

ORIGINAL DRAMATIC READINGS WITH A CRITICAL ANALYSIS  
OF STAGING AND LIGHTING FOR COLLEGE USE

by

BARBARA MEALS WHITEHAIR

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ..... 1

CONVICTION ..... 2

HE'S PERFECT ..... 9

ONE SATURDAY NIGHT ..... 15

WOMAN TALK ..... 20

A DATE AT EIGHT ..... 25

THE CASUAL TOUCH ..... 29

CHATTERBOX ..... 33

DETACHMENT ..... 37

"OH, WHAT A BEAUTIFUL MORNING" ..... 42

A NEW BEGINNING ..... 47

"TRUST--THE OLD FASHIONED BRAND" ..... 51

JUST ONE OF THOSE DAYS ..... 56

THE DRESS FOR THE WEDDING ..... 60

MY HUSBAND HATES CATS ..... 65

CONCLUSION ..... 69

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ..... 70

## INTRODUCTION

Interpretative reading has changed subtly in the past years from elocution to dramatic reading or other expressions of similar meaning. This change has come not only in title, but in delivery. The great, eloquent, oratory manner of delivery has been replaced with a natural, simple style of acting. With this change came a great deficiency in suitable readings for practical use. Especially inconvenienced are the college groups who find the melodramatic essays of the nineteen-twenties below their standard of reading material.

With this situation in mind, the writer has presented for college use a group of readings designed for and about college personalities. For those students interested in pertinent, dramatic reading material, this thesis has been prepared.

CONVICTION

"Conviction" is a dramatic reading for either a man or a woman. It is a deeply serious reading and should not be done except in a mature and highly perfected manner. The costume for this reading should be dark and simple with only the animation of the reader's face to enhance the picture.

The stage should be bare with a dark background. The stage, too, should be in darkness except for spotlights on the reader's face. The effectiveness of this reading is in the simplicity of its telling and consequently in the simplicity of its setting.

The first speaker:

"The sick of all this. This place stinks and to be certain  
some people are of violence about ready to set themselves on  
fire. I've seen the place - ever since out of town.  
I'm the best of health - I'm out back from the lake water, all  
I know. I don't know the fact thing to do."

"Don't be afraid, dear, you're as rich as you are. I suppose  
I think I find it pleasant with that lot of them and must quit  
at the end of the night. Don't worry, well, come on something."

The cocktail lounge of the Pelican was empty but for a few scattered couples. The air was stale with smoke that a few hours before had curled from a hundred glowing cigarette tips. It was eight o'clock and the room held only memories of clinking glasses and whispered confidences. The laughter and gaiety were gone. The huge pelicans painted on the wall seemed to hover over the room, trying to shut in the last bit of intrigue and mystery that it had held. The orchestra had long since departed and the remaining waters stood impatiently about, watching for the last stragglers to leave.

In the far corner on one of the circular couches which surrounded the diminutive tables sat three girls. Each was smartly dressed. Their attitude bespoke sophistication and wealth. They were obviously young, but with the young-old faces that you find on the young, modern set. Too much to do, too much to drink, and unutterably weary of it all. The three sat there, and had they only known, that bored, knowing look, gave one a glimpse of their very souls -- lifeless, barren souls without joy, without peace.

The first spoke:

"I'm sick of all this. This place stinks and those damned pelicans remind me of vultures about ready to set themselves on our carcasses. We've seen the plays - everyone's out of town. Why in the hell we decided to come back from the lake early, I'll never know. There's not one damn thing to do."

"Don't get wrathful, dear, we're as sick as you are. I suppose you think I find it pleasant with Paul out of town and that chit Marge at the same resort. Don't worry, we'll think of something."

We'll sit here till we do."

"Any damn man would suit me now."

"Don't be vulgar, dear."

The third girl spoke for the first time. She was prettier and softer than the other two, and had been during the preceding conversation, obviously trying to make a break in the unsavory repartee.

"Girls, I just thought of something. As I was driving in from the club this afternoon, I noticed a Negro camp-meeting down on the corner of tenth and Sycamore. Why don't we go out there. Anyway, it would be different. Negro antics are always good for a laugh."

"My God, now we have to turn to niggers for entertainment."

"Oh hush, Sally, nothing could please you tonight. We might as well go, as Dot says, 'niggers are always good for a laugh'."

A little group of Calvary Baptist Negroes were holding a revival -- intense, serious people holding a meeting where they could revive through song, preaching. Yes, and shouts if they liked, the joy and happiness they felt in worshiping and loving a Supreme Being.

The girls entered just as a riotous spiritual drew to a close. And throughout the audience were heard fervent "Amen's" and shouts of "Lawdy, Lawdy."

Sally spoke, "Damned if I don't believe you're right, Dot. This is the funniest thing I've seen in years."

The girls shushed her, as heads turned to see who had entered. When they caught a glimpse of the white girls, eyes lowered and

faces became impassive. The silence held for a moment and then a huge, black man arose and another hymn began. It was a familiar tune and the girls recognized it as one they had sung in Sunday School as children, when their parents had insisted on attendance.

For the first time the girls were given a chance to look about them, and what they saw was both crude and beautiful. The building was actually a tent set out on the grass with folding chairs for seats. The light was furnished by dozens of shiny lanterns suspended from the top of the tent. The flame of the lanterns threw gigantic shadows on the canvas walls. The grass was green under their feet and the costumes of the people made a diffused blend of color about the room. A temporary platform had been erected in the front of raw pine boards and the light from the lanterns made the knotholes in the wood seem like dark, brooding eyes peering out over the congregation.

The congregation itself was crude and beautiful. Big, fat women sat with tiny morsels of black humanity on their laps. The little black heads covered with curled black hair looked like fine pieces of Persian lamb.

There were old, gnarled women, and black, lean men. The younger generation was there too. A few zoot suits with colorful painted dolls on their arms sat near the back. All were there, the cooks and the loafers, the mechanics and the waiters.

When the hymn drew to a close, the big, black man again arose and introduced the speaker for the evening.

In the center of the room a tall, old Negro arose. His first distinguishing feature was a very shiny spot on the seat of his

black suit as he walked toward the platform. He walked erect, his head held high, and when he reached the platform he turned slowly and faced the congregation.

The hair that covered his head with tiny screws of curls was of purest white. Beneath the broad, black brow, kindly soft eyes peered out. He commanded attention. Every eye was upon his as he gazed about the room. He looked briefly at the three girls in the back and they felt anything but laughter while that penetrating gaze rested upon them. Each had a feeling that she was looking at something she had no business seeing; as though they were looking at something holy.

Sally quickly whispered, "Let's get out of here." But the other girls quieted her as the old man began to speak.

"Brothers and sisters. This evening I've been asked to give my Testimony. To tell yo' of de Lawd and how He can work in yo' life."

The voice of the old man was deep and clear. It carried to every corner of the room and the honestly and genuine goodness of its speaker was in every tone. It went on--

"My pappy was a slave on a big plantation in de South. When Mistah Lincoln freed all de slaves, my pappy come noth fo to start a new life--one of his own. It was up noth here dat he met my mammy and married her. And in no time at all us chillen come. My pappy and mammy loved de Lawd, and it was from dem I fust got my teachin' about Him."

"My pappy used to tell us Bible stories about Moses, and David, and Jonah, but even mo' he used to tell me 'bout Jesus and

how we should live like Him."

"My pappy was a great one for honest too. He never had no truck for a thevin' nigger. He said it ain't so much bein' honest wid odder people as it's bein' honest wid yo'self and wid de Lawd. If yo' triffls wid de truth it don' hurt no one but yo'self. Its only to yo'self and to de Lawd dat yo' really has to answer.

"My pappy may have learned me honesty, but it was mammy dat tole me 'bout bein' humble. She used to laugh and say dat jest bein' a nigger is bein' humble, but yo' has to be careful. She said no one on dis earth is big enough or smart enough to even half way realize de powah of de Lawd and God. She said us humans is jest little mites of things like us maybe lookin' down on an ant hill. Yet, she said no matter how little we is, or how unimportant, de Lawd looks down on us, and watches us and cares for us."

"When my folks died I learned real well what it 'tis to have de Lawd watch out fo yo'. I prayed dat He'd make me feel better kind of ease up my misery; and He did too. I'd get down on ma knees and pray and in no time at all I'd be feelin' bettah. De Lawd love yo' all right and He's right there ready to help yo' if yo' only asks."

"Fust though youse got to trust yo'self; make everything all right inside of you. Yo' has to feel clean and good likes yo' wants something bettah. Dat's when da happiness and da joy comes."

"Let's all kneel in prayah."

As the voice stopped, people all over the room were getting on their knees. The simplicity and the truth of the old man's works had struck the hearts of every individual. Tears were in the eyes of many and some were murmuring a quiet "amen" under their breath. The three girls in the back of the room sat held in a spell of reflective thought. They were looking not at the people, nor at each other, but in their own hearts.

As the old voice began the words--"Our Fathah which are in Heaven--" the three sank slowly together to their knees.

The lighting for this reading should be ordinary stage light-  
 ing with a spotlight directed on the reader's face to catch the  
 expression of the reciter. No particular color effect is neces-  
 sary, but amber light would be the most effective if it were de-  
 sired. Shadows about the stage, caused from light spill, should  
 be avoided because the aim is to create a strong, bright atmos-  
 phere.

