

FOR ALL THE SAINTS

AND FOUR MORE READERS THEATER PLAYLETS

by Gordon C. Bennett



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For All The Saints
(and four more Readers Theatre
playlets)

by GORDON C. BENNETT

READER'S THEATRE PRODUCTION NOTES

Although you may dispense with the scripts and memorize the material, these pieces are designed to be given as Reader's Theatre.

Reader's Theatre is a simplified form of drama in which the scripts are held by the performers and the attempt is made to stimulate the audience's imagination by reading the lines evocatively, without suggesting that the scene is taking place on stage. In effect, the scene is projected into the auditors' minds by effective oral interpretation. Reader's Theatre has well been called "Theatre of the Mind."

This is not to say that Reader's Theatre cannot be visually interesting; but usually there is a very limited amount of stage movement, little or no costuming, and sketchy, suggestive scenery at best. The readers use body language to support what they are saying but they tend to remain in fixed positions, standing or sitting on stools or chairs.

In Reader's Theatre we generally do not enter or leave the stage. The conventions used to indicate when a reader enters and leaves a scene are to turn toward/away from the audience, or, if desired, to remain facing the audience throughout the performance but to simply drop the head when "leaving" the imaginary scene. The readers must rehearse strenuously and learn to read their lines very freely, with a great deal of eye contact between them and each other or, when appropriate, with the audience.

It is fun to experiment with different stage positions in rehearsing Reader's Theatre. For this reason we have not given a floor plan or detailed stage directions for presenting each of these pieces; we are leaving most of that up to the discretion — and the creative imagination — of the director. There is no one right way to stage any of them. The main thing is to rehearse thoroughly, make it a lively performance — and enjoy!

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For All The Saints
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 Reader's Theatre for Three

We're highlighting one of this era's little-known saints. The name Millicent is fictitious but the character is modelled on a real person and based on an actual incident. Using three Readers, the Narrator may be male or female; it is important that the others, a Man and Woman, can sing well together. The Woman as Millicent must communicate a warm, expansive nature, a generous spirit indeed! Millicent was black: If a black Reader is not available, use a white person — reading her lines with a black urban dialect, if possible. However, the character must sound genuine!

- 1 **MAN & WOMAN:** *(Singing a cappella)*
2 "For all the saints, who from their labors
3 rest;
4 Who thee by faith before the world
5 confessed,
6 Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest,
7 Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia!" * (See page 8)
8 *(Then they hum under the Narrator...)*
9 **NARRATOR:** We all know the story of the little boy who
10 saw the Apostle Peter framed in a stained-
11 glass window and said, "Oh, I know! A
12 saint is a person that the light shines
13 through!" But we get the idea from the
14 stained-glass windows and the great hymns
15 of the church that saints are long-dead,
16 long-ago heroes of faith, outstanding to
17 be sure, but rather musty and certainly
18 not modern. Are there still saints today?
19 **MAN & WOMAN:** *(Singing)*
20 "Thou wast their rock, their fortress and
21 their might;
22 Thou, Lord, their captain in the well-
23 fought fight;
24 Thou, in the darkness drear, their one true
25 light,
26 Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia!" '
27 *(And they hum under...)*
28 **NARRATOR:** The older versions of the Bible have Paul
29 greeting the saints at Corinth and
30 Philippi and so on, as if all the believers
31 were saints. How does that sound, Saint
32 _____? *(Using Man's real first name)*
33 **MAN:** It sounds strange, Saint _____.
34 **NARRATOR:** The newer versions translate it "people of
35 God." All God's people are saints, _____.

