

Copyright 1955 by Maxwell Anderson.

This selection is fully copyrighted under the copyright laws of the United States of America, Canada and the British Empire. Recitation rights for amateurs are granted to the WETMORE DECLAMATION BUREAU. All other rights, including professional, motion pictures, publications, radio broadcasting, television and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Inquiries regarding these rights should be addressed to Brandt & Brandt, 101 Park Ave., New York 17, N.Y.

This is the arrangement of the play with which Karen McPeck won the National Contest of the National Forensic League in 1958.

The Bad Seed is a play which deals with Rhoda Penmark, a child of eight, who is in direct competition for a penmanship medal, with Claude Daigle, a boy in her fourth grade class. Upon losing the medal to Claude, Rhoda becomes so angry that she...drowns him at a class picnic.

I shall portray Mr. and Mrs. Daigle, the parents of the drowned boy; Miss Fern, matron of Fern School; and Mrs. Penmark, Rhoda's mother.

MRS. PENMARK: This is a terrible tragedy for Mrs. Daigle, as you say. She has lost her only son. But if there were any shadow over Rhoda--from what has happened--I shall have to live under it, too--and my husband. As for Rhoda--she would not be happy in your school next year.

MISS FERN: No, she would not. And since she would not, it would be as well to make up our minds now that she will not be there.

MRS. PEN.: Then there is a shadow over her--and you have decided that she will not be invited to return to the Fern School?

MISS FERN: Yes. We have made that decision.

MRS. PEN.: But you can't tell me why?

MISS FERN: I think her behavior in the matter of the medal would be sufficient explanation. She has no sense of fair play. She's a poor loser. She doesn't play the game.

MRS. PEN.: But you're not saying that Rhoda had anything to do with Claude's death?

MISS FERN: Of course not! Such a possibility never entered our minds! (At this moment, the doorbell chimes). There's someone at the door.

MRS. PEN.: I'd better answer.

MISS FERN: Of course, my dear.

(Mrs. Penmark goes to the door, hesitates a moment, then opens it. Mr. and Mrs. Daigle come in, he tentatively, she boldly. She has been drinking.)

MRS. PEN.: Yes?

MRS. DAIGLE: Thanks. We're Mrs. Daigle and Mr. Daigle. You didn't have to let us in, you know. (To Miss Fern) You realize we followed you, Miss Fern. We shouldn't have done it. I'm a little drunk. (To Mrs. Penmark) I guess you never get a little drunk.

MRS. PEN.: You're quite welcome, both of you.

MRS. DAIGLE: Oh, pay no attention to him. He's all for good-breeding. He was trying to stop me. Now, you, Mrs. Penmark. You've always had plenty. You're a superior person.

MRS. PEN.: No, I'm not.

MRS. DAIGLE: Oh, yes. Father was rich. Rich Richard Bravo. I know. Never had to touch dinner. Now I worked in a beauty parlor.

1-ways-06
JWB

682347

MB/S/S
C.1

Miss Fern used to come there. She looks down on me.

MISS FERN: Please, Mrs. Daigle.

MRS. DAIGLE: I was that frumpy blonde. Now I've lost my boy and I'm a lush. Everybody knows it.

MR. DAIGLE: We're worried about Mrs. Daigle. She's under a doctor's care. She's not herself.

MRS. DAIGLE: But I know what I'm about just the same. Just the same. May I call you Christine? I'm quite aware that you come from a higher level of society. You prolly made a debut and all that. I always considered Christine such a gentle name. Hortense sounds fat--that's me, Hortense. "My girl Hortense," that's what they used to sing at me, "Hasn't got much sense. Let's write her name on the privy fence." Children can be nasty don't you think?

MR. DAIGLE: Please Hortense.

MRS. DAIGLE: You're so attractive, Christine. You have such exquisite taste in clothes, but of course you have amples of money to buy 'em with. What I came to see you about, I asked Miss Fern how did Claude happen to lose the medal, and she wouldn't tell me a thing.

MISS FERN: I don't know, Mrs. Daigle. Truly.

MRS. DAIGLE: You know more than you're telling. You're a sly one--because of the school. You don't want the school to get a bad name. But you know more than you're telling, Miss Butter-Wouldn't-Melt-Fern. There's something funny about the whole thing. I've said so over and over to Mr. Daigle. He married quite late, you know. In his forties. But I wasn't exactly what the fellow calls a "spring chicken" either. We won't have any more children. No more.

MR. DAIGLE: Please, Hortense. Let me take you home where you can rest.

MRS. DAIGLE: Rest. Sleep. When you can't sleep at night, you can't sleep in the daylight. I lie and look at the water where he went down. There's something funny about the whole thing, Christine. I heard that your little girl was the last who saw him alive. Will you ask her about the last few minutes and tell me what she says? Maybe she remembers some little thing. I don't care how small it is! No matter how small. You know something, Miss Fern dyes her hair! She knows something and she won't tell me. Oh, my poor little Claude! What did they do to you?

(Christine goes to Mrs. Daigle and puts her arm around her.)

MRS. DAIGLE: Somebody took the medal off his shirt, Christine. It couldn't come off by accident. I pinned it on myself, and it has a clasp that locks in place. It was no accident. You can wear such simple things, can't you? I never could wear simple things. I couldn't even buy 'em. When I got 'em home they didn't look simple--He was such a lovely, dear little boy. He said I was his sweetheart. He said he was going to marry me when he grew up. I used to laugh and say, "You'll forget me long before then. You'll find a prettier girl, and you'll marry her." And you know what he said then? He said, "No, I won't, because there's not a prettier girl in the whole world than you are." If you don't believe me, ask the girl who comes in and cleans. She was present at the time.

MR. DAIGLE: Hortense--Hortense!

MRS. DAIGLE: Why do you put your arms around me? You don't care about me. You're a superior person and all that, and I'm--oh, God forgive me! There were those bruises on his hands, and that peculiar crescent-shaped mark on his forehead that the undertaker covered up. He must have bled before he died. That's what the doctor said. And where's the medal: Who took the medal? I have a right to know what be

BAD SEED---Page 3.

came of the penmanship medal! If I knew, I'd have a good idea what happened to him.--I don't know why you took it on yourself to put your arms around me. I'm as good as you are. And Claude was better than your girl. He won the medal, and she didn't. I'm drunk. It's a pleasure to stay drunk when your little boy's been killed.

Some other good, dramatic readings from New York plays:

JOAN OF LORRAINE--Maxwell Anderson
DARK VICTORY--George Brewer and Bertram Bloch
LITTLE FOXES--Lillian Hellman
MOON IS DOWN--John Steinbeck
OF MICE AND MEN--John Steinbeck
ON BORROWED TIME--Paul Osborne
REBECCA--Daphne du Maurier
SUSAN AND GOD--Rachel Crothers
THROUGH SUFFERIN'--From "Green Pastures"



SEMINARIO MULTIDISCIPLINARI
JOSE EMILIO GONZALEZ
FACULTAD DE HUMANIDADES
UNIVERSIDAD DE PUERTO RICO
RECINTO DE RIO PIEDRAS

WETMORE DECLAMATION BUREAU

Sioux City, Iowa