



Donna Van Oss

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BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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*To my children
Sam and Amelia
who light up my life
and make me a better person.*

CAJUN CONFUSION

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CAJUN CONFUSION was first performed at the Louisiana School for the Deaf on March 31, 2004.

MELODY FOWLER: Lauren Landry

MARILYN BLACK: Erica Ferguson

TAYLOR DUNCAN: Ashley Stewart

EMILY MILLER: Ditanya Johnson

GINA RICHARD: Gloria Matthews

ALLISSA GALLOWAY: Alana Smith

GUY THOMPSON: Jeff Alvarez

PAUL MANACHI: Michael Hayes

BRANDON (BJ) JOHNSON: Derrick Nettles

MATTHEW FITZGERALD: Roland Edmond

TALLY RAMOS: Shankel Gladden

SEYMORE SNEED: Jeremy Omoike

COACH JAN DAVIS: Tasha Brown

DELORES MACK: LaKeita Joseph

CLOVIS THIBODEAUX: John Cairo

CLOTILE THIBODEAUX: Kristie DeVille

NELA THIBODEAUX: Amie Aguilar

MERTICE THIBODEAUX: Gina Engolia

EVANGELINE THIBODEAUX: Trinese Hall

CAJUN CONFUSION

FARCE. While on their way to New Orleans, a high school show choir from Texas takes a wrong turn and finds themselves lost in the Cajun countryside. Hungry and tired, the group finds lodging at Thibodeaux's Bed and Breakfast, where Clotile, a Cajun palm reader who works voodoo spells, warms up some gator steaks, possum stew, and squirrel casserole for the weary travelers. The next morning, the students discover that their bus won't start and that they are stranded. With no phone at Thibodeaux's and no cell phone service, the students seek the help of Clotile's husband, Clovis. The only problem is that Clovis' accent is so thick no one can understand him. But with Clotile translating, Clovis tells the students that he will have to row his pirogue down the bayou to fetch a mechanic, which will only take 2-3 days. In the meantime, the students have to endure the pranks of a mischievous Cajun ghost all the while trying to convince their spacey bus driver that they aren't in New Orleans!

Performance Time: Approximately 120 minutes.

CHARACTERS

(7 M, 12 F)

CLOVIS THIBODEAUX: Cajun owner of Thibodeaux's Bed and Breakfast; his speech sounds like a jumble of sounds with a few recognizable Cajun words sprinkled in; no one except the other Cajuns and Delores can understand him; wears overalls.

CLOTILE THIBODEAUX: Clovis' wife and interpreter; palm reader; wears a Cajun dress and apron.

NELA THIBODEAUX: Eldest teenage daughter; wears a Cajun skirt and top.

MERTICE THIBODEAUX: Youngest daughter and only person who can see Evangeline the ghost; wears a Cajun skirt and top.

EVANGELINE THIBODEAUX: Cajun ghost who enjoys playing tricks; wears an old-fashioned wedding dress.

COACH JAN DAVIS: Reluctant show choir sponsor and overly enthusiastic girls' basketball coach from Texas; female.

DELORES MACK: Spacey, dimwitted school bus driver with no sense of direction.

MELODY FOWLER: Hippie show choir member.

MARILYN BLACK: Goth drama freak and show choir member.

TAYLOR DUNAWAY: Self-centered diva and show choir member.

GINA RICHARDS: Worships Taylor and waits on her hand and foot; show choir member.

ALLISSA GALLOWAY: Worships Taylor and waits on her hand and foot; show choir member and basketball player.

BRANDON (BJ) JOHNSON: Taylor's boyfriend; show choir member and football jock; always hungry; secretly dating Emily.

EMILY MILLER: Quiet, sincere show choir member; secretly dating BJ.

GUY THOMPSON: Tense show choir leader; carries a clipboard.

PAUL MANACHI: High-strung show choir member.

MATTHEW FITZGERALD (MATT) WILLIAMS: Popular and friendly.

TALLY RAMOS: Foreign exchange student and prince from Belize.

SEYMORE SNEED: Nerdy show choir member; allergic to all animals; wears glasses.

NOTE: If desired, Cajuns can have uni-brows for a humorous touch.

SETTING

Port Fourchon, LA. Thibodeaux's Bed and Breakfast.

SET

The play takes place in the lobby area of Thibodeaux's Bed and Breakfast. The lobby is an all-purpose room that includes a living area, dining area, and an office area. There is a couch that slants from CS to SR and two chairs that face that couch. The main entrance to the bed and breakfast is SL and miscellaneous chairs line the wall on either side of the entrance. There is a drop-leaf table with four folding chairs against the back wall UCS. On the SL wall is a shelf with cubby holes for keys. In front of that is a counter area. The room is decorated with quilts, handmade crafts, and plenty of mounted and stuffed animals. There is an exit just to the right of UCS, which leads to the hotel rooms. Another exit SR leads to the Cajuns' living quarters.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

- Scene 1:** Outside Monitor High School, Texas, Wednesday morning.
Played before the curtain. There is a cardboard cutout of a school bus.
- Scene 2:** Lobby, Thibodeaux's Bed and Breakfast, that evening.
- Scene 3:** Lobby, after midnight.
- Scene 4:** Lobby, 7:30 a.m., the next day.
- Scene 5:** Lobby, a short time later.
- Scene 6:** Lobby, that evening.

Intermission

ACT II

- Scene 1:** Lobby, the next morning.
- Scene 2:** Lobby, a short time later.
- Scene 3:** Lobby, that afternoon.
- Scene 4:** Lobby, that evening.
- Scene 5:** Lobby, midnight.
- Scene 6:** Lobby, early Saturday morning.

PROPS

Cutout of a bus	Water glasses
Watch, for Guy	Whistle
Clipboard	CD player
Suitcases	Watch, for Melody
Hairspray	Large bag for beauty supplies
Bottle of water	Misc. beauty supplies (Combs, brushes, hair products, etc.)
Toys	Nail file
Dolls	Purse, for Allissa
Stuffed duck	Hand mirror
Stuffed/mounted animals	Risers
Sign that reads, "For service, make the fish sing"	Stylish clothing, for Nela
Stuffed or toy fish	Misc crazy looking items
Pen	Ceremony costumes for show choir members (Hoods with feathers and a necklace with some type of animal charm like a rabbit's foot, an alligator skull, a crow's foot, etc.)
Keys	Urn
Scroll	Candles
Boxes of candy	Watch, for Clotile
Necklace with a small bag for a pendant	Herbs
Engine part	Large engagement ring, for Nela
Cards	Basket
Flowers	Business suit and hat, for Evangeline
Amulet	Brown scroll
Guitar	Amulet
Brightly colored pajamas, for Marilyn	Show choir costumes for members
Pair of shoes	
TV trays	
Colorful, tight-fitting jogging suit, for Paul	
Plates of food	
Pitcher of milk	
Napkins	
Forks	

SOUND EFFECTS

Bus driving off
Music for singing fish
Music for show choir routine

"WE'RE GOING TO NEW ORLEANS.
BUT WE'RE IN TEXAS.
HOW ARE WE GOING
TO GET ACROSS THE OCEAN?"

-DELORES

ACT I
SCENE 1

(Curtain is closed. Outside Monitor High School, Texas. There is a bus cardboard cutout onstage. Guy enters SL, carrying a suitcase. He looks at his watch, gets out his clipboard, looks irritated, and then sits on his suitcase.)

GUY: Where is everybody? It's 6:45 and we're supposed to leave at seven. The bus is here, so the bus driver must be around here somewhere.

(Guy gets up and paces around. After a while, Seymore enters and trips on the suitcase and falls down.)

SEYMORE: Ouch, my arm.

(Guy helps Seymore up. Seymore cradles his arm.)

GUY: Be careful, Seymore. If you hurt yourself, you won't be able to dance in the competition.

SEYMORE: Is that all you care about?

GUY: Sometimes I think I'm the only one who cares.

SEYMORE: My arm really hurts, but I don't think it's broken.

(Seymore nurses his arm. Guy checks Seymore's name off the clipboard and looks at his watch again. Marilyn reluctantly enters SL.)

GUY: Marilyn, I can't believe you're here early.

MARILYN: Whatever, Guy. Mom is so excited about this competition that she couldn't wait to get here. I can't believe I'm in a show choir. I'd rather be dead.

GUY: Why did you join the Monitones if you feel that way?

MARILYN: Mom made me do it. She said I couldn't have a nose ring unless I got involved in an extracurricular activity. The show choir misses more school than any other group. At least that's one good thing.

GUY: How are we ever going to get anything accomplished as a group if we don't work together? It's attitudes like yours that spoil the fun for everyone else. Don't you want us to do well?

(On "together" Matt and BJ enter SL. They are boisterous and loud.)

MATT: Hi, Guy. *(Both laugh.)* How's it going?

GUY: I don't know where everybody is. We are supposed to leave at seven, and I can't even find the bus driver.

BJ: Don't expect Coach Davis to be here anytime soon. We saw her car stopped on the side of the road.

GUY: *(Concerned.)* Why didn't you stop and help her?

MATT: Because our doors were locked.

GUY: *(Getting hysterical and looking back and forth from Matt to BJ.)*

What are you talking about? If she doesn't get here, we won't be able to go, and this is the first time Monitor High School has been invited to the Regional Show Choir Competition. I have to call somebody to go get her. Matt, can I borrow your phone?

BJ: Calm down, Guy. We were just kidding. I'm sure she'll be here soon.

MATT: You've got to lighten up, man.

GUY: Why can't ya'll be more serious? *(BJ makes faces behind Guy's back.)* I really am worried about our performance at the competition. You two obviously don't care. You're just here because of Taylor.

MATT: That's not true. We've got plenty of pretty girls in the choir.

GUY: Will you stop kidding? You should be thinking about the competition.

MATT: It's okay, Guy! We're ready to knock 'em dead in New Orleans. *(To BJ.)* By the way, where is Taylor?

BJ: I don't know. I haven't talked to her in over an hour.

(Emily enters SL, carrying a suitcase.)

GUY: Finally, someone who doesn't kid around all the time. I'm getting stressed out!

EMILY: Calm down, Guy. It's going to be all right.

(Emily approaches BJ and Matt.)

MATT/BJ: Hey, Emily.

EMILY: Hi, BJ.

(Matt approaches Seymore and Marilyn.)

BJ: Hey, Emily, I just wanted to thank you again for helping me with that English assignment. It really had me stumped.

EMILY: Anytime. I am so excited about this competition. I bet we will meet lots of new and interesting people.

(Tally enters SL, carrying a suitcase.)

BJ: Speaking of new people, there's Tally.

GUY: *(To Tally.)* Hey, I don't know how things work in Belize, but around here, people are supposed to be on time.

TALLY: Ha, ha! Guy, you are so funny! *(Looks around.)* It's not even seven, and from what I can tell, there are still quite a few people missing. They'll get here. Don't worry. Besides, there are more important things to think about. *(He approaches Emily.)* Hi, Emily. You look nice this morning.

EMILY: Thanks, Tally.

TALLY: I would like to talk to you about that English assignment. Maybe we can sit together on the bus.