1 MAN: But I always thought saints were special.
 2 NARRATOR: All God's people are special.
 3 MAN: Yes, but —
 4 NARRATOR: I know what you mean. We like to think
 5 that saints are exceptionally special. Really
 6 “in” with God. Outstanding Christians.
 7 Like Saint Millicent.
 8 WOMAN: What a woman she was! Tall, brown, and
 9 heavyset, with arms that could give you a
 10 bear-hug you'd never forget, and a smile
 11 as broad as a barn door. She worked on a
 12 farm in Georgia until she was 20, then
 13 she caught a fast freight North to find her
 14 fortune, or get married. Or both.
 15 MAN: She didn't find her fortune, and the man
 16 she married was her second mistake. He
 17 turned to drink, when he wasn't pushing
 18 drugs in West Philadelphia. And then he
 19 split, leaving her with five children below
 20 the age of ten.
 21 NARRATOR: Millicent cared about those kids, and she
 22 cared for them; despite working at least
 23 40 hours a week as a scrub lady, mainly
 24 washing floors in the rich folks' offices on
 25 City Line Avenue.
 26 WOMAN: She spent a lot of time on her knees. Maybe
 27 that's where she learned to pray.
 28 NARRATOR: Weekends she took in wash, to help pay
 29 for her children's food and clothing and
 30 education. Two of them needed private
 31 tutoring. Somehow she paid the bills.
 32 WOMAN: She also made sure they got to church on
 33 Sunday, and she drilled them on right and
 34 wrong. The community loved Millicent.
 35 Her behavior was Christlike, everyone said.

1 **MAN:** The strongest language that passed her
2 lips was an occasional surprised,
3 **WOMAN:** “Saints preserve us!”
4 **MAN:** Two of the five kids went to college, and
5 were graduated. One of them went on to
6 medical school and became a doctor. All
7 five of them worked hard and made a
8 fair income. Four of them married fine
9 men and women.
10 **NARRATOR:** But one of the girls didn’t. Her husband
11 ran off with a barmaid, leaving Millicent’s
12 daughter with three kids after three-and-a-
13 half years of marriage. They moved in with
14 Millicent, and since the mother had to work
15 all day, the task of raising the kids fell
16 pretty much to Millicent. She had already
17 raised one family and now, when she had
18 thought she could relax and enjoy life,
19 she found herself raising another.
20 **MAN:** Millicent never complained. She raised
21 her grandchildren as she had raised her
22 own: honest and true. She took them to
23 church and taught them to respect God and
24 try to love everyone, which isn’t easy in
25 West Philadelphia. And Millicent still
26 found time to take in washing in order
27 to save something for her grandchildren’s
28 education. These kids are college-bound
29 she said. And she still found her way to
30 church to work on White Cross packages
31 or help organize the food pantry; and
32 nobody took more time to visit the sick
33 than Millicent. People loved her . . .
34 **WOMAN:** And their respect grew after that awful
35 night. *(Pause. Change position?)*

1 NARRATOR: The awful night we're talking about was
2 three nights before Christmas.

3 MAN: It was a bitter cold night. It had been
4 snowing, and there was a chill brisk wind
5 whipping the flakes about the pavement.

6 WOMAN: At 11:00 P.M. Millicent finished wrapping
7 some Christmas presents, made sure the
8 grandchildren were still tucked in, and got
9 herself ready for bed. The children's mother
10 was late coming in, she was working
11 overtime, and Millicent waited up for her.
12 When she finally came in it was ten past
13 midnight.

14 NARRATOR: By 12:30 everyone in the row house was
15 asleep. Or half-asleep.

16 MAN: Millicent was sleeping fitfully. The wind
17 rattled her windowpane and she was
18 thinking about Christmas. Were there
19 enough gifts to go around?

20 WOMAN: When she heard the noise she assumed it
21 was a gust of wind. But when she opened
22 her eyes there was the dark shape at the
23 foot of her bed, a shape that turned out
24 to be a man.

25 NARRATOR: She wanted to scream but she couldn't!

26 MAN: He had a knife. (*Use mime here*)

27 WOMAN: It had a long thin blade that gleamed
28 faintly in the moonlight. He held the
29 knife to her throat. (*Man mimes this with*
30 *the Woman*)

