



Agatha the Ugly

a one act drama about friendship

by C. Canon Rosenau

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Characters

- Agatha: A 30 year old bombshell blonde - she dresses impressively and dons a fur coat. She's a comedienne on a radio show but more comfortable hiding behind the radio.
- Steve: Pushing 40, good looking. He's the narrator and co-star for the radio show.
- Ruth Miller: 35 year old content housewife named Ruth. She looks nice, but nothing fancy (like she used to). She doesn't approve of the Agatha the Ugly radio show.
- Nanna Miller: Elderly mother-in-law of Ruth Miller. She's pretty hip and a little bit of a rebel.
- Suzy Miller: Ruth Miller's 12 year old daughter who loves listening to her radio shows.
- Georgie Miller: Ruth Miller's 10 year old son who also loves radio shows.
- Sal: Nice gentleman of about 50. Owner of Sal's Deli. He works the counter.
- Benji: Agatha's fiance (in a flashback).
- Henry: Ruth's husband (in a flashback).
- Woman #1: A customer listening to the radio show in the last scene.
- Woman #2: A customer sitting with Woman #1 in the last scene.

Scene

The Miller's living room centered around the radio with a dinette off to the side, the small radio studio and Sal's - a local deli cafe.

Time

November, 1944.

ACT I

SCENE 1

SETTING: Open on the Miller's living room,
then crossfade to the radio studio.

AT RISE: Ruth is busy cleaning and setting
the table, while Nanna, Suzy and
Georgie are gathered around the
radio listening to the Agatha the
Ugly radio show. Tommy plays with a
toy truck on the floor and Nanna
knits.

SUZY

Shhh! It's back on!

She turns up the knob on
the radio.

STEVE

(off)

Welcome back to Agatha the Ugly, a comedy brought to you by Savings
Bonds - no laughing matter. Pay \$100 and one day you'll triple
your money! The best gift you can give, better yet, receive!
What are your thoughts on Savings Bonds, Agatha?

(beat)

Agatha?

We hear chewing and
smacking.

STEVE

(off)

Agatha? Wouldn't you love to give Savings Bonds to someone on
their birthday? Ahem.

AGATHA

(off)

Mmmph, mmmph rrrrmph.

(gulp)

Wouldn't you agree, Steve?

Suzy and Georgie laugh
hysterically. Nanna
chuckles lightly. Ruth
sits in one of the dining
chairs polishing the
silverware, uninterested
in the radio. She glances
at the radio annoyed.

Now we hear gulping from
the radio. Now there's
gargling.

STEVE

(off)

Gggggggggg, gggggggggggg, gggg, ggg...

(huge gulp)

I can't believe I just told you my deepest darkest secret. Oh,
Agatha, you won't tell another soul will ya?

AGATHA

(off)

Oh, don't worry, fella, your secret's safe with me. The day I
tell another person

(gargling)

"ggggggggg, gggggggggggg, gggg, ggg..."

(gulp)

Is the day someone actually wants to be my friend!

STEVE

(off)

Oh, thank goodness. That'll never happen.

The Miller kids burst out
laughing again. Nanna
grins. Ruth gets up and
switches the radio off.
The kids protest.

GEORGIE

Hey! It wasn't over yet!

SUZY

Mom!

RUTH

This is just nonsense. Go read a book or something.

Ruth grabs a small laundry
basket full of clean clothes
off the floor and exits.
The kids start to grab
books until Nanna switches
the radio back on.

AGATHA

(off)

Say, Steve? Can you give me a boost? I can't reach this top
shelf.

STEVE

(off)

Come over here and I'll give it a try.

Through the radio we hear
a big boom, boom, boom -
like a herd of elephants
crossing the room. The
kids cup their hands over
their mouths trying to
stifle their giggles.
Nanna puts her finger to
lips to shush them.

AGATHA

(off)

C'mon, Steve. Give it all you got. Can't you lift lil lo' me?
I'm just a dainty 300 pounds.

STEVE

(off)

Is that all? Well, I can only bench 299.

A big long belch comes
from the radio. The
children are amused.

STEVE

(off)

I can't imagine why you don't have any friends.

AGATHA

(off)

That oughta do it. Now try.

There's a crash, bang,
boom of Agatha walking
across the room coming
from the radio.

