

# AT THE DECLAM CONTEST

A Humorous Monolog

by

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SCENE: The high school auditorium, on the night of a declamatory contest. The parents of one of the contestants enter. The mother speaks.

Oh, Wilbur, I'm so nervous--I just hate to go in, don't you? Oh, Wilbur, do you suppose folks will think that we think that Jennie May will win? Do try to look unconcerned, Wilbur, and let's sit down in the center section--that's where the judge always sits. I want to be where I can watch the judge.

There! Right over there by the Ransoms, they're sitting right behind the seat reserved for the judge. There's a lot of Presbyterians over there, too, and they'll want Jennie May to win.

Oh, good evening, Mrs. Ransom--Oh, no! Of course we don't expect Jennie May to get anywhere--you know she's the only freshman in the contest, but we think the experience will be good for her--Oh, she's in the humorous division. Do you know that child is simply a scream--such a keen sense of humor, and a perfect mimic--What! You think that Rollo Buster will place first in Humorous--Oh, I don't know. I think he is positively silly--I'm sure Booth Tarkington would pass out if he could hear him murder "Little Gentleman"--How do I know? Heavens! They live right next door to us and I've heard him practicing that reading for six weeks! (To Wilbur) The old cat! She makes me sick! Just because he won last year is no sign that he'll win again.

Oh, there comes the judge--Isn't she darling! I wonder if that's a new spring hat--She looks so young--Wilbur!!! Do you suppose she's an expression teacher or just a student? Oh, dear, something else to worry about.--

Why don't they start? Have you a program, Wilbur? Oh, the orchestra plays first--Oh my! Why do they prolong a person's agony like this? Let's see. (Consults program) 1-2-3-4 oratorical selections--Oh, oratory is so dry and uninteresting!

Oh, there goes the first speaker--isn't he awkward? Why do parents allow such gawky, uncouth boys to appear before the public? Why, he's not bad though. (Yawns) Tell me when he's through. I'm going to shut my eyes and say Jennie May's piece over to myself. (Closes eyes and moves lips ridiculously) Why, are we ready for the Dramatic?--Thank goodness!

There goes Dorothy Stephens--My word! A bright green dress, and she's reading "Madame X!" Her mother has such rotten taste anyway. That's one advantage Jennie May has--she's dressed absolutely in keeping with her selection. Oh, Wilbur, look quick! Look at Dorothy's mother. She's saying that thing right along with Dorothy. Isn't that comical?

Now what's next? (Consults program) "The White Hands of Telham." Oh, I love that! Oh, look at her gestures, Wilbur. She's doing good work! That's realism! Oh, Wilbur, do you think that Jennie May will win? I know if she doesn't it will be because the judge has been bribed. My this is harrowing!

Oh, thank goodness we're ready for the humorous division. Wilbur! I can't stand it! Do you think she will win?--But I can't keep still! I don't care if the judge does hear me, maybe if she knows it's affecting us so vitally, she'll give her first place--Wilbur! I'm going to lean over and tell old Mrs. Cody the title of Jennie May's piece, and maybe she will be impressed. (Leans over) Mrs. Cody! Mrs. Cody I'm so glad you could come. Jennie May said when she decided to speak "A Case of Fits" that she just knew Mrs. Cody would love that because your cats have fits so much. Mrs. Cody, do you know where the judge is sitting?--No, I don't either, but I heard that she was a beautiful girl from the State University, and a perfectly wonderful critic judge!

(To Wilber) Oh my, there goes Jennie May--doesn't she look darling? That's the best looking dress that has been on the platform tonight. Wilbur, laugh, LAUGH!! We must impress the judge. Oh! Oh! I believe she's going to forget--(Closes eyes) I'll try will power. She can't forget, she can't forget, she can't forget. (Opens eyes, sighs relievedly) Ah-h-h, she's got her bearings again. Isn't she cute?--HA! HA! Laugh, Wilbur! Wilbur, look! The judge likes it--she's smiling--but my, she's doing a lot of writing. Wilbur! She's not watching Jennie May--There, she didn't see that gesture at all. Oh, dear! Wilbur, tell the judge to watch Jennie may and write afterwards--I'm making a fool of myself? Oh, I don't know--the trouble with you and all other fathers is you can't appreciate a mother's feelings. Look! Isn't her facial expression wonderful? I think she'll not only place first in her class, but first over all. Wilbur, where will she go after she wins the State? Oh dear, I wanted the judge to get her expression when she mimics the cat, but she was looking at me!

Thank heavens that's over--Wasn't that a demure little bow? (Watches her off stage. Breathes sigh of satisfaction.)

(Looks at program) Let's see--"At the Swimming Pool" is next. Nothing to fear there--that girl's a total loss as a speaker.

There goes Rollo Buster--Wilbur, do you think that he is good? Well, I wouldn't talk that way when my very own child is competing with him! Wilbur, is he better than Jennie May?--Well, I want to know what you think. Listen, Wilbur, I'll put my hand down between us, and if you think that Jennie May will place first, you squeeze it once, and if you think she'll place second, squeeze it twice--do that every little bit just to reassure me. Oh there goes the last speaker. I'm going to say something to Mrs. Cody while she's going up. Oh, Mrs. Cody, did you like Jennie May? I think she has wonderful possibilities--of course we want the one to win that will best represent the school, and the faculty and student body want Jennie May to win. (To Wilbur) Jennie May will win now, without a doubt. Did you see the judge taking in everything I said?

Oh, dear, I don't like that piece. Why she's a perfect flop, isn't she?

There goes the judge to announce her decision. Doesn't she act businesslike? I'm sure she knows her stuff. There, the oratorical came out just as I have it marked. Yessir, and the dramatic, too. I was sure "White Hands of Telham" would win. Oh, Wilbur, she is going to announce the humorous now--Why the dirty thing! Rollo Buster doesn't deserve second place--but that means that Jennie May will take first. Oh, Wilbur, do I look too pleased?--Why! Why! She's giving "At the Swimming Pool" first--and Jennie May fourth!!! Of all the incompetent--unqualified--ignorant judges I ever saw, she beats them all!--I don't care who hears me. I'm going to write a letter of protest to the president of her college. I knew she was a total loss the minute I set eyes on her. Let's get out of here, Wilbur.