

SHAKIN' THE BLUE FLAMINGO

By
Gwen Flager

SHAKIN' THE BLUE FLAMINGO

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SHAKIN' THE BLUE FLAMINGO

for Ruthann

SHAKIN' THE BLUE FLAMINGO

Shakin' the Blue Flamingo was originally produced by Queensbury Theatre in Houston, Texas, directed by Claire Hart-Palumbo, with the following cast:

Anne	.....	Janet Berzins
Billie	.....	Joyce Anastasia Murray
Cory	.....	Ann C. Harlan
Mac	.....	Karen Ross
Rosemary	.....	Michelle McCarel
Taylor	.....	Jennifer Doctorovich
Wendye	.....	Susan Shofner

Shakin' the Blue Flamingo received its second production by Dirt Dogs Theatre Co. UNLEASHED in association with Sweet Darlin' Productions in Houston, Texas, directed by Bonnie Hewett, with the following cast:

Anne	.....	Katherine Rinaldi
Billie	.....	Meredith Ann Gaines
Cory	.....	Adina Owens
Mac	.....	Malinda L. Beckham
Rosemary	.....	Alex Vaughn
Taylor	Christina Taylor Wood
Wendye	Melissa J. Marek
Edna	Leona Hoegsberg

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CAST: 7 Women

ANNE: 40s-50s, mental health professional, very out fluff/lipstick lesbian, passionately in love with Taylor.

BILLIE: 40s-50s, administrative clerk with an uncanny memory of details, homophobic lesbian, in a relationship with Wendy.

CORY: 40s-50s, graphic designer, a single, hot, liberal lesbian, protective of Mac.

MAC: 40s-50s, shop mechanic for car rental company, liberal lesbian, adjusting to life after the death of her partner, Ellie.

ROSEMARY: 40s-50s, CEO of petroleum engineering firm, whose husband recently died after a lengthy illness, still in love with Mac and focused on rekindling their love.

TAYLOR (“Tea”): 40s-50s, old school butch, owns and manages horse stables, wildly in love with Anne.

WENDYE: 40s-50s, a conservative businesswoman, guarded lesbian, in a relationship with Billie.

TIME: Spring, 2000

PLACE: Edna’s Café, a “Hippie” style café, furnished with mismatched chairs, various shaped tables, jukebox or tabletop jukebox on one table or booth, on the outskirts of a Southern city

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DRESS AND ATTIRE NOTE:

Anne, Rosemary and Wendye will be dressed in more feminine attire, i.e., blouses, skirts, dresses, dress slacks, jewelry, etc.

Billie, Cory, Mac and Taylor will be dressed in more tailored “butch” attire, i.e., khaki slacks, denim jeans, tailored/button down shirts, vests, jackets, boots, sneakers, loafers, mechanic coveralls, etc.

DIRECTORS NOTE: Music will NOT be played *during* any scene of this play.

“Are You Lonesome To-night?”

words and music by Roy Turk and Lou Handman

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SHAKIN' THE BLUE FLAMINGO

ACT 1 SCENE 1

MAC sits at a table in Edna's Cafe, reading a newspaper, drinking coffee, on Sunday morning.

CORY. *(Enters, hugs Mac from behind, kisses her cheek.)*

MAC. I'd know that cologne anywhere.

CORY. How are ya, precious?

MAC. Under caffeinated.

CORY. We're gonna need a bigger table.

MAC. It's just the four of us. You, me, Anne and Taylor.

CORY. You, me, Anne, Taylor, Wendye and Billie.

MAC. Oh, no. Nope. Not going to happen. Oh, hell no. *(Gets up from the chair.)* I'm going home.

CORY. Damn, Mac. Sit down. Anne needs your help. You can help Anne, can't you?

MAC. *(Slowly sits.)* You never said Wendye was coming.

CORY. You wouldn't have come.

MAC. You're damn right. Anne had finished speaking at Ellie's service. A calm washed over me. Giving me...giving us the comfort we were all seeking. Then, Wendye's phone rings from the bottom of her purse. And she took the call. I do regret calling her a bitch in front of everyone. I can barely make eye contact.

CORY. It might have been the you-old-ugly that preceded the "b" word that set her off. Hell, Wendye only makes eye contact with the rich and powerful. She almost ran me down in the crosswalk on Springhill Boulevard last Sunday. Let's order some fried pickles. *(Glances O.S.)* The rest of the choir is in the parking lot.

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MAC. Our pickles will get cold if Wendye circles the parking lot looking for the perfect spot.

CORY. She and Billie have stopped. They're straightening jackets and primping in the side mirrors.

ANNE, TAYLOR, WENDYE and BILLIE. *(Enter.)*

ANNE. Good morning, Mac.

MAC. Mornin', Annie.

CORY. *(To Anne.)* Kiss me you wild creature.

ANNE. Cory, you rascal, pucker up. *(Anne and Cory kiss.)*

TAYLOR. *(To Cory.)* Plant a good one. *(Taylor and Cory kiss.)*

BILLIE. Not in public.

WENDYE. You all behave. You're causing a scene.

MAC. Oh that we could. *(Cory, Billie, Anne, Taylor and Wendye fuss with chairs while deciding where to sit.)*

WENDYE. *(Looks around café disapprovingly.)* I suggest we move our future meetings to Chez Louis on River Road. At least the silverware matches.

CORY. Wendye, you are no longer class president at St. Agnes Girls Academy. You have no authority here.

