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Norman Maine Publishing

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Norman Maine Publishing

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*To the ladies
of Old Fort United Methodist Church
for their inspiration
and laughter.*

HARMONY ROMANCES

ROMANTIC COMEDY. The hilarious church ladies who make up Harmony Church's funeral committee are back in this side-splitting sequel to *The Ladies of Harmony*. This time, the church ladies are in charge of planning a wedding instead of a funeral. Leah, a fellow church lady, is getting married to Howard, a man she hasn't seen in years and with whom she has had only an e-mail and telephone relationship. When Howard finally arrives in town, the church ladies discover that the liver spots on his hand form a pentagram, which they suspect could indicate he may be a warlock or a demon. And to make matters worse, the church ladies have to decorate the church in the bride's chosen color scheme—varicose-vein purple and bedpan white. On the day of the wedding, Howard, who ate at a Mexican restaurant at the rehearsal dinner the night before, suffers a major spastic colon flare-up and disappears into the church's bathroom. Now it's up to the church ladies to find a way to get Howard out of the bathroom before he misses his own wedding!

Performance Time: Approximately 75-90 minutes.

CHARACTERS

(3 M, 5 F)

MAUD: Widowed church lady who heads the funeral committee at Harmony Church.

RUSSELL: Church janitor who has a crush on Maud and whose social graces are not the best but tends to be charming in spite of himself.

LEAH: Church lady and lifetime spinster who is engaged to Howard.

HOWARD: Engaged to Leah; excitement and Mexican food tend to overwhelm his spastic colon.

ADDIE: Sweet, lovable church lady who tends to say things without thinking.

GRACE: Church lady who says what she thinks regardless of the consequences.

PASTOR BOB: Pastor who tries to keep the church ladies under control.

MARILYN: Newly married to Pastor Bob, a former lawyer who hasn't gotten the hang of being a preacher's wife.

NOTE: All characters should appear to be in their 50s or 60s.

SETTING

Harmony Church's fellowship hall, located in the basement of the church.

SET

Harmony Church's fellowship hall. Several tables and chairs are scattered about the stage. AT SL, there are doors leading to the restrooms. At USR, there are several steps representing the stairway that leads to the church's fellowship hall, which is located in the basement of the church. At USC across the center portion of the set, there is a counter. A swinging door leads to the kitchen and there is an exit to the storage room.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I: Fellowship hall of Harmony Church, Monday morning.

Intermission

ACT II: Fellowship hall of Harmony Church, day of Leah and Howard's wedding.

PROPS

Broom	Plastic cups
Cleaning supplies, misc.	White suit or pantsuit, for Leah
Coffee cups	2 Identical dresses, for Addie and Grace
Purse, for Grace	Dress, for Grace
Napkins	Wet cloth
Wristwatch, for Maud	2 Boutonnieres, for Russell and Howard
Purse, for Maud	Corsage, for Maud
Washable black markers	Dark suit jacket and pants, purple tie, dress shirt, for Howard
Papers	
Wedding cake	
Paper bag	
Punchbowl	
Glass punch glasses	

HARMONY ROMANCES

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SOUND EFFECT

Wedding march

**“MOST MEN ARE BETTER
WHEN THEY ARE DEAD.”**

—MAUD

ACT I

(AT RISE: Fellowship hall of Harmony Church, Monday morning. Russell, the church janitor, is sweeping the floor and getting things in order. Maud enters and stops dead in her tracks when she sees Russell.)

MAUD: Oh, I wasn't expecting to find anyone here.

RUSSELL: (*Cheerfully.*) Good morning, Maud.

MAUD: (*Icily.*) Hello, Russell.

RUSSELL: Who died?

MAUD: No one that I know of. Why would you ask that?

RUSSELL: Well, you're in charge of the funeral committee, and I figured—

MAUD: You figured wrong...again.

RUSSELL: So what brings you here this fine morning?

MAUD: Russell, you have work to do. I suggest you do it and stop asking so many questions.

RUSSELL: Just trying to be friendly.

MAUD: Well, I'm in no mood for it.

RUSSELL: Someone hasn't had their morning coffee. I have it ready. Would you like a cup?

MAUD: No, thank you. I've had enough of your coffee.

RUSSELL: I have to agree with you. My coffee is generally lousy, but this pot came out pretty special. Sure you wouldn't like some?

MAUD: I've had enough of your "special" coffee to last me a lifetime. Remember Clarence Bowers' funeral?

RUSSELL: Oh, that.

MAUD: Yes, that. A fine, sober man.

RUSSELL: I thought you didn't like him.

MAUD: He's dead. I can afford to like him now. Most men are better when they're dead.

RUSSELL: Boy, Gloria Steinem has nothing on you, does she?

MAUD: Russell, you have work to do and so do I. Can we get on with it?

RUSSELL: That was months ago, Maud. I'm a changed man.

MAUD: So is Clarence Bowers.

RUSSELL: I'll admit that it was wrong to let you ladies drink that spiked coffee, but you have to understand, I was at a low point in my life. It's all changed. It's different now.

MAUD: The only difference is that you're probably using better liquor. I don't trust you, Russell...not when it comes to coffee.

RUSSELL: Can't say that I blame you, but some things do change, Maud.

MAUD: And some things remain constant. The sun still rises in the east.

RUSSELL: And sets in the west. I know. Those are natural laws. I'm talking people and the changes they can make. I've made some big ones.

MAUD: Like what?

RUSSELL: Are you familiar with the AA program here at the church?

MAUD: You mean that Wednesday night group that takes all the good parking when we're having choir practice? I've heard that it's nothing more than a bunch of drunks making confessions without the closet.

