

A PRODUCTION BOOK FOR
THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING

by

445

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A MASTER'S THESIS

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requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

to the faculty of the
Department of Speech

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Manhattan, Kansas

1966

Approved by:

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Major Professor

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INTRODUCTION

This production book of The Member of the Wedding describes a production of the play presented at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas, in April, 1966. The play was sponsored as a Master's thesis production by the theatre area of the Department of Speech, and by the student organization, the K-State Players. It was directed by this writer; the actors and technical crew members were students; and the audience was from the university and the community.

The material included here explains the director's interpretation of the play and the results of implementing that interpretation in staging the play. Only those aspects of the interpretation which have been considered most pertinent to production have been included.

The discussions of interpretation and technical production are intended to be a description of one particular production. From a director's viewpoint such a description can be valuable in planning another production of the same play. Some new approaches may be suggested by the information recorded here; in some cases there may be no application to another theatrical situation.

The Problem

Carson McCullers is primarily a non-theatrical, short

EXPLANATION OF PLATE I

The program

THE DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH and THE K-STATE PLAYERS present:
A Master's Thesis Production

The Member of the Wedding

by Carson McCullers, adapted from her novel of the same name.

Director: BETTY CARY

Technical director: FRANK NACCARATO

PURPLE MASQUE THEATER

April 20, 21, 22, & 23, 1966

8:00 p. m.

NEXT PRODUCTION: "A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE"
by Tennessee Williams

May 18-21, 1966

PURPLE MASQUE THEATRE

The Member of the Wedding

Time: August, 1945
Place: A small Southern town

ACT I A late afternoon in August

INTERMISSION

ACT II Afternoon of the next day

INTERMISSION

ACT III

Scene 1: The Wedding day--afternoon
of the next day following ACT
II.

Scene 2: 4 a.m. the following morning

Scene 3: Late afternoon, in the following
November

CAST

Frankie Addams Carolyn Lee
Berenice Sadie Brown Yolonda Dozier
John Henry West Stephen Engler
Jarvis Rick Broadhurst
Janice Mary Alice Krueger
Mrs. West Linda Rowland
Mr. Addams Don Monroe
T. T. Williams Percy Brown
Honey Camden Brown Gene Harris
Barney Mackean Tracy McQuillen
Helen Fletcher Jamie Aiken
Doris Suzanne Biggs
Girl Ann Sanders
Sis Laura Sandra Freelain

PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Manager Becky Bloss
Assistant Stage Manager Alice Sheik
Scenery Frank Naccarato, Frank Siegle, Rick Broadhurst,
The Technical Production Class.
Lighting Mary Berg*, Michele Clark, Tracy McQuillen,
Beatrice Ball, Lyle Heldenbrand,
Sheryl McNevin
Properties Frank Siegle*, Liz Wary*, Ann Sanders, Jamie
Aiken, Suzanne Biggs
Makeup Glenda Apt*, The Makeup Class
Costumes Jean Shackelford*, The Costume Class
Sound Sharon Mount*
Posters Jamie Aiken*, Denton Smith, Doug Van Wickler
Business Manager Pamela Malik
House Manager Ardis Horsch

*crew head

THEATRE STAFF FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| Director | Dennis Denning |
| Associate Director | Wallace Dace |
| Technical Director | Carl Hinrichs |
| Costumes | Betty Cleary |
| Wardrobe Mistress | Lydia Aseneta |
| Shop Foreman | Chuck Boles |
| Head, Department of Speech | Norma Bunton |

NEXT PRODUCTION: "A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE"
by Tennessee Williams

May 18-21, 1966

PURPLE MASQUE THEATRE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thesis advisor: Wallace Dace, Associate Professor of Speech

Johnson Brothers Furniture Co.

The Manhattan Mercury

The Cary Company

The Collegian

Seven Dolor Home and School Shop

KSAC

University News Bureau

KMAN

Wildcat Lumber Yard

KSDB-FM

"THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING" IS PRODUCED
BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH THE DRAMA-
TISTS PLAY SERVICE

PLEASE: NO PICTURES MAY BE TAKEN DURING THE PERFORMANCE.

fiction writer and novelist, but among her most widely known and discussed works are three plays. The play described in this production book, The Member of the Wedding, has been successful both financially and critically. The others have had mixed receptions. The more successful one, The Ballad of the Sad Café, was adapted from her novella by Edward Albee with her personal supervision and assistance in writing the narration. It was produced in New York in 1963. The other play, commercially a failure, was The Square Root of Wonderful, written directly for the stage. It had a brief run in the 1957-58 season.

The Member of the Wedding was entirely the work of Mrs. McCullers, having been adapted by her from her novel at the suggestion of Tennessee Williams. He invited her to spend the summer with him at his home on Nantucket, where they worked across the table from each other, he on Summer and Smoke and she on her adaptation.

She admits that she knew little about writing for the theatre, having seen only ten plays including high school Hamlets and Vagabond Kings, but was intrigued with the potential power of drama. Although she claims to have lain aside the novel completely while writing the play, the ideas, characters, and action of the story which she had spent five years creating and perfecting were as much a part of her as her own experiences. Most of the original creation was retained in the play, but because she was working in a medium

with technical and literary limitation, she was forced to condense the ideas, characterization, and action. The result was a concentration of the emotions and moods on a sharper, more immediate point, while the incidents which had accompanied those emotions and moods were moved to the background.

Successful adaptations are rare in the American theatre, especially those made by the same person who wrote the original version. In fact, it seldom happens that a writer can be completely successful in two such different forms as the novel and the play. Even Carson McCullers, according to some critics, failed when she attempted to write directly for the stage in the case of The Square Root of Wonderful. In condensing and dramatizing, Carson McCullers was forced to make decisions about what to include and what to omit, but she could not completely disregard her own attitudes and opinions about the novel. Brander Matthews has asserted that the success of a play may depend on the choice of special aspects of the subject which shall be shown on the stage.¹ George Pierce Baker, in discussing how the "dramatic" is made "theatric" (words which he carefully explains), says that the conditions which must be met in the transition will affect action, characterization, and dialogue.² Critics have generally agreed that the "dramatic" was present in Mrs.

¹The Development of the Drama (New York, 1903), Chapter 3.

²Dramatic Technique (New York, 1919).

McCullers' novel (Evans, Atkinson, Breit, Hicks, and others); so she was faced with the challenge of making it "theatric."

From the director's point of view, this aspect of The Member of the Wedding has particular significance. While the play is complete, and should contain enough information within itself to be produced, a director wants to achieve the most meaningful and accurate interpretation possible. A familiarity with the novel and its more detailed descriptions and incidents can influence the director's planning of the technical and aesthetic design of the play. A part of the purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how this influence works in the interpretation and staging of the play.

Purpose

This production book is intended to be a record and explanation of a production thesis in play directing, so the information and opinions are presented from the viewpoint of the director. Before a play can be staged, the director must make decisions about the playwright's reasons for writing the play and his own reasons for producing it. Once these decisions have been made, the actual designing and planning of the production can begin. This paper attempts to record the two steps by indicating the director's approach to interpreting the play and by presenting a description of the production as it was seen by the audience.

The specific purposes of this production book are: first, to indicate the special problems encountered by the director of The Member of the Wedding, which is an adaptation of a novel; second, to describe the significant differences between the novel and the play; third, to show how those differences affected the directing of the play; fourth, to describe the production which resulted; fifth, to provide a research aid to other directors who are planning to direct this play or other adaptations of novels.

Procedure

In Part One of this production book the thematic material, characterization, and action are described in view of the differences between the novel and play versions of The Member of the Wedding. This approach makes possible the inclusion of all the aspects of the novel and the play which have been considered in the staging.

The other novels, plays, and short stories by Carson McCullers have been highly praised by critics in the United States and in Europe. These other works have been considered in the process of preparing the production described here. However, they have been incorporated in the interpretation indirectly as a basis for judging the relative importance of various aspects of Mrs. McCullers' writing.

Following the comparison of the novel and the play is an explanation of how the director attempted to utilize the novel when staging the play. The approach which resulted

from the comparison affected the directing of the actors in vocal expression and physical movements, as well as the planning and execution of the technical aspects of the production. The success of the approach is indicated by the opinions of the reviewers, the audience, the actors, and the director.

Part Two attempts to describe the production as it was seen by audiences. The descriptions of the characters represent the director's interpretation. Descriptions of costumes, makeup, the set, properties, sound effects, and lighting are included in order to provide direct reference to the production. While there is some explanation of the choices made in staging the play, the technical descriptions represent what the director believes was the appearance of the play to the audience.

The prompt script and cue sheets are those used in the production. The basic script is that published as a New Directions Paperback, and obtained through the Dramatist's Play Service. Some of the stage directions are from that text, and others incorporate the changes which were made because of the physical arrangement of the stage, the actors, or special interpretations of specific lines or movements.

Photographs, sketches, and charts provide visual evidence of the production. These are presented as concrete clarification of the verbal descriptions. Rehearsal and performance data are included as part of the record.

This production book, then, is an attempt to describe the finished product as it appeared on the stage, rather than the processes by which the product was obtained.

I. INTERPRETATION

The first part of this production book attempts to describe the director's approach to interpreting the play. The approach chosen in this case is a comparison of the novel and the play versions of The Member of the Wedding. In making the comparison the director has found significant differences which affected her interpretation and staging of the play. The discussion of these differences is followed by a summary of them and their effect on the staging.

Comparison of the Novel and the Play

Because it is an adaptation of a novel, The Member of the Wedding is a play which poses certain problems for a director. Most contemporary directors attempt to research all available material concerning a play in trying to decide on the proper interpretation of lines, characters, and actions. In this case the novel and the play are so closely related, being one of the very few instances of an adaptation by the original author, that a director should probably familiarize himself with the novel and use this knowledge in interpreting the play.

When Carson McCullers dramatized her novel, she was forced by the limitations of the stage medium to alter her emphasis, her style, and many details of her treatment of

theme, characterization, and action. In treatment of theme, dialogue, stage directions, and lighting and sound effects were substituted for the narrative prose discussions of ideas. Actors and dialogue were used for characterization in place of long descriptive passages. In cases where changes were made in the action, the playwright subordinated the incidents themselves to the associated emotions and moods. Because significant changes have been made, the director has attempted to recognize the reasons for them. If some specific theme, character, or incident has been altered or omitted, it might be possible that the director should completely disregard its original existence. However, if knowledge of the novel helps the director to better understand the elements of the play and to better present them to the audience, then that knowledge should be put to use. Just as all available critical and historical information may not be especially useful to the director, so everything in the novel may not be useful in interpreting the play.

The degree of utilization of the novel depends on the director's purposes in producing the play. In this case, the director wanted to represent as accurately as possible the truth of what Mrs. McCullers was trying to say in her play. Much of that message seemed to be the same as it had been in the novel. It was felt that the clearest basis for interpretation of the play would be a consideration of the differences between the two versions. The following discussions of theme, characterization, and action are an attempt to

point out the differences between the novel and the play which are significant to the director, actors, and technicians.

Terms such as theme, characterization, and action refer only to general categories of those elements which make up a novel and a play. For instance, theme includes the ideas and meanings which are communicated. Characterization is the method of revealing the characters, and is not to be confused with the characters as entities in themselves. Action includes everything the characters do and say.

Thematic Material

By means of an examination of the total literary output of Carson McCullers certain themes can be discovered to be of major importance. Other themes related to these are included in some degree in most of the works. Once the themes have been discovered The Member of the Wedding can be discussed in its relation to them.

The examination shows that the most important and most frequently used themes of Carson McCullers are present in a significant degree in both versions of The Member of the Wedding. All the minor themes also retain that status in both versions. No theme which is of any importance in any other play, novel, or story is absent from either the novel or the play of this title. Consequently, The Member of the Wedding can be considered as representative of the themes of Carson McCullers, and equally in both its forms.

Three general ideas can be considered major themes. The first is the spiritual loneliness of an individual. The second is a sense of abortive incompleteness including the concepts of immaturity, discontinuity, interruption, disappointment, incongruity, and ambiguity. Third is the juxtaposition of tragic and comic impressions, which relates to incompleteness in the sense of incongruity, but which has individual significance in its stylistic application. All other ideas and details in The Member of the Wedding can be related to these. Since each is important in both novel and play, they can be examined without specific reference to either form. Only when there is a significant difference in the emphasis must such reference be made.

Loneliness. Harold Clurman, who directed the Broadway production of The Member of the Wedding, wrote in his preliminary notes, "A mighty loneliness emanates from this play. It is as if all the characters were separated from the world--as if the world were only a mirage in a vaporous space making wraiths of the people."³ The mighty loneliness he mentions enamates from general ideas it suggests, and from specific references to related ideas.

The basic motivation for the central character, as indicated by the title, is to become a member--to get

³"Some Preliminary Notes to The Member of the Wedding," Directors on Directing: A Source Book of the Modern Theatre, ed. Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy (New York, 1963), p. 381.

connected. Frankie, isolated between childhood and adulthood, seeks identification. As she says, "The trouble with me is that for a long time I have been just an 'I' person. All other people can say 'we.'" Everything she does and says is directly or indirectly related to her feeling of isolation.

Berenice is a woman who is naturally and easily connected. Although she once felt she had lost the only connection she had, her happy marriage to Ludie Maxwell Freeman, she has resigned herself to only a connection with life. She is, in fact, more alone than Frankie. She has no real family, no close friends, no one left to love, and no more need to hate. The advantage she has over Frankie is her viewpoint. Her experiences have led her to a resignation to isolation. She is a member of a world filled with isolated individuals. Her loneliness makes her like everyone else; Frankie's loneliness makes her different.

John Henry West has not yet learned what it means to belong. He is a member only of the kitchen. His understanding of belonging is to act like everyone else, hence, his attempts to imitate. Since he is unaware of his position, isolation is not a basis of motivation for him. It is only as a comparison to Frankie and Berenice he can be discussed in terms of loneliness.

The other characters are motivated by the need to connect, but in varying degrees. Mr. Addams is losing his connections; he is becoming oblivious to the world. He is

not self-centered; he is only absent minded, having no conscious focus on anything. Jarvis has found the most obvious kind of connection: marriage. His need to belong is also subconscious. Honey Camden Brown has resorted to violence to gain acceptance, rather than resign himself to his present isolation. In attempting to become a member of society he is only more strongly rejected. Committed to all or nothing, he must resign himself to suicide. T. T. Williams takes connection as it comes. His personality is such that neither acceptance nor rejection is important to him. He is acquiescent. To him acceptance is the absence of rejection; rejection is the absence of acceptance. Neither is positive because neither is on a conscious level.

In addition to the motivations of the characters, the theme of loneliness is projected in other ways. One is the idea of freaks. Freaks are, by definition, abnormal, hence, rejected. Only in association with other freaks can they be accepted.

Frankie is a freak because of her size, her short haircut, her dirty elbows, and her boy's name. Berenice is a freak because she has a glass eye, and perhaps also because she is a Negro in a White household. John Henry is a freak because he wears glasses.

Frankie's consciousness of being different makes her overly sensitive to the other characters' abnormalities. This is a group she does not admire, with whom she does not wish to be identified, although she is fascinated by it. Her

frantic and urgent attempts to hide her size, to stretch her hair, to wash her elbows, and to change her name are motivated by her desire to belong to the world of normality. Her motivation is a positive need to join, rather than a negative wish to escape.

In the conversations among Frankie, Berenice, and John Henry there are specific references to grey eyes. This is another expression of the idea of loneliness. Not only are grey eyes unusual in themselves, they become associated with the idea of jealousy. Jealousy is a natural result of loneliness.

Frankie is jealous of Jarvis and Janice because they belong to each other and to something larger than themselves: the wedding. She is jealous of the club members because they have each other and their club. There is a hint of jealousy of John Henry because he belongs to the world of children and can play with them on equal terms. She is jealous of Berenice's security, maturity, and experiences. John Henry is jealous of anyone who gets more attention than he is getting, but his jealousy is primarily instinctive and imitative.

Stemming from the ideas of freaks and jealousy is a tendency toward self-torture. In all the works of Carson McCullers there is a definite undercurrent of almost masochistic tendencies. Characters who would apparently have enough problems because of their isolation or their abnormalities choose to inflict upon themselves some physical or mental punishment. In The Jockey, a short story, a man

already too small to be normal but who can no longer make a decent living as a jockey chooses to tempt himself with a delicious meal and then refuse to indulge in it. In The Ballad of the Sad Café, a novella, the central character, a large, almost masculine woman, locks herself away from other people even though her strongest desire is for companionship. She enters a wrestling match when she knows she can only be the loser. In Reflections in a Golden Eye an army major who values his appearance, his reputation, and his sanity above all else takes a wild ride through the woods on his wife's horse. He ruins his clothes, mutilates his face with thorns, and destroys his reputation with a kind of masochistic impulse; and he tortures the horse (representing his marriage and his wife) with sadistic cruelty. Every other work of Carson McCullers has characters purposely putting themselves in painful situations, whether for their art, their love, or their own satisfaction in proving they can stand the pain. Since the punishments are more severe than mere self-discipline, they can be described as masochistic.

In The Member of the Wedding, this particular idea is not strong, but it is present. Frankie attracts attention to herself by doing bad things, rather than seeking approval in good things. She would rather be punished than praised. In the novel, she becomes a criminal by stealing a knife from the department store, shooting a pistol within the city limits, and committing a "queer sin" with Barney MacKean. Her desire

to be captured, while subconscious, is a motivating force. She punishes herself physically by removing a splinter with a carving knife, by banging her head against the wall, or by walking barefoot on hot pavement. While each of these actions is small, together they constitute a major portion of Frankie's actions. The theme of self-torture, while not of major importance, is a consistent underlying idea throughout the story. In the play the idea can be seen in the small physical pains, the desire to get caught when she runs away from home, and her own implications that she hates herself. This hate, with its basis in her sense of being different, is related to the theme of loneliness.

Because of Frankie's intense need to be connected with the world she cannot comprehend the meaning of death. "It must be terrible to be nothing but black, black, black," she says. Death is a solitary experience. There is no companionship in death, as opposed to birth which cannot be accomplished alone. Frankie's fascination with death and dead people makes the sudden deaths of Honey and John Henry important to her, although she cannot understand why.

The concept of death is present in some degree particularly in the novels of Carson McCullers. Clock Without Hands is the story of a man facing death from leukemia. The meaning of death in this work becomes clear in an explanatory comment by Oliver Evans:

(The book that Malone chooses to read in the hospital is Kierkegaard's Sickness Unto Death, and the sentence

in it that most impresses him is: "The greatest danger, that of losing one's own self, may pass off quietly as if it were nothing; every other loss, that of an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife, etc., is sure to be noticed.")⁴

The individual is nothing alone; it is only in association with other individuals that his existence is meaningful.

At least one important character dies in each novel. Details of the death are never explained. It is a mysterious occurrence--seldom expected and usually dismissed by the author with a line or two. Ironically, death, the most lonely experience, is the only experience every person must accept.

Closely associated with the idea of unity and belonging is the state of marriage. Yet, because each person remains an individual, there is a sense of loneliness in all marriages. Some aspect of marriage, a wedding, a divorce, a love affair, or a specific marriage problem, is mentioned in almost every work by Carson McCullers. In The Member of the Wedding the idea of marriage is central. References to Jarvis's wedding, Berenice's many husbands, and Mr. Addams's deceased wife occupy a large portion of the dialogue. Marriage is one of the few kinds of belonging Frankie can understand. Because it is positive, concrete, and indisputably valuable, Frankie concentrates all her attention on it as a cure for her loneliness. The way she plans to apply it to

⁴"The Achievement of Carson McCullers," EJ, LI (May, 1962), 307.

her own situation is wrong, but she finds comfort in associating herself with the idea.

Understanding the theme of loneliness is essential to understanding the structure, characterization, plot, and dialogue of The Member of the Wedding. The theme explains and is clarified by the references to freaks, jealousy, self-torture, death, and marriage. In structural terms, it is the antagonist. The conflicts are between the characters and the frustration of loneliness. All the characters can be understood in their varying degrees of relationship to the theme. The plot is built around Frankie's attempts to become a member and her discovery of the futility of those attempts. In the dialogue can be seen the inability to communicate successfully. The conversations between Frankie and Berenice reflect the consciousness of the desire to belong but the inability to verbalize the feeling accurately.

The treatment of the theme of loneliness has been shown to be different in the novel and the play. In the former, the idea of loneliness is presented more often and more directly than in the play. There are more instances of Frankie's attempts to be recognized and accepted. There are more conversations described in which her feeling of isolation is compared to that of the other characters. There are long descriptions of her awareness of being a non-member. In the play, the idea is condensed and concentrated into a few specific mentions of it: she desires to be accepted in the club; she comments about the "we" of herself; she realizes

that she is unusual in appearance; she tries several specific ways of attracting attention; and she resolves to join the wedding.

Consequently, while the references to loneliness in the play are less frequent and briefer, they become more significant individually. Because each instance attains this additional importance in conveying the idea, their combined effect can equal the total impression of the novel. In working with the play, the director and actors must realize that if a single such instance is under-emphasized, the total impression of the theme of loneliness is reduced proportionately. The importance of this theme in understanding the characters and their behavior makes such a de-emphasis undesirable.

Incompleteness. The piano tuner plays seven notes of a scale; Berenice breaks off a story at its most exciting moment; John Henry dies without having had a chance to live. These and similar incidents in The Member of the Wedding are among the explicit indications that incompleteness has an irritating effect for Frankie. Because she is incomplete, Frankie is uncomfortable in the presence of anything which is unfinished. She is an incomplete woman, having the right height, but neither the right figure nor the maturity. She is incomplete as a human being, having human emotions and attitudes, but not the ability to understand through rational thinking. The presence of the quality of incompleteness is

of major importance in The Member of the Wedding. Mrs. McCullers uses the theme with full awareness of its effect on her writing style. She has commented,

The play has abstract values; it is concerned with the weight of time, the hazard of human existence, bolts of chance. The reaction of the characters to these abstract phenomena projects the movement of the play. Some observers who failed to apprehend this modus operandi felt the play to be fragmentary because they did not account for this aesthetic concept.⁵

Those critics who have commented on the poetic quality of the play have at least an instinctive recognition of the aesthetic concept she mentions. Brooks Atkinson, for instance, analyzing the play in the New York Times observed, "The performance is an orchestration of moods, all pulled together and related."⁶

Poetry consists of sounds and rhythms. Music is poetry in this sense. Rhythms are pleasing when they are complete, but in The Member of the Wedding the commonplace rhythms of life are seldom completed. In her numerous specific references to sounds and music the author attempts to show how they affect the behavior of the characters.

Honey Camden Brown is a trumpet player. Sounds and rhythms are part of his life in a direct way. The story of the Addams kitchen is punctuated with the nerve-racking sounds of a piano tuner next door. The sounds become so unbearable that Frankie associates them with the crazy house

⁵"The Vision Shared," Theatre Arts, XXXIV (April, 1950), 30.

⁶"Three People," Jan. 15, 1950, Sec. 2, p. 1.

at Milledgeville. "There is the sound of an unseen Negro singing from the neighboring yard," reads one of the stage directions. Later a clear horn plays a blues tune in the distance, but stops before the tune is finished. Frankie, listening from the yard, is deeply upset. Whenever sounds are a part of her life, she is affected by them. With the sounds in the background she makes momentous decisions. Her decision to look nice for the wedding, and her sudden realization that she must run away with the bride and groom are accented by such sounds.

Most of the rhythms of life are not so obvious, however. Frankie's life fluctuates freely between intense physical activity and deep emotional concentration. Similarly, the rhythm of the whole action is fluctuating and sudden. "The world is certainly--a sudden place," says Frankie.

Berenice replies, "Sometimes sudden, but when you're waiting, like this, it seems so slow." Things may happen unexpectedly, but they are often quickly forgotten.

In the rhythms of life time becomes a factor. Frankie is aware of the mystery of time:

I wonder if you have ever thought about this:
Here we are--right now. This very minute. Now.
But while we're talking now, this minute is passing.
And it will never come again. Never in the whole
world. When it is gone, it is gone. No power on
earth could bring it back again.

Frankie, Berenice, and John Henry pass the time of day in the kitchen. Frankie hopes Sunday, the wedding day, will come soon. Mr. Addams is a jeweler who spends most of his

time repairing clocks. When the family has packed to move to a new house the clock stops. Nothing in life can ever be completed except life itself.

It is in this thematic consideration that the sudden death of the child becomes an essential factor in understanding the aesthetic concept of the play. While the death is treated similarly in the novel, it is in the play that the suddenness of it is most significant. John Henry, who had asked about death; who wanted to know, "What is 'die'?" is suddenly cut off from the rhythms of life. Frankie, who honestly believed she would never die, gains a deeper appreciation of the meaning of death. "I never believed John Henry would die," she says. In the novel the frightening details of his suffering and death are clearer, but Frankie remembers him as he used to be, "solemn, hovering, and ghost-grey."

One sequence, vividly described in the novel and retained in the play, captures the unification of the concepts of time, death, and the frustration of incompleteness.

Frankie looked for a last time at herself in the mirror, and then she turned away. She thought about her brother and the bride, and there was a tightness in her that would not break.

"I don't know what to do. I just wish I would die."

"Well, die then!" said Berenice.

And: "Die," John Henry echoed in a whisper.

The world stopped.

"Go home," said Frankie to John Henry. (p. 19)⁷

⁷Throughout this essay page references to the novel are to the Bantam edition (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1962). The original edition was not available.

After chasing him three times around the table and out the door, she sits down to "think over everything for a while."

Frankie is sensitive to missing parts. If she is to be a member of the wedding she must fit into the group. Since both their names begin with "JA," she changes hers to Jasmine in order to complete the set.

Incongruities might fill a gap, but they do not match. Berenice's glass eye fills the socket, but "It has a wrong expression, let alone being blue!"

Freaks are incongruities. They are human beings but something about them is incomplete. The little-headed girl, the "morphidite," and the giant have all the parts, but the parts are not arranged properly. The rhythm is upset.

Frankie tries to remember Granny's face, but it is "like a face seen under water." The essence is there but the picture is incomplete because the details have become blurred by time. Blurred images, colors, sounds -- the essences of memories remain. So that the details of the bride and groom will not become blurred, Frankie begs Berenice to review for her the happenings of the afternoon. Sometimes no memories at all would be better than incomplete ones. Berenice scolds Frankie for her stretching of the truth, but the embellishments are an attempt by Frankie to complete her memories of the situation. When she recalls experiences her memory is a mixture of her own impressions and what actually happened. Both are necessary for the image to be complete.

As much is said in the rhythmical motion of the play as in the lines. Music and rhythms are the non-verbal language used to communicate non-verbal feelings. Conveying meanings on a subconscious level, they become symbols. The aesthetic qualities of the writing depend as much on this particular concept as on the story of the characters. The feeling of incompleteness is important in its own message, and in its application as a stylistic device.

There are significant differences between the novel and the play in the treatment of the theme of incompleteness. In the novel Frankie's reactions to sounds are seen in her own behavior and in the author's comments. These reactions must be shown in the play by the actress's interpretation of lines and movements. Where the novel describes background sounds, the play uses specific sound effects. Not all such sounds are retained in the play. For instance, the constant undercurrent of radio garble which is described in the novel is dismissed from the play by Frankie's line, "I don't want the radio on." Such a sound would probably be distracting to the audience and would force the actors to project over it, even when a soft reading is indicated.

Suddenness is often presented indirectly in the novel through the author's commentary and descriptions of characters' reactions. In the play the dialogue contains specific mentions of suddenness; Frankie's emotions and thoughts change suddenly and unexpectedly; Honey's sudden suicide and

John Henry's death are ironically accented by the apparent de-emphasis of such important events. The rhythmical motion of the action is apparent only indirectly in the novel. The reader must "get the feel" for the transitions between situations or ideas. In the play a sequence may build until a rhythm is established and then be interrupted. Examples of this are the knife-throwing sequence in Act One, Frankie's running around the table in Act Two, and the song at the end of Act Two which is cut off by Berenice's line, "Frankie, you got the sharpest set of human bones I ever felt."

Longer and more frequent mentions of death occur in the novel than in the play. Because of the infrequency of such references, the actors must not forget that the mystery of death is the basis for essential motivations of the characters. If the effect is not made clear by the actors, the deaths have no meaning.

The images and memories which are described so carefully in the novel are only mentioned or hinted at in the lines and stage directions of the play. It is up to the actors to make the mental images seem so clear that the audience is able to imagine what the character must be seeing and react accordingly.

If the theme of incompleteness is to be clear and meaningful, the director must have control over the tempo of the sequences, the interpretation of lines and gestures, and the timing of sound and lighting effects. The rhythms of life

as described in the novel can be represented in the rhythms of the play through the actors' interpretation and the control of technical effects.

The Tragi-comic. Closely related to the implications of the concepts of loneliness and incompleteness which have been mentioned is the juxtaposition of tragic and comic impressions with which Carson McCullers has laden her writings. Of The Member of the Wedding she wrote, "The funniness and grief are often co-existent in a single line and I did not know how an audience would respond to this."⁸ In the preface to her second play, The Square Root of Wonderful, she explains her rationale in including such lines:

Present day audiences have been accustomed to plays that have a single emotional direction. If it's a modern tragedy the overtones of tragedy are undisturbed by the comedy of every day. In modern comedy such themes as death and failure are so subordinated that they are almost inexistent. Yet audiences do respond to tragi-comedy when the absurd and painful truths of life are combined in a single line.⁹

If the play is to be "a vivid fragment of the living truth,"¹⁰ then the blend of the tragic and the comic which is in life must be retained in the play.

Adolescence itself is tragi-comic. The adolescent suffers in his confusion and frustration, but the adult laughs at him. Frankie is an adolescent in this situation.

⁸"The Vision Shared," 30.

⁹(Boston, 1958), p. viii.

¹⁰Atkinson, Times ("Three People").

Berenice mocks her not because she does not sympathize with Frankie, but because she understands very well that the pain will disappear as suddenly as it appeared. Frankie herself becomes comic, an incongruity which by its very nature induces laughter.

