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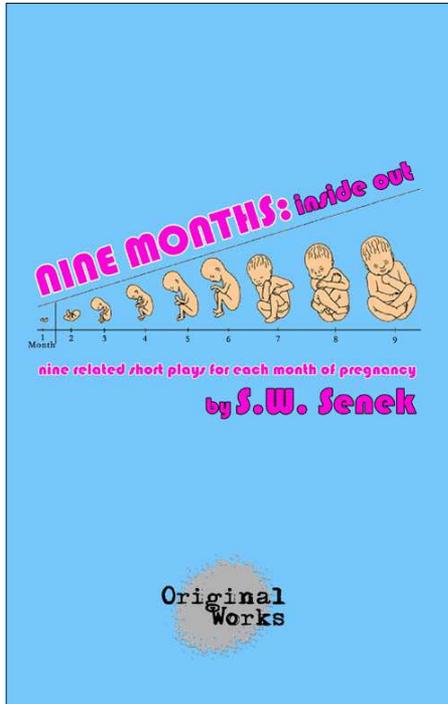
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NINE MONTHS: Inside Out by S.W. Senek

Nine related short plays for each month of pregnancy

Synopsis: Bob and Lisa are having a baby and their lives will change forever. This circular play is a month-by-month guide made up of nine scenes, revolving around one couple, exploring different points of view on how the birth of one baby can affect so many lives.

Cast Size: 2 Males, 2 Females

COMFORT FOOD

By Rob Roznowski

The play runs about 90 minutes. At the end of the play, samples of some of the food mentioned in the scenes may be made available to the audience for tasting.

The cast may be as many as 20 and as few as 6.

Comfort Food premiered at the Renegade Theatre Festival in East Lansing, MI on August 16, 2013

Directed by Rob Roznowski

Designed by Kirk Domer

Stage Manager Megan Molloy

The cast was as follows:

Carolyn Conover

Sarah Goeke

Andrew Head

Kirill Sheynerman

Zev Steinberg

Jacqueline Wheeler

Comfort Food was written as part of a Big Ten Theatre Initiative where theatre departments would create unique entertainments to showcase the Special Collections of their campus libraries. The Michigan State University Library expansive historical cookbook collection served as the basis for this play. Using the prefaces of American cookbooks as inspiration it became clear how food and history intersect.

I could not have completed this project without the guidance of the Head of Special Collections for MSU Libraries, Peter Berg.

Please note the projections indicated in the play are the book titles and cover art that inspired each scene. You may seek permission for the book cover art or simply use the scene titles and decade as projections.

Comfort Food is dedicated to the best cook I know-- Mahalah Boob.

SCENES:

PROLOGUE

MY, HOW THINGS CHANGE 2010/ 2000/ 1990

COMFORT FOOD (FAST) 1980

MICRO WAVES 1970

FOND U 1960

TV DINNERS 1950

BATTLE SCARS 1940

BROTHER, CAN YOU... 1930

EAT THIS, NOT THAT 1920/1910

TURN OF THE CENTURY 1900

ETHNIC CLEANSING 1890

CIVIL UNION 1880

HEALTH FOOD 1870

CHARITY BEGINS 1860

A SLAVE TO THE PAST 1850

RUSH! GOLD! 1840

COMFORT FOOD (SLOW) 1830

SIMPLE JOYS 1820-1790

DO YOU COME HERE ORPHAN? 1780

EPILOGUE

COMFORT FOOD

PROLOGUE

(A sudden blackout. Ancient drumming is heard. Then thunder. Then lightning. Another flash and a fire is started. The fire burns. A curious slumping caveperson come up to the fire. He is dragging a raw rabbit carcass. He looks to the fire and looks at the rabbit. Then the fire again. Then the rabbit. Fire. Rabbit. Fire. Rabbit. He makes no discovery.

Another caveperson with a primitive bow in her tangled hair watches from the side. She rolls her eyes in frustration. She snatches the rabbit from his hand and holds it to the fire. The rabbit cooks slightly. She feeds the meat to him. It tastes better. He pounds the floor in glee. She hands the rabbit back to him. He does not know what to do with it. She indicates that he should hold it to the fire. He does not understand. She guides his hand and the carcass to the fire but when she lets go, he removes his hand from the fire and makes no connection. She holds his hand and carcass to the fire. Pulls off a piece of meat and feeds him. He is gleeful again. She indicates that he must put the carcass to the fire. He stands confused. She in exasperation takes a stick from the fire and begins drawing the first recipe primitively. The caveman looks confused. When she is done...)

CAVEMAN: *(Getting it finally.)* Oh.

(Projection: Recipe for Roasted Rabbit: Fire. Rabbit.)

(Lights shift.)

MY, HOW THINGS CHANGE

(1990, 2000, and 2010 are discovered onstage.)

1990: I am a gourmand.

