't go to school?

YOUNG MILLIE

I have a plan. I'm going to join the Army and go kill Germans.

MILLIE

You can't join the Army! That is the silliest thing! I don't remember anything about it. Besides, you are too young, and you're a girl. You cannot join the Army.

YOUNG MILLIE

I can sneak in.

MILLIE

You what?

YOUNG MILLIE

I can sneak in. I can sneak onto a ship. I can run away and come back here, then get on a ship that leaves from here, one that's going to Germany. I know where it is. I'm a whiz at geography. Daddy said so.

MILLIE

You have some imagination! How will you manage to find a ship? That is considering you can get back here from as far away as Texas.

YOUNG MILLIE

I told you. I have a plan.

MILLIE

And what is your plan?

YOUNG MILLIE

I am the one who always reads the map when we drive. So while we're driving back to Texas, I will mark the way we go on the map. Then I will keep the map, and when I run away, I'll just follow the map back to here.

MILLIE

On foot?

YOUNG MILLIE

NO! Of course not, I'll hitch rides.

MILLIE

Hitchhike? That is a good one! How do you even know about hitchhiking? Have you ever done it? Who in their right mind would pick up a little girl on the side of the road? A pervert probably God only knows! What kind of plan is this? All right, I'll give you the benefit of the doubt. Let's say you make it back here, what then? How do plan on getting on a ship?

YOUNG MILLIE

I'll find out from Colonel Hatfield. He'll know where a ship is. He'll even know where the ship is going.

MILLIE

And what makes you think Colonel Hatfield will tell you where a ship is? Not to mention turning you in as a runaway and calling Mother, and that's if you're lucky. Remember what Daddy told Mother about Colonel Hatfield?

YOUNG MILLIE

I have that part planned too.

MILLIE

Oh please, fill me in.

YOUNG MILLIE

I'll spy. He'll never see me, and by the time Mother realizes I'm gone, I'll be in the ocean somewhere, the Atlantic Ocean, on a ship going to Germany. I have it all planned and no one's going to stop me. Not even you.

MILLIE

Why would I try to stop such a good plan?

YOUNG MILLIE

It is a good plan. And I am going to do it.

MILLIE

But why don't you want to go to Texas with Mother. There's really no reason to stay here, is there? What about Mother? You would just go off and leave her? She'll be worried sick about you.

YOUNG MILLIE

What if Daddy comes back looking for us, and no one's here? He won't know where to find us.

MILLIE

You won't be here! You'll be on a ship in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, remember!

YOUNG MILLIE

Maybe I will stay here for a while just in case he does come back, before the ship leaves.

MILLIE

Daddy's not coming back, honey.

YOUNG MILLIE

Yeah, that's what Mother says too, but I know he will. He'll come back here 'cause he told me he would.

MILLIE

I know he said that with every intention of doing so. He didn't know he was... was not going to be able to come back.

YOUNG MILLIE

He is too!

MILLIE

Daddy's not coming back. He's dead.

YOUNG MILLIE

(Screams)

Don't say that!

(MILLIE tries to comfort YOUNG MILLIE but she keeps screaming.)

No! Leave me alone!

MILLIE

You're going to have to face it! He is dead. I can come back here and visit you, but I can't change what happens! It doesn't work that way. Do you understand?!

YOUNG MILLIE

Why don't you leave?!

MILLIE

I can't. I won't. Not until I figure out what's going on. Something's not right. What is it? What haven't you told me? You're not telling me something, and I want to know what it is!

YOUNG MILLIE

Why should I? You were here. You said so. So you know everything that happened, right? So leave me alone.

MILLIE

Tell me! (*Shaking her.*) TELL ME! Why won't you help me?

YOUNG MILLIE

Because you don't want me to. You won't let me.

(YOUNG MILLIE breaks loose and runs upstairs.)

MILLIE

I don't understand! Wait! I do want to know! I do, that's why I'm here! Don't you understand? (*Sits*) This just isn't working. I'm so confused. How am I supposed to find out what happened when she won't talk to me? What am I supposed to do?

(YOUNG MILLIE appears at the top of the stairs.)

YOUNG MILLIE

It's up here.

MILLIE

What's up there? Do I have to follow you?

YOUNG MILLIE

Yes.

(As MILLIE follows YOUNG MILLIE up the stairs, the house turns 1/4 turn. The stage is dark except for one LIGHT on in IRENE'S bedroom and another illuminating YOUNG MILLIE'S bedroom.

A dim LIGHT follows the COLONEL as he ENTERS from the wooded area. He stops when he notices the light in IRENE'S window. The COLONEL stares up at the window while IRENE ENTERS into his view undressing. As he watches her, MICK, who has been leaning against a tree out of the COLONEL'S view, lights a cigarette and watches the COLONEL.

MILLIE and YOUNG MILLIE watch the scene through Millie's bedroom window.)

MICK

So, Colonel, come to check on the girls, eh?

CHES

Who's there?!

(MICK stays purposely out of CHES'S view.)

MICK

How's Irene look, Colonel?

CHES
Is that you Booster?

MICK
She looks good, doesn't she, Chester?

CHES
(Relaxes a little.)
I happened on the event. (*Motioning toward the window*) You must have been expecting it.

(MICK comes around the tree to face CHES.)

MICK
I was expecting you.

(MICK takes a last long drag of his cigarette.)

CHES
Did we have an appointment?

(MICK tosses his cigarette and mashes it under his boot.)

MICK
Funny man, eh? As a matter of fact, yes. We've had an appointment for a long while now, and the subject of our meeting concerns your picture show in the window. What the hell do you think you're doing here, besides watching a married woman undress?

CHES
(Keeping his cool.)
Why Mick, I just came by to make sure the girls were all right. What's your excuse?

MICK
Admit it! YOU wanted to see how far you could get with Irene while you've got Randall out of town! You planned the whole thing! The meeting, the trip, tonight! Hell, you prob'ly planned the snowstorm so Randall would get stuck up there and you'd have a little extra time to... play!

CHES
Planned? That's old stuff you're digging up, Mick, over long ago. Now, I suggest you keep your voice down before you wake the girls.

MICK

Over long ago? My ass! You might fool Randall with your bullshit, but I can see right through it! You've just been waiting for the chance to get her alone to rekindle an old flame. I've seen the way you look at her. And let me tell you something else, Chester, the flame's burnt out! That's right, Chester, you're working to light ashes, nothing but ashes.

CHES

I wouldn't be so sure of your self, Booster. What I see is that you're drunk, and what you should see is your overly protective actions and the danger they're getting you into. As for Irene, let her speak for herself, but I bet Randall would love to witness this little scene.

MICK

Why you son of a bitch!

CHES

Calling your C.O. a "son of bitch" isn't too smart, Mick.

MICK

If Randall's not going to do anything about you, then I will! Quit hiding behind your uniform and fight, you bastard!

CHES

Easy there, Mick, easy!

(Agitation mounting, CHES takes off his uniform jacket.)

MICK dances boxer-style in front of CHES, and stumbles.)

Ho there, Champ! You're a little drunk to be fighting, aren't you, Capn' Booster? Well? C'mon!

(MICK lands a hard punch to the mouth.)

MICK

That's for Irene you slimy bastard!

(Wiping blood from his lip, CHES grabs MICK by the collar shaking him violently.)

CHES

Damn you! Do you have a thing for Irene, or what?! If ya do, I suggest you get over it real quick! You understand me?

(CHES jumps on MICK. They fall to the ground.)

Inside, IRENE goes to the window and looks out. Barely dressed, IRENE runs downstairs, opens the side door, and searches the darkness.

MICK falls hard, hitting his head on the tree. He doesn't move.)

CHES

Mick? What the hell, Mick! What the hell was that all about? Jeezus!
(Getting to his feet, CHES notices MICK has not moved.)

Mick?

IRENE

What's happened out here?! Is Mick okay?

CHES

He's drunk and tried to fight me, damn him!
(Car headlights flash across the stage.)
Who the hell can that be?

IRENE

Maybe it's Randall. Damn! The roads might have been too bad for him to get through. I told you tonight was too dangerous! Come on. Let's get Mick inside.
(As IRENE and CHES drag MICK in from the side door, RANDALL ENTERS through the front door.

The stage goes DARK on the scene downstairs as the house turns 1/4 turn to where the front door is upstage.)

MILLIE

You saw the whole thing?

YOUNG MILLIE

So did you.

MILLIE

But before, ...before when I saw something out the window, the Colonel, I'm sure of it, you wouldn't come to the window. You wouldn't come see it.

YOUNG MILLIE

I was scared.

MILLIE

Then why didn't you just tell me to look!

YOUNG MILLIE

You are me. And you weren't ready. You didn't want to remember. So you came and sang to me.

MILLIE

But it was you who wouldn't come. It was you that was too scared. I... *(Beat)* It was me?

YOUNG MILLIE

Yes.

MILLIE

What about now? I just saw it? We both saw it. I don't get it. What does it all mean? Now that I've seen it, now that we have both seen it, I mean, this doesn't tell me anything! So Uncle Mick and the Colonel got into a fight over Mother. Is that it? Is that the horrible thing I haven't been able to face all these years? Am I supposed to understand everything now?

YOUNG MILLIE

I told you, you didn't want to know.

MILLIE

Why are you torturing me like this? I'm here aren't I? Why do you think I'm here? Do you think I came here for a little mental torture, and now that you have satisfied me with it, I'll go home? What is wrong with you? There's something I'm not putting together, isn't there? Why don't you answer me? At least shake your head, or something! My God, I'm having an argument with a child! Me! I am going mad. Think, Millie! There is something.... What were they fighting about? About Mother, Mother and Colonel Hatfield, their relationship I never understood. They could have been having an affair. He did come over a lot when Daddy wasn't home. Was what Uncle Mick saying right? Maybe I just couldn't see what was going on because I was too young. But if it was something I couldn't understand at the time, why would I suppress it? No, there was more about that fight... more that upset me, but what? Can't you help me?

YOUNG MILLIE

I don't want to anymore.

MILLIE

How come every time I get close to knowing something more, you back out? What is it that you don't want me to remember? That was the last time I saw Uncle Mick. Is that it? He was killed in the fight! That's it! Colonel Hatfield killed Uncle Mick in the fight! That's it! Isn't it? Isn't it!

YOUNG MILLIE

NO! Shut up! I won't hear any more!

(YOUNG MILLIE runs downstairs and hides.

MILLIE follows and looks for her.)

MILLIE

Where did you go? Talk to me, please! I'll figure it all out. I promise. I want to know what happened. I do! Please help me. Colonel Hatfield killed Uncle Mick, and someone came home ...Daddy! Daddy came home from Boston. No, he never got to Boston because of the snowstorm! Daddy came home and found Colonel Hatfield and Mother ...oh my God! They were having an affair. (Sits) That's why Mick was so mad at him. He was looking at Mother in the window, and Mick caught him, and they had a fight, and...

YOUNG MILLIE

Shut up!

MILLIE

Did Daddy figure out what was going on? Where was I? Did I come downstairs when Daddy came home?

(YOUNG MILLIE comes out of hiding.)

YOUNG MILLIE

Stop it! I won't hear any more!

(YOUNG MILLIE covers her ears and sings at the top of her voice.)

MILLIE

Where were you? What did you do when Daddy came home? What did you do after the fight?!

(YOUNG MILLIE spins around and around singing at the top of her voice.

IRENE ENTERS, and the spinning stops.)

IRENE

Are you ready Millie? It's time to load up. Come on, run upstairs and give it a one last look over. I'll be up in a minute.

(YOUNG MILLIE runs upstairs. IRENE moves the boxes to the front door. She is not aware of MILLIE.)

MILLIE

What happened that night, Mother? Why doesn't someone tell me? I know about you and Colonel Hatfield. How could you? What about Daddy? How could you do that to him? Did he ever find out? Before he left, did you confess? Or did you keep, ...no, you must have quit because the Colonel didn't come around after the fight. I wonder what you'd say, if I told you, after all these years, that I saw that fight? That I knew about you and Colonel Hatfield? Would you explain to me why you did it? Or would you deny it? I had an affair. Gerald still doesn't know about it. No one knows. That's why I started seeing Doctor Ross. I told Gerald it was the nightmares. You know, the ones I have had since I was a kid. I still have them. I never told you. Doctor Ross said they are connected to my having an affair. Funny, I thought my affair was a nightmare! Maybe they are connected, in a strange way.

(IRENE EXITS.)

The LIGHTS go dim and YOUNG MILLIE comes downstairs.)

YOUNG MILLIE

I couldn't sleep so I thought I'd come downstairs to look at my globe.

MILLIE

Why couldn't you sleep?

YOUNG MILLIE

I had a nightmare. Want to see my globe?

MILLIE

Sure. Let's see the geography whiz at work.

YOUNG MILLIE

I know most all the big countries by heart without even looking at the names. And I know all the oceans and all the seas. You can test me. Go ahead.

MILLIE

Okay. What's this one?

YOUNG MILLIE

That's easy! England, and it's even a small one! Try another.

MILLIE

This one.

YOUNG MILLIE

Canada! Come on, pick something hard! Another small one, they're harder.

MILLIE

This one.

YOUNG MILLIE

New Zealand! Told you I'm good. Go ahead try another.

MILLIE

What was your nightmare about?

YOUNG MILLIE

Why do you want to talk about that for? I have them all the time. Go ahead. Pick another.

MILLIE

Don't you ever talk about them to anyone? I mean what it is that it's about? Have you told Mother? How about this one? It's a tough one.

YOUNG MILLIE

No. She knows I have bad dreams. Greece. But I always tell her that I can't remember what was in them.

MILLIE

Good! You are too good at this! I quit. You know, I have nightmares too. Maybe if you tell me what yours are about, we can talk about them.

YOUNG MILLIE

Nah, they scare me.

MILLIE

They are scary, aren't they? But maybe if you talk about them, it will make them less frightening.

YOUNG MILLIE

Are you sure? It won't make them more scary, will it?

MILLIE

No. I'm sure.

YOUNG MILLIE

Sometimes I dream about the woods. Sometimes I dream about Daddy. Sometimes I dream about Uncle Mick. Sometimes I dream about Charlie. Sometimes they are all together and I get them all mixed up. Charlie's howling will turn into Uncle Mick's howling then into Daddy's howling and I can't make it stop until someone shoots and they die.

MILLIE

Stop! That's enough, really. You can stop now. I don't think I want to hear any more.

YOUNG MILLIE

I thought you wanted to hear about them. Don't you have them, too? Don't you have the same ones?

MILLIE

I can't listen to that howling. Every time you say that word, I get chills and feel sick. Why must you go on about the howling?

YOUNG MILLIE

That's how I feel when I have the nightmares! You must have the same ones! Oh, please tell me about them!

MILLIE

No. Leave me alone, please. I feel sick.

YOUNG MILLIE

The worst nightmares are the ones in the woods. I'm standing at this window.

MILLIE

Please, I don't want to hear it.

(YOUNG MILLIE moves over to the window at the side of the house.)

