SHEREE
LEXIE
DINAH
VERNADETTE
JERI NEAL

START →

SHEREE. What does it matter? We love Jeri Neal. But she has been hard to reach lately. When she called just now, that's the first time I've actually spoken to her in months.

LEXIE. I haven't talked to her in forever.

SHEREE. She says she has big news.

LEXIE. Well, she'd better get here and tell it if we're going to get our first group swim in before— *(A car horn is heard outside.)*

SHEREE. *(Runs to the screen door.)* She's here!

DINAH. So, Sister Mary Esther has big news. Five bucks says the boiler at the convent broke. We could be in for some titillating dinner conversation, girls.

VERNADETTE. I bet ten she's been fast-tracked to Mother Superior.

LEXIE. No, I bet she's going to Rome for an audience with the Pope. *(Jeri Neal McFeeley, mid-forties, enormously pregnant and dressed in beach-appropriate maternity wear, enters.)*

JERI NEAL. Hi, girls!

VERNADETTE. *(To Dinah.)* All bets are off.

LEXIE. *(Chatters non-stop.)* Why, Jeri Neal, it's so good to see you, we just never thought you'd get here and look at that cute little top you're wearing there's just a glow about you probably from driving all that way in the heat *(To the others, without stopping.)* she's pregnant, isn't she?!

JERI NEAL. Eight months and counting. *(Beat. Everyone stares at her open-mouthed.)* So…anybody going to say anything?

DINAH. Looks like they've relaxed at least *one* of the rules at the convent.

VERNADETTE. Oh, honey. Not even Miracle Whip's going to get you out of this one.

LEXIE. Jeri Neal, what have you done?

SHEREE. We know what she's done, what we want to know is who she did it *with*.

JERI NEAL. Okay, so now you know my big news, and I've left the convent.

DINAH. Naturally, we'd expect one to follow the other.

JERI NEAL. Good, that's out of the way. Now, I'm starving. Where are we going for dinner?

LEXIE. Oh, no, no, no, no. This isn't like you've just changed your hair color. Start explaining, Sister Mary Esther Hot Pants.

JERI NEAL. Can I get something to drink first?

SHEREE. Sure. But don't tell any of the good stuff 'til I get back. *(Races into the kitchen.)*

JERI NEAL. *(Calls.)* Oh, I never would. Granny McFeeley always said, "Don't strike the match 'til you got all your kindlin' in the stove." *(Then.)* Ooh, that looks good. *(Reaches for an hors d'oeuvre.)*

DINAH and LEXIE. *(Lexie grabs her hand.)* No!!!

VERNADETTE. We can't let you do that to the baby.

JERI NEAL. Oh. Sheree, right?

SHEREE. *(Hurries in with a martini glass of milk.)* Here we go. Now, start talking.

JERI NEAL. Well…Y'all remember how I'd gotten the calling right after graduation? Guess what? I got another one.

LEXIE. Darlin', we are not Catholic. You'll have to walk us through this.

JERI NEAL. Okay. One day I was working at the shelter and a mommy asked me to hold her baby while she fed her two-year-old. When I held that tiny, little thing, I had the most incredible sensation. I looked into that baby's eyes and it was like a jolt of electricity just shot right through me. I realized I wasn't supposed to be a sister anymore, I'm supposed to be a *mother*. So, I decided to leave the convent and had myself artificially inseminated.

LEXIE. *(To the others.)* Isn't that sweet? She doesn't even know the other way's more fun.

SHEREE. You know, you could've shared this with us before now.

JERI NEAL. I wanted to surprise you and there's been so much to do. Boy howdy, leaving the Sisters and moving home to Roanoke to live with Mama has been an awful lot to handle.

VERNADETTE. You're certainly bringing this baby in under the wire.

JERI NEAL. I know that's going to present its own set of challenges,

but it's like Granny McFeeley would say, "When you change horses mid-stream, you better count on gettin' your boots wet."

DINAH. Your grandma was a talkative old gal, wasn't she?

JERI NEAL. Oh, she sure was. After the chimney collapsed and that brick hit her in the head, no one could shut her up.

LEXIE. Look, Jeri Neal, if you're happy about this, we're happy.

JERI NEAL. I'm very happy. *(Holds out her arms.)* Group hug? *(They do so.)* Now, I don't want this to make the weekend weird for anyone, but honestly, we've made so many wonderful memories here, I knew this was the only place for me to share my news with you.

SHEREE. And to that end, we're fixin' to kick off our weekend right. Come on. Lift 'em up, girls.

EVERYONE. *(They rise, helping Jeri Neal to her feet, and lift their glasses.)* The faster we swim, the sooner we win! *(They take a drink.)*

VERNADETTE. That still gives me a tingle after all these years.

SHEREE. It helped us win a lot of swim meets.

JERI NEAL. *(Gets her purse.)* Ooh, that reminds me, look what I found when I was packing my things at the convent. *(Hands them a photo.)* This was taken right after we won the Conference Swim Meet.

DINAH. Just look at the five of us: the Pemberton College Champion Swim Team. We were so young and beautiful!

VERNADETTE. Look at my fabulous thighs. I was gorgeous. How come I didn't know that?

SHEREE. I think we still look pretty good.

LEXIE. Yeah. But some of us a little more than others.

JERI NEAL. And I've still got the medal. That was the happiest moment in my life. *(Pats her stomach.)* Soon to be demoted to *second* happiest. STOP

VERNADETTE. Did Coach take this picture?

SHEREE. No, I remember this distinctly. It was Richie Walker; Antioch's men's team captain. You know, the one who put the "ohhh" in Speed-o.

JERI NEAL. Whew, Richie Walker! Now *that's* a fella who could eat crackers in my bed any old time.