WENDYE. All I'm saying is - -

CORY. I know what you're saying. We are both products of a privileged Southern education. I have the plaid skirt to prove it. Try to channel that sweet little fifth grader who said please and thank you. Now enjoy Edna's fine dining.

WENDYE. Never mind.

BILLIE. Where's the waitress?

TAYLOR. Billie, it's a buffet.

BILLIE. Who gets my water?

TAYLOR. You or your wife.

BILLIE. Do you have an attitude this morning?

TAYLOR. I did. But Anne made me leave it in the barn.

WENDYE. I'll get you some water.

TAYLOR. So your wife will be getting your water.

BILLIE. Taylor, I don't have a wife.

TAYLOR. Not exactly official. But you both swapped rings. High dollar

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from the look of what's on Wendye's finger.

BILLIE. More like a promise ring.

CORY. I'm shocked Wendye made a promise.

BILLIE. I promised too.

WENDYE. Why do you all tease her so? *(Exits.)*

TAYLOR. Cuz' we love her.

CORY. I'll order the pickles. *(Exits.)*

ANNE. Mac, I'm so glad you came.

MAC. Cory bet me I wouldn't come.

ANNE. How much did you win?

MAC. One hundred dollars.

ANNE. I've missed you.

MAC. I'm not sure why I came. I don't need the hundred dollars. I miss Ellie.

ANNE. It's only been - -

MAC. One year, three months and seventeen days.

ANNE. No one's counting.

MAC. I am.

TAYLOR. Hell, we've all missed you. Nice to see you amongst the livin'.

BILLIE. Good lord, Taylor. What a cruel thing to say.

TAYLOR. Relax, Billie. I've been tellin' Mac that since Ellie's funeral. Mac and I have cleaned many a horse stall over the past year. I remind her what life is about every time we dump a wheelbarrow of manure.

BILLIE. You're not the least bit delicate.

ANNE. Oh, Billie. My sweet Tea is ever so delicate. *(Kisses on Taylor.)*

BILLIE. Can't you keep your hands off each other?

ANNE. Sometimes...sometimes not.

CORY and WENDYE. *(Enter, carrying a basket of pickles and water glasses.)*

CORY. Who wants a pickle?

ANNE. Billie does.

WENDYE. *(To Billie.)* Here, take a napkin. Don't spill any on your shirt.

TAYLOR. *(To Billie.)* See, you do have a wife. *(To Cory.)* Hand me one of those.

ANNE. Let's get started. I'm sure you've all wondered why I've called

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this meeting.

MAC. You did not just say that.

ANNE. I've always wanted to start a meeting like that.

CORY. Now you have.

ANNE. Wasn't that fun?

TAYLOR. I'm starvin', darlin. Pick up the pace.

ANNE. Right. The Rainbow Caucus will sponsor a LGBT prom for the high school seniors. My favorite, and only, nephew, Kevin, asked if I and his sweet Uncle Tea would get involved. I volunteered to chair the event and I need your help.

WENDYE. Are you looking for underwriters?

ANNE. We are. But - -

WENDYE. How much?

ANNE. You'll need to call Scott.

WENDYE. What's his number? Or email? I can get my assistant to call. I can network with Lucy and Keith. Set up a conference call. Do you have his number?

CORY. Wendye, take your business hat off.

WENDYE. Aren't you going to ask if Anne needs a graphic design artist? I read in the business journal where you secured the advertising contract for that fancy British car company. Guess they were impressed with your many artistic awards.

CORY. I think they liked that I can color between the lines. Have another pickle and let Annie finish.

TAYLOR. Hurry up. I'm fadin'.

ANNE. Tea, have a pickle. The last time we worked on a project together was the Christmas gala our senior year in college. Tea refused to go. Tea's cousin escorted me to the gala. I was embarrassed and felt like a charity case. But it did look respectable. That was the last date I ever had with a man. Tea and I found safe places to dance and be together. Oh to be twenty-two again. Wish I had been braver then.

BILLIE. The Lake Charles community college didn't have a Christmas gala. My senior class did get to decorate the cafeteria with garland and tinsel. Wish I had known you all then.

ANNE. You're a part of us now.

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BILLIE. Really?

WENDYE. Believe her. She never lies.

ANNE. Cory if you could do programs and invitations. Billie...dress and tux rentals. Sweet Tea...decorations. Wendye...transportation. Mac, could you be in charge of boutonnieres and corsages?

MAC. Not interested.

ANNE. Mac, please.

MAC. I never went to a prom.

TAYLOR. You mean a gay prom.

MAC. No. I mean any kind of prom.

CORY. Why not?

MAC. I was never asked.

CORY. That never stopped me.

BILLIE. Has anything ever stopped you?

CORY. The highway patrol.

TAYLOR. Hell, even I went to the high school prom. Mom promised me a new saddle if I went with Bob Ferguson. It was the first and last time I ever wore a strapless ball gown. My brother looked better in that dress.

BILLIE. Got any pictures?

TAYLOR. Mom had the official prom picture framed and sittin' on the TV for years. She finally put it in her hope chest. I think she got tired of folks askin' who the boy was in the dress.

WENDYE. I was queen my junior year.

CORY. What no crown for senior prom?

WENDYE. I didn't go to my senior prom.

TAYLOR. Is that when you decided to sing in our choir?

WENDYE. No.

TAYLOR. You can tell me. Did you find yourself drawn to the women's track and field try outs? Ever sit in the bleachers and watch those long-legged sprinters stretch?

CORY. Do you remember Karla? High jump. Oh, my.

TAYLOR. Wendye, was it the swimmers? Strong backs.

