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### The Nuance of Character Acting

Heather Baker

*Ouachita Baptist University*

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# SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

**“The Nuance of Character Acting”**

written by

**Heather Baker**

and submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for completion of  
the Carl Goodson Honors Program  
meets the criteria for acceptance  
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.



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Mary Handiboe, thesis director



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Dr. Barbara Pemberton, Honors Program director

April 14, 2010

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## **FORWARD**

### **THE NUANCE OF CHARACTER ACTING**

**Heather Baker**

I came to college knowing nothing about acting, other than the little experience I had performing in a few high school musicals. My background up until then was primarily in music. I had never taken an acting class and was oblivious to the existence of acting techniques. When I came to Ouachita Baptist University, I eagerly attended classes and enjoyed learning more about my craft. My time at Ouachita has encouraged me to independently seek knowledge about my field. I wanted to be well versed in the most common acting techniques.

In the acting classes here, we primarily work under the Stanislavski thought; we briefly talk about some of the others, but not to a great extent. As a member of The Carl Goodson Honors Program, I participated in a directed study with Mary Handiboe, Associate Professor of Theatre Arts. In this study, I further explored numerous acting methods including those of: Konstantin Stanislavski, Sanford Meisner, Stella Adler, Lee Strasberg, and Viewpoints, along with some lesser known methods. I anticipated finding that they all contradicted one another, but I found that many of them stemmed from the ideas of Stanislavski and differed in only a few ways. The biggest dispute concerned the approach of the actor. There are two ways to develop a character: externally and internally. The different techniques have strong opinions between these two approaches. The external relies on the exploration of the body, while the internal depends on intellect. Both strive for emotional connection and a powerful impact.

After researching the different methods, I desired to further explore the Meisner technique. This method appealed to me because it is very impulse driven, which goes against

my natural inclinations toward the analytical in my acting. I do not rely on instinct but instead plan every moment out carefully. Sanford Meisner (1905-1997) preached against this way of working. I yearned to work spontaneously, but did not have the nerve to be so daring on my own. When the Honors Program granted me a scholarship, I was able to actively pursue the study of Meisner's method in New York City at The Neighborhood Playhouse, the conservatory where Meisner had taught and developed his technique. The acting teachers are all former students who Meisner apprenticed. My teacher, Ron Stetson, taught that acting is doing. By this he simply meant to do something and be present. He also emphasized the importance of listening to your partner, and honestly hearing what he says. It is important to listen to the other actor because most of acting is reacting. Acting without listening is like feeding others without ever giving yourself nutrients. You will soon starve to death because you have deprived yourself of food. In regards to acting, the food is your partner. The partner creates opportunity to act on impulse. My time under his teaching revealed that acting has little to do with me, and everything to do with my partner. Much of this is difficult to utilize in solo performances, so I asked Ron how I should apply what I learned to my thesis, since it contains a considerable amount of monologue work. He said that it will require me to, "create [my] own pinches and ouches." By this he meant that I would need to create the responses of the other character so I could then react to that imaginary person in an honest way. I was not able to work with him on monologue work, so I began the next semester exploring this on my own.

I came back to Ouachita my senior year and continued working on my thesis. The purpose of my thesis was to explore nuance. Many young actors do not have a good

understanding of this, and consequently all of their characters are the same. The actors often have idiosyncrasies they carry into each role. My initial goal was to have a collection of twenty distinct characters whom I would develop as specific individuals. Although this was eventually cut down to ten due to time constraints, my goal of creating distinctly different characters remained. I believed this would benefit me as an actress because I would be limited by neither style, nor genre. Performing the monologues and scenes consecutively and uninterrupted would also be very revealing. In essence all of the characters would be in a "line up," thus exposing any personal habits or ticks I unintentionally brought to the different roles.

Selecting the repertoire was an important step that was influenced by my study in New York. The scenes I worked on at The Neighborhood Playhouse all revolved around strong and clear conflicts. I chose a lot of the material for my thesis while I was working on these scenes, and I was influenced by the hostility I was exposed to through them. Going through this selection process was one of the most rewarding parts of my thesis. I spent hours upon hours reading through plays. I enjoyed being introduced to countless playwrights as I sifted through a variety of material. I had some specific criteria in mind when I was deciding on my performance pieces: I wanted a variety of ages, and socio-economic statuses; I wanted characters who represented different eras of theatre; and I wanted to include both renowned and unknown characters. I also wanted an added challenge of having a few characters that were similar in several ways, making specific choices vital to creating their individuality. I deliberately chose several southern young ladies to push me beyond a reliance on stereotypes. I had to be very deliberate with these characters who shared so many qualities. Nuance is all

about making a fine distinction, and what better way to demonstrate this than by being forced to create differences in three individuals who are very similar in nature? This was one of the most difficult aspects about the process. I did this by preparing each role from an internal standpoint prior to focusing on the external. I wanted to be sure I had a well developed analysis for each of them so their physical qualities would have a firm and honest foundation. If, after this process, the differences were not clear enough, I layered on specific physical and vocal choices that better distinguished them from one another.

In the early stages of preparing my thesis, I hoped the different acting techniques would aide me in varying my characters. As I tried them, however, I found it difficult to produce a product worthy of performance. There were some techniques with which I simply did not relate well. Not surprisingly, I seemed to gravitate towards the few I was exposed to in workshops and classrooms. Difficulties became apparent when I attempted to connect with the ones I only read about. I did not find them easily accessible through simple book knowledge. If nothing else I learned that acting is not something one learns by reading; it must be learned by doing.

I used a combination of Stanislavski and Meisner for the majority of my work. Stanislavski's goal in theatre was to portray truth. He thought actors would achieve this truth by taking note of the exercises and ideals he outlined in his system. This system is based on a delicate balance of the actor between belief and reality. The performer should be "in the moment" and experience and show the honest emotion of the character, yet remain detached enough to stay away from complete belief. Stanislavski also encouraged "round the table

analysis” which in essence was the actor’s homework. The actor is expected to break down the script into beats and sections, define objectives, and provide action verbs. Much of my thesis is composed of this “homework.” I did not necessarily use all of it in the performance, but it was crucial to the process. It gave me a firm foundation on which to play. I went through each monologue and divided it into beats and sections to map out where thoughts changed and discoveries were made, then inserted specific objectives to clarify immediate goals and for what the character fought. In addition to these things, I added tempo and pitch markings in order to recognize patterns in my speech. I was able to see on paper when I went up in pitch, when I slowed down, and how often I stay at a certain pace. This was beneficial because I could look at all of the pieces together and see what my tendencies were and adjust accordingly to keep each monologue distinctly different. Without this work being done first, I would have performed all of the monologues in a very similar manner.

The Meisner technique starts with a series of improvisation exercises that build upon one another and help institute a degree of spontaneity and authentic response in one’s acting. As mentioned earlier Meisner was much more concerned with what the actor was doing, rather than content of the text. Many of the exercises are rooted in impulse and observation. My experience in New York made me value authentic response, and helped me feel more comfortable with being vulnerable. There was nothing I could do to prepare for the majority of the work. I had to respond to the specific moment at hand.

With the monologues it was difficult to use the Meisner approach because I only had myself from which to work. Consequently, I tended to rely mostly on the Stanislavski approach.

I did, however, heed Ron Stetson's advice and created "my own pinches." For each monologue I was sure to have a clear vision of what the other person was doing, so I could respond accordingly. The Meisner approach worked much better in the scene work. It felt easier because I did not have to artificially create another character to react to, but instead there was a real person who brought surprises to the scene.

My overall process was fairly simple. As soon as I had a piece selected, I worked to memorize it. Initially I had twenty pieces, so the memorization process took a long time. At one point I had fifteen pages worth of material memorized. Also, it was important for me to memorize these monologues rote. Learning by rote avoids paying attention to the subject and focuses on pure memorization so that recall is easier. In relation to memorizing lines, rote learning implies that the actor should not put any specific inflection in the voice, but learn the lines as generically as possible. Learning the lines in this manner prevents the actor from forming vocal habits or pre-conceived ideas, and allows for more vocal freedom and internal discovery later in the process.

After the pieces were memorized, I began exploring and playing with different character options. Much of this did not show up in the final performance, but it assisted me with getting comfortable as I moved and spoke with the monologue. The majority of the character development happened after I did the respective analysis. Throughout the next several weeks, I performed a few pieces at a time for Professor Handiboe. She worked with me, and we were able to better focus each character. At this time, we became aware that I only had thirty minutes rather than an hour to present my thesis work. Many of the pieces I

had been developing were cut. The ones that remained kept in mind my initial challenge of showing nuance and diversity. I ended up with a group of pieces that had similar styles so that I could really focus on this challenge. I also chose characters that varied in age and status, and who came from plays of various eras and styles. From here much of the work was trial and error, as all characterization processes are. I have included in my portfolio a journal entry for each piece that details the process and discoveries of the respective journey with that individual monologue or scene.

On this journey I learned that I have distinct habits. I have a tendency to flutter my eyelids when the character is in confrontation. During rehearsal this occurred in several of my pieces, so I tried to be aware of it. I am afraid, however, that it still slipped into the performance. Professor Handiboe also pointed out my tendency to add a raspy quality to my voice for many of my characters. I believe I subconsciously did this to make each character different from my own natural voice, but instead it resulted in them all sounding alike. This problem was resolved before the performance. I also found that I limit the use of my hands. It was difficult to find new ways of gesturing that seemed natural.

Throughout this process I have learned that I am more comfortable acting in methods or techniques in which I have been trained as opposed to those I have simply been exposed to through just reading. I have also learned a great deal about the inhibitions I have. Frequently, I found myself fearful of taking risks, but once I did overcome those fears great improvements occurred. Once I let go of myself, I found a world of adventure and freedom waiting for me. I found that with most pieces I began from an internal approach and then added nuance by

examining the physical aspect of each character. I am still not certain if this is the most effective way of working; most of the time, it felt like I was being artificial. The physical approach does not register with me as an acceptable method of acting. It seems like I am putting on layers of clothes to try to hide who I really am, rather than stripping them off and exposing more of myself. In the end, however, utilizing an external approach produced a product that was better than using my intellect alone. Actors have four things with which to work; the voice, the body, the head, and the heart. I now strive to use more heart in my acting, but success, I believe, will come with time and maturity.

In the following pages you will find a clean copy of each monologue and scene, followed by the journal I mentioned previously, along with the analysis of each character, my marked script, a visual character sketch of how I think the character may look or what her physical demeanor may be, plus any other pertinent research. In conclusion, I have tried my best to create ten uniquely different characters. I am sure I have failed in many rights, but I have also had my share of successes. Most importantly, I have learned what methods of acting work for me, and have learned how to work around many of the things that hold me back as an actress.

**ABSENT FRIENDS  
MONOLOGUE**

I know I'm running myself down when I say this, I don't think I'm enough for him. He needs me, I can tell that; he doesn't say as much but I know he does. It's just, as I say, I don't think I'm really enough for him. But he couldn't do without me. Make no mistake about that.

He's got this amazing energy. I don't know where he finds it. He goes to bed long after me, he's up at dawn, working down here—then off he goes all day...I need eight hours, it's no good. What I'm saying is really, I wouldn't blame him. Not altogether. If he did. With someone else. You know, another woman. I wouldn't blame him, I wouldn't blame her. Not as long as I was told. Providing I know, I'm told---all right. Providing I feel able to say to people—" Yes, I am well aware that my husband is having an affair with such and such or whoever...it's quite all right. I know all about it. We're both grown-up people, we know what we're doing he knows I know, she knows I know. So mind your own business." I'd feel all right about it. But I will not stand deception. I'm simply asking that I be told. Either by him or if not by her. Not necessarily now but sometime. You see. I hope I've made enough tomato.

## ABSENT FRIENDS: DIANA

### Journal

This play is written by a British playwright, Alan Ayckbourn. He is known for his dark humor and witty writing. In this monologue from *Absent Friends*, I considered taking out the English dialect, but the character required the British spirit. The first few days of rehearsing this monologue I tried American dialects, but I could not capture the heart of the character Ayckbourn created. In further rehearsals, the vocalization became very important. I played around with many British variations and finally landed with this: a bright-gay London accent.

Every time I am dealing with an accent, particularly one I do not feel comfortable with, I visit the Speech Accent Archive. This is an online site that allows you to browse through numerous dialects organized by age, gender, and location. The last thing I wanted to do was place a generic English accent on Diana. It was not until after the dialect was decided upon, and I began playing around with a special prop, that the moment hit when I really started to understand the character. This piece would not be the same without the knife I use to cut the tomatoes, and to gesture with. This monologue taught me the importance of props. It gave my character an extra sense of power, and uneasiness in the interaction between the two women.