31 NARRATOR: When he spoke, it was a mean voice; it
32 had the sound of a buzz-saw in it.

33 MAN: Don't make a sound — not one sound!

34 NARRATOR: Part of her said no, don't talk. Another
35 part was telling Millicent to scream as loud

1 as she could, wake the neighborhood!
 2 Instead a whispered,
 3 WOMAN: Saints preserve us!
 4 NARRATOR: Left her lips. And then . . .
 5 WOMAN: What . . . do you want?
 6 MAN: Not a sound, I said, or I'll slit your fat
 7 throat! I want your money, stupid — all
 8 the money you have — and anything else
 9 that's valuable. And if you have any
 10 Christmas presents I'll send a truck for
 11 'em!
 12 NARRATOR: He laughed grimly at his own joke.
 13 WOMAN: Don't do this . . . please!
 14 MAN: Come on, where's the cash stashed?
 15 WOMAN: Well, I have some money I've been saving
 16 for Christmas . . . and some money I've
 17 been saving for my grandchildren's
 18 education —
 19 MAN: I don't want to hear about it —
 20 WOMAN: I meant to take it to the bank today.
 21 MAN: *(Fiercely)* Where is it?
 22 WOMAN: I can't give it to you. I love them too much.
 23 MAN: *(Shocked and angry)* I don't believe it!
 24 Listen to me, old lady — are you gonna
 25 risk your life for a sock full of money?
 26 I'll rip you open! *(He is still holding her*
 27 *tightly, with his knife to her throat.)*
 28 WOMAN: Lord, please — don't let him do it, Lord —
 29 MAN: Shut up!
 30 WOMAN: Lord, you know this is something this man
 31 is going to regret for the rest of his life!
 32 Please keep him from doing this thing,
 33 Lord —
 34 MAN: I said, shut up!
 35 WOMAN: He'll carry it on his conscience, Lord. He's

1 got some good in him, deep down, it's
 2 there because you put it there, Lord, he
 3 was made in your image —
 4 MAN: You bitch —
 5 WOMAN: Lord, I don't care about my life, I'm pretty
 6 well used up, but this man's young, he's
 7 got so much to live for! Lord, I pray, keep
 8 him from doing this deed!
 9 MAN: Lady, you're weird! You dingbat! *(There*
 10 *is a pause, and he removes his knife.)*
 11 Christ, I don't want your money!
 12 WOMAN: You said Christ . . .
 13 MAN: So?
 14 WOMAN: That's the first step. Open your life to
 15 him. Give Christ a chance to scrub you
 16 clean and begin again.
 17 MAN: Oh, Jesus! Now you want to convert me!
 18 *(He turns away, quickly.)*
 19 NARRATOR: In a minute he was gone, down the fire
 20 escape and into the night. Millicent lay in
 21 bed for ten minutes, trembling and
 22 thanking God for his grace, and praying
 23 for the young man. How she hoped that
 24 his "Oh Jesus" really was a prayer!
 25 WOMAN: When her heartrate returned to normal,
 26 Millicent got up and put on her slippers
 27 and went downstairs. There she made
 28 hot chocolate and shared her story with
 29 her daughter and grandchildren, who now
 30 were awake. And they all hugged each
 31 other and gave God thanks.
 32 *(The Man and Woman hum the first note,*
 33 *and then softly "La-La" the hymn, "For*
 34 *All The Saints" under...)*
 35 NARRATOR: You talk about saints: Peter and Paul and

1 Lydia and Dorcas ... and of course St. Francis
 2 and Joan of Arc and the others who were
 3 canonized, which doesn't mean they were
 4 shot from guns although a few of them
 5 were shot by guns . . . and it's still hard
 6 to figure out who in our times would be
 7 considered a saint . . . but there are some
 8 people who have learned to pray without
 9 ceasing. And I think that Saint Millicent
 10 heads the list.

11 MAN & WOMAN: *(Singing)*
 12 "O blest communion, fellowship divine!
 13 We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
 14 Yet all are one in Thee for all are thine."
 15 *(Hold a hum on one note under ...)*

16 NARRATOR: According to Paul, all God's people are
 17 saints, and potentially, we're all Peters
 18 and Pauls . . . and Millicents!

19 MAN & WOMAN: *(Singing)*
 20 "Al-le-lu-ia! Al-le-lu-ia!"

21 NARRATOR: Amen.

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* "For All the Saints" is a familiar hymn that appears in most traditional Protestant hymnbooks. The hymn is listed as written by William Walsham How, 1823-1897, with the tune "SINE NOMINE," by Ralph Vaughn Williams, b. 1872.

PROBES:

1. Are all the believers saints or just potential saints? How would you feel about being canonized?
2. Stop a minute to think of the outstanding Christians in our world today. Whom do you admire the most, and why? Make a list, perhaps, and share it with the group, giving consideration, of course, to some of the people you know locally.
3. Are the Millicents too good for this world? Whence cometh their faith?
4. "We have not ceased to pray for you," Paul wrote the Colossians (1:9), and he told the Thessalonians to "pray constantly." (1 Thess. 5:17, RSV) What does this mean? Are we to take it literally?

