

The Jukebox Diner



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The Jukebox Diner

COMEDY. The one-liners and puns never end in this hilarious comedy! Everyone in town is eager for Shelby, a big-time country-music star, to arrive from Nashville to attend Uncle Roy's memorial service. Hoping to convince Shelby to move home, get married, and have a family, Shelby's mother sets her up on a blind date with Luke Duncan, a thrice-divorced ex-con who works at the local hardware store. Meanwhile, Shelby's brother makes plans to leave the diner to pursue a singing career in Nashville, but no one has the heart to tell him he can't sing including his friends, a Mr. Potato Head model and a mountain man/aspiring stand-up comedian. Then on the day of the memorial service, everyone discovers Uncle Roy was a bit of a womanizer when all his girlfriends show up wearing identical dresses, Uncle Roy's secret son is revealed, and Uncle Roy arrives at his own memorial service in the form of a cake!

Performance Time: Approximately 90-120 minutes.

Characters

(5 M, 10 F, 2 flexible, opt. extras)
(With doubling: 5 M, 9 F)

SHELBY: Country-music star who has made it big and lives Nashville, TN; female.

JACKSON: Shelby's older brother who lives at home and works with her mother at the Jukebox Diner; dreams of becoming a singer and moving to Nashville but he doesn't know he can't sing.

ABIGAIL: Shelby and Jackson's mother; runs the Jukebox Diner and desperately wants Shelby to move back home, get married, and have many babies.

EILEEN: Abigail's wealthy sister who is happiest when the world revolves around her.

LUKE: Thrice-divorced ex-con who went to high school with Shelby and now works at the local hardware store.

MARTY: Mountain man and diner customer who aspires to be a stand-up comic; dresses like Daniel Boone; male.

EDGAR/ELECTRA: Simple-minded friend and diner customer who works as a Mr. Potato Head model; large in stature; male. Electra is Edgar's twin sister, an unattractive girl who has a crush on Jackson. Note: Electra is played by the same actor who plays Edgar.

CHARLOTTE: Sassy waitress who enjoys stirring up trouble; wears a waitress uniform.

BARBIE: Dimwitted, likeable waitress; wears a waitress uniform.

ACE: Gruff cook who's always clenching an unlit cigar between his teeth; male.

CUSTOMER 1: Jukebox Diner customer; female.

CUSTOMER 2: Jukebox Diner customer; flexible.

LADY 1-4: Uncle Roy's former girlfriends; all wear identical blue dresses.

DELIVERY PERSON: Delivers flowers and candy; flexible.

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EXTRAS (Opt.): As Customers and Ladies.

Options for doubling:

LADY 1/DELIVERY PERSON (flexible)

LADY2/CUSTOMER 1 (female)

LADY 3/CUSTOMER 2 (flexible)

Setting

A rundown diner in Tennessee.

Set

Rundown diner. Various diner tables are scattered about the stage. Tables and chairs need not match and can vary in size and style. A jukebox is extreme SL. The front door is USR and a large window is SL of the door, which looks out onto a brick wall. The window that looks into the kitchen is SL. The door going into the kitchen is SL of the kitchen window. A small counter stands in front of the kitchen window. There is a mirror DSR.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Scene 1: Diner, early morning.

Scene 2: Diner, later that evening.

Intermission

ACT II: Diner, the next day.

Production Notes

This play is a comedy and should move along at a rapid pace. The arguments in the play work best if they're loud and quick; however, the serious moments toward the end of the play shouldn't be rushed.

Props

3 Aprons	CD
Apron with pocket, for Barbie	Marker
Apron with pocket, for Jackson	Purse, for Charlotte
Apron, for Abigail	Bottles of ketchup for tables
Apron, for Charlotte	Cup of coffee
2 Bags of groceries	Broom
Nail file	Dustpan
Small cardboard box	Various pieces of mail
Picture frame	Snapshot
Napkins	Salt and pepper shakers for tables
Small homemade decoration	Beautiful fur coat, for Eileen
Tarnished tiara	Shoebox
Tablecloths for diner tables	2 Large identical sugar jars
Coffeemaker	Dishrags
Telephone	Napkin holders for tables
Tissue	Menus
Large cigars	Homemade signs
Hatchet	Sign that reads, "Is Shelby in town yet?"
Order pads	Sign that reads, "I'm real nervous"
Restaurant order pad	Sign that reads, "I can't"
Pencil	Sign that reads "Wait" on one side and "Okay" on the other side
Pieces of Mr. Potato Head glued together	Bowl
Wrapped Danish	Note card
Newspaper	Trashcan
Luggage	Camera
Homemade banner that reads, "Welcome Home, Shelby"	Doll wrapped in a blanket
Glass of ice water	Large wooden spoon
	Purse, for Electra

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2 Fake round cakes	Tray
Small flower bouquet	Purse, for Eileen
Roll crepe paper	Piece of paper for will
Doughnuts	Ring box
Small candles	Tray with slices of cake on it
Decorations for memorial service	Cleaning rags
Tissues/Kleenex	Stack of paper cups
Box of chocolates	Lease
Identical blue dress, for Barbie	Head of lettuce
Identical blue dress, for Charlotte	Dr. Suess's <i>Green Eggs and Ham</i>
Identical blue dress, for Electra	Sealed envelope
4 Identical blue dresses, for Ladies	Cook's hat
3 Cards for flower arrangements	Loud Hawaiian shirt, for Ace
3 Flower arrangements for memorial service	2 Hawaiian leas
	Luggage, for Shelby
	Dishes/ tableware for diner
	2 Suitcases, for Jackson
	Purse, for Abigail
	Sign that reads, "I'm sorry"

Special Effects

NOTE: Royalties paid to perform this play do not include other copyrighted material such as songs that aren't in the public domain. Permission to perform copyrighted material must be obtained from the publisher of that work. Songs and music listed below are merely suggestions.

