

The Best Little Youth Theatre in Lexington

by Jordan Beswick

THE BEST LITTLE YOUTH THEATRE IN LEXINGTON

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THE BEST LITTLE YOUTH THEATRE IN LEXINGTON

Special Thanks to

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THE BEST LITTLE YOUTH THEATRE IN LEXINGTON

The Best Little Youth Theatre in Lexington was first presented as part of the Garry Marshall Theatre 2021 New Works Festival; GMT Producer, Joseph Leo Bwarie, Festival Producer, Kimberly Arnold, Festival Producer, Jonathan Muñoz-Proulx, Directed by Mary Jo DuPrey, with the following cast:

Rose Portillo.....	Charmin Purell
Maile Flanagan.....	Caroline Cartwright
Julianna Ojeda.....	Cassie Rowlands
Ann Hu.....	Jolene Peters
Danielle Kennedy.....	Lucinda Collins

CAST: 5 Women

CHARMIN PURELL. 65.
CAROLINE CARTWRIGHT. 55.
CASSIE ROWLANDS. 45.
JOLENE PETERS. 35.
LUCINDA COLLINS. 80.

* A note on inclusivity: Diversity in casting is strongly encouraged.

TIME: February/March 2020

PLACE: Lexington

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SCENE 1

CHARMIN PURELL's spacious living room. There is a couch and two matching arm chairs with loud floral print upholstery. An end table to the right of the couch, on which sits a brass lamp with a stained glass lamp shade with a prominent Rooster image. In fact there are Rooster knickknacks everywhere you look. Clearly it's a theme. A coffee table. A well stocked gun rack adorns the left wall. To the right is a well stocked mini bar with bar stools. Charmin (65) enters stage left, dialing a number on her cell phone. She goes directly to her couch and sits.

CHARMIN. Hello, Connie? Charmin here. Have you spoken with Concord Theatricals yet? You have? Did we get the rights? That's wonderful. Oh, really? What stipulations? Of course we won't alter the piece. The whole point is for our children to have their horizons broadened. No better time to open one's mind than the present. Of course it's family friendly. Has Miss Dolly Parton ever done anything that wasn't? Besides, there are so few musicals with large female casts. The girls are tired of playing boy roles. Most of them anyway. They understandably want to play girls. True, but it's done in such a wholesome way. Not to mention it's historical. There was a time in this country when it was legal and while not entirely approved of, it served its purpose and dare I say, in many cases, saved marriages. Husbands got what they needed and good, upstanding, Christian women, could kiss their children with clean consciences. Tell Concord Theatricals that our Youth Theatre will deliver a Best Little Whorehouse in Texas to remember. Perfect. Call me back. Muah. *(She hangs up. The doorbell rings.)* Finally. *(Charmin stands and exits stage left. After a moment she re-enters with CAROLINE CARTWRIGHT (55) and CASSIE ROWLANDS (45), dressed country casually.)* Would either of you like something to drink?

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CAROLINE. Not at the moment.

CHARMIN. Cassie?

CASSIE. I'm good. Thank you. *(Caroline and Cassie sit on the couch.)*

CAROLINE. That was exactly what I needed to clear my head. I feel so refreshed.

CASSIE. Next time you decide to slip in to the gorilla exhibit please inform me first.

CHARMIN. She what?

CASSIE. Caroline and I were chaperones for Zach's class field trip to the zoo today. It ended with me talking the park authorities out of pressing charges against her.

CAROLINE. It wasn't premeditated.

CASSIE. When I saw him dragging you through the creek like that kid in the video all I could think was we're going to have another dead Harumbe on our hands and be vilified all over social media.

CHARMIN. Caroline!

CAROLINE. I never felt so free. So connected to nature. To the elements. To life.

CASSIE. I nearly soiled my undergarments.

CAROLINE. I was one with the gorilla.

CHARMIN. What possessed you?

CAROLINE. I don't know what came over me. One minute I'm standing there staring into space and the next I'm in the clutches of that beast.

CHARMIN. You're lucky to be alive.

CASSIE. I had to promise to fund a new ultra secure enclosure. It's going to cost me a small fortune.

CAROLINE. It's the first time in my life I was completely spontaneous.

CASSIE. Let's hope it's the last.

CHARMIN. Well, I have excellent news.

CAROLINE. Did we get the rights?

CHARMIN. Indeed, we did.

CASSIE. Are you sure Lexington is ready for this?

CHARMIN. Mark my words, The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas, will be the best little production our youth theatre has ever produced!

CASSIE. Do they not have a Junior version?

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CHARMIN. No. And even if they did, I wouldn't want to do it. No, this production is going to put us on the map, ladies.

CASSIE. Or have us removed from it.

CAROLINE. I think it's a spectacular idea.

CASSIE. You just spent the morning romancing an ape. Your judgment is questionable at best.

CAROLINE. Party poop. You worry too much. Relax. The kids are so excited.

CHARMIN. I made the movie mandatory viewing this past weekend. With parental supervision of course.

CASSIE. Of course. Just to be clear. All the parents are on board?

CHARMIN. Oh, there's been a bit of grumbling, but I told them to go home and watch all the videos of the little beauty pageants and talent competitions their kids took part in. If they could honestly say that their daughters didn't look and act like pre-pubescent prostitutes in them, I'd consider their complaints.

CAROLINE. And?

