



Ron Hill

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BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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*To my children
Cindy, Missy, Valerie, and Tim
I hope I've taught you laughter.*

THE LADIES OF HARMONY

4

THE LADIES OF HARMONY was first performed September 22, 2005, by the Fremont Community Theatre, Fremont, OH: Michael P.J. Foos, director.

MAUD: Donna Wollenslegel
ADDIE: Karen Langley
LEAH: Susan Doell
THELMA: Claire Zimmerman
STELLA: Martha Mead
GRACE: Linda Rich

The first all-male production of **THE LADIES OF HARMONY** was performed April 24, 2009 at the Oregon Community Theatre, Oregon, OH: Patti Kasper, director.

MAUD: Ron Davis
ADDIE: John Tonkovich
LEAH: Dan Sifuentes
THELMA: Tim Yard
STELLA: Jeff Smith
GRACE: Ronnie Tanner

THE LADIES OF HARMONY

Honorable Mention, Writer's Digest 75th Annual Writing Competition, 2008
First Place, Community Theatre Association of Michigan, 2007

COMEDY. The laughter is nonstop in this hilarious comedy. Six church ladies arrive at Harmony Church's fellowship hall to plan a small funeral dinner for a man they despised. While eating doughnuts, drinking coffee, and gossiping on a variety of topics including Pastor Bob's go-go dancing fiancée, the church ladies engage in a game of "what-ifs" and "I-wish-I-hads," and in doing so, reveal several secrets about themselves. However, the biggest shock comes the next day when an unexpectedly large crowd of mourners arrive at the funeral dinner and the ladies have to endure their most embarrassing moment yet!

Performance Time: Approximately 90 minutes.

CHARACTERS

(6 F) or (6 M)

MAUD: Head of the funeral committee at Harmony Church; has successfully achieved her dream in life—becoming the head of the funeral committee; the same age as Addie but older than the other ladies.

GRACE: Funeral committee member at Harmony Church; bawdy, enjoys life but wishes she had been a truck driver in her younger days; has dyed hair and a weak bladder.

THELMA: Funeral committee member at Harmony Church; widow who remembers being young but has no regrets about being older; thinks she could have been a go-go dancer in her younger days.

LEAH: Funeral committee member at Harmony Church; slow-talking, whiny man-hater.

ADDIE: Funeral committee member at Harmony Church; sweet but ditsy; wishes she could have been a tap-dancing star; same age as Maud.

STELLA: Funeral committee member at Harmony Church; dreams of writing a novel.

CASTING: Though casting calls for six women, the roles also can be played by male actors dressed as women if desired.

COSTUMES: In Act I, the women are dressed as if going to church or to work. In Act II, they should look as though they have just attended a funeral. The hair color of the women is flexible, except for Grace who has obviously dyed hair.

SETTING

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

SET

Harmony Church's fellowship hall. Several tables and chairs are scattered about the stage. AT SL, there are doors leading to the restrooms, which are separated by a bulletin board and a drinking fountain. At USR, there are several steps representing the stairway that leads to the church's fellowship hall, which is located in the basement of the church. At USC across the center portion of the set, there is a counter and a swinging door. The swinging door leads to the kitchen and allows characters in the kitchen to be seen as part of the stage action.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I: Harmony Church's fellowship hall.

Intermission

ACT II: The fellowship hall, after the funeral dinner the next day.

PROPS

Bakery bag full of doughnuts	Assorted vases
6 Purses	Artificial flowers
Papers, debris	Tray of silverware
Apron, for Addie	Napkins
Apron, for Maud	Silverware that has been wrapped in napkins
Apron, for Stella	Clipboard for checklist
Coffee cups	Wastebasket
Coffee urn or coffee pot	Empty Kahlúa bottle
Car keys, for Stella	Dishes
Dishtowels or dishrags	Salt and pepper shaker sets
Table covers	

SOUND EFFECTS

Calliope music

**“WHEN WE USE
OUR SMILEY VOICE,
WE CAN’T BE HATEFUL
TO EACH OTHER.”**

—ADDIE

ACT I

(AT RISE: Summer, mid-morning. Harmony Church's fellowship hall, which is located in the basement of the church. [Note: If the director chooses to let the audience in on what's happening with the coffee, a man playing the janitor, can enter and pour Kahlúa into the coffee urn and then exit before Maud and Addie enter.] Maud and Addie enter. Maud looks about the room and is thoroughly disgusted.)