EMILY: *(Looking at BJ and then back to Tally.)* Oh, I don't know. Let's not think about schoolwork now. We've got to concentrate on our performance.

TALLY: *(Grabbing Emily.)* That's a good idea. Let's practice some dance moves.

EMILY: *(Pulling away.)* No, Tally. We'll have plenty of time for that later.

TALLY: Come on, Emily. I just want to get to know you better.

EMILY: That's what you always say. Look, I don't mean to be rude, but—

(With a lot of energy, Paul enters SL.)

PAUL: Hi, everyone! Isn't it a beautiful morning? *(Approaches Guy and puts his arm around him.)* Hello, fearless leader! Are you ready for our big performance?

GUY: It would be a lot easier to be ready if the whole group was here. We should be on the road by now, not standing around in the parking lot.

PAUL: I'm sure the others will get here soon. *(He approaches Emily, Tally, and BJ.)* I hope the weather is this nice in New Orleans. I can't wait to check out the French Quarter. I think this trip is going to be so much fun.

(Paul approaches Marilyn.)

BJ: Hey, Paul, why don't you save some of that energy for our performance? *(To Emily.)* That guy's too much.

EMILY: Oh, BJ, don't pick on him. He's really nice.

TALLY: You two sound like an old married couple.

BJ: *(Defensively.)* Why would you say that?

(BJ approaches Matt. Emily goes to talk to Marilyn and Seymore. Melody enters SL, carrying a suitcase.)

GUY: *(Checking her name off of his clipboard.)* Okay, now we're only waiting for three more girls, the coach, and the bus driver.

MELODY: Well, good morning to you, too.

GUY: Huh?

MELODY: I said, "Good morning."

GUY: Oh, well, I don't think it's such a good morning.

MELODY: The world is what you make of it. Try to look at the positive things.

GUY: Okay. I'm positive that we aren't going to be able to compete if the rest of the people don't get here soon. You haven't seen the bus driver, have you?

MELODY: No, but I'm sure she'll be here soon.

GUY: I hope so.

(Coach Davis enters SL and approaches Guy.)

COACH: Is everyone here? I'm ready to get this show on the road. The sooner we leave, the sooner we'll get back.

GUY: Coach Davis, I know you care more about basketball than the show choir, and that you got stuck sponsoring us, but couldn't you

be a little enthusiastic about our competition. I mean, we're going to regionals. That's a pretty big deal.

COACH: I'm sure it's a big deal to you, Guy, but I'm going to miss five days of practice for this competition, so don't expect me to be happy about it.

GUY: Today is Wednesday. Your team practices every day of the week?

COACH: That's right. I don't know what to expect when I get back. I'll have to work hard to whip them back into shape. Of course, I'm sure Allissa will stay in shape. She and I will find time for our workouts during the trip.

GUY: I hope you don't plan on interfering with our rehearsal schedule. Allissa is part of the show choir, and she needs to be ready to perform

COACH: I'll make sure your team gets enough practice. Don't worry about that. *(She looks around.)* Where is Allissa anyway?

GUY: I'm sure she's with Taylor and Gina. They like to be fashionably late.

(Taylor enters SL, with Gina and Allissa on either side of her. Gina and Allissa carry their own suitcases and Taylor's as well.)

TAYLOR: Did someone say fashion? Here we are. Now we can get this party started. *(She snaps her fingers.)* Hairspray. *(Gina and Allissa pull out hairspray and spray Taylor's hair.)* This humidity is ruining my new 'do.

GINA: I know what you mean. My hair is always so frizzy. I wish I knew someone who could help me figure out what to do with it.

TAYLOR: BJ, come get my bags. *(BJ runs over, and she leans forward.)* Kiss! *(They air kiss on both sides, and then he picks up her bags.)* Go ahead and put them on the bus. I don't want them to get scratched, so make sure they're in a safe place.

BJ: Okay, babe. So how are you feeling? I know the last time we talked, you told me you had a hangnail.

(Allissa and Gina lean forward anxiously and look at Taylor's hand.)

TAYLOR: Yes, it was very painful, but it doesn't hurt very much any more. I think I'll be fine.

(Allissa and Gina breathe a big sigh of relief. BJ heads to the bus.)

GINA: Let me see... *(She looks at one of Taylor's hands.)* Yeah, it looks fine, but we'll keep a close watch on it. I'll redo your polish on the bus.

(Not to be outdone by Gina, Allissa pulls out a bottle of water.)

ALLISSA: Here, Taylor. Would you like a sip of water?

TAYLOR: Yes, thanks. I think I'm going to go ahead and get on the bus.

(Taylor heads toward the bus. Guy herds the Choir Members toward the bus.)

COACH: Allissa, did you call the rest of the girls on the team and give them the workout routines for the next five days?

ALLISSA: Yes, ma'am. I'm sure they'll stay in shape while we're gone. I know I plan to workout every chance I get.

COACH: As soon as we get to the hotel, I'll see what the exercise room looks like, and I'll figure out a place for us to do our daily 2-mile run.

(Matt approaches Allissa.)

ALLISSA: Great. I'll see if some of the other choir members would like to join us. *(She pushes Matt's shoulder.)* What about you, Matt?

MATT: Sure. I need to stay in shape. By the way, my mom wants your family to come over for dinner when we get back from the competition.

ALLISSA: Yeah, my mom's been saying we need to get together. It just seems like everybody is always so busy.

MATT: Maybe our families will go on another vacation together before we graduate.

ALLISSA: That would be a lot of fun. It will give me another chance to beat you at thumb wrestling.

MATT: Oh, yeah, you think you're so good? Let's go right now.

(They start to thumb wrestle and act goofy and silly around each other.)

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COACH: I don't know why you two don't date each other. You'd make a perfect couple.

ALLISSA: Aw, Coach, Matt is like a brother to me. *(She and Matt are standing with their arms around each other.)*

COACH: Well, I guess it's time to get on the road.

GUY: That would be a lot easier to do if the bus driver was here.

(Looking confused, Delores enters SL.)

COACH: Delores, where have you been?

DELORES: I had to go to the bathroom, and then I couldn't find the bus. *(Coach looks exasperated and shakes her head.)* So where is the basketball team going today?

COACH: I told you three times that it's the choir, and we're going to New Orleans for a competition.

DELORES: Oh. We're going to New Orleans. But we're in Texas. How are we going to get across the ocean?

COACH: Across the ocean? We're not going across the ocean, you ditz. I can't believe you were the only bus driver available. I thought you would be fired after the time you were supposed to drive me to Mississippi and we ended up in California.

GUY: Look, we're already late, and I have a map, so can we please leave now?

DELORES: No, I don't need a map. I was just kidding.

GUY: Whatever, let's just gooo!

(They all walk toward the bus and the front curtain closes briefly. The sound of a bus driving off is heard.)

SCENE 2

(AT RISE: Lobby, Thibodeaux's Bed and Breakfast, that evening. Evangeline is sitting on the couch with her hand under her chin. Pause. Carrying some toys, Mertice enters SR and sits down next to Evangeline.)

MERTICE: Mais cher, what are you doing, Evangeline?

EVANGELINE: Nothing. I've been so bored lately. We haven't had any guests because it's not hunting season. You know, I've been playing tricks on people in this house for a very long time. I can't believe that today it's been a hundred years since I died.

MERTICE: Wow, a hundred years. Will you please tell me the story again?

EVANGELINE: Well now, cher, when I was 12 my momma died. She was trying to get us some crawfish for dinner, and a gator got her. After that, my dad married Miss Effie, who was a renowned voodoo priestess from a neighboring village. She never did like me much because she thought Daddy loved me more than he loved her. She used to tell me that she was going to summon an evil spirit to kill me. I told my daddy about her threats, but he didn't believe me. I think she had him under one of her spells. I avoided her as much as possible, but I couldn't escape her.

MERTICE: Tell me about how you died.

EVANGELINE: Well, cher, after my daddy remarried, I got engaged to Henry, my third cousin. He wanted to marry me when I was 11, but my daddy was stubborn. He didn't care that all of my friends were already married. He told me I had to wait until I was 13. I planned a beautiful ceremony that was supposed to take place right here in this room. There used to be a big chandelier hanging right up there, and we were going to stand under it when we got married. A few days before the wedding, I put on my wedding gown and stood under that there chandelier to practice my vows. The next thing I remember is feeling a sharp pain in my head and falling to the ground.

MERTICE: Then what happened?

EVANGELINE: My physical body was dead, but my spirit floated out and saw that the chandelier had fallen. My step mom ran into the room laughing and then started chanting and dancing. She trapped my spirit here in this house with one of her voodoo spells.

MERTICE: Will you stay here forever?

EVANGELINE: I think that's what Miss Effie wanted, but after she died, I found her voodoo spell book. It taught me how to make this special amulet that allows people other than you to see me. It also describes a ritual that will release my spirit from this earth. One day, I may want to leave this place, but not yet. It's just too much fun playing tricks on people. Mertice, I need you to do something very important for me.

MERTICE: What?

EVANGELINE: I have the only copy of my stepmother's release spell, and I want you to hold on to it for me.

MERTICE: Why?

EVANGELINE: Because if the wrong person finds it, they might release my spirit, and then I wouldn't be able to talk to you anymore. You don't want that, do you?

MERTICE: No, I like talking to you. You can count on me.

(Nela enters SR.)

NELA: Mertice, who are you talking to? *(Evangeline goes behind Nela and blows on her hair. Nela swats the air like she's swatting a bug. Mertice giggles.)* What are you laughing at?

MERTICE: Oh, nothing, I was playing with my dolly.

(Evangeline waves goodbye as she exits UC, and Mertice smiles at her. Nela looks around to see what Mertice is smiling at.)

NELA: Mom said it's past your bedtime.

MERTICE: Why are you always bossing me around?

NELA: Because I'm older and I know better.

(Mertice stands.)

MERTICE: No, you don't.

NELA: Yes, I do.

MERTICE: No, you don't.

NELA: Yes, I do.

MERTICE: No, you don't.

NELA: Yes, I do.

MERTICE: No, you don't.

NELA: Look, I don't have time for this. Just go to bed, all right?

MERTICE: Oh, okay.

(Mertice exits SR. Nela picks up one of Mertice's dolls.)

NELA: *(To doll.)* I sure wish some guests would come and stay here. I've been really bored, and I wanna meet some new people.

CLOTILE: *(From offstage.)* Nela, can you come here for a minute, cher?

NELA: *(Sighing and rolling eyes.)* Yeah, Momma.

(Nela exits SR, carrying toys. Pause. Coach and Guy enter SL, carrying suitcases. They look agitated.)

COACH: I can't believe she did it again! She shouldn't be allowed to drive. I can't believe anybody could be that stupid.

GUY: I told her to use the map, but no one ever listens to me. I don't know why I even care. Obviously nobody else does.

(Guy and Coach continue to complain. BJ enters SL, carrying his and Taylor's suitcases. Matt, Gina, and Allissa enter carrying their suitcases. Taylor enters.)

TAYLOR: *(Whining.)* Just look at my shoes! They're totally ruined. I can't believe I had to walk through the mud.

GINA: It's okay, girl. I'll clean them up for you.

ALLISSA: I'll help.

(Gina leads Taylor to the couch.)

