



Tis Better To Be Vile
Than Vile Esteem'd

by Terry Dugan
a comedy in 1 act

“Tis Better To Be Vile Than Vile Esteem’d”
By Terry Dugan
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Published by: Self (and proud of it)**

Tis Better To Be Vile Than Vile Esteem’d
ROBERT, man seeking a promotion
AMY, wife of ROBERT
EUGENE, CEO of Happy Helper Toilet Supply Company
DONNA, dinner date of EUGENE
ANDREA, a homeless person with multiple-personality disorder
TED, paranoid husband of ANDREA

Setting: *ROBERT and AMY’s home. Most of the action takes place at their dining table and small kitchen.*

Scene 1

Amy Gladstone is making preparations for a dinner. Robert, her husband, enters with an unmade tie around his neck.

AMY: What we need is a divorce.

ROBERT: What was that?

AMY: I said, “Of course.” Of course I’ll help. College graduate can’t tie his own tie. That’s what you get when you major in helplessness.

ROBERT: If you’ll recall, I majored in being miserable, then I married you. At least I’m doing something with my education.

AMY: Mr. Westin called while you were in the shower. He’s an hour away, which gives us enough time to break in my new nightie.

ROBERT: Break it into what?

AMY: Then we can go back to arguing for the remaining 57 minutes.

ROBERT: I have a lot on my mind and none of those things is sex with you.

AMY: You know how to make a girl feel special.

ROBERT: Get over it. If I don’t get this promotion, I don’t know what I’m going to do.

AMY: You meant “we.”

ROBERT: Yeah, that's what I said. Focus.

AMY: Well I'm sorry for trying to distract you with my ferocious vagina.

ROBERT: It's not that distracting.

AMY: It's this uncontrollable, hungry animal. It needs fed, Robert. It'll eat anything at this stage, even your dick.

ROBERT: Fasting was good enough for Jesus.

AMY: So was getting nailed to a cross.

ROBERT: I don't get it.

AMY: I cook for you, look after the dog and pretend to be interested in your career, and when I want something once every 10 weeks, you cast me away.

ROBERT: Burning is not the same as cooking. The dog was run over two years ago-

AMY: Those ashes aren't going to walk themselves-

ROBERT: And you pretend very poorly. I'd say you weren't this nuts when we got married, but you were.

AMY: You have no class.

ROBERT: This coming from a person who brought a date to her own sister's funeral.

AMY: Well, you didn't have to go.

ROBERT: "Robert, would you mind if we made one little stop on our way to the show?"

AMY: So what if you were underdressed. I didn't want to go by myself. Did you ever stop to consider how I felt, sitting through "Hair" in a black dress and veil? People thought I was planted in the audience. *(AMY goes to the kitchen and brings 2 plates to the table as ROBERT speaks.)*

ROBERT: You didn't have to stand up and join in the singing.

AMY: *(Upon return)* Sometimes you just gotta go with it and spread the sunshine. *(Goes to the kitchen for 2 more plates.)*

ROBERT: You could have sang the right lyrics, or learned the right lyrics the 14th time you heard the line.

AMY: *(Upon return)* I'm sorry for not being a perfectionist.

ROBERT: What the hell is this?

AMY: What the hell is what?

ROBERT: Why are you setting four places at the table?

AMY: Mr. Westin said he was bringing a date.

ROBERT: A date to a business dinner?

AMY: Yeah, that's what he said. *(Goes to the kitchen for 2 more plates.)*

ROBERT: OK. No problem. Maybe you two can chat while we're talking about my- *(AMY returns with 2 more plates.)* What the hell is this!

AMY: When he called, he asked if he could bring a couple guests.

ROBERT: And you said yes?

AMY: What was I supposed to tell the man you want to marry? No?

ROBERT: When were you going to tell me about this?

AMY: I wasn't because I knew this is how you'd get, and I know you're trying to "focus."

ROBERT: Well, I am fucked.

AMY: That makes one of us. *(Blackout)*

Scene 2

The doorbell rings. Lights go up when AMY answers the door. EUGENE enters with DONNA. ROBERT is surprised and not happy to see DONNA.