MAUD: Oh, for crying out loud! Will you look at this place? What a mess!

ADDIE: Oh, Maud, it isn't that bad. It just needs a little straightening up.

MAUD: That isn't the point, Addie. I told Russell to set up tables and chairs for a funeral dinner and it looks as though he died in the process.

ADDIE: Well, they are set up...just not arranged. We can do that. (Places a bakery bag and her purse on the counter and heads for a chair.) You don't think Russell died, too, do you?

MAUD: Of course not. Laziness never killed anyone. He's probably back to his old ways. (Raises her hand to her mouth to make a drinking gesture.)

ADDIE: You mean *drinking*?

MAUD: That's exactly what I mean. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. That family has spawned at least one drunk every generation since getting off the boat.

ADDIE: What boat? (Begins clearing papers and debris from tables and arranging chairs.)

MAUD: Oh, Addie, it's just a figure of speech! Russell's father was a drunk. His uncle was arrested a number of times for drunkenness, and his grandfather couldn't plow a straight furrow when he was sober. You'd think that with "Gertz" for a last name, they'd be able to hold their booze.

(Sets her purse on the counter and puts on an apron, which she has brought.)

ADDIE: I don't see what their last name has to do with anything.

MAUD: Gertz! *(Looks at Addie to see if she is catching on.)*
Gertz! It's German. They're practically raised on beer. *(Addie stares stupidly at Maud.)* Forget it. I hope he was sober enough to start the coffee. *(Exits to kitchen and talks through the counter opening.)*

ADDIE: I didn't even know that Russell had a drinking problem. *(Dons an apron.)*

MAUD: For him, it's no problem. It's a way of life.

ADDIE: An addiction to anything must be a terrible way to live. It's really a disease.

MAUD: In my opinion, there's no such thing as an addiction. It's simply a lack of will power.

ADDIE: The experts would disagree with you.

MAUD: The experts don't have to deal with a drunken janitor at every funeral dinner.

ADDIE: Who's all coming? Stella? Grace?

MAUD: All the regulars...Stella and Grace included. Lord, I hope Stella doesn't have to bring that miserable granddaughter. I can't stand that kid. *(Gets coffee mugs from a cupboard.)*

ADDIE: I think Tiffany is a sweet little thing. I can't understand why you feel that way.

MAUD: She's never been made to mind, that's why. Last week, Stella brought that little terror over to my place and she couldn't keep her fingers off of things.

ADDIE: Stella?

MAUD: Not Stella...Tiffany. Stella just sat there and didn't say anything. *(Enters from kitchen.)* When they finally left, it took me nearly an hour to get the stickiness off my Precious Moments.

ADDIE: I'm sure she was just curious. Tiffany probably wondered why a woman your age has a doll collection. (*Busies herself straightening tables and chairs.*)

MAUD: It isn't a doll collection, but that isn't the point...they're my things and little Tiffany can learn to keep her fingers off. Lord, that's another thing...Tiffany...what kind of a moniker is that to hang on a kid? That's a name for a lamp, not a child. How dumb will that sound when she's grown? (*Exits to kitchen.*)

ADDIE: (*Under her breath.*) About as dumb as naming a baby "Maud."

MAUD: (*Calls from the kitchen.*) What did you say?

ADDIE: Nothing.

MAUD: Well, I'll be blessed! The coffee's ready. Thelma and Leah said they'd be a little late...naturally, but Stella should be here any minute. Grace had a hair appointment and will be here as soon as she's done.

ADDIE: Oh dear, I hope she's sober.

MAUD: Addie! What an awful thing to say! Why would you even think such a thing?

ADDIE: Her last name...Gerstenberger. How German can you get and not have an accent?

MAUD: That's her married name. She was a Sullivan before marriage...just forget it. (*Enters from behind the counter and begins to wipe tables and chairs.*) I wish the others would get here. This funeral committee will be the death of me.

ADDIE: Oh, don't say that, Maud. At our age, that's not funny.

MAUD: *Our age?* You're older than I am.

ADDIE: Why don't we ask some younger women to help us? At some point, someone will have to take over for us.