GINA: *(To Taylor.)* Come sit down over here. Allissa, go get some water.

ALLISSA: I'm on it.

TAYLOR: *(Yells.)* Make sure it's [Evian]. BJ, bring my bags over here, I need my nail file. *[Or insert the name of another brand of bottled water.]*

(BJ carries Taylor's bags to her.)

GINA: Girl, let me see. I thought we fixed that on the bus. (*Gina engrosses herself in helping Taylor.*)

MATT: (*To BJ.*) Why do you let her order you around like that?

BJ: Oh, that's just the way she is. She's used to being treated like a princess.

MATT: Well, she *is* the hottest girl at school. I guess everything has a tradeoff.

(*Matt and BJ sit down on chairs. Melody, Marilyn, and Emily enter SL, carrying their suitcases.*)

MELODY: This is a very down-to-earth place.

MARILYN: I can tell you didn't look behind you.

(*Melody turns around and sees a stuffed duck. Seymore enters SL, carrying his suitcases and approaches Melody.*)

MELODY: How could someone do that to a poor defenseless animal?

SEYMORE: What are you talking about?

MELODY: Look at this poor little duck.

(*Melody pets the duck's feathers. Seymore starts searching frantically for a handkerchief.*)

SEYMORE: Oh, no...here it comes.

MELODY: What's wrong?

SEYMORE: I'm allergic to— (*Huge sneeze.*)

MELODY: To ducks?

SEYMORE: No, I'm allergic to— (*Sneezes.*)

MELODY: To all birds?

SEYMORE: Not exactly. I'm aller— (*Sneezes.*)

MELODY: Just tell me what you're allergic to.

(*Seymore sneezes.*)

SEYMORE: To all animals. (*Sneezes.*)

MARILYN: (*No expression.*) Gesundheit.

(Paul and Tally enter SL, carrying their suitcases. Seymore approaches Matt and BJ as he tries to get away from all of the animals. Marilyn and Melody sit on their suitcases. Paul goes CS and excitedly looks around.)

PAUL: Oh, this place is just screaming with atmosphere.

(Tally joins Paul CS.)

TALLY: I'm so glad to have the chance to see all of this local character. I didn't know people in this country lived like this.

(Excited, Evangeline enters.)

PAUL: I can't wait to meet the people who live here.

(Guy approaches Paul.)

GUY: How can you be so excited about being stuck in this dump? Nobody even seems to care that we're going to miss our competition.

(BJ approaches Guy.)

BJ: Stop whining, you big baby.

GUY: Look, I've had just about enough of you. I know you don't care about this show choir, but you don't have to be so immature about everything. *(He starts to walk away, and Evangeline pushes his back. Guy turns around.)* Now that's uncalled for.

BJ: What?

GUY: Don't act like you didn't push me.

BJ: I don't know what you're talking about, but I didn't push you.

GUY: Right, I'm supposed to believe that.

(Evangeline laughs and starts walking around messing with the other guests. Coach blows her whistle.)

COACH: *(To BJ and Guy.)* Break it up, boys. Let's take five. We've got to make the best of this situation. I've been trying to figure out how to get some service around here, and I could use some help.

MATT: I think I can help. *(Indicates fish on counter.)* Look, I believe you have to touch this fish.

(Coach approaches Matt.)

COACH: What did you say?

MATT: Here's a sign, "For service, make the trout sing."

COACH: That is ridiculous.

MATT: It kind of makes sense for this place.

(Coach resists touching the fish and looks around for another way to attract someone's attention. Matt keeps trying to convince her that she really does have to touch the fish. Delores enters SL, carrying her luggage and smiling.)

DELORES: I thought you'd all be in your rooms by now. I was just walking around enjoying the view. New Orleans sure is beautiful.

(Delores approaches Guy CS.)

GUY: Are you serious? You don't know that we're *lost* because you took a wrong turn. I have no idea where we are, but it's definitely not New Orleans.

MELODY: Calm down, Guy. There's nothing we can do about the fact that we're stuck here. We'll leave here tomorrow, and everything will be just fine.

(Evangeline hears this, gets an idea, and exits SL.)

GUY: If we leave here early enough tomorrow, we might be able to perform for the Rotary Club like we planned. But even if we miss that performance, we won't miss the competition. Okay, we all need to get to a room and get to sleep so we can get up bright and early in the morning. I'll ask for a 4 a.m. wake-up call, and I'll set the alarm clock I brought, too. I'll make sure everybody gets up in time, too.

MELODY: Lighten up, Guy. I'm getting tired just listening to you.

(Suddenly there is a strange noise and everyone onstage looks SR. It is the singing fish and it is very loud. Delores enjoys the music and dances all around. Soon, Clovis enters SR. Note: Clovis' Cajun accent is so thick that

his speech is unintelligible. Clovis welcomes everyone and then starts talking about his last hunting trip. Coach cautiously approaches Clovis.)

COACH: *(To Clovis.)* Hi, my name's Jan Davis and we need some— *(Clovis walks around and points to the deer heads and other stuffed animals.)* I was wondering if you might be able to help us. You see— *(Clovis continues talking and pointing to the stuffed and mounted animals.)* We got lost and ended up here, and this is the only place we saw that had— *(Clovis is discussing the details of a specific mounted animal. Coach is getting annoyed.)* Is there anybody around here who can help me?

(Full of energy, Clotile enters.)

CLOTILE: Iiiee! Welcome to Thibodeaux's Bed and Breakfast! *(Points to sign.)* You can eat here and rest in peace. I also offer free palm reading to anyone who's interested. Has Clovis been bothering you with his hunting stories? I can't ever get that man to stop talking. I guess you folk are interested in gettin' some rooms for the night?

COACH: Yeees. Can you help us with that?

CLOTILE: Yeah, cher. Let me see...we have six rooms, so I guess you'll want them all.

COACH: Yes, how much do you charge?

CLOTILE: Oh, honey, don't worry about all that right now. I bet you folk are hungry. I got some nice steaks left over from our supper tonight.

(The guys act interested.)

MATT: That sounds pretty good.

(BJ stands up.)

BJ: What are you talking about? That sounds *great!* I'm starving.

COACH: You're always starving.

CLOTILE: Yep, it's hard to fill up a growing boy. I'm just glad that Clovis got that big gator this morning. It's been awhile since we had such good steaks.

MATT: Did you say you made steaks from an alligator?

CLOTILE: Yeah, cher, where else would you get steak from?

BJ: It doesn't matter to me where they came from. I'll take some now. I'm so hungry.

CLOTILE: You just wait right here. I'll go warm up the food in the kitchen so everyone can get a bite. I'm so glad you folk came here. It's been really slow since hunting season ended. My yungins are just dying for some company.

EMILY: You have yungins? I mean, children?

CLOTILE: Mmmm-hmmm, two of 'em. Both girls. One's about your age. Her name is Nela. The younger one is twelve. Her name is Mertice. You can meet them in the morning. They've already gone to bed. *(Clotile exits SR.)*

COACH: All right, everybody, huddle up. We've got to figure out room assignments. There are only six rooms available here, so we're all going to have to share.

(Guy gets out his clipboard and a pen.)

GINA: I want to share a room with Taylor.

ALLISSA: So do I.

COACH: That's fine. We're going to need three people to share some of the rooms. Guy, can you write all of this down?

GUY: *(Writing on his clipboard.)* Way ahead of you, Coach.

MELODY: I'll share a room with Marilyn and Emily.

(Marilyn and Emily nod in agreement.)

COACH: Okay, that takes care of the girls. What about you guys?

MATT/BJ: We'll share a room.

COACH: Good, what about you, Seymore and Tally? Will you share a room?

(Seymore sneezes violently.)

SEYMORE: Sure.

TALLY: Fine with me.

COACH: *(To Guy, laughing.)* So that leaves you and Paul.

(Guy sighs, but then has a realization.)

GUY: Yep, but there's only one room left. I guess that will be for you and the bus driver. *(Laughs.)*

COACH: There's no way.

GUY: What choice do you have?

COACH: I can't believe I have to stay in a room with that stupid bus driver.

(Delores, who has been following Clovis around and listening to him, turns around.)

DELORES: Huh? What?

GUY: We weren't talking to you...we were talking *about* you.

DELORES: Oh. *(She goes back to listening to Clovis.)*

COACH: I wish that woman would come back here so we could get our room keys.

GUY: Me too. I want to make sure everybody gets plenty of rest.

(Clotile enters SR.)

CLOTILE: Who's hungry? I've got plenty of steak, and I even warmed up the possum stew.

EMILY: Yuck.

BJ: Great, where's the food.

COACH: *(To Clotile.)* Thanks anyway, but... *(To BJ.)* ...we're all really tired, and we just want to get up to our rooms.

(Everyone goes SR to get the keys and some are carrying their suitcases.)

BJ: But...

COACH: *(To BJ.)* I've got plenty of candy to sell. You can buy some of that to eat. *(To Clotile.)* If you could just give us our room keys now, I would appreciate it.

(Coach goes CS and several students, including Matt, gather around her to buy candy.)

CLOTILE: That's just fine, cher. You can eat some of it tomorrow morning. Breakfast is served at 7:30, but if any of you folk want to eat earlier, I'm always up by five. Just let me know. Clovis usually leaves to look for food around 5:30. Maybe some of you boys can

help him find something for me to cook for lunch tomorrow.
(Starts picking out the keys.) So who's going to be in the Gator
Retreat?

GINA: I guess that's us.

(Gina gets the key, goes to check on Taylor, and helps gather her bags.)

CLOTILE: Let's see, who's in the Possum Palace?

MELODY: That must be us. *(She's still carrying the duck.)*

CLOTILE: I see you found... *(Indicating duck.)* ...Marie. My
daughter Mertice used to carry her around, too.

MELODY: Your daughter played with an animal that used to be
alive but was killed and then stuffed. That's disgusting.

CLOTILE: Oh, no, honey. That's just our way of life. Here in Port
Fourchon, we live off the land. We don't have all the modern
conveniences that you city folk have.

MELODY: I still don't think that justifies killing innocent—

EMILY: Melody, I'm really tired. Do you think we can go up to our
room now?

MELODY: Yeah, sure.

*(Melody puts the duck down on the counter and exits UC with Emily and
Marilyn.)*

CLOTILE: Who wants the Squirrel Hideaway?

(BJ reaches for the key.)

BJ: We'll take it. Do we have to pass by the kitchen to get to it?

GUY: You need to think about getting some rest instead of some
food. I want everybody to be ready for the competition.

MATT: *(Leading BJ out.)* Look, I just bought some candy from Coach.
That ought to hold you until morning.

(BJ grabs the box of candy.)

BJ: Thanks, man.

(BJ and Matt exit UC.)

CLOTILE: Next is the Mallard Sanctuary. *(She picks up the stuffed duck.)* I'm glad I didn't offer that room to the girl who was so upset by Marie. *(She laughs heartedly.)* You city folk sure have some funny ideas.

TALLY: I agree. Of course, I'm not from the same city or even the same country as the rest of these people. I'm from Belize. I think these city folk have some interesting ideas, too. *(Seymore is trying with all his might to fight back a big sneeze.)* I'd love to talk to you more about the way you and your family live. I'm very excited to have the chance to meet—

(Seymore loses the battle and sneezes really loudly.)

