
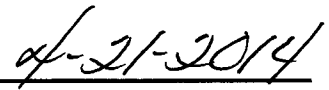
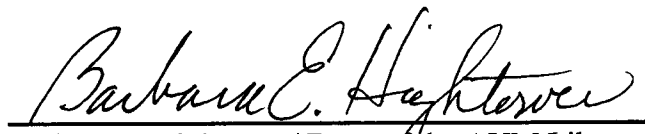
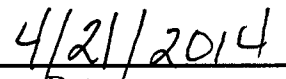


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Gastronomical Pleasures


A Play

By Kathryn Pearson

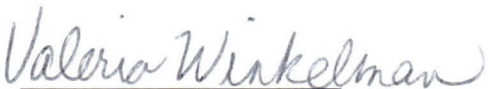
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Montgomery, Alabama

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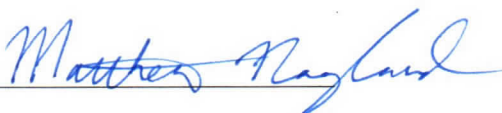
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Gastronomical Pleasures began as a project for a playwriting course taken as part of my graduate studies. I didn't have a particular story in mind when I enrolled in the course; the play was influenced by two separate circumstances. The first is an important rule for any playwright. Write about what you know. Consider works by Neil Simon or Tennessee Williams. Their most successful plays were based on personal experiences. The other influence was another course I was also taking during that time, entitled "Love and Friendship." The course involved the study of relationships portrayed throughout history, real or imagined, through literary works. We examined the origins of specific relationships, determining what influenced them and why some relationships worked while others were toxic. I learned that friendships form from a variety of circumstances such as convenience (think co-workers or neighbors), common interest, social and political reasons, and reasons that can't be explained. The latter is the category that best describes the friendship I share with three other women. During a class discussion, when asked to reflect on our friendships, (how they formed, why they endured, what makes them so valued), I remember describing us as a mixed bag of nuts. We aren't friends from early childhood and we have different hobbies and pastimes; even our educational backgrounds and careers are different. The one common thread we share is that we are all divorced and now single. Our children are mostly grown, and we raised them primarily on our own. We all have circles of friends and interests separate from this one, but our friendship endures regardless of circumstances. It is a friendship that is satisfying on a variety of levels; it is comforting and empowers us to keep moving forward. *Gastronomical Pleasures* is a fictional piece based on real events. Anyone familiar with this particular group of friends of mine would easily recognize who each character is in real life, albeit an inflated or

distorted version, like a caricature taking a particular attribute and exaggerating it. Some of the dialogue in the play does stem from actual conversations, as well as, certain circumstances. The events are just not presented in sequential order and are often embellished. It's a condensed version of our history together. The theme of the play is aging: not just getting old but the transition from one stage in life to another. The characters, ranging in age from 55 – 63, are postmenopausal women who, as their children become less dependent on them, are approaching retirement and beginning to explore the next phase of their lives and what lies ahead. Because the characters in the play are all women, it does by nature address issues that pertain primarily to women, particularly divorced women and women born in the 1950s, the time period in which we were born. It is not intended to be a women vs. men play; it simply illustrates our different approaches to life. Binding the whole story together is food. Coming together to share a meal, whether it's a gourmet dinner or pot luck supper, nourishes our bodies as well as our souls. Sometimes, we are hungry for something no amount of food can satisfy.

Aging

Generally, we move through stages in our lives with little difficulty or concern. We move from infant to toddler, toddler to child, child to adolescent, adolescent to adult, adult to middle aged adult, and middle aged adult to senior citizen. Except for the final stage, most of our transitions from one stage to the next are met with a sense of expectancy and accomplishment. Our parents celebrate, even document, all of our acquired skills: walking, talking, reading, first day of school, the list goes on. And then, we begin to look forward to our own personal accomplishments: getting a driver's license, registering to vote, moving out of our parents' home, and pursuing interests and careers. In moving toward senior status, it's not uncommon to experience a bit of fear or anxiety. We don't just wake up one morning declaring, "I'm old." Aging is more complex than that. We fight the physical signs of age and resist the physical limitations associated with aging but in the end, we must and do begin to let go. We let go of children, our youthful appearance, our careers, and our parents. The latter event, the loss of parents, is often the catalyst that brings us to terms with aging. With the death of our parent, we find ourselves in what Alexander Levy, in his book, *The Orphaned Adult*, calls "the lead car." He imagined our lives as if on a train, moving forward from moment to moment, and each car on the train occupied by individual generations. We, along with our siblings, cousins, friends, all occupy one car; ahead of us are our parents, aunts and uncles, ahead of them our grandparents. The cars behind us belong to the next generation, our children, followed by our grandchildren. Growing up, the cars are always separate, and our view of life is different from those in the other cars and always peripheral. With the death of our parents, we find ourselves in the lead car. For the first time, we have a view of life from the front, an

unobstructed view. According to Alexander Levy, we see the future before us and realize it is not endless. We discover that the past, present, and future are not distinct moments. From our new vantage point, the lines between each phase blurs. We start to realize and understand the interconnectedness of life. Levy states: "Reality is no longer an orderly sequence from the past through the present to the future that scrolls past the window of a train. And we are not just passengers. Reality, it turns out, is much more complex, much richer, than that – and this is the most precious lesson we can learn after our parents die" (189). Levy means that we are not separate. Our lives, our actions, regardless of how significant or insignificant we believe they are, have an effect, good or bad. We begin to appreciate and know the broader effects of our actions. We question what gives us purpose, what gives us meaning. With the years of establishing ourselves, and the years of acquisition behind us, the one remaining place of growth is internal. This is a time of reflection, a time to discover or rediscover our true nature. It's not a time we spend preparing to die; it's a time we spend taking stock of what we still have left to offer. Joan Chittister believes that age is a blessing. In her book, *The Gift of Years: Growing Old Gracefully*, she acknowledges that death can come at any moment. "Age comes only to the truly blessed" (x). Age indicates a life of experience. Chittister devotes each chapter in her book to an issue related to old age: relevancy, loss, forgiveness, etc. And with each topic, she lists the blessings and burdens each issue offers. Concentrating only on what we lose or what changes keeps us focused on the negative aspects of aging and that keeps us from living fully. When we divert our attention to what is possible, where our strengths lie, and what life has taught us, we have an opportunity to establish a renewed sense of purpose and effectiveness – a

reason to live. Everyone, regardless of gender, has to come to terms with aging; being a woman adds another dimension to this process.

