

The Pie Ladies Make Bail

Sherry Piros





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THE PIE LADIES MAKE BAIL

by

Sherry Piros

CAST

KITTY: Age 50-70, she is the group's leader, keeping the Pie Ladies on track.

LUCILLE: Age 50-70,, she is quiet, friendly, helpful, and proper.

GLADYS: Age 50-70, she is savvy, quick to grasp nuances, an organizer.

DULCIE: Age 50-70, she takes things too literally, not the sharpest tack in the box.

NADINE: Age 50-70, she's the motherly one of the group, concerned with doing what needs to be done.

VELDA: Age 50-70, she has a sharp tongue and a quick wit. She and Dulcie quarrel like sisters but really are friends.

PASTOR MAXELL

LOLA: Landlady.

GINGER: Neighbor woman.

DIXIE: Neighbor woman.

The set and blocking directions are given for performing this play in situations where there is no stage or curtain. If a curtain is available for your group, feel free to adapt.

THE PIE LADIES MAKE BAIL

(Dixie and Ginger enter from L, each looking at a quilt that is hung over the top of the jail bars. It consists of two panels, hinged at the center, of gray PVC pipe in a gray wooden frame, representing a jail cell.)

DIXIE: And this is a Grandmother's Flower Garden *(or substitute appropriate name.)* quilt that my grandmother made.

GINGER: It's beautiful. Do you quilt?

DIXIE: No, but one of the women in Lola's apartment is going to teach me.

GINGER: Are those the women they call the "pie ladies?"

DIXIE: Yeah, because they make the pies for the church supper.

GINGER: Oh.

DIXIE: Did you hear - Lola was telling me that they got arrested!

GINGER: Who?

DIXIE: The pie ladies!

GINGER: The pie ladies are criminals! What happened?!

DIXIE: Well, you knew they all moved into that apartment together to form their own country.

GINGER: What do you mean "form their own country?"

DIXIE: They wanted to combine the best of yesterday and the best of today to make a better place to live.

GINGER: That's an interesting idea. How did that lead to getting arrested?

DIXIE: Oh, some of the neighbors thought the pie ladies might be terrorists or something.

GINGER: So what were they arrested for?

(They take the quilt down and, as if talking confidentially, move off to stage left where they may sit or stand, possibly still on stage.)

DIXIE: *(as they exit.)* Well, here's what I heard, from a very reliable source...

(The church ladies are revealed, behind bars. Some are pacing. Velda is center front, facing the audience.)

VELDA: *(hands on her head.)* I can't take it! I can't take it!

LUCILLE: What's the matter, Velda?

VELDA: *(very panicky. Over-acted.)* I can't take being closed in like this. We're like rats in a cage... like feet in a shoe... like chicken in a pot pie!

LUCILLE: But Velda, we've only been here for ten minutes!

VELDA: I'm practicing for going to *(dramatically.)* The Big House.

DULCIE: We've been invited to the governor's house? Why?

KITTY: Not the governor's house. The big house refers to prison.

DULCIE: The governor's going to prison? I knew he was a crook!

KITTY: No, Dulcie, Velda was saying that we're going to prison.

DULCIE: *(with conviction.)* Oh, no. My great-grandfather went to prison, and we're nothing like him.

KITTY: Why did your great-grandfather go to prison?

DULCIE: My mother never told me. It was a family secret.

KITTY: Then how do you know we're nothing like him?

DULCIE: *(indignantly.)* Well, he had a beard and bushy eyebrows!

(Women react: "Not again" with Dulcie and her non sequiturs!)

VELDA: Trapped like olives on a pizza!

DULCIE: Would you stop that! You're making me hungry!

GLADYS: Don't we get to make a phone call?

LUCILLE: Who would you call?

GLADYS: Well, if you hadn't gone and gotten yourselves locked up, I'd be calling you!

NADINE: Anybody know how we're going to make the \$12,000 bail?

GLADYS: Well, Nadine, if you hadn't been cited for public endangerment, our bail would only be \$6,000 for disturbing the peace.

NADINE: All I did was throw flour at the demonstrators!

GLADYS: Yeah, why did you do that?

NADINE: I was making cookies when Kitty called us to the foyer, and I had the flour canister in my hand. I didn't have anything else to throw!

LUCILLE: At least you didn't throw the canister. That would have been assault with a breadly weapon.

NADINE: I sure hope I turned off the oven! It all happened so fast!