CLOTILE: *(Still holding the duck.)* Wow, yungin'! That's some sneeze you got there.

SEYMORE: I'm allergic to— *(Huge sneeze.)*

CLOTILE: To ducks?

SEYMORE: No, I'm allergic to— *(Sneezes.)*

CLOTILE: To all birds?

SEYMORE: Not exactly. I'm aller— *(Sneezes.)*

CLOTILE: Just tell use what you're allergic to.

(Seymore sneezes.)

SEYMORE: To all animals. *(Sneezes.)*

CLOTILE: Well, here, honey, wear this. *(She takes out a necklace with a little bag for a pendant.)* It'll ward off those nasty sneezes.

(Seymore takes the necklace from her.)

SEYMORE: It couldn't hurt. *(Big sneeze.)* Thank you.

(Seymore puts on the necklace and stops sneezing. He and Tally get their bags and exit UC.)

PAUL: Did ya'll see that? That necklace made Seymore stop sneezing. That's just amazing. *(To Clotile.)* How did you do that?

CLOTILE: Oh, that's just a simple charm bag. The reason it works is because he thought it would work! There's a little bit of magic, but most of the power is in his own mind.

PAUL: Oh, wow. You must know so much about charms and spells and... *(Looks at sign.)* ...palm reading. I would love for you to tell me about all of that stuff!

CLOTILE: Anytime, cher. You see, my family has a tradition of practicing voodoo. I don't do all of that crazy stuff like casting spells and sticking pins in dolls, but I use some of the simple charms and chants.

GUY: As interesting as this is, we need to get our key so we can get some rest.

CLOTILE: Oh, sure, here you go. You are in the Deer Haven. *(She hands Guy the key, and he and Paul exit.)* And that just leaves the Armadillo Burrow.

COACH: I guess that's mine. *(She takes the key, then turns to address Taylor. Gina and Allissa are still fussing over Taylor.)* Come on, girls, let's hustle up. *(She turns.)* Delores.

(Delores is totally engrossed with one of the mounted animals.)

DELORES: Huh?

COACH: Are you ready to go up to the room?

DELORES: Okay. *(Touching Coach's hair.)* You should let me fix your hair. It could use a new style.

GINA: *(Interested.)* You do hair?

DELORES: Yeah. I've been going to beauty school off and on for several years, but I can't seem to finish. *(She touches Gina's hair.)* Looks like you could use some help with this frizz.

GINA: Girl, you know it.

COACH: Let's talk about this in the morning. I'm ready to get some rest. Are you coming, Delores?

DELORES: Uh-huh.

(Coach and Delores exit UC.)

CLOTILE: *(To Taylor, Gina, and Allissa.)* So which one of you wants the free palm reading? *(To Gina.)* How about you?

GINA: *(To Taylor.)* Oh, I think you should do it.

ALLISSA: *(To Taylor.)* Yes. It should be you.

(Taylor rises dramatically.)

TAYLOR: If you insist. *(To Clotile.)* What wonderful things can you tell me about my life?

CLOTILE: No, honey, that's not how it works. I can just tell you what your hand reveals about your personality.

TAYLOR: Well, I'm always ready for a compliment. Here you go.

(Taylor extends her hand to Clotile. Clotile inspects Taylor's hand and runs her fingers over some of the lines.)

CLOTILE: Let's see, according to the lines on your palm, you are overly sensitive to criticism. *(Gina and Allissa, who are standing behind Taylor, nod to each other.)* Hmm, you have romantic conflicts and difficulty maintaining friendships, and although your personality is attractive to most people, you often treat the opposite sex unkindly.

(Highly insulted, Taylor pulls her hand away.)

TAYLOR: You obviously don't know anything. I've been trying not to be rude, but you backwoods hicks are the most ignorant and... *(Looks around.)* ...least fashionable people I have ever seen, and I can't believe I have to sleep in this... *(Making quotes in the air.)* ...fleabag hotel tonight. I guess I can endure anything for one night. *(To Gina and Allissa.)* The very idea that this bad excuse for a woman would dare talk to me this way is just about more than I can take. *(Snaps her fingers.)* Water.

(Allissa hands Taylor a water bottle while Gina fans her.)

GINA: Come on, Taylor, let's go find our room so you can get some rest.

(Gina and Allissa collect their bags and most of Taylor's and the three head toward the UC exit.)

ALLISSA: *(To Taylor.)* I'll brush your hair and massage your scalp.

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GINA: *(To Taylor.)* I'll repair any damage to your manicure and massage your hands.

(Gina, Allissa, and Taylor exit.)

CLOTILE: I guess it's a good thing I didn't tell her that she's got some bad news coming soon! Ha! City folk! I imagine they'll want to leave in the morning.

(Clotile exits SR. Evangeline enters SL, holding an engine part.)

EVANGELINE: Those folks won't be going anywhere for a while!
(She swings the engine part around and laughs as the lights fade to black.)

SCENE 3

(AT RISE: Lobby, Thibodeaux's Bed and Breakfast, after midnight. BJ and Taylor enter UC.)

BJ: Couldn't this have waited until morning? It's after midnight. I was trying to get some sleep.

TAYLOR: *(Holding onto his arm.)* Now, pookie, you know I just wanted to be close to you. I could have just sent Gina or Allissa down here to get my makeup case, but since we haven't had any time to be together today, I decided that you should be the one to get it. Look, there it is over there. Can you hand it to me?

BJ: Sure, baby. *(He walks over to get her makeup case.)* I'm glad you didn't come down here alone. This place gives me the creeps.

(BJ walks back to her and hands her the makeup case. Evangeline enters SR and circles around Taylor and BJ, laughing. BJ and Taylor can't see her.)

EVANGELINE: Oh, look at the young lovers. How adorable.

TAYLOR: BJ, is something wrong? You haven't been paying much attention to me lately.

BJ: *(Defensively.)* Why would you say that?

TAYLOR: Oh, I don't know. You've just seemed distracted lately.

BJ: I don't know why you would think that. How could I ever pay any attention to anything else?

TAYLOR: True.

EVANGELINE: *(To audience.)* Is this girl for real?

BJ: Let's go sit on the couch for a while.

TAYLOR: Okay. Can you rub my neck? I'm all stiff from riding that nasty old bus.

BJ: Sure, honey.

(BJ and Taylor sit on the couch. BJ massages her back and she closes her eyes.)

TAYLOR: I don't know what I'd do without you to help calm my nerves. Being in this rundown place with these awful people is just about more than I can take.

EVANGELINE: Just wait!

(Evangeline pulls Taylor's hair. Taylor stands and faces BJ.)

TAYLOR: Ouch! Why did you do that?

BJ: What?

TAYLOR: You pulled my hair.

(BJ stands.)

BJ: I did not. Why would you say such a thing?

(Evangeline comes up behind Taylor and pulls her hair again.)

TAYLOR: Ouch, you pulled it again. Stop!

BJ: Taylor, you can see me standing here. Why are you saying I pulled your hair?

TAYLOR: But, I— . This is scaring me.

BJ: What is it?

(Evangeline pulls Taylor's hair again.)

TAYLOR: *(Screams.)* Stop! Stop, pulling my hair! Get away from me! *(She exits UC, running.)*

BJ: *(Chasing after her.)* What's wrong, baby? Come back here. *(He exits UC.)*

EVANGELINE: That was fun! I wonder who's going to be next! *(Melody enters, stretching her arms up over her head and stretching her neck from side to side.)* That didn't take long. *(Melody sits down CS, crosses her legs, and puts her hands on her knees in a meditating posture.)* Now what is this girl doing?

(Evangeline walks around Melody trying to figure out what to do to her. Paul enters UC.)

PAUL: Hey, Melody. You couldn't sleep, either. I thought it was just me. Have you been hearing strange noises?

MELODY: Oh, hi, Paul. I'm just trying to relax, but I am getting some weird vibes in this place.

PAUL: Um-hmm, I know what you mean. The more I'm in this place, the weirder it seems.

MELODY: Obviously, I'm not going to be able to meditate, so why don't we try to find something to pass the time? *(She gets up and sits on the couch.)*

PAUL: I don't see a TV anywhere. *(He looks around and goes to the counter.)* Oh, look, here are some cards. Let's play. *(He sits on the couch.)*

MELODY: I don't really know any card games.

PAUL: We can play Battle. It's easy. I can teach you.

MELODY: Okay.

(Paul starts explaining the game to Melody. Evangeline walks around the couch.)

EVANGELINE: I hope they don't think their card game is going to be relaxing. *(She walks around.)* What can I do?

(Paul and Melody play the game and comment as necessary. Evangeline looks for opportunities to knock cards off of the couch or out of the players' hands.)

MELODY: How did that card fall off?

PAUL: I don't know. I thought you knocked it off. *(Evangeline laughs in the background as she exits SR. They continue playing and Evangeline enters SR, carrying some flowers and her amulet.)* Oh, whatever. Let's just keep playing.

MELODY: Okay. I kind of like this game.

PAUL: I can't believe I have to be Guy's roommate. He was worse today than he normally is.

MELODY: He really needs to mellow out. He's going to kill himself with stress. *(Evangeline puts the flowers in Paul's hand and makes him hand them to Melody.)* Where did you get these?

PAUL: But, I didn't...

MELODY: Paul, what's wrong? You have a really strange look on your face.

PAUL: Something made me move my arm. It is still holding on to me. *(He jumps up and gets hysterical.)* Get it off! Get it off! Come on, Melody, we've got to get out of here. It won't leave me alooone!

(Paul exits UC followed by Melody while Evangeline laughs and swings her amulet around.)

EVANGELINE: He's a little high-strung! I wonder who I should let see me first.

(Guy enters UC, carrying a guitar. He sits on the couch and starts playing. After awhile, Matt enters and sits in a chair.)

MATT: Hey, Guy. What's up?

GUY: I was just looking for a quiet place to practice. *(He starts picking up cards.)* Paul was really getting on my nerves.

MATT: Yeah, I can see how Paul could be a really annoying roommate.

(Evangeline walks behind them and blows in their ears. They swat at what they think are mosquitoes. Guy puts the cards back on the counter.)

GUY: He has more energy than anybody I've ever met.

MATT: Well, I'm glad I get along with my roommate, but my problem is I can't seem to find him.

GUY: Oh, Taylor's probably got him ironing her clothes or something.

MATT: Yeah, she is a beautiful girl, but I don't know why he lets her boss him around like that.

(Wearing brightly colored pajamas, Marilyn enters UC and sits down on the couch.)

MARILYN: Matt and Guy, have you heard or seen anything strange?

(Guy and Matt look at each other and snicker.)

MATT: You mean besides those pajamas?

MARILYN: Real funny, Matt. *(She plops down in the chair next to Matt.)* I was just wondering if anybody besides me heard people screaming.

GUY: Before I came in here, I saw Paul and Melody running out like they'd seen a ghost.

(Evangeline laughs.)

MATT: Yeah, I thought I heard some people screaming earlier, too.

(Evangeline puts on her amulet. Marilyn and Matt see her and start pointing silently.)

EVANGELINE: *(Speaks softly.)* I bet I can make you scream.

