

VETA
Side #1 – monologue

- A) To excess? Well – don't you call it excess when a man never lets a day go by without stepping into one of those cheap taverns, sitting around with riffraff and people you never heard of? Inviting them to the house – playing cards with them – giving them food and money. And here I am trying to get Myrtle Mae started with a nice group of young people. If that isn't excess I'm sure I don't know what excess is.
- B) Well, yes, I say definitely Elwood drinks and I want him committed out here permanently, because I cannot stand another day of that Harvey. Myrtle and I have to set a place at the table for Harvey. We have to move over on the sofa and make room for Harvey. We have to answer the telephone when Elwood calls and asks to speak to Harvey. Then at the party this afternoon with Mrs. Chauvenet there – We didn't even know anything about Harvey until we came back here. Doctor, don't you think it would have been a little bit kinder of Mother to have written and told me about Harvey? Be honest, now – don't you?

VETA & DR. SANDERSON
Side #2

VETA: (*impatient*) Doctor – do I have to keep repeating myself? My brother insists that his closest friend is this big white rabbit. This rabbit is named Harvey. Harvey lives at our house. Don't you understand? He and Elwood go every place together. Elwood buys railroad tickets, theater tickets, for both of them. As I told Myrtle Mae – if your uncle was so lonesome he had to bring something home – why couldn't he bring home something human? He has me, doesn't he? He has Myrtle Mae, doesn't he? (**SHE** *leans forward.*) Doctor – (**SHE** *rises to him.* **HE** *inclines toward her.*) I'm going to tell you something I've never told anybody in the world before. (*Puts her hand on his shoulder.*) Every once in awhile I see that big white rabbit myself. Now isn't that terrible? I've never even told that to Myrtle Mae. (*straightening*) And what's more – he's every bit as big as Elwood says he is. Now don't ever tell that to anybody. Doctor, I'm ashamed of it.

SANDERSON: I can see that you have been under a great nervous strain recently.

VETA: Well – I certainly have.

SANDERSON: Grief over your mother's death depressed you considerably?

VETA: Nobody knows how much.

SANDERSON: Been losing sleep?

VETA: How could anybody sleep with that going on?

SANDERSON: Short – tempered over trifles?

VETA: You just try living with those two and see how your temper holds up.

SANDERSON: Loss of appetite?

VETA: No one could eat at a table with my brother and a big white rabbit. Well, I'm finished with it. I'll sell the house – be appointed conservator of Elwood's estate, and Myrtle Mae and I will be able to entertain our friends in peace. It's too much, Doctor. I just can't stand it.

SANDERSON: (*HE has been repeatedly pressing a buzzer on his desk. HE looks with annoyance toward hall door. His answer now to VETA is gentle.*) Of course, Mrs. Simmons. Of course it is. You're tired.

VETA: Oh, yes I am.

SANDERSON: You've been worrying a great deal.

VETA: Yes, I have. I can't help it.

SANDERSON: And now I'm going to help you.

VETA: Oh, Doctor....

MRS. ETHEL CHAUVENET & MYRTLE MAE & VETA & ELWOOD

Side #3

MYRTLE: *(enters right)* Mother – Mrs. Chauvenet – she's asking for you. *(turning – speaking in oh so sweet tone to someone in hall.)* Here's Mother, Mrs. Chauvenet. Here she is. *(Enter MRS. CHAUVENET. She rushes over to Veta.)*

MRS. CHAUVENET: Veta Louise Simmons! I thought you were dead. *(Gets to her and takes hold of her.)*

VETA: *(Rushing to her. They kiss.)* Aunt Ethel! *(motioning to MYRTLE to come forward and meet the great lady.)* Oh, no – I'm very much alive – thank you –

MRS. CHAUVENET: - and this full-grown girl is your daughter – I've known you since you were a baby.

MYRTLE: I know.

MRS. CHAUVENET: What's your name, dear?

VETA: *(proudly)* This is Myrtle – Aunt Ethel. Myrtle Mae – for the two sisters of her father. He's dead. That's what confused you.

MRS. CHAUVENET: Where's Elwood?

VETA: *(with a nervous glance at MYRTLE MAE)* He couldn't be here, Aunt Ethel – now let me get you some tea. *(crosses to right of table right)*

MRS. CHAUVENET: Elwood isn't here?

VETA: No –

MRS. CHAUVENET: Oh, shame on him. That was the main reason I came. *(takes off scarf – puts it on chair Left of table)* I want to see Elwood.

VETA: Come – there are loads of people anxious to speak to you.

MRS. CHAUVENET: Do you realize, Veta, it's been years since I've seen Elwood?

VETA: No – where does the time go?

MRS. CHAUVENET: But I don't understand it. I was saying to Mr. Chauvenet only the other night – what on earth do you suppose happened to Elwood Dowd? He never comes to the club to dance any more. I haven't seen him at a horse show in years. Does Elwood see anybody these days?