The women in this play are between 55 and 63, menopausal and postmenopausal empty nesters approaching retirement. They are coming to terms with what they perceived life would be like versus the reality that is their lives. What they are experiencing is not drastically different from what other women of their generation experience. As they move into the final phase of their lives, they find that it is somewhat uncharted territory. Although many women have lived long lives, for the first time in history, they are experiencing a time when the population of elders equals the population of youth. In her book *A Woman's Book of Life: The Biology, Psychology and Spirituality of the Feminine Life Cycle*, author Joan Borysenko claims that in 1900, the life expectancy of the average woman was 47.3 years. By 1989, life expectancy increased to 75.3 years and by 2015, it is expected that 50% of the population of women will be postmenopausal, creating a new sociological phenomenon (5). The added years bring a desire to live out that time in ways that are personally fulfilling. In order to do that, women frequently have to come to terms with outdated perceptions and myths that surround old age, ideas that have gone unchallenged for generations. Traditionally, women were considered the weaker sex, inferior to men. Men gained respect and power with age while a woman's worth diminished when child-bearing years were over. Women were admired for their beauty and youth, and seen primarily as an appendage or helpmate to men. That trend in thinking caused boys to be raised differently than girls. Traditionally, boys were brought up to assume positions of dominance and power; they were encouraged to be autonomous and independent compared to girls who were raised to be subordinate and encouraged to develop

qualities of empathy and tenderness. This approach, Borysenko states, gave men a sense of self in isolation; they stand alone and they are self-reliant. In comparison, women developed a sense of self in relationships – able to see the interdependence and interconnectedness of all life (27). The women’s movement challenged this way of thinking. Still too often, as a woman’s youth fades so does her perceived sense of relevancy. This perception of lost relevancy is a shame and what Borysenko seeks to alleviate with her writing. Generally, the stages of a woman’s life are divided into three parts: maiden, mother, and crone. Borysenko finds this breakdown inadequate and limiting; even the term “crone” conjures up images of a shriveled, menacing, mean-spirited woman. As an alternative approach, Borysenko divides the stages of a woman’s life into four quadrants: maiden, mother, guardian, and elder. She further breaks each of these quadrants into three cycles of seven years each, devoting a chapter in her book to each of these. She informs readers about the physiological, psychological, and spiritual developments that a healthy female would experience in each of these phases. “The Heart of a Woman” is the title Borysenko gives to women ages 56 - 63. This is the age range of the women in *Gastronomical Pleasures*. For healthy women, this period in life often generates a call to social action.

For Borysenko, a healthy-minded woman would find herself moving away from a “salvage your youth” mentality, concerned with surface beauty, and moving toward authenticity, continuing to develop her mind and spirit (193). For women who have raised children, she acknowledges there is often a grieving period that can lead to depression as children begin to leave home, especially for women whose identities and feelings of self worth are tied to their children’s activities and accomplishments. Women who are able to shift their attention from the

nuclear family to a broader world family, through volunteer or service projects, not only alleviate their depression but often find a new sense of purpose and accomplishment (185-189).

Borysenko references the work of Paul Ray, who in 1996 originated the term “Cultural Creatives” to describe an emerging group of elders in our society whose core values reflect the feminine values triad of love: the expression of self-in-relation, serenity, and service. Cultural Creatives are concerned with ecological sustainability, problems of population, and pollution. They support the simpler lifestyles. They have interests in alternative healthcare, spiritual growth, and the importance of the inner life (190 – 191). Like Cultural Creatives, an interest in the broader community is beginning to emerge for the women in *Gastronomical Pleasures*.

Food

There is a Buddhist parable that tells of a traveler being chased by a tiger. The traveler comes to the edge of a cliff. He grabs hold of a vine and throws himself over the edge only to find another tiger below him. He then discovers two mice gnawing away at the vine. Off to the side, he notices a bunch of luscious grapes and with his free hand grabs the grapes and proclaims: "How delicious!" The story reminds us that as travelers through life we will inevitably find ourselves surrounded by circumstances or events that threaten our well-being. If we look for it, even in the midst of chaos, there is always something good to grab hold of. It is often the little things, simple pleasures, that offer us relief from the tension and stress of everyday life; something to latch onto and enjoy. I like that the parable uses food as the symbol of good to latch onto. Food is one of life's simple pleasures; it is also a catalyst for unexpected occurrences.

Food brings people together. Most every event or celebration has some food involved. We serve cake on our birthdays, eat anniversary dinners, share a meal after funerals, and enjoy a holiday that centers on food, Thanksgiving. Food is associated with hospitality; it builds community. I personally like and enjoy family meals, but I grew up in the era when all meals were served at the table. There was no grab and go, no fast food, and few convenience foods. We weren't distracted by technology; dinner was our version of "social media." We connected to and shared with the ones who were most important to us. When my parents celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary, in lieu of gifts, guests were asked to share a story or favorite memory they experienced with our parents. Food was involved in 80% of the responses, not always the star but always part of the story. I was one of the 80% who chose a

food-related story and recalled our family dinners. In a family with ten children, our family dinners could be an adventure: infants, toddlers, elementary school age children, and teenagers, all with different personalities and different schedules and agendas. Just preparing food every day for twelve people was a feat in itself that my mother pulled off with competence and grace. When I thought about our family dinners, especially those occasions when we lingered after a meal, I remembered the lasting effects of those moments. Sometimes the conversations were serious, just as often they were light-hearted discussions, and sometimes they were just silly. When I sat down to write about these experiences, I didn't isolate one particular experience. I took a different approach. Instead, I drew from my Catholic upbringing and dared to suppose that something similar to a family meal is possibly what Christ had in mind at the Last Supper. I am not diminishing the seriousness or sadness of the Last Supper, but I tend to believe Christ was trying to establish the importance of the group coming together for support, to reflect and to bond. There are ritual aspects of the Last Supper that carry over to any meal: bread and wine, lighting candles, setting the table, all the preparations that help enhance our experience but are never meant to be the star attraction. The reasons vary, but the intent is always to bring people together, and that nourishes our souls as well as our bodies. For me, a meal shared with a good friend, my children, or colleagues can be as meaningful and satisfying as, or even better than, many church services I've attended. Michael Pollan shares similar attitudes about food; this is something he discovered when he set out to learn how to cook. A food and nutrition specialist, Michael Pollan is a bestselling author who is best known for his consulting work on the popular, eye-opening documentary, *Food Inc.* He has devoted much of his career to educating the public about the food they put into their bodies, calling much of what we eat "edible food-like