The Girl Whose Fame Was Mud

(1 man and 4 women)

Reader's Theatre for Five

You may present this piece very simply, with the Readers in fixed positions until the last sequence. Tell it lightly, as a fairy tale. It would be nice if the twins were little girls who looked alike, but if they don't look alike they should at least stand very close together, giggle a lot, and read in unison! Maude should look just a bit older. The Man and Woman are also Narrators. One clever twist would be to secure a wheelbarrow and put a few bricks in it, ready to bring on towards the end.

"This piece previously appeared, in slightly different form, in promotional material for the America for Christ Offering 1979, American Baptist Churches. Permission granted for use in this packet by the ABC."

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- 1 MAN: You've all heard about King Midas, whose touch
2 turned everything to gold. But what about Maude
3 Manners, whose touch turned everything to mud?
4 Maude was a nice girl, although her mother
5 worried about her round shoulders and kept
6 telling her to . . .
- 7 WOMAN: Walk tall, dear; walk tall!
- 8 MAN: Maude lived in one of those newfangled glass
9 houses that look like they'll shatter in a high
10 wind. Maude's Dad was a writer who worked at
11 home in a study with a big red rug on the floor
12 and piles of books lining the walls. He also kept
13 house reasonably well and cooked some delicious
14 meals.
- 15 WOMAN: Maude's Mom was a railroad conductor. She would
16 drag herself home in the evening, looking
17 exhausted and throwing her conductor's black
18 hat over the coat tree. Maude's Dad would ease
19 her into an easy chair and bring her some hot
20 coffee and wipe her face with a damp towel and,
21 pretending to be her, would announce:
- 22 MAN: *(Like a train conductor)* Supper! Pork chops and
23 lima beans, next station-stop! All aboard!
- 24 WOMAN: And they would laugh and laugh.
- 25 MAN: They were a happy family . . .
- 26 WOMAN: Until Maude acquired the unhappy talent of
27 turning everything she touched into mud. Maude's
28 younger sisters brought the news home from
29 school one warm June day. They were twins,
30 snub-nosed and giggly.
- 31 TWINS: Miss Morrison's keeping Maude in detention,
32 WOMAN: They announced.
- 33 TWINS: She's been tracking mud all over the classroom!
- 34 MAN: That's odd!
- 35 WOMAN: Maude's always been a neat and tidy girl.

1 MAN: Mud, you say?
 2 TWINS: Yes, mud! Damp, dirty, slimy, gooey mud!
 3 WOMAN: The twins giggled at the thought of brown
 4 footprints all over Miss Morrison's classroom.
 5 Just then Maude appeared on the threshold. She
 6 threw the front door open and just stood there,
 7 grinning a little, her cap askew, her pants legs
 8 dirty, her hands and feet dripping with something.
 9 Her parents pounced.
 10 MAN: Why were you kept after school, young lady?
 11 And what's that dripping from your hands?
 12 MAUDE: It's nothing,
 13 WOMAN: Said Maude.
 14 MAUDE: Just mud,
 15 WOMAN: She said. And the twins snickered and giggled.
 16 MAUDE: I have something important to tell you.
 17 Everything I touch turns to mud. Look!
 18 MAN: She walked across the hall floor to get to the
 19 living room. Where her six-inch feet had trod
 20 they left their footprints, already brown, half-
 21 filling with water. The twins leaned over to feel
 22 the impressions in the carpet.
 23 TWINS: Mud!
 24 MAN: They cried. Maude put a hand on the arm of a
 25 chair. The arm turned brown and drops dripped
 26 to the carpet, coloring it dark. The twins danced
 27 and pranced.
 28 TWINS: Mud!
 29 MAN: They cried.
 30 WOMAN: Maude Manners, you stop that this instant!
 31 MAUDE: I can't, Mommy. I'm a mud-machine!
 32 TWINS: (*Chanting*) She's a mud-machine, a mud-machine!
 33 MAN: When did all this begin?
 34 MAUDE: When my teacher asked us to make a wish upon
 35 a star. My friends all made a wish but theirs