EUGENE: *(Grabbing AMY and swinging her around)* WHOA HO HO WHOW!! *(Put his hand on AMY's ass and French kisses her.)* You must be Bobby's wife. I can't tell you how happy I am to meet you. Bobby, my boy! There's my boy wonder! *(Shakes ROBERT's hand.)*

ROBERT: Hello, Mr. Westin.

EUGENE: Whoa. What is that?

ROBERT: Is this a quiz?

EUGENE: *(Letting loose a disproportionate laugh)* Oh Amy, your little tiger has the most wonderful sense of humor.

AMY: Just makes you want to roll in the aisles, hit your head and kill yourself.

EUGENE: Come on, Bobby. We're not in the office. Call me Eugene.

ROBERT: Thank you, Mr. Eugene Westin.

EUGENE: *(Another hearty laugh)* Oh my God! Stop it! Save some for desert. Hey, I want you two to meet a most lovely woman. Amy and Bobby Gladstone, meet...

DONNA: Donna Moorehead.

EUGENE: Yes, Donna!

DONNA: A pleasure, I'm sure.

EUGENE: Donna works on the 14th floor in research. What is it that you're working on right now?

DONNA: A new abrasive non-abrasive toilet cleaner.

EUGENE: Sounds brilliant!

ROBERT: Did you have any trouble finding our place?

EUGENE: Not at all, my great-grandfather was part Apache Indian. GPS is for the white man.

AMY: Didn't you say on the phone you had two more guests?

EUGENE: Ah, yes. They said they'd come inside once they finished looking through your trash. *(AMY and ROBERT kink their necks to the side quickly to look toward the window.)* I met them today at the train station, and they're just great. They make me laugh and funny people are always good people to laugh at. Tell me Amy, what are we having for dinner tonight?

AMY: Well, I thought about cutting up certain parts of Robert's anatomy and serving them in a nice white sauce, but I thought you'd much rather have Chicken Kiev.

EUGENE: You two are hilarious! And you remembered that I told you I wanted Chicken Kiev to eat. "Memory, the warder of the brain." That's Shakespeare.

AMY: You read Shakespeare?

EUGENE: A CEO isn't just a man of letters, but he must be a man of words. *(Takes a book out of his pocket and will read from it.)* So I carry around the Pocket Shakespeare for CEOs: The bard's greatest quotes pertaining to the business world. "How holily he works in all his business, And with what zeal!", "To business that we love we rise betime, and go to 't with delight", "He shall but bear them as the ass bears gold, to groan and sweat under the business."

AMY: If you're looking for a great ass, look no further than my husband. *(Doorbell rings. AMY and ROBERT look at each other tentatively before AMY answers the door. As soon as the door opens, TED spurts inside and braces himself against the wall.)* Hello?

ANDREA: *(Imitating Marilyn Monroe)* Miss Holiday, a pleasure. And

this must be Mr. Holiday. *(She acts seductively toward ROBERT)* Are you a good boy, Mr. Holiday?

ROBERT: Oh my Christ. *(She goes in to give him a kiss. TED violently moves on him.)*

TED: Hey! Are you moving in on my girl?

ROBERT: I hope not.

ANDREA: C'mon Teddy. I was only being nice to him, besides... *(She whispers in TED's ear.)*

TED: You're right, he does look impotent. *(Stretches out his hand for a shake.)* No hard feelings.

ROBERT: Sure Ted.

TED: *(Pulls ROBERT's arm)* How'd you know my name? Tell me how you fucking know my name!

ROBERT: She said it! She said it! She said it!

TED: So she did. *(Lets go of his arm)* Nice to meet you, I'm Ted. She's Andrea, no matter what she tells you. Listen, pal, you ever had to shit so bad, you thought it was going to come out your gut?

ROBERT: No.

TED: Like, your belly button was going to rip open in a violent shit storm, raining down on everyone around you?

ROBERT: Can't say that I-

TED: Jesus Christ. I'm trying to ask you if you got a toilet around here. What kind of fucking host are you? I already told you I was going to explode shit all over the place, and we're still talking?

ROBERT: Through the kitchen! Through the kitchen. *(TED exits)*

AMY: Maybe we should eat.

ROBERT: And keep our mouths as full as possible. *(AMY goes to the kitchen to start bringing the food to the table and serves chicken on everyone's plate. EUGENE escorts ANDREA to her seat. DONNA and ROBERT talk near the door.)* What are you doing here?

