

## SIDE 4 - CHARLENE

### P. 81 CHARLENE SCENE or MONOLOGUE

**Read scene with reader OR read bold only to perform as monologue**

HALEY

Charlene? What are you doing here? I thought you were coming back this weekend.

CHARLENE

I was, but I got out of quarantine, so we just came on--

HALEY

(running to her) Oh, my gosh! I'm so happy to see you!

CHARLENE

I know, sweetie. Me, too. (phone rings) And as for the rest of you-- I'm really not in the mood.

HICK MALE VOICE

Yeah, I've gotta message--

CHARLENE

(on phone) I'm sorry. I'm telling them off right now. You'll have to get in line.

JULIA

Charlene, what's wrong?

CHARLENE

What's wrong? Let's start with we've been friends for over three decades and as soon as I leave town, you all decide to fire my little sister?

HALEY

(on their looks) I didn't tell her. (to Charlene) Who told you that?

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CHARLENE

Suzanne. Outside. Just now. Frankly, I don't understand why you're over here helping them pack. But then, I don't understand anything anymore. (getting emotional) I thought we were all... sisters.

JULIA

I should've told you. But I didn't want to ruin your vacation.

CHARLENE

I wasn't actually on vacation. I was in the hospital on a waiting list for a ventilator. While you all were trying to figure out if my own flesh and blood was good enough to work here.

HALEY

Oh, my Lord! A ventilator!

CHARLENE

I'm fine now. Let it go.

JULIA

Charlene, do you really, in your heart, believe what Suzanne said?

CHARLENE

Yes. Because I've felt it myself. **All of you, look down on the people who come from where I'm from.**

SUZANNE

Amen, girl.

CHARLENE

**And you're no better, Suzanne, with all of your *Deliverance* jokes and always asking if I know the Duggars-- all of you make fun of the people in small towns and out in the country-- where they live-- what they live in-- it's always a doublewide-- their jacked-up trucks, tacky clothes, fried food, what they read, if they can read, where they**

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worship, how they vote and even how they talk. Especially how they talk! And THAT, in case you've been wondering, is why they hate you.

JULIA

That was a good speech, Charlene.

CHARLENE

Thank you... You're the one who taught me.

JULIA

And I'm sorry to my marrow if I have ever done anything to make you feel less than. But I've spent my life defending the South-- at least the New South. And whenever anyone from New York moves to Atlanta, I always tell 'em-- "Hey, we're not that different from you. We're really just New Yorkers... in a good mood." But I'm not going to defend people who say the election was stolen and the virus is a hoax. That's gonna get us all killed.

MARY JO

That's right. And I'm sorry, but if the people you're talking about want our so-called side to respect them, then maybe they should stop acting like who we say they are.

*Charlene begins collecting her personal items,*

CHARLENE

**Who made you judge and jury? Newsflash! All hicks are not alike! And as long as we're clearing the air, I am completely insulted by your presumptions of how I vote! My husband's a general and my daughter's a marine! Do you really think I could support a draft-dodging coward, who only likes war heroes who didn't get caught and thinks the dead boys on D-Day were losers? Obviously, you don't know me at all. And I guess I didn't know you either. I didn't know, after all these years, that you would just pack up and leave so easily over what is essentially nothing.**

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MARY JO

It's not nothing, Charlene.

CHARLENE

**Yes, it is! It's nothing to me! For God's sake, we raised our children together. We buried three husbands and all of our parents. Fought cancer, menopause, affairs, divorce, depression-- and now some silly, reality TV star and your out of control grudges are gonna take us down? (heading for door with box) Really? If it wasn't so sad, it would be embarrassing. Haley, I'll see you at home.**

**(to Julia) And you can delete that video I sent. I had 104 fever. I don't even remember what's in it--but whatever it was, it no longer applies!**

(As Julia peruses her phone, Charlene drops and spills the contents of her box. Suddenly, the image of her, in hospital gown, appears on the computer screen. As the women, including Charlene, are gradually drawn in,

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

(on TV, fumbling around) Okay, where are my notes? I'm so sick, guys-- but I have to do this.

(reading paper, rapid fire)

Haley! You run through my heart like that little stream behind our house... I know I already wrote that on your birthday card... but I still mean it... and Julia, my hero... you taught me that courage is just an ordinary, female trait... waiting to be summoned (struggling with breath) and that's what I'm doin' right now. So... thank you for that...

(back to page)

Cleo, you dazzle me with your strength... how you wear it so easily.

(suffers coughing, then)

And Suzanne, thank you for showing me that loving yourself is not a crime... but a beginning... Okay, I saw that on a pillow, but it reminded me of you... Mary Jo... I don't think I've ever been down, that I didn't look up... and there you were.

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(quiet, then)

My mother used to say, “Charlene, you’re gonna have a lot of friends-- just be sure to pick three or four who love you the way your daddy and I do...”

And boy, did I get that right.

(emotional again)

I’m sorry. It’s just sad to think of us... splitting up. But I guess that’s not up to me anymore... because if you’re looking at this...

(softly)

I died... (quiet, then recovering)

If you wanna honor me... then stay together! That way, I’ll still be there-- stirred into everything you do. Cause we’re like a cake-- you can’t take the ingredients out of a cake.

(suddenly somber)

And if you can’t stay together... maybe someday we’ll all be together in heaven... or maybe we already were... and we just didn’t know it.

(On TV, Charlene kisses the tip of her finger and touches the screen. Silence, as the women, including Charlene, react, overcome.)

MARY JO

Okay. I don’t wanna fight anymore.

CLEO

Me either.

CHARLENE

**(throwing arms around them) I wanna kill all of you, but then I’d just be sitting in jail, missing you. I feel like George Bailey in *It’s a Wonderful Life*. Suddenly, it’s snowing outside and I’ve never been so happy to be alive!**