CHARMIN. Not a peep.

CAROLINE. Has Conrad accepted our offer to direct?

CHARMIN. He has. And I'm sure he'll do a splendid job.

CAROLINE. He always does.

CHARMIN. He's so inspired. Who but Conrad would think to place Shrek in 1940's Germany.

CAROLINE. Lord Farquaad as Hitler.

CHARMIN. Shrek's swamp, Auschwitz. The fairy tale creatures Jews, gays, gypsies, the handicapped.

CAROLINE. Challenged.

CHARMIN. Yes, of course, dear. Challenged. Fighting back and winning!

CAROLINE. It was absolutely glorious.

CHARMIN. And Fiona, a princess Anne Frank, trapped in her tower/attic.

CASSIE. You honestly think putting the fairy tale creatures in striped pajamas wasn't too much?

CHARMIN. Not at all.

CAROLINE. It was a perfect parallel.

CASSIE. Kids were sobbing.

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CAROLINE. By the end they were cheering.

CASSIE. Children should be allowed to be children.

CHARMIN. For how long, dear?

CAROLINE. Touché.

CASSIE. I'm sorry?

CHARMIN. Keep them children too long, they become adults like you.

CAROLINE. You infantilize everything.

CHARMIN. And everyone.

CASSIE. I do not.

CHARMIN. Conrad's a conceptual genius.

CASSIE. We've never had so many parents threaten to pull their kids from a show.

CAROLINE. That means we did something right. The farther the envelope's pushed—

CHARMIN. The greater the push back.

CASSIE. Their concerns were valid.

CHARMIN. Cassie, if you'd been a child weaned on Hogan's Heroes like us, you wouldn't have had a problem with it.

CASSIE. I've never seen Hogan's Heroes, but it sounds highly offensive.

CHARMIN. Why?

CASSIE. A situational comedy set in a German prisoner of war camp during world war two with the holocaust as its backdrop?

CHARMIN. It ran for six sidesplitting seasons and won innumerable Emmys.

CAROLINE. Clearly we weren't the only ones enjoying it.

CHARMIN. She probably hated Jojo Rabbit.

CAROLINE. I adore, Jojo!

CASSIE. I didn't see it.

CHARMIN. It should've won the Oscar!

CAROLINE. I agree 100%.

CHARMIN. And Life is Beautiful.

CAROLINE. She would've hated that too.

CHARMIN. If you can't laugh at the holocaust, what can you?

CASSIE. But the intended audience for those films wasn't grades K through 12.

CHARMIN. In my opinion they should be shown to elementary school

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children everywhere.

CASSIE. Why am I not surprised?

CAROLINE. Oh Cassie, you led protests against Teletubbies.

CASSIE. It was a recruitment tool!

CAROLINE. Because Tinky Winky carried a handbag?

CASSIE. The lavender one?

CAROLINE. He was purple. Plus they were all naked as jaybirds and, correct me if I'm wrong, not one of them had identifiable genitalia. Which leads me to believe they were all gender neutral.

CASSIE. And we wonder why young people today are gender confused.

CHARMIN. When Charles was five he asked me to buy him a stroller for his stuffed rabbit. His father objected of course. But as he'd been trained to object to such things, I forgave him and bought Charles one anyway. One day when we were in the park I noticed a few of the mothers casting disapproving looks our way. Finally one of them approached me and asked what I was teaching my son by getting him a stroller. Her implication was obvious. I looked her dead in the eye and replied, "How to be a father."

CAROLINE. Which he now is.

CHARMIN. And an excellent one, if I do say so myself.

CASSIE. You dodged a bullet.

CAROLINE. Pushing a stroller does not make you gay.

CHARMIN. Or watching a children's television show.

CASSIE. Studies suggest otherwise.

CAROLINE. What studies?

CASSIE. My Facebook page is loaded with the most informative memes! You should read them sometime. As a very protective parent myself, I understand.

CAROLINE. Marshall had the time of his life playing Pinocchio.

CASSIE. Because I made sure he had no idea what he was doing. I told him Pinocchio had the flu and was having fever dreams.

CHARMIN. Well the decision's been made and it's final.

CASSIE. Okay, but we need to be prepared for opposition.

CHARMIN. Noted.

CAROLINE. Charmin, who are you thinking for musical director?

CHARMIN. Conrad wants Lucinda.

CASSIE. But she's gotten so senile.

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CHARMIN. She's his mentor.

CASSIE. Half of the time she doesn't even play the right score.

CAROLINE. And she gets so angry when you correct her.

CASSIE. She's long past retirement age.

CAROLINE. To be fair, she's quite spry for 112. *(They all giggle.)*

CASSIE. Evil.

CHARMIN. How many times have you heard Conrad say he owes his entire career to her?

CAROLINE. Too many times to count.

CASSIE. She's definitely his blind spot.

CAROLINE. Blind, deaf and dumb spot.

CHARMIN. We were at the same charity event a couple of weeks back and as we were climbing the stairs to the ballroom Arnie Pankow was coming down and as he passed us he said hello. As soon as he was out of ear shot Lucinda said, "Who was that man?"

CAROLINE. No.

CHARMIN. Yes. I said, "Lucinda, that's Arnie Pankow. You were married to him."

CASSIE. She was hospitalized recently, wasn't she?

CAROLINE. It was gas.

CHARMIN. She recently went vegan.

