

SEW SISTERS

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by
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SETTING The play takes place in a small town adjoined to a small city. It can be any such place but here it's in Niagara and the small town of Thorold. Feel free to change the names of the places and local people to suit your area.

CHARACTERS

Guild President	Choose the name of the local guild president
White Gloves	Two ladies
Quilters	Rachel and Angela and a group of other presenters from a local guild
Libby McDonald	a new quilter. Married to Bill. Her sister is Rose
Rose Ralph	married to Richard Robert Ralph III. Organizer of the Charity Ball
Bill McDonald	married to Libby
Jane	friend of Libby. Loves traditional quilts.
Marnie	friend of Libby. A quilter who enjoys innovating.
Mrs. Kasun	manager of the Hall
Mrs. Leigh	mother of Rose and Libby
Mrs. Morgen	administrator of Quiet Acres. Only her voice is heard on the phone.
Lady Emmet	a socialite
Voice 1	a friend of Lady Emmet
Voice 2	an acquaintance of Lady Emmet
Waiter	works at the Blue Mermaid (<i>a high end restaurant in St. Catharines</i>)
Trixie	secretary to Mrs. Kasun
Delivery man	

A variety of ladies with rollators and canes, all dolled up.

PROLOGUE

The stage is dark. A spotlight comes on at stage right, highlighting the Guild President. Jane, Marnie and Quilters are waiting in the wings stage left. Libby is sitting at a table stage left.

PRESIDENT Ladies and Gentlemen ... the moment we've all been waiting for ...*(lights flash on and off)* It's Show and Tell!!! Bring up your quilts. Let's see what you did with all those fat quarters. I bet your creative juices were flowing during the pandemic. Cooped up so long with a stash and a sewing machine. Aren't we blessed? White Glove ladies ... where are you? ... Ladies? *(looks around - two ladies putting on white gloves come on stage)* This is so exciting. It's a nice change from sewing masks. Didn't we all make hundreds of them? *(Clapping)* Can't wait to see the Covid quilts ...*(she peers to stage left)* I see our first one is Jane's quilt. We are in for a treat. *(Jane comes forward with her quilt and hands it to the white glove lady.)*

JANE Thank you, Madame President. You are so right. Like all of us I made so many masks. Don't we quilters step up to the plate when the world needs us? *(President nods)* I dare say we follow patterns precisely. Too many amateurs were churning out masks that were off-kilter. It drove me crazy to see them. If it's a matter of life or death should they **not** be done right?

PRESIDENT Doing it right. Yes. It's important... But we are dying to see what you brought.

JANE I made about twelve quilts in isolation but will only show this one tonight. I don't want to hog the spotlight. Others need a chance. No one wants to be here til midnight. *(President nods in agreement)* This quilt is called Match Up. It's so complicated it drove me nuts matching all the seams. I kept at it. Sew and snip. Just had to get it right. Kept unsewing again and again. That's why seam rippers were invented. And goodness knows, I used mine a lot. And I had to be super organized. All the pieces in the right order. But that's me. I like to keep on top of things, use a schedule, do things perfectly if I can. It takes work but life can get out of hand if you let your guard down.
(The President motions for the white gloves to come forward with the quilt) And now, here is the quilt... Match Up. *(People clap. The White Gloves hold the quilt up then examine it themselves and point out the seams in amazement)*

PRESIDENT Lovely work, Jane. Thank you. I don't know how you do things so perfectly. But I get what you're saying. Don't let life unravel. Now on to the next quilt. In the interest of time, I will limit my comments so just go ahead once the next person is done. *(The White Gloves get the next quilt)*

QUILTER 1 My name is Rachel and I made this quilt for my first grandchild. Well, I started it when he was born. He's six now. I figure he'll appreciate the love that went into it since he's older. *(People clap. She leaves the stage. The WG get the next one)*

- QUILTER 2 I'm Angela. I made this out of a cheater cloth for my daughter. It went together lickety split. I think I'm hooked on this method. No use putting that much time and effort into a quilt that has a limited life. These modern kids redecorate all the time. Then the quilt is recycled and on to the dog. That's my experience anyway. I'm not falling for that one again. *(People laugh and she exits)*
- MARNIE *(Looking at Quilter 2 departing)* Oh boy, that sucks. Buy them a cheap quilt or comforter from Walmart. They won't know the difference. *(She turns to the audience)* But don't get discouraged. Most people really appreciate the work that goes into quilting. You can buy all the comforters in the world but a quilt has personality. Isn't it amazing we get to work with such colours, patterns, fabrics? Having a stash. How lucky are we? During Covid I bonded with my Bernina buddy, Cecil... Does sewing fast count as aerobic exercise? I think it should... anyway, Cecil does what I want, when I want. Not like my Ex ... but that's a story for another day. This staying home has been fun. Should have retired sooner. Here is my latest quilt. Not perfect, mind you, but I enjoyed making it. *(The White Gloves hold it up and everyone claps. Marnie leaves the stage and sits at a table with Libby. A few other quilts are shown but the speech is muted as Marnie and Libby speak)*
- LIBBY Gosh, Marnie. What a beautiful quilt you've made. *(She fingers the quilt)* I could never do anything like that. I'm not in that league.
- MARNIE There's a league? No one told me. Hey ...I sense a critical eye. Libby, I suppose you didn't you bring anything for show and tell?
- LIBBY My quilts are for my eyes only. Besides, I only just joined the guild. I'm inspired by all these creative people.
- MARNIE Don't be intimidated. We're all just women who have the same hoarding disorder. When life gives us scraps, we make a quilt.
- LIBBY Well, I'm just figuring it all out. Since Covid I lost my job in the flower shop. Polly's Posies folded but I'm not in a hurry to find a new job. Quilting is good for me. I never had time for classes before ... you know how it is ...with work, my kid and my mom needing me. Now it's just Bill and me. So I started sewing and now I can't stop. Maybe I'm stitching a new life together? Figuring out designs, building my own stash. My style is more Que Sera, Sera. Whatever will be will be. No one will see my quilts. No pressure. It brings me joy, that's all.
- MARNIE Quilts ... made with hands and hearts. Every single one is unique. Bring yours out of the closet. Think about it.... Share your joy.

ACT 1: SCENE 1

Libby's living room: Libby is hand quilting and Bill is sitting in his chair reading his newspaper. The door opens stage left and Rose comes marching in.

ROSE Why didn't you answer the door? I've been ringing and ringing.
Bill hastily puts the newspaper over his head and starts snoring.

LIBBY Oh, sorry. I guess the doorbell is still broken. Bill? Can you...? *(The snoring increases in volume)* I'll talk to him later. So, Rose ... What's wrong? You're looking rattled.

ROSE You bet. It's mom.

LIBBY Is she sick? Oh, good God, don't tell me she died.

ROSE Don't be so dramatic. It's mom... the usual. Causing trouble.

LIBBY What kind of trouble can you get into at Quiet Acres?

ROSE Are you forgetting when she moved there? The signs she put in the window? 'Please Release Me' ... or 'Starving ... Send real food'.

LIBBY That was different. It was the pandemic. The place was new to her. All the restrictions. No one could visit. Poor thing. She felt like a prisoner.

ROSE Well the pandemic is over. But precautions are still in place. Not for mom though. She's going out with her walker all over the neighbourhood.

LIBBY That's good, isn't it? Fresh air. Exercise.

ROSE Not if you keep falling. She's supposed to stay in but she feels entitled to do what she wants. You always catered to her every whim. Now she's out of control.

LIBBY Don't blame me. I just tried to keep her safe. Nobody tells mom what to do.

ROSE Well, now it's a problem. I don't know why they always call me and not you... anyway ... her new scooter.. It's for outdoors but she insists on taking her rollator. She refuses to wear the emergency lifeline. Doesn't want Big Brother watching her... out she goes looking for adventure. Then she falls. Emergency workers pick her up. Last time it was a ride back on the fire truck. She can't keep doing that.

LIBBY But if she needs help?