The physical development of Diana came from an accidental discovery. I happened to stumble upon a TV character that seemed perfect as Diana. I was in the gym, and someone was watching *That 70s Show*. The mother, Kitty Forman, looked the part. I could not hear her, because I had my headphones in, so I could easily imagine her with whatever dialect I desired. She moves with almost a waddle and keeps herself open to others. This made sense with my character because Diana is trying to get approval; she always opens up her physical self to

welcome people. Kitty also plasters on a smile, even when she is not happy. I tried to incorporate this idea into my reading. Diana is talking to a woman she detests, but she would never come straight out and say that. Thus, she allusively accuses this woman of having an affair with her husband while keeping a grin on her face the whole time.

## ABSENT FRIENDS: DIANA

### Character Analysis

- THE “GIVENS”
  - The Play
    - What is the name of the play? *Absent Friends*
    - Who is the playwright? *Alan Ayckbourn*
    - When was it written? *1974*
    - What is the basic plot?  
*When Colin, a friend who has been absent, comes back to his circle of friends, his friends are worried about how to approach him over the death of his fiancée, Carol (who has drowned). Diana organizes a tea party for Colin's arrival. The characters are shown to have interrelationship tensions and this is near erupting when Colin arrives, heightening the tension when they all have to appear friendly towards him. However Colin seems euphorically happy while the rest of the party is near breaking point.*
  - The Character
    - What is my name? *Diana*
    - What is my gender? *Female*
    - How old am I? *I am in my early 40s*
    - What is my marital status?  
*I am married but not happy. He is having an affair. I feel like I am not a partner in the relationship at all. I do not contribute anything other than meals.*
    - What is my educational level?  
*College education, Private high school*
    - What is my socio-economic status?  
*It is higher than others in play. My husband employs them. My family has a history of money.*
    - What do I do for a living?  
*I have never been able to work, because my husband would see that as a weakness. I am a mother and wife...but in a sense I have been fired from both jobs.*
    - How are my looks and personality described?  
*I am a 1970s wife. I'm a bit insecure. So I try to compensate with makeup. I Wear patterns and floral prints—but there is always something off.*
  - The Relationships
    - Who are the other characters in the scene, and what is:
      - the basic relationship of each to your character: *wife of my husband's employee.*

- the actual? *I believe she is having an affair with my husband. I do not like her. I am by the book superior to her but she has the one thing I want: a relationship with my husband.*

#### •INTERNAL EXAMINATIONS

- Self Image
  - What do I say about myself throughout the play that is a self-judgment?  
*I say than I am needed, and that my husband can't live without me. I say that he is too good for me. But I don't believe this last remark to be true, I just want someone else to vocalize that I am more than good enough for him.*
  - How smart am I?  
*I understand people and know how to get what I want...but I never seem to get it. Maybe I somehow enjoy being the underdog.*
  - Do I like myself? *I do not. But expect everyone else to.*
- Emotion
  - How emotionally stable am I?  
*I am not very stable. I am very manipulative and on the edge of a breakdown. So give me some grace.*
  - What is the range of perceived emotions I experience in the play?  
*Hurt-revenge-devastated-scheming-hopeful-proud*
  - What are my fears?  
*I fear that I am nothing, that I do not exist. Life can go on without me*
- Spirituality
  - Do I believe in God, or a god? *Yes*
  - Do I practice a particular "religion," and how fervently?  
*No, haven't thought of God seriously since I was a kid. I occasionally wish I had bought into religion more, but think it has been too long. I go on Holidays. Like much of England.*
- Actor Connection
  - How is the character similar to "me-the-actor"?  
*We are both women, both want to feel accepted. I can identify with feeling forgotten or unimportant. I too want to be a companion. Neither of us have full relationship with men. I seek mine with my dad, she seeks a fuller relationship with her spouse.*
  - How is the character different from "me-the-actor"(in all ways you can think of? *I am not married. I am not 40. I am not on the verge of a breaking point. I do not I do not stay at home all day. I have purpose.*
- Growth
  - Who am I / what am I like at the beginning of the play? *I am trying to please husband by creating a tea party for his friend*
  - Who am I / what am I like at the end of the play? *I am taking matters into*

my own hands. More proactive, directly with problem rather than manipulating the situation.

- **IMAGINATION AND/OR OTHER GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES**

- History
  - How and where did I grow up? *I was born in England, I had two parents who loved me, but they seemed to care about maintaining their status in the community more than they cared about me. I have no siblings.*
- Pertinent Creativity - What background do I need to create for each scene?
  - What was my "moment before"
    - *I was in the living room with the entire party. They had been making jokes, one of which I was offended by, and escaped into the kitchen to prepare more tomatoes.*
    - How long had I been there? *About 45 min*
  - What are my basic likes and dislike? *I don't like lies. I don't like liars. I don't like feeling unneeded. I don't like tomatoes.*
- Personality
  - Am I an introvert or an extrovert? *Extrovert, but extremely analytical of each of my actions*
  - Am I a "giver" or a "taker? *Giver*
  - How honest am I? *Not really honest to anyone, but is anyone honest 100% of the time.*
  - What idiosyncrasies/eccentricities do I have? *My stance is strong. I am British, so my speech reflects that. I try to bottle thing up, but I tend to explode.*

- **PRACTICALITIES**

- Goal/Objective
  - What do I want most of all throughout the entire play? *I want companionship and camaraderie. I want to feel needed and desired.*
  - What do I want most of all in the scene at hand? *I want Evelyn to admit she has had an affair with my husband, so that I can at least be in on the thing.*
  - What is/are my obstacles for obtaining my goal? *I try to manipulate her into thinking that I would be fine with this knowledge, that I understand and that it is not that big of a deal.*
- Motivation
  - Why do I want what I want? *If I know than that means I was a contributor, I have come to this conclusion alongside everyone else, it wasn't decided for me.*
  - How will achieving my goal drastically improve my life? *Then I will not be a victim, I will be in control. Somehow makes me partner in relationship, he*

*values my opinion.*

- How will the lack of achievement destroy me? *This means he doesn't care enough to try. I am not even worth telling. Lowers my status even further.*



**THE CASKET COMEDY: HALISCA  
MONOLOGUE**

If heaven doesn't rescue me, I'm dead and done for, with not a soul to look to for aid! Oh, how miserable my own heedlessness makes me! Oh! How I dread what will happen to my back, if my mistress finds out I've been so negligent! Surely I had that little casket in my hands and received it from her here in front of the house--and where it is now I don't know, unless I dropped it somewhere about here, as I suspect. *[to audience]* Dear gentlemen, dear spectators, do tell me if anyone of you saw him, the man who carried it off or who picked it up. Did he go *[pointing]* this way, or that? *[pauses, then indignantly]* I'm none the wiser for asking or pestering them--the creatures always enjoy seeing a woman in trouble! Now I'll *[scans the ground]* examine the footprints here, in case I can find any. For if no one passed by after I went inside, the casket would be lying here. *[looking about again, then hopelessly.]* What am I to do? I'm done for, I fancy! It's all over, my day has come, unlucky, fated wretch that I am! Not a trace of it, and there won't be a trace left of me, either! It's lost, and so I'm lost, too! But I won't give up, though; I'll keep on looking. Oh, my heart's in a flutter and my back's in a fright--fear on both sides driving me frantic! What poor, poor things human beings are! Now he's happy, whoever he is, that has it--something that's no use to him and the death of me! But I'm delaying myself by not setting to work. To work, Halisca! Eyes on the ground, eyes down! Track it--sharp now--like an augur! He went this way . . . here's the mark of a shoe in the dust . . . I'll follow it up this way! Now here's where he stopped with someone else . . . Here's the scene of some sort of fracas . . . No, he didn't go on this way . . . he stood here . . . from here he went over there . . . A consultation was held here . . . There are two people concerned, that's clear as

day . . . Aha! Just one person's tracks! . . . He went this way . . . I'll investigate . . . From here he went over here . . . from here he went-- *[after an energetic search]* nowhere! *[with wry resignation]* It's no use. What's lost is lost--the casket and my cuticle together. I'm going back inside.

## **THE CASKET COMEDY: HALISCA**

### **Journal**

This play was written in 254 BC and would have originally been presented in a very stylized way. I wanted to incorporate some of the acting style but realized that today's audience would not relate well to the style the Roman's enjoyed. To compromise I used some of the systemized gestures of Francois Delsarte (1811-1871). Delsarte was convinced that good acting was based on the external. He believed that every gesture represented an emotion and that these gestures were what conveyed feeling to audiences. He went studied the gestures and postures of individuals and created a codified system of poses that represented specific actions and emotions based on his findings. This technique seemed a better fit with Casket Comedy than would be a completely realistic and fully psychologically developed Stanislavski approach.

I found this style to be out of my comfort zone. I do not usually approach scenes with such a physical approach. However, I enjoyed researching Delsarte's system, and seeing how I could incorporate a more contemporary style with this older approach.

Halisca was an interesting role to explore. She is a minor character, so there were several holes that I had to fill with my imagination. Much of her background and personality were up to me to decide rather than designated by the playwright. This part of creating the character is indicative of Stanislavski's school of thought because this would fall under the "homework" he assigns actors. It is always enjoyable as an actor to pick up where the playwright left off when developing a character.

The most challenging part of this monologue is in its performance. The character must

stay desperate the entire time, and each discovery has to be an exciting, hopeful step towards her survival, that in the end leads nowhere. All of the discovery moments have an anticipation beat before the “aha!” moment. This made the comedic timing difficult for me. I have not been able to really capture and embody the search as well as it reads in my mind.

Another difficulty I had connecting with Halisca was how she was written. She was crafted by the playwright as a caricature who talks to herself the entire time, with the exception of when he has her address the audience. Because she does not have specific person to speak with, I found it difficult to communicate honestly.

## THE CASKET COMEDY: HALISCA

### Character Analysis

- **THE “GIVENS”**

- The Play
  - What is the name of the play? *The Casket Comedy*
  - Who is the playwright? *Plautus*
  - When was it written? *254 BC*
  - What is the basic plot? *Parents trying to find child, carry around a casket that has toys for the child in it. Halisca is the servant and loses the casket.*
- The Character
  - What is my full name? *Halisca*
  - What is my gender? *Female*
  - How old am I? *38 rough tattered*
  - What is my marital status? *Single, don't know any men*
  - What is my educational level? *no education*
  - What is my socio-economic status? *poor*
  - What do I do for a living? *I am a servant; my lady is wealthy and takes care of my basic needs.*
  - How are my looks and personality described by the playwright?  
*I am a servant, one with the earth. I am biting. Looks and personality off putting but something compelling. I'm a funny girl with a youthful spirit but look older than I am.*

- **INTERNAL EXAMINATION**

- Self Image
  - What do I say about myself? *I think I am a failure*
  - How smart am I? *Not smart at all, at least not book smart. But I know how to make a meal out of nothing*
  - Do I like myself? *No, I'm always messing up. I like others a lot.*
- Emotion
  - How emotionally stable am I? *Not currently I am fighting for my life*
  - What are the range of *perceived* emotions I experience in the play?  
*Desperate, tired, desperate, exhausted, desperate.*
  - What are my fears, and why? *That I will be beaten, because I lost the casket*
- Spirituality
  - Do I believe in God, or a god? *Yes, pagan gods*
  - Do I practice a particular “religion,” and how fervently? *Right now they are my only hope. I particularly enjoy religion around celebration time. The wine is nice.*
- Actor Connection–

