**Happy Birthday, Wanda June**

**By: Kurt Vonnegut Jr.**

The opening of this play is "This is a simple-minded play about men who enjoy killing, and those who don't."

Big game hunter and war hero Harold Ryan returns home to America, after having been presumed dead for several years. During the war he killed over 200 men and women, and countless more animals — for sport. He was in the Amazon Rainforest hunting for diamonds with Colonel Looseleaf Harper, a slow-witted aviation hero who had the unhappy task of dropping the atomic bomb on Nagasaki. Harold finds that his wife Penelope has developed relationships with men very much unlike himself, including a vacuum salesman called Shuttle and a hippie doctor called Dr. Woodly, who later becomes Harold's foe. Harold also finds that his son, Paul, has been pampered and grown unmanly. Harold Ryan, the prolific killing machine, is very unsatisfied. It is set during 1960s America, and Harold feels the country has become weak, all the heroes have been replaced by intolerable pacifists, and that in post-war America there is no proper enemy for him to vanquish. This is the story of his tragic attempt to find one.

The "Wanda June" of the title is a young girl who died before she could celebrate her birthday. She was run over by an ice cream truck, but she is very pleased with her situation in Heaven, and feels that dying is a good thing and everyone in Heaven loves the person who sent them there. Her birthday cake was subsequently purchased by one of Penelope's lovers, for a celebration of Harold's birthday in his absence. Wanda June and several other deceased connections to Harold Ryan (including his ex-wife Mildred who drank herself to death because she could not stand Harold's premature ejaculation, and Major Von Koningswald, The Beast of Yugoslavia, Harold Ryan's most infamous victim) speak to the audience from Heaven, where Jesus Christ, Adolf Hitler, Albert Einstein, and Judas Iscariot are happily playing shuffleboard.