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Big Dog Publishing

P.O. Box 1401

Rapid City, SD 57709

ON THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

HOLIDAY FARCE. For 12 days, Veronica has received gifts from the song, “The Twelve Days of Christmas” sent to her by a secret admirer. It’s now the 13th day of Christmas and with maids a-milking cows in the parking lot, lords a-leaping, pipers piping, drummers drumming, and a variety of birds flying about, her neighbors at Westwood Apartments are fed up. Mrs. Henderson’s beloved cat, Pookums, has been attacked by geese and is now “cat-atonic,” and Mr. Rudolph can’t get any sleep due to all the noise. The only neighbors who aren’t unhappy are two single ladies camping out in Veronica’s apartment so they can get a better view of the lords a-leaping. With all the chaos, a police officer charges Veronica with “maintaining an unlicensed menagerie,” a maintenance worker serves Veronica an eviction notice, and two TV news reporters arrive to report on “The Christmas Catastrophe at Westwood Apartments.” With everyone having had way too much Christmas cheer and eggnog, Veronica must find a way to get rid of all her “gifts” before everyone goes mad and discover the identity of her anonymous suitor. This wild, action-packed holiday farce has one-liners for everyone in the cast and numerous opportunities to showcase physical humor. Perfect for teen or adult actors. Easy to stage with one simple set.

Performance Time: Approximately 75-90 minutes.



Portrait of Frederic Austin, 1907

ABOUT THE STORY

"The Twelve Days of Christmas" is an English Christmas carol that dates back to the 1700s. The song tells of the many gifts received from a "true love" on each of the 12 days of the Christmas season, which starts on Christmas Day and continues for 12 days. Thought to have originated in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, a copy of the carol was found printed on a 1714 broadsheet entitled, "An Old English Carol." Some scholars believe that the "old ballad" Sir Toby Belch begins to sing in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* also may refer to the carol. Written records indicate that the song was also used as part of a Christmas game in which participants took turns repeating verses and had to offer a small gift if they made an error. Today, the best-known version of the carol comes from the children's book, *Mirth Without Mischief*, published in London in 1780. Many variations of music exist, but the standard melody known today was popularized by the English composer, Frederic Austin, whose arrangement was published in 1909. In France, the song is called, "The Twelve Months" and the gifts include 12 cockerels, 11 silver dishes, 10 white pigeons, 9 horned oxen, 8 biting cows, 7 windmills, 6 running dogs, 5 rabbits running along the ground, 4 ducks flying, 3 wooden branches, 2 turtle doves, and a partridge.

CHARACTERS

(2 M, 8 F, 3 flexible)

- VERONICA LONGWORTH:** Resident of Wildwood Apartments who has been showered with gifts from “The Twelve Days of Christmas” sent to her from a secret suitor; female.
- BRIDGETTE:** Veronica’s calm, collected roommate who would like Veronica to help out cleaning the apartment; female.
- CEE CEE:** Downstairs neighbor who wants a better view of the lords a-leaping outside Veronica’s window; female.
- DEE DEE:** Downstairs neighbor and Cee Cee’s sister who likes a good show; female.
- MAID A-MILKING:** An expert on milk and ex-boyfriends; wears a dress with an apron and carries a pail of milk; female.
- MRS. HENDERSON:** A neighbor whose beloved cat “Pookums” was attacked by Veronica’s geese and is cat-atonic; female.
- MR. RUDOLPH:** Angry neighbor who can’t get any sleep due to all the noise from Veronica’s “gifts”; noticeably near-sighted; wears thick eyeglasses, pajamas, a bathrobe, and a blaze-orange nightcap; male.
- POLICE OFFICER:** Wants to charge Veronica with maintaining an unlicensed menagerie; not good at math, particularly fractions; flexible.
- MAINTENANCE WORKER:** Maintenance worker at Westwood Apartments who serves Veronica an eviction notice because the building manager got bitten by one of her ducks; flexible.
- TV REPORTER ASHLEY:** Painfully bubbly, upbeat reporter for Channel 1 who wants to interview Veronica for a story on romantic Christmas gifts; female.

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CAMERA PERSON 1: Camera person for Channel 1 who loves pears; flexible.

TV REPORTER NICKY: Reporter with Channel 2 Action News reporting on "The Christmas Catastrophe at Westwood Apartments"; female.

CAMERA PERSON 2: Camera person for Channel 2 Action News who likes the nine ladies dancing; male.

SETTING

Veronica's apartment, Wildwood Apartments complex.

SET

Veronica's apartment. There is a living room and part of a kitchen. The kitchen has a refrigerator. The living room has a window, a television, chairs, a sofa, a coffee table, wall clock, etc.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I: Veronica's apartment

Intermission, opt.

ACT II: Veronica's apartment, an hour later.

PROPS

Crossword puzzle	Stuffed orange cat (aka "Pookums"), for Mrs. Henderson
Newspaper	
Card	
Official-looking paper	Work clothes (jeans, ratty shirt), for Veronica
2 Lawn chairs	Dishwashing gloves
2 Binoculars	Mismatched oven mitts
Cotton balls	Bottle of lighter fluid (empty)
2 Pails of "milk"	Plastic spork
Potato chips	Ocean machine (for sleep)
Wristwatch, for Maid a-Milking	Sleep mask
Remote control for TV	Pair of fuzzy slippers
Fruit basket filled with pears	Bottle of eggnog
2 TV cameras	Glasses for eggnog
2 Microphones	Chainsaw
Business card	Armload of cut wood
Snack, for Cee Cee and Dee Dee	Truck keys
Assorted food items for refrigerator	Shotgun (toy for safety)
Plate with assorted food items, for Maid a-Milking	Several large eggs
	Broken egg whites (can be real or fake)
	2 Stuffed geese
	Rings

SPECIAL EFFECTS

Doorbell
Banging on the door
Sound of geese honking
Sound of an egg breaking

**“BELIEVE ME,
I KNOW MILK
AND I KNOW BOYFRIENDS,
AND SOONER OR LATER
THEY BOTH GO BAD.
AND WHEN THEY DO,
PEEE-EWWWW!”**

—MAID A-MILKING

ACT I

(AT RISE: *Veronica's apartment. The apartment has been showered with unwanted gifts. The gifts are all items mentioned in the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas." The show begins with the entire cast singing "The Twelve Days of Christmas." First, Veronica enters alone or is already onstage when the curtain opens and sings the first verse. Bridgette enters and sings the first three lines of the second verse, with Bridgette and Veronica singing the last line together. From there, each character who enters should sing the first three lines of their verse, which will get them through their particular gift. Then the entire cast sings the remaining lines. [Note: Or, alternately, each new character may sing solo all but the last line of their verse with the entire cast joining in on "and a partridge in a pear tree." Either way, the order of the third through seventh singers doesn't matter, but it should favor those characters with the most lines like Cee Cee, Dee Dee, Mrs. Henderson, Mr. Rudolph, and the Maintenance Man. The eighth singer should be Maid A-Milking, because the Maids A-Milking arrived on the eighth day. The order of singers nine through 13 should favor the Police Officer, the two TV Reporters, and their Camera People.] For the following, the last person onstage starts to sing an extra verse and then stops when Veronica shouts at him/her.)*

CAST MEMBER: *(Sings.) "On the 13th day of Christmas, my true love gave to me—"*

VERONICA: *Enough already! (Song ends abruptly.) Thank you!*

(Cast exits, except for Veronica and her roommate, Bridgette. Veronica is frantic. Bridgette is sitting in a chair with her legs crossed, working on a crossword puzzle. Doorbell rings multiple times.)