CORY. You're makin' me crazy. Did you see Linda Jackson win the regional high dive competition our senior year?

ANNE. I know Wendye's type. The quiet rugby player. Sensitive. Big

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butch.

WENDYE. I hate that kind of talk.

MAC. You didn't use to.

CORY. We'll whisper.

TAYLOR. *(Leans closer to Wendye.)* Whisper in my ear.

WENDYE. *(Pushes Taylor away.)* I got pregnant my senior year.

TAYLOR. It's not like you to be careless.

WENDYE. I wasn't careless.

BILLIE. Was it a little girl?

WENDYE. Who?

BILLIE. Your baby.

WENDYE. There was no baby.

BILLIE. But you said you were pregnant.

WENDYE. I didn't have a baby.

BILLIE. Did you get - -

WENDYE. I miscarried.

BILLIE. Are you okay?

WENDYE. It happened over twenty years ago. *(Checks cell phone.)*

BILLIE. Did you go to the hospital?

WENDYE. No.

BILLIE. Do you want to talk about - -

WENDYE. No, Billie. I don't want to talk about it.

BILLIE. I just thought.

WENDYE. No, you didn't. What would your point of reference be? Ever been pregnant? Ever had sex with a man?

BILLIE. You already know the answer.

ANNE. You all sure know how to break the ice at the first organizational meeting. Any other thoughts? Secrets? Confessions?

BILLIE. *(Nervously shares.)* I never learned to dance. With all the parties that Momma threw I thought someone might teach me. Hard to teach someone to dance when you're so drunk you can't stand up. Took a modern dance class in high school. It wasn't exactly the dancing I had in mind.

TAYLOR. Even with ballroom dance lessons, I still sputter and lurch across the floor.

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BILLIE. It would have been nice to learn.

TAYLOR. I'll teach you what I know.

CORY. Now's your chance. Get Wendye a nice corsage. Rent a tux. We can all chip in on a limo. Yes ma'am. I'll call Diane. She'd fly in from Chicago to go to a prom with me. Party time. Rent a hotel room for the night.

BILLIE. You've lost your mind.

TAYLOR. Billie, you've dressed up for Halloween. Pretend it's dress up night.

BILLIE. I'm not dressing up like - -

CORY. Let's see, men's Levi's, white shirt, man's belt, boots. D'ya leave your ball cap in the truck?

WENDYE. You're making her uncomfortable.

ANNE. Excuse me. I have handouts...in color.

BILLIE. I can't be involved in anything like a prom.

CORY. You could park cars.

WENDYE. We'll donate money.

ANNE. I don't want your money. I want your help.

TAYLOR. I'll take your money. The county equine rescue needs money.

BILLIE. I can't be seen at a...ah...um...

CORY. Prom for queers.

WENDYE. Cory!

CORY. I took Billie to her first gay bar. Granted she was high. Had a good time though, didn't ya?

BILLIE. Can you lower your voice?

CORY. Billie, you're more homophobic than Taylor's Aunt Margaret.

BILLIE. I am not.

TAYLOR. Are too.

CORY. No one buys the story that you and Wendye are sisters.

BILLIE. We don't tell them that.

CORY. Just friends, huh?

BILLIE. We don't know the neighbors.

TAYLOR. Hell, Billie, put a rainbow flag out and be done with it.

ANNE. It sounds like you all need some nourishment. Emotions are running too high for this early in the day. Time to get to the buffet.

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WENDYE. Billie and I can't stay.

MAC. Come on, Wendye. Take a deep breath.

WENDYE. Don't tell me what to do. I'm not on my death bed needing your instructions on when to take my final breath.

MAC. I didn't tell Ellie when to take her last breath. One minute you're breathing. The next minute you're not. Ellie's sister was holding her hand. I was standing at the end of the hospital bed circling menu choices for Ellie's supper.

WENDYE. I didn't mean that. Oh, God, Mac. I'm sorry.

MAC. Yes, you are. Your comments are sorry. Your attitude is sorry. You answered your phone, Wendye. You answered your fuckin' phone.

ANNE. Stop it. I will not watch you peck at each other. Let me remind you of the time you both got drunk and threw up all over each other. Then you stripped naked and ran through the sprinklers at the golf course in the light of the moon. I don't care how you make up, but you need to do it by the end of lunch.

CORY. Let's start a conga line to the buffet. Billie, you lead.

BILLIE. What?

CORY. Wendye, Annie and Taylor will follow. Mac and I will bring up the rear.

WENDYE. Mac - -

TAYLOR. Jump up, Billie.

BILLIE. I'm ready.

TAYLOR. *(Takes hold of Billie to form a conga line.)* Grandma's slow, but she's old. Grab hold, Annie, I'm movin'. *(Exits with Billie and Anne.)*

WENDYE. Mac, you know I still love you. *(Exits.)*

MAC. I do.

CORY. Come on, precious, let's dance our way to the omelet station.

MAC. Shit, I need some aspirins.

CORY. Here. *(Hands Mac a small aspirin tin.)*

MAC. This feels like when we were twenty and fighting over where to have the end of year picnic.

CORY. It's a help that most of us have had therapy or a religious conversion. Grab your newspaper or Edna will think you're finished with it and take it home.

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MAC. I'm finished. Was reading the obits.

CORY. Shit, Mac. Don't be doing that. Read the crime section instead.
Makes a person grateful.

MAC. Saw where Rosemary's husband died.

CORY. Not the Rosemary?

MAC. The very one.

CORY. Let me see. (*Picks up newspaper.*) She's back.

MAC. That's what it says.