2 Partial karaoke songs, for
Jackson to sing
Dog barking
Soft classical music such as
Mozart's Clarinet
Concerto's second
movement, or another
suitable song
Menacing tune
Song such as "Welcome
Back" from the TV show
"Welcome Back, Kotter"
or another suitable song
Song such as "Hello
Darlin'" by Conway
Twitty or another suitable
song
Old love song such as
"Close to You" by The
Carpenters or another
suitable song
Song such as Handel's
"Hallelujah" chorus or
another suitable song
Song such as "You're No
Good" by Clint Ballard,

Jr. or another suitable
song
Song such as "I Got You
Babe" by Sonny Bono or
another suitable song
Karaoke version of a love
song such as "Three
Times a Lady" by the
Commodores or another
suitable song
Bell ring
Phone rings
Song such as "Happy
Birthday Darlin'" by
Chuck Howard or
another suitable song
Song such as "Gonna Fly
Now," the theme song
from the movie *Rocky*, or
another suitable song
Classic love song
Upbeat love song
Carnival music
Dog growling
Dirge type music

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Song such as "Take This Job
and Shove It" by David
Allan Coe or another
suitable song

Song such as "Once Upon a
December" from the
movie *Anastasia* or
another suitable song

Song such as "Three Times
a Lady" by the
Commodores or another
suitable song

Song such as "What a
Wonderful World" by
George Douglas and
George David Weiss or
another suitable song

NOTE: In the original production of "The Jukebox Diner" a real jukebox was used. Every time the jukebox "played" it lit up as the various songs were played over the sound system. You may choose to use a real jukebox or you may simply make your own jukebox out of a large box.

**"I have three pieces of advice:
never hire an electrician with no eyebrows,
never get a tattoo during an earthquake,
and never say you're in love
with an out-of-work underwear model."**

—Charlotte

Act I

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Diner, early morning. The diner is not yet open for the day. Chairs are stacked on top of the tables. Jackson is performing a song for Charlotte and Barbie. The jukebox provides the music as Barbie sits, leaning forward listening to every word of Jackson's song. Charlotte is filing her nails and looking bored. Not far into the song, Abigail, holding two bags of groceries, passes the outside window, looks inside the diner, becomes angry, disappears, and begins banging on the front door. Suddenly, Jackson points to the jukebox, which ceases playing immediately and ushers Barbie and Charlotte out through the kitchen door.)

JACKSON: Hurry up! Go through the kitchen and out the back door! Come in later! Hurry! *(Charlotte and Barbie exit. Jackson ties on his apron and rushes to the front door and unlocks it. Abigail enters.)* Sorry, Mama, I'm not sure how that door got locked.

(Abigail rushes over to a table and sets the groceries down.)

ABIGAIL: Don't talk. Just help me with these bags.

(Jackson crosses to her.)

JACKSON: I must have turned the deadbolt by mistake.

ABIGAIL: *(In direction of kitchen, shouts.)* Charlotte, Barbie, put these groceries away in the kitchen!

(Jackson begins taking the chairs off the tables.)

JACKSON: What makes you think Charlotte and Barbie are here?

(Abigail gets busy with her morning routine.)

ABIGAIL: *(Ignoring his question.)* Did you feed Mudhole?

JACKSON: We're out of Alpo.

ABIGAIL: Why didn't you put that on the grocery list?

There's a piece of spoiled bologna in the crisper.

JACKSON: Mama, I can't give Mudhole expired bologna.

He'll get worms.

ABIGAIL: Don't think I didn't see you through the window.

What if our customers walked by?

JACKSON: *(Heavy sigh.)* Nobody saw me, Mama. Besides, I was just fooling around.

ABIGAIL: Just fooling around. Don't you know what today is?

(Abigail crosses SR, retrieves a cardboard box, crosses to a table, and sets the box down. Jackson takes the groceries and sets them inside the kitchen window.)

JACKSON: It's Shelby's homecoming.

ABIGAIL: Did you get your stuff out of her room yet?

JACKSON: It's my room now.

(Abigail opens the lid of the box and pulls out a picture frame.)

ABIGAIL: Look what I had framed. It's Shelby's high school cheerleading picture. It's important we make Shelby feel at home.

JACKSON: *(Folding napkins.)* I know why you want to make her feel at home.

ABIGAIL: Because she's my baby girl.

JACKSON: You hope she'll move back to Remington.

ABIGAIL: *(Gruffly.)* Don't talk to me! *(Suddenly sweet as she pulls out a small homemade decoration.)* Look, Shelby made this in the second grade. She was the talented one of my kids, that's for sure.

(Jackson is sad. Mudhole barks offstage.)

JACKSON: I'm coming, Mudhole! *(Turns back to Abigail.)*

Mama, can I talk to you for a minute?

ABIGAIL: Not now, there are a million things to do.

JACKSON: *(Nervously.)* But, Mama...it's something important.

ABIGAIL: You pick the worst times to want to talk.

JACKSON: But sometimes I'd like to just sit down with you, Mama. I'd like to talk about things that are important to me.

ABIGAIL: *(Gruff.)* What about things that are important to me? *(Sweet again as she pulls a tarnished tiara from the box.)*

Oh, would you look at this! *(Rushes to a mirror DSR and places the tiara on her head.)*

JACKSON: *(Folding napkins.)* I know, I know...Shelby was Prom Princess.

ABIGAIL: It's not Shelby's at all. It's mine. Didn't I tell you I was Snow Queen my senior year? I forgot I saved it after all this time. I think I'll wear it today. *(Begins rushing around brushing wrinkles out of tablecloths.)*

JACKSON: Can we talk now?

ABIGAIL: If you want to talk, you'll have to do it while I'm working.

JACKSON: *(Following her around the room.)* I've been doing a lot of thinking lately—thinking about my life and where I want to go from here.

(Abigail stops suddenly SL of the coffeemaker.)

ABIGAIL: Where's Uncle Roy?

JACKSON: *(Ignoring question.)* You see, Mama, I was thinking...

ABIGAIL: Uncle Roy! *(Dialing the phone.)* He's missing! I can hardly breathe. *(Mudhole barks offstage. To Jackson, yells.)* And would you please feed that cockroach in the kitchen?

JACKSON: But, Mama, we were talking.

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ABIGAIL: (*Into phone.*) What did you do with Uncle Roy?...Don't start with me. I know you took him! I don't care what you wanted! We all agreed the best place for him was the diner! Shelby is coming home today and she will be expecting to find Uncle Roy resting in his usual place! You have half an hour! (*Hangs up and pulls out a tissue.*) Why do I let her get to me this way?

JACKSON: Uncle Roy's dead, Mama. Life goes on. Now, where was I?

ABIGAIL: (*Wiping her eyes.*) Don't you dare speak that way about your Uncle Roy! He was a saint who cared only for the well-being of others.

JACKSON: He was a stingy miser.

ABIGAIL: (*Taken aback, looks up.*) Don't listen to him, Uncle Roy. We know what kind of man you were. Continue to look over and protect us on this earth below. (*Mudhole barks offstage.*) And if you have any pull up there, we'd be glad to throw a mangy dog on the next train bound for heaven!

JACKSON: (*Angry.*) I can't stand it!

(*Jackson rushes into the kitchen. Marty, dressed like Daniel Boone, enters with his friend Edgar.*)

MARTY: Morning, Abigail.

