

DORALEE

But Dwayne, it hurts my feelin's. They all seem to be judgin' me on how I look.

DWAYNE

I think you look real good. If they weren't a bunch of women, I'd go down there and punch 'em all out for you.

DORALEE

You would wouldn't you?

DWAYNE

Course I would, you're my girl. You go down there tomorrow and show 'em what a great gal you are. Remember, Texans never quit.

(The following song plays with the three women in their respective spaces.)

DORALEE

YOU'RE THE ONE THAT KEEPS ME STRONG,
YOU'RE THE SHOULDER I LEAN ON

VIOLET

HARD TO SWALLOW PRIDE

DORALEE

WHEN I THINK I'VE HAD ENOUGH
I THINK OF YOU AND TOUGHEN UP

VIOLET

I KNOW THE TRUTH INSIDE

DORALEE

LOVE'S A WEAPON AND A TOOL
AND I'M NOBODY'S FOOL

VIOLET

I'M NOBODY'S FOOL

DORALEE

I'LL JUST TRY TO RIGHT WHAT'S WRONG

DORALEE & VIOLET

AND JUST KEEP ON KEEPIN' ON

DORALEE

BUT I JUST MIGHT MAKE IT WORK

JUDY & WOMEN'S ENSEMBLE

I JUST MIGHT

ACT ONE
SCENE 4

FILING ROOM.

VIOLET, MARIA, KATHY and MARGARET are gossiping.

MARIA

I hate my typewriter. This morning the self-correcting tape broke, mira, I had to go back to the es-Stone Ages and use White Out.

VIOLET

That's nothing. In the old days, you made a mistake; you had to retype the entire document.

MARGARET

You said it, sister.

KATHY

I hear they're coming out with a new typewriter next year with triple pitch, electronic keyboards and ... wait for it ... automatic right-margin justification!

ALL

(impressed)

Oooooooooohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

(JOE the cute, young, office accountant enters. He's smitten with VIOLET.)

KATHY

Heads up, hunky accountant at eleven o'clock!

MARIA

Word in the ladies room is that he has the hots for you!

VIOLET

Stop. I'm a widow.

MARGARET

Just because you're not going to order doesn't mean you can't peruse the menu.

(JOE approaches.)

JOE

Hey, Violet.

KATHY

I think I hear my typewriter calling.

(The other SECRETARIES exit, except for MARGARET.)

Okay, you're getting hysterical.
lawyer.

JUDY

Don't move. We'll be right back.

(DORALEE and JUDY head off-stage. An ORDERLY wheels in the sheet-covered corpse. The COP waves the orderly off stage.)

From her chair, VIOLET starts pointing at the body and to herself.)

VIOLET

I did that. Guilty. Me. That.

(The hospital is busy. Everyone ignores her.)

What am I doing? I can't go down like this.

(She pushes the gurney offstage as ominous music plays. VIOLET suddenly reacts with the body, wearing a doctor's coat.)

Just then, a CANDY STRIPER comes down the hall and surprises VIOLET.)

CANDY STRIPER

Excuse me, can you tell me where the coffee shop is?

VIOLET

The coffee shop? No, I'm new here.

CANDY STRIPER

I'm new here too. Where do you work?

VIOLET

(no clue)

Ah, downstairs ...

ACT ONE
SCENE 13

HOSPITAL.

A PLAINCLOTHES DETECTIVE and a COP pass through the corridor.

DETECTIVE

He was our only witness. We had him all ready to testify and now this.

(VIOLET, DORALEE and JUDY race in and see the COP.

VIOLET screeches to a halt.)

VIOLET

Cop. Cop. Cop. Cop. Cop.

DORALEE

Take it easy. It probably has nothing to do with Mr. Hart.

DETECTIVE

(continuing to the COP)

Poor guy never saw it coming. What kind of low life would try to kill someone with poison?

VIOLET

Ohmygod, they found out already.

JUDY

We don't know that. This is not the time to panic.

(A DOCTOR enters.)

DETECTIVE

How is he, doc?

DOCTOR

He's dead.

(The women are stunned.)

JUDY

Now is the time to panic.

DOCTOR

(to DETECTIVE)

I'll need you boys to sign some forms so we can perform an autopsy.

DICK

Hey, Babe.

JUDY

Dick, what are you doing here?

DICK

Your sister told me you got a job.

(looks at the mess)

Doesn't look like it's exactly up your alley.

JUDY

Oh no, it's completely up my alley. I own this alley. I'll be done in a minute. Do you want to grab a bite to eat? Maybe talk?

DICK

Judy, I can't stay. Mindi's waiting in the car.

(Her face falls.)

These are the final divorce papers. You need to sign them and give them to your lawyer.

JUDY

Oh, I ...

DICK

Bye, Judy.

(He leaves. She calls after him.)

JUDY

What's she doing in the car? Practicing for her learner's permit? — Dick? — I'm sorry

TRANSITION to VIOLET'S garage and DORALEE'S Bedroom.