substances” (174). Until recently, Pollan knew little about actual food preparation and decided he would learn to cook. What he learned about food preparation (the chopping, mixing, stirring) was equal to the peripheral benefits he discovered about preparing his own food. He came to the conclusion that “cooking might be the most important factor in fixing our public health crisis” and believes that the unrefined and unprocessed food that we use in meal preparations is very healthy for us (124). Eliminating processed foods could eliminate the source of many of our health problems. While learning to cook, Pollan spent time with professional chefs, bread makers, barbeque masters, and even a cheese making nun all in the pursuit of a better understanding of what it means to turn ingredients into a meal. In the process, he discovered the social and cultural benefits of cooking with others. Pollan realized that cooking not only connects us to plants and animals, it also connects us with people. What we experience sharing a meal, he found, could also be experienced while preparing a meal. We tell stories and share experiences, all resulting in a deeper relation with food and friends. That deeper relation, with food and friends, is the root of *Gastronomical Pleasures*. What begins as a simple meal between friends grows into a relationship that extends beyond personal satisfaction. When the four characters have dinner the first time, the conversation is light, as one would expect for individuals getting to know each other. In the same way that parents prepare their children for a world outside themselves, the characters, once they have filled their personal needs, are prepared to move into a larger community.

The Writing Process:

The playwriting process has enhanced my understanding and perhaps even more, my appreciation of a well-written play. I discovered how much I take for granted when I attend or read a well-crafted play. What I experience, in that instance, is the finished product. All the elements are in place: the story is relevant and meaningful, the characters are developed, and the dialogue is presented efficiently and effectively. A good play can be presented from a variety of design perspectives but nothing can compensate for content. The words, the dialogue, the structure of the plot, and the development of the characters all have to be present to communicate the story. Recently, I attended a staged reading of a new play. Afterwards, during the talk back session, the playwright said this was the thirty-third revision! It seemed excessive but totally plausible to me. With each revision of *Gastronomical Pleasures*, I would address certain areas only, to create new problems, and leave others unattended. Through all the revisions *Gastronomical Pleasures* evolves, the message gets clearer, and the characters more sharply defined.

My first draft of *Gastronomical Pleasures* read like a TV sitcom; I had eight characters and four separate locations. Sadly, I thought I had done a satisfactory job. What I failed to consider was how the whole package would be presented. I was saying too much and had too much going on, telling a story with too many details that disguised the essence of what I was actually trying to say. During the playwriting course, in which I produced this text, we were required to read our works aloud. For me, there was something about hearing our works read that helped me imagine the plot in more practical ways. It enabled me to see my clumsy approach and all the distracting elements that needed to be eliminated. The excess characters

and all the different locations were the easiest problems to address when I took into consideration how the play might be presented on stage. Other problems required a little soul searching.

From the start, I wanted to use my friendships as a basis for *Gastronomical Pleasures*, but friendship is just too broad of a subject. I needed a specific event or story to portray the meaning of this friendship instead of a condensed history, which was in essence what I had produced in my first draft. Exploring our history as friends eventually led me to the focus for *Gastronomical Pleasures*. I turned fifty about the time this group of friends and I started meeting regularly and socializing. I had known each of them separately. They didn't all know each other but at that time, we all happened to be working part-time jobs at The Alabama Shakespeare Festival. This is when the friendship we enjoy now began to develop. In the decade plus that we have been getting together, we have each experienced some life-altering experiences such as health and financial issues. For me, it was the death of my parents. We also moved into senior citizen status. None of what we experienced was outside the norm, just fairly typical occurrences that happen to anyone. It did bring me to the realization that part of what made our relationship meaningful is that we helped each other move from one stage of our life to another. Certain stages in our lives were ending, and we were beginning to redefine our lives, and that led me to choose age as the theme of *Gastronomical Pleasures*. Settling on that helped other elements of the play fall into place.

I always knew that food would be involved in *Gastronomical Pleasures*. It was the one constant of the play. The friendship I share with this group started with dinner. One evening, when the four of us were at work, one of the girls stated she would love for someone

to cook dinner for her and I said I would do that. We laughed at this because we knew that I was not the person she wanted cooking dinner for her but for whatever reason, we all decided to have dinner together and I did cook. That marked the first of many meals we would share together. Sometimes one of us cooks; sometimes we all cook together. Sometimes we each just bring something and enjoy each other's company, but there is always food. Food then became symbolic in *Gastronomical Pleasures* for the way it nourishes our bodies and souls. Food is a way we take care of ourselves and others. My friends and I have had many conversations over food. We've discussed all the usual topics: religion, politics, children, and finances. Regardless of the topic, laughter would ensue at some point. Much research touts the benefits of laughter for health and well-being, and anyone who's enjoyed a good hearty laugh can attest to that belief. My friends and I certainly can. Because of that, I chose to keep the tone of *Gastronomical Pleasures* light and make it a comedy. I believe that genre also fits because it is about a stage in life when we generally learn to lighten up and, in particular, we have learned to laugh at ourselves. The wisdom of age allows us to see the big picture. The focus of our lives begins to shift from our nuclear family and we shift our attention to new opportunities and possibilities. With this loose framework, I was able to move on to more challenging (for me) aspects of playwriting.

When I submitted the first draft of *Gastronomical Pleasures*, my professor suggested I read some of Wendy Wasserstein's works, in particular *The Heidi Chronicles*, for examples of strong female characters. This proved to be good advice. Wasserstein's characters are strong but more important for my purposes, they are often forging a new direction for themselves, setting a new standard for living that is outside the norm. This is something I wanted

to project through the characters in *Gastronomical Pleasures*. These characters are setting a new standard for what it means to be old in our society, especially for women. In *The Heidi Chronicles*, Heidi Holland is on a personal journey toward self-actualization. She is influenced by the women's movement and represents a generation of women struggling to balance careers and personal lives. In *Gastronomical Pleasures*, the women are on a journey toward authenticity. They are past the years of establishing families and careers. As senior citizens, they are experiencing a time in history when the population of elders is almost equal to the population of youth. Generally, they are not experiencing a time of poor health and disabilities. They find themselves in what has come to be termed a "second middle age." Author Ken Robinson talks about the second middle age in his book, *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*. He states that middle age used to represent an age group between thirty-five and fifty. With an increase in life expectancy, along with better health and financial stability among the elderly, fifty now marks the end of the first middle age and ushers in a second stage of mid-life where a healthy-minded individual can pursue a new set of goals (193). Robinson tells the stories of individuals who took advantage of this time to do and learn more, stating:

... life-enhancing things can happen when we take the time to step out of our routines, rethink our paths, and revisit the passions we left behind (or never pursued at all) for whatever reason. We can take ourselves in fresh directions at nearly any point in our lives. We have the capacity to discover the Element at practically any age. As the actor Sophia Loren once said, "There is a fountain of youth: it is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lives of the people you love. When you learn to tap this source, you will truly have defeated age." (208)

That spirit, the healthy mentality that Robinson suggests for individuals in the second middle age and beyond, is what I sought to project through the characters in *Gastronomical*

Pleasures: women with a spirit of optimism, youth, and vitality. That kind of personality is the essence of my real life friends. I never anticipated, however, the difficulties I would have making these characters “real.” After all, they are based on people with rich, complex personalities to begin with. Constructing believable characters created a dilemma. To highlight issues associated with age, I would have to present characters who are struggling with these issues. That was obvious and not too difficult to imagine. From time to time all of us had encountered some issue, fear, or concern connected with age: like being alone, living on fixed incomes, and health issues. The problem, for me, was to incorporate these struggles into characters without making the characters one dimensional. Assigning a concern associated with aging to each of the characters was a solution but one I felt made them cartoon like. It was challenging not to make one issue the only aspect of any one character’s personality. In *Gastronomical Pleasures*, Caroline is the character who is affected the most. In life, as in the play, she is the youngest, and much of what she experiences, the rest of us have already gone through. In the play, she is also the one still looking for someone to take care of her and compared with the other characters, she tends to be impractical. These aspects are part of her real life personality but not dominant qualities. They are merely tendencies that when we know ourselves, we can acknowledge but not give into. Giving equal expression to the strengths and weaknesses of each character, for this novice playwright, was a considerable obstacle. Equally challenging was the dialogue. In the same way character development presented unexpected problems, producing effective, natural sounding dialogue was also unexpectedly difficult. I was drawing from real life experiences and conversation, but capturing the spirit of those moments and their overall effect and meaning through conversation was not an easy process. At times, I

felt the only way to accomplish this was to write emotional response directions the way stage directions are incorporated. I was comforted by words of Jeffrey Sweet. Mr. Sweet, an award-winning playwright, visited our playwriting class and addressed, among other areas, issues with dialogue. Good dialogue comes, he said, with years and pages of practice. He used examples of dialogue that were particularly good from some of our works but also pointed out how they either weren't consistent throughout the piece or that snappy dialogue can't take the place of a well-developed plot. He stressed the need to concentrate on the whole package. He encouraged our efforts and with that, began the process of revisions. *Gastronomical Pleasures* has evolved from where it began. Is it complete? Probably not. What I am finding is that the more I spend with it, the more ways to articulate the story emerge. The Canadian recording artist, Drake, putting his own spin on a popular expression, said: "Sometimes it's the journey that teaches you a lot about your destination." His words describe my experience with playwriting. The destination was a finished play. I did that. The process taught me so much more in the way I approach a piece, whether it is as an actor, a designer, or a member of the audience.

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Gastronomical Pleasures

By
Kathryn Pearson

DRAFT

Characters

Caroline, early 50's, friendly, easy going demeanor, well-educated with a very naïve approach to practical matters of life

Maggie, late 50's, tends to be introverted, an artist perhaps

Sally, mid to late 50's, English professor, flamboyant personality

Jackie, mid to late 50's, culinary school student, very proper and formal in her demeanor.

Time

2009

Place

Scene I, the balcony area of a major regional theatre

Scene II thru VI, Maggie's home

GASTRONOMICAL PLEASURES
SCENE ONE

Balcony area of the a theatre,
the doors have just closed for a
Saturday evening performance.

SALLY

Thank goodness this is a short show tonight! I was so tempted to take the night off but I couldn't call anyone to take my shift. I didn't have anybody's number programmed into my phone.

MAGGIE

(Teasing)

You don't have them or you don't know how to program your phone?

SALLY

(Gives Maggie a look and teases her back.)

And how's that paper of yours coming?

MAGGIE

Touché! I can't write and you're technologically challenged.

SALLY

Well, at least it's a short show and we can go home early. How've you been?

MAGGIE

Ok, I guess; I just wanted to be outside all day. You know how much I hate writing when yard work starts to look appealing. There is no end to the things I would rather do.

SALLY

That's typical, everybody does that; it's another way to procrastinate. When I have work to submit or have papers to grade, there's no limit to the distractions.

MAGGIE

You write and you put it off? That's not encouraging.

SALLY

Just do it! Then we can celebrate.

Jackie enters.

JACKIE

Well, hello ladies.

SALLY and MAGGIE
(together)

Hey. How are you?

JACKIE

I was so glad to get here and see you on the schedule as well. What does it say about our social life when the majority of it is spent at our part-time jobs?

MAGGIE

That we don't have one?

SALLY

How are your classes going, Jackie? When are you going to bring some exotic food in for us to taste?

JACKIE

I don't have samples, but I did bring some pictures of my last presentation.. I was pleased with how they turned out.

Jackie presents a photo album.

MAGGIE

These are great. Look at that!

SALLY

They're making me hungry. Jackie, I'm so proud of you. Look at you two: you're almost a chef, and you're almost through with your degree. Before long we won't need to be moonlighting at the theatre. I'll have that furnace paid off; you'll have new jobs.

MAGGIE

Hopefully, but what will happen to our social life?

JACKIE

I think we'll manage to stay in touch.

MAGGIE

What could possibly keep us from getting together? We'll have so much spare time. Right?

SALLY

I could be retired; then I might have some free time.

MAGGIE

"Grow old with me; the best is yet to be."

SALLY

Love ya, Mags, but you aren't really the person I thought I'd be growing old with.

MAGGIE

I know, but I am loyal. That's the phrase I always think of when I think about getting older. I wonder what it would be like to really be with someone that long, grow old together.

SALLY

Well, none of us are going to give you examples. Hey, speaking of partners... Did you see that guy Caroline was talking with tonight? He was good lookin'.

MAGGIE

That's the guy from the wine shop isn't it? The one she goes to see every Monday for wine tasting?

JACKIE

That's the one.

SALLY

She was flirty; she has a crush on him.

MAGGIE

There is definitely somethin' goin' on. She said she was going to offer him a comp ticket, kind of a way to ask him out, ya know, and kind of not.

JACKIE

Well, that backfired.

SALLY

Really? What happened?

JACKIE

The two of them were having a nice cordial conversation, and then about 10 minutes before the show, this woman appears. I couldn't hear the conversation from where I was, but it was obvious this wasn't his sister, if you know what I mean.