RUSSELL: It's a great deal more than that, Maud. They have this 12-step program to sobriety, and, I'm proud to say, I'm part of it.

MAUD: Twelve steps to sobriety? You should have thought of that years ago—at least before that coffee incident.

RUSSELL: Oh, I thought of it. I just couldn't do it.

MAUD: Lack of will power?

RUSSELL: Nope, bad knees. I had to have knee replacement surgery first. The steps were killing me.

MAUD: What?

RUSSELL: I'm kidding. It's a joke. But the 12-step program is very real, and I'm in my third month of being dry and sober.

MAUD: And I'm in my second trimester with twins. I simply don't believe you.

RUSSELL: It's true. Three months, and I feel great.

MAUD: Three months? *(Russell nods.)* Not a drop? *(Russell crosses his heart.)* Well, I hardly know what to say. I never thought I'd see this day. I'm... *(Smiles at him and her demeanor softens.)* Well, I'm very happy for you, Russell.

RUSSELL: Thanks. And you aren't really...

MAUD: Oh, good heavens, no! *(Smiles.)*

RUSSELL: You have a nice smile. Is it new? I've never seen it before.

MAUD: It's the same old smile I've always had. The teeth are new.

RUSSELL: Really? They look very real.

MAUD: They are real, Russell. I'm kidding. It's a joke.

RUSSELL: You're smiling and kidding all in the same day. Are you sure I'm sober?

MAUD: You appear to be. Are you sure I am?

(Maud smiles again and they look at each other a moment longer than necessary.)

RUSSELL: Well, I guess I should...I mean, I have to...well, there's work to be done. I'd better get at it. You never did say what brings you here...not that you have to explain things to me, but I was just wondering.

MAUD: Actually, I came to see Pastor Bob about using the fellowship hall, but he isn't in his office yet. I came down here to check out a few things.

RUSSELL: I'm sure you can use the hall, depending on what's going on. When did you want it?

MAUD: The girls thought maybe a week from this Friday or Saturday. It all depends on when we can get the majority of people here.

RUSSELL: Here for what?

MAUD: Oh, didn't I mention that? (*Russell shakes his head no.*)

We're having a surprise bridal shower for Leah.

RUSSELL: Leah is getting married?! I can't believe it! Will wonders never cease? Who's the unlucky man? Anyone I know?

MAUD: His name is Howard Chaney, and I doubt you know him. His family left town years ago and moved out West. Leah got on the Internet and located Howard, and one thing led to another.

RUSSELL: Howard Chaney, huh? It sort of rings a bell. Well, I guess it's never too late for romance.

MAUD: For Howard, it was too late years ago. Believe me, Leah is getting no prize.

RUSSELL: From what I've heard, Leah isn't exactly the brass ring on this merry-go-round.

MAUD: If they're happy with each other, I guess that's all that matters. My mother used to say that love will go where it's called...even if it's to a pile of dung.

RUSSELL: You were married, weren't you, Maud? That didn't come out right. I don't mean you're a pile—

MAUD: I know what you mean, Russell. And, yes, I was married, but I've been a widow a long time.

RUSSELL: Me, too. Well, I'm not a widow. I mean, I was married. Ol' demon rum took over, though, and I lost everything.

MAUD: You didn't lose everything. You just misplaced your priorities.

RUSSELL: That's a nice way to put it. I hope you're right.

MAUD: Of course, I'm right. Take it one day at a time. Isn't that the mantra?

RUSSELL: Yeah, but some days are easier than others. There's always the chance of slipping back into those ways.

MAUD: You're dry and sober now. Stay that way. Maybe the next time you marry it will be different.

RUSSELL: The next time? I haven't even considered that. Have you?

MAUD: Good heavens, no. Who would be interested in someone my age?

RUSSELL: Someone your age. *(They exchange a look again. Maud exits into the kitchen. Spot comes up on Russell as stage lights dim. To audience.)* Holy cow! My body is sober, but my tongue is still drunk. What am I saying? What am I feeling? Did I just come on to Maud? Tell me I didn't do that...didn't say that. It's been so many years, I'm not even sure what "coming on to somebody" means, but I have a pretty good idea. Did I say things like this when I was drinking? Did I act like this when I was drunk? Not remembering is the worse part. Still, she didn't seem repulsed by the prospect even though she hates my guts. Well, maybe she doesn't hate my guts, but I'm definitely not one of her favorite people. If I were to ask her, I wonder if she would...no, she probably would laugh in my face. Still, nothing ventured, nothing gained. The only thing to lose is a little self-respect, and I lost most of that years ago. It's worth a shot.

(Spot goes out and lights come up onstage. Russell exits to storage room. Maud enters from kitchen. Addie enters.)

ADDIE: Good morning, Maud. I thought that was your car in the parking lot. Who died?

MAUD: No one died. What do I look like...the Grim Reaper?

ADDIE: Just a little bit, you know, through the eyes. You really should use more makeup. *(Russell enters, carrying cleaning supplies.)* Well, good morning, Russell.

RUSSELL: Top 'o the mornin' to ya, Addie. It's always nice to see you. Would you like a cup of coffee?

ADDIE: It's a little early, but what the hey. Is it your "special" blend?

RUSSELL: For you ladies, it is always my "special" blend.

(Russell gets a cup of coffee and gives it to Addie.)

MAUD: It isn't what you think, Addie.

(Addie sips the coffee, and then sips it again.)

ADDIE: *(Surprised.)* This is just coffee.

RUSSELL: What were you expecting?

ADDIE: Something with a little more kick...a little more happiness.

MAUD: Russell has changed his recipe.