- How is the character similar to “me-the-actor”? *Both have lost things, and have been in a panic. Female, no children, or husband.*
    - How is the character different from “me-the-actor”?  
*I do not live hand to mouth. I have never experienced hard manual labor. I do not fear for my life. I am well educated.*
  - Growth
    - Who am I / what am I like at the beginning of the play?  
*Not seen in play but in one scene. But for sake of analysis: I was afraid of messing up, by end I see that life goes on if I make a mistake, and I become more bold. Have more strength in my identity*
- **IMAGINATION AND/OR OTHER GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES**
  - History
    - How and where did I grow up? *Rome, I was poor daughter of midwife*
    - What kind of family did I come from? *Poor, dad died when I was 12 and mother was midwife. I loved my mother*
    - What skeletons do I have in my closet? *None, I am very loyal to everyone, and don't keep secrets, it might be a fault. I don't steal, or lie.*
  - Pertinent Creativity - What background do I need to create for each scene? *A house with door, dusty road. And no trace of a casket*
    - What was my “moment before”  
*I realized that I did not have the casket and rush to find it. I hold my breath until I see that there is nothing there.*
    - What are my basic likes and dislikes? *I don't like beef. I do like carrots. I don't like being looked down upon. I don't like not succeeding. I don't like messing up.*
  - Personality -
    - Am I an introvert or an extrovert? *Introvert around people by self extrovert. Very scattered. Type B*
    - Am I a “giver” or a “taker”? *Giver of anything I have, particularly love and loyalty.*
    - How honest am I? *I am too honest. I am a good person too simple to think of lies.*
    - What idiosyncrasies/eccentricities do I have? *Very connected to the earth, animal like. Aware of back.*
- **PRACTICALITIES**
  - Goal/Objective
    - What do I want most of all throughout the entire play? *I want to please*
    - What do I want most of all in the scene at hand? *I want to find the casket/save my back*
    - What is/are my obstacles for obtaining my goal(s)? *It is missing/lost/stolen*

- Motivation
  - Why do I want what I want? *If I don't I will be beaten, and I don't want pain, nor do I wish to disappoint my lady.*
  - How will achieving my goal drastically improve my life? *I will bring about good things, and have done a good job. Get a reward, money or food.*



The Attack



HORROR



FLIGHT





**DEATH COMES TO US ALL, MARY AGNES: MARGOT  
MONOLOGUE**

Grandma, do you remember me? It's your little Margot. Sit down, let me look at you. Do you remember me? I remember you, way back before you first feigned madness. Do you remember that summer I was fifteen, and Daddy and I came to visit right after he'd found the French orphanage my mother had put me in? And Grandad had just got the first of his secretaries. Remember? It was Miss Willis, then, I think. And I asked you why Mama had put me in an orphanage like I didn't belong to her, just so she could go to Italy with her two boys, her two sons, my twin brothers! She left me there for five years! And I said to you, Grandma, will there ever be anyone in the world who will love me? And you looked at me and you said, "No," and I said, "But Grandma, why?" And you said, "Because there never was for me!" Do you remember, Grandma? There never was for me!

## DEATH COMES TO US ALL, MARY AGNES: MARGOT POMME

### Journal

This monologue was one of the first pieces on which I began to work. It is a dark comedy, and I had never worked on anything in this genre before. The subject matter is very dark and brings out serious issues, but does so in a comedic fashion. Christopher Durang, a comedic playwright, makes it the actor's job to find the humor in this show. I tried to do this by using Shurtleff's techniques. Michael Shurtleff (1920-2007) wrote an auditioning book outlining twelve "guideposts" that he found essential in any scene work. The suggestion I thought was most crucial in this piece was his idea of opposites. He states that for every thing people desire there is also a desire to resist it. This results in a tug-of-war in a scene, and makes the read unpredictable and fun, but still truthful. I like to relate this to chocolate cake. I like chocolate cake, a lot. I could inhale an entire piece, but then I realize the ingredients and shove it away with detest. Only seconds later I find myself inching back towards the chocolaty goodness. I related my relationship with chocolate cake to my grandmother in this scene and came up with a monologue that has a lot of give and take.

As I mentioned earlier, Christopher Durang is a well known comedic writer and he wrote this script with the actors in mind. He created a script that demands big choices: an actor's playground. However, as a relatively young actor, this is really intimidating. The answers cannot always be found using the script; the actor must work opposite of what the script says in order to achieve the best results. This is scary. There are no right answers. I feel very vulnerable in this situation. It is hard to not be self aware, and ask questions like *is this dumb?* When preparing for this monologue, I had to explore some really extreme opposites,

and it seemed schizophrenic. The end result may not be so extreme, but I had to experiment with every extreme in order to come up with a combination of middle ground choices.

Because of this monologue, I have a new freedom that I did not have before. It pushed me to take risks I otherwise would not have taken. I am still not completely liberated, but I have made a big step in that direction. This was also important for some of the other monologues I worked on, and will continue to be important in my future.

## DEATH COMES TO US ALL, MARY AGNES: MARGOT POMME

### Character Analysis

- THE "GIVENS"

- The Play

- What is the name of the play? *Death Comes to Us All Mary Agnes*
- Who is the playwright? *Christopher Durang*
- When was it written? *1979*
- What is the basic plot?

*The scene is a decaying mansion occupied by a family beset by all manner of problems: conceit, hatred, selfishness, incest and cruelty--all dealt with in an ironic, highly theatrical manner*

- The Character

- What is my full name? *Margot Pomme*
- What is my gender? *Female*
- How old am I? *late 20s*
- What is my marital status? *Single*
- What is my educational level? *College Graduate*
- What is my socio-economic status? *Very wealthy*
- What do I do for a living? *I do not work, I rely on my inheritance from my father*
- How are my looks and personality described by the playwright?  
*I have very attractive parents, so I have good genes. My looks are strong, but they are not important to me, so I don't put as much effort into them as most do. I could be a knock out, but don't have the desire to be. My personality has been wounded. I have been rejected by my mother, and family. Personality can be anything at any moment. All over the place.*

- The Relationships

- Who are the other characters in the scene, and what is: *Mrs. Jansen Humbell*
  - the basic relationship of each to your character: *My grandmother-maternal*
  - the actual relationship?  
*We share a mutual dislike for one another. Our relationship changed when my mother abandoned me, and she too decided to have nothing to do with me.*
- From the writing, who has the power in the scene, and why? *I have the power. She just had a seizure and is dying.*
- What is specifically said about me by each of the other characters? *They say that I should not be loved, that I'm inferior to my twin brothers.*

- How well does each person know me?

*Not well, my dad knows me best, but my mom doesn't even recognize me. I am a stranger, a ghost from the past.*

- What do I specifically say about other characters in the play? *I do not respect any of them. I point out all of their flaws.*

- **INTERNAL EXAMINATION**

- Self Image
  - What do I say about myself *throughout the play* that is a self-judgement? *I want to be loved*
  - How smart am I? *I am smarter than most*
  - Do I like myself? *No...but I want to*
- Emotion
  - How emotionally stable am I? *Not at all. I am a nut case. Emotional stability is not something that runs in my family.*
  - What are the range of *perceived* emotions I experience in the play? *Loss-revenge-joy-anger-wrath-nostalgia*
  - What are my fears, *and why*? *Not being accepted*
- Spirituality
  - Do I believe in God, or a god? *No*
  - Do I practice a particular "religion," and how fervently? *No*
- Actor Connection
  - How is the character similar to "me-the-actor"? *I can go from wone extreme to the next sometimes. I am a female, I have a broken family; we both desire truth about our background.*
  - How is the character different from "me-the-actor"? *She is insane. My mother and I have a good relationship. I don't have brothers. I feel loved.*

- **IMAGINATION AND/OR OTHER GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES**

- History
  - How and where did I grow up? *With my parents and then in an orphanage where my mom left in France*
  - What kind of family did I come from? *Broken, wealthy, unstable*
- Pertinent Creativity - What background do I need to create for each scene?
  - What was my "moment before"? *I just witnessed my grandmother having a seizure. Then I see this as my chance to seek revenge. It was oddly gratifying her to see suffer*
- Personality
  - Am I an introvert or an extrovert? *Introvert most of the time, it depends on who I'm around.*
  - Am I a "giver" or a "taker"? *taker, due to survival*
  - How honest am I? *I can be honest, but I can be very deceitful as well.*
  - What idiosyncracies/eccentricities do I have? *I go from hot to cold in 2 sec.*

*flat. I am sweet and sour depending on what mood I'm in.*

- **PRACTICALITIES**

- Goal/Objective

- What do I want most of all throughout the entire play? *I want to be a part of my family*
    - What do I want most of all in the scene at hand? *I want Grandma to experience the pain I once felt.*
    - What is/are my obstacles for obtaining my goal? *My family's insanity and self-centeredness prevent them from paying attention to my needs.*



**A DOLL'S HOUSE: NORA  
MONOLOGUE**

It is perfectly true, Torvald. When I was at home with papa, he told me his opinion about everything, and so I had the same opinions; and if I differed from him I concealed the fact, because he would not have liked it. He called me his doll-child, and he played with me just as I used to play with my dolls. And when I came to live with you—

I mean that I was simply transferred from papa's hands into yours. You arranged everything according to your own taste, and so I got the same tastes as you--or else I pretended to, I am really not quite sure which--I think sometimes the one and sometimes the other. When I look back on it, it seems to me as if I had been living here like a poor woman--just from hand to mouth. I have existed merely to perform tricks for you, Torvald. But you would have it so. You and papa have committed a great sin against me. It is your fault that I have made nothing of my life.

You neither think nor talk like the man I could bind myself to. As soon as your fear was over--and it was not fear for what threatened me, but for what might happen to you--when the whole thing was past, as far as you were concerned it was exactly as if nothing at all had happened. Exactly as before, I was your little skylark, your doll, which you would in future treat with doubly gentle care, because it was so brittle and fragile. Torvald--it was then it dawned upon me that for eight years I had been living here with a strange man, and had borne him three children--. Oh! I can't bear to think of it! I could tear myself into little bits! I am neither the woman you need of desire.

## **A DOLL'S HOUSE: NORA HELMER**

### **Journal**

When I selected this monologue, I was rather intimidated by the reputation it carries. I feared that I would not do it justice. Nora is such a beloved character; I would hate to represent her poorly. I was drawn to her because she is struggling to find herself, and I very much identify with that as a college kid getting ready to enter into the real world.

Ibsen does such a great job of creating well balanced psychological characters. I loved rereading this classic and finding the nuances he puts in every line. He created a character that is multidimensional. Nora interacts differently with every character. This presented a challenge for me. How does she interact with Torvald, and how is that different from how she interacts with the other characters in the play? She is much more playful with Torvald, but only up until the moment before this monologue begins. I discovered that Nora behaves the same way as any other human. We all talk to different people in different ways. I do not talk to my little sister the same way I would talk to my employer.

The biggest challenge I had was recreating the moment Nora experiences. This moment of epiphany is difficult to capture. I still don't know if I really did it justice. Nora realizes that her whole life has been a scripted play. She makes discovery after discovery about the nature of her past. The numerous disservices bewilder her. As an actress, it is so hard to string together these breakthroughs in an interesting, captivating, and realistic way.

I also wanted to stay true to Ibsen's Realistic tendencies and keep my style consistent with his. To prepare for this, I had to draw a floor plan for the Helmer's living room, so that I could imagine Torvald and Nora living there, and interacting in the space. In realism the set

was very important but because I couldn't put up a whole living room set for the performance, it was important for me to at least know what it would look like, so I would know how to interact with Torvald.

Torvald also plays a crucial part in this piece. This is the first real conversation they have had in eight years of marriage. Nora has to feed off of his reactions. These reactions are what fuel the next epiphany. In the actual play, this is written with little interruptions from Torvald, but is often performed as a monologue by omitting those lines. Even without another actor present, I had to react to his attempts of calming me and shutting me up. I learned the importance of listening this summer studying acting in New York. The Meisner technique relies very heavily on the other person. They emphasize listening to the other person and really hearing what they say. There is no way I could get through this monologue without seeing Torvald's face and hearing his words.