AGATHA

(off)

Just a little higher!

STEVE

(off)

(muffled)

Mrrrrr, mrrrr, mrrrr ssss.

Georgie turns to Suzy.

GEORGIE

What's happening?

SUZY

I don't know. I think she's standing on his face. Shhh.

AGATHA

(off)
Now, let's see...

STEVE

(off)
(muffled)
Huwwwy, mah jaw is bwaking.

AGATHA

(off)
Oh, that's right. I don't keep my purse up here.

A big boom from Agatha
stepping off Steve comes
from the radio. The Miller
kids are cracking up.
Nanna quickly switches off
the radio.

NANNA

You better read your books now. Here comes your mother.

The kids quickly pick up
their books - Georgie's is
upside down. Ruth enters
with a pitcher of lemonade
and sets it on the table.
She grabs Georgie's book
and flips it around for
him.

RUTH

Nanna, I do wish you wouldn't let them listen to that program.
It fills their heads with filth.

GEORGIE

Aw, mom. It's funny. Agatha is big and fat and has no friends.
And Steve is kinda normal but always tries to help her -

SUZY

But he always ends up hurt or something. Besides, it's Nanna's
favorite show.

Nanna shrugs with a little
smirk.

GEORGIE

Mama?

RUTH

Yes, dear?

GEORGIE

How come you don't have any friends? You're not fat like Agatha the Ugly.

Nanna looks down at her
knitting to avoid Ruth's
stink eye.

RUTH

Well, Georgie. Daddy was my best friend. And I have you and Nanna and Suzy. And that's exactly what is wrong with that program: it's teaching you to judge a book by its cover.

GEORGIE

But, mama, I wasn't even reading my book.

SUZY

Georgie, she doesn't mean your actual book.

GEORGIE

Oh. I'll be your friend, mama. As long as I can hear you sing again. Won't you sing to me like you used to?

RUTH

I don't feel much like singing, sweetie. Now run along you two and go get ready for bed.

Crossfade to the radio
studio where Agatha and
Steve have just wrapped up
their show.

STEVE

Nice work, Aggie. I wasn't sure if that last bit was gonna work, but you pulled it off perfect.

AGATHA

Oh yeah? You're not so bad yourself.

STEVE

Say, my mom saved us some pot roast if you wanna come by for a bite. Then one of the guys from my apartment building is having some people over. Should be a real hoot.

Steve and Aggie turning
off switches on the radio
board. They both stand up
and start gathering their
things.

AGATHA

No, thanks. I'm just going to grab a deli sandwich and go home and take a nice quiet bubble bath. Yes, that's just what I need.

STEVE

(disappointed)
Aw, Aggie. Why do you do this to yourself?

AGATHA

Do what?

STEVE

Hide.

AGATHA

Why would you say such a thing? Hiding. I'm right here, right in front of ya.

STEVE

That's not what I mean. Ever since...
(beat)

Nevermind.

Agatha sits back down,
sullen.

AGATHA

You know me almost as well as he did. I suppose one of these days I'll listen to ya. I'll get back out there and be around people. Any people.

(she gives a playful smile)

Even the likes of you if I'm desperate.

STEVE

Atta kid. Enjoy your bubble bath and I'll see you tomorrow for rehearsal.

Agatha exits. Steve goes
over to the phone on the
wall.

STEVE

Yeah, operator? Get me Mildred Baker.
(beat)

Hi, ma. Yeah, it'll be just me for dinner.
(beat)

No, I didn't say something stupid.
(beat)

Please don't invite Mrs. Gladwin's daughter.
(beat)

Yes, I know there aren't many other fish in the sea left at my age.

He hangs up the phone.

STEVE

No fish as lovely as that one.

Crossfade back to the
Millers' living room.
Nanna and Ruth sit and
have coffee together at
the table.

NANNA

You may never love anyone again the way you loved my son, but you really should join a group or something. Be with people.

RUTH

I am with people. I have you guys.

NANNA

Other people. Frankly, I get sick of you guys.

RUTH

(playful)

Oh, Nanna! I thought you loved me as your daughter-in-law!

NANNA

Why do you think I go out to my bridge club, Bible study and Help from the Home Front volunteer group?