(*Abigail puts on an apron.*)

ABIGAIL: Well, look what the hyenas drug in.

(*Ace appears at the kitchen window with a large cigar clenched between his teeth.*)

MARTY: Where should we sit to be served quickly?

ACE: The restaurant down the street!

ABIGAIL: (*To Marty.*) What brings you out of the mountains? Avalanche? Mudslide?

(Marty takes a seat at a table DSR. Edgar sits opposite him.)

MARTY: Just needed to pick up a few things in town. Hey, I've been working on my stand-up routine. You should give me a job here in the diner. I'll work for tips.

ABIGAIL: Here's a tip: Don't do stand-up.

MARTY: I've been practicing. *(Stands, overly dramatic.)* What did the hotdog say when it crossed the finish line? *(Slight pause.)* I'm a *wiener*.

(Ace laughs loudly. Everyone turns to him. He becomes embarrassed and disappears.)

EDGAR: You mean "winner."

MARTY: Huh?

EDGAR: If he was the first to cross the finish line, he would be the *winner*. You said "*wiener*."

(Marty sits.)

MARTY: *(Annoyed.)* I don't need a sidekick, Edgar.

(Abigail stands between them.)

ABIGAIL: Is that what you do up on the mountain all by yourself...practice?

MARTY: It's real peaceful up there.

ABIGAIL: Edgar, what are you doing being seen with the likes of him?

EDGAR: We met up at the hardware store. *(Holds up a hatchet.)* I got my ax sharpened.

ABIGAIL: That's an ax all right.

EDGAR: This ax has been in the family for 200 years, and it's only had four new handles and two new heads.

ABIGAIL: *(Holding an order pad. To Marty.)* You want orange juice?

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MARTY: And eggs. Scrambled with bacon, extra crisp.

ABIGAIL: *(In direction of kitchen, shouts.)* Two scrambled...side of bacon and nuke it!

(Ace appears at the window.)

ACE: 'Bout time somebody ordered something!

ABIGAIL: Edgar, you want something?!

EDGAR: I'm watching my figure. Just cut me half of a grapefruit and sprinkle some [Splenda] over it. *[Or insert the name of another artificial sweetener.]*

ABIGAIL: Got it.

EDGAR: Then wrap the grapefruit in strips of raw bacon and deep fry the whole thing for two minutes.

ABIGAIL: I'm sure glad you're watching what you eat.

EDGAR: You don't get a body like this without a little work.

MARTY: Edgar said he wanted to buy me breakfast this morning.

EDGAR: I'm celebrating landing my new job.

ABIGAIL: Congratulations. What job did you get?

EDGAR: I'm a model for Mr. Potato Head. It doesn't pay much, but I get to keep all the little plastic parts they have left over.

ABIGAIL: What do you do with all the plastic parts?

EDGAR: I make gifts out of them. *(Holds up Mr. Potato Head parts glued together.)* Surprise!

ABIGAIL: For me? *(Takes it. Sweetly.)* Edgar, that's very kind of you.

EDGAR: Guess who it is. You! I like this position better than my last job at the salt-and-pepper factory. I found out it was just *seasonal* work.

(Marty does a spit take.)

MARTY: I've got to remember that one for my act. Just *seasonal* work.

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ABIGAIL: *(To Edgar.)* I'll treasure it always.

(Mudhole barks offstage.)

MARTY: Was that a dog?

ABIGAIL: You've been up on that mountain too long.

MARTY: The mountain keeps me away from the hustle and bustle of the world. People should take life easy. If I had my way, everyone would wear a yield sign around their neck.

EDGAR: And I agree. *(Pause.)* What does "yield" mean?

MARTY: Slow down.

EDGAR: *(Slowly.)* What...does...yield...mean?

(Ace enters, wiping his hands. Customer 1 enters through the front door and takes a seat at a table CS.)

CUSTOMER 1: Hey, Ace, do you serve crabs here?

ACE: We'll serve anybody. Sit down.

CUSTOMER 1: I'll start with a fresh Danish.

(Ace takes a wrapped Danish off the counter and throws it down on the table.)

ACE: There you go.

MARTY: That sounds good. I'll have what she's having.

ACE: Okay, but I don't think she will be very happy about it.

(Ace grabs Customer 1's Danish, hands it to Marty, and exits. Customer 1 stomps out. Jukebox plays.)

ABIGAIL: There it goes again. *(In direction of kitchen, shouts.)*
Jackson, I thought I told you to get this jukebox fixed!

(Abigail kicks the jukebox and it stops. Jackson sticks his head through the kitchen window.)

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JACKSON: It's not broken, Mama. I tried to tell you there's something really special about that jukebox.

ABIGAIL: And I told you jukeboxes don't have brains.

JACKSON: No, ma'am, but I think this one sure has a soul.

(Disappears.)

MARTY: That jukebox is a true antique.

ABIGAIL: Marty, don't forget you're officiating tomorrow.

MARTY: I've been practicing. *(Stands and takes his dramatic pose again.)* My friends, we are gathered here today to mourn the loss of a dear friend of everyone in Remington... *(Barbie enters, carrying a newspaper and speaks over Marty's speech.)* ...a man who wasn't afraid to stop and smell the coffee because he knew how important the little things in life are...

BARBIE: Morning, everybody.

ABIGAIL: *(Also over Marty's speech.)* Barbie, why are you late?

(To Marty, sharply.) And would you be quiet!

(Marty sits.)

BARBIE: I had an early appointment at the beauty salon.

EDGAR: *(Pitifully.)* Ahhhh, and they were closed?

(Barbie sits at one of the tables SL and rubs her feet.)

BARBIE: My feet are killing me. I stood up on the bus all the way across town.

MARTY: Why didn't you ask someone for his seat?

BARBIE: I couldn't. I was the only one on the bus.

ABIGAIL: *(To Barbie.)* You can stop the act. I saw you in here this morning. You're only encouraging him, Barbie.

BARBIE: *(Resigned.)* But I really think he has talent.

ABIGAIL: It's a silly pipedream, and I don't need you egging him on.

EDGAR: I had a pipedream once. *(All stare at him.)* I wanted to be a plumber.

(Barbie stands.)

BARBIE: *(To Abigail.)* Don't you think you're being a little hard on Jackson?

ABIGAIL: How hard I'm being on my son is none of your business.

BARBIE: *(Under her breath.)* Wouldn't hurt you to support him now and again.

ABIGAIL: What kind of mother would I be if I didn't protect him from silly nonsense? Jackson has a perfectly fulfilled life right here in Remington.

(Barbie heads to the kitchen.)

BARBIE: Does anyone know what today's date is?