RUSSELL: And my life. Drink up, ladies. I have things to do.

(Russell exits up the stairs. We hear him and Grace exchange greetings and then Grace enters.)

GRACE: This has turned into the biggest fiasco I've ever seen!

ADDIE: Oh, I think the wedding will be just fine. Don't get so upset.

GRACE: I'm not talking about the wedding. I'm talking about finding a dress in this one-horse town. It's impossible!

MAUD: Aren't you going to ask me who died?

GRACE: No, why would I?

MAUD: It seems to be a real conversation starter.

GRACE: Let's talk dress shopping. There's a real conversation piece. I must have tried on a dozen outfits this morning, and the only thing I can find is either too frumpy or it makes me look like a teeny-bopper. *(Gets a cup of coffee.)* Boy, I hope Russell made this coffee. I need some help!

ADDIE: You won't find it in this. *(Holds up coffee cup.)* Russell has changed the recipe, but it's very good.

GRACE: That's just great! Just when I could use a good snort! What do you mean he changed the recipe?

ADDIE: That's what Maud said.

(Grace and Addie look to Maud for an explanation.)

MAUD: I stopped in to check on some things for Leah's shower, and before you girls got here, Russell told me that he's joined AA and is in his third month of sobriety. I don't know whether to believe him or not.

ADDIE: Oh, that's wonderful! Why don't you believe him? I'm sure he's telling the truth.

MAUD: Old habits die hard. Still, he does seem sincere...very different.

GRACE: What a dirty trick...just when I was counting on his coffee to get me through the next couple of weeks!

MAUD: Don't be so flippant, Grace. Russell seems so much happier and, well, he's really quite funny, and he's very...well, he's—

ADDIE: Say it, Maud. Say it.

GRACE: What's she going to say?

ADDIE: I have no idea, but isn't it exciting?

GRACE: I don't know!

MAUD: Russell can be very... *(Reluctant, barely audible.)*
...charming.

ADDIE: What?

GRACE: *(To Maud.)* Speak up.

MAUD: Charming. There! I said it! Russell can be very charming.

(Grace and Addie look at each other in disbelief and then begin laughing uncontrollably. Grace exits into the restroom.)

ADDIE: I really believed Maud when she said this coffee wasn't nailed.

GRACE: *(Offstage, from restroom.)* Spiked, Addie, spiked. And it isn't the coffee. I think Maud has a crush on someone.

ADDIE: Who?

GRACE: *(Offstage, from restroom.)* Mahatma Gandhi, you dingbat. Russell, of course!

MAUD: Don't be ridiculous. I don't have a crush on Russell, or anyone else for that matter. All I said was that he can be

very charming—totally different from what I always thought him to be.

ADDIE: That's exactly what I've always said. We have to really know people before passing judgment.

(Grace enters from restroom.)

GRACE: Thank you, Little Miss Sunshine.

MAUD: I never judged Russell. I just knew—or thought I knew—that he was a worthless drunk.

GRACE: Face it, Maud, that's passing judgment.

MAUD: You could be right, but he seems so different now—not at all the same person.

GRACE: I always liked Russell. I never considered his drinking any of my business.

MAUD: You're right, of course. Just before you came in, Addie, Russell seemed on the verge of asking me something.

ADDIE: Maybe he was going to ask you for a date. If he does, will you go?

MAUD: Good heavens, Addie. Who said anything about a date? And, no, I wouldn't go.

GRACE: Why not? You said he can be charming. Live a little.

MAUD: How could I after all I've said about Russell? Talk about eating crow. What would people think?

GRACE: Who cares what people think? If he asks, tell him yes. Put some excitement in your life.

ADDIE: *(To Maud.)* Don't tell him yes right away. Tell him, "I'll have to check my calendar." Then pretend to look and say, "Oh, I am free that evening." Or maybe afternoon, or weekend, or whatever he asks. Play hard to get.

MAUD: I'm not going out with Russell. *(Pause.)* Where would we go? *(Pause.)* Certainly no place that serves alcohol. *(Pause.)* What would I wear?

GRACE: Good luck finding something in this town.

ADDIE: *(To Maud.)* You could wear that blue dress you bought at Penney's last year. You'd have to put a pin at the

neckline—at least for the first date—and wear heels, not flats. Flats just make your ankles look thick.

MAUD: Addie, Russell hasn't asked me out. And, if or when he does, well, we'll see.

(Marilyn, Pastor Bob's wife, enters and offers no formal greeting to the Church Ladies.)

MARILYN: *(To Church Ladies.)* I'll bring the potato salad. How many are we expecting?

GRACE: Expecting for what?

MARILYN: The funeral dinner. Who is it this time? I didn't hear a thing.

ADDIE: See, I knew someone died. Why didn't you tell us, Maud?

MAUD: No one has died, but I'm about to change all that any minute. I just came here to...to...well, now I can't remember why I'm here.

GRACE: Wasn't it something to do with Leah's bridal shower?

MAUD: Yes, it was. Thank you, Grace.

MARILYN: That's close enough to a funeral dinner for me. I'll still bring the potato salad.

ADDIE: I found a new recipe for a salad that I'd like to bring.

GRACE: I'll bake and slice up a ham for sandwiches.

MARILYN: What about a relish tray? And the cake? Are we going to buy it or is someone making it?

ADDIE: Be sure the cake doesn't have a stork on it. It's a little late for Leah and Howard.

GRACE: It's a bridal shower, not a baby shower, you twit.

ADDIE: Oh, that's right...unless Leah is keeping another secret from us.

