

# **THE FEARS OF HAROLD SHIVERS**

By Dawson Moore

PO Box 3505  
Valdez AK 99686  
907-255-5325  
dawsonguy@juno.com  
www.dawsonmoore.com

## *The Fears of Harold Shivers*

### The Characters

HAROLD THE YOUNGER: 20. Student. Afraid.

HAROLD THE OLDER: 36. Librarian. Afraid.

THE DEMON: 31. Demon.

THE MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER: 20. Student. Smart, awkward.

THE DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER OF HIS CHILD: 16. Daddy's girl.

### Costumes

Harold the Younger's clothes and those of The Mother of His Child should be from the 80s. Harold the Older dresses like a librarian trying to avoid notice. The Daughter of the Mother of His Child wears lots of friendly pastels. The Demon wears black.

### Set

Sparse. At rise, two chairs sit next to each other center stage, facing the audience

### Time

Harold the Younger's scenes are set in the mid-1980s.  
Scenes with Harold the Older are turn of the century.

*(In the darkness, ominous music plays. A spotlight rises center stage on the YOUNGER and OLDER, seated center stage. The YOUNGER rises.)*

THE YOUNGER

I am the real Harold Shivers.

*(The OLDER rises.)*

THE OLDER

I am the **real** Harold Shivers.

THE YOUNGER

I was caught beating a lame squirrel to death with a rock when I was five.

THE OLDER

I was caught beating a lame squirrel to death with a rock when I was five. How could he claim to be the definitive **me**? He's simply a stepping stone to what I have become.

THE YOUNGER

How could **he** claim to be the real me? It's not like there's been any growth. He is simply what has become of my remains.

*(The DEMON walks into the spotlight and looks at them. They tense up, and look to the audience for help. The DEMON turns to the audience.)*

DEMON

I am the real Harold Shivers.

*(They all stand in stillness for a moment... The DEMON suddenly makes a tiny lunge at the HAROLDS. They scream like little girls and cower.)*

Harold Shivers was caught beating a lame squirrel to death with a rock when he was five. A... **lame**... squirrel.

*(pause)*

It was my birthday.

*(The DEMON exits. Lights rise on the rest of the stage. The HAROLDS tentatively come forward, watching for the DEMON. They then speak to the audience, rarely interacting with each other.)*

THE YOUNGER

Have you ever been caught doing something you couldn't explain? "Why'd I do it? Um..."

THE OLDER

It's something that mostly happens to small children. No rational thought equals no explanation.

THE YOUNGER

It wasn't even family that caught me. It was a teenager. A girl. Very pretty.

THE OLDER

Very pretty. Beautiful.

*(to the YOUNGER)*

We'll never forget her.

THE YOUNGER

*(responding)*

Good to know. That's great.

*(back to audience)*

It was in our backyard, but we were right next to a large park we called the Plantation. It was huge.

THE OLDER

Very large, very wide open. A big hill running down the middle of it, open on one side for sledding in winter...

THE YOUNGER

...a giant wooded area on the back of it...

THE OLDER

...with caves and leaf-covered trails...

THE YOUNGER

Below it...

THE OLDER

...at the bottom of the hill...

THE YOUNGER

...was a bunch of trails through gardens or something—

THE OLDER

But who gives a crap about botany when they're five?

*(They share a macabre laugh, then resume frowning and speak to the audience again.)*

THE YOUNGER

The squirrel was limping along the imaginary line between my yard and the Plantation. But because I was five, I didn't understand that people could see through my imaginary line. One thing I still don't get... how the hell did a squirrel break its leg? A squirrel. Think about it! It would be hard.

THE OLDER

*(to the YOUNGER)*

I've actually figured it out.

THE YOUNGER

Really?

THE OLDER

God broke its leg to test us. And we failed. That's why this has been our life.

*(The two regard each other sadly, then turn back to the audience.)*

THE YOUNGER

And the squirrel's helplessness was like euphoria to me. I could argue that I did it to put it out of its misery...

THE OLDER

...I didn't...

THE YOUNGER

...or that I was too young to know what I was doing...

THE OLDER

I wasn't.

THE YOUNGER

But really, I just wanted to end its life.