MAUD: I'm thinking about it, but most of the younger women work during the day, and people don't die on schedule. Besides, they aren't much on cooking. Take away their can openers and boxes that call for a cup of water, and most of them are lost.

ADDIE: Some of the new things are really good. Have you tried those instant mashed potatoes? I use them all the time.

MAUD: And you were the kid in second grade who ate paste until Miss Heron took it away from you.

ADDIE: My mother thought I had a vitamin deficiency, but she could never figure out what it was.

MAUD: You have a deficiency, that's for sure.

(Stella enters.)

STELLA: Good morning, girls.

MAUD/ADDIE: Good morning, Stella. Hello.

STELLA: Sorry I'm so late, but I forgot the flowers and had to go back for them. Then I realized I hadn't fed the cat, so I did that, and it was one thing after another. I'm glad to see that Russell set up the tables and chairs. *(Places her purse and car keys on the counter.)*

MAUD: Russell, my foot. All he did was put on the coffee. Where's Tiffany?

STELLA: She stayed the night with her other grandma, so I get a bit of a break. Besides, I thought she might get in the way, and I know she irritates you.

MAUD: Irritates me? Where did you ever get that idea? She's a sweet little thing.

ADDIE: Speaking of precious moments...

STELLA: *(Indicating chairs.)* Will this be enough? *(Puts on her apron.)* Old man Bowers had a small family, but what about his friends?

(Grace enters.)

GRACE: He didn't have any. No one liked the old coot. Good morning, ladies.

(Maud, Addie, and Stella greet Grace.)

ADDIE: Everyone has friends. I don't think that's any way to talk about the deceased.

GRACE: Why not? He was a nasty old fart all his life. *(Places her purse on the counter with the others.)*

MAUD: I agree with Grace but object to her choice of words.

STELLA: Well, his daughter and son will be here with their families and at least a few others. This should be enough, and, if not, we can add a few chairs.

GRACE: Forget the grandson. The talk at the beauty shop is that he's doing time in the county jail.

STELLA: Again? What is it this time? Drugs?

GRACE: I heard it was burglary, but don't quote me. I don't know for sure.

ADDIE: German apples. The poor boy can't help himself.

(Pause. Confused, Maud, Grace, and Stella look at each other.)

MAUD: German apples?

ADDIE: That's what you said earlier, and it's beginning to make sense.

GRACE: Only to you, Addie. Only to you.

STELLA: Is the coffee ready? Let's have a cup and then get cracking.

ADDIE: Oh, I nearly forgot...I brought doughnuts. *(Places the bag of doughnuts on the table.)*

GRACE: Oh, great! Coffee and doughnuts! Bring it on! Couple those with incontinency and thighs, and I'm in for a busy day.

STELLA: There's medicine for that problem. Why don't you take it? *(Gets a cup of coffee.)*

GRACE: Depends. *(Pours herself a cup of coffee.)*

ADDIE: Depends on what? *(Grace looks at Addie and waits for it to sink in.)* Oh. *(Finally realizes.)* Oh!

(Leah and Thelma enter.)

LEAH: Good morning, everyone. Just in time for coffee. *(Sets down the table cover and gets coffee.)*

THELMA: No doughnuts, though. I'm trying to lose a few pounds.

MAUD: Aren't we all.

GRACE: I'm not. The only way I'd be able to lose weight is to have something amputated, and I need all my parts. *(Starts eating a doughnut.)*

STELLA: Who made the coffee? It's great.

MAUD: I told you, Russell had it ready. Isn't it his normal swill? *(Gets a cup of coffee.)*

LEAH: No... *(Takes a sip.)* ...it's wonderful. One of those flavored kinds.

THELMA: I think it's hazelnut.

ADDIE: Tastes more like vanilla to me.

MAUD: I can't decide, but it's very good, and I don't usually like Russell's coffee.

STELLA: Maybe we should ask him to make the coffee tomorrow.

MAUD: *(Annoyed.)* I'll take care of who does what for the dinner, if you don't mind.

STELLA: It was just a suggestion. You don't have to bite my head off.

MAUD: I didn't bite your head off, but I've been doing this for years, and the dinners have always been successful thanks to my organization. Even nasty old fa...fathers like Clarence deserve our best efforts.