YOUNG MILLIE

I'm standing here looking out the window and I see them. I see them in the woods. It's dark but they have a small light. Uncle Mick is there. Daddy is there, too. And people I don't recognize, not because I don't know them, though. I just can't see them from here. They have something. It's dark. It's not moving. It starts howling and howling, louder and louder. They push it into a hole and it disappears, but it keeps on howling. I shut my eyes and ears real tight, as tight as I can, to make it stop, but it won't stop howling. Then I start to feel dirt on me. I open my eyes and I'm in the hole, howling! I'm looking up at

YOUNG MILLIE, cont.

Daddy and Mother and Uncle Mick and Colonel Hatfield and Charlie: they're all smiling, but they can't hear me. I keep screaming and screaming till I wake up.

(MILLIE passes out. YOUNG MILLIE hums her lullaby and wanders off upstairs.)

IRENE ENTERS.)

IRENE

Millie! Millie, come downstairs! It's time for the photo!

YOUNG MILLIE

(Offstage)

Coming! I can't get my bow fixed right!

IRENE

Well come down here and let me fix it! Don't just yell about it from upstairs.

(YOUNG MILLIE ENTERS from upstairs.)

RANDALL ENTERS at the same time wearing his uniform.)

RANDALL

Whoowhee! Aren't we a pretty sight! All dressed up to get your photograph taken. Come here and give your Daddy a hug.

YOUNG MILLIE

Don't mess up my bow, Daddy.

RANDALL

I wouldn't dream of messing up your bow!

IRENE

Y'all come on. We don't have much time. Randall can you show me again how to work this camera? I don't want to mess it up. It's important.

RANDALL

All right. Where do you want us? You stand in my place and I'll get it focused, then all you'll have to do is push the button.

IRENE

Stand over by the mantel.

RANDALL

Here?

IRENE

Perfect. Okay, let's switch.

YOUNG MILLIE

Do I look pretty?

RANDALL

You look beautiful, my little angel, just gorgeous!

YOUNG MILLIE

I'm not little.

RANDALL

Of course, you're not. Now stand there with your Mother and give me a big smile. That's it!

(A bright FLASH.)

IRENE

You caught me by surprise! I was supposed to take your picture.

RANDALL

And you are. Step right over here my dear.

IRENE

Okay, say cheese!

YOUNG MILLIE

Cheese!

RANDALL

Cheese!

(Another bright FLASH.)

YOUNG MILLIE

Daddy, do you have to leave now?

RANDALL

Yes, honey. It's about that time. I've got to get to my ship. We wouldn't want me to be left behind, would we?

IRENE

Yes, we would, but I already thought of that. It won't work.

RANDALL

Too bad.

YOUNG MILLIE

Why can't we go to the ship with you?

RANDALL

It's better if I say goodbye here. Easier for me. I want to keep this picture of you both looking so pretty in my mind.

YOUNG MILLIE

I'll send you a picture so you can remember what I look like.

RANDALL

Hey, now don't start crying on me. You'll make your daddy sad. Now, give me a big Millie smile! That's more like it. You keep the picture, baby. I won't forget what you look like.

YOUNG MILLIE

What if I change?

IRENE

Come on, Millie. Give your daddy a hug. He's got to go now.

RANDALL

Come here both of you.

YOUNG MILLIE

Don't go.

(The LIGHTS FADE.)

The LIGHTS come UP on YOUNG MILLIE staring out the window at the woods. She is humming her lullaby.)

MILLIE

Are you here? Is anyone still here?

YOUNG MILLIE

I'm here.

MILLIE

Good. I didn't want to be alone. I had a terrible dream, all full of screaming and Daddy leaving. I have an awful headache. Wonder how long I've been asleep?

YOUNG MILLIE

Do you like me?

MILLIE

What? What kind of question is that? Of course I like you. You are me, and I like me.

YOUNG MILLIE

But did you like me when you were me?

MILLIE

I...I don't remember. I think, no, I'm sure I must have. Why do you ask such a strange question?

YOUNG MILLIE

I don't like me.

MILLIE

What do you mean? Why not?

YOUNG MILLIE

I'm bad.

MILLIE

What could you have possibly done at your age to be considered bad?

YOUNG MILLIE

Lots of things.

MILLIE

Tell me one.

YOUNG MILLIE

You'll hate me.

MILLIE

Don't be ridiculous. I won't hate you. I don't even think you'll be able to tell me anything I would consider to be bad. So give it your best shot.

YOUNG MILLIE

Sometimes I don't stay in my room when I'm supposed to.

MILLIE

And that makes you bad? That doesn't make you bad. It makes you normal for your age!

YOUNG MILLIE

But Mother and Daddy expect me to be in my room. I'm bad because I hear things and see things that they don't want me to see.

MILLIE

Like what?

YOUNG MILLIE

I can't tell you.

MILLIE

Not this again! You brought it up. Now tell me!

YOUNG MILLIE

No. You'll do what you did when I told you about my nightmares.

MILLIE

What did I do?

YOUNG MILLIE

You passed out when I told you about my dream.

MILLIE

It's not a dream at all, is it? That's the problem. My nightmares come from the fight, that night. Colonel Hatfield killed Uncle Mick.

YOUNG MILLIE

That's what I saw, wasn't it? I thought he only got hurt because Daddy told me he left.

MILLIE

You didn't see him after that, did you?

YOUNG MILLIE

No. But they said he went skiing.

MILLIE

What did you think at his funeral, then? That he died in a skiing accident? I think you knew he was dead. You knew and didn't tell me. I think you knew all along!

YOUNG MILLIE

Why don't you go away!

MILLIE

Not until you tell me everything! Tell me everything you saw that night. Tell me what you know!

YOUNG MILLIE

I saw who killed Uncle Mick and I didn't ever tell anyone, never, not even when Daddy had to leave!

(YOUNG MILLIE covers her ears and sings loudly.)

MILLIE

Why didn't you tell them? Why didn't you talk about it? I would think it would have made you so upset you would have had to talk to someone! They didn't even tell you Uncle Mick was dead. They were keeping it from you, and you already knew about it! Had they only known! They didn't tell you he was dead until they buried him. Or did they? Can you remember? Why didn't you say something?

(YOUNG MILLIE continues singing at a screaming level.)

A witness to the whole horrible murder and I stood silent. Daddy never had to go to war. Colonel Hatfield must have blackmailed him somehow. They had no idea I saw everything. How could you?!

YOUNG MILLIE

I was scared!

MILLIE

But you could have prevented Daddy going! Don't you understand? Why would you be scared of telling Mother and Daddy? You were about to tell them when Daddy got the letter that gave him his orders. That's what you were going to tell them when you were listening outside their bedroom door. You could have kept Daddy from going and you didn't because you were scared!

YOUNG MILLIE

STOP it! Don't say that! That's not all! I was too scared to tell them! I was too scared because I saw them with the Colonel! I saw them all! The night Uncle Mick had that fight with the Colonel! They thought I was asleep! They didn't see me! No one knew I saw!

MILLIE

Saw what? What else did you see?

YOUNG MILLIE

I saw what they did to Uncle Mick. I heard them downstairs. They took him out to the woods. I heard them talking from upstairs. They took Uncle Mick outside and I came downstairs because I was scared. I didn't want to be in the house all by myself, and I didn't know where they were going. I came downstairs to find out. I didn't want to be left alone! They were already gone and so I looked for them out the window. This window. This one right here!

MILLIE

Oh my God! My nightmare!

YOUNG MILLIE

I saw people in the woods. They were dragging something. Burglars, I thought it was burglars or someone bad sneaking around the house. I got so scared I almost screamed, but then I recognized Daddy. I saw his face. I saw Mother and Daddy and Colonel Hatfield. They were out in the woods, out in the woods in the snow. They were out in the woods dragging Uncle Mick. I saw them. I watched them. I watched them dig a hole. I watched them dig a hole and put, him in it. I saw them hide Uncle Mick in a hole just like Daddy put Charlie in a hole!

MILLIE

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I should never have made you say it, remember it...I'm sorry...I'm so sorry.

RANDALL

(From downstairs)

Millie? Is that you?

YOUNG MILLIE

I thought Daddy was dead?

RANDALL

Millie?

YOUNG MILLIE

Daddy!

MILLIE

He wants to talk to me! What do I say?

YOUNG MILLIE

We could stay up here.

MILLIE

No. I'm not finished with him yet. Come on!

(MILLIE runs downstairs.

YOUNG MILLIE stays behind.)

Daddy?!

RANDALL

You knew I'd come back here, didn't you?

MILLIE

I...I...I have so much I want to say to you.

RANDALL

Can I just tell you how wonderful it is to see you? You're all grown up. Look at you! You were always such a pretty little girl. And look at you now - as beautiful as ever! Come here and give me a hug.

(MILLIE does so and for a long time.)

MILLIE

Daddy it is you! I didn't know if I could reach you, I mean, I didn't expect to be able to talk to you, talk to you alone, just you and me. I've waited a long time for this, too long.

RANDALL

It has been a long time. I've been waiting for you to come. We've got a lot to talk about.

MILLIE

It's all a dream isn't it? I'm just making this all up, aren't I?

RANDALL

Believe what you need to believe.

MILLIE

In some ways that's easy, in other ways, very hard. I don't know what to believe after today. When I came here, I had no idea what was going to happen. And I'm still not sure. So much has happened! I'm supposed to be better after I go through all this, but I think I feel worse. I just don't know what's real anymore.

RANDALL

You've been through a lot today.

MILLIE

You mean I've been through a lot again today. Daddy, it is all so awful, so horrid, no wonder I've blocked it all out.

RANDALL

If I could have done things different, things to make your and your mother's life better than it was, I would have. You must believe that. Everything happened so fast. Maybe I could have fought a little harder, done something, to change it all. I didn't want to leave you.

MILLIE

Don't Daddy. Don't make this any harder than it already is.

RANDALL

What do you mean?

MILLIE

I've got a lot of things to say to you that you might not want to hear. But I've got to tell you. I've got to do it for me. My therapist told me I should write you a letter or go talk to your grave. He said I had to tell you what was bothering me, that talking to you would help me, help me feel better.

(MILLIE gets the brandy and two glasses.)

He said it would help me deal with your death.

(MILLIE pours the brandy.)

RANDALL

Millie...

MILLIE

No. Let me finish. I attempted many letters, but I never finished one. I could never figure out what to say. All I could do when I went to visit your grave was cry. I tried many things, many ways to talk to you, but I never could get through, get through all the shit in my own head. I knew something was wrong with the memories I had. Nothing made any sense. And this house! I had to get to this house. Something pulled me to it. Maybe it was you.

RANDALL

Millie, I'm so sorry.

MILLIE

Don't be sorry. I did it to myself. I did it all to myself. Children can do strange things to heal themselves. And it usually is not the best thing. You see, the reason I couldn't figure out what to say to you was because I didn't know. I didn't know yet what was wrong. It had to do with the nightmares, but I didn't know what the connection was.

RANDALL

Nightmares?

MILLIE

Yes. I've had them since I was a little girl. Since right about the time you left. My therapist decided it might help if I came back, back to the scene of the crime, so to speak.

RANDALL

I wanted so much for you to be older, old enough to explain to you what happened. But how old do you have to be to understand all that happened to us in those few months? I know I had a hard time dealing with it myself. I can't imagine how a little girl might have reacted.

MILLIE

Your leaving was hard. Your not coming back was even harder. I'm sorry for all the bitter feelings I've bottled up over the years, my anger at you for leaving. I know now they must have stemmed from guilt.

RANDALL

Guilt?

MILLIE

There's something I never told you. I never told anyone. I even managed to block it out of my own mind, for all these years. The night Mick died...

RANDALL

How do you know about that? How could you possibly know about that night? Did Mother tell you about it? But why? I don't understand.

MILLIE

I saw it. I saw the whole thing. Ches got in a fight with him because Mick caught him looking in our house at Mother undressing the night you left. I saw Ches hit him. I saw Mick fall and hit his head. I knew Ches did it. Don't you get it? I was the witness you needed to keep Ches from sending you overseas. If had known there was another witness, he wouldn't have thought he could get away with threatening to pin it on you. Don't you see? I am the one to blame. I could have saved you, if only you'd known! And I didn't tell you!

RANDALL

A witness. You've been thinking it was your fault I died this whole time? You poor child. You had no idea what the Colonel was up to. He would have got around that little problem. Oh, yes, he was very smart and quick, too. I should have told you everything

RANDALL, cont.

right from the beginning. Never underestimate a child. They always know more than you think they do.

MILLIE

There was something else.

RANDALL

Yes, I knew about your Mother and the Colonel. We had no idea you knew anything about it. We would have explained. We should have explained. If it makes any difference to you, we had it all worked out by the time I left. I can't say we discussed it much, and I don't know about forgiveness. Our minds were on more serious matters. I knew it was all over, and that's all I needed to know. The incident with Mick ended it.

MILLIE

Incident?! How can you refer to Uncle Mick's murder as an incident? Did it mean that little to you? You bury your best friend in the woods and you refer to it as an incident? Maybe I was right blaming you.

RANDALL

What did you see?

MILLIE

Enough, or too much, depending on your view.

RANDALL

My God girl! Where were you?

MILLIE

Does it matter? I watched you all from that window right there.

RANDALL

You can't possibly know the story. Can I explain?

MILLIE

Please do. What story could there possibly be? You cover up the murder of your best friend who was just murdered by your wife's lover. Yes, I would love to hear the story that goes behind The Incident.

RANDALL

Enough! You were a very small child. You can't expect to have understood what was going on, but you're big enough now. So give me a chance. Isn't that why you came here?

MILLIE

I'm beginning to wonder why, wonder why I don't just walk out that door.

RANDALL

You stay because you want to know. You want to have what happened explained to you, explained by me.

MILLIE

Okay. Go ahead.

RANDALL

I had been suspicious of the Colonel and your Mother for a while. They used to have a thing going before we were married and a man can just tell when another man has eyes for his wife, especially one that has been there before him. But the War was getting pretty hot, and the Colonel was my commanding officer. I thought if anything was going on, it was partly my fault for not paying enough attention to her, but mostly I thought it would all blow over because the Colonel was so wrapped up in what was going on with the Germans in Italy. I thought..., hell, I don't know what I thought. Whatever it was, I was wrong. I should have done something about it when Mick talked to me. Mick tried to tell me something was going on but I didn't listen to him. I told him he was reading into the situation, and that I could take care of my wife myself. Did a good job, didn't I? Poor Mick. If I had only listened to him, he wouldn't have come over that night to prove himself. You see, I always knew that Mick had a little crush on your Mother...

MILLIE

Daddy! How dare you!

RANDALL

Let me finish. I knew he would never have done anything to hurt her or our marriage. He loved her too much for that. And he was much too loyal to me to even consider it. But that's what got him in trouble. If he hadn't tried to prove he was right about the Colonel that night, he would have lived to see me find out for myself. If he hadn't got into the fight, I would have come home that night and found your mother with the Colonel. Somebody would have ended up dead, but it wouldn't have been poor Mick.

MILLIE

So if you found out about them that night, and the Colonel had just killed Mick, why didn't you call the police or someone? Why did you have to hide Mick's body in the woods?

RANDALL

We didn't know what to do. I had it out with the Colonel, right here in this room...

(IRENE and CHES ENTER through the side door, dragging MICK.)