THE OLDER

Yeah, I really did.

THE YOUNGER

I know it was wrong.

THE OLDER

I do.

*(The DEMON pokes his head in and shouts angrily at them.)*

DEMON

Hurry up! Show them the good stuff. Bring on the girls!

THE YOUNGER

*(obediently, to audience)*

College. My dorm room.

*(The DEMON exits. The YOUNGER rearranges the chairs into a couch and straightens up.)*

THE OLDER

The place was your usual cliché college pad, complete with uncomfortable furniture the college had bought cheap from prisons and bookshelves made from milk crates... look at me clean... Jesus. I'd managed to get my own place, no roommates, which was good. Gave me privacy. People weren't invited in. We'd have nice chats at my doorway, but I would leave them standing there while I got whatever they wanted to borrow and never return. Things changed when I met her. She was willing to have sex with me, and not dig too deep. She could come in.

*(The MOTHER enters and gives him a peck on the mouth, which he tries not to flinch from. The OLDER steps back watches the scene.)*

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

Susan's cancelled, so it's just you and me tonight.

THE YOUNGER

So what should I wear?

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

Whatever.

THE YOUNGER

I mean, is there a dress code or anything?

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

Harry, it's just a recital.

THE YOUNGER

Right. Of course. Tie, you think?

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

Sure.

THE YOUNGER

What are you going to wear?

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

Clothes.

THE YOUNGER

You're not going to help me out at all here, are you?

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

No, Harry. Wardrobe is a road you must walk alone.

THE YOUNGER

For better or worse.

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

That's how life is.

*(pause)*

Will you relax when you get there?

THE YOUNGER

Oh sure. Unless I've made some horrible mistake in my attire...

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

All right. Wear your blue shirt, and that sexy sexy paisley tie. Grey slacks. I'll wear something summery and hot and make you look very good.

THE YOUNGER

Was that so hard? I'm relaxing already. I'm sorry, I'm so rude, can I get you anything to drink? I've got water, diet coke, diet 7-Up, some orange juice... it's probably a little questionable. Scratch that, I'm not serving you my nasty old orange juice.

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

Do you have a beer?

THE YOUNGER

Um... are you a narc?

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

Damn you, Harry, I'm not a narc. And beer is not a narcotic.

THE YOUNGER

Okay then. Let me get you that beer.

*(The YOUNGER walks offstage. She looks after him.)*

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

Where are you going?

*(The YOUNGER reenters, opening a beer bottle.)*

THE YOUNGER

I keep it in the back of the toilet. The RAs in this place are crazy. They do surprise inspections of our refrigerators. They act like they're coming by to say hi, but invariably they say "Can I get a drink? Thanks." And they're in the fridge digging.

*(He looks at her looking at her beer.)*

Can I get you a glass?

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

That'd be nice. Please.

*(He exits. The OLDER steps forward.)*

THE OLDER

Here's the kicker to this pathetic display:

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

*(quietly)*

I love him?

*(pause)*

Yeah.

THE OLDER

*(laughing heartily)*

That's so sad!

THE YOUNGER

*(off)*

Do you have a glass preference? I've got a beer glass, but there're also mugs, travel mugs, rocks glasses...

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER*(yelling off to him)*

You are insane. And I mean that in a good way.

*(The YOUNGER enters with the glass and looks at her questioningly.)*

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER cont.

You're not like anyone I've ever met before... you're weird, hard to read sometimes... but you are so... generous. And you make me laugh. Sometimes. I... love you.

*(pause)*

Well, I just thought that should be said.

*(The YOUNGER turns and looks at the audience, morose.)*

THE YOUNGER

There is no one who scares me more than her right now.

*(The MOTHER exits.)*

THE OLDER*(to audience)*

This is yesterday.

*(calling offstage)*

Honey, I'm home!

THE YOUNGER

What're you, trying to be Ward Cleaver?

*(The DAUGHTER comes in carrying a backpack.)*

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

Welcome home, Daddy.

*(She gives him a big hug.)*

THE OLDER

You can just barely get around my big gut for a hug, I really need to get to a gym.

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

I love your belly. You're like a panda.