MAUD: Girls! Girls! You have the cart before the horse. You're all bringing food, acting like a bunch of [Methodists], and we haven't even decided on a date for the shower. *[Or insert another religion.]*

MARILYN: I thought Grace said it was this Saturday.

GRACE: Where did you get that idea?

MARILYN: When we were talking the other day, isn't that what you said?

GRACE: I never said any such thing. Besides, I can't make it Saturday. We'll have to make it Friday.

MARILYN: Well, I can't make it Friday.

MAUD: Neither can I. How about a week from this Saturday?

ADDIE: What if someone dies? Won't that mess up our plans?

MAUD: If someone dies, we'll just have to put them on ice. Leah deserves a shower after waiting all these years, and she is going to have one. The shower is a week from this Saturday.

GRACE: The Mighty Oz has spoken. Okay, a week from Saturday. Is that okay with everyone?

MARILYN: It's fine with me. I'll have to check with Bob, of course, but I'm sure it will be all right.

ADDIE: Any time is okay with me. Of course, I'll miss the ["Antiques Roadshow,"] but most of them are re-runs anyhow. *[Or insert the name of another suitable TV show.]*

GRACE: Come to the shower. There'll be more antiques there than you can handle.

MAUD: I still can't believe that Leah is going to marry someone she hasn't even seen in years. And Howard, does he know what he's getting?

MARILYN: Neither one is a spring chicken, but I'm sure it will work out just fine.

ADDIE: Oh, they've talked a lot on the phone and have e-mailed back and forth. Leah knows a lot about the computer. I don't know how she does it. I'm still trying to figure out the microwave.

GRACE: Well, liver spots and an extra 50 pounds don't show up on the phone or Internet. Both of them might be in for a big surprise. What if we have a bridal shower and no wedding? What will we do?

ADDIE: Maybe we'll get lucky and someone will die. The funeral dinner will be ready.

MARILYN: What a gruesome thought.

(Pastor Bob enters from upstairs.)

PASTOR: I thought I heard people down here. *(To Marilyn.)*

Good morning, dear. *(Gives Marilyn a peck on the cheek.)*

Morning, ladies. Who died?

MAUD: No one died! We are trying to plan a shower for Leah and Howard and aren't making much progress.

ADDIE: Sure we are, Maud. We have the date set a week from this Saturday, and the food is pretty much taken care of. We just have to decide on decorations and a way to get Leah here so it will be a surprise. What are Leah's colors? Does anyone know?

MARILYN: Purple, as in varicose veins, and bedpan white.

PASTOR: Marilyn! I'm surprised at you. There's no reason to make that kind of a remark.

MARILYN: Oh, lighten up, Bob. I'm just kidding. Her colors are purple and white. At least I think that's what she told me.

GRACE: We have to be sure.

PASTOR: Why don't you ask her? She and Howard will be here in a little while.

ADDIE: What?

MAUD: Why?

PASTOR: Pre-marital counseling. It's required for everyone I marry.

MARILYN: *(To Maud.)* Didn't I tell you that?

MAUD: You certainly did not.

GRACE: Pre-marital counseling? At their ages? Boy, talk about locking the barn after the horse is gone.

ADDIE: If Leah sees all of us here, she'll know we're up to something and the surprise will be ruined.

MARILYN: Let's tell her someone died and we're making arrangements.

PASTOR: Marilyn, that would be lying, and that's never a good idea. Besides, she'd want to know who, and that would mean lying again.

MARILYN: I was a lawyer. I'm used to it.

MAUD: No. We'll simply tell her the truth...sort of. We'll tell her that we heard she and Howard were coming for counseling—which we did even if it was after the fact—and that we couldn't wait to meet Howard.

PASTOR: Maud, that isn't exactly—

MAUD: The truth? But it is. Maybe a little stretched and bent out of shape, but basically true. We have coffee ready, and if we just have a few cookies or punch, everything will be just fine.

ADDIE: [Pathmark] is just around the corner. I'll go get some cookies. How about some mixed nuts? Pretzels? Chips? [Or insert the name of another grocery store.]

MAUD: Your [Methodist] background is showing. Just get some cookies and let it go at that.

ADDIE: Why don't you come with me, Grace. You can help me decide on what kind of cookies.

GRACE: What's to decide? Round flat ones. *(Grabs her purse.)* Hey, I've looked every place else. Does [Pathmark] sell dresses?

(Addie and Grace exit.)

PASTOR: Marilyn, will you please come with me for a moment? *(Exits.)*

MARILYN: Uh-oh. *(To Maud.)* It's the how-a-pastor's-wife-should-behave talk again. I don't think I'll ever get the hang of it.

(Marilyn exits. Maud begins getting out cups, napkins, and other things for the coffee. Russell enters.)

RUSSELL: What? All by yourself? Where did everyone go?

MAUD: Addie and Grace went to the store for cookies. Pastor Bob is having a “do better” talk with Marilyn, and, naturally, I’m left to do the grunt work.

RUSSELL: My work is done. I’d be glad to give you a hand. What needs to be done?

MAUD: Well, I guess you could check the coffee. See if we have enough. Nothing fancy. Just coffee.

RUSSELL: Not to worry, Maud. (*Checks the coffeepot.*) There’s probably 12 cups or so left. Think that will be enough?

MAUD: Oh, that should be more than enough.

RUSSELL: Good. (*Pause.*) Enough for what?

MAUD: Well, Pastor Bob told us that Leah and Howard will be here in a little while for pre-marital counseling.

RUSSELL: Pre-marital counseling?

MAUD: I know. It sounds ridiculous, doesn’t it? But that’s what he said. Anyhow, if Leah sees all of us here, she’ll know we’re planning something, and we want the shower to be a surprise. So we decided to have cookies and coffee as an excuse to get to know Howard better.