RANDALL, cont.

When I came through that door and saw Mick, I...

(RANDALL steps into the scene with
IRENE, CHES and MICK.
MILLIE stands back to watch.

YOUNG MILLIE appears at the top of the
stairs.)

What the hell has happened to Mick?

IRENE

I'll get something for his head. He's bleeding pretty bad.

RANDALL

Will somebody tell me what's going on? What are you doing here Chester?

CHES

What are you doing here, Randall? Don't you have a job you're supposed to be doing?

RANDALL

My Commanding Officer sent me out in a snowstorm without checking to see if the roads were open. What are you doing here Chester?

CHES

I dropped by the house to see if everything was okay and got jumped by a drunk Captain. He fell and hit his head 'cause he was too drunk to fight. Hit it pretty good, too. He's out like a light.

RANDALL

Ever heard of a telephone? What was Mick doing here? And what did you do to make him fight you?

IRENE

Will you two stop it! Mick's breathing doesn't sound right.

(CHES and RANDALL check MICK.)

CHES

He'll be fine. Just give him a minute to come to.

RANDALL

That's a nasty gash. He didn't get that from just falling down. You must have laid him a hard punch.

CHES

He hit his head when he fell!

RANDALL

Yeah, after you decked him, and for what? What did he say to you to provoke it? Something about you and Irene maybe?

IRENE

Randall!

CHES

Maybe it did have something to do with Irene.

IRENE

Don't, Ches.

RANDALL

You son of a bitch!

(RANDALL leaps at CHES and they start fighting.)

Mick was right! I should have listened! I'll kill you!

CHES

For what? Irene? She doesn't want you! Why would she want a man who doesn't even notice she's having an affair right under his nose!

IRENE

Stop it! Both of you!

RANDALL

Mick tried to stop you!

CHES

And he couldn't! And neither can you!

(IRENE tries to break up the fight.)

RANDALL

Get away, Irene, you'll get hurt!

IRENE

I already am hurt. Stop fighting dammit! Mick's dead!

(The men stop fighting. Both look at IRENE.)

RANDALL jumps up, checks MICK.)

CHES

He's not dead. He's just slow coming to. That's all. Don't worry. He can't be dead.

RANDALL

Tell that to Mick. I don't think he understands.

IRENE

I'm calling the doctor.

CHES

NO!

(CHES intercepts IRENE on her way to the telephone.)

We can't do that.

IRENE

Why the hell not? Don't you touch me!

CHES

You can't regain his favor that easily, Irene,

IRENE

Get away from me.

RANDALL

Call the police. He's dead.

CHES

No one is calling anybody, understand?

RANDALL

No Chester, I don't, and I don't have time for any of your explanations. Get out of my way!

(RANDALL pushes CHES out of the way and picks up the phone.)

CHES

If you want to stay on this side of the ocean, Randall, I suggest you put down that phone.

RANDALL

Is that a threat?

CHES

And it's not an idle one. You get the police or anybody else out here, and there'll be an investigation, an investigation of the murder of Captain Mick Booster. I am not going to get Court Marshaled for Mick's drunken stupidity!

IRENE

What do you think you are doing?

RANDALL

If it was an accident like you said, then you have nothing to worry about. But of course, if it wasn't an accident...

CHES

I'm not taking any chances, understand?!

RANDALL

You'll have to.

CHES

Who says I had the fight with Mick?

IRENE

Ches, what are you thinking?

CHES

Nobody saw that fight, no one but me. It could have just as easily been you, Randall. You come back early to find Mick with Irene, and you two got in a fight. Irene called me to come help break it up, but I was too late. Irene changes the story and blames Mick's death on me to try and save her husband's neck, but it doesn't work. Testimony from the Commanding Officer outweighs the testimony of a distraught wife of a Captain ... a shame, a terrible shame.

RANDALL

You think you could really make a story like that pile of shit stick?

CHES

Yes. I do.

IRENE

You wouldn't! Why are you doing this? It'll never work! Even if we did what you said, what do you expect to do with the body?

RANDALL

Don't worry, Irene, he's bluffing.

CHES

Bluffing? You don't think I'd jump on a chance to send you overseas leaving your beautiful wife here alone with me? Think again.

RANDALL

What do you want us to do?

IRENE

You must be crazy? Why are you going along with him? I can't believe this is happening! What's wrong with you two?!

RANDALL

If you think I am going to chance his shipping me out or having me put in the tank so he can have you, you are the one who has lost their mind. No more, Irene, no more.

IRENE

You bastard! You think I would go back to him after what he has just pulled?

RANDALL

I don't know! I can't be sure of anything right now! You tell me what I should do because, frankly, I don't know what to do.

CHES

While you two lovebirds are working things out, I'm going to make myself at home and look for a shovel. Join me in the woods when you're done.

IRENE

You're sick.

RANDALL

You have made yourself at home too much around here. Help me with Mick. The shovel's out back.

(They drag Mick through the side door.)

IRENE

This isn't happening!

(RANDALL steps back out of the scene.

ALL but MILLIE and RANDALL EXIT.)

MILLIE

So you went along with the Colonel. And for what? What did you and Mother have to gain by keeping it quiet? He shipped you out anyway!

RANDALL

Nothing! I know it was wrong! I knew afterwards we shouldn't have done it! Ches was a snake. He was ahead of us all the way. Your mother and I both knew we had made a mistake, a gruesome mistake. But it was done. It was done and we couldn't undo it. Do you understand that? We panicked, we were upset, we... I know there are no excuses, Millie, I only wanted to try to give you a glimpse of what we went through that night.

MILLIE

I had all the glimpse I ever wanted.

RANDALL

I am so sorry you had to be a part of any of it. I wish you had said something. I don't know what we could have done to help, but we could have tried. We just didn't know.

MILLIE

I should have said something. I was too young to understand what was happening. It has taken me a long time to tell myself. I had to get through that step before I could talk to you.

RANDALL

Did it help?

MILLIE

I think so.

RANDALL

I'm glad you came.

MILLIE

So am I.

RANDALL

I suppose this means your visit's coming to an end. Don't wait so long before you come again, I enjoy talking to you.

MILLIE

I won't. It'll be a lot easier to do now that this is all straightened out. I do have one more thing I need to do before I leave. But it's something I need to do alone. I love you Daddy, and I miss you very much.

RANDALL

I miss you too, but my rest will be all the more peaceful now. Can I have one more giant hug before you go?

(MILLIE obliges, then turns to go upstairs.)

RANDALL

Go easy on her. She's only little.

MILLIE

I will.

(MILLIE finds YOUNG MILLIE putting Sarah in her box and hiding under the floorboard in the closet. YOUNG MILLIE continues as they talk.)

YOUNG MILLIE

What are you doing back here? I thought you left.

MILLIE

I had a long talk with Daddy. We worked a lot of things out. What are you doing?

YOUNG MILLIE

I'm hiding Sarah.

MILLIE

Why?

YOUNG MILLIE

Because she's dead.

MILLIE

You don't hide things when they die. You bury them and give them a funeral so you can say goodbye to them.

YOUNG MILLIE

Daddy didn't have a funeral.

MILLIE

No, you're right. He didn't. But I have talked to him now, and I understand things a lot better now.

YOUNG MILLIE

Did you say goodbye?

MILLIE

Yes, in a way. I left it open so I can come back and talk to him whenever I feel the need.

YOUNG MILLIE

You are going to come back here?

MILLIE

No. I don't need to come back here to talk to him. He'll be around whenever I want him to be.

YOUNG MILLIE

Can I talk to him, too?

MILLIE

Yes, because you'll be with me. Don't you want Sarah to be with us, too?

YOUNG MILLIE

No. I'm hiding her.

MILLIE

You don't have to.

YOUNG MILLIE

I'm hiding Sarah just like...

MILLIE

Come on. You can say it now. It's okay.

YOUNG MILLIE

I'm hiding Sarah just like they hid Uncle Mick.

MILLIE

It's okay now. It's all okay. Come here and give me hug. There won't be any more nightmares. It's all over.

(MILLIE goes into the closet and lifts up the floorboard.

The house turns back to its original position as MILLIE takes the box out of the floor, takes Sarah out of the box, dusts the doll off.

KNOCK at the front door.)

GERALD

Millie? It's me!

MILLIE

Coming! *(to YOUNG MILLIE)* I have to go!

YOUNG MILLIE

I'll see you soon!

(MILLIE comes down the stairs with an old dusty Sarah, and opens the door.

The house is back to rental furniture.)

GERALD

Millie? Where have you been? I was about ready to... *(Beat)* You found your doll!

MILLIE

Yes, and a lot of other things too. Come on in. Would you like the grand tour?

GERALD

You look so ...so happy. Did everything go okay? In fact, I'd say, you're almost, well, glowing.

MILLIE

More than okay, Gerald, I have just walked through a hidden time in my life. It's going to take me ages to explain, but I found my father. And I healed a hurt little girl. I think I'm beginning to feel whole again.

GERALD

Can you tell me about it?

MILLIE

I would love to. Maybe we should skip the tour and get something to eat 'cause I'm starved!

(LIGHTS OUT.)

APPENDIX B

MILLIE'S WAR

MILLIE'S WAR²

A full-length drama in two acts

By Elizabeth Terry Wintour

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² Millie's War is different from and has no connection with Jeffrey Kinghorn's script of the same title.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

UNCLE SAM/GRIM REAPER	Dancer/Actor, Male or Female, any age. Half Grim Reaper, half the Uncle Sam known from United States' Armed Forces Recruitment Posters.
MILLIE	Female in late middle-age (62).
YOUNG MILLIE	Dancer/Actress, Female, young teen (age 12-14). Millie as a young girl.
MOTHER	Dancer/Actress, Female, young woman (age 17, and later 30). Millie's mother.
FATHER	Dancer/Actor, Male, young man (age 18, and later 31). Millie's father, World War II Army Captain.
ROSE	Female, young teen (age 12-14). Millie's granddaughter.
BOBBY	Male, young man (age 31). Millie's son, Rose's father, and Gulf War Army Captain.
DANCERS and SOLDIERS	as needed.

TIME

The action occurs the night before Millie buries her soldier son.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

- SCENE 1: DANCE: First Dance, Lubbock Hotel Ballroom, Lubbock, Texas, March 1930 - Millie's Mother and Father meet and fall in love.
- SCENE 2: Lullaby: Millie's nightmare, the night before she buries her soldier son.
- SCENE 3: Father: The same.
- SCENE 4: Rose's Recruitment: The same.
- SCENE 5: Mother: The same.
- SCENE 6: DANCE: Last Dance, a temporary home near the sea, March 1943 - Mother and Father say goodbye as Father leaves for World War II.

ACT II

- SCENE 1: DANCE: The Telegram, back home, Lubbock, Texas, October 1943 - news of Father's death destroys Mother.
- SCENE 2: The Raven: Back in Millie's Nightmare.
- SCENE 3: Bobby: The same.
- SCENE 4: Reenactment: The same.
- SCENE 5: DANCE: Lover's Dance: Arlington Memorial Cemetery, March 1991 - Millie says goodbye and Mother and Father reunite.

SETTING

Dance Scenes (Act I.1, I.6 and Act II.1, II.5) should evoke the time period but still have a surreal quality. Items from the other scenes should be incorporated as much as possible to ease the flow between scenes.

For all other scenes, the stage should be a surreal combination of youth and death - part playground, part graveyard. The set should include the following items: a rocking chair, a small table and two chairs, a gravestone (in the style of Arlington Memorial Cemetery), a pair of World War II army boots, a radio (circa 1943), a tattered United States flag, a stars and stripes top hat, a baby doll, one or more toy gun(s), and some sort of playground equipment (a jungle gym, a swing set, a teeter totter, a merry go round, or monkey bars).

SYNOPSIS

It is the night before Millie must bury her soldier son. Millie is a veteran, so to speak, of losing a loved one to war. She lost her husband in Vietnam and her father in World War II. Millie must now care for her son's daughter, Rose, who is the age Millie was at the time of her father's death. Millie fears that Rose intends to become a soldier, and that this will perpetuate the tragic destruction of her family. This anxiety conjures up familial ghosts - her dead father, mother, and son. *Millie's War* portrays her struggle to come to grips with the tragedy of war. Dance scenes interspersed throughout the play tell the tragic love story of Millie's mother and father. To wage this war, Millie must fight her own ghosts and the deadly lure of the Grim Reaper disguised as Uncle Sam.

MILLIE'S WAR

ACT I

ACT ONE

Scene 1: First Dance

(March, 1930, Lubbock, Texas)

Summary: MOTHER appears as a young woman of 17. She is vibrant and full of passion. She meets FATHER at a dance. FATHER is a young and handsome 18-year-old, proud in his Texas National Guard uniform. MOTHER and FATHER court each other, fall in love, and culminate their love by getting breakfast at the local drugstore. This is Millie's version of her parents' love story - the romanticized, idealistic image she's created in her subconscious from hearing their story long ago.

Setting: The scenery and costumes should place the scene in Lubbock, Texas - circa 1930 - period, yet stylized to give a surreal quality. The dance takes place at the Lubbock Hotel Ballroom and verandah, and later, Wyley Jarrett's Drugstore.

Mood: upbeat, happy, romantic, sexy, sensual, and surreal.

Tone: youthful exuberance, innocence, the perfect love, the perfect song, the perfect dance, all signs point toward a long and happy life together, the perfect partnership, on the verge of sappily romantic.

Tempo: upbeat; a mix of dances of the period - as if a live band played.

Climax: a romantic moment on the verandah.

Montage: Couples are dancing in the style of the time. The beat is fast, fun and carefree. At first MOTHER is shy about being without a date at the dance, but since this was the plan, to be able to see *him*, she brightens, and steadily gains her composure and confidence. FATHER has gone stag to the dance, but realizes when he sees MOTHER, that he's in it for the long haul. At the moment FATHER catches her eye, she peaks in grace and beauty. He makes her wait, but not too long. He makes sure his dance path leads him to her. He politely and gallantly asks her for the next dance. They start to dance, at first with the beat of the other couples, then something closer and more risky (touchy) and move to a more intimate spot out on the verandah. Finally, the couple gives in to their love in a romantic embrace. As if sealing the seriousness of the relationship, the couple leaves the dance and heads for bacon and eggs at Wyley Jarrett's Drugstore - an extravagance allowed only for serious dates.

(Note: The DANCE scenes tell MOTHER and FATHER'S tragic love story. Each piece should therefore be a part of a whole and connect with the other DANCE scenes in a thematic arc.)

END OF ACT I, SCENE 1

ACT ONE
Scene 2: Lullaby

(MILLIE ENTERS. MILLIE picks up baby doll and lovingly rocks the baby.)

MUSIC: The tune is *All Through the Night*, an ancient Welsh folk song. UNCLE SAM plays the tune OFFSTAGE on a single melancholy instrument. Where stage directions describe UNCLE SAM'S actions - this is more suggestive than specific. The players should explore variations and include what works best.)

MILLIE
(combination of singing, speaking, humming)

Sleep my love, and peace attend thee
All through the night;
Guardian angels God will lend thee,
All through the night,
Soft the drowsy hours are creeping,
Hill and vale in slumber steeping,
I my loving vigil keeping,
All through the night.