MAGGIE

Wait. How does he show up with a date? She gave him one ticket!

SALLY

He could have bought another one, which obviously he did.

MAGGIE

Yeah, but wouldn't he have said something?

SALLY

Ya think? She was young, wasn't she?

JACKIE

Definitely not our age.

SALLY

It figures.

MAGGIE

She must be crushed. Should we say something to her?

SALLY

(sarcastically)

Yeah right, like what? Sorry that date thing didn't work out.

MAGGIE

You know what I mean.

JACKIE

You got to admire her. She puts herself out there.

SALLY

(ranting)

What a moron! I mean what was he thinking? She offers him a ticket. Would it have killed him to say, "Could I have two", or that he had a girlfriend, save her a little awkwardness. Geez.

MAGGIE

Talk about bruised feelings.

JACKIE

A real hit to the ego.

At this time Caroline enters.
She doesn't know the others
have been talking about her.
There is some awkwardness at
the start of the conversation.

CAROLINE

(Business like, no emotion.)

Do you have your ticket count?

SALLY

Workin' on it. Good crowd tonight.

JACKIE

(Without thinking)

Saturday date night always...

MAGGIE and SALLY
shoot JACKIE a look.

MAGGIE

(Interrupting)

We were just saying we were glad it's a short show. We're all sort of tired.

CAROLINE

I can't wait to get home myself.

SALLY

Thanks for putting us up in the balcony tonight. It seems work's become our social life. We can be together up here; no one bothers us.

CAROLINE

Glad to help out, I know you guys are friends.

SALLY

We do appreciate it.

There's a long, awkward pause as no one knows what to say. As the conversation progresses, they all lighten up.

CAROLINE

Well, I'm going back down to my office. I have a good book.

SALLY

What are you reading?

CAROLINE

(Hesitating)

I'm sort of ashamed to admit this, I'm reading the *Twilight Series*.

MAGGIE

O my gosh, I am too! WHY do I like these books? My thirteen-year-old is so hooked on them. She kept telling me, "Mom you just have to read these so we can talk about it." When your daughter wants to talk about books with you, I guess you read those books. I'm like you Caroline, I'm sort of ashamed to say I'm enjoying them. Why is that?

SALLY

It's all that first love stuff. Don't you remember your first big romance? How great it was to be young and in love? Think about how innocent and naive you were.

MAGGIE

Dr. Sally, don't tell me you're reading them too!

JACKIE

Research, right? I do like your theory about first romances though.

MAGGIE

We all have our excuses for getting hooked. Hey, talk about a girl with potential men issues. Her love interests are a vampire and a werewolf, but then the vampire does offer her eternal youth.

JACKIE

We need to find us a vampire.

SALLY

If we did find one, he would probably only be interested in our blood. There would be no hope for eternal youth, just eternity. That wouldn't be so bad.

CAROLINE

Thank you for making me feel better about my reading material.

She starts to leave but
reconsiders.

All of you are divorced aren't you?

JACKIE MAGGIE and SALLY

(overlapping)

Yes. More times than I want to think about. Happily, yes.

CAROLINE

It doesn't bother you, being single?

SALLY

Not really.

CAROLINE

Do you ever want to date?

MAGGIE

NO!

SALLY

(to MAGGIE, teasing.)

I wouldn't either, not with your history.

(cont.)

Sometimes. All depends.

CAROLINE

You don't mind living alone?

MAGGIE

I'm not alone yet. Almost there.

SALLY

When my kids left home, I was doing a happy dance. I missed them but I was so ready for them to leave. It was hard but they needed to be on their own.

JACKIE

That's how I felt. I was lonesome at first and then, I started culinary school. Now I don't have time to be lonesome.

CAROLINE

But wouldn't it be nice to be pampered a little bit...

SALLY

Depends on what you mean by being pampered.

CAROLINE

Someone to cook dinner for me.... Or....

MAGGIE

Well I can cook dinner for you.

CAROLINE

That's not really what I had in mind.

MAGGIE

We know what you had in mind.

So you saw my wine tasting friend.

MAGGIE, JACKIE and SALLY

(overlapping)

Yeah.

Sorry about that.

Don't beat yourself up over him.

CAROLINE

Why did she have to be everything I'm not?

SALLY

She was young, wasn't she? I knew it. That's the only thing she is that you aren't. You're smart and creative. Look at all the things you do. You bring in jewelry you've made, which by the way is gorgeous. You knit, you sew. You make books! Honestly what can't you do?

CAROLINE

Get a date.

SALLY

Oh come on. Don't beat yourself up over this guy. In the big scheme of things, it's a minor setback.

MAGGIE

It really is. I mean easier said than done bouncing back but don't sell yourself short.

JACKIE

(Very spur of the moment.)

It's a short show. We're going over to Maggie's for a drink after. You should come.

Maggie shoots her a look.

MAGGIE

(Mouths)

WE ARE!

CAROLINE

I wouldn't be that much company.

SALLY

Oh come on. What's your alternative? You'll go home drink a bottle of wine, or eat a quart of ice cream, watch some sappy movie on Lifetime and make yourself more miserable. Just come.

CAROLINE

I don't know.

JACKIE

Sure you do. Come on, it will do you good.

CAROLINE

Ok, why not?

I'm not sure where you live, I need directions.

Lights fade as Maggie begins to
give directions to her house.

SCENE TWO

Immediately following,
Maggie's house. The kitchen,
dining and living areas of the
house are an open concept
design. Maggie is visibly
rattled. There is a good deal of
clutter that she frantically tries
to sort and stash away. Sally
enters with a handful of trash.

SALLY

Picked up some litter in the driveway. Looks like the neighborhood boys were shootin' hoops again.

MAGGIE

Thanks. They're getting to be a bit of a problem. I don't mind them playing basketball but I specifically told them not to come over when I'm not here. I kind of feel taken advantage of; they come when I'm not here, toss their drink bottles and candy wrappers all over. Kids!

SALLY

You're going to have to talk to their momma again.

MAGGIE

I know, but she's never home and neither am I. But I have bigger problems right now.

She hands Sally her
laptop and a stack of
books and papers.

(cont.)

Here, take this back to my room. Just set it on my bed.

SALLY

What are you so stressed about?

MAGGIE

Look at this place! It's a mess. I know you're used to it being cluttered, but Caroline has

never been here. I think she's used to things a little more upscale.

SALLY

Oh, stop. There's nothing wrong with your place.

MAGGIE

Just go put that up and let me gather a few dirty dishes graciously provided by my 'too busy to clean up after herself' teenager.