ROSE If she used her scooter she wouldn't fall at all. Is it her game? Clocking emergency response time? She'd call that research ... oh, I am at the end of my

rope with her.

LIBBY What do you want me to do? I can talk to her.

ROSE It's too late. Quiet Acres wants her out of there by the end of the month. They think she has dementia and needs more care. There's an opening at Sweet Sunset. We have no choice. She has to go.

LIBBY A nursing home! Is mom ready for that?

ROSE Well, if you get fired from a retirement home ... There's no other choice. On top of it ... this is the worst possible time for me. You know I am Chair of the big Charity Ball. My life has no room for unruly mothers.

The phone rings and Libby answers it. She paces up and down with the phone. Rose stands there with her arms crossed, tapping her foot.

LIBBY Mom? Can you slow it down? I don't understand you. Of course my hearing is fine..... Yes, I heard.... What? It's not Sunset Surprise.... Sweet Sunset, mom that's the place. It's lovely. You will like it.... I'm not trying to tell you what to do, mom. I'm giving positive ... OK... Yes, I heard... yup ... the cute firemen ... I'm sure you meant no harm. Mom, how about I help you? ah, ha ... hmmm Rose is not abandoning you. She took you in, remember? Before Quiet Acres. She loves you dearly.... Of course... She and Richard are just busy... no, we are not putting you out to pasture. Listen. Next week .. I can come and pack. We'll have a good time.... yes, I can bring chocolates... I believe you'll be happier in the new place... yes, better food ... no, there are no wardens in the place... just nurses ... no grouches... I promise. Gotta go, mom. Love you. See you tomorrow.

ROSE Oh Libby. Can you really do this? Move mom yourself? I feel bad pushing it all on you but it's such a load off my shoulders. Mom makes it so hard. Why can't she just get old gracefully.

LIBBY That's as graceful as she's going to get. I don't mind helping her. We'll all be in that same boat someday.

ROSE Don't remind me. I have no time for getting old. Too much to do. Listen, all the paperwork is done for Sweet Sunset. Just pack mom up and get her over there. Sorry to run but I have another meeting. I can't believe they asked me to chair the Ball and the Art Show. Perfect timing. Everyone's been cooped up so long it's bound to be a success. So easy... Ta Ta little sister. *(She throws a kiss to Libby.)*

Rose sweeps out of the room. Libby looks at Bill who is still snoring.

LIBBY All clear, Bill. You can come out now. *(Bill continues to snore. Libby goes up to him)* Bill, I'm running off with Brad Pitt! *(No response. She shrugs)* Guess he

doesn't care. Oh well ...Passionate affairs may have to wait. Better get organized..Let's see. Boxes! Where did I put them after last move? (*Stops and looks at the audience*) Is this the slippery slope? Taking care of somebody's problems again. I know Rose has been doing most of the work for mom. She felt bad and took over because I'd done it for so long. But I don't want it all to fall back on me again. There's got to be a happy medium. I have Jenny to worry about ... she might need me too. Oh dear ...What if I end up being the sandwich filling? ... squished in the middle of some jam or other. How does this happen? I'd rather be quilting. (*She stops and thinks*) But isn't there a quilt store by Quiet Acres? Oh, I should treat myself and stop there when I see mom. Just to look, you know. Feel some fabric. It would balance my life.

ACT 1: SCENE 2

Libby's basement sewing room stage right: *Libby comes in furtively, looks around, and then puts her big bag in a large garbage bin. Puts the lid on with a flourish.*

LIBBY It's the third day in a row that I helped the economy. I sure am glad the quilt stores are open again. (*She opens the bin and peeks in. Smiles toward the audience. Takes a metre of fabric out*) Just look at this batik. Isn't it dreamy? Oh look at this one. Pure magic. (*Pulls out some more*) I got the last of the bolt. Don't you just love it? (*Hears the door open upstairs and quickly stuffs the fabric back in the bin*) Bill's back. He doesn't appreciate fabric the same way that I do. I'm the material girl. I'll take care of this stash later. When he's asleep.

Libby sits at her machine and starts to sew. The phone rings.

LIBBY Hello.

JANE Hi Libby.

LIBBY Hi Jane. I'm sewing. I'll put you on speaker.

JANE No problem. I talked to our Guild executive. We're trying to rebook the quilt show ... you know, the one the Covid bug squashed? Anyway we're going ahead ... looking at venues. Every hall is booked solid. We don't know what to do. Should we cancel? That would be a shame. Charities need the money more than ever. You're new to the guild but you worked in retail. You've got a business mind. Any ideas?

LIBBY Gosh, I don't know. Let me think. *(She walks around)* If venues are scarce could we put up tents? Maybe in a park.

JANE Too cold. Good idea though. Parks are open now ... well, maybe you're on to something ...do they have a hall or buildings we could use?

LIBBY Good question. Maybe a greenhouse. Let me check. How big do we need?

JANE Pretty big. Maybe 200 quilts. And room for the people to browse but not get too close. Social distancing is still a thing. But everyone wants to see a show. It's been way too long.

LIBBY Leave it with me. I'll call you back.

Libby starts sewing again faster than before. She looks at the seam. Notices it's wrong and throws it on the floor and yells AHHHHH. The phone rings.

MARNIE *(quickly)* Libby ... hi. It's Marnie. Sorry to bother you but the president and I were wondering if we could pick your brains about the quilt show? You're new and you've never been to a show. A clean slate.

LIBBY I can give you my opinion for what its worth. *(Libby picks up another two pieces of two inch binding fabric and tries to figure out how to join them in the air)*

MARNIE OK ... Here's the deal. There is not a hall to be found in town or anywhere else to put on a quilt show. So ... what do you think of a virtual show?

LIBBY Virtual? Like on a computer? Is there an app for that?

MARNIE We're not sure but we think there must be a way of doing it.

LIBBY Isn't this a fundraiser for charity? How would that work?

MARNIE Details, details. We're not that far yet... but would you go to a virtual show? *Libby goes to the sewing table, picks up a ruler but drops it. She raises her arm in frustration.*

LIBBY Why not? Any show sounds good to me. I would say yes. But just so you know, I got a call from Jane. She asked me to look for a venue at a park. Should I follow that up?

MARNIE So Jane isn't giving up on the hall? Well, sure. It's worth investigating. I'll check out the virtual show idea. We can put our heads together once we find out. Thanks for your help. Oh, the President says hi. You met Fran, haven't you?

LIBBY No I haven't but say hi from me.

MARNIE OK. We'll be in touch. Bye.

Libby hangs up, picks up the two pieces of two inch binding fabric and a box of pins. Puts a few pins in her mouth. She takes one and sticks it in the fabric. The phone rings again.

LIBBY Hello. *(Libby drops the pins and crouches down to look for them)*

MORGEN Hello Mrs. McDonald. This is Mrs. Morgen from Quiet Acres. We tried to get hold of your sister but I'm glad I got you. I regret to inform you. We can't find your mother.

LIBBY What? Mom's missing? *(Libby jumps up)*

MORGEN Unfortunately she is. We looked everywhere. Checked with the police. Nothing

LIBBY When was she last seen?

MORGEN At lunch. She went to her room. Her scooter is there and her walker. She couldn't have gone far. Or else she was abducted ... God forbid. Did you pick her up or has she gone to an appointment?

LIBBY She's not here. I can't imagine an abduction ... that's absurd. I don't know of any appointments. Rose would have told me. I'm coming over.

MORGEN That would be most helpful, Mrs. McDonald. *(Libby puts down the phone and sighs, looks at the audience and shrugs.)*

ACT 1: SCENE 3

Libby's living room. Libby is sitting on a chair hand sewing. Bill is reading the paper. Rose comes barging in and Bill covers his head with the paper.

LIBBY Rose, you startled me. I've pricked my finger.

ROSE How can you sew at a time like this?

LIBBY Next time ring the doorbell first.

ROSE I did. It's still broken ...

LIBBY Shoot. I forgot. Bill, remember to fix the door. *(Bill starts snoring)*

ROSE Good luck with Rip Van Winkle. But that's the least of our problems.