MARTY: Why don't you look at that newspaper in your hand?

BARBIE: That's no good. It's yesterday's paper.

(Barbie exits into the kitchen. Shelby sneaks in and then stands up straight.)

SHELBY: *(Shouts.)* Surprise!

ABIGAIL: *(Startled.)* Shelby? Shelby Baits! You're two hours early.

SHELBY: I wanted to surprise you, Mama.

(Shelby and Abigail hug.)

ABIGAIL: *(Smiles.)* She wanted to surprise me, but I wanted everything to be perfect. *(Holds Shelby at arms length.)* Look at my baby. *(To Shelby.)* You're so thin. Don't they feed anybody in Tennessee?

SHELBY: *(Smile.)* Now, Mama...

(Abigail ushers Shelby over to Marty and Edgar's table.)

ABIGAIL: Marty, look! My baby girl has come home.

MARTY: *(To Shelby.)* Do you know what a teakettle does when it's angry? *(Slight pause.)* It lets off a little steam.

ABIGAIL: *(To Shelby.)* Your room is exactly the same as it was the day you left.

(Barbie enters, tying her apron.)

SHELBY: Mama, don't forget I'm leaving tomorrow night.

BARBIE: Is that Shelby? The long lost Shelby? *(Hugs her. To Shelby.)* You're home at last. Look at you. Don't they feed you in Tennessee?

SHELBY: I don't think I know you.

BARBIE: Barbie Reeves. I have worked for your mama going on three years now. What you have done for yourself is so inspirational for women everywhere.

ABIGAIL: *(Brushing Barbie off.)* That's enough from you. *(To Shelby.)* Now you sit down right here and take a load off. *(In direction of kitchen, shouts.)* Jackson, come out and see who's here!

MARTY: Shelby, I heard you made it big in Nashville.

SHELBY: Mr. Thomas, you look so rugged and carefree.

MARTY: Moved to the mountains...living with the rattlesnakes and mountain lions. Just the other day, I found myself face to face with a 12-foot grizzly.

SHELBY: That sounds dangerous.

EDGAR: It would have been if the bars hadn't been in the way.

BARBIE: Would you like something to drink, Shelby?

SHELBY: A coffee would be nice. Thank you, Barbie.

BARBIE: One iced tea coming right up. *(Jackson enters. Barbie exits into the kitchen. To Jackson.)* Shelby's home.

(Abigail pulls a chair up beside Shelby.)

ABIGAIL: *(To Shelby.)* We have so much to talk about.

(Jackson approaches Shelby.)

JACKSON: Would you look at that! Little sister Shelby as I live and breathe!

SHELBY: Jackson? *(Stands and they hug.)* How good you look.

JACKSON: It's all that grease I inhale every day. Look at you.

ABIGAIL: She's too skinny.

SHELBY: Mama, stop worrying. Show business has been very good to me.

EDGAR: Show business, huh? Are you a Potato Head model like me?

MARTY: No, Edgar. Shelby's a big-time country-singing star.

ABIGAIL: The thought of you alone in that big city gives me hives.

JACKSON: Nashville's not a rough city, Mama.

ABIGAIL: *(Sharp.)* How would you know anything about the world outside Remington?

JACKSON: That's the point I've been trying to make for weeks. I never get to go anywhere.

ABIGAIL: We are not going to talk about it right now. Your sister is home. Jackson, the banner.

JACKSON: I almost forgot.

(Jackson points to the jukebox, which immediately begins playing ["Welcome Back"] from the TV show "Welcome Back, Kotter" or another suitable song. He rushes over and unrolls a cheap banner against the back wall. It reads, "Welcome Home, Shelby." Jackson begins singing off key with the song. Abigail pushes him out to the kitchen. She turns to the jukebox and slides her finger across her throat. Jukebox suddenly stops.)

ABIGAIL: *(To Shelby.)* It was supposed to be up before you got here.

SHELBY: Mama, it's beautiful.

(Barbie enters, places a glass of ice water on the table, and stands and stares at Shelby.)

BARBIE: Here's you a nice cold glass of ice water.

SHELBY: Thank you, Barbie, but I asked for coffee.

(Barbie pulls a CD and marker out of her apron pocket.)

BARBIE: I hate to bother you, Shelby, but I was wondering if you would mind signing your latest CD "Cannibal of the Heart."

SHELBY: Of course I don't mind.

(Shelby signs the CD and hands it back to Barbie.)

BARBIE: I hear cannibals won't eat clowns because they taste funny. Is that true?

ABIGAIL: *(To Shelby.)* Don't mind, Barbie. She thinks "Dancing with the Stars" is a show about astronauts.

MARTY: *(To Barbie.)* You have two hungry men over here!

BARBIE: *(Almost possessed, to Marty.)* I'm talking to Shelby! *(Hugs her CD. To Shelby, sweetly.)* Thank you, Shelby. I will treasure it always.

MARTY: The service here is terrible!

ABIGAIL: How do you know? You haven't had any yet!

(Abigail and Barbie have a seat at Shelby's table. Charlotte enters through the front door chewing gum wildly.)

MARTY: Charlotte, how about some service over here.

CHARLOTTE: I just walked in, Daniel Boone.

MARTY: I've got errands to run.

(Charlotte crosses to Marty's table.)

CHARLOTTE: On your way to pick up a can of moose-be-gone?

MARTY: Are you making fun of me?

(Charlotte crosses to a table SL.)

CHARLOTTE: Ah, you know me, Marty.

EDGAR: *(To Marty.)* She's making fun of you.

MARTY: I wouldn't trade places with any of you down here in the rat race.

CHARLOTTE: *(Sarcastically.)* Yeah, Remington is a real metropolis.

(Charlotte puts her purse up and takes an apron off the wall. Abigail, Shelby, and Barbie pantomime a conversation.)

EDGAR: *(To Marty.)* I'm ready to get out of this town myself. I've been thinking about divorcing Yolonda and joining you up in your mountain retreat.

MARTY: Edgar, you've been saying that for years. You'll never divorce Yolonda.

EDGAR: Who says?

MARTY: What are your grounds?

EDGAR: We just have that little farm on the outskirts of town.

MARTY: Do you have some sort of grudge?

EDGAR: No, we park all our cars outside.

MARTY: Well, does she beat you up?

EDGAR: That's silly. I get up two hours before she does.

MARTY: Then why in the world do you want to divorce her?

EDGAR: 'Cause I can never carry on an intelligent conversation with that woman.

MARTY: *(Shakes head.)* Edgar, are you going to order something else?

(Charlotte has crossed back to their table.)

EDGAR: *(To Charlotte.)* What would you suggest?

