

THE SAVANNAH SIPPING SOCIETY

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Late morning. Up-tempo jazz plays as a pin spotlight comes up downstage right on Randa Covington, high-strung perfectionist, in trendy form-fitting yoga pants and off-one-shoulder top. Hair stylishly pulled back, a rolled mat under one arm, water bottle in hand, she faces the audience and speaks.

RANDA. (*Exudes confidence, upbeat.*) It's my firm belief — and certainly any clear-thinking individual would agree — that one must approach life from a *logical* point of view. It's my mantra. For example, any time I'm asked to fill out a form that includes the phrase "in case of a medical emergency please contact —" I always write ... "*a doctor.*" Logic! It's how I built my successful career in architecture — working twenty-four-seven and accepting nothing less than perfection from myself. So, when a new partner was to be named at McCarthy & Fowler, it was *logical* my unflinching loyalty to the firm was about to be repaid. I was so proud as I walked into that conference room. (*Beat. Then, uncomfortable.*) You know, I don't actually *remember* screaming obscenities as the security guards pried my hands from the throat of the thirty-year-old *man* who was given the partnership. But when McCarthy & Fowler filed the restraining order against me, I completely understood because ... it was *logical*. (*Shakes it off, determinedly upbeat.*) Anyway, having an excess of time to fill, logic dictates that I do something other than sit

at home alone rearranging my sweaters according to cashmere content. And I may have stumbled on to a masterful way to heal body and spirit — yoga! (*Gets into it, indicates her costume.*) Obviously I have prepared and I am ready for the adventure. This will be wonderful! (*Her pin spotlight goes to black as another pin spotlight comes up downstage left on the lobby/juice bar in a yoga studio — bistro table, three chairs. "Spa"/new-age music plays softly in the background. Dot Haigler, daffy and endearing, in glasses, colorful exercise pants and top, is seated in a chair, fans herself vigorously. Randa, gasping, exhausted, joins her from stage right.*) That was the most horrible thing I've ever been through! Forcing otherwise sane women to squat and contort themselves in a small room, then cranking the heat to a hundred fifty degrees?! Really?! What homicidal maniac thought that up?! (*To Dot.*) Excuse me, mind if I collapse in this chair?

DOT. Please do! You certainly lasted longer than I did. I thought "hot yoga" meant it was fun and hip. Who knew we signed up for Lucifer's little sweatshop?

RANDA. (*Laughs.*) I guess what counts is that we tried.

DOT. I agree. Honestly, I'm at the age where all I usually exercise is caution. (*Extends her hand.*) I'm Dot.

RANDA. I'm Randa. Good to know at least two of us were smart enough to get out of there alive. (*They shake as Marlafaye Mosley, earthy, boisterous, good ol' Texas gal, in baggy sweatpants, sweatshirt with sleeves cut out, staggers in stage left, near collapse, drags a gym bag behind her.*)

MARLAFAYE. The pearly gates — they're openin' up! (*Croaks.*) Must ... have ... water! (*The others are alarmed. She sinks to her knees at the table.*)

RANDA. Oh! Okay, I'll go get — (*Marlafaye grabs Randa's bottle, chugs all of it, slams it back on the table.*) Or ... just ... help yourself to mine.

MARLAFAYE. Thank god I didn't slather on the baby oil this morning. I would've come out of that hellhole chicken fried. (*Indicates Dot's fan.*) Hey, could I get a little bit of that action?

DOT. Sure. At least this way I'll burn a few calories. (*Fans Marlafaye, who basks in the breeze.*) So, I take it you don't work out that much, either?

MARLAFAYE. Please. If it weren't for mood swings, I'd get no exercise at all. But that's okay, 'cause it just wouldn't be fair to the women of Savannah if I was this gorgeous, smart, funny, and thin. It's a public service, really.

DOT. How very thoughtful. (*Fans.*) Gee, what a waste of a perfectly good morning. I drove in all the way from Tybee Island to get here.

RANDA. That's the only positive part for me. I just had to walk from the end of the block. Mine's the house with the jasmine-covered verandah.

MARLAFAYE. Nice digs. (*Wipes her forehead.*) Boy howdy! I'm sweatin' like a hooker at altar call. I swear I've got a towel in here somewhere. (*Plops gym bag on table, rummages in it.*) By the way, I'm Marlafaye.

RANDA. I'm Randa. Randa Covington.