KITTY: I know! One minute I'm yelling back at the demonstrators and the next, I'm in a cop car on my way to the pen.

VELDA: Yeah, and now, here we are...trapped like nuts in a quick bread!

LOLA: *(rushes in)* Ladies, are you all right?

(All the women are excited. Ad lib: Lola! Thank goodness! A familiar face! Etc.)

LUCILLE: How did you know we were here?

LOLA: Well, I just happened to be looking out my front window.

DULCIE: What else is new?

LOLA: What?

DULCIE: I said... "So nice of you. As our landlady, to watch our every move, like that."

LOLA: Oh. I always throw in a little surveillance with the price of the rent.

KITTY: Sure... water, utilities, and surveillance!

LOLA: When I saw those people pulling your flag down, I knew you were going to need help.

LUCILLE: Oh, that was so thoughtful of you.

LOLA: So I rushed out to find somebody, and when I got back, you were gone.

LUCILLE: Anyway, you tried.
(*General ad lib of appropriate comments.*)

LOLA: I got a picture of it all on my cell phone.

KITTY: Good! That will help us if we have to go to court.

LOLA: But you can't see much. There's all this white powdery stuff in the air!

VELDA: So when will they let us out of here?

LOLA: A very nice gentleman is out there talking to the officers right now on your behalf.

LUCILLE: Who is it?

LOLA: I don't know. He's the 'somebody' I found when I rushed out to find somebody.

KITTY: Who do we know that's a 'very nice gentleman?'

(They all try to think of a very nice gentleman. With no luck.)

LOLA: When I told him you had just been in a riot, he looked quite shocked.

LUCILLE: It sure would be nice if it were -

(The Pastor enters.)

ALL: *(as he enters.)* Pastor Maxwell!!!

PASTOR: Ladies! Are you all right? What happened?

NADINE: I was baking chocolate chip cookies...

DULCIE: A whole bunch of people...

KITTY: At first they were just shouting and...

GLADYS: We were just minding our own...

LUCILLE: It's not our fault in any...

VELDA: I just want to get out of...

PASTOR: *(holding up his hands.)* Wait! Stop! Kitty, what happened?

KITTY: We were arrested on public endangerment charges.

PASTOR: You?!? The Pie Ladies?!? What did you do... burn some pies? *(chuckles to himself at his joke.)*

KITTY: Pastor, the Pie Ladies -

ALL PIE LADIES: Never burn pies!

PASTOR: Yes. Of course. So what are the charges?

KITTY: Nadine threw flour at a group of people who were harassing us for starting our own country, and they thought she was throwing anthrax spores.

NADINE: Oh, brother. What would a bunch of old ladies be doing with anthrax?

GLADYS: The same thing we're doing by declaring our own country – bringing down the free world!

VELDA: And now we're here... trapped like apples in a pie!

PASTOR: The Pie Ladies in jail. (*shaking his head.*) I must not be doing my job. (*looking up.*) Where have I gone wrong?

VELDA: Can you get us out of here, Pastor?

PASTOR: Everything would be as easy as pie (*he appreciates his own double entendre.*) if it weren't for the \$12,000 bond.

LOLA: \$12,000! That's a lot of money.

LUCILLE: What'll we do, Pastor? We don't have that kind of money.

DULCIE: We might if we didn't pay such high rent.

LOLA: What?

DULCIE: I said, we might if we lived in a tent.

LOLA: Oh no! Don't do that!

LUCILLE: Then what can we do?

(Others ad lib additional worries and questions.)

PASTOR: I have some good news: the church has a fund for destitute members.

NADINE: We're not destitute, Pastor!

VELDA: Speak for yourself. If it means getting out of here, I'm the most destitute person I know.

PASTOR: I also have some bad news: it doesn't contain \$12,000.

KITTY: How much is in the fund?

PASTOR: About \$7,000.

KITTY: That leaves us \$5,000 short.

LOLA: I think I've got \$5,000 I could lend.

LUCILLE: Lola! What a charitable thing for you to do!

LOLA: Well, charity begins at home... especially if the home is mine!

GLADYS: Yeah, follow the money!

LOLA: It also says in the Bible that we should love our neighbors, doesn't it, Pastor Maxwell.

PASTOR: It certainly does, Ms. Albright.

LOLA: If we're going to be financiers together, please call me Lola.

PASTOR: *(clearing his throat.)* Oh. All right. Lola.