BRIDGETTE: *(Coyly.) Aren't you going to get that, Veronica? You know it's going to be for you.*

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VERONICA: (*Frantic.*) It's January already! When's he going to stop?

(*Doorbell.*)

BRIDGETTE: (*Smugly.*) Yesterday.

VERONICA: I wished he'd have stopped yesterday! I wished he'd stopped 12 days ago!

BRIDGETTE: Exactly. The twelve days of Christmas. Today's the 13th day, so he's stopped.

(*Doorbell.*)

VERONICA: But they're all still here! They won't go away!

BRIDGETTE: He's your true love! He won't take them back.

VERONICA: He's not my true love. He's just some guy I met at a party. I mean, I guess I met him at a party. The name doesn't mean anything to me. In fact, I don't even know his name.

BRIDGETTE: I've warned you about hitting the eggnog so hard.

VERONICA: It wasn't the eggnog! I just don't remember him, okay? (*Looking at card.*) All the card says here is "from your true love." Now how am I supposed to know who my true love is?

BRIDGETTE: Ah, one of the great questions of all time. And it's not like you have a lot to choose from, Veronica.

VERONICA: All I know is this delivery guy starts showing up looking for Apartment 245. And look... (*Points to window.*) ...there're all those stupid birds outside.

BRIDGETTE: They have names, Veronica. I told you. The ones that came in the pear trees are the partridges, the rest are either turtle doves or French hens, some are calling birds—

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VERONICA: (*Looking out the window.*) Look at them! They're everywhere! They're in the bushes, they're on the roof, they're up in the trees—

BRIDGETTE: Oh, you'll want to find a place to plant all those pear trees before long. They won't last long in this weather just sitting there in those buckets with the roots exposed like that. But with 12 of them, you should have yourself a nice little orchard someday.

VERONICA: (*Looking out the window.*) They're over in the swimming pool.

BRIDGETTE: (*Looking out the window.*) Those would be the swans a-swimming...seven per day for six days. That's quite a lot of waterfowl, you know.

VERONICA: And don't even talk to me about all those people making a racket out there in the parking lot.

BRIDGETTE: It might help if the pipers and drummers could actually agree on the same tune. Just a hint. (*Doorbell.*) Are you going to get the door or not?

VERONICA: I'm afraid to! I don't know what might be coming next!

BRIDGETTE: I told you...nothing. It's over. It's the 13th day of Christmas. No verse, no special deliveries.

(*Doorbell.*)

VERONICA: (*Indicating door.*) Then what's that?

(*Bridgette goes to answer the door.*)

BRIDGETTE: It's called a doorbell. (*Pointing to doorknob.*) And this is called a "doorknob." (*Demonstrates.*) See, you just turn the knob clockwise. It won't bite.

(*Bridgette opens the door and returns to her chair, leaving Veronica standing by the door.*)

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VERONICA: But—

(Police Officer enters.)

POLICE OFFICER: Excuse me, I'm looking for Veronica Longworth.

VERONICA: Uh, that would be me.

POLICE OFFICER: Are those your cows out there in the parking lot, ma'am?

VERONICA: Uh, yes. *(Realizes.)* I mean, no. I mean, this guy sent them to me, but I don't want them.

POLICE OFFICER: I'm sorry, ma'am.

(Police Officer hands Veronica an official-looking paper.)

VERONICA: Sorry for what? That I've got a stalker boyfriend with a twisted sense of humor?

BRIDGETTE: Oh, so he's been demoted from "true love" to "boyfriend" now, huh? What's next? Fiancé? Husband?

POLICE OFFICER: *(To Veronica.)* You're being charged with 40 counts of livestock running at large—

VERONICA: Forty?!

POLICE OFFICER: One charge per cow, ma'am.

BRIDGETTE: Eight per day, starting with the eighth day. *(Counting on her fingers.)* So that's eight, nine, ten, 11, 12. Five days times eight. Yep, that's 40, all right.

POLICE OFFICER: *(To Veronica.)* But we'll cut you a break and charge you with only one count of maintaining an unlicensed menagerie within city limits.

VERONICA: Menagerie?! Since when do I have a menagerie?

BRIDGETTE: Well, technically, that probably depends on how they count the birds. Doesn't it depend on how you classify the birds, Officer?

POLICE OFFICER: *(To Veronica.)* That's just what the law says, ma'am. And I should warn you, the health department

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is investigating what's happening to all the milk your herd is producing, so you might be hearing from them as well.

VERONICA: But the song doesn't even say anything about cows!

BRIDGETTE: Um, eight maids a-milking? Presumably, they're milking something.

VERONICA: Hey! Whose side are you on?

BRIDGETTE: Just trying to help.

POLICE OFFICER: *(To Veronica.)* Have a good day, ma'am.

Oh, and I'm sorry. I think I hit one of the geese a-laying when I pulled in. Darned thing wouldn't let me pull into the parking space. I think I kind of clipped it. Oh, and the city will probably want to make you pay for the damage to the cruiser. *(Exits.)*

VERONICA: Aarrgh!

BRIDGETTE: By the way, what is happening to all the milk?

VERONICA: I don't know! I don't know why it's my problem.

BRIDGETTE: They're your maids a-milking!

VERONICA: They're not my maids a-milking!

BRIDGETTE: He seems to think they are.

VERONICA: Well, he's wrong.

BRIDGETTE: You'll just have to tell that to the judge.

VERONICA: The judge? *(Looks at the official-looking paper in her hand.)* You mean I'm going to need a lawyer?

BRIDGETTE: Either that or some open pasture, a barn, and a milk truck.

(Doorbell.)

VERONICA: Now what?!

BRIDGETTE: The ladies dancing haven't caused much trouble...yet.

(Veronica opens the door. Cee Cee and Dee Dee burst in. They're carrying two lawn chairs and a pair of binoculars.)

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CEE CEE: *(To Veronica and Bridgette.)* Hello, I hope you don't mind.

DEE DEE: Oh, we can just set up right over there.

(Dee Dee points to the window. Cee Cee and Dee Dee set up their lawn chairs in front of the window.)

CEE CEE: *(To Veronica and Bridgette.)* We're from downstairs.

DEE DEE: *(Looking out the window with binoculars.)* Oh, this is a great view, Cee Cee! Come have a look!

CEE CEE: *(To Veronica and Bridgette.)* We'd just like to come in and watch for a little while.

VERONICA: Watch what?

CEE CEE: Why, the male dancers, of course.

VERONICA: Male dancers?! What male dancers?!

BRIDGETTE: That would be your lords a-leaping.

CEE CEE: *(To Veronica.)* We're over on the other side of the building in 346, so we don't have a very good view.

DEE DEE: *(Looking out the window.)* Is that "The Nutcracker" they're doing?

CEE CEE: *(Looking out the window.)* It doesn't look like "The Nutcracker" to me. In "Nutcracker" they have those tall fur hats. It's Russian, you know.

DEE DEE: *(Looking out the window.)* Well, it's some kind of ballet.

CEE CEE: *(Looking out the window.)* If you ask me, it's definitely a nut-cracker.

VERONICA: Wait a minute! What are you doing?

CEE CEE: You can come join us, if you'd like. I'm Cee Cee and this is my sister, Dee Dee. We just love a good show!