There are specific lines and actions which are humorous because of the tragi-comic incongruity. They are too numerous to be mentioned individually, and part of the humor must be conveyed in their execution. One of the most pointed instances of this is the brief appearance of Honey after he has escaped from the police. In the play, the scene is juxtaposed between Frankie's solemn return from her wanderings and the poignant announcement that John Henry is critically ill. Honey, doomed to be captured and hanged, laughs hysterically at the realization of the freedom he will achieve in death. When sensitively played, his laughter becomes contagious. Frankie and the audience cannot keep themselves from smiling or even laughing with him. When the laughter stops, the realization of its incongruity has a sobering effect.

The incongruity of the hysterically happy Honey being caught and hanging himself in the jail is not included in the novel. At the conclusion he is in jail awaiting trial. Here is one instance of an effect being "transposed on a sharper more immediate point," as Carson McCullers called it.¹¹

¹¹Harvey Breit, "Behind the Wedding," New York Times, Jan. 1, 1950, Sec. II, p. 3.

Its effect can be related to the notion of the juxtaposition of tragic and comic.

John Henry's death is similarly related to this idea. The balance is more explicit in the novel. For the reader, the effect of the following lines is a sudden transition from a wide-eyed horror at a frightening image to a gentle smile at the description of the day.

John Henry had been screaming for three days and his eyeballs were walled up in a corner stuck and blind. He lay there finally with his head drawn back in a buckled way, and he had lost his strength to a scream. He died the Tuesday after the Fair was gone, a golden morning of the most butterflies, the clearest sky. (p. 152)

The transition here is less overt; it is from fear to comfort, rather than from tears to laughter, but the principle is similar.

The music which was related to the theme of incompleteness also has an application here. Most music, being pleasant to hear, is associated with pleasant thoughts. People listen to music for enjoyment, even if the enjoyment is of the sort they can get from watching a horror movie. But when the music becomes associated with the irritating sensation of incompleteness it is being used with a slightly different effect. The music from the clubhouse, the Negro singing in the neighboring yard, and the sound of the blues trumpet are pleasant in themselves, but their connotation is unpleasant. (The importance of music in the treatment of thematic material reflects the playwright's own interest in that art form. After high school she went to New York with the

intention of attending the Juilliard Institute to study concert piano. On her first day there she lost her tuition money on the subway and was forced to go to work, but she still considers music an essential part of her life.)

In general, the novel produces the tragi-comic effect through the juxtaposition of specific incidents and in descriptive passages, but the play depends on single lines which in themselves convey the idea. In the treatment of the theme of tragi-comedy, as with the other major themes, the play is more concentrated, more precisely structured. If the actors and director realize the effect is meant to occur, it will happen almost automatically. The ironic lines will be most effective if they do not draw attention to themselves, and yet the irony must be expressed in the reading. "Playing it straight," as comedians often do with their punch lines, is usually the best method for conveying such irony.

The same kind of concentration and precision applies to the sound and musical effect. Such sounds, while mentioned more frequently and explained more clearly in the novel, are used carefully and even sparingly in the play. The greatest difference is that Frankie's love of and fascination with music are very clear in the novel. In the play, her intense reactions to the piano tuner and the clear horn are meaningless unless the actors can somehow show that Frankie's first reaction to any music is positive and that unpleasant connotations are therefore more irritating. There are at least two occasions when this can be done, but as the play is

structured, the piano tuner is heard before this can be clearly established. One such occasion is the sound of the blues trumpet. If the music is allowed to be established as pleasant, rhythmical, and flowing, then Frankie has a chance to build to an intensely positive kind of reaction to it. Only when her concentration is total can the sudden cutting off have the pointed effect it should. The other occasion is in the last scene, when Frankie speaks of Mary's piano recital. The idea of music is pleasant to Frankie, but in this scene it is juxtaposed with the sadness of moving and the deaths of friends. Frankie's admiration for Mary's talent must be sincere and intense in order for lines to convey the irony intended.

The sound effects are frequent enough and of sufficient duration to be established as an integral part of the play, but if they intrude so much as to call attention to themselves, then their natural association with characters and action is lost.

The actors' timing and interpretation are important in Honey's escape scene. The scene begins as somber and serious; Mr. Addams and Berenice set the atmosphere of worry and fear. Only if the mood is properly established can Honey's hysterical outburst produce the desired effect. Mrs. West's intrusion into the echos of his laughter is timed so that the incongruity is even clearer. The responsibilities of mood and timing rest with the director, the actors, and the technical designers.

Summary of Thematic Material

The themes of loneliness and incompleteness, and the juxtaposition of tragedy and comedy are closely related to each other. In both versions of The Member of the Wedding each has its place in influencing character development, action, structure, and mood. The play, taken from an emotionally structured novel, has been criticized for not having been given the elements of a "well-made" play in its plot structure. Rather, the criticism praises the aesthetic qualities which make it effective: "It may not be a play, but it is art. That is the important thing."¹² Carson McCullers's skillful use of the three major themes accounts for such a statement.

The conscious awareness of the themes which the reader of the novel is given makes them effective indirectly. Mental verbalization must be complete before the effect can occur. In the play the themes are less frequently verbalized; they can directly affect the audience through the senses of sight and hearing, through imagination and empathic involvement. Their effect is not dependent on the conscious realization of their presence and is therefore more direct.

Less frequent and briefer references in the play are more significant individually. As Brooks Atkinson observed, "In the strange, rambling, improvised pattern of the drama every word counts toward a total impression of the truth."¹³

¹²Brooks Atkinson, "At the Theatre" (review of The Member of the Wedding), New York Times, Jan. 6, 1950, p. 26.

¹³Times ("Three People").

The physical presence of actors and of special lighting and sound effects, and the timing and atmosphere which are controlled by the director are used in place of the sensitive observations in the novel.

Characterization

A second means of comparing the novel and the play is to discover significant differences between character development methods. In this case, the significance refers to that which concerns the director of the play. In a detailed discussion of the influence of the loneliness theme on the structure of the play, Winifred L. Dusenbury made this comment: "Carson McCullers has presented the character of this lonely young girl in a play which creates a mood and illustrates a situation, not in conventional dramatic form, but in a way dictated by the theme of loneliness."¹⁴ In a personal preface to her second play, Carson McCullers wrote, "I suppose my central theme is the theme of spiritual isolation."¹⁵ The characterization in the novel and in the play is largely dependent on the theme of loneliness, especially spiritual loneliness. This discussion attempts to show some of the differences between the novel and the play based on this thematic association and on other methods of characterization.

¹⁴The Theme of Loneliness in Modern American Drama (Gainesville, Florida, 1960), p. 59.

¹⁵The Square Root of Wonderful (Boston, 1958), p. viii.

The central character, that is, the character around whom the action takes place and who is also the initiator of the action, is Frankie Addmas, a twelve-year-old girl just entering the period of adolescence. Frankie's most apparent characteristic is that she feels lonely; she wants to become a member of something. The development of her character is based on this aspect. Frankie's loneliness is not physical. Certainly she has companionship at almost every moment of the day and night. Her loneliness is spiritual; it is a mental state. In order to portray a mental state Mrs. McCullers had to write what she called an "inward play."¹⁶

The novel is, in some ways, more inward than the play. More of Frankie's character is shown in the author's commentary than in overt action. Frankie is physically active in the novel: she plays, sleeps, shops, visits a cafe of questionable reputation, tries to run off with her brother and his bride, and almost shoots herself. The inward character, however, is most clearly developed in descriptions of Frankie's thoughts: her dreams, her wishes, her hates, and her loves. A large portion of this description is of Frankie's world as she sees it: huge, mysterious, and often hostile. With the onset of adolescence, Frankie is suddenly more aware of the world, but only of very few aspects of it. The rest remains distorted in her mind. Sounds, rhythms,

¹⁶"The Vision Shared," 30.

and emotions are experienced vividly, but the meanings associated with them are unclear and confusing to her.

In the novel, this unbalanced understanding is shown by the relationship between the ideas as seen in the narrative description and the verbalization represented in the dialogue. An example of this is found early in part one. Frankie is in the kitchen, chatting with Berenice and John Henry West during a game of three-handed bridge. Her mind wanders rapidly through the hot, lazy summer; she recalls the warm night when John Henry stayed with her; she ponders over the adventures of her brother and about the army; she dreams about the approaching wedding; details of colors and sound appear in her mind. The random memories take on a kind of emotional order. Just at the point when her mind is about to burst with impressions and incomplete images, frustration makes it uncomfortable for her to think any more, so she speaks:

"Oh, Jesus!" Frankie said. The cards on the table were greasy and the late sun slanted across the yard. "The world is certainly a sudden place."

"Well, stop commenting about it," said Berenice. "You don't have your mind on the game." (p. 14)

This sequence shows how Frankie is unable to verbalize her feelings in a way which can be understood by others. Carson McCullers develops characters largely by describing the innermost workings of their minds. Brooks Atkinson, in a commentary on the New York production, in which he mentioned the characterization of the novel, wrote of Mrs. McCullers,

"She knows the elusive little impulses that race through their hearts and minds and knock them off center or restore them to the mainstream of normal life."¹⁷ In novel style, those elusive little impulses can be shown rather easily, but in a drama the workings of the mind must be reflected in overt behavior.

Significant as this dual-level method of characterization may be in regard to Frankie, it is not so applicable to the other characters. Since the novel concentrates on her view of the world, the reader sees the other characters as Frankie sees them. All she knows of them is what she sees them do, what they tell about themselves, and her own imagined embellishments of the experiences they relate. In the novel, the reader is given the same clues to their characters as Frankie is. Most of these clues are in the description of their behavior or in their own speech. In the drama similar techniques are employed.

Obviously, the audience seeing the play must largely imagine Frankie's impressions of the other characters based on what she says and does. Her attitude toward her father, for instance, is verbalized. "Sometimes I wonder if Papa really loves me," she says. However, her love for him is shown by her concern about his feelings. It can be seen in her reactions to his presence in the house after she had been afraid to enter it after dark. With his entrance, the

¹⁷"Three People,"

fear disappears, although other fears about the world outside replace it. Subconsciously, she knows he loves her, but her conscious attempts to understand his love are unsuccessful.

Dialogue and physical behavior had to be retained whenever possible in transferring Frankie's character to the stage. The considerable amount of dialogue which exists in the novel no doubt simplified this task somewhat. Somehow, the inward thoughts had to be shown on stage. Mrs. McCullers was faced with the challenge of making efficient use of the techniques available to her. As Brooks Atkinson observed in the commentary already cited, "Every word counts toward a total impression of the truth."

Carson McCullers admitted the difficulty involved. Her own explanation of her approach appeared in an article by Harvey Breit in the New York Times. It clearly summarized the problem and her solution:

"Paradoxically, I had to forget the novel. It all has to spring from another medium. It was fascinating. The play has to be more direct. The inner monologue has to become the spoken word. It has to be more naked emotionally, too. I'd say the play is transposed on a sharper, more immediate point. I wouldn't say the play gains, but in a strange way the play becomes more emotional because those lines in the novel needed to be spoken."¹⁸

But Mrs. McCullers could not completely forget the characters she had lived with for five years. In the play she left unsaid many of the aspects of the characters which were

¹⁸"Behind the Wedding."

clearly developed in the novel, and depended on actors to understand those aspects and convey them emotionally to the audience.

Essentially, long reflective passages are condensed into single, vivid lines. The long, involved images have been replaced by one emotion-packed line such as, "My heart feels them going away--going farther and farther away--while I am stuck here by myself." It becomes the task of the actors and the director to convey as much of the imagery as possible through the physical and vocal interpretation of such lines.

The minor characters, especially Frankie's family, are not developed so differently in the play. In the novel, they are lightly sketched characters. Their lives are seen only as related to Frankie's. Her brother and his bride, her father, and her Aunt Pet are seen primarily as Frankie sees them. This shallow characterization is retained in the play.

Whatever differences exist between the novel and the play in regard to these minor characters are caused only by a difference in the frequency of references to them. The more times a person is seen, the clearer his character becomes. In a novel there is more opportunity to see a character because of the length of the work.

In the cases of the Negro characters, this added length is used to show more of their home environment. In the novel, Frankie visits Sugarville, the colored section of town. She talks with Berenice's "Big Mama," who tells fortunes. She

sees Honey lounging around the kitchen. The Negro life is more vivid because more of it can be seen.

In the novel, Berenice is a larger character, because her long stories have a chance to go on and on without becoming boring so readily as they would on stage. Many of the relationships, thematic and personal, between Berenice and Frankie which are implicit in the play are explicit in the novel. For instance, in the play, the significance of the Negro-White relationship is never so obvious as in the novel. In the latter, Berenice is given lines which clarify the significance. When Frankie is frantically trying to escape reality in her own mind, she explains that she wants freedom because she doesn't want to be caught. Berenice consoles her:

"Me neither," said Berenice. "Don't none of us. I'm caught worse than you is."

F. Jasmine understood why she had said this, and it was John Henry who asked in his child voice: "Why?"

"Because I am black," said Berenice. "Because I am colored. Everybody is caught in one way or another. But they done drawn completely extra bounds around all colored people. They done squeezed us off in one corner by ourself. So we caught that firstway I was telling you, as all human beings is caught. And we caught as colored people also." (pp. 113-14)

In the same sequence she further clarifies the relationship between Frankie's life and the stories of Ludie Maxwell Freeman, Honey Camden Brown, and the other Negro characters in the story.

When the play was written, much of this sort of clarification was omitted, apparently for two reasons, or at least

with two results: condensation and unification. The condensation reduces the time element to make the play a feasible production length. The unification concentrates all the action around Frankie, centralizing the focus on one character. Mrs. McCullers compromised considerably in submitting to playwriting techniques. In her preface to The Square Root of Wonderful she hints at the problems of the process of adaptation:

Once a play is in rehearsal, a playwright must write under unaccustomed pressure, and alas, what he had in mind is often compromised. . . . And so begins a transmutation that sometimes to the author's dismay ends in the play being almost unrecognizable to the creator.¹⁹

While her feelings about the adaptation of The Member of the Wedding were not so strong, it is obvious that at some time during the transformation from novel to play, something had to be sacrificed. The minor characters were neglected, but the immediacy and poignancy of Frankie's dilemma were perhaps the objectives thereby achieved.

If the director of the play uses the novel to aid in interpretation of the play, she should be aware of the differences in characterization and emphasis which exist. In order to convey the attitudes and emotional reactions which are described in the novel, but which are left unsaid in the play, the director and the actors must decide on specific methods of interpreting the lines. One character's reactions to another's lines or behavior become particularly vital in clarifying the attitudes of both.

In the cases of Frankie, Berenice, and perhaps Honey Camden Brown, the more extensive characterization found in the novel can become a problem for the director. For instance, in the novel it is clear that Honey is intelligent and well educated. He could be successful if he would apply his talents constructively. In the play this aspect of his character is not mentioned. He is a more one-sided character: wild, desperate, and frustrated, but apparently helpless. Only in Berenice's reactions to him is there an indication that he has more potential. The director must decide which aspects of character should be emphasized, and which to ignore, if necessary. For the audience, only confusion might result if every aspect of Berenice's character were treated equally. Confusion might also result if every turn of Frankie's mind were emphasized on stage. In any given scene the characteristics emphasized must be those which are most important to that scene, although the other sides of the character must be present in some degree, just as they would be in an actual situation.

When working with the minor characters, conversely, the director can rely heavily on characterizations from the novel. The play itself offers very little information about the minor characters, so arbitrary decisions would have to be made in portraying them. One decision available is to invent characteristics to fill the gaps left by the script. The other alternative is to rely on the novel. Carson McCullers herself abandoned the novel in working on the script, but the

director does not have her advantage of knowing the characters so completely. Since the characters are essentially similar in both versions, the director can refer to the novel for a more complete understanding of them. If he chooses to do so, he must be prepared to incorporate his knowledge if it is needed to reveal the characters as he feels the playwright intended.

If he decides to show the intellectual side of Honey's character, for instance, it would be difficult with the lines he has. However, by portraying Honey as alert, sensitive, and considerate of Frankie, John Henry, and Berenice, the contrasting reactions to Mr. Addams and the law can show that his laziness and rebellion are not necessarily his only character. The character becomes more interesting in himself and more meaningful in his relationship to the other characters and to the themes.

The less obvious side of Frankie's character, that of her sensitivity (which has been discussed in relation to music) and of her appreciation of the beauties of nature, is also clearer in the novel. In order to show this clearly, the actress must be able to shift rapidly but smoothly from one emotion to another. However, if the shifts are too great or too frequent, the audience will not know which emotion is guiding her behavior in any given sequence. If the director decides that her primary motivations are anger and frustration, then that part of her which is happy and secure would be less

emphasized. If he decides that her motivations are confused and her actions are uncontrolled, then the conflict between the two sides of her character must be clear and her decisions apparently instinctive.

The final scene is more easily understood if preparation has been made for Frankie's discovery of the stronger side of her own character. The change which takes place would be less abrupt and more natural if the sensitive side had been emphasized in some degree. The approach depends on the director's interpretation of the character and the reasons for the change. In Part Two of this book the character sketches indicate this director's interpretation, and show that the novel was used in that interpretation. In the summary at the conclusion of Part One some judgments are made about the effectiveness of this approach.

Action

In addition to themes and character, action is an essential element in a novel and a play. By the term action is meant incidents, decisions, and specific sequences of dialogue. They are organized in a particular order, so that the structure exists in the order of the action. Action, as described here, refers to anything which is said or done by the characters. The reason for this general use of the term is that the purpose of this discussion is to discover in the novel and the play differences in the incidents which are included, and in the order in which they occur.

The structure of the novel is emotionally conceived. While plot--a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end--exists, it is structured primarily around the mind of the central character, rather than around her physical actions. Overt action is a result rather than a cause of mental action.

The play retains the basic structuring rationale with revisions to overcome technical problems. For instance, in the novel Frankie's mind wanders from incident to incident, sometimes remembering, sometimes anticipating. This random switching of scenes would be impractical and confusing on stage, so in most cases all references to one specific incident are combined and condensed into a single sequence in the play. Consequently, there is less feeling of physical motion in the play. Frankie is seen only in the kitchen and back yard. The sequences in the novel in which she wanders downtown and in Sugarville, and in which she is rejected from the wedding, occur offstage. The audience knows of them only through the fragmentary accounts given by Frankie and John Henry. At the same time, however, the spiritual motion of the novel remains. John Mason Brown, reviewing the play in the Saturday Review concluded, "Character and mood are her substitutes for plot."²⁰ He recalls John Galsworthy's observation, "A human being is the best plot there is." The novel describes incidents and memories; the play reveals the emotions and atmosphere associated with those incidents as remembered by Frankie.

²⁰"Plot Me No Plots," XXXIII (Jan. 28, 1950), 27.

Despite slight alterations, condensations, and omissions, the structure of the play is essentially similar to the novel. The novel has three main divisions: Parts One, Two, and Three. Part Two is further divided into three sections. The play has three acts, and Act Three has three scenes.

Part One is similar to Act One. While primarily expository, it introduces the conflict between Frankie and loneliness. The visit of Janice and Jarvis, Frankie's memories of it, the conversations over the kitchen table, and most of Frankie's thoughts are very similar in both versions. There are only minor alterations.

In the novel, there is no mention of the old vegetable lady. The idea of old age is included but in other ways. One is John Henry's old Uncle Charles who has been very ill. Later, in Part Two, Mr. Addams announces that Uncle Charles, not Sis Laura, is dead. The other old person in the novel is "Big Mama," apparently Berenice's grandmother, who is very feeble but can tell fortunes. Neither of these characters is mentioned in the play.

The only other difference is in the setting. Part of the conversation in the novel takes place in Frankie's bedroom. Specifically, it is the test of John Henry's eyesight. Apparently, Carson McCullers felt it more useful to keep one long scene in the kitchen than to include a short scene in the bedroom, although the bedroom would be a meaningful

setting. This is an example of alterations which were made in consideration of the technical limitations of the theatre.

Other than these instances, the structure of Part One is retained in Act One. The descriptive passages are longer in the novel, but much of the description is replaced by the direct sensory effect of actors, costumes, and scenery.

The action of the first section of Part Two of the novel is only referred to at the beginning of Act Two. In it Frankie walks downtown, window shopping and telling everyone she meets about her plans to run away after the wedding. She visits her father's shop to obtain permission to buy new clothes. She stops by the Blue Moon Café, a tavern in a disreputable part of town. There she meets a red headed soldier who makes a pass at her and asks for a date for that evening. Overwhelmed by the attention she is getting, Frankie innocently accepts. When she comes home the hot, warped images of the afternoon play in her mind. During her attempts to tell Berenice of her adventures, they become only more blurred. In the play, the actress must show the significance of her walk downtown by revealing a more secure attitude toward her decision to leave home. At the same time the attitude must be somewhat affected--optimistic for the moment by what she chooses to believe was encouragement from strangers.

Section Two of Part Two is essentially the same as Act Two. Some of the dialogue has been slightly rearranged, but the effect exists. In the novel there is a discussion of

dead people, although it was Mr. Addams and not T. T. who announced the death of Uncle Charles. The mention of Barney is not associated with Helen Fletcher. The "queer sin" behind the Wests' garage had been committed by Frankie herself. If Frankie's opinion of Helen Fletcher is prompted by jealousy, then a completely new aspect of her character appears. In the play, the relationship between Frankie and Helen is simply a matter of the club. By making Frankie an innocent victim of the other girls' meanness, the playwright gains more sympathy for the character's confusion and frustration.

Mr. Addams's conversation with T. T. and Honey is not in the novel. It was apparently added because of the infrequency of opportunities to see his character in other ways. Berenice's stories about her husbands, about peculiar things, and her warnings for Frankie are very similar in the novel although more detailed. In the play, the moods and mystery are conveyed through interpretation by the actors instead of in long descriptive passages.

The end of Section Two corresponds closely to the end of Act Two. Frankie's sudden awareness of names and identity, her mad run around the kitchen, and the soothing song are similarly treated in both novel and play.

Perhaps the portion of the novel which is most noticeably absent from the play is Section Three of Part Two. In it Frankie visits Big Mama in Sugarville to have her fortune

told. She sees Honey in Big Mama's kitchen lounging with his feet on the table. After wandering around town observing the lights and sounds of the evening, she goes to the Blue Moon to keep her date with the soldier. He treats her to a beer, which she is ashamed to refuse, and then invites her up to his room. There Frankie undergoes what is perhaps her most frightening experience because of her complete inability to understand it. The terror of the incident can only be described in the climactic passage of this section:

The next minute was like a minute in the fair Crazy-House, or real Milledgeville. Already F. Jasmine had started for the door, for she could no longer stand the silence. But as she passed the soldier, he grasped her skirt and, limpened by fright, she was pulled down beside him on the bed. The next minute happened, but it was too crazy to be realized. She felt his arms around her and smelled his sweaty shirt. He was not rough, but it was crazier than if he had been rough--and in a second she was paralyzed by horror. She could not push away, but she bit down with all her might on what must have been the crazy soldier's tongue -- so that he screamed out and she was free. Then he was coming toward her with an amazed pained face, and her hand reached the glass pitcher and brought it down on his head. (p. 130)

Fearing that she might have killed him, she slips out the door and goes home.

Since there is no mention of this incident in the play, its absence points most clearly to what is probably the greatest difference between the two versions. The novel shows incidents; the play conveys the mood and emotions of the incidents through Frankie's memories of them.

While this difference does not explain the absence of the soldier sequence, it does clarify the completely new

viewpoint with which Carson McCullers approached the dramatization of her novel. The desired motivation determines the use of this incident. Here again, Carson McCullers apparently chose to concentrate on Frankie's innocence and curiosity, and leave out the other aspect of the character. If this was actually her intention, then the actress would only confuse the issue by reading cynicism or sarcasm into her lines.

In Part Three and Act Three the same action occurs, but again, it is treated in very different ways. Frankie's preparation, decision, and impulse to leave with the bride and groom take only a few minutes in the play. In the novel the wedding takes place at Winter Hill, in Janice's home, so Frankie has all the time of the bus ride going and coming to plan her course of action and then to suffer over her humiliating rejection. In the transposing of the wedding to the Addams home the emotional sequence is made more concentrated, intense and vivid.²¹

When Frankie returns home from the wedding she types a note to her father and leaves the house in the middle of the night, unseen except by John Henry who does not understand why he must be left behind. Frankie carries her suitcase around the dark, quiet town, trying to decide what to do. Shadows recall images of the soldier, of Evelyn Owen, of the wedding. She remembers her threat to kill herself if

²¹In the novel, in the description of the wedding, the Mr. and Mrs. Williams who are mentioned are apparently Janice Evans's parents. If so, the name discrepancy is unexplained.

she were not allowed to join the bride and groom, but she changes her mind. The police, having been notified of her disappearance, discover her sitting in the Blue Moon Café, and they bring her home.

While the incident is vaguely suggested in the play, the shadowy, nightmarish mood becomes one of storm-like impulse in the play. The focus is on John Henry, Berenice, and Mr. Addams rather than on Frankie. Honey's delirious scene also fits the atmosphere of this section. In the novel, his arrest, like Frankie's escape, is unclear and distant. The reason for the scene as it appears in the play has been discussed in relation to the thematic material.

The difference in the treatment of John Henry's death has been mentioned in the discussion of thematic material. The conclusion of the play, the moving to a new house, and Frankie's new friendship, is essentially the same as the conclusion of the novel. It is only, as the author said, "transposed on a sharper, more immediate point."

This comparison shows that several important actions have been eliminated from the play: Frankie's walk downtown, her visit to Sugarville, the incident with the soldier in the Blue Moon Café, the wedding ceremonies and Frankie's ejection from the car, and the passages which show more of her relationship with Barney.

The off-stage wedding scene is primarily only a technical consideration, made without noticeable loss to the ideas

of the play. The other deletions have more notable consequences. The absence of the other four actions detracts from the fullness of the characters as shown in the play. The Negro aspect loses the obvious importance in the story which has been shown to be related to the themes and to the characterization of Mr. Addams and the Negro characters. Frankie's reactions to Berenice and Honey would be more meaningful if the other side of their life were shown, and if it were clear that Frankie has seen that life. If the novel is used in interpreting the play, the visit to Sugarville provides motivation for Berenice's similar concern for Honey and Frankie; Frankie's fascination with Honey is explained; Honey's relationship with John Henry is meaningful; and the loneliness and isolation themes have an added dimension.

The details of Frankie's walk downtown provide motivation for a growth in her character in Act Two. It is possible for the actress to adopt a pseudo-sophisticated air which shows something has happened to encourage her planning to leave. Once the motivation is clear, her specific decision to join the wedding is arrived at more convincingly. This incident also provides a chance for the actress to portray Frankie as an extrovert, secure for the moment in her knowledge of people, but not fully aware of the accuracy of that knowledge. She at least affects a veneer of social assurance: "It's funny I can't think who you are talking

about. I used to think I knew so many people." An awareness of her conversations with strangers on the street helps the director and the actors understand why Frankie will not heed Berenice's warnings, and chooses to follow her own instincts in rebelling against her "cooped-up" existence.

The Blue Moon and Barney MacKean sequences have been deleted with a different effect, however. If Frankie's security with the world is more imagined than real, then her experiences with sex and drinking are inconsistent. Even though the drinking and bedroom incidents show Frankie as completely naïve and innocent, their presence in the novel gives a dimension to her character which would be confusing in the play. In connection with the "queer sin," however, no specific mention is made of innocence. Because it is called a "sin," the reader assumes it was not completely innocent. The director, as has been pointed out in this discussion, must decide which motivations guide Frankie: jealousy and desperation, or confusion and frustration. Except for decreasing the possibility of audience confusion resulting, the play possibly loses something because of the alteration. Frankie may be admirable without being likeable, but her character is undeniably unpleasant. The unpleasantness is more difficult to portray if her ignorance is inculpable: she tends to become a pathetic rather than a sympathetic character.

Except for these significant differences, the action

is essentially the same in both versions. In the play, a different viewpoint, a different purpose, and a more direct emotional pattern change the effects of the action. The specific atmosphere, mood, or motivation for any given scene might be determined by the director through reference to the novel, but because of the differences which exist, the director must consider the intentions of the playwright. In any case, reference to the novel must be made with a conscious recognition of the consequences of the alterations.

Summary and Conclusions

Summary of the Comparison of Novel and Play

The comparison of the novel and the play has attempted to show that the novel has "been transposed on a sharper, more immediate point," as the playwright observed. Devices of thematic statement were used less frequently, but with more direct effect; the references became more important individually. The themes retained their relationship to the motivations of the characters: Frankie's desire to belong and be recognized; Berenice's acceptance of her position and her understanding of Frankie's problem; Honey's choice to rebel rather than to apply his talents constructively; and John Henry's attempts to imitate. The themes also have application in conveying what Carson McCullers wanted to say about the human condition through the use of music, death, and the other elements of everyday life. The differences caused by concentration and condensation make the success of the message dependent on timing and interpretation of dialogue, movement, and technical effects.

Some of the changes were made in consideration of facility in technical execution. Some of the motivations of characters were altered for the sake of intensity, clarity, and simplicity on the stage--so the play's message would be more direct emotionally. Because of the condensation every word, gesture, and technical effect is significant and meaningful. In the transition from

novel to play, descriptions of mood and atmosphere become the responsibility of the director and designers.

The effect on characterization is that the motivations can be more easily understood by reference to the more detailed descriptions in the novel. While the characters are still associated with the themes, the relationship is simplified but more direct in the play. What is sacrificed in completeness of character development is gained in the emotional and aesthetic qualities of the play. Characters are individually less fully developed, but in relation to each other they are meaningful. Particularly with the minor roles, additional information from the novel can aid greatly in the actors' characterization. Interpretation must compensate for incidents and descriptions which have been eliminated. The characters must be understood through the actors' techniques and in the relationships of the characters to each other. The focus of characterization has been narrowed to Frankie, almost to the detriment of the other characters.

In recognizing the differences in characterization, the director must be prepared to make decisions about which aspects are essential to conforming to the intentions of the playwright. Frankie's primary motivations must be decided on and executed on stage.