CORY. So, you're both widows.

BILLIE and WENDYE. (*Enter, carrying plates of food.*)

WENDYE. Mac, I brought you a plate. A little bit of everything.

MAC. Thanks.

BILLIE. She feels guilty.

WENDYE. Mac knows how I feel.

CORY. No plate for me?

WENDYE. I knew you'd want to flirt with the servers.

CORY. You are so good to me. (*To Mac.*) Want an iced tea to wash all that down with?

MAC. Thanks.

CORY. Oh, say, tell Wendye about the obit. (*Exits.*)

WENDYE. Who died now?

MAC. Rosemary's husband.

WENDYE. Rosemary Williams?

MAC. No.

WENDYE. Not Rosemary from our sorority?

MAC. The same.

WENDYE. Was there any truth to the rumor?

ANNE and TAYLOR. (*Enter, carrying plates of food.*)

MAC. Well...truth is an odd commodity at a sorority house.

TAYLOR. Are we gonna tell sorority stories?

MAC. No.

ANNE. No.

WENDYE. All I'm saying is that many of us wondered...

CORY. (*Enters, carrying a plate of food and a glass of iced tea.*)

WENDYE. ...why you were summoned by the house mother to visit.

CORY. Ah...the visit.

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MAC. The visit.

WENDYE. What was that all about?

MAC. About fifteen minutes.

CORY. Miss Elinor Porter, sorority house mother extraordinaire, received word from on high that Mac was no longer welcome as a sorority member.

TAYLOR. That woman wore enough Chanel No. 5 to choke a good-sized frog.

WENDYE. You weren't really the sorority type.

MAC. Well, Wendye, my great-grandmother wasn't a charter member, but I did manage to make the cut. Everyone knows I wasn't the most popular. But I did enjoy that sense of belonging. And, I did so love the sing-alongs.

ANNE. You did not.

CORY. That's when I found that Flamingo double-wide off campus.

BILLIE. You moved out of the house? Wendye never told me that.

CORY. I wasn't forced to live at the sorority house. Miss Porter was relieved when I moved out. She helped me pack. There was never any proof of my indiscretions mind you, but not everyone was held to the same standard. Having old money made it easy for the chancellor to overlook any rumors. Besides, Mac needed a place to live.

TAYLOR. God, I loved that old trailer. My heart sank when they quit makin' the Flamingo.

WENDYE. Mobile home.

TAYLOR. Wendye, it's only a mobile home if it's capable of motion.

WENDYE. Taylor, you're a smart ass.

TAYLOR. I'm telling you the blue Flamingo was incapable of forward motion. It wiggled from side to side on many occasions.

WENDYE. You're just nasty.

TAYLOR. I was talkin' about when the washin' machine was in the spin cycle. Who's nasty now?

BILLIE. The move. Can we get back to the move?

MAC. Cory made me a sweet offer.

CORY. Mac only had to cook. My allowance covered all our expenses.

ANNE. You two acquired quite a reputation. Many at the sorority compared you to Lucy and Ethel. Some even blushed and giggled when your names were mentioned.

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MAC. I wasn't the one with the reputation.

CORY. Ah, but later. We had the Blue Flamingo chronicles. Talk about shaking the trailer.

ANNE. Okay. Before we break into a K. T. Oslin song, we have a prom to plan.

CORY. I want "Do Ya" played.

ANNE. Fine. So, is everyone in?

CORY. In.

WENDYE. I'll need to check my schedule.

TAYLOR. Come on, we're the only friends you've got left.

ANNE. Say yes. It'll be fun.

WENDYE. Yes.

TAYLOR. I'm in Lady Bug.

BILLIE. Okay.

ANNE. Mac?

MAC. I'm not good company these days. Maybe some other time. (*Walks toward the door.*)

ANNE. There won't be another time, Mac. This is it. Come play.

TAYLOR. You're outnumbered. Surrender now.

MAC. (*Exits.*)

ANNE. (*Calls to Mac from the door.*) Give it some thought. Next meeting is set for two weeks from today.

BILLIE. Can we order more pickles?

TAYLOR. We can order whatever you want.

ANNIE. Pass the pepper.

WENDYE. Pepper won't help.

CORY. Will too. (*Blackout.*)

SCENE 2

Two weeks later, Sunday, mid-morning, Wendye and Billie sit at a table in Edna's Cafe, papers/notebooks strewn on the table.

BILLIE. The dress and tux rental company has agreed to donate all

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rentals. I'll schedule the kids for fittings.

WENDYE. (*Looks at a notebook.*) I need to find one more couple who will pick up the kids and chauffeur them to the prom. Eddy Osborn is loaning me the older Lincoln town cars used at the funeral home. Just drive thirty-five kids to the community center. It's not like they have to use their own cars. How hard is that? I'm not asking them to change their political affiliation.

BILLIE. Please don't get angry. We had such a nice Saturday night and breakfast on the back porch this morning. You love our mornings on the porch.

WENDYE. I'm not angry. I can't believe Anne put Taylor in charge of decorating. She's probably never heard of a color wheel. She'll most likely haul in bales of hay and feed buckets for tables and chairs.

BILLIE. She minored in art.

WENDYE. Am I supposed to remember that?

BILLIE. She was your roommate in college.

WENDYE. Like you remember everyone's major and minor.

BILLIE. I do. I remember what's important. What makes people special.

WENDYE. It is a valuable asset for an administrative assistant. Certainly one I don't have. Your office depends on you. Why don't you ask for a bigger raise next year? You deserve it. (*Cell phones rings, looks at caller's number, smiles.*)

BILLIE. Answer it.