GRACE: Now that we're all here, I have some news I heard at the beauty shop this morning.

LEAH: You went to the beauty shop this morning?

THELMA: *(To Grace.)* Didn't they have time to do you?

GRACE: Fine! I won't tell you my news.

ADDIE: They're just kidding, Grace. Tell them about Clarence's grandson.

LEAH: *(To Grace.)* What about his grandson?

THELMA: *(To Grace.)* Is he in trouble again?

ADDIE: Armed burglary. He's in jail. That's what Grace said.

GRACE: I did not! I didn't say anything about armed burglary. That's how rumors get started. Besides, what I have to say has nothing to do with old man Bowers' grandson.

MAUD: Then get on with it, Grace. We need to get this dinner organized. And I like that color on you better than the stuff you had last week.

GRACE: Thank you, Maud. Anyhow, I heard at the beauty parlor that our pastor is getting married.

STELLA: We all know that!

GRACE: Well, there's more. It seems—

STELLA: He announced it to the congregation a couple weeks ago.

GRACE: Let me finish—

LEAH: I, for one, didn't appreciate the way he sprung that on us. We've never even met the woman, and we don't know anything about her.

GRACE: If you'd just listen—

ADDIE: We don't have to know anything about her. It isn't any of our business, and, besides, the only reason he told us was to stop some wagging tongues.

(Grace gives up trying to get in a word edgewise.)

MAUD: What do you mean by that remark?

ADDIE: I'm not accusing anyone, Maud, but we were all guilty of speculating. *(Crosses SL to the bulletin board and starts rearranging things.)*

THELMA: Addie's right. We all wondered how long he would stay single...why he took so many trips to Cleveland...

ADDIE: Do you think he was going to visit his girlfriend?

GRACE: That's a safe assumption. *(Gets another cup of coffee)* That's where she's from, but that isn't the best part.

MAUD: Well, don't keep us guessing. What did you hear?

GRACE: Are you ready for this? I overheard someone at the shop say she was a *dancer*.

ADDIE: A dancer? You mean like a ballerina? How exciting!

LEAH: Exciting?! I don't think a pastor should be married to any kind of a dancer. In fact, I don't think he should even be thinking about marriage. His wife died only— (*Thinks.*) What was it? About three years ago?

STELLA: It's been nearly four years, and who and when he decides to marry is really none of our business. (*Gets another cup of coffee. Takes a sip. Indicating coffee.*) Russell really outdid himself. This is the best coffee I've ever had.

MAUD: This really is good. Russell has redeemed himself.

ADDIE: Well, I think it's wonderful that Pastor Bob is getting married. He's only about 50 years old. Why should he spend the rest of his life alone?

LEAH: Because he's a pastor, that's why. He should dedicate himself to this congregation and not be so concerned with...

THELMA: With what, Leah?

LEAH: Well...you know...

THELMA: If I knew, I wouldn't be asking. Spit it out, girl.

LEAH: We all know what I'm talking about. There's no reason to explain.

GRACE: I think she means human pleasures. Get real, Leah. He might be a pastor, but he's still a man.

LEAH: Well, I think it's disgusting. (*Leaves the table and gets another cup of coffee.*)

GRACE: You think that's disgusting?! You haven't even heard the best part. Not only is she a *dancer*—and not a ballerina—but she dances in a *bar*!

MAUD: Good heavens!

STELLA: Are you serious?

ADDIE: You have to be kidding!

LEAH: That's impossible! She'd have to be a lot younger than Pastor Bob, and I don't think—

GRACE: Pleasures of the flesh...

THELMA: You must have heard wrong. I don't think you should be repeating that to anyone.

GRACE: All I know is what I've heard. I haven't mentioned it to anyone but you girls, and I know none of you will repeat it. I was under the dryer and I heard Sylvia mention Pastor Bob and then something about a dancer and a bar. What else could she have meant?

ADDIE: A dancer in a bar? You mean like... *(Thinks.)* ...what's that called?

MAUD: A go-go dancer!

THELMA: That's it, but you have to be mistaken, Grace. How would Pastor Bob ever meet a person like that?

LEAH: Heaven only knows what he does in Cleveland...