Of the four significant differences in action, two relate to themes and the understanding of minor characters; the other two affect the growth of Frankie's character. The

existence of the latter can complicate the decision about Frankie's basic motivations. The director must decide why Carson McCullers made the deletions. Was it a deliberate simplification of character for the sake of clarity on the stage; or, in her intense personal involvement with the characters, did she not realize that Frankie became more one-sided in the play?

The play reflects a different viewpoint, now more centralized in Frankie; it seems to have a different purpose-- a more direct emotional effect; the structure is more emotional, more impulsive. These differences explain many of the changes.

Conclusions

It is the decision of this director, based on Carson McCullers' own statements and the opinions of the critics, that the playwright attempted to make the same comments about the world and human existence as she had in the novel, and that the play essentially represents the truth of her message. Physical limitations and stylistic differences in the dramatic technique forced her to change her methods of conveying that message. The themes, characters, and action are essentially similar, but the effect is more direct--less intellectual and more emotional.

Decisions about the characters are indicated by the notes in Part Two of this production book. In general, because Frankie's actions seem to reflect a positive need to

be recognized more than a desire to rebel or escape, her motivations must be confusion and frustration from not being able to understand herself. She is a sympathetic character, reflecting the confusion and frustration which is in everyone in some degree. Those who have experienced the trials of adolescence can understand her problem. However, because she is an adolescent, she is somewhat grotesque; everything she does is exaggerated, and since she is so often wrong, those exaggerations are repulsive. In the end, the strongly repulsive character is seen to have the potential of becoming a strongly admirable character. Consequently, she is basically likeable, but usually unpleasant. An attempt was made in the production to concentrate on her sensitivity, her confusion, and her impulsiveness. The novel was used to strengthen her character in these aspects, but the play was adhered to in its depiction of her innocence and immaturity. Thus, the growth of her character was somewhat simplified, having a single direction: from ignorance to knowledge (to use Aristotelian terminology perhaps sacrilegiously), or at least from confusion and frustration to a kind of security.

The other characters, also simplified to emphasize their relationship to Frankie, were interpreted on the basis of the novel in an attempt to make them more interesting and meaningful. Both sides of Honey's character were considered; Berenice's background was emphasized as much as possible in an attempt to make her a sympathetic character while

retaining her unemotional understanding of Frankie; John Henry's loveliness and innocence were emphasized to make his death more meaningful; and Mr. Addams' absent-mindedness and apathy were somewhat exaggerated to account for his insignificance in the action but his responsibility for Frankie's confusion. In general, the characters as they appear in the play were kept intact in production, with the novel being used for additional information when necessary for meaningful relationships between characters or to make the characters more interesting in themselves.

The thematic material, which is so closely associated with the characters and action, was considered in interpretations of lines, movements, and technical effects. Emphasis was intended of the specific thematic qualities of the play which have been mentioned. The results of this can be seen in the technical descriptions of set, lights, and sound, and in the stage directions of the prompt script.

No attempt was made to add any specific incidents or dialogue sequences to the play, but in some scenes the actors were directed to indicate that a change had taken place off-stage. For instance, at the beginning of Act Two, the actress playing Frankie tried to convey the pseudo-sophistication which was a result of the unseen adventure downtown. When she appeared in Act Three, scene two, her entire attitude had changed to one of serious reflection and intense concern, rather than the impulse which had characterized her earlier. This gave her room to rise again at Honey's

entrance and to reverse abruptly at the news of John Henry's illness, the effect being related to the tragi-comic theme.

The actors and actresses, who were quite inexperienced but who had natural talent and the will to work, found the constant intensity and the sudden shifts of mood difficult to execute effectively. Frankie's grotesqueness, the extremes of which were moderated but the poignancy more concentrated in the transition from novel to play, was in continuous conflict with the more sensitive and sympathetic side of her character. The sudden transitions between intense mental anguish and equally intense physical excitement were challenging for the actress. Berenice's dual characteristics of cynicism and sympathy were similarly difficult to portray. However, the minor characters were more aided than confused by the additional information available in the novel. The actors appreciated the chance to do more with their roles than they could find basis for in the script.

Reflections

Judging by the comments of reviewers, audience, actors, and by first-hand impressions, the director of this production concludes that the approach taken was generally successful. The reviews which support this conclusion are included in this production book. The audience seemed to understand the play without any one aspect of it obscuring another. While they could not completely verbalize their reactions, their comments indicated that the direct emotional effect

had occurred. When asked about the quality of the acting, one member of the audience replied, "I don't see what's so hard about the roles; that's just the way those people [the characters] would really act." One remark by a reviewer seems to imply that points were made without being obvious. He expressed doubt as to whether the actors understood the irony of the line, "It must be terrible to be nothing but black, black, black," and Berenice's reply, "Yes, baby." Frankie spoke the line with her hands covering her eyes, and Berenice's reply was off-hand but definite. If the irony of the line was not conveyed, then the reviewer would probably not have mentioned it; it simply was not as obvious as he expected it to be. The technique of "playing it straight" seems to have been effective, at least in this one instance.

In general, the technical effects were successful. Lighting changes were very subtle, but the mood of the audience could be observed to respond. One observer described the recorded thunder as "anemic," but otherwise the sound effects were not distracting. The sequence of blues horn, which was dangerously close to being too long, was accepted by the audience because the actors reacted to its strange effect convincingly. The set apparently conveyed the mood intended. Audiences admitted that their closeness to the stage was not distracting, and that they were immediately absorbed into the action of the play.

It seems useful, in the interest of directors, to interject at this point an incidental observation about the

color scheme's effect on the atmosphere of the play. As explained in the description of the set, the colors of the set and the theatre were intensely warm shades of orange and brown. Although the production was in April and the weather outside was not unseasonably warm, some members of the audience complained of the heat in the theatre. The smallness of the theatre did cause some problems in ventilation, and the noisy air conditioners were used only before the play and between the acts, but the actors were not uncomfortable on stage and the temperature of the theatre was not abnormally high. One month after this production, in May, when the weather was slightly warmer but the state of the theatre was the same, an extremely cold blue set was used for another play. The actual temperature in the theatre was not significantly lower, but there were no complaints from the audience. One is tempted to conclude that the color planning worked too well.

On the negative side, criticisms have been made of insufficient variety, particularly in the roles of Frankie and Berenice. Mention has been made of the difficulty in executing the drastic shifts of mood and intensity. While the actors were somewhat successful in this regard, the audience was distracted when the expected highs and lows were not quite achieved. The intensity of Frankie's voice was meant to make the character irritating, but at times it was the actress who was apparently irritating. This fault in the intensity of the play, while important, did not seem to

detract greatly from the total effectiveness of the play. Most of the audience found it a satisfying theatrical experience.

Criticisms of the minor roles reflect the shallowness of the characterizations. Even with the additional interpretations from the director's use of the novel, these characters were not completely satisfying, but neither were they distractingly empty.

Because of the overall success of the performance, the approach of the director seems to have been justified. The playwright's message was conveyed directly, although some of the poignancy and ironic comedy of Frankie's situation was lost in the moderation of her character. What is overly obvious to the director is not always completely obvious to the audience. In the attempt to retain some of the gentleness and sensitivity of the novel, perhaps more restraint was used than was needed. At any rate, while the play's effect was not as pointed as it might have been, it was an understandable and enjoyable portrayal of an unpleasant adolescent. It is the subjective opinion of the director the reference to the novel and recognition of the differences added to the effectiveness of the production, particularly by aiding in an understanding of the complexities of the characters and the message of the play.

II. PRODUCTION NOTES

The character sketches, technical descriptions, and prompt script included in this section are an attempt to describe the production which resulted from the interpretation which has been discussed in the first part. The actors were directed to correspond as closely as possible with the descriptions given. These descriptions of the characters are not to be confused with the previous discussion of characterization. These sketches represent the director's decisions about which aspects are important in presenting the truth of what Carson McCullers was trying to say in her play. Costumes, makeup, the set, properties, lights, and sound were executed to help depict the atmospheres, moods, and themes which have been discussed. The prompt script incorporates the most important changes and additions which were made in stage directions, based on the director's interpretation as influenced by her utilization of the novel and her understanding of the intentions of the playwright concerning themes, character, and action. Other changes were caused by technical limitations indicated in the descriptions of the set and technical facilities.

The photographs, sketches, charts, and the production and rehearsal data provide an accurate record of the actual production.

Lighting and sound cues have been related to the prompt

script by means of color-coded marginal numbers.

The Characters

Frankie Addams. Frankie's physiological and sociological characteristics are easier to explain than her psychological makeup. However, her psychological motivations are based directly on the other two aspects of her character. A careful distinction must be made between Frankie's own attitudes about herself and her actual situation. The actors and the director must understand why normal behavior is sometimes abnormal for Frankie, and why abnormal behavior is sometimes normal for her. The actress playing Berenice needs this understanding in order to motivate her own character's reactions to Frankie.

Frankie is very aware that she is "twelve and five-sixths years old, and already five feet four and three-quarter inches tall." Obviously, she is tall for her age. She is by no means ugly, but her mannerisms and self-consciousness make her seem more gangling and awkward than she is. She is thin, with sharp bones, so that every part of her seems to protrude excessively. For the summer she has had her hair cut short like a boy's, but by August it has grown out to an unmanageable blond shock.

Since it is summer -- hot, dusty, and humid -- she is dirty. Adding to her problem of appearance is her tomboyish tendency to play on the ground, in the trees, and in general to rough-house without any inhibitions. She has stiff brown

crust on her elbows and knees, and her feet are dirty, with thick callouses caused by going barefoot frequently. She has acquired a good summer suntan.

Her movements are often fast and precise, but sometimes become listless, awkward, and groping. She is potentially graceful, so that when it occurs to her that she has control over her body, she will be able to move in a more socially acceptable manner.

In moments of tension, or when she is particularly excited, her voice can become quite irritating. Otherwise it is not unpleasant. The actress playing Frankie must be aware that the character can be irritating -- even repulsive -- but the actress must never be so.

Frankie has been raised in the South, the daughter of a small town jeweler. Her mother died at Frankie's birth, so that the mother-figure in her life has always been Berenice Sadie Brown, a Negress cook and housekeeper. Berenice does not live at the Addams home, however, so in the evenings and on Berenice's days off Frankie is the lady of the house.

Mr. Addams is absent-minded and set in his ways, so that his affection for Frankie is never obvious. She feels this very sharply, often wondering aloud if he really loves her. She is loved by her father, by her brother, and by Berenice, and probably no less normally than most adolescents. Frankie, however, craves overt affection. She misses being fondled and fussed over. She wants to be touched, but the contact must be genuine. An honest slap from John Henry is

more welcome to her than a playful pat from her brother. The implications of this feeling, of which she is not consciously aware, indicate a touch of dissatisfaction with herself, and a subconscious desire to punish herself. This interpretation would explain many specific actions and gestures in the play.

Her playmates are all ages, from very young children to the monkey man downtown. At the turning point in her life she does not belong with children, nor with adult teenagers, nor with adults. Consequently, despite almost constant companionship of some kind, she feels very much alone.

Her relationship to John Henry is largely one of exploitation. He is not old enough to realize that she does not care about him as an equal, but only as someone to talk to, to yell at, or to stay all night with. She can be superior to him because he is younger than she is; and superiority is important to Frankie. If she has any feeling of racial superiority to Berenice, she is seldom allowed to verbalize that feeling.

Personal property is important to Frankie. She owns a cat which runs away, leaving her seriously concerned. Her method of keeping enemies away is to remind them rudely that they are trespassing on her papa's property. The suitcase, the doll, the shell, the wedding clothes, and her other property are valued highly. Whenever she is willing to give up something it is a noteworthy event. Apparently, this pride of ownership is influenced by her social position as the

daughter of a landowner in an area where the rare and valued mark of free, white, secure man is his property.

Travelling to other cities is another luxury Frankie enjoys infrequently. She has seldom been away from home, and then probably only to the nearest towns. Her longing for Winter Hill is no less intense than her dreams of the far corners of the universe. She is fascinated with Honey Brown because he has been to Harlem. Any place she hasn't seen is an exotic, faraway paradise. In the muggy, intense heat of her home, only change is desirable. The best change would be for a crisp, cold, and white wonderland. Frankie is trapped in circumstances which are not intrinsically bad; it is only her inability to escape which makes her home an unbearable prison. Her body is a torture chamber; because of it she is neither child nor adult. Her home life is a trap which could be released if she were older. Her family and friends seem to ignore her, to mock her, to ridicule her ambitions. Her first desire is to escape, but she cannot be free without being a member of something--anything. She is free in her own home, but she is inhibited by isolation. If the wedding won't take her, some profession might. Frankie's drive to be a member of the wedding is as much a need to join as it is a need to escape. She is as trapped as Honey Camden Brown, but she instinctively realizes the desirability of escaping to, rather than from, something.

In the play, the growth of this character is spasmodic. No definite change in basic motivating forces is seen until

the very last scene, when she has finally become involved with school, with a girlfriend, and with a boyfriend. She is motivated by a need for conformity, rather than for achievement.

In early scenes she is unable to verbalize her problems. By the end of the act the random ideas begin to organize themselves. The concept of "I" versus "we" is raised to a conscious level, along with the solution of escape.

The conscious needs take concrete form in the second act with the physical preparations for the wedding. Public announcement of her plans is an important development in her growth; it establishes a commitment--a plateau from which only more growth is possible. Berenice's explanations of the dangers of loneliness can have meaning to Frankie only at this point. The analogy between Berenice's affairs and Frankie's mental activity becomes clear to Frankie. Berenice's warnings take root in Frankie's mind. They begin to soften the impetuosity which characterized her earlier.

When the wedding actually arrives, in Act Three, Frankie's original fire has cooled considerably. She cannot find it in herself to proceed methodically as she had planned. Frustrated, confused, and desperate, she regresses to impulsive action. The flight to the wedding car is just as impulsive as her flight from home during a storm.

After Frankie has had a chance to cool off in a literal as well as a figurative way, she is able to reason more clearly. The sudden realization of her mistakes breaks her

spirit enough to provide an opportunity for some profound introspection. The incomplete plans of childhood lead to a decision by Frankie. Some cruel shocks provide a means of forcing Frankie to stop and think--to complete a thought and discover what she really is. Sudden as the world may be, Frankie can see some order in it. This discovery is partially conscious and partially instinctive.

With the opening of school in September, and with the friendship of a girl her own age, the order is assured. Frankie realizes that while she might not understand the reasons for everything, she must accept them as necessary. Bad or good, this acceptance is a commonly accepted characteristic of maturity.

The actress playing Frankie must clearly indicate the sudden changes of mood. Her sorrow must be exaggerated sorrow; her sophistication must be experimental and artificial; her joy must be exaggerated. However, the exaggerations which are natural for Frankie must be differentiated from those she affects. Both the natural exaggerations and the affectations must, of course, be Frankie's; not the actress's.

Berenice Sadie Brown. In the script of the play, Carson McCullers describes Berenice as "a stout, motherly Negro woman with an air of great capability and devoted protection." In the novel she is "very black and broad-shouldered and short." Ethel Waters created the role on Broadway, fitting

the stereotype as stout, broad-shouldered, and physically imposing. The type has been associated with the "Mammy" character. An interpretation of the descriptions presents two possibilities. The first is that Berenice actually is the "Mammy" role, with emphasis on physical motherliness and devoted protection. The other gives primacy to her air of great capability, decreases the importance of her physical shape, and leads to the conclusion that Berenice is more than a stereotype "Mammy."

Berenice is not yet forty, but has seen more of life than many people know exists. She has a great capacity and need for love. This is because she has never been satisfied; it may also be the reason she has not been satisfied. Her familiarity with life has made her a practical woman. She hates evil, and loves good, but accepts both as common necessities of life.

In the production being described here, Berenice was played by a Negro girl of average height and below average weight. Berenice's maturity had to be portrayed in mannerisms, voice, attitudes, and position, rather than by her physical appearance. Certain aspects of her character were found central to this interpretation.

The actress found difficulty in rationalizing Berenice's apparent apathy in disciplining Frankie. Despite her scolding and admonitions, Frankie succeeds in disrupting the entire household. Frankie is never seen being punished. Berenice, however, is not apathetic; she is wise. She under-

stands Frankie too well to waste time with petty threats or physical punishment. She knows that the worst torture for Frankie is Frankie herself. In essence, Berenice's role is that of referee between two Frankies. She admonishes one when necessary, encourages the other when possible, loves them both whenever she can, and scolds them both to show that love.

In view of the themes of the play, possibly the most important aspect of Berenice's character is the loneliness which mirrors Frankie's isolation. As Frankie is isolated between the worlds of children and of adults, so Berenice is isolated between slavery and freedom. Frankie is physically neither completely mature nor immature. Racially, Berenice is neither African nor Caucasian. Her physical ancestry is Negro, her cultural ancestry is American. Frankie claims no membership in any social group. Berenice claims membership in family, church, and club, but her loyalties to Ludie and Honey are futile.

For the actress, portraying this essential loneliness is a problem. The meaning must come from the lines, through vocal interpretation and physical involvement. The futility of her love is emphasized. Ludie is shown to be central in her mind. Honey's predicament is always close to Berenice, but he is never within her grasp. She perceives and she feels, but she cannot understand the meanings or the results of her involvement. Finally, after she has no hope of ever replacing Ludie, and after Honey is dead, she is really no

more or less alone than she had been. The purpose of her advice to Frankie is not to give her a hope of belonging, but rather to prepare her to accept a lonely future.

Berenice's position then, physically, mentally, and spiritually, is close, but not intruding; loving, but not committed; angry, but not hateful; caring, but not responsible. She is secure, but not safe; permanent, but not trapped; independent, but not free. She is young, but not virile; old, but not senile. Every individual is alone in many ways; Berenice has learned to live with loneliness.

Berenice's relationship to T. T. and Honey is central in an understanding of her character. Without it her strengths and weaknesses within the Negro social framework are accounted for only by her own testimony. With it she is seen to be a leader, a comforter, and a compromiser even outside of the special environment of the kitchen. All of these qualities were described in her own words, but only with T. T. and Honey present are the claims substantiated. She lives in a matriarchal society at home, and the instincts go with her to her job.

A poetic narrative style used for the exposition of Berenice's background, and Berenice's total involvement in her own emotions serve to clarify her place in Frankie's life. The sensitive descriptions of Berenice and her experiences make her a major character study.

John Henry West. John Henry's sudden death at the end

of The Member of the Wedding raises questions about his relationship to the other characters. The death itself has thematic importance, but its effect shows in retrospect the importance of the character. Except for his place in helping move the scenes of the play, it might be said that his only reason for living is so he can die. Berenice ironically set forth a basis for such an interpretation when she answers Frankie's question about people: "They were born and they're going to die." If his death is to have meaning to Frankie and Berenice he must first have been established as an integral part of their lives. His character must have been strong enough for them to feel close to him.

Because he is Frankie's cousin who lives next door he is naturally close to her. He enjoys spending time in the Addams house with Frankie and Berenice because there is usually something interesting to do. He enjoys playing with Frankie because her imagination is compatible with his, yet richer because of her wider range of experiences. He enjoys Berenice because she spoils him and includes him in all the games of the kitchen. If Frankie has Berenice's sympathy, he is jealous. He often stays all night with Frankie because she makes him feel needed.

His actions are primarily imitative. He wants to experiment with new words, phrases, and gestures. At the age of seven he understands very little of life, but is fascinated by the newness of everything. For his age, he has tremendous powers of concentration, but only when he doesn't

have anything better to do.

Since he is content and relaxed most of the time, his speech and mannerisms are easy and not irritating. However, his personality is volatile whenever he feels anger or excitement building. He can whisper, "Grey eyes is glass," with mysterious intensity, but he can yell, "Son of a bitches!" just as loudly as Frankie.

Physically, he is not unusual for his age. His gold rimmed glasses give him "an oddly judicious air," and his knees and feet seem larger than they should be, but he is a cute seven-year-old.

The young actor playing John Henry need not understand the character completely, but he should understand the reasons for individual lines. Since most of them are short and often irrelevant to the action, intense concentration is needed to recognize cues and remember the lines. The director's difficulty with this role is casting a boy who is intelligent, not shy or easily embarrassed, able to concentrate, and willing and able to take suggestions. He must be able to sit very still for long periods without daydreaming or becoming bored.

John Henry is lovable, amenable, and easily satisfied, but his own developing personality seeks recognition in brief outbursts of jealousy or anger. His object is to gain approval through imitation. Since Frankie is his most usual companion he tries to copy her: if she is sad, he is sad; if she is solemn, he is solemn; in any situation he does

what he thinks she would do.

Because he is agreeable and pleasant company, Berenice and Frankie become fond of him, each in her own way. When his personality breaks forth in disagreement, jealousy, or anger he becomes more than just a pawn or a plaything; he becomes a human being with an identity of his own. This is why his death can be meaningful.

Royal Addams. Frankie's father has been a widower for almost thirteen years, and in that time has acquired mannerisms and habits which are absent-minded. He is not older than forty-five or fifty, but he has about him an old fashioned look and manner. He is graying, perhaps with a mustache. His clothing is conservative; not in bad taste, but several years out of style.

A small jewelry store and watch repair business supports his family comfortably but not elegantly. He has probably never been particularly ambitious, but in the environment of the small southern town his position is quite respectable. No doubt a member of the local business clubs, he has a few friends who lunch and have coffee with him, but none is close.

He is pro-segregation, but not as an agitator or aggressor. The Negro problem of the South is a personal matter with him because it indirectly affects his business. He especially hates "uppity, bigoted niggers," but is good to Berenice and T. T. because they do their job without fussing.

Mr. Addams, in his own environment, usually has control over any situation. While his love for Frankie is sincere, he scoffs at her wild ideas. He has never had the time to understand Frankie nor taken the trouble to show his affection for her in terms she can recognize, because it has never occurred to him that he should.

Since he is set in his ways, schedules are important to him and must be kept. When Frankie is late for lunch or dinner he becomes upset with her lack of punctuality rather than with her absence as such.

Understanding his absent-mindedness and preoccupation with his business explains his allowing Frankie to play her wild games and wear such outlandish clothes to the wedding. He would rather turn her over to Berenice than take the trouble to understand her, and therefore mostly ignores her.

Honey Camden Brown. A boy who has traveled to Harlem and other northern cities, who plays the horn, and who goes wherever he wants, Honey Camden Brown is an exciting figure in Frankie's life. He has seen the world by the time he is twenty. Because of Frankie's fascination with him, every detail of his appearance and behavior contributes to his character.

He is a light colored Negro, tall and slender. His clothes are "jazzy"; that is, loud-colored and extreme. His movements are rhythmical and easy; he is loose and limber. Frankie calls him Lightfoot because he moves all over the

world with his almost dance-like walk.

Although well-educated, he is too concerned with his own problems to use his knowledge constructively. The New Orleans jazz life seems to be a part of him. His emotions rule him.

Wild and unsettled, not knowing who he is or what he is doing, Honey seeks relief from his frustration in music, in drinking, and in marijuana. His instability is magnified by these escapes. His temper is unpredictable. This is clearly seen in his encounter with John Henry. One minute he pushes the boy away in uncontrolled rage; the next minute he gives John Henry a dime, smiling a cynical but gentle smile. When he runs from the law his wild eyes betray his front of hysterical and uncontrolled laughter.

Brusque, high-strung, and volatile, he is a mixture of hostility and playfulness. He is ambitious, but lazy; polite, but cruel; relaxed, but intense.

He is Berenice's half-brother, but unlike her he has not learned to accept the life he has been given. He would rather have independence given to him than to have to earn it. Experience has made him believe that neither is possible, however. Since everything he does is wrong, his values of good and evil have disappeared.

Trapped as he may be, to Frankie he is the incarnation of freedom. He has chosen his own way of life, done whatever he felt like doing, and has gone wherever his lightfeet would carry him. Frankie would be unable to understand why such a

person would commit suicide, even in jail. Conversely, Honey understands Frankie's problems, but is slightly envious of her position. Possibly his only concern with Frankie and John Henry is that they will grow up with the same prejudices which have made his life unbearable.

T. T. Williams. T. T. Williams, a large and pompous-looking Negro of about fifty, slow-moving and easy-going, is a complete contrast to Honey Camden Brown. He does not complain about his existence because he is satisfied with it. He has a steady income, a position as a deacon in the church, and the respect of people who know him. Berenice thinks highly of him, but he is no match for a woman who has had four husbands. He is happy because even in his inferior social position he is superior.

His pompous appearance belies the true personality of a man who is overly polite, somewhat complacent, even shy.

The inclusion of this character has several purposes: to show that Berenice has given up trying to replace Ludie; as a contrast with Honey; to clarify Mr. Addams's position; to show that security, even within the southern Negro framework, is possible only in acquiescence.

Jarvis Addams. Jarvis Addams, despite his place in Frankie's world, is one of the least fully developed characters in the play. This is because it is his position, rather than his personality, that is important. He has found connection: in the army and in love.

Jarvis is an average, good-looking boy of about twenty. He is easy-going, energetic, and playful. He has no problems, no conflicts, because he is in love. Although not particularly ambitious, he will probably have a normal adult life as a husband and father, as a salesman or even an independent businessman.

At the moment he is secure, happy, self-assured. He is easy to know and light-hearted, pleasant company. He loves his father and his sister. Although he teases Frankie, he understands her well enough to ignore her problems.

Janice Evans. Janice Evans, the girl Jarvis is about to marry, is average in every respect: average height, average weight, average intelligence, average background. Plain, sweet and gentle, she is best described as the "girl next door" type.

She tries her best to understand everyone, but her best is only average. She is very much in love; any friend of Jarvis's is a friend of hers. For Frankie, it is impossible to think about one of them without the other being included. Janice is important to Frankie because she is a member of the wedding.

Mrs. West. John Henry's mother is neither old nor young, neither plain nor beautiful, neither kind nor cruel. She is a plain dresser, but is very meticulous about the appearance of her home and her son. This is shown in her concern for his grape-stained feet, and by her changing him to

a white linen suit just for the afternoon.

Berenice indicates that she respects and admires Mrs. West, but could never work for her. Mrs. West's interest in Janice is just normal curiosity, but her concern about John Henry's illness shows her preoccupation with things that are hers. After Honey leaves, her lines indicate that she takes no pains to be polite, but leaves nervously, saying, "Make sure of that." One gets the impression that she would not be completely comfortable in a strange social situation but would compensate for her insecurity by keeping her mind filled with her own conversation.

Barney MacKean. Barney is a worldly-wise, sweet but obnoxious teenager who will do very well until something better comes along. Frankie has neither affection nor respect for him, but he is somebody to take her places. His interest in her is similarly motivated.

Sis Laura. The old vegetable lady is about ninety, senile, ill, but forced by circumstances to work until the day she dies. Even then, because she is a Negro, the world denies her the privilege of a decent burial because she let her insurance claim lapse, so they say. Her death reminds Frankie that people appear and disappear suddenly, with no warning, for no reason, and without any great loss to the world they leave.

Helen Fletcher and the Club of Girls. The club members

are older than Frankie, exclusive, nasty, giggly, and generally blasé. They are secure because they have each other, and are irritating to Frankie because they won't have her. They are disgusted with her unladylike manner, and when she is angry they run because they fear what they know can happen when she gets that way.

Costumes

Costumes for The Member of the Wedding were chosen to be suggestive of the styles in 1945. Exact styles were not followed because they would have been distracting for the audience. Like David Balasco's ultra-realistic settings, they would have drawn attention to their own authenticity instead of providing merely an environment to strengthen the believability of the action.²² Many costumers have felt that "When historically accurate costumes are also stodgy and meaningless (as indeed they sometimes are) they had better be rejected."²³ The styles of 1945 are familiar enough and unpleasant in their connotations to an ordinary audience, but there is no sense in causing dislike for a character at first sight because of his unfashionable clothes. The women's clothes were consequently slightly shorter than 1945 styles, but slightly longer than 1966 styles. Men's lapel, suit shapes, and trouser fullness were similarly treated to

²²H. D. Albright, William P. Halstead, and Lee Mitchell, Principles of Theatre Art (Boston, 1955), p. 162.

²³Lucy Barton, Historic Costume for the Stage (Boston, 1961), p. vii.

suggest the period.

Characters who required particularly unusual costumes were Frankie and Honey Camden Brown. Frankie's wedding clothes had to be garish and unsuited to her age and position. Honey required a "jazzy" suit which would be unusual, wild colored, and suited to his character. In most theatrical situations, a loud print must be exaggerated on the stage, but in the small theatre used for this production there was no need for such exaggeration. Sketches of the costumes for the three main characters, Frankie, Berenice, and John Henry, and for Honey have been included following this section. The others did not present any special problems, and can be described without sketches.

Frankie. In Act One, Frankie wore rolled up cut-off jeans shorts of light blue, and a print sailor-type blouse of red, white, and blue. She was barefoot throughout the act. For Act Two she changed to a simple cotton flared jumper of light lavender, which she wore with a short-sleeved white blouse. Her shoes were plain white flats. The wedding costume which she changed into was an ankle-length gown of bright orange taffeta. Around her head was tied a metallic silver ribbon with a dangling bow over her forehead. She added earrings, necklace, and bracelet of rhinestones. Her medium-high heeled shoes were silver with narrow crisscross straps over the instep. For the wedding in Act Three, the jewelry was toned down slightly, and a small white corsage

was pinned to her left shoulder. When she returned in Scene Two she wore the same lavender dress from Act Two, now mussed from having been wadded in her suitcase. In Scene Three she wore a dark brown, subdued cotton print school dress of a shirtwaist pattern. Brown and white saddle oxfords and white socks helped indicate the school season. All of her costumes except the wedding clothes were in good taste and simple in design.