CAROLINE. Too much fiber.

CASSIE. Why on earth would anyone go vegan at 80?

CHARMIN. Why would anyone go vegan, period?

CAROLINE. I was a vegetarian for three months once. It was hell. You can only be so creative with tofu and quinoa.

CHARMIN. I'll talk with Conrad and see if he'd be willing to consider hiring someone else and making Lucinda a consultant.

CAROLINE. Great idea.

CASSIE. Well, ladies, I have to run. Fred is taking off work early and we're going to Pigeon Forge for the long weekend.

CAROLINE. Dollywood?

CASSIE. Yes. For our anniversary.

CHARMIN. Keeping with the theme, I see.

CAROLINE. Will Miss Dolly be performing?

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CASSIE. She is! But listen to this! Fred's paid to have her serenade us personally!

CAROLINE. What money can buy.

CHARMIN. And who. *(Cassie stands, followed by the others.)*

CASSIE. I'll call you as soon as I get back.

CHARMIN. Perfect.

CAROLINE. Have fun. *(They all hug.)*

CHARMIN. I'll see you out. *(They exit. Caroline sits, pulls out her cell phone and checks her Facebook page. She scrolls down it until she sees something of particular interest.)*

CAROLINE. Ah, Facebook. Let's see who's posted what. Oh Lord, Cynthia's at it again. What's she ranting about now? "No I'm not ready to play nice. No kumbay- f-ing-ya for me!" My question for you is, were you ever?! Poster child for mental stability you are most definitely not. Scroll on, scroll on. Hm. Okay. *(She quickly dials.)* Hello, Frances? It's your mother. Would you do me a favor? Go into the garage and get the three bikes that have been sitting there collecting dust for the last several years, hose them off and run them across the street to Sherry. She posted on Facebook that she's looking for someone to donate bikes for a friend of hers with three Foster kids. Oh please, they're the bikes you and your brothers rode when you were kids. If you were going to sell them for extra cash you would've done it by now. Dig down deep and find some charitable spirit in yourself. Then create some. And get your brothers to help you. I promise it'll make you all feel good when you hear how happy it makes those kids. Then let me rephrase, do it now or you can kiss your allowances goodbye and your household chores will quadruple. Thank you, sweetheart. Oh, and tell her I need my gun back. Okay. See you soon. *(She hangs up as Charmin enters).*

CHARMIN. That Cassie.

CAROLINE. She means well.

CHARMIN. Bless her heart. I'm going to make myself a pimento cheese sandwich. Want one?

CAROLINE. I'm fine. Thank you. I... Need to talk with you about something.

CHARMIN. Of course. *(Charmin sits.)*

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CAROLINE. It's probably nothing.

CHARMIN. But?

CAROLINE. Just my overactive imagination.

CHARMIN. But?

CAROLINE. God knows, I've been guilty of jumping to false conclusions before.

CHARMIN. True. But?

CAROLINE. I have it on pretty good authority.

CHARMIN. That?

CAROLINE. You have to promise you won't say anything.

CHARMIN. You have my word. *(Caroline closes her eyes and takes a very deep breath).*

CAROLINE. Fred.

CHARMIN. Cassie's husband?

CAROLINE. Is running an illegal side business.

CHARMIN. Doing what?

CAROLINE. Selling opioid prescriptions. I hear it's a cash cow.

CHARMIN. But he doesn't need the money.

CAROLINE. Seems he has a huge gambling problem.

CHARMIN. He's a gambler?

CAROLINE. No. That's the problem. He sucks. His losses are astronomical. Everything he makes he loses. In fact, from what I understand, he loses faster than he earns.

CHARMIN. He's going to end up in prison.

CAROLINE. It's a very real possibility.

CHARMIN. Cassie has no idea?

CAROLINE. None. And from what I understand, Fred suspects the noose is tightening. *(Charmin stands).*

CHARMIN. The Feds are on to him?

CAROLINE. That's his fear. Prescription drug fraud is a third or fourth degree felony. A third degree felony can be punished by three to five years in prison, and a fourth degree felony can be punished by up to eighteen months in prison. Fines can be up to \$30,000.

CHARMIN. You Google this?

CAROLINE. Yes.

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CHARMIN. I need a drink.

CAROLINE. It's not even noon.

CHARMIN. It's a crises. Maker's Mark?

CAROLINE. Do you have coke?

CHARMIN. Yes.

CAROLINE. Then yes. A double. With one ice cube. *(Charmin makes their drinks.)*

CHARMIN. Poor, Cassie.

CAROLINE. I have a feeling this whole Dollywood Anniversary trip—

CHARMIN. Is—

CAROLINE. One last fabulous time before everything goes to hell in a handbag.

CHARMIN. Tinky Winky's handbag.

CAROLINE. Stop.

CHARMIN. Like an anniversary cruise on the Titanic.

CAROLINE. With Miss Dolly Parton headlining.

CHARMIN. Who in the world did you hear this from?

CAROLINE. Nita Howe. *(Charmin finishes making the drinks, picks them up, takes Caroline hers, and sits.)*

CHARMIN. Caroline, you know as well as I do that Nita Howe is a pathological liar. And an alcoholic. *(They drink.)*

CHARMIN. Not to mention Nita hates Cassie because Fred left her, for her.

CAROLINE. True. But I believe her.