## A DOLL'S HOUSE: NORA HELMER

### Character Analysis

- THE "GIVENS"

- The Play

- What is the name of the play? *A Doll's House*
- Who is the playwright? *Henrik Ibsen*
- When was it written? *1879*
- Who are the other characters in the play, and what is the basic relationship of each to your character?
  - *Torvald Helmer*– Husband. He treats me like a doll.
  - *Krogstad*- A lawyer who went to school with Torvald. He has a subordinate role to him at work. Takes immoral steps to protect his family. He is quick to make Nora suffer.
  - *Mrs. Linde*- Kristine is an old friend of Nora, who comes and catches up on life. We discover that the two women are very different. Nora has lived a privileged lifestyle while Kristine has suffered, yet maintained an optimistic attitude.
  - *Dr. Rank*-He is Torvald's best friend, he is sick. He has always been attracted to Nora.
  - *Bob, Emmy, Ivar*- Nora's children

- The Character

- What is my full name? *Nora Helmer*
- What is my gender? *Female*
- How old am I? *30*
- What is my marital status? *Married not partnership. I am a prop. We are only married in the since that we had a wedding and I am labeled his wife.*
- What is my educational level? *High school level but have been taught by my father to a higher extent.*
- What is my socio-economic status? *Torvald is about to get a promotion which will put us in a higher social bracket. I have no liberty with the money myself, but I know how to manipulate Torvald into giving me more allowance.*
- What do I do for a living?  
*I live off of my husband's money that he makes at the bank. I am solely dependent on my husband for everything including food and shelter. I have to ask him before I buy a dress or hat.*
- How are my looks and personality described by the playwright? *Doll like, gentle, fragile, feminine, soft features, small, like a puppet*
- The Relationships
- Who are the other characters in the scene, and what is:
  - *Torvald is my husband. By husband, I mean he is my caretaker.*

*He doesn't have respect for me. He treats me like a trophy wife. He is typically superior to me. I am his toy.*

- From the writing, who has the power in the scene, and why?
  - *In this scene, I have the power. I find my voice and speak for myself. I threaten to leave, and do leave which puts his status in the community at risk. I belittle him as a husband.*
- How well does each person know me? *Torvald doesn't know me at all.*
  - *Friend knows me well and has lost touch but can sympathize with me.*
  - *Doctor knows my soul. Understands me and wants me to be happy.*
  - *I am just beginning to understand myself and realize I have an identity independent*
- **INTERNAL EXAMINATION**
  - Self Image
    - What do I say about myself that is a self-judgement? *I say that I have just been living hand-to-mouth, existing for the sole purpose of entertaining the men in my family.*
    - How smart am I? *I am reasonably smart. I have a lot of knowledge, but not much wisdom. I have never had to critically think.*
    - Do I like myself? *I thought I did but no. I am now trying to create a person I will like and respect.*
  - Emotion
    - How emotionally stable am I? *I am not very stable. My emotions change with everyone I am with. I conform to the emotional environment I am placed in.*
    - What are the range of *perceived* emotions I experience in the play? *I am proud-hurt-surprised-determined*
  - Spirituality
    - Do I believe in God, or a god? *I believe there is a God. I believe He exists but I don't have the confidence that if I cry out to him that he will answer me. I put more faith in people than God.*
    - Do I practice a particular "religion," and how fervently? *Christianity. I go to church on holidays for show but don't have a personal relationship with God.*
  - Actor Connection–
    - How is the character similar to "me-the-actor"? *She is trying to find out who she is. She wants to please others. She is feminine. She struggles with perfectionism. She doesn't always voice her opinions openly.*
    - How is the character different from "me-the-actor"? *She doesn't seem to have a voice at all. She has been put in a box all of her life. She is married. She is influenced more by her father than her mother. There are more roles in her life for men than women. She is a mother.*

- Growth
  - Who am I / what am I like at the beginning of the play? *Very idealistic, perfect cookie cutter wife, eager to please.*
  - Who am I / what am I like at the end of the play? *I am a mother who has abandoned my family. I am a new individual with a blank canvas and am starting. I don't know what I am saying yet I have found a voice to say it.*
  - When in this growth process does the scene take place? *At the very end, after I have discovered I have been a doll to the people in my life and know I realize I have a hope and future filled with my opinions and choices.*
  - What are the main points of action for your character that lead up to your scene?  
*Torvald change in demeanor when he thought blackmail would make things okay and put me back on the pedestal. He acts as if nothing at all has happened. When moments before he was livid.*
- **IMAGINATION AND/OR OTHER GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES**
  - History
    - How and where did I grow up? *I grew up with my father who taught me his thoughts and opinions and those became my own. I suppressed my own because I knew he wouldn't like it.*
    - What kind of family did I come from? *Moderately wealthy, traditional, politically correct. Mother passed away. I didn't have a mother or wife figure to be my role model. My nanny is my children's nanny as well. She was the closest thing I have to a mother.*
    - What skeletons do I have in my closet? *The loan I take out in my father's name the day after he died.*
  - Pertinent Creativity - What background do I need to create for each scene?
    - What was my "moment before"? *Living room after Torvald right after he found out about the loan and he was furious. When he realizes that it has been take care of everything goes back to normal. I wanted him to see me as a individual and not someone who was perfect.*
    - What are my basic likes and dislikes? Whatever those around me like. *I am like a chameleon*
    - Personality -
    - Am I an introvert or an extrovert? *I act like an introvert because that is my place, but I have extroverted qualities like desiring attention from others.*
    - Am I a "giver" or a "taker"? *Take, I take from people what I want, because you don't get by giving.*
    - How honest am I? *I am not honest because I can manipulate the truth to get what I want. But eventually I speak the truth even if that truth is ugly.*

- What idiosyncrasies/eccentricities do I have? *Soft spoken, delicate gestures, very poised. There is a lot to be seen in the face and eyes.*

- **PRACTICALITIES**

- Goal/Objective
  - What do I want most of all throughout the entire play? I want to know who I am
  - What do I want most of all in the scene at hand? *I want Torvald to save me*
  - What is/are my obstacles for obtaining my goal? *He is not listening to what I am saying. The social laws of the time don't encourage me to step out and be who I want to be. The role of wife during this time does not encourage me to speak up.*
- Motivation
  - Why do I want what I want? *Because there is no more air in the box that they have put me in. I can only live for so long as a puppet. I need air to breathe.*
  - How will achieving my goal drastically improve my life? *It will give me sense of accomplishment and I won't be a character in someone else's story. I will be creating a story – a real life.*
  - How will the lack of achievement destroy me? *If my life stayed the same for another day I would be unable to function or breathe. Each day is another day of digression of how I am losing a part of me. Every day I am more like an aged photograph that fades little by little.*



**THE FACULTY LOUNGE: RHONDA BOOTIN  
MONOLOGUE**

Operator. Operator. I want to make a collect call to Mrs. Laura Jean Bootin, and please hurry. Where? She's in Texas of course—and hurry 'cause I'm in big trouble. The number? Ah...ah the number. Sure I know the number. It's my mother's house. I live there too. At least I did live there up until yesterday. But now I live here—and that's the reason for the trouble. I should never have left home, operator. I thought it was time for me to go out on my own, but..Oh, yes, the number. Her number is...hold on it will come to me. Sure. Good idea. Call information. The city? Ah... I knew it yesterday. I was born there...ah ...Amarillo. Yeah. No, no, not Armadillo—*Amarillo*. Never mind. I remember the number. It's area code eight-oh-six, then six-eight-four, four-eight-three-one. Yep, four-eight-three-one. One I said ONE! Sorry. It's just that my nerves feel like pork fat in a hot skillet...I said like pork fat in a...forget it. just dial the nuber please. It's from her daughter Rhonda Sue Honey Mae Bootin. I'm holding.

**THE FACULTY LOUNGE: Rhonda Bootin  
Journal**

With this character I wanted to make sure that she was different from the other southern characters I had been working on. Because I knew I was going to have trouble differentiating between Rhonda and Sophie, from *Star-Spangled Girl*, I started with the physical and vocal work. These two characters are both bright, young, animated and desperate southern girls. I had to determine how they were going to read differently to the audience. The most obvious solution was to find specific character choices for the two of them. I decided that Rhonda was going to be quirky. I thought physical humor would suit her, so I didn't worry about being "pretty." She is larger than life with her facial expressions, which at times seem to melt into distortion.

To insure she did not read as a complete caricature of Texans, I needed to develop Rhonda's soul a bit. I did this by starting by asking how I relate with her. Immediately I realized that we have shared a very similar experience. I too left my home in Texas and ventured to the north and feared that I would not be accepted in that new community. When I got to New York I did not react as dramatically as Rhonda does, but that is what makes theatre so fun. With this role, I am able to heighten all of the fears I repressed and react irrationally as Rhonda would.

Sharing this experience with Rhonda is both good and bad. It's good, because I understand how she feels, it's bad because I didn't react the same way she does in the same situation. This presented a challenge. *How do I justify her colossal freak out?* I couldn't. So, I

used Stanislavski's magic "as if" technique. This technique asks the actress to use her imagination and put the character in an imaginary situation and envision the character's response. I imagined that all of the teachers were chasing Rhonda with pitch forks and nearly captured her but she escaped into the teacher's lounge and barred the door. She reaches for the phone to make a 911 emergency call, while the teachers are all outside beating the small door with chairs. If she does not complete the call, her fate is doomed.

In reality she is just calling the operator trying to connect a collect call to her mom for moral support, but the stakes have to be so high. She needs to be making this call as if it were her life line. I had to do this to get to her frazzled state.

This monologue is also difficult because I am having a conversation with the operator on the phone. Phone conversations are always challenging because the actor must know both character's parts, and react as if she does not. Phones also present the challenge of not having both hands to work with, and in many cases there is a chord. In this instance the phone was really helpful. The chord wrapping around me mimicked the idea of ropes the teachers might use to wrangle her up in.

## THE FACULTY LOUNGE: Rhonda Bootin

### Character Analysis

- **THE "GIVENS"**
  - The Play
    - What is the name of the play? *The Faculty Lounge*
    - Who is the playwright? *Michael Schulman*
    - When was it written? *1992*
    - What is the basic plot?  
*A young adult from Amarillo Texas has moved to the New England to pursue her teaching career. She is overwhelmed with the northern mentality, and misses the hospitality of home.*
  - The Character
    - What is my full name? *Rhonda Sue Honey Mae Bootin*
    - What is my gender? *Female*
    - How old am I? *23*
    - What is my marital status? *Single, only single person in family*
    - What is my educational level? *Just finished College*
    - What is my socio-economic status? *Not bad not good. Momma always said to do good with watcha had. I don't really have a good understanding of money.*
    - What do I do for a living? *I have always depended on mamma and papa, but now I'm tyin' to make it on my own.*
    - How are my looks and personality described by the playwright? *I'm a natural blonde, and proud of it. I am bubbly and 100% southern.*
  - The Relationships
    - Who are the other characters in the scene, and what is: *Operator*
      - the basic relationship of each to your character: *Operator/stanger*
      - the actual relationship: *She is my lifeline.*
    - From the writing, who has the power in the scene, and why? *She does because she holds my life in her hands, I am desperate for the answers she has.*
- **INTERNAL EXAMINATION**
  - Self Image
    - What do I say about myself throughout the play that is a self-judgement? *I feel like I'm ready to face the world, I am confident (most of the time).*
    - How smart am I? *well in my hometown I have always been seen as a smart one, but here...I don't know.*
    - Do I like myself? *Yes, I like myself. Silly.*
  - Emotion
    - How emotionally stable am I? *I would like to think that I am emotionally*



- at my best friends answers over her shoulder.*
- Pertinent Creativity - What background do I need to create for each scene? *In this scene I pretend that there is a whole herd of teachers coming at me with knives and pitch forks.*
    - What was my “moment before” *In reality, I have just witnessed a conversation between two of my coworkers. They joked about me*
  - Personality
    - Am I an introvert or an extrovert? *Extrovert*
    - Am I a “giver” or a “taker”? *Giver, it’s the hospitable way to be.*
    - How honest am I? *I honest. I might say a white lie or two, but just because I don’t want to hurt someone’s feelings.*
    - What idiosyncracies/eccentricities do I have? *I talk with my hands, but I have a phone in them so that causes some difficulties.*
  - **PRACTICALITIES**
    - Goal/Objective
      - What do I want most of all throughout the entire play? *I want to show everyone that I can take care of myself. I am a big girl.*
      - What do I want most of all in the scene at hand? *I want my Mommy.*
      - What is/are my obstacles for obtaining my goal(s)? *I can’t seem to remember anything. I’m in such a panic I can’t remember my phone number or town or anything.*
    - Motivation
      - Why do I want what I want? *I have been Daddy’s little girl for long enough and I just want to show the world that although I’m blonde and petite I can take on the big city.*
      - How will achieving my goal drastically improve my life? *I feel confident in pursuing other goals.*
      - How will the lack of achievement destroy me? *I will be defeated and never try for things again.*



**LORNA: LORNA  
MONOLOGUE**

When I was three, I could hammer out little tunes on the piano and by five I was playing sonatas and fugues. I was giving recitals by the time I was nine. And math was never a problem, anything that required reasoning. I was into algebra and calculus at a very early age and could run answers down in my head before my teachers figured them out on calculators. It was the same with history—places and dates—I had total recall. Still do.

My childhood was kind of ridiculous. Here I was, this little kid, standing around intellectualizing while other children my age were out having a good time. While other girls my age were playing doctor, I was playing Brahms. And because of it, I was never part of the “in” group, I was an outsider. Intellectual pursuits cut you out of the mainstream and you get branded a *smarty pants*. It wasn’t easy.