STELLA: I think you should have all the facts before repeating something like that. *(Goes into the kitchen for a couple of vases and begins arranging the artificial flowers she brought.)*

GRACE: Why? Not having all the facts hasn't stopped any of us before.

ADDIE: She must be some sort of bambi.

LEAH: Bambi?

MAUD: I think Addie means "bimbo."

ADDIE: Yeah!

MAUD: Good lord! I understand her! Even "German apples" is beginning to make sense.

STELLA: Can we drop this conversation and get back to old man Bowers' funeral dinner?

GRACE: What's the rush? He's as dead as he's going to get. Besides, we have plenty of time to throw a dinner together.

LEAH: If she is a dancer—and I'm not saying she is—why didn't he say so when he made the announcement?

MAUD: In church? In front of the entire congregation? *(As Pastor Bob.)* "My fiancée is a go-go dancer. Let us pray." Pastor Bob has better sense than that.

STELLA: If he had any sense, he wouldn't be marrying a dancer.

THELMA: We don't know for certain that she is a dancer...and if she is that *kind*.

GRACE: Thelma's right. I'm just telling you what I heard.

MAUD: Or what you *thought* you heard.

GRACE: Fine. Have it your way...what I *thought* I heard. You can ask her all about it tomorrow. I also heard—or thought I heard—that she's coming to the burial service.

LEAH: Clarence Bowers' service?

GRACE: He's the only dead one we have. There's a law against burying live people.

ADDIE: Why?

MAUD: Addie, for crying out loud! We don't bury live people.

ADDIE: I know that. I mean, why is she coming to old man Bowers' funeral?

GRACE: Some sort of business, paperwork...something like that.

ADDIE: Maybe she's Clarence's illegitimate child, and she's coming back to claim her share, and maybe she's working as a go-go dancer because Clarence was too stingy and never paid child support. And now she's going to inherit money and become a missionary in Africa.

GRACE: Whew! (*Swipes her hand over her head as though the comment went over her head completely.*)

MAUD: And maybe one of those German apples hit you on the head. Old man Bowers never had any illegitimate children and, if he did, I don't think the pastor would be marrying her.

THELMA: With all this eavesdropping, did you happen to catch her name? It would be so much easier to talk about her if she had a name.

GRACE: Maxine. (*Thinks.*) Could have been Laverne. When I heard it, I thought of the Andrews Sisters.

LEAH: Wonderful. And Pastor Bob is going to be her Bugle Boy of Company B.

STELLA: (*From behind the counter, arranging the flowers. To Grace.*) Did you even once, after getting out from under that dryer, think of asking any questions, of getting your story straight?

LEAH: (*To Grace.*) I think years of dying your hair has affected your brain.

GRACE: There's nothing wrong with my brain. I have my story straight, and, no, I don't ask questions. I don't want the girls to think I'm a nosey busybody or they'll stop talking altogether. (*Goes to warm up her coffee.*)

THELMA: What's so bad about being a go-go dancer? It's an honest living.

ADDIE: Thelma!

THELMA: If I were younger and had to support myself, I'd consider it.

GRACE: (*Starts to laugh and then gets a startled look on her face.*) Oh, no! (*Sets down her cup and runs in to ladies' room.*)

LEAH: Oh, Thelma, you wouldn't do that!

ADDIE: (*Laughing.*) There's a bambi in our group.

MAUD: "Bimbo," Addie, "bimbo"!

THELMA: I'm not a bimbo, and I don't think all the young ladies who dance for a living are bimbos, either. I've heard of girls working their way through college by doing that very thing.

STELLA: And how many of them wound up married to pastors, especially our pastor?

MAUD: I still think Grace misunderstood. There is simply no way Pastor Bob would marry a go-go dancer. Good heavens, he's 50 years old! A girl who dances for a living couldn't be more than 25 or 30. The age difference alone would kill him.

LEAH: Men are harder than we think.

ADDIE: Men are what?

LEAH: You know what I mean. Men don't commit to any relationship...pastors included.

THELMA: You're lumping people together, Leah. Men are no good. Dancers are no good. If your mind was any narrower, it would overlap in the middle.

LEAH: You know I have my reasons.

(Grace enters from the ladies' room.)

GRACE: Whew! False alarm. Russell's coffee is just too good to stop drinking. I wonder what kind it is...