WENDYE. I'll call later.

BILLIE. Can't you turn that thing off?

WENDYE. No, Billie, I can't.

BILLIE. Wish you paid that much attention to me.

WENDYE. Please don't start. With the prospectus out for my business I've got to be available. This is the next level up. Playing with the monied people. You can't do it with a flip phone and note pad.

BILLIE. I don't understand why - -

WENDYE. I am the business. It's not a nine-to-five with thirty minutes for lunch. This is my time. My chance.

BILLIE. Not our time?

WENDYE. Billie, please. Help me get through the next six weeks. The

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prom will be over and the prospectus will either be funded or not. You can do that. Then we can sit on the porch and talk about whatever you want.

BILLIE. I can do that.

ANNE and TAYLOR (*Enter, carrying notebooks.*)

ANNE. Morning, y'all.

TAYLOR. Looks like my old harem pants are stretched over a couple of poles right outside.

BILLIE. Those are not your pants. I asked Edna if I could set up the privacy screen, so we don't disturb the other customers.

TAYLOR. We embarrass you.

WENDYE. Yes, Taylor, you do.

TAYLOR. I can help you get over that.

WENDYE. Not without a lot of drugs and alcohol. Where the hell is everyone?

TAYLOR. Cory's on her way. Haven't heard from Mac. Reckon she stopped at the cemetery.

WENDYE. God, she can't drive by the front gate without the car turning in. It's like her car is on automatic pilot.

BILLIE. She misses Ellie.

WENDYE. Mac doesn't know who she misses.

BILLIE. She might figure it out at the cemetery.

WENDYE. I can't stay here all afternoon.

TAYLOR. What's going on with you?

WENDYE. Besides looking for investors for my business?

TAYLOR. Stress is the number one killer in old lesbians.

WENDYE. Honest to God, Taylor - -

ANNE. I can give you a discount at the clinic if you want.

WENDYE. I don't need any therapy.

TAYLOR. Anne's very good.

WENDYE. Don't see how she's helped you any over the years.

ANNE. Wendye, I know you didn't mean that. Because that would be hurtful. And you don't want to hurt my sweet Tea. Billie, how's Kevin doing?

BILLIE. He's terrified to get measured for a tux. He's scared of everyone.

ANNE. We're working on that.

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TAYLOR. I'll handle it.

WENDYE. You're more masculine than Kevin will ever be.

TAYLOR. Exactly. I'll take him with me to the barn.

BILLIE. You're not going to get him near a horse.

TAYLOR. Not at first. All I need is for him to carry a sack of apples. He's not afraid of apples is he?

ANNE. He wants to ask Michael to the dance.

TAYLOR. I'm on it, Lady Bug.

BILLIE. Does Mac have a date?

WENDYE. I think we should set her up with Christine.

TAYLOR. Christine is the ugliest lesbian we know.

WENDYE. She is not.

TAYLOR. Would you go out with her?

WENDYE. No. But I have higher standards than Mac.

TAYLOR. Oh, really? D'ya forget about that bull dyke you romanced durin' spring break?

WENDYE. I don't know what you're talking about.

TAYLOR. You were probably in a blackout. You drank enough Tequila to tenderize shoe leather.

BILLIE. Which spring break?

TAYLOR. Our junior year at the University of Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

WENDYE. Taylor's thinking of someone else.

ANNE. Can you two get along with each other at prom?

TAYLOR. Only if Wendye promises me a dance.

WENDYE. What are you wearing?

TAYLOR. Heavy starched Wranglers, white cotton shirt and a glitterin' sparklin' jacket like Porter Wagoner wears.

WENDYE. No.

ANNE. Yes, she is. We found the perfect jacket on sale at the tuxedo shop. Bought it and Lucille is sewing on sequins and strands of glitter. Taylor will be the prettiest woman there.

BILLIE. Porter Wagoner?

TAYLOR. Wanna jacket? Or how about a vest? They got all kinds and we can get it altered in time for prom. Wendye, what are you wearin'? Anne tells me it's important to match.

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WENDYE. I haven't decided.

ANNE. I don't believe that. Are you buying a new dress? I'll go shopping with you.

WENDYE. I may be out of town.

BILLIE. You may be?

CORY. (*Enters, carrying a box of invitations.*) This is perhaps my finest work. It's better than the Estee Lauder campaign. Take a look.

WENDYE. I've got to see this.

BILLIE. Wendye, are you going to be here for the prom?

WENDYE. It's not like you asked me to go.

BILLIE. Will you go with me to the prom?

TAYLOR. Oh, my, a woman who doesn't like to be taken for granted.

CORY. Wendye, get a better offer?

WENDYE. It's business.

CORY. That's what I've always called it...tending to business.

WENDYE. You all bring out the worst in me.

TAYLOR. Nah.

BILLIE. Well?

WENDYE. I suppose. You cannot wear a vest like Porter Wagoner.

TAYLOR. Lady Bug, how about a dance? Ladies, this is how ya do it.

ANNE. Ready.

TAYLOR. (*Takes Anne in her arms, greatly exaggerates dance moves.*)
Imagine what I could do with music.

CORY. And you said those ballroom dance lessons didn't pay off.

TAYLOR. (*Embraces Anne and gently dips.*) My knees almost buckle every time I put my arms around you.

ANNE. Tea, don't you drop me.

TAYLOR. I got ya.

ANNE. Oh, sweet Tea. Wait 'til I get you home.

TAYLOR. I'm savin' myself for prom night. (*Gently pulls Anne upright.*)

CORY. Got the rooms reserved.