To say my life has been an anomaly is a helluva understatement. A lot of the time I feel like some freak of nature, or something. People relate to me strangely, at arm’s length, gingerly, like I’m this piece of fine china. And my relationship with men? Forget it. One sure way to mess it up with men is to come on intellectual. And with me it’s overkill. I can’t keep from shooting off my smart mouth.

It would be great to be below average intelligence; to know nothing; to be able to sit through Hamlet without mouthing all the parts; to be able to enjoy simple pursuits. What was it Sophocles said? “The happiest life consists in ignorance, before you learn to grieve and rejoice.” Oh no! See—see there, I just did it again.

## LORNA: LORNA Journal

Lorna is a monologue written as a monologue. There is no play to put it into context. This leaves a lot of opportunity for creativity on my part. I was able to come up with a whole back story for her, and the situation. I had a lot of fun creating this character from scratch. When I first started working on this monologue, I thought of Meryl Streep and her voice in *The Devil Wears Prada*. She has the air of superiority in it. The placement is a little further back, and airy. I think Miranda Priesly and Lorna are kindred spirits. They both are living the life they dreamed of, but are missing relationships. Miranda (Meryl Streep) uses hand gestures that open but not inviting. I have incorporated some of her specific hand movements that are for this type of character. I re-watched the movie and mimicked Meryl's speech I order to prepare. I borrowed aspects that I liked.

I was also inspired by Herta Muller, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, from Germany. She has a very distinct look. Her hair is cropped short and black. Her face is fair with red lips and dark eye liner. She has glasses that she sometimes uses and sometimes wears on her head. I was able to watch interviews with her. She speaks in German, but I was able to get a good grasp on her mannerisms. She smokes, which is convenient, because by the time I found her, I had already made the decision to make Lorna a smoker. It was good to see someone carry on an interview and smoke at the same time. This also confirmed that it was not outside of Lorna's character to be as smart as she is and commit to such a counter intuitive habit.

## LORNA: LORNA

### Character Analysis

#### THE "GIVENS"

- The Character
  - Who is the author? *Rodger Karshner*
  - What is my full name? *Lorna*
  - What is my gender? *Female*
  - How old am I? *45*
  - What is my marital status? *Single. I hate it. I cannot seem to get myself a man*
  - What is my educational level? *Very Intelligent. Doctorate in two fields: Literature and Music*
  - What is my socio-economic status? *Extremely Wealthy*
  - What do I do for a living? *I write bestselling novels. And one of my novels won prestigious prize*
  - How are my looks and personality described by the playwright? *Looks, very tried. I am put together, but there is something off. Perhaps the makeup too harsh. Slick lines, a bob, red lips. Distinct glasses. Artistic.*
- The Relationships -
  - Who are the other characters in the scene, and what is: *Interviewer*
    - the basic relationship of each to your character: *Stranger, interviewer from TIME;*
    - the actual relationship? *I have read her articles and do not have a lot of respect for her writing.*
- 2. From the writing, who has the power in the scene, and why? *She does, because she catches me off guard with an unexpected question.*

#### INTERNAL EXAMINATION

- Self Image
  - What do I say about myself throughout the play that is a self-judgement? *I am smart, but do not have good relationships with people*
  - How smart am I? *Too smart for my own good*
  - Do I like myself? *I like aspects of my elf, but desire to do away with some of these aspects for the sake of being average, so that I could enjoy simple pursuits.*
- Emotion
  - How emotionally stable am I? *Emotions are something I don't understand and don't always know how to control therefore, I don't like them.*
  - What are the range of perceived emotions I experience in the play? *Unalarmed-vulnerable-defensive-nostalgic*
  - What are my fears, and why? *Never being one with the crowd. Always*



- Motivation
  - Why do I want what I want? *I have lived 45 years without a family or support base, it's about time.*
  - How will achieving my goal drastically improve my life? I hope to love
  - How will the lack of achievement destroy me? I will become a machine

REPLAZED ANIMAL ASINCE  
MONOLOGUE

Don't wipe my tears away that what will make everything clear I'll never be able to get that  
taste out of my mouth, offering of his fingers wrapped around my wrist. Why? You have to



Herta Muller: Nobel Piece Prize Winner

**MISPLACED ANGEL: ASHLIE  
MONOLOGUE**

Don't wipe my tears away like that will make everything okay. I'll never be able to get that taste out of my mouth or feeling of his fingers wrapped around my wrists away. You have no idea what I go through every day. Will you ever experience the feeling of screaming your lungs out and not being heard? I don't think so.

I'm tired of people trying to comfort me on a situation they know nothing about. I can't and don't want to talk about it can't you respect that.

Don't pity me or say you get it. You don't

But everything happens for a reason right? Well, what was my life supposed to teach me?

Cause all I've learned is that I can trust no one. I mean, where was my angel while I cried. So, don't say you know where I'm coming from, because it's apparent to me that sometimes God just doesn't come through.

**MISPLACED ANGEL: ASHLIE**  
**Journal**

Misplaced Angel was hard for me. The writing seemed a bit melodramatic. But what teenager do you know that is not a bit overdramatic. Never mind the fact that she has just experienced something awful. In this piece it was really important for me to see the reactions of the people I was talking to. This is very Meisnerian. The Meisner technique emphasizes the partner: what are they doing? I had to envision every action these girls did, and that justified my next action. In essence, they pinched me and I pinched back.

Because the material is a bit heavy, the transition between this monologue and others is a little difficult. There is no time for Strasberg's method of preparation and emotional recall. This is why I chose the Meisner technique. I can get a strong response immediately because I am responding to something that is happening rather than something that happened long ago.

The voice was also hard for me to find for Ashlie. I had a lot of liberty but not much direction. I think she needs to be a little rough around the edges. She has not been brought up by the most intelligent people, and has just had a rough life, so I thought that should be represented in her voice and movements. She is not polished.

One thing that really seemed to help was tension. I kept tension starting in my legs and moving up through my entire body. At moments there would be little explosions of energy that would burst out. This gave me something tangible to fight against.

## MISPLACED ANGEL: ASHLIE

### Character Analysis

- **THE "GIVENS"**

- The Play

- What is the name of the play? *Misplaced Angel*
- Who is the playwright? *Casey Macauley*
- When was it written? *1989*
- What is the basic plot? *Girl is trying to cope with being raped by employer.*

- The Character

- What is my full name? *Ashlie*
- What is my gender? *Female*
- How old am I? *17*
- What is my marital status? *Single, had a two year boyfriend, but broke up with him after the incident*
- What is my educational level? *High School, Planning to go to Community College*
- What is my socio-economic status? *Lower mid-class*
- What do I do for a living? *Work in a stock store, like CostCo.*
- How are my looks and personality described by the playwright? *Looks slightly older than 17. Angry hurt.*

- The Relationships

- Who are the other characters in the scene, and what is: Coworkers
  - the basic relationship of each to your character: *Coworkers, not friends*
  - the actual relationship? *They have talked about me before, and now they are trying to "comfort me" when they have no idea what it's like. Like I'm reacting too strongly*
- From the writing, who has the power in the scene, and why? *I do. I finally take a stand for myself*
- What is specifically said about me by each of the other characters?
  - How well does *each* person know me? *They know me based on what they hear in town*
  - Can I trust *each* person's opinion of me? *Hell no.*
- What do I specifically say about other characters in the play? *I say that they are wrong, and ignorant. Bigots.*

- **INTERNAL EXAMINATION**

- Self Image

- What do I say about myself throughout the play that is a self-judgment? *I have a lot of insecurities about my weight and looks.*
- How smart am I? *I have a smart wit which implies I'm intelligent but I don't*

- always apply this to my school assignments. I can get by without trying too hard.*
- Do I like myself? *No, are you kidding. Does anybody?*
  - Emotion
    - How emotionally stable am I? *Not so stable right now. I was just raped, I think that's excusable okay?*
    - What are the range of perceived emotions I experience in the play? *Hurt-defensive-angry-numb*
    - What are my fears, and why? *Being abused again, it's already happened. It's not a great thing to go through.*
  - Spirituality
    - Do I believe in God, or a god? *I used to.*
    - Do I practice a particular "religion," and how fervently (expound)? *Well not anymore, My mom used to make me. But I have recently found how mind-numbingly artificial it all is.*
  - Actor Connection
    - How is the character similar to "me-the-actor"? *We both are young. Both a little melodramatic at times. Understand the dislike of empathy.*
    - How is the character different from "me-the-actor"? *I don't understand the pain she is going through. I don't know what it's like to be so lonely. I believe in god. I have never been abused.*
  - Growth
    - Who am I / what am I like at the beginning of the play? *A mildly upset teenager*
    - Who am I / what am I like at the end of the play? *A seriously hurt confused girl*
    - When in this growth process does the scene take place? *Towards the end. She is giving up.*
  - **IMAGINATION AND/OR OTHER GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES**
    - History
      - How and where did I grow up? *In a nasty apartment with my mother*
      - What kind of family did I come from? *It was nice and cheery, what do you think? My dad left us for a hot little thing. And my mom drank herself to sleep. She didn't exactly have the best reputation around town. If you know what I mean.*
      - What skeletons do I have in my closet? *Let's just say that this wasn't the first time. I'll give you a clue: I wasn't sad when my dad left. I would keep my door unlocked at night.*
    - Pertinent Creativity
      - What was my "moment before" *These girls are practically defending the jerk, and I am about to explode. This has been going on for weeks, this is the last straw.*

- What are my basic likes and dislikes? *I don't like posers. I like ice-cream and muffins with crumbly tops. I don't like men. I don't like talking on the phone.*
  - Personality
    - Am I an introvert or an extrovert? *Introvert; I don't want people knowing my business*
    - Am I a "giver" or a "taker"? *I am a taker, but I give a lot too.*
    - How honest am I? *I am as honest as I need to be.*
    - What idiosyncrasies/eccentricities do I have? *I fidget, I don't stand up straight, I have a wide stance.*
- **PRACTICALITIES**
  - Goal/Objective
    - What do I want most of all throughout the entire play (super-objective)? *I want to be understood*
    - What do I want most of all in the scene at hand? *I want them to be on my side.*
    - What is/are my obstacles for obtaining my goal(s)? *There screwed up point of view.*
  - Motivation
    - Why do I want what I want? *Everybody thinks I was asking for it, but I didn't.*
    - How will achieving my goal drastically improve my life? *Justice is nice*
    - How will the lack of achievement destroy me? *My whole self is valued in my integrity, and if no one believes me, then I might as well die.*



**OF MICE AND MEN: CURLY'S WIFE  
MONOLOGUE**

'Nother time, I met a guy an' he was in pitures. Went out to the Riverside Dance Palace with him. He says he was gonna put me in the movies. Says I was a natural. Soon's he got back to Hollywood he was gonna write me 'bout it. I never got that letter. I always thought my old lady stole it! I ask'd her 'bout it too, an' she says no. So, um... I married Curley. Met him out at the Riverside Dance Palace that same night. Are you listenin'? I ain't told this to nobody before. And maybe I oughtn't to. I don't like Curley. He ain't a nice fella. I could've been in the movies. Cuz this guy says I was a natural.

## OF MICE AND MEN: CURLY'S WIFE Journal

I love this monologue. It has such a heart. I found myself saying it over and over in my head. It has such a musical quality. I just really felt for Curly's Wife. She is one of the smallest characters in the show, but the audience really empathizes for her. I wanted to make sure I represented her charm well. She just seems to have this captivating glow, and that is not something that can be taught by a technique. I just put myself out there and hoped people would want to buy it. It was important for me to create an environment with this piece. From the first breath, I want people to be sucked in, like I was the first time I read it.

I love her because she honestly believes she was capable of these dreams, and had to in order to deal with her mundane life. She is so optimistic, even despite the Great Depression.

I had difficulty with her dialect. The dialogue is written with a southern accent, but they are in California. I did not know where she came from. After doing some research, I still couldn't find an exact location so I watched a snippet of the film to get an idea of how they dealt with the dialect. To my assurance it was not far off from what I was already doing. This one seemed to come pretty naturally, I didn't slave over it. I enjoyed working on it, and discovering the little nuances that were built into the monologue.

This is the monologue I used as an Irene Ryan competitor, so I spent a lot more time on this piece than some of the others. This gave me an extra confidence in presenting it, that worked well with the character.

