

Scene 9

Lights come up on the fellowship hall. Frankie finishes a hem. Rhonda Lynn enters from the sanctuary.

RHONDA LYNN. I think Honey Raye's got things back on track. Turns out LaDonna Thompkins allergic to hay, but she's hell-bent on being the angel. Her mama's bringing down her inhaler.

FRANKIE. It'll be mighty impressive if Honey Raye pulls off flying an angel in over the stable ... especially an angel the size of LaDonna.

RHONDA LYNN. Oh, there's a whole team working the ropes and pulleys. John Curtis is in there helping them strap LaDonna into the harness to try another lift off. Maybe this time she'll actually clear the stable.

HONEY RAYE. *(She and Twink enter from the parking lot carrying a large box. They set it down.)* Look what finally got here from the Waco Light Opera Company.

TWINK. The world's slowest camel.

RHONDA LYNN. Why, Twink! It's a Christmas miracle! *(She runs to Twink and gives her a hug, which is not returned.)* This is the first time I've ever seen you without bars in front of your face.

TWINK. Hey, Rhonda Lynn. I guess I should thank you for all the corn dogs and Tater Tots you brought me. Every single day I've been in jail. Every. Single. Day.

RHONDA LYNN. And we've got plenty of 'em here tonight. Oh, and you gotta try some of Earlene's Pink Stuff. It is out of this world. I've got to get her recipe; mine always turns out funny.

HONEY RAYE. It's only Cool Whip and Cherry Jell-O, Rhonda Lynn. A one-armed baboon with a learning disability could make it.

FRANKIE. *(Low, to Honey Raye.)* I'm warning you.

RHONDA LYNN. Oh. Well, forget that. Let me take the camel costume into the sanctuary for you.

HONEY RAYE. Don't you need some help with that?

RHONDA LYNN. (*She easily picks up the box.*) Darlin', when you've hauled as many hundred pound sacks of Ore-Ida's as I have, you can lift a Buick off a squirrel and never break a sweat. (*She exits into the sanctuary.*)

FRANKIE. You're lucky she's here to help you tonight.

HONEY RAYE. If you say so. All I care about is things are finally coming together for this Christmas show ... and that the Futrelle Sisters get to spend Christmas Eve with each other.

FRANKIE. Lord, the things we've seen and done.

HONEY RAYE. Yeah, we've been through a lot together.

TWINK. We sure have. And most of it was your fault.

HONEY RAYE. Considering recent events, I'd say we're about even.

FRANKIE. (*She's eager to change the subject.*) Hey, Twink, I want you sitting with me and Dub when the show starts.

TWINK. I don't think so, Frankie. I don't want to give all those gossips the satisfaction of seeing me in this jailhouse jumpsuit.

FRANKIE. Teresa Denean Futrelle, I know you're bigger than that. You just have to overcome your sense of shame and embarrassment. Honey Raye did. I mean she was labeled nothing but "tramp" and "white trash" early in life because of all her wild ways.

HONEY RAYE. Hold on —

FRANKIE. Sure you were jilted by a boyfriend and burned down a few doublewides, but Honey Raye's overcome her horrible reputation and had to face unbearable humiliation!

HONEY RAYE. Okay, that's enough —

FRANKIE. I mean, just think about all those ridiculous marriages: the Christian Ventriloquist, Rabbit, the Tilt-A-Whirl operator, that wrestler who was already married —

HONEY RAYE. In Snake's defense, his previous wife had entered the Witness Protection Program and she wasn't free to let him know their divorce was not final.

FRANKIE. Uh-huh. Then Bulldog somebody-or-other, the *third* husband with an animal's name, and finally, a character known to law enforcement officials state-wide as "Wild Bill Boudreaux, The Crazy Cajun." There's no reason in the world Honey Raye's not off

squattin' in a cave somewhere, but instead, here she is, with her head held high. And you know why? Because she's a Futrelle. She can bear the shame of her stupid decisions. And you can, too.

HONEY RAYE. You know, I hated the thought of you having to go through the pain of childbirth again at your age, but suddenly, I'm feeling a whole lot better about it.

FRANKIE. What I'm trying to point out to Twink is, people will understand. So she made a mistake. It doesn't have to be the end of her life.

TWINK. Mistake? The only mistake I made was not leaving Wiley's NASCAR junk *inside* his trailer when I torched it.

HONEY RAYE. You have got to let this go.

TWINK. Oh, no I don't. The only perk of being in jail is it gives you plenty of time to plot revenge.

FRANKIE. I never thought you were a vindictive woman who could bear such a vicious grudge.