2000: I am a foodie.

2010: I am a slow cooker.

1990: My kitchen is pristine. Untouched.

2000: My kitchen is stainless, shiny and smooth. My kitchen is prepared for any recipe. I have every appliance.

2010: My kitchen is practical.

1990: Truffles.

2000: Truffle oil.

2010: Mushrooms I grew out back.

1990: The latest trends.

2000: The trendiest as of late.

2010: Lately, the trend is eat what you grow.

1990: Orgasmic.

2000: Organic.

2010: Organization.

1990: The year is 1990.

2000: The year is 2000.

2010: The year is 2010.

1990: I may heat up leftovers from my gourmet meals.

2000: It's fun to use oregano that I grow in my terrace garden.

2010: I cook what I can grow.

1990: I actually asked the chef for this recipe. Although I'll never make it.

2000: I follow recipes to the "T."

2010: I have adapted this recipe out of necessity. We can't afford all the ingredients...

1990: I eat where the New York Times tells me to eat.

2010: I cook what I grow or what is on sale.

1990: I think I may have capers and olives in my fridge. And mixers. Yeah, that's it.

2000: I label everything in my fridge. With expiration dates and what market I got it at. I have a separate fridge in the pantry for specialty items. Oh and the meat freezer in the basement.

2010: Eggs, milk, juice if it's on sale, and whatever I am going to cook for dinner that night. I buy day by day. I have to.

2000: My friends and I outdo each other with our fabulous menus and meals.

1990: My friends are amazed that I can taste the difference between olive oils.

2010: My friends and I don't really talk about what we cook.

2000: We had a progressive dinner party and it was like this amazing competition.

1990: I don't eat at a restaurant unless the reviews are good. Chefs are competitive people.

2010: I can't afford to eat at a restaurant. It's been a while.

2000: We went to a party the other night and the guests were talking about fusion food. Fusion! How 90's. Needless to say the hors d'oeuvres were terrible.

1990: The latest thing is fusion food. Taking the best of both cultures and creating new cuisine. Cutting edge.

2010: If I can't grow it and can't put it in a crock pot—then the hell with it.

1990: I went out to eat last night. I spent \$700 on dinner and drinks.

2000: I spent \$700 on a dinner party last month.

2010: I use coupons. I bet I spent \$700 on groceries total last year.

ALL THREE: I had to.

1990: The 80s have been great to me. I can afford it. I deserve it. Each meal is an event. My bank account and me are both fat. Who cares?

2000: You know we lost a little bit back in the 90s. We used to eat out all of the time. But now it's more fun to eat at home. It's an adventure. I am proud of myself.

2010: We don't have a lot. Well, nothing really. So, finding money for the next meal is always an adventure. You get the paycheck and it's gone. I have to put it in the crock-pot in the morning before I drop the kids off and before work. I don't get home till after 6 usually. My husband picks the kids up before he naps. So, it's really convenient to cook it all day. The house always smells good when I come in.

1990: I buy cookbooks by my favorite chefs. They are autographed and placed in my kitchen. I'll never use them.

(PROJECTION: Cover of "The New York Times 60 Minute Gourmet.")

2000: I use cookbooks constantly. It's whatever we feel like and whatever is fresh at the market.

(PROJECTION: Cover of "Home Bistro.")

2010: My husband actually got me a cookbook for Christmas. A slow cooker cookbook. That's when I read I was part of a movement.

(PROJECTION: Cover of "From Casseroles and Stews to Stove-Top Dishes.")

1990: I know that the best restaurants won't be trendy forever, but I can't imagine the idea of gourmet dining: three hour meals and haute cuisine ever going out of style. What could possibly happen?

2000: In ten years, I think everyone will be buying organic and cooking as adventurously as I. It's just everywhere you turn. From cooking classes to cooking shows. What could possibly happen?

2010: In ten years I think we'll probably be stuck doing the same thing. Maybe a different house or something. But I see me worrying each morning about what to cook for dinner and how we're going to afford it. What could possibly happen?

1990: Things are great.

2000: Things are fun.

(2010 stands silently.)

(Lights shift.)

COMFORT FOOD (FAST)

(1980s. Billy-- a young boy-- sits onstage alone. He is lonely and sad. A Narrator stands near him. She holds a bike pump that is attached to the boy's midsection. Music from a 1980s workout video begins blaring. A Jazzercising Woman, Billy's Mother, enters doing some expert moves. Billy tries to get her attention. She is oblivious. He tries several other ways to get her to notice him. Finally she does. He interrupts her flow. She is agitated and jazzercises her way offstage. She jazzercises back with a bag of McDonald's fast food. Billy eats contentedly as she exercises offstage.)

(PROJECTION: Cover of "Junk Food: The Answer Book.")