(UNCLE SAM ENTERS, continuing to play the tune.)

While the moon her watch is keeping
All through the night
While the weary world is sleeping
All through the night
O'er they spirit gently stealing
Visions of delight revealing
Breathes a pure and holy feeling
All through the night.

Angels watching ever round thee,
All through the night,
In thy slumbers close surround thee,
All through the night,
They should of all fears disarm thee,
No forebodings should alarm thee,
They will let no peril harm thee,
All through the night.

(MILLIE lays the baby down to sleep and
EXITS.

UNCLE SAM steals the baby, leaving in
place of the baby, his stars and stripes top
hat.

UNCLE SAM EXITS.)

END OF ACT I, SCENE 2

ACT ONE
Scene 3: Father

(UNCLE SAM ENTERS playing TAPS and enjoying the environment.

Lured by UNCLE SAM like the Pied Piper, MILLIE ENTERS. She is followed by ROSE, who wears a vintage dress circa 1943 and combat boots.

Throughout scene UNCLE SAM wants to seduce ROSE.

FATHER ENTERS. Despite his young age, he acts like a much older veteran - muttering stories from some long ago moment in his war experience - pieces of letters written long ago.)

FATHER

What d'ya think of this uniform, eh? Pretty sharp, I'd say! You always said you loved me in these boots, Baby.

MILLIE

Father?

FATHER

Say do you remember the show "Lilac Time," and the hero getting tight on champagne - all the bubbles he saw floating around? Well that is the way it works. I went on a reconnaissance Saturday - found some real ole stuff - champagne - pretty good doing, no bad after affect. The only trouble is I probably won't see any more for quite some time. There's always bugs in the ointment. You know though, My Sweet, it ain't no fun without my girl along.

MILLIE

Father, it's me, Millie.

FATHER

Sugar, when you told me Goodnight and Goodbye, and drove off - you took my heart and soul with you. All I can do now is hope and pray that we can end this war soon, so I can get back to My One And Only. Just in case you are interested, I Love You. One thing though, I have had a lifetime of happiness during the time I have had you. It has really

FATHER, cont.

been wonderful. Every minute of our time together is a highlight in my life, and during these past months, I have relived every moment with you...

MILLIE

Your letters.

FATHER

But just remember, My Sweet, when this is all over we can settle down on our farm and really enjoy life. Eat fried chicken too! What I wouldn't give to eat one of your good meals. We get lots of good food, but it don't taste like yours...

MILLIE

Oh Poppy - it's me - Millie - your daughter!

FATHER

Millie? I thought... I thought for a minute there... I could swear you were your mother.

MILLIE

Father. You look so... wonderful - you really do. I've missed you so much.

FATHER

The girl - I thought she was you... and, gee, kid, there's sure an awful lot to say. Who'd you say the girl is?

MILLIE

The girl is Rose - I didn't say.

FATHER

She looks a lot like you - like you did - then.

MILLIE

She does, doesn't she? She's my granddaughter, your great-granddaughter.

FATHER

You really know how to make a man feel old, kid.

MILLIE

You don't look old. You look exactly the same as the day you left - like Errol Flynn in combat boots.

FATHER

Windy and cold as I remember it. Didn't tell you I was leavin' neither. Mother didn't want you to get too upset. I kissed you goodbye as you slept...a face to remember...

MILLIE

Rose is something special. You would have really had fun with her. Sometimes I see myself so clearly in her eyes. It's frightening and awesome at the same time. With your own child it's incredible - you've never seen anything like it before - that golden thread of evolution - but with a grandchild, the connection to the endless circle of life can really haunt you.

FATHER

You have your mother's eyes. (*Beat - lost in memory*) By the time you get this you will more than likely be back home in Lubbock or some other place if ever you decide where you're going to live - anyway save a place for me...

MILLIE

That's funny - she always said I have your eyes.

FATHER

That dress looks mighty familiar - you had a dress just like that, I'm sure of it.

MILLIE

It is mine. I gave it to Rose as a keepsake, but she insists on wearing it - and with combat boots! She needs to make it her own somehow, I suppose.

FATHER

This ain't no place for little girls.

(UNCLE SAM successfully lures ROSE away and OFF.)

MILLIE

I'll be okay - with you here.

FATHER

Sugar, give my girls my love and kisses - Tell Millie Poppy is throwing her a kiss too, in fact, I am throwing all my love and kisses to my girls...

MILLIE

And I throw a kiss right back, Poppy. I'm your little girl again. I want to be with you.

FATHER

I thought you were your mother. I miss her. It's been so long ...(*Beat*) Hard to believe my baby brother tellin' me about how he'd be tattooed, bow-legged, and in blue pants when I saw him next...

MILLIE

Don't leave me, Poppy. I want to stay and play with you again. I miss you.

FATHER

You say, the girl is... She looks like you did the last time I saw you. You were the most beautiful little girl in the world – so much like your mother - the hardest face in the world to leave.

MILLIE

You left in the middle of the night.

FATHER

Boy, that winter was really cold. We'd a had the men out firing in 16 below and snow, again if we'd stayed. We left Camp Edwards at 5:00 a.m. - arrived in New York at 1:30. We left the train and marched right on to the ship *U.S. A.T. Brizzill*. We looked just like a herd o pack horses!

MILLIE

I never saw you again. Loose lips sink ships - was all Mother said.

FATHER

I tell ya, this here's no place for little girls.

MILLIE

It's okay if you're here. Come play with me, Poppy – just like we used to.

FATHER

I've seen you here before. Taps always gets me up to have a look around. And there you were ... so sad. I'd always remembered you as such a happy kid - always had a smile and a laugh for your Poppy. We had fun together - didn't we, kid. Not that day - you were all tears and red faced – a gut wrenching scene, kid. I'd never seen you like that. *(Beat)* I saw my grandson for the first time. It made me so darn proud - such a tall, strong boy! Yep, darn proud.

MILLIE

And now I'm must bury that tall, strong boy. My son - Rose's father - the Gulf War – and trip number three for me to this cemetery. And now you can meet him again - in a grave. *(Beat)* He was just a boy when he lost his father – when you saw him here before. To me, he's just a boy now. Didn't take long, did it? Seems like I just buried his father and now.... Bobby was so proud of his father and so - angry. I think he signed up just to get revenge. *(Beat)* I don't want to think about it anymore, Poppy. Please, let's just play! Come on! Make me laugh again, Poppy.

FATHER

A good trip over, real smooth – and a real sight to see all that ocean. After all the hustle and bustle of gettin' on that ship - pretty darned uneventful, but we did get a visit from some porpoises. You'dve loved that, wouldn't ya, kid...

MILLIE

Yes, Poppy. I'm your little girl again, here. Can't I stay with you this time?

FATHER

It's your mother's time, not yours.

MILLIE

Bobby's dead.

FATHER

Except for that trip, it rained all year. Can you believe it? There's always bugs in the ointment. Got off to a muddy start, and we've had mud ever since...

MILLIE

This is where time stops for me. I like it like this. We can play and just be silly for no reason at all. Tag! You're it!

FATHER

We kept on the boys in Africa, but two months of training is all yer gonna need in the Army - that is until ya get inta combat. *There* one picks up quite a few more things you can use as you go along. But don't you worry none, My Sweet...

MILLIE

I don't want to hear about war - I just want to play - nothing more to worry about.

FATHER

We experienced our first air raids. The Jerrys came over Arzew Harbor. We were back up on a hill, but we were plenty scared. We worked from sundown to 10 or 11 o'clock diggin' holes in them rocks. You can always dig a little more when things start a'poppin!

(UNCLE SAM ENTERS with ROSE
leading her in a march.)

MILLIE

Rose - now there's something to worry about. She's asking a lot of hard questions right now – about death, war, revenge. You see, I failed with Bobby. He joined the Army and now he's dead - just like the rest of you. I have to bury my little boy tomorrow - my little baby boy. I can't - I can't live through this again.

FATHER

This ain't no place for little girls.

MILLIE

Come on, Poppy. Let's go play. There's nothing left for me – and I'm happy here with you.

FATHER

We worked all day on formal reveille. Things like this is what makes the Army so stupid. Got the boys up at 2:00 A.M. Went out to the firing range at 4:00 A.M. Fired one round at 8:00 A.M. Came back in. How's that for efficiency? The Army is full of that hurry up and wait.

(UNCLE Sam and ROSE stop.)

MILLIE

No. I don't want to play soldier. I'm tired of that game.

ROSE

Grandma, why do we have war?

MILLIE

Rose, I don't know. But it always seems to be alive and kicking, and as long as there is good and evil in the world, I guess we'll have war. *(Beat)* As long as we have war, soldiers will be killed - and families destroyed. I'm sorry, Rose.

ROSE

I'm gonna be a soldier!

FATHER

Goodnight My Own Sweetheart - I Love You...

(FATHER falls in step with UNCLE SAM and ROSE. ALL march OFF.)

MILLIE

How come everyone wants to play soldiers? Seems like we should try a little harder to keep the peace, don't it? *(Beat)* I'm sorry, Rose. I'd do anything to change it.

END OF ACT I, SCENE 3

ACT ONE
Scene 4: Rose's Recruitment

Summary: ROSE is seduced into signing her life over to UNCLE SAM.

Setting: Army Recruitment Office

Mood: surreal, humorous

Tone: dangerous seduction

Tempo: a mix of seduction and victory march

Climax: UNCLE SAM gets ROSE to sign on the dotted line

Montage: MILLIE sits and observes. UNCLE SAM ENTERS with ROSE following behind marching - a continuous motion from the previous scene. ROSE is curious. UNCLE SAM bribes her with trinkets (medals, flags, diplomas, weapons, travel brochures, toy guns, etc., the promises of enlistment). At first ROSE rejects the trinkets but then is won over, and she signs on the dotted line. UNCLE SAM soon has ROSE marching, saluting, and smoking a victory cigar. UNCLE SAM is victorious, at least for now, and BOTH march OFF arm and arm. MILLIE collapses.

END OF ACT I, SCENE 4

ACT ONE
Scene 5: Mother

(Sometime later. MOTHER ENTERS.
MOTHER appears young, vibrant, and
beautiful - how she was when FATHER last
saw her.)

MILLIE
(cold)

Mother.

MOTHER
I've passed on. I'm looking for your father. Is he here?

MILLIE
I thought for a moment you might be comforting me. Should've known better.

MOTHER
I've waited so long to see your father. I'm cold. Where is he?

MILLIE
I need you Mother. Bobby's dead.

MOTHER
I need your father. I want to dance.

MILLIE
Did you hear me, Mother? Bobby's dead. I don't think you heard the news before you passed. I called you to tell you, and they told me to come out. You really have a knack for poor timing. I guess your death took my mind off Bobby – for a moment anyway. You never fail to surprise me, though, Mother. I would never have guessed you'd do such a thing – not after all you've been through – not at your age.

MOTHER
I no longer had anyone to live for.

MILLIE
You looked at peace – strangely enough, and I envied the expression on your face. As I stood there looking at you – not knowing what to do with myself - an image as clear as day flashed across the room - a vision of you two - you and Father - dancing. You were young – lovely – happy - smiling - dancing. You looked so - in love - like a couple of teenagers... with the world at your feet.

(FATHER ENTERS.)

MOTHER

October 2, 1943. My Darling Angel Face, How you all? We are still waiting for news that never comes. Is it true that "no news is good news"? Here it is Saturday night again, how's about having this next dance with me? To the music of *Oh, How I Miss You Tonight* - Sugar, I am so lonely for you and those lovely evenings of the past. But someday you will come home to me and never - never will I let you out of my sight again...

MILLIE

No words for *me*, Mother?

MOTHER

The girls and I had dinner at the officers club last night. It was fun but those cadets don't look much like the officers of the U.S. A. F., now do they? Afterwards, Ruby and I went to see *Destroyer* with Edward G. Robinson, quite good. Goodnight now my dearest love, God guide and protect you always, with all my love...

MILLIE

No - *me*, Mother - I've just lost my son. You must have some words *for me*.

MOTHER

(cold)

War leaves its bruises... on the psyches of generations.

MILLIE

Is that all? Surely you have more words of wisdom than that. Please, Mother. You owe me so much more.

MOTHER

I came for your father. I've waited so long to see him.

MILLIE

Mother, listen to me. I've lived this moment before - with the death of my husband and the death of Father - and each time the pain is new and sharp and cold. But this time - my boy - my little boy is gone. I can't do it this time. You must know how I feel. You must have some words of comfort - something.

MOTHER

Too late for us, I've passed. I'm here for your father. No time for old wounds. I must be with him.

MILLIE

He's not only a part of your life – he's a part of mine, too. You act like you're the only one who has lost. I lost my best friend. I lost that wonderful feeling of safety a child should get to enjoy. I had no one left to laugh with, no more clown, no one who'd play "I'm gonna getcha! I'm gonna getcha..."

FATHER

I -- gotcha gotcha gotcha! Whoeee, kid, we sure had a laugh, didn't we?

MILLIE

I want to be with Father just as bad as you, and you've always ignored that fact – as if I never had a relationship to miss. All the fun in my life simply vanished. You're so selfish. I hurt just like you, Mother. (*Beat*) I remember watching you read that telegram, Mother. I had never known such fear - then. How could I? I was too young.

MOTHER

Worst moment of my life. Do you have to bring all that up again? I've waited so long to dance with your father.

MILLIE

The closest thing I could relate it to at the time was when I met up with that horrible dog.

MOTHER

The Hound from Hell...

(UNCLE SAM ENTERS. As MILLIE narrates, UNCLE SAM plays the part of the Hound from Hell.)

MILLIE

Walking home from school, I took the shortcut through the cemetery. I liked cemeteries then. I used to play there. I thought they were pretty - and peaceful.

MOTHER

You're shaking...

MILLIE

I was nearly to the gate when, out of nowhere, came this snarling hound from hell.
(UNCLE SAM as HOUND circles MILLIE.)

MOTHER

Come, let me hold you.

MILLIE

I froze. He froze. I shook. He growled. We stared at each other for what seemed like a lifetime, then he snapped his jaw shut and ran straight for my face. All I could think of to do was to shut my eyes and prepared to be mauled. I choked on my heart and let out a brain splitting silent scream.

(UNCLE SAM lunges for MILLIE, stops short, stands, hands MOTHER the telegram announcing her husband's death. MOTHER collapses.)

I opened my eyes and the dog had vanished. But you, Mother, you and that dreaded telegram stubbornly remained. The words "Killed in Action" tattooed across my memory. I've hated dogs - and telegrams for that matter - ever since.

(FATHER moves to console MOTHER. MILLIE blocks him.)

(Beat)

Mother, you sat down on the floor where you had stood a moment before, and stared at nothing.

(Beat)

Mother, you couldn't hear me screaming.

(Beat)

Mother, you never really heard me again.

(UNCLE SAM helps MOTHER to her feet like a manager in a boxing ring. Throughout the rest of this scene, UNCLE SAM plays both sides as MILLIE and MOTHER compete for FATHER.)

MOTHER

(unfeeling)

You were always the dearest thing in my life - from the moment you were born.