Berenice. Berenice wore plain white bib aprons over pastel cotton house dresses for Acts One and Two. The first dress was of pin-striped red and white seersucker, which appeared to be almost pink. Near the end of the act she removed her apron and put on a small white straw hat for her date with T. T. She carried a small white leather clutch purse. The second dress was a slightly flared style of pale lilac with an indistinct print of deeper shades. For both acts she wore laced white work shoes with open toes. For Act Three and the wedding she wore a cotton suit of white with a heavy speckling of black. The rounded collar was edged in black. Her apron for the wedding was a white bib-type with ruffles. There was no change of shoes from Act Two. The same costume was worn in Scene Two. For the final scene she changed into her "going-away" suit of navy blue with red polka dots. A navy blue felt hat, navy blue leather handbag, and navy blue suede shoes completed her costume except for the brown fox fur draped around her shoulders. At

all times Berenice wore a black patch over her right eye. The light colored dresses and print suits helped make Berenice seem slightly heavier and more mature than the actress actually was. The costumes were all conservative and appropriate to her position.

John Henry. At the beginning of Act One and throughout Act Two John Henry wore a bib sunsuit of brown and white pin-striped seersucker. The straps were crossed in the back. With this suit he wore no shoes. When he returned in Act One after being cleaned up by his mother, he wore a white linen collarless suit with above-the-knee length shorts. With the white suit he wore a white shirt open at the collar, white socks, and brown and white saddle oxfords. For Act Three a small bow tie of tan with small red dots, and a red corduroy vest were added to the white suit. A red rosebud boutonniere was pinned on the left breast of the jacket. Small gold-rimmed spectacles were worn at all times. John Henry's costumes were in excellent taste, very clean and neat, and appropriate to his age. They added much to the audience's impression of the character and of his mother's attitude toward him.

Jarvis. For Act One Jarvis wore a World War II Army uniform with no jacket. His wedding outfit was a navy blue gabardine suit, white shirt and navy blue long tie. His shoes and socks were black. A white rosebud boutonniere completed the costume. There was nothing unusual about

Jarvis's costumes; they were conservative and appropriate.

Janice. Janice wore a light blue shirtwaist cotton dress with plain white pumps for Act One. An engagement ring was the only jewelry for this act. For the wedding she wore a pale green suit with a white ruffled-front blouse. A small white feather hat, white gloves, white high heels, and a large white corsage completed her outfit. Janice dressed nicely but conservatively.

Mr. Addams. Mr. Addams was made to appear somewhat old-fashioned by costuming him in suits which were more nearly 1945 styles than the others'. For the first two acts he wore a plain brown suit with a white shirt and wide patterned tie. His jewelry consisted of a gold watch chain on the waist, a gold tie clasp, and a small organizational button on his left lapel. He changed to a navy blue suit and tie for Act Three, and added a white carnation boutonniere. His shoes and socks were black. The suits fit loosely and indicated his carelessness in dressing.

Mrs. West. John Henry's mother wore a brown cotton print housedress with a rounded neckline and white work shoes in Act One. When she returned in Act Three, Scene Two she had changed to a dress of navy blue lightweight silky material with very small white polkadots. The same white shoes and a white apron were worn with this. Both dresses were slightly flared and hung loosely on her, giving her a

matronly appearance. They made her seem older than her age and just a little dowdy.

Honey Camden Brown. Honey's "jazzy" suit was a coat of blue and white, two inch checked light woolen material worn with blue trousers. The jacket was suggestive of a minstrel or even a zoot-suit style. It was slightly fitted in the back and waist, with flapped pockets, wide lapels, and four buttons. His shoes were brown and white wing tips. An off-white shirt and dark blue bow tie completed the costume. The only change was for Act Three, Scene Two, when the tie was removed and the collar of the shirt was loosened. The blue checked coat gave the effect that was needed without being garish. The clothes, while loose, gave the impression of a carefully fitted suit for 1945.

T. T. Williams. Berenice's beau is described in the script as wearing a black suit with a deacon's pin on the collar. The actor playing this role wore a size 48 suit coat and this was impossible to find or make with the budget allowance for this production. He wore black trousers and a short sleeved white shirt with a black long tie. He appeared to be a carefully dressed man, but without the coat because of the August heat. For Act Three he added a white busboy jacket. At all times he wore black shoes and socks. While the deacon image was not specifically indicated, the sincere, religious, gentle character was suggested by the costumes.

Sis Laura. The old vegetable lady was costumed in a dark green cotton print dress which was just above ankle length. The sleeves were tight, and wrist-length. Several net and lace petticoats gave it body, and one was allowed to show in the back when she stooped. Plain black leather shoes also showed below the skirt. Around her head she tied a blue bandana, letting some hair show in the front and at the nape of the neck.

Barney MacKean. For the summer scene Barney wore tan cut-offs, a white sleeveless undershirt, and white socks and shoes. For his final scene he changed to a red and white football jersey and long tan trousers. The shoes and socks were not changed. He appeared to be a careless but comfortable dresser.

The Club. Helen, Doris, and their friend wore pastel cotton sundresses. Helen's was light blue, Doris's was pink, and the other was pale aqua. They each wore white flats. The costumes were similar in style to suggest the idea of their copying each other in everything.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE II

Review printed in
The K-State Collegian, April 21, 1966, p. 2.

unfold

PLATE II

Characters Create Roles in 'Wedding' Production

By HAROLD SCHNEIDER

Instructor in English

"The Member of the Wedding," a drama about family life in Georgia, is a play absolutely dependent upon the performances of the actors playing its three central characters: a 12-year-old girl, the Negro cook who takes care of her, and the girl's seven-year-old boy cousin.

BETTY CARY, WHO directed the K-State production of this play, has found performers who do not so much act as create these roles for the audience. I confess that I went to the play with memories of Julie Harris and Ethel Waters, but once the play began I made no invidious comparisons.

What Miss Cary's Frankie Addams, Berenice Sadie Brown, and John Henry West do is to seize one's attention and sustain one's interest through extended scenes in which they alone appear. It is a complement to the actors' ability and the skill of their director that one does not wish for more action or the appearance of other members of a fairly numerous cast.

FRANKIE IS PLAYED by Carolyn Lee, a freshman, who managed to convince me that she was 12, that life indeed is inexplicable at this age when the green sapling, and that longing is the most painful emotion one can know. In a role that skirts fairly close to the edge of monotony, Miss Lee is never monotonous. She manages somehow to be appealing at Frankie's most frenetic moments, to move one's emotions whether she is removing a splinter with a carving knife, chasing snobbish older girls from her yard by screaming insults at them, or desperately trying to understand why she, "F. Jasmine" Addams, cannot accompany her brother Jarvis and his bride on their wedding trip.

As counterpoise to Frankie, the character of Berenice Sadie Brown requires strength and dignity, and yet an earthiness, a bawdiness even, that a woman who has had four husbands since she was 13 might have. Yolonda Dozier gives the role a suggestion of all of these, and the proper amount of humor besides. In a play that

scene by scene is permeated with comedy and cause for laughter, Miss Dozier provides the right transitions between the light and the serious moments.

That two such excellent characterizations should be accompanied by a third, and that by a small boy, is truly surprising. I understand that professional actors abhor being on the stage with animals and children. Perhaps I can compliment Stephen Engler who plays young John Henry no more highly than by saying he is as sure in his performance as anyone there. I cannot imagine the role being better played.

All of the other roles are secondary to these three. No prospective bride ever received less attention than in this play. While the acting in the minor parts is competent, the roles rarely allow us much knowledge of the character.

RICK BROADHURST AS Frankie's brother plays a fatuous role somewhat fatuously. Don Monroe has a few good moments as the father; and Gene Harris moves us as the Negro trumpet player who has knifed a white man and must flee, but who first delivers one great outburst of protest. In lesser parts are Mary Alice Krueger, Linda Rowland, Percy Brown, and others.

The play has been well staged in the small area of the Purple Mask Theatre. The left side of the stage has been made to represent a not particularly resplendent household kitchen; the right side, slightly lower, shows an arbor leading out of a front yard. The action of the play moves fluidly between these areas.

THE PRODUCTION, then, because of excellent directing, acting, and staging, can be considered a success. On the classic theme of an adolescent's becoming more aware of the world, the play also deals with the Negro's struggle for recognition. At one point Frankie says dying must be terrible in being "nothing but black, black, black." Berenice says, "Yes, baby." I'm not sure that the cast conveyed the irony in that exchange, but if not, it must be one of the few things they missed.

The play continues in performances at 8 tonight through Saturday. It would be a shame if the few empty seats of last night were repeated at any future performance.

Review

EXPLANATION OF PLATE III

Review published in
The Manhattan Mercury, April 21, 1966, p. 2.

Actors Give Interesting Portrayals

"The Member of the Wedding," a Master's Thesis production directed by Betty Cary, was an interesting performance in the Purple Masque Theater last night.

The play, by Carson McCullers is an excellent choice for graduate study. Primarily a picture of a sensitive young girl's reaction to a bewildering mature world's mysteries of marriage, war, death, and racial violence, the play crystallizes enduring problems of human concern.

Yolanda Dozier's sympathetic portrayal of Bernice Sadie Brown brought to the audience a wonderful character filled with the strength, kindness, and understanding to withstand all trouble.

Carolyn Lee as Frankie Adams portrayed the young girl, lonely and proud, ignorant and perceptive, cruel and kind, but above all objecting to grown-ups who seemed to have only partial answers to questions which plagued her.

Stephen Engler as John Henry West was a most believable eight-year-old cousin who lived next door. His delightful portrayal charmed the audience.

A realistic yet imaginative setting was authentic in its detail as were the costumes. They went far to set the mood.

Perhaps greater variety in leading characters' conversational rhythm and stage movements would lend added credibility to their interpretations. — Marjorie Adams.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE IV

Costume sketch for Frankie

"The Wedding Clothes:" Act II; Act III, Scene 1.



PLATE IV

EXPLANATION OF PLATE V

Costume sketch for Frankie

Fig. 1. Costume for Act I.

Fig. 2. Costume for Act II and Act III, Scene 2.

Fig. 3. Costume for Act III, Scene 3.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

EXPLANATION OF PLATE VI

Costume sketch for Berenice

- Fig. 1. Act I and Act II.
- Fig. 2. Act III, Scenes 1 and 2.
- Fig. 3. Act III, Scene 3.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

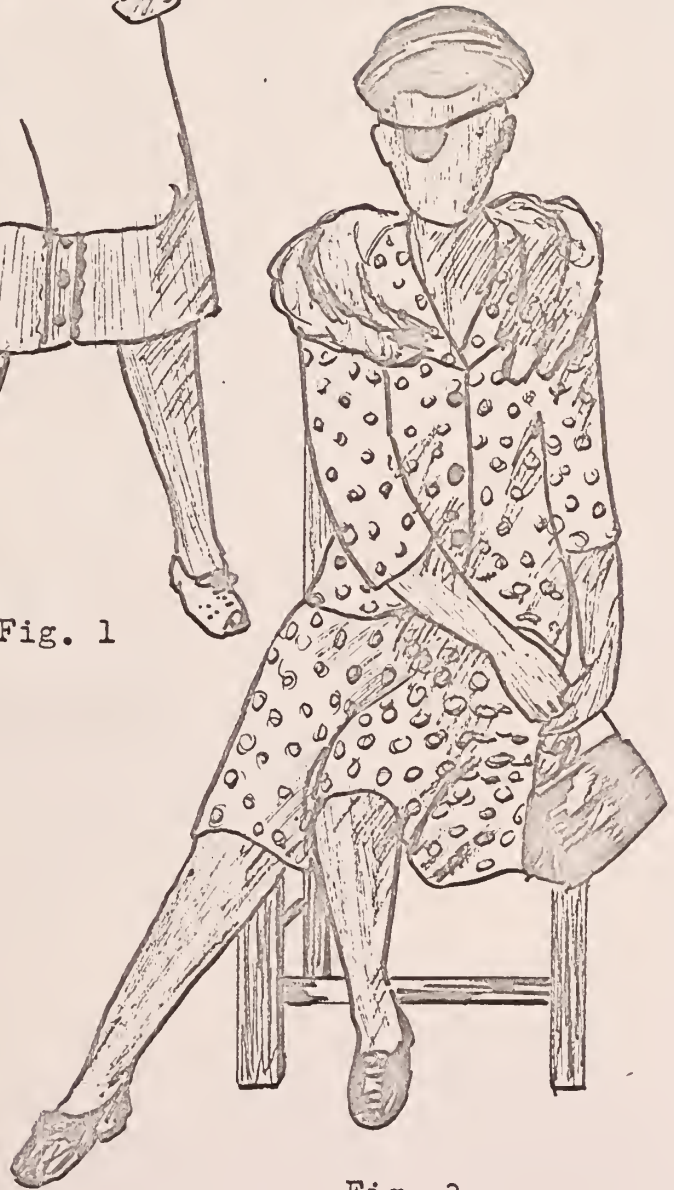


Fig. 3

EXPLANATION OF PLATE VII

Costume sketch for John Henry

- Fig. 1. Costume for Act I.
- Fig. 2. Costume for Act I and Act II.
- Fig. 3. Costume for Act III, Scene 1.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

EXPLANATION OF PLATE VIII

Costume sketch for Honey

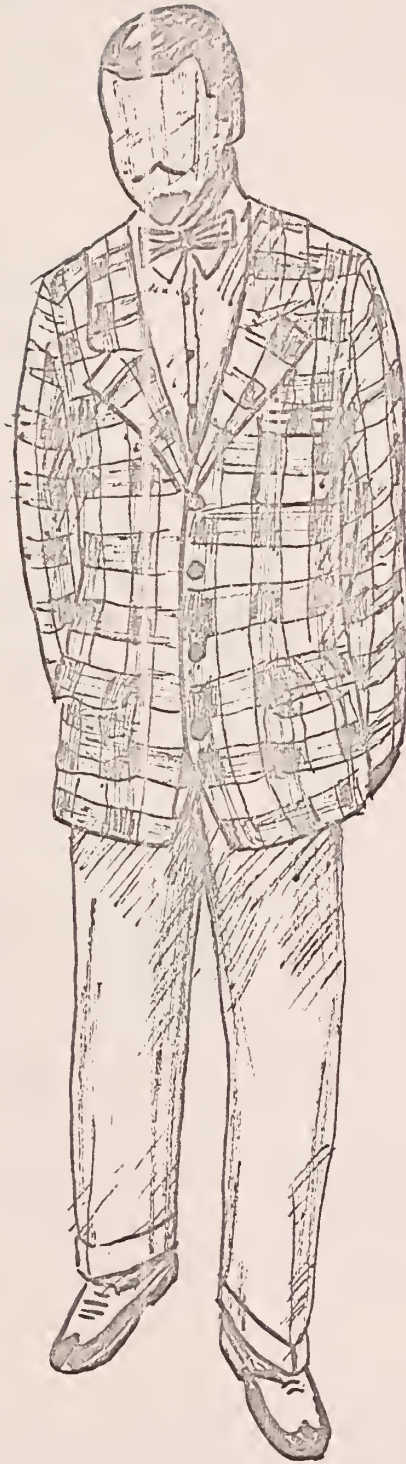


PLATE VIII

Makeup

Since this production was staged in a small, intimate theatre, makeup was necessarily precise and natural. Most of the characters wore light makeup to show age, suntan, or simply to enhance their appearance under lights. Because of the closeness of the audience, Berenice's eye could not be made up as a glass eye, so she kept the patch on at all times.

Negro actors always present special problems for makeup artists. Their skin tones do not react to makeup and lights in the same way lighter tones do. Since none of the characters required heavy character makeup, a light base of cold cream served to accent the highlights quite well. Lines, shadings, and shadows were applied sparingly in shades complementary to the natural color tones.

Two hair pieces were used for women, and a heavy mustache was made for Mr. Addams of crepe hair and liquid latex, and applied with spirit gum. The actor playing Honey had grown a small goatee and mustache which gave him an almost aesthetic, sensitive quality.

The following chart shows the exact makeup used for each character. The numbers refer to Max Factor Theatrical Makeup products.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE IX

Makeup Chart used for the production.

Note: Numbers refer to Max Factor Theatrical Makeup Products.

| Character | Base | Shading | Lines | HiLites | Eyes | Powder | Miscellaneous |
|------------|-----------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------|---------|----------------------------------|
| Berenice | Cold Cream | Dk. Br. | Dk. Br. | #6 | Dk. Br. Sh. | Transp. | Hair Piece Grey Streaked Hair |
| Frankie | #5½, 2A | Pancro Lt. Rouge | - | - | Pancro, Br. Liner | #7R | Body Makeup Brown on Elbows |
| John Henry | #5½, 2A | Lt. Rouge | - | - | Pancro, Br. Liner | #7R | Body Makeup Brown on Elbows |
| Mr. Addams | #5½ | Brown | Brown | White | Br. Shadow | #7R | Mustache |
| Jarvis | #5½ | Brown | Brown | White | Br. Shadow | #7R | - |
| Janice | #5½, 2A | - | - | - | Bl. Shadow Br. Lines | #7R | Hair Piece Hair Spray |
| Mrs. West | #5½, 2A | Brown | Brown | White | Br. Liner | #7R | Streaked Hair |
| Honey | Cold Cream | Pancro Br. | Dk. Br. | #6 | Br. Shadow | Transp. | Mustache and Goatee |
| T.T. | Cold Cream | Dk. Br., Bl. | Dk. Br., Bl. | #6, Brown | Dk. Br. Sh. | Transp. | Grey Hair |
| Helen | #7A, 2A | Lt. Rouge | - | - | Bl. Sh. Br. Liner | #7R | - |
| Doris | (Same as Helen) | | | | | | |
| Girl | (Same as Helen) | | | | | | |
| Barney | #5½ | Pancro | - | - | Pancro Sh. | #7R | Body Makeup |
| Sis Laura | Cold Cream | Dk. Br. | Dk. Br. | #6 | Dk. Br. Sh. | Transp. | - |

The Set

In this discussion of the scenery, the following terminology is used: a setting is the place where a play takes place. A set is a stage device designed and built to represent the setting.

The setting of The Member of the Wedding is the kitchen and back yard of a rather ordinary house in a small southern town, in August and November, 1945. In the production being described, this setting was represented on an open stage measuring twenty-eight by twelve feet. The platform stage, open to the audience on three sides, was separated into two distinct acting areas by a difference in levels. The right end, which became the area for the kitchen, measured sixteen feet by twelve feet; the surface was one foot higher than the theatre floor. The left area, which was used for the yard, measuring twelve feet by twelve feet, was six inches higher than the floor. A ramp measuring approximately three feet by three feet was added to the upstage left corner to facilitate entrances and exits made from backstage, which was on floor level. The downstage left corner was rounded to soften its appearance in contrast to the sharp corners of the house.

Since the play was written for an essentially realistic style of production, and since the successful Broadway production had adhered to this style, it was chosen as the most practical style.

With the exception of some furniture and appliances, almost all the set was manufactured. No attempt was made to make details of the set look real, but rather the purpose was to make the whole set seem real in relation to the actors.

An experimental approach was somewhat indicated by the theatre itself. It is a small theatre, seating an audience of 149 in four sections: two in front of the stage, and one at each end of the stage, facing toward each other. The front sections are separated by a three foot thick pillar which can cause serious sight line problems for the designer. Since the stage was divided into two parts, the visibility of the set and actors became a major concern. The nearest spectators were less than ten feet from the stage edge. The farthest spectator was about twenty feet from the stage edge. Consequently, the definition of the areas needed to be clear at very close range, but without obstructions or distractions.

The script indicates a tight, closed-in, somewhat cluttered area. Frankie's frustration can be motivated physically by enclosing her in a walled-in space. Obviously, the stage cannot be surrounded by solid walls. On a proscenium stage a room is represented by three walls and sometimes a ceiling. If a closed-in effect is wanted, it may be achieved by limiting the number and size of openings in the walls. On an open stage, other techniques must be used for the same effect. In this play, the kitchen must have at least two doors, one opening to the rest of the house, and one opening to the back yard. The room would probably have at least

one window. The back wall of the stage has only two openings: there is a doorway near each end of the stage platform.

In designing the set, an attempt was made to define the kitchen area by building low corner sections at the downstage corners, and full length corners upstage. The exteriors of these pieces were covered with natural color wood shingles. The interior surfaces were painted to match the wallpaper design used on the back wall. A section of a skeletal window frame was supported by the downstage right corner piece, and a window curtain hung from the corner on one side of the window. In its position the window and corner piece was not a visual obstruction because there was no audience in the corner of the theatre. The downstage left corner piece was two feet high with extensions of approximately two feet along both sides of the area. Similarly shingled and stenciled sections were added in the upstage areas, extending from the floor to the apparent ceiling height of the room. A partial door frame was connected to the upstage left corner section, representing the back door. Sight lines prohibited the use of a practical door.

The result was a cut-away view into the kitchen. Sight line problems were solved by limiting the height and width of the corner pieces.

The upstage or back wall of the kitchen was made of flats set against the wall of the stage area. The flats were

EXPLANATION OF PLATE X

Detail of set corner piece



PLATE X

painted to resemble a wallpapered wall almost ten feet high. Stenciled onto a dull light orange-brown base color was a dark brown four petal abstract floral figure. Each flower was about six inches wide. The centers of the flowers were approximately twelve inches from each other. The result was a muted, but distinct design, not attractive in itself, but giving warmth and texture to the set. Black spray was added near the upper corners and above the stove to produce an aged and worn appearance.

The major furnishings of the kitchen were placed along the upstage wall because of sight line problems. The kitchen table and chairs were the only exceptions. These were placed in the visual center of the kitchen area, which was slightly to the left of the actual center. Originally, an attempt was made to set the table at an angle, as is usually done on a proscenium type stage. In the open set this had no advantages. The logical position for the table was square with the walls, and it was set this way.

Against the back wall, from stage right to stage left, were set real appliances and furniture: a heavy black iron coal-burning heating stove with a plain black coal scuttle beside it; a doorway to the rest of the house, the frame of which was painted dark brown to match the other woodwork; a small, round-topped brown telephone table; a small white gas range; a counter with a large sink built into it; and a white electric refrigerator of pre-war manufacture. The refrigerator had decorative legs and a large, circular motor on top.

The age and appearance of the refrigerator helped date the setting, and added interest to the decorations. Since the range, sink, and refrigerator were of white porcelain finish, they tended to reflect light. Scouring powder was applied to them with a wet sponge and was not wiped off. This treatment dulled the finish without changing the color, but was easy to clean off after the production. There was no need to use a more rugged finish because the appliances were not used extensively.

The kitchen table and chairs were made of dark brown wood. The table was plain, with a three by four foot top surface. In one side was a small, practical drawer. Lightweight, but sturdy oaken chairs were purchased to match the table.

Shelves or cabinets were needed to hold cooking utensils and dinnerware. Three shallow shelves were built above the sink. These were furnished with an assortment of knickknacks, dishes, and glasses. They were left open, but a small curtain was hung at each end of the shelf unit.

To mask the area under the counter and sink, a curtain was used. The material was the same as that used on the window and shelf: a brown, orange, and white cotton floral print. This added warmth, texture, and color to the set, and harmonized with the brown and orange color scheme.

Above the telephone table, near the doorway, a rectangular mirror was hung. It was sprayed with blond tinted

hair spray to give the glass a warped, watery appearance and to reduce the reflection without completely obscuring it. Rough child-like drawings were painted on the wall with black paint.

The floor was made to resemble a softwood floor by painting dark brown lines on the padded, canvas-covered platform, which had been painted a flat medium brown color. The lines were painted perpendicular to the back wall. The visual effect of this was a tightening of the area without any reduction of the actual size.

When completed, the kitchen area had the closed-in atmosphere which was desired. It was cluttered enough to have a lived-in look, but had as much open space as possible. The color scheme and decoration were conservative, and neither tacky nor elegant.

Because of the nature of the theatre and the stage, the yard was a special problem. An indication of outdoor space was needed, but, as in the kitchen, a closed in atmosphere was needed to emphasize Frankie's frustration. An arbor, a bench, and some indication of a tree are mentioned in the script, but the realistic approach called for more decoration. Placing the arbor downstage would have caused serious sight line problems. The script indicates that the bench is under the arbor, but by moving the arbor upstage the bench would have been obscured for most of the audience. The arbor was built around the left doorway in the back wall;

the plain white, low bench was set near the downstage left corner of the yard area.

An arbor of large size would have overpowered the set, so it was limited in size and design to a simple criss-cross pattern built eight feet high, four feet wide, and one foot deep. The arched opening was four feet wide and five feet high at the center. Adults and Frankie stooped slightly to walk through it, but it was large enough for children to play in comfortably. Lines in the first scene of the play provided the rationale for the size of the arbor.

Vine for the arbor was a combination of real and artificial ivy-like plants. Grape vine could not be used because real grapes were not in season, and the cost of artificial grape vine was prohibitive. The arbor and the bench were painted flat white, then spattered and brushed to age and dull the finish. The white surfaces were not distracting, but provided visual reference points for the subtle lighting changes in the play.

A low stoop related the house to the yard at the back door. It was painted dark grey and a simple wooden railing was added to the upstage edge. Low evergreen shrubs were placed at the sides of the arbor to fill the spaces and add color. After the back wall had been painted flat black, a five foot high plain board fence was set against it. The fence extended from the kitchen wall to the far left exit, with the arbor providing the only passage through it. It

was painted dark brown, then decorated with a few crude drawings in dull green paint. The far left exit was around the end of the fence. Thus, the fence seemed to enclose the yard, but its continuation off the set itself provide the effect of outdoor space. No attempt was made to put a tree in the yard, primarily because of the limitations of the stage construction.

Since the bench alone did not sufficiently fill the downstage left area, a simple flower box was placed between the bench and the edge of the stage. It contained artificial flowers of dull orange and brown shades, which corresponded to the total color scheme, but did not draw attention to themselves.

No attempt was made to simulate grass. Instead, the stage floor was painted a dull green and heavily spattered with brown and black. This made a neutral, rough surface which would not reflect light, but which was obviously different from the wooden floor of the kitchen.

Burlap was used for the stage curtain in the arbor. White sheets were rejected because they reflected light and detracted from the other pieces in the yard. The burlap was lettered "BIG SHOW" in black, but hung limply at one side of the opening, except for one moment in the first scene when John Henry holds it out for Janice to see.

Only one other property was used in the yard. This was a simple orange crate which was lettered roughly to show

that it had been used as a lemonade stand. Laid on its side and set in the downstage right corner of the yard area, it was useful as an extra seat, and as a table.

The edges of the kitchen area platform were painted roughly to resemble a stone foundation. The edges of the yard area were left a neutral brown shade. All exits were masked with black curtains.

Although no conscious attempt was made to match the colors of the set to the decorations of the theatre itself, a pleasing combination resulted. The theatre decorations included brown and orange shades, so the set, while obviously not matching, became almost a part of the theatre itself. The warm colors contributed to the effect of warmth which had been obtained with the set coloring. The audience felt comfortable with the set; they were close enough to see it clearly, but were not embarrassed by their closeness to it. The desired atmosphere, mood, and space definition had been achieved without obstructing the view from the audience, and without attracting their attention to irrelevant details of the set.

Property plot

Act One. In the kitchen: six glasses of lemonade on a tray with a pitcher; kitchen utensils on the counter; food (prop and real) in the refrigerator; blond baby doll on a chair; saucer of milk on the floor; telephone, fly swatter;

sea shell; knick-knacks on the shelves; candle in holder on the shelf; small kitchen shelf clock; carving knife in the table drawer; deck of cards minus jacks and queens. In the yard: palmetto fan on the crate. Hand props: Janice--engagement ring; Frankie--bottle of perfume; Berenice--coins and paper money, glass eye in purse; Sis Laura--vegetable basket, stick cane; Honey--trumpet, a dime and a penny; Mr. Addams--pocket watch on a chain.

Act Two. In the kitchen: soap solution and spool on the table; mixing bowl with biscuit dough and spoon, rolling pin, and flour; dinner and service for three; kitchen matches; knick-knacks on shelves; cookie sheet in the oven; (other props the same as Act One). In the yard: no change from Act One. Hand props: Frankie--old suitcase, newspaper; Berenice--money, pack of cigarettes; Honey--razor knife (straight razor).

Act Three, Scene One. In the kitchen: (Add) wedding refreshments on the counter and the table (punch, sandwiches, cake); (Remove) sea shell; dinner dishes; cookie-making tools. In the yard: no change. Hand props: Frankie--punch glass, old suitcase; John Henry--show costumes, sea shell, fairy wand; Janice and Jarvis--wedding rings.

Act Three, Scene Two. In the kitchen: empty glasses and trays stacked on the counter (no other changes). In the yard: no change. Hand props: Berenice--paper money;

Frankie--old suitcase.

Act Three, Scene Three. In the kitchen: (Remove) all dishes, utensils, knick-knacks except the clock, two chairs; (Move) table up to counter, one chair on top of table, one chair to center, doll beside center chair; (Add) knitting or carpet bag by center chair. In the yard: (Remove) fan from crate, Frankie's suitcase from stoop. Hand props: Frankie--sheet music.

Sound Effects

Sound effects for The Member of the Wedding were designed to be clearly audible, but not distracting. They had several purposes: offstage voices for atmosphere, musical sounds for mood and thematic illustration, and special storm effects. The offstage voices of children playing were eliminated because of the difficulty in making them sound natural with the equipment that could be used. The sounds of the family's voices offstage were live effects, but were not ad-lib. Specific lines of carefully timed lengths were memorized by the actors. The reason for this was that the backstage was so close to the audience that words could be clearly understood in parts of the audience. The lines were natural for the characters who spoke them, and appropriate to the particular situations.

All other sound effects were on tape, but only the thunder was from a sound effects library; the others were

taped especially for the performance. The speaker unit was located just offstage behind the arbor, but sounds were non-directional. That is, they seemed to emanate from wherever the actors indicated. Sound cues are indicated in the script by red marginal number.

Lighting

Considered in lighting this production were the functions of stage lighting, visibility, plausibility, composition, and mood. The qualities which were controlled were intensity, color, distribution, and movement (change in the other three). These functions and qualities were intended to correspond with the overall realistic style of production. The chart of instruments, location, and use shows that twenty light sources and ten dimmers were sufficient for the stage size and the relatively uncomplicated demands of the play.

Although intensity and color were changing almost continuously throughout the play, the movement was so subtle as to be imperceptible. The changes in mood, atmosphere, and composition were complete and effective. The only significant special effects needed were an accent light for the kitchen table and a stormy atmosphere for portions of the third act. The table was accented by an 8", 500w Fresnel spotlight, which could be controlled individually. The storm effect was achieved with a special set of instruments gelled with grey. Light cues are indicated in the script by blue marginal numbers.