1 didn't come true. Mine did. I guess my star's
 2 bigger.
 3 MAN: But why did you wish for mud?
 4 MAUDE: I didn't ask for mud, Daddy. I just asked for the
 5 power to make something useful.
 6 WOMAN: Something went wrong, dear. Mud is not useful.
 7 TWINS: Oh yes it is!
 8 MAN: And the twins made up a song . . .
 9 TWINS: *(Rhythmically) (Melody is unimportant, make up*
 10 *your own.)*
 11 Cool clean mud . . .
 12 It brings the flowers to bud,
 13 It's good to paste on your nose,
 14 Or wriggle between your toes.
 15 And so we like it a lot,
 16 Especially when it gets hot . . .
 17 Cool clean mud!
 18 MAN: Maude's parents still didn't think mud was very
 19 useful, so they confined her to the back yard
 20 where she couldn't muddy up the glass house.
 21 They put up their big blue camp tent and brought
 22 her clothing and books and meals, and she lived
 23 outside for several days. Maude was unhappy.
 24 MAUDE: I wanted something useful and you gave me the
 25 power to make mud!
 26 MAN: She told her star.
 27 *(Shift positions, with the Twins leaving the stage.*
 28 *Now the Man takes a different role in the story.*
 29 *Add more physical action . . .)*
 30 WOMAN: One day, as Maude was walking down Elm Street,
 31 trying to keep from touching things like mailboxes
 32 and fences and people — for they all turned to
 33 mud when she touched them — a gentleman
 34 stooped down behind Maude and examined her
 35 footprints.

- 1 MAN: My goodness!
- 2 WOMAN: He cried.
- 3 MAN: That's good solid mud there! Young lady, you should
- 4 know that you have a rare gift!
- 5 MAUDE: A gift, sir?
- 6 MAN: The gift of making mud as good as any of the clay
- 7 I use in my kilns.
- 8 MAUDE: What's a kiln?
- 9 MAN: It's a very hot furnace where we bake pieces of
- 10 mud to make bricks. I'd like to buy your mud if
- 11 you'll come by our factory and walk over the
- 12 dirt we have. We'll pay well. And your name'll be
- 13 mud from now on. Synonymous. We'll advertise
- 14 our bricks with the phrase, "Mud by Maude."
- 15 How's that? Will you come?
- 16 *(Maude nods, and they shake on it. Now the*
- 17 *twins wheel in the wheelbarrow, if one is handy,*
- 18 *with bricks in it.)*
- 19 WOMAN: She would.
- 20 MAN: She did!
- 21 WOMAN: And it was good clay.
- 22 MAN: And Maude earned a good salary making bricks.
- 23 WOMAN: More importantly, Maude's bricks went into the
- 24 building of schools and churches and zoos and
- 25 museums and homes . . .
- 26 MAN: Until the magic touch wore off and she couldn't
- 27 make mud any more. Only mischief.
- 28 *(Maude puts a book on her head and, balancing,*
- 29 *walks across stage.)*
- 30 Maude's mother was glad she'd found a way to
- 31 help Maude walk tall and . . .
- 32 WOMAN: Keep your shoulders back, dear!
- 33 MAN: Maude was very happy that something she had
- 34 thought useless turned out to be a wonderful gift.
- 35

PROBES:

1. This may seem like a children's story with little in it for adults . . . but is there a gem of insight here? A significant idea, perhaps?
2. In the Bible the potter and his creation are used as a metaphor for God and his creations. (Isaiah 45:9-13; 64:8, Jeremiah 18.) Explore this as you read the scriptures and think about the various uses of clay.
3. Have you found an ability that on the surface seemed useless or had only nuisance value, but later turned out to have value as a redeemed gift? Share your experience with others.

My Husband, The Public Speaker

(1 man and 1 woman)

Reader's Theatre for Two

Here we have a married couple , sharing a personal story with the audience. Keep it informal and lighthearted. The piece is based on a story told often by Dr. Anthony Campolo of Eastern College.