RUTH

You stop it. How about this? How about I go visit my old pal, Sal at the deli and get us some coffee cake to go with this coffee?

NANNA

It doesn't count if you have to pay them to hang out with you.

Ruth grabs her coat and
purse.

RUTH

Oh, but what fine friends to have - we'll never be without sweet treats and deli sandwich meats!

Nanna waves her off as she
exits. Crossfade to Sal's
Deli. Agatha sits at a
table, picking at her coffee
cake - she looks bored.
Sal is cleaning up for
closing time. He looks up
as Ruth enters the deli.

SAL

How's my favorite customer this evening?

She smiles and gives him a
little wave.

SAL

I've just about got everything wrapped up and put away, but we have a few slices of upside down cake left, oh, and cinnamon coffee crumb cake.

RUTH

Oh, that sounds delightful, Sal. Do you mind if I eat a slice here? Nanna is driving me crazy!

SAL

In-laws, huh. What'ya gonna do, eh?

He hands her a plate and
fork with the cake on it
along with a box to go.
She hands him the money.

RUTH

Thanks, Sal.

Ruth sits at the table
next to Agatha's and takes
a bite. Agatha stirs
uncomfortably in her chair
and looks right at Ruth.

AGATHA

(quietly)
You're lucky to have in-laws.

Ruth looks up and looks
around, not sure if she
really heard someone
talking. She makes eye
contact with Agatha.

RUTH

I'm sorry. Did you say something?

AGATHA

I just said how lucky you are to even have in-laws.

Ruth takes a deep breath,
not knowing what to say.

AGATHA

I'm sorry. That was rude of me.

RUTH

No, no. You're right. I am truly lucky to have my mother-in-law. It's just another person to tell me how I should be feeling and acting.

(MORE)

RUTH (CONT'D)

(beat)

I'm sorry. I won't bore you with my silly life. A girl like you should have her pick of in-laws.

AGATHA

(defensive)

What d'ya mean "a girl like me?" Huh?

SAL

Ooo-wee. Them are fightin' words. I'm outta here.

He grabs an empty tray and
exits with it.

RUTH

I didn't mean anything by it. I just meant that you're so pretty. I bet men are falling at your feet.

AGATHA

It's just not that simple. I have standards, see? I want a man who respects me for my personality. One who will listen to me. Truly listen. Even if I'm just telling him about what I had for breakfast, see. A man who doesn't expect me to cook if I don't want to and he'll do the wash once in awhile. But most of all, I want a man who loves me unconditionally.

RUTH

I'm afraid there is no such man. That man doesn't exist-

AGATHA

Not anymore, he doesn't. I had all that.
(she weeps)
He's gone. This stupid war took him from me.

Ruth gets up and goes to
Agatha's table. She puts
her arm around her.

RUTH

I lost mine too. It'll never be the same, will it?

Agatha looks up, wipes her
face and starts laughing
uncontrollably. Ruth
withdraws her arm from
around Agatha and tenses
up.

RUTH

I beg your pardon?

AGATHA

I'm sorry. I don't mean to laugh. This is the first time I've cried about it.

Ruth relaxes.

RUTH

That fresh, huh?

AGATHA

That's the thing. It's been two years!

RUTH

How long were you married?

AGATHA

We weren't. We were engaged. The wedding was three years comin'.

RUTH

Mine was like that too. I couldn't get him to pin down a date.

Agatha dabs her tears and
blows her nose.

AGATHA

Well, he set a few dates. I am the one that never committed. And now he's dead. I'm such an ugly person. You see, looks don't matter none.

Sal comes back out.

SAL

Say, ladies. I got to lock it up.

Ruth gives Sal the "just a
moment sign" by holding up
her index finger.

RUTH

You couldn't have known. None of us can know.

They stand up and put their
coats back on.

AGATHA

I suppose that's so.

(Forcing a smile)

I'd love to hear about your husband.

SAL

Another time, ladies. Please.

RUTH
Alright, Sal. We'll get out of your hair. And I'd love to hear about your three year engagement.

AGATHA
(She smiles)
Tomorrow then?

RUTH
It's a date.
(extending her hand)
Ruth.

They shake hands lightly.

AGATHA
Aggie.

They exit together.

SAL
Women.

END SCENE

ACT I

SCENE 2

Scene

The Miller's living room, the radio studio and a local deli.