DONNA: Nice to see you again, too, you dirtbag.

ROBERT: Nice tits, who bought those for you?

DONNA: Certainly wasn't you, was it?

ROBERT: I want you out of here now. Make your phone ring. Make something come up.

DONNA: Oh, forgot to tell you, we're not fucking anymore, and you can't tell me what to do. Your place is a shithole, by the way.

ROBERT: So now you're whoring yourself out to old men for money.

DONNA: And you're not?

ROBERT: Uh, no. I'm trying to get a legitimate promotion.

DONNA: Oh, really. How did your wife react when you told her we had an affair?

ROBERT: How did... Are you that obsessed with me that you'd arrange to come here and destroy me?

DONNA: Arrange? Don't flatter yourself. This is just the happiest coincidence of my life. But while we're here, you can tell her, or I can tell her.

ROBERT: You're bluffing.

DONNA: Enjoy your last meal, mother fucker.

AMY: *(As she's dishing out the last bit of chicken)* Hey you two, dinner's ready. *(DONNA and ROBERT sit down)* Where is-

ROBERT: Ted.

AMY: Ted?

ROBERT: He said he had to use the bathroom.

AMY: OK, we'll wait a bit then. (*Blackout. Pause. Light comes back up, with no Ted. Blackout again. Pause. Light comes back up.*) Maybe he fell in. (*EUGENE laughs. Blackout again. The lights come back up.*)

ROBERT: Maybe we should – (*TED appears, goes to sit down.*) Ah, OK, we're ready now.

TED: I wouldn't go in there if I were you.

EUGENE: Ah, my good boy, that's where you're mistaken as I'm assuming the Gladstones are using one of my wonderful bathroom Scent Bombs.

ROBERT: Yes, sir!

EUGENE: With Scent Bombs, there's no gaseous fallout. You never have to worry about following someone into the toilet again. Our slogan is "Scent Bombs: Like someone bombed your bathroom, but in a nice way." That slogan barely edged out: "Scent Bombs: Don't let it smell like someone died in your bathroom." I'm not sure why we always sell more during wartime, but I like it. More war for us, I say.

TED: Why don't you go in there?

EUGENE: So, let's eat, huh?

AMY: Would you like to say the blessing for the meal, Eugene?

EUGENE: I'd be delighted. And all this time I thought you two were Jewish. Let us pray. Dear father in heaven, we ask your blessing for this wonderful meal I requested. We ask that you bless the Gladstones for all the things they do for me. And, while you're at it, if you could bless the opening of our new home lobotomy line of products, I would greatly appreciate it. Ha, ha. Seriously, bless it. And bless us all in all the things we do in your name-

TED: (*Picks up his fork and stabs the chicken on his plate*) Aaaaaahhhhhhh!!!! It moved! (*Gets off his chair and backs away*) It moved!! It was walking off my plate.

EUGENE: That must have been one amazing shit you took, Teddy my boy.

ANDREA: Teddy, you're making a sceney-weenie. (*TED sits and says, "Amen." Then everyone else says "Amen" and starts eating*)

TED: I think I pulled a muscle in my wrist when I killed that chicken. You sure that chicken was dead when you cooked it?

AMY: Positive.

ROBERT: What a terrible host Amy is, would anyone like some wine?

ANDREA: Does it have bubbles?

ROBERT: If it doesn't, I'll put dish soap in it and stir it with my finger.

ANDREA: OK, I'll take some.

TED: Is it poisoned?

ROBERT: Eugene?

EUGENE: (*Pulls a flask from his pocket*) No thanks. I brought my own.

ROBERT: Amy, can you help? (*They leave to the kitchen.*)

AMY: What?

ROBERT: That woman Eugene brought. She's a lesbian.

AMY: How do you mean, like I've seen her before being a lesbian or the lesbian scent from her is so strong I must be clogged not to recognize?

EUGENE: The flask is the CEO's safety valve.

ROBERT: Well, just look at her with her short hair. She's not wearing a bra.

AMY: Oh please!

EUGENE: *(Pulls out his book)* "Thy wit, that ornament to shape and love, misshapen in the conduct of them both, like powder in a skillless soldier's flask, to set a-fire by thine own ignorance, and thou dismember'd with thine own defence."