## OF MICE AND MEN: CURLY'S WIFE

### Character Analysis

- THE "GIVENS"
  - The Play
    - What is the name of the play? *Of Mice and Men*
    - Who is the playwright? *John Steinbeck*
    - When was it written? *1937*
    - What is the basic plot?  
*Two field workers in California during the Great Depression. An intelligent and cynical man, and Lennie Small, an ironically-named man of large stature but limited mental abilities. They eventually come to work for Curly, who is my character's husband. Lennie kills Curly's wife accidentally because he has a love of soft things, including her hair.*
    - Who are the other characters in the play, and what is the basic relationship of each to your character  
*Curly-husband*  
*Lennie-husband's employee*
  - The Character
    - What is my full name? *Curly's Wife: only character in play without full name*
    - What is my gender? *Female*
    - How old am I? *29*
    - What is my marital status? *Unhappily married*
    - What is my educational level? *Little education*
    - What is my socio-economic status? *Not wealthy, but better off than those around me. Poor*
    - What do I do for a living? *Live off of money that Curly makes on the Ranch*
    - How are my looks and personality described by the playwright? *I am attractive (petite, dark soft curly hair), seductive, feisty, mysterious. Identity found in looks.*
  - The Relationships
    - Who are the other characters in the scene, and what is:
      - the basic relationship of each to your character: *I don't know Lennie. I know of him, but he is off limits to me. He is working for my husband, but my husband 'protects' me from everyone.*
      - the actual relationship: *I am attracted to him. Not sexually, but magnetically. I am intrigued. I am trying to develop a friendship with him. It turns out that our relationship turns into a deadly one. I am his prey, he is the predator. But that is just the result, the process is the opposite. I act like the predator, and he plays the prey.*

- From the writing, who has the power in the scene, *and why?* *I have the power in the beginning of the scene. I find him in the barn with a dead animal (another "bad thing"). I catch him. I am his boss's wife. By the end of the scene he has the power because of my natural naivety and his natural brute strength.*
- **INTERNAL EXAMINATION**
  - Self Image
    - What do I say about myself throughout the play that is a self-judgement? *I say that I could have done more with my life. I have done nothing, but have big dreams, and still believe that I could have achieved them.*
    - How smart am I? *Not intelligent. I have never had to get by on my knowledge. Brains haven't mattered. I don't see this as a bad thing. I have other virtues, intelligence just was never an option as an attractive gentle woman.*
    - Do I like myself? *I would never admit it but no. I like what I could have been but not what I have become. I never lived up to what potential I thought I had.*
  - Emotion
    - How emotionally stable am I? *Not stable at all. I'm a bit delusional. Keep on living by living in past*
    - What are the range of perceived emotions I experience in the play? *Fear, Hope; sadness, loneliness*
    - What are my fears, and why? *Fear of not being enough, losing beauty, not being desired.*
  - Spirituality
    - Do I believe in God, or a god? *Yes, but a very narrow view. I don't think about God much only in a traditional since. Not relational. Because it is the right thing. Only go to God when things are too big to handle.*
    - Do I practice a particular "religion," and how fervently? *I don't read the Bible regularly. Attend church on big religious holidays*
  - Actor Connection
    - How is the character similar to "me-the-actor"? *We both are very feminine. I can relate with many of her insecurities and ambitions and desires. Wanting to be noticed, desired. These are things that every woman can relate with. Neither one of us are complete ingénue, we are not polished to perfection only wish we were.*
    - How is the character different from "me-the-actor"? *I am not delusional. I realize when I have insecurities and do not feed them. I have an identity outside of my looks and how men perceive me. I have a relationship with God. I don't dwell on past mistakes. I don't settle.*
  - Growth
    - Who am I / what am I like at the beginning of the play? *I am not mentioned*

*until near the end. I am seen as a picture perfect woman. Mysterious, desirable*

- *Who am I / what am I like at the end of the play? By the end I seem a bit more tangible. And in fact become obtained, and die.*
- *When in this growth process does the scene take place? Near the end, moments before my unforeseen death. I am seen as someone who can be obtained.*

- **IMAGINATION AND/OR OTHER GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES**

- **History**
  - *How and where did I grow up? In the south, with controlling mother, father not around.*
  - *What kind of family did I come from? Richer town in south, then we suddenly lost money. Dad left.*
  - *What skeletons do I have in my closet? Dad left family. I lie. I don't like myself. I don't know myself or my husband.*
- **Pertinent Creativity - What background do I need to create for each scene?**
  - **What was my "moment before"**
    - *Where was I and what had I been doing just before I start talking to the person I'm speaking to? Talking with Curly, we had an argument.*
  - *What are my basic likes and dislikes? I like long baths. I don't like my husband. I don't like being told what to do. I like flowers and rabbits.*
- **Personality**
  - *Am I an introvert or an extrovert? Extrovert, but seldom get the chance to be*
  - *Am I a "giver" or a "taker"? Taker*
  - *What idiosyncrasies/eccentricities do I have? I play with my hair. I am flirtatious. I have my charming southern belle tendencies.*

- **PRACTICALITIES**

- **Goal/Objective**
  - *What do I want most of all throughout the entire play (super-objective)? I want to be loved*
  - *What do I want most of all in the scene at hand? I wanting him to tell be I was good enough to be an actress.*
  - *What is/are my obstacles for obtaining my goal(s)? Lennie is not listening, If Curly catches me I'm in trouble.*
- **Motivation**
  - *Why do I want what I want? I want to be an actress so that I can be important and everyone will love me.*
  - *How will achieving my goal drastically improve my life? I will know I'm loved*
  - *How will the lack of achievement destroy me? I will die.*



**OLEANNA: CAROL  
MONOLOGUE**

Why do you hate me? Because you think me wrong? No. Because I have, you think, power over you. Listen to me. Listen to me, Professor. It is the power that you hate. So deeply that, that any atmosphere of freed discussion is impossible. It's not unlikely. It's impossible. Isn't it? Now. The thing which you find so cruel is the selfsame process of selection I, and my group, go through every day of our lives. In admittance to school. In our tests, in our class rankings. Is it fair? I can't tell you. But, if it is fair. Or even if it is unfortunate but necessary for us, then, by God, so must it be for you.

You write of your responsibility to the young. Treat us with respect, and that will show you your responsibility. You write that education is just hazing. But we worked to get to this school. And some of us. Overcame prejudices. Economic, sexual, you cannot begin to imagine. And endured humiliations I pray that you and those you love never will encounter. To gain admittance here. To pursue that same dream of security you pursue. We, who, who are, at any moment, in danger of being deprived of it. By the administration. By the teachers. By you. By, say, one low grade that keeps us from graduate school; by one, say, one capricious or inventive answer on our parts, which perhaps, you don't find so amusing. Now you know, do you see? What it is to be subject to such power. Who do you think I am? To come here and be taken in by a smile. You little yapping fool. You think I want revenge. I WANT UNDERSTANDING.

**OLEANNA: CAROL**  
**Journal**

Attempting Mamet was another scary thing for me. So much of what he communicates is not in the line, but rather what he chooses not to say. Subtext was so important for this monologue. This is another one of those roles that I have heard a lot about, and didn't want to royally mess up. Carol is an interesting girl. There are some questions about her character that you must answer before you play the role: does she really think the professor made sexual advances, or is she saying that just to use it as ammo?

I took a very internal approach to Carol. I didn't weigh myself down trying to figure out voice and movement for her. I thought it was more crucial to figure out what she was doing in every line, and why she was doing it.

It was difficult to play this as a monologue because the professor is such a crucial part. This was yet another instance when I used Meisner to help me fill in the gaps. I did this by being sure I could see everything John was doing: when he leaned into me, when he looked away, everything down to an eyebrow lift. These things determine my reactions to him. Mamet is so specific, I need a reason to stammer on a word, or to take an extra pause on another. That pause might be because he frightened me.

This scene is all about having power. I had to explore different ways one displays power. I don't see myself as a powerful person, so this presented a whole lot of challenges. I'm still working on this aspect. I played with the natural power women have over men a lot, but wish I would have found other levels.

## Oleanna: Carol Character Analysis

- THE “GIVENS”
  - The Play
    - What is the name of the play? *Oleanna*
    - Who is the playwright? *David Mamet*
    - When was it written? *1992*
    - What is the basic plot?  
*A student is going into the professor office to find out why her grade is low and through the course of actions she either believes or fabricates that her professor made sexual advances towards her. She set out to keep him from getting tenure as a professor.*
    - Who are the other characters in the play, and what is the basic relationship of each to your character?
      - *John-Her professor*
  - The Character
    - What is my full name? *Carol*
    - What is my gender? *Female*
    - How old am I? *22*
    - What is my marital status *Single*
    - What is my educational level (given or inferred)? *Bachelor candidate needing to pass this class.*
    - What is my socio-economic status (given or inferred)? *Not poverty, lower middle class, broken home, had to fight to get to my way to college.*
    - What do I do for a living (how do I, or does someone else, take care of my physical needs—given or inferred)? *student, work at the library*
    - How are my looks and personality described by the playwright (in “stage directions,” not within the lines of the play)?  
*Scholastic, not polished. Typical smart college girl. Very straight forward. She has words but doesn't know how to articulate them but does by the end of the play. She is very determined. Head strong.*
  - The Relationships
    - Who are the other characters in the scene, and what is:
      - the basic relationship of each to your character: *Professor.*
      - the actual relationship *He is my authoritative figure. I feel like he is trying to talk above us and I don't like him.*
    - The writing, who has the power in the scene, and why?  
*Me. I actually ask my professor how it feels to be subjected to losing all his dreams and security.*
    - How well does each person know me? *Not at all. He thinks he knows me and where I come from but doesn't know me at all.*

- **INTERNAL EXAMINATION**

- Self Image
  - How smart am I? *Very smart. I don't take knowledge at face value. I try to apply it to life. I think about what people say and don't take it at face value. I am very inquisitive.*
  - Do I like myself? *Yes. I like myself. I know what I have accomplished and I measure my worth by my accomplishments and feel like I have been successful.*
- Emotion
  - How emotionally stable am I? *I am emotionally very stable. At least I think so.*
  - What are the range of perceived emotions I experience in the play? *I go from being timid and inquisitive to determined and proud at my ability to have been defeated.*
  - What are my fears, and why? *That I will never be enough. I have all this potential on the inside but it will never break through.*
- Spirituality
  - Do I believe in God, or a god (expound)? *No. I rely on my own strength and do not acknowledge him in my life. I believe his is an idea not a practical part of my life.*
  - Do I practice a particular "religion," and how fervently? *I have researched them, considered them, but decided against them.*
- Actor Connection
  - How is the character similar to "me-the-actor"? *Student. We both want to feel like we are enough. We are both struggling to reach our potential. Ambitious. Youthful I can't lose attitude.*
  - How is the character different from "me-the-actor"? *She places all her identity in what she can accomplish and I find my identity in Christ because I know I know I will never be enough on my own. She always feels like she needs to prove something. She is bolder than I am.*
- Growth
  - Who am I / what am I like at the beginning of the play? *I am a student who is struggling to find what she wants to say. I am trying to understand the class.*
  - Who am I / what am I like at the end of the play? *I am a student that has figured out how to say what she needs to say and didn't realize my learning would be more about humanity that actually what happens in the classroom. Sometimes life lessons are the hardest to learn but the most important to our future decision making.*
  - When in this growth process does the scene take place? *At my highest moment of feeling victorious right before the fall.*
  - What are the main points of action for your character that lead up to your

scene? *The professor belittles her intelligence, her womanhood. He didn't hold any punches back.*

- **IMAGINATION AND/OR OTHER GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES**

- History

- How and where did I grow up? *In an apartment with my mom. Not quite suburbia. Never comfortable.*
    - What kind of family did I come from? *Broken home. Because my mom was a single mom she didn't have time to nurture me so I learned to be independent. I got where I am and what I have by getting it myself.*
    - What skeletons do I have in my closet? *My background. I am at a prestigious school but I don't have the lineage that people would expect and I don't know that I even believe I deserve to be here.*

- Personality

- Am I an introvert or an extrovert? *Introvert in classroom setting*
    - Am I a "giver" or a "taker"? *Taker*
    - How honest am I? *I am honest to other specifically when it comes to other especially when pointing out faults. But not always honest with myself. I can't admit that I don't like who I am.*
    - What idiosyncracies/eccentricities do I have? *My shoulders are curled forward. I hide behind glasses. Strength? Unsteady breathing*

- **PRACTICALITIES**

- Goal/Objective

- What do I want most of all throughout the entire play (super-objective)? *Wants to be accepted and welcomed and wants to feel "good enough".*
    - What do I want most of all in the scene at hand? *Understanding*
    - What is/are my obstacles for obtaining my goal(s)? *The grade my professor gave me. It will prevent me from going to grad school. It is a road block to keep me from achieving the next accolade.*

- Motivation

- Why do I want what I want? *I want someone to study me and understand me as diligently as I have studied the world.*
    - How will achieving my goal drastically improve my life? *I will have another accomplishment to keep me going. I won't fail. In my mind I can't fail.*
    - How will the lack of achievement destroy me? *My whole identity is found in grades and accolades and achievement. To fail will be a huge blow emotionally.*



**STAR-SPANGLED GIRL: SOPHIE RAUSCHMEYER  
MONOLOGUE**

Mr. Cornell, Ah have tried to be neighborly, Ah have tried to be friendly, and Ah have tried to be cordial...Ah don't know what it is that you're tryin' to be. That first night Ah was appreciative that you carried mah trunk up the stairs...The fact that it slipped and fell flights and smashed to pieces was not your fault..Ah didn't even mind that personal message you painted n the stairs. Ah thought it was crazy, but sorta sweet.