RUSSELL: Sounds like a plan to me. Why don’t you just tell her that someone died?

MAUD: We’ve already discussed and rejected that idea. This is just a pretext of getting to know Howard.

RUSSELL: You mean to tell me that you ladies haven’t even met this Howard?

MAUD: We’ve met him, but only for a few minutes. He arrived a few days ago, and he and Leah have been in a tizzy putting this wedding together.

RUSSELL: Did I hear someone say his last name was Chaney?

MAUD: That’s right. Howard Chaney. Do you know him?

RUSSELL: It sounds familiar, but I can’t place him. I’m probably mixing him up with someone else.

MAUD: That’s easy enough to do. (*Checks her watch.*) Addie and Grace should be back pretty soon unless Grace found a dress shop on the way.

RUSSELL: Before they get back, Maud, I was wondering if you...well, if you—now I'm speaking hypothetically in broad general terms—I was wondering if you...you know...if someone asked you for a date—hypothetically speaking—would you go?

MAUD: Hypothetically speaking?

RUSSELL: In broad, general terms. Just suppose. Would you go?

MAUD: I haven't even entertained a thought like that for years. You certainly caught me off-guard on that one. I really don't know what to say.

RUSSELL: Oh, you don't have to say anything. I mean, I'm not asking you to go out. I was just wondering if someone did. (*Slight pause.*) Would you go?

MAUD: Go? Where?

RUSSELL: Well, maybe to dinner or a movie. Or something like a wedding...hypothetically speaking, of course.

MAUD: Well, now that you have me thinking about it, I guess if all the circumstances were right, I would consider it. What about you?

RUSSELL: What about me?

MAUD: Just hypothetically speaking, would you go if the opportunity presented itself?

RUSSELL: (*Too quickly, excited.*) Yes! (*Calmer.*) I mean, if everything felt right. That didn't come out right. It doesn't matter how it feels. Well, it does, but it doesn't. Oh, Lord, someone help me out of this mess!

(*Addie and Grace enter.*)

ADDIE: Hello, again, Russell. I'm glad you're still here.

RUSSELL: I've never been happier to see you in my life.

GRACE: (*To Russell.*) You look as though you've seen a ghost. Are you okay?

ADDIE: (*To Russell.*) I knew it. (*To Maud.*) Someone did die. Why didn't you tell us, Maud?

MAUD: No one died. Russell and I were talking about Leah and Howard, and circumstances and opportunities, and, well, it got to be too much for him.

GRACE: I know how you feel, Russell. The visuals are not a pretty sight.

ADDIE: We have the cookies. I bought some chocolate ones and macadamia nut. Is everything else ready?

RUSSELL: There's plenty of coffee.

MAUD: I think everything is ready. I'm just not sure when they will be here.

GRACE: I hope it's soon. I still want to find a dress. The wedding is only two weeks away.

ADDIE: You could order one from the [Blair] catalog. They'd have it here in five days. [*Or insert the name of another catalog.*]

GRACE: [Blair] catalog?

ADDIE: Sure. I order a lot of things from them.

GRACE: I know.

(Marilyn enters.)

MARILYN: *(To Maud.)* Leah and Howard just arrived, and Bob is talking with them now. I don't think it's going to take very long. Is everything ready?

MAUD: Well, it's nothing fancy, but it will give us a chance to get better acquainted with Howard.

RUSSELL: Well, I'd best be going. Try not to make much of a mess. I just got everything cleaned up.

MAUD: You don't have to run off, Russell. Stay for some cookies and coffee. I don't think it would hurt any of us to get to know you a little better as well.

RUSSELL: Well, if you think I won't be in the way, I'd like that very much. There's nothing and no one waiting for me at home.

ADDIE: Please stay, Russell. Maud said you can be quite charming.

MAUD: Addie!

RUSSELL: She did? *(To Maud.)* You did?

MAUD: What I said was—

GRACE: Quite charming.

ADDIE: I think she said, “very charming.”

MAUD: Will you two be quiet for a minute?

MARILYN: *(To Russell.)* She also said you have a nice body.

MAUD: I certainly did not. I see your “do better” talk didn’t do any good. What I said was—

RUSSELL: It doesn’t matter, Maud. I’ll stay for coffee and we can talk. There’s something I want to ask you.

GRACE: *(To Addie.)* I bet I know what he is going to ask her.

ADDIE: What?

GRACE: How are things in Glocca Morra?

(Pastor Bob, Leah, and Howard enter.)

ADDIE: *(To Leah and Howard.)* Surprise!

LEAH: What’s all this?

MAUD: We heard you two would be here this morning, and we thought it would be a good time to get to know Howard a little better. Let’s have some cookies and coffee.

HOWARD: Well, how nice is that! Thank you very much.

LEAH: Thank heavens. When I saw all of you here, I thought someone had died. Howard, you’ve met Maud, Addie, and Grace. And this is Marilyn, Pastor Bob’s wife, and Russell. Russell is the janitor and keeps our church in tiptop shape. Just beware of his coffee.

HOWARD: The pleasure is mine, Marilyn. I’ve heard a lot about you.

MARILYN: Don’t believe everything you hear. Bob tends to exaggerate.

HOWARD: Hello, Russell. You look familiar. Have we met?

RUSSELL: Not that I know of, but you remind me of someone from long ago. I just can’t figure it out.

ADDIE: It’s probably that twin thing.

MAUD: I'll probably regret asking this, but what do you mean "twin thing"?

ADDIE: Oh, you know, the idea that everyone in the world has someone who looks just like them.