MILLIE

Oh come on - things were different from that day on.

MOTHER

(stoic)

Your father was dead.

MILLIE

You built a wall. You couldn't look me in the eye.

MOTHER

(distant)

You have your father's eyes.

MILLIE

I needed a funeral. I needed closure. I never got to say goodbye. Do you have any idea what that has done to my life?

MOTHER

I lost the love of my life.

FATHER

Hello My Dearest One, another windy day, but a pleasant ending - there is just enough breeze to make things pleasant - nice and cool too. The sun is about to go down behind a large mountain. One thing this country does have is wonderful sunrises and sunsets. The country is rolling and really looks like some painting (from a distance) and the more distance the better! Got your letter today about your trip. Well, one of these days, Sugar, we will travel some together. However, if I could just hold you close and talk to you - we could visit every place we have both been and still not have to move except for another cup of tea or a drink. Say, Sugar, if whiskey gets too scarce, how about buying me a case of P.J., or something similar, and save it for me - Goodnight now my sweetheart...

MOTHER

My Darling? Let's go now - take a trip around the world - dancing everywhere we go!

MILLIE

No don't go, Poppy. Stay and play with me. We can make kites and take them down to beach, or ski down the slopes of the golf course, or just swing under the maple tree. Come on - push me in the swing, Poppy! Please!

FATHER

Say, kid, why don't you and your sisters write your ole Poppy some letters? I get lonely over here so far away, and I sure would love to hear all about your big trip home to Lubbock. What do ya think about us doin' that trip again someday, and you showin' your Poppy all the swell sights? You've got them all mapped out, I'm sure...

MILLIE

If I draw you a map - do you think you can find your way home? I'll mark the X right over my room so you can find me. (*Beat*) You must have lost that map - maybe you never got that letter. You never made it home. I lost my father (*pause*) and my mother.

MOTHER

I was always there for you.

MILLIE

Physically. You were never there for me emotionally - from the moment you read that telegram.

MOTHER

Worst moment of my life.

MILLIE

And at those times when I needed you the most - my own husband's funeral, my son's death - I got nothing from you, nothing to help me cope, nothing but more death, more loss. Your timing's rotten, Mother. Maybe I need to be with Father now just as much as you.

MOTHER

Too painful - much too painful. I came to dance.

MILLIE

Can't you think about my pain - even for a minute? You never mentioned a word about Father ever again. He was killed and that was the end of that.

MOTHER

I had a life to live. And now I'm done with that life - that long, long life - and now I can finally be with my love again. I've waited so long. It's my time. Let me go, Millie. I must go to him.

MILLIE

I must bury my son.

MOTHER

You have a life to live.

MILLIE

What do I have to live for?

MOTHER

People still depend on you.

MILLIE

The only thing that's left of interest to me is my granddaughter. Rose is the only thing I'm living for now.

MOTHER

You can't save people, Millie.

MILLIE

Then what am I living for?

MOTHER

You'll have to answer that for yourself.

MILLIE

I never told you I found our house. I went back there, back to the house we lived in when Father left for the War.

MOTHER

Why on Earth would you do such a thing? We were there for such a short period of time. Why go to all that trouble?

MILLIE

It was when Charles died. All the feelings of abandonment and despair just flooded over me. It was all I could think of to do. I was obsessed by it. It took quite a lot of investigation, without your help.

MOTHER

I wouldn't have been any help. I don't remember a thing about it.

MILLIE

I hadn't been there since. I hadn't been anywhere near that part of the country since 1943. I went alone. I took off without telling a soul. I drove right into the town square - the pond was just here - and the golf course on the right - and then the house just - appeared. It hadn't changed one bit. I pulled up in the drive under the same old maple tree - only now it towered above the house - ominous really. They kept the swing - can you believe it? It didn't look very safe - but the wind caught it - and I caught a glimpse of Father pushing me in that swing. I stepped out onto the crunch of the clamshell drive. I sucked in the fishy, salty smell of seawater and the memories hit me hard. I knocked on the door. I had to go to my room - the last place I saw Father alive. I just had to be there - one more time. I needed to be with him - somehow.

MOTHER

Past is past, Millie. You can't keep living in the past.

MILLIE

My husband had just been killed. Instead of crying and trying to console my family, I got angry and left. I left my boy, my poor little boy, to deal with the loss of his father on his own - like you did to me.

MOTHER

I did not abandon you.

MILLIE

I had to go there. I had to be in that house.

MOTHER

If you spend your life reliving every moment you'll never be able to cope. Just put it behind you.

MILLIE

I can't. And I can't live through this again.

(UNCLE SAM dances with MOTHER.)

MOTHER

Death can be appealing at times.

MILLIE

You would know.

MOTHER

It was my answer, yes, but I've waited a long time to be with your father. I had nothing left to live for. I am old and I've lived my life. You still have Rose.

(MILLIE cuts in and dances with UNCLE SAM.)

MILLIE

Sometimes I see death as a tall, dark, handsome man who comes and sweeps me off my feet - I glide into his arms, and he takes me away to a happy place – and I feel safe again – without a care in the world.

FATHER

Dearest Sweetheart: Sugar I just got back from another show - getting to be a regular night - and saw Bing Crosby's *If I Had My Way*. Pretty good show. If you haven't seen it, you should if you get a chance. But Sugar why is it not a good show? It is not a good show when you see it alone. Now if we could go home and make a pot of tea and mix me a drink and discuss the show - that would be really good. My love, I miss you more each day and the nights are worse...

MILLIE

I felt so alone in the house. Some woman was renting the place. She was kind enough to let me in. I think she enjoyed my story. She made a pot of tea. They'd put water in the house. Remember the old water pump bursting in the basement?

MOTHER

It was bitter cold. Everything froze. I cursed that house so many times. We were headed for a long hard winter.

MILLIE

I didn't realize it was a summerhouse when we lived there - not meant for use in cold weather. Somebody since then had the plumbing updated, but nothing else was changed. I thought it odd, that woman in our house. She didn't belong there - neither did I. I should have been at home with my little boy. It all felt very strange.

MOTHER

They gave officers houses. They knew we'd only be there a short while. We were headed for a long hard winter. Mama sent pinto beans and chili mix. I made a huge pot a chili n' beans for all us Texans. Ever'body, not just me, was so homesick, and no one had even left for the war yet.

MILLIE

The woman let me wander around the house at will. She must have thought it odd and a bit sad...

MOTHER

Your father left sooner than expected. Funny - we thought we were so lucky. We were supposed to have been at the Coconut Grove the night of the big fire. We were going dancing - Boy, did we love to dance. We were half way there and turned around. Your Father wasn't feeling well - had a bit of a knot in his tummy. He always said we were lucky. But God was saving me - not him - saving me to torture me - with surviving.

FATHER

Tell the girls hello for me and give them my love. Goodnight now My Sweetheart. I love you...

MILLIE

The kitchen was still the same color blue.

MOTHER

Blue is too cold.

MILLIE

The smell of attic dust and damp sea made me go back there, Mother, back to that night.

MOTHER

He always said we were lucky.

MILLIE

I expected to see myself run down the stairs. Everything looked and smelled the exact same. I was there, you were there, *he* was there – just like the night before he left!

MOTHER

I cursed that house so many times.

MILLIE

I walked right up to my room.

FATHER

Go back to sleep, kid. I love you, little one.

MOTHER

We gave you the room with the view - a big maple tree, your swing - and a really good view of the pond.

MILLIE

The light shone in the bedroom window and through the dust in the air. I drank in the smell...

MOTHER

...attic dust and damp sea. I loved being so near the sea. We walked on the beach and watched the moon's reflection dance on the waves. And we'd dance – we loved to dance...

(UNCLE SAM turns on the RADIO.
MUSIC PLAYS. MOTHER and FATHER
each dance separately, pretending the other
is in their arms.)

MILLIE

Standing there, for a moment with my eyes closed, I could hear music and the memory of that night came down on me hard and fast. I was in bed, sleeping, dreaming - warm under the down cover. The long branch of the maple tree scraped the window. The swing creaked in the wind. The air was cold. I smelled salt in the air and fish. (*To FATHER*) You came in. The door latch woke me up. I knew instantly it was you. (*Beat*) I can still drink in the smell of your Old Spice and feel as though you're with me - all over again. (*Beat*) You were in uniform, and I thought that was odd. I thought it must be nearly morning and you were going to work. But it was the middle of the night. It was so cold. Windy. That branch kept scraping my window. Something gave me a fright. Something I didn't understand, but I sensed was wrong. You thought I was sleeping, but I was awake.

MILLIE, cont.

You sat down on the edge of my bed for what seemed like hours. Then you brushed back the hair from my face, and I opened my eyes. You smiled and kissed me. I can still feel your mustache scratching my forehead.

FATHER

Go back to sleep, kid. I love you, little one.

(FATHER kisses MILLIE on the forehead.
UNCLE SAM leads FATHER OFF.
MOTHER tries to follow. MILLIE pulls
MOTHER back.)

MOTHER

Let me go! (*Beat*) Why do you do this to yourself?

MILLIE

I live that night over everyday of my life.

MOTHER

I had a life to live. Now I'm done with that life, and I can finally be with him again. You can't help the living if you're dead, Millie. Think of Rose. Bobby suffered because you...

MILLIE

Don't you, of all people, tell me what I did wrong with Bobby! I couldn't help his father being killed, but damn it, I tried to be there for him. I went back home, and I tried to help him through it. Unlike you, I tried to talk to him.

MOTHER

You're too angry. So was I.

MILLIE

My worst fear was having a child of mine lose their father. At the time - that was my worst fear. Now I know better than to name my worst fear.

MOTHER

Your father is a good man.

MILLIE

Charles had to go off and get himself killed in another stupid war – these wars – these endless wars are out to get me - slowly – and I think they've won – I'm beaten, Mother. I have no fight left in me.

MOTHER

Your husband is a good man.

MILLIE

I tried to break the cycle of death. I married a doctor, damn it! His job was to *save* lives. Charles joined the fight for revenge. He would have never gone if his brother hadn't been killed.

MOTHER

So much death.

(UNCLE SAM returns with ROSE working her like a soldier puppet.)

MILLIE

And now my granddaughter - it's enough to break a person. I can't do this again, Mother, I'm not gonna make it.

MOTHER

Too angry to really understand your father's reasons for going - or your husband's, and too angry to realize your son just needed you.

MILLIE

How dare you! You never mentioned my father again. For two years you brought home every uniformed soldier you saw, and...

MOTHER

Don't.

FATHER

(offstage)

What d'ya think of this uniform, eh? Pretty sharp, I'd say! You always said you loved me in these boots, Baby.

MILLIE

You're telling me I didn't do right by my son when his father died? I tried my best to keep him out of the damned army. His mind was his own. He never listened to me. I pleaded. I told him not to leave his beautiful baby girl. He never looked back, but it wasn't because I didn't try.

MOTHER

Bobby is a good boy.

MILLIE

Now Rose - look at her! She should be flying kites or riding horses or, I don't know, something fun and free - and look at her - marching around like GI Joe. It's not right.

MOTHER

So much heartache.

MILLIE

She wants revenge, just like Charles, just like her father.

(UNCLE SAM marches ROSE OFF.)

MOTHER

Your father had his reasons. You were too young to understand. Rose needs you.

MILLIE

I understood - I no longer had a father.

MOTHER

Your anger is keeping you stuck in the past. Put it behind you, Millie.

(UNCLE SAM ENTERS.)

MILLIE

No. You can't help me. Not now. (*Beat*) You see, he's here for me now - that tall, dark, handsome man - I see him looking at me - beckoning me... He'll take me to where I belong...

(MILLIE moves to UNCLE SAM.)

MOTHER

Hush little baby
Don't you cry
Mama's gonna sing you a lullaby

(UNCLE SAM gives MILLIE toy gun.)

FATHER

(offstage)

Go back to sleep, kid. I love you, little one.

(MILLIE lies down with UNCLE SAM at gravestone.)

MILLIE

I'm your little girl again, here. This is where I want to be - with you, Poppy. Can't I stay with you this time?

(MILLIE places the toy gun in her mouth.
MOTHER approaches MILLIE.)

FATHER

(offstage)

Darling One, did you know that I love you, love you with all my heart and soul, and all the love that there is in the world? Regardless of what happens, I have had the pleasure of having you these past years, and Sweet, you just can not imagine what that has meant to me. You have made me the happiest man in the world...

MOTHER

I must go to him.

(MOTHER EXITS.)

FATHER

(offstage)

Go back to sleep, kid. I love you, little one.

(ROSE ENTERS.)

ROSE replaces toy gun with baby doll.

ROSE EXITS.

MILLIE rises, sits in rocking chair holding baby doll, and rocks.)

END OF ACT I, SCENE 5

ACT ONE
Scene 6: Goodbye Dance

(March, 1943, a temporary home, near the sea.)

Summary: Mother and Father say goodbye and have their last dance before Father leaves for World War II.

Setting: It is the night before Father ships out. It is cold and windy outside, warm and sad inside. The radio plays slow songs.

Mood: sad, romantic, reminiscing, loving, with a hint of desperation.

Tone: subdued, beautifully heartbreaking.

Tempo: slow, sad, wistful, (Glenn Miller's *String of Pearls* and *Moonlight Serenade*).

Climax: when the couple realizes it very well may be their last dance.

Montage: MOTHER kisses YOUNG MILLIE (same age as ROSE and wearing the same dress) and sends her to bed. FATHER stops YOUNG MILLIE. FATHER asks for one last hug and kiss. YOUNG MILLIE doesn't realize FATHER is leaving. They haven't told her. YOUNG MILLIE is sent OFF to bed happy. FATHER reacts to YOUNG MILLIE'S departure with sadness and grief. MOTHER attempts to console him. MOTHER turns up the radio. They both brighten at the sound of the MUSIC. Dancing has always brightened their lives together. MOTHER and FATHER begin to dance slowly, and at some point realize that this may very well be their last dance together. This realization changes the mood and the intensity of the dance. YOUNG MILLIE ENTERS unseen by the couple and watches them dance.

END OF ACT I, SCENE 6

END OF ACT ONE

MILLIE'S WAR

ACT II

ACT TWO
Scene 1: The Telegram

(October 3, 1943, at home, Lubbock,
Texas.)

Summary: Mother gets news of Father's death, a telegram - "Killed in Action". She responds by trying to recapture it all with any uniformed soldier. Mother ends alone and broken.

Setting: Mother is at home. It is another cold and windy night.

Mood: nightmarish.

Tone: tragic, surreal.

Tempo: Starts out haunting (like Artie Shaw's version of *Stormy Weather*), then becomes more frantic and horrific (like Glenn Miller's *Nightmare*), then ends in a jarring, blast at climax – the way an off-key trumpet blast would feel.

Climax: Unveiling of the soldier Mother thinks is Father but who turns out to be Uncle Sam as the Grim Reaper.

Montage: MOTHER is dancing to the music on the radio as if FATHER were in her arms. UNCLE SAM delivers telegram (FATHER has been killed in action) exactly as he did in the Hound from Hell scene (I.5). MOTHER reads telegram and collapses in a heap. MOTHER rises as if caught in a nightmare. MOTHER sees SOLDIERS she believes to be FATHER. MOTHER grabs for them and tries to dance with them, but they soon become unrecognizable to her. MOTHER searches again and again. The last soldier she attempts to dance with unveils to be UNCLE SAM as the GRIM REAPER. Mother tears herself away in agony. UNCLE SAM is triumphant. MOTHER is defeated.