CHARLOTTE: *(Tying her apron.)* Prime rib, but not from here.

ABIGAIL: Charlotte, get over here and meet my long-lost Shelby.

CHARLOTTE: *(Sarcastic.)* Oh, look, it's Shelby. She makes records. She moved away. She doesn't want to come back. Smart girl.

(Barbie stands.)

BARBIE: Charlotte, that is so rude. Shelby is a hero to women everywhere...like the [Wonder Bra]. *[Or insert the name of another bra or female product.]*

CHARLOTTE: What's the matter...can't she stand the attention? I thought her kind thrived on it.

ABIGAIL: That's enough, Charlotte. Nothing can bother me today, for my prodigal daughter has returned.

CHARLOTTE: Excuse me for putting my two cents in.

SHELBY: Mama, I haven't "returned."

BARBIE: Let me know if you need anything, Shelby. I'll be in the kitchen.

(Charlotte crosses to the kitchen.)

CHARLOTTE: You remember the way?

(Charlotte and Barbie exit.)

SHELBY: What's on your mind, Mama?

ABIGAIL: *(Fixing Shelby's collar.)* You, baby. I think it's high time you finally get rid of this silly notion of yours and settle down—get yourself a real job and find you a man who can take care of you.

SHELBY: *(Laughs.)* Find me a real job? Mama, I've won two Grammy Awards. My albums are selling by the millions.

ABIGAIL: I don't know about all that stuff. But in case you haven't noticed lately, you're not getting any younger.

SHELBY: Mama, I'm a successful recording artist. I've played Vegas, the Grand Ole Opry, and next month I'll be in Los Angeles recording a new album with [*Insert the name of a popular country recording artist.*]

ABIGAIL: All that running around doesn't give you much time for a dating life. Don't you think it's time you settle down with a man who will make all your dreams come true? Start a family. You probably haven't heard that the Wilson house over on 14th Street is for sale—the perfect place to raise my grandchildren...

(Shelby rises and crosses SR.)

SHELBY: I haven't been here ten minutes, and it's already starting.

ABIGAIL: I just want you to be happy.

SHELBY: I *am* happy, Mama. I'm *happy*. I'm living my dream. I'm doing what I was created to do.

(Barbie enters and puts bottles of ketchup on the tables.)

ABIGAIL: (*Sharp.*) How do you know anything about happiness? You're barley [30 years old]. It's past time you get serious about living your life. [*Or insert another age.*]

SHELBY: Serious? Mama, I was on "Oprah" last month. Didn't you see me? [*Or insert the name of another TV show.*]

ABIGAIL: I live and work in this diner 24-7. How am I supposed to know anything going on outside these grimy walls?

SHELBY: Mama, don't do this. You begged me to come home for Uncle Roy's memorial service. Let's not turn it into anything else.

ABIGAIL: You're still that same stubborn child.

SHELBY: I won't argue with you, Mama. I won't.

(Charlotte enters, holding a cup of coffee.)

CHARLOTTE: You two, hold it down out here. Can't you see we have customers?

MARTY: *(Shouts.)* Edgar's starving over here!

EDGAR: *(Shouts.)* I'm starving!

CHARLOTTE: Here, suck on this bottle of ketchup. *(Takes a nearly empty plastic ketchup bottle from Barbie and throws it to Edgar. To Abigail.)* Hey, Abi, have you told Shelby about your surprise?

SHELBY: What surprise?

BARBIE: Charlotte, this is not the time.

ABIGAIL: I swear, Charlotte, if you don't get to work—

CHARLOTTE: Shelby, you mean your dear, sweet mama hasn't told you she's setting you up on a date tonight?

ABIGAIL: Charlotte, when's the last time you minded your own business?

CHARLOTTE: When I was five.

SHELBY: *(Angry.)* Mama, you didn't! Tell me you didn't—

ABIGAIL: You don't even know who he is.

SHELBY: You had no right.

ABIGAIL: A mother has every right. Now that the cat's out of the bag... *(Gives Charlotte a look.)* ...come on and guess who it is. Just one guess.

SHELBY: It doesn't matter who it is because I refuse to go on a blind date. I'm not 16.

CHARLOTTE: This is getting pretty good. *(To Abigail.)* Ask her again to guess who you've set her up with.

BARBIE: Charlotte!

ABIGAIL: Charlotte, have you called the man about the jukebox?

CHARLOTTE: I did.

ABIGAIL: Did you tell him it starts playing all by itself?

CHARLOTTE: He said it sounded like you needed a new jukebox.

ABIGAIL: I'm sure he'd like to sell me one.

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CHARLOTTE: You're changing the subject. (*Rushes to Shelby SR.*) Shelby, I'll tell you who she set you up with.

ABIGAIL: Charlotte Wray!

BARBIE: (*To Charlotte.*) Don't you dare!

CHARLOTTE: (*To Shelby.*) Luke Duncan.

ABIGAIL: I should fire you here and now!

(*Shelby stands between Charlotte and Barbie.*)

SHELBY: Mama, you didn't set me up with Luke Duncan!

ABIGAIL: He's a free man now, sweetheart.

CHARLOTTE: (*To Shelby.*) His third divorce was just finalized.

SHELBY: Mother!

ABIGAIL: Married three times. He should know what he wants by now.

SHELBY: Luke Duncan stood me up at our senior prom.

ABIGAIL: He was just a kid. He took a nice, steady job down at the hardware store.

CHARLOTTE: (*Wiping down a table.*) He learned a trade during that stint in prison.

ABIGAIL: (*Sharply.*) You know full well he was cleared of that murder charge!

SHELBY: Mama, coming home was supposed to be different this time. I was looking forward to a pleasant visit, and you just ruined any chance of that. Most parents would be proud that their daughter is living her dream.

ABIGAIL: What about your mama's dream, Shelby? You think *this* is my dream? Running a washed-up diner on a road that leads to nowhere with a cook who thinks PetSmart is a school for dogs?

(*Ace pops his head up.*)

ACE: (*Insulted.*) Hey!

SHELBY: That's not my fault, Mama.

(Jackson enters, carrying a broom and dustpan.)

ABIGAIL: You ran off all those years ago leaving me here with your brother.

SHELBY: I don't see you trying to marry *him* off.

ABIGAIL: I'm a lot of things, but I'm no miracle worker.

JACKSON: *(Annoyed.)* Mama, I'm standing right here.

ABIGAIL: And he's always hanging around at the wrong times.

SHELBY: *(Scolding.)* Mama!

JACKSON: It's okay, Shelby. I'm used to it.