MARILYN: You mean there might be two Addies wandering around?

GRACE: Now, there's a scary thought!

PASTOR: Marilyn, a remark like that is uncalled for.

MARILYN: I meant that as a good thing. Grace is the one who said it was scary.

PASTOR: Well, scary or not, I'm sure there is only one Addie.

RUSSELL: I don't think it's a twin thing. I know you from some place, some time. It'll come to me.

LEAH: There's only one Howard, and he's all mine.

PASTOR: Not until a week from this Saturday when you're married. Then he's all yours, officially. Howard, it's been a pleasure meeting you. Now, if you'll all excuse me, I have some calls to make. *(Exits.)*

RUSSELL: *(Raising coffee cup for a toast.)* Here's to Leah and Howard. May all your days be happy ones.

ALL: Here! Here!

(They all cautiously sip their coffee.)

RUSSELL: So, Howard, all the plans are in place and you're ready to take the plunge?

HOWARD: Well, I'm ready if Leah is. She's taking care of the planning part.

MAUD: *(To Leah.)* Have you decided what you'll wear?

GRACE: *(To Leah.)* Are you going to wear white?

ADDIE: Oh, yes, a white wedding gown with lots of frills and a long train!

MARILYN: They didn't ask you, Addie, and it isn't your wedding.

ADDIE: But she's never been married before, and heaven knows at her age she won't get another chance.

LEAH: I'm not wearing a gown. We want this to be a very simple affair. I plan on wearing my white suit, and Howard will wear a dark suit with a purple tie.

GRACE: You mean that's it? No attendants? No flower girl or ring bearer?

LEAH: None of that stuff. Simple and quick with no big fuss.

MAUD: I'm on your side, Leah. Simple is still legal, and that's all that matters.

ADDIE: What about a shower? Wouldn't that be fun?

GRACE/MAUD/MARILYN: Addie!

ADDIE: I'm just asking...

LEAH: I appreciate the thought, but no. No shower. There's nothing we need. I have all Mother's things and everything I've acquired through the years. There isn't room for anything more.

MAUD: But we were looking forward to it.

GRACE: *(To Leah.)* We want to do something for you. Why don't we all go to lunch next week? At least it's something.

ADDIE: But it's not a shower, and I had some really good ideas.

LEAH: Let's do lunch. I'll let you know when.

RUSSELL: I just remembered those fancy candelabras we have in storage. They would look nice on the altar. Using those would be a nice touch without being too fancy.

LEAH: I hadn't thought of those. They would be nice. What do you think, Howard?

HOWARD: That's fine with me. The details are up to you. As long as you don't make me wear a monkey suit, I'll be happy.

GRACE: Cheez, no attendants, no flower girl. Why am I even worried about finding a new dress?

MARILYN: Forget about a new dress. Wear something that's been around the block a couple of times. It will fit right in with the bride and groom.

MAUD: It's a good thing the pastor didn't hear that.

MARILYN: You're telling me! I thought I'd bust before I got that line out.

ADDIE: I think Grace has been a bad influence on you.

GRACE: Don't blame me. She came up with that one all on her own. *(Exits to restroom.)*

RUSSELL: So tell me, Howard, how did you two meet?

LEAH: We went to school together.

HOWARD: That's right. We were in the same class right up until my senior year. Then my dad took a job in Colorado and we moved. Man, I hated that, but I had no choice in the matter.

LEAH: He's back, and that's all that matters.

RUSSELL: *(To Howard.)* Well, I didn't go to school here, so I can't know you from there. It's really starting to bug me.

MAUD: Don't worry about it, Russell. What difference does it make?

RUSSELL: None, I guess. What's done is done.

ADDIE: It will probably come to you in the middle of the night. That's when I get some of my best ideas.

MARILYN: Is that when you got the idea that Bob and I should adopt an orphan from China? That was a real winner.

ADDIE: Actually, I was awake when that came to me, and I still think it would be a good idea. Don't go to Russia, though...too many problems.

(Grace enters from restroom.)

GRACE: Who's going to Russia?

MAUD: No one is going anywhere. Addie is being Addie, and you know how that goes.

GRACE: Whoa! I don't need another ride on that merry-go-round. Is there any more coffee? Not that my bladder can handle it.

LEAH: There's plenty. Have a cookie.

RUSSELL: *(To Howard.)* You say you went to school here?

HOWARD: Yep, right up to my senior year.

RUSSELL: Well, I didn't, so that can't be it.

ADDIE: I still think it's that twin thing.

MAUD: Forget the twin thing, Addie. That's probably an old wives' tale.

MARILYN: *(To Addie.)* Maud's right. Have you ever heard of anyone meeting their twin?

ADDIE: I did.

HOWARD: You actually met someone who looks like you?

ADDIE: I sure did. It was years ago, of course, and very strange.

MARILYN: How strange was it, Addie?

GRACE: You're just egging her on. I'm telling Pastor Bob when I see him.

MARILYN: Oh, hush. If I hadn't, you would have.

ADDIE: Well, we didn't look exactly alike. She weighed more than I, and I have no idea what color her hair was naturally, but through the eyes and mouth, we looked exactly the same. However, there was one big difference.

GRACE: What was that? *(To Marilyn)* Ha! I beat you to that one.

ADDIE: She was a real scatterbrain. It was impossible to follow her line of thinking.

GRACE: Excuse me, but nature calls! *(Quickly exits to the restroom.)*

MAUD: Well, I hate to say it, but that sounds an awful lot like you, Addie.

MARILYN: You tend to jump from pillar to post all the time.

ADDIE: Of course, it could be reincarnation, too. That's always a possibility.