(Note: Resonates with Hound from Hell Scene Millie describes in Mother Scene, I.5, and also with Last Dance Scene, I.6.)

END OF ACT II, SCENE 1

ACT TWO
Scene 2: The Raven

(MILLIE ENTERS with UNCLE SAM who plays the refrain from *The Three Ravens*, an old English ballad):

“Down a down, hey down, hey down,”

MILLIE

Hello Mr. Raven, you with your ominous silky black feathers, what is your message?

(Beat) Always a bad sign. *(Beat)*

There were three ra’ens sat on a tree,

(UNCLE SAM plays):

“Down a down, hey down, hey down,”

You perch seductively on a gravestone. Whose visit are you announcing? Your sharp steely beak squawks menacingly at the unsuspecting innocents below. *(Beat)*

So much death. *(Beat)*

They were as black as black might be,

(UNCLE SAM plays):

“With a downe.”

Song lyrics from a laughing, back-stabbing friend tell a tale of seduction and sadness lurking just on the other side of time. *(Beat)*

I hate this place. *(Beat)*

The one of them said to his mate,

Where shall we our breakfast take?

(UNCLE SAM plays):

“With a down, derry, derry, derry down, down”

No one's listening to you, Raven. No one's looking. No one pays any attention to your warning signs, Oh Dark One. The leaves rustle in response to your song like a Greek chorus. They hear. They understand. They respond. *(Beat)*

Nothing changes. *(Beat)*

(MILLIE begins to dance with UNCLE SAM.)

Down in yonder green field,

There lies a knight slain ‘neath his shield,

(MUSIC plays):

“Down, a down, hey down, hey down,”

MILLIE, cont.

His hounds they lie down at his feet,
So well they do their master keep,

(MUSIC plays):

*“With a down, derry, derry, derry down,
down.”*

His hawks they fly so eagerly,
No other fowl dare come him night,

(MUSIC plays):

*“With a down, derry, derry, derry down,
down.”*

MOTHER

(offstage)

Down there comes a fallow doe
As great with young as might she go.

(MUSIC plays):

*“With a down, derry, derry, derry down,
down.”*

(MOTHER ENTERS.)

MOTHER

She lifted up his bloody head,
And kissed his wounds that were so red,
She got him up upon her back,
And carried him to earthen lake,

(MUSIC plays):

*“With a down, derry, derry, derry down,
down.”*

MOTHER

She buried him before the prime
She was dead herself ere e'en-song time,

(UNCLE SAM dances MILLIE OFF.)

MOTHER, cont.

God send every gentleman,
Such hawks, such hounds, and such a leman.

(MUSIC plays as MOTHER
EXITS.):

*“With a down, derry, derry, derry
down, down,”*

END OF ACT II, SCENE 2

ACT TWO
Scene 3: Bobby

(MOTHER is writing letters. UNCLE SAM, looking more and more like the Grim Reaper, takes each letter as she finishes it, stamps and keeps them.)

MOTHER

July 20, 1943. My darling husband: We were so thrilled to have your letters of June 30th forwarded to us here in Michigan. It is a long way to Texas. The baby held hers and said - Dada, Dada - looking into the letter to see if you were there. She surely misses her Poppy - So do we all - especially me. My sweetheart, you cannot ever imagine how very lonely I get for you. We went shopping in Detroit for shoes (no ration stamps) and had lots of fun on the escalator. Have you ever been on one? Quite thrilling. Did you get your box yet - and is the candy all melted? I surely hope not. Michigan is pretty hot - and there is no place to swim - the salt water surely was nice - but by the time I can get back to Texas and find a place to live, it will be time to start the children to school. Dear one, write to me often - your letters are so wonderful - they bring you so much closer - all my love is with you...

(FATHER ENTERS.)

FATHER

August 5, 1943. Hello my darling: The news looks better and better every day, don't it? Any way, looks like I might be back to help raise our kids - yet. Tell our precious bundle o'baby if she looks hard enough she will find me in that envelope - any how that's where my heart is. How about this escalator business - reckon I could ride one? Do you need spurs? Remember we don't have them any more. Say Sugar - you take the kids to school in the morning! I want to sleep - you can fix my breakfast when you get back. Boy I am looking forward to those days. For now though goodnight & Sweet Dreams - I Love You - night kids...

MOTHER

Sunday morning or Saturday Night - very late - August 29, 1943. My darling: So at last you know that I am back in Texas - today, Sugar, I've been here one month - That's how far behind the times you are. School begins next week - so since we've not yet found a suitable house, they will start at Roscoe Wilson. We are going to stay on here until a house is vacant somewhere. I am to buy and prepare the children's and my meals, and I will pay our share of the utilities - after all, it makes little difference to me - no place on earth seems like home to me without you my own darling. I do love you and miss you so very much. Oh, my sweet, I would love to hold you close once more and kiss you over and over again. I must go to bed now, my precious husband, God bless you and keep you. Love and kisses...

(MOTHER and FATHER each dance as if the other is in their arms.

MILLIE ENTERS.)

MILLIE

I'm sorry, Bobby. Never could bring myself to say that before. I never said it to you. I'm sorry you had to grow up without a father. I wanted so much for you to have what I didn't - a childhood - enough time to play.

MOTHER

Stolen innocence.

FATHER

No time to dance.

MILLIE

You were such a beautiful baby, Bobby. So full of fun. You could make me laugh with just the tiniest grin - and that soft angelic face of yours. Oh you made me so happy – just looking into your laughing eyes and sniffing your sweet head.

(BOBBY ENTERS.

BOBBY and UNCLE SAM respond to each other like long lost pals - comrades in arms. BOBBY strolls over and circles MILLIE, examining her as if she's a butterfly caught under glass.)

MILLIE

Your father worked long hard hours, but he was home as much as any surgeon could manage. Charles loved his family, especially his little boy. You know that, don't you? Your father adored you – and you wanted to be a doctor - just like your father - remember? Do you remember that? I do.

BOBBY

(to UNCLE SAM)

Oh grrooan - she hasn't changed one bit.

MILLIE

But war came, as it always does, and you... (*Beat*) you changed. And Charles had to be (*in Charles's voice*) "where I'm needed most," he said. And why wasn't that right here at home - with us? By the time he decided to go, flag draped caskets were all I could see on TV. What a nightmare. But I couldn't talk him out of it. I tried to keep him from going - just like I tried to keep you from going.

BOBBY
(to UNCLE SAM)

See what I have to put up with?

MILLIE

Charles lost his little brother early on in the conflict. I knew then -- he'd go. I just knew it. *(Beat)* And my little boy no longer played doctor. He played soldier instead - only playing was no longer a game for you. The twinkle in your eyes turned to sparks. It broke my heart to look at you. Everything became so serious. The weight of the world on your little shoulders. And now my little boy is gone. I'm not that strong, Bobby. I never was. I can't do this again. I just want to curl up and die.

BOBBY
(confronts MILLIE)

So what do ya want *me* to do fer ya, Ma? Give ya a medal?

MILLIE

Bobby? Is that my little boy? My precious darling boy?

BOBBY

Cut it out, Ma. For crissakes, yer embarrassin' me.

MILLIE

Oh Bobby – let me touch your face. I need to touch your face – just one more time.

BOBBY

What are ya doin'? Don't get freaky on me, Ma.

MILLIE

You have the most beautiful face...

BOBBY

I'm a grown man fer crissakes, Ma. Pull yerself together.

MILLIE

It's too hard. A mother should never have to lose her baby.

MOTHER

You're shaking... come let me hold you.

MILLIE

My boy, Mother. I've lost my little boy.

FATHER
(To MOTHER)

August 8, 1943: Hello My Darling, How's My Sugar doin' these days? Better hurry and send me an address to write to. Everything here is still doing fine. In fact it looks better everyday, but you probably know more about that than I do - cause you take time to read the paper, and I don't. I haven't changed a bit! See we don't have the funnies in our paper - just wait till I can eat breakfast and drink my coffee while I read the funnies - oh boy! Sweetheart, we are going to have many things to do when I get back, and I am really looking forward to them. Goodnight now My Darling. I love you...

MILLIE

Yes, you could have had such a happy life with us. We could have all been so happy together. But war came, as it always does, and you left - and the happiness in our lives died with you. (*Beat*) Hey, but we had a hero for a father - yippee hurray - let's here it for the USA!

FATHER

I don't feel much like a hero. It was my job. I wanted to come home to my girls - nothing in the world I wanted more - I wanted come home and raise you kids - buy a farm - your mother and me. We had it all planned, see...

MOTHER

No place on earth seems like home to me without you my own darling...

MILLIE

And my brave husband - they bombed his hospital for God's sake - and now my son's a hero, too - killed by his own army. The sense - I'm looking for the sense in it all? Why do men leave the family they love to go get themselves killed in some godforsaken country on the other side of the planet? What about those left at home to pick up all the pieces? What about those left to scrape up their children's souls and convince them the world really is a happy place? Hey, kids, let's all go to the playground and have some good clean fun, why don't we? Do you know how hard it is to look in a child's face and see nothing but hollow eyes? Where's my goddamn medal? I'm the one left behind to deal with it all. I'm the one that deserves a medal!

BOBBY

I think you deserve a punch in the head.

MOTHER

I know that you will meet it bravely, with high courage, and at home, we will too...

FATHER

Folks do join the fighting for good reasons, kid.

MILLIE

Revenge is a good reason? That's what seems to drive my family. My son went off to war and got himself killed - like my husband and my father - leaving behind his daughter for me to deal with - and the young lady is bloodthirsty for revenge - sound familiar? Somebody else will have to handle it this time. I'm done.

BOBBY

Oh, so now all this is *my* fault? Now *that's* what sounds familiar - you goin' off and blamin' it all on me - or the Army. You never understood Military Life. Not like me - I live It, love It, lust after It!

(UNCLE SAM winds FATHER up as if he's a run down toy.)

FATHER

Yep, that's right, folks do join the fighting for good reasons, kid.

MILLIE

To avenge their loved ones? Blood for blood only leads to endless blood baths. You'd think we'd have lived long enough to become more civilized than that.

BOBBY

(to UNCLE SAM)

What a sap.

FATHER

Order sometimes requires force. There are bad people in the world, kid. You can't just let 'em walk all over you.

MILLIE

When people are killed, the survivors seek revenge. Where does it end?

MOTHER

Turn your anger into strength.

FATHER

You didn't seek revenge.

MILLIE

No, I seek peace. And I'm pretty sure I've thought of a good way to get it.

BOBBY
(to UNCLE SAM)

Glad Rose isn't havin' ta suffer through this crap.

FATHER

I reckon we all seek peace, kid.

MILLIE

Through killing? I don't see the sense. Can you explain it to me? I've experienced death my whole life, and it hasn't brought me much peace. *(Beat)* No, the only time I remember being happy and safe was when I was with you, Poppy - in your lap - you telling me my bedtime story - remember? You can really ham it up. We would make you do it again and again. I still hear your voice...

FATHER
(overly dramatic)

...but Peter, who was sometimes naughty, went straight away to Mr. McGregor's garden and squeezed under the fence...

MILLIE

When I knew you were gone, I thought - who's going to tell us our bedtime stories?

MOTHER

No more time to play, Millie, come help your Mother with the chores.

MILLIE

I can still feel myself stand on your feet while you whirl me around the room dancing - just like I was Mother. I'd watch you two - and sometimes - I'd dream of when I'd be married and happy like you two. *(Beat)* But you had another girl - the Army - and she stole my Prince Charming away from me...

FATHER

It's more complicated than that, kid. Things don't always make sense. I reckon you were too young to get the big picture.

MILLIE

Well I'm a big girl now - and still - nothing makes sense to me. I was so angry at Charles for even considering Vietnam. I wasn't even thinking he might be killed. I was angry *he left*. I was devastated when he died. I couldn't forgive him. I'd rave on sometimes completely out the blue - about something stupid - like the dishes or the trash - you know - the mundane, everyday, had-to-do-it-anyway kinda stuff. He wasn't there to help. He wasn't there to hold. He wasn't there to play ball with Bobby. And I hated him for that. Bobby couldn't forgive me for my anger. Bobby, you suffered the most - poor child.

BOBBY
(to UNCLE SAM)

I wasn't the sissy she's makin' me out ta be.

MILLIE
(to BOBBY)

You needed your father, and I turned hateful.

BOBBY

Yer pretty damned hateful now, too!

MOTHER

There's no time for anger. We must dance. Where's the music?

MILLIE
Not hateful towards you, Bobby, but to the world in general. (*To FATHER*) Charles's death brought back everything I went through losing you. All those sad angry nights I spent cursing anyone and everyone for your death. I thought I had safeguarded my family from war...

BOBBY

You're deluded.

MILLIE
...but I guess there is no such thing. War is always there. It comes upon you like a bad flu. You do everything in your power to ward it off, and then the next thing you know, you're clinging to the rim of the toilet for dear life.

BOBBY
Oh for chrissakes! I've heard just about enough of your preachin', Ma.

MILLIE
It's how I feel. Sorry. I want it to be different for Rose. If I thought I could do anything for her, but her time to play is over now - damage done. There's nothing I can do for her except watch her suffer like I did, and like you did, Bobby. I can't watch that again.

BOBBY
What the hell are you talkin' about? Rose is a strong girl. She'll be fine.

MILLIE
Rose is looking to get back at someone, something - for your death. I'm sure she'll do something stupid - like join the army - as soon as she gets a chance.

BOBBY

And what's wrong with that? It's a family tradition.

MILLIE

I just don't think I have the strength to do anything about it.

BOBBY

And why should you? Leave her be. The Army will treat her just fine.

MILLIE

I don't even have the strength to get myself out of bed or wash clothes. It's no use. I can't change anything, and I ... *(Beat)* Bobby, I know I couldn't stomach Rose going in to the army. I don't have it in me. I know I don't. Don't be mad at me, Bobby. I look at Rose, and all the pain I went through losing Father and Charles rushes up inside. Then I see your face and... It's too much... Bobby, I'm sorry I'm not stronger.

BOBBY

(to UNCLE SAM)

I can't listen to this crap. I need a gun.

MOTHER

There's strength to be found in your anger. I found the strength to carry on. So can you.

FATHER

(to MILLIE)

Rose has you.

BOBBY

So that's where all this is leadin' - Rose! I gotta save Rose from this shit. She's a real little spitfire destined to become the best soldier your Army's ever seen. Ma, yer not goin' to do nuthin' to ruin my Rose! I gotta get Rose.

(BOBBY EXITS. UNCLE SAM
FOLLOWS.)

MILLIE

Yeah, but what can I do? Harm's already been done. All she has is suffering - and I - I can't bear to see that serious look in her eyes. I want to take her back to innocence - back to that carefree world she'll never know again. I tried to do that with Bobby. I took him to the park one day - he was dressed in full camo gear, of course, and I tried to play with him. We used to have such fun together on that playground. I tried to recapture just one moment - he just shot me a look of disgust and walked home. He never let me near him again.