NARRATOR: The greasy (*Pumps the bike pump.*)
Cheesy (*Pumps the bike pump.*) Fried (*Again.*) Salted
(*Again.*) Buttered (*Again.*) Artificially sweetened
(*Again.*) Chemical-laden (*Again.*) And addictive
(*Again.*) meals make-up the fast food phenomenon in
America today.

(Billy's midsection expands with each pump. He takes notice. He stops eating the food and pushes the bag away. A Business Man, Billy's Father, enters lost in conversation on a giant 80s cell phone. Billy tries to get his attention. He is oblivious. He tries several other ways to get his father to notice him. Finally he does. He interrupts the business deal. The Business Man is agitated. He walks offstage-- still on the phone. Business Man returns with a bag of Burger King fast food. Billy eats contentedly as the father strides offstage.)

NARRATOR: Fast food companies places before us Big
Macs (*Pumps the bike pump.*) Whoppers (*Again.*)

French fries (*Again.*) Onion Rings (*Again.*) Frostys
(*Again.*) And colas. (*Again.*)

(Billy's midsection continues to expand with each pump. He takes notice and stops eating the food and pushes it away. The Jazzerciser and Business Man both enter the stage lost in their activities. Billy tries to get their attention. He interrupts their flow. They roll their eyes walk offstage. Bags of fast food fly from offstage pelting Billy over top of the following dialogue.)

NARRATOR: Our children are starting to become fatter
(*Pumps the bike pump.*) Teeth decay (*Again.*) Muscles
get weaker (*Again.*) And waists get flabby. (*Again.*)
And the fat teenager epidemic we have in America to-
day may only get worse.

(Billy sits dejectedly amidst the debris. He is about to cry. Billy tries to unhook the pump. He is unsuccessful. The Narrator goes to Billy and unhooks the pump.)

NARRATOR: Just remember that the more food parents
offer their children does not equal love. Sometimes par-
ents have to realize that offering less may actually
mean more.

(The pump is unhooked and the air escapes loudly and quickly from the device around his midsection. The air sound is loud and long...like a balloon mixed with a whoopee cushion. Billy looks shocked.)

BILLY: (*Embarrassed.*) Excuse me.

(Lights shift.)

MICRO WAVES

(1970s. Sadie's kitchen. Sue, her daughter, visits.)

(Projection: Cover of "Let's Cook Microwave.")

SUE: Mom, where's the microwave oven I got you for Christmas?

SADIE: I had to put it away. Your grandmother was coming over.

SUE: What are you talking about?

SADIE: She just gets nervous. Afraid the radiation will leak.

SUE: Mom, come on.

SADIE: I know. She's from a different generation.

SUE: Have you used it?

SADIE: I did. I tried it...

SUE: And...

SADIE: And honestly the food doesn't taste as good. It just doesn't.

SUE: Come on. What did you make?

SADIE: I tried bacon which was awful. And difficult to clean up.

SUE: You can make—

SADIE: I heated up soup and the Tupperware melted.

SUE: Mom, I gave you the manual. You can't put certain things in there.

SADIE: I understand. I just don't like the taste of how it comes out.

SUE: I got you that cookbook. There are really great recipes in there. The one for Quiche Lorraine--

SADIE: I have my own recipes.

SUE: You've only used it twice?

SADIE: No, I used the timer when I was doing my home perm.

SUE: With nothing in it?

SADIE: Yes. I'm sorry but I think I broke it.

SUE: That cost...never mind. Mom, look, the whole point of getting you that was so you could spend less time in the kitchen.

SADIE: Cooking relaxes me.

SUE: You must be tired coming home from work.

SADIE: I'm fine. I am enjoying having a job.

SUE: I am not saying that. Mom, it's a big adjustment. Cooking for one. This was supposed to make your life easier.

SADIE: I'm fine.

SUE: Look, let's say you go on a date—

SADIE: Stop right there. We are not having this discussion again.

SUE: OK, fine. Mom, you spend too much time in the kitchen. You should get out of there. Go to meetings. Meet other women like you.

SADIE: Listen, I have had to learn enough new things since your father left me. And if I don't want to add this new appliance to the list of things that now require me to read a manual, then so be it.

SUE: Mom, I—

SADIE: Look, you want me to be like the other cool divorced moms wearing frosted lipstick and frosted hair, well... I don't want to do it. I'm not going to become some women's libber.

SUE: I want you to---

SADIE: I don't need that microwave oven to save time.

SUE: Think of all you could be doing.

SADIE: Alone.

SUE: I could go with you.

SADIE: To bra burnings? No thank you.

SUE: We could just go out to dinner.

SADIE: Why? I love to cook! And if I don't like the way that contraption makes the food taste then so be it. So, I thank you for the now broken gift, but I don't want it. I'll cook like I cook.

SUE: All right. So where is it? Lemme get it out of here.

SADIE: Um...

SUE: Where is it?

SADIE: Since it was broken, I was thinking the radiation leaked so...