WENDYE. You all need a room now.

TAYLOR. We can use the floor.

BILLIE. I can't imagine.

ANNE. It helps if you have a rug.

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CORY. There's always rug burns.

WENDYE. I'll bet Cory has an ointment she can recommend.

CORY. I do.

ANNE. (*Looks at watch.*) We need to get started.

MAC. (*Enters, carrying samples of flowers.*) Sorry to be late.

ANNE. Not a problem. You can start if you like.

MAC. We can use carnations. Small roses or daisies. Fill in with baby's breath...dammit. Ellie worked at the florist. I don't know anything about flowers. I don't know how to go about this.

TAYLOR. Mac, you know enough. We've picked 'em wild in the yard. They all look pretty to me.

ANNE. Any special greenery?

MAC. Shit, I forgot the greenery.

CORY. Louise works at Buds and Bows. She can help. I've got her number.

WENDYE. Why am I'm not surprised.

MAC. The last flowers I picked out were for Ellie's service.

ANNE. Mac, these are fine. Lovely. You made the right choice.

TAYLOR. I'll go next. In keepin' with the theme - -

ANNE. We don't have a theme.

TAYLOR. We do now.

WENDYE. Well?

TAYLOR. Roosters, Hens and In-Betweens.

CORY. I love it.

WENDYE. You can't be serious.

TAYLOR. I am. I've got peacock feathers and duck and goose...even some turkey feathers. Got a great deal on feather dusters. Origin of the feathers is unknown.

BILLIE. What no horse feathers?

CORY. You made a funny.

WENDYE. No bales of hay and feed buckets?

TAYLOR. Wasn't in keepin' with my theme. I've borrowed bean bag and lawn chairs from Carl down at My Daddy's Pantry. Lord, those boys sure know pretty. Carl gave me exact instructions on how to drape the yards and yards of glitterin' fabric. I've got all the colors of the rainbow. It'll be

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prettier than a sunset on the river.

ANNE. It sounds fun. That's our goal, you know. Fun. Wendye, update on transportation, please.

WENDYE. Got loaner town cars from Osborn's Funeral Home. Eddy owed me a favor. I'm short one couple to drive. Waiting to hear back from Darlene and Nick.

MAC. Why didn't you call me? My company donates rental cars for community events.

WENDYE. First off, it's not your company. It's where you work...as a mechanic by the way. Second, it wasn't yours to do, Mac. I'm in charge of transportation arrangements.

MAC. The rent cars are newer. Prettier colors.

WENDYE. I've taken care of it.

MAC. I am not riding in an old black car that smells of death.

ANNE. Mac - -

MAC. What?

ANNE. Wendye's made the arrangements.

TAYLOR. Mac - -

MAC. What is it?

TAYLOR. You're not gonna be ridin' in an old black car. I've rented a limo. We'll all meet up here. It's a hot pink Hummer. You okay with pink? Cuz' there's a teal blue one that looks like the old Flamingo.

MAC. Pink is fine.

ANNE. Let's see...Cory, I need to get you the mailing labels for the invitations. Who will help fold the programs?

MAC. I can fold.

ANNE. Thanks.

WENDYE. I have a question.

TAYLOR. Brace yourself.

WENDYE. Mac, how much longer will you be in mourning?

ANNE. Wendye, let's meet for lunch tomorrow. I have literature at the clinic you might find enlightening regarding grief. There's a little something on depression you should read.

WENDYE. I've never had a close family member die. Old age runs in the family.

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CORY. Intelligence apparently lags behind.

WENDYE. It's a question, Cory.

MAC. I don't know, Wendye. Is it a problem for you? If I make you uncomfortable, I can damn well resign from the committee.

WENDYE. It's a little creepy. It's like you bring Ellie's ghost with you.

MAC. Damn, I should have just called you. I've walked up and down the rows of headstones at the cemetery. And out by the lake. I am desperate to feel Ellie again. Just once more. In a breeze...in the rain. And here you've sensed Ellie all along.

WENDYE. I haven't heard you laugh in months. You rarely smile. It doesn't fit you, Mac.

TAYLOR. She smiles when she feeds watermelon to the horses.

WENDYE. With people, Taylor. Mac, it's time to at least smile.

MAC. Good advice abounds.

CORY. I know what will make you smile. Let's go skinny dipping in Taylor's pond. During the day. High noon. No cover of darkness to hide our saggy breasts or jiggly bellies. Shakin', shimmyin' butts on parade.

TAYLOR. I'll provide the music.

ANNE. I'm a little more modest than I used to be.

CORY. It's for a good cause. I'll bet your breasts could make Mac smile.

TAYLOR. They make me smile.

BILLIE. I wanna come. I'll take the day off.

WENDYE. I'll bare my ass for Mac anytime.

CORY. We're only aiming for a smile, not wild hysteria.

WENDYE. Cory, you can kiss my ass.

CORY. It's always been a dream of mine.

MAC. Stop. You're trying too hard.

CORY. It's skinny dipping or a road trip to the French Quarter. Naked old women you know or naked old women you don't.

MAC. *(Slowly smiles.)* Fine. Old women I know. I'm gonna need some more aspirins. *(Blackout.)*

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SCENE 3

The following Saturday evening, Mac sits at a table in Edna's Cafe, drinking coffee, fiddling with keys, looks at watch, glances toward kitchen area.

MAC. Edna, I'm leaving. If Cory shows up, tell her I waited as long as I could. *(Rosemary enters.)*

MAC. Edna's in the back. *(Turns around and sees Rosemary.)*

ROSEMARY. I'm looking for you.