LOLA: I'll probably have to raise their rents. Temporarily, of course.

PASTOR: Just how much of an increase would that be? Temporarily, of course.

LOLA: Excuse us, ladies. Pastor Maxwell and I have to talk high finance. *(she links arms with him. They move off to the side.)*

KITTY: I think she has designs on the pastor!

DULCIE: She's tattooed him?!?!? Where?

KITTY: Not art. Heart. She's after his heart.

(Dulcie's facial expression is very puzzled.)

KITTY: She thinks he's hot.

(Dulcie's facial expression changes to understanding and then to scandalized.)

LUCILLE: Well, I, for one, am very glad to see both the pastor and Lola.

KITTY: Me, too. I'd hate to see the world's best pie makers languish in jail!

DULCIE: What did they do?

LUCILLE: She was referring to us, Dulcie.

DULCIE: I knew that.

(Pastor and Lola return.)

PASTOR: All right, ladies. Ms. Al - uh, Lola's offer seems reasonable. And I have the authority to loan the church's money.

KITTY: But what if we can't pay it back fast enough?

LOLA: Then your very nice pastor and I would work out an extension, wouldn't we, RJ?

(The other look at each other, startled, mouthing "RJ!?!")

PASTOR: I'll go talk to the officer at the front desk, and you'll be out of here faster than you can bake a pie!

NADINE: Here, Pastor. I made this drawing of the people who took down our flag.

(He holds up a drawing of stick people with cartoon-type faces.)

PASTOR: Uh, thanks.

NADINE: Would you believe I took art classes to draw that well!

PASTOR: No! That's hard to believe! *(Nadine is pleased. He exits, shaking his head.)*

(Dixie and Ginger hold up quilt and go out to center stage again. Behind the quilt, the stage is re-set: jail bars are removed; a blanket or cover is thrown over chairs to represent a sofa, also other chairs covered; small table on far R; lamp, flowers or dried arrangement, anything to represent the interior of a home. In this space, the R exit is to the kitchen, the L is to the outside.)

DIXIE: See this piece? This was one of my favorite dresses when I was in fourth grade. I think it might have been my only dress in fourth grade.

GINGER: Oh, come on now. You must have had more than one dress!

DIXIE: Yeah, I must have because my grandmother cut this one up for a quilt!

GINGER: So, back to the pie ladies... they now all have arrest records. Plus they are up to their eyeballs in debt. How awful! How terrible! *(beat.)* How delicious!

DIXIE: It IS a juicy story, isn't it.

GINGER: Tell me more. What happened then?

DIXIE: Well, when they got back to their apartment and pooled their money, they realized they didn't have enough to pay back the pastor, let alone the landlady—and she was charging interest.

GINGER: I would have sold the movie rights! So fill me in on the details. *(prompting her.)* They got out of jail and then...

DIXIE: Well, it wasn't long before they met in Kitty's apartment to come up with a plan to make money.

(Ginger and Dixie again move to the side with the quilt.)

(The women sit on the sofa and chairs. Kitty is the only one standing. Everyone is talking excitedly. Kitty is trying to bring the meeting to order.)

KITTY: *(tapping with the handle of a knife on the table beside her.)* Ladies. Ladies! *(when they get quiet.)* Before we begin our meeting, let's thank Lola for taking notes.

LOLA: My shorthand skills are still with me. I was the fastest in my class, you know.

DULCIE: Yes, that's what we heard.

LOLA: But my real skills are in figures.

DULCIE: Yeah, mine too! See? *(she stands and strikes a pose. Others chuckle.)*

KITTY: Down to business: Lola, would you read back the minutes, please.

LOLA: Certainly. (*reading.*) Suggestions for ways to pay back Pastor Maxwell and our landlady. (*looks up.*) That would be me, of course.

KITTY: Yes, yes. Go on.

LOLA: (*reading.*) Suggestion #1. Babysit anything and everything. Objection: Dulcie's great grandson broke her toilet. The neighbor kid broke her window. She does not want to babysit.

DULCIE: No babysitting, no dog sitting, and no house sitting! The only sitting I'll do is in a recliner with a book, a bag of pretzels, and a beer.

KITTY: (*to Lola.*) Keep reading, please.

LOLA: Suggestions #2. Have a garden stand. Objection: Velda is allergic to dirt. Plants make Lucille sneeze. Gladys gets hives when she sweats.