DEE DEE: "Nutcracker's" the only ballet I know.

CEE CEE: Well, there's "Swan Lake."

DEE DEE: That's right. *(Looking out the window.)* And there are a lot of swans in the swimming pool right now, so maybe they are getting ready to do "Swan Lake."

VERONICA: Wait a minute! You can't just barge into my apartment like this!

BRIDGETTE: Actually, I think they just did.

DEE DEE: *(To Cee Cee, looking out the window.)* So what's with all the drummers? Are they rehearsing a halftime show?

CEE CEE: I don't think so. The Rose Bowl's already come and gone.

DEE DEE: I liked it better when all the games had pretty names...names you could understand. Now they're all named after companies and computers and things I've never heard of.

CEE CEE: [Bluebonnet Bowl]...that was always my favorite. They always played that one in [Houston]. *[Or insert the name of another bowl and location.]*

DEE DEE: There ought to be a rule that bowl games should only be named after animals, minerals, or vegetables.

CEE CEE: What about the Orange Bowl? Oranges are fruits.

DEE DEE: Well, oranges are okay. You know what I mean. But think about all the bowls they could have...the Broccoli Bowl, the Asparagus Bowl—

VERONICA: Well, it's not okay with me! This is my place!

CEE CEE: Do you want us to scoot over? There's plenty of room for everyone.

DEE DEE: I must say, I'm so glad they didn't put us in that nursing home.

CEE CEE: *(Correcting.)* Retirement home, Dee Dee. It was a retirement home, not a nursing home.

DEE DEE: Well, whatever. It didn't have much of an activities program.

CEE CEE: Well, that's true. The activities program at this building is really something. It sure beats doing crafts all day.

DEE DEE: *(Looking out the window.)* Oh, look, they're leaping again!

CEE CEE: Oh, let me have a look! *(Looks out the window.)*

VERONICA: That does it! I've had it up to here!

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BRIDGETTE: See, if you were taller, you'd be calmer.

VERONICA: What are you talking about?

BRIDGETTE: You said you've "had it up to here." If you were taller, you could have it up to here... *(Indicates a higher height.)* ...so you'd be calmer. Maybe you should put some heels on. Your true love might really like those stilettos you keep in the back of your closet.

VERONICA: You know what, Bridgette? You're weird.

BRIDGETTE: Me? I'm not the one with a menagerie out in the parking lot.

VERONICA: Aaargh!

(Banging on the door. Bridgette picks up her crossword puzzle.)

BRIDGETTE: Could you get that? I'm right in the middle of a crossword.

VERONICA: And I'm right in the middle of a disaster!

BRIDGETTE: *(Indicating crossword puzzle.)* "Disaster." Six down. "D"... "I"... "S"...no, too many letters.

(Veronica answers the door. Mr. Rudolph enters. He's wearing thick glasses, pajamas, a bathrobe, and a blaze-orange nightcap. He is noticeably short-sighted, evidenced by his squinting.)

MR. RUDOLPH: *(To Veronica.)* So you're the one!

VERONICA: I'm sorry? The one what?

MR. RUDOLPH: The one responsible for all that horrible noise out there!

VERONICA: I'm sorry. I don't know what you're talking about. *(To Bridgette, threateningly.)* Don't you say a word!

BRIDGETTE: If I did, it would be a very short word.

CEE CEE: *(To Mr. Rudolph.)* Oh, are you talking about the marching band? *(To Dee Dee, indicating Bridgette.)* She must be talking about the marching band.

DEE DEE: I don't think they're that bad.

MR. RUDOLPH: Well, I want to say a few words!

BRIDGETTE: Four letters, maybe?

MR. RUDOLPH: Yes! Yes, as a matter of fact, I might just say some four-letter words!

BRIDGETTE: (*Indicating crossword puzzle.*) Well, if any start with the letter "Q," that would be helpful.

MR. RUDOLPH: "Quit"! That would be a good four-letter word to start with! Quit!

BRIDGETTE: Ah! Thank you. I should have guessed that.

MR. RUDOLPH: (*To Veronica.*) And you! You—! (*Turns to speak to Veronica, but can't see her because of his poor eyesight.*) Where'd you go?

BRIDGETTE: (*Gesturing.*) A little more to the left.

VERONICA: (*To Mr. Rudolph, calls.*) Over here.

MR. RUDOLPH: Ah, right. There you are. You! You should think about it, too!

CEE CEE: (*To Dee Dee.*) I suppose some people just don't appreciate the pipes.

DEE DEE: I just like to see men wearing dresses.

CEE CEE: (*Looking out the window.*) They're not dresses. They're kilts.

DEE DEE: Whatever. You can still see their—

CEE CEE: Hush, Dee Dee! You're making me blush.

DEE DEE: You? What about *him*? (*Points out the window.*)

CEE CEE: (*Looking out the window.*) Oh my! That wind sure is blowing things around, isn't it?

DEE DEE: (*Looking out the window.*) Oh, this is better than those male dancers. All they do is jump around.

VERONICA: (*To Mr. Rudolph, indicating Cee Cee and Dee Dee.*) Uh, don't mind them. I have no idea who they are.

MR. RUDOLPH: (*Can't see Cee Cee and Dee Dee well.*) Neither do I.

CEE CEE: (*Introducing.*) Oh! I'm Cee Cee, and this is my sister, Dee Dee.

MR. RUDOLPH: (*To Veronica, but he is now facing away from her.*) Well, look, lady—

VERONICA: (*Calls.*) Over here!

MR. RUDOLPH: (*Turns to face her.*) Thanks. Look, lady, I don't know what kind of stunt you're trying to pull, but I work the night shift and I am trying to sleep!

VERONICA: Look, I am really sorry! Really, really sorry, Mr. —?

MR. RUDOLPH: Rudolph. The name is Rudolph. No jokes about the name now. I'm not in a joking mood, especially this time of year.

BRIDGETTE: You don't happen to own any reindeer, do you?

MR. RUDOLPH: (*Annoyed.*) I told you...no jokes about the name!

BRIDGETTE: I just thought that if you had reindeer, you might have a barn that my friend, here... (*Indicating Veronica.*) ...could rent out to put all of her animals.

VERONICA: I don't need a barn!

BRIDGETTE: Just trying to be helpful...

VERONICA: Well, try being a little less helpful.

BRIDGETTE: (*To Mr. Rudolph.*) So your nose...do people make fun of your nose a lot this time of year?

MR. RUDOLPH: What?!

BRIDGETTE: (*To Veronica.*) How's that for being less helpful?

VERONICA: Look, I'm really sorry, Mr. Rudolph, but none of this was my idea. See, I've got this boyfriend — well, he's not really a boyfriend, he's just this guy. In fact, I don't even know what his name is. I'm not even sure we've met before, but I guess he wanted to get my attention and —

BRIDGETTE: He certainly got it. Everybody else's, too.

MR. RUDDOLPH: (*To Veronica, sarcastically.*) Oh, two little lovebirds, isn't that sweet?

BRIDGETTE: (*Correcting.*) Actually, they're turtle doves. That's a different species.

VERONICA: Bridgette! Not now!

MR. RUDOLPH: Well, I don't care if they're mourning doves!

VERONICA: Anyway, I thought they'd leave, but they won't. I've asked them, and they just say they can't. They're under contract or something —

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BRIDGETTE: It's one partridge, two turtle doves, three French hens, four calling birds. I don't know what's so difficult about that.