CHARMIN. Well if it is true it's going to crush Cassie. *(Charmin takes out her cell phone and dials.)*

CAROLINE. Who are you calling?

CHARMIN. Fred.

CAROLINE. Charmin, you can't tell him you know anything about this.

CHARMIN. I don't intend to. I'm going to place an order as someone else.

CAROLINE. Charmin Purell!

CHARMIN. I want confirmation. And you should too. It's not right to condemn a man purely because his ex-wife said he did it. Especially when we both know she's got an axe to grind.

CAROLINE. Won't he recognize your number? *(Charmin hangs up.)*

CHARMIN. You're right. I didn't think about that. Poop. *(The doorbell*

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rings.)

CAROLINE. It's gonna be a hard candy Christmas at Cassie's. (*Charmin stands.*)

CHARMIN. Feel free to freshen that up. (*Charmin exits. Caroline stands, goes to the wet bar and fixes herself another drink. Charmin enters with JOLENE PETERS (35), a colorful country gal in workout clothes and sporting a walking calorie counter on her wrist. Jolene jogs in place wherever she stands.*) Drink, Jolene?

JOLENE. I can't. I have to be coherent till the kids go down.

CAROLINE. Hey, Jolene.

JOLENE. Caroline.

CHARMIN. Whip me up another, will you dear?

CAROLINE. Coming up.

JOLENE. I will have some Cheerwine if you've got it.

CHARMIN. Caroline, there should be some in the refrigerator underneath the counter.

CAROLINE. You got it.

JOLENE. Girls, let me tell you about the date I had last night.

CHARMIN. How many does that make this week?

JOLENE. I'm a comparison shopper. Until I settle, I sample 'em all.

CAROLINE. (*Delivering everyone's drinks.*)

JOLENE. Much obliged.

CHARMIN. So tell us.

CAROLINE. We're all ears. (*Caroline sits beside Charmin.*)

JOLENE. Amazin' guy. Benji. I met him at Larry's garage when I took my car in to get new tires last week. He's a mechanic there. I was outside smokin' a cigarette.

CAROLINE. I thought you were vaping.

JOLENE. I was. But I started readin' about all those people dyin' from it so I was like, hell no, if I'm gonna die from smokin' it'll be from good old fashion tobacco. Anyway, I was outside smokin' and he and I got to talkin' and he said he liked my laugh.

CHARMIN. You do have a nice laugh.

CAROLINE. I've always thought so too.

CHARMIN. Infectious.

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JOLENE. I love to laugh. And he loves to tell jokes so right off the bat, somethin' in common.

CHARMIN. Funny?

JOLENE. Does a fat baby fart?

CAROLINE. I assume that's a yes?

JOLENE. And he keeps 'em comin'. Non stop. Hardly gives a girl a chance to catch her breath. He told this one. Shoot, how does it go? Oh yeah. How do you make holy water? You boil the hell out of it! (*Jolene laughs uproariously.*)

CHARMIN. Clever.

JOLENE. Oh, and, what's the number one cause of divorce? Marriage!

CAROLINE. Sounds fun.

JOLENE. He is. We really hit it off so he asked me out and I said, hell yeah. So I had my sister to watch my kids and I went to his place. Besides bein' a mechanic he's a short order cook so he said he wanted to cook for me.

CHARMIN. A man of many talents.

CAROLINE. And chivalrous.

JOLENE. It was nothing fancy. A well done steak, twice baked potato and a green salad, but it was tasty and thoughtful as hell. Shoot, when was the last time either of your husbands cooked you dinner?

CHARMIN. The honest answer to that is never, Jolene.

CAROLINE. Sounds like a keeper.

JOLENE. He had candles burnin', Lil Nas X playin', and good God almighty, he's got the most penetratin' hazel eyes. When he looks at a woman she knows she's been looked at. I am not exaggeratin' when I say it could not have been goin' better. And then, boom! My meal hit my lower intestine.

CAROLINE. So fast?

JOLENE. My metabolism knows neither rhyme nor reason. Well, to cover the noise I launched, loudly, into the final chorus of Old Town Road. Thank you, Lil Nas and Billy Ray.

CHARMIN. God bless them both.

CAROLINE. And the horse they rode in on.

JOLENE. I then politely excused myself and imagine my relief when I saw a can of floral spray on the back of his commode.

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CAROLINE. How many single men—

CHARMIN. Single *straight* men.

CAROLINE. Think to do that?

CHARMIN. Color me impressed.

CAROLINE. Very.

JOLENE. *And*, I heard him turn up the music.

CAROLINE. If you don't marry him, I swear I'll divorce my husband and marry him myself.

JOLENE. It felt like everythin' I'd ever eaten in my entire adult life came pourin' out. Thankfully it was solid. But there was so dang much it wouldn't all flush. After the third try I decided to take matters into my own hands. Literally. I opened his bathroom window, scooped up everythin' that was left and threw it outside.

CAROLINE. Jolene!!

CHARMIN. Please God, tell me you used toilet paper!

JOLENE. The thought crossed my mind, but how many dogs do you know wipe their butt? 'Cause that was the impression I was goin' for. Doggie doo.

CAROLINE. Does he have a dog?

JOLENE. No. Luckily for me the bathroom window faced his front yard.

CHARMIN. So it could be a stray.

JOLENE. Bingo. (*Jolene finally stops jogging and plops herself down on the couch.*) Then I washed and sanitized my hands thoroughly and rejoined him.