However, things have now gone too far..Ah cannot accept gifts from a man Ah hardly know...Especially canned goods. And I read your little note. Ah can guess the gist of it even thought Ah don't speak Italian. This has got to stop, Mr. Cornell. Ah can do very well without you leavin' little chocolate-almond Hershey bars in mah mailbox—they melted yesterday, and now Ah got three gooey letters from home with nuts in 'em—and Ah can do without you sneakin' into may room after Ah go to work and paintin' mah balcony without tellin' about it. Ah stepped out there yesterday and mah slippers are still glued to the floor. And Ah can do without you tying big bottles of eau de cologne to mah cat's tail. The poor thing kept swishin' it yesterday and nearly beat herself to death...

And most of all, Ah can certainly do without you watchin' me get on the bus every day through that high-powered telescope. You got me so nervous the other day Ah got on the wrong but. In short, Mr. Cornell, and I don't want to have to say this again, leave me ay-lone!

**STAR-SPANGLED GIRL: SOPHIE RAUSCHMEYER**  
**Journal**

Sophie is another very southern girl. This was one of my self-induced challenges. I selected several people from similar geographic areas with similar socio-economic backgrounds specifically for the purpose of being sure I could create distinct character differences between them.

The first time I read *Star-Spangled Girl*, I was in New York. There was a girl I had met just a few days before who was Sophie. I immediately thought of how this text would sound coming out of her mouth. I was able to spend more time with her and pick up on a few characteristics that I thought would cross over to Sophie well. The girl I met used her hands with her fingers spread out. She also used her body to punctuate her sentences with little pops. Her voice was perfect for this as well. The rhythm of her voice ebbed and flowed. It was predictable in the fact that it was unpredictable. She would be talking 100 words per second and then she could spend 30 seconds drawing out a single syllable in a word. I wanted to incorporate aspects of this into *Star-Spangled Girl*, because it would be humorous and I thought it would compliment Simon's writing.

I enjoyed the energy of this monologue. Sophie is so fed up, but she can not stand the idea of being altogether rude to Mr. Cornell; she does not want to be mean. It was fun to go through her journey and get to a point where she is less concerned with being polite and more concerned with being heard. I experienced a similar feeling this summer. Although it was not as directly as she experienced it, I definitely learned that politeness is not always heard.

## THE STAR-SPANGLED GIRL: SOPHIE RAUCHMEYER

### Character Analysis

- **THE "GIVENS"**

- The Play

- What is the name of the play? *Star-Spangled Girl*
- Who is the playwright? *Neil Simon*
- When was it written? *1970*
- What is the basic plot? *Olympic swimmer, Sophie, from Florida comes to California for training. Two LA newspaper editors, Norman (Mr. Cornell) and Mr. Karlson are doing everything they can to keep paper from going under. Norman falls head over heels for Amy and gets her fired from her day job, and impairs his own ability to write.*

- The Character

- What is my full name? *Sophie Rauchmeyer*
- What is my gender? *Female*
- How old am I? *20*
- What is my marital status? *Single*
- What is my educational level? *High School, some college*
- What is my socio-economic status? *My family has some money but most of it goes towards my training. I need a job to cover my financial obligations while in LA.*
- What do I do for a living? *I am an Olympic Swimmer, I work at an office and my parents take up most of my finances.*
- How are my looks and personality described by the playwright? *Athletic, very southern. Sweet, pretty. Determined.*

- The Relationships -

- Who are the other characters in the scene, and what is: *Norman Cornell- the writer of the paper*

- the basic relationship of each to your character: *Neighbors*

- the actual relationship? *He really really likes me, and I really really don't like him. He is nerdy and stalker like.*

- 2. From the writing, who has the power in the scene, and why? *I do because I am scolding him, he has had power previously and I am regaining it.*

- **INTERNAL EXAMINATION**

- Self Image

- Do I like myself (expound)? *Yes, I am confident in my abilities and enjoy competition, and being challenged*

- Emotion

- How emotionally stable am I (expound)? *Yes. There is nothing to suggest other wise. In this scene towards the end she is very passionate, but not unstable*
    - What are the range of *perceived* emotions I experience in the play?
    - Hopeful-annoyed-in love-fed up
  - Spirituality
    - Do I believe in God, or a god (expound)? *Yes, I believe in the Christian God.*
    - Do I practice a particular “religion,” and how fervently (expound)? *I have a good relationship with God. Go to church seek relationship with him. Depend on him.*
  - Actor Connection–
    - How is the character similar to “me-the-actor”? *We are both young, in college, both determined, from the south. Have similar morals and standards.*
    - How is the character different from “me-the-actor”? *I am not an athlete. I am not as forward as she is.*
- **IMAGINATION AND/OR OTHER GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES**
  - History
    - How and where did I grow up? *In the south, then moved to Florida*
    - What kind of family did I come from? *Loving supportive family.*
  - Pertinent Creativity - What background do I need to create for each scene?
    - *What was my “moment before” I have just come out from apartment, where I found the many “gifts” Mr. Cornell left for me. I did not appreciate them at all. He has gone too far.*
    - What are my basic likes and dislikes (given or inferred)? *I don’t like people sneaking into my apartment when I have left. I don’t like being smothered.*
  - Personality -
    - Am I an introvert or an extrovert (given or inferred)? *Extrovert*
    - How honest am I (to others, and to myself–given or inferred)? *I am pretty honest. I seek to be honest with everyone.*
    - What idiosyncrasies/eccentricities do I have (given or inferred)? *I talk with my hands, I go towards others.*
- **PRACTICALITIES**
  - Goal/Objective
    - What do I want most of all throughout the entire play (super-objective)? *I want a sense of independence*
    - What do I want most of all in the scene at hand? *I want Mr. Cornell to leave me alone*
    - What is/are my obstacles for obtaining my goal(s)? *Mr. Cornell made me*

*lose my job, preventing me from gaining financial independence. And he is not leaving me alone....he is soooooo persistent*

○ Motivation

- Why do I want what I want?

*I want independence the same reason every 20-21 year old does...I'm growing up and do not want to remain accountable to my parents forever, and as long as I rest on their financial support I cannot actually be freed from that responsibility. In regards to wanting Mr. Cornell to go away; I'm tired of fall of his surprises that backfire on me. All of my daily habits are ruined by his trying to impress me.*

- How will achieving my goal drastically improve my life? *I can live my life my way peacefully*
- How will the lack of achievement destroy me? *Mr. Cornell will completely suffocate me with his affection.*



**THE DEATH OF A MINER: MARY ALICE HAGER  
SCENE**

**Jack:** Damn fool thing. Might as well just get a new one..Mary Al—now don't she look sweet?

**Mary Alice:** Mmmm, Jack?

**Jack:** Hi Sweetheart. Whatta you dreamin about?

**Mary Alice:** Lord! I just sat down and before you know, I was asleep.

**Jack:** Now don't get up, don't get up. Mmm that's nice.

**Mary Alice:** Mmm. Oh no! Supper...

**Jack:** Now you just lie there. . .this is nice. Better still. . .why don't you come lie down with me  
in the bedroom. . .hmmm?

**Mary Alice:** I've gotta get supper made. . . it's late. Where's Sallie?

**Jack:** She's around. Let's go in there first.

**Mary Alice:** Jack, not now. I gotta get supper. Gotta wash my hair. . .have to wash out some  
clothes for work. . . and I'm makin. .

**Jack:** Hell, Mary Alice!

**Mary Alice:**. . .and I'm makin' curtains for Sallie's room tonight.

**Jack:** Sallie's room. I ain't even put the roof on it yet. Come on sweetheart. We'll go make love  
and be nice and snug for a while and then I'll whip up some eggs and sausages or  
something. Or we can all go down to Jake's.

**Mary Alice:** That's real sweet, honey, but not now. Want some tea? Or some coffee?

**Mary Alice:** Jack. . . let go.

**Jack:** Mmmm. . . you feel good.

**Mary Alice:** Jack. . Jack. . Jack. . . I said let go! No just stop it!

**Jack:** What is the matter with you?

**Mary Alice:** What's the matter with you, grabbin me like that?

**Jack:** I was tryin to kiss you. Oh forget it.

**Mary Alice:** Honey. . . I . . . I'm just—

**Jack:** Why the hell did you marry me anyway?

**Mary Alice:** Jack. . .

**Jack:** That's what I would like to know. Huh? Why the hell did you marry me?

**Mary Alice:** Honey, I just told you—

**Jack:** I can't figure out why you bothered. You already got a job, so you don't need me to support you. You already got a kid. And now you don't even need me for a little lovmakin. Go away, Jack. I'm tired, Jack. I gotta make curtains, Jack. I gotta go to a union meetin, Jack. I gotta wash some string beans, Jack. Hell! What am I supposed to be doin in this marriage anyway? Damn it!

**Mary Alice:** Don't be stupid! You really are startin to sound like every other dumb hillbilly I ever met, you know that! I'm just tired! I didn't say I didn't want to be married! I didn't say I didn't need you! I'm just tired. I am just a little edgy from work and I didn't want you to paw me like—

**Jack:** Paw you? Now I'm some kinda animal—

**Mary Alice:** Jack, listen to me. Let's not fight. Jack, I love you. I married you cause I love you. . . cause you're different.

**Jack:** DIFFERENT!

**Mary Alice:** Oh, nothing I say is right when you get like this.

**Jack:** Different! Yeah. That's the problem! That's what everyone else thinks, too! Hell, I don't need to be told what's. . .

**Mary Alice:** You're different because you understand.

**Jack:** I don't want to understand. I don't want to be different! I want us to be like everyone else! Hell, I'm goin where I'm appreciated for bein. . .bein. .

**Mary Alice:** Bein what?

**Jack:** ME! Instead of some cog in the big Mary Alice wheel.

**Mary Alice:** SO GO! I'm sick of hearin about it! I'm sick of tryin to explain it to you! I'm sick of you!

**Jack:** There! I KNEW IT. Hell. . .

**Mary Alice:** GO! GO!

## **THE DEATH OF A MINER: MARY ALICE HAGER**

### **Journal**

I absolutely love this play. It is about a miner, Mary Alice, who dies in a mining accident in the first moving scene. The rest of the play deals with different scenarios from the weeks before her accident. Because the ending is known from the beginning, it makes each moment something to cherish: every quarrel and every "make up." This scene starts out sweet but turns into a rather hurtful argument between two individuals who love each other in a passionate way. The scene is all about love, and how wonderfully painful it is. People love and hate simultaneously. In the heat of the moment, they say hurtful things out of response the other's previous action. Both parties end up devastated that their spouse, the person they love most in the world, could hurt them so deliberately.

I love the raw quality to this couple. They just exist, nothing complicated. They merely exist and take every moment as it comes. I envy this attribute; it was fun to exist with them for a short while.

I adored working with Greg. He challenges me so much. As we came across problems he was so proactive in finding solutions. It made me realize I am good at identifying problems in scenes, but not as quick to find a working alternative. Greg lets his soul shine through his character, and becomes so vulnerable. I don't know if I do this, but I know this is something I strive to accomplish in my acting.

The process happened pretty organically. The most difficult aspect was the physical contact these two people have. They are married, and Greg and I are obviously not. We have worked together a little bit before, but nothing that required this amount of trust. The first

rehearsal we sat knee to knee and looked at one another in the eyes. This is a very vulnerable thing to do with an individual but it broke down social barriers and we were able to communicate with each other in a personal way. We had one rehearsal that was completely awkward. We just laughed at everything we tried. This was really beneficial for me. It made me feel better that it was weird for him too. But it was also insightful. People are funny when they are trying to be suave and seductive, so in the scene I was sure that my character laughed at his attempts as well. The next rehearsals went much better after having started on such a light note. We felt much more comfortable with each other and were able to get some really good work done because of a trust that was built during the first few rehearsals.