MR. RUDOLPH: *(To Veronica.)* Well, all I know is your birds, whatever they are, have crapped on my car, and now all those men in skirts won't let me sleep!

BRIDGETTE: They're not wearing skirts. They're bagpipers. You know, like the song...eleven pipers piping. Kilts are quite traditional in Scotland.

MR. RUDOLPH: Well, in this country, it's quite traditional for men to wear pants!

CEE CEE: *(Looking out the window.)* I think they're wearing something underneath...

DEE DEE: *(Looking out the window with binoculars.)* Oh, I'm not so sure about that, Cee Cee!

CEE CEE: Oh! Well, I should try the binoculars, eh?

(Cee Cee looks out the window with binoculars. Cee Cee and Dee Dee laugh.)

MR. RUDOLPH: *(To Veronica.)* It's also traditional to sleep sometimes, too!

(Veronica grabs some cotton balls off a table.)

VERONICA: *(In desperation.)* Here! You can take these!

(Veronica gives Mr. Rudolph the cotton balls.)

MR. RUDOLPH: *(Indicating cotton balls, confused.)* What's this?

VERONICA: Cotton balls. You can stuff 'em in your ears.

MR. RUDOLPH: I don't want to stuff cotton in my ears! I want to stuff—! Oh, never mind what I want to stuff!

VERONICA: Well, I'm just trying to help.

MR. RUDOLPH: Oh, all this aggravation is going to make my ulcer act up!

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(Maid A-Milking enters, carrying one or two pails of "milk.")

MAID A-MILKING: *(To Veronica, assertive.)* Excuse me, but what do you want us to do with all this milk? We've filled up all our buckets.

BRIDGETTE: Milk's good for ulcers, I hear. You could give some to him. *(Indicating Mr. Rudolph.)*

MR. RUDOLPH: Well, I can see I won't get any satisfaction here! I'm going to the building manager! *(Exits in a huff.)*

VERONICA: *(Calls.)* No, wait! Come back!

MAID A-MILKING: I'm waiting! What am I? Chopped liver?

VERONICA: Bridgette, how many days did you say the cows have been out there?

BRIDGETTE: Five. Why?

(Veronica takes a whiff of the "milk" in the pail and makes a face.)

VERONICA: Ewwww!

MAID A-MILKING: Look, lady, I just milk 'em. I can't help it there's no proper refrigeration.

VERONICA: Just...I don't know...dump it out somewhere.

MAID A-MILKING: If you say so. *(Starts to pour the "milk" in the sink.)*

VERONICA: What are you doing?!

MAID A-MILKING: *(Sadly.)* A lot of people starving in the other countries could use this milk, though.

VERONICA: Well, mail it to them, then!

MAID A-MILKING: Lady, what kind of nutcase are you? You can't mail milk. Although, once it goes bad, you could probably fit some in one of those overnight mail folders.

VERONICA: Well, can't you just stop milking them for a while? You know, let them store it up for you?

MAID A-MILKING: Lady, you don't know much about cows, do you?

VERONICA: Is it required?

MAID A-MILKING: Say, do you have any hand lotion? My hands are getting kind of chapped. All that milking, you know.

BRIDGETTE: In the bathroom...top cabinet.

MAID A-MILKING: Thanks. *(Exits to the bathroom.)*

BRIDGETTE: *(Calls.)* I like the minty-fresh kind myself.

VERONICA: Great! Just great! Now they're moving in.

CEE CEE: *(To Dee Dee, looking out the window.)* Oh, what's that they're doing now?

DEE DEE: *(Looking out the window.)* It appears to be some kind of drill team formation.

CEE CEE: I think it's called a "tattoo."

DEE DEE: Oh. *(Recalling.)* You know, at the rest home, one of the young fellows we had perform at the talent show had a tattoo.

CEE CEE: *(Giggles.)* Oh, that's right, he did.

DEE DEE: Right on his derriere, too! *(Giggles.)*

CEE CEE: Well, it's not that kind of tattoo. It's a Scottish military march thingamajig. *(Slight pause.)* You know, when they said they were having a talent show, I didn't think they meant it had to be the residents who had the talent.

DEE DEE: I wonder if that's why they asked us to move out?

(Maid A-Milking enters from the bathroom.)

MAID A-MILKING: *(To Veronica.)* Mind if I use your window?

VERONICA: Why not? Everyone else is.

(Maid a-Milking opens the window.)

MAID A-MILKING: *(Shouts out the window.)* Hey, Maids a-Milking, come on up! They've got [insert brand name of hand lotion] up here!

VERONICA: What are you doing?

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MAID A-MILKING: Lucky for you, the Maids a-Milking decided to go out on the town instead.

VERONICA: Oh, thank goodness for small favors!

MAID A-MILKING: So, we need to talk. Do you have another shift coming in for the weekend, or are you going to handle this yourself?

VERONICA: Handle what?

MAID A-MILKING: Oh, honey, don't tell me you're one of those "Oooh, that's so icky!" types. I should have figured as much, though, living in a place like this.

VERONICA: What are you talking about?

MAID A-MILKING: *(To Cee Cee.)* Say, mind if I have some of those chips?

CEE CEE: Oh, please, help yourself.

MAID A-MILKING: Don't mind if I do. *(Helps herself to some potato chips.)*

CEE CEE: We brought enough to last us all day, didn't we, Dee Dee?

DEE DEE: Speak for yourself, Cee Cee. I'm hungry.

BRIDGETTE: *(Silently counts on her fingers.)* Uh-oh.

VERONICA: Uh-oh?

BRIDGETTE: *(Indicating Maid a-Milking.)* She's right.

VERONICA: Who's right?

BRIDGETTE: The Maid A-Milking.

VERONICA: *(Confused.)* She's right about what?

MAID A-MILKING: So, how you gonna handle it?

BRIDGETTE: Five-day work week.

MAID A-MILKING: *(To Veronica.)* We're off the clock starting... *(Looks at watch or clock.)* ...oh, right about now.

VERONICA: Thank goodness. At least that takes care of all the Maids a-Milking. Now, if we can just figure a way to get all the rest of my "presents" to leave, too.

MAID A-MILKING: Too bad the cows aren't.

VERONICA: Too bad the cows aren't what?

MAID A-MILKING: Off the clock.

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VERONICA: But, uh, surely, you're going to take them with you?

MAID A-MILKING: (*Laughs.*) You're funny, you know that?

VERONICA: What's that mean?

MAID A-MILKING: You know what happens to a cow that doesn't get milked on time?

VERONICA: (*Shaking her head no.*) Nuh-uh.

MAID A-MILKING: (*Gestures with her hands and cheeks that the cow will fill up with milk and explode.*) Ka-boom!

VERONICA: Ewww!

MAID A-MILKING: (*To Bridgette, indicating Veronica.*) See, I told you she was one of those "Ewww, that's icky!" types.

BRIDGETTE: She's like that when it comes to cleaning out the refrigerator, too.

VERONICA: Hey!

MAID A-MILKING: I'd suggest you line up some weekend help real fast. Otherwise...ka-boom!

VERONICA: Ka-boom. Right.

BRIDGETTE: Actually, it's 40 milk cows, so that would be more like...ka-boom! Ka-boom! Ka-boom! Ka-boom!

VERONICA: All right, all right! I get the picture!

MAID A-MILKING: It's not a pretty one, is it?

BRIDGETTE: Ka-boom!

VERONICA: Bridgette! Shut up!