Sound Cues

| PAGE | CUE | DURATION | DESCRIPTION |
|------|-----|----------------------------|--|
| 112 | 1 | 30 sec. | Gramophone music |
| 132 | 2 | 35 sec. | Negro singing ("Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child") |
| 149 | 3 | 60 sec. | Blues trumpet ("St. Louis Blues") |
| 159 | 4 | 30 sec. | Piano tuning |
| 163 | 5 | 30 sec. | Piano tuning |
| 174 | 6 | 15 sec. | Piano |
| 176 | 7 | 10 sec. | Piano to tee, repeat |
| 194 | 8 | Intermittent for 2 min. | Storm rumblings |
| 204 | 9 | 5 sec. | Piano on-key arpeggio |

Lighting Cues

| PAGE | CUE | DESCRIPTION |
|------|-----|--|
| 112 | 1 | House out. |
| 112 | 2 | Yard up full; kitchen up 3/4. |
| 119 | 3 | Kitchen up full. |
| 127 | 4 | Yard to 3/4. |
| 132 | 5 | Yard up 1 point. |
| 138 | 6 | Yard up 1 point. |
| 139 | 7 | Yard to 3/4. |
| 144 | 8 | Yard up 1 point. |
| 147 | 9 | Kitchen to 1/2; D. Sp. to 3/4. |
| 152 | 10 | All lights fade out. |
| 152 | 11 | House up. |
| 153 | 12 | House out. |
| 153 | 13 | Kitchen up full; yard to 3/4. |
| 157 | 14 | Yard up full. |
| 163 | 15 | Yard to 3/4; T. Sp. to 1/2. |
| 167 | 16 | Kitchen to 3/4; yard to 1/2; B. Sp. to 3/4; T. Sp. to 3/4. |
| 180 | 17 | Kitchen up slightly; T. Sp. up slightly. |
| 182 | 18 | Kitchen to 1/2; T. Sp. up full. |
| 184 | 19 | All lights fade out; T. Sp. hold for 3 sec. |
| 184 | 20 | House up. |
| 185 | 21 | House out. |
| 185 | 22 | Kitchen up full; yard to 3/4. |
| 194 | 23 | Yard to 1/2; storms to 1/2. |
| 194 | 24 | Kitchen and yard blackout; storms stay at 1/2. |

Lighting Cues (continued)

| PAGE | CUE | DESCRIPTION |
|------|-----|--|
| 195 | 25 | Storms to 3/4 with lighted candle. |
| 195 | 26 | Storms blackout with candle blackout. |
| 196 | 27 | Kitchen to 1/2; storms to 3/4; B. Sp. to 3/4. |
| 196 | 28 | Yard to 1/2. |
| 199 | 29 | All lights fade out. |
| 199 | 30 | House to 1/4 for 30 sec. |
| 200 | 31 | House out. |
| 200 | 32 | Kitchen, yard, and T. Sp. to 3/4. |
| 204 | 33 | All lights fade out; T. Sp. holds for final chord. |
| 204 | 34 | Curtain call. |
| 204 | 35 | House up. |

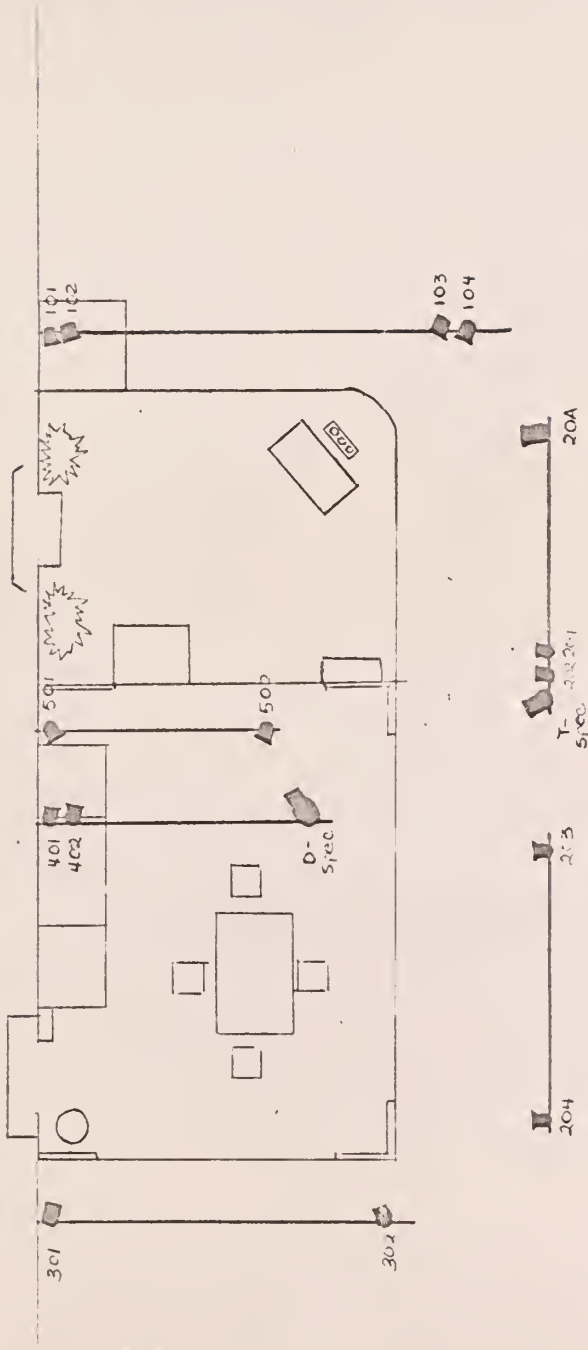
EXPLANATION OF PLATE XI

Lighting chart

| No. | Instrument | Location | Purpose | Lamp | Color | Plugged With |
|-------|-------------------------|----------------|---------------|----------|--------------|--------------|
| 101 | 6" Fresnel-Lens Splt. | 1st Pipe | Area 1 day | 500 T 20 | Straw | 401 |
| 102 | 6" Fresnel-Lens Splt. | 1st Pipe | Area 1 storm | 500 T 20 | Grey | 402 |
| 103 | 6" Fresnel-Lens Splt. | 1st Pipe | Area 1 storm | 500 T 20 | Grey | 202 |
| 104 | 6" Fresnel-Lens Splt. | 1st Pipe | Area 1 day | 500 T 20 | NC Blue | 201 |
| 20A | 8" Fresnel-Lens Splt. | 2nd Pipe L | Bench Special | 750 T 12 | Straw | - |
| 201 | 6" Fresnel-Lens Splt. | 2nd Pipe L | Area 1 day | 500 T 20 | Straw | 104 |
| 202 | 6" Fresnel-Lens Splt. | 2nd Pipe L | Area 1 storm | 500 T 20 | Grey | 103 |
| T.Sp. | 8" Fresnel-Lens Splt. | 2nd Pipe L | Table Special | 750 T 12 | Sp. Lavendar | - |
| 203 | 6" Fresnel-Lens Splt. | 2nd Pipe R | Area 2 | 500 T 20 | NC Pink | 204 |
| 204 | 6" Fresnel-Lens Splt. | 2nd Pipe R | Area 2 | 500 T 20 | NC Blue | 203 |
| 301 | 6" Fresnel-Lens Splt. | 3rd Pipe | Area 2 | 500 T 20 | Straw | 501 |
| 302 | 6" Fresnel-Lens Splt. | 3rd Pipe | Area 2 | 500 T 20 | Straw | 502 |
| 401 | 6" Fresnel-Lens Splt. | 4th Pipe | Area 1 day | 500 T 20 | NC Pink | 101 |
| 402 | 6" Fresnel-Lens Splt. | 4th Pipe | Area 1 storm | 500 T 20 | Grey | 102 |
| D.Sp. | 6" Ellips'l-Ref'r Splt. | 4th Pipe | Door Special | 750 T 12 | Straw | - |
| 501 | 6" Fresnel-Lens Splt. | 5th Pipe | Area 2 | 500 T 20 | NC Blue | 301 |
| 502 | 6" Fresnel-Lens Splt. | 5th Pipe | Area 2 | 500 T 20 | Straw | 302 |
| 601 | 6" Ellips'l-Ref'r Splt. | Lt. Booth Pipe | Ramp day | 750 T 12 | Straw | - |
| 602 | 6" Ellips'l-Ref'r Splt. | Lt. Booth Pipe | Ramp storm | 750 T 12 | Grey | - |

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XII

Lighting layout



1/4" = 1'0"

PLATE XII

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XIII

Photographs of the production

- Fig. 1. L to R: Mr. Addams, John Henry, Janice, Frankie, Mrs. West, Jarvis (Act I).
- Fig. 2. Frankie, Berenice, John Henry (Act I).



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XIV

Photographs of the production

Fig. 1. John Henry, Frankie (Act I)

Fig. 2. Frankie, Honey, Berenice (Act III, Scene 2)



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XV

Photographs of the production

- Fig. 1. Frankie, John Henry, Berenice, T. T., Honey (Act II)
- Fig. 2. Mr. Addams, Frankie, Berenice, John Henry, Honey,
T. T. (Act II)



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XVI

Photographs of the production

Fig. 1. Berenice, John Henry (Act III, Scene 1).

Fig. 2. Frankie, Berenice, Barney (Act III, Scene 3).



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

PLATE XVI

The Prompt Script

The basic text: The Member of the Wedding:
A Play by Carson McCullers. New York, 1951.

The Member of the Wedding

by

Carson McCullers

Act One

Time: A late afternoon in August, 1945.

Place: A small Southern town.

(The lights go on dimly, with a dreamlike effect, gradually revealing the family in the yard and Berenice Sadie Brown in the kitchen. Frankie is facing the bench, gazing adoringly at Jarvis and Janice. Jarvis stands near the arbor. He is awkward when he first appears because this is his betrothal visit. Janice is seated on the bench. Mr. Addams sits comfortably on the stoop, facing Janice, who is opposite him, across the yard. John Henry is playing in and around the arbor. Berenice is busy in the kitchen preparing a tray of lemonade glasses.)

Jarvis

(indicating the arbor)

Seems to me like this old arbor has shrunk. I remember when I was a child it used to seem absolutely enormous. When I was Frankie's age, I had a vine swing here. Remember, Papa?

Frankie

(measuring herself against the arbor)

It don't seem so absolutely enormous to me, because I am so tall.

Jarvis

(playfully ruffling her hair)

I never saw a human grow so fast in all my life. I think maybe we ought to tie a brick to your head.

Frankie

(hunching down in obvious distress)

Oh, Jarvis! Don't.

Janice

Don't tease your little sister. I don't think Frankie is too tall. She probably won't grow much more. I had the biggest portion of my growth by the time I was thirteen.

Frankie

But I'm just twelve. When I think of all the growing years ahead of me, I get scared.

(Janice goes to Frankie and puts her arms around her comfortingly. Frankie stands rigid, embarrassed and blissful.)

Janice

I wouldn't worry.

(Berenice comes from the kitchen with a tray of drinks. Frankie rushes eagerly to help her serve them.)

Frankie

Let me help.

Berenice

(indicating the glasses)

Them two drinks is lemonade for you and John Henry. The others got liquor in them.

(Berenice returns to the kitchen.)

Frankie

Janice, come sit down. Jarvis, you sit down too.

(Jarvis and Janice sit close together on the bench. Frankie hands the drinks around, then perches on the ground before Janice and Jarvis and stares adoringly at them.)

Frankie

(while serving the drinks)

It was such a surprise when Jarvis wrote home you are going to be married.

Janice

I hope it wasn't a bad surprise.

Frankie

Oh, Heavens no! (with great feeling) As a matter of fact. . .

(She strokes Janice's shoes tenderly and Jarvis' army boot.)

If only you knew how I feel.

(John Henry comes to the crate down right, drinks a glass of lemonade which Frankie left on the tray there, then returns to the arbor.)

Mr. Addams

Frankie's been bending my ears ever since your letter came, Jarvis. Going on about wedding, brides, grooms, etc.

Janice

It's lovely that we can be married at Jarvis' home.

Mr. Addams

That's the way to feel, Janice. Marriage is a sacred institution.

Frankie

(rising)

Oh, it will be beautiful.

Jarvis

Pretty soon we'd better be shoving off for Winter Hill. I have to be back in barracks tonight.

Frankie

Winter Hill is such a lovely, cold name. It reminds me of ice and snow.

Janice

You know it's just a hundred miles away, darling.

Jarvis

Ice and snow indeed! Yesterday the temperature on the parade ground reached 102.

(Frankie takes a palmetto fan from the crate and fans first Janice, then Jarvis.)

Janice

That feels so good, darling. Thanks.

Frankie

I wrote you so many letters, Jarvis, and you never, never would answer me. When you were stationed in Alaska, I wanted so much to hear about Alaska. I sent you so many boxes of home-made candy, but you never answered me.

Jarvis

Oh, Frankie. You know how it is . . .

(He rises; starts to give her a comforting hug.)

Frankie
 (sipping her drink)
 You know this lemonade tastes funny. Kind of sharp and hot.
 I believe I got the drinks mixed up.

Jarvis
 I was thinking my drink tasted mighty sissy. Just plain
 lemonade--no liquor at all.

(Frankie and Jarvis click their glasses together
 in mock ceremony, and exchange their drinks.
 Jarvis sips his.)

Jarvis
 This is better.

Frankie
 I drank a lot. I wonder if I'm drunk. It makes me feel
 like I had four legs instead of two. I think I'm drunk.

(She gets up and begins to stagger around in
 imitation of drunkenness.)

See! I'm drunk! Look, Papa, how drunk I am!

(There is a blare of music from the club house
 gramophone off left.)

Janice
 Where does the music come from? It sounds so close.

Frankie
 (indicating off left)
 It is. Right over there. They have club meetings and
 parties with boys on Friday nights. I watch them here from
 the yard.

Janice
 It must be nice having your club house so near.

Frankie
 I'm not a member now. But they are holding an election this
 afternoon, and maybe I'll be elected.

John Henry
 (pointing off left)
 Here comes Mama.

(Mrs. West, John Henry's mother, enters from the
 left. She is a vivacious, blond woman of about
 thirty-three. She is dressed in sleazy, rather
 dowdy summer clothes.)

Mr. Addams
 (rising to meet her)
 Hello, Pet. Just in time to meet our new family member.

Mrs. West
 I saw you out here from the window.

Jarvis
 (rising, with Janice)
 Hi, Aunt Pet. How is Uncle Eustace?

Mrs. West
 He's at the office.

(Mrs. West stands left of Janice, to admire the ring. Frankie sticks her head between them, proudly admiring the diamond.)

Janice
 (offering her hand with the engagement ring on it)
 Look, Aunt Pet. May I call you Aunt Pet?

Mrs. West
 (hugging her)
 Of course, Janice. What a gorgeous ring!

Janice
 Jarvis just gave it to me this morning. He wanted to consult his father and get it from his store, naturally.

(She returns to the bench and sits.)

Mrs. West
 How lovely.

Mr. Addams
 A quarter carat--not too flashy but a good stone.

Mrs. West
 (to Berenice, who is gathering up the empty glasses)
 Berenice, what have you and Frankie been doing to my John Henry? He sticks over here in your kitchen morning, noon and night.

Berenice
 (politely, but continuing to collect glasses)
 We enjoys him and Candy seems to like it over here.

(John Henry goes from his mother to Berenice, who pats him on the head.)

Mrs. West
 What on earth do you do to him?

Berenice

We just talks and passes the time of day. Occasionally plays cards.

Mrs. West

Well, if he gets in your way just shoo him home.

Berenice

Candy don't bother nobody.

John Henry

(Embarrassed by the attention, he returns upstage to the arbor.)

These grapes are so squelchy when I step on them.

Mrs. West

Run home, darling, and wash your feet and put on your sandals.

John Henry

I like to squelch on the grapes.

(Berenice goes back to the kitchen.)

Janice

That looks like a stage curtain.

(John Henry plays with the curtain.)

Jarvis told me how you used to write plays and act in them out here in the arbor. What kind of shows do you have?

Frankie

(proudly, facing front)

Oh, crook shows and cowboy shows. This summer I've had some cold shows--about Esquimos and explorers--on account of the hot weather.

Janice

Do you ever have romances?

Frankie

Naw . . . (with bravado) I had crook shows for the most part. You see I never believed in love until now.

(Her look lingers on Janice and Jarvis. She hugs Janice and Jarvis, bending over them.)

Mrs. West

Frankie and this little friend of hers gave a performance of "The Vagabond King" out here last spring.

(John Henry spreads out his arms and imitates the heroine of the play from memory, singing in his high childish voice.)

John Henry
Never hope to bind me. Never hope to know. (speaking)
Frankie was the king-boy. I sold the tickets.

Mrs. West
Yes, I have always said that Frankie has talent.

Frankie
Aw, I'm afraid I don't have much talent.

John Henry
Frankie can laugh and kill people good. She can die, too.

Frankie
(with some pride)
Yeah, I guess I die all right.

(Frankie "dies" dramatically, but is ignored by all except John Henry, who watches admiringly.)

Mr. Addams
Frankie rounds up John Henry and those smaller children, but by the time she dresses them in the costumes, they're worn out and won't act in the show.

Jarvis
(looking at his watch)
Well, it's time we shove off for Winter Hill--Frankie's land of icebergs and snow--where the temperature goes up to 102.

(Jarvis takes Janice's hand. He gets up and gazes fondly around the yard and the arbor. He pulls her up and stands with his arm around her, gazing around him at the arbor and yard.)

Jarvis
It carries me back--this smell of mashed grapes and dust. I remember all the endless summer afternoons of my childhood. It does carry me back.

(Frankie rises, puts one foot on the bench and distantly gazes off down left.)

Frankie
Me too. It carries me back, too.

Mr. Addams
(putting one arm around Janice and shaking Jarvis' hand)

Merciful Heavens! It seems I have two Methuselahs in my family! Does it carry you back to your childhood too, John Henry?

John Henry

Yes, Uncle Royal.

Mr. Addams

Son, this visit was a real pleasure. Janice, I'm mighty pleased to see my boy has such lucky judgment in choosing a wife.

Frankie

I hate to think you have to go. I'm just now realizing you're here.

Jarvis

We'll be back in two days. The wedding is Sunday.

3

(The family move through the arbor toward the street. John Henry enters the kitchen through the back door, bringing the tray of glasses which had been left on the crate. There are the sounds of "good-byes" from the front yard.)

John Henry

Frankie was drunk. She drank a liquor drink.

Berenice

(gently taking the tray from him)

She just made out like she was drunk--pretended.

John Henry

She said, "Look, Papa, how drunk I am," and she couldn't walk.

(He imitates her stagger.)

Frankie's Voice

Good-bye, Jarvis. Good-bye, Janice.

Jarvis' Voice

See you Sunday.

Mr. Addams' Voice

Drive carefully, son. Good-bye, Janice.

Janice's Voice

Good-bye and thanks, Mr. Addams. Good-bye, Frankie darling.

All the Voices

Good-bye! Good-bye!

John Henry
They are going now to Winter Hill.

Frankie
(strangely affected)
Oh, I can't understand it! The way it all just suddenly happened.

Berenice
Happened? Happened?

Frankie
I have never been so puzzled.

Berenice
Puzzled about what?

Frankie
The whole thing. They are so beautiful.

Berenice
(after a pause)
I believe the sun done fried your brains.

John Henry
Me too.

Berenice
(looking into Frankie's eyes)
Look here at me. You jealous.

Frankie
Jealous?

Berenice
Jealous because your brother's going to be married.

Frankie
(slowly)
No. I just never saw any two people like them. When they walked in the house today it was so queer.

Berenice
You jealous. Go and behold yourself in the mirror. I can see from the color of your eyes.

(Frankie goes to the mirror and stares. She draws up her left shoulder, shakes her head, and turns away. She picks up a chair, lifts it above her head, and whirls around.)

Frankie
(with feeling)
Oh! They were the two prettiest people I ever saw. I just

can't understand how it happened.

Berenice
(taking the chair from her)
Whatever ails you?--actin' so queer.

Frankie
I don't know. I bet they have a good time every minute of the day.

John Henry
Less us have a good time.

Frankie
(confronting him from across the table)
Us have a good time? Us?

Berenice
Come on. Less have a game of three-handed bridge.

(Berenice takes the cards from the table drawer. They sit down to the table, shuffle the cards, deal, and play a game.)

Frankie
Oregon, Alaska, Winter Hill, the wedding. It's all so queer.

Berenice
I can't bid, never have a hand these days.

Frankie
A spade.

John Henry
(trying to be angry)
I want to bid spades. That's what I was going to bid.

Frankie
Well, that's your tough luck. I bid them first.

John Henry
Oh, you fool jackass! It's not fair!

Berenice
Hush quarreling, you two.

(She looks at both their hands.)

To tell the truth, I don't think either of you got such a grand hand to fight over the bid about. Where is the cards? I haven't had no kind of a hand all week.

Frankie

I don't give a darn about it. It is immaterial with me.

(There is a long pause. She sits with her head propped on her hand, her legs wound around each other.)

Let's talk about them--and the wedding.

Berenice

What you want to talk about?

(Frankie stands on her chair, and gazes into the distance, hand above her eyes.)

Frankie

My heart feels them going away--going farther and farther away--while I am stuck here by myself.

(She flops down in her chair again.)

Berenice

You ain't here by yourself. By the way, where's your Pa?

Frankie

He went to the store. I think about them, but I remembered them more as a feeling than as a picture.

Berenice

A feeling?

Frankie

(She tries to picture them, drawing in huge thoughts with groping arm and hand gestures.)

They were the two prettiest people I ever saw. Yet it was like I couldn't see all of them I wanted to see. My brains couldn't gather together quick enough to take it all in. And then they were gone.

Berenice

Well, stop commenting about it. You don't have your mind on the game.

Frankie

(playing her cards, followed by John Henry)
Spades are trumps and you got a spade. I have some of my mind on the game.

(John Henry looks away.)

Frankie

Go on, cheater.

Berenice

Make haste.

John Henry

I can't. It's a king. The only spade I got is a king, and I don't want to play my king under Frankie's ace. And I'm not going to do it either.

Frankie

(throwing her cards down on the table)

See, Berenice, he cheats!

Berenice

Play your king, John Henry. You have to follow the rules of the game.

John Henry

(pouting, but playing the card)

My king. It isn't fair.

Frankie

Even with this trick, I can't win.

Berenice

Where is the cards? For three days I haven't had a decent hand. I'm beginning to suspicion something. Come on less us count these old cards.

(They spread out the cards on the table.)

Frankie

We've worn these old cards out. If you would eat these old cards, they would taste like a combination of all the dinners of this summer together with a sweaty-handed, nasty taste. Why, the jacks and the queens are missing.

Berenice

John Henry, how come you do a thing like that?

(John Henry hunches down in his chair.)

So that's why you asked for the scissors and stole off quiet behind the arbor. Now Candy, how come you took our playing cards and cut out the pictures?

John Henry

(pouting)

Because I wanted them. They're cute.

Frankie

See? He's nothing but a child. It's hopeless. Hopeless!

Berenice

Maybe so.

Frankie

We'll just have to put him out of the game. He's entirely too young.

(John Henry whimpers.)

Berenice

Well, we can't put Candy out of the game. We gotta have a third to play. Besides, by the last count he owes me close to three million dollars.

Frankie

Oh, I am sick unto death.

(She sweeps the cards from the table, then gets up and begins walking around the kitchen. John Henry leaves the table and picks up a large blonde doll on the chair.)

I wish they'd taken me with them to Winter Hill this afternoon. I wish tomorrow was Sunday instead of Saturday.

Berenice

(begrudgingly collecting the cards from the floor)
Sunday will come.

Frankie

I doubt it. I wish I was going somewhere for good. I wish I had a hundred dollars and could just light out and never see this town again.

Berenice

It seems like you wish for a lot of things.

Frankie

I wish I was somebody else except me.

John Henry

(holding the doll)

You serious when you gave me the doll a while ago?

Frankie

It gives me a pain just to think about them.

Berenice

It is a known truth that gray-eyed peoples are jealous.

John Henry

(indicating through the back door)

Let's go out and play with the children.

Frankie

I don't want to.

John Henry

There's a big crowd, and they sound like they having a mighty good time. Less go.

Frankie

You got ears. You heard me.

John Henry

I think maybe I better go home.

Frankie

Why, you said you were going to spend the night. You just can't eat dinner and then go off in the afternoon like that.

John Henry

I know it.

Berenice

Candy, Lamb, you can go home if you want to.

John Henry

But less go out, Frankie. They sound like they having a lot of fun.

Frankie

No, they're not. Just a crowd of ugly, silly children. Running and hollering and running and hollering. Nothing to it.

John Henry

Less go!

Frankie

(suddenly trying to generate enthusiasm)

Well, then I'll entertain you. What do you want to do? Would you like for me to read to you out of The Book of Knowledge, or would you rather do something else?

John Henry

I rather do something else.

(He goes to the back door, and looks into the yard. Three young girls of thirteen or fourteen, dressed in clean print frocks enter the yard slowly from the left.)

Look. Those big girls.

Frankie

(running out into the yard)

Hey, there. I'm mighty glad to see you. Come on in.

Helen

We can't. We were just passing through to notify our new

member.

Frankie

(overjoyed)

Am I the new member?

Doris

No, you're not the one the club elected.

Frankie

Not elected?

Helen

Every ballot was unanimous for Mary Littlejohn.

Frankie

Mary Littlejohn! You mean that girl who just moved in next door? That pasty fat girl with those tacky pigtailed? The one who plays the piano all day long?

Doris

Yes. The club unanimously elected Mary.

Frankie

Why, she's not even cute.

Helen

She is too; and, furthermore, she's talented.

Frankie

(on the stoop, mockingly pantomiming a pianist)

I think it's sissy to sit around the house all day playing classical music.

Doris

Why, Mary is training for a concert career.

Frankie

Well, I wish to Jesus she would train somewhere else.

Doris

You don't have enough sense to appreciate a talented girl like Mary.

Frankie

(suddenly turning on them)

What are you doing in my yard? You're never to set foot on my Papa's property again.

(Frankie shakes Helen.)

Son-of-a-bitches. I could shoot you with my Papa's pistol.

(The girls run off, frightened.)

John Henry
(shaking his fists)
Son-of-a-bitches.

Frankie
Why didn't you elect me?

(She starts back into the house. Then, with intensity:)

Why can't I be a member?

John Henry
Maybe they'll change their mind and invite you.

Berenice
I wouldn't pay them no mind. All my life I've been wantin' things that I ain't been gettin'. Any how those club girls is fully two years older than you.

Frankie
(crossing down right of the table)
I think they have been spreading it all over town that I smell bad. When I had those boils and had to use that black bitter-smelling ointment, old Helen Fletcher asked me what was that funny smell I had.

(She angrily stomps one foot onto the chair, pounding once on the table with her fist.)

Oh, I could shoot every one of them with a pistol.

(John Henry approaches and sniffs Frankie's neck.)

John Henry
I don't think you smell so bad. You smell sweet, like a hundred flowers.

Frankie
(swinging around the chair)
The son-of-a-bitches. And there was something else. They were telling nasty lies about married people. When I think of Aunt Pet and Uncle Eustace! And my own father! The nasty lies! I don't know what kind of fool they take me for.

Berenice
That's what I tell you. They too old for you.

(John Henry raises his head, expands his nostrils and sniffs at himself. Then Frankie goes into the interior bedroom and returns with a bottle of perfume.)

Frankie

Boy! I bet I use more perfume than anybody else in town. Want some on you, John Henry? You want some, Berenice?

(She sprinkles perfume.)

John Henry

Like a thousand flowers.

Berenice

(She halts Frankie with her sudden change of mood.)

Frankie, the whole idea of a club is that there are members who are included and the non-members who are not included. Now what you ought to do is to round you up a club of your own. And you could be the president yourself.

(There is a pause.)

Frankie

(almost interested)

Who would I get?

Berenice

Why, those little children you hear playing in the neighborhood.

Frankie

(pouting)

I don't want to be the president of all those little young left-over people.

Berenice

Well, then enjoy your misery. That perfume smells so strong it kind of makes me sick.

(John Henry plays with the doll at the kitchen table and Frankie watches.)

Frankie

Look here at me, John Henry. Take off those glasses.

(John Henry takes off his glasses.)

I bet you don't need those glasses.

(She points to the coal scuttle.)

What is this?

John Henry

The coal scuttle.

Frankie
(taking a shell from the telephone table)
And this?

John Henry
The shell we got at Saint Peter's Bay last summer.

Frankie
What is that little thing crawling around on the floor?

John Henry
Where?

Frankie
That little thing crawling around near your feet.

John Henry
Oh.

(He squats down.)

Why, it's an ant. How did that get in here?

Frankie
If I were you I'd just throw those glasses away. You can see as good as anybody.

Berenice
Now quit picking with John Henry.

Frankie
They don't look becoming.

(John Henry wipes his glasses and puts them back on.)

He can suit himself. I was only telling him for his own good.

(She walks restlessly around the kitchen.)

I bet Janice and Jarvis are members of a lot of clubs. In fact, the army is kind of like a club.

(John Henry searches through Berenice's pocketbook.)

Berenice
Don't root through my pocketbook like that, Candy. Ain't a wise policy to search folks' pocketbooks. They might think you trying to steal their money.

John Henry
I'm looking for your new glass eye. Here it is.

(He hands Berenice the glass eye.)

You got two nickels and a dime.

(Berenice examines the glass eye, but replaces it in the pocketbook.)

Berenice

I ain't used to it yet. The socket bothers me. Maybe it don't fit properly.

John Henry

The blue glass eye looks very cute.

Frankie

(with an air of superiority; looking away)

I don't see why you had to get that eye. It has a wrong expression--let alone being blue.

Berenice

Ain't anybody ask your judgment, wise-mouth.

John Henry

Which one of your eyes do you see out of the best?

Berenice

The left eye, of course. The glass eye don't do me no seeing good at all.