SUE: You threw it out?

SADIE: No, I gave it to your father.

(Lights shift.)

FOND U

(1960s. Bob and Carol's house. Their neighbors are at the front door.)

(Projection: Cover of "Cheese Fondue.")

CAROL: This bowl is for your keys

BOB: Put 'em right here.

TED: Um...

BOB: In case you drink too much.

CAROL: Honestly!

ALICE: Oh we don't drink.

BOB: Oh, well, looks like some people don't need alcohol to loosen them up.

CAROL: Honestly! Just thought it'd be great to get to know you. You just moved in, I thought we should...

BOB: Combine.

(A Man in a Smoking Jacket enters and speaks lasciviously and always in double entendre.)

(PROJECTION: Cover of "Cheese Fondue.")

MAN IN SMOKING JACKET: *(Lasciviously.)* The secret to making and serving an excellent fondue lies in the selection of "just the right" ingredients.

CAROL: So, take your shoes off.

BOB: We just got new shag carpeting and it feels great
between your toes.

CAROL: Honestly!

ALICE: Oh, well I wish we had known but...

TED: Honey, let's take them off.

ALICE: Don't want to be rude.

MAN IN SMOKING JACKET: The cheese used should
be well-aged, for it then melts very smoothly.

CAROL: So, tonight we're having a fondue party.

BOB: Fondue.

(Bob kisses Carol amorously.)

MAN IN SMOKING JACKET: Guests can easily help
themselves, leaving the host free to socialize.

CAROL: Honestly. Have you had fondue before?

ALICE: I haven't.

TED: Me either. Nope.

BOB: Oh, well, get ready.

ALICE: Isn't it messy? I wish we had known but...

BOB: Feel free to take off whatever you think you might
get cheese on.

MAN IN SMOKING JACKET: Have an ample supply of napkins on hand and attractive wastebaskets placed strategically around for the guests' convenience.

BOB: Well, we're all friends here, right?

CAROL: No, you don't actually touch the fork to your mouth.

MAN IN SMOKING JACKET: When each lifts his fork out of the pot, the fork should be given a little twist to remove excess fondue from the bread.

BOB: You just slide it off the fork, watch.

(Bob and Carol show them lasciviously grabbing and teasing with the fondue fork. They chew sexually.)

ALICE: Bob!

TED: Carol.

CAROL: Ted?

BOB: Alice...

ALICE: Oh, well, perhaps we'll pass on the fondue.

BOB: No, no. You have to.

CAROL: Honestly! No, it's just for fun.

BOB: Loosen up.

ALICE: Well, I guess we could try.

TED: Come on, I'll feed you.

(They share the food awkwardly. Hilariously. Cheese drops on her blouse.)

ALICE: All over my—

TED: Sorry.

CAROL: No problem. Here, give me your blouse I'll throw it in the wash.

(Carol grabs the blouse off Alice's back as Alice protests. Carol goes offstage to wash the blouse.)

BOB: Here let me show you how it's done.

(Bob takes the fork and tries to feed Ted the fondue. It drops on his pants.)

BOB: Oops.

TED: I---

CAROL: *(On her return.)* Into the wash---

(Carol strips him of his pants. Ted and Alice stand awkwardly and embarrassed.)

BOB: It's not a really party until ---

CAROL: *(Walking off stage.)* Honestly---

TED: Look, I think maybe we should just go. You know... considering...

BOB: Nonsense. They're in the wash.

TED: Look, I don't really think we're the fondue crowd.

BOB: Come on everybody is fonduing. You know that.

ALICE: Yeah we know that.

CAROL: (*Who has returned.*) Don't you want to be part of it—

ALICE: It?

CAROL: You know the changing times?

BOB: The revolution?

TED: Revolution?

CAROL: You know things are different now.

BOB: Things are looser.

MAN IN SMOKING JACKET: If by chance a woman loses her bread in the fondue, tradition has it she must kiss the man to her right, and that a man so doing must buy the next round of drinks.

BOB: But don't you want to join in?

CAROL: Loosen up!?

BOB: Play?

ALICE: Are we still talking about fondue?

TED: I don't think so.

BOB: We thought you might like to swing, honestly.

CAROL: Honestly.

TED: Honestly?

ALICE: Honestly...

CAROL: Honestly, this is our first time, we thought you know, why not try it?

ALICE: Why not?

CAROL: You read about it in the magazines—

BOB: It's on "Laugh-In" for God's sake.

CAROL: We just thought, it might be fun to try.

MAN IN SMOKING JACKET: Since the fondue is probably being served at home, not at a restaurant, the man could also pay with a kiss.

BOB: That's why we got the fondue pot.

CAROL: Something new. Swinging always seems to start with fondue.

BOB: You know sharing food.

CAROL: Everybody mixing altogether.

BOB: Melting together. (*Pause.*) Doesn't it sound like fun?