KITTY: That one's out. Keep going.

LOLA: #3. Make and sell a cookbook.

KITTY: Objections?

LOLA: There aren't any yet. That's as far as you got.

NADINE: Say! We started a cookbook for the church years ago, remember?

KITTY: Yeah, I remember. For some reason, we didn't finish it.

(Others ad lib agreement.)

NADINE: I recently found the box of stuff when I was cleaning out a closet.

LUCILLE: Oh no! We'd have to self-publish and that would take MORE money! It's too big a risk!

LOLA: Not nearly as big a risk as not paying me my money back! Or Pastor Maxwell's money back. Just think of the connections he has!

GLADYS: You're right! We'll pay him first!

(The ladies ad lib agreement, concern, etc.)

KITTY: So, it's settled? We're in the cookbook business?

GLADYS: Well, no one's died yet from eating our pies. I guess we can publish a cookbook!

NADINE: *(raising a glass of lemonade.)* To us! The best undiscovered cooks in the world!

(They stand and raise their glasses in a mutual toast.)

DULCIE: Betty Crockett, here we come!

VELDA: No, no. That was Davy Crockett.

DULCIE: Did he write a cookbook?

GLADYS: No, he died in the Alamo, remember?

DULCIE: It wasn't from eating our pies, was it? *(others patiently reassure her.)*

NADINE: I'm going to get the box. Let's see how much of a start we've got already.

(She exits R.)

LOLA: I've been doing some figuring. If you could sell them for \$12 a book, you'd only have to sell 1,000 books!

LUCILLE: Do we know a thousand people?

(Brief silence as they think.)

GLADYS: Then we'll just have to work harder and make the best cookbook in the world so people who aren't even related to us will buy it!

KITTY: And that's the title! The Best Cookbook in the World by the Best Cooks in the World!

(Nadine re-enters with box.)

NADINE: We've got a good start. Look! *(she picks up wads of recipes as she speaks.)*
Meats. Salads. Casseroles. Veggies. My personal favorite, Desserts. And more!

KITTY: Let's use these plus any new recipes you have. If everyone puts her share into the computer, it won't be too hard.

DULCIE: And we can add tips and stories to make it personal and homey.

(Women ad lib their enthusiasm for the idea.)

KITTY: Okay. Let's get to work. Meet back here next week for a progress report.

(Nadine, Gladys, Velda, and Dulcie talk as they exit with recipes.)

LOLA: If there's anything I can do to help, just let me know.

KITTY: Thanks.

LOLA: In the meantime, R.J— I mean, Pastor Maxwell has asked me to work on the church's books.

KITTY: Oh?

LOLA: *(handing her the papers.)* Here are your notes. See you around. *(She exits.)*

LUCILLE: I thought Margie, the secretary, kept the books.

KITTY: I did, too.

LUCILLE: Could Pastor Maxwell really be taken with her?

KITTY: Taken in by her, is more like it.

LUCILLE: Now, she's a nice person.

KITTY: But she's just not right for him.

(Ginger and Dixie hold up quilt again and walk to center.)

DIXIE: See this fabric here? My mother, my sister and I all had dresses alike out of it.

GINGER: Your mother sewed them?

DIXIE: Didn't all mothers sew back then?

GINGER: Yeah, sewed and cooked. But what happened with the cookbook ladies?

DIXIE: Well, after about 6 weeks of hard work, they had the contents ready to go.

GINGER: Six weeks! Wow!

DIXIE: The last thing to decide was the cover. For their final meeting, each one was to bring her best idea for the cover.

GINGER: That sounds like a good way to handle it.

DIXIE: Well, you'd think so, wouldn't you. But when they got together...

(They move to the side and sit.)

(Kitty is standing. The others are sitting. Each is holding a file folder, papers, brown envelope, etc. containing her cover idea.)

KITTY: *(holding up a large mailing box.)* First of all, here it is! THE cookbook! Ready to mail to the publisher! *(she points to the mailing label on the box. Others cheer and applaud. Kitty sets it on the telephone book on the table beside her.)*

GLADYS: And we've come prepared with our covers.

KITTY: Why don't we each hold up our individual cover and look at them all at the same time.

(They agree. Kitty calls them to stand in a line center stage, facing front holding up their covers. Each cover is an 8" x 10" picture of herself with the title, The Best Cookbook in the World by the Best Cooks in the World, written in varying fonts, sizes, and arrangements. One of the women's pictures needs to be duplicated so that one version can have doodling on it. They ad lib their consternation or amazement, etc. at the others' covers.)

