

DREAMKILLER

A Ten Minute Comedy by

Frank Farmer

Two middle age parents rejoice at finally being empty nesters and plan for the rest of their lives; a plan that nearly drives the husband insane.

Frank Farmer
Long Beach, CA
farmhand4@gmail.com

CAST

HARRIET. . . .motherly, age 53

HERBERT. . . .fatherly, age 55

SETTING:

The suggestion of a living room. A table and two chairs. Some books are on the table. VOICES are heard off-stage:

HARRIET and HERBERT (off)

(together)

Good-bye, kids, take care now, drive carefully, see you Thanksgiving. Or Christmas or New Years. Easter for sure. Love you, miss you already, stay in touch, g'byeeee, g'byyyyye...!!

The sound of a car driving off,
then HARRIET and HERBERT enter,
waving off-stage.

HERBERT

They're gone, Harriet. Gone with the wind!

HARRIET

Gone, gone, gone.

HERBERT

After all these long years. WAAAAAHOOOOO!! Happy days are here again!

THEY dance a wild twirling dervish,
laughing and ad libbing the music.
Finally, THEY collapse on the
chairs.

HERBERT

At last: tranquility.

HARRIET

Peace and quiet and serenity.

HERBERT

Ah, my dearly beloved wife. Alone together at last.
So...whatcha gonna cook us for dinner, my sweet?

HARRIET

Nothing.

HERBERT

Nothing? That doesn't sound very appetizing.

HARRIET

I don't feel like cooking. I don't feel like cooking ever again. We shall go out for dinner. We shall go out all the time from now on. For breakfast and lunch and dinner and breakfast and lunch and dinner and breakfast and...

HERBERT

Whoa, there Nelly!

HARRIET

Whoa? Whoa?! I am a human being, not a horse named Nelly.

HERBERT

But no more cooking? I love your cooking. You cook real good. I'd miss that. I'd miss that muy mucho.

HARRIET

I made a vow. A silent vow to my innermost self: NO MORE COOKING. Or washing. Or cleaning, or dusting, or sweeping, or...

HERBERT

Whoa, uh, I mean, ho! Ho, ho, ho! (forcing a laugh). You're just funnin' me now, aren't you, my sweet?

HARRIET

(dead serious)

Never. Ever. Forever. Amen.

HERBERT

Then we're gonna have a time problem, Harriet.

HARRIET

Oh? What kind of a time problem?

HERBERT

A problem of what to do with it. Cooking and cleaning and dusting and washing and sweeping takes a big chunk of time. That stuff is an essential part of family life.

HARRIET

My life. My time. And now I am free. My domestic servitude is finis. I will now have time to make some of my fondest dreams come true.

HERBERT

Oh? And just what dreams are those, my dearest darling?

HARRIET

I am thinking of becoming a professional woman. A doctor of mental medicine. A psychoanalyst.

HERBERT

A...a what?

HARRIET

A diagnostician of deranged cerebellums.

HERBERT

Oh, you mean a shrink.

HARRIET

Don't you dare use that pejorative word in my presence ever again. My new profession will not be demeaned.

HERBERT

Pejorative? Demeaned? Harriet...the warmth and smell of our children hasn't even left the room and you've become a, a, Mrs. Hyde! (A forced laugh) You're not my Harriet any more.

HARRIET

No, I am now my ME. Perhaps to become Doctor; Doctor of Psychiatric Medicine. I have been doing a considerable amount of reading on the subject.

SHE points to the books lying on the table.

HERBERT

But these are detective novels!

HARRIET

Just the jacket covers. Fooled you, didn't I?

HERBERT

(reading a cover)

The Case of the Caretaker's Corpse?

HARRIET

Psychotic Revisionism And its Analogous States.

HERBERT

A Dagger For The Defense?

HARRIET

Diagnosing Depressive Anxiety.

HERBERT

Dreamkiller?

HARRIET

Analytical Case Histories, Volume 8.