TED: Well, honestly? No.

ALICE: No, we like to eat off of plates.

TED: The fondue is a metaphor honey.

ALICE: I get it. The plate was a metaphor too.

TED: Well, at best a mixed metaphor.

ALICE: You know, why don't you let me do the talking.

TED: Because that's all you do is talk.

ALICE: Oh, well I talk because it's the only intelligent conversation I ever hear.

TED: Go to hell you braying shrew.

ALICE: Why would you even want to swap partners with this impotent piece of jello? Sex with him is like an attack of jellyfish. With teeny little stingers.

TED: Sex with you is like mounting a braying donkey.
Hew Haw Hee Haw

ALICE: Little stinger...zap zap zap.

(Ted and Alice attack each other and chase each other angrily out of the front door. Bob and Carol are left behind. They sigh. They each take the fork and stick it into the fondue pot. They take the dripping cheese and hold it to the other's mouth. They both do not take a bite.)

CAROL: I sort of lost my appetite.

BOB: I'll blow out the sterno.

(They silently clean up. They give each other a sweet kiss good night and turn the lights out and head to bed. Once they leave the stage Ted and Alice burst in making out passionately.)

TED: We're here!

ALICE: We're ready!

(They notice no one is there. They head to the fondue and begin rubbing it with their hands all over each other's faces and licking it off.)

(Lights shift.)

TV DINNERS

(1950s. Mary and Joseph's living room. Two chairs face the TV. Mary runs in. She is pregnant. She has two new TV trays that she tries to put together awkwardly. She finally does so. She tests their strength. She seems satisfied. She heads back to the kitchen. Joseph enters with briefcase and rumpled overcoat. He throws them on a TV tray and it collapses. He heads off. Mary enters with two cups of fruit cocktail. She sees the collapsed tray and tries awkwardly to put it together. She does so and places the fruit cocktail on the trays. She runs off to the kitchen. Joseph comes back into the room. Mary enters with potholders. She sees Joseph and runs to kiss him. They embrace. Joseph is impossible to read.)

(Projection: Cover of "The TV Guide Cookbook")

MARY: I thought tonight could be an entire night of firsts.

JOSPEH: Hmmmm.

MARY: First! We get to eat while we are watching television! Isn't that exciting? Decadent!? Modern?

JOSPEH: Hmmmm.

MARY: This is our second first! Fruit cocktail.

(He takes a bite.)

JOSEPH: Hmmmm.

MARY: It's good, isn't it?

JOSEPH: Hmmm.

MARY: It's fruit cocktail.

JOSEPH: Hmmmm.

MARY: Yes, it is fruit in syrup!!!

JOSEPH: Hmmm.

MARY: It's from a can. It's from a can! Isn't that crazy!?

JOSEPH: HmmHmmm.

MARY: I just opened the can. Uh, wait I want to—

JOSEPH: HmmHm.

MARY: Wait, let me make it more homemade! Wait, I want to add a personal touch. Our third first!

(She sprays a large portion of Reddiwhip on the fruitcup.)

MARY: See? A personal touch!

JOSEPH: Hmmmm.

MARY: Eat quick. The dinner's ready. Be right back.

(Joseph examines the fruit cocktail. He takes tiny bites. Suspicious.)

MARY: Ta da! This is dinner!

(She has two TV dinners in her oven-mittened hands.)

MARY: This is our fourth first. This is our dinner,

(She peels the aluminum off the meal.)

MARY: Ta, ta, ta, ta!!!! This is our dinner. Our TV dinner. A dinner created to be eaten at your television. This is our first frozen dinner. And now we shall try it.

JOSEPH: HmMMM

MARY: What do you think? It is good, right?

JOSEPH: HmmHmM.

MARY: I didn't really do anything. I put in our new oven. Peeled back a few compartments and cooked. Good. Right?

JOSEPH: HmMMM.

MARY: Shall I get dessert?

JOSEPH: HmMMM.

(She runs to the kitchen. He examines the rest of his meal suspiciously.)

MARY: Our fifth first!!!! Here is dessert. I made this cake from a mix. A mix in a box. Can you believe it? I had to add only a few ingredients. No measuring. No muss. No fuss. No bother.

JOSEPH: HmMMM.

MARY: Now this is good. Right? Right? Right?

JOSEPH: HmmHmM.

MARY: Can you believe this whole meal only took me a few minutes? A can. A tray. A box. This is the future. This is cooking.

JOSPEH: HmmHmm.

MARY: Oh. Wait!

(She runs off to the kitchen. She returns with a jar of baby food.)

MARY: Our last first. But this is for our first first. This is the new line of Gerber baby food. It is improved! They say it tastes better.

JOSEPH: HmmHmmm.

MARY: It is important to me what we feed Junior or Missy. Isn't it to you?

JOSEPH: HmmHmmm.

