

*Catherine's kitchen.*

*Catherine, Charlotte, Pearl, and Frances playing poker at the table.*

*Catherine finishes dealing a hand.*

FRANCES. At least you had the nerve to say something to him when he fired you, Katie. I just started to cry.

PEARL. I cried. Then I threw his pencil sharpener at him.

CHARLOTTE. This is a poker party, girls. Not a pity party.

CATHERINE. Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE. I'm just saying. We're playing for pennies ... not sob stories. You in or not.

PEARL. I'm in. *(She tosses a poker chip on the table.)* Come on, Char. You cried. Admit it. When Mr. Reed called you in.

FRANCES. We wouldn't know, would we? She was the last one of us left. She's not gonna fess up.

PEARL. Come clean, Char. Did you cry or not cry? Anyone wanna take bets on that?

CHARLOTTE. Worse. I was struck dumb. I couldn't say a thing. Not a thing. First time in my life, words failed me.

FRANCES. Words fail you? Hell must've frozen over.

PEARL. Or maybe pigs flew. I'll take three ...

CHARLOTTE. *(Dealing Pearl three cards.)* The only person more surprised than me was Mr. Reed. Complete silence. Then I cried. All of us let go. Not a second thought.

CATHERINE. *(Reminding her.)* No pity, Char. I'm in. *(She tosses a chip in.)*

CHARLOTTE. Just stating a fact.

CATHERINE. Frances?

FRANCES. I'm in. *(She tosses in a chip.)*

PEARL. You girls hear about Marie?

CATHERINE/FRANCES/CHARLOTTE. Yes.

CHARLOTTE. I'm gonna raise you ... *(She tosses in a chip.)*  
PEARL. I'm out. *(She folds.)* It's awful. Horrible. She was so ...  
CHARLOTTE. Pretty?  
PEARL. Young, I was going to say.  
FRANCES. And Marguerite?  
PEARL. What about Marguerite?  
FRANCES. She had to move back home. I'm out. *(She folds.)* Her and her husband, they lost everything. Doctor's bills, hospital bills, medicine ... They lost their house. They had to move back in with her mom and dad. Now they all pitch in to take care of her.  
CATHERINE. Same with Mary Ellen.  
FRANCES. I heard.  
CATHERINE. And Helen and Inez and Margaret and —  
CHARLOTTE. *(Cutting her off.)* Enough, girls, okay? Enough. We all know we feel awful about this whole mess. We can whine about it till the cows come home. We *have* whined about it till the cows came home. So do you mind if I make a suggestion?  
FRANCES. I think it kind of depends on whether you —  
CHARLOTTE. *(Cutting her off.)* We can keep whining or we can actually do something.  
FRANCES. Like what?  
CHARLOTTE. I don't know. Something ... gutsy. It's not like we got a lot to lose.  
PEARL. I don't have the stomach for it.  
CHARLOTTE. I'm not saying I do, but ...  
PEARL. What *are* you saying?  
CHARLOTTE. The company's counting on us just going away quietly, right? Maybe we should make a little noise.  
PEARL. You're suggesting ...  
CHARLOTTE. We could put up a bit of a fight. God knows we've earned it.  
FRANCES. PEARL.  
Charlotte ... Noooooo ... .  
CHARLOTTE. I'm just saying ...  
FRANCES. What do you think, Katie?  
CATHERINE. A big part of me wants to take my family, leave town, change my name, and pretend for as long as I can that none of this happened.  
PEARL/FRANCES. *[Ad lib in agreement.]*  
CHARLOTTE. What about the other part?

CATHERINE. It wonders what it would feel like to hire the best lawyer I could find.

PEARL. You would sue? You really would?

CATHERINE. No. I don't know. Women like me don't stir up trouble. We play nice and do what we're told.

CHARLOTTE. Tell ya what, Katie. Let's make this game interesting. I win, I decide what we're going to do. You win, you decide. Okay?

PEARL. What exactly do you mean by "what we're going to do?"

CHARLOTTE. If we're going to put up a fight — or lie down and die. Because that's our choice as I see it. *(A beat.)* Okay?

CATHERINE. No no no no no. I can't.

CHARLOTTE. You're really gonna leave it up to me?

PEARL. Katie!

FRANCES. *(To Pearl.)* Shh!

CATHERINE. Okay. Okay. I can't believe I'm saying this ... But, you're on. *(Frances crosses herself.)*

CHARLOTTE. *(Laying her cards on the table.)* Three aces. *(Catherine puts her head in her hands.)* Sore loser? *(Pearl takes Catherine's cards and places them on the table.)*

PEARL. Full house.

FRANCES. I'll be damned.

CHARLOTTE. *(In shock.)* You won. I can't believe it. Of all times, you won.

CATHERINE. I don't want to decide this. I really, really don't. Somebody else. Someone else should do this. Not me. I just — I really can't. I'm not cut out for it. You know that. Char, you're the one. You do this. Come on.

CHARLOTTE. I lost fair and square.

CATHERINE. Okay. Okay. Okay, then. Forgive me, but ... I think we do the only thing we can do.

FRANCES. Which is ...

CATHERINE. Fix our hair, stand up straight, and go get / those sons of — *(Light up on Leonard Grossman, vivid, avuncular, aggressive.)*

GROSSMAN. *(Overlapping on the /.)* Those sons of bitches — Sorry, ladies, sorry.