CAROLINE. I'm assuming he's what's motivating you to exercise?

JOLENE. Partly. I'm also doin' it 'cause my kids are scared I'm gonna up and die on 'em.

CHARMIN. You're not fat.

CAROLINE. We could all afford to exercise more.

JOLENE. When I had my annual physical last week my doctor told me if I wasn't careful I'd find myself at risk for type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and a stroke.

CHARMIN. Scary.

JOLENE. So. I ain't takin' no chances.

CHARMIN. (*Raising her glass, a toast.*) To taking our health seriously.

CAROLINE. (*Raising hers.*) Here here. (*Jolene raises her glass, they drink.*)

JOLENE. I really think this could turn into somethin' serious. But I'm not

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gonna rush it.

CHARMIN. Excellent idea.

JOLENE. Anyhoo, I am so excited to get to work choreographin' this play. You did secure the rights, didn't you?

CHARMIN. I did.

JOLENE. Kinda gives a whole new meanin' to Hoedown. (*Charmin takes a deep breath, shakes her head.*)

CAROLINE. (*To Charmin.*) She's not wrong. (*Black out.*)

SCENE TWO

Same living room. Charmin and Caroline sit on the couch opposite LUCINDA COLLINS (80), who's seated in the arm chair. Lucinda is a bit fidgety.

CHARMIN. Thank you, Lucinda, for humoring us like this.

LUCINDA. Is that a persimmon tree in your front yard?

CHARMIN. Yes, it is.

LUCINDA. Would you mind if I come by with a basket when they start bearing fruit and take some? My husband loves my persimmon pie.

CHARMIN. Of course, dear. But you've been gathering persimmons from my tree for at least twelve years.

CAROLINE. And your husband died last July.

CHARMIN. Caroline.

CAROLINE. Too soon?

CHARMIN. We were hoping Conrad would join us but one of the girls he coaches asked him to accompany her to that model and talent convention in New York they do every year.

CAROLINE. Those things are such scams.

CHARMIN. Not entirely.

CAROLINE. Granted there have been a few success stories, but come on.

CHARMIN. Yes, those types of events are typically less about discovering actual talent than they are profiting off of desperate, delusional people's dreams.

CAROLINE. Exactly.

CHARMIN. But I think you're being too harsh. They may not be

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everything they're promoted to be, but you have to admit that everyone who participates gets a valuable learning experience.

LUCINDA. Is that a persimmon tree in your front yard?

CHARMIN. Yes, Lucinda, it is. And you can have all the persimmons you want. If that's why you're asking.

LUCINDA. Thank you. I make the best persimmon pie. I bake everything from scratch. It's not the same if it's not.

CAROLINE. You're absolutely right. Nothing's better than homemade.

CHARMIN. So, Lucinda. Let's discuss our next show.

LUCINDA. CATS?

CHARMIN. No, dear. Whorehouse.

LUCINDA. Whose house?

CAROLINE. Whorehouse, Lucinda.

CHARMIN. Best Little Whorehouse in Texas.

LUCINDA. I was born and raised in Texas. The Porn Star State.

CHARMIN. Lone Star State.

LUCINDA. Did you live there?

CHARMIN. No.

LUCINDA. All right then.

CAROLINE. Have you and Conrad discussed it?

LUCINDA. When I was a girl I sang in a whorehouse. They weren't called that then. They were cat houses. Or brothels. Or bordellos.

CAROLINE. She doesn't remember her husband died, but she remembers that.

LUCINDA. The one where I sang was called the Chicken Ranch.

CHARMIN. *The* Chicken Ranch?

LUCINDA. I learned to play the piano there too.

CAROLINE. The Chicken Ranch *was* the best little whorehouse in Texas!

LUCINDA. I wouldn't know only having sung at that one.

CHARMIN. Lucinda, she's talking about the play. The musical. And now you're telling us that you've actually been there?

CAROLINE. And performed there?

LUCINDA. Where?

CHARMIN. The Chicken Ranch.

LUCINDA. Great place. Rowdy crowd. But appreciative. Very

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appreciative.

CAROLINE. How old were you?

LUCINDA. When?

CHARMIN. When you started singing there?

LUCINDA. Six, seven.

CAROLINE. That young?

LUCINDA. They called me their own personal Shirley Temple.

CAROLINE. Where was your mother?

LUCINDA. Around.

CHARMIN. Did she work there?

LUCINDA. Did who work where?

CAROLINE. Your mother.

LUCINDA. What about her?

CHARMIN. Did she work at the Chicken Ranch?

LUCINDA. Oh, since before I was born.

CAROLINE. As a prostitute?

CHARMIN. Caroline?! Boundaries!

LUCINDA. She ran the place.

CHARMIN. Miss Mona?

LUCINDA. Who?

CAROLINE. The madam?

LUCINDA. I'm lost.

CHARMIN. The woman who ran the Chicken Ranch?

LUCINDA. My mother didn't run a chicken ranch. She worked in a whorehouse.

CHARMIN. Yes, dear, we've established that. A whorehouse in Texas.

CAROLINE. The best whorehouse in Texas.

CHARMIN. Which is the basis of the musical, The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas.

LUCINDA. It wasn't little. It was quite grand.

CAROLINE. Little isn't literal.

LUCINDA. It isn't what?