BRIDGETTE: Sorry. I just like saying that.

MAID A-MILKING: (*To Veronica.*) Not that I know anything about art, but I know my cows!

BRIDGETTE: Ka-boom! Ka-boom! Ka-boom!

VERONICA: (*Admonishingly.*) Bridgette!

BRIDGETTE: Can I do just one more, please?

VERONICA: (*Throwing up her hands.*) Oh, all right. Why not!

BRIDGETTE: Ka-boom! (*Slight pause.*) There, that was fun. Okay, carry on.

MAID A-MILKING: (*To Veronica, looking around.*) Where's your remote?

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VERONICA: You know what, Bridgette? If I ever find that guy, I'm gonna kill him. I swear, I'm gonna kill him.

(Maid a-Milking finds remote control and turns on TV.)

MAID A-MILKING: *(Indicating TV, horrified.)* What's with this?! You don't get [premium sports channels]? *[Or insert another channel or streaming company.]*

(Knock at the door.)

VERONICA: That better not be the health department. *(Opens the door.)*

TV REPORTER ASHLEY: *(Bubbly, upbeat, coming on strong.)* Hello, Ashley Fairweather, Channel 1, Eyewitness News!

(Veronica shuts the door.)

VERONICA: *(To others.)* I think I'd rather have the health department.

(Knock at the door. Veronica opens the door.)

TV REPORTER ASHLEY: *(Upbeat, cheerful.)* This won't take but a minute. We'd like to ask you just a few questions for a feature we're doing on romantic Christmas gifts.

VERONICA: Romantic? What planet are you from?

TV REPORTER ASHLEY: *(Painfully bubbly, upbeat.)* I'm not from any planet! I'm from Channel 1!

VERONICA: I'm sorry. You've got the wrong address. *(Shuts the door.)*

BRIDGETTE: Actually, I think she had the right address, after all.

(Knock at the door. Veronica opens the door.)

VERONICA: *(To TV Reporter Ashley.)* Can't you take no for an answer?

(TV Reporter Ashley enters, followed by Camera Person 1.)

TV REPORTER ASHLEY: I can see why he had to send you so many gifts. You like to play hard to get, don't you?

VERONICA: Hard to get? What are you talking about?

BRIDGETTE: I believe she's talking about the partridge in a pear tree, the two turtle doves, the three French hens—

VERONICA: I know what she's talking about!

BRIDGETTE: Then why did you ask?

TV REPORTER ASHLEY: *(To Camera Person 1.)* What if we set up right over here? *(Points.)*

CAMERA PERSON 1: Oh, look, a fruit basket. *(Takes a pear from the fruit basket and bites into it.)*

VERONICA: Hey! That's mine!

CAMERA PERSON 1: *(With mouthful of pear.)* Not anymore, it's not.

BRIDGETTE: Plenty more where those came from. One tree a day adds up, you know.

CAMERA PERSON 1: *(Munching on the pear.)* Used to be an apple a day, huh?

TV REPORTER ASHLEY: Say, aren't you one of the Maids a-Milking?

MAID A-MILKING: That's me.

TV REPORTER ASHLEY: Would you mind if we talked to you for just a few moments?

(TV Reporter Ashley starts interviewing Maid A-Milking.)

VERONICA: I might mind!

BRIDGETTE: Just hold your horses, Veronica. They'll get to you.

TV REPORTER ASHLEY: *(To Maid a-Milking, excited.)* Horses? She's got horses, too?! Where?

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CEE CEE: Remember that time we went to Aqueduct and played the horses, Dee Dee?

DEE DEE: Oh, how could I forget? And you talked your way back of the stables to meet the jockeys –

CEE CEE: I had no idea they were so short!

(Cee Cee and Dee Dee giggle.)

VERONICA: *(Exasperated.)* I give up!

TV REPORTER ASHLEY: So does that mean you're giving in and going out with him?

VERONICA: No!

TV REPORTER ASHLEY: So you're holding out for more presents, then?

VERONICA: No!

BRIDGETTE: She's just holding out.

VERONICA: Hey!

CAMERA PERSON 1: *(To others, indicating Veronica.)* She's awfully jumpy. Is she always this jumpy?

CEE CEE: *(To Dee Dee, looking out the window.)* Speaking of jumping, you'd think those fellows would get tired of that all that jumping around.

DEE DEE: Well, they are professionals.

CEE CEE: I know they're professionals. But you'd still think they'd get tired of all that jumping around.

(Knock at the door.)

VERONICA: Now what?!

BRIDGETTE: Maybe it's the health department.

VERONICA: Or maybe the fire marshal coming to tell me we've exceeded the occupancy permit.

(Veronica opens the door. TV Reporter Nicky and Camera Person 2 burst in. [Note: Camera Person 2 films throughout, alternately

focusing on TV Reporter Nicky and Veronica and whatever else seems humorous.])

TV REPORTER NICKY: Nicky Hatfield, Channel 2 Action News here. Are you Veronica Longworth? Tell me, how do you respond to the charges your neighbors have made against you? Would you say you're making a political point with your actions, or are you simply indifferent to the concerns of the community?

VERONICA: *(Confused.)* Political point? Indifferent? What are you talking about? You mean the guy who can't sleep? Well, let you tell you about him—

TV REPORTER NICKY: Oh, so you claim to be oblivious to the community uproar. How convenient for you. *(To Camera Person 2.)* Okay, let's do the standup right here: *(Nicky assumes the pose of a TV reporter doing a standup interview while the Camera Person 2 films her. Into TV camera.)* Day 13 of "Crisis Over Christmas Gifts" and the young woman at the center of this firestorm of controversy is adamant that she's done nothing wrong and intends to ride out the storm—

VERONICA: Wait a minute! You can't say that!

TV REPORTER NICKY: You know what? You're right. I used the word "storm" twice. Thanks for the heads up. You're not so bad, after all. *(To Camera Person 2.)* So, you want to get me coming in again? And be sure to get my good side. You know my right side is my good side.

(Camera Person 2 nods.)

VERONICA: *(Grabs Nicky, threateningly.)* Listen, lady, if you don't tell me what's going on, you're not going to have a good side.

TV REPORTER NICKY: *(To Camera Person 2.)* Are you getting this? She's threatening me if we pursue this story! *(To Veronica.)* You just go ahead. This'll do wonders for the

ratings. They just love this kind of thing during sweeps week.

VERONICA: *(To Camera Person 2, indicating camera.)* And you! Get that thing out of my face!

TV REPORTER NICKY: *(To Camera Person 2.)* Stand your ground. That's it! Remember the First Amendment!

VERONICA: If you don't shut that thing off and get out of here, I'm going to amend you!

TV REPORTER NICKY: *(To Camera Person 2.)* Make sure she stays in focus! Steady now! Think of the ratings!

VERONICA: Oh, yeah. Well, I want you to focus on this!

(Veronica puts her hand on the camera lens and pushes Camera Person 2 against the wall.)

TV REPORTER NICKY: *(To Camera Person 2.)* Did you get that? Oh, yes, that's the money shot right there!

BRIDGETTE: *(Calmly intervening.)* Excuse me. *(Grabs Veronica and pulls her back.)* Deep breaths, Veronica. Deep, cleansing breaths.

VERONICA: But...but...but—

BRIDGETTE: *(To TV Reporter Nicky, calmly.)* So what's the issue here?