## THE DEATH OF A MINER: MARY ALICE HAGER

### Character Analysis

- **THE "GIVENS"**

- The Play

- What is the name of the play? *The Death of a Miner*
- Who is the playwright? *Paula Cizmar*
- When was it written? *1982*
- What is the basic plot? *A mother, wife, and worker, Mary Alice dies in a mining accident. Leaving survivors, Jack, her husband, and Sallie's her daughter from a previous marriage. The play goes in and out of time shifting between scenes before and after the accident.*

- The Character

- What is my name? *Mary Alice Hager*
- What is my gender? *Female*
- How old am I? *29*
- What is my marital status? *Married. I love Jack so much. We fight sometimes, but I love him. We got married pretty quick after Sallie's daddy and I split.*
- What is my educational level? *I finished high school. I want Sallie to go to college.*
- What is my socio-economic status? *I make more money than my husband. (He don't like that) But we aren't rich or nothin'*
- What do I do for a living? *I'm a coal miner. It's a rough job.*
- How are my looks and personality described? *I am passionate. I fight for what I know to be true. I love with my whole being. I used to be real pretty, but these mines steal my beauty.*

- The Relationships

- Who are the other characters in the scene, and what is:
  - the basic relationship of each to your character: *Jack is my second husband*
  - the actual? *I love my husband, he just doesn't understand that I'm am tired. I work all day, to come home to more work. I don't have time for everything right now.*

- the actual?

- **INTERNAL EXAMINATION**

- Self Image

- What do I say about myself *throughout the play* that is a self-judgment? *I say that I'm tired. I am. I talk about how much I love my Sallie and Jack. I say that I work hard.*
- How smart am I? *I'm not real smart. But brains don't mean everything.*
- Do I like myself? *I do most of the time. But sometimes, I really feel like I let my family down. I just can't do it all.*

- Emotion
  - How emotionally stable am I? *Most of the time I'm pretty stable, but Jack has got me pretty upset right now.*
  - What is the range of perceived emotions I experience in the scene? *Exhausted-content-rushed-hurt-disappointed-mad-furious-hurt*
  - What are my fears? *I fear that I won't be able to everything everybody needs me to be. I not as strong as the men at work, I am not home enough for Sallie, and I can't satisfy husband. I don't really want to fail in all areas of my life.*
- Spirituality
  - Do I believe in God, or a god? *Yes*
  - Do I practice a particular "religion," and how fervently? *I'm a simple mind. I don't understand all that preacher talk. But I know God's up there helping me out.*
- Actor Connection
  - How is the character similar to "me-the-actor"? *I know what it is like to be completely overwhelmed and not feel like anything I'm doing is right.*
  - How is the character different from "me-the-actor"? *I am not married. I have never had to do heavy manual labor. I don't have a good grip on the pressures of being wife, and mother.*
- Growth
  - Who am I / what am I like at the beginning of the play? *I at the end of the story reflecting and able to appreciate all of the small moment I had taken for granted.*
  - Who am I / what am I like at the end of the play? *I am more at peace, being able to reflect and realize that all of the work and hardships were worth the people I experienced them with.*
- **IMAGINATION AND/OR OTHER GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES**
  - History
    - How and where did I grow up? *In the hills of Appalachia. My father was a miner. I met my first husband when I was real young. That wasn't the smartest thing I've ever done. But I got Sallie.*
    - Pertinent Creativity - What background do I need to create for this scene?
    - What was my "moment before"
      - *I was going to the unfinished part of the house to spend some time with Jack before I needed to start dinner, but he was busy. I sat down and fell asleep.*
      - How long had I been there? *About 30 min*
    - What are my basic likes and dislike? *I like green. I like being domestic. I love sewing. I like earl gray tea. I don't like when my husband gets rough. I don't like being late. I don't like feeling like a failure.*

- Personality
  - Am I an introvert or an extrovert? *When I was younger I was a lot more outgoing. But now, I am pretty reserved.*
  - Am I a “giver” or a “taker? Giver, I’d give anything to see my family smile.
  - How honest am I am honest. I may not be good at many things. But honesty I do well.
  - What idiosyncrasies/eccentricities do I have? *My body is exhausted and worn. I hunch. My mouth is prominent. I bite my lip and sometimes talk out of the side of it.*
- PRACTICALITIES
  - Goal/Objective
    - What do I want most of all throughout the entire play? *I want to be the best mother and wife I can.*
    - What do I want most of all in the scene at hand? *I want to get my errands done, I already wasted time, by sleeping and I need to get things done. I want Jack to realize how awful he is bein’. He is being so rough, and doesn’t even apologize for it. But despite this, I want more than anything at this moment for him to know I love him.*
    - What is/are my obstacles for obtaining my goal? *He is being a jerk. He is saying the nasty things and I didn’t ask to get in a fight. He is not listening*
  - Motivation
    - Why do I want what I want? *I have already failed as a wife once. I refuse to let that happen again.*
    - How will achieving my goal drastically improve my life? *I will be assured that I am a good person. I will have peace. I might actually be able to sleep at normal times.*
    - How will the lack of achievement destroy me? *It means all my fears have come true. I’m nothin’ I’m a failure yet again. I failed to communicate to him how much I love him, and it means all my work is in vain and void.*



**A DELICATE BALANCE: JULIA  
SCENE**

**Julia:** Do you think I like it? Do you?

**Agnes:** Julia Please!

**Julia:** DO YOU? Do you think I enjoy it?

**Agnes:** Julia!

**Julia:** Do you think it gives me some kind of. . . martyr's pleasure? Do you?

**Agnes:** THERE IS A HOUSEFULL OF PEOPLE!

**Julia:** Yes! What *about* that! I come home: my room is full of Harry and Edna. I have no place to put my things. . .

**Agnes:** They'll go to Tobias' room, he'll sleep with me. . .

**Julia:** That'll be different

**Agnes:** What did you say, young lady?

**Julia:** I SAID THAT WILL BE NICE.

**Agnes:** You did *not* say any such thing. You said. . .

**Julia:** What are they doing here? Don't they have a house any more? Has the market gone bust without my knowing it? I may have been out of touch, but. . .

**Agnes:** Just. . . let it be.

**Julia:** Why are they here?

**Agnes:** They're . . . frightened. Haven't you heard of it?

**Julia:** They're what?

**Agnes:** They're frightened. Now, will you let it be!

**Julia:** What are they frightened of? Harry and *Edna*? Frightened?

**Agnes:** I don't . . . I don't know yet

**Julia:** Well, haven't you *talked* to them about it? I mean, for God's sake. . .

**Agnes:** No. I haven't.

**Julia:** What have they done; stayed locked up in their room all day—my room—not come down? Locked in?

**Agnes:** Yes.

**Julia:** Yes what?

**Agnes:** Yes, they have stayed up in their room all day.

**Julia:** My room.

**Agnes:** Your room. Now, let it be.

**Julia:** No. . . .

**Agnes:** Please?

**Julia:** I'm sorry Mother, sorry for screeching.

**Agnes:** I am too old—as I remember—to remember what it is like to be a daughter, if my poor parents, in their separate heavens, will forgive me, but I am sure it is simpler than being a mother.

**Julia:** I said I was sorry.

**Agnes:** I don't recall if I ever asked my poor mother that. I do wish sometimes that I had been born a man.

**Julia:** Not so hot.

**Agnes:** Their concerns are so simple: money and death—making ends meet until they meet the end. If they knew what it was like. . . to be a wife, a mother, a lover, a homemaker, a nurse, a hostess, an agitator, a pacifier, a truth-teller, a deceiver. . .

**Julia:** Da-da-dee; da-da-da

**Agnes:** There is a book out, I believe, a new one by one of the thirty million psychiatrists practicing in this land of ours, a book which opines that the sexes are reversing, or coming to resemble each other too much, at any rate. It is a book to be read and disbelieved, for it disturbs our sense of well-being. If the book is right, and I suspect it is then I would be not better off as a man. . . would I?

**Julia:** No, not at all.

**Agnes:** Oh! There is nowhere to rest the weary head. . . or whatever. How are you, my Darling?

**Julia:** What?

**Agnes:** How are you, my darling?

**Julia:** How is your darling? Well, I was trying to tell you before you shut me up with Harry and Edna hiding upstairs, and. . .

**Agnes:** ALL RIGHT!

**Julia:** I will try to tell you, Mother—once again—before you've turned into a man. . .

**Agnes:** I shall try to hear you out, but if I feel my voice changing, in the middle of you . . . rant, you will have to forgive my male prerogative, if I become uncomfortable, look at my watch, or jibble the change in my pocket. . . Where do you think you're going?

**Julia:** . . . you go straight to hell. . .

**A DELICATE BALANCE: JULIA**  
**Journal**

I was excited about the prospect of working with Mary Handiboe. I thought about doing a scene from *'Night Mother*, but decided instead on this scene from *A Delicate Balance*. I have never worked on an Albee piece before. It presented a lot of challenges. The script is difficult to bring off the page. Reading it I really liked the scene, but I had a difficult time portraying what I liked about the scene in the performance. Albee has an interesting way of working with dialogue. It reminds me of Mamet in the sense that what is not on the page is often more important than what is.

I also struggled to find the arch in the scene. There is a segment towards the end that drastically changes mood and style. I just want to ask Albee what he was thinking. However, it is there, and it is my job to discern the reasoning behind it and use it to positively contribute to the scene as a whole.

Mary was really fun to work with in this capacity. I am accustomed to working under her direction rather than as a fellow actor. It was nice to work with someone who really is a mother. At Ouachita the actors are all college age, and so I am always working with my peers, who come to the table with very similar life experiences as me. It was nice to work with someone who has seen more of the world and has real experience. I enjoyed learning from her and the presence she has on stage. She just seems at home—very comfortable. Sometimes, I feel exposed when I am performing, I hope to eventually acquire the confidence she exudes.

## A DELICATE BALANCE: JULIA

### Character Analysis

- **THE “GIVENS”**

- The Play

- What is the name of the play? *A Delicate Balance*
- Who is the playwright? *Edward Albee*
- When was it written? *1966*
- What is the basic plot?

*Julia, the daughter of Agnes and Tobias, has come home after an argument with her husband. She has divorced three times, and is probably about to divorce again. When she arrives home, she finds Harry and Edna, neighbors of her parents, are in her bedroom. Apparently they are frightened. But no one knows of what.*

- The Character

- What is my name? *Julia*
- What is my gender? *Female*
- How old am I? *36, but stuck in adolescence*
- What is my marital status? *Married. Not happy. I have been married three other times. If this one falls apart, it is apparent that it is my fault.*
- What is my educational level? *Associates Degree*
- What is my socio-economic status? *My parents have money. I don't have a lot. My husband does most of the financial stuff.*
- What do I do for a living? *I am a secretary for a stuck up hot shot attorney.*
- How are my looks and personality described? *I am described as angular. I tease a lot. Say what I want to say in the form of a joke; I never answer anything directly. A lot is mentioned about the divorces I have been “collecting.”*

- The Relationships

- Who are the other characters in the scene, and what is:
  - the basic relationship of each to your character: *My mother*
  - the actual? *I love her, but she is not being what I need right now. She is going off about men, and how wonderful they are, while I'm going through a divorce. I don't think men are so hot right now.*

- **INTERNAL EXAMINATION**

- Self Image

- What do I say about myself *throughout the play* that is a self-judgment? *I believe I am the only sane person in my family. I don't like being the girl that comes home every year because of another failed marriage.*
- How smart am I? *I could have applied myself a little more in school. I started out at a pretty good college but finished up at a community*



- What idiosyncrasies/eccentricities do I have? *I am angular. Abrasive. I don't treat my mom well. I am comfortable in their home. Too comfortable.*
- **PRACTICALITIES**
  - Goal/Objective
    - What do I want most of all throughout the entire play? *I want to be told that there is nothing wrong with me.*
    - What do I want most of all in the scene at hand? *I want to be able to go to my room and cry my head off.*
  - Motivation
    - Why do I want what I want? *I have just ruined my fourth marriage. Enough said. My world is crumbling. This means I have failed. To them it's old news, but this was supposed to be the one that worked.*
    - How will achieving my goal drastically improve my life? *I will feel like I'm not a failure of a person.*
    - How will the lack of achievement destroy me? *I will be completely alone. If my parents don't welcome me who will. I don't think any guy is going to want me after four divorces.*



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