GUY: Did you hear something?

MATT: *(Stuttering.)* Do you see that?

MARILYN: I can see right through her.

(All stand. Marilyn starts moving toward Evangeline while Matt and Guy start backing toward the UC exit.)

GUY: You know, I just remembered that I need to go tune my guitar.

MATT: Yeah, me too. *(They are in the doorway.)* Come on, Marilyn.

MARILYN: Wow! I've never seen anything like this.

(Evangeline tries to scare Marilyn. Guy and Matt run to Marilyn and start pulling her to the exit.)

GUY: What are you, crazy?

MATT: We've gotta get outta here.

MARILYN: *(As she's being pulled out, she reaches for Evangeline's necklace.)* Cool necklace.

(Guy, Matt, and Marilyn exit. Evangeline takes off the necklace.)

EVANGELINE: I wonder if they'll admit to anybody that they saw a ghost! I'm so glad Miss Effie's spell book taught me how to make this amulet. I like being seen by someone other than Mertice.

(Gina enters UC with no makeup on. She walks over to the counter to look for a phone. Seymore enters UC and approaches her.)

SEYMORE: Hey, whatcha doing?

GINA: *(Startled.)* Oh, boy, you scared me!

SEYMORE: I'm sorry. So what are you doing?

GINA: I'm looking for a phone to call for Chinese 'cuz Taylor's hungry.

SEYMORE: Why don't you use your cell phone?

GINA: My cell isn't getting a signal.

SEYMORE: We're probably too far from a tower.

GINA: (*Becoming hysterical.*) I can't find a phone anywhere. Taylor's going to be mad!

(*Seymore leads Gina to the couch and sits down next to her.*)

SEYMORE: Just calm down. It's going to be okay. I'm sure Taylor will understand. Besides, you shouldn't worry so much about her.

EVANGELINE: Aw, that's so sweet, I'm getting cavities. (*She stays near the counter area.*)

GINA: But I'm not happy unless Taylor's happy. She's my best friend.

SEYMORE: I don't know why.

GINA: Why'd you say that?

SEYMORE: Because she's always bossing you around.

GINA: I was a nobody until I met Taylor. She introduced me to everybody, and now look at me. Everybody knows who I am, and I like that.

SEYMORE: She acts like a spoiled child.

GINA: That's just what *you* see. She can be very sweet.

(*Evangeline drops something, and Gina and Seymore both jump.*)

SEYMORE: What was that?

GINA: I don't know. I've been hearing weird noises all night.

EVANGELINE: Duh, I wonder why?

SEYMORE: Gina, I want to tell you something.

GINA: What?

SEYMORE: I think you are a very pretty girl.

GINA: Well, you're sweet.

SEYMORE: Especially now, without all that makeup on.

GINA: (*Covering her face with her hands.*) Oh, I'm so embarrassed. I forgot I didn't have on any makeup. I can't believe I let you see me like this.

(*Gina stands up and tries to leave, but Seymore grabs her.*)

SEYMORE: Don't run away. I'm serious. You look much better this way.

GINA: You sure are acting different than you normally do.

SEYMORE: I feel different. I don't know what it is, but I feel really great. You know, Gina, I think that any guy who could be with you would be the luckiest guy in the world.

EVANGELINE: I'm getting sick of this mushy stuff.

GINA: Are you hitting on me? Trust me, I'm not your type.

SEYMORE: How do you know that?

GINA: Look at you, look at me. It's not that hard to figure out.

(Evangeline grabs the stuffed duck and makes it fly in front of them. They both scream.)

SEYMORE: Let's get outta here! *(He exits UC.)*

GINA: I'm right behind you.

(Gina exits UC. Evangeline laughs. After a brief pause, Allissa enters UC and starts looking around. Tally enters UC, stands in the doorway, and looks at her for awhile.)

TALLY: Hey, beautiful, what are you looking for?

ALLISSA: Oh, hi, Tally. I'm just trying to find Taylor's shoes. We left them down here when we were cleaning them up earlier.

TALLY: I'll help you find them.

(Tally approaches and leans down next to Allissa, who is looking under a table, and puts his arm around her. Allissa moves his arm off of her.)

ALLISSA: Uh, Tally, I think I can handle this by myself. *(She finds the shoes and puts them on the couch.)*

TALLY: Oh, come on now. You must be feeling a little creepy. Wouldn't you like a big strong man to protect you from this strange place?

EVANGELINE: This could be interesting!

ALLISSA: Look, Tally, I think you're a nice guy and all, but—

(Evangeline puts Allissa's arm on Tally's shoulder. Tally grabs Allissa around the waist.)

TALLY: Oh, Allissa, I think you're a nice girl and all—

ALLISSA: Hey, get your hands off of me!

(Tally backs off a little.)

TALLY: Why are you acting that way? You started it.

ALLISSA: I did not, I mean, I didn't mean to...something is weird—

(Evangeline puts both of Allissa's arms around Tally's neck. Tally hugs her tightly.)

TALLY: Now, isn't this nice...?

(Allissa pushes Tally away, gets her shoes, and starts to exit.)

ALLISSA: Something weird is going on here. I didn't put my arms around you. I don't know how that happened. I'm getting out of here. *(She exits UC.)*

TALLY: *(Chasing after her.)* Oh, I get it. You're playing hard to get. I like that game. *(He exits UC.)*

EVANGELINE: *(Laughing.)* I haven't had this much fun in a long time. Maybe I should go see if I've started a new romance. *(Emily enters UC looking for BJ.)* Or maybe I should stay and have some more fun. Now who is she looking for?

EMILY: BJ, BJ, where are you?

EVANGELINE: Ah, the plot thickens!

(Evangeline taps Emily on the shoulder, and Emily turns around quickly.)

EMILY: BJ, don't play games. I'm already nervous enough. *(Evangeline taps her again and she turns again.)* BJ, that's enough. You're scaring me.

(BJ enters and walks up behind her.)

BJ: Who are you talking to?

(Startled, Emily jumps.)

EMILY: You shouldn't do that to me. I'm already jumpy as it is.

BJ: I shouldn't do what?

EMILY: Tap on my shoulder and hide.

BJ: I didn't tap on your shoulder. I just walked in.

EMILY: Don't try to be funny. We don't have time right now.

BJ: But I'm not trying to be funny. I really didn't tap your shoulder.

EMILY: Oh, whatever. *(She puts her arms around his neck.)* I'm just so glad to finally be alone with you.

BJ: Me too, I didn't think I'd ever get away from Taylor. She is just so demanding.

EMILY: When are you going to tell her about us?

BJ: Now, you know that's a tricky situation. I have to find the right time. But let's not waste all of our time talking.

(BJ hugs her close, pulls back, and is just about to kiss her when Evangeline interrupts.)

EVANGELINE: Not now, you two lovebirds.

(Evangeline drops something near the counter, making a loud crash, and Emily and BJ look toward the noise.)

EMILY: Did you hear that?

BJ: Yes. I wonder if someone saw us. I better go see if anyone is over there. *(He heads to the counter.)*

TAYLOR: *(From offstage UC, calls)* BJ, where are you? *(Emily runs behind the counter just as Taylor enters. To BJ.)* What are you doing in here? You didn't finish my massage, and I'm all tense.

(BJ puts his arm around Taylor and leads her to the exit.)

BJ: I'm coming. You go ahead to your room and I'll be right up.

TAYLOR: Okay, but don't be too long. *(She exits.)*

BJ: I'm right behind you.

(BJ looks toward the counter, catches Emily's eye, shrugs, and exits UC. Emily watches BJ exit and then exits UC. Blackout.)

SCENE 4

(AT RISE: Lobby, Thibodeaux's Bed and Breakfast, 7:30 a.m., the next day. Four chairs are set up facing the couch. Everyone except Coach, Paul, BJ, Allissa, Matt, and Delores is sitting around the table or on the furniture with a TV tray in front of them waiting to eat breakfast. Marilyn, Tally, Melody, Emily, Seymore, and Guy are at the table. Taylor and Gina are on the couch.)

MARILYN: I can't believe I'm awake and the sun's not even out. It must be 5 o'clock.

GUY: No. It's already six. We've got to hurry and eat so we can leave. We need time to check in at the hotel and still make it to our Rotary Club performance.

MELODY: Can't you two just relax and breathe in the fresh air?

MARILYN: So you're not still upset about all of our company? *(She motions to the stuffed and mounted animals that are everywhere.)*

MELODY: I can't say that I approve, but I can't change the way these people live.

SEYMORE: I can't believe I'm not sneezing my head off with all of our... *(He makes quotes in the air.)* ...company. I think it must be because of this necklace I'm wearing. These things are giving me the creeps, especially that duck.

MELODY: I have to admit, I have been getting some pretty strange vibes around here. Did anyone else...oh, never mind.

GUY: What were you about to say?

MELODY: Oh, it's nothing.

SEYMORE: Well, I was wondering if...well...if anybody else noticed anything strange last night?

TAYLOR: I noticed that my bed was full of lumps. I didn't get a wink of sleep last night. I must look just awful.

GINA: Oh, no, girl. You look great. I think the way I did your makeup really makes your eyes stand out.

TAYLOR: Do you really think so?

(Their conversation continues quietly as the others talk.)

TALLY: I heard a lot of strange noises last night, and I know I heard several different people screaming.

MARILYN: Guy, did you tell everybody that we saw a ghost?

GUY: I don't know what you're talking about.

EMILY: You saw a ghost?

MARILYN: Yeah, I was down here talking to Guy and Matt, and we all saw her. She was standing right over there.

(Paul and BJ enter SL. Paul is wearing a colorful, tight-fitting jogging suit.)

PAUL: That was a great run. The scenery out there is just beautiful.

BJ: Yeah, if you like moss. *(He leans over, puts his hands on his thighs, and breathes heavily.)* That was a tough run. Boy, am I hungry. *(He approaches Taylor.)* Hey, babe, you look nice this morning. *(He leans in for a kiss.)*

TAYLOR: Oh, you stink. Don't come over here trying to sit by me. You need to sit over there.

(Taylor points at one of the chairs. Coach, Allissa, and Matt enter. Matt is popping Allissa with a towel.)

ALLISSA: *(To Matt. Squealing.)* Stop doing that.

(Allissa slaps at Matt, and he grabs her wrist as she struggles to get away.)

MATT: I have to teach you a lesson. You can't drop ice down my shirt without some type of payback.

COACH: I really don't know why you two don't just become a couple. You obviously like each other.

ALLISSA: Coach, don't be silly. He's not even my type!

(Tally approaches Allissa and puts his arm around her. Coach, Paul, BJ, and Matt sit on the chairs.)

TALLY: So I guess after last night, you don't want to date anyone but me, right, beautiful?

ALLISSA: Look, Tally, I don't know what happened when we were in this room, but I know I didn't mean to do anything that would encourage you.

TALLY: You say that now, but that's not what you said last night.

ALLISSA: Actually, that *is* what I said. Something strange was happening in here. I don't know how to explain it.

GINA: Yeah, I saw some pretty strange things in here, too.

(Allissa gets away from Tally and sits on the couch. Tally goes back to the table.)

TAYLOR: I'm glad I'm not the only one.