TV REPORTER NICKY: It seems your friend, here... *(Indicating Veronica.)* ...has stirred up quite a little controversy. Let's see, there are all the noise complaints—

BRIDGETTE: The drummers drumming and the pipers piping.

TV REPORTER NICKY: The animal rights activists—

BRIDGETTE: All the birds.

TV REPORTER NICKY: Tying the partridges to the pear tree to keep them from flying away seems to be the main point of contention there.

BRIDGETTE: *(To Veronica.)* Oh, did I mention that Mrs. Henderson downstairs has a new cat? That might take care of the partridge problem.

TV REPORTER NICKY: *(To Camera Person 2.)* Be sure to get some footage of that, will you? We might be able to use that on one of our outdoors shows, too.

VERONICA: I think the only things that haven't caused any problems are the ladies dancing and the —

TV REPORTER NICKY: Scratch that. Concerned Citizens for Community Values says they're indecent.

VERONICA: What kind of ladies dancing are there?

BRIDGETTE: Apparently, very energetic ones.

CAMERA PERSON 2: *(Looking out the window.)* Holy moly! *(Starts taping.)*

TV REPORTER NICKY: *(Looking out the window.)* Oh, my! I guess we should use the word "ladies" loosely, huh?

BRIDGETTE: Well, that leaves the five golden rings.

TV REPORTER NICKY: *(Looking out the window.)* No wonder those lords are leaping, eh?

BRIDGETTE: *(Continuing.)* Actually, at five rings a day, times eight days, that's 40 golden rings.

CEE CEE: *(To TV Reporter Nicky.)* We thought maybe their costumes were too tight.

BRIDGETTE: *(Continuing.)* That's enough for every finger and every toe, and you can switch them out every other day.

DEE DEE: *(Looking out the window.)* Well, such as they are.

VERONICA: *(To Bridgette, fatalistically.)* Well, at least rings don't make noise, or crap on people's cars, or cause any other disturbance.

CEE CEE: That's true. Such as they are.

BRIDGETTE: *(To Veronica, cheerfully.)* And you can always hock them.

DEE DEE: *(Looking out the window.)* I don't remember the June Taylor Dancers dressing like that.

VERONICA: *(Fatalistically.)* And I can always hock them.

(Knock at the door.)

BRIDGETTE: You going to get that?

VERONICA: Well, it can't get any worse.

(Veronica opens the door.)

MAINTENANCE WORKER: *(Announcing.)* Eviction notice.

VERONICA: It just got worse.

MAINTENANCE WORKER: I'm sorry, ma'am. The building manager said he'd come deliver it himself, but he's too busy dealing with complaints from the tenants' association.

VERONICA: I'm being evicted?!

MAINTENANCE WORKER: And it didn't help that he got bit by one of those ducks you got. Those things are right snappish, you know.

BRIDGETTE: They're geese. And they're just being protective of their nests. They're laying, you know.

MAINTENANCE WORKER: Is that why they attacked the police officer? They've got him surrounded pretty good...last I looked.

VERONICA: But you can't do this! I didn't want any of those things! This guy—I don't even remember meeting—sent them all. He's nuts, he's crazy—

BRIDGETTE: He's trying to impress you.

VERONICA: Oh, he's made an impression, that's for sure.

BRIDGETTE: And it sounds like the geese have made an impression on your police buddy.

VERONICA: He's not my buddy!

BRIDGETTE: *(To Maintenance Worker.)* You'll have to excuse her. She's in a state of denial right now.

MAINTENANCE WORKER: *(To Veronica.)* I'm sorry, ma'am. All the technical stuff is spelled out in the fine print. You have five days.

VERONICA: Five days?! That's less time than it took to deliver all this stuff!

MAINTENANCE WORKER: Then you better get cracking, eh? *(Exits.)*

VERONICA: *(Calls.)* But they won't go away! I want them to go away! Make them go away!

BRIDGETTE: I think that's what the police officer is probably saying right now, too.

(Veronica moves away from the open door. Maintenance Worker re-enters.)

MAINTENANCE WORKER: Oh, and you'll probably be hearing from Mrs. Henderson, too.

VERONICA: Why's that?

MAINTENANCE WORKER: Seems her cat started going after some of the partridges in the pear trees.

BRIDGETTE: *(To Veronica.)* Told you.

MAINTENANCE WORKER: But then the geese got after the cat. Guess birds of a feather really do flock together, eh? *(Chuckles.)* They worked that cat over something fierce. Guess it's a good thing they really do have nine lives, eh? He used up quite a few from what I heard.

(Maintenance Worker exits. Veronica slams the door, turns around, and is confronted by TV Reporter Nicky and TV Reporter Ashley.)

TV REPORTER NICKY: *(To Veronica.)* So how does it feel to be despised by your neighbors and held up for public ridicule and contempt by the entire community?

TV REPORTER ASHLEY: *(To Veronica.)* So did you know it was true love at first sight, or did it take all 12 days to convince you?

TV REPORTER NICKY: *(To Veronica.)* So will you be throwing yourself at the mercy of the court, or will you be fighting this tooth and nail all the way to the Supreme Court?

BRIDGETTE: Apparently, Mrs. Henderson's cat tried fighting the geese tooth and nail, and you see where that got him.

TV REPORTER ASHLEY: *(To Veronica.)* So do you think you're going to accept his proposal? Are you going to marry him?

VERONICA: Proposal? Who said anything about a marriage proposal?

BRIDGETTE: You know, Veronica, in some countries, all those animals out there would count as your dowry.

TV REPORTER ASHLEY: *(To Veronica.)* Well, whatever. Details, you know. But it would sure help drive the ratings if you said yes!

VERONICA: Look, the only details I care about right now are getting rid of all this stuff. Bridgette, I need your help.

TV REPORTER NICKY: *(Reporting live, looking into the camera.)* All right, folks, you just heard it from the horse's mouth. The young woman at the center of this controversy is giving into the public's demands...so once again Channel 2 Action News gets results!

TV REPORTER ASHLEY: *(To Veronica.)* Does this mean you won't be available for our Valentine's Day special on the cutest couples?

VERONICA: Now, Bridgette!

BRIDGETTE: I'm thinking, okay?

TV REPORTER ASHLEY: *(To Veronica, handing her a business card.)* Here's my card, if you change your mind. *(To Camera Person 1.)* Come on.

CAMERA PERSON 1: Hang on! *(As he exits, he pockets a few more pears. Indicating pears.)* These things are pretty good.

(TV Reporter Ashley and Camera Person 1 exit.)

VERONICA: *(To TV Reporter Nicky.)* Well, aren't you leaving, too?

TV REPORTER NICKY: *(Helpful, smiling.)* It's been a pleasure, ma'am. *(To Camera Person 2.)* Are you coming?

CAMERA PERSON 2: But the ladies dancing—

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TV REPORTER NICKY: Come on, we can get a better view in the parking lot, anyway.

CAMERA PERSON 2: *(Excited.)* Oh!

(Camera Person 2 bounds out the door. TV Reporter Nicky exits.)

VERONICA: Well, that clears things up a bit.

MAID A-MILKING: You got anything to drink around here? I'm a bit parched. And don't tell me to drink some milk, okay? I'm tired of hearing that one.

VERONICA: But only a bit, I see.

CEE CEE: *(To Dee Dee.)* It's a good thing I brought something to eat.

(Cee Cee hands Dee Dee a snack.)

DEE DEE: Is this all? You call this a meal?

CEE CEE: Well, a snack.