No set staging is required for this reading but it would be  
 to keep in mind, as in the matter of lighting, that oral  
 grounds could be incongruous to the reader. A cyclorama  
 drop of some light color would be the most suitable. The  
 stage itself should remain bare since the reading does not lend  
 itself to symbolic staging.

### HE'S PERFECT

"He's Perfect" is a reading designed for a girl and is to be given in a light, humorous manner. The reader should cultivate a "not too bright" personality and combine it with a kindly simplicity. The appeal of the reading is to make an intimate confidant of the audience, and thus to create a conversational mood.

The lighting for this reading should be ordinary stage lighting with a spotlight directed on the reader's face to catch the animation of the recital. No particular color effect is necessary, but amber light would be the most effective if it were desired. Shadows about the stage, caused from light spill, should be avoided because the piece is to create a sunny, bright atmosphere.

No set staging is required for this reading but it would be well to keep in mind, as in the matter of lighting, that drab backgrounds would be incongruous with this reading. A cyclorama backdrop of some light color would be the most suitable. The stage itself should remain bare since the reading does not lend itself to symbolic staging.

If we had had a little talk earlier this year, with a little encouragement, I'd have poured out my life story, and with it my burning stage ambitions, my love of independence, and my contempt for men. Please strike the latter from the records, because I have learned that men are really rather nice creatures, especially one. He is a paragon of all the virtues ever named, an exemplifier of all things good and worthwhile, and has a sense of humor. This is strictly between you and me, but he's perfect! I know that it must be a matter of confidence between us because others are not as understanding as you and I. For instance, the other day in a circle of my most intimate of intimates, I lowered my voice, let my eyes slowly circle the group, and then whispered, "He's super!" That was all I said--neither boring them with any qualifying nor detailed statements. Then I sat back smugly. Someone snickered. Other instances like this have happened when I have only mentioned perhaps one of his capabilities and was met with a smile of derision. Don't misunderstand, everyone likes him, it's just that they don't realize like I do, and as I want you to, that he's perfect. I know my word is sufficient, but please let me give you some examples.

For ten years I have driven a car. I drove to school while I was in high school and in the past few years have done the principal share of the driving on our summer vacations. I even back well. Once on a dare, I backed a whole half mile. However, no matter how many miles I go forward or how many miles I back, I have never been able to parallel park. Either the front end goes in and the back end sticks out, or the back end goes in and

the front end sticks out. Bill does it perfectly. (Did I forget to tell you? His name is Bill) He does it so easily and so efficiently. I enjoy watching him parallel park. He sort of scoots himself up in the seat, until he's sitting very tall, sometimes he even clears the seat. This gives him better vision, both front and back you see. Then he puts his right arm on the back of the seat, and with his left arm turns the wheel quite quickly, first one way and then the other way. All the time with one hand you realize. When he's stopped turning the wheel, we are sitting snugly against the curb. Never in the time I've known him has he, like so many do, made little starts forward and backward to jockey the car in position. He makes just one sweeping park. Now, I ask you, is that not perfection? But that isn't all--

He's so intelligent. Now I do admit to a liberal education and that on some subjects I can fairly well carry on my end of the conversation, but I have to concentrate and think quite deeply. With Bill, it's different, information just rolls out of him with no concentrated effort at all. For instance, the other night it was about fifteen minutes until closing hours so we were sitting in the car kissing goodnight. The radio was on, tuned to one of those quiz programs, but at that particular moment I wasn't very conscious of it. Anyway Bill suddenly lifted his mouth and said quite distinctly "Sprocket wheel." At first I was puzzled but then the voice on the radio said, "I'm sorry, sir, but the correct answer is sprocket wheel. Thank you for being with us and you may try for the jackpot question later in the show. Now don't you consider that perfect power of concentration, plus intelligence?"

Most girls would be insulted that he was listening to the radio, but not me. I know he likes kissing me, and enjoys it, but being perfect, he can also attend to other matters--like the mind.

Physically he's perfect, too. He is six feet tall, has very broad shoulders, and the rest of him is in perfect proportion. He has dark hair, hazel eyes, and is very handsome. He once played football, so you can see that he has physical as well as mental powers. I'm glad he's strong because all my life I've wanted to do what I've seen done many times. The girl runs a short distance then gives a leap and he catches her in his arms. Even when I wasn't so fond of men, this looked like quite a good feat. We've done it. He lifts me as easily and as effortlessly as a feather. He doesn't even show the slightest sign of panting when he drops me. My girl friend's friend invariably pants. Are you beginning to understand?

Thoughtfulness is another of his virtues. At any time I wish, he lets me use his car to run errands or even for just pleasure driving. He carries my books. He opens doors for me and helps me across intersections. All of these are done with perfect gallantry and courtesy. Even his gifts to me have been thoughtful. I think my wedding gift is a set of aluminum ware. Of course, I know that most grooms give the bride a string of pearls or some such trifle, but I have two strands of pearls and I might lose his even if he gave me one. Certainly I can never lose much aluminum ware and it will be something I can use all my life. Always I will be reminded of him as I fry an egg or boil some potatoes. A perfect gift!

Even his terms of endearment are perfect. Never could Bill be satisfied with just an ordinary "sweetheart", "darling", or "honey." His names for me are perfect and meaningful. For instance sometimes he calls me "Puppy nose". He calls me that not because my nose resembles that of a puppy, but because I was bitten by one several years ago. There were seven stitches and some of the scars still show. Other times he calls me "funny face" and since you know me, that needs no explanation. I will admit, that occasionally he calls me "Sweetie", which is much used by others, but the way he says it makes it completely out of the realm of the trite or commonplace.

Honestly, sometimes I become panicky when I think how closely we came to not meeting at all. You see it was one of those days when a person wants to get away from familiar things, just deviate from routine somewhat, so Louise and Jo and I decided to eat out, rather than at the sorority house. We went to "Johns" in Aggieville and then started back up to the campus. I had to go to the first rehearsal of "Two Blind Mice", and they were on their way to the library. We had just crossed the street to the corner where the bookstore is located when this yellow convertible pulled up beside us and this man spoke to Louise and asked if we would like to ride. Louise had known him for ages, so Jo and I climbed into the back seat and Louise sat in front. They chatted and laughed all the way to Education, where I was going to rehearse. Even Jo said something, who it turned out knew him, too, but no one mentioned my presence least of all my name. I thought he was nice looking, and since I was slightly dateless about that time,

I thought too, the least they could have done was introduce me. They didn't though, and I climbed out as unidentified as I had climbed in. Fate truly must have been with me though, because the next day I walked into the Canteen and there he sat by one of my girl friends. I'll not say I rush to the booth, but on the other hand, stroll wouldn't be quite proper either. This time we were introduced and I had a date with him the next Friday. However, I think it was three weeks later that he first looked at me. Until then he considered me an amusing companion. So, making a long story short, the age old routine began. We dated, we danced, we talked, we tried to get along without each other, and we fell in love. I suppose by now, along with the realization that he is perfect, you've also realized that I love him. Truly, I do love him. Like Bill says "It's a good thing you do, it will make living with me for the next fifty or sixty years less testy." Ain't it the truth!

ONE SATURDAY NIGHT

"One Saturday Night" is a dramatic reading for a woman. It should be given in a manner of determined gaiety until the climax is reached and then should leave the audience on a note of hurt and anger. I suggest that the costume in the reading be similar to the one described in the story. This I believe will lend a note of authenticity to the telling.

The stage should be dark except for the spotlights directed on the face of the reader. To the back and left of the stage a property juke box gaily sighted in reds and greens should furnish the only other light. This staging should produce the mood and atmosphere of the reading properly.

The description of the character and the setting for the reading is provided in the text. It includes details about the character's appearance and the environment. The text is somewhat faint and difficult to read in some places.

He hadn't called. Every night in that whole long week had been an agony in suspense because he hadn't called. On Friday I vocally said to hell with him and accepted a date for Saturday night. My heart didn't echo those sentiments, not for a minute. It just made excuses for him and pounded like mad every time I glimpsed a yellow convertible.

I dressed carefully Saturday night. My hair was shining and clean, the make-up near to perfect, and I wore my black dress with the velvet roses at the waist. With panels swirling I twirled to a stop in front of the mirror in the hall. The experimental dance step had been another of those outward gestures that I had been doing all week and that my heart never even noticed. I looked long and carefully, the scrutiny of a photographer could not have been more critical. With a little sigh I turned away and wished again as I had wished ever since I had met him three months ago, that I were beautiful. All my features are good, I thought ruefully, it's just when they put them together that something went wrong.

The doorbell rang soon after that and it was for Anne and I. We were double dating. My date was a friend of a friend, a lieutenant named Toni stationed at Ft. Riley, and it was with some relief that I noted nice brown eyes, a strong, rather handsome face, and a tall, lean body. On the way to the Palace, I discovered that he was intelligent too, in an obvious, "never explored too much" way. A graduate of the University of New Mexico, he spoke rather interestingly of famous historical spots in that state. Frankly I wished I were back in my own hacienda.

It was early, so getting a booth was an easy matter. We had a drink and Toni and I listened while Anne and Lon monopolized the conversation. I knew I wasn't being a good companion, but I could think of nothing to say and a simple witticism was beyond me. Growing tired of the talk about me, I slowly scanned the room and then my heart stopped, the breath in me came out in a little shock because he had come in. He was walking across the dance floor, a girl at his side and another couple trailing behind. They kept coming closer and closer and then they were seated at a table directly at the right of our booth, and he so that we were facing each other. I knew I was staring and at any moment he would look up and see me, and I knew too, that when the time came, I must be gay and laughing. Pulling my thoughts together, I heard just the end of Lon's sentence.