John Henry

I like the glass eye better. It is so bright and shiny--a real pretty eye. Frankie, you serious when you gave me this doll a while ago?

Frankie

Janice and Jarvis. It gives me this pain just to think about them.

Berenice

It is a known truth that gray-eyed people are jealous.

Frankie

I told you I wasn't jealous. I couldn't be jealous of one of them without being jealous of them both. I 'sociate the two of them together. Somehow they're just so different from us.

Berenice

(She approaches Frankie, who avoids her.)

Well, I were jealous when my foster-brother, Honey, married

Clorina. I went a warning I could tear the ears off her head. But you see I didn't. Clorina's got ears just like anybody else. And now I love her.

(Frankie moves down left but stops her walking suddenly.)

Frankie
J.A.--Janice and Jarvis. Isn't that the strangest thing?

Berenice
What?

Frankie
J.A.--Both their names begin with "J.A."

Berenice
And? What about it?

Frankie
(walking down right of the kitchen table)
If only my name was Jane. Jane or Jasmine.

Berenice
I don't follow your frame of mind.

Frankie
Jarvis and Janice and Jasmine. See?

Berenice
No. I don't see.

Frankie
I wonder if it's against the law to change your name. Or add to it.

Berenice
Naturally. It's against the law.

Frankie
(impetuously)
Well, I don't care. F. Jasmine Addams.

John Henry
(approaching with the doll)
You serious when you give me this?

(He pulls up the doll's dress and pats her.)

I will name her Belle.

Frankie
I don't know what went on in Jarvis' mind when he brought me

that doll. Imagine bringing me a doll! I had counted on Jarvis bringing me something from Alaska.

Berenice

Your face when you unwrapped that package was a study.

Frankie

John Henry, quit pickin' at the doll's eyes. It makes me so nervous. You hear me!

(He sits the doll up.)

In fact, take the doll somewhere out of my sight.

John Henry

Her name is Lily Belle.

(John Henry goes out and props the doll up on the back steps. There is the sound of an unseen Negro singing from the neighboring yard.)

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Frankie

(going to the mirror)

The big mistake I made was to get this short boy cut. For the wedding, I ought to have long brunette hair. Don't you think so?

Berenice

I don't see how come brunette hair is necessary. But I warned you about getting your head shaved off like that before you did it. But nothing would do but you shave it like that.

Frankie

(stepping back from the mirror and slumping her shoulders)

Oh, I am so worried about being so tall. I'm twelve and five-sixth years old and already five feet five and three-fourths inches tall.

(She sits on the table, stretches her hands high above her head, then collapses backwards, so that her head hangs down over the table. Her arms dangle and one knee is up.)

If I keep on growing like this until I'm twenty-one, I figure I will be nearly ten feet tall.

John Henry

(re-entering the kitchen)

Lily Belle is taking a nap on the back steps. Don't talk so loud, Frankie.

Frankie

(after a pause)

I doubt if they ever get married or go to a wedding. Those freaks.

Berenice

(staring down into Frankie's face)

Freaks. What freaks you talking about?

Frankie

At the fair. The ones we saw there last October.

John Henry

Oh, the freaks at the fair!

(He holds out an imaginary skirt and begins to skip around the room with one finger resting on the top of his head.)

Oh, she was the cutest little girl I ever saw. I never saw anything so cute in my whole life. Did you, Frankie?

Frankie

No. I don't think she was cute.

Berenice

Who is that he's talking about?

Frankie

(She sits up on the table, legs crossed under her.)

That little old pin-head at the fair. A head no bigger than an orange. With the hair shaved off and a big pink bow at the top. Bow was bigger than the head.

John Henry

Shoo! She was too cute.

Berenice

(imitating the freaks)

That little old squeezed-looking midget in them little trick evening clothes. And that giant with the hang-jaw face and them huge loose hands. And that morphidite! Half man--half woman. With that tiger skin on one side and that spangled skirt on the other.

(John Henry has been walking around the room imitating the giant with the hang-jaw face.)

John Henry

But that little-headed girl was cute.

Frankie

(She lies down again, imitating the wild man by lowering an imaginary rat into her mouth, like a sword swallower.)

And that wild colored man they said came from a savage island and ate those real live rats. Do you think they make a very big salary?

Berenice

How would I know? In fact, all them freak folks down at the fair every October just gives me the creeps.

Frankie

(after a pause, and slowly)

Do I give you the creeps?

Berenice

You?

Frankie

(going to the mirror)

Do you think I will grow into a freak?

Berenice

(making a joke of it)

You? Why certainly not, I trust Jesus!

Frankie

Well, do you think I will be pretty?

Berenice

Maybe. If you file down them horns a inch or two.

Frankie

(turning to face Berenice, and shuffling one bare foot on the floor)

Seriously.

Berenice

Seriously, I think when you fill out you will do very well. If you behave.

Frankie

(desperately)

But by Sunday, I want to do something to improve myself before the wedding.

Berenice

Get clean for a change. Scrub your elbows and fix yourself nice. You will do very well.

John Henry

You will be all right if you file down them horns.

Frankie

(raising her right shoulder and turning from the mirror)

I don't know what to do. I just wish I would die.

Berenice

Well, die then!

John Henry

(intensely)

Die.

Frankie

(suddenly exasperated)

Go home!

(There is a pause.)

You heard me!

(She makes a face at him and threatens him with the fly swatter. They run twice around the table.)

Go home! I'm sick and tired of you, you little midget.

(John Henry goes out, taking the doll with him.)

Berenice

Now what makes you act like that? You are too mean to live.

Frankie

(She sits right of the table.)

I know it.

(She takes a carving knife from the table drawer.)

Something about John Henry just gets on my nerves these days.

(She puts her right foot on the table and begins to pick with the knife at a splinter in her foot.)

I've got a splinter in my foot.

Berenice

That knife ain't the proper thing for a splinter.

Frankie

(dreamily)

It seems to me that before this summer I used always to

have such a good time. Remember this spring when Evelyn Owen and me used to dress up in costumes and go down town and shop at the five-and-dime? And how every Friday night we'd spend the night with each other either at her house or here? And then Evelyn Owen had to go and move away to Florida. And now she won't even write to me.

Berenice

(sitting near her)

Honey, you are not crying, is you? Don't that hurt you none?

Frankie

It would hurt anybody else except me. And how the wisteria in town was so blue and pretty in April but somehow it was so pretty it made me sad. And how Evelyn and me put on that show the Glee Club did at the High School Auditorium?

(She raises her head and beats time with the knife and her fist on the table, singing loudly with sudden energy.)

Sons of toil and danger! Will you serve a stranger! And bow down to Burgundy!

(Berenice joins in on "Burgundy." Frankie pauses, then begins to pick her foot again, humming the tune sadly.)

Berenice

That was a nice show you children copied in the arbor. You will meet another girl friend you like as well as Evelyn Owen. Or maybe Mr. Owen will move back into town.

(There is a pause.)

Frankie, what you need is a needle.

Frankie

I don't care anything about my old feet.

(She stomps her foot on the floor and lays down the knife on the table.)

It was just so queer the way it happened this afternoon. The minute I laid eyes on the pair of them I had this funny feeling.

(She goes over and picks up a saucer of milk near the cat-hole in back of the door and pours the milk in the sink.)

How old were you, Berenice, when you married your first husband?

Berenice
(without special emphasis)
I were thirteen years old.

Frankie
What made you get married so young for?

Berenice
Because I wanted to.

Frankie
You never loved any of your four husbands but Ludie.

Berenice
(with a hint of warmth)
Ludie Maxwell Freeman was my only true husband. The other ones were just scraps.

Frankie
Did you marry with a veil every time?

Berenice
Three times with a veil.

Frankie
(returning the saucer to the cat-hole, and looking out into the yard)
If only I just knew where he is gone. Ps, ps, ps . . . Charles, Charles.

Berenice
Quit worrying yourself about that old alley cat. He's gone off to hunt a friend.

Frankie
To hunt a friend?

Berenice
Why certainly. He roamed off to find himself a lady friend.

Frankie
Well, why don't he bring his friend home with him? He ought to know I would be only too glad to have a whole family of cats.

Berenice
You done seen the last of that old alley cat.

Frankie
(crossing the room)
I ought to notify the police force. They will find Charles.

Berenice

I wouldn't do that.

Frankie

(at the telephone)

I want the police force, please . . . Police force? . . .
I am notifying you about my cat . . . Cat! He's lost. He
is almost pure Persian.

Berenice

(flabbergasted)

As Persian as I is.

Frankie

But with short hair. A lovely color of gray with a little
white spot on his throat. He answers to the name of Charles,
but if he don't answer to that, he might come if you call
"Charlina." . . . My name is Miss F. Jasmine Addams and the
address is 124 Grove Street.

Berenice

(giggling)

Gal, they going to send around here and tie you up and drag
you off to Milledgeville. Just picture them fat blue police
chasing tomcats around alleys and hollering, "Oh Charles!
Oh come here, Charlina!" Merciful Heavens.

Frankie

Aw, shut up!

(Outside a voice is heard calling in a drawn-out
chant, the words almost indistinguishable: "Lot
of okra, peas, fresh butter beans . . .")

Berenice

The trouble with you is that you don't have no sense of
humor no more.

Frankie

(disconsolately)

Maybe I'd be better off in jail.

(The chanting voice continues and an ancient Negro
woman, dressed in a clean print dress with several
petticoats, the ruffle of one of which shows,
crosses the yard to the back door. She stops and
leans on a gnarled stick.)

Frankie

Here comes the old vegetable lady.

Berenice

Sis Laura is getting mighty feeble to peddle this hot weather.

Frankie

She is about ninety. Other old folks lose their faculties, but she found some faculty. She reads futures, too.

Berenice

Hi, Sis Laura. How is your folks getting on?

Sis Laura

We ain't much, and I feels my age these days. Want any peas today.

Berenice

I'm sorry, I still have some left over from yesterday. Good-bye, Sis Laura.

Sis Laura

Good-bye.

(She goes off left, continuing her chant.)

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(When the old woman is gone Frankie begins walking around the kitchen.)

Frankie

I expect Janice and Jarvis are almost to Winter Hill by now.

Berenice

Sit down. You make me nervous.

Frankie

(She lies across the table left to right, turning her face upwards to picture of Granny.)

Jarvis talked about Granny. He remembers her very good. But when I try to remember Granny, it is like her face is changing--like a face seen under water. Jarvis remembers Mother too, and I don't remember her at all.

Berenice

Naturally! Your mother died the day that you were born.

Frankie

(standing with one foot on the seat of the chair, leaning over the chair back and laughing)

Did you hear what Jarvis said?

Berenice

What?

Frankie

They were talking about whether to vote to C. P. MacDonald. And Jarvis said, "Why I wouldn't vote for that scoundrel

if he was running to be dogcatcher." I never heard anything so witty in my life.

(There is a silence during which Berenice watches Frankie, but does not smile.)

And you know what Janice remarked. When Jarvis mentioned about how much I've grown, she said she didn't think I looked so terribly big. She said she got the major portion of her growth before she was thirteen. She said I was the right height and had acting talent and ought to go to Hollywood. She did, Berenice.

Berenice

O. K. All right! She did!

Frankie

She said she thought I was a lovely size and would probably not grow any taller. She said all fashion models and movie stars . . .

Berenice

(facing Frankie and scolding)

She did not. I heard her from the window. She only remarked that you probably had already got your growth. But she didn't go on and on like that or mention Hollywood.

Frankie

She said to me . . .

Berenice

She said to you! This is a serious fault with you, Frankie. Somebody just makes a loose remark and then you cozen it in your mind until nobody would recognize it. Your Aunt Pet happened to mention to Clorina that you had sweet manners and Clorina passed it on to you. For what it was worth. Then next thing I know you are going all around and bragging how Mrs. West thought you had the finest manners in town and ought to go to Hollywood, and I don't know what-all you didn't say. And that is a serious fault.

Frankie

(turning away)

Aw, quit preaching at me.

Berenice

I ain't preaching. It's the solemn truth and you know it.

Frankie

I admit it a little.

(She sits down at the right of the table and puts

her forehead on the palms of her hands. There is a pause, and then she speaks softly.)

What I need to know is this. Do you think I made a good impression?

Berenice
(sitting near Frankie)

Impression?

Frankie

Yes

Berenice

Well, how would I know?

Frankie

I mean, how did I act? What did I do?

Berenice

Why, you didn't do anything to speak of.

Frankie

Nothing?

Berenice

No. You just watched the pair of them like they was ghosts. Then, when they talked about the wedding, them ears of yours stiffened out the size of cabbage leaves . . .

Frankie

(raising her hand to her ear)

They didn't!

Berenice

They did.

Frankie

(suddenly threatening)

Some day you going to look down and find that big fat tongue of yours pulled out by the roots and laying there before you on the table.

Berenice

Quit talking so rude.

Frankie

(after a pause)

I'm so scared I didn't make a good impression.

Berenice

What of it? I got a date with T. T. and he's supposed to pick me up here. I wish him and Honey would come on. You

make me nervous.

(Frankie sits miserably, her shoulders hunched. Then with a sudden gesture she bangs her forehead on the table. Her fists are clenched and she is sobbing.)

Berenice
Come on. Don't act like that.

Frankie
(her voice muffled)
They were so pretty. They must have such a good time. And they went away and left me.

Berenice
Sit up. Behave yourself.

Frankie
They came and went away, and left me with this feeling.

Berenice
Hosee! I bet I know something.

(She stands, and begins tapping with her heel: one, two, three--bang! After a pause, in which the rhythm is established, she begins singing.)

Frankie's got a crush! Frankie's got a crush! Frankie's got a crush on the wedding!

Frankie
Quit!

Berenice
(doubling the tempo; over Frankie's shoulder)
Frankie's got a crush! Frankie's got a crush!

Frankie
You better quit!

(She rises suddenly and snatches up the carving knife. Berenice backs away, up right.)

Berenice
You lay down that knife.

Frankie
(moving backwards, down left)
Make me.

(She bends the blade slowly.)

Berenice
Lay it down, Devil.

(There is a silence.)

Just throw it! You just!

(After a pause Frankie aims the knife carefully at the closed door leading to the hall and throws it. The knife goes through the doorway.)

Frankie
(defensively)
I used to be the best knife thrower in this town.

Berenice
Frances Addams, you goin' to try that stunt once too often.

Frankie
I warned you to quit pickin' with me.

Berenice
You are not fit to live in a house.

Frankie
(She is standing down left of the table, facing front.)

I won't be living in this one much longer; I'm going to run away from home.

Berenice
And a good riddance to a big old bag of rubbish.

Frankie
You wait and see. I'm leaving town.

Berenice
And where do you think you are going?

Frankie
(gazing around the walls)
I don't know.

Berenice
You're going crazy. That's where you going.

Frankie
No. (solemnly) This coming Sunday after the wedding, I'm leaving town. And I swear to Jesus by my two eyes I'm never coming back here any more.

Berenice

(going to Frankie and pushing her damp bangs
back from her forehead)

Sugar? You serious?

Frankie

(exasperated)

Of course! Do you think I would stand here and say that
swear and tell a story? Sometimes, Berenice, I think it
takes you longer to realize a fact than it does anybody who
ever lived.

(She sits awkwardly, not wanting anything to
touch her.)

Berenice

But you say you don't know where you going. You going, but
you don't know where. That don't make no sense to me.

(Berenice is behind Frankie, looking down at her
tenderly.)

Frankie

(after a long pause in which she again gazes
around the walls of the room)

I feel just exactly like somebody has peeled all the skin
off me. I wish I had some good cold peach ice cream.

(Berenice takes her by the shoulders. During the
last speech, T. T. Williams and Honey Camden
Brown have been approaching through the arbor.
Honey carries a horn. They cross the back yard
and wait at the back door until after the next
speech. Honey holds his hand to his head.)

Frankie

But every word I told you was the solemn truth. I'm leaving
here after the wedding.

Berenice

(taking her hands from Frankie's shoulders and
going to the door)

Hello, Honey and T. T. I didn't hear you coming.

T. T.

You and Frankie too busy discussing something.

(He crosses down right of table. Honey slinks
to the chair right and sits, laying his horn on
the table.)

Well, your foster-brother, Honey, got into a ruckus standing
on the sidewalk in front of the Blue Moon Cafe. Police

cracked him on the haid.

Berenice

What!

(She examines Honey's head.)

Why, it's a welt the size of a small egg.

(John Henry feels the horn admiringly.)

Honey

Times like this I feel like I got to bust loose or die.

Berenice

(with a hint of exasperation)

What were you doing?

Honey

(angrily and helplessly)

Nothing. I was just passing along the street minding my own business when this drunk soldier came out of the Blue Moon Cafe and ran into me. I looked at him and he gave me a push. I pushed him back and he raised a ruckus. This white M. P. came up and slammed me with his stick.

T. T.

(moving up right)

It was one of those accidents can happen to any colored person.

John Henry

(reaching for the horn)

Toot some on your horn, Honey.

Frankie

Please blow.

Honey

(to John Henry, who has taken the horn)

Now, don't bother my horn, Butch.

John Henry

I want to toot it some.

(John Henry takes the horn, tries to blow it, but only succeeds in slobbering in it. He holds the horn away from his mouth and sings: "Too-ty-toot, too-ty-toot." He begins to parade around the room, counter-clockwise. Honey snatches the horn away from him, and shoves John Henry back up stage.)

Honey

I told you not to touch my horn. You got it full of slobber inside and out. It's ruined!

(He loses his temper, turns to get John Henry.)

Berenice

(slapping Honey)

Satan! Don't you dare touch that little boy! I'm going to stomp out your brains!

Honey

(He retreats from Berenice, then holds his ground.)

You ain't mad because John Henry is a little boy. It's because he's a white boy. John Henry knows he needs a good shake. Don't you, Butch?

Berenice

Ornery--no good!

(Honey motions John Henry to come to him, down left of the table, then reaches in his pocket and brings out some coins.)

Honey

John Henry, which would you rather have--the nigger money or the white money?

John Henry

I rather have the dime.

(He takes it.)

Much obliged.

(He goes out and crosses the yard to his house. Honey grins smugly.)

Berenice

(to Honey's face, intensely)

You troubled and beat down and try to take it out on a little boy. You and Frankie just alike. The club girls don't elect her and she turns on John Henry too. When folks are lonesome and left out, they turn so mean.

(She moves up right, toward the counter.)

T. T. do you wish a small little quickie before we start?

T. T.

(looking at Frankie and pointing toward her)

Frankie ain't no tattle-tale. Is you?

(Berenice pours a drink for T. T.)

Frankie

(disdaining his question)

That sure is a cute suit you got on, Honey. Today I heard somebody speak of you as Lightfoot Brown. I think that's such a grand nickname. It's on account of your travelling--to Harlem, and all the different places where you have run away, and your dancing. Lightfoot! I wish somebody would call me Lightfoot Addams.

Berenice

It would suit me better if Honey Camden had brick feet. As it is, he keeps me so anxious-worried. C'mon, Honey and T. T. Let's go!

(Honey and T. T. go out. Berenice leaves her apron on the chair; picks up her hat and pocket-book from the table.)

Frankie

I'll go out into the yard.

(Frankie, feeling excluded, goes out into the yard. Throughout the act the light in the yard has been darkening steadily. The kitchen begins to dim imperceptibly. The yard, in contrast, glows strangely.)

Berenice

Now Frankie, you forget all that foolishness we were discussing. And if Mr. Addams don't come home by good dark, you go over to the Wests'. Go play with John Henry.

Honey and T. T.

(from outside)

So long!

(They start to leave, left.)

Frankie

So long, you all. Since when have I been scared of the dark? I'll invite John Henry to spend the night with me.

Berenice

(looking back)

I thought you were sick and tired of him.

Frankie

I am.

Berenice

(kissing Frankie)

Good night, Sugar!

(She follows the men off.)

Frankie
Seems like everybody goes off and leaves me.

(She walks towards the Wests' yard, calling,
with cupped hands.)

John Henry. John Henry.

John Henry's Voice
What do you want, Frankie?

Frankie
Come over and spend the night with me.

John Henry's Voice
I can't.

Frankie
Why?

John Henry
Just because.

Frankie
Because why?

(John Henry does not answer.)

I thought maybe me and you could put up my Indian tepee and
sleep out here in the yard. And have a good time.

(There is still no answer.)

Sure enough. Why don't you stay and spend the night?

John Henry
(quite loudly)
Because, Frankie. I don't want to.

Frankie
(angrily)
Fool Jackass! Suit yourself! I only asked you because you
looked so ugly and so lonesome.

John Henry
(skipping toward the arbor)
Why, I'm not a bit lonesome.

Frankie
(looking at the house, ignoring John Henry)
I wonder when that Papa of mine is coming home. He always

comes home by dark. I don't want to go into that empty, ugly house all by myself.

John Henry
(standing by the bench, watching her)

Me neither.

Frankie
(standing with outstretched arms, and looking around her)

I think something is wrong. It is too quiet. I have a peculiar warning in my bones. I bet you a hundred dollars it's going to storm.

John Henry
I don't want to spend the night with you.

Frankie
A terrible, terrible dog-day storm. Or maybe even a cyclone.

John Henry
Huh.

Frankie
I bet Jarvis and Janice are now at Winter Hill. I see them just plain as I see you. Plainer. Something is wrong. It is too quiet.

(A clear horn begins to play a blues tune in the distance.) 3

John Henry
Frankie?

Frankie
Hush! It sounds like Honey.

(They both listen carefully. Frankie has one foot on the crate. John Henry sits on the bench. The horn music becomes jazzy and spangling, then the first blues tune is repeated. Suddenly, while still unfinished, the music stops. Frankie waits tensely.)

Frankie
He has stopped to bang the spit out of his horn. In a second he will finish. (after a wait) Please, Honey, go on finish!

John Henry
He done quit now.

Frankie

(moving restlessly)

I told Berenice that I was leavin' town for good and she did not believe me. Sometimes I honestly think she is the biggest fool that ever drew breath. You try to impress something on a big fool like that, and it's just like talking to a block of cement. I kept on telling and telling and telling her. I told her I had to leave this town for good because it is inevitable. Inevitable.

(Mr. Addams enters the kitchen from the house, calling: "Frankie, Frankie." The kitchen is quite dim and eerie by now.)

Mr. Addams

(calling from the kitchen door)

Frankie, Frankie.

Frankie

(Her immediate response is to go in, but she decides to remain nonchalant.)

Yes, Papa.

Mr. Addams

(opening the back door)

You had supper?

Frankie

I'm not hungry.

Mr. Addams

Was a little later than I intended, fixing a timepiece for a railroad man.

(He goes back through the kitchen and into the hall, calling: "Don't leave the yard!")

John Henry

You want me to get the weekend bag?

Frankie

Don't bother me, John Henry. I'm thinking.

(She sits left of John Henry. He looks up into her eyes.)

John Henry

What you thinking about?

Frankie

About the wedding. About my brother and the bride.

Everything's been so sudden today. I never believed before about the fact that the earth turns at the rate of about a thousand miles a day. (half rising from the bench, looking off down left) I didn't understand why it was that if you jumped up in the air you wouldn't land in Selma or Fairview or somewhere else instead of the same back yard. But now it seems to me I feel the world going around very fast.

(Frankie begins turning around in circles with arms outstretched. John Henry copies her. They turn.)

I feel it turning and it makes me dizzy.

John Henry
I'll stay and spend the night with you.

Frankie
(suddenly stopping her turning)
No. I just now thought of something.

John Henry
You just a little while ago was begging me.

Frankie
I know where I'm going.

John Henry
Let's go play with the children, Frankie.

Frankie
I tell you I know where I'm going. It's like I've known it all my life. Tomorrow I will tell everybody.

John Henry
Where?

Frankie
(dreamily)
After the wedding I'm going with them to Winter Hill. I'm going off with them after the wedding.

John Henry
You serious?

(He sits again, patiently.)

Frankie
Shush, just now I realized something. The trouble with me is that for a long time I have been just an "I" person. All other people can say "we." When Berenice says "we" she means her lodge and church and colored people. Soldiers can say "we" and mean the army. All people belong to a "we" except me.

John Henry

(not understanding)

What are we going to do?

Frankie

Not to belong to a "we" makes you too lonesome. Until this afternoon I didn't have a "we," but now after seeing Janice and Jarvis I suddenly realize something.

John Henry

What?

Frankie

(She goes to the stoop and stands on it, facing front.)

I know that the bride and my brother are the "we" of me. So I'm going with them, and joining with the wedding. This coming Sunday when my brother and the bride leave this town, I'm going with the two of them to Winter Hill. And after that to whatever place that they will ever go.

(There is a pause.)

I love the two of them so much and we belong to be together. I love the two of them so much because they are the we of me.

(The lights fade out.)

10

(Eight minute intermission.)

11

Act Two

12

13

(When the lights come up, the scene is the same: the kitchen of the Addams home. Berenice is cooking. John Henry sits left of the table, blowing soap bubbles with a spool. It is the afternoon of the next day. The front door slams and Frankie enters from the hall. There is a pseudo-sophisticated air about her.)

Berenice

I been phoning all over town trying to locate you. Where on earth have you been?

Frankie

(moving down right, then left)

Everywhere. All over town.

Berenice

(still working at the counter)

I been so worried I got a good mind to be seriously mad with you. Your Papa came home to dinner today. He was mad when you didn't show up. He's taking a nap now in his room.

Frankie

(with pride)

I walked up and down Main Street and stopped in almost every store. Bought my wedding dress and silver shoes. Went around by the mills. Went all over the complete town and talked to nearly everybody in it.

Berenice

What for, pray tell me?

Frankie

I was telling everybody about the wedding and my plans.

(She takes off her dress and remains in her slip.)

Berenice

You mean just people on the street?

(She is creaming butter and sugar for cookies.)

Frankie

Everybody. Storekeepers. The monkey and monkey-man. A soldier. Everybody. And you know the soldier wanted to join with me and asked me for a date this evening. I wonder what you do on dates.

Berenice

Frankie, I honestly believe you have turned crazy on us. Walking all over town and telling total strangers this big tale. You know in your soul this mania of yours is pure foolishness.

Frankie

Please call me F. Jasmine. I don't wish to have to remind you any more. Everything good of mine has got to be washed and ironed so I can pack them in the suitcase.

(She goes out the hall door.)

Everybody in town believes that I'm going. All except Papa. He's stubborn as an old mule. No use arguing with people like that.

(She sets a suitcase on the right chair, opens it, and examines the interior.)

Berenice

Me and Mr. Addams has some sense.

Frankie

Papa was bent over working on a watch when I went by the store. I asked him could I buy the wedding clothes and he said charge them at MacDougals. But he wouldn't listen to any of my plans. Just sat there with his nose to the grindstone and answered with--kind of grunts. He never listens to what I say.

(There is a pause.)

Sometimes I wonder if Papa loves me or not.

Berenice

Course he loves you. He is just a busy widowman--set in his ways.

Frankie

Now I wonder if I can find some tissue paper to line this suitcase.

(She crosses up left and moves toward the right, looking in the refrigerator, under the counter, on the shelf.)

Berenice

Truly, Frankie, what makes you think they want you taggin' along with them? Two is company and three is a crowd. And that's the main thing about a wedding. Two is company and three is a crowd.

Frankie

You wait and see.

Berenice

Remember back to the time of the flood. Remember Noah and the Ark.

Frankie

And what has that got to do with it?

Berenice

Remember the way he admitted them creatures.

Frankie

Oh, shut up your big old mouth!

Berenice

Two by two. He admitted them creatures two by two.

Frankie

(after a pause)

That's all right. But you wait and see. They will take me.

Berenice

And if they don't?

Frankie

(She is by the suitcase again. Quietly:)

If they don't, I will kill myself.

Berenice

(playing along)

Kill yourself, how?

Frankie

I will shoot myself in the side of the head with the pistol that Papa keeps under his handkerchiefs with Mother's picture in the bureau drawer.

(She takes the suitcase out and returns immediately.)

Berenice

You heard what Mr. Addams said about playing with that pistol. I'll just put this cookie dough in the icebox. Set the table and your dinner is ready. Set John Henry a plate and one for me.

(Berenice puts the dough in the icebox. Frankie hurriedly sets the table. Berenice dishes from the stove and sets the plates on the table.)

Berenice (continued)

I have heard of many a peculiar thing. I have knew men to fall in love with girls so ugly that you wonder if their eyes is straight.

John Henry

Who?

Berenice

I have knew women to love veritable satans and thank Jesus when they put their split hooves over the threshold. I have knew boys to take it into their heads to fall in love with other boys. You know Lily Mae Jenkins?

Frankie

I'm not sure. I know a lot of people.

Berenice

Well, you either know him or you don't know him. He prisses around in a girl's blouse with one arm akimbo. Now this Lily Mae Jenkins fell in love with a man name Juney Jones. A man, mind you. And Lily Mae turned into a girl. He changed his nature and his sex and turned into a girl.

Frankie

What?

Berenice

He did. To all intents and purposes.

(Berenice is sitting in the center chair at the table; Frankie is to her right; John Henry to her left. She says grace.)

Lord, make us thankful for what we are about to receive to nourish our bodies. Amen.

Frankie

(eating)

It's funny I can't think who you are talking about. I used to think I knew so many people.

Berenice

Well, you don't need to know Lily Mae Jenkins. You can live without knowing him.

Frankie

Anyway, I don't believe you.

Berenice

I ain't arguing with you. What was we speaking about?

Frankie

About peculiar things.

Berenice

Oh, yes. As I was just now telling you I have seen many a peculiar thing in my day. But one thing I never knew and never heard tell about. No, siree. I never in all my days heard of anybody falling in love with a wedding.

(There is a pause.)

And thinking it all over I have come to a conclusion.

John Henry

How? How did that boy change into a girl? Did he kiss his elbow?

(He tries to kiss his elbow.)

Berenice

It was just one of them things, Candy Lamb. Yep, I have come to the conclusion that what you ought to be thinking about is a beau. A nice little white boy beau.

Frankie

I don't want any beau. What would I do with one? Do you mean something like a soldier who would maybe take me to the Idle Hour?

Berenice

Who's talking about soldiers? I'm talking about a nice little white boy beau your own age. How 'bout that little old Barney next door?