KITTY: Well, we are certainly on the same page, aren't we.

GLADYS: Looks to me like we're on the same cover!

VELDA: What are we going to do now?

LUCILLE: I have an idea. Let's use a group picture taken by a professional photographer.

VELDA: Make sure he gets Dulcie's good side... if he can find it.

(Others ad lib responses to the idea. Nadine begins picking up all the covers. What is not noticeable is that she begins to pretend to doodle on one of them.)

KITTY: Let's each get a kitchen implement of some kind, maybe ham it up a little. What do you think?

(They ad lib agreement.)

VELDA: I'll call a photographer friend of mine to see if he can get us in right away.

KITTY: Okay. Let's go out to the kitchen to find something to use in the picture.

(They all start to leave. Nadine calls Gladys back.)

NADINE: Gladys! Come here.

GLADYS: What are you up to now?

NADINE: Well, I just couldn't resist. *(she holds up what she's been doing – drawing a moustache, beard, and glasses on Kitty's, or whoever in the cast looks the most like the Pastor, picture. Also, she has crossed out both Bests and written in Worst in both places.)*

GLADYS: That looks just like Pastor Maxwell! And he is the world's worst cook.

NADINE: Remember the baked beans he brought to last year's picnic?

GLADYS: Yeah. Not only were they still as hard as pebbles, the only sauce he'd put on them was ketchup. He needs a woman! Or a cook!

NADINE: Thank goodness Lucille managed to spill the pot on the lawn.

GLADYS: Yes! And she looked so innocent when she said it was an accident!

KITTY: *(from off stage.)* Nadine! Gladys! Come and make your choice.

NADINE: I'd better throw this away before someone sees it. *(she starts to throw it.)*

GLADYS: No! Wait! I think it's funny how much it looks like the pastor. Let's show the others.

NADINE: *(clearly not sure.)* Well... all right, if you think so.

GLADYS: I'll just paperclip it under this sheet of paper until we get back. *(she matches her actions to her words. Then sets it down on the sofa or a chair, especially in a way that would make it slide off onto the floor.)*

(They exit to the kitchen. Sounds of excited voice and laughter cover Lola's tapping on the door.)

LOLA: *(entering.)* Ladies? *(peering around.)* Ladies? *(she arrives at the box on the table. She picks it up.)* This must be the cookbook! *(brushing over the address label.)* And ready to mail. This is so exciting! *(she starts to set it down, then stops, with a sudden inspiration.)* I'll mail it for them! It'll be my good deed, my contribution... my way of making sure I get paid back! *(she notices the sheet of paper on the floor or sofa.)* *(reading.)* Cover Design Instruction Sheet. *(she starts to lift the top page, then stops.)* No, I'll wait and be surprised like everyone else. Sometimes my virtue amazes even me. *(she puts the sheet into the box and seals it shut. She exits, taking it with her.)*

KITTY: Okay, ladies *(pointing with spatula, etc.)* to the photography studio!

(They chatter excitedly as they exit. The stage is empty for about 5 seconds. Then they reenter, in a much less excited frame of mind.)

VELDA: I'm really very sorry. *(she's holding a bowl or colander. As the others say the next lines, they put their items in her container somewhat forcefully.)*

KITTY: We're not upset, Velda. Just disappointed.

LUCILLE: Yes. It's not your fault your friend's wife chose this exact moment to have their baby.

GLADYS: We can have our picture taken by a different photographer, and everything will be all right.

KITTY: That's right. There are lots of other studios in the phone book. *(she starts to pick up the phone book.)* That's funny.

LUCILLE: What?

KITTY: I'm sure I put the cookbook on top of this phone book before we went for our picture.

LUCILLE: Well, it's not here now.

KITTY: Did anybody move it?

(Others ad lib that they didn't.)

KITTY: I'm positive I left it right here. *(putting her hand on top of the phone book.)* Help me look for it.

(They scatter throughout the area and look for the manuscript. Nothing.)

VELDA: Well, it's got to be somewhere.

GLADYS: Could it be in the fridge? I've put some crazy stuff in there over the last couple of years. One time I even put my goldfish in the fridge!

LUCILLE: So your goldfish became a cold fish.

KITTY: Sounds like my first husband!