"Well, I was delighted no end." With a gigantic effort, I looked coy, a slow smile spread itself over my lips and I murmured "That's what the firefly said when he backed into the electric fan, wasn't it?" Thank God for what little dramatic ability I have, because it went over. It was poor, but they laughed and I laughed, letting my head fall back at an interesting angle and then as the laugh died, pulling myself forward so that as I righted my head, my glance could look casually to the right. He was looking and I knew from that look that he had seen the whole thing. I let a surprised look of wonder come into my eyes, held it for a second and then smiled. The slow, teasing smile he has often commented upon. With an abrupt gesture he pushed back his chair and was over at our table.

"Hello," he said.

"Hello," I replied. There was an awkward pause and then I introduced my party to him. He murmured some appropriate greetings, gave me a quizzical look, and went back to his table.

In the meantime I had said something hilariously funny and we were laughing in just that manner. From then on I was gay; my eyes flirted with the lieutenant, and he was holding my hand. We danced, we drank, and we laughed. I was playing a beautiful part of having a wonderful time and of being thoroughly entranced with my date. I had an audience of one, but it was the only audience I needed. It was a strange audience, though, because it kept coming on stage. Every few minutes he would appear at our booth, sit for a moment, say something to me, and then bounce back to his table.

I began to feel ashamed about the lieutenant, because he was obviously bowled over. He kept asking me about my plans for such nights and nights in advance, but I didn't feel ashamed enough yet so that I could call off the act. He thought me beautiful, the most fascinating girl he had ever met, the best dancer, etc. etc. I thought maybe I would die. It seemed a possibility because everything inside me was dead and I was constantly amazed at the very alive things I did outwardly.

It was a few minutes after twelve, however, when I died outwardly. I was dancing with the lieutenant and he was dancing with horseface - I called her that because I knew no other name and besides there was a remarkable resemblance. It was nearing the close of the number and I found myself looking right into his

eyes over the shoulder of my partner. He gave me a strange, pained, weary look, and then turned to the girl and kissed her. That was when I died. He looked back at me and I gave a nod that was almost imperceptible and then a look that said "watch a minute." I turned my face up to the lieutenant, said "Hello" with my lips, "Kiss me" with my eyes, and he did. I looked back, he had seen. He nodded imperceptibly, the music ended and we walked back to the booth.

I couldn't cry. It hurt too much for tears, and then in a voice that was really honest, really genuine for the first time that evening, deadened and heavy with hurt, I said "Let's go home."

The car was cold when we got in, but I didn't feel it, I was just aware of it. The lieutenant moved in when the car started to move, his arm around my shoulders, was turning me toward him. I stiffened and through clenched teeth, I hissed "Don't you touch me!"

## WOMAN TALK

"Woman Talk" may be done by a woman of any age and is to be given in a smart but sarcastic fashion. The women in the reading should be portrayed as young matrons of the middle class and costuming may be done on this basis. I suggest that the reader wear a belted coat of some dark fabric, white gloves, and no hat.

The staging and lighting on this reading are combined for the desired effect. The center area of the stage should be brightly lighted with the use of spots, and the remainder of the stage area dark. In this center area and to the right should be placed a prop lamp post painted a vivid yellow. The lamp should not be lighted since this would shadow the reader's face who is to stand at its side directly left. The lamp and the reader placed as they are, give the reading the atmosphere of a chance meeting and also, its atmosphere of mean, petty conversation.

"Hello, hello, darling."

(Well here comes old brindle face, I wonder what's on her mind.) "Hello, Alice, how are you?"

"Fine, just fine. What brings you out so early this morning?"

"Oh, I'm trying to get my shopping done early today. There's a new recipe I found in a magazine last week for kidney stew and I'm going to devote my whole afternoon to it. Bill's so fond of it."

"Well, that sounds like an interesting afternoon. I'd ask you for the recipe, but Henry's so particular about his food-- just won't touch things like kidney stew. He's getting so finicky, I have to watch my menus more closely every day. However, he never was one for common foods."

(His lack of appetite is probably due to the fact he has to watch across the table while he's eating it.) "Oh, I know, so many men are like that. What are you doing this afternoon?"

"Oh, I'm going to the beauty salon--facial, manicure and set. You see, Henry and I are celebrating tonight. He's just had a marvelous promotion, manager of the publicity department, and honestly, dear, I feel it's just the beginning. Henry's a brilliant man, even if he is my husband, and my father always said so.

"Dad told me when we were married, 'Mark my words, that young man will be a great success someday'. This promotion brings a big increase in salary, too. We're thinking now of getting out of the Rockhurst Club and joining the city group now that we can afford it. Of course, we'll miss all of you, but a man must get ahead socially as well as in a business way. You do see, dear,

don't you?"

"Oh, yes, yes, a man must get ahead." (Probably the only thing holding him back for years has been you, horseface. I wonder if the members of the City Club will be so anxious to have you guzzling their liquor when old success boy Henry just happens to forget to bring his own?)

"I'm on my way now to get a dress for tonight. Darling, do you think a grey or a green would be more becoming?"

(Well both colors have their points. The green would bring out your complexion and the gray those lines around your mouth.)

"Really, Alice, dear, I think either would be lovely. You have always been able to wear just any color."

"I'm really awfully partial to green and they're showing so much of it this fall. There's a little dress at Aleen's for only \$99.95. I saw it the other day and I'm just tempted to go get it."

(If you do it will be the first time you've had anything on that looked over \$17.50.) "Aleen's is a marvelous shop. True, they're expensive but so original and such good quality."

"Have you ever gotten anything there, dear?"

(Damn her, she knows good and well I haven't, but then neither has she.) "Oh, yes, Alice, lots of my things come from there. Why even this suit I'm wearing I got there last spring."

"Well---. Oh, by the way, have you heard about Charlotte and her husband? Really, dear, it's the most disgusting thing I've ever heard."

(I honestly and sincerely doubt that.)

"I got this from my beauty operator who knows the girl that's engaged to the man that Charlotte got involved with. Anyway, she says that Charlotte just walked into this bar one evening, completely plastered, and this man came over and sat down by her and began buying her drinks. They left after a while and this girl didn't tell my beauty operator where they had gone, but they ended up at Charlotte's and Bob's place about five in the morning, and I guess Bob was just about frantic. He'd called the police and everything, my operator says. I'm surprised you hadn't heard about it. But then they are keeping it awfully quiet. I don't suppose I'd ever have heard if I hadn't gotten my hair fixed last Thursday. Of course, I've always known what Charlotte was like ever since she acted like she did toward Henry a few weeks ago, but then I never imagined she'd go this far."

(I don't imagine she has. It's a good story, Alice baby, but you just can't make it stick even if she did do a little overtime with Henry that night of the party. You've a mean mind Alice, something mean ought to happen to you. You and your lousy promotion.) "It shocks me, really it does, but I suppose if your operator knows this girl..."

"Oh, she does. Well, listen, honey, I've just got to run along, I left the car in a ten minute zone and I'll probably have a ticket. It's been so wonderful seeing you. We must get together for lunch soon. See you."

"'Bye, Alice. Yes, see you." (What a sweet, sweet lady. How Rockhurst Club will ever get along without her! Well, what

have we here?) "Charlotte, hello, darling. How are you? You're just who I wanted to see, I'm so upset. Do you know just a few minutes ago Alice Johnson told me a pack of the most malicious lies about you?"

### A DATE AT EIGHT

"A Date at Eight" is a dramatic reading intended for a college girl, to whom the situation is one of drama indeed. The reading should be told with a variety of moods: anticipation, dread, and sadness. The reader should keep these in mind and strive for an overall effect of disappointment. The reading could be given in a humorous fashion, but it was not my intention when writing it.

The stage should be brightly lighted but the center area should also have spots directed upon it. In this center area and to the right, a dressing table covered in bright chintz should be placed. It may sit at an angle so that the stool placed in front of it will be in full view of the audience. At the beginning of the reading the reader may be seated here and rise as she begins the story. The reader may be dressed in a simple party dress that harmonizes with the staging.

The giggling ceased and a hushed silence filled the room as the doorbell chimed softly a second time.

"It's for you, Jane, it must be for you, he's ten minutes late already."

I stood in the midst of a laughing group of girls who were trying to prepare me for a blind date that had been arranged a few days before. Skepticism of all blind dates had made me a reluctant partner for the young man who was to have presented himself at eight o'clock. It was now ten minutes past and my skepticism and reluctance grew with every second. However, it wasn't all reluctance on my part, because there was a certain aura of excitement in going out with a new man, especially one you had never seen before. He could be tall, dark and divine--but then, common sense prevailed and the reluctance began again. More likely short, fat, and obnoxious.

"You're sure you know which one he is, Sally?" I asked.

"Oh, sure, he comes in the Can every day at 4:00 o'clock and I know exactly who he is," Sally replied. "You'll love him."

Her last statement filled me with dismay. Her blase' reassurance--"you'll love him" assailed me with more doubts still. From the hall the proctor called out, "Date at the door, Martha."

So the doorbell hadn't been for me. I was filled with a tremendous relief. Give me just a few more minutes of reprieve, I prayed."

Nadine was at my hair again and she was rapidly loosening all the curls she had so carefully combed in a few minutes earlier.

"Hold still, Honey, we want you to look your best. I believe

it looks better with the ends just turned under--so. Look in the mirror. See what I mean?"