PAUL: Something grabbed onto my arm and made it move.

TAYLOR: Something pulled my hair.

EMILY: Something tapped on my shoulder.

MARILYN: It was probably that ghost we saw. Don't you think so, Matt?

MATT: Ghost? What are you talking about?

MARILYN: I don't know why you and Guy are trying to act so cool.

All three of us saw that ghost. Like I said, it was right over there.
(Points.)

GUY: I admit I heard some strange noises last night, but I don't think they were caused by a ghost.

(Guy makes a sign to Matt like he thinks Marilyn is crazy.)

PAUL: I don't how else you can explain it. Something really strange is going on in this house.

COACH: All right, that's enough. I don't know how any of you slept last night with all of the noise you were making. I still can't believe I had to miss five days of practice for this. We just need to eat so we can get out of here as soon as possible.

GUY: For once, I agree with you. Let's just eat so we can leave. We're going to need to rehearse before our performance.

COACH: What are we supposed to eat?

(Clotile and Nela enter SR, carrying platters of food. Mertice follows, carrying a pitcher of milk.)

CLOTILE: Here's breakfast! Eat up, everybody. We've got lots of eggs and possum bacon. Now that everyone's here, I'd like to introduce you to my daughters. This here's Nela, and this one's Mertice.

NELA: Hi, it's nice to meet ya'll.

MERTICE: Hello.

(Group adlibs hellos. Clotile starts serving at the table while Nela and Mertice serve those sitting on the couch and chairs.)

NELA: *(To Gina, Allissa, and Taylor, who are sitting on the couch.)* How many eggs would you like?

(Gina and Allissa look to Taylor for an answer.)

TAYLOR: I'll take two.

GINA: *(To Nela.)* I'll take two also.

ALLISSA: *(To Nela.)* Me, too.

NELA: *(To Gina.)* I just love your shoes. I wish I could wear something nice like what you have on.

GINA: Well, I owe my fashion sense to Taylor here. She taught me how to dress to impress.

TAYLOR: Yep, fashion is my passion.

NELA: Oh, I would just love for you to give me some tips. Do you think you could spare some time to help me?

ALLISSA: We're planning to leave just after breakfast. Sorry.

(Nela looks sad as she walks over to serve BJ, Matt, and Paul, who are sitting on chairs.)

NELA: *(To BJ.)* Hi, how many eggs would you like?

BJ: How many you got?

MATT: Leave some for everybody else, BJ! The people at the table haven't gotten any yet.

BJ: Okay, just bring me what you have left over.

PAUL: *(To Nela.)* So, do you practice voodoo with your mom?

NELA: Oh, Momma doesn't really do voodoo. She just knows a little bit about charms. She has been teaching me about palm reading, though.

PAUL: That sounds interesting. You'll have to read my palm later.

NELA: But I thought you were leaving after breakfast.

PAUL: That's true. How about after you finish serving breakfast?

NELA: Sure. I don't really know that much. I'm just learning.

PAUL: Then you can just teach me what you know.

NELA: Okay.

(Nela goes to back table.)

CLOTILE: *(To BJ.)* Here's the bacon.

BJ: Bring it on.

TAYLOR: *(To Clotile.)* You did say that was possum bacon, didn't you?

CLOTILE: Yep. I only serve the best to my guests.

TAYLOR: BJ, you can have mine.

GINA/ALLISSA: *(To BJ.)* Mine, too.

(While everyone gives BJ the bacon, the people at the table make their eggs disappear by putting them in their laps or under napkins, etc.)

MATT/COACH/PAUL: *(To BJ.)* Mine, too.

BJ: I'll take it.

(Clotile piles the rest of the bacon onto BJ's plate.)

CLOTILE: Well, ya'll enjoy. If you need anything else, just touch the singing fish. And don't forget, I'll read anyone's palm for free.

(Clotile, Nela, and Mertice exit SR.)

COACH: I've got plenty of chocolate here for anyone who wants some.

(Taylor snaps her fingers, and Gina and Allissa hop up and get some chocolate from the Coach. Then they sit down on the couch and eat. While the Coach sells candy, BJ moves some of the food off of his plate and hides it behind a pillow.)

PAUL: *(To Coach.)* Man, I didn't bring my money with me. Can I get some candy later?

COACH: Sure, I have plenty.

GUY: Let's all just hurry up and eat. We really need to get out of here. By the way, where is the bus driver?

COACH: When I woke up this morning, she wasn't in the room.

GUY: Oh, great. Where could she be?

COACH: Who knows?

TALLY: I'll buy a box of candy, Coach.

COACH: Here you go.

(Tally moves over to sit on the arm of the couch next to Gina.)

TALLY: Here, Gina. You can have some of my candy since you gave most of yours to Taylor.

GINA: Oh, no thanks. I ate some of mine and I'm full.

TALLY: I see...you're trying to keep that gorgeous figure, right?

GINA: No, not really. I'm just not very hungry today.

TALLY: You know, you have the most beautiful eyes...

SEYMORE: Hey, Tally, how about sharing that candy with your roomie?

TALLY: Sure. *(He starts walking toward the table, and Gina mouths "thank you" to Seymore. To the people at the table.)* Would any of you like some candy?

(Looking confused, Delores wanders in SL.)

DELORES: I don't understand it. I got up early so I could go shopping in the French Quarter, but I couldn't find any shops.

(Coach gets up and approaches Delores.)

COACH: Do you try to think of ways to be stupid? We are not in New Orleans, you idiot. We are stuck in...what's the name of this place?

PAUL: Port Fourchon.

COACH: Yeah. Look, Delores, we need to get out of here so we can actually get to New Orleans.

GUY: Right. Let's all go up and get our bags.

(Everyone gets up and exits UC talking amongst themselves. BJ carries some food out with him. Blackout.)

SCENE 5

(AT RISE: Lobby, a short time later. Evangeline is sitting on the couch. Guy and Melody enter SL.)

GUY: This is just great. The bus was running just fine yesterday. I can't believe we're going to miss our Rotary Club performance. We really needed that practice for our routine.

(Evangeline laughs in the background.)

MELODY: I wish we could get out of this place. I usually like being around nature, but there's a dark aura here.

GUY: What are you talking about?

MELODY: Can't you see the haziness that surrounds us?

GUY: Umm, it's fog. We are in the bayou.

MELODY: I guess you're right, but I do have a strange feeling about this place.

EVANGELINE: And you should. *(She tickles Melody's neck.)*

MELODY: *(Swatting at her neck.)* I'm also getting really tired of these mosquitoes.

GUY: I know. I've never seen such big mosquitoes.

EVANGELINE: *(Laughing and still tickling Melody's neck.)* Yep, the mosquitoes around here are pretty big!

(Taylor, Gina, and Allissa enter SL.)

TAYLOR: Déjà vu all over again. I don't think I can take much more of this.

ALLISSA: It's going to be all right.

TAYLOR: It's not going to be all right. You told me that yesterday, and we're still here. Why are we still here?

GINA: Girl, there's nothing we can do about it. You are just going to have to calm down.

TAYLOR: Excuse me. Are you talking to me?

ALLISSA: Yeah, that was really mean.

GINA/TAYLOR: Butt out, Allissa.

(Evangeline approaches and looks interested in the argument.)

GINA: I'm not trying to be mean. I just think we should all chill out.

Here, Taylor, come sit on the couch and relax.

EVANGELINE: I don't think so.

(Evangeline goes behind the couch as Taylor, Gina, and Allissa sit on it.)

ALLISSA: *(To Taylor.)* Here's some water.

(Taylor turns to Allissa, and Evangeline tickles her from Gina's side.)

TAYLOR: What's your problem?

GINA: Girl, what are you talking about?

TAYLOR: You know I can't stand to be tickled.

GINA: And...

TAYLOR: And...stop tickling me.

GINA: Girl, you're trippin'. I didn't tickle you.

TAYLOR: Yeah, whatever.

(Gina and Taylor continue bickering as BJ and Matt enter SL.)

BJ: *(To Matt.)* So, Coach has been saying that you should go out with Allissa?

MATT: Yeah. She thinks we would be a great couple because we get along so well.

BJ: What do you think?

MATT: To tell you the truth, I've always thought of Allissa like a sister, but lately I don't know. I think it might be nice to have a relationship with someone I really know.

BJ: I can understand that. It's nice to have something in common with your girlfriend.

TAYLOR: *(Whining.)* BJ, Gina's being mean to me.

(BJ goes to Taylor. Matt sits at the table. Emily enters SL and sits at the table. Seymore and Paul enter SL. BJ leaves Taylor and goes and sits at the table.)

SEYMORE: Paul, can I ask a favor?

PAUL: Sure, anytime. What do you need?

SEYMORE: Well, I would like some advice about my look.

PAUL: Your look?

SEYMORE: Yeah. Everybody thinks of me as a nerd, and I guess I do look like one, but I'd like to change that. Do you think you can help me?

PAUL: Umm...

SEYMORE: So you will help me?

PAUL: Oh, I just love a challenge. Let me ask you a question. *(He reaches up and takes off Seymore's glasses.)* Do you need these to see?

(Paul goes DR and Seymore stumbles along behind him. Tally and Marilyn enter SL.)

MARILYN: This is pretty cool. I think I'd rather stay here and try to find out more about that ghost than go sing and dance for a bunch of judges.

TALLY: I'm pretty interested in these people, too. I'd like to find out more about their customs. *(He loops his arm through hers.)* Maybe we can learn about them together.

(Evangeline approaches and stands behind them.)

MARILYN: What do you mean? Oh, are you coming on to me? Tally, you're just too much! But maybe you can help...I want to find out more about that ghost. If anything else unusual happens to you, or if you hear anybody talking about anything strange, will you tell me?

TALLY: Sure. So do you really think you saw a ghost?

(Evangeline is now standing in between them looking back and forth.)

MARILYN: I don't think I did...I know I did. I'm sure somebody around here knows something about it. I'll have to start asking some questions.

(Marilyn and Tally sit in two chairs facing the couch. Coach and Delores enter SL.)

GUY: *(To Delores.)* So you thought you didn't need a map, and we ended up in the middle of nowhere. Now the bus won't start, and we're going to miss our performance for the Rotary Club. Do you

think we'll at least be able to get to New Orleans in time to perform in the competition?

COACH: Guy, back off. She didn't do anything wrong, this time. The engine is just dead. We'll have to see if there's anyone around here who can fix it.

EVANGELINE: Good luck!

COACH: Did anyone touch that stupid singing fish yet?

DELORES: Oooh, oooh, let me do it. *(She runs over to the fish, makes it sing, and dances around the room.)*

GUY: *(To Coach.)* Are you sure she didn't mess up the engine somehow?

COACH: *(Rolls her eyes.)* Guy, let's just see if these people can tell us where to find some help. *(Clovis enters SR and tries to communicate that he's surprised to see everyone. He thought they left.)* Excuse me, sir, we seem to be having a problem with our bus. It won't start. In fact, it's completely dead. Do you know someone who can help us get it fixed? *(Clovis says he'd be glad to look at it. He asks Delores if she's the bus driver and if she would come on out and look at it with him. Delores seems to understand him. Clovis and Delores exit SL.)* Oh, that should be interesting. I bet those two understand each other perfectly.