VETA: *(And MYRTLE, with a glance at each other.)* Oh, yes – Aunt Ethel. Elwood sees somebody.

MYRTLE: Oh, yes.

MRS. CHAUVENET: (*To MYRTLE*) Your Uncle Elwood, child, is one of my favorite people. (*VETA rises and crosses around chair right of the table.*) Always has been.

VETA: Yes, I remember.

MRS. CHAUVENET: Is Elwood happy, Veta?

VETA: Elwood's very happy, Aunt Ethel. You don't need to worry about Elwood – (*looks through doorway. She is anxious to get the subject on to something else.*) Why, there's Mrs. Frank Cummings – just came in. Don't you want to speak to her?

MRS. CHAUVENET: (*crosses above chair to peer out right*) My – but she looks ghastly! Hasn't she failed though?

VETA: If you think she looks badly – you should see him!

MRS. CHAUVENET: Is that so? I must have them over. (*Looks again*) She looks frightful. I thought she was dead.

VETA: Oh, no.

MRS. CHAUVENET: Now, what about tea, Veta?

VETA: Certainly – (*starts forward to lead the way*) If you will forgive me, I will procede you – (*ELWOOD enters. MRS. CHAUVENET turns back to pick up her scarf from the chair and sees him.*)

MRS. CHAUVENET: (*rushing forward*) Elwood! Elwood Dowd! Bless your heart.

ELWOOD: (*coming forward and bowing as he takes her hand*) Aunt Ethel! What a pleasure to come in and find a beautiful woman waiting for me!

MRS. CHAUVENET: (*looking at him fondly*) Elwood – you haven't changed.

VETA: (*moves forward quickly, takes hold of her*) Come along, Aunt Ethel – you mustn't miss the party.

MYRTLE: There's punch if you don't like tea.

MRS. CHAUVENET: But I do like tea. Stop pulling at me, you two. Elwood what night next week can you come to dinner?

ELWOOD: Any night. Any night at all, Aunt Ethel – I would be delighted.

VETA: Elwood, there's some mail for you today. I took it up to your room.

ELWOOD: Did you Veta? That was nice of you. Aunt Ethel – I want you to meet Harvey. As you can see he's a pooka. *(turns toward air beside him)* Harvey, you heard me speak of Mrs. Chauvenet? We always called her Aunt Ethel. She is one of my oldest and dearest friends. *(Inclines head toward space and goes "hmmm!" and then listens as though not hearing first time. Nods as though having heard someone next to him speak.)* Yes – yes – that's right. She's the one. This is the one. *(To MRS. CHAUVENET)* He says he would have known you anywhere. *(then as a confused, bewildered look comes over MRS. CHAUVENET'S face and she looks to left and right of ELWOOD and cranes her neck to see behind him – ELWOOD not seeing her expression, crosses her towards VETA and MYRTLE MAE.)* You both look lovely. *(Turns to the air next to him.)* Come on in with me, Harvey – we must say hello to all of our friends – *(Bows to MRS. CHAUVENET)* I be your pardon, Aunt Ethel. If you'll excuse me for one moment – *(puts his hand gently on her arm, trying to turn her)*

MRS. CHAUVENET: What?

ELWOOD: You are standing in his way – *(she gives a little – her eyes wide on him)* Come along, Harvey. *(He watches the invisible HARVEY cross to door, then stops him.)* Uh – uh! *(ELWOOD goes over to door. He turns and pantomimes as he arranges the tie and brushes off the head of the invisible HARVEY. Then he does the same thing to his own tie. They are ALL watching him, MRS. CHAUVENET in horrified fascination. The heads of VETA and MYRTLE, bowed in agony.)* Go right on in, Harvey. I'll join you in a minute. *(He pantomimes as if slapping him on the back, and ushers him out. Then turns and comes back to MRS. CHAUVENET.)* Aunt Ethel, I can see you are disturbed about Harvey. Please don't be. He stares like that at everybody. It's his way. But he liked you. I could tell. He liked you very much. *(Pats her arm reassuringly, smiles at her, then calmly and confidently goes on out right. After his exit – MRS. CHAUVENET, MYRTLE, and VETA are silent. Finally VETA, with a resigned tone – clears her throat.)*

VETA: *(Looking at MRS. CHAUVENET.)* Some tea – perhaps - ?

MRS. CHAUVENET: Why, I – not right now – I - well – I think I'll be running along. *(Crosses back of table.)*

MYRTLE: But –

VETA: *(putting a hand over hers to quiet her.)* I'm so sorry. –

MRS. CHAUVENET: I'll – I'll be talking to you soon. Goodbye – goodbye – *(SHE exits quickly out left.)*

MYRTLE: Oh, God – *(starts to run for doorway.)* Oh, my God!