I looked in the mirror and surveyed carefully the results of two solid hours work by four of my closest girl friends. What I saw was neither startling in its beauty, nor its plainness. It was just a face, a little different from the millions of others, but with the same unobtrusiveness of feature that made it one you never looked at a second time nor one you subsequently remember.

The doorbell rang again and someone thrust my coat on my arm and started moving me toward the door.

"Be gay, Jane, and no matter what he's like, act as though you're having fun," Peggy advised.

I cast a weak smile about the room for these girls who really cared about whether my evening would be fun or not and a wonderful feeling of secureness overcame me. I walked out into the hall and as I did so, the proctor brushed by me.

"The date is for Diane," she murmured over her shoulder.

I stepped back into the room and looked a little apprehensively at the girls waiting there. It was eight-thirty and that feeling of reluctance to go had changed into something quite different. A dread of I knew not what assailed me and I felt tears pricking back of my eyelids. I didn't want to go, I didn't want to go, but why didn't he come?

This didn't make sense and I realized it, but a numb haze had come over my brain and a dim realization that maybe he wasn't coming at all. Maybe he hadn't wanted to go with me any more than I with him. I felt a curious mixture of relief, hurt pride,

and disappointment.

It was eight-fifty and the doorbell rang again impatiently. This was for me, and a smile of real anticipation lit my face. He was coming, the evening would be wonderful. The other girls had not spoken except in monosyllables and only then about how late it was getting. I waited tensely for the door to open and the proctor's head to appear around its edge. Nothing happened, and presently we heard her footsteps die down the hall as she went for the girl whose date was waiting in the living room below.

The dresser was at my right. I walked deliberately toward it and began arranging the bottles and jars in methodical neatness along its inner edge. The girls got up and without a look or sign slowly left the room. They knew I wanted to be alone. After they had gone, I began to unbutton the back of my dress, I glanced at the clock as I went to the closet for my pajamas. It was nine o'clock.

### "THE CASUAL TOUCH"

"The Casual Touch" is a reading of college life, and the girl who does the reading should be dressed in college apparel somewhat similar to that described in the story. Too, the reader in representing a college person should keep her voice and manner of delivery bright and a bit superficial.

The stage should be dimly lighted to represent a smoky room and a spot may be placed on the reader at stage center to illuminate her person for expressions and gestures. Although the stage is dimly lighted, the light should be strong enough so that the backdrop curtain is discernible. On this curtain, large pictures of ice cream sodas and cokes in multi-colors may be hung. These combined with the word pictures of the reading itself should create the atmosphere of a college "hangout."

Sue surreptitiously brightened her lips with a slender tube of lipstick and a little mirror she pulled from her coat pocket. She held her head down and when she had finished, she looked across the booth to Alice, who had been watching closely. "Does it look all right?", she asked. "Is it straight?"

"It looks fine, quit fussing," Alice answered.

Sue had chosen her costume carefully this morning. A navy skirt hugged her hips and waist snugly, a shocking pink sweater accented her elfin features and made her dark hair shine and sparkle and her eyes very blue. She was a tiny girl, tiny but vivacious. Her hands were seldom at rest and she lit her cigarette nervously, letting the smoke slip from her lips in a long stream that sniffed the flame of the match. "You'll tell me the minute he comes in, won't you?", she asked her companion.

"Sure, sure I'll tell you," Alice replied. Alice was big. Not big unproportionately, but tall and raw-boned. She was blond and sitting across from the tiny, dark girl, the two made an interesting contrast in color and size.

It was ten o'clock and the Canteen was filled with mid-morning coffee drinkers. The Canteen was the hang-out for most of the college students and eventually one could see all his acquaintances, had he the time to sit all day. The place was crowded this morning and smoke hung hazily above the booths and tables. The boys who waited tables made endless trips from kitchen to coffee urn filling the shiny monster with gallons of steaming water. The dirty dish cart was piled higher and higher with used cups and

saucers.

"Why do you want to see him, anyway?", Alice probed, "he knows where you live, if he wants to see you he'll call."

"You don't know men very well, do you, dear," Sue responded, "they have to be reminded of your existence. If you'd go out more you'd learn these things yourself. Do you see him yet? He's sure to be in here a few minutes after ten. He has to come from his Engineering lecture class. Are you looking?"

"Of course I'm looking," Alice replied. "Do you know this is the reason I don't date more. Why if I had to worry and stew like this over a boy asking me out for next Saturday night, I'd go nuts. If you weren't my very dearest friend, I wouldn't be here now. Quit looking over your shoulder, I'll tell you when he comes in."

"You'll have to admit he's cut though," said Sue, who was want to change the conversation at will. "Even you said this fall that the way he carried the ball for the team was something to watch."

"Yes, I said he handled the ball nicely, but I didn't mean by that that I thought you should sit in the Can with a spy glass at your eye, frothing at the mouth, ready to pounce the instant he comes in. What does he say when you're out on a date anyway, he barely manages a grunt when he comes to the door for you? He's purty, but dull, very dull."

"It's because you don't know him that you can't appreciate him," Sue defended. "He's very intelligent in an athletic sort of way. Why he can make the muscles in his arms positively

quiver when he clenches his fists. Was that him?", she interrupted.

"No, I said I'd tell you when he comes in," Alice said irritably.

"What time is it?", said Sue in an anxious tone.

"Ten-thirty, and I don't believe he's coming," Alice answered.

"Of course he's coming, there's hours of time yet," Sue said.

"Twenty minutes to be exact," Alice said matter of factly.

"Here comes some of the girls. They must have got out of lab early."

"Don't ask them to sit down, he might come in and they'd only interfere," Sue said hastily.

"I don't know why I'm your friend. Sometimes you say the wackiest things. Why, those girls are your sorority sisters who---" Alice broke off as the girls approached the table.

Greetings were exchanged and then an awkward pause ensued when no mention of sitting or joining was made. Finally the tallest of the girls said, "Oh, I get it. Good luck, Susie." They moved off and the spotting process went on.

"He didn't come in yesterday either, do you suppose he's avoiding me? I haven't seen him since Sunday night," Sue asked.

"Which was two days ago," Alice replied wearily. "Listen, it's ten 'till and I have to get to class. Drink up and let's go."

"Ok," Sue said slowly, "I guess he isn't coming. Alice dear, what do you have at three this afternoon? Could you meet me here then?" Her voice brightened. "He's sure to be in. He's through with classes every day at three."

CHATTERBOX

"Chatterbox" is a humorous reading for a man. It should be given in a serious manner, as though the problem were a real and personal one. The reader should wear a simple, dark suit.

The stage for this reading may be brightly lighted and without properties. A cyclorama of some dark material would make the best background.

I love Sue dearly, but there are times when her chatter makes me yearn to choke her. We have been engaged for six months and the only dissention we ever have is over her ridiculous habit of talking all the time. She is sweet, lovable, and when I call her "Kitten" it is as good a comparison as I can make. However, she is a kitten with a constant "meow".

For instance last Friday evening we had been asked to the home of Alice and Bob Armstrong, just four months married, for a quiet party of dancing, drinking, and maybe tossing a few bridge cards around. When we arrived, Alice and Bob threw open the bright yellow door of their little bungalow and a flurry of greetings began. Sue's first remarks were lost in a deluge of amenities, but long after our wraps had been laid aside in the spare bedroom she was still telling Alice how happy she was to be here, how she had anticipated the evening, and how doubtful she had been as to what to wear. All these things came at machine-gun rapidity with no pause for answers from Alice, and I marveled again as I had marveled before at her ability to talk on and on without taking a breath.

I listened through that whole long evening as I listen every evening I am with her. Alcohol quiets some people down but on Sue I notice no effect whatever. She neither becomes gayer, louder, nor more frivolous. A drink for her is not a stimulant, just an accompaniment.

We left around twelve o'clock and our situation being what it is, I drove out to Sunset for a few minutes before Sue had to be in at one o'clock. I parked the car off at the side of a

winding road, pushed off the lights and turned on the radio. All this time Sue had been telling me about the difficulties she had with a particular instructor, the color of her new sweater, and were we going to the football game tomorrow?

I answered her question and then looked down at the face snuggled against my shoulder. That sweet face had its little mouth wide open and was saying something about how distasteful dissecting frogs had become.

Firmly I took her by the shoulders and turned her around so that she faced me and stopped the chatter with a quick kiss on her lips.

"See here, honey, this has got to stop," I said. "All evening long you've been going a mile a minute with all sorts of nonsense and none of it very coherent. Why, even the bridge game had to be stopped because you weren't quiet enough to let the bidding go uninterrupted. I love you, baby, but it's embarrassing and makes me uncomfortable for you to talk all the time when we're out. I know you don't mean to monopolize things, but it always works out that way."

"Oh, I'm sorry Larry, I really am, but I think of so many things at once, it seems like I just have to say them all. I'll be careful and you'll be proud of me. I'll keep remembering 'Silence is golden'. I'll say it over a million times to myself. 'Silence is golden, silence is golden, silence is golden.'"

I interrupted her golden silence by drawing her back into my arms and kissing her very thoroughly. This sort of thing continued for a while and when I looked at the clock on the dash,

it read 12:45.

"We've got to get you to the house, honey," I murmured in her hair. "Now, remember what you promised me, no more chatter, just nice conversation that says something and then is finished."

"I promise," she said meekly.

There were several couples on the steps of the sorority house as we started up the walk. The lights blinked a warning from inside the hallway as we reached the group. The warning hadn't come soon enough, however, because Sue was off.