(Clotile, Nela, and Mertice enter SR. Mertice hangs on to Clotile for most of this scene or sits next to her playing with her dolls. Evangeline exits SL.)

CLOTILE: Iiiiiiiii! It's good to see you folks again. You decided to stay for another night?

COACH: Actually, we're waiting to see if your husband can help us get our bus fixed. We really need to get on our way.

CLOTILE: Oh, Clovis is handy with motors. I'm sure he'll be able to help you out. In the meantime, I haven't read your palm yet. Let's have a look. *(She grabs the Coach's hand and starts examining it.)* Hmm, it looks like you're intelligent and practical, very likely to have a good memory and good leadership skills.

COACH: That's nice of you to say.

(Interested, Paul gets closer.)

CLOTILE: *(Still looking at the Coach's hand.)* Oh, I'm not sayin' it. I'm just telling you what your hand reveals about you. It also looks like you are a good matchmaker.

(Coach pulls her hand away.)

COACH: How interesting. Well, maybe you can read someone else's palm now.

PAUL: I'd like for someone to read my palm.

NELA: *(To Clotile.)* Can I try, Momma? I told him at breakfast that I would.

CLOTILE: Oh, sure, honey. Let me know if you have any questions.

(Nela takes Paul's palm and examines it.)

NELA: You seem to have a positive attitude, which helps you overcome problems.

PAUL: I think so.

NELA: And, it looks like you have many talents and lots of ambition, so you have the potential to be successful in many different fields.

(Nela lets go of his hand.)

PAUL: *(Looking at his hands.)* It's amazing, like you know everything about me. You can tell all that just by looking at my hand?

CLOTILE: We just interpret the lines we see. Usually, we're pretty accurate.

GUY: I think this is just a waste of time.

PAUL: I think it's interesting. Besides, there's nothing we can do until Mr. Clovis and the bus driver come back in.

NELA: *(To Guy.)* Can I read your palm?

GUY: I don't really believe in all of that nonsense.

NELA: Well, then, it won't matter what I say, right? Let me see. *(She grabs one of Guy's hands and looks at it.)* You have a lot of ambition and the energy to make your dreams come true.

GUY: That's what you just said to him.

NELA: Not exactly. There's more. Let me see...you have the ability to make and follow plans, but you spend too much of your time worrying.

PAUL: *(To Nela.)* You're really good at this. That sounds just like him.

GUY: Well, sort of.

PAUL: Let's find somebody else for you to read.

(Paul starts to walk around looking for someone else, but then Clovis and Delores enter SL. Coach, Clotile, and Guy join them. Clovis talks as he comes in, saying that there's no way the bus is going to start. The engine has been tampered with and is missing some parts. Delores understands and shrugs.)

DELORES: I think he's trying to say that the bus won't start.

COACH: We know that already. Can it be fixed?

CLOTILE: Not right now. He said that someone tampered with the bus, and it's missing some parts.

(Mertice starts looking around for Evangeline and eventually exits UC. Clovis sneaks off SR.)

COACH: Is there a place around here where we can get the parts we need?

CLOTILE: Oh, no, cher, but I can get Clovis to row down the bayou in his pirogue and get a mechanic. It'll only take a few days.

GUY: A few days! If we're not there by Saturday, we won't be able to perform in the competition. I can't believe this.

COACH: Isn't there someone we can call?

CLOTILE: We don't have a phone here. Never have a need for one.

GUY: And we're too far away from a tower for a cell phone to work. It looks like we're stuck.

COACH: *(To Clotile.)* Can you ask Clovis to leave to go find some help? *(To Guy.)* If he leaves right now, maybe he can get back so that we can still get to New Orleans in time for the competition.

GUY: It's worth a shot. *(To Clotile.)* Do you think he'll go right away?

CLOTILE: Sure. There's nothing Clovis likes better than a boat trip. I'll tell him. *(She looks around.)* Now where did that man go? I bet he's in there sneakin' a piece of my sweet potato pie. I told him that was for the guests. If you'll excuse me. *(She exits SR.)*

DELORES: Did she say sweet potato pie? *(Runs after Clotile.)* Hey, wait for me. *(She exits SR.)*

NELA: *(To Paul.)* Did you find anyone who wants me to read their palm?

PAUL: I was about to, but I got sidetracked. I'll go ask now.

COACH: No, Paul, wait a minute. I want to talk to everybody. *(Addresses group.)* Huddle up, team. We need to discuss the game plan. It looks like we're going to be here for another night, maybe two. Hopefully, we'll be able to get out of here in time for you to compete because I'd hate for this trip to be a total waste of everybody's time, including mine.

GUY: I think that we should be ready to compete no matter what. Since we're going to miss our performance today, we should at least rehearse. We don't have to pull out the risers. We can rehearse right here. All we need is our music.

SEYMORE: The CD player is on the bus. I'll go get it. *(He exits SL.)*

COACH: Well, it doesn't hurt to practice. *(She blows her whistle.)*
Let's get this furniture moved out of the way.

(Taylor makes a big production about having to get off the couch while the rest help move the furniture to the sides of the stage. Seymore enters SL with the CD player.)

GUY: Coach, can you start the music for us?

(Evangeline enters UC.)

NELA: I'll do it. Just show me which button to push on this fancy machine.

(Seymore shows her how to work the machine briefly and then joins the group. Mertice enters SR to watch.)

GUY: Okay, everybody. Starting positions. Let's make it snappy. Lots of energy. And music. *(He points to Nela. She starts the music and then looks very proud of herself. The show choir rehearses halfheartedly for about half of the song. Evangeline walks among the dancers and trips and pushes some. Guy has had enough.)* Cut! *(The music keeps playing.)* I said cut! Nela, turn off the music!

NELA: Oh, I'm sorry. I thought that was part of your routine.

(Mertice motions to Evangeline to come meet her at DSR.)

GUY: It might as well have been. *(To group.)* What was that? Don't you care about the competition?

BJ: I care, but, Guy, we've had a hard night, and we're all really tired.
TAYLOR: Yeah. I was going to try to get some sleep on the bus
because I sure didn't get any in that lumpy bed. I can't believe I
have to sleep here again tonight.
MARILYN: You whine and complain more than any person I know.
TAYLOR: Well, at least I don't look like I'm dead.
GINA: That was mean.
TAYLOR: Who are you talking to?
GINA: Both of you.

(Taylor gasps.)

PAUL: *(Intervening.)* Now, now, we're all a little edgy. Let's not
have a big fight over nothing.
MATT: Don't interrupt them, Paul. Things were just getting
interesting.
GUY: Matt, you're just making things worse.

(Everyone starts complaining and it gets loud. Coach blows her whistle.)

COACH: Break it up! *(Everyone stops and looks at her.)* Let's all go get
our stuff off the bus and go cool off in our rooms. I'll get all of the
keys. Don't just stand there. Hustle up.

*(Coach walks over to talk to Nela and then both exit SR. As the group starts
to exit SL, Marilyn notices that Mertice is talking to someone. She stays
onstage and tries to hear the conversation.)*

MERTICE: That was very mean. Why can't you just leave them
alone? They're already upset enough.
EVANGELINE: I haven't done anything to hurt anybody.
MERTICE: I know you like to play tricks, but I think you're being too
mean to these people. Will you please stop?
EVANGELINE: I'll have to think about it.

*(Marilyn has been coming closer and closer. She is now right behind
Mertice.)*

MARILYN: Who are you talking to?

(Startled, Mertice jumps.)

MERTICE: Oh, you scared me. What did you say?

MARILYN: *(Looking around.)* You can see her, can't you?

(Mertice looks around. Evangeline goes behind Marilyn.)

MERTICE: I don't know what you're talking about.

(Evangeline makes faces behind Marilyn's back. Mertice tries not to laugh.)

MARILYN: I saw her last night, but she didn't talk to me.

MERTICE: *(Stifling a laugh.)* Who?

(Nela and Coach enter SR.)

MARILYN: What are you laughing at? *(She looks behind her and starts reaching out to touch Evangeline. Evangeline avoids her.)* Hi, are you here? I'd like to talk to you, too.

MERTICE: Oh, hey, Nela. Did you like watching the singin' and dancin'? I know I did.

COACH: *(To Marilyn.)* Where are your suitcases?

MARILYN: I didn't go get them yet.

COACH: Well, move! Go, go, go!

MARILYN: I'm going. I'm going.

(Marilyn looks behind her and all around the room as she exits. Evangeline waves at her. Coach rolls her eyes and exits UC.)

NELA: I enjoyed watching them sing and dance, too. Some of the boys are kind of cute, don't you think?

MERTICE: I guess. I hope they have to stay for a few days. It sure is boring around here with no guests.

EVANGELINE: You said it.

CLOTILE: *(From offstage R.)* Girls, come on in here. We need to start cooking some lunch.

NELA: Coming.

MERTICE: Yes, ma'am.

(Nela and Mertice exit SR.)

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EVANGELINE: I wonder when that show choir is going to rehearse again. I think I can make their performance much more interesting... (*Exits UC. Blackout.*)

SCENE 6

(AT RISE: Lobby, that evening. The furniture is moved back like it was in the opening scene. BJ is sitting on the couch with Emily.)

BJ: Everybody is supposed to be here in about ten minutes, so we can have our little talk before supper. I guess Guy and the Coach are going to chew us out.

EMILY: Probably. I don't think I'm going to eat supper. After that crazy lunch, I'm just not hungry. How can you eat that stuff, BJ?

BJ: It wasn't so bad.

EMILY: Squirrel casserole and buzzard stew? The only thing that looked half decent was the sweet potato pie, but I didn't know what those green things were so I didn't eat any.

BJ: I don't know what they were either, but they were crunchy. I thought everything tasted pretty good.

EMILY: You were the only one.

(BJ puts his hand on hers.)

BJ: Can we stop talking about food?

EMILY: Oh, BJ, I wish we could be together. When do you think you'll be able to get away from Taylor?

BJ: I have to find the right time.

EMILY: Are you just playing with me? If you are, I'd rather know, so I can start figuring out how to live without you.

(Taylor enters and stands in the UC doorway.)

BJ: No, Emily. Don't think that. I care about you more than I've ever cared about anyone else.

EMILY: Oh, BJ.

(They lean in to kiss when Taylor interrupts them.)

TAYLOR: BJ Johnson! *(BJ and Emily jump away from each other.)* You lying jerk! How could you?!

BJ: Taylor. What are you doing down here? You're never early for anything.

TAYLOR: Well, it looks like I'm here at the right time. How long has this been going on? Oh, don't bother to tell me. I won't be treated this way. I'll just go find someone who can appreciate me. *(She turns to leave, takes a few steps, stops, and looks back at BJ.)* Aren't you going to try to stop me?

BJ: I don't think so. I have what I want right here. *(Indicates Emily.)*

TAYLOR: Aaaaugh! *(She storms out UC.)*

EMILY: Oh, BJ, that was just amazing. I'm so happy. Now we can finally tell everybody how we really feel about each other.

BJ: Yep, and I don't have to lie anymore. That was really getting hard. You know, this isn't over, though. Taylor is going to try to get back at me. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if she tries something pretty soon. Maybe we should go take a walk so she won't know where we are.