Frankie

(with a very nasty expression)

Barney MacKean! That nasty Barney!

Berenice

Certainly! You could make out with him until somebody better come along. He would do.

Frankie

You are the biggest crazy in this town.

Berenice

The crazy calls the sane the crazy.

(Barney MacKean, a boy of twelve, shirtless and wearing shorts, and Helen Fletcher, a girl of twelve or fourteen, cross the yard from the left. Barney picks a flower from behind the bench, and

presents it to Helen. He gallantly escorts her out through the arbor. Frankie and John Henry watch them from the door.

Frankie

Yonder's Barney now with Helen Fletcher. They are going to the alley behind the Wests' garage. They do something bad back there. I don't know what it is.

Berenice

If you don't know what it is, how come you know it is bad?

Frankie

I just know it. I think maybe they look at each other and peepee or something. They don't let anybody watch them.

John Henry

(returning to the table)

I watched them once.

Frankie

(returning to her dinner)

What do they do?

John Henry

I saw. They don't peepee.

Frankie

Then what do they do?

John Henry

I don't know what it was. But I watched them. How many of them did you catch, Berenice? Them beaus?

Berenice

How many? Candy Lamb, how many hairs is in this plait? You're talking to Miss Berenice Sadie Brown.

Frankie

I think you ought to quit worrying about beaus and be content with T. T. I bet you are forty years old.

Berenice

Wise-mouth. How do you know so much? I got as much right as anybody else to continue to have a good time as long as I can. And as far as that goes, I'm not so old as some peoples would try and make out. I ain't changed life yet.

John Henry

Did they all treat you to the picture show, them beaus?

Berenice

To the show, or one thing or another. Wipe off your mouth.

(There is the sound of piano tuning.)

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John Henry

The piano tuning man.

Berenice

(beginning to clear the table)

Ye Gods, I seriously believe this will be the last straw.

John Henry

Me too.

(He goes to the door.)

Frankie

It makes me sad. And jittery too.

(She walks around the room.)

They tell me that when they want to punish the crazy people in Milledgeville, they tie them up and make them listen to piano tuning.

(She puts the empty coal scuttle on her head and walks around. She immediately becomes bored with this and puts it down.)

Berenice

We could turn on the radio and drown him out.

Frankie

I don't want the radio on.

(She goes into the interior room; speaks from inside.)

But I advise you to keep the radio on after I leave. Some day you will very likely hear us speak over the radio.

Berenice

Speak about what, pray tell me?

Frankie

I don't know exactly what about. But probably some eye witness account about something. We will be asked to speak.

Berenice

I don't follow you. What are we going to eye witness? And who will ask us to speak?

John Henry

(excitedly, at the door)

What, Frankie? Who is speaking on the radio?

Frankie

(She returns, and holds John Henry by the shoulders.)

When I said we, you thought I meant you and me and John Henry West. To speak over the world radio. I have never heard of anything so funny since I was born.

(She leaps up on the chair right of the table and tries to sound hysterically amused.)

John Henry

(confused)

Who? What?

Frankie

Ha ! Ha ! Ho ! Ho ! Ho ! Ho !

(Frankie goes around punching things with her fist, and shadow boxing. Berenice raises her right hand for peace. Then suddenly they all stop. Frankie goes to the door and John Henry hurries there also. Berenice turns her head to see what has happened. The piano is still. Two young girls in clean dresses are passing before the arbor. Frankie watches them silently.)

John Henry

(softly)

The club of girls.

Frankie

(viciously)

What do you son-of-a-bitches mean crossing my yard? How many times must I tell you not to set foot on my Papa's property?

(She starts toward them with clenched fists. They escape through the arbor.)

Berenice

Just ignore them and make like you don't see them pass.

Frankie

Don't mention those crooks to me.

(T. T. and Honey approach by way of the back yard. Honey is whistling a blues tune.)

Berenice

Why don't you show me the new dress? I'm anxious to see what you selected.

Berenice (continued)

(Frankie goes into the interior room. T. T. knocks on the door. He and Honey enter.)

Why T. T. what you doing around here this time of day?

T. T.

Good afternoon, Miss Berenice. I'm here on a sad mission.

Berenice

(startled)

What's wrong?

T. T.

It's about Sis Laura Thompson. She suddenly had a stroke and died.

Berenice

(near the stove)

What! Why she was by here just yesterday. We just ate her peas. They in my stomach right now, and her lyin' dead on the cooling board this minute. The Lord works in strange ways.

T. T.

Passed away at dawn this morning.

Frankie

(putting her head in the doorway)

Who is it that's dead?

Berenice

Sis Laura, Sugar. That old vegetable lady.

Frankie

(unseen, from the interior room)

Just to think--she passed by yesterday.

T. T.

Miss Berenice, I'm going around to take up a donation for the funeral. The policy people say Sis Laura's claim has lapsed.

Berenice

(reaching for her pocketbook)

Well, here's fifty cents. The poor old soul.

T. T.

She was brisk as a chipmunk to the last. (moving solemnly down left) The Lord had appointed the time for her. I hope to go that way.

Frankie

(from the interior room)

I've got something to show you all. Shut your eyes and don't open them until I tell you.

(She enters the room dressed in an orange satin evening dress with silver shoes and stockings. She strikes a pose.)

These are the wedding clothes.

(Berenice T. T. and John Henry stare. John Henry comes close to feel the dress. The others giggle.)

John Henry

Oh, how pretty!

Frankie

(sweeping down left a few steps; modelling)

Now tell me your honest opinion.

(There is a pause.)

What's the matter? Don't you like it, Berenice?

Berenice

No. It don't do.

Frankie

What do you mean? It don't do.

Berenice

Exactly that. It just don't do.

(She shakes her head while Frankie looks at the dress.)

Frankie

But I don't see what you mean. What is wrong?

Berenice

Well, if you don't see it I can't explain it to you. Look there at your head, to begin with.

(Frankie goes to the mirror.)

You had all your hair shaved off like a convict and now you tie this ribbon around this head without any hair. Just looks peculiar.

Frankie

But I'm going to wash and try to stretch my hair tonight.

Berenice

Stretch your hair! How you going to stretch your hair?
And look at them elbows. Here you got on a grown woman's
evening dress. And that brown crust on your elbows. The
two things just don't mix.

(Frankie, embarrassed, slinks down left and
covers her elbows with her hands. Berenice is
still shaking her head.)

Take it back down to the store.

T. T.

The dress is too growny looking.

Frankie

But I can't take it back. It's bargain basement.

Berenice

Very well then. Come here. Let me see what I can do.

Frankie

(standing on the chair while Berenice works with
the dress)

I think you're just not accustomed to seeing anybody dressed
up.

Berenice

I'm not accustomed to seein' a human Christmas tree in
August.

John Henry

(dancing by Frankie: jeering)

Frankie's dress looks like a Christmas tree.

Frankie

Two-faced Judas!

(She leaps down to John Henry, shaking her fists
at him.)

You just now said it was pretty. Old double-faced Judas!

(The sounds of piano tuning are heard again.)

Oh, that piano tuner!

Berenice

Step back a little now.

Frankie

(looking in the mirror)

Don't you honestly think it's pretty? Give me your candy
opinion.

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Berenice

I never knew anybody so unreasonable! You ask me my candy opinion, I give you my candy opinion. You ask me again, and I give it to you again. But what you want is not my honest opinion, but my good opinion of something I know is wrong.

Frankie

I only want to look pretty.

Berenice

(giving up)

Pretty is as pretty does. Ain't that right, T. T.? You will look well enough for anybody's wedding. Excepting your own.

(Mr. Addams enters through the hall door.)

Mr. Addams

Hello, everybody. (to Frankie) I don't want you roaming around the streets all morning and not coming home at dinner time. Looks like I'll have to tie you up in the back yard.

(He turns toward the counter to see what was for dinner.)

Frankie

I had business to tend to.

(She sees that he hasn't noticed.)

Papa, look!

Mr. Addams

(not impatiently)

What is it, Miss Picklepriss?

Frankie

Sometimes I think you have turned stone blind. You never even noticed my new dress.

Mr. Addams

(just explaining)

I thought it was a show costume.

Frankie

Show costume! Papa, why is it you don't ever notice what I have on or pay any serious mind to me? You just walk around like a mule with blinders on, not seeing or caring.

Mr. Addams

Never mind that now. (to T. T. and Honey) I need some help down at my store. My porter failed me again. I wonder if you or Honey could help me next week.

T. T.

I will if I can, sir, Mr. Addams. What days would be convenient for you, sir?

Mr. Addams

Say Wednesday afternoon.

T. T.

Now, Mr. Addams, that's one afternoon I promised to work for Mr. Finny, sir. I can't promise anything, Mr. Addams. But if Mr. Finny change his mind about needing me, I'll work for you, sir.

Mr. Addams

How about you, Honey?

(Honey is leaning against the doorframe, cleaning his fingernails.)

Honey

(shortly)

I ain't got the time.

Mr. Addams

I'll be so glad when the war is over and you biggety, worthless niggers get back to work. And, furthermore, you sir me! Hear me?

Honey

(reluctantly)

Yes,--sir.

Mr. Addams

I better go back to the store now and get my nose down to the grindstone. You stay home, Frankie.

(He goes out through the hall door.)

John Henry

Uncle Royal called Honey a nigger. Is Honey a nigger?

Berenice

Be quiet now, John Henry. (to Honey) Honey, I got a good mind to shake you till you spit. Not saying sir to Mr. Addams, and acting so impudent.

Honey

(smugly)

T. T. said sir enough for a whole crowd of niggers. But for folks that calls me nigger, I got a real good nigger razor.

(He takes a razor from his pocket. Frankie and

Honey (continued)
 John Henry crowd close to look. When John
 Henry touches the razor Honey says:)

Don't touch it, Butch, it's sharp. Liable to hurt yourself.

Berenice
 Put up that razor, Satan! I worry myself sick over you. You
 going to die before your appointed span.

John Henry
 Why is Honey a nigger?

Berenice
 Jesus knows.

Honey
 (crossing down right; intensely)
 I'm so tensed up. My nerves been scraped with a razor.
 Berenice, loan me a dollar.

Berenice
 I ain't handing you no dollar, worthless, to get high on
 them reefer cigarettes.

Honey
 (crudely)
 Gimme, Berenice, I'm so tensed up and miserable. The nigger
 hole. I'm sick of smothering in the nigger hole. I can't
 stand it no more.

(Relenting, Berenice gets her pocketbook from the
 telephone table, opens it, and takes out some
 change.)

Berenice
 Here's thirty cents. You can buy two beers.

Honey
 Well, thankful for tiny, infinitesimal favors.

(He moves toward the door.)

I better be dancing off now.

T. T.
 Same here. I still have to make a good deal of donation
 visits this afternoon.

(Honey and T. T. go out the door.)

Berenice
 So long, T. T. I'm counting on you for tomorrow and you too,
 Honey.

Frankie and John Henry

So long.

T. T.

Good-bye, you all. Good-bye.

(They go out, left.)

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Berenice

Poor ole Sis Laura. I certainly hope that when my time comes I will have kept up my policy. I dread to think the church would ever have to bury me. When I die.

John Henry

Are you going to die, Berenice?

Berenice

Why, Candy, everybody has to die.

John Henry

Everybody? Are you going to die, Frankie?

Frankie

(facing front, down left of table)

I doubt it. I honestly don't think I'll ever die.

John Henry

What is "die"?

Frankie

(covering her eyes)

It must be terrible to be nothing but black, black, black.

Berenice

(ironically)

Yes, baby.

Frankie

(She moves left; then sits down center from the table, straddling the chair.)

How many dead people do you know? I know six dead people in all. I'm not counting my mother. There's William Boyd who was killed Italy. I knew him by sight and name. An' that man who climbed poles for the telephone company. An' Lou Baker. The porter at Finny's place who was murdered in the alley back of Papa's store. Somebody drew a razor on him and the alley people said that his cut throat shivered like a mouth and spoke ghost words to the sun.

John Henry

Ludie Maxwell Freeman is dead.

Frankie

I didn't count Ludie; it wouldn't be fair. Because he died just before I was born. (to Berenice) Do you think very frequently about Ludie?

Berenice

(sitting up center of the table)

You know I do. I think about the five years when me and Ludie was together, and about all the bad times I seen since. Sometimes I almost wish I had never knew Ludie at all. It leaves you too lonesome afterward. When you walk home in the evening on the way from work, it makes a little lonesome quinch come in you. And you take up with too many sorry men to try to get over the feeling.

Frankie

But T. T. is not sorry.

Berenice

I wasn't referring to T. T. He is a fine upstanding colored gentleman, who has walked in a state of grace all his life.

Frankie

When are you going to marry with him?

Berenice

I ain't going to marry with him.

Frankie

But you were just now saying . . .

Berenice

I was saying how sincerely I respect T. T. and sincerely regard T. T.

(There is a pause.)

But he don't make me shiver none.

Frankie

(She begins to pace back and forth slowly, trying to recreate the experience with pantomime.)

Listen, Berenice, I have something queer to tell you. It's something that happened when I was walking around town today. Now I don't exactly know how to explain what I mean.

Berenice

What is it?

Frankie

I was walking along and I passed two stores with a alley in

between. The sun was frying hot. And just as I passed this alley, I caught a glimpse of something in the corner of my left eye. A dark double shape. And this glimpse brought to my mind--so sudden and clear--my brother and the bride that I just stood there and couldn't hardly bear to look and see what it was. It was like they were there in that alley, although I knew that they are in Winter Hill almost a hundred miles away.

(There is a pause.)

Then I turn slowly and look. And you know what was there?

(There is a pause.)

It was just two colored boys. That was all. But it gave me such a queer feeling.

(Berenice has been listening attentively. She stares at Frankie, then draws a package of cigarettes from her bosom and lights one.)

Berenice

Listen at me! Can you see through these bones in my forehead?

(She points to her forehead.)

Have you, Frankie Addams, been reading my mind?

(There is a pause.)

That's the most remarkable thing I ever heard of.

Frankie

(leaning across the table toward Berenice)

What I mean is that . . .

Berenice

I know what you mean. You mean right here in the corner of your eye.

(She points to her eye.)

You suddenly catch something there. And this cold shiver run all the way down you. And you whirl around. And you stand there facing Jesus knows what. But not Ludie, not who you want. And for a minute you feel like you been dropped down a well.

Frankie

(sitting at the right)

Yes. That is it.

(Frankie reaches for a cigarette and lights it, coughing a bit.)

Berenice

Well, that is mighty remarkable. This is a thing been happening to me all my life. Yet just now is the first time I ever heard it put into words.

(There is a pause.)

Yes, that is the way it is when you are in love. A thing known and not spoken.

Frankie

(patting her foot)

Yet I always maintained I never believed in love. I didn't admit it and never put any of it in my shows.

John Henry

I never believed in love.

Berenice

(She rises, puts her cigarette in the sink, and begins to walk slowly down stage.)

Now I will tell you something. And it is to be a warning to you. You hear me, John Henry. You hear me, Frankie.

John Henry

Yes.

(He points his forefinger.)

Frankie is smoking.

Berenice

(squaring her shoulders)

Now I am here to tell you I was happy. There was no human woman in all the world more happy than I was in them days. And that includes everybody. You listening to me, John Henry? It includes all queens and millionaires and first ladies of the land. And I mean it includes people of all color. You hear me, Frankie? No human woman in all the world was happier than Berenice Sadie Brown.

Frankie

The five years you were married to Ludie.

Berenice

(completely engrossed in her story)

From that autumn morning when I first met him on the road in

Berenice (continued)

front of Campbell's Filling Station until the very night he died, November, the year 1933.

(Frankie and John Henry listen intently.)

Frankie

The very year and the very month I was born.

Berenice

(She is down left of the table.)

The coldest November I ever seen. Every morning there was frost and puddles were crusted with ice. The sunshine was pale yellow like it is in winter time. Sounds carried far away, and I remember a hound dog that used to howl toward sundown. And everything I seen come to me as a kind of sign.

Frankie

I think it is a kind of sign I was born the same year and the same month he died.

Berenice

(moving toward the window)

And it was a Thursday towards six o'clock. About this time of day. Only November. I remember I went to the passage and opened the front door. Dark was coming on; the old hound was howling far away.

(She is at the upper right corner of the table.
Frankie and John Henry watch carefully as she
relives the experience.)

And I go back in the room and lay down on Ludie's bed. I lay myself down over Ludie with my arms spread out and my face on his face. And I pray that the Lord would contage my strength to him. And I ask the Lord let it be anybody, but not let it be Ludie. And I lay there and pray for a long time. Until night.

John Henry

How? (in a higher, wailing voice) How, Berenice?

Berenice

That night he died. I tell you he died. Ludie! Ludie Freeman! Ludie Maxwell Freeman died!

(She sits, and hums mournfully.)

Frankie

(after a pause)

It seems to me I feel sadder about Ludie than any other dead

Frankie (continued)

person. Although I never knew him. I know I ought to cry sometimes about my mother, or anyhow Granny. But it looks like I can't. But Ludie--maybe it was because I was born so soon after Ludie died. But you were starting out to tell me some kind of a warning.

Berenice

(looking puzzled for a moment)

Warning? Oh, yes! I was going to tell you how this thing we was talking about applies to me.

(As Berenice begins to talk Frankie goes to a shelf and brings back a fig bar to the table.)

It was the April of the following year that I went one Sunday to the church where the congregation was strange to me. I had my forehead down on the top of the pew in front of me, and my eyes were open--not peeping around in secret, mind you, but just open. When suddenly this shiver ran all the way through me. I had caught sight of something from the corner of my eye. And I looked slowly to the left. There on the pew, just six inches from my eyes, was this thumb.

Frankie

(with eyes wide)

What thumb?

Berenice

Now I have to tell you. There was only one small portion of Ludie Freeman which was not pretty. Every other part about him was handsome and pretty as anyone would wish. All except this right thumb. This one thumb had a mashed, chewed appearance that was not pretty. You understand?

Frankie

You mean you suddenly saw Ludie's thumb when you were praying?

Berenice

I mean I seen this thumb. And as I knelt there just staring at this thumb, I begun to pray in earnest. I prayed out loud! Lord, manifest! Lord, manifest!

Frankie

And did He--manifest?

Berenice

(rising)

Manifest, my foot! (spitting) You know who that thumb belonged to?

Frankie

Who?

Berenice

(strolling down left)

Why, Jamie Beale. That big old no-good Jamie Beale. It was the first time I ever laid eyes on him.

Frankie

Is that why you married him? Because he had a mashed thumb like Ludie's?

Berenice

Lord only knows. I don't. I guess I felt drawn to him on account of that thumb. And then one thing led to another. First thing I know I had married him.

Frankie

Well, I think that was silly. To marry him just because of that thumb.

Berenice

I'm not trying to dispute with you. I'm just telling you what actually happened. (moving right) And the very same thing occurred in the case of Henry Johnson.

Frankie

You mean to sit there and tell me Henry Johnson had one of those mashed thumbs too?

Berenice

No. It was not the thumb this time. It was the coat.

(Frankie and John Henry look at each other in amazement. After a pause Berenice continues.)

Now when Ludie died, them policy people cheated me out of fifty dollars so I pawned everything I could lay hands on, and I sold my coat and Ludie's coat. Because I couldn't let Ludie be put away cheap.

Frankie

Oh! Then you mean Henry Johnson bought Ludie's coat and you married him because of it?

Berenice

(near the window, facing the table)

Not exactly. I was walking down the street one evening when I suddenly seen this shape appear before me. Now the shape of this boy ahead of me was so similar to Ludie through the shoulders and the back of the head that I almost dropped dead there on the sidewalk. I followed and run behind him. It was Henry Johnson. Since he lived in the country and didn't come into town, he had chanced to buy Ludie's coat and from the back view it looked like he was Ludie's ghost

Berenice (continued)
 or Ludie's twin. But how I married him I don't exactly know, for, to begin with, it was clear that he did not have his share of sense. But you let a boy hang around and you get fond of him. Anyway, that's how I married Henry Johnson.

(She sits up center from the table.)

Frankie
 He was the one went crazy on you. Had eatin' dreams and swallowed the corner of the sheet.

(There is a pause. Frankie rises, takes a few steps down right.)

But I don't understand the point of what you was telling. I don't see how that about Jamie Beale and Henry Johnson applies to me.

Berenice
 Why, it applies to everybody and it is a warning.

Frankie
 But how?

Berenice
 Why, Frankie, don't you see what I was doing? I loved Ludie and he was the first man I loved. Therefore I had to go and copy myself forever afterward. What I did was to marry off little pieces of Ludie whenever I come across them. It was just my misfortune they all turned out to be the wrong pieces. My intention was to repeat me and Ludie. Now don't you see?

Frankie
 (crossing left)
 I see what you're driving at. But I don't see how it is a warning applied to me.

Berenice
 You don't! Then I'll tell you.

(Frankie does not nod or answer. The piano tuner is heard again.)

You and that wedding tomorrow. That is what I am warning about. I can see right through them two gray eyes of yours like they was glass. And what I see is the saddest piece of foolishness I ever knew.

John Henry
 (in a low voice, as he shifts to the next chair)
 Gray eyes is glass.

(Frankie tenses her brows and looks steadily at Berenice. John Henry is watching them both.)

Berenice

I see what you have in mind. Don't think I don't. You see something unheard of tomorrow, and you right in the center. You think you going to march to the preacher right in between your brother and the bride. You think you going to break into that wedding, and then Jesus knows what else.

Frankie

No. I don't see myself walking to the preacher with them.

Berenice

I see through them eyes. Don't argue with me.

John Henry

(repeating softly; shifting to the far right chair)

Gray eyes is glass.

Berenice

But what I'm warning is this. If you start out falling in love with some unheard-of thing like that, what is going to happen to you? If you take a mania like this, it won't be the last time and of that you can be sure. So what will become of you? Will you be trying to break into weddings the rest of your days?

Frankie

(moving impetuously toward the window)

It makes me sick to listen to people who don't have any sense.

(She sticks her fingers in her ears and hums.)

Berenice

You just setting yourself this fancy trap to catch yourself in trouble. And you know it.

Frankie

(desperately)

They will take me. You wait and see.

Berenice

(giving up)

Well, I been trying to reason seriously. But I see it is no use.

Frankie

You are just jealous. You are just trying to deprive me of all the pleasure of leaving town.

Berenice

(at the sink)

I am just trying to head this off. But I still see it is no use.

John Henry

Gray eyes is glass.

(The piano is played to the seventh note of the scale and this is repeated.)

Frankie

(singing)

Do, ray, mee, fa, sol, la, tee, do. Tee. Tee. It could drive you wild.

(She crosses to the door.)

You didn't say anything about Willis Rhodes. Did he have a mashed thumb or a coat or something?

(She sits down near the door.)

Berenice

Lord, now that really was something.

Frankie

I only know he stole your furniture and was so terrible you had to call the Law on him.

Berenice

(As the intensity builds, she stealthily moves into the upstage chair and speaks with suspense in her voice and face.)

Well, imagine this! Imagine a cold bitter January night. And me laying all by myself in the big parlor bed. Alone in the house because everybody else had gone for the Saturday night. Me, mind you, who hates to sleep in a big empty bed all by myself at any time. Past twelve o'clock on this cold, bitter January night. Can you remember winter time, John Henry?

(John Henry nods.)

Imagine! Suddenly there comes a sloughing sound and a tap, tap, tap. So Miss Me . . .

(She laughs uproariously and stops suddenly, putting her hand over her mouth.)

Frankie

What? (leaning closer across the table and looking intently at Berenice) What happened?

(Berenice looks from one to the other, shaking her head slowly. Then she speaks in a changed voice.)

Berenice

Why, I wish you would look yonder. I wish you would look.

(Frankie glances quickly behind her, then turns back to Berenice.)

Frankie

What? What happened?

Berenice

Look at them two little pitchers and them four big ears.

(Berenice gets up suddenly from the table.)

Come on, chillin, less us roll out the dough for the cookies tomorrow.

(Berenice gets out the cookie dough and utensils, and rolls out the dough on the table.)

Frankie

(She gets up and walks away.)

If it's anything I mortally despise, it's a person who starts out to tell something and works up people's interest, and then stops.

Berenice

(still laughing)

I admit it. And I am sorry. But it was just one of them things I suddenly realized I couldn't tell you and John Henry.

(John Henry skips up to the sink.)

John Henry

(singing)

Cookies! Cookies! Cookies!

Frankie

You could have sent him out of the room and told me. But don't think I care a particle about what happened. I just wish Willis Rhodes had come in about that time and slit your throat.

(She goes out into the hall.)

Berenice

(still chuckling)

That is a ugly way to talk. You ought to be ashamed. Here John Henry, I'll give you a scrap of dough to make a cookie man.

(Berenice gives John Henry some dough. He stands beside Berenice and begins to work with it. Frankie enters with the evening newspaper. She stands in the doorway, reading the newspaper.)

Frankie

I see in the paper where we dropped a new bomb--the biggest one dropped yet. They call it a atom bomb. I intend to take two baths tonight. One long soaking bath and scrub with a brush. I'm going to try to scrape this crust off my elbows. Then let out the dirty water and take a second bath.

Berenice

Hooray, that's a good idea. I will be glad to see you clean.

John Henry

(looking up for approval)

I will take two baths.

(Berenice has put the cookies in the oven and cleared the table. She holds the newspaper open before her and her head is twisted down to one side as she strains to see what is printed there.)

Frankie

Why is it against the law to change your name?

Berenice

What is that on your neck? I thought it was a head you carried on that neck. Just think. Suppose I would suddenly up and call myself Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. And you would begin naming yourself Joe Louis. And John Henry here tried to pawn himself off as Henry Ford.

Frankie

Don't talk childish; that is not the kind of changing I mean. I mean from a name that doesn't suit you to a name you prefer. Like I changed from Frankie to F. Jasmine.

Berenice

But it would be a confusion. Suppose we all suddenly change to entirely different names. Nobody would ever know who anybody was talking about. The whole world would go crazy.

Frankie

I don't see what that has to do with it.

Berenice

Because things accumulate around your name. You have a name and one thing after another happens to you and things have accumulated around the name.

Frankie

But what has accumulated around my old name?

(Berenice does not reply.)

Nothing! See! My name just didn't mean anything. Nothing ever happened to me.

Berenice

But it will. Things will happen.

Frankie

What?

Berenice

You pin me down like that and I can't tell you truthfully. If I could, I wouldn't be sitting here in this kitchen right now, but making a fine living on Wall Street as a wizard. All I can say is that things will happen. Just what, I don't know.

Frankie

Until yesterday, nothing ever happened to me.

(John Henry crosses to the door and puts on Berenice's hat and shoes, takes her pocketbook and walks around the table twice.)

Berenice

John Henry, take off my hat and my shoes and put up my pocketbook. Thank you very much.

(John Henry does so.)

Frankie

(walking from right to left, dramatically)

Listen, Berenice. Doesn't it strike you as strange that I am I and you are you? Like when you are walking down a street and you meet somebody. And you are you. And he is him. Yet when you look at each other, the eyes make a connection. Then you go off one way. And he goes off another way. You go off into different parts of town, and maybe you never see each other again. Not in your whole life. Do you see what I mean?

Berenice

Not exactly.

Frankie

(impatiently)

That's not what I meant to say anyway. There are all these people here in town I don't even know by sight or name. And we pass alongside each other and don't have any connection.

Frankie (continued)

And they don't know me and I don't know them. And now I'm leaving town and there are all these people I will never know.

Berenice

But who do you want to know?

Frankie

Everybody. Everybody in the world.

Berenice

Why, I wish you would listen to that. How about people like Willis Rhodes? How about them Germans? How about them Japanese?

(Frankie knocks her head against the door jamb and looks up at the ceiling.)

Frankie

That's not what I mean. That's not what I'm talking about.

Berenice

Well, what is you talking about?

John Henry

(in a low voice)

Less play out, Frankie.

Frankie

No. You go. (after a pause) This is what I mean.

(Frankie holds her hands to her head and bends down, strangely. Berenice waits, and when Frankie does not speak again, says:)

Berenice

What on earth is wrong with you?

Frankie

(after a long pause, then suddenly, with hysteria) Boyoman! Manoboy! When we leave Winter Hill we're going to more places than you ever thought about or even knew existed. Just where we will go first I don't know, and it don't matter. Because after we go to that place we're going on to another. Alaska, China, Iceland, South America. Travelling on trains. Letting her rip on motorcycles. Flying around all over the world in airplanes. Here today and gone tomorrow. All over the world. It's the damn truth. Boyoman!

(She runs around the table.)

Frankie!
Berenice

Frankie

(She runs, then stops, then runs again, around and around, talking all the time.)

And talking of things happening. Things will happen so fast we won't hardly have time to realize them. Captain Jarvis Addams wins highest medals and is decorated by the President. Miss F. Jasmine Addams breaks all records. Mrs. Janice Addams elected Miss United Nations in beauty contest. One thing after another happening so fast we don't hardly notice them.

Berenice

Hold still, fool.

Frankie

(her excitement growing more and more intense)
And we will meet them. Everybody. We will just walk up to people and know them right away. We will be walking down a dark road and see a lighted house and knock on the door and strangers will rush to meet us and say: "Come in! Come in!" We will know decorated aviators and New York people and movie stars. We will have thousands and thousands of friends. And we will belong to so many clubs that we can't even keep track of all of them. We will be members of the whole world. Boyoman! Manoboy!

(Frankie has been running round and round the table in wild excitement and when she passes the next time Berenice catches her slip so quickly that she is caught up with a jerk.)

Berenice

Is you gone raving wild?

(She pulls Frankie closer and puts her arm around her waist.)

Sit here in my lap and rest a minute.

(Frankie sits in Berenice's lap. John Henry comes close and jealously pinches Frankie.)

Leave Frankie alone. She ain't bothered you.

John Henry

I'm sick.

(He holds his head pathetically, as if to get attention.)

Berenice
Now no, you ain't. Be quiet and don't grudge your cousin a little bit love.

John Henry
(hitting Frankie)
Old mean bossy Frankie.

Berenice
What she doing so mean right now? She just laying here wore out.