Time

November, 1944.

AT RISE: The Miller's living room where Nanna, Suzy and Georgie sit at the table eating dinner.

SUZY
Can we listen to the "Agatha the Ugly" radio show after dinner?

NANNA
It's not on tonight, dear. Even if it were, your mom doesn't really approve of it.

SUZY
That never stops you from listening!

NANNA

(She winks)

I can't help it if you just so happen to be in the room from time to time. Georgie, finish up your greens there.

GEORGIE

Aww, Nanna, do I have to?

NANNA MILLER

Yes. You want to grow up big and strong like your daddy was don't ya?

She touches his little nose with her finger and gives him a sincere smile.

GEORGIE

Alright. But I'm not gonna like it!

He takes a bite and chews with a sour face. Suzy switches on the radio.

ANNOUNCER

(off)

The USS Intrepid has been hit by kamikazes again for the third time. There were 60 found dead and it is estimated that 15 are still missing. Another 100 are wounded.

Suzy switches off the radio right away and sits back down at the table.

SUZY

Sorry. I just don't want to think of the other 60 families that will never be the same again.

NANNA

Oh, sweetie. I know. We all miss him. We're still the Miller family and your daddy, my brave son, will always be a part of that.

Georgie pushes his veggies around on his plate.

SUZY

It's not that. I mean, I miss dad and all. It's just...
(trails off)

NANNA

Your mom?

SUZY

Yes. She's so different now. She used to be so, so...full of life. She was more -

GEORGIE

Fun!

SUZY

Yeah, she would get dressed up so pretty in her cocktail dresses. She would let me help her pick out her shoes.

GEORGIE

She would play catch with me...in the house! Now she makes me go outside.

NANNA

Well, that's just being a good mother. She still takes great care of you at least. I remember during World War I, after my friend Sally's dad died, her mom just locked herself in her room. Sally and her brother had to figure out how to feed themselves.

(Chuckles)

And bathe themselves. Once the kids at school started catching a whiff of them, they learned why they used to be forced to take baths.

GEORGIE

(Chuckling)

Yeah, I don't like baths. But I don't want the kids to laugh at me either.

NANNA MILLER

You and all the other little boys of the world. Speaking of baths.

GEORGIE

I know. I'm going, I'm going.

Georgie hops up from the table and exits. Nanna stacks the dinner plates as she talks to Suzy.

NANNA

Your mom's problem is that she won't grieve properly. She won't let herself have any fun because she feels guilty that she's alive. She thinks she's just grateful to be alive, but...

SUZY

She's not livin'. Not like she was. It's not just the singing, she never even talks about him.

NANNA

I noticed that too. I've buried a husband and now two sons and life does go on. Our choice is how we want to live it.

(MORE)

NANNA (CONT'D)

We can honor their memory still and I believe your mom is honoring your father by taking such wonderful care of you and your brother. But she's not honoring him by becoming a lonely old spinster!

SUZY

(surprised and amused)

Nanna!

NANNA

Well, it's true.

SUZY

You're right though. She's starting to remind me of that lady down the hall with all the cats. The other day, when I was coming home from school, I actually thought that was mom ahead of me on the stairs. I called out, "Mom, mom" and when she turned around it was the cat lady - yikes!

NANNA

Well, she'll snap out of it. Hopefully. She has been wanting to run errands down at the deli more lately. She's itchin' to get out of the house, so that's a sign of the old Ruth comin' back.

Suzy jumps up, excited.

SUZY

You don't think she has the hots for that deli guy, do ya?

NANNA MILLER

Sal? Oh, my no. It's just a place she has always gone.

(She has an epiphany)

I mean, could she?

Crossfade to the deli where Ruth and Agatha sit together at a table. They are having coffee and biscuits. Sal looks on from behind the deli counter as he works.

AGATHA

It sure is funny running into you again here.

RUTH

Yeah, I usually need to get out of the house at least a little. You say you come here every night too?

AGATHA

(She nods)

Wild right? Never ran into you.

RUTH

Well, I used to put a little more effort into getting ready. Perhaps you saw a less tired and sexier version of me.

Sal drops something behind the counter. Agatha and Ruth turn to him. He waves sheepishly and gets back to pretending to clean.

AGATHA

Sal remembers.