1 **SHE:** Hello, there. This is my husband, the public speaker.
2 He lectures all over the place and speaks at Christian
3 conferences. Preaches a lot too. He's good at it.
4 **HE:** Aw shucks, dear!
5 **SHE:** He was born with a silver tongue in his mouth.
6 **HE:** Please!
7 **SHE:** But the real reason we're here is to tell you a story.
8 **HE:** It's about a car.
9 **SHE:** It was ancient.
10 **HE:** She knows how old it was.
11 **SHE:** That's not very flattering.
12 **HE:** Joking, dear.
13 **SHE:** It was ancient. That automobile was so rickety you'd
14 have thought it would never make its next appointment.
15 My husband's always on his way to one appointment
16 or another. We don't see much of him at home — but
17 we love him anyway!
18 **HE:** This is my wife, the organizer. She knows me better
19 than I know myself!
20 **SHE:** Sure. I have to get him to his appointments and make
21 sure he remembers which group he's talking to when.
22 And then I run about in his wake cleaning up spills.
23 And it's a big wake because he's in great demand! Like
24 aspirin or underwear.
25 **HE:** You could choose different examples, dear! The point
26 is, that Ford was really decrepit. The only reason it
27 wasn't a Model T is that one day the rumble seat fell
28 out on the road.
29 **SHE:** Now that's pushing it, dear.
30 **HE:** We did push it a time or two. Anyway . . . one night I
31 was in a strange city waiting for the next flight home
32 when I found myself in a conference session listening
33 to a missionary speaker. He talked about the work in
34 Africa and how God was shedding light in those dark
35 jungle villages and people were coming to know the

- 1 Lord and other people were constructing sturdy concrete
 2 houses for them which were a lot better than grass huts
 3 and . . . and I was so impressed it brought tears to my
 4 ears — eyes, I mean. In those days I was young and
 5 impressionable! And so when he called for pledges to
 6 support the mission program I wrote on a pledge card,
 7 “I’ll give everything I make from speaking engagements
 8 as long as my car holds up!”
- 9 SHE: We didn’t think of that as a long time.
- 10 HE: To coin a phrase, that car was on its last wheels!
- 11 SHE: It had more rattles than a baby’s toy shop.
- 12 HE: The tires were bald. All four of them, and the spare
 13 too. So when I turned in that pledge card I really
 14 didn’t expect I’d be giving all that much to the mission
 15 program. We couldn’t afford to give all that much!
- 16 SHE: But that car held on!
- 17 HE: It had more lives than a cat.
- 18 SHE: It went bouncing along from one appointment to
 19 another, and my hubby was making some handsome
 20 fees . . .
- 21 HE: Lecturing two or three times a month and preaching
 22 at five or six churches . . .
- 23 SHE: And that old Ford lasted and lasted . . .
- 24 HE: And I was giving everything to missions, including some
 25 money we thought we needed for groceries and
 26 clothing! Well, I did everything I could to hasten that
 27 car’s demise. I didn’t change the tires or the oil and I
 28 would deliberately run over potholes on the way home
 29 from an engagement. But nothing worked.
- 30 SHE: He even brought in a priest to say the last rites over
 31 the car.
- 32 HE: One hooded figure bending over another.
- 33 SHE: But that car wouldn’t take the hint! Three years after
 34 the last rites it was still running right!
- 35 HE: The tires had the threads showing through too. Well,

1 one night I was called up to North Jersey to preach
2 and so I left home an hour earlier than I would normally
3 because I thought for sure I'd have to change at least
4 one tire on that trip. But nothing happened on the way
5 up, so I went into church. There was a supper first,
6 before the service. I toyed with my tuna casserole,
7 thinking apprehensive thoughts about the trip home
8 later that evening.

9 SHE: But while he was eating or preaching . . .

10 HE: Some time during the evening . . .

11 SHE: A kindly deacon happened to notice his bald tires and...

12 HE: When I came out of the church I discovered that those
13 fine people had replaced my bald tires with a set of
14 brand new ones!

15 SHE: The deacon, it happened, owned a tire outlet. He
16 wouldn't take any thanks.

17 HE: I wasn't about to thank him, so it's a good thing he
18 wouldn't take any. Very gentle and self-effacing, he
19 was.