"It was a marvelous party and the curtains in the kitchen were the cutest things you've ever seen, and they have one of those shaker things for cocktails, it was a wedding present you know Bob bid five spades and made it, ..."

The housemother appeared at the door, key in hand, and the goodnights were ended abruptly. Sue threw me a quick peck just before she and the girls went in and as the door closed, I could hear her saying, "And the sandwiches all had little scallops around them...".

DETACHMENT

"Detachment" is a dramatic reading for a woman. It should be given in a directly simple fashion with a feeling of withdrawal injected into the delivery. The costume should consist of a simple, black dress and white gloves. The gloves in this situation will draw attention to the gestures of the hands which should be used to obtain the greatest degree of effectiveness.

The stage should be dimly lighted with spotlights directed on the reader's face. The stage should be bare with the exception of a large, yellow arrow painted with a phosphorescent paint and attached to a screen placed to the back and left of the reader.

We had been speaking only in monosyllables for miles. It was very late and the four of us were very tired. We were hungry too, and Dick said again as he had said ten miles back, "I'm hungry."

It slipped out, an involuntary sound full of weariness and depression. We had seen a wearing and depressing play and nothing could shake us of the spell it had put upon us. We had been tired to begin with, and the rain along with the play had only deepened our mood.

Pris and Pete in the back seat said nothing and I realized there was nothing I could say in answer either. My head rested on the back of the seat and I let my eyes drift beyond the window's edge where raindrops and telephone poles spread together in damp confusion. Presently there were trees and they all swam together like the pictures in magazines taken with high speed cameras. The rain made the trees appear fluid and I had an insane desire to laugh at liquid trees floating along the black ribbon of highway.

Suddenly my eye caught a glimpse of something yellow flickering on and off in the distance. As we sped on toward it, I realized it was a neon sign. Dick applied the brake as we came close enough for me to read the words--Golden Arrow, Dine and Dance.

"Let's eat," Dick said, and without waiting for an answer pulled into the gravel drive circling the building. It was a low, squatty affair of white stucco and the only relief in the deadly pattern of motley white was the yellow arrow flashing

on and off above the door.

I stretched and drew great breaths of the wet, cold air as I waited for Pris and Pete to clamber out of the back seat. The mist of rain on my face was cold and I shivered and pulled the collar of my coat up around my chin.

We walked quickly to the door, and then we stopped, for it was locked and bolted; but through the dirty pane of glass we could see couples dancing, and laughing, and drinking. It reminded me of a movie where the animation continues after the sound track has stopped, for no sound of the gaiety escaped.

Dick knocked on the door and suddenly it opened and we were confronted by a gray-haired, hatchet-faced woman who said:

"What do you want?"

"Something to eat. We saw your sign," Dick replied.

"This is a private club," and as she said the words, the door began to close.

"Just a minute," Pete said, "How much does it cost for membership in your club?" The way he said club, made it sound like something no one would want to be a part of.

"Five dollars and fifty cents a head guest fee," she replied.

Dick and Pete shoved some bills into her hand, and while she was still counting, we stepped inside.

The room was low and dark. Stained wood lined the walls and from the ceiling in garish incongruity hung tinsel stars reflecting with each twirl and twinkle the sordidness below.

We ordered our food quickly, and then sat quietly looking about us. The gaiety had done nothing to change our depression. If anything, it had heightened it. As I watched these people, eating, drinking, dancing, and with so much hilarity, I had an odd sensation of detachment, that made me apart from everyone, even Dick, and Pris and Pete.

Our food came after only a few minutes and it surprisingly was very good. We ate quickly, neither wasting words nor gestures in conversation. We had just finished and were relaxing a bit over the coffee when it all started.

I remember looking up. A man was lying on the floor, obviously pushed there by a young fellow who was poised tense above him. Without any warning the young man crumpled to his knees and fell. Someone had struck him from behind. After that, things became too shocked, too confused for detail. It seems a blur of people striking, pushing, screaming. There were bottles breaking, chairs falling, and a horrible scuffling of people's feet as they looked for a new opponent and gained their balance from the last.

I finally became aware that I was breathing very quickly, and that my hands were clenched tightly in my lap. I relaxed and for an instant in the midst of all the upheaval, I felt the same detachment I had felt earlier. This is raw and crude, this is violence, and you are no part of it, I thought.

Then directly in front of our booth, so that I couldn't look away or escape, a man began to beat the young man's head against the door frame. He hit it again and again and each time he cursed

the young man with foul oaths spit out between tightly clenched teeth.

I don't remember when it stopped or when we put on our coats and left, but suddenly we were outside in the cold, wet air and I found it clean and good. Tears were streaming unchecked down my cheeks and because of them I almost stepped on the bloody, beaten young man lying in the gravel, the rain in his face.

I no longer felt detached nor depressed, nor bored, just small and weak and with the greatest pity I've ever felt for the wretched young man in the rain.

"OH, WHAT A BEAUTIFUL MORNING."

"Oh, What a Beautiful Morning" is a reading for a woman. It is humorous and should be given in a bright, eagerly conversational way. The costume for this reading should be a simple suit without decoration to detract from the reader.

The stage should be brightly lighted with ordinary stage lighting and overtones of amber. No special setting is necessary because of the changing scenes in the story. The reading will be quite effective if it is told in a simple setting, using only the word pictures of the story for decoration.

"Oh, what a beautiful morning, Oh, what a beautiful day." I sang the song in snatches as the slip fell down over my hips. I stood before the mirror admiring the silky sheath that clung to my body. It was creamy pink with a froth of white around the bottom.

"Oh, what a beautiful morning, Oh, what a beautiful day," I walked quickly, and on the new, brown suede shoes that made my feet look so slim and delicate, to the closet where the new suit hung. It was a beautiful suit for a beautiful day. The skirt was slim and straight, and the jacket fitted snugly to the waist. It was a soft shade of gold and it had a diminutive vest of brown velvet that fitted under the jacket. "I've got a beautiful feelin'," I caroled.

The hat, gloves, and bag came next. The hat in its box already lay on the end of the bed. I lifted it out tenderly from its nest of tissue paper and carried it to the mirror. The hat itself was perfection. It was made of brown velvet and was so designed that little flaps fitted down low on one side of the face and up on the other side. The snowy white gloves I put on top of the brown velvet purse. Then I began the last minute details. "Everything's going my way," I sang.

The stocking seams were straight, the make-up was perfect, and now the last thing needed was just a daub of perfume behind each ear. The thrilling fresh scent that Aunt Kettie had given me last Christmas, and that I used on only the most special of occasions.

It was a special occasion indeed, it was a first date. For the last two weeks we had run into each other at the corner grocery where I bought my few food supplies. Apparently he did the same. Then yesterday Mr. Collins, the grocer, had said, "You young people should get acquainted, Miss Irene Nevins, Dr. Jim Murry," and that's how it began. Mr. Collins knew our names from writing them at the top of the bill each time we came in.

Jim walked me the three blocks to my apartment after I had gotten the bottle of milk, the loaf of bread, and head of lettuce, that had prompted my walk to the grocery. When we came to the big, grey apartment building where I lived, we stood and talked for hours, it seemed. Jim held both his sack and mine, and had to poke his head between the two when he wanted to make himself particularly assertive.

It was the groceries that got me a date. "How do you plan to eat on just a loaf of bread and a bottle of milk?" he asked. "I'll bet you have nothing more than coffee and juice for breakfast. Don't you know that the first essential for good health is a big breakfast?"

He should know. Jim was finishing his internship at St. Lukes Hospital. "It's usually all I care for," I admitted.

"As your doctor, I prescribe a big breakfast for you tomorrow morning, and to be sure you have it, I'd better take you to it," he said. "How about breakfast and church tomorrow morning?"

"I'd love to," I murmured. "After all its a matter of health."

When Jim left I reflected on my good fate. As an assistant librarian, I had little opportunity to meet young interns and Jim seemed like a particularly nice sort of person. He seemed the tweedy, pipe-smoking, book-loving man that I admired so much.

I spent the whole evening in grooming. My hair I scrubbed and brushed to silken smoothness and then rolled in tiny pin curls around my head. My nails I manicured and polished in a subdued shade of rose. A long, luxurious bubble bath completed the program and as I slipped in between the smooth, clean sheets of the old iron bed, I felt assured and confident that tomorrow I would be the neatest, the cleanest and the best groomed girl in the whole city.

"Oh, what a beautiful morning, Oh, what a beautiful day, de da, du da." I finished smoothing the white gloves and the buzzer sounded from downstairs. With a last quick glance in the mirror, I hurried through the door, down the hall and stairs. I stopped a couple of steps from where he stood because he was looking at me with such admiration that I felt a momentary shyness. When he spoke, the shyness vanished and I was confident again, and very, very pleased.

"Hello, Irene. You're very beautiful," he said simply and directly.

"Thank you," I barely breathed, as I looked up into his eyes. An awkward silence prevailed for an instant and then Jim spoke jauntily.

"Come, lovely lady, you must be fed. I certainly don't want you to think I'm a doctor who would neglect his patient."

Breakfast was a delight and the conversation sped along. We discussed mutual interests, likes, and dislikes. This time I thought I've found someone special who understands and admires me. After the third cup of coffee, we slid out of the red leather booths and started for church.

As we walked along I kept humming under my breath, "Oh, what a beautiful morning, hum, hum." As we approached the big stone church, I exclaimed at the number of people crowding about the steps and sidewalk. Old friends were greeting other old friends and it was a pleasant, friendly atmosphere entirely in keeping with this wonderful day.