JUDY remains in the Xerox room:

(VIOLET is standing on a ladder fixing the garage door with her son, JOSH.)

VIOLET

Can you believe it? Me, the mother of an aging child, a widow for godsake and I'm still his "girl."

JOSH

Why do you let him get away with it?

VIOLET

Cause he makes a decision on the ...

Josh

JOSH

You need to stop thinking about work all the time and start dating.

VIOLET

—Josh, you've got to stop trying to get me laid. It's a little weird.

JOSH

You seem tense.

VIOLET

Hart could make anyone tense.

JOSH

O.K. take this doobie.

VIOLET

Hang on there, buster.

JOSH

It'll calm you down.

(He holds out a joint. VIOLET climbs down off the ladder.)

VIOLET

You know my feelings about that! Pot is dangerous—it can lead to other things.

JOSH

I know ... like relaxation.

VIOLET

Not gonna happen.

(VIOLET stands back and points the remote. We HEAR the door close.)

Hey, it works!!!!

JOSH

Exactly how long have you been waiting for that promotion?

VIOLET

Slip it in my purse.

(LIGHTS GO DOWN on VIOLET and JOSH. LIGHTS UP ON DORALEE and DWAYNE in their bedroom.)

DORALEE

I'm as nice as I know how to be down at that office and everyone still treats me like the bastard at the family reunion.

DWAYNE

Forget all about them, honey.

I am your employee
little respect!

DORALEE

What do you mean, mistress?

VIOLET

Oh, come off it, Doralee. Everyone knows you and Mr. Hart are having an affair.

DORALEE

An affair! Who's been saying that?

VIOLET

Who's been saying that? HE has.

(VIOLET stalks out as HART backs away from a furious DORALEE.)

DORALEE

WHAT!

HART

Now, don't get upset.

DORALEE

You've been telling everyone I'm sleeping with you! That explains why everyone's been treating me like some dime store floozy! They all think I'm banging the boss!

HART

Now wait a minute. I can explain.

DORALEE

And you love it, don't you. It gives you some sort of cheap thrill, like knocking over pencils and picking up papers.

HART

You're getting all excited.

DORALEE

I've put up with your grabbing and chasing me around the desk cause I need this job, but this is the last straw! I've got a gun out there in my purse and up to now I've been forgiving and forgetting cause that's the way I was brought up but I sweat if you say another word about me, I'll get that gun of mine

What!

This is Judy Bernly, new employee.
(HART takes JUDY in.)

HART
Now this is what I'm talking about. You're not bad looking for a gal with a little tread worn off her tires. I mean that. Sincerely.

VIOLET
Mr. Hart, I really wish you wouldn't refer to ...

HART
Come on Violet, Franklin Hart knows the value of each girl who has the privilege to serve under him. Now ...

VIOLET
Oh Lord, here we go ...

HART
Let me tell you my philosophy of business, Julie.

JUDY
Judy.

HART
In a word: Teamwork. Everyone pulling together. It's a shame, and I have always said this, that you girls don't have the experience growing up of playing football or baseball because that's where you learn that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. If we all work together we can cut the balls off our competition and be sitting pretty on top of the hill.

VIOLET
Sitting pretty on top of a hill of balls. What a lovely picture.

JUDY
I'm very happy to be part of the team.

HART
You see that, Violet? That's the attitude I'm looking for. By the way, is that the present for my wife?

(VIOLET picks up a memo and begins to read)

(VIOLET)

From Franklin Hart, President, Consolidated Industries. To the employees: when planning for your retirement, why diversify? And ...

(VIOLET stops, looks over at JUDY who is frantically trying to keep up.)
It works a lot better with paper in the typewriter.

JUDY

Oops.

VIOLET

Where did you say you worked before?

JUDY

I've never really had a job in an office.

VIOLET

No kidding.

JUDY

You're not going to tell them are you?

VIOLET

I sorta have to ...

JUDY

Yeah.

(starts to get upset)

Well, I'm sorry, but I wasn't sure where on my resume to write, "I have no skills because I've spent my entire adult life taking care of a husband who just dumped me for a nineteen year old named Mindi." With an "i"!

(JUDY sobs.)

VIOLET

Alright, come on now, don't ... cry.

(beat)

So you have absolutely no office skills whatsoever?

None.

JUDY

(beat)

Is this where you call Security?

(VIOLET takes a moment, considers.)

MISSY

Oh Frank, don't get mad. I just was dying to show you some of these brochures for cruises I picked up.

DORALEE

How are you, Mrs. Hart?

(VIOLET re-enters with Hart's coffee. She instantly sees the scarf.)

MISSY

Just fine, Doralee. My, that's a lovely scarf you're wearing.

VIOLET

Yes, Doralee. What a lovely scarf you're wearing.

DORALEE

It was a present from your husband.

MISSY

Oh Frank, how thoughtful of you.

(to DORALEE)

I'm so glad he appreciates all you do for him.

VIOLET

Oh he appreciates her all right.