LIBBY What's eating you, Rose. Something up?

ROSE Didn't you hear? A Voice Mail.. from Quiet Acres. Mom's missing. This is an emergency.

LIBBY It was. Past tense. I took care of it. Mom's OK.

ROSE *(Rose sinks into a chair)* Thank God she's alright. What was it this time?

LIBBY She was missing so I went there to help look. No one noticed the closet .. Out of the way storage... way down the hall. There they were. Whispering... Mom and some old cronies. She said it was her office.

ROSE Good grief. Tell me she wasn't plotting some new shenanigans!

LIBBY Right on. It was Bingo. At Quiet Acres they play for buttons. Mom thinks there's no point to that. She suggests using real money and management turned it down. So mom figured a trip to the casino was in order for all of them. And while they were at it they decided on an outing to the Shaw Theatre.. An evening ... after curfew. The staff can't wait til she goes.

ROSE Thankfully she'll have more checks and balances in the nursing home. It must be her dementia that's making her act like this.

LIBBY Maybe she's just exerting her independence.

ROSE *(Shrugs)* Well, now that this problem is solved and your plate is clear except for mom's move Can you, Libby, take over the art show and auction?

LIBBY What? Me? I don't know the first thing about art.

ROSE *(Rose gets up to get a chocolate from the coffee table)* You sell yourself too short. Think about your work with flowers at the shop. That's artistic. I have complete faith in you, Libby. Here is a list of artists who donated before. Just call them.

LIBBY Oh Rose. It's not that simple. I have lots to do and mom is a wild card.

ROSE I get it. But the Charity Ball and Art Show is looming. Volunteers aren't jumping out of the bushes. I need help. I have to do the publicity. Surely the art show could be your baby. Just one thing.

LIBBY One more thing. That's how it starts. *(Bill gets up and sneaks out)* Hey, Sis... What did you just say about publicity? You aren't doing that yourself?

ROSE If no one steps up I, Mrs. Richard Robert Ralph the Third, will do it. I'll show them how its done. This will be the best charity ball ever.

LIBBY It's the **Thorold** Charity Ball, Rose. Don't kill yourself to make a splash.

ROSE But the who's who of Niagara will be there. Doors will open for Richard and me.

LIBBY Maybe the wrong doors. *(Rose sits down again and leans towards Libby)*

ROSE My PR person has taken on another commitment. It's imperative we have someone competent to do publicity. So I am stepping in. That's why I need help in another area.

LIBBY That's crazy. You can't do all that.

ROSE I cannot listen to negativity. I am committing to the PR because, of course I am a good talker. Radio, TV, guest appearances. My parlance is perfect, if I do say so myself. The right job for me. But if you could do the art part... You know I only ask out of desperation.

LIBBY Rose, Rose... I won't leave you in the lurch. *(Extends a hand)* Give me the list. I'll call. *(Rose hands it over)*

ROSE Oh, this means a lot to me. I hope it's not too much for you.

LIBBY I'm capable too. Besides I have some friends who might be able to help.

ROSE Friends? Artists?

LIBBY Quilters. I joined a Guild.

ROSE What? Quilters? Oh no, Libby ... no, no. What do they know about art? If you don't mind my saying, quilting is so last century.

LIBBY That's not fair. Quilting has become an art. It's modern, even. I can show you ...

ROSE Libby I have confidence in you. Leave the quilters to their stitching. Oh, by the way, I looked at the list and wondered why Picasso wasn't on it. Could you call him to see if he would donate?

LIBBY Are you out of your mind, Rose? Where would we get one of his pieces? Do you know how much security would cost?

ROSE How much could it be? If we get him to speak at the opening he could keep an eye on his own painting.

LIBBY But he's dead.

ROSE Dead? What about his salon on Welland Ave.?

LIBBY Oh... you mean that Picasso. The hairdresser? Not the same guy.

ROSE Really? So that hairdresser isn't an artist? But he's alive?

LIBBY Alive and well but not an artist. The only hairdresser I know who's an artist is Al Cote.

ROSE Well, call him up. He might donate. But Al? What kind of name is that for an artist? He should change it ... Hmm... Alberto ... that's more artsy.

LIBBY You want me to get Al???

ROSE Alberto. Of course. ASAP.

LIBBY Are you sure?

ROSE Honestly, Libby, here I am doing all the thinking for you again.

LIBBY I guess you are the brains of this operation. *(With sarcasm)*

ROSE The Thorold Charity Ball and Art Show will be a sensation with me at the helm. Libby, you have energized me, thank you. With a little make up I will shine in front of the cameras. But, Libby dear, put away that sewing kit. Honestly, a grown woman cutting up perfectly good fabric. *(Rose picks a thread off Libby gingerly)*

LIBBY Don't push it, Rose. I'm trying to be your right hand woman.

ROSE Don't take offence. I do appreciate you, Libby. I'm merely making suggestions. That's what sisters do ... gotta run. Talk to Alberto ... soon. *(Rose hurries off)*

LIBBY Oh boy. Do I call Al? ... Alberto. Rose will have a fit if she finds a quilt in the show. But she might change her mind once she sees his wonderful work. Perhaps Rose needs to expand her horizons! This could be a risky business. Better go see mom. Might learn some tricks from that silver fox.

ACT 2: SCENE 1

The coffee shop stage left. Jane and Libby are sitting at a table with cups of coffee.

JANE It's so nice of you to meet me here. I am dying to know if you found a venue for the quilt show?

LIBBY I hope you had better luck. There is a greenhouse in the park by the Locks but it really is quite dirty. They haven't had time to do any cleanup. Not a good place to hang quilts.

JANE Looks like we both hit a wall. I didn't come up with anything. Nothing big enough. Can we think small? Make it a mini quilt exhibit. Even a large parlour someplace might work with little pieces.

LIBBY Mini show, mini profits. Is it worth it?

JANE Quality, not quantity. I expect some of our members would take more care with their stitching on a small piece. They might try to do better work. Mediocre quilts drive me nuts. And let me tell you, there is more and more of that. Quilts just thrown together. No neat hand stitching.

LIBBY You wouldn't want to see mine then. I need way more practice to be good at it. I'm such a beginner.

Marnie comes in and sits down.

MARNIE Hey girlfriends, having a serious discussion?

LIBBY Just talking about quality workmanship.

JANE We haven't found a venue. How about going mini? Small quilts only?

MARNIE Not the same impact. Probably not worth it. A virtual show may be our best chance this year. It's a long shot.

JANE Not convinced an on-line show will fly but virtual or real life, the standards of the guild must be upheld. Each quilt must be juried before it's shown.

MARNIE Jane, who's going to count stitches on a screen?

JANE Me.

MARNIE Honestly. Get a grip. Surely it won't matter if the odd bits don't quite match? No one will give us any quilts if we're too critical.

JANE We are a guild. We can't have inferior workmanship. Keep our standards high. People will rise to the occasion and produce top quality. Corners lined up, perfectly square. It reflects badly if not done properly. People will notice.

MARNIE There is no way to make a perfect quilt but there are a million ways to make a good one.

JANE Not good enough.

MARNIE Libby, would you put your quilt in a show if it was being judged so rigorously?

LIBBY Don't look at me. This newbie has no plans to put anything in a show. Don't even ask me for Show and Tell. I'm not in your league.

MARNIE Remember what I told you. There is no league. Quilting is modern, traditional, artistic, crazy and innovative. Lots of different skills and talents. Jane, I think you're being too picky.

JANE The highest standards are important to me. No matter what kind of quilt it is.

LIBBY I wonder if I should even be in the guild. Should beginners pass a test first?

JANE Now that's an idea!

MARNIE A crazy one. The guild is supposed to be fun. We learn from each other. Kindness not criticism. Libby, you have every right to be in the guild.