(They continue sitting. Frankie is relaxed now.)

Frankie
Today I went to the Blue Moon--this place that all the soldiers are so fond of and I met a soldier--a red-headed boy.

Berenice
What is all this talk about the Blue Moon and soldiers?

Frankie
Berenice, you treat me like a child. When I see all these soldiers milling around town I always wonder where they came from and where they are going.

Berenice
They were born and they going to die.

Frankie
There are so many things about the world I do not understand.

Berenice
If you did understand you would be God. Didn't you know that?

Frankie
Maybe so.

(She stares and stretches herself on Berenice's lap, her long legs sprawled out beneath the kitchen table.)

Anyway, after the wedding I won't have to worry about things any more.

Berenice
You don't have to now. Nobody requires you to solve the riddles of the world.

Frankie

(looking at newspaper)

The paper says this new atom bomb is worth twenty thousand tons of T. N. T.

Berenice

Twenty thousand tons? And there ain't but two tons of coal in the coal house--all that coal.

Frankie

The paper says the bomb is a very important science discovery.

Berenice

The figures these days have got too high for me. Read in the paper about ten million peoples killed. I can't crowd that many peoples in my mind's eye.

John Henry

Berenice, is the glass eye your mind's eye?

(John Henry is standing by Berenice, trying to get into the picture. He pulls her head back to look into her eye.)

Berenice

Don't yank my head back like that, Candy. Me and Frankie ain't going to float up through the ceiling and leave you.

(John Henry sits down right of Frankie, and leans close to her.)

Frankie

I wonder if you have ever thought about this? Here we are--right now. This very minute. Now. But while we're talking right now, this minute is passing. And it will never come again. Never in all the world. When it is gone, it is gone. No power on earth could bring it back again.

John Henry

(beginning to sing)

I sing because I'm happy,
I sing because I'm free,
For His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.

Berenice

(singing)

Why should I feel discouraged?
Why should the shadows come?

Berenice (continued)

Why should my heart be lonely,
Away from heaven and home?
For Jesus is my portion,
My constant friend is He,
For His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.
So, I sing because I'm happy.

(John Henry and Frankie join on the last three lines.)

I sing because I'm happy,
I sing because I'm free,
For His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches . . .

19

Berenice

Frankie, you got the sharpest set of human bones I ever felt.

(The last light fades out.)

(Ten minute intermission.)

20

Act Three

21

Scene One

22

(The scene is the same: the kitchen. It is the day of the wedding. When the curtain rises Berenice, in her apron, and T. T. Williams in a white coat have just finished preparations for the wedding refreshments. Berenice has been watching the ceremony through the half-open door leading into the hall. There are sounds of congratulations offstage, the wedding ceremony having just finished.)

Berenice

(to T. T. Williams)

Can't see much from this door. But I can see Frankie. And her face is a study. And John Henry's chewing away at the bubble gum that Jarvis bought him. Well, sounds like it's all over. They crowding in now to kiss the bride. We better take this cloth off the sandwiches. Frankie said she would help you serve.

T. T.

From the way she's been acting, I don't think we can count much on her.

Berenice

I wish Honey was here. I'm so worried about him since what you told me. It's going to storm. It's a mercy they didn't decide to have the wedding in the back yard like they first planned.

T. T.

I thought I'd better not minch the matter. Honey was in a bad way when I saw him this morning.

Berenice

Honey Camden don't have too large a share of judgment as it is, but when he gets high on them reefers, he's got no more judgment than a four-year-old child. Remember that time he swung at the police and nearly got his eyes beat out?

T. T.

Not to mention six months on the road.

Berenice

I haven't been so anxious in all my life. I've got two

Berenice (continued)

people scouring Sugarville to find him. (in a fervent voice)
 God, you took Ludie but please watch over my Honey Camden.
 He's all the family I got.

T. T.

And Frankie behaving this way about the wedding. Poor little
 critter.

Berenice

And the sorry part is that she's perfectly serious about
 all this foolishness.

(Frankie enters the kitchen through the hall door.)

Is it all over?

(T. T. crosses to the icebox with sandwiches.)

Frankie

Yes. And it was such a pretty wedding I wanted to cry.

Berenice

You told them yet?

Frankie

About my plans--no, I haven't yet told them.

(John Henry comes in and goes out.)

Berenice

Well, you better hurry up and do it, for they going to leave
 the house right after the refreshments.

Frankie

Oh, I know it. But something just seems to happen to my
 throat; every time I tried to tell them, different words
 came out.

Berenice

What words?

Frankie

I asked Janice how come she didn't marry with a veil. (with
 feeling) Oh, I'm so embarrassed. Here I am all dressed up
 in this tacky evening dress. Oh, why didn't I listen to
 you! I'm so ashamed.

(T. T. goes out with a platter of sandwiches.)

Berenice

Don't take everything so strenuous like.

Frankie
I'm going in there and tell them now!

(She goes.)

John Henry
(coming out carrying several several costumes)
Frankie sure gave me a lot of presents when she was packing the suitcase. Berenice, she gave me all the beautiful show costumes.

Berenice
Don't set so much store by all those presents. Come tomorrow morning and she'll be demanding them back again.

John Henry
And she even gave me the shell from the Bay.

(He puts the shell to his ear and listens. Then he leaves the shell and a "magic wand" on the table, taking the costumes into the other room.)

Berenice
I wonder what's going on up there.

(She goes to the back door and looks through.)

T. T.
(returning to the kitchen)
They all complimenting the wedding cake. And drinking the wine punch.

Berenice
What's Frankie doing? When she left the kitchen a minute ago she was going to tell them. I wonder how they'll take this total surprise. I have a feeling like you get just before a big thunder storm.

(Frankie enters, holding a punch cup.)

Berenice
You told them yet?

Frankie
There are all the family around and I can't seem to tell them. I wish I had written it down on the typewriter beforehand. I try to tell them and the words just--die.

Berenice
The words just die because the very idea is so silly.

Frankie

I love the two of them so much. Janice put her arms around me and said she had always wanted a little sister. And she kissed me. She asked me again what grade I was in in school. That's the third time she's asked me. In fact, that's the main question I've been asked at the wedding.

(John Henry comes in, wearing a fairy costume, picks up the wand, and dances out. Berenice notices Frankie's punch and takes it from her.)

Frankie

And Jarvis was out in the street seeing about this car he borrowed for the wedding. And I followed him out and tried to tell him. But while I was trying to reach the point, he suddenly grabbed me by the elbows and lifted me up and sort of swung me. He said: "Frankie, the lankie, the alaga fankie, the tee-legged, toe-legged, bow-legged Frankie." And he gave me a dollar bill.

Berenice

That's nice.

Frankie

I just don't know what to do. I have to tell them and yet I don't know how to.

Berenice

Maybe when they're settled, they will invite you to come and visit with them.

Frankie

Oh no! I'm going with them.

(Frankie goes back into the house. There are louder sounds of voices from the interior. John Henry comes in again.)

John Henry

The bride and the groom are leaving. Uncle Royal is taking their suitcases out to the car.

(Frankie runs to the interior room and returns with her suitcase. She kisses Berenice.)

Frankie

Good-bye, Berenice. Good-bye, John Henry.

(She stands a moment and looks around the kitchen.)

Farewell, old ugly kitchen.

(She runs out, followed by John Henry.)

(There are sounds of good-byes as the wedding party and the family guests move out of the house to the sidewalk. The voices get fainter in the distance. Then, from the front sidewalk there is the sound of disturbance. Frankie's voice is heard, diminished by distance, although she is speaking loudly. Berenice listens from the doorway.)

Frankie's Voice

That's what I am telling you.

(Indistinct protesting voices are heard.)

Mr. Addams' Voice

(indistinctly)

Now be reasonable, Frankie.

Frankie's Voice

(screaming)

I have to go. Take me! Take me!

John Henry

(entering excitedly)

Frankie is in the wedding car and they can't get her out.

(He runs out but soon returns.)

Uncle Royal and my Daddy are having to haul and drag old Frankie. She's holding onto the steering wheel.

Mr. Addams' Voice

You march right along here. What in the world has come into you?

(He comes into the kitchen with Frankie who is sobbing.)

I never heard of such an exhibition in my life. Berenice, you take charge of her.

(Frankie flings herself on the up center chair and sobs with her head in her arms on the kitchen table.)

John Henry

(sing-song)

They put old Frankie out of the wedding. They hauled her out of the wedding car.

(He sits opposite Frankie and watches her carefully.)

Mr. Addams

(clearing his throat)

That's sufficient, John Henry. Leave Frankie alone.

(He puts a caressing hand on Frankie's head.)

What makes you want to leave your old papa like this? You've got Janice and Jarvis all upset on their wedding day.

Frankie

I love them so!

Berenice

(looking down the hall)

Here they come. Now please be reasonable, Sugar.

(The bride and groom come in. Frankie keeps her face buried in her arms and does not look up. The bride wears a blue suit with a white flower corsage pinned at the shoulder. She goes to Frankie tenderly, Jarvis behind her.)

Jarvis

Frankie, we came to tell you good-bye. I'm sorry you're taking it like this.

Janice

Darling, when we are settled we want you to come for a nice visit with us. But we don't yet have any place to live.

(She caresses Frankie's head. Frankie jerks.)

Won't you tell us good-bye now?

Frankie

(with passion)

We! When you say we, you only mean you and Jarvis. And I am not included.

(She buries her head in her arms again and sobs.)

Janice

Please, darling, don't make us unhappy on our wedding day. You know we love you.

Frankie

See! We--when you say we, I am not included. It's not fair.

Janice

When you come visit us you must write beautiful plays, and we'll all act in them. Come, Frankie, don't hide your sweet face from us. Sit up.

Janice (continued)

(Frankie raises her head slowly and stares with a look of wonder and misery.)

Good-bye, Frankie, darling.

Jarvis

So long, now, kiddo.

(They go out and Frankie still stares at them as they go down the hall. She rises, crosses towards the door and falls on her knees.)

Frankie

Take me! Take me!

(Berenice puts Frankie back on the chair, right.)

John Henry

(singing)

They put Frankie out of the wedding. They hauled her out of the wedding car.

Berenice

Don't tease your cousin, John Henry.

Frankie

It was a frame-up all around.

Berenice

Well, don't bother no more about it. It's over now. Now cheer up.

Frankie

I wish the whole world would die.

Berenice

(sitting, up center)

School will begin now in only three more weeks and you'll find another bosom friend like Evelyn Owen you so wild about.

John Henry

(seated left)

I'm sick, Berenice. My head hurts.

Berenice

No you're not. Be quiet, I don't have the patience to fool with you.

Frankie

(hugging her hunched shoulders)

Oh, my heart feels so cheap!

Berenice

Soon as you get started in school and have a chance to make these here friends, I think it would be a good idea to have a party.

Frankie

Those baby promises rasp on my nerves.

Berenice

You could call up the society editor of the Evening Journal and have the party written up in the paper. And that would make the fourth time your name has been published in the paper.

Frankie

(with a trace of interest)

When my bike ran into that automobile, the paper called me Fankie Addmas, F-A-N-K-I-E.

(She puts her head down again.)

John Henry

Frankie, don't cry. This evening we can put up the teepee and have a good time.

Frankie

Oh, hush up your mouth.

Berenice

Listen to me. Tell me what you would like and I will try to do it if it is in my power.

Frankie

All I wish in the world, is for no human being ever to speak to me as long as I live.

Berenice

(going to the counter)

Bawl, then, misery.

(Mr. Addams enters the kitchen, carrying Frankie's suitcase, which he sets in the middle of the kitchen floor. He cracks his finger joints. Frankie stares at him resentfully, then fastens her gaze on the suitcase.)

Mr. Addams

Well, it looks like the show is over and the monkey's dead.

Frankie

You think it's over, but it's not.

Mr. Addams

You want to come down and help me at the store tomorrow?
Or polish some silver with the shammy rag? You can even
play with those old watch springs.

Frankie

(still looking at her suitcase)

That's my suitcase I packed. If you think it's all over,
that only shows how little you know.

(T. T. comes in.)

If I can't go with the bride and my brother as I was meant
to leave this town, I'm going anyway. Somehow, anyhow, I'm
leaving town.

(Frankie raises up in her chair.)

I can't stand this existence--this kitchen--this town--any
longer! I will hop a train and go to New York. Or hitch
rides to Hollywood, and get a job there. If worse comes to
worse, I can act in comedies.

(She rises.)

Or I could dress up like a boy and join the Merchant Marines
and run away to sea. (glancing from the suitcase to her
father and back again) Somehow, anyhow, I'm running away.

Berenice

Now quiet down--

Frankie

(grabbing the suitcase and running into the hall)
Please, Papa, don't try to capture me.

(Outside the wind starts to blow.)

John Henry

(instantly)

Uncle Royal, Frankie's got your pistol in her suitcase.

(There is the sound of running footsteps and of
the screen door slamming.)

Berenice

Run catch her.

(T. T. and Mr. Addams rush into the hall, followed
by John Henry.)

Mr. Addams' Voice

Frankie! Frankie! Frankie!

(Berenice is left alone in the kitchen. Outside ²³
the wind is higher. There is a rumble of thunder,
then a loud clap. Thunder and flashes of light- ⁸
ning continue. Berenice is seated left, when
John Henry comes in.)

John Henry

Uncle Royal is going with my Daddy, and they are chasing
her in our car.

(There is a thunder clap.)

The thunder scares me, Berenice.

Berenice

(taking him in her lap)

Ain't nothing going to hurt you.

John Henry

You think they're going to catch her?

Berenice

(putting her hand to her head)

Certainly. They'll be bringing her home directly. I've got
such a headache. Maybe my eye socket and all these troubles.

John Henry

(holding his head, whining)

I've got a headache, too. I'm sick, Berenice.

Berenice

No you ain't. Run along, Candy. I ain't got the patience
to fool with you now.

(He sits down right of Berenice, still holding
his head. Suddenly the lights go out in the ²⁴
kitchen, plunging it in gloom. John Henry gropes
across the table to touch Berenice. The sound of
wind and storm continues and the yard is a dark
storm-green.)

John Henry

Berenice!

Berenice

Ain't nothing. Just the lights went out.

John Henry

I'm scared.

Berenice

Stand still, I'll just light a candle. (muttering) I always
keep one around, for such like emergencies.

Berenice (continued)

(She gets a candle from the shelf, sets it on the table and lights it. Her shadow is sharp against the back wall.)

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John Henry

What makes the lights go out so scary like this?

Berenice

Just one of them things, Candy.

John Henry

(looking through the flame at Berenice)

I'm scared. Where's Honey?

Berenice

Jesus knows. I'm scared, too. With Honey snow-crazy and loose like this--and Frankie run off with a suitcase and her Papa's pistol. I feel like every nerve been picked out of me.

(John Henry picks up the seashell and takes it around to hold it to Berenice's ear.)

John Henry

You want to listen to the ocean?

(Blackout)

26

Scene Two

27

(The lights come up slowly. The scene is the same. There are still signs in the kitchen of the wedding: punch glasses and the punch bowl on the drainboard. It is four o'clock in the morning. Berenice and Mr. Addams are alone in the kitchen. There is a crepuscular glow in the yard.)

Mr. Addams

(pacing, fingering his watch chain)

I never was a believer in corporal punishment. Never spanked Frankie in my life, but when I lay my hands on her . . .

Berenice

(sitting quietly, left)

She'll show up soon--but I know how you feel. What with worrying about Honey Camden, John Henry's sickness and Frankie, I've never lived through such a anxious night.

(She looks through the window. It is dawning now.)

Mr. Addams

I'd better go and find out the last news of John Henry, poor baby.

(He goes through the hall door. Berenice goes to the back door.)

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(Frankie comes into the yard and crosses to the arbor. She looks exhausted and almost beaten. Berenice has seen her from the door, rushes into the yard and grabs her by the shoulders and shakes her.)

Berenice

Frankie Addams, you ought to be skinned alive. I been so worried.

Frankie

I've been so worried too.

Berenice

Where have you been this night? Tell me everything.

Frankie

I will, but quit shaking me.

Berenice

Now tell me the A and the Z of this.

Frankie

(She puts her suitcase on the stoop.)

When I was running around the dark scarey streets, I begun to realize that my plans for Hollywood and the Merchant Marines were child plans that would not work. I hid in the alley behind Papa's store, and it was dark and I was scared. I opened the suitcase and took out Papa's pistol. I vowed I was going to shoot myself. I said I was going to count three and on three pull the trigger. I counted one--two-- but I didn't count three--because at the last minute, I changed my mind.

Berenice

You march right along with me. You going to bed.

Frankie

Oh, Honey Camden!

(Honey Camden Brown, who has been hiding behind the arbor, has suddenly appeared, breathless.)

Berenice

Oh, Honey, Honey.

(They embrace.)

Honey

Shush, don't make any noise; the law is after me.

Berenice

(She helps him to the bench. They sit. Quietly:)

Tell me.

Honey

Mr. Wilson wouldn't serve me so I drew a razor on him.

Berenice

You kill him?

Honey

Didn't have no time to find out. I been runnin' all night.

Frankie

(from the stoop)

Lightfoot, if you drew a razor on a white man, you'd better not let them catch you.

Berenice

Here's six dolla's. If you can get to Fork Falls and then to Atlanta. But be careful slippin' through the white folks' section. They'll be combing the county looking for you.

Honey

(with passion)

Don't cry, Berenice

Berenice

Already I feel that rope.

Honey

(swinging Berenice around)

Don't you dare cry. I know now all my days have been leading up to this minute. No more "boy this--boy that"--no bowing, no scraping. For the first time, I'm free and it makes me happy.

(He begins to laugh hysterically.)

Berenice

When they catch you, they'll string you up.

Honey

(beside himself, brutally)

Let them hang me--I don't care. I tell you I'm glad. I tell you I'm happy.

(He goes out behind the arbor.)

Frankie

(calling after him)

Honey, remember you are Lightfoot. Nothing can stop you if you want to run away.

(Mrs. West, John Henry's mother, comes into the yard.)

Mrs. West

What was all that racket? John Henry is critically ill. He's got to have perfect quiet.

Frankie

John Henry's sick, Aunt Pet?

Mrs. West

The doctors say he has meningitis. He must have perfect quiet.

Berenice

(taking Frankie's arm)

I haven't had time to tell you yet. John Henry took sick sudden last night. Yesterday afternoon when I complained of my head, he said he had a headache too and thinking he copies me I said, "Run along, I don't have the patience to fool with you." Looks like a judgment on me. There won't be no more noise, Mrs. West.

Mrs. West

Make sure of that.

(She goes away.)

Frankie

(putting her arm around Berenice)

Oh, Berenice, what can we do?

Berenice

(sitting on the bench)

Ain't nothing we can do but wait.

Frankie

The wedding--Honey--John Henry--so much has happened that my brain can't hardly gather it in. Now for the first time I realize that the world is certainly--a sudden place.

Berenice

Sometimes sudden, but when you are waiting, like this, it seems so slow.

(The lights fade out!)

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Scene Three

31

32

(The lights come up slowly. The scene is the same: the kitchen and arbor. It is months later, a November day, about sunset. The kitchen is neat and bare and the furniture has been removed. Berenice, wearing a fox fur, is sitting in a chair with an old suitcase and doll at her feet. Frankie enters from the hall carrying sheet music, which she lays on the counter.)

Frankie

Oh, I am just mad about these Old Masters.

Berenice

Humph!

Frankie

The house seems so hollow. Now that the furniture is packed. It gives me a creepy feeling in the front. That's why I came back here.

Berenice

Is that the only reason why you came back here?

Frankie

Oh, Berenice, you know. I wish you hadn't given quit notice just because Papa and I are moving into a new house with Uncle Eustace and Aunt Pet out in Limewood.

Berenice

I respect and admire Mrs. West but I'd never get used to working for her.

Frankie

Mary is just beginning this Rachmaninoff Concerto. She may play it for her debut when she is eighteen years old. Mary playing the piano and the whole orchestra playing at one and the same time, mind you. Awfully hard.

(She winks to the back door.)

Berenice

Ma-ry Littlejohn.

Frankie

I don't know why you always have to speak her name in a tinged voice like that.

Berenice

Have I ever said anything against her? All I said was that she is too lumpy and marshmallow white and it makes me nervous to see her just setting there sucking them pigtails.

Frankie

(walking back toward the window)

Braids. Furthermore, it is no use our discussing a certain party. You could never possibly understand it. It's just not in you.

(Berenice looks at her sadly, with faded stillness, then pats and strokes the fox fur.)

Berenice

Be that as it may. Less us not fuss and quarrel this last afternoon.

Frankie

(She comes to Berenice sweetly, and pets the fur.)

I don't want to fuss either. Anyway, this is not our last afternoon. I will come and see you often.

Berenice

No, you won't baby. You'll have other things to do. Your road is already strange to me.

Frankie

(coming around from behind Berenice to look at the fox face)

You still have the fox fur that Ludie gave you. Somehow this little fur looks so sad--so thin and with a sad little fox-wise face.

Berenice

(continuing to stroke it)

Got every reason to be sad. With what has happened in these last two months. I just don't know what I have done to deserve it.

(She sits, bent over with her forearms on her knees and her hands limply dangling.)

Honey gone and John Henry, my little boy gone.

Frankie

You did all you could. You got poor Honey's body and gave him a Christian funeral and nursed John Henry.

Berenice

It's the way Honey died and the fact that John Henry had to suffer so. Little soul!

Frankie

It's peculiar--the way it all happened so fast. First Honey caught and hanging himself in the jail. Then later in that same week, John Henry died and than I met Mary. (sweeping right) As the irony of fate would have it, we first got to know each other in front of the lipstick and cosmetics counter at Woolworth's. And it was the week of the fair.

Berenice

The most beautiful September I ever seen. Countless white and yellow butterflies flying around them autumn flowers--Honey dead and John Henry suffering like he did and daisies, golden weather, butterflies--such strange death weather.

Frankie

(at the window, quietly)

I never believed John Henry would die.

(There is a long pause. She looks out the window.)

Don't it seem quiet to you in here?

(There is another, longer pause.)

When I was a little child I believed that out under the arbor at night there would come three ghosts and one of the ghosts wore a silver ring. (whispering) Occasionally when it gets so quiet like this I have a strange feeling. It's like John Henry is hovering somewhere in this kitchen--solemn looking and ghost-grey.

A Boy's Voice

(from the neighboring yard)

Frankie, Frankie.

Frankie

(calling to the boy)

Yes, Barney. (to Berenice) Clock stopped.

(She shakes the clock.)

The Boy's Voice

Is Mary there?

Frankie

(to Berenice)

It's Barney MacKean. (to the boy, in a sweet voice) Not yet. I'm meeting her at five. Come on in, Barney, won't you?

Barney

Just a minute.

Frankie

(to Berenice)

Barney puts me in mind of a Greek god.

Berenice

What? Barney puts you in mind of a what?

Frankie

(going nonchalantly to the mirror)

Of a Greek god. Mary remarked that Barney reminded her of a Greek god.

Berenice

It looks like I can't understand a thing you say no more.

Frankie

You know, those old-timey Greeks worship those Greek gods.

Berenice

But what has that got to do with Barney MacKean?

Frankie

On account of the figure.

(Barney MacKean, a boy of thirteen, wearing a football suit, bright sweater and cleated shoes, runs up the back steps into the kitchen.)

Berenice

Hi, Greek god Barney. This afternoon I saw your initials chalked down on the front sidewalk. M. L. loves B. M.

Barney

If I could find out who wrote it, I would rub it out with their faces. Did you do it, Frankie?

Frankie

(drawing herself up with sudden dignity)

I wouldn't do a kid thing like that. I even resent you asking me.

(She repeats the phrase to herself in a pleased undertone.)

Resent you asking me.

Barney

Mary can't stand me anyhow.

Frankie

Yes she can stand you. I am her most intimate friend. I ought to know. As a matter of fact she's told me several lovely compliments about you. Mary and I are riding on the moving van to our new house. Would you like to go?

Barney

(looking out the back door at nothing)

Sure.

Frankie

O.K. You will have to ride back with the furniture 'cause Mary and I are riding on the front seat with the driver. We had a letter from Jarvis and Janice this afternoon. Jarvis is with the Occupation Forces in Germany and they took a vacation trip to Luxembourg.

(She repeats in a pleased voice:)

Luxembourg. Berenice, don't you think that's a lovely name?

Berenice

It's kind of a pretty name, but it reminds me of soapy water.

Frankie

Mary and I will most likely pass through Luxembourg when we--are going around the world together.

(Frankie sweeps out dramatically, escorted by Barney. They go out through the arbor. Berenice sits in the kitchen alone and motionless. She picks up the doll, looks at it and hums the first four lines of "I Sing Because I'm Happy." In the next house the piano is heard again, playing a full arpeggio, as the lights fade out.)

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THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING

| <u>Expenditures</u> | | <u>Receipts</u> | |
|---------------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Tax on ticket sales | 7.04 | Box office | 36.00 |
| Costumes | | Advance ticket sales | 198.50 |
| Material | 11.32 | | <hr/> |
| Cleaning | .90 | | 234.50 |
| Props | 4.00 | | |
| Printing | 36.15 | Budget Allowance | 150.00 |
| Advertisement | 2.06 | | <hr/> |
| Rental | 7.51 | | 384.50 |
| Playbooks | 28.75 | | |
| Royalty | 125.00 | | |
| Set | 25.77 | | |
| Make-up | 17.12 | | |
| | <hr/> | | |
| | 265.62 | | |

Ticket prices: Adults, \$1.00.
 Students, \$.50.

Theatre capacity: 149

Cast Information

| NAME | ADDRESS | PHONE |
|------------------|---------------------------------|----------|
| Aiken, Jamie | 1520 Fremont, Manhattan | PR 64154 |
| Biggs, Suzanne | 2325 Brockman, Manhattan | PR 66427 |
| Broadhurst, Rick | 621 Bluemont, Manhattan | PR 83106 |
| Brown, Percy | Marlatt Hall, K. S. U. | JE 95301 |
| Dozier, Yolonda | West Hall, K. S. U. | JE 95311 |
| Engler, Stephen | 2847 Oregon, Manhattan | JE 94338 |
| Freelain, Sandy | 314 N. 11th, Manhattan | PR 69807 |
| Harris, W. Gene | 1706 N. Manhattan, Manhattan | |
| Krueger, Mary | U-27 Jardine Terrace, Manhattan | JE 97250 |
| Lee, Carolyn | Van Zile Hall, K. S. U. | JE 94641 |
| McQuillen, Tracy | Goodnow Hall, K. S. U. | JE 92281 |
| Monroe, Don | 1521 Pipher Lane, Manhattan | JE 94765 |
| Rowland, Linda | 1114 Bluemont, Manhattan | PR 82186 |
| Sanders, Ann | 2323 Bailey, Manhattan | JE 92017 |

Rehearsal Schedule

All rehearsals were held at the Purple Masque Theatre. For rehearsal purposes, the play was divided as follows: Act One became scenes 11, 12, 13, and 14; Act Two became scenes 21, 22, and 23; Act Three became scenes 31, 32, and 33.

| DATE | TIME |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| March 14-18 | 6:45 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. |
| March 21-25 | 6:45 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. |
| March 28-31, April 1, 2 | 6:45 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. |
| April 4-9 | Vacation |
| April 11-16 | 6:45 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. |
| April 18-19 (dress rehearsal) | 6:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. |
| April 20-23 (performance) | 6:00 p.m. - 10:30 p.m. |

| CHARACTER | Act I | Act II | Act III Scene 1 | Scene 2 | Scene 3 |
|----------------|-------|--------|--------------------|---------|---------|
| Berenice | X | X | X | X | X |
| Frankie | X | X | X | X | X |
| John Henry | X | X | X | | |
| Jarvis | X | | X | | |
| Janice | X | | X | | |
| Mr. Addams | X | X | X | X | |
| Mrs. West | X | | | X | |
| Honey | X | X | | X | |
| T. T. | X | X | X | | |
| Helen | X | X | | | |
| Doris and Girl | X | X | | | |
| Barney | | X | | | X |
| Sis Laura | X | | | | |

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A PRODUCTION BOOK FOR
THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING

by

ELIZABETH ELLEN CARY

B.A., Kansas State University, 1965

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

to the faculty of the
Department of Speech

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1966

This production book of The Member of the Wedding, a play by Carson McCullers, is a record of a production at Kansas State University in April, 1966. The play was directed by the writer of this thesis, and the actors and technical crew members were students. This record is in part a description of the director's approach to the play.

The purposes of this record are: first, to indicate the special problems encountered by a director when working with a play which is an adaptation of a novel; second, to describe the significant differences between the novel and the play; third, to show how those differences affected the direction of the play; fourth, to describe the production which resulted; fifth, to serve as a research aid to other directors who are planning to direct this play or other adaptations of novels.

The essay comparing the two versions of The Member of the Wedding classifies the differences under the headings of treatment of themes, characterization, and action. Themes discussed are loneliness, incompleteness, and the juxtaposition of the tragic and the comic. Action includes everything the characters say or do, whether or not it can be considered dramatic action. A summary of the differences indicates how the direction of the play was affected by the director's awareness of these differences. It is shown that there are important factors to be considered if the director chooses to consult the novel as an aid to interpreting the

play. Because there are significant differences, the director should recognize the playwright's reasons for the alterations. The director should be aware of the risks involved in utilizing the original version in his staging of the play. The novel shows incidents, while the play expresses the emotions and atmosphere accompanying the incidents. Characterization is more complete in the novel, and examples are given of how the actors must either reveal the unstated character traits through interpretation of dialogue and movement, or rely only on the characterization in the play. This paper attempts to demonstrate that the absence in the play of specific actions makes motivations which are obvious in the novel more difficult to understand. Some of the omitted details were compensated for in production by technical considerations and acting techniques; others were disregarded.

The production notes include descriptions of the characters as interpreted by the director, technical information about costumes, makeup, scenery, lighting, and sound effects, and the complete prompt script. Also included are photographs of the production, performance and rehearsal data, and a list of works consulted in connection with the interpretation and direction of the play.

This production book, then, is a record and explanation of a production thesis in play directing.

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