RUSSELL: Reincarnated twins?

ADDIE: Not twins necessarily...just souls that had a connection in a past life.

MAUD: Where do you come up with these ideas?

ADDIE: I watch a lot of public television.

MARILYN: Twins?! Reincarnation?!

MAUD: She's difficult to follow.

HOWARD: I'm not having any problem. It's a little strange, but an interesting idea.

ADDIE: Thank you, Howard.

RUSSELL: *(To Howard.)* Give it a minute.

ADDIE: *(To Howard.)* By the way, how's your liver?

HOWARD: What?

RUSSELL: See what I mean?

LEAH: *(To Addie.)* How does the condition of his liver have anything to do with this conversation?

ADDIE: I'm just curious. *(To Howard.)* How's the liver?

HOWARD: You people go through this all the time?

RUSSELL: All the time. Makes life interesting.

LEAH: *(To Addie.)* Why do you want to know about Howard's liver?

ADDIE: The spots.

(Grace enters from restroom.)

GRACE: Who's got spots? All we need is a case of measles.

MARILYN: We aren't talking measles. At least, I don't think so. Are we, Addie?

ADDIE: Of course not. I'm talking liver spots...on his hands. *(To Howard.)* Is your liver in good working order?

HOWARD: Yeah, as far as I know.

LEAH: *(To Addie.)* You nincompoop! Those are age spots. We all have them.

MAUD: *(To Addie.)* They have nothing to do with one's liver.

RUSSELL: If a bad liver had anything to do with spots, I'd look like one of the [Pips]. *[Or insert the name of another celebrity.]*

HOWARD: You got a bad liver?

RUSSELL: Probably. Years of hard drinking takes its toll.

MAUD: *(To Howard.)* That's all behind him now. Russell has turned his life around.

ADDIE: *(To Howard and Russell.)* It's probably reincarnation. Maybe you two were brothers in a past life. You lived a hardscrabble life and fought all the time, and now—well, in this life—you have to learn how to get along. That's called karma.

GRACE: Karma...shmarma. I like the twin idea better.

MARILYN: So do I. At least it isn't so creepy.

ADDIE: There's nothing creepy about it. I like the idea that we have more than one chance of getting things right. This is my second life. I was a princess the last time.

MAUD: Well, Your Highness, how has your life changed this time around?

GRACE: You sound like [Barbara Walters]. *[Or insert the name of another female reporter.]*

ADDIE: Oh, I'm much more tolerant of other peoples' weaknesses. That's why I don't pay any attention to Maud's bossiness or even Russell's drinking.

HOWARD: *(To Russell.)* A thought just occurred to me. What did you say your last name is?

RUSSELL: I didn't say, but it's Daniels. Why?

HOWARD: Well, it's a long shot, but did anyone ever call you "Jack"?

RUSSELL: *(Laughs.)* Not since I was in high school. They used to call me that because... *(Realizes.)* Wait a minute! Wait a minute! You're Wolf! I knew you looked familiar. I can't believe it!

LEAH: Wolf? What are you talking about?

ADDIE: Who is Jack Daniels?

GRACE: It isn't who, Addie. It's what.

MARILYN: Well, I'm completely in the dark. What's going on?

MAUD: Something about a Wolf and Jack Daniels. We might as well be talking with Addie.

HOWARD: We're talking football...years ago.

RUSSELL: I played for Centerville, and Wolf—I mean Howard—played for Jefferson High.

LEAH: You mean you played football together?

HOWARD: Not together. We were high school rivals.

ADDIE: Well, I'm still confused about wolf and Jack Daniels.

RUSSELL: They were nicknames. Everyone had a nickname back then.

HOWARD: We called him "Jack" because even back then he was developing his drinking habit. No offense intended.

RUSSELL: None taken. And we started calling him "Lon" because of Lon Chaney. Then it became "Werewolf" and finally just "Wolf."

ADDIE: *(To Howard.)* I always knew you were related to Lon Chaney.

MAUD: He's not related to Lon Chaney.

LEAH: That's just his name.

ADDIE: Lon? I thought it was Howard.

GRACE: It was. I mean, it is. Oh, just forget it.

HOWARD: *(To Russell.)* Man, that was years ago. It's no wonder I didn't recognize you...you're old.

RUSSELL: Now, look here, you liver-spotted old duffer, you're no spring chicken.

HOWARD: You got that right. A game of football would probably kill both of us.

RUSSELL: The last I heard of you was that you had some girl in the "family way" and that's why you left town.

LEAH: It's time to go, Howard.

HOWARD: What a bunch of hooey. I never had anyone in the "family way."

LEAH: I said, it's time to go, Howard.

HOWARD: *(To Russell.)* My dad transferred. That's why I left.

LEAH: And we are leaving now. We have things to do.

MARILYN: Oh, stick around awhile. This is just getting good.

MAUD: No! Leah's right. They have a lot of ground to cover, lots of things to do. *(To Leah and Howard.)* Run along. Shoo! Scat!

ADDIE: (*To Russell.*) You have Howard mixed up with someone else. It's that twin thing again.

RUSSELL: I don't think so, but I could be wrong.

MAUD: You are. Take my word for it.

LEAH: Come along, Howard. We still have to find a purple tie for you.

HOWARD: It was nice to visit with all of you. And really good to see you again, Jack. I still can't figure out where you got that story.

LEAH: Forget the story. It was years ago. Thanks for the cookies. See you Sunday. And, Maud, call me if anyone dies.

(Leah and Howard exit.)

MAUD: (*To Russell.*) Of all the dumb remarks to make, that one wins the prize.