ROBERT: OK, listen, she used to work on my floor, and one day I walked into the copy room and-

AMY: She was making copies of her ass.

ROBERT: A woman was eating her pussy as she was making copies of her ass.

DONNA: What does that even mean?

EUGENE: Whiskey is the best defense for ignorance.

AMY: Look at me, not caring about this. Let's go!

ROBERT: Just try to say something nice about me. *(AMY groans)*

EUGENE: And I say, "You can sucketh that, dear Shakespeare." *(ROBERT and AMY re-enter.)* You were getting the wine, boy. *(ROBERT hangs his head and exits.)*

AMY: You know, Mr. Westin, Eugene, working for your company has been Robert's dream come true. He's loves what he does and has devoted so much time to it, sometimes I don't see him for days. *(ROBERT smiles in the kitchen as he starts unscrewing the cork.)*

EUGENE: Sounds like bullshit. I like it.

DONNA: There sure is something special about him. *(Realizing he's in trouble, ROBERT unscrews faster.)*

EUGENE: How's that, my sweet-smelling accessory?

DONNA: Hard to explain. I guess some people just have that aura, where they touch you on the inside – somewhere, anywhere- *(ROBERT abruptly enters and says, "OK!" Ted is shocked, screams and ducks under the table)*

EUGENE: You OK, Teddy?

TED: Just testing the floor.

EUGENE: You know, Bobby my boy, Dorothy-

DONNA: Donna.

EUGENE: Donna here says that you have an aura of influence on people.

ROBERT: Oh, I really wouldn't say influence. Actually, I wouldn't believe anything she says.

DONNA: Come on, Robert, are you telling me that you don't influence others? Or is it that you influence when you want to influence?

ANDREA: I think I was influenced once. *(TED reappears.)*

TED: Yeah, you drank too much at The Four Seasons when we were in New York. In New York, you'd be god damn sure people kill their food before it's cooked.

EUGENE: I think this food is wonderful! You know, Bobby, people who are influential and can change people's lives have a great future ahead of them.

DONNA: He's certainly changed my outlook on life.

EUGENE: And we've been here, what, 10 minutes? Good show, my boy.

DONNA: Actually, we used to be very close, oops, I mean, work very closely together.

EUGENE: You don't say. How do you do it, my boy?

ROBERT: I just try to be myself.

DONNA: You sure do.

AMY: Chicken! More chicken, anyone?

ANDREA: *(In an Australian accent)* We ain't got a lotta chickens in the Outback. We ever need some food, we just peg a boar and roast away.

TED: Well, welcome back Olivia Newton-Fuckin' John. Why didn't you stay in Australia where you belong?

ANDREA: It ain't Olivia, you wanker. Me name is Dot.

EUGENE: Aren't they great!

AMY: Robert.

ROBERT: Kitchen?

AMY: Kitchen.

ANDREA: See ya on the backside, mate. *(ROBERT and AMY go to kitchen.)*

EUGENE: That must be one amazing kitchen.

TED: They're probably plotting against me right now. *(To ANDREA)* Try this wine. See if it kills you.

AMY: When were you going to tell me about your "influencing" of Donna?

ROBERT: I don't know what she's talking about.

TED: I think I'm choking. No, no really. I think I am.

AMY: You two are close, huh, but you never thought of mentioning her name before?

DONNA: Why's that?

ROBERT: I'm telling you, I don't know what she's talking about.

TED: I don't know. I've never choked before.

AMY: Are you having an affair with her?

TED: I definitely think I'm choking now.

ROBERT: Of course I'm not. She's a lesbian.

ANDREA: I once knew a mate that had a whole 'roo arm stuck in his throat.

EUGENE: Amazing. How'd he get it out?

ANDREA: He didn't. He croaked two minutes later.

ROBERT: Can we talk about this later? I want to get through this dinner, and I'm not in the mood to deal with your crazy mind right now.

DONNA: How'd he get the bone in his throat?

ANDREA: We wagered him \$50 he couldn't pound it down his mouth with a hammer.

AMY: You, you, you! Everything about you I feel like I'm not even a part of your world.

DONNA: And he did it?

ANDREA: Wouldn't you?

TED: Can you see breath coming into my mouth? I can't see it or feel it.