- LIBBY Well, I do enjoy seeing the quilts and the speakers are great. Everyone is nice. I love going to the meetings.
- MARNIE Hanging out with quilters is great. Sharing ideas ...learning from each other.
- LIBBY It's like therapy. I sure need that. My stress level is growing.
- JANE Is it your mother again?
- LIBBY So far so good. She's settling in. Sweet Sunset looks like it's working out. She's even gotten friendly with a man who volunteers there. Mr. Lovejoy. Nice fellow. But it's my sister. She asked me to do the Art show and auction for the Thorold Ball. There's not much time. I called everyone on her list. All the artists donated last year but only five of them gave me a painting. Everyone else had an excuse. Am I being paranoid?
- MARNIE That's odd. Artists are always so generous and this is a very prestigious event.
- JANE Did someone upset them?
- MARNIE Maybe somebody used a ruler on their paintings? Straight? Too wonky? (*Jane makes a face*) Sorry, Jane, just kidding. Go on, Libby.
- LIBBY I thought it would be easy. Five little pictures will look silly on the walls.
- JANE You need more than that ... and something big.
- MARNIE The word is pizzaz. Splashes of colour to grab your attention.
- JANE It sounds as if you've been beating your head against the wall. Did you try Trisha Romance? She's always willing to help.
- LIBBY I couldn't get hold of her. Rose told me to get Al Cote ... or Alberto, to her.
- MARNIE He's a great guy. He'll donate. But does she want quilts?
- JANE You told me Rose hates quilts. Does she know Al's a quilter?
- LIBBY (*shrugs*) It was Picasso or Al. Al's alive.
- JANE Picasso the hairdresser? Oh no. Did he pass away?
- LIBBY Very much alive ... still doing his thing on Welland Ave.
- JANE Thank goodness he's not dead. I have an appointment next week.

- MARNIE Looks like you didn't tell Rose about the quilt. (*Libby nods sheepishly*) And Rose doesn't like quilts. But you are desperate to find something for the art show besides five measly little paintings. Am I right? (*Libby nods more*). So here's the thing. Quilts are art. How about we get people to donate quilts for the art show? It would solve both of our problems.
- LIBBY Oh my goodness! I never thought of that. It might work. But Rose would have a fit. She'll say no automatically.
- JANE I thought this was an art auction? A different thing altogether.
- MARNIE Open your horizons, Jane. Think about it. I repeat... Quilts are art.
- LIBBY I like the idea. We showcase the paintings and the quilts. That would give me enough for the auction. And we would have a place to show quilts. Except for Rose it's a win/win option. Not sure how I could convince her.
- JANE Rose has her mind made up, by the sound of it. But **if** we did the show we have to make it so good she won't be mad. It will be imperative to have quality control.
- MARNIE This isn't a regular quilt show. Our members will simply donate a quilt for the Charity Ball. And get a chance to display their work.
- LIBBY People will get a tax receipt too.
- JANE Be that as it may. This is a grand affair, all the more reason to be scrupulous.
- MARNIE Don't stifle creativity, Jane. Quilting is not an exact science. Let people donate whatever quilt they choose. They'll give their best.
- JANE Then, I, for one, want no part of it. My friends will be shocked at your lackadaisical attitude. I wish you the best of luck. (*Jane gets up to leave*)
- MARNIE Sorry you feel that way, Jane. Just give it some thought. Don't dismiss it yet...(*throws Jane a kiss*) we still love you. (*Jane leaves. Marnie turns to Libby*) She'll get over it.
- LIBBY Now I feel bad. She has a point, you know.
- MARNIE I get it. The thing about Jane ... she has a heart of gold. She's just a perfectionist. Gets tied up in knots. We've been friends for a long time. She accepts my rough edges and, quite frankly, I am a better person ... a better quilter... because she has high standards. We need people like her. But she's too hard on herself. She'll stew a bit but it blows over quickly. She'll help us. Now what do you say? Can we do this show?

LIBBY Instead of framed paintings, we put up quilts? I don't know. The hall is used to handling artwork. Quilts are different. Maybe we should check first. Let me call Alberto. He can be our test case. If he agrees to give us a quilt, I'll call Mrs. Kasun at the hall to make an appointment. We can gauge her reaction to his quilt. She'll tell us if this is a good idea. It's worth a try. Can you come with me?

Libby and Marnie clink each other's coffee cups.

MARNIE Sure. Remember the time before Covid when we shook hands on every agreement?

LIBBY What happened to high five? *(They do it from a social distance and laugh)*

ACT 2: SCENE 2

Convention Hall. *Mrs. Kasun is sitting at her desk. There is a knock at the door. Libby and Marnie enter with a big box.*

LIBBY Mrs. Kasun, it's a pleasure to see you again. I'm Libby. This is Marnie. I'm helping Mrs. Ralph with the art show. We want your opinion. Do you mind?

KASUN Not at all. And what a coincidence ..Mrs. Ralph is coming in shortly. Maybe we should wait for her?

LIBBY *(Looks alarmed)* Mrs. Ralph is coming? We better not take your time. She's far more important.

Libby and Marnie turn to leave.

KASUN Nonsense. We have at least 10 minutes. Go ahead.

MARNIE We'll make it snappy. Let me get this out to show you.

LIBBY It's been difficult to get enough paintings but we have a new idea. Do you think this would work on a big wall? *(Libby and Marnie hold up Al's quilt)*

KASUN Well, that's stunning. I've never seen anything quite like this before.

- LIBBY You like it? Will it work here?
- KASUN It makes a bold statement. It catches the eye right away. What an impact for the entrance. Can we hang it?
- MARNIE We have a rod.
- KASUN We use hooks. Not sure a rod will work. Can I look at the back?
- LIBBY You're busy. We'll bring it back later.
- KASUN But Mrs. Ralph would want to see it.
- MARNIE I'm sure she would. *(Rolls her eyes)*
- LIBBY Well ... we want it to be a surprise.
- KASUN Are you sure? Mrs. Ralph doesn't strike me as ... *(gets cut off)*
- LIBBY We just want this to be memorable for her too. Mrs. Ralph is working so hard ... We don't want to bother her with details.
- MARNIE Might just send her to the moon.
- LIBBY We want the surprise to warm her heart.
- KASUN That is so sweet. But please leave the quilt. I won't show her. I just need to figure out the hanging.
- MARNIE We don't want to be the ones hanging. Keep it under wraps.
- The secretary calls from the back.*
- TRIXIE Mrs. Ralph has arrived.
- LIBBY Thank you for your help, Mrs. Kasun. We'll put the quilt back in the box if you don't mind. *(They hastily fold it and put it in the box. Leave it on a chair)* Don't bother seeing us out, we'll take the back door. *(Libby and Marnie leave. They stop offstage)*
- MARNIE Can't believe Rose was hot on our heels.
- LIBBY Now I feel guilty. Am I doing the right thing? Maybe I should go back and confess?
- MARNIE Really? Where would you be then? Left with only five pictures and lots of blank

walls. A sad auction and no profits. Rose wouldn't like that at all. You've got her back. She just hasn't experienced the joy of quilting. Give her the opportunity to grow.

Libby and Marnie leave. Rose comes walking in.

KASUN Mrs. Ralph. What a pleasure to see you. Come sit down. *(Rose goes to sit but notices the box and moves it to the other chair.)*

ROSE Thank you, Mrs. Kasun. I was hoping to go over some of the details for the Ball. We usually do a dinner but in light of the pandemic, people are still a bit skiddish sitting too close to each other. Is there enough room for the tables to be six feet apart? We have about 200 coming.

KASUN The hall seats 500. No need to worry. Ample space.

ROSE Dancing may be a problem. Especially ballroom dancing? All that touching?

KASUN I never thought of that. Hmmm.

ROSE Well, here's what I was thinking. Could the DJ provide music for some entertainment? Perhaps some professional dancers.

KASUN Trixie Bell school of Dance. They've been here before. People loved them.

ROSE Can you check into that? And also, there's a lady that does line dance classes. People can stand their regulation distance apart if they want. It's still a dance. Do you think we should ask her?