LEAH: It's probably [Starbucks] or one of those expensive kinds. *[Or insert the name of another brand of coffee.]*

STELLA: The church doesn't pay Russell enough to buy those. It's probably something he concocted himself.

LEAH: I'm going to go find Russell and ask him. I'd like to have some of this at home. *(Exits.)*

THELMA: *(Watches Leah exit.)* The poor thing. She's really beginning to show her age.

MAUD: She doesn't have a good thing to say about any man. Maybe that's why she never married.

THELMA: She's bitter all right, but she has her reasons.

GRACE: Not to worry. I don't think she wants to be a go-go dancer anyhow.

THELMA: I never said that I wanted to be one. All I said is that if I were young, I'd consider it.

GRACE: I know, Thelma. I'm just kidding. There's not one of us whose go-go hasn't gone-gone years ago.

MAUD: And I, for one, am glad of it. The young people today are a mess: wild parties, drinking...girls with tattoos. They ought to be ashamed of themselves.

(Maud goes into the kitchen, gets two different vases, and sets them in front of Stella. Her point is made and Stella tears apart her arrangements and starts over.)

GRACE: Why? Because they're young, or because we're old?

MAUD: I don't know what you mean.

THELMA: I think I do. Sometimes, we—or people our ages—are jealous of young people.

MAUD: Jealous? Why would I be jealous of them? I was young once. We all were—some of us longer ago than others—but so what? *(Fires a look at Stella.)*

STELLA: We sometimes forget what it was like to be young...to stay up all night and still go to work the next day. The excitement of sitting next to the new boy in English class and hoping he'll notice you...

(Maud enters from the kitchen carrying a tray of silverware and napkins.)

THELMA: We forget that once we were young, wild...full of piss and vinegar.

ADDIE: Thelma!

THELMA: What?

ADDIE: *(Barely able to say it.)* Full of piss and vinegar. *(Smile grows on her face. With enthusiasm.)* Oh, piss! Piss! Piss! Piss and vinegar! I like that. Sorta says it all. I think I'll have some more coffee.

STELLA: We think that we get better as we get older, but what we get is tired.

ADDIE: We let our dreams die and go through life with a bunch of what-ifs and I-wish-I-hads.

THELMA: Hads?

ADDIE: Yeah. Your I-wish-I-had was to be a go-go dancer.

THELMA: I didn't say I wish I had been a go-go dancer. I said, given certain circumstances, I would have considered it.

ADDIE: Okay...that falls into the "what if" category. What if you had been divorced and your children—little Johnny and Patsy—didn't have shoes, and what if they were going to bed hungry because you couldn't afford a can of SpaghettiOs, then you found a job as a go-go dancer. And all of sudden, you could afford [Reeboks] for their little feet and real

mashed potatoes—not those instant kind. What if all that happened? [*Or insert the name of another brand of shoe.*]

THELMA: Have you taken your medication today? Where in the world do you come up with these stories? All I said was that there are worse things in life than being a go-go dancer, and naming a girl “Patsy” is one of them.

ADDIE: That was my mother’s name and I’ve always liked it. Do you want to hear my I-wish-I-had? (*Stella, Grace, Maud, Thelma, and Leah adlib “No,” “Not really,” “It’s getting late,” “Oh, please,” etc. Addie sits at the table with her coffee. The other church ladies, if seated at the table, get up and busy themselves, leaving Addie alone at the table.*) I wish I had been a dancer like Ginger Rodgers...a movie star dancing with Fred Astaire. I took tap dancing lessons, but it didn’t work out. I kept missing the floor, and it didn’t sound right.

STELLA: Addie, you’ve been missing the floor for more years than I care to think about.

GRACE: For crying out loud! We’ve known each other for years and never talked about our what-ifs or wish-I-hads. Let me tell you this...I wish I had been a truck driver.

(*Maud enters from the kitchen carrying silverware and napkins.*)

MAUD: A truck driver?!

THELMA: (*To Grace.*) You mean one of those big things? A semi?

STELLA: (*To Grace.*) Women didn’t do those kinds of jobs when we were young.

GRACE: But they do now, and I wish I could be part of it.

ADDIE: What would you haul?