DULCIE: Well, the cookbook has to be here. It can't just walk away.

LOLA: *(knocking and entering.)* Yoohoo! Ladies! Oh good! You're here. You'll be so happy! I just returned from the Post Office where – surprise! - I mailed your cookbook!!! Overnight delivery! As my gift to you. *(there is silence.)* I knew you'd be stunned!

KITTY: Well, thanks, Lola. That's very nice of you. But we weren't done with the cover.

LOLA: Oh sure, you were. It was attached to the instruction sheet so I stuck it in with the manuscript.

KITTY: But -

LOLA: Don't worry. I didn't peek.

KITTY: But -

LOLA: It's all taken care of. When it arrives, you can give me a copy, okay? I'll be running along now. No thanks necessary. *(she exits.)*

KITTY: Well. Now what?

VELDA: Surely the publishing company will call us if there's something missing.

KITTY: I think I'm going to get something to drink. And I don't mean water! Anybody else?

LUCILLE: Yes! A Coke, straight up! No chaser.

(They exit, talking about their drinks or Lola's stunt. Gladys and Nadine remain.)

GLADYS: You know what I think happened?

NADINE: I know what happened. She put the picture of Kitty in, the one I had drawn on.

GLADYS: Exactly.

NADINE: What should I do?

GLADYS: You could confess to everyone.

NADINE: Not yet. I'd like to live a little longer!

GLADYS: They might be a little angry at first...

NADINE: You think I should tell them that I drew a moustache, beard, and glasses on her picture and then changed Best to Worst before it got sent to the publisher?!?!

GLADYS: You're right. I wouldn't want to be in your shoes right now.

NADINE: None of the books will sell. Then we'll owe money to the publisher AND the pastor AND Lola.

GLADYS: Yeah. I'm glad I'm not in your shoes right now.

NADINE: Pastor Maxwell will lose his job because of me. Lola will kick all of us out of the apartment.

GLADYS: Boy, I'd hate to be in your shoes right now!

NADINE: Stop with the shoes! If you were in my shoes, you'd trip and fall and then, on top of everything else, I'd have to pay your medical bills!

GLADYS: (*sympathetic.*) I know, I know. (*a new idea.*) I know! Don't tell anybody anything.

NADINE: Good idea! (*pause.*) Why?

GLADYS: Because most likely the publisher will notice the strange cover and send it back! Then you can tell everybody about your... funny mistake.

NADINE: Oh, thank you! Thank you! It'll be our little secret. (*she exits to kitchen.*)

GLADYS: (*on her way out.*) Well, it's a secret, anyway.

(*Ginger and Dixie come back out.*)

GINGER: So, did she tell them or did they find out the hard way?

DIXIE: Yes, she told them but not until they got the proof copy. By then it was too late to change the cover.

GINGER: Goodness! She must have felt terrible.

DIXIE: They all felt terrible. Their debt was now \$15,000, and they knew the book was a bust. They decided to find jobs, anything that would hire them.

GINGER: Oh, so that's why I began running into them recently.

(A folding screen has been brought up and spread out in back of Ginger and Dixie during their conversation. In front of the screen is a chair with a large, plain cardboard box upside down on it. The pastor sits behind the screen. He makes a musical type note to separate each scene, such as striking a gong. Ginger moves over to the far left. Dixie picks up a shopping basket filled with emptied grocery items (butter, toothpaste, salt, etc.) and returns to center stage. Velda enters from right with a paper bag and a plastic bag. Ginger sets her shopping basket on the upside down box as if it were a counter.)

(Gong)

VELDA: Paper or plastic?

GINGER: Neither. I brought my own. *(holding a cloth bag out to her.)*

VELDA: *(rolls her eyes.)* Of course, you did. *(she tosses the paper and plastic bags over her shoulder to the side of the stage. She takes the cloth bag and begins to jumble groceries into it.)*

GINGER: Don't pack all the heavy things on one side, please.

(Velda gives her a you've-got-to-be-kidding look.)

GINGER: And please put the eggs on top.

VELDA: Would you like to bag this yourself, lady? *(male voice from behind the screen: The customer is always right.)* I mean, sure. Anything you say.

(She exits R with all the grocery store items. Ginger retrieves a paper plate with glued-on plastic ware and a napkin from behind the screen. She sits on a chair pantomiming finishing eating, using the box as a table, and Lucille enters L with a small basket of candies. She wears a little chain restaurant hat and the suggestion of a uniform.)