THE OLDER

Less fur.

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

Oh, you have fur, Daddy.

THE OLDER

I've been thinking of getting it waxed. What'd ya think, honey?

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

Oh, Daddy, no. No no no. Women think chest hair is sexy.

THE OLDER

What?

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

They do.

THE OLDER

I thought I just heard my daughter say I was sexy.

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

Not to me, Daddy. But other women. Older ones. I've been thinking, and I think I want a step-mother.

THE OLDER

Oh. Um... that's a very strange thing for you to want.

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

Well, I do. I think a woman in your life would be good for you.

THE OLDER

It's not that there aren't options... Miss Neider next door is always trying to start things with me.

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

No... that's **too** old.

THE OLDER

Thanks, I appreciate that.

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

I think you're lonely.

THE OLDER

Oh, honey... Lonely is just a state of mind.

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

Um... what?

THE OLDER

How was school?

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

It's summer.

THE OLDER

Right. How was... whatever you've been doing today?

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

Mr. Jones gave me a big bunch of books on horse care to study.

THE OLDER

Did he?

*(The DEMON enters and stands quietly behind the DAUGHTER. The DEMON and the OLDER stare at each other.)*

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

*(glowingly)*

They're great, I was reading them on the bus and missed my stop. On the walk back, I fell in a puddle. I didn't see where I was going because I couldn't stop reading. They're so beautiful, and powerful... Mr. Jones says I have a real connection with them, and as soon as a job opens up, it'll be mine. There should be riding classes at school. I'm going to be a jockey, or at least in the crew.

THE OLDER

*(to DEMON)*

That's terrifying.

*(The DEMON turns and exits.)*

Do you know how many injuries there are involving horses?

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

Do **you**?

THE OLDER

Not off the top of my head, but riding wild beasts at high speeds? I'm sure it's a high fatality rate.

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

I won't get hurt.

THE OLDER

Everyone gets hurt. It's only a question of how often. Horses are very dangerous.

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

I'll be careful!

THE OLDER

I'm really not sure you should spend too much time at those stables. They don't even pay you.

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

*(almost in tears)*

Daddy.

THE YOUNGER

I've turned into kind of a dick.

THE OLDER

*(sincerely)*

I love you, honey.

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

*(sadly)*

I love you, too, daddy.

*(The OLDER turns to the audience.)*

THE OLDER

There is no one who scares me more than her right now.

*(The DAUGHTER shakes her head at him sadly, then exits. The YOUNGER approaches him, never having seen this before now.)*

THE YOUNGER

Don't you see how you're taking away what she loves?

THE OLDER

Yes, I see it. I just don't think it matters.

THE YOUNGER

*(to audience)*

I'd tell you I'll try to do better than that, but I guess I already know that I won't.

THE OLDER

*(to the YOUNGER)*

It'll make her tougher. Tougher than we are.

THE YOUNGER

I'm not talking to you. That was horrible.

THE OLDER

I know a good day. A day I'd like to remember.

*(The DEMON enters with the MOTHER. He moves the two chairs to sit opposite each other. The MOTHER and the YOUNGER sit opposite each other. The OLDER watches, smiling, reminiscing.)*

MOTHER OF THE DAUGHTER

I'm pregnant.

THE OLDER

Ah bliss. This could have been a turning point.

THE YOUNGER

That's... amazing.

MOTHER OF THE DAUGHTER

What're you gonna do? They only promise to work 97% of the time.

THE YOUNGER

No, that's not what I mean.

MOTHER OF THE DAUGHTER

What?

THE YOUNGER

I was going to ask you to marry me tonight.

Harry... MOTHER OF THE DAUGHTER

I was. THE YOUNGER

Harry, stop. MOTHER OF THE DAUGHTER

I'd be worried that you didn't believe me, but I have proof. THE YOUNGER

*(The DEMON hands him a ring box. She gasps slightly. )*

I... know I have trouble telling you... what you mean to me.