GRACE: I don’t know... (*Thinks.*) ...maybe vegetables from California to the East Coast. Sort of like in Steinbeck’s “East of Eden.” Just to be out there on the road, free of everything.

ADDIE: And maybe you would meet James Dean, and maybe he wouldn't get killed in a car crash, and maybe the two of you would get married, and what if—

MAUD: Addie, Grace is hauling lettuce to Brooklyn, not re-writing history.

ADDIE: And what if you got a tattoo on your arm...something like "Life Trucks"?

STELLA: Or maybe a rose.

THELMA: She can't have a rose. I'm going to have a rose on my hip when I dance.

GRACE: On *your* hip, that rose will look pretty wilted.

STELLA: And where are you going to dance? The senior citizens' center?

THELMA: I'll have Grace drop me off somewhere on her way to Brooklyn...some place where they appreciate the *mature* female form.

STELLA: (*Shouts.*) All aboard for Dubuque!

MAUD: Girls, please! We aren't driving to Brooklyn, and we certainly aren't dancing in Dubuque. We are here to plan a dinner for that miserable Clarence Bowers. Now let's get back on track.

STELLA: I wonder what's taking Leah so long.

GRACE: She's probably whining to Russell about the coffee. It takes that poor woman forever and a day to say something.

STELLA: She doesn't whine because she's older...she's always whined. In high school, the boys used to say that by the time she could say "I'm not that kind of a girl" ...she was.

(*Leah enters.*)

LEAH: Well, I found Russell and asked him about the coffee.

ADDIE: Did he say what kind it is?

THELMA: (*To Leah.*) Does he care that we're drinking it?

LEAH: Well, first, he said he hadn't made it for us...that it was his coffee. He thought we wouldn't be here until tomorrow.

MAUD: The funeral's tomorrow. We have to get everything ready today. I told him that just yesterday. I thought he sounded a little funny when I phoned him. He was probably drunk and doesn't remember.

LEAH: He asked who was here, I told him, and he said we could drink all we wanted. Then he just smiled...

MAUD: Russell smiled? He's up to something. I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of times I've seen that man smile.

ADDIE: Don't be so cynical, Maud. Maybe he's had a change of heart.

STELLA: Speaking of hearts, old man Bowers' has stopped. The funeral's tomorrow and we have to know who is doing what for the dinner. *(Spies Thelma eating a doughnut.)* Thelma, I thought you were on a diet.

THELMA: I am, but my blood sugar must be low. I'm feeling a little dizzy.

MAUD: Let's see...I've asked Opal, Cora, and Virginia to each bake two pies. That should be plenty.

LEAH: Six pies cut into eight pieces will give us...

GRACE: Forty-eight slices. Clarence Bowers didn't have that many friends.

MAUD: I thought we'd cut each pie into six pieces instead of eight. That will give us 36 slices, and I'm sure that will be enough.

LEAH: Six pieces? We've never done that before.

GRACE: What's your point?

LEAH: My point is that we've never done that before. We always cut pies into eight pieces.

MAUD: Just this one time we'll cut them into six pieces.

(Grace crosses to the bulletin board and begins rearranging Addie's earlier efforts.)

LEAH: Well, all right, but that's still going to make an awfully big piece of pie.

ADDIE: It'll be fine, Leah.

LEAH: I couldn't eat that big of a piece of pie.

(Stella enters from the kitchen.)

STELLA: Maud isn't asking you to eat the pie, Leah. Just cut the darn things into six pieces.

GRACE: Hey, that's no way to talk. *(Goes for more coffee.)*

What's the problem?

THELMA: Maud wants to cut the pies into six pieces...

STELLA: *(Whining like Leah.)* And we've never done it that way.

GRACE: Old man Bowers has never died before, either. First time for everything.

THELMA: Let it go, Leah. You don't beat your laundry on a rock at the river any longer. Things change.

LEAH: But six pieces—

MAUD: Enough about the pies!

ADDIE: Girls! Girls! Use your smiley voices.

GRACE: Our smiley voices?

ADDIE: Yes. When we use our smiley voice, we can't be hateful to each other.

LEAH: I wasn't being hateful, but six pieces...

THELMA: *(Big smile.)* Do you really want eight pieces of one of Opal's pies?

MAUD: What's that supposed to mean?

[END OF FREEVIEW]