DEE DEE: You'd think they'd at least have a boxed lunch.

BRIDGETTE: *(Seated, calm. To Veronica.)* So what's your plan?

VERONICA: My plan? I was hoping you'd have a plan.

BRIDGETTE: Why should I have a plan? It's not my problem. I'm just an innocent bystander.

VERONICA: Bridgette, did you miss the part where it said roommates are supposed to be helpful to one another?

BRIDGETTE: It was probably the same day they talked about sharing responsibility for cleaning out the refrigerator.

MAID A-MILKING: *(Looking in refrigerator.)* Good grief. What is all this stuff in here? Ewww!

VERONICA: *(To Bridgette.)* Okay, I'll start cleaning out the refrigerator more often.

MAID A-MILKING: *(Looking in the refrigerator, pulling out food items.)* Some of this stuff goes back to the [Nixon] Administration. *[Or insert another president.]*

BRIDGETTE: *(To Veronica.)* "More often" would imply you do it now.

MAID A-MILKING: Don't you people believe in expiration dates?

VERONICA: *(To Bridgette.)* Okay, okay, I'll start, period. Happy now?

BRIDGETTE: Reasonably. There're still the dishes, the bathroom, the vacuuming—

VERONICA: All right, all right! I get the point! So, will you help me?

BRIDGETTE: Sure.

(Veronica waits for Bridgette to respond.)

VERONICA: With a plan!

BRIDGETTE: Get rid of everything.

MAID A-MILKING: Just like boyfriends.

VERONICA: I beg your pardon?

BRIDGETTE: You don't want the stuff? Get rid of it.

MAID A-MILKING: You know, guys should come with expiration dates stamped on their forehead. That way you'd know ahead of time when things are going to go sour.

VERONICA: *(To Bridgette.)* What kind of plan is that?

BRIDGETTE: It's a concept. You can work out the details. Me, I'm a big-picture thinker.

VERONICA: How? It's not like there's a return desk for Noah's Ark, now is there?

MAID A-MILKING: Believe me, I know milk and I know boyfriends, and sooner or later they both go bad. And when they do, peee-ewwww!

BRIDGETTE: *(To Veronica.)* You'll figure out something.

VERONICA: I was hoping you'd figure out something.

BRIDGETTE: I'm trying to figure out this crossword. Do you know what a ten-letter word is for a "British mid-morning meal."

MAID A-MILKING: How about a snack?

BRIDGETTE: No, that's only five letters.

MAID A-MILKING: I meant, I'm hungry!

BRIDGETTE: Oh. What are you hungry for?

MAID A-MILKING: I don't know. Whatcha got? Leg o' lamb? Any leftover turkey?

BRIDGETTE: How do you feel about French hens?

VERONICA: Bridgette! This is no laughing matter! *(Realizes, gets a maniacal gleam in her eye.)* No, wait! That's it! That's it, exactly! We'll eat them! We'll kill them all and eat them! The partridges, the French hens, the calling birds, the whole lot of them!

MAID A-MILKING: Sounds like quite a barbecue. So when's supper?

VERONICA: Especially those calling birds! They're driving me nuts!

BRIDGETTE I'm pretty sure songbirds are protected species. You may want to check on that.

VERONICA: Oh, I'll show him. I'll cook his goose for sure...literally!

BRIDGETTE: You may want to get a bigger microwave, then. There are 42 of them, you know.

VERONICA: And the swans. Can you eat a swan? Oh, never mind. We'll just cook them all and mix them into one giant stew. It's got to taste better than that [low-carb] diet thing I've been on. *[Or insert another diet fad.]*

BRIDGETTE: The 11 pipers piping might be kind of tough. *(Realizes.)* That's it!

VERONICA: That's what?

BRIDGETTE: "Elevenses." A British mid-morning meal..."elevenses."

VERONICA: Will you shut up about eating?

BRIDGETTE: Just a hint...don't count on any drumsticks from the 12 drummers drumming.

VERONICA: Well, it's a concept, okay? It's the big picture! I thought you liked the big picture!

BRIDGETTE: It might also be a big mess. Don't expect me to do all the dishes.

VERONICA: *(To Maid A-Milking.)* You! You're a farm girl. You know about these things.

MAID A-MILKING: Don't look at me. I don't do dishes, either.

VERONICA: So how do you do it? Do you wring their necks or chop off their heads?

BRIDGETTE: Are you asking about her ex-boyfriends or the birds?

MAID A-MILKING: *(To Veronica.)* I just milk cows. I did help slaughter a pig once, though. That was pretty cool. But that's more of a Thanksgiving Day thing out in the country.

VERONICA: Hold that thought, okay? That just might come in handy.

MAID A-MILKING: That's what I told one of my exes, too. I swear, I've never seen anyone's eyes bug out that wide before.

(Maid A-Milking begins to fix a plate of food. [Note: This process continues through the following until her next line.] Knock at the door.)

VERONICA: Oh, great.

BRIDGETTE: You know who that is, don't you?

VERONICA: Don't tell me.

MAID A-MILKING: I know one thing...it's not my ex. At least not that one.

BRIDGETTE: *(To Veronica.)* Don't say I didn't warn you.

VERONICA: I said, "Don't tell me."

BRIDGETTE: You're just asking for it.

VERONICA: I said, "Don't tell me!"

BRIDGETTE: Okay, have it your way.

VERONICA: Fine.

BRIDGETTE: But you know it's got to be—

VERONICA: Ssssh!

BRIDGETTE: It can only be one person, you know.

VERONICA: Oh, and who would that be?

(Knock at the door. Veronica opens the door.)

VERONICA/BRIDGETTE: Mrs. Henderson!

(Mrs. Henderson is at the door, holding an orange cat in her arms. [Note: An orange stuffed cat may be held or wrapped up so the audience can't tell it's fake.] Like an angry cat, Mrs. Henderson glowers and hisses.)

VERONICA: What in the world?

MRS. HENDERSON: *(To cat, indicating Veronica.)* There she is, Pookums. There's the vile creature who had this done to you.

VERONICA: Vile creature?!

MRS. HENDERSON: *(To cat.)* Oh, don't you worry, my little Pookums. I won't let her scare you anymore. I'm here to protect you.

BRIDGETTE: *(Calls.)* Hello, Mrs. Henderson.

MRS. HENDERSON: *(Sweetly.)* Hello, Bridgette. How are you today?

BRIDGETTE: Just fine? And you?

MRS. HENDERSON: Oh, tolerable, I suppose. My joints are acting up again. The weather, you know.

BRIDGETTE: Sorry to hear that, Mrs. Henderson.

VERONICA: Look, Mrs. Henderson, I'm sorry about your cat, but it's not really my —

(Like an angry cat, Mrs. Henderson hisses at Veronica.)

MRS. HENDERSON: *(Comforting cat.)* My poor little Pookums. The big, bad birds tried to peck him, didn't they?

VERONICA: Well, excuse me, but didn't your poor little Pookums try to eat one of the partridges?

(Like an angry cat, Mrs. Henderson hisses at Veronica.)

MRS. HENDERSON: (*Comforting cat.*) Now, now, you just stay right there, my little Pookums. I can see we'll get no satisfaction from her. The wicked hussy.

VERONICA: Hussy?!

MRS. HENDERSON: All this cavorting around with strange men! You see where it's got you! You see where it got my Pookums! Isn't that right, Pookums?