SALLY exits, JACKIE enters.

JACKIE

I stopped by my house. I had some appetizers and some really good cheese left over from a catering job, but I didn't have any crackers to go with them. Do you have some?

MAGGIE

I baked bread today. That will work. You know where everything is. Will you set the food out? I need to straighten up this place.

SALLY re-enters.
She has overheard the conversation.

SALLY

When did you find time to bake? I thought you were writing all day?

MAGGIE

Processing, processing. Good thing too, we have something to eat.

Hands Sally a stack of glasses.

(cont.)

Here, put these in the sink.

Maggie stacks magazines on the coffee table and picks up coats and jackets to hang up.

It's a good thing I love you guys, cause right now I'm not too happy with you. Why did you ever think it would be a good idea to invite somebody over here?

They have no time to answer.
Caroline has just arrived.

CAROLINE

Made it.

JACKIE

Did you have trouble finding us?

CAROLINE

No, no trouble at all. I stopped by my house to pick up some wine. I've kind of been stockpiling it.

SALLY

Wow, this is good stuff. Wohoo, this party just got bumped up a notch.

During the course of the following dialogue, they will pour wine, set food on the coffee table, and eventually they will all end up seated in the living room. As the wine flows, they all begin to relax and lighten up.

CAROLINE

I didn't know your preference, so I brought a mix of red and white. Help yourself.

Caroline takes a look around.

(cont.)

This is nice, quaint. Have you lived here long?

MAGGIE

Too long.

SALLY

Maggie hates her house.

MAGGIE

I don't hate it. It's not the house of my dreams though.

JACKIE

House of your nightmares.

MAGGIE

Yeah.

Caroline has picked up a photo
of SALLY, JACKIE, and
MAGGIE.

CAROLINE

Aw, look at you guys, cute picture.

MAGGIE

That was taken at my daughter's wedding last year.

SALLY

Look at us! Are we not fabulous?

CAROLINE

I bet you have some stories to tell. How long have you all been friends?

JACKIE

I've known Maggie since her oldest son was born so that makes it...

MAGGIE

Almost 40 years! Wow, I just now put that together.

(Playfully.)

Oh darling, it seems like yesterday.

SALLY

I met Maggie when our boys were in kindergarten. They were best friends; if I couldn't find Joseph, I knew he was somewhere with Andy; those two bicycled all over this neighborhood.

MAGGIE

That's when you lived in this neighborhood, but you got away.

SALLY

How about you, Caroline? Do you have childhood friends here? We don't know anything about you.

CAROLINE

Well, I'm not an axe murder.

JACKIE

What a relief, we were so worried.

SALLY

(To CAROLINE.)

So tell us your story.

CAROLINE

Real or fictional, you know I'm a storyteller.

SALLY

That too! I told you, there's no end to your talent. Where do you tell stories?

CAROLINE

Mostly local book fairs, schools sometimes, that kind of thing. It's fun. I love it.

SALLY

I love a good story. I used to teach a course on fairy tales, it was one of my favorites.

CAROLINE

Oh honey, my life is the stuff fairy tales are made of, just without the happily ever after.

MAGGIE

Did anyone ever get a happily ever after?

SALLY

Tell us your fairy tale story!

CAROLINE

Let's see....I was the Princess of Quite A Lot in the Land of All Things Proper and Nice. The precious daughter of the kindly king was a hopeless mess to her mother, the Queen of All Things Social whose only wish was that the princess would marry well and take her place in society, as a charming, and gracious person. Was it too much for a mother to wish for? Because God knows the princess would never be able to take care of herself. But alas the princess was too plain and worse, a daydreamer.

SALLY

And did the princess rebel against the evil queen? Did she run away or was she captured by a band of gypsies?

CAROLINE

Of course not. She did something much more tragic; she joined the theatre.

JACKIE

And is that how you became a House Manager?

CAROLINE

Goodness no. But that's a different story.

SALLY

And Prince Charming? Was there a suitable prince to make the queen happy?

CAROLINE

A suitable prince to the queen, not the best choice for the princess. As it turns out, he is a much more charming prince now that I'm not married to him. There may never be anyone as "charming" as my father. He was a great man, never met a stranger and was kind to everyone. I miss him.

MAGGIE

Your dad passed away? I didn't know that. I'm sorry.

CAROLINE

It was awhile ago.

(Quickly, not wishing to get sentimental)

Alright, I told you my story. Who's next?

SALLY

Well, I'm definitely not the princess adored by the king. Let's see, I'm Belle.

JACKIE

Nerdy and nice.

SALLY

Don't forget beautiful! From the time I was eight I had a bike and a library card. We moved a lot when I was growing up, and one of the first things my parents would do when we got to a new place was to show us how to get to the library. I rode my bike all over town. I would check out my books and ride off someplace and read. You could do that back then. My momma would let me read as much as I wanted; it was my salvation. And can I just tell you how many fairy tales there are where father messes up and puts the daughter in danger to make everything right. Did he ever think about sending his son? No! He has to rely on his smart, kind daughter, yeah that's me.

Sally clink glasses with the others.

JACKIE

Alrighty then.

SALLY

I told you who I was. Who are you, Jackie?

JACKIE

Well, let's see now. I can see me as the Little Mermaid. She was a princess of sorts.

MAGGIE

At least in the Disney version. She came from underwater royalty and married a real life prince. I think that qualifies.

CAROLINE

Why the little mermaid?

JACKIE

She just wanted to be something else. She loved her family but knew she didn't fit in. I grew up with people that never imagined any kind of life that was outside what they knew. I guess that makes me the odd one in their eyes, but at least I keep them amused. That leaves you,

Maggie. I really chose the Little Mermaid because we all know you're Cinderella: cooking and cleaning for everyone.

MAGGIE

No, no, no I'm mean yeah, that is me cooking and cleaning for everyone, with a never ending list of chores and all I really want to do is go to the ball. But who's the princess that keeps kissing all the frogs, hoping they'll turn into a prince? That's me.

CAROLINE

Oh my goodness, how many times were you married?

MAGGIE

Enough times to learn to quit kissing frogs.

Sally points to a wine bottle.

SALLY

Pass me that bottle, will you?

CAROLINE

Here ya go. Pass me that bread. This is really good. Where did you buy it?

MAGGIE

I made it.

CAROLINE

You're kidding. You really do cook?

MAGGIE

Yeah. You don't?

CAROLINE

My mother raised me to be charming, not domestic. I do not cook.

JACKIE

What did you eat growing up?