MARY: Let's give it a try.

JOSPEH: HmmHmm.

MARY: This is what we will feed our child. We have to be as careful about what we feed our baby as what we feed ourselves.

JOSEPH: Hmmmm.

(They taste the baby food.)

MARY: Hmmmm?

JOSEPH: Hmmmm.

MARY: This is delicious. Like something I never tasted before.

JOSEPH: HmmHmmm.

MARY: What is in this? Isn't it great?

JOSEPH: HmmHmm.

(She reads the ingredients from the jar.)

MARY: Well, it is just apples...

JOSEPH: HmmHmm.

MARY: And... cereal.

JOSEPH: HmmHmm.

MARY: And monosodium glutamate. MSG.

JOSEPH: Hmmm.

MARY: What do you think honey? Can we feed this to our baby? I mean they sell it at the biggest stores. That means it's good. It is considered the best baby food out there.

JOSEPH: Hmmm.

MARY: I need to know what you want me to do. Have you liked our night of firsts?

JOSEPH: Hmmm.

MARY: I need to know is that a good "Mm" or a bad "Mm?"

(Silence.)

JOSEPH: This is delicious. Everything is delicious. So sweet. So special.

MARY: And so easy.

JOSEPH: I don't care about ease. I care about taste. And everything you served tonight is like an explosion in my mouth.

MARY: Oh, I am so happy you approve.

JOSEPH: I dare those communists to attack us now. Watching television while we eat!

MARY: Oh, I love our night of firsts!

JOSEPH: It won't be our last. We should eat like this more often. No. Forever.

(They kiss. She sits contentedly on Joseph's lap. He pulls out cigarettes and gives them both one. They light them and smoke in contented bliss as the lights shift.)

BATTLE SCARS

(1940s. Millie is awaiting her husband's return from the war. She is in apron and pearls. And sits anxiously by the front door. The doorbell rings. She runs to the door to find her husband Sergeant at the door in full uniform. He is missing one arm and has his sleeve pinned up to his shoulder. He is remote and quiet.)

(Projection: Cover of "The Wartime Edition of The American Woman's Cookbook.")

MILLIE: You're home. You're home. You're home.
(They continue to hug. She is overwhelmed. She let's go.) You're home.

SERGEANT: Well, most of me.

MILLIE: Donald. No. You are home. I missed you. I'm so proud of you.

SERGEANT: I missed you too.

MILLIE: You look good. You're so tan.

SERGEANT: That's... that's what the sun does to you.

MILLIE: You look so healthy. I was afraid you would have wasted away from the army cooking.

SERGEANT: No the food in Burma...the food. The local food was great.

MILLIE: Well, good.

SERGEANT: Things you never heard of.

MILLIE: Well, I made your favorites. Pot roast, mashed potatoes, and rhubarb pie.

SERGEANT: (*Averting his eyes.*) Thanks.

MILLIE: Look at me. Look at me. I am so proud of you. I am so happy to have you home.

SERGEANT: Me too.

(*There is an awkward silence.*)

MILLIE: Well, I am going to run to the kitchen to check on everything. You sit down at the table. Do you want a beer or something?

SERGEANT: No, I'm fine.

(*She exits to the kitchen. He sits at the table and picks up a fork with his hand and looks at it and puts it down. He then picks up a knife. Studies it. Laughs to himself. He drops them suddenly. Millie returns to the room and picks them up. She kneels before him.*)

MILLIE: You're home. Everything is going to be all right now. You're home.

SERGEANT: I know.

MILLIE: Look I am going to get you a plate. You'll eat something. You'll feel better.

(*She exits to the kitchen. He walks around the house taking in the familiar. He is cold. She returns with a plate and watches a second.*)

MILLIE: (*Checking thermostat.*) Honey, are you cold?
The heat is on. It's nearly 80 degrees with the oven on.

SERGEANT: My blood's probably thinner.

MILLIE: Yes, used to all that heat. We are gonna have to fatten you up. Get some good food in you.

SERGEANT: Right.

MILLIE: Well, sit down. Come on, it's your favorite.

(*He sits down at the table and stares at the plate. She hovers.*)

MILLIE: Oh, dear. Not hungry?

SERGEANT: No, I'm hungry.

MILLIE: Well, then eat... please honey. It's for you. It's your favorite.

(*He tries to eat a bite of it but can't bring it to his mouth.*)

MILLIE: (*Quietly.*) Do you want me to cut it for you?

SERGEANT: No, I'm fine.

MILLIE: Do you want something to drink? A beer?

SERGEANT: Yes. Sure...Do you have tea?

MILLIE: Tea? (*She hesitates.*) No, honey, I don't. You never...

SERGEANT: Fine.

MILLIE: I can make coffee. Strong and black like you like.

SERGEANT: I don't like coffee.

MILLIE: You...well, we have milk? Want a warm glass? Could warm you up too.