E.J. LOFGREN (CAB DRIVER) & VETA, MYRTLE, JUDGE, & CHUMLEY
Side #4

CAB DRIVER: I'm lookin' for a little short – (*seeing VETA.*) Oh, there you are! Lady, you jumped outta the cab without payin' me.

VETA: Oh, yes. I forgot. How much is it?

CAB DRIVER: All the way out here from town? \$2.75.

VETA: (*looking in purse*) \$2.75! I could have sworn I brought my coin purse – where is it? (*Gets up, goes to table, turns pocketbook upside down, in full view of audience. Nothing comes out of it but a compact and a handkerchief.*) Myrtle, do you have any money?

MYRTLE: I spent that money Uncle Elwood gave me for my new hair-do for the party.

VETA: Judge, do you have \$2.75 I could give this man?

JUDGE: Sorry. Nothing but a check.

CAB DRIVER: We don't take checks.

JUDGE: I know.

VETA: Dr. Chumley, do you happen to have \$2.75 I could borrow to pay this cab driver?

CHUMLEY: (*just entered center, wearing white starched jacket.*) Haven't got my wallet. No time to get it now. Have to get on with this injection. Sorry. (*exits left.*)

VETA: Well, I'll get it for you from my brother, but I can't get it right now. He's in there to get an injection. It won't be long. You'll have to wait.

CAB DRIVER: You're gonna get my money from your brother and he's in there to get some of that stuff they shoot out here?

VETA: Yes, it won't be but a few minutes.

CAB DRIVER: Lady, I want my money now.

VETA: But I told you it would only be a few minutes. I want you to drive us back to town, anyway.

CAB DRIVER: And I told you I want my money now or I'm nosin' the cab back to town, and you can wait for the bus – at six in the morning.

VETA: Well, of all the pig headed, stubborn things-!

MYRTLE: I should say so.

JUDGE: What's the matter with you?

CAB DRIVER: Nothin' that \$2.75 won't fix. You heard me. Take it or leave it.

MYRTLE MAE & VETA
Side #5

MYRTLE: He's introducing Harvey to everybody. I can't face those people now. I wish I were dead.

VETA: Come back here. Stay with me. We'll get him out of there and upstairs to his room.

MYRTLE: I won't do it. I can't. I can't.

VETA: Myrtle Mae! (*MYRTLE stops. VETA goes over to her and pulls her down center, where they are directly in line with doorway.*) Now – pretend I'm fixing your corsage.

MYRTLE: (*covering her face with her hands in shame.*) Oh, Mother!

VETA: We've got to. Pretend we're having a gay little chat. Keep looking. When you catch his eye, tell me. He always comes when I call him. Now, then – do you see him yet?

MYRTLE: No – not yet. How do you do, Mrs. Cummings?

VETA: Smile, can't you? Have you no pride? I'm smiling – (*waves off right and laughs.*) and he's my own brother.

MYRTLE: Oh, Mother – people get run over by trucks every day. Why can't something like that happen to Uncle Elwood?

VETA: Myrtle Mae Simmons, I'm ashamed of you. This thing is not your uncle's fault. (*phone rings.*)

MYRTLE: Ouch! You're sticking me with that pin!

VETA: That's Miss Ellerbe. Keep looking. Keep smiling. (*she goes to phone.*)

MYRTLE: Mrs. Cummings is leaving. Uncle Elwood must have told her what Harvey is. Oh, God!

VETA: (*on phone.*) Hello – this is Mrs. Simmons. Should you come in the clothes you have on – what have you on? Who is this? But I don't know any Miss Greenawalt. Should you what? – May I ask who invited you? Mr. Dowd! Thank you just the same, but I believe there has been a mistake. – Well, I never!

MYRTLE: Never what?

VETA: One of your Uncle Elwood's friends. She asked me if she should bring a quart of gin to the Wednesday Forum!

MYRTLE: There he is – he's talking to Mrs. Halsey.

VETA: Is Harvey with him?

MYRTLE: What a thing to ask! How can I tell? How can anybody tell but Uncle Elwood?

VETA: (*calls.*) Oh, Elwood, could I see you a moment, dear? (*To MYRTLE.*) I promise you your Uncle Elwood has disgraced us for the last time in this house. I'm going to do something I've never done before.

MYRTLE: What did you mean just now when you said this was not Uncle Elwood's fault. If it's not his fault, then whose fault is it?

VETA: Never you mind. I know whose fault it is. Now lift up your head and smile and go back as though nothing had happened.

MYRTLE: You're no match for Uncle Elwood.

VETA: You'll see. (*ELWOOD is coming.*)

MYRTLE: (*as they pass at the door.*) Mother's waiting for you.

RUTH KELLY & VETA

Side #6

KELLY: *(writing.)* Mrs. O.R. Simmons, 343 Temple Drive, is that right?