HERBERT

But why, my darling...? Why didn't you just tell me about this dream. Impossible though it is.

HARRIET

I rest my case.

HERBERT

I mean, impossible at your age.

HARRIET

Nothing is impossible to accomplish if one has dreams, Herbert; dreams that challenge one's ageless intellectual capacities.

HERBERT

Well, I have some, too. So there.

HARRIET

Some what?

HERBERT

Some dreams. Some dreams of...accomplishment.

HARRIET

Devoting the rest of one's life to breaking par is not a particularly challenging dream, Herbert.

HERBERT

You don't even sound like my...like yourself. Your old self. Your comfortable, reliable self. What are you becoming?

HARRIET

As a lowly caterpillar emerges from her cocoon to become a beautiful butterfly, so shall I. And I shall fly with my dreams just as far as they will take me.

HERBERT

My dream is not to break par. It's to...to...

HARRIET

To what?

HERBERT

To...to become a...a...a writer! Yes! That's it! A writer of...of...books! Best selling books. Now what do you think of that, my doubting Thomasina?

HARRIET

Not much, considering the fact that you've never read one single book during the entire course of our...our union.

HERBERT

You don't have to read stuff to write stuff. I've got ideas and ideas are what count.

HARRIET

You have not had an original idea in over thirty years.

HERBERT

Have to, have to! Lots of 'em. They're all in here. (indicates his head) Tucked away, just bustin' to get loose.

HARRIET

And how are they going to do that?

HERBERT

You wait here, my skeptical little squeeze, I'll be right back.

HE rushes off-stage. HARRIET picks up Dreamkiller and begins reading aloud.

HARRIET

"Delusive dementia in mid-life is often characterized by various degrees of grandiose behavior and abject denial of objective reality. The patient went on to say..."

HARRIET closes the book as HERB rushes back in with a notebook and pencil.

HERBERT

(with manic conviction)

Okay, here we go, here we go. I'm a-gonna write these suckers one after the other. You just watch my smoke.

HE sits, pencil poised, gathering HIS thoughts. Moments pass as HE becomes more and more agitated, apparently unable to begin.

HARRIET

Well...?

HERBERT

Well what?!

HARRIET

I don't see any smoke.

HERBERT

The beginning is the most important part, Harriet. You gotta grab the reader's attention. Once I get started, then I'm off like a rocket.

More agonizing. Finally:

HERBERT

(writing)

"Once...upon...a...time...in a land far, far away". Yeah.
That's it! That's the beginning of something truly significant.
What do you think of my book so far?

HARRIET

I think I've read it before.

HERBERT

But that's impossible! I just now wrote it.

HARRIET

(quoting)

"Once upon a time there were three bears. A Poppa bear, a Momma
bear, and a baby bear."

HERBERT

(realizing)

Oh, crap! Crap, crap, crap! Those lousy kid's books! That's how
they start, don't they?

Smiling sweetly, SHE nods, yes.

HERBERT

Years of reading that garbage to them. It gets jammed into your
head. Blocks you up. Damn those kids! Thirty years of sapping
my creative juices and giving me nothing in return.

HARRIET

They gave you their love and their respect.

HERBERT

But what good is that stuff to me now? Now that I must create.
Now that I must validate my entire life.

HARRIET

You're a very disturbed man, Herbert. Soon I shall be able to
help you.

HERBERT

I don't need any help. I just need peace and quiet. And a
beginning. Then my book will soar like a, a, a butterfly.

HARRIET

What's it going to be about?

HERBERT

About? Well, it's going to be about...things. And people. And
places. Places most people only...only dream about. It's gonna
be a book about dreams. And I'm gonna dedicate it to you, my
love. (he writes) "I dedicate this first book to my wife. My
dream come true."

HARRIET

Why that's lovely. That's beautiful writing, it really is. Maybe you can do it. Maybe we can do it. Together.

HERBERT

You mean...collaborate?

HARRIET

Just like we've done with the children these thirty long years.