VERONICA: But-but he's not a stranger. I don't even know who he is. (*Realizes.*) Wait, that didn't come out right.

MRS. HENDERSON: My poor, precious, pitiful Pookums. Look at him! He's just a shell of what he was. Why, I have half a mind to contact my lawyer!

VERONICA: A lawyer? But why?

MRS. HENDERSON: Mental anguish, you know. As you can see, he's plainly traumatized. You can just tell the way his whiskers droop.

BRIDGETTE: Well, if you go that route, let me know. I have some contacts downtown.

VERONICA: Hey! You stay out of this!

MRS. HENDERSON: Sssh! (*To cat.*) Yes, I know. The mean lady is shouting again, but I'm here to protect you.

VERONICA: Hey, I'm not mean! Am I mean, Bridgette?

BRIDGETTE: Well, you can be rather, um, volatile.

VERONICA: Volatile? Volatile?! What do you mean by "volatile"?

BRIDGETTE: I mean you sometimes lose your temper. It's okay. I just put on my headphones and crank up the volume.

VERONICA: Hey! Is anybody paying attention? I'm the victim here, okay?! Where's the sympathy for me?

(*Maid a-Milking sees the cat.*)

MAID A-MILKING: Awww, look at the kitty!

CEE CEE: A kitten? Where? (*Sees cat.*) Oh, look, Dee Dee, a kitten.

DEE DEE: Oh, let me see! Let me see!

CEE CEE: I just love small, furry animals.

DEE DEE: (*Sees cat.*) Oh, isn't he a cutie?

CEE CEE: (*Indicating cat.*) He's just precious. Isn't he just precious?

BRIDGETTE: (*To Veronica.*) Let's face it, you're just not as warm and cuddly as Pookums there.

MAID A-MILKING: (*Indicating cat.*) Isn't he the sweetest thing? Awww!

VERONICA: Well, that settles it.

MRS. HENDERSON: (*Indicating cat.*) Look at him. See his dull, glassy stare? Don't you think his eyes look like he's had a fright?

BRIDGETTE: (*To Veronica.*) Settles what?

MAID A-MILKING: (*Indicating cat.*) Oh, he does look rather shell-shocked, doesn't he?

BRIDGETTE: (*To Mrs. Henderson.*) You might want to watch out for post-traumatic stress syndrome.

VERONICA: I'm definitely taking matters into my own hands.

BRIDGETTE: Does that mean you're going to do the dishes now?

MAID A-MILKING: (*Indicating cat.*) I guess that's why they call it "cat-atonic," eh?

MRS. HENDERSON: Oh, dear! You don't mean—?

BRIDGETTE: Yup. After being through an ordeal like that, he might just go berserk on you without warning.

VERONICA: He's a cat! How could you possibly tell?!

MRS. HENDERSON: Oh, how could you say something like that about my dear, sweet little Pookums after all he's been through? I had to give him a whole bowl of eggnog just to calm him down.

MAID A-MILKING: (*Indicating cat.*) I guess that explains the glassy stare, eh?

VERONICA: (*To Mrs. Henderson.*) You gave eggnog to the cat?

ON THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS

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MRS. HENDERSON: Well, I was out of milk!

VERONICA: I've got 40 registered Holsteins outside and you're out of milk?!

MAID A-MILKING: *(To Mrs. Henderson.)* They're self-serve, you know. You could have helped yourself.

MRS. HENDERSON: Besides, I hear eggnog has lots of protein in it. That'll help him stand up to the bad lady's big bad geese.

VERONICA: If he can stand up at all!

DEE DEE: Personally, I was betting on the goose. Of course, with so many of them, I suppose it wasn't really a fair fight.

MRS. HENDERSON: I know eggnog always gives me a little extra zip-a-dee-doo-dah in my step. Between you and me, I think it's the little dash of cinnamon I sprinkle on top.

CEE CEE: *(To Dee Dee.)* Remember the time we went with that tour group to New York, and we slipped the bus driver a few extra bucks to take us to that cock fight in West Virginia?

DEE DEE: Oh, yes! I still don't know why the bus company won't let us go on those trips anymore.

CEE CEE: Well, I suppose, in hindsight, maybe we should have let everyone go on to New York first.

MRS. HENDERSON: Oh, my pretty little Pookums. What have they done to you, my little baby-waby kitty-poo?

DEE DEE: *(To Cee Cee.)* That's true. But sometimes you just have to take charge in life! I didn't want to see a bunch of Broadway shows, anyway. Did you?

VERONICA: *(To Mrs. Henderson.)* "They"? What's this "they" business?

MAID A-MILKING: *(To Mrs. Henderson.)* I think the technical term is called "snockered."

VERONICA: All right, that's it! It's clear that nobody here is going to look out for me but me!

MAID A-MILKING: You tell it, sister!

BRIDGETTE: I'm sorry, did you say something, Veronica?

VERONICA: I'm not letting some guy I don't even know push me around and make my life miserable.

MAID A-MILKING: I'll drink to that. So will Pookums, too, apparently.

VERONICA: I am woman! Hear me scream!

BRIDGETTE: *(Correcting.)* It's "roar."

VERONICA: What's that?

BRIDGETTE: The song. It says, "roar." But if you want to scream, you go right ahead.

VERONICA: Whatever. I've had enough trouble with one song already.

MAID A-MILKING: I had this one ex-boyfriend who screamed a lot. Of course, that was after I dumped the fire ants in his underwear drawer. You know, the neighbors said they could hear him hollering for a week or more.

(Sound of geese honking.)

DEE DEE: *(To Cee Cee.)* Oh, what's happening out there now?

CEE CEE: *(Looking out the window.)* Oh my!

DEE DEE: What is it?

MRS. HENDERSON: Why do I hear all those horns honking?

BRIDGETTE: They're not horns.

MRS. HENDERSON: Well, what are they, then?

VERONICA: *(Realizes it's the geese.)* Oh, no.

BRIDGETTE: I guess they're not cooked yet, huh?

MRS. HENDERSON: *(Indicating geese.)* That's them! The ones that did this to my Pookums!

MAID A-MILKING: Quick, the TV!

VERONICA: Why the TV?

MAID A-MILKING: Oh, you'll see!

MRS. HENDERSON: *(To cat.)* My poor baby. I'll shield your eyes from the horror, so you won't have to see. *(To Maid a-Milking.)* Excuse me, you're in my way!

(Veronica turns on the TV. [Note: During Nicky's report, honking geese are heard.])

TV REPORTER NICKY: *(Voiceover.)* That's right, Jim. It looks like they've got us surrounded now. If our sources are correct, there should be more than 40 of them.

BRIDGETTE: Forty-two, actually. Six a day for seven days—

VERONICA: Sssh!

TV REPORTER NICKY: *(Voiceover.)* As you can see, we were just here minding our own business when they attacked us. Oh, the vicious brutes are coming back at us now, and it looks like this time they mean business!

MRS. HENDERSON: *(To Veronica.)* See! Even she called them "vicious brutes"!

DEE DEE: I'm definitely laying odds on the geese this time.

(As lights begin to fade, Veronica buries her face in her hands.)

TV REPORTER NICKY: *(Voiceover.)* I don't know how much longer we can hold out here. Shoo! Shoo! Go on! Go away! Ow! This is Nicky Hatfield, reporting live from the scene of "The Christmas Catastrophe at Westwood Apartments." Shoo! Ow! Oh, the humanity! Oh, the humanity!

[END OF FREEVIEW]