MAC. Now you've found me.

ROSEMARY. Mac, it's Rosemary.

MAC. I know who you are.

ROSEMARY. The funeral home forwarded your card. Thank you.

MAC. You're welcome. *(Turns to leave.)*

ROSEMARY. *(Gently takes hold of Mac's arm.)* I'd like to talk to you for a minute. Well, more than a minute.

MAC. I have a minute.

ROSEMARY. *(Looks at a table.)* This okay?

MAC. Fine.

ROSEMARY. *(Pulls out a chair and sits.)* I missed you at graduation.

MAC. Missed me at graduation. I never dreamed those would be the first words I heard you say, should we ever meet again. Not in my wildest dreams.

ROSEMARY. Alright. You never answered my letters.

MAC. Didn't get them.

ROSEMARY. Liar. I know your handwriting. You wrote Return to Sender on every letter. Where the hell did you go?

MAC. Where I was told...so no one would get hurt.

ROSEMARY. There is no such place.

MAC. You're absolutely right. There is no such place. Never was! Never will be! Never!

ROSEMARY. God, Mac - -

MAC. I'm sorry. That was unkind. I'm a lot of things, but I'm not mean. Can I get you a glass of water?

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ROSEMARY. I don't need any water.

MAC. Edna will run us off if we don't get a dish or mug of something.

ROSEMARY. Coffee then.

MAC. (*Gets cup of coffee from a self-serve table/counter.*) I'm hoping you still take cream with your coffee.

ROSEMARY. It's nice that you remembered.

MAC. Please take a sip. Edna's coffee has restorative powers.

ROSEMARY. Mac, I can't sleep. No, that's a lie. I slept after I got your card.

MAC. Great. Nothing like a sympathy card to take the edge off.

ROSEMARY. That wasn't it. I thought about that night...with you.

MAC. Oh, God, Rosemary.

ROSEMARY. I had to find you.

MAC. A simple thank you note would have been fine. No need to tell me in person.

ROSEMARY. My brother boards his horses at Taylor's. I called her. She said I might find you here.

MAC. What do you want?

ROSEMARY. I want you.

MAC. Wow.

ROSEMARY. I was living in Norway when Ellie died.

MAC. The obituary indicated that your husband . . .

ROSEMARY. Dan.

MAC. That Dan had been ill.

ROSEMARY. For quite some time. We knew the day would come when Dan needed more care than could be provided in Venezuela. His family insisted he return to their home in Rosedale. The illusion of a foreign illness suited his family. The death certificate indicated that Dan died of pneumonia. I knew different. I kissed his unshaven cheek and said goodbye in Caracas.

MAC. Just like that.

ROSEMARY. I hadn't seen Dan in over a year. He was ravaged by his illness. I was at peace with his leaving.

MAC. Well, you're a wonder.

ROSEMARY. Not so much a wonder. Dan no longer knew my name,

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much less that I was his wife. How did Ellie - -

MAC. Leave?

ROSEMARY. Okay. Die? Pass away? Take the last train to glory?

MAC. She was walking toward the house from her garden with a basket full of flowers. I watched her collapse a foot from the porch. She died six weeks later.

ROSEMARY. At least you were here to tell her goodbye.

MAC. I didn't tell Ellie goodbye.

ROSEMARY. You never told me either.

MAC. I can't do this.

ROSEMARY. Please wait.

MAC. My coping skills consist of shoveling manure at Taylor's barn on weekends and trying to sleep without a light on.

ROSEMARY. I've slept with the stove light on. Mac, let me hold you.

MAC. No. This is not going to happen.

ROSEMARY. You don't get to disappear this time.

MAC. I'm not the one who disappeared.

ROSEMARY. Did I say too much that night at the sorority house? You barely spoke.

MAC. I could barely breathe.

ROSEMARY. Tell me you still love me, Mac. *(Takes Mac's hand.)*

MAC. I loved you that night. You had cried off all of your make-up...holding an empty tissue box. When you pulled me to you...I've wondered how it would feel for you to touch me again.

ROSEMARY. How does it feel?

MAC. Familiar...comforting. Like I'm betraying Ellie. *(Gently releases Rosemary's hand.)*

ROSEMARY. I didn't come back to take Ellie's place. I came back for you.

MAC. You don't even know who I am.

ROSEMARY. I may not know what all has happened to you. But, I still know who you are.

MAC. I compared every woman to you. The looking got easier the more I drank. You'd be surprised how alcohol enhances the qualities of other women.

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ROSEMARY. There never was another woman for me.

MAC. Yet you married. Surely you loved Dan.

ROSEMARY. We grew up together. Of course I loved him. Everyone adored Dan. He was my escort at the cotillion. We reconnected at Daddy's funeral. After graduation, we were thrown together at family functions and social gatherings. It was unspoken, yet understood, by our families that we would marry one day. Dan and I didn't know then just how much we had in common. Kindred spirits you might say.

MAC. Looks like you orchestrated your life fairly well. Successful career...marriage.

ROSEMARY. It was a platonic partnership. In love, but not with each other. I loved you. I seduced you that night.

MAC. No. You didn't. I wanted you to kiss me.

ROSEMARY. Your lips were so soft. Still keep Chapstick in your pocket?

MAC. I do.

ROSEMARY. Still bathe with Ivory soap?

MAC. I do.

ROSEMARY. I will not make the same mistake.

MAC. This is a mistake.

ROSEMARY. Talking is a mistake?

MAC. Well...no.