CAROLINE

My mother fixed sandwiches every night for my brother and me. Daddy was a traveling

salesman. He was gone all the week. When he came home on Friday, we had dinner at the country club and on Saturday night, he always grilled steaks but the rest of the time we had sandwiches. I thought everybody did that. I was in high school before I knew other families ate real dinners every night. I should probably learn to cook.

SALLY

Why? You got away without knowing this long.

CAROLINE

It could be fun. And it is the fastest way to a man's heart.

SALLY

Have we taught you nothing?

MAGGIE

Besides I thought you wanted to do something else with a man.

CAROLINE

There is that. Come on, you could teach me, Something simple.

JACKIE

Like what?

CAROLINE

You're the expert. Let's cook a meal together. I can get all the stuff; you just have to let me know what to get.

Lights fade as CAROLINE
continues to plead her case.

SCENE THREE

MAGGIE is in the kitchen. There is the sound of a basketball hitting the side of the house. MAGGIE goes to the door, calls to the children playing. They are not seen; only their voices are heard.

MAGGIE

Guys, you're going to have to leave. I have company coming.

VOICES

(In no particular order)

Oh man. Just a little bit longer. Can we finish this game?

MAGGIE

No, they'll be here any minute. Maybe tomorrow.

VOICE

Alright, let's go.

MAGGIE

Hey, pick up your trash. Don't leave it lying in the yard.

SALLY and CAROLINE arrive at the same time just as MAGGIE finishes talking with the boys. SALLY is helping CAROLINE carry in several bags.

SALLY

Are we running off the boys?

MAGGIE

They'll live.

SALLY

I see you have them picking up their mess.

CAROLINE

Who are they?

MAGGIE

Neighborhood kids. They like to come over and use my basketball hoop. At first I didn't mind so much, but now they're starting to be a nuisance. They'll come over when I'm not here. They're always leaving empty drink bottles and candy wrappers all over.

SALLY

Did you talk with their momma yet?

MAGGIE

Not yet.

SALLY

Maggie! Why haven't you said anything to her?

MAGGIE

I just don't ever see her. She works all the time too. I don't know her.

SALLY

That's not an excuse.

(to CAROLINE)

She lets these little boys play in her driveway but she won't talk to their mom.

CAROLINE

I agree, you need to say something.

MAGGIE

I will, I will. I'm not going to do it right now though, OK? We're cooking, right?

CAROLINE has started emptying the bags she brought in. There are pots and pans, a set of knives, a cookie press, a cookbook, and 4 aprons. She

also has an assortment of food items.

(to CAROLINE)

Caroline, what is all this stuff?

CAROLINE

I realized since I don't cook, I don't have anything to cook with.

MAGGIE

But I have plenty of cooking utensils.

MAGGIE and SALLY listen and watch the following, a little agast.

CAROLINE

I know but I'll need these at my house. I wanted to show you all the things I found at that Williams Sonoma place, my new favorite store. I got these pots and pans. They're pretty, and I thought I would need a good set of knives. Well, the saleslady told me I should have a good set. I told her I was learning to cook. And then I saw this. My grandmother used to make cookies with one of these. We'll have to try it. It will be so fun and so good. And then, look, chopsticks. Aren't they pretty? I think we should cook Chinese so we can use these. I didn't know if Jackie had recipes for that, so I bought a cookbook. The saleslady said this was a good beginners cookbook. Hey, where is Jackie anyway?

MAGGIE

Oh, she's running late, something with Laurie. She's on her way.

SALLY

Nothing serious, is it?

Sound of a car.

MAGGIE

No. She just said she would fill in the details later. That might be her now. I heard someone pull up.

Jackie does enter.
They all greet and hug
each other.

SALLY

We were just talking about you, everything OK?

JACKIE

(a little exasperated)

Everything is just fine. Laurie had some car issues and of course, no money to take care of them.

SALLY

How much did that set you back?

JACKIE

About \$500.00. I guess that's cheap in comparison to other times.

SALLY

But she does pay you back?

JACKIE

In her own sweet time. But we did have a nice chat. If it weren't for periodic crises, we might never talk.

MAGGIE

I hear you. Sometimes I feel like the ATM for favors.

JACKIE

She's going to "shoot me a text" when she gets through with her errands, so she can drop by here and pick up the check. Is it so hard to just pick up the phone?

SALLY

That's the way you have to communicate with kids now. I'm telling you. They don't want to talk. Just send your message and they'll answer. You know, they don't have time for a conversation.

CAROLINE

It's nice to know we share similar problems. I guess I'm not the only one whose kids

remember you only when they need something. Do kids ever really see you as a real person, a person with feelings.

SALLY

They do, in their own time. What a ride till they get there.

JACKIE

Well enough about the kids.

Noticing all the things

CAROLINE has brought.

(cont.)

What is all this?

CAROLINE

(renewing her excitement about cooking)

I changed the game plan up a little bit. I'm thinking Chinese. I think I got all the ingredients. We'll have egg rolls, wontons. I found chopsticks. Oh and I almost forgot, I got you each an apron. Aren't they adorable?

The three are stunned.

MAGGIE

Wow, you thought of everything.

JACKIE

And then some. Let's see what we have here.

SALLY

Do we have any wine?

Lights go down as they begin to plan and sort through the things CAROLINE has brought.

SCENE FOUR

It is several hours later. The kitchen is cluttered with all manner of cooking utensils. In the dining area, the last few cookies are being put on a tray. MAGGIE carries this to the oven, JACKIE moves to the sink with some dirty dishes. They are all pretty worn out except for CAROLINE, who remains unaffected.

SALLY

She holds a wine glass.

Last batch in the oven! I'll drink to that.

CAROLINE

I may have lost some affection for butter cookies. I'm really surprised that the cookie press didn't work any better than it did. It looked so simple. But what a great idea of yours, Jackie, shaping them by hand. Wish mine looked as good as yours.

JACKIE

After a thousand or so, you just get better.

CAROLINE

Yeah. Sorry about that. I guess I just got distracted and measured wrong. I didn't know that was a two-cup measuring cup. Kind of got twice what we needed.

JACKIE

Four times as much, but I'm not counting. What are we going to do with all this food?

MAGGIE

I've been tasting and sampling all afternoon. I don't feel much like eating anymore.

CAROLINE

We can give some to your daughter, Jackie. She's coming by.

SALLY

That takes care of one serving; we have enough here for an army.

CAROLINE

But just look at this? It's beautiful!

CAROLINE begins to
assemble a plate of food.

(cont.)

Let me just arrange a plate here. See, doesn't that look appetizing? That could be on a magazine cover.