20 SHE: So retiring. (*They groan*)

21 HE: Anyway, I learned my lesson.

22 SHE: And what is the lesson, dear?

23 HE: Don't make rash promises. God has big ears!

24 SHE: Stop joking. What's the real lesson? The audience
25 wants to know.

26 HE: They look intelligent. Let them figure it out.

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PROBES:

1. What is the real lesson?
2. How does it apply to your life?
3. Have you ever made a promise to God? Did you keep your promise? Did that interchange strengthen your faith in some way?
4. Someone said that "We need to be careful what we pray. We may be taken at our words." Do you ever find yourself praying things you don't mean? How can this be corrected?

The Toaster-Oven
(2 men and 1 woman or 3 men)
Reader's Theatre for Three

Now we're updating the call to Moses and the voice from the toaster-oven is, of course the voice of God. This Reader could be unseen, with his voice heard over the P. A. system (I did say "His." Most congregations aren't to the point of accepting a female voice for God). Or, you can stage it as formal Reader's Theatre, with or without reading stands, and all three voices placed up front. At any rate, play it for laughs without losing the central thrust of the story, same as before, the notion that God expects obedience from those he fingers for special work in this world.

- 1 **NARRATOR:** It was a Monday morning, and the first thing
 2 that caught his eye was an English muffin.
 3 Eddie Monroe split it deftly with a knife,
 4 spattered it with butter, and stuck it in the
 5 toaster-oven. The next thing he knew there
 6 was smoke pouring out of both sides of the
 7 appliance. He switched on the exhaust fan
 8 and flipped off the toaster. Then he took the
 9 muffin out and looked it over carefully. It
 10 wasn't burned. In fact, it wasn't even hot. But
 11 the toaster-oven was still smoking. It wasn't
 12 flooding the kitchen with smoke, the fan was
 13 clearing it nicely, but there was a steady stream
 14 of smoke. And then he heard the voice.
 15 Awesome!
- 16 **VOICE:** Take off your shoe, Monroe. The kitchen floor
 17 is holy ground.
- 18 **MONROE:** Holy ground! What? Who said that?
- 19 **VOICE:** Kitchens in general are sacred because that is
 20 where the food is prepared which is to nourish
 21 the body to serve me and your fellow man, or
 22 person if you like. But this kitchen is more
 23 sacred at this moment than usual. As for the
 24 bedroom slippers . . . leave 'em on. I know the
 25 floor's cold.
- 26 **MONROE:** Well, hose me down! A toaster talking!
 27 Wonders never cease. Who are you, anyhow,
 28 as if I didn't know?
- 29 **VOICE:** I'm that I'm.
- 30 **MONROE:** I'm? Did you say "I'm?" God wouldn't speak
 31 in contractions.
- 32 **VOICE:** Oh no?
- 33 **NARRATOR:** The voice roared, shaking every piece of china
 34 in the house.
- 35 **VOICE:** I'm going to say whatever I'm going to say and

1 you're not telling me what I'm doing. Is that
 2 clear, Moses?

3 MONROE: Yes, sure. But, I knew you had the wrong
 4 house. My name's Monroe.

5 VOICE: I forgot momentarily. You know I have a lot of
 6 things to remember.

7 MONROE: But why the toaster? Why not —

8 VOICE: A burning bush? For you, living in a
 9 condominium with never a look outdoors —
 10 the computer whiz who wouldn't know a
 11 pansy from a peony? You don't notice when
 12 the leaves come out on the trees. To get your
 13 attention I have to use a machine. I thought
 14 about burning out your terminal but I didn't
 15 want to embarrass you at work.

16 MONROE: Much appreciated. But why breakfast, and me
 17 with hardly any sleep and an Excedrin headache?

18 VOICE: You should lay off the drugs, Monroe. Also
 19 the booze. But let's get down to business. And
 20 you can turn off that fan.

21 NARRATOR: Monroe switched off the fan and did a double-
 22 take on the muffin. It was done to a turn,
 23 perfectly. He chomped down on a golden-brown
 24 half.

25 VOICE: I've got a job for you, Monroe.

26 NARRATOR: Monroe choked on the muffin. Then he washed
 27 it down with a swallow of orange juice laced
 28 with lime.

29 MONROE: Look Lord, you may have me confused with
 30 somebody else. Don't call me into the ministry,
 31 I know I can't hack it — dealing with people's
 32 gritty problems every day of the week and then
 33 trying to get psyched up to preach on Sunday.
 34 No, thanks —

35 VOICE: Who said anything about pulpits and preaching?

1 We have too many clergy already. Why does
 2 everybody with a call think it means filling a
 3 pulpit? You can do me a lot more good as a
 4 non-professional minister, an ordinary
 5 Christian . . .