Harry... MOTHER OF THE DAUGHTER

But you have to know. How can you not? I would die for you. Damn. I didn't want to use song titles in my proposal. But Prince really seems to have a monopoly on ways to say... I love you. THE YOUNGER

*(He gets down on his knee and opens the box, revealing the ring.)*

No one has ever made me comfortable like you. I'm open with you, I tell you everything... that makes it so that you won't ever catch me in anything I shouldn't be doing. I'm not worthy of you, but you don't seem to agree with me about that, and I would love nothing more than for you to agree to disagree with me on that forever. For better or worse.

Oh, Harry... MOTHER OF THE DAUGHTER

Yes? THE YOUNGER

Yes... MOTHER OF THE DAUGHTER  
*(very uncertainly)*

*(He buries his face in her hand. She stares at him, very ill at ease. The OLDER stares at her. She can't see him.)*

THE OLDER

I never knew. Stop kneeling and look at her! Look at her!

*(The MOTHER gets up and leaves the YOUNGER on his knee, head in hand.)*

You never looked at her. You never looked at her, how could you not look at her, how could you not know!

*(The DEMON makes a "brrrring" phone noise. The OLDER stiffens. The DEMON repeats the noise as he pulls out a receiver. He hands it to the OLDER.)*

Hello?

*(The DAUGHTER appears in an isolated spot on the other end of the line. She is very upset.)*

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

Daddy...

THE OLDER

Honey? Where are you?

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

I'm just out, Dad.

THE OLDER

I'm... glad you called. I... you know I worry?

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

I know, Daddy. I know. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

THE OLDER

What's the matter?

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

I haven't been...

THE OLDER

What is it?

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

I've done things you think I haven't. Some bad things. Some worse than others. I'm pregnant, Daddy.

THE OLDER

Oh... it'll, you know, it'll be all right, come home, come home, it'll be all right.

THE YOUNGER

Are you kidding?

THE OLDER

*(to the YOUNGER)*

Shut up! You're the past, and I'm the present, so you shut up.

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

Daddy... I... I love him. He's quirky, but so smart, and he tries so hard. He gets depressed, but he loves me so much. I want to have the baby with him.

THE OLDER

Oh, yeah, that's about right, yeah, I'm really pleased to hear that, he sounds nice.

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

I'll be home tomorrow, Daddy.

*(He has no idea what to say.)*

Good night, Daddy.

*(She hangs up and exits. He speaks into the empty receiver.  
The DEMON makes a dial tone under his words.)*

THE OLDER

You know, I think you really should come home. Are you at this boy's parents place? Or... is he older? How old is he, honey? Where'd you meet him? It's not Mr. Jones, is it? Tell me it's not Mr. Jones, that horse freak. You've got to watch out for those loners... they're not healthy. They mean well, but trust us with your heart? Trust them with my daughter?

THE YOUNGER

Oh yeah, that's enough of that. You're so pathetic.

*(The DEMON comes and takes the phone away from him.)*

DEMON

Please hang up and dial again.

*(The DEMON exits. The YOUNGER stands and faces off with the OLDER.)*

THE YOUNGER

I am the **real** Harold Shivers.

THE OLDER

I am the real Harold Shivers.

THE YOUNGER

Older can mean wiser, but in your case, it doesn't.

THE OLDER

Younger can mean more energetic, but if it just propels you in circles, people refer to that as a **wasted youth**.

THE YOUNGER

So would you say you've finally managed to drag us to the bottom? Does it get any lower? Hit your rut in your mid-20s, your valley in your late 20s, and now at 36 you have finally tunneled to all the way to hell.

THE OLDER

I am only what you made me. Proposing to a stranger. Taking the enemy into your bed, into your life, what did you think would happen, A Fairy Tale Ending? What're you, five?

*(The MOTHER enters. She is about eight months pregnant.)*

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

I want a divorce, Harry.

THE YOUNGER

What?

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

You heard me.

THE YOUNGER

But... you're...

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

Yes, I am. And that's why I've got to get away from you now, before she's born. She can't look at us as a couple, Harry. They're very impressionable. From the moment they're out in the air, they're taking things in. And she might look at us, might look at us and have her tiny baby brain think "parents, couple." And carry that with her through life. I can't have that. Not for my little girl. You're so scared, Harry. So scared. I don't know if I ever really loved you. I just wanted to help you stop shivering. I wanted to take your fear away. You're like a bird that's run into a window. I wanted to pick you up and cup you in my hands and calm your heart. But the bird has to get better. If it doesn't... you need to leave it to die.