KASUN Interesting idea. You seem to have thought this through. I'll be glad to make the contacts. The DJ has been booked anyway. He will accommodate us.

ROSE I want this to be a memorable night. I am imagining balloons at every table, perfect linens, flowers and, of course, the wonderful artwork. The ladies on that committee will be in touch with you.

KASUN Why, they already have. Today, actually.

ROSE Oh, no one told me. We could have coordinated our visit. *(Rose notices the box with the quilt and looks at it.)*

KASUN Well, it wouldn't have worked out.

ROSE Why not?

- KASUN *(looking uncomfortable)* You know how committees are. They take ownership of the job. Sometimes they like to spring a surprise of two themselves. Makes them look good. *(Mrs. Kasun get up)* I think that box is in the way. Let me move it. *(Rose picks it up and hands it over. Mrs. Kasun moves the box behind her desk)*
- ROSE Surprises? I would hate that. I like to stay on top of things so nothing goes wrong. Tell me, is there something I should know?
- KASUN Mrs. Ralph, all I know is that your people are *(she pauses and looks up)* ... they're doing their best to help you put this Ball together. You have strong leadership. Really, I am impressed with your ideas. Line dancing idea is perfect for this time.
- ROSE Why thank you, Mrs. Kasun. That gives me hope. Can we see the linens and go over the table settings?
- KASUN But Mrs. Schneckler went over them with me a week ago.
- ROSE I guess she didn't tell you. Her mother in law died so she is in mourning and can't do hospitality for us.
- KASUN Her mother in law? Why she died a year ago.
- ROSE You must be mistaken. It was last week. She called me up herself.
- KASUN It was in the paper... I remember because she was here last year planning a party.
- ROSE Could it be a step-mother? A former wife who kept the name?
- KASUN Why would you keep that name after a divorce?
- ROSE Good point. But a complicated family must make mourning difficult. No wonder she wanted to drop out. But I can take over for now. Until I find a volunteer.
- KASUN Sometimes family members can be roped in. Volun-told.
- ROSE Tell me about it. *(They laugh)* On to the linens. I was thinking of navy tablecloths and a pretty colour to compliment it.
- KASUN Mrs. Schneckler wanted a bright yellow. Will you be changing that?
- ROSE Probably. I'm thinking a bit more sophisticated.
- KASUN Let me take you to the cupboard and you can see the possibilities.

Mrs. Kasun escorts Rose out.

ACT 2: SCENE 3

The Blue Mermaid restaurant. Stage right. Jane is sitting alone at a table with a glass of water. Soft music is playing. There is a large plant hiding the view of another table behind hers. You just catch a glimpse of a woman sitting there. Jane looks at her watch. Takes a sip of the water. Hears some whispering. Looks around. Checks her watch again. She hears a clearer voice behind her and moves her chair closer to the plant.

LADY Rose begged me to do it. (*Jane looks astonished*) What could I say? You have to be gracious in these circumstances.

VOICE 1 You're kidding? You mean you agreed to be the Master of Ceremonies?

LADY Of course. She was desperate to have me.

VOICE 2 But didn't you ask Elizabeth to talk to Rose about making you the MC?

LADY I did no such thing. Rose has seen me at the podium. She knows my reputation ...knows that I am an influencer.

VOICE 1 I thought you weren't even going to the Charity Ball? Did you change your mind?
Jane moves even closer. She looks incredulous.

LADY True. I have no plans to be there. I will let Rose know soon enough.

VOICE 1 Soon enough? Lady Emmet, shouldn't you tell her now? If you're the MC...

LADY My dear. It will be done at the appropriate time. There are other considerations.

VOICE 2 You were telling me about that mold and other contamination in that hall. The roof might even cave in. Is that what you're talking about?
Jane whispers ... WHAT!

LADY Why, yes. I am trying to verify whether there is mold combined with the Covid virus ... it could possibly be lurking in the walls. No one knows for sure but it might cause structural damage.

VOICE 2 Really? I've never heard of such a thing.

LADY None of us have. But if it proves true then the whole event will be cancelled. I will not have to resign as MC and my reputation will be kept intact.

VOICE 1 You don't want to look bad by resigning too early. But it must be a thing. I've hear that all the artists are talking about the mold. Worried their paintings could be ruined. They don't want to touch that hall with a ten foot pole.

VOICE 2 It still sounds strange.

VOICE 1 It puts the Charity Ball and art auction in a compromising position.
Jane stands up and tries to look over the bush. She gets her phone out, frantically searches through it, grimaces and puts it on the table.

LADY What a shame. If it gets cancelled perhaps we could get the artists to display at my event?

VOICE 1 What a wonderful idea, Lady. Helping artists. So generous of you.

LADY Think nothing of it, my dear. I help where I can.

VOICE 2 Is this factual? I had no idea Covid could live in walls. Lady Emmet, how did you find out?

LADY I can't really disclose my sources. You know how the scientific community operates. This is a sensitive matter.

Jane pushes her chair over to the bush and starts to stand on it but the waiter comes in. He gives her a look of surprise. She gets off and he puts the chair back with a disproving look. Jane sits down. She picks up the menu and points to a tea. He nods and leaves.

VOICE 2 Are you saying it's not proven yet?

LADY I am saying it's under review.

VOICE 1 Well you can't take any chances. Best to nip this in the bud.

LADY You do have to be careful. It's the right thing to do.

VOICE 2 Lady, did I hear you say you have an event planned?

LADY I certainly do. The week after the Charity Ball. We are having ours at the races in Fort Erie. It's going to be a grand affair. Hats Off to Niagara. It will showcase the best in our region.

VOICE 1 Lady Emmet is up for a prize if she makes the most money for a local charity.
Jane stands up. She puts her hands on her hip and scowls.

VOICE 2 So getting the artists to your event would help. That sounds like a win/win.

VOICE 1 Lady Emmet, you do so much good work in our community. Let me know how I can help.

VOICE 2 Count me in.

LADY That's exactly why I asked you to come today. Here are my plans. *(They start to whisper again. Jane can't hear and shakes her head. Jane picks up her purse. Leaves a tip on the table and rushes out just barely missing the waiter. The waiter comes in with a cup of tea. He looks around baffled. Takes a sip of the tea. Puts it down and picks up the tip.)*

ACT 3, SCENE 1

The coffee shop. Stage left. Libby and Rose are sitting down talking.

ROSE What's the latest on mom?

LIBBY Surprisingly quiet. Maybe she's starting to like the new place. Though she did say they're herded like cows for meals and everything. She doesn't like rules.

ROSE She may not like them but I hope she starts following them. She's run out of places to go. *(Rose picks up the menu and puts on glasses)*

LIBBY She's made new friends. That should help.

ROSE Hope so. A renegade mother. Next thing you know, she'll have her photo in the newspaper. That's bad press for me. She should rest on her laurels and just cool it.

LIBBY That's not mom. She's had meaningful work her whole life. She's bored. She wants more out of life.

ROSE We should never have got her that power chair. Too much freedom.

LIBBY But mom's got a point. Why should older people be treated like children?

ROSE The staff can only do so much. Some rules have to be there to keep everything on an even keel. Those workers are amazing but they get paid a pittance. It's backbreaking and emotional work.

LIBBY Not to mention the extra stress of dealing with a pandemic. That was hard.

ROSE I don't know how they did it ... Libby, you know I love mom but dealing with her is getting to me.

LIBBY I'm trying to take care of things so you don't have to.

ROSE I know but it's still on my mind. *(Starts to cry)* I can't take another thing.