(Gong)

LUCILLE: Would you like a mint?

GINGER: Yes, thanks.

LUCILLE: Chocolate or peppermint?

GINGER: Chocolate. *(Lucille hands her one and starts to walk away.)* No, I'd better not. Peppermint, please. *(Lucille returns, exchanges the candy and starts to walk away.)* No, wait. You only live once, right? I'll take chocolate. *(again Lucille returns, exchanges the candy, and starts to walk away. She's obviously getting aggravated.)* Oh, wait, I really shouldn't...

LUCILLE: I could help you with your decision. But I shouldn't. *(she starts to step away. Then steps back.)* Well, maybe I could - no, never mind. *(she steps away and then back.)* Here. Have one of each. *(she slaps one of each into Ginger's hands and exits L, saying.)* They don't pay me enough to put up with this. *(Ginger is aghast.)*

(Gong)

(Nadine enters R wearing a McDonald's-type hat and carrying a McD-type food bag. Ginger stands, facing her across the box placed on the chair and used as a counter. Nadine drops a candy bar wrapper unobtrusively as she enters.)

NADINE: Would you like fries with that?

GINGER: No.

NADINE: Would you like to supersize your drink?

GINGER: No, thanks.

NADINE: Would you like an apple pie for dessert?

GINGER: No, thank you.

NADINE: Please, lady, spend more money on something!

GINGER: Just give me my chicken chunks!

NADINE: Cheapskate!

(Ginger, insulted, turns and walks away. Nadine exits R with food bag.)

(Gong)

(Dulcie enters L with a white apron and plastic gloves on and a plate of sample crackers.)

DULCIE: Would you like to try our new crackers? We're having a special today.

GINGER: No, thank you.

DULCIE: They're our newest flavor!

GINGER: Not right now.

DULCIE: *(stuffs a couple in her mouth and tries to talk over them. A fountain of cracker crumbs spouts from her mouth.)* Very good. Ummmm. Yummy. I've got coupons!

(Ginger walks away, alarmed and disgusted. Dulcie exits Left, dejected.)

(Gladys enters R with a push broom.)

(Gong)

GLADYS: *(As Ginger approaches)* Ma'am, you dropped something.

GINGER: *(Looking around)* No, I don't think so.

GLADYS: Yes you did. Right there. *(Pointing to candy wrapper.)*

GINGER: That's not mine. You can just sweep it up.

GLADYS: I've been cleaning this place for almost eight hours. My back is killing me. Pick it up. Please.

GINGER: I didn't drop it. You sweep it up.

GLADYS: You dropped it. YOU pick it up!

GINGER: YOU sweep it up!

GLADYS: All right. I will if you can prove you didn't drop it.

GINGER: *(she picks it up to hold it close to Gladys' face.)* See this? It's a Snickers candy bar. I don't eat Snickers. I'm allergic to nuts!

GLADYS: Thanks. That wasn't so hard, was it. Trash can is right over there. *(pointing L. She exits R, sweeping as she goes.)*

(Ginger, outraged, puts the wrapper in her pocket to get ready for next moment. Kitty enters Left)

(Gong)

KITTY: Excuse me, ma'am. Would you mind responding to an opinion poll?

GINGER: I suppose not.

KITTY: Thank you. Do you use a GPS in your car?

GINGER: No.

KITTY: Do you log onto the Internet at least once a day?

GINGER: No.

KITTY: Do you use your cell phone for more than conversation?

GINGER: What else is there?

KITTY: Do you twitter?

GINGER: Heavens, no!

KITTY: Do you tweet?

GINGER: If I did, I wouldn't tell you!

KITTY: I'm sorry. You're not useful. Have a nice day! *(she exits L.)*

(Ginger looks stricken.)

(Dixie returns to the stage with the quilt. Ginger takes the other side again. The screen is taken down in back of spread quilt.)

DIXIE: Yes, that's when you saw them around town. With lots of scrimping and saving, they began to make small payments on their big debt. But they were tired and the results were discouraging. Then one day, Kitty called a meeting. The first shipment of cookbooks had arrived.

(Dixie and Ginger move to the side. The ladies are sitting around, obviously tired, slumped in chairs, heads in hands, etc.)

KITTY: Well, here's the first shipment.

NADINE: Do we have to open it?

GLADYS: We know what's in it.

VELDA: Let's not.

DULCIE: We could use it as a coffee table.