CHARMIN. Skip it.

LUCINDA. Is that a persimmon tree in the front yard? *(The doorbell rings. Charmin stands and exits to answer the door.)*

THE BEST LITTLE YOUTH THEATRE IN LEXINGTON

LUCINDA. I love persimmon pie.

CAROLINE. You don't say (*Charmin enters with Jolene.*)

JOLENE. Do you all think Carole Baskin killed her husband?

CAROLINE. You've been watching that too?

JOLENE. I'm addicted.

CHARMIN. What's that?

JOLENE. Tiger King on Netflix. It's insane.

CAROLINE. Carol's as bad as Joe.

JOLENE. Worse.

CAROLINE. She's such a hypocrite.

JOLENE. And she killed someone.

CAROLINE. Were you not shocked when Travis shot himself?

JOLENE. I shit myself.

CHARMIN. Is he the Tiger King?

JOLENE. Joe's the Tiger King.

CAROLINE. Joe Exotic.

CHARMIN. His name is Joe Exotic?

JOLENE. He changed it.

CHARMIN. Then who's Travis?

JOLENE. One of Joe's husbands.

LUCINDA. Is that legal?

CHARMIN. Go back to sleep, dear.

JOLENE. Every one of them is a narcissistic, sociopathic, con artist.

CAROLINE. I think he truly did love those animals.

JOLENE. Caroline, he shot his tigers.

CHARMIN. He did what?

JOLENE. He killed five tigers. *And* there've been multiple investigations and reports that his "zoo" had filthy cages, the animals didn't get veterinary care, and he didn't think twice about ripping newborn tigers away from their mamas.

CAROLINE. Carol was a terrorist in that man's life. Some people are so evil. They'll call your friends and contacts and spread lies about you. They steal your life while pretending to be a saint.

LUCINDA. Some people deserve to have their lives stolen from them.

CHARMIN. I feel like mine's being stolen now.

THE BEST LITTLE YOUTH THEATRE IN LEXINGTON

CAROLINE. That kind of terrorism affects you mentally.

JOLENE. He named two of his cubs Tess and Tickles.

LUCINDA. Sweet.

JOLENE. Put 'em together.

LUCINDA. Tess. Tickles.

JOLENE. Closer and quicker.

LUCINDA. Testicles.

CHARMIN. Oh my.

LUCINDA. I'm a senior citizen and I'll never live to see a female president.

CHARMIN. Testicles took you there?

LUCINDA. We will always be blamed for handing that damn apple to Adam and mankind being banished from paradise, ladies.

CAROLINE. Okey dokey.

JOLENE. What's ironic, is that Joe wanted to be famous so bad and now because of this show he's super famous but he's in prison.

CHARMIN. For killing the tigers?

LUCINDA. It's a frat boy, Animal House, world.

CAROLINE. For hiring a hit man to kill Carol.

JOLENE. For three thousand dollars.

CHARMIN. No legitimate hitman charges \$3000.

LUCINDA. I was at Woodstock at 18.

CAROLINE. He was set up!

LUCINDA. In my papagallos.

JOLENE. Caroline, he videotaped it all!

CHARMIN. I remember those shoes.

CAROLINE. I wish someone would interfere and help him get out.

CHARMIN. Intervene.

LUCINDA. Singing with Country Joe and the Fish.

CAROLINE. What?

LUCINDA. Give me an F!

CHARMIN. You wish someone would intervene and help him get out.

LUCINDA. What's that spell?

CHARMIN. Not interfere.

LUCINDA. Peter, Paul and Mary sang

JOLENE. They all need to be locked up.

THE BEST LITTLE YOUTH THEATRE IN LEXINGTON

LUCINDA. Where have all the flowers gone?

JOLENE. For life!

LUCINDA. The hippies?

JOLENE. But Joe most of all.

LUCINDA. The NAM generation?

JOLENE. If only for groomin' those underage boys to be his meth addicted sex slaves.

CAROLINE. They were grown men.

LUCINDA. They're all living in zillion dollar mansions in Greenwich diapering great grandchildren.

JOLENE. They were nineteen!

LUCINDA. It's revolting.

CAROLINE. Years past the legal age of consent.

LUCINDA. Vomiting in my soul right now.

JOLENE. Legal schmegal.

CHARMIN. Entenmann's?

JOLENE. His ego is poisonous.

LUCINDA. Oh, yes please.

CAROLINE. Childhood trauma led to his downfall. (*Charmin stands and exits*).

JOLENE. Bull crap!

CAROLINE. What he needed was a good therapist and some love.

JOLENE. Well, hate him or love him, the man can sing. (*Charmin enters with Entenmann's and small plates, which she sets on the coffee table. As she puts pastry on a plate and hands it to Lucinda.*)

CHARMIN. It appears Joe Exotic is also guilty of hijacking our production meeting.

LUCINDA. Thank you.

JOLENE. Sorry.

LUCINDA. (*Nibbling on her heavenly pastry.*) Mmmmmm.

CAROLINE. Watch the show.

JOLENE. You'll understand.

LUCINDA. Charmin, is that a per—

CHARMIN. Lucinda, if you mention that God forsaken persimmon tree one more time I'll feed *you* to the tigers!

THE BEST LITTLE YOUTH THEATRE IN LEXINGTON

LUCINDA. I love persimmons.