- LIBBY *(Libby hands her a tissue)* What's wrong? Did someone else quit?
- ROSE No. It's more than the Charity Ball... Richard's business is going under. We will lose everything we worked so hard for.
- LIBBY O, Rose, I didn't know.
- ROSE Nobody does. That's why the Ball is so important to me. Making good connections with the right people. If I prove myself I might get a job ... a new career. It could keep us out of the poorhouse. Oh, Libby, I am so scared.
- LIBBY What does Richard say?
- ROSE I'm trying to be brave and not talk to him about my fears. But he's coming to the Ball. It won't hurt to make contacts with the rich and famous.
- LIBBY Rose, you're killing yourself trying to impress people. Stop being someone you aren't.
- ROSE I am Mrs. Robert Richard Ralph III.
- LIBBY No, you are Rose Leigh. Don't forget you were important before you became Mrs. Ralph. My big-hearted sister. Don't underestimate that woman. She's smart, capable and has nothing to prove to a phoney social circle.
- ROSE I don't think I ... *(She sobs)*
- LIBBY You've done so much already. Be proud of yourself. Not a copy of someone you think you need to be.
- ROSE I'm not sure who I am anymore. My life is falling apart. People are quitting on me, mom has gone nuts ... my world is in jeopardy.
- LIBBY It's just being rearranged. You'll figure it out.
- ROSE I wish I had your optimism.
- LIBBY Hey, where are those rose coloured glasses? *(Picks a pretend pair out of her purse)* Well, look at these. *(Pretends to put them on Rose)* See the Ball? A success. Look at mom. Happy in her new place. Everything's coming up rosy.
- ROSE *(Laughs)* Not convinced yet.
- LIBBY Look into my eyes ... loook deeply... the Swami sees it all ... it's good, all good.

- ROSE Alright. I get it. I should lighten up. What else can I do?
- LIBBY You know you're a lot like mom.
- ROSE Like mom? Crazy, you mean?
- LIBBY The best kind of crazy. Like a patchwork quilt. But you keep those glasses on. Worry about mom after the Ball. Just concentrate on what you have to do now. It's all going to fall into place, you'll see. Just like pieces of a quilt. Relax.
- ROSE You have a one track mind. For someone who has more fabric than food in the house, you're pretty wise. Please don't tell anyone about Richard.
- LIBBY Your secret is safe with me. Just don't tell Bill about my fabric stash. I call myself curator of a private collection but he's of a different mind. *(they laugh)* But, seriously, Rose, I have a confession to ... *(a commotion starts outside. Some people are yelling.. "We want FREEDOM "... Rose stands up to look. Libby too)*
- ROSE What the heck is going on?
- LIBBY Must be some political protest. Hey, look. It's a parade of old people... *(peers out)* Is that who I think it is?
- ROSE ...*(Rose stands and checks ... they look at each other)* Oh Lord, tell me I'm wrong. Tell me that's not mom. A lookalike? I don't want anyone to think it's my mother.
- LIBBY Oh boy... She's right at the front of the line. Where did she get all those balloons? *(Rose crouches down on the floor)* Rose, what are you doing?
- ROSE I lost my contacts. Help me find them Libby. I don't want to step on them.
- LIBBY *(in a loud whisper)* Stop it, Rose. Crawling under the table... everyone's looking.
- ROSE *(Rose says in a loud voice)* No worry, people. I just lost my contacts. We're trying to find them.
- LIBBY You look silly. Besides you're wearing glasses. *(Rose whips her glasses off)*
- ROSE Shut up. It was the first thing that popped into my head. Start looking. *(Rose pulls Libby down. Loud chanting from the window. Old is good, Old is fine, This is our time to shine.)*
I don't want mom to see us. Put your head down.
- LIBBY I am not hiding. She can't see us anyway.

ROSE Let's get out of here. Where's the kitchen? (*Rose leads and Libby follows*)

ACT 3: SCENE 2

Living room: Libby's sitting with Marnie. They are looking at a quilt.

LIBBY You'll never guess. Mrs. Kasun called me. She hung Al's quilt on the wall. Says she loves it. She wants more quilts.

MARNIE Really? How many walls does she want to fill?

LIBBY Lots apparently. She's thinking 50 quilts would do it. Or more.

MARNIE Well, what do you know... you've been shaking the bushes trying to rustle up some paintings and all along, quilts are the answer.

LIBBY I was getting tired of beating my head against the wall. If we can get more quilts like this one of yours... Those colours work beautifully together, by the way. This quilt show is starting to run through my head. Can you imagine all the colours and varieties?

MARNIE People will be drawn to them. If Al gave you a quilt, I bet his wife would too. Debbie does nice work. She's up to Jane's standards.

LIBBY Really? I'll ask. Would you consider donating this quilt to the show too?

MARNIE Of course. If you need a few more there are others in my closet. It just blows me away that Mrs. Kasun asked for quilts. I have such a good feeling about this, Libby. My friends will donate, I'm sure. We'll get the word out to the guild.

LIBBY I'm so grateful, Marnie. But there's not much time.

Jane comes barging in. Libby and Marcie jump
Jane, you startled us.

JANE Well I rang the doorbell several times but no one answered. So I came in.

MARNIE You're out of breath. Anyone chasing you?

JANE (*Jane sits down*) Well, I just couldn't wait to get here... You have to hear this. (*Jane takes a deep breath*) I was at the Blue Mermaid. You'll never guess. There were two or three socialites ...

MARNIE Socialists? What the heck are you talking about?

JANE Socialites! The upper crust.

- MARNIE Socialites? Is this one of those how many socialists does it take to change a light?
- JANE This is no joke. I heard the socialists (*she shakes her head*) socialites..
- MARNIE Were you eavesdropping again?
- JANE Of course not. I was waiting for Trisha ... minding my business.... in the moment, so to speak ... with both ears open.
- MARNIE This must be pretty earth shattering. Spill it.
- JANE Listen to this. (*Jane gets up and gesticulates*) At the next table ... behind the shrubs ... I couldn't see but I could hear them... three women. It wasn't clear at first til I moved closer. I looked for an app on my phone for spying. They really should have one.
- LIBBY Jane, who was it?
- JANE I didn't catch the names ... oh, except one. Lady, I think. But maybe that's a title.
- LIBBY Lady? Lady Emmet?
- JANE That's the one. They were discussing the Thorold Charity Ball. It sounded to me like they started a rumour about the hall having mold and Covid and the roof may cave in ... so none of the artists want to show their work there.
- LIBBY That's terrible. We can't expose people to that.
- MARNIE It sounds fake if you ask me.
- JANE It's suspicious. This Lady person wants the artists to donate to her show. And worse than that: she agreed to be Master of Ceremonies for the Thorold Ball. But plans to back out at the last minute. How nervy! Leaving your sister in the lurch. She's already gloating ... thinks the Ball will be a bust.
- LIBBY Why would they do this to Rose? It doesn't make sense. It's all for a good cause.
- JANE There's a prize. The Award for Best Community Effort. This lady wants to win it. She's only pretending to help Rose. Plans to pull the rug out ..
- MARNIE She's no lady. Who in the world would give her a title?
- LIBBY It's her name. Like Lady Bird Johnson. There is no title. But she's under the impression it gives her a royal edge.

JANE Is she likely to get away with it?

MARNIE Not if we can help it. They aren't going to win this one.

LIBBY So Rose was right. She wasn't just being paranoid.

MARNIE Now I feel sorry for her. Let's get going.

JANE I will help. Libby, have you spoken to Rose yet? Did she get over showing quilts?

LIBBY OH that ...I haven't told her. I tried.

MARNIE She'll find out soon enough. The show's next week. Didn't you say Mrs. Kasun was impressed? Rose will be too. Don't worry.

LIBBY Easy for you to say, it's my neck under the rotary cutter.

JANE You don't want to spring it on her the night of the Ball.

LIBBY That does worry me. We're going to do the decorating. Marnie's friends and I. Rose will be too busy with TV interviews and press conferences. She's not coming until the Ball starts. It's killing her. There's no time for her to inspect it beforehand.

JANE I was supposed to meet Trisha Romance for lunch today but we didn't connect. Can I ask her for a painting?

LIBBY Sure. That would be wonderful. It would round out that wall of art.

MARNIE Would you donate a quilt too, Jane?

JANE It would be my pleasure. What about you, Libby? What are you donating?

LIBBY My time. My quilts are not for display.