VETA: *(Nodding, taking handkerchief from handbag.)* We were born and raised there. It's old but we love it. It's our home. *(crosses to table right puts down handbag.)*

KELLY: And you wish to enter your brother here at the sanitarium for treatment. Your brother's name?

VETA: *(Coming back to desk – raising handkerchief to eyes and dabbing.)* It's – oh –

KELLY: Mrs. Simmons, what is your brother's name?

VETA: I'm sorry. Life is not easy for any of us. I'll have to hold my head up and go just the same. That's what I keep telling Myrtle and that's what Myrtle Mae keeps telling me. She's heart broken about her Uncle Elwood – Elwood P. Dowd. That's it. *(Sits chair right of desk.)*

KELLY: *(Writing.)* Elwood P. Dowd. His age?

VETA: Forty seven the 24th of last April. He's Taurus – Taurus – the bull. I'm Leo, and Myrtle is on a cusp.

KELLY: Forty-seven. Is he married?

VETA: No, Elwood has never married. He stayed with mother. He was always a great home boy. He loved his home.

KELLY: You have him with you now?

VETA: He's in a taxicab down in the driveway. *(KELLY rings buzzer.)* I gave the driver a dollar to watch him, but I didn't tell the man why. You can't tell these things to perfect strangers. *(ENTER WILSON)*

KELLY: Mr. Wilson, would you step down to the taxi in the driveway and ask Mr. Dowd if he would be good enough to step up to Room 24 – South Wing G?

WILSON: Ask him?

KELLY: *(with a warning glance towards VETA.)* This is his sister, Mrs. Simmons.

WILSON: How do – why, certainly – be glad to *escort* him. *(EXITS)*

VETA: Thank you.

KELLY: The rates here, Mrs. Simons – you'll find them printed on this card.

VETA: That will all be taken care of by my mother's estate. The late Marcella Pinney Dowd. Judge Gaffney is our attorney.

KELLY: Now I'll see if Dr. Sanderson can see you. *(Starts to his office.)*

VETA: Dr. Sanderson? I want to see Dr. Chumley himself.

KELLY: Oh, Mrs. Simmons, Dr. Sanderson is the one who sees everybody. Dr. Chumley sees no one.

VETA: He's still head of this institution, isn't he? He's still a psychiatrist, isn't he?

KELLY: *(shocked at such heresay.)* Still a psychiatrist! Dr. Chumley is more than that. He is a psychiatrist with a national reputation. Whenever people have mental breakdowns they at once think of Dr. Chumley.

VETA: *(pointing.)* That's his office, isn't it? Well, you march right in and tell him I want to see him. If he knows who's in here he'll come out here.

KELLY: I wouldn't disturb him, Mrs. Simmons. I would be discharged if I did.

VETA: Well, I don't like to be pushed off onto any second fiddle.

KELLY: Dr. Sanderson is nobody's second fiddle. *(Her eyes aglow.)* He's young, of course, and he hasn't been out of medical school very long, but Dr. Chumley tried out twelve and kept Dr. Sanderson. He's really wonderful – *(catches herself.)* to the patients.

VETA: Very well. Tell him I'm here.

DR. SANDERSON & VETA

Side #7

SANDERSON: Mrs. Simmons?

VETA: (*startled. SHE jumps.*) Oh – oh dear – I didn't hear you come in. You startled me. You're Dr. Sanderson?

SANDERSON: (*HE nods.*) Yes. Will you be seated, please?

VETA: (*Sits*) Thank you. I hope you don't think I'm jumpy like that all the time, but I –

SANDERSON: Of course not. Miss Kelly tells me you are concerned about your brother. Dowd, is it? Elwood P. Dowd?

VETA: Yes, Doctor – he's – this isn't easy for me, Doctor.

SANDERSON: (*Kindly.*) Naturally these things aren't easy for the families of patients. I understand.

VETA: (*Twisting her handkerchief nervously.*) It's what Elwood's doing to himself, Doctor – that's the thing. Myrtle Mae has a right to nice friends. She's young and her whole life is before her. That's my daughter.

SANDERSON: (*sits*) Your daughter. How long has it been since you began to notice any peculiarity in your brother's actions?

VETA: I noticed right away when Mother died, and Myrtle Mae and I came back home from Des Moines to live with Elwood. I could see that he – that he – (*looks pleadingly at SANDERSON.*)

SANDERSON: That he – what? Take your time, Mrs. Simmons. Don't strain. Let it come. I'll wait for it.

VETA: Doctor – everything I say to you is confidential? Isn't it?

SANDERSON: That's understood.

VETA: Because it's a slap in the face to everything we've stood for in this community the way Elwood is acting now.

SANDERSON: I am not a gossip, Mrs. Simmons. I am a psychiatrist.