(Jukebox plays soft, classical music such as Mozart's Clarinet Concerto's second movement or another suitable song.)

ABIGAIL: *(To Shelby.)* This is what my life has become. You give up 18 months of your life to carry your children and this is the thanks you get. You raise them, protect them, and provide for them when their no-good daddy runs off with a post office clerk 'cause she's got mail! Have I ever gotten *one* thank you? Well, you're welcome!

(Jackson hushes the jukebox. Jukebox stops. Barbie exits into the kitchen.)

CHARLOTTE: Look at my life and you don't hear me complaining. Thirty-year-old single girl working at a dead-end job for less than minimum wage, living in a one-bedroom garage apartment over old Ms. Hanson's cat-filled split-level. No education. No future.

ABIGAIL: You're right, Charlotte, nobody's life is as pathetic as yours.

(Charlotte exits to kitchen.)

SHELBY: *(Calmly.)* Just so you know, Mama, I'm not going on this date tonight. *(Exits to kitchen.)*

ABIGAIL: *(Calmly.)* If you choose to break your date with Luke, you'll have to call him yourself. I don't have the heart. *(Shoots a curious glare at the jukebox and exits to kitchen.)*

MARTY: Let's go, Edgar. We'll starve if we stay here.

JACKSON: Edgar, Marty, can I talk to you for a minute? *(Edgar, Marty, and Jackson meet CS.)* The man you see before you here is slowly dying inside.

EDGAR: You want me to call a doctor?

JACKSON: What I mean is...I've got to get out of this place. You see, I'm planning to go off and look for adventure, prosperity, beautiful women, and excitement. And I don't want anyone trying to stop me.

EDGAR: Who's trying to stop you? Shucks, I think I'll go with you.

JACKSON: In the meantime, with Shelby in town, I've got to try my best not to appear to be a loser.

EDGAR: Just stand next to me, and you'll look like a genius.

JACKSON: I need a girl. You know, a secret admirer. Edgar, have you done your good deed for the week?

EDGAR: Sure did. I spent half an hour helping a little old lady across the street.

JACKSON: It took you half an hour?

EDGAR: She didn't want to go.

JACKSON: You guys need to fix me up. Do you know a girl who would pretend to like me for a couple of days? She doesn't have to be pretty or have a personality.

EDGAR: Hmm, doesn't have to be pretty...no personality... *(Snaps his fingers.)* I got it! My sister's back in town.

JACKSON: Your sister, huh? Is she easily impressed?

EDGAR: Yes, sir.

JACKSON: Does she like simple, laid-back guys?

EDGAR: Yes, sir.

JACKSON: Is she smart?

EDGAR: About as smart as I am.

MARTY: Two out of three's not bad, Jackson.

JACKSON: Is she busy tonight?

EDGAR: I'm not sure.

MARTY: Hey, Jackson, don't you want to know what she looks like?

JACKSON: Looks aren't important to me. I'm more interested on the inside. *(Beats his chest.)*

EDGAR: Oh, she has real healthy kidneys.

JACKSON: I mean her soul—her heart—those are the things that really matter. *(Pause.)* Do you have a picture?

EDGAR: I think I've got one here somewhere. *(Pulls a snapshot out of his shirt pocket. Proudly.)* She gets her looks from my side of the family.

(Jackson takes the picture and crosses to Marty.)

JACKSON: Wow, Edgar, she's really pretty.

MARTY: When was this picture taken?

EDGAR: Let's see... *(Thinks.)* ...that picture was taken in the summer. My family traveled to Panama City Beach, and we took a walk down by the ocean.

JACKSON: Edgar, she's hot. Your mama's ugly, but your sister's hot!

EDGAR: Like I said, we were on the beach.

JACKSON: *(Looking at the photo.)* What does she do for a living?

EDGAR: She was an underwear model in California but has since moved back home to settle down.

(Jackson hands the picture back to Edgar.)

JACKSON: Who am I kidding? Someone who looks like that wouldn't be interested in somebody like me. *(Turns to fold napkins at a table.)*

EDGAR: Don't talk like that. You're not as ugly as people say.

MARTY: I had a friend once who was so ugly it looked like his neck threw up.

EDGAR: *(To Jackson.)* Yours is more like a dry heave.

(Jackson crosses back to Edgar, taking the picture again.)

JACKSON: What do I have to lose? What do you say, Edgar? Can you set it up for me? Just try not to make me sound desperate. *(Charlotte enters and pours another cup of coffee. Speaks loudly to make sure Charlotte overhears.)* I don't know, Edgar. Meeting your sister like this on the spur of the moment? I don't know if I have the time.

EDGAR: *(Confused.)* But you just said—

JACKSON: May I keep the picture? *(Runs to the kitchen door and then turns back to Edgar. Holding up the snapshot.)* This was taken in the summer, huh?

EDGAR: Yes, sir. *(Jackson grins big and exits to kitchen. To Marty, calmly.)* Summer of [1985]. *[Or insert another year.]*

(Marty shakes his head as he and Edgar exit. Barbie and Shelby enter from the kitchen. Barbie is sorting through a stack of mail.)

BARBIE: Look at this, Shelby, you got some mail. Word must have leaked out you were going to be in town.

SHELBY: For me?

CHARLOTTE: *(Sarcastically, yells.)* Shelby?! Shelby?! Nobody else answers. Must be you.

BARBIE: Here's one from Tom Driskle and one from Rodney Bradford and Frank Sutton. Look, this one here is a proposal. Oh, Shelby, look how popular you are!

CHARLOTTE: Barbie, come on. I'm not filling these salt shakers by myself. *(To Shelby.)* Barbie is just fascinated with work. She could sit and watch it for hours.

(Charlotte exits to kitchen. Jackson enters and sets out salt and pepper shakers on the tables.)

BARBIE: Don't say anything exciting while I'm gone.

(Barbie runs into the kitchen. Abigail enters.)

ABIGAIL: Shelby, Henrietta Walters is on the phone and wants to hear your voice.

SHELBY: *(Sighs.)* Coming, Mama.

(Shelby exits to kitchen. Abigail crosses and looks out the window.)

ABIGAIL: Where is that sister of mine with Uncle Roy? I swear if she spills one drop of that man... *(Eileen enters carrying a shoebox. She is wearing a beautiful fur coat.)* There you are. Where is he?

EILEEN: Don't give me that dirty look.

ABIGAIL: I didn't give you a dirty look. You were wearing it when you came in.

EILEEN: Calm down, I have him right here. *(Hands Abigail the shoebox.)* Good heavens, take your medication. *(Crosses SL, removes her fur coat, and places it on the back of a chair.)*

ABIGAIL: That's a very underhanded thing you did. Give him to me.