JOLENE. Did you know there's a tree just filled with them out front?

CAROLINE. *(Quickly placing her hand on Jolene's arm.)* Don't.

LUCINDA. Yum, yum, yum.

CHARMIN. Lucinda, has Conrad spoken to you about being a consultant for our next show?

LUCINDA. May I have another?

CHARMIN. Of course, dear. *(As Charmin takes Lucinda's plate and gets her another pastry.)*

CAROLINE. Has he? *(Charmin hands Lucinda her plate.)*

LUCINDA. Has he what?

JOLENE. Talked to you about bein' our consultant? *(Lucinda nibbles.)*

LUCINDA. Heaven.

CHARMIN. Has Conrad asked you to consult on our show?

LUCINDA. You mean music direct?

CHARMIN. No, dear.

LUCINDA. I'm confused.

JOLENE. You?

CHARMIN. We thought it best that this time we hire someone else to do that and retain you as a consultant.

LUCINDA. Why?

CAROLINE. We're too dependent on you.

CHARMIN. It's dangerous to make oneself dependent on any one person.

JOLENE. You've been doin' our shows for so long—

CAROLINE. Excellently.

CHARMIN. A genuinely brilliant job.

LUCINDA. I do my best.

CAROLINE. And because of that we never thought to look elsewhere.

JOLENE. And we started thinkin'.

CHARMIN. What if you got sick?

CAROLINE. Or were unavailable?

JOLENE. Because you got another job.

CHARMIN. It's in our best interest to cultivate relationships with other music directors so we have options.

CAROLINE. Just in case.

THE BEST LITTLE YOUTH THEATRE IN LEXINGTON

LUCINDA. I'll always make myself available for your shows.

CHARMIN. And we appreciate that.

CAROLINE. Enormously.

JOLENE. But—

CHARMIN. It's not fair to you.

JOLENE. Or us.

CAROLINE. So we've decided it's time to—

JOLENE. Cut the umbilical cord.

CHARMIN. So to speak.

LUCINDA. I'll think about it.

CAROLINE. Think about what?

LUCINDA. What you said.

CAROLINE. What did we say?

LUCINDA. About what?

CHARMIN. You're going to make a marvelous music consultant for us.

CAROLINE. Thank you so much, Lucinda.

JOLENE. You've made our day.

LUCINDA. Did I agree?

CAROLINE. Do you make the best persimmon pie in Lexington?

LUCINDA. *(Excitedly.)* I do!

JOLENE. I don't think I've ever seen you more excited about anythin' in my life.

LUCINDA. Then I best get to work. *(Lucinda starts to stand but struggles. Charmin and Caroline stand and help her up off the couch. Jolene stands and makes her way to the bar. She begins mixing up some cocktails.)* Thank you, ladies.

CHARMIN. I'll see you out.

CAROLINE. Bye, Lucinda.

JOLENE. And thank you ever so.

LUCINDA. *(Exiting.)* Did I sing well, Mama?

CHARMIN. *(Exiting with her.)* Beautifully, dear. *(Caroline goes to the bar, sits on a bar stool and watches Jolene mix the drinks.)*

CAROLINE. Mission accomplished.

JOLENE. We all deserve a nice stiff one to celebrate. *(Charmin enters and joins the others at the bar.)*

THE BEST LITTLE YOUTH THEATRE IN LEXINGTON

CHARMIN. I feel guilty.

JOLENE. It'll pass.

CAROLINE. You handled it with your usual aplomb.

JOLENE. A-what?

CAROLINE. Aplomb.

JOLENE. That French?

CAROLINE. No.

CHARMIN. It means, self-confidence.

CAROLINE. Or assurance.

CHARMIN. Especially when in a demanding situation. *(Jolene serves up the cocktails.)*

JOLENE. I'll drink to that. Hell I'll drink to pretty much anythin'.

CHARMIN. A toast. *(They all raise their glasses.)*

CAROLINE. To a job well done. *(They clink glasses and start to drink. The doorbell rings.)*

CHARMIN. Mary mother of— Coming! *(Charmin storms off. They other two shrug their shoulders and drink. Cassie enters sobbing hysterically, followed by Charmin. Cassie sits on the couch, Charmin sits beside her and puts her arm around her. Caroline goes to the couch and sits on the other side of Cassie. Jolene grabs a box of Kleenex from behind the bar and goes to the arm chair and sits, placing the Kleenex on the coffee table.)* Cassie, honey, calm down.

JOLENE. Breathe, darlin'. *(Grabbing a Kleenex and handing it to Cassie.)*

CAROLINE. Here, sweetheart. Blow your nose. *(Cassie takes the Kleenex and does.)*

CHARMIN. What's wrong?

JOLENE. Was Dolly a no show?

CASSIE. She was there.

CAROLINE. How did she look?

CASSIE. Gorgeous. *(She sobs more.)*

CHARMIN. Take a deep breath.

CASSIE. I can't.

CHARMIN. Yes, you can. A big deep breath. *(Cassie takes a breath.)*

CHARMIN. Deeper.

(Cassie takes a deeper breath.)

THE BEST LITTLE YOUTH THEATRE IN LEXINGTON

CHARMIN. Good. Again. *(Cassie takes another one.)*

CHARMIN. Even deeper. *(Cassie takes one more, extremely deep breath).*
Very good. Now. Tell us what's wrong.

CASSIE. Can I have a drink?