DOT. Dot Haigler. I was named for my great-aunt Rebecca. (*Off their looks.*) Oh, she had a huge mole in the middle of her forehead. We always called her Aunt Dot. (*Marlafaye pulls out various items from the bag, including a two-foot terrycloth rag doll. Dot picks it up.*) Oh, my. And who's *this* little fellow?

MARLAFAYE. (*Glances up, slightly embarrassed, takes it back.*) Don't think I always traipse around with a big ol' doll. I've been *encouraged* to keep it handy. It's what they call a mobile therapy device.

DOT. Oh. That's what my late husband used to call his whiskey flask.

MARLAFAYE. My ex's divorce lawyer forced me to take anger management classes. Turns out Mr. Happy Pants failed to see the humor in me cuttin' the crotch out of every one of his business suits.

RANDA. Going out on a limb here, I take it your husband cheated on you?

MARLAFAYE. (*Anger slowly rises.*) Yeah. With a twenty-three-year-old dental hygienist. Now every time I brush my teeth, I think of them sneakin' around, livin' the high life, while I was bustin' my hump on the job and wonderin' what was wrong with my marriage! (*Loses it, beats the doll against the table. Louder.*) I should've known Waylon was tomcartin' when he started flossin' between meals! That's just not normal! (*Stops. Pants. Smiles, relaxed.*) Whew! (*Offers it to Dot.*) Got any man problems you'd like to get over?

DOT. Me? (*Takes it.*) Oh, no. Ross and I had a wonderful marriage. He passed away suddenly eight months ago just after we moved here. We always planned for a golden retirement, to live near the water, make new friends. But Ross kept putting it off. We did finally get here, but — (*Determinedly upbeat.*) No. I don't have any man problems, but thanks. (*Puts the doll on the table.*)

MARLAFAYE. How about you, Randa? Want to take a shot? It's the least I can do to thank you for the water. (*Unseen by them, Dot studies the doll with increasing interest, picks it up, starts to shake and choke it. Her vigor builds.*)

RANDA. Oh, no. Men haven't been in the picture for years. I'm a dyed-in-the-wool career gal, devoted my whole life to it. No, I don't have a — (*They notice Dot.*)

DOT. (*Fiery.*) I told you we were waiting too long! You wasted the best years of our lives. Now you've left me all alone in a strange city with a drawer full of sexy underwear that's absolutely useless to me! A woman has needs! (*Slaps the doll repeatedly.*)

MARLAFAYE. (*Gently pulls doll away.*) Whoa. Kinda early in the day for that much information, Dottie. You okay?

DOT. (*Refreshed.*) You know, you're right. That little doll's a real winner. Oh, come on, Randa. Take a crack at it. Feels great!

RANDA. Oh, no, I haven't been involved in a relationship for years. I'm sure there's no *therapy device* for my particular situation. It's career-related. You see, I was recently the victim of a vicious corporate downsizing.

MARLAFAYE. I am so sorry. How many employees did they fire?

RANDA. (*Confident façade shatters. Sobs.*) One! (*Wails.*) They gave my job to a thirty-year-old twit. He wears bow ties! (*Grabs doll, screams as she smashes its head repeatedly against the table.*)

MARLAFAYE. Hey, now! Easy, girl! That doll's got to last me another couple months. (*Marlafaye pulls the doll away.*)

RANDA. (*Calms down.*) I ... don't know where that came from, but I feel much better now. I'm fine. (*Beat. Grabs the doll, gives it another whack, Marlafaye snatches it from her.*) Okay, now I'm fine.

MARLAFAYE. Wow! We may have bombed out of hot yoga but we sure let off some steam here today, right, girls? (*Shoves the doll into her bag.*)

DOT. I say good for us! And I don't think we bombed out here at all. Maybe we were meant to meet each other.

RANDA. Yes, maybe. It's ironic because I always avoid places like this. I'm starting to think the only way I'll ever expand my social horizon is to hire a life coach or find a miracle worker.

MARLAFAYE. Well, you won't catch *me* here again. I'm done with this exercise bull. I only joined this stupid class because my ex-husband bragged about how he and his trophy wife go to the gym and how he's lost fifty pounds since our divorce. He asked if I know what his ideal weight is and I said, "Sure. Four pounds includin' the urn." (*They laugh. She checks her watch.*) Gotta go. It was great to meet y'all.

RANDA. Yes, it *really* was. Another fifteen minutes and I would've invited you both over for drinks at my place. (*Laughs.*)

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