ROBERT: You don't know how to be included.

TED: I think I'm going to pass out. Yep. *(Passes out on table. Blackout)*

Scene 3

After dinner, still at the table. EUGENE is feeling a bit tipsy at this point. Both he and Andrea are chomping on cigars. ANDREA has taken on the personality of a war veteran.

EUGENE: Normandy: 1944. The day the Earth stood still.

ANDREA: And we were there.

EUGENE: Company B.

ANDREA: Fighting Nazi scum till our hands bled.

EUGENE: Except for those who used guns.

ANDREA: Pussies.

EUGENE: Pussies. That's where I learned to be a powerful CEO, where you've got two choices: fight or die. It's war, war in the world, war in business. What's the difference between Nazi's and my competitors who want to displace my products in your bathrooms and your cat's litter box?

ANDREA: Nothing.

EUGENE: Damn right. Nothing. *(Fumbles with his book.)* "A victory is twice itself when the achiever brings home full numbers." We defeat them in war, we sell twice as many products. Even fruity Shakespeare knew that one.

ANDREA: Shakespeare never shot no gun!

EUGENE: I watched a lot of good men die in those movies.

TED: Watching war movies ain't the same as being there.

EUGENE: If you're patriotic enough, it is! I didn't need to be there to feel it, to feel what they went through. I don't need to shoot someone to know what it feels like to shoot a man. When you're as powerful as I am, you don't have experiences and emotions. You absorb them, like one of my sponges.

DONNA: I use your bathroom sponge, and I just love it.

EUGENE: See what I'm saying, people. I've never used my sponge because I have a stable of servants, but listening to this beautiful, young, voluptuous woman...

DONNA: Donna.

EUGENE: Donna, I can feel how good my sponge is.

DONNA: I'm not sure I agree with you on feelings and experiences, Eugene. Maybe I'm an old-fashioned girl-

EUGENE: An old-fashioned girl with a great rack-

DONNA: But I like having experiences. I want to have emotions. Sometimes I don't like the way they make me feel, but I'd rather have them than see them.

EUGENE: I've got no time for them.

DONNA: And more than anything, I'd rather share them than keep them to myself. How about you, Amy? Do you like sharing emotions?

ROBERT: Just leave her alone, OK!

EUGENE: Whoa, tiger, she just asked her a question. You are certainly an attack dog, Bobby boy. *(Makes barking noises)*

AMY: I don't know.

DONNA: You don't know what?

AMY: I don't know what you're asking.

TED: *(As if AMY was deaf.)* Do you like sharing emotions?

AMY: Thank you, Ted.

ROBERT: We share everything together. Our feelings, our experiences,

our-

DONNA: I don't remember asking you anything.

AMY: *(Pauses)* Yes, I like to share.

DONNA: Do you share?

AMY: I've come to learn there are some things that can't be shared.

EUGENE: Boo! Answer the question.

AMY: Some things can't be shared. *(To DONNA)* For instance, I will never know what it's like to be a lesbian, but I don't think you'll share that experience with me.

EUGENE: Lesbian? YES!

DONNA: Lesbian? What makes you think I'm a lesbian?

AMY: Robert told me you were.

EUGENE: I'm having sex with a bisexual! *(ANDREA gives him the thumbs-up)*

DONNA: Surely, he didn't.

AMY: He told me how you and another girl were having oral sex on the copier at Robert's work.

EUGENE: I need to walk around the office more often.

DONNA: I think Robert is confused. He was giving me oral sex as I sat on the copier.

AMY: *(To ROBERT)* I can't believe you stared me right in the face, and you lied to me. I asked, "Are you having an affair with her?" and you said no.

ROBERT: But I'm not having an affair with her.

DONNA: We used to fuck, but we don't anymore, so technically he wasn't lying.

EUGENE: *(Pretends to look through his book)* "To thine own pussy be true." *(ANDREA, TED and EUGENE laugh.)*

AMY: You want to know if I like sharing emotions? Is that it?

DONNA: I just wanted you to share with you what a letch your husband is.

AMY: You want to know if I like to share experiences?

DONNA: Not really.

AMY: I wish I could share them, but some things can't be shared. Something happened to Robert and me, but to this day, we can't share it.

ROBERT: No one cares, Amy. No one cares about this.