When we started through the midst of the crowd, I heard such comments as "What a nice looking couple." "They look well together, don't they?" all comments of approval on our appearance. I felt a great surge of confidence, and blessed again the little gold suit. Oh, what a beautiful morning, I felt like shouting it. Suddenly something gave about my waist and I heard a distinct snap, I stood stock still and at my feet in a heap lay a pair of pink nylon panties, lace-edged and at one corner printed for all the world to see -- IRENE.

### A NEW BEGINNING

"A New Beginning" is a dramatic reading for a woman. It should be told as one tells of recollections. The first part of the reading is in the reader's memory and should be given in that fashion. However, when the theme switches to the present moment, the mood and tone of the reading should change. The costume for this reading should be a simple suit or jacket without a hat or bag to encumber the reader. A suitcase may be placed at the left of the reader to help produce the atmosphere of a railroad station.

The lights for this piece should be of a deep blue with only spotlights on the reader's face. When the reading switches scene to the train, ordinary yellow light may be used. No other staging is necessary to produce the effect.

My back felt tired and numb as I shifted an inch lower on the hard, wooden bench in the waiting room. The train was late and I felt anger at its mechanical inefficiency. One couldn't even depend on trains. It wasn't just my back that was tired and numb, and I had learned other things than trains were late or perhaps didn't come at all.

Bill and I had broken up "once and for all" last night. It was one of the evenings he did make an appearance. Now I was on my way home for the week-end. It had been my first thought after Bill had gone---to go home to see and to bask in the security and love my folks shared.

We had gone together a year - six months of that time steady. Bill was a senior at the University and I was a junior. Even during the long summer vacation months, we had written to each other every day, and had managed to see each other occasionally. Everything had been perfect until fall; then something changed. Maybe it had been he, maybe me or maybe the both of us. Anyway he just wasn't as interested as before or at least he didn't show it. He'd make a date with me and then never come, but always with a good excuse. Usually he'd say, "K knew you'd understand, Nancy," and give me a swift hug. This was to repay me the hours of sitting and waiting, I supposed.

I sat thinking these bitter, sick thoughts and my whole soul writhed in pain, because no matter how badly he treated me, I still loved him. I felt revulsion at my own weakness.

The room was too hot, but I refused to go through the motions of removing and eventually replacing my coat. I shifted again and

again, trying to make the bulk of its material a protection against the hardness of the bench. My feet tingled and I squirmed my toes about in my shoes trying to rid myself of the annoying sensation. Dimly through my thoughts and bodily discomforts I could hear the unsteady click clack of a telegraph machine. I was alone in the tiny junction waiting room, except for the ticket man behind the grill cage.

There was suddenly a breath of fresh air on my face and I realized that the door had opened and was now closing behind a ragged little boy. He stood just a few feet from the door looking about the room. Tears were streaming down his face and every few minutes he sniffed loudly and gave a convulsive gulp as he tried to control the sobs that were shaking his tiny body.

My heart burst with pity for the little fellow and I felt tears behind my own eyes as I watched his pathetic attempts to control himself. When I felt I could safely speak to him, I said, "Hello there, what's the matter honey?"

He walked toward me, but my speaking to him had brought on another proxysm of crying and so he stood at my knee gulping and sniffing until he finally burst out, "I lost it."

"Lost it? What did you lose?", I asked.

It came out bit by bit, but finally I learned that his mother had given him a dollar to get some potatoes and he had lost it on the way to the store. He had started back home and then at the depot had decided to wait, and warm himself, and prolong the ordeal. He assured me that his mother would "whip the livin' day-lights" out of him when he reached home. Feeling very sorry for

the skinny, ragged little fellow, at the end of his story, I reached into my billfold and handed him a dollar.

His eyes lighted when he saw the bill and his hand reached for it but then the light faded, the hand drew back, and he said, "Thanks, but I couldn't take it. It ain't mine. You don't owe me a dollar."

"Listen guy," I said, "this is a dollar. Nowadays they're not too hard to get, and I want to give it to you. You lost a dollar and I have one to replace it. Take it and run on home."

He took it, smiling shyly, mumbled a thanks, and then bolted for the door, the bill clutched tightly in his fist.

As he left, I heard the distant sound of a train whistle. It would soon be here. I bundled my things about me, picked up my bag, and started for the door.

I stood on the brick pavement outside the station and felt the cold air make my eyes water, and my nose tingle, but I felt clean and free. The train came in with a terrible panting and grinding of brakes. The passenger coach stopped just a few feet from where I stood and a Negro porter swung down some steps and helped me and my bag aboard.

The coach wasn't crowded but it was hard making a decision as to where to sit. As I paused making a momentary survey of light and heat, a deep, nice voice spoke at my elbow, "Would you like to sit here?"

Turning my head, I noted nice gray eyes, a thin, sensitive face, and a good, honest grin. I caught the twinkle of a pin on his sweater under the flannel coat. "Yes," I said slowly, "yes, I would like to sit here."

...the room was a dim light. I was seated with the  
 ...the smoke was in the air.  
 ...my feet, leaning with my hands on my knees  
 ...the "TRUST--THE OLD FASHIONED BRAND" article for a

"Trust--The Old Fashioned Brand" is a reading of mood rather than humor or drama. It is to be done by a woman. The reader through the story itself will create any effects necessary if it is given in a tired, depressed manner. No costume is necessary, and I suggest a simple dark dress without adornment.

The stage should be well-lighted and the conventional cyclorama will be all that's necessary as a background. No properties are needed, and in this situation would probably detract rather than add to the recitation.

...to put his feet across the length of the aisle, his hands  
 ...a cigarette and took a long look at me, and he laughed softly  
 ...my hair and stepped aside for me.  
 ...father on the seat a fat Negro woman, her head on a pillow  
 ...a sleeping, snoring child. A small woman in  
 ...and tied with green ribbon her hair in a bun  
 ...saw me, she started to rise, but her head  
 ...rising, her head so suddenly with a look of surprise,  
 ...the bundle in the vacant seat beside her.  
 ...a slow double-take, she looked at my hair and pro-  
 ...to me, she said in a filthy overalls as she looked  
 ...to me across the aisle. There were groans from

The air in the bus station was thick with smoke, which hung over the room like a blue haze. As I entered, carrying my bag clumsily in my hand, I had to blink. My eyes smarted with the sudden sting as the smoke rushed to engulf me.

Moving awkwardly, my feet leaden with fatigue, and my body numb after the long, cramped bus ride, I felt no anticipation at the wait ahead of me. The waiting room was crowded and as I moved farther in, scattering cigarette butts and gum wrappers in my wake, I looked for a quiet spot.

Soldiers in soiled and rumpled uniforms filled many of the benches and as I passed, that slow smile began at their lips with the actual invitation written in their eyes. I walked slowly, looking quickly right and left for a comparatively safe companion by whom to sit. In front of me, a pimply boy in jeans, his feet encased in ornate high-heeled boots, slid indolently down on his spine to put his feet across the length of the aisle, blocking my way. A cigarette hung from his lower lip, and he laughed softly as I lifted my bag and stepped across his feet.

Farther on down sat a fat negro woman, her head nodding as she clutched a sleeping, curly-headed child. A bundle wrapped in brown paper and tied with green twine lay on her lap in an unwieldy heap. Pausing a moment, I started to slip down near her. Without raising her head or seemingly without opening her eyes, she slid the bundle in the vacant spot beside her.

Doing a slow double-take, I hitched my bag higher and prepared to go on. An old man in filthy overalls and black, tattered coat spoke to me across the aisle. There were grooves down

the sides of his mouth and as he spoke, saliva slowly escaped from the corner of his lips.

"Wanna seat, miss," he inched over and patted a spot beside him.

Perhaps he meant it kindly, but mumbling a "no thanks", I moved quickly away.

Then I saw her. Sitting rigidly on a bench far in the corner of the room sat an old lady. Her hands folded lightly in her lap, and on her face an expression of quiet endurance. Her hair was white, and a neat, black hat let waves of the white show softly at her ears. Her coat was grey, and on the lapel was fastened a tiny pin which read simply, "Mother."

I sat down beside her and placed my bag at my feet. She turned slowly and smiled at me, it was the kindest, most understanding smile, and at once I felt warmed and safe.

"It's rather late for a young girl like you to be traveling, isn't it, my dear?" she said.

I explained to her about having gone to my aunt's and how I must wait for my bus back to school.

"It's good you are going to school, your parents might worry if they knew you were out this time of night."

I agreed with her.

"Even my children worry about me when I make these trips to visit them," she explained. "They seem to think that something might happen to me, as old as I am."

I murmured something polite, and a silence fell.

"Would you like a piece of cake, dear," she said.

She was unwrapping a piece of chocolate cake from a paper sack that had been lying beside her. I hadn't eaten since dinner and the thought of the food made me almost dizzy.

Breathless, lest I sound too eager, I said, "Thank you, if you're sure you have enough."

"Oh, I have plenty, my dear, please take it."

"It's wonderful cake," I said, gulping the first bites rapidly. "My mother makes a cake almost this good. She calls it a prize chocolate cake and makes some kind of custard batter before she adds the flour and things."

"Well, now, isn't that amazing, that's just the way I make this cake, and I thought I was the only one with that kind of recipe. Your mother must be a good cook, child."

"She certainly is, I just live until vacations so I can go home and eat her cooking."