MARNIE Team leaders always have to put something in the show. Do you mind if we look? I'm sure we'll like one of them. Jane, you will promise to keep your rulers under wraps... won't you, Jane? (*Libby looks sceptical*)

JANE I promise not to make judgements. My eyes will be shut to any flaws during this entire show ... even if it kills me. By the way, Libby, I brought in your newspaper. (*Jane looks before handing the paper to Libby*) Look at that. Old people picketing on Main Street.

LIBBY What in the world?

MARNIE What's wrong?

JANE Do you know that person?

LIBBY My mother ... on the front page!

MARNIE Can't miss that. Funny sign and she's leading the pack.

LIBBY Rose will have a fit.

MARNIE Your mother's sure making a bold statement. That's quite a publicity stunt. Never underestimate a woman who owns a power tool. Sure would like to meet your mom sometime. Hmm ... I have an idea.
(Marnie gets up and starts pacing. Libby keeps her eyes on the paper)

LIBBY This is terrible. I better go smooth the waters. Don't want mom kicked out of another home. Sorry, I hate to push you out like this.

MARNIE We understand. But what about your quilts? Can we see them first? I'll choose the best one.

LIBBY I'm still not sure. Who would ever bid on one of my quilts?

MARNIE You never know. It's hard to judge your own work.

LIBBY Can't it wait? They're in my sewing room downstairs. It's a total mess.

MARNIE Why not now? There's a time crunch. We don't expect you to clean up your creative clutter. We all have that. *(Jane puts up a hand)* Oh, sorry, Jane, not you. The rest of us do our sewing forever and housework whenever.

LIBBY I suppose ... well, if you really insist ... I have a few quilts on a table by my machine. Just take one. If they were any good I'd donate them all. Close the door when you leave. Bill's coming home soon so you don't have to lock it.

Libby runs off. Jane and Marnie head for the basement. Jane stops and pulls on Marnie's arm with a worried face.

JANE What if Bill comes home and sees us making off with Libby's quilt? He might freak out. Call the Police.

MARNIE You're right. He doesn't know us. He's been asleep whenever I've been here. Let's be quick. We can get out fast. I think we could outrun Bill if need be.

Marnie and Jane leave for the basement. The lights dim. Everything is quiet for one minute.

Footsteps are heard by the door. The sound of the doorknob turning. The stage goes dark.

ACT 3: SCENE 3

The coffee shop. Stage left. Libby, Marnie and Jane are walking in. They sit at a table.

LIBBY Can't believe we pulled it off so fast. The Hall looks great. The quilts are up. This is it. Tonight's the night.

MARNIE I feel like a rag doll. Up and down that ladder. My legs aren't what they used to be. *(She massages her legs)*

JANE Tell me about it. My arms too. Just aching. Who knew quilts were so heavy? I have to go home and take a long bath. Then go to the salon.

MARNIE You're having your hair done? It looks fine.

JANE I'll feel better if it looks professional. This is a grand affair after all.

LIBBY A nap is all I want. Then throw on a gown and off to the Ball. Like Cinderella.

MARNIE I shall whisk myself over in my fancy pants but ditch the pumpkin. My ole Buick will be my chariot.

JANE Isn't it so charming to be going to a real Ball? I shall dance the night away.

MARNIE Can't wait for the line dancing. *(She swings her arms around)* A little cha cha cha.

In walks Rose. She looks around then sees them and comes to the table.

LIBBY Rose, what a surprise. Come sit with us. I'm not sure you've met Marnie or Jane.

ROSE It is a pleasure to meet all of you. I'm just on my way to the station for the next interview. Honestly, I can't believe how many media want to talk to me. I had no idea my campaign would be so successful.

MARNIE I guess these things just snowball. It must be tiring for you.

ROSE For some reason, it's not. I feel so energized. Pulling this together has been challenging, so many stumbling blocks but I overcame them. Partly because of Libby here and some other great volunteers. It's made me see things in a different light. For me, it's about doing something worthwhile for the community. In the past, the Thorold Charity Ball has neglected the charity part. For me that's the only reason to do it. To make things better for people who need our help. Richard and I have been very fortunate in our day so I'm glad to give to back. Libby and I

didn't have the means growing up and it was tough some days. But we had a strong mother and we made the most of it. A community needs to pull together as a family. We saw signs of that in the pandemic. I want to make sure we continue that helping spirit. Oh... I am so sorry. Spouting off like that. Gosh, look at the time? Must run. I hope to see you later. Are you all coming to the Ball?

MARNIE You bet. We'll be there with flying colours.

JANE We would not miss this one. Good luck with your interviews.

Libby gets up and hugs Rose. Rose runs off. Libby sits down again. Puts her head on the table.

LIBBY Now I feel really guilty.

MARNIE So Rose still doesn't know she's, in effect, hosting a quilt show?

LIBBY Well, I couldn't tell her now! Just before the interviews. She'd be a wreck. I tried a few times before but something always intervened.

JANE Fate. Maybe this is working out the best way.

MARNIE The day of reckoning is coming. We'll stick by your side. Help you explain to Rose.

JANE Once she sees the hall? She'll love it. So stunning. Our members were generous. The quilts are such good quality ... even I was impressed.

MARNIE You didn't?

JANE Just one little ruler. Most of them I eyed quickly. You can't expect me to turn my scrutinizing eye off?

LIBBY Did you see Al gave us three quilts? All amazing. One of them is pretty avant guard. He's such a card. I told him about his name change and he thought it was a hoot. Alberto ... He's going to play that up. Says he's going to introduce his Debbie as Deborahhh. I asked him to give a little talk about quilts just before the auction.

MARNIE He's so unpretentious but he won't pass up an opportunity to joke around. He'll give a great talk. I think it'll help people understand our work.

JANE It might help Rose feel better about the quilts too.

LIBBY Sure hope so. It's making me nervous. Why didn't I just spit it out before? I think I keep trying to make things easier on her.

MARNIE Sometimes that doesn't work. You can't save everybody from bad feelings.

LIBBY I'm going to the Hall early. Meet Rose and have it out with her.

MARNIE Do you want your posse there?

LIBBY No, I got myself into this mess and I have to deal with it. But thanks.

JANE In that case, I am on my way to get dolled up for tonight. See you ladies.

MARNIE That's curtains for us too, Libby. (*They both get up. Jane leaves.*) But before you go I want to let you know that I went to see your mother.

LIBBY What? Whatever for?

MARNIE That woman knows publicity. The press can't get enough of her. I helped her set up a blog. Only one week blogging and she's become a thing.

LIBBY A thing? My mom?

MARNIE She's blogging about seniors and a lot about the Charity Ball. That's why the press from Toronto to Buffalo and in between are clamouring to speak to Rose.

LIBBY I can't believe this. Rose will have a fit. First my secret then my mom's. (*Libby puts her hand over her eyes*)

MARNIE You're missing the point. Both you and your mom are helping Rose. You're making her shine. Isn't that what this is all about? Don't be so hard on yourself. Talk to Rose like an equal partner. You haven't done anything despicable. Quite the opposite. Be proud, Libby. Think of this as important behind the scenes work.

LIBBY Behind the scenes? Is that another word for lying? Marnie ... What you say may be right but I've learned my lesson. Secrets aren't a good way of dealing with a relationship. Now how do I get out of this gracefully? And stop Rose from disowning me and my mother.

MARNIE It's all going to stitch together nicely, you'll see. Go home and relax. You want to be your best tonight. Let it all unfold.

ACT 3: SCENE 4

In the Convention Hall. Music is playing in the background and people are heard laughing and talking in another room. Rose and Libby stand close together.

ROSE You've made a laughing stock out of me. No one will bid on quilts. We promised them art. We won't make any money.

LIBBY You're being ridiculous. People pay good money for quilts like these.

ROSE And I hear you've fired Lady Emmet?

LIBBY I did no such thing. She quit.

ROSE That's not what she told me. She said she came looking for me. You were there and fired her. Now what are we going to do without an MC? I suppose I'll have to step up to the plate again.

LIBBY We took care of that?