EILEEN: I just did.

(Shocked, Abigail looks at the shoebox.)

ABIGAIL: What did you do with his urn?

EILEEN: J. J. broke it by accident. Don't worry. He's all there.

ABIGAIL: Are you trying to tell me you have taken it upon yourself to place Uncle Roy in an ordinary, everyday shoebox?

EILEEN: It was either that or leave him in my vacuum cleaner bag.

ABIGAIL: You're only trying to upset me. *(Thrusts the shoebox into Jackson's arms and crosses to Eileen.)* You march right

back to that self-proclaimed mansion of yours and bring that urn back this instant!

EILEEN: I told you it's broken. If you spent as much time listening as you do talking—

JACKSON: (*Peeping inside the box.*) He seems to be all here, Mama.

ABIGAIL: I will not have Uncle Roy's remains housed in a common shoebox! What are you going to do to help me get ready for the memorial service tomorrow?

EILEEN: I brought the guest of honor. What more is there for me to do?

ABIGAIL: Sit down!

JACKSON: (*To Eileen.*) Mama's in one of her moods.

ABIGAIL: (*To Jackson, sharply.*) And I don't need you narrating my life. Take Uncle Roy to the kitchen and make him presentable.

(*Holding the shoebox tightly, Jackson heads to the kitchen.*)

JACKSON: You know, Uncle Roy never liked it when you girls argued like this. (*Exits to kitchen.*)

ABIGAIL: (*To Eileen.*) Why didn't you tell me you were taking Uncle Roy from the diner?

EILEEN: Because I knew you would go off the deep end the way you always do when you don't get your way.

ABIGAIL: You had no right.

EILEEN: I had every right to spend quality time with my favorite uncle.

ABIGAIL: I was a nervous wreck! Why don't you just thrust a stake through my heart and get it over with!

EILEEN: Until you've walked a day in my shoes, you shouldn't dare talk to me about pain.

ABIGAIL: Pain? What do you know about pain?

EILEEN: How can you say I've never hurt?

ABIGAIL: (*Circling Eileen.*) Did it hurt when Leroy surprised you with that fur? Does it hurt every time you climb into

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that Mercedes or eat caviar your personal chef prepares?
Did it hurt when you received that first check after your
beloved husband died and left you his money?

EILEEN: Leroy loved me, and I loved him, and I absolutely
resent the fact that you are insinuating otherwise.

ABIGAIL: You loved what he could do for you.

EILEEN: At least I had a husband who stuck around.

(Pause. Abigail is hurt by this.)

ABIGAIL: Shelby's home. Don't you dare let her hear you
talk like that about her daddy!

(Jukebox plays a menacing tune underneath the following.)

EILEEN: Good heavens, take your head out of the sand now
and again. Shelby's grown up, and she's doing fine without
this town, without her daddy, and without you!

ABIGAIL: *(In the direction of the kitchen, shouts.)* Jackson, get
out here and do something about this jukebox!

EILEEN: I don't know why you continue to blame everyone
but yourself for the life you've chosen to live.

ABIGAIL: This diner is only a stepping stone to bigger and
better things.

EILEEN: *(Scoffs.)* In Remington? Please...

ABIGAIL: Uncle Roy always told me he would make sure I
was taken care of.

EILEEN: Are you talking about his will?

ABIGAIL: It's being read here tomorrow at the memorial
service.

*(Jackson runs on holding a large sugar jar. Shelby enters behind
him.)*

JACKSON: What is it, Mama?

ABIGAIL: *(Staring at Eileen.)* The jukebox is acting up again.

(Jackson looks at the jukebox and puts his hand out. Music stops.)

SHELBY: Aunt Eileen, I didn't know you were here.

EILEEN: Hello, baby. How's my Shelby?

(Eileen hugs Shelby. Jackson crosses down DSL to Abigail.)

JACKSON: Here you go, Mama.

(Jackson hands Abigail the sugar jar.)

ABIGAIL: Why are you bringing me the sugar?

JACKSON: It's not sugar, Mama. It's Uncle Roy.

ABIGAIL: Good heavens, you put your uncle in my best sugar jar?

JACKSON: You told me to make him presentable.

(Eileen crosses to Jackson.)

EILEEN: I think a sugar jar is appropriate. Uncle Roy was the sweetest man I ever knew.

SHELBY: Poor Uncle Roy.

(Abigail hands the sugar jar to Jackson.)

ABIGAIL: Uncle Roy, I promised you the best memorial service, and you're going to get it. Your favorite niece will see to it.

EILEEN: Favorite? Huh! And now you think he's left you everything.

(Jackson sets the sugar jar on a table DSC and wipes the top of it with a dishrag.)

ABIGAIL: I refuse to talk about his will. It isn't dignified.

(Charlotte enters and begins filling a napkin holder.)

SHELBY: Uncle Roy left a will?

(Customer 2 enters and takes a seat close to the kitchen window.)

JACKSON: *(To Customer 2.)* Be right with you.

(Jackson listens intently to what Abigail is saying.)

ABIGAIL: Uncle Roy had lots of money. Not many people knew that. He always quoted Ben Franklin: "If you would be wealthy, think of saving as well as getting."

CHARLOTTE: Great advice from two dead men.

ABIGAIL: That's where Uncle Roy and I were alike. We both understood that money brought neither happiness nor fulfillment.

EILEEN: Then you shouldn't care if he doesn't leave you anything in his will.

ABIGAIL: I couldn't care less.

EILEEN: We'll see about that.

SHELBY: *(Breaking the tension between them.)* Have you decided how you're going to set up the banquet room for the service tomorrow, Mama?

ABIGAIL: To the letter.

EILEEN: The ulogolic ceremony should be conducted in a chapel, not a run-down, greasy spoon.

ABIGAIL: Ulogolic? There's no such word.

SHELBY: Mama, Benjamin Franklin also said, "There never was a good war or a bad peace." *(Exits to kitchen.)*

CUSTOMER 2: *(Finger in the air.)* Excuse me! I'm in a bit of a hurry.

(Jackson pulls out a pad and pencil from his apron.)

JACKSON: I'm sorry. What can I get for you?

CUSTOMER 2: What would you suggest?

JACKSON: Prime rib, but not from here.

(Jackson hands Customer 2 a menu and recites the specials.)

EILEEN: *(To Abigail.)* I'll walk over and pick up the flowers from Dora Lee. *(Holds out her hand.)* That will be 25 dollars.

ABIGAIL: You expect me to pay for the flowers?

EILEEN: This whole ceremony was your idea.

ABIGAIL: He was your uncle, too. Good heavens! How tight can you get?