AMY: I care. I care about this.

ROBERT: Well then just go ahead. Go ahead and tell them about the baby – it was born dead. Go ahead, cry your eyes out and tell them how I was never there for you after that and how I was always at work and how we don't have sex anymore. Go ahead, they're listening.

DONNA: Don't be an ass.

ROBERT: You weren't here; you can shut your mouth. You weren't here to see her holding her belly all day, crying day and night, praying for the baby to come back. She wouldn't get over it. She still can't get over it. How can someone be around that all day? *(To AMY)* How can you be like that all day! *(Away from AMY)* I've been through that once; I'm not going through that again.

AMY: You wouldn't even hold him.

ROBERT: It was dead.

AMY: Can't a woman speak of the child she's lost!

ROBERT: Speak, yes, do, that's all you do. Speak, please, tell anyone and everyone. Speak! But one would think that the more you speak about it, the sooner you'd get over it. But you just don't. You've taken up residence in the past. In a way, I'm glad he's dead. It showed me what kind of a person you really are.

DONNA: Don't talk to her like that.

ROBERT: Or what? You going to tell her we had an affair? You played all those cards. Now what do you have? You're as desperate and lonely as you were before. I would, just once, like to be with a woman who's normal – who can handle reality. I stop having sex with her, she goes crazy thinking about her dead baby. I stop having sex with you, you fuck old men and go get a boob job.

DONNA: Boob job? I had breast cancer.

ROBERT: Shit.

EUGENE: They're quite good.

AMY: You don't know how to speak to me. You close up and run away. A real husband would go with me to the grave.

ROBERT: Our life didn't end with a child we never spent three minutes with.

AMY: Yes it did, Robert. Yes it did. (**AMY exits out the front door.**)

TED: Boy, you know how to kill a fucking party. C'mon, we're leaving.

EUGENE: You two need a lift back to the train station?

TED: Nah. We'll be fine. We're going to fuck behind his trash cans and take it from there. (*Sarcastically*) Once again, thanks for a really great party. Come on Dot or Butch or whoever the fuck you are right now.

ANDREA: (*Acting like a British queen – to ROBERT*) And with this, I bid you adieu, sir knight. Whist I may be getting it on with the stable boy, you must always know that my heart is with you.

TED: (*As they leave out the door.*) You are so full of shit. (*As soon as the door is shut, they begin cartoonishly kissing and exit.*)

EUGENE: I just love them! They're great.

DONNA: It was really great seeing you again, Robert.

ROBERT: Why didn't you tell me you had cancer?

DONNA: Because when someone tells me they don't ever want to see me or hear from me again, I usually listen.

ROBERT: You could have sent a note.

DONNA: I could have. While I was looking for a birthday card for my mom, I did see a couple "I-know-you-said-you-hate-me-but-guess-what?-I-have-cancer" cards. Next time I have cancer, you'll be the first to know. Eugene, I'll be waiting in the car where I will give you a blow job. (*DONNA exits.*)

EUGENE: Boy, I love that Tina.

ROBERT: Donna.

EUGENE: Yes, Donna.

ROBERT: I wanted this night to be different.

EUGENE: No shit?

ROBERT: This, this is not who I really am.

EUGENE: I don't know who you are, Bobby my boy, but I know what I saw. In the span of one dinner, I saw a liar, an ass hole, an egotistical bastard, a heartless, selfish man. I can't help but have this feeling that you would love nothing more than taking someone's existence, their reason for being, and ripping it into shreds. I've never seen one man be such a destructive force toward the person he purportedly loves. I mean, what you did to her, I'm going to have nightmares about it. If Jesus met you, he probably would hate you. (*Pause*) You're exactly the man I need

to be at my right hand, to be my number-two in the toiletries industry. I don't want you to give me an answer now, but listen to me, Robert, you are CEO material – you showed that tonight, and more I might say. All the qualities you have, I need them in my business. Maybe you need to learn how to, you know, give off the appearance that you're likeable. But this all comes in time. You'll think about it, won't you? (*ROBERT nods. EUGENE heads toward exit and looks back from the door.*) 'Tis better to be vile than vile esteem'd. (*EUGENE exits. After a small pause, ROBERT shouts a celebratory "yes" for his promotion. Blackout.*)