ROSEMARY. Afraid we'll do more than talk?

MAC. I don't know. Yes.

ROSEMARY. Let me take you to the symphony. Or dinner at the lake. We can take this as slow as you want.

MAC. No.

ROSEMARY. A trip to the grocery then.

MAC. How long were you out of the country?

ROSEMARY. You've never watched couples in love shop.

MAC. I always thought grocery shopping was a chore.

ROSEMARY. As we slowly walk down the deli aisle, we'll pick up a small wheel of Brie...a jar of pear preserves...a couple of links of Boudin, maybe a box of Wellington water crackers. Figs...if they're in season. A little sweet...a little spicy. We'll grab a bunch of jasmine. The fragrance is

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most intense in the moonlight. I promise you'll never view shopping the same.

MAC. What kind of figs?

ROSEMARY. Black Mission.

MAC. I love those.

ROSEMARY. I remember. Shop with me tomorrow. You still have to buy groceries.

MAC. I eat out a lot.

ROSEMARY. You have to buy paper products. Laundry detergent. Garbage bags.

MAC. Are you making a list?

ROSEMARY. Life goes on, Mac.

MAC. It doesn't feel like it.

ROSEMARY. Because - -

MAC. Because Ellie and I didn't make it to the finish line.

ROSEMARY. Neither did we.

MAC. You sang a sultry jazz number up and down the halls at the sorority house. Oh, my God, you're still bewitching. I'm not ready for you. You're a complete stranger.

ROSEMARY. I am not a stranger.

MAC. That woman who sang those songs doesn't exist anymore. She left and never looked back. I don't think about her anymore.

ROSEMARY. I don't believe you. I have loved you all my life. I think you've always loved me.

CORY. (*Enters.*) Mac? Oh, my lord, it's the Rosemary.

ROSEMARY. Cory. You always did have bad timing.

MAC. Your minute's up. (*Exits.*)

ROSEMARY. Don't leave.

CORY. Damn. You can't make this shit up. What are you doing here?

ROSEMARY. Starting over.

CORY. Good for you.

ROSEMARY. Please, sit down and listen.

CORY. No, you listen. You broke her heart.

ROSEMARY. And she broke mine.

CORY. Who walked in on you that night?

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ROSEMARY. I don't know. It was two or three in the morning. Mac heard me crying and literally held me together.

CORY. Well, princess, word got out that you two weren't practicing the secret handshake.

ROSEMARY. We kissed and...

CORY. Mac never said what happened.

ROSEMARY. Surely you remember what a mess I was after Daddy's funeral. Momma called me every morning. She started with gasping sobs of how much she missed Daddy and ended with bitter angry screams of being left behind. I was unprepared to parent my mother. I desperately needed Mac. And she was gone. I thought I didn't have enough to offer her. That she didn't want to be around me. She moved and never said why.

CORY. Rosie, I was at your daddy's funeral. Mac asked that I go. I tried to reach you, but your brother and another man, I suspect it was Dan, held tightly to you and whisked you into the waiting limo after grave site services.

ROSEMARY. I never saw you. Cory, I would have - -

CORY. Mac wanted me to tell you she loved you. Did you forget about her? You never called.

ROSEMARY. I called. I left messages all over campus. She never called me. Wendye let slip that she heard Mac sometimes stayed at your trailer. I drove by that ugly blue thing dozens of times, hoping to see Mac's car parked out front.

CORY. Mac parked her car back by the wash house at the trailer park.

ROSEMARY. Making damn sure I couldn't find her.

CORY. I'll bet that's not all Wendye let slip. My God, Rosie, you were the most affectionate woman in the house. You hugged and kissed on everyone. People saw what they wanted to see. And then believed the lies. Mac was expelled from the sorority. She was packed and out the door in one day. Once word got to the dean of academic affairs, Mac never stepped foot on campus. All of her classes were conducted by correspondence. Mac got her diploma in the mail. Didn't have to rent a cap and gown like the rest of us. The university saw to that.

ROSEMARY. I never knew.

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CORY. The fear of losing the treasured donations from your family dictated the dean's actions. Your family's money was more important than Mac. A nobody from nowhere was not going to tarnish your precious image.

ROSEMARY. I see.

CORY. I doubt that you do.

ROSEMARY. I see that Mac's drowning in your pity.

CORY. And where in the world were you when Taylor and I were scrapping her off barroom floors and breaking up the fights?

ROSEMARY. Help me.

CORY. Oh, no.

ROSEMARY. I love Mac.

CORY. You can understand my skepticism when I tell you how odd it is that you decide you want to sing in our choir after your husband dies.

ROSEMARY. Dan and I lived very separate lives. Neither of us wanted children. Our careers were a priority. We opted for a marriage of convenience to please our families. Our arrangement was the perfect solution for us. We kept each other's secrets. Dan's seemingly sudden death was no surprise to me.

CORY. Sweet story. Let's put it to music.

ROSEMARY. How did I hurt you?

CORY. Damn you, Rosemary. Mac lost everything. Forced out of the sorority, banned from campus...and then she was yanked out of your life.

ROSEMARY. You could have dropped by the sorority house to tell me what happened.

CORY. No, I couldn't. Mac made me promise. Too much was riding on you not knowing.

ROSEMARY. Cory, you should have called. I can stop her hurting.

CORY. Can you?

ROSEMARY. I know how that must sound.

CORY. It sounds arrogant and self-serving.

ROSEMARY. Cory, I want us both to stop hurting. You didn't help me then. Please, help me, now. *(Blackout.)*

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