SERGEANT: Do you have juice?

MILLIE: I do. I do I have apple juice like you like.

(She starts for the kitchen.)

SERGEANT: I don't want apple.

MILLIE: Well, why don't I run to the store? Get some tea and some juice. What kind of juice?

SERGEANT: I drank juice with every meal.

MILLIE: Well, sure there. But now you're home. I can get a can of frozen orange juice. Right away.

SERGEANT: No. It was fresh. Everything there was fresh.

MILLIE: Well, I don't think we can...

(He gets up from the table.)

MILLIE: What's the matter? Don't you like my cooking anymore?

SERGEANT: I...

MILLIE: This is what I made when you left. It was your favorite. It's your mother's recipe.

SERGEANT: I know...

MILLIE: I don't expect this to be easy. I know we have to get to know each other again, but you used to love this.

SERGEANT: I know I did.

MILLIE: Come on, honey. Come to the table. Try it.

(He does so. He picks up the fork.)

SERGEANT: Do you have chopsticks?

MILLIE: No, of course I don't have chopsticks? Are you serious?

SERGEANT: Just haven't eaten with a knife and fork since...

MILLIE: Oh...sorry.

SERGEANT: I'm sorry.

MILLIE: I know honey. But you'll fit right back in. I set up an interview for you with Mr. Kiefaber who says he doesn't mind one bit about your... You're home. That's all the matters.

SERGEANT: This isn't home.

(Silence.)

MILLIE: What do you mean? Yes, it is. This is our home.

SERGEANT: I lived here for a month before I got shipped out.

MILLIE: I know but isn't this what you kept picturing each night? Coming home? To me?

SERGEANT: I thought about you sure.

MILLIE: Is something wrong? Did something happen over there?

SERGEANT: (*Referring to his arm.*) Something else?

MILLIE: No, I know. I'm sorry. I just have been waiting for this for so long.

(*Pause.*)

SERGEANT: I was a boy when I left.

MILLIE: I know.

SERGEANT: My adult life has been over there. I loved it there.

MILLIE: Loved it? Loved war?

SERGEANT: No, I loved, the climate, I loved the food, I loved the people—

MILLIE: When they weren't attacking you?

SERGEANT: Honey, it's not that. I grew up over there. I don't want to go back to what I was before. I have a whole different perspective now.

MILLIE: So...do you want to go back there? Alone?
Now?

SERGEANT: No. I don't. I want us to get to know each
other now. As adults you know?

MILLIE: I am still the same girl you married.

SERGEANT: I'm not the same.

MILLIE: I understand.

SERGEANT: We are going to have make some adjust-
ments.

MILLIE: I can learn to cook some of the foods you like.

SERGEANT: Like that, sure.

(They look at each other for a long time.)

MILLIE: What was it like over there?

*(Period music fades up as they begin to gab. He takes the
fork and knife like chopsticks and begins to eat occasion-
ally feeding her as she listens rapt.)*

(Lights shift.)

BROTHER, CAN YOU....

(1930s. A singer sings a 1930s standard. A fancy high society Gentleman in a tuxedo enters the stage. A ragged Panhandler also enters. They listen to the song for a bit. They offer competing images of the depression. They may try to out do each other or spar or joke throughout—but there is definite tension between them.)

(PROJECTION: Cover of “Economy in Cooking.”)

PANHANDLER: Soup kitchens.

GENTLEMAN: Supper clubs. White glove service.

PANHANDLER: Handouts. Rickets.

GENTLEMAN: Picnics.

PANHANDLER: Automats.

GENTLEMAN: Catered affairs.

PANHANDLER: Chicken in every pot.

GENTLEMAN: Chafing dishes. Apples in a Waldorf salad.

PANHANDLER: Selling apples in front of the Waldorf.
Boiling a bone.

GENTLEMAN: Bouillabaisse. Cocktail parties.

PANHANDLER: Bread lines.

GENTLEMAN: Cafes.

PANHANDLER: Penny Restaurants.

GENTLEMAN: Luncheons and teas.

PANHANDLER: Java and a roll.

GENTLEMAN: Bridge parties.

PANHANDLER: New Deal.

(The tension between them mounts.)

GENTLEMAN: Diet fads.

PANHANDLER: Hobos begging for leftovers.

GENTLEMAN: Wait staff.

PANHANDLER: Volunteers. Day old.

GENTLEMAN: The latest.

PANHANDLER: Spilling milk to raise the price.

GENTLEMAN: *(Disgusted with the game and the Panhandler.)* Crying over spilt milk.

(The song ends. The tension remains.)

(Lights shift.)

EAT THIS, NOT THAT

(1920s A Gangster enters with a Tommy Gun. His Moll is slaving over a stove. 1910s. A young Boy dressed like a cowboy enters with a toy pistol. His Mother is stirring a pot of soup on the stove. Although they are in different kitchens and decades, they interact and overlap in the same space taking no notice of the other scene. They stir the same soup pot. A “/” in the dialogue indicates overlapping.)