Finishing the cake, I pulled a kleenex from my jacket pocket and wiped my fingers on it. How thankful I felt that out of all this sordid room, I had found such a haven. I actually was beginning to feel less tired and not so dreading of the station and the ride ahead of me. I wondered if she would mind my asking just one favor of her, and I voiced my question.

"Would you mind watching my bag a second while I go to the rest room?"

"Not at all, my dear, you go right ahead and I'll see that no-one bothers it."

I walked away, but I turned back just as I pushed open the door marked "Women", and smiled at her sitting across the room,

my bag at her feet, it was such a reassuring sight in that otherwise squalid, mean room.

Rubbing the lint from the scratchy paper towel off my hands, I pushed open the door and walked back out into the station. Looking immediately to catch the eye of my companion, I found the bench empty, and my bag nowhere in sight. I scanned the room desperately, but no little, old lady with white hair, and no bag.

There was no giver, no recipient, no recipient. The woman was a mass of white hair, color and an apron over her dress. The woman in the street is young, so spirit, combined with a certain amount of age, and the rest of the piece.

The stage should be brightly lit with ordinary stage lighting. At the opening of the reading I suggest that the reader be standing, stage left at a table piled high with glasses, water, and other things. She may be standing, people to the audience, and the rest of the piece of kitchenware and after a while of a few words, she may slowly descend stage and begin the reading.

### JUST ONE OF THOSE DAYS

"Just One of Those Days" is a humorous reading for a woman and should be given in a complaining, petulant manner. The reader may wear a housedress of some solid color and an apron over it. The woman in the story is young, so spirit combined with fretfulness should make up the mood of the piece.

The stage should be brightly lighted with ordinary stage lighting. At the opening of the reading I suggest that the reader be standing stage left at a table piled high with glassware, pots, and pans, etc. She may be standing profile to the audience surveying the piles of kitchen ware and after a wait of a few seconds, walk slowly center stage and begin her recital.

Everything went wrong last Wednesday. Being married, and you and your husband going to college has its advantages at times, but none of them showed up last Wednesday. It was a beautiful day, the sun was out, the air was just mildly cool, and all nature had a hint of spring about it. On such a day things should go smoothly and efficiently for a person, but they didn't for me.

The alarm went off for the second time at 7:30 a.m. The night before I had set it for 5:00 a.m., planning to get up and study before I made breakfast and sent my husband off to his eight o'clock class. At five o'clock in the morning, I said, "Oh hell, to studhing", set the alarm for seven, and went back to bed. I often do this so I really wasn't prepared for a late awakening. The clock had always worked before. Dick, after I shook him, took one look at the clock, and then practically jumped from the bed to the dresser across the room to where his things were. "7:30!", he kept howling.

I was apologizing all the while but I knew he wasn't listening. Finally I gave up and scurried from the room to fix him a bite of breakfast.

I quickly poured coffee and water into the darned old coffee maker, but I forgot to put on the lid. I put the plug in the wall and pretty soon it was percolating all over the tablecloth. I snatched the coffee pot from the table and clamped the lid on it. Just as I did, the fat in the skillet on the stove began to smoke, so I put the coffee maker down, reached for an egg, and dropped it hurriedly into the skillet. As I dropped it into the skillet, my finger punctured the yolk and it sort of dribbled

into the hot fat. Then I remembered that I should have fried the bacon first, but I was too late anyway, because Dick was dressed and it was ten minutes until eight and neither the egg nor the coffee nor the toast was done. The toast wasn't done because I didn't connect the toaster.

He left with a grim look around his mouth and I didn't know whether it was because of me or hunger. Anyway his kiss was just a peck and usually he isn't the pecking sort. I cleaned up the mess and cleaned up myself for school. I had only one mishap while I was in the kitchen. I mistook a whole egg for the egg shell I had laid on the cabinet and I dropped the good one in the garbage. It broke.

At school things went rather well and I had almost convinced myself by noon that the nightmare which had been early morning hadn't even occurred. I was fixing lunch when I shattered this illusion all to pieces. I was making sandwiches and had laid out lettuce and bread and meat and things. Anyway, I had just picked up the lettuce when the cat brushed against my leg, startling me, and I dropped the lettuce. It rolled out into the middle of the floor and evidently the cat thought it a swell game, because she rolled it about the kitchen floor, strewing lettuce leaves in her wake. The sight upset me so that it took several seconds before I realized I must catch her. It wouldn't have been so bad, but Dick walked in just as I was swooping for the cat, and she was dancing about, and lettuce was all over the floor. He said, "What in the hell's going on here?"

I tried to explain, but it came out in splutters, so I just

shut up. Pretty soon he came over and hugged me and laughed and I felt so good that he wasn't angry any more. I kicked a few lettuce leaves myself.

Lunch went rather smoothly after that and so did school in the afternoon, but come evening and preparations for dinner and I rendered more havoc in one hour than you could think possible. I broke my best platter; I caught my foot in the flounce on the big chair and pulled it nearly off; I spilled a can of asparagus back of the refrigerator; and several other things too tender and heartbreaking to remind myself of.

It went like that all evening, me pulling blunder after blunder until I was as nervous as I could be. Finally around ten when I stepped on the cat's tail, and it frightened me so, I decided I was going to end that day right then and there. I flew into the bedroom, pulling off clothes as I went. I grabbed my pajamas, switched off the light and jumped into bed. The bed springs fell to the floor.

## THE DRESS FOR THE WEDDING

"The Dress for The Wedding" is a humorous reading for a woman. It should be told in a charmingly simple manner, and with the sweet bewilderment that is characteristic of most brides. The appeal of the reading lies in the manner in which it is delivered and should be given with the surprise ending always in mind.

The stage should be lighted brightly and a backdrop of some light-colored material would be most effective. The only property needed on stage would be a somewhat ornate chair with the skirt of a satin dress thrown across it. The chair may be placed at the extreme left and back of the stage so that it would neither detract from the reading nor the reader.

The department store was crowded with people, all pushing and swarming over counters and aisles. Mother and I worked our way through to the elevators and after a brief struggle were squeezed in behind heavy, iron doors and were sky-rocketing our way to the fourth floor--ladies' ready-t-wear. A very fat lady bundled into a shaggy fur coat, a bunch of bright roses perched on top of her head, kept breathing in my ear, and the shopping basket on her arm pressed painfully against my thigh. When the doors finally opened, we were erupted into a world of thick carpets, silk hangings, and ladies in black gliding silently about. One of these ladies in black came forward after we had gone only a few feet, and asked, "Could I help you, please?"

"Yes," I said, "could you show me a wedding dress, ballerina in length, and of satin or some similar material?" I had memorized my little speech because so often I have been at loss for descriptive words, and in this instance I knew exactly what I wanted and after much thought had condensed it to those few words. From experience I knew too much description could bring you most anything, for salesladies are apt to hear only a few words and from those misconstrue entirely your meaning.

"Just a minute, dear," she murmured and slinked her silent way back through a leather-covered door. As she reached its threshold, she turned and said, "Won't you be seated? I won't be long."

She reappeared with one dress over her arm. She held it up for my inspection and involuntarily a little exclamation of delight escaped me. "Oh, it's beautiful," I breathed. Truly it was.

Its skirt was very full, and its bodice very tiny. Little covered buttons ran from the bottom of the bodice to the collar at its top. The collar itself was a masterpiece. All lace and seed pearls, it matched the cuffs on the long sleeves. It was the color of honey with beige tones in it. The saleslady kept insisting it was called champagne. I tried it on and it was a beautiful fit. Somehow though, for a wedding I just couldn't see myself in beige. It was beautiful, but not beige for a wedding, even if it was called champagne and declared to be very chic.

"It's beautiful on you, honey," the saleslady drooled, "You'd be a lovely bride."

Mother, noting my look of consternation, finally spoke up and suggested, "Perhaps we should look a little further. Remember Barbara, this is just the first dress you've seen."

After promising to "hold" it for me for a few hours, the saleslady helped me out of the dress and Mother and I battled our way down in the elevators and out of the store.

We walked a few blocks, and again it was the same procedure-- the crowds, the elevator, and the lady in black. "Could you show me a wedding dress, ballerina in length, and of satin or some similar material?" This time the door was covered in plush and when the saleslady came through, she was holding a dress of blue over her arm. As she spread it out before me, again I exclaimed, but this time with surprise, for it was the same identical dress except for the color. Where the other had been beige, this was blue with the same full skirt, the same tight bodice, and the same lace collar and cuffs embroidered in seed pearls.

I was amazed and quite speechless. Mother smiled indulgently as the saleslady and I walked away together so that I might try it on. It fit as perfectly as the other had, only blue just didn't seem the color for a bride either. The saleslady kept insisting that ice blue for the bride was very smart, and I couldn't help but think blush pink might be more appropriate. After a few turns before the mirror, Mother again came to my rescue with the suggestion that they keep the dress back for me a while and that we look a little further.

By the time we reached the third store, our technique in handling crowds, elevator operators and the like had vastly improved and with little difficulty we were soon seated on zebra-striped satin chairs waiting for a saleslady to appear through red lacquered doors.

She glided toward us, one dress on her arm, and instantly I knew this time my difficulty wouldn't be with color, because it wasn't any color, not beige, not blue, not even dead white, just soft and silken.

As she dropped the dress from her arm and spread it out for my approval, my eyes widened and my jaw dropped perceptibly because it was the same dress--the very same dress. I followed her mutely into a dressing room to try it on and it fit just as the others had fit--perfectly. We walked back together to where mother was sitting, the saleslady making little cooing noises over my appearance, all the way.