CHARMIN. Of course. Jolene? *(Jolene stands.)*

JOLENE. What can I get you, sweetie?

CASSIE. Something strong.

JOLENE. You got it. *(Jolene makes her way to the bar and sets to work.)*

CAROLINE. We're here for you.

CASSIE. I know and I appreciate it. It's just so hard to say.

CAROLINE. Did something happen at Dollywood?

CASSIE. Yes. I wish you could have seen the suite Fred booked for us. It had everything. So romantic. There were rose petals strewn everywhere. A jacuzzi bathtub. Champagne on ice. And the view. The man thought of everything.
(Delivering her drink).

JOLENE. Here you go, Cass.

CASSIE. Thanks.

JOLENE. Anytime.

CHARMIN. And Miss Dolly. *(Cassie sniffles.)*

CASSIE. A vision in rhinestones. And her voice. She really does have the voice of an angel.

CAROLINE. An indisputable fact.

CHARMIN. Did she sing—

CASSIE. She did. I will always love you.

JOLENE. If I knew Miss Dolly Parton would be singin' that song directly to me? You best believe I'd be sportin' a pair of extra absorbent Depends.

'Cause girl, I'd be pissin' all over my damn self.

CHARMIN. Thank you, Jolene.

CASSIE. But between bittersweet memories, that is all I'm taking with me, and so, goodbye, please, don't cry, a team of federal law enforcement agents tackled Fred, cuffed him and took him away.

CAROLINE. Lord have mercy.

CASSIE. You know she never missed a beat. Kept right on singing as if nothing happened. She simply pivoted and sang the remainder of the song to a young couple on their honeymoon.

THE BEST LITTLE YOUTH THEATRE IN LEXINGTON

CAROLINE. What did Fred do?

CASSIE. They said he was selling opioid prescriptions. But Fred's a successful doctor. He makes a lot of money. I mean, *a lot* of money. There is no earthly reason he'd do something like that.

JOLENE. Maybe it's a case of mistaken identity.

CASSIE. I think one of his nurses stole a prescription pad and set up a little side business for herself and when she got caught said he was masterminding it.

CHARMIN. If that's the case then it's just a matter of time before he's cleared of the charges.

CAROLINE. Since you have no choice but to wait it out, thank God you have Whorehouse.

JOLENE. Yes. You can focus all of your attention on that.

CHARMIN. And we'll make sure to keep you busy.

CASSIE. You all are so good to me.

CHARMIN. We love you.

JOLENE. And always will.

CAROLINE. Silly goose.

CHARMIN. You'd do the same for us.

JOLENE. If your boots were on our stinky feet.

CASSIE. I love you all so much.

CHARMIN. Group hug.

CAROLINE. Great idea.

JOLENE. Haul it in. *(They all hug.)*

CHARMIN. Are you okay staying on your own at home?

CASSIE. Yes.

CHARMIN. You and Marshall are more than welcome to stay here with us.

CASSIE. Thank you, but for Marshall's sake it's better if I don't disrupt his routine. At times like this constancy is key.

JOLENE. Amen.

CHARMIN. I'm so sorry, Cassie. *(Cassie takes Charmin's hand and squeezes it.)*

CASSIE. I'll get through this.

CHARMIN. Yes you will.

CASSIE. It'll all be fine.

THE BEST LITTLE YOUTH THEATRE IN LEXINGTON

CAROLINE. I've never been so sure of anything in my life.

JOLENE. Y'all wanna hear about my second date with Benji?

CHARMIN. Jolene.

CAROLINE. Timing.

JOLENE. You can say no.

CASSIE. It's fine. It'll distract me. *(As Charmin stands and goes to the bar.)*

CHARMIN. You know what? I'm going to break out a bottle of the good champagne and we're going to have ourselves a celebration.

CASSIE. Just what the doctor ordered. *(Charmin pulls a bottle of Cristal Champagne from the refrigerator and places it on the counter.)*

CAROLINE. Cristal?!

JOLENE. Ooooooooooooo, Lordt. I'm gonna enjoy that. *(Charmin gets a silver tray and four Champagne flutes and takes it all to the coffee table.)*

CHARMIN. I've been saving it for a special occasion.

CASSIE. So, Jolene. Spill. *(Charmin starts to open the bottle.)*

JOLENE. Besides bein' a mechanic and short order cook, the man's a carpenter. He showed me his shop. You should see his woodwork. The things that man can do with his hands. Long story short, he said he'd build our sets. For free. *(Charmin pops the cork and pours.)*

CHARMIN. Just last night I was on my knees praying to God for a replacement for Hank. I didn't tell you girls, but last week he had a massive heart attack and can't do our show.

CAROLINE. The power of prayer.

CASSIE. Thank you Lord for troublesome situations. The peace they can produce far outweighs the trials we endure.

JOLENE. "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus." - Fallopian 4:19

CHARMIN. It's, Philippians, dear.

JOLENE. What I say?

CAROLINE. Fallopian.

CHARMIN. A Fallopian tube transports the egg from the ovary to the uterus.

CAROLINE. The womb.

JOLENE. Does change things a bit, don't it?

CHARMIN. To great friends. *(They all raise their glasses, toast and drink.)*

THE BEST LITTLE YOUTH THEATRE IN LEXINGTON

Cassie starts to cry, they all embrace her. Black out.)

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