(PROJECTIONS: Cover of “The Temperance Cookbook” and “Foods That Will Win the War and How to Cook It.”)

BOY & GANGSTER: Stick’ em up.

MOTHER: *(Startled.)* Ah. Billy.

MOLL: Ah, quit your flappin’.

BOY & GANGSTER: What are you doing?

MOLL: Can’t ya see/I’m cooking?

MOTHER: I’m cooking your supper.

BOY & GANGSTER: What is it? I’m starving.

MOTHER & MOLL: Soup.

MOLL: And I don’t want to hear no jaw about it.

BOY & GANGSTER: Aw, soup. What kind?

MOTHER & MOLL: Vegetable.

GANGSTER: Nuts.

BOY: Nertz.

MOTHER & MOLL: Watch your mouth. You'll eat it.

MOLL: Or Else.

MOTHER: And like it.

GANGSTER: Soup, ain't gonna cut it./ I'm exhausted.

BOY: I'm tired and I want some meat./I'm hungry.

GANGSTER: I'm hungry. And I tole you when I split I wanted food like my mom's recipe for Oyster Stew Delmonico.

MOTHER & MOLL: Well, you are getting soup.

MOLL: That recipe calls for sherry!

MOTHER: --Young man.

(The Gangster and the Boy pout.)

MOLL: Get the message? Unless you brought me some hooch?

GANGSTER: I tole' you, I can't get no hooch. This town is locked tighter than your gams lately.

MOLL: I tole' you no hooch; no kooch.

BOY: Mom, soups give me the blues. Vegetable soup extra-specially.

MOTHER: It is Meatless Mondays. You know that.

GANGSTER: I need one or the other! Gimme my mom's Oyster Stew Delmonico or gimme some whoopee.

BOY: Nertz.

MOTHER: Don't you want your father to win the war?

MOLL: You ain't getting neither till I get some hooch. I can't make this meal without the liquor.

BOY: Yes...

MOTHER: Than this is how we do our part. To bring our boys back home.

GANGSTER: You're a regular Dumb Dora. Can't you just substitute something in the recipe?

MOLL: Go chase yourself. I tole' you I wrote your Ma in the slammer and she can't think of nothing to use in place of the hooch. I tried the vanilla extract and ya said it tasted like a dessert and then I tried the cough syrup and it made ya sleepy.

GANGSTER: I know. You did your best.

MOTHER: I'm doing my best.

BOY: I do want Daddy to win, but I don't see why I can't have a little bit of meat in the soup.

GANGSTER: I don't see why we just can't get a little liquor to make the sauce.

MOTHER & MOLL: The government says so.

MOTHER: Don't be a wisenheimer. The government wants all Americans to cut back on food consumption.

GANGSTER: This prohibition is making me loony.

BOY: I wish we weren't in this stupid war.

MOTHER & MOLL: What kind of talk is that?

MOTHER: Where your patriotism?

MOLL: You're the one making a killing offa this lousy prohibition.

BOY & GANGSTER: I know. I know.

MOTHER: Everyone has to do his or her part.

MOLL: With all your rackets, you can't score no hooch?

MOTHER: That's why we have Meatless Mondays and Wheatless Wednesdays.

BOY & GANGSTER: But how can the government tell us what to eat? Drink?

BOY: Who cares if I eat meat on Mondays?

GANGSTER: What's the big alarm if I knock back a snort?

MOTHER: We need to change what we eat so that we can send more money over to those people we are helping

MOLL: Washington says that liquor makes ya bonkers.

GANGSTER: I'm going bonkers without it!

MOTHER: The government knows what's best.

MOLL: Those G-men think they know it all.

BOY: But what if I eat meat on Monday and decide not to on Tuesday, shouldn't I be able to decide when to eat it?

GANGSTER: I don't get where those high hats in Washington think they can tell me what I put into my body. Can't I decide that?

BOY & GANGSTER: They can't tell me what to do!

MOTHER: You're not being patriotic. /The government needs our help.

MOLL: The government needs help! They're fulla baloney!

GANGSTER: If I wanna eat or drink something that's bad for me, I decide.

BOY: That government can't tell me what I eat!

GANGSTER: (*Simultaneous with Boy.*) The government can't tell me what to drink!

MOTHER: Go to bed immediately! You get nothing to eat.

MOLL: You're right! Go out and shoot some G-men.

GANGSTER: I love you!

BOY: I hate you!

(The Boy and the Gangster leave the stage The Moll and the Mother both taste the soup pot on the stove.)

MOLL: Not enough salt.

MOTHER: *(Overlapping with above.)* Too much salt.

(For the first time they notice each other. They eye each other suspiciously.)

(Lights shift.)