HERBERT

But what about your dream to become a shhhhhh...a, whatchmacallit?

HARRIET

I am perfectly willing to defer my dream to your dream, my darling; to be your helpmate in your time of creative need.

HERBERT

You'd do that? You'd do that for me? God, but I love you. I love you so much. I'll be right back.

HE rushes off-stage. HARRIET again reads aloud from Dreamkiller.

HARRIET

"The patient went on to say, "My strength is of the strength of ten because my heart is pure. I shall scale the highest mountains, trek the trackless plains, and sail the seven seas..."

HERBERT returns with another notepad and pencil which he places in front of HARRIET.

HERBERT

Here you are, my honeybun. Now we can begin. Write on! You go first.

HARRIET

I said I would assist you. The beginning belongs to you. This is your dream.

HERBERT

But I...Of course. Of course. My dream.

HERBERT struggles, HE agonizes, HE begins to write, then erases it furiously and begins again. HE rips out the page, crumples it up, and once more attempts to write.

(MORE)

HE looks at HARRIET. SHE smiles sweetly. Frustrated and angry, HE moves HIS chair downstage and sits with HIS back to HER. SHE re-opens Dreamkiller.

HERBERT
(struggling)
The, uh...the, uh...the...

HARRIET
(reading aloud)
"The patient went on to say, 'My strength is of the strength of ten because my heart is pure'. I shall scale the highest mountains, I shall..."

HERBERT
(writing furiously)
That's it, that's it! Brilliant! Absolutely brilliant! We have now begun! More, more, MORE!!

HARRIET
(continuing to read)
"I shall scale the highest mountains, trek the trackless plains, and sail the seven seas. I am young in heart and mind and spirit. And I shall conquer! I shall prevail!"

HARRIET rapidly turns the pages of the book as HERBERT scribbles furiously. A flashing strobe light indicates the accelerated passage of time. Then, abruptly, it stops and the scene returns to normal. HARRIET closes the book. Triumphant, HERBERT returns to the table and places the notebook in front of HARRIET.

HERBERT
We did it. We did it! Didn't we? My dream has come true.

HARRIET
How do you feel?

HERBERT
Triumphant. Fulfilled. I could live to be a hundred. Thanks to you, my love, my helpmate, my reason for living, I have now accomplished my dream. How can I ever thank you?

HARRIET opens Dreamkiller and hands it to HERBERT.

HARRIET
You can thank me, my love, by reading to me.

HERBERT

Reading? Reading what?

HARRIET

Reading your dream. Pretty please?

HERBERT

Of course, my precious. (reading) "My strength is of the strength of ten because my heart is pure. I shall climb the highest mountains..." Oh, my God, my God! Why? Why have you done this to me? WHY?!

HARRIET

Because you've been foolish, Herbert. Foolish and self-deluded and self-obsessed. Now isn't that the truth?

HERBERT

But my dream...you've destroyed it!

HARRIET

No, I destroyed your fantasy. A dream, a real dream, is living within the confines of reality; within the realm of what is pragmatically possible; to live within one's reach.

HERBERT

What about your dream...?

HARRIET

My dream...has come true. I have just cured my beloved husband of his silly, childish delusion. Now why don't you go out and try to break par. Then, after you've had an afternoon with the boys on the links, you can take me to dine at a fancy, expensive restaurant. I shall be dressed and ready at precisely a quarter past seven.

HARRIET pats HIM on top of HIS head. As SHE exits, grandly:

HARRIET

Pate d'foix gras, Beluga cavier, Dom Perignon. HMMMMMMMMMMMM... Yummy, yummy.

HERBERT sits stunned, staring at HIS "novel". Then, slowly, HE picks up the pencil and starts writing.

HERBERT

(snarling, as HE writes)

Once upon a time there was an evil shrink who attempted to destroy a man's dream. But the dreamer dreamed on and on and on...!

BLACKOUT - END OF PLAY