EILEEN: I'll just tell Dora Lee to charge it.

(Eileen exits. Abigail exits to kitchen.)

CUSTOMER 2: *(Looking at menu, to Jackson.)* What's the Chef's Surprise?

JACKSON: He doesn't wash his hands. *(Laughs.)* Get it?

CUSTOMER 2: *(Doesn't find this amusing.)* I'll just try the grilled cheese sandwich.

(Ace appears at the kitchen window.)

JACKSON: Hey, Ace! One grilled cheese sandwich!

ACE: *(Pulls cigar from his teeth.)* We're out of cheese and bread.

JACKSON: *(To Customer 2.)* We're out of cheese and bread.

CUSTOMER 2: How about a burger?

JACKSON: *(To Ace.)* How about a burger?

ACE: All my ground beef is frozen solid!

JACKSON: *(To Customer 2.)* Ground beef is solid ice. The poultry here is decent.

CUSTOMER 2: That sounds good. *(To Ace.)* Excuse me, but how do you prepare your chicken?

ACE: We just tell them straight out they're going to die.

CUSTOMER 2: *(To Jackson.)* Good heavens. Just bring me a coffee without cream.

JACKSON: We're out of cream. You'll have to take it without milk.

CUSTOMER 2: And a bowl of today's soup.

JACKSON: You got it.

(Jackson exits to kitchen. Abigail approaches Ace from behind the kitchen window.)

ABIGAIL: Ace, I told you to notice when the soup boiled over.

ACE: I did. It was half past ten.

(Ace and Abigail disappear. Charlotte stands from filling the napkin container and sees Luke outside the diner window.)

CHARLOTTE: Luke Duncan, is that you? Why are you hiding? *(Luke holds up a sign that reads, "Is Shelby in town yet?" Through window, shouts.)* She's in the kitchen. You can calm down. She knows all about your date. *(Luke holds up another sign that reads, "I'm real nervous.")* Get in here! *(Luke holds up a sign that reads, "I can't." In the direction of the kitchen, shouts.)* Shelby, someone's here to see— *(Luke knocks on the window and holds up a sign that reads, "Wait." Then he flips it over and it reads, "Okay." He disappears, rushes in the front door, and hides behind the jukebox. In direction of the kitchen, shouts.)* Barbie!

(Barbie enters from the kitchen holding a sugar jar identical to the one used to hold Uncle Roy's ashes.)

BARBIE: What is it?

CHARLOTTE: Help me with Chicken Little.

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(Barbie sets her sugar jar beside Uncle Roy's sugar jar, which Jackson had earlier placed on the table. Barbie crosses to Charlotte and they look in the direction of the jukebox.)

LUKE: *(Peeping out.)* If I come out, will you girls help me with Shelby?

ABIGAIL: *(Offstage.)* Shelby, you get out there and relax. You've had a long trip!

(Barbie and Charlotte quickly stand in front of the jukebox. Shelby enters from the kitchen.)

SHELBY: *(To Barbie and Charlotte.)* Tell me what I can do to help you get ready for tomorrow's service. Mama won't let me do anything. *(Notices that they look suspicious.)* Is there something back there you don't want me to see?

(Jukebox plays a few lines from a song such as "Hello Darlin'" by Conway Twitty, or another suitable song. Luke steps out and makes his way to Shelby CS. Ace enters from the kitchen carrying a bowl and sets it in front of Customer 2.)

ACE: *(To Customer 2.)* Here you go.

CUSTOMER 2: Wait a minute, cook. There's a twig in my soup.

ACE: *(Sarcastic.)* My apologies. I'll inform the branch manager.

CUSTOMER 2: That's it! I'm out of here! *(Rises and quickly exits out the front door.)*

ACE: *(Shouts.)* Come back and see us!

(Ace exits to kitchen. Song fades on the jukebox.)

SHELBY: Luke Duncan, you're here so early.

LUKE: I was just passing by.

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SHELBY: Look, I'm really sorry my mother has gotten you mixed up in one of her crazy schemes.

(Charlotte and Barbie go back to their individual chores.)

CHARLOTTE: Crazy schemes is your mother's middle name.

LUKE: I didn't mind. I don't have anything going on this weekend. Hey, what would you say to a drive-in movie?

SHELBY: Look—

LUKE: You know what's playing? "Closed for the Season." Get it? "Closed for the Season."

(Barbie approaches Luke.)

BARBIE: I saw that movie last week. It was so boring.

SHELBY: Barbie, don't you have something to do?

CHARLOTTE: *(Takes Barbie by the shoulders, to Luke.)* You'll have to excuse her. Her antenna doesn't pick up all the channels. Come on, Barbie, there's things to do in the kitchen. *(Exits to the kitchen.)*

BARBIE: Okay. *(Sneaks over to Shelby and Luke and helps them have a seat at a table across from one another.)* Isn't this cozy? Who's going to say the first word? I know you're just dying to know about each other. So, who's it going to be? Who's going to talk first? Who's going to break the ice here?

ABIGAIL: *(Offstage, shouts.)* Barbie, if you don't get in here, you're fired!

BARBIE: *(To Luke as she gives him the "okay" sign.)* Glad I could help, but I've got a cake to bake. *(Starts for the kitchen but stops.)* Oh, I forgot the sugar.

(Barbie crosses to the table where both sugar jars sit and can't remember which one she set down. She shrugs and picks up the sugar jar that holds Uncle Roy's ashes, looks to the jukebox, gives a nod, and exits to the kitchen. The jukebox plays an old love song)

such as “Close to You” by The Carpenters or another suitable song. Shelby and Luke look uncomfortably across the table at one another.)

LUKE: Shelby, let’s make the most of this. I’m only on day release.

SHELBY: You see—

(Luke pulls a note card from his pocket.)

LUKE: *(Reads.)* “Is there an airport around here or is that my heart taking off?”

SHELBY: What?

LUKE: *(Reads.)* “Somebody better call heaven, ‘cause they’re missing an angel.”

SHELBY: Look, Luke—

LUKE: *(Reads.)* “Good news! My test results are negative. *(Slight pause.)* Hey, how did you do that?”

SHELBY: What?

LUKE: *(Reads.)* “Look so good?”

SHELBY: I’m sorry, Luke, I don’t think this is going to work.

(Luke runs toward the window.)

LUKE: Come on, my [Chevette] is parked outside. I just filled it with STP Power Boost! *[Or insert another type of car.]*

SHELBY: I’d love to, but I feel a song coming on.

LUKE: *(Suddenly sad.)* Rejection isn’t good for my clinical depression, you know.

[END OF FREEVIEW]