DORALEE

Nice seeing you, Mrs. Hart.

(DORALEE and VIOLET exit. MISSY brings the brochure to HART.)

MISSY

Here's my favorite. An Italian line. Four weeks of sunshine —

HART

Four weeks? Are you out of your mind? I can't take off four weeks to go paddling around on some spaghetti Love Boat!

(She smiles and points at his coffee.)

MISSY

Somebody needs to switch to Sanka! There are some shorter cruises. Take a look at them when you have time. I'm sorry I bothered you, Frank.

(MISSY exits.)

(ROZ KEITH, company snitch and second only to the boss, ENTERS and cuts everyone off. Underscore continues.)

ROZ

Violet, oh, Violet —

VIOLET

Judy, this is Roz Keith, Mr. Hart's administrative assistant. It's Judy's first day.

ROZ

Welcome to our happy little family. Violet, I've been meaning to talk to you about Mr. Hart's rules regarding office decor. No personal items on the desk. We mustn't look cluttered and sloppy. "An office that looks efficient —

VIOLET & ROZ

is efficient."

ROZ

As Mr. Hart always says ...

(with longing)

What a man.

VIOLET

(sarcastic)

What a man.

ROZ

I've typed up a memo. You can post it on the bulletin board.

VIOLET

Thanks, Roz. I know just where to stick it.

(ROZ scurries away.)

Dear old Roz is Mr. Hart's administrative eyes, ears, nose and throat. If you ever want to gossip in the ladies room, check under the stall for feet first.

YOU GOTTA KNOW WHO TO TRUST,

BETTER KNOW IT IN A HURRY,

NO TIME FOR SUCH A THING AS YOUR PERSONAL WORRIES

GOTTA GROW, YOU GOTTA SHOW

GOTTA KEEP IT IN TOW AROUND HERE

Let's recap.

ALL

ACT ONE
SCENE 7

HART'S OFFICE.

BOB ENRIGHT celebrates his promotion with HART and the other men.

HART

To Bob!

(VIOLET enters.)

VIOLET

You gave that promotion to Bob Enright instead of me?

(The men start to exit.)

I trained him for godsake!

HART

Now, Violet, don't fly off the handle. The company feels —

VIOLET

The company, *bullshit!* It's your decision. Just tell me why!

HART

He's got a family to support.

VIOLET

And I don't?

HART

My hands are tied. Clients prefer to deal with a male in that position.

VIOLET

Oh, so it's the old boy's club.

HART

Hey, I'm still the boss here,

(as he sits in his chair)

I'm not going to sit here and take this!

(The chair jerks back again, annoying him.)

He presses the intercom button.)

Doralee, get in here, dammit! I told you six weeks ago to get this chair fixed! Violet, get back to work.

VIOLET

I'm going, but before I do, I have one more thing to say. Don't you ever refer to me as your 'girl' again. I am no girl. I am a woman. W-O-M-Y-N! I am not your wife, your mother —

(DORALEE comes in.)

Joe

HART

let, be a good girl and get my coffee. No sugar, just some Skinny 'N' Sweet.
(HE exits.)

VIOLET

not enough I have to do the shopping for the office—

(as she takes things out)

lf and half, Skinny and Sweet, rat poison, ant poison ... I have to fetch his coffee,
!

(pours coffee)

wear one of these days he's going to push me too far and then I'm going to really
him have it!

JOE

ey, did I tell you Roz accused me of inter-office fraternizing this morning?

VIOLET

hat? With who?

JOE

ho do you think? With you.

VIOLET

ho the hell do that petty dictator and his flunky think they are. We've never
aternized!

JOE

ever. Our office conduct has been completely professional.

VIOLET

absolutely.

JOE

But if we wanted to—

VIOLET

if we wanted to—

(A beat as they get a little lost in each other's eyes and the thought hangs in the air.)

HART

Not that I'm not flattered, sir, but ...

TINSWORTHY

Better get packing, Frank. I've got inside info there may be a military ~~company~~ there and you know how that can impede travel.

HART

Sir, if we could discuss this ...

TINSWORTHY

I don't take no for an answer. Bob—

HART

(pleading)

Bob ... ?

BOB ENRIGHT

Funny, right?

(BOB ENRIGHT ushers HART out. TINSWORTHY turns back to VIOLET.)

TINSWORTHY

Congratulations. To all three of you. Don't worry about Hart, he won't get his hair again for along, long, time.

(Wink)

Carry on.

(TINSWORTHY exits. A NEW EMPLOYEE in a wheelchair enters carrying stack of annual reports.)

NEW EMPLOYEE

I was making more copies of the annual report and the Xerox machine was

JUDY

I'll take care of it.

VIOLET

No, I think we'll have Roz handle it. Go fix the Xerox machine, Roz.

ROZ

But, wait, I don't —

VIOLET

Roz, get in there and start to show a little esprit de corps. Chop chop!

ROZ

Holy *merde!*

(ROZ exits.)