

MARLAFAYE. Sounds great! Happy hour, six o'clock Friday night.
DOT. I'm in! *(To Randa.)* You get the wine, we'll bring the nibblies.

(She and Marlafaye exit stage left.)

RANDA. *(Completely blindsided.)* What?! But we don't really ...uh ... okay ... *(Tries to get into it. Calls.)* Great! The more the merrier! *(Light crossfades to black as downstage right pin spotlight comes up. Randa crosses into it, faces audience.)* Um ... when I was thinking about widening my horizons I didn't *exactly* see the process beginning with me chatting up two sweaty escapees from a New Age death trap. But ... maybe Dot's right. Maybe we *were* meant to meet each other. Of course Dot's a bit more mature and Marlafaye is ... well, she's *definitely* the person I'd want on my side if I were to find myself, say, in a *bar fight*. But I have to wonder if the three of us have anything in common. Now I'm questioning why I agreed to get together with them again. Frankly, I'm just not seeing the *logic* in it. But, maybe that's part of opening myself to new experiences, like ... *hot yoga*. *(Beat. Then, horrified.)* Oh god, what have I done? *(Blackout.)*

Scene 2

A few days later, late afternoon. Up-tempo country swing plays for only a few bars. Downstage left pin spotlight comes up on Marlafaye, now dressed in casual pants and shirt, carries an oversized purse.

MARLAFAYE. Know how you get that tingly feeling when you're fallin' in love? That sensation that washes over you and kinda gives you the shivers? Well, *that* is common sense leavin' your body. That's what happened to me on that black day I met Waylon Mosley. Waylon was the kind of guy you could count on to do the right thing ... once he'd tried everything else. And the man had no sense of humor. He'd turn to me in bed and say, "Marlafaye, I'm about to make you the happiest woman in the world." And I'd look at him and say, "I'm gonna miss you, Waylon." I mean, not even a *smile*. *(Sighs.)* Life in Tyler, Texas, was no bed of roses ... ironic since its claim to fame is being the *Rose Capital of the World*. I landed a job straight out of

nursing school and worked for Flip Gawler, perhaps *the* most egotistical doctor in the lower forty-eight and you *know* that competition is stiff. Thirty years I'd slave all day for one jackass, then go home and sleep all night with another one. That was my life, carved in stone. It never occurred to me to ask for anything better. But on the very day I found out Waylon had dumped me for Little-Miss-Rinse-And-Spit, I had the good sense to jump up and grab the curveball Fate had thrown me. So I burned those ugly scrubs, set my sights on Savannah, and left the bad memories behind. I became a rep for a liquor distributor, which is not all that different from being a nurse — a visit with me always makes my clients feel better — and I've been here four months. It's *my* town now. *(Beat.)* Sure, it's a little lonely. Nobody promised that startin' a brand new life at fifty-seven would be easy. But I'm workin' on it and thinkin' positive. I get that from my daddy. He always said to bury him in his four-wheel-drive pickup — because "It ain't never been in a hole it couldn't get me out of." *(A few bars of country swing play as the pin spotlight goes to black. Marlafaye turns and walks into the light as it comes up on Randa's beautifully appointed second-story verandah of her lovely home. The upstage and stage left exterior walls are butter yellow clapboard with white trim. A door to the kitchen is on the stage left wall. Just downstage of the door is a small cart that serves as a bar. A wicker sofa with brightly colored cushions sits center stage, in front of two interior windows on the upstage wall. Slightly downstage, right and left of the sofa, is a pair of comfortable wicker armchairs. A coffee table is in the center of the seating. A potted palm tree sits at the stage right end of the sofa. An occasional table with a fern on it sits further stage right of the potted palm. A white balustrade extends downstage from the far right upstage wall, with side stairs leading to the street below. Architectural "gingerbread" ornamentation, hanging baskets, and potted greenery complete the Southern elegance of the space. Calls:)* I have arrived — let the party begin! *(Looks around, impressed.)* Man alive, you've got one heck of a house. And your porch! This is what I'm talkin' about!

RANDA. *(Calls from offstage.)* Actually, here it's called a *verandah*.

MARLAFAYE. Yeah? So this is *Randa's verandah*?! *(Laughs. Randa, in a frilly blouse, skirt, heels enters with a bouquet, sets it on coffee table.)*

RANDA. As long as Randa can keep paying the mortgage, it is. What epicurean delight have you brought?

MARLAFAYE. My signature dish — pimento cheese, chock-full

hug, celebrate.)

MARLAFAYE. Woo-hoo!!! I'll bet the old girl's twirlin' in her grave like a giant turkey leg on a spit!

DOT. Me thinketh this momentous occasion deserveth more than mere mead! What sayeth we go downtown and hit-eth the bars?

JINX. Yeah! Why not? We're Renaissance women. We can do anything we want ... *(They head for kitchen door.)* As long as we drink responsibly.

MARLAFAYE. Absolutely! And any joker knows "drink responsibly" means *don't spill it!* *(Laughter. Lively Renaissance music comes up as Jinx, Dot, and Randa take magnifying glass, box, and brooch, exit into kitchen, and light fades to black as downstage right pin spotlight comes up. Marlafaye crosses downstage, walks into spotlight, removes the fool's cap.)* I guess this is the way it happens — *life*, that is. One day you're locked in a sweatbox with some health nuts thinkin' you're either gonna blow your groceries or stroke out. Next thing you know, you've got yourself a handful of potential friends. Funny how that works. It's been a few months since we started gettin' together and I gotta say, all four of us *seem* to be "re-energizin'" our lives — which is a loosey-goosey way of sayin' "gettin' off our cans and takin' care of business." 'Course Jinx forcin' the four of us to traipse off to the opera one night was nothin' but a bust. I mean, who sings for twenty minutes when they're dyin'?! And it wasn't even in English! Other than that, it's all been pretty good. But right now, there's trouble a-brewin'. Jinx has given us a "courage challenge" that's way over the top. She said we all had to do somethin' good for our hearts, but I told her no way, no how was I eatin' *kale!* That stuff is some kind of nasty. Then she explained she *meant* we all had to suck it up and get ourselves dates for *Valentine's Day* — which is almost as bad as eatin' kale. *(Sighs.)* But I did it. We all did. *(Beat. Guiltily.)* I kinda run hot and cold about *my* date and even though I've been thinkin' about him for a while now, it makes me nervous. I know what I'd *like* it to lead to, and I also know that's puttin' the cart before the horse. *(Confident.)* So I'm not tellin' the girls much about this 'cause I'm not about to tempt Fate. *(Puts fool's cap on at a jaunty angle.)* No sirree Bob... my mama didn't raise no fool! *(Looks down at her costume, realizes what she's wearing, sighs. Blackout.)*