EMILY: That sounds romantic.

(Emily leans against his arm, bats her eyes at him, and they get up and exit SL. Guy enters UC with his clipboard and paces around. Melody enters.)

GUY: Where is everybody?

MELODY: What?

GUY: We're all supposed to meet down here at six.

MELODY: *(Looks at her watch.)* Guy, it's ten till. I'm sure people will start coming in soon. You are always so tense. You should let me teach you how to relax.

GUY: I'm relaxed. Man, I can't believe nobody's down here yet. We've got to discuss our routine and figure out when we're going to have a dress rehearsal. I mean, after that last rehearsal, we really need to get serious—

MELODY: Whoa! Stop talking. Take a deep breath. *(He tries.)* No, no. *(She comes over and pries the clipboard out of his hands.)* Now, stand up straight, relax your shoulders and breathe in. Keep going, breathe in. Good, now hold it. Good, now exhale slowly. Now don't you feel better?

(Guy exhales very quickly.)

GUY: Sure. Now, can I have that back? *(He grabs his clipboard as Paul and Seymore enter UC. He checks off their names. Melody shrugs and*

sits down in the middle of the floor.) I'm glad you two decided to come. Have you seen anybody else?

PAUL: I saw Taylor earlier, but she was looking for Matt.

(They sit in the two chairs across from the couch.)

GUY: Maybe she'll get here soon with her two sidekicks and Matt. Then we'll only be missing Emily, Marilyn, Tally, and BJ. *(Gina and Allissa enter UC and sit on the couch.)* Wait a minute. Where's Taylor?

GINA: We haven't seen her in a hot minute.

ALLISSA: You know, I was looking around for Matt, and I couldn't find him, either.

GUY: Paul said that Taylor was looking for Matt earlier. Maybe they're together. I just wish they would both get down here.

(Tally and Marilyn enter UC.)

MARILYN: I'm telling you, Tally, that little girl was talking to someone who wasn't there. I think she can see the ghost.

TALLY: Okay. I believe you. I've heard that young children can see ghosts.

GUY: Good, you're here, so we just need four more.

ALLISSA: *(To Gina.)* I wonder why Taylor was looking for Matt.

GINA: I don't know, girl. She usually tells us everything.

(Taylor enters, draped on Matt's arm.)

TAYLOR: Hello, people. *(Touching all over Matt's face.)* Sorry Matt and I were late, but we got sidetracked... *(She looks all around and then has a fit.)* Where's BJ?!

GUY: I don't know, but he and Emily better get here soon.

TAYLOR: Come on, Matt, let's go over here.

(Taylor drags Matt over to the couch. BJ and Emily enter SL.)

BJ: What's going on, you guys? Sorry we're late, but we got sidetracked.

(BJ and Emily stand with their arms around each other.)

TAYLOR: What do you mean you got sidetracked? *(She stands.)*
BJ: Taco, burrito, nacho business.

(Everyone says, "Oooh.")

GINA: *(To Taylor.)* Girl, you gonna take that from that little boy.

MATT: Calm down, Gina, this doesn't concern you.

ALLISSA: Matt, I know that BJ is your best friend, but you can't take up for him all the time.

(Melody runs from person to person saying "chill.")

TAYLOR: *(To BJ. Hanging on Matt.)* You just keep your cheesy little girlfriend. I've got what I want right here.

BJ: Matt, what's going on?

MATT: Well, Taylor came to me and said she needed someone to—

TAYLOR: Now, now, Matt, no need to bring up the past. All that matters is that we're together now.

SEYMORE: This is better than watching ["Days of Our Lives"]! *[Or insert another popular soap opera show.]*

MELODY: I wish everyone would calm down. All of this tension is giving me a headache.

PAUL: This is all very interesting. I'd like to hear more about how the most popular couple in school broke up.

BJ: It's easy to explain. I just decided that I'd had enough of—

TAYLOR: A good thing. Yes, I guess some people get overwhelmed when they get everything they've ever wanted. *(Hugging Matt closely.)* But that's not going to happen to us, is it, baby?

(Matt starts to speak but is interrupted.)

EMILY: BJ has what he's always wanted—someone who actually cares about him.

MARILYN: How did you two get together?

BJ: Emily started helping me with my English homework, and the more I was around her, the more I realized that she was a sweet, caring person.

TALLY: How long have you been together?

EMILY: We've been seeing each other for about a month now.

MARILYN: So, Taylor, your man's been running around on you for a month. I guess that makes you feel pretty bad, huh?

(Everyone onstage erupts and makes loud comments about the situation until Coach enters UC and blows her whistle. Coach is carrying a box of chocolate candy.)

COACH: Everybody, huddle up. *(Everyone huddles and faces her.)*
You people have got to get it together. Guy, what's the plan?

GUY: We need to make sure that we're prepared for the competition. As soon as that bus is fixed, we'll be on our way, and I want to make sure that we look our best. We've worked too hard to just quit.

COACH: I think it's too late to practice tonight. What time do you want to review your moves tomorrow?

GUY: I think 9:30 is a good time. It will give everybody time to eat breakfast, recover, and then get dressed.

COACH: So you want the team to dress out tomorrow?

GUY: I want to have a dress rehearsal.

COACH: That's what I said.

GUY: Okay. Anyway, I just want to ask, does anyone else even care about our competition?

PAUL: There's so much else going on right now, it's hard to think about that.

TALLY: Yeah. I'm ready to see what's going to happen next.

MARILYN: I just want to find out more about that ghost. I think that little girl can see her.

SEYMORE: Marilyn, there's no such thing as ghosts.

MELODY: I'm still getting weird vibes. It's hard for me to concentrate.

PAUL: I find everything in this hotel so interesting. I just want to learn more about these people.

TAYLOR: I don't see how I'm supposed to care about anything if I can't get enough sleep. Matt, could you massage my shoulders, please? *(To Gina and Allissa.)* Do you two think you can sing me a lullaby tonight? I need to find a way to get to sleep.

GINA: Yeah, girl. I offered last night. Allissa and I can sing some harmony for you. Right, Allissa?

ALLISSA: Of course.

BJ: I'm hungry. I wonder why supper's not ready yet.

EMILY: Oh, BJ, you're too much.

GUY: Just stop it. *(Everyone keeps talking about their topic of interest.*

Guy looks at Coach and she blows her whistle.) So, basically, nobody besides me cares at all. You all have something else to think about?

MELODY: Guy, you worry enough for all of us, but I agree, we do need to rehearse.

BJ: Yeah, I think so, too.

(Others all hesitantly agree.)

GUY: That's more like it. So we'll get serious and have a great dress rehearsal tomorrow at 9:30?

(Others agree and act slightly excited. Nela and Mertice enter SR. Mertice is carrying a doll.)

NELA: Hi, everyone. Mom sent us in here to tell ya'll that dinner's running a little late. She had a hard time plucking those buzzards.

(Everyone groans.)

COACH: I've got plenty of candy if anyone wants to buy some.

(Coach sits at the table and Tally, Gina, Allissa, Paul, and Seymore go buy some candy. Taylor and Matt sit on the couch, Emily and BJ sit on the two chairs and Guy and Melody sit on the floor between the chairs and the couch. Marilyn stands behind the couch.)

PAUL: *(After he buys his candy.)* Hey, Nela. I found someone else who wants to have his palm read. Right, Seymore?

SEYMORE: *(A little surprised.)* Yeah, sure.

(Tally goes to sit by Guy and Melody.)

MERTICE: Nela, Momma told us to come right back.

NELA: She can wait a minute.

MARILYN: Mertice, would you come talk to me for a minute?

MERTICE: I guess.

(Delores enters SL, carrying a big bag.)

DELORES: Hey, is it time to eat? I'm starving.

COACH: Almost. Where have you been?

DELORES: I was out watching the possums cross the road.

GINA: I'm glad you're here. Could you help me tame this mess that's on my head?

DELORES: *(To Gina.)* Sure, you just sit right here. *(She indicates a chair at the table.)* We'll get started right now.

GINA: Don't you need to get a brush or something?

DELORES: Oh, honey, I carry everything I need with me. *(She pulls out all types of combs, brushes, bottles.)*

ALLISSA: So, Coach, are we going to do our jog tomorrow morning?

COACH: Absolutely. We've got to stay in shape.

NELA: *(Who's studying Seymore's hand.)* You are a true romantic at heart even though you have trouble expressing that part of yourself.

SEYMORE: My hand says that about me?

NELA: Yep. It also says that you are intelligent and have a good memory.

PAUL: At least you got that part right.

(Seymore and Nela continue talking. Paul gives Seymore fashion tips.)

TALLY: So, Melody, are you having any luck teaching Guy how to relax?

MELODY: What do you think, Guy?

GUY: *(Looking up from his clipboard.)* Huh, oh, I'm relaxed. You don't have to worry about me.

TAYLOR: Oh, Matt, aren't you glad that we're finally together? I know you must be.

EMILY: *(To BJ.)* Here, honey. Would you like for me to massage your shoulders?

MARILYN: *(To Mertice.)* So how long have you been able to see the ghost?

MERTICE: What ghost?

MARILYN: I saw her last night. You were talking to her earlier, weren't you?

MERTICE: Yes.

MARILYN: What is her name?

MERTICE: Evangeline.

MARILYN: Hey, everybody, Mertice told me that the ghost's name is
Evangeline

(All express interest.)

NELA: Don't listen to her. She likes to make up stories.

(Others go back to what they were doing. Taylor sees Emily rubbing BJ's shoulders.)

TAYLOR: Matt, could you rub my shoulders? I'm so tense.

(Matt starts rubbing Taylor's shoulders.)

BJ: Emily, you're so considerate. I've never been treated better.

EMILY: Thank you, BJ. I always try to put the needs of others before
mine.

CLOTILE: *(From off SR.)* Nela, Mertice, get in here. We've got to
finish this meal before those folk starve to death.

(Mertice drops her doll when she hears her mom.)

MERTICE/NELA: Comin', Momma.

(Mertice and Nela exit SR. Evangeline enters UC. Evangeline waves at Marilyn.)

EVANGELINE: So you want to talk to me? Maybe later. Let me
see...how can I make this scene more interesting? Everyone,
freeze. *(Everyone onstage freezes. Evangeline walks around and changes
their positions slightly.)* Okay, unfreeze. *(Everyone does so and reacts
to the changes.)* No, that's not enough. Everyone, freeze. *(Everyone
onstage freezes. Evangeline changes people's positions, making Taylor
massage BJ, Matt massage Marilyn, and Delores fix Coach's hair.)* Now,
unfreeze. *(Everyone does so and reacts loudly to the changes.)* Aaah,
that's better. Now, let's get some exercise. Everyone, grab a
partner. Now swing your partner round and round. *(The group
square dances, changes partners, and yells "yee-ha." Mertice enters SR
and walks over to get her doll. She looks very upset and then exits SR,
running. Evangeline doesn't see her.)* Now, let's conga. *(The group*

forms a conga line, parades around the room, and then exits UC.) Oh, this is so much fun! (She exits as the last person in the conga line. Blackout. Intermission.)

[END OF FREEVIEW]