LUCILLE: What a mess!

(Group sigh. Then knocking on the door.)

KITTY: *(goes to the door.)* Pastor Maxwell. You're just in time. Would you perform a burial for our cookbook.

PASTOR: That bad, huh?

KITTY: Well, it's not good.

PASTOR: Oh, by the way, one of you must have dropped this on the steps. *(he hands her an envelope.)*

KITTY: *(looking at the return address.)* It's from the publishing company. What else could go wrong?

(Kitty hands it back to Pastor.)

KITTY: Would you read it, Pastor? Bad news is easier to take coming from you. *(she sits down.)*

VELDA: Yes. You do such a good job with bad news.

PASTOR: All right. (*reading.*) Dear Pie Ladies, (*Lola enters and stays in doorway.*) Your rather unorthodox cover caught the eye of one of our editors. Without your authorization, she did a trial sale of 100 of your cookbooks at a local bookstore. Your book sold out in three days! Then she doubled the number of books, and they sold out within a week. To make a long story short, your book has already sold 500 copies.

(*As he reads, the tired ladies sit up in their chairs, no longer so tired.*)

You will, of course, be compensated for those copies at a fair market value. Please send us the contact information for your agent. We would like to discuss the terms of a contract to print and market 10,000 copies of *The World's Worst Cookbook by the World's Worst Cooks*.

(*He looks at the ladies, very puzzled.*)

DULCIE: It's a lonnnng story, Pastor.

PASTOR: (*continues.*) Congratulations! I hope you give our publishing house first opportunity to work with you again on a future project. And then it gives his name and contact information. Et cetera.

NADINE: Did that say what I think it said?

PASTOR: It says, ladies, that your money worries are at an end.

(*They cheer. Etc.*)

LOLA: What wonderful news!

KITTY: And we owe it all to you!

LOLA: All I did was mail it too soon. Nadine was the artist.

PASTOR: Speaking of artist, may I see what this is all about?

NADINE: Sure.

(*She gets a book. He looks at it.*)

PASTOR: I can't quite put my finger on it, but this face reminds me of someone. (*the ladies are smiling as he hands it back.*)

VELDA: I can't believe it. Someone pinch me. *(one of the women behind her pinches Velda. She thinks the pastor did it.)* Ouch! PASTOR! *(she slaps him. He protests his innocence as he hurriedly moves away from her.)*

LUCILLE: You know, you'd think women of our advanced wisdom would have known better.

NADINE: Known better than to throw flour, you mean?

LUCILLE: No, known that when the clouds look the darkest, they will eventually pass on.

GLADYS: But sometimes they just dump on you.

DULCIE: Speaking of clouds, let's use our money to go someplace sunny!

VELDA: Yeah, we could all to take a cruise.

NADINE: To the Bahamas!

LUCILLE: Or we could buy a house of our own.

LOLA: Oh, please, don't do that. I'd miss you all.

KITTY: And you'd miss our money.

LOLA: Yeah, that too. But it's a good thing you got arrested when you did. I'm going to be too busy to post bail for you in the future.

LUCILLE: Oh? Why's that?

LOLA: Because I'm going to be part-time bookkeeper for Pastor Maxwell's church, starting next week.

KITTY: You are!?!

LOLA: I've been looking for some way to use my brain, to be useful. This position will be perfect.

(All ad lib congratulations.)

PASTOR: That's right. Our church is growing and we needed someone to help Margie.

(More ad lib felicitations.)

DULCIE: Let's go out and celebrate!

(All agree.)

PASTOR: May I bring a friend?

KITTY: Of course. Uh, who is it?

PASTOR: Oh, just a friend.

KITTY: But, what about Lola?

LOLA: Me? Oh, no, no, no. I was their matchmaker!!

OTHERS: Ohhhhhhhhh.

KITTY: Now we have many reasons to celebrate: a new job, a new "friend," and lots of new money!

DULCIE: But money is the best!

(They exit, singing "Happy Days Are Here Again." Dixie and Ginger enter with quilt.)

GINGER: Thanks for showing me your quilt. *(they fold it.)* AND for telling me about the pie ladies.

DIXIE: Glad to do both.

GINGER: If you hear any more about those ladies, let me know. Unless, of course, you'll be too busy...

DIXIE: I'm never too busy for a good gossip. What's your number? I'll put you in my speed dial. *(they exit, giving a number.)*

THE END