TWINK. You know, I didn't think I was, either. But turns out, I am.

HONEY RAYE. What happened to my happy, generous little sister? The volunteer who kept the books at the Food Pantry and drove the Kidney Caravan to the Dialysis Center every Wednesday?

TWINK. She's in a chain gang picking up trash off the side of the road. (*Unnoticed, Rhonda Lynn enters from the sanctuary.*) I don't know why you two don't get it. I'm the one who was wronged. How come I've got nothing and Wiley Hicks has everything? If you think I'm going to let him and Maryjack MacLemore get away with living happily ever after, you are sadly mistaken. I will not rest 'til I have had my revenge. Somehow, some way, Wiley Hicks will get what's coming to him for what he did to me. (*Frankie and Honey Raye are clearly alarmed.*)

RHONDA LYNN. (*She breaks the tension.*) Listen, if you girls want something to eat, get it now. The cast will be coming in here any minute to grab a bite before the run-through.

TWINK. Hey, the fire's gone out under this chafing dish. (*She picks up a lighter and clicks it on.*)

FRANKIE, HONEY RAYE and RHONDA LYNN. (*Horried, they*

rush to the chafing dish and form a barricade to keep Twink from getting near it.) No!!!

RHONDA LYNN. *(She takes the chafing dish.)* I needed to refill this thing, anyway. I'll just ... you know.

FRANKIE. I'll help, Rhonda Lynn, after I go to the bathroom ... again. *(She and Rhonda Lynn exit into the kitchen.)*

TWINK. I don't get that Lampley gal. She's been bringing me food and magazines and papers down to the jail for months now. What does she want?

HONEY RAYE. Search me. But she and Frankie have been thick as thieves ever since Rhonda Lynn moved to town. And she tries to be friends with me just a little too much. All the time, in fact. *(She checks her watch.)* They've got to be finished with that angel harness by now.

G.J. *(She enters from the sanctuary.)* Aunt Twink! We didn't know you'd be here tonight.

TWINK. You think a little jail sentence could keep me away from a Tabernacle Christmas Program?

HONEY RAYE. G.J., are we ready for the run-through?

G.J. No, ma'am. The sheep had an accident and Miss Geneva's having the area around the pulpit wet-vac'd. Right now she's restaging the shepherds abiding in the fields. She had the idea to put the sheep in Raynerd's wagon and Harley, the TV camera guy, liked it a lot.

HONEY RAYE. *(She starts for the door to the sanctuary.)* I can't leave that meddling, old woman alone out there for one second! I should have —

GENEVA. *(She barrels in from the sanctuary.)* Okay, people, listen up. We've got a Yuletide disaster in the makes.

HONEY RAYE. We already know about the sheep incident, Geneva, not to mention your taking liberties with my staging.

GENEVA. You're welcome. But here's the new problem: There are three people throwing up their guts in the restroom as we speak. You're down two Wise Men and an Elvis.

HONEY RAYE. What?!

TWINK. Why? What's causing it?

GENEVA. Not a clue. But you better pray it's not contagious.

HONEY RAYE. Nooooo! Things were just starting to go right! They can't ruin this for me! *(She races into the sanctuary.)*

GENEVA. *(She turns to G.J. and Twink.)* Far be it for me to state the obvious, but this never would've happened if I was directing the show. *(Blackout.)*

Scene 10

Lights come up on Dub, who sits on his "Santa Throne." He is clearly in pain. Justin calls after unseen children. He has a camera.

JUSTIN. *(He speaks in an odd falsetto.)* Thanks for coming to the North Pole, kids. And make sure Mommy buys the Super SmartMart eight-by-ten glossy print of your picture with Santa, for only nineteen ninety-five. Merry Christmas!

DUB. *(He snaps at Justin.)* Why are you talking in that weird voice?

JUSTIN. *(He drops "the voice.")* I just thought it sounded like how a reindeer would talk.

DUB. Did you factor into that thought process that reindeer can't talk?!

JUSTIN. I only wanted to make the experience more fun for the kids. Sorry.

DUB. *(He squirms, trying to ease the pain.)* What I'm sorry about is the real cause of this back pain. I've lied to myself as long as I can. I am passing a kidney stone. Why me, Justin? Why now?

JUSTIN. Oh, gosh! You want me to take you to Dr. Ballard's?

DUB. I have to make it through the last hour. Frankie and I are counting on the money. Bring on another brat.

JUSTIN. *(He speaks in "the voice.")* Sorry, Santa. There are no boys and girls — *(Dub shoots him a withering look. Justin drops "the voice.")* Uh, no one's in line right now.