MOTHER

You can't save children. You can only teach them.

MILLIE

Bobby was different from me. We never really clicked. But he was my baby, my beautiful baby boy. And he was such a sensitive soul. I'm certain he would have never chosen the military life if his father had not been killed. He vowed revenge, to no one in particular - maybe his own revenge against the world. He became a soldier the day after we left his father's funeral. I couldn't look at him. And I couldn't stop him. I know it's no way for a mother to think, but I couldn't believe he could do that to me.

MOTHER

He was too young.

MILLIE

They're all too young.

FATHER

The darndest thing - we have a pet crow here now - He really keeps the kitchen in line - visits everyone while they eat and sure raises Cain if a meal is late. He is just learning to fly good - but is never away from the kitchen very long - That's all the space for now - Goodnight and sweet dreams my darling...

MILLIE

Bobby made up his mind to be a soldier right there in the cemetery. They handed me the folded flag. Out of instinct, or God knows what - I wasn't thinking - just going through the motions - I handed the flag to Bobby. It was a stupid thing for me to do. I've always regretted it, and I don't know if one thing led to the other - I don't think it was the only thing. Bobby made up his mind to fight.

(BOBBY and UNCLE SAM return with ROSE marching.)

He fought me especially.

(BOBBY and UNCLE SAM began to teach ROSE as if she's a new pupil at Military School.)

He turned his room into a military headquarters - a big HQ carved into his door. He spent all his money stocking up on maps, camo-gear, radio equipment. All the baseball equipment disappeared. It was all I could do to curb the harboring of guns and knives. I know he was stashing them in places I'd never find. He scared me. (*Beat*) I gave into his wishes for military school because he frightened me. I hated the idea, but I didn't know what else to do. I went to see the Head of School. I told him Bobby's history. I thought maybe the male influence might snap him out of it. But off he went. He studied history, battles - graduated West Point.

FATHER

Well I'll be! Runs in the family. I bet your mother had a hissy fit over that one.

(ROSE graduates and is handed a gun.
UNCLE SAM, BOBBY, ROSE EXIT
marching.)

MOTHER

May God be always with you.

MILLIE

Knew you'd be proud. *(Beat)* I guess I somehow thought that all that studying might help save him from the front lines, but there's no keepin' that boy from a fight. He'd be on the front lines even without a war. He went into the Gulf War as gung-ho as ever in some sort of radio intelligence unit.

FATHER

Special Ops.

(UNCLE SAM and BOBBY return with
ROSE - all marching in formation.)

MILLIE

It was the battle for Khafji – apparently conditions were chaotic around Observation Post 4 - the Saudi police station at Al Zabr. I don't have any more details. But when the doorbell rang that day, I froze. The hair on my neck stood on end, and I just stood there. The bell rang and rang and rang. I couldn't move. They finally came around to the back door. I saw them and... that's all I remember of that day - those uniforms coming around the fence. I took a bunch of pills. I lost count. I'm sure I wanted to lose count. I woke up in the bathtub. How I kept from drowning – I don't know. The phone was ringing ringing ringing ringing – God make it STOP! *(Beat)* Friendly fire. *(Beat)* Sad and ironic, huh?

BOBBY

(aghast)

Friendly fire?

MILLIE

How do I explain that to Rose? She's already vowing revenge. Revenge against ---?
(Beat) I don't know what to say.

FATHER

Bobby was killed fighting for his country, kid. Friendly fire don't change that.

BOBBY

Friendly fire, my ass! I was ambushed, I tell ya! Rose, don't listen to that media censored garbage. Ma, you was told what they wanted you to hear. It was all hush-hush, ya understand - Top Secret!

MILLIE

Oh Bobby - you have such a sweet face. Don't get angry with me - not now. I just want to touch your face...

BOBBY

Get the hell away from me! Just let me say my peace – okay? Why is it always all about you ? You haven't changed one bit. So ya know what's good fer Rose, do ya, Ma? I'm not even in the ground yet and yer plannin' Rose's life out for her. Why don't ya ask Rose what she wants to do, huh? Like ya never asked *me*.

MILLIE

I don't have the strength.

FATHER

Yer stronger than you know, kid. You've got your mother's strength, and she's one tough gal.

BOBBY

Not strong enough to get my girl. She's a born fighter.

(UNCLE SAM plays drill sergeant and teaches ROSE new skills - salute, march, drop, fire, etc. - ALL watch.)

MILLIE

(To BOBBY)

You know they recognized me at the gate, Bobby. How sick is that? I'm a regular. The young man gave me a map of your spot so we would all be able to find it okay for the burial. I shoved it back in his face. He seemed rather surprised at that! I knew where you'd be. I know this place by heart. I have a part of me on three different hills at this cemetery. They're gonna start taxing me on my property soon. *(Pause)* And I have to bring her *(indicates Rose)* now. I can't explain any of it to her. And I don't want to.

FATHER

She looks a lot like you did.

BOBBY

Rose ain't nothin' like you, Ma.

ROSE

I'm not like you, Grandma. I wanna be a soldier!

MILLIE

(to FATHER)

I look at her, and all I see is myself waiting for you to come home. I relive the night you left - over and over and over.

ROSE

I remember the night you left, Daddy.

FATHER

We are going to have many things to do when I get back, and I am really looking forward to them...

MILLIE

I thought of that night so often when you (*to BOBBY*) were a baby - holding you in my arms - looking at you - at your little angel face - wondering how anyone could leave their child.

ROSE

I'll miss you, Daddy.

MILLIE

The irony of it all haunts me. Makes me sick. I owe it to you to be there for Rose in ways I couldn't be there for you. Can't you understand? It's the only way I can cope.

MOTHER

You'll find your strength, Millie. Just like I did.

MILLIE

(To FATHER)

Why did you go? How could you leave me?

FATHER

It was my job, kid. There's always bugs in the ointment. My duty was to serve my country. Couldn't have done nothin' but what I did.

MILLIE

You didn't have to go.

BOBBY

Get me a gun!

(UNCLE SAM restrains BOBBY.)

FATHER

My men needed me.

MILLIE

We needed you. I needed you. I was a little girl. I needed my Father.

ROSE

Aren't you ever coming home, Daddy? Who's gonna help me with my pitching? I don't wanna to say goodbye.

(ROSE clings to BOBBY.)

BOBBY

What the hell is this, Rose? Backbone, child - show some backbone fer crissakes! Now lay off the anti-war soapbox will ya - you're ruinin' my daughter.

MOTHER

Poor lost children.

(UNCLE SAM peels ROSE off of BOBBY and, in seconds, has ROSE showing off her new military skills to the admiration of her enthusiastic tutors.)

MILLIE

Look at her! I can't bear it!

(During the remainder of the scene, FATHER, BOBBY, UNCLE SAM, and ROSE move in formation to surround MILLIE.)

FATHER

The whole world *needed*. There wasn't a choice, not then. The damned free world was at stake!

MILLIE

Well, then. I guess you didn't accomplish much because (*mimicking him*) "the damned free world" is still in peril. At least that's the same song and dance I've been hearing as I buried my husband and now my son.

FATHER

We wanted a farm. We'd raise chickens and cows and whatever money we had left over we'd use to see the world. We had dreams - we had plans - your Mother and me.

MILLIE

We never got to do that - so what were you fighting for? My safety, you say? My life has been one tragedy after another - all brought on by men running off to war. If you want to save someone, why don't you save Rose? Keep her from joining the stupid army.

MOTHER

Darling, of course you have that tight knot in your tummy...

BOBBY

No support for the troops, Ma? Rose could be the one who saves your bee-hind.

MILLIE

I've been *saved* enough, thank you.

ROSE

Daddy taught me how to shoot a gun. Says I'm a damn good shot, too.

MILLIE

Rose - watch your mouth, please. Bobby, I won't let Rose be a soldier.

ROSE

What if I wanna go to college, Grandma? The Army'll pay for it, ya know.

BOBBY

And she's gonna be a damned good soldier at that.

MILLIE

Where? The front lines? There are other ways to pay for college, Rose.

BOBBY

I taught her right - I made her a real sharp shooter.

FATHER

The front lines? Are you crazy man?

MILLIE

It's the damned free world Father, you know - the one you fought so hard to save.

BOBBY

You sayin' my Rose ain't good enough?

ROSE

I can shoot the head off a rattler at one hundred feet.

(Picks up gun, aims (not at MILLIE), and fires.)

BOBBY

That's my girl!

(MILLIE drops and curls herself into the fetal position.)

BOBBY, cont.

Yep - the best damn soldier ever!

MILLIE

No - no - no - no - no...

(FATHER, BOBBY, UNCLE SAM, and ROSE begin to march.)

MILLIE

All of you - go away. Please just go away.

(FATHER, BOBBY, UNCLE SAM, and ROSE EXIT marching.)

MOTHER

God bless and keep you.

(MOTHER EXITS.)

END ACT II, SCENE 3

ACT II
Scene 4: Reenactment

FATHER

August 27, 1943. Dearest Sweetheart Darling: Another day about gone - that makes it just twenty-four hours sooner that I will get to see you. Trouble is there's no telling how many days are still left. I miss you more each moment of each day. Sugar, I do love you - love you more than you will ever know. Say, the news sounds better everyday as I guess you already know. Looks like we may get to do our bit one of these days and maybe get to do some more KP and policing up. Hello girls - how's everything with my little girls? Won't be long now till you will be in school again I guess - know yet where you are going? Write and tell me all about it. Night kids - sweet dreams and kisses... Night now my own sweetheart...

(MOTHER ENTERS.)

MOTHER

...doesn't every courageous fighter, soldier, or sailor have that same feeling...

MILLIE

How many times did we all pray for your safety? God kept you all right - for himself. God seems like a pretty selfish prick keeping all the heroes.

FATHER

I wasn't trying to be a hero. I was doing what I had to do. I couldn't stay behind sitting on my thumbs listening to the destruction on the radio. I could do something about it. I was trained. I could do my part.

MILLIE

Why didn't you just go play soldier, then? Why'd you bother having a family? Your leaving destroyed us.

FATHER

World destruction was at hand. Our job was to save the world from an evil dictator. I don't remember there being a choice.

MILLIE

The world survived. You didn't.

FATHER

I had a duty to serve. It was an honor to serve my country - and I'm proud of that.

MILLIE

I also chose to have a family. My duty is to my family, and I find that pretty honorable.

FATHER

I loved you kids.

MILLIE

But you enjoyed being a soldier more.

FATHER

That's not true, kid. It's just more complicated than that. We had plans – your Mother and me. I wanted to make it home – all us boys wanted to make it home. The day before the landing, I had the biggest knot in my stomach. All I thought of was you – my family – my wife - my darling girls - I pictured each one of you and held that picture in my mind so clearly, and I really wondered if I could do it, but I had to. I had my men to think about. I had to do my job.

MILLIE

We won you know. We won the war. *(Pause)* Thought you might like to know that.

FATHER

My men?

MILLIE

Of course - your men made it through to Germany then France then home. All of them, all of them but you, Daddy.

FATHER

They made it through?

MILLIE

Your men survived the War. I met some of them at a reunion held in your honor. They were old men by then, but they had a story to tell. They'd been waiting their whole lives to tell Mother what happened that day. They told their story through tears, like scared little boys.

FATHER

She never knew?

MOTHER

September 3, 1943. Well here it is time to start to school once more - this afternoon I took the daughters to register - Mrs. Ivy Savage is the principal at the Roscoe Wilson School where the girls will attend. We, Mrs. Savage and I, had quite a chat. Did you know that Virgil used to go with her daughter, Betty? By the way, have you heard the news? Italy

MOTHER, cont.

had a bit of an invasion last night. Hope all is well. It seems the British and Canadian forces have been delegated to do this little job. Sounds like good news to one. Darling Boy, I'm still thinking of you and missing you more every day. Angel Face, I do love you so. The paper is gone now so Goodbye for now my dearest love - keep your precious self warm on those cool nights. Much love and kisses...

(UNCLE SAM takes each letter, and just like before, stamps and keeps them.)

MILLIE

They marched with a replacement Captain, one who had watched all his men get blown out of the water at Anzio the day before - a perfect match.

FATHER

The landing was a disaster - Operation Avalanche - a fitting name. I'm surprised any of us made it to shore. The bug in the ointment was that the Germans were everywhere along that beach. Entire ships of men were blown out of the water - like ducks in a row. Chaos. It was a damned nightmare, kid.

MILLIE

One you never woke up from.

(MUSIC CUE - something like Glenn Miller's *American Patrol*. MUSIC plays as if it is the gunfire of the battle. FATHER assumes his role as CAPTAIN.)

FATHER

(Shouting)

We were going to surprise the Germans when we invaded Salerno, but the Italians surrendered on September 8th, and the Germans were waiting for us. The Germans were tipped off about our invasion plans. They knew the password - the 36th had a damned spy! I suspected it even in Africa - we were set up. We landed on Salerno beach September 9th.

(ROSE, BOBBY, and UNCLE SAM ENTER with SOLDIERS.

FATHER as CAPTAIN prepares his troops for the taking of the beach.

ROSE is GERMAN SNIPER. BOBBY is HOGAN. UNCLE SAM is STOKES.)

Keep your heads down men! We've gotta get off this damned beach before we're slaughtered. Heads Down!

MILLIE

You were killed three days later.

(MILLIE's voice is slower, more distant – a voice from the future.

MOTHER represents the home-front, and FATHER – the battlefield.)

MOTHER

September 9, 1943. My darling, we are praying that you are okay. We heard by radio that General Clark was moving his army into a spot just above Naples, and gee oh gee, isn't that near you? Remember all the many lessons that you've learned through out those many maneuvers and please sugar don't go running around in view of the enemy lines. My very dearest one in all this world I just couldn't bear it if anything should happen to you. I do love you so much. By the way - the poem was clever - do you really want a nice soft double bed with plenty of room for offensive operations? Boy, am I reading your mind - I too, could go for a spot of smooching. Buy a case of P.J.? Say haven't you heard you can't buy liquor any more without a ration stamp? Sorry Sugar, any and every thing else I'll save for you (and me), but I'm afraid I can't buy a case of P.J. I'll try though. Goodnight My Darling. I love you...

FATHER

(still yelling over the "artillery")

Three waves of soldiers landed on the beach before the Germans opened up on us. Cover those men, boys! Heads down! Hogan – DOWN –DOWN – DOWN! What're you doing man? We've gotta have somebody left to take out the enemy! STOKES, GET YOUR HEAD DOWN!

(CAPTAIN, STOKES, and HOGAN crawl up the beach toward the top of the cliff.)

BOBBY

(as Hogan)

Ain't we gonna do anything for those boys in the water, Cap'n?

FATHER

Yeah, we're gonna get to the top and get those Jerry's. Now MOVE! We gotta have somewhere to aim these guns, don't we? MOVE IT!

BOBBY

(as Hogan, yelling)

The Jerrys are gonna wipe us out - run us back into the water!

FATHER

(yelling)

We don't have a lot of time! Stokes - get some more boys to help with the gun. We've gotta gain that cliff - it's up to the top boys or we're done for - MOVE IT! MOVE IT! MOVE IT! KEEP YOUR HEADS DOWN!