6 MONROE: That's a relief!

7 VOICE: Doing extraordinary things! You're a banker,
 8 I believe.

9 MONROE: Actually I'm just an associate trust officer but —

10 VOICE: No buts about it! I want you to be my agent in
 11 that bank. Energize it. Vitalize it. Humanize it!

12 MONROE: Energize? Vitalize?

13 VOICE: Humanize! There are a hundred thousand poor
 14 people living in run-down apartments in what
 15 you call the ghetto. There are no ghettos in
 16 heaven, by the way, and some folks are
 17 surprised to find they can't stay just with their
 18 own kind, so to speak. Of course, if they're
 19 really upset about it we send 'em down below
 20 where the ghetto's very well defined. Just
 21 recently, by the way, a very smug Republican
 22 committeeman appeared before St. Peter and
 23 demanded entrance. Well, he was the picture
 24 of —

25 MONROE: Lord, could you get to the point? I've got a
 26 9:15 staff meeting.

27 NARRATOR: The floor quaked, the refrigerator clattered, and
 28 the kitchen clock flew off the wall with a loud
 29 cockadoodle-do. A huge puff of smoke escaped
 30 the Proctor-Silex and blackened Monroe's
 31 face.

32 MONROE: Come to think of it, Lord — there's no harm in
 33 missing one meeting!

34 VOICE: I'm glad to hear it, Monroe. In this town live a
 35 hundred thousand poor folk, at the mercy of

1 their landlords. These landlords don't keep up
 2 the buildings, they charge high rentals, and
 3 they throw the poor folks out if they raise a
 4 complaint. These people can't move because
 5 they don't have the money. The good-salaried
 6 jobs are out of their reach because they require
 7 training which their education hasn't provided.
 8 And if they do find the money to move, there
 9 are realtors in this town who won't sell them
 10 a house if they happen to be wearing skin
 11 that's a shade too dark for the neighborhood.
 12 I know there are laws against it, but it still
 13 happens.

14 MONROE: But Lord, where do I come in?

15 VOICE: Your bank owns or hold mortgages on most of
 16 the apartment houses I'm talking about, and
 17 you have connections with the realtors too.
 18 Recently your bank turned down a loan to an
 19 agency that wanted to provide job-training
 20 programs for the poor. Your bank could change
 21 all that, with the clout it has — if it had the
 22 vision. But the bank has to be energized.
 23 Vitalized . . .

24 MONROE: Humanized. But, Lord, I'm not persuasive.
 25 Sometimes I trip over my own tongue. Anyway,
 26 I'm not that well known in the bank yet —

27 VOICE: Monroe!

28 MONROE: And besides . . . I don't want to get canned.

29 VOICE: Now you're being up front, Monroe. I know
 30 your job's important to you. But there's a lot
 31 more at stake here than a job.

32 MONROE: *(After a pause)* Um-hm. Poor folks, you say.

33 VOICE: The neglected poor. A legion of the disregarded.

34 MONROE: Slumlords, you say. Tragic.

35 VOICE: You can turn it around.

1 **MONROE:** People with no hope, no vision.
2 **VOICE:** A bank like yours can leaven the city.
3 **MONROE:** I might blow it, Lord.
4 **VOICE:** I'm not demanding success, Monroe. Just
5 obedience.
6 **MONROE:** Sure, but — I still don't get it. Why me and my
7 bank? There are lots of people you could
8 take. Why pick on me, Lord?
9 **VOICE:** Monroe, do you think this is the only toaster-
10 oven that's on fire?
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PROBES:

1. Is there something irreverent about God appearing in a burning toaster, as compared to a burning bush?
2. Do you think God still speaks directly to individuals?
3. What about the poor? Jesus said “the poor you will always have with you,” and some Christians feel this means there’s no way to eliminate poverty. Do you agree?
4. What difference can banks and big corporations make in fighting poverty? Do they have the will? Why, or why not?
5. Discuss your job with others in your group. What would it mean to be God’s agent where you work?



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