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The Secretaries

by The Five Lesbian Brothers
Maureen Angelos, Babs Davy,
Dominique Dibbell,
Peg Healey and Lisa Kron

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



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THE SECRETARIES was first produced at the WOW Café in New York City in December of 1993, under the direction of Kate Stafford. The sets were designed by Amy Shock, costume design was by Susan Young, lighting was designed by Lori E. Seid, sound was designed by Peg Healey and props were designed by Sharon Hayes, who was the stage manager.

This production of the play was also presented at Theatre Rhinoceros, San Francisco; Highways, Los Angeles; Alice B. Theatre, Seattle and DiverseWorks, Houston.

THE SECRETARIES was produced in the version printed here at New York Theatre Workshop, New York City. It opened on September 8, 1994, under the direction of Kate Stafford. Set design was by James Schuette, costume design was by Susan Young, lighting was designed by Nancy Schertler, sound was designed by Darron L. West, the fight director was J. Allen Suddeth, the dramaturg was Sybille Pearson, the production stage manager was Janet M. Clark and the production manager was Susan R. White. The cast was as follows:

DAWN MIDNIGHT/BUZZ BENIKEE Maureen Angelos
ASHLEY ELIZABETH FRATANGELLO Babs Davy
PATTY JOHNSON Dominique Dibbell
SUSAN CURTIS/SANDY/
MR. RON KEMBUNKSCHER Peg Healey
PEACHES MARTIN/HANK Lisa Kron

CHARACTERS

DAWN MIDNIGHT – office lesbian.

ASHLEY ELIZABETH FRATANGELO – Susan’s sycophant, bulimic.

PATTY JOHNSON – the new girl.

SUSAN CURTIS – office manager/cult leader.

PEACHES MARTIN – sweet, clueless, slow-moving target.

BUZZ BENIKEE – sensitive lumberjack.

HANK AND SANDY – sexually harassing lumberjacks (slow).

MR. RON KEMBUNKSCHER – the boss.

TIME AND PLACE

The play takes place in and around the town of Big Bone, Oregon.

Some time before Windows '95.

Prologue - Cooney Lumber Mill.

Scene One - The Office.

Scene Two - The Breezy Barn.

Scene Three - The Loading Dock.

Scene Four - Back in the Office.

Scene Five - The Video Store.

Scene Six - The Chorus.

Scene Seven - First Club Meeting.

Scene Eight - Patty and Buzz at the Loading Dock.

Scene Nine - Patty and Peaches in the Bathroom.

Scene Ten - HHH Health and Beauty Night.

Scene Eleven - The Chorus.

Scene Twelve - Back in the Office.

Scene Thirteen - Patty and Buzz on the Phone.

Scene Fourteen - Patty and Dawn at the HHH.

Scene Fifteen - Patty and Dawn: The Morning After.

Scene Sixteen - Susan and Dawn.

Scene Seventeen - In the Car.

Scene Eighteen - Shit Hits the Fan.

Scene Nineteen - Guts/Prep.

Scene Twenty - Kill Night.

AUTHORS' NOTES

BABS DAVY: We wanted to write a musical and Moe had seen a version of *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* at the Edinburgh Festival that year and was smitten with it. We would play lumberjacks and turn the story on its ear. We rented the movie and were horrified by what we saw: the glorification of rape in song and dance. The men were “doin’ what comes nat’rally” and the women would come to like it in the end when they saw what a cool house they could have. We went on retreat to New Hampshire and began writing about lumberjacks and doing improvs about church suppers and pancake breakfasts. We had the shy lumberjack, the singing lumberjack, the mean lumberjack. We put them on the mountain, in the smokehouse, at the restaurant with a terrace overlooking the valley, and in the office where their brides worked at the lumber mill. Nothing happened in these improvs because we had no idea what lumberjacks did aside from yell timber and dance on logs like they did in the movie. We wanted to kill these guys. Dominique had just been reading somewhere about motorcycle girl gangs who kill and torture men for sport. Everyone’s face lit up and much excitement and animated discussion in the group commenced. Now we were getting somewhere. Fuck the lumberjacks. We would play the “brides” in the office at the lumber mill.

DOMINIQUE DIBBELL: Something about the brilliant fall colors and piney smell all around us encouraged us to hold onto the idea of lumberjacks. Lisa kept pushing for the introduction of the secretaries who worked at the lumber mill, and eventually we gave them a try. Almost immediately we saw that we had found the vehicle for our simmering anger. Sick and disgusting scenes of the ravages of internalized sexism came pouring forth. We were relieved beyond words that we finally found the play we were already booked to perform in a few months. Lisa summed up our feelings when she impulsively scribbled on her writing pad, then held up for all to see à la *Norma Rae*, the words, “Writing Itself!”

PEG HEALEY: I think this was the first time we consciously used our writing to deal with our dynamic in working together. I remember it was a time when we were worried that Lisa might be leaving the Brothers (actually, aren’t we always worried that someone is leaving), but we took that fear and turned it around and decided to analyze what happens when someone new comes into a tight-knit group...and Patty Johnson was born. Susan Curtis was born when Dominique was being interrogated as an improv exercise. Ashley Elizabeth Fratangelo was an homage to Elizabeth Ashley. We were obsessed with her SlimFast campaign at the time. Needless to say it permeates the script.

LISA KRON: The play examines the ways in which women are the enforcers of sexism. The rules that are enforced involve weight, food,

sexuality. Proof that we were covering uncharted territory was in the disconnect between the responses of men (notably male reviewers) and women. Women recognized what we were doing because they had experienced it. Men did not because they had never seen it before, never had it described to them. Male viewers often focused on the cartoonish violence at the end of the play when poor Buzz is killed with his own chainsaw. The emotional violence between the women did not show up on their radar. They tended to see the play as a revenge fantasy, which it clearly is not. The only likeable character in the play is Buzz and before his bloody execution Susan Curtis makes clear he does not deserve to die: "We don't kill them because they're bad. We kill them because we're bad."

DOMINIQUE DIBBELL: *The Secretaries* gave us our first walkouts. We empathized. Some of us almost walked out of the writing process, too. Confronting issues of body image and woman's cruelty to woman was no picnic. We had many an angst-filled check-in in which we worried that we were promoting violence and/or betraying the feminist movement. But, in the end, our soul-searching made us more passionately devoted to the play. New Yorkers, of course, loved it. They like it in Houston, too, where gun laws are less restrictive.

MAUREEN ANGELOS: *The Secretaries* is a true product of