MILLIE

No, you didn't have much time, not much time at all.

MOTHER

Wednesday Night - very late - September 12, 1943. Dear Angel Face, So you don't think the name is appropriate - well, Sugar, I do. And it's not flattery either you know I always tell the truth - at least to you I do. My own sweet, precious husband, I'm wondering how the battle is actually going tonight. Are you all right, or not? Sugar - when we are together again I'll never let you out of my sight. This not knowing is too, too awful. May God watch over you and all our other boys and keep them unharmed. Sweet One - about the case of P.J. - I am too sorry for words - but there simply isn't any to be had. Maybe if I keep on trying I can find some. The girls are still missing their Poppy and send their love. Sugar, I bought new coats for them last week. Millie said to tell you hers is red - and she's sure you'll love it! I've not bought anything for me yet - but maybe next month I will. We are sending some pictures, but they aren't so very good. Sometimes my camera technique is horrible. Oh my precious, if I could just know what's happening to you?? But no matter what, I love you and love you and love you, and we are all thinking of and praying for you - all of our love and kisses...

FATHER

(yelling)

As our infantry gained a foothold on the beach, our 105mm howitzers had trouble knocking out enemy positions.

BOBBY

(as Hogan, yelling)

I can't see their locations! Where do I aim the guns?

FATHER

Stokes - help Hogan with those guns!

BOBBY

(as HOGAN)

Can't see - I can't see a damned thing, Cap'n! What d'we do? Stokes - look out!

FATHER

(yelling)

Over here boys – aim THERE – KEEP YOUR HEADS DOWN! Hogan – fire that damn thing! Again! FIRE!

(MUSIC STOPS.)

BOBBY

(as Hogan)

The firing, Cap'n. It's stopped. I don't believe it. Listen - d'you hear that? Silence. You did it Cap'n! You did it!

FATHER

Stokes - take me up to the front! That only bought us a little window of time, boys. Come on! No time for champagne yet, boys - we've got a job to finish.

MILLIE

One of your men, Hogan I think it was, said, and I can still hear his cracking old voice...

BOBBY

(as HOGAN, overly patriotic)

He stopped the Jerry's from pushing us back into the ocean. He saved the beach and he saved our lives.

FATHER

(still yelling)

No time for grandstanding, Hogan. Gotta keep 'em running.

BOBBY

(as HOGAN)

Yeah, let's move. This quiet is givin' me the creeps.

MILLIE

You earned a Purple Heart and a Distinguished Service Cross.

(FATHER slows to MILLIE's timing,
pitch.)

FATHER

I remember the firing had stopped...we finally gained the top of the cliff - and I could see where they'd been. We needed to get the rest of the men and the ammo up where we could use it. You're right, Hogan, it's too damn quiet.

MILLIE

The medals came in a package with your false teeth. It's all I ever got for a funeral.

MOTHER

September 15, 1943. My Darling, The battle at Salerno has been raging now for five days - and still we don't know whether you are alive or not - oh, my precious one, you can not know what torture it is to wait - for news, good or bad. May God be always with you. We at home are praying for you every moment. Oh, my dearest love - come safely through - if it is God's will - I love you, darling...

FATHER

Stokes and I were standing side-by-side...I remember Stokes's face - the look of fear in his eyes. What's wrong Stokes - somebody walkin' on your grave?

(ROSE fires her weapon.)

MILLIE

A sniper's bullet hit you in the heart.

(FATHER collapses in UNCLE SAM's [STOKES'S] arms. ROSE stands frozen, staring at her weapon.)

BOBBY

(as HOGAN)

Drag Cap'n into the bar pit! Get down! Get down! Dammit, man, GO! GO!

MOTHER

...and please, Sugar, don't go running around in view of the enemy lines...

MILLIE

Stokes was standing beside you and caught you before you hit the ground. You died standing up. You never knew what hit you.

MOTHER

September 28, 1943. Hello Angel Face, How you 'all - is everything well with you? I was so surprised and pleased to have your letter of September eighth. Darling, of course you would have that tight knot in your tummy, why not. Doesn't every courageous fighter, soldier, or sailor have that same feeling? Even we on the home front have it. Of course I would have so liked to be there with you - sharing everything. Even war would not be as terrible if I could be with you. What ever happens, or has happened to you, my own true love, I know that you will meet it bravely, with high courage, and at home, we will too. Oh my darling, I do love you so much and want you to know that our thoughts and dreams are always with you - all my love is with you...

(UNCLE SAM plays TAPS.)

BOBBY

That was beautiful, men, a real nice piece of work, real nice. You should all expect to be awarded some shiny chest metal.

MILLIE

Your men - grown old - cried when they told us about it. They never spoke about that day to anyone - not even their families. They waited all those years to tell us - to tell Mother.

(UNCLE SAM takes out all the letters
MOTHER has given him and dumps them
out at MOTHER'S feet.)

MOTHER

Addressee reported deceased. Return to sender.

BOBBY

Now why do you have a problem with a death like that? Saved his men, saved the mission, a real honest ta' John Wayne H-E-R-O, HERO. A daughter should be proud - not goin' around whinin' about it the rest of yer life!

MILLIE

Your men couldn't find Mother at the end of the war. She had remarried. Each man - Stokes, Wells, Williamson, Hogan - recounted the details carefully. They said you were the best, just one of the boys. Mother took it well. She's a very strong woman.

FATHER

Always was.

MILLIE

Fighting back tears, she spoke to the press. She blamed your General for setting you all up for what he knew would be annihilation. The Germans knew you were coming in...

FATHER

They knew the password.

MILLIE

Betrayed by your own army. War sucks.

(UNCLE SAM offers MOTHER
condolences. MOTHER refuses.)

FATHER

My Dearest: How's my girls? All ok I hope. Everything's fine here - have been swimming in the sea every afternoon for nearly a week - Really is swell - a grand beach - Don't you wish you were here with me? I do - or me there with you - just so we are both in the same place. I do miss you so much, I live on memories of the past. We have really had fun together...

MILLIE

Rose is not going to be a soldier like you, Bobby.

BOBBY

No, Ma, she's gonna to be a better soldier than I ever was.

(UNCLE SAM plays drill sergeant, breaking ROSE's freeze, and orders a repeat show of ROSE's new skills - salute, march, drop, fire, etc. ROSE responds like an overworked puppet.)

BOBBY

Yep, she's gonna make a fine soldier, ma'am, a fine soldier!

(ROSE stops.)

What's the matter Rose?

ROSE

The gun - do I really have to kill people? I mean, I never thought about them as people before - you know - like some little girl's dad, or someone's grandpa they'll never meet, or some lady's kid, or some lonely wife's husband she'll never hold again. I only thought of the target and aiming at it. Now all I see is a face - and a story just comes flying out at me - I don't think I can do it, Dad, sorry...I'm just not sure...

BOBBY

The enemy is the enemy. There ain't no faces about it.

MILLIE

How can you want your own daughter to follow in your footsteps? Damn it - look around you - a sea of fighting men - mostly boys - belly up!

BOBBY

Oooh, a cemetery - I'm scared.

MILLIE

Damn you. How can you be so cold? Most of these dead soldiers barely had left the playground, much less the baseball field. They should have been worrying about the World Series - not World War.

BOBBY

The world ain't a pretty place, Ma. I don't know why you think you've been so wronged. The sooner kids learn about how the world really works - the better off they'll be. Childhood innocence - what a load of crap. They're just too stupid to know any better yet, and the faster they learn what's up - the safer we'll all be. I'm proud of my daughter, and I made sure she's strong enough to handle what comes her way. Look around you, Ma.

BOBBY, cont.

This is the stuff that connects us all: Death. Death from these wars is the glue that binds the whole goddamn US of A together. It's a beautiful thing.

MILLIE

Rose, come with me. We're getting out of here.

(MILLIE moves to ROSE, but is met with resistance from BOBBY and UNCLE SAM. A struggle ensues.)

BOBBY

You're not taking my Rose.

(BOBBY and UNCLE SAM take ROSE prisoner.)

MILLIE

Rose! Bobby stop! Father help me!

BOBBY

Whose side are ya on, Pops? You're veteran of the United States Army, remember that.

FATHER

Stay calm, kid. Maybe we can negotiate.

BOBBY

Negotiate, my ass. This is my daughter I'm saving.

MILLIE

Saving? Throwing her life away like you did your own?

BOBBY

Whoa! You haven't dragged that one out in awhile, Ma. I chose the same career as your father did, and he's your HERO - remember?

FATHER

I don't feel much like a hero.

(UNCLE SAM pins medals on FATHER.)

BOBBY

How could I have been anything else, Ma? All you ever talked about was WWII and how handsome your father looked in his tall leather boots.

MILLIE

Oh my God, Bobby - I never meant...

FATHER

What d'ya think of this uniform, eh? Pretty sharp, I'd say! You always said you loved me in these boots, Baby.

BOBBY

You never meant to lead me astray? Never meant that I would look handsome in those boots? Never meant chicks would dig me in these boots? Yeah, well, Ma, what you never got was - I like these boots. I like these boots on me. I think I look real sharp in these boots.

MILLIE

And you both died in those boots.

BOBBY

Yeah, we did, but Grandpa over here died a hero because he fought in a war deemed by all to be the Good Guy War, and Bobby, ol' Bobby just liked to play soldier. His war was just about oil anyway. We shouldn't haven been there, and he shouldn't have died. He's not a hero; he's just – well - unlucky. No wonder you want to off yerself.

MILLIE

Don't talk like that. That's not how I see things, and you know it. You were always a hero to me - despite my anger.

(FATHER attempts to rescue ROSE.
BOBBY fights back.)

BOBBY

Blue-on-blue won't happen with me, Grandpa! We're on the same team, remember?

MILLIE

Don't compare your life to his, Bobby.

BOBBY

Why not? WWII isn't the only justified war. Ain't we both US Soldiers, both died for our country? I don't know of a higher honor than that! You'd deny me that? You'd deny that opportunity to your granddaughter?

MILLIE

You're sick. I'll do what I can for Rose. I can live for that. You're gone Bobby. I don't have anyone left to live for except Rose, but I will try. Maybe she will join the Army and make you proud, but she won't do it out of revenge. She'll see those faces when she shoots – faces and stories – because those targets do have them, Bobby, and the killing has consequences the killer may never know.

(ROSE escapes.)

MOTHER

Like your father, like Charles, and like her father - she'll do what she wants. You can teach her, but you can't save her.

BOBBY

Oh for chrissakes! Et tu (*pronounces it: ate two*) Rosie?

(BOBBY picks up the gun and aims at
MILLIE.)

Get back over here! Didn't I raise you right? Are you no longer an American? This here's the E-N-E-M-Y, Enemy! No? You ain't comin'? Well - that just leaves one brave soldier - one left to the job that cowards could not. Any last words, Ma?

MILLIE

Mother – help me!

ROSE

What are you doing, Daddy? That's Grandma – you can't kill Grandma!

MILLIE

It's okay, Rose. He can't hurt me.

BOBBY

To hell I can't!

MOTHER

Children should play as long as they can. There'll be enough time for suffering.

MILLIE

Bobby, you can't hurt me. Put down the gun.

MOTHER

War is a boy's dream and a mother's heartache.

MILLIE

You came to help me, Mother.

MOTHER

I came to be with My Love.

FATHER

War took us all, kid, - me - your husband - your son, but there'll always be bugs in the ointment, kid. Can't let that get you down. You survived. You're a survivor for a reason - I reckon that reason is Rose.

(MILLIE looks at ROSE and walks right up to the end of the gun BOBBY holds on her.)

ROSE

NO, Dad, DON'T!

(MILLIE forcefully lowers the gun to the floor.)

BOBBY

Ya see, Ma? Sometimes force is necessary for peace.

MILLIE

I'll never understand you, Bobby. *(Beat)* I'll do my best to take care of your daughter. *(Beat)* I may not honor your wishes, but you've left your mark on her, and when it comes time, she'll make up her own mind – and I'll honor her decision. Thank you, Rose, for giving me a reason to live. *(Beat)* Maybe someday, Bobby, you can forgive me.

FATHER

We do what we can, kid. We do what we think is right at the time.

MOTHER

It rarely feels like enough.

MILLIE

A lot of blood has splattered my soul. So much loss. I don't want to play this game anymore, but Rose deserves to have someone there for her. She can't go back to the playground – none of us ever can, but I'll do what I can to keep her out of the battlefield.

MOTHER

What else can you do? The living live life for the living, not for the dead. Do what you can for Rose, but don't expect to be able to save her.

ROSE

I'm a little old for the playground, Grandma. I like softball, though.

BOBBY

She's an ace pitcher – I taught her.

MILLIE

This is no place for little girls – too many ghosts of children. Come, Rose, take my hand - we'll get through all this together.

(ROSE salutes Bobby. BOBBY and UNCLE SAM return the salute.)

MOTHER

It's time you said goodbye to your father, Millie.

(FATHER kisses MILLIE goodbye on the forehead and turns to MOTHER.)

MILLIE

Goodnight. No - *goodbye*, Poppy.

FATHER

(to Mother)

May I have this dance?

MOTHER

You may.

ROSE

She's beautiful.

MILLIE

Yes, she is.

FATHER

Always was.

(UNCLE SAM makes one last seductive pass at ROSE. MILLIE protects ROSE. LIGHTS OUT on ALL EXCEPT DANCING COUPLE. FATHER and MOTHER DANCE OFF.)

END OF ACT II, SCENE 4

ACT TWO
Scene 5: Lover's Dance

(Arlington Memorial Cemetery, March
1991.)

Summary: Millie says goodbye. Mother and Father have their Last Dance - a deadly winter changes into spring, a renewal of their youthful love.

Setting: Same as last scene.

Mood: Somber, then romantic, then happy and upbeat.

Tone: Resolution, cathartic.

Tempo: Starts with military style funeral music (taps/bagpipe rendition of *Amazing Grace*), becomes romantic and slow (Glenn Miller's *String of Pearls*), builds to a moment of passion, then concludes with a lighthearted jig.

Climax: The moment of passion between the two lovers.

Montage: Sunset. BOBBY and FATHER lay by gravestone. A military funeral procession ENTERS with UNCLE SAM as the TAPS player. MILLIE and ROSE ENTER following procession and take their places as for a funeral. MUSIC CUE - Dusk: MOTHER ENTERS dancing, lifts FATHER to his feet, and THEY dance (a continuation of their dance from the previous scene). Their dance builds to a moment of passion between them (ex: a kiss, a low dip) solidifying their reunion. MUSIC STOPS. UNCLE SAM breaks from funeral procession and begins to PLAY a dancing happy tune. FATHER and MOTHER become their youthful selves again, the couple they were when they first met. MILLIE pulls BOBBY up from the grave. MILLIE and BOBBY play a silly childhood game while MOTHER and FATHER DANCE. ROSE joins in their game, then EXITS alone. MILLIE and BOBBY EXIT in opposite directions. LIGHTS FADE on the COUPLE DANCING to the Grim Reaper's tune.

END OF ACT II, SCENE 5

END OF PLAY