ROSE WE? Who's we?

LIBBY My friends. The ones who decorated the Hall .. Organized the show.

ROSE (*Distainfully*) Might have guessed. The quilters. What do those threadheads know?

Mrs. Kasun comes running up to Rose. Marnie and Jane are behind her.

KASUN Oh, Mrs. Ralph. Isn't this wonderful? Your team went all out ... lights, flowers, balloons ... all the amazing quilts! ... this is the most creative show we've ever had here. You are to be congratulated.

ROSE Well ... I ... um ... I'm glad you think so ... but...

KASUN Don't be modest, Mrs. Ralph. As the leader, you should take a bow.

ROSE Really? Well, I thank you for those kind words.

KASUN You deserve it. And getting Al to speak about quilts. Perfect. People will bid higher once they hear the stories behind the work.

ROSE Al? Who's Al?

LIBBY Alberto, Rose? Remember?

KASUN Alberto? ?? Oh Al ...Yes, of course, I forgot he changed his name tonight. What a character. Did you see people crowding around his quilt? It's causing quite a stir. Even the men are taking a second look.

There is a commotion in the background. Jazzy music starts. Everyone looks over to the left.

ROSE Oh no. Tell me that's not mom. AND her gang. Dressed like French tarts?? This can't get any worse.

A row of ladies with canes and walkers dance by at the side. They're sporting boas and sparkly tops.

MARNIE They're part of the entertainment.

ROSE Is this a nightmare? What's happening? Am I not in charge?

LIBBY Last minute changes ... I was trying to tell you...

ROSE *(Lights flashing)* Cameras? Who are those people?

MARNIE The Press.... Toronto... Hamilton... Buffalo ... and locals too.

ROSE Why? This is just the Thorold Ball.

MARNIE It's your mom ... and her blog...

ROSE MOM has a blog???

LIBBY Facebook too. Quite a following for a newbie.

MARNIE She knows how to get publicity.

ROSE Stop. This is too much. I can't take this in. Don't tell me another thing. *(She puts up her hand and breathes deeply)* I have to pull myself together. It sounds like things are ready to go. I am the MC now. I must make my entrance... welcome people....How do I look? *(From the other room two male voices ... Welcome Ladies and Gentlemen to the Thorold Charity Ball and Art show.)* What? **I'm** supposed to start...Who's talking?

LIBBY The Master of Ceremonies. Let's get you in there so you can be introduced.

ROSE MC? What??? Who in the world ...

LIBBY Richard Ralph III and William McDonald.

ROSE My Richard? Your Bill?

LIBBY We had to think fast and they stepped in. Volunteered.

A delivery man comes running in with a wagon full of flowers and big balloons and many hearts on strings trailing behind him. He is carrying a violin. Marnie, Libby and Rose look at each other quizzically.

MARNIE What is that?

LIBBY Did we order it?

MARNIE Don't think so. But there's no time to check.

ROSE This is getting weirder by the minute.

LIBBY *(Libby takes Rose by the shoulders and looks into her eyes)* Take a deep breath. Put on those rosie glasses and get into the limelight. You are the star of the show right now. They are about to introduce you.

They all walk towards the ballroom, Rose in front. Music plays ... (suggestion: Anchors Away. 1906 by Charles Zimmerman and Alfred Miles)... Then a big cheer ... hooting and hollering.

ACT 3: SCENE 5

In the Foyer. Libby, Jane and Marnie come dancing in.

MARNIE Can you believe it? The crowd loved it. The Flowers and the hearts ... then the violinist! So romantic ... how did that old guy get down on his knees so fast?

JANE My husband never proposed to me like that. What did your mother think?

LIBBY She had a notion Mr. Lovejoy was getting sweet on her. Mom was taken aback.

MARNIE For just a heart beat. But she did look tickled.

JANE She had stars in her eyes.

LIBBY She played along. But they had a chance to talk. After all this has been a whirlwind romance of just a few weeks! He agreed to hold off on marriage. Did I

tell you Mr. Lovejoy owns a small motel? He's turning it into a seniors place. He got the idea from mom's blog. She told him time will tell if they're right for each other. This guy moves a little too fast.

MARNIE At his age he needs to make the most of his time. Not put things off.

JANE You'll have to keep us posted on this budding romance.

LIBBY Of course... But I think mom likes her freedom a bit too much to tie the knot again.... Now wasn't this a magical night? How can I ever thank you?

MARNIE Are you kidding? We've never had so much fun. I'd do it again in a heartbeat.

LIBBY Well I heard how much people loved your quilts. The price was going pretty high before I left.

MARNIE Can you believe it? I was astonished. And Jane here. Someone from cable TV wants to get her on a show to demonstrate her sewing skills. Pretty cool.

JANE It blew me away. This was awesome. We did well, ladies. We're quite the team. Different fabrics but one crazy quilt. All stitched together.

MARNIE That's the thing about quilters. We know how to iron things out.

LIBBY I was so worried. Figured Rose would kill me. But did you see her? She sure let her hair down. People got to see the real person for once. Not that phoney baloney.

MARNIE I noticed she was introducing herself as Rose, not Mrs. Richard Ralph III.

Rose comes running in.

ROSE You missed it. Just so exciting...

LIBBY Missed what? I thought the night was over.

ROSE The Mayor of St. Catharines was bidding against the Mayor of Thorold.

LIBBY But the auction's finished, isn't it?

ROSE It just happened... an impromptu bidding war between two rivals... for Alberto's masterpiece.

JANE The big statement quilt? The one where the bottom seam is 1/4 of an inch off?

- MARNIE Really, Jane? Get a grip.
- LIBBY What happened? I thought Jim Bradley got that quilt?
- ROSE He did. But just now he offered it for auction to the mayors. To get them to part with their money. My Ralph egged them on. Who knew men would bid on a quilt? It was a tie. So they agreed to split the cost. They'll share the quilt. Six months in one City Hall and six months in the other. Jim's smiling. He just upped the profits for his favourite charity.
- MARNIE Well, imagine that? Politicians cooperating.
- JANE Maybe the pandemic taught them something.
- ROSE Did you hear about the other intense bidding? Earlier on. I think you ladies were helping Mrs. Kasun. It really surprised me.
- LIBBY Nothing surprises me anymore. Whose quilt was it?
- ROSE Even your Bill was in on it...
- LIBBY My Bill wouldn't bid on a quilt. You sure you got that right? (*She looks stunned*)
- ROSE Yes. Lots of people bid on it. The price climbed up. He kept bidding. ... very romantic, don't you think?
- JANE Libby, Bill is proud of your work.
- LIBBY How would you know? You never met him until tonight.
- MARNIE Actually we saw him the day you let us choose your quilts. He helped us. He knows a lot more than he lets on.
- LIBBY Well ... blow me down with a featherweight Singer.
- ROSE Libby, your quilt went for \$3,000.
- LIBBY No way!!! Mine???Are you kidding? That's crazy! It can't be true. Who would pay that much?
- ROSE Ralph. He loves it.
- LIBBY That's a ridiculous amount of money for a small quilt. Are you sure ... cause I thought ... (*she looks worried*)

ROSE Not to worry, Libby. Ralph just landed a big contract. The cheque won't bounce.

LIBBY Oh, Rose. I am so happy for you.

ROSE Our guys sure came through for us.

LIBBY And so did our friends.

Mrs. Kasun comes over.

KASUN I hope you will be in charge again next year, Mrs. Ralph....ah ... Rose. This was such a huge success. Congratulations on a job well done.

Mrs. Leigh and her Can Can friends come dancing across the stage with their walkers/ canes.

ROSE Not again ... I thought they had a curfew? *(Everyone laughs)*

LIBBY Not for long. They're all moving into Mr. Lovejoy's Motel. Everyone with their own suite. Hiring staff to look after them. Ditching all the rules.

ROSE Like the lady in the book?

LIBBY Yup. The little old lady who broke all the rules. That's our mom. C'mon ...Let's join the dance.

(Everyone joins the dance laughing)