CAROLINE take her plate to
the coffee table and gets out her
phone to take a picture.

(cont.)

I want a picture of this. I may never cook again, and I want to remember this day.

SALLY

Hey, all of you, go get your phones. I've got an idea.

As they move to get their
phones.

JACKIE and MAGGIE

(overlapping)

Why? What are you thinking?

SALLY

You take a picture of this food and then send it to your kids. Add a little message, like, "look what's for dinner." Just do it, and I'll bet we won't have a problem getting rid of any of this food.

They do a SALLY says.
Within moments phones start
going off

SALLY

(Looking smug)

Guess who's coming to dinner?

SCENE FIVE

Several months have passed.
A major hurricane type storm
has passed through the city,
leaving a lot of debris and
power outages. JACKIE
enters. She is carrying two
large cooking pots. She hugs
MAGGIE.

JACKIE

What a mess. I see you've been out cleaning up a bit.

MAGGIE

Trying to get a handle on it, a lot of limbs down but no major damage. I'm one of the lucky ones; my side of the street has power, finally. Nothing like three days without power to make you realize you are no pioneer woman. You didn't have any damage, did you? No loss of power?

JACKIE

No, I have some limbs to pick up also, but I never lost power.

MAGGIE

Come on in. What brings you here anyway? What's with all the pots?

JACKIE

Caroline called and just said to meet over here. I thought you knew.

MAGGIE

No. We talked. She called to see how I was doing. Oh God, what if she wants to cook again? I did tell her I had food I needed to cook. I was afraid some of it would go bad because it started to thaw.

Sally enters giving all a hug.

SALLY

Hi guys! Maggie, your neighborhood looks like mine. The streets are piled up with debris,

looks like a war zone. How are you? Everybody survive alright?

MAGGIE and JACKIE

Fine. Good.

MAGGIE

Did Caroline call you too?

SALLY

She said to come over, that she was planning something and she'd explain when she got here.

JACKIE

Stay calm, Maggie. I see you getting anxious. Caroline hasn't been that impulsive since our cooking debacle. I'm sure she's not planning anything like that.

There is a lot of commotion at the back door. CAROLINE speaks from outside the kitchen door, peeking her head inside.

CAROLINE

Hi all! Glad you're all here. How are you, Maggie? My goodness. I didn't know you were without power all this time. Why didn't you call one of us?

MAGGIE

We were fine, nothing serious.

Looking out back, and then to Caroline.

What is all this?

CAROLINE

A grill.

MAGGIE

I can see that.

CAROLINE

I want you to have it. I bought it one night on impulse. My daughter and her friends wanted to cook out. We did, but we never used it again.

MAGGIE

Thanks, I guess. I have power. I don't need it to cook.

CAROLINE

I know that. I guess I need to back up and explain.

JACKIE, MAGGIE, and SALLY

(overlapping)

Yeah, what's going on?

Please.

What are you thinking?

CAROLINE

Well, you were saying you have all this food you might need to cook, right? And remember how you said you just didn't know all your neighbors that well?

MAGGIE

Yes. But what does that have to do with the grill?

CAROLINE

I'm getting there. You haven't had power for three days, and now you do. You also have food you think should be cooked before it goes bad.

MAGGIE

Go on.

CAROLINE

I bet all your neighbors have food that needs to be cooked too. So why don't you just organize a block party?

MAGGIE

What? I can't do that. I don't know half these people.

CAROLINE

It's about time you meet them then. They're all probably in the same boat as you. They've probably got food that needs to be cooked, and they might not have any way to cook what they do have. We're going to organize a neighborhood cook off.

MAGGIE

I don't know.

CAROLINE

Look, I can't cook but I can organize, and I'm not afraid to talk to people. We're going to go talk to your neighbors. We'll get everyone with grills to get them out and bring them here. Folks that have food to be grilled can bring it here and have it cooked. We can cook side dishes inside. We'll fix the food that needs to be used up right away and keep it from going bad and in the process, help the neighborhood! After three days of no electricity, I bet they're ready for some fun.

SALLY

It will be like Stone Soup. Bring what you have and see what we get and how far it goes.

CAROLINE

Exactly. So here's what we do. Maggie, you're coming with me. You're going to talk to your neighbors! We'll see what they have, what they need, and we'll start sending people here with things they need to cook or grill. Sally and Jackie, you stay here and take in supplies. I'm sure others in the neighborhood will join you. You can chop, wash, whatever you have to do to get food ready. I'll leave the menu to you this time. Any questions? Are you in?

JACKIE

I can sure give it a try.

SALLY

I'm in.

CAROLINE

Maggie?

MAGGIE

Why not?

CAROLINE

That's the spirit! Come on, let's get started.

Lights fade.

SCENE SIX

SALLY and JACKIE enter through the kitchen door.

SALLY

My feet are killing me. But what fun! Can you believe Caroline? She has this whole neighborhood out! People are eating, and dancing. What a party!

JACKIE

How many people do you think we fed?

SALLY

A lot. Let's sit down. I think we can take a break.

JACKIE picks up an open wine bottle. She holds the bottle but does not pour any wine.

JACKIE

I think that's in order. Here, let's finish up the rest of this wine. Our glasses are here somewhere.

MAGGIE enters. She is ending a conversation with someone outside. She enters carrying some empty serving pieces.

MAGGIE
(off stage)

OK, I'll be right back; just let me set these down.

Seeing SALLY and JACKIE.

(cont.)

Can you believe this? Thank you so much for staying and doing all this. How is it that I've never met these people? They are my neighbors. Oh, you will be happy to know I talked with the boys' mom. She didn't know they were sneaking over here to play when I wasn't here.

JACKIE

Are they in trouble?

MAGGIE

No, didn't rat 'em out too bad. Everybody is having such a good time. I wasn't going to spoil it for the kids. But I don't think they'll be coming over here if I'm not around. She's a single mom, reminds me of us from a few years ago. I think I'll be seeing a lot more of her.

CAROLINE enters.

Maggie gives her a hug.

MAGGIE

This is so wonderful! In a million years I would never have imagined anything like this, let alone try and pull something off like this. You were amazing out there. You've got people dancing and singing; havin' a good time. I've been here 30 years, and this is the most I've interacted with any of these people.

CAROLINE

I'm my daddy's girl.

SALLY

But your momma had it wrong. You are an amazing woman!

JACKIE

Raising the wine bottle she has been holding.

Grab your glasses ladies. Let's have a toast.

They each grab a glass and JACKIE pours a round of drinks.

ALL

To Life!

Lights fade.