THE YOUNGER

*(hyperventilating)*

You're... you're... you're... you're...

*(The DEMON comes in and ushers for her to leave.)*

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

*(to DEMON)*

Yes, thank you.

*(to the YOUNGER)*

Good bye, Harry. You'll be hearing from my lawyer.

*(She exits with the DEMON, who smiles over his shoulder at the YOUNGER. The YOUNGER talks quietly after them.)*

THE YOUNGER

But... it's our baby. I went to that class with you. We were in love... what did I do? What did you catch me doing?

THE OLDER

Please let it go.

THE YOUNGER

I won't let you keep my daughter from me.

*(screaming after her)*

I have rights!

THE OLDER

Don't drag our daughter down with us.

THE YOUNGER

*(ignoring him)*

You can't do this to me! I trusted you!

THE OLDER

You can't do it, can you? You can't let her go.

THE YOUNGER

*(calming down, turning to the OLDER)*

No. Could you?

THE OLDER

Obviously not.

*(The DEMON reenters.)*

DEMON

They just don't understand you.

THE YOUNGER AND OLDER

They don't.

DEMON

You only want the best for them.

THE YOUNGER AND OLDER

That's right.

DEMON

You put them before yourself.

THE YOUNGER AND OLDER

I do.

DEMON

You'd die for them.

THE YOUNGER AND OLDER

I would.

*(The women's voices come from offstage, sharing a monologue of the pretty teenager catching the five year old with the squirrel. The HAROLDS grab onto the DEMON's legs and cower, listening to the voices. The spotlight from the top of the show comes back.)*

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

Oh my God, what are you doing?!

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER  
You've got blood all over you!

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER  
Is that a squirrel?

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER  
What's wrong with you!!

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER  
You're sick!

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER  
Kids who murder animals grow up to be serial killers!

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER  
You're going to be a serial killer!

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER  
I'm telling! I'm telling! I'M TELLING!!!

*(The HAROLDS whimper as the voices stop.)*

THE OLDER  
Don't look at me.

THE YOUNGER  
Please don't look at me.

THE OLDER  
I'm sorry.

THE YOUNGER  
I won't hurt you.

THE OLDER  
I won't try to hurt you.

THE YOUNGER  
I'll try not to hurt you.

THE OLDER  
I may hurt you.

THE YOUNGER

I won't want to.

THE OLDER

I probably won't want to.

THE YOUNGER AND OLDER

I'm sorry!

*(The two are sprawled at the feet of the DEMON, who addresses the audience casually.)*

DEMON

He was so scared that day, he couldn't even beg the girl to not tell. Just stared at her. Watched as she ran back to the hill, to the other children. At first someone captured her... they were playing capture the flag. The Plantation was a good place for that game. Then she told them. Word spread like wildfire. And I was born.

*(to the HAROLDS)*

We've been inseparable since then.

*(back to audience)*

They don't celebrate the anniversary of my birth. Kids always forget to write down important dates.

*(The two women appear at opposite sides of the stage and speak to the DEMON.)*

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

I was spending half the summer with him.

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

I lost partial custody to him. Visitation rights.

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

He was staying in a guest room off of some family's house.

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

I was so scared. Not that he would hurt her physically.

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

There was no space for me.

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

But there wasn't a choice. She was ten when she came back from the summer with him.

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

*(to her)*

Hello, mom.

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

*(to her)*

Oh my. You've got a lot of acne.

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

It's not acne.

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

What?

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

It's mosquito bites. I was sleeping in a tent.

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

In a tent?

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

In a tent.

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

For a month?

DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER

For a month.

*(to audience)*

I don't deserve to be inside.

MOTHER OF HIS DAUGHTER

*(to audience)*

I don't deserve to be a mother.

DEMON

*(to women)*

Come in, come in, there's plenty of room.

*(They cross to him and stand partially behind him. The four of them look at him. He smiles and snaps his fingers. Lights out. End of play.)*