RUTH

(Changing the subject)

Tell me about your fiance. How did you meet?

AGATHA

It's really kind of stupid actually...

Crossfade to the radio studio. Where Benji waits for Agatha in front of the microphone. He fiddles with the equipment.

AGATHA

(off)

I was running late for a small spot on a radio show I was doing at the time. He was

RUTH

(off)

Oh, I can see that now! Radio must've been a good fit for you!

AGATHA

(off)

Yeah. There Benji was, sitting there all smug like owned the place. This irritated me, but also made me a little crazy, if you know what I mean.

RUTH

(off)

Oh, how we do like our bad boys.

Agatha enters the studio in a different dress than she had on at the deli. She hasn't noticed Benji in the chair yet. She whistles while she hangs up her coat and bag. Benji whistles along.

She stops and looks around,
he had swiveled the chair
around so she can't see
him.

AGATHA

Hello?

She goes to sit in the
chair and nearly has a
heart attack when she sees
someone there.

AGATHA

(Shrieking)

Oh, my word! Who the heck are you?

She falls backward into
the chair.

BENJI

Woah, girl, we've only just met. I'm looking for something more
proper, see.

AGATHA

Eek, get off me!

BENJI

Why, I'm not on you. You seem to have pinned me down.

AGATHA

You know what I mean. Scoot the chair back so I can get up.
I'll scream!

BENJI

You already are screaming.

AGATHA

Oh, you.

She hauls off and clocks
him. She finally frees
herself and stands up.

BENJI

What'd you go and sucker-punch me for?

AGATHA

Why, sir, I am a lady. And you, you hooligan, did not treat me
like a lady.

BENJI

It was purely an accident, I swear. Well, maybe I didn't mind
having all your weight killing the feeling in my leg.

AGATHA

(Growling)
You callin' me fat? Ooooooh, why I oughtta...

She notices the board by
the microphone as it lights
up. Agatha runs over to
it.

AGATHA

Oh, no. We were on the air the whole time!

BENJI

(into the microphone)
Oh, good. Then let the world be a witness to the fact that I
want to take this horribly rude, heavy and scary woman out to a
proper dinner.

AGATHA

(Yelling, angry)
I accept. You awful, smug, and not even that attractive man!
(Calm)
Now, if you excuse me, I have to go tell my boss what happened
and probably resign.

She exits, leaving Benji
there sprung like a dog in
heat.

AGATHA

(off)
And so it was hate...And love at first sight.

Crossfade back to the deli.
Where Ruth and Agatha are
still sitting. Agatha is
back in her current dress.

AGATHA

I'm sorry. I've been rambling on. You must be bored to pieces.

RUTH

No, that is a great story! It's whimsical. Did you end up getting
fired?

AGATHA

Oh no! Quite the opposite. That was the beginning of the Agatha
the Ugly radio show.

RUTH

Wait, you're...? Aggie, Agatha. Oh, Lord! That's funny. I
didn't even get the connection.

AGATHA

I'm glad. That's one of the things I like about you. Most people just try to show me how...

(air quotes)

"Talented they are" because they should

(air quotes again)

"be on the show." Boy, there are a lot of nincompoops out there. Anyhow, since we were on-air the whole time, it turns out the listeners loved it! Until, Benji enlisted and went off to war. They replaced him with Steve.

RUTH

Before you go on, I have to confess something. I won't let my kids listen to your program. My mother-in-law never misses it though.

Agatha stirs her coffee as
she thinks a moment.

AGATHA

I always wondered what it is that people don't like about the program.

RUTH

(Uncomfortable)

Well, it's not that bad, really. It's just since my husband died, my only job is to raise these kids as best I can. And I want them to be proper and polite. It's just the belching and the -

AGATHA

(Interrupting)

I see, it's considered offensive to those of you who were lucky enough to have that time with your husband and carry on his legacy with his children. I should go.

Agatha gets up and hands
Sal some money.

AGATHA

Thanks, Sal. That should cover both of our tabs.

RUTH

I didn't mean to be rude.

Agatha exits. Ruth gathers
her things.

SAL

I beg your pardon, Ruth, I couldn't help but overhear. She'll come around. If she's not being funny, she's busy being angry. It's the only emotions those comedienne's know how to use, see.