RUSSELL: What?

MAUD: That Howard had someone in the "family way" and that's why he left town.

RUSSELL: That's what I heard.

ADDIE: That twin thing...maybe reincarnation.

GRACE: Twin thing, my foot. Leah told all of us that herself—the day of Clarence Bowers' funeral—when we all drank that spiked coffee.

MARILYN: You mean Leah was pregnant by Howard?

GRACE: Well, that's what she told us. She must not have told Howard.

ADDIE: Maybe he just forgot. It was a long time ago. And if his liver is bad—

MAUD: There's nothing wrong with his liver. Those are age spots. And neither his liver, nor age spots, have anything to do with Leah's being in the "family way."

RUSSELL: You're right, Maud. I should have kept my big mouth shut.

MAUD: Don't worry about it, Russell. I shouldn't have snapped at you. *(Puts her hand on his shoulder.)* You had no way of knowing.

RUSSELL: Still, I should have been more careful. *(Covers her hand, which is on his shoulder, with his hand and it remains there longer than necessary.)* Thanks.

(Addie, Grace, and Marilyn watch as Maud and Russell stare at each other with unabashed attraction. Finally, Marilyn, unable to contain herself, breaks the silence.)

MARILYN: *(To Russell and Maud.)* Cheez, get a room!

(Maud and Russell snap out of their reverie. She removes her hand from his shoulder and pats her hair.)

RUSSELL: *(Flustered, stammers.)* Well, I guess...I mean...I probably should...be leaving. *(Starts for the stairs, stops, and turns to Maud.)* Will you be going to the wedding alone?

MAUD: Well, I guess...I mean...probably. Why?

RUSSELL: I was thinking, maybe, if you'd like to—

ADDIE: She'd love to!

MAUD: Love to what?

GRACE: Go to the wedding as Russell's date. Are you dense?

MAUD: *(To Russell.)* Are you asking?

RUSSELL: Well, yeah, I guess I am...

MAUD: *(Remembering what Addie said earlier.)* I'll have to check my calendar. *(Goes for her purse.)*

MARILYN: It's the wedding. You don't have anything else going on.

(Stage lights dim as spot comes up on Maud. Actors freeze.)

MAUD: *(To audience.)* He's actually asked me out. I can't believe it. Oh, I know it isn't a real date...just going to the wedding together, but it's a start. Listen to me! "It's a start"

as though there will be more to come. But you know what? I hope there is. I haven't felt like this since Tommy Cleveland asked me to go to the senior prom. Of course, back then, I didn't have a blood pressure problem. Maybe that's what I'm feeling now. No, I don't think that's it. For the first time in years, I feel alive, and attractive, and like a teenager. I thought those things died with my husband. I guess life can be full of surprises if we just open ourselves to all the possibilities. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Russell has changed. I think it's time for me to do the same.

(Spot goes out on Maud. Stage lights up. Actors resume.)

ADDIE: Isn't this exciting? A drunk and a prig discover each other.

MAUD: *(Checking calendar.)* Well, it looks as though I'm free. Yes, Russell, I'd enjoy going with you...but no drinking.

RUSSELL: That's great. And there won't be any drinking on my part. Just be sure there's no priggging on yours. *(Exits.)*

GRACE: Priggging? Boy, that's open for interpretation.

MARILYN: I don't think that's even a word.

GRACE: Well, it should be. There's a world of possibilities.

MAUD: Isn't Russell a pleasant man?! I told you he's a changed man.

MARILYN: *(Sarcastically.)* Like night and day. A real keeper.

ADDIE: I think you two are a better match than Leah and Howard. She's getting into a sorry situation. We should warn her.

MAUD: Number one, Russell and I are not a "match" in that sense of the word, and, number two, we should warn Leah about what?

ADDIE: Those liver spots!

GRACE: Will you forget about those priggging spots? They mean nothing.

ADDIE: I know, Grace. I'm not stupid. Each spot individually means nothing, but connect them and you'll see why I'm concerned.

MARILYN: He's a man—albeit an old one—and he has age spots. We all do. He isn't some connect-the-dots picture.

ADDIE: Oh, I hated those things when I was a kid. They were so confusing.

MAUD: You follow the numbers. What's so confusing about that?

GRACE: You're talking to Addie.

ADDIE: On big things, I was fine. It was little stuff like bumblebees and butterflies where I'd get all messed up. On Howard, I'm having no problem.

MARILYN: This is the person who said her twin was a scatterbrain. Addie, look at me and concentrate. (*Talking slowly.*) What the heck are you talking about?

ADDIE: I can't believe that none of you noticed his right hand. Didn't you even think of connecting the liver spots?

MAUD: Let's suppose we did notice his hand, and just for giggles, we connected the spots. What would we have seen?

ADDIE: A pentagram.

(*Maud, Marilyn, and Grace look at each other in stunned disbelief.*)

MAUD: A pentagram?

(*Addie nods her head.*)

GRACE: On his hand?

(*Addie nods again.*)

MARILYN: And Leah shouldn't marry him because of this?

ADDIE: Pentagrams are magic symbols used by warlocks and evil demons. I'm afraid for Leah.

MAUD: Addie, your imagination has run amok. Spots, without numbers, can be connected to make just about anything. Look. *(Gets a washable marker from the counter and quickly draws something on her hand.)* That could be a car.

ADDIE: It has no wheels.

(Maud quickly adds two circles to the drawing on her hand.)

MAUD: There, it has wheels. That still doesn't make me a Chevy.

ADDIE: But it's not a pentagram.

(Grace and Marilyn have now taken markers and are drawing on each other.)

[END OF FREEVIEW]