Mother looked up from the magazine she had been glancing through as we approached her. She smiled at me and I nodded my head. "We'll take it," she said.

MY HUSBAND HATES CATS

"My Husband Hates Cats" is a humorous reading for a woman. It is to be done in a light, slightly derisive fashion without ever letting the humor of the situation slip the attention of the audience. This reading could be done by a man if the wording of the pronouns were changed throughout. If it were done, the man would have to keep in mind that he was the object of the humor and read it in such a manner.

The staging and lighting for this reading should be very simple. A brightly lighted stage and light-colored cyclorama is all that is necessary. However, a screen placed back center left with a huge painting of a cat in a hunched-backed, snarling position on it would be effective and add humor to the story.

My husband hates cats. From the very beginning I want it made clear that he loathes, detests, and abhors the creatures. The reason I know is because he told me. I love cats, all kinds of cats, male or female, maltese or Persian, alley or registered, I love them. No cat has yet been too scrawney or too dirty to win my affection. But on with the story.

Since we've been married I have made occasional comment about how nice and companionable a kitty would be. About how nice it would be to come home and find a little furry bundle bounding to the door to welcome you. Above all I've made it very clear that cats are the cleanest animals known and that they take practically no care or discipline. Also, I intimated that the only thing that would make me completely happy on my next birthday was a cat. I got it.

I was making dressing for the roast when he came in holding at arm's length a beautiful orange-colored Persian kitten. I tried to take it calmly so I kept sprinkling sage into the bread crumbs until I could stand it no longer. And he just stood there dangling the cat and it squirming about furiously. Finally with a little squeal I ran and hugged them both tightly---the cat yowled and he looked rather sheepish and began to grin. Later he regained his composure and began telling me the restrictions that came along with the cat. We were at the dinner table and the dressing had too much sage, but that's another story.

The rules went something like this: 1. The cat box with its contents of sand would be emptied and replaced by the cat's owner, namely me. 2. The cat would never leave the living room unless

the owner, namely me, took it outside. By no means was the cat to enter another room of the apartment. 3. The cat would never be allowed on any piece of furniture within the apartment except a straight, wooden chair on which it couldn't shed, or a box for sleeping provided by its owner, namely me. These weren't all the rules, but they were the important ones. I provided two boxes, one for sleeping and one for--you know. I fed the cat and by eleven o'clock my family was ready for bed.

The husband preceded me to the bedroom, so I turned out the lights, and blew a kiss to my kitty in the living room. I was just slipping my dress over my head when a piercing "meow" was heard from the living room. I ignored it and continued with my undressing. Hubby lifted his head from the pillow and said, "Do you think it's lonesome?"

"Probably just a bit, most animals are their first night in a strange home," I answered. I put on my pajamas and again a "meow", fainter this time, was heard.

"I can't stand it," hubby said. "You'd better go get the cat, we'll not get any sleep with it howling its head off."

I started to say that two "meows" wouldn't exactly necessitate the loss of an entire night's sleep, then I checked myself, left the room and returned with the cat under one arm and carrying the sand box. I got into bed and was just dozing off to sleep when hubby punched me in the small of the back. "Look," he hissed, "isn't that cute? Look at that!"

I raised myself upon my elbow, shook my head, and looked about the dark room sleepily. "Where," I muttered.

"Here on the rug by the bed," he whispered. "Be quiet."

I hoisted myself up to a sitting position, looked over the mound that was hubby and over the side of the bed. There lying on the rug was the kitten curled into a ball, sound asleep. "Very cute," I said dryly. I gave my pillow a punch, smothered a chuckle, and went to sleep.

The next afternoon I went shopping and didn't get home until a few minutes after six. I got out of the cab and with a cry of dismay saw the car and knew that hubby was already home from work. No preparation for dinner had been made so I paid off the driver quickly and positively flew into the apartment. Opening the door I almost dropped the bundle I was carrying in my arms at the sight that confronted me. The cat was standing in the center of the room and so was the husband--on his hands and knees. They were facing each other and obviously I had broken up a beautiful dialogue. Nothing was said and I hurried to the kitchen to start dinner. Presently he leaned in the doorway and said, "Just teaching it a few things. Gotta teach them discipline."

"Yes, oh yes," I agreed. I let the matter drop, dinner in the stage that it was.

I went to bed earlier than hubby and never has a sight startled me more than his coming through the doorway of the bedroom with the cat under one arm, and the sandbox in his hands. I guess I must have looked pretty wide-eyed because he said as he deposited the box in the corner, "We have to sleep at night you know."

I didn't bother to answer, just looked at him and he began opening and closing drawers very quickly.

This time I wasn't dozing, I was really asleep when I was interrupted a second time in two nights. No one had punched me in the back, but I had felt a distinct plop on my feet--like a cat makes when it jumps on a bed.

"Honey, the cat's on the bed. Get it down will you, I can't reach it," I cooed. There was no answer. "The cat's on the bed," I said more loudly and more distinctly, thinking him asleep. "Get it down."

"I know it's on the bed," came back the calm, soft voice of my husband. "It's probably cold, leave it alone. You know, sometimes I wonder whether you like cats or not," his voice was filled with righteousness and concern as he directed it toward the furry ball at our feet, "Is 'a nice kitty comfable?"

"Goodnight!" I said.

## CONCLUSION

The subject matter for these readings has been taken from every-day situations and experiences. It is the belief of the writer that only such experiences can make a truly good dramatic reading. The little lost orphan or the convict in his cell were the themes so often used twenty years ago. These and other situations were unreal both to the reader and to his audience. The trend in literature and acting has changed. With that change has come a freer, more simple style of dramatic reading.

It is the express wish of the writer that these readings may be used by the students in speech and dramatics at Kansas State College as a source for class work and as a source for enjoyment.

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AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

of a

ORIGINAL DRAMATIC READINGS WITH A CRITICAL ANALYSIS  
OF STAGING AND LIGHTING FOR COLLEGE USE

by

BARBARA MEALS WHITEHAIR

B. S., Kansas State College  
of Agriculture and Applied Science, 1950

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requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Speech and Dramatics

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This thesis has been submitted with the intention of providing for college people a group of readings written at their level for their use. Oratory, as it was known twenty years ago, has been replaced by interpretative or dramatic reading. The style in reading has changed and thus, so must the material to be read.

"Conviction" is a dramatic reading for either a man or a woman. It is a deeply serious reading and has as its plot, the spiritual beliefs of two groups of people. The first group includes three sophisticated, but rather ignorant, young women; and the second is a group of Negro Baptists holding a revival. The two come together and the white girls find that their color and class distinction may be radically different from the Negro group, but that their God is the same.

"He's Perfect" is a humorous reading for a girl. It tells of the courtship of a rather impressionable young lady and her swain. The girl thinks the young man perfect and tells in a narrative style, the proof of her reasoning.

"One Saturday Night" is a dramatic reading for a woman. It tells the age-old story of a woman's jealousy. She has expected a date with a certain young man and when none is offered, accepts another. On the evening of this engagement, she and her date are sitting in a local night spot when the young man in question comes in with a girl on his arm. The events that follow his entrance are both pathetic and humorous.

"Woman Talk" is a bit of unsavory repertoire between two women in a suburban shopping district. They are intensely ambitious women and intensely petty. The reading contains malice and unprovoked sarcasm.

"A Date at Eight" is a dramatic reading intended for a college girl. It is based on a blind date circumstance and has an unusual twist to its ending when the young man fails to put in an appearance.

"The Casual Touch" is another reading of college life. It discloses the casual but definite manner in which a college girl intends meeting the young man of her fancy. At this purposeful meeting, she intends to wrangle another date.

"Chatterbox" is a humorous reading for a man. It tells the real and serious problem of a young man engaged to a girl who talks far too much and with far too little coherence.

"Detachment" is a dramatic reading for a woman. It tells of a night club brawl and of the detachment the young girl feels at its violence. As she and her party leave the scene of the fight, she accidentally trips over a man lying injured. Her detachment vanishes as pity rushes to replace it.

"Oh, What a Beautiful Morning" is a reading for a woman. It tells the story of a young lady anxious to please the young man on their first date. Of her appearance, she is certain, until they reach their destination, a church. There her panties fall to the ground.

"A New Beginning" is a dramatic reading for a woman. It has as its theme, "off with the old and on with the new." The old in this case being a man and the new naturally is another man.

"Trust -- The Old Fashioned Brand" is a reading of mood rather than of humor or drama. A girl is in a bus station late at night and has some difficulty in finding a suitable place to sit. Finally she spies an old lady, the picture of respectability. She leaves her bag with the old lady and when she returns, both the bag and her companion are gone.

"Just One of Those Days" is a humorous reading for a woman. It's the story of just one of those days when everything goes wrong. She burned the food, stepped on the cat, dropped canned asparagus back of the refrigerator, and experienced many other exciting incidents.

"The Dress for the Wedding" is a humorous reading for a woman. A young bride-to-be is in search for the appropriate thing for her wedding. She finds a dress at each of the stores she visits, but each is identical except the color. It finally became not a problem of selecting a dress, but eliminating colors.

"My Husband Hates Cats" is a humorous reading for a woman. It tells of a husband and his declared hatred of cats. When one moves into the household, he changes both his mind and his attitude toward them.

This thesis was written from everyday experiences. It is hoped by the writer that they may be a source of information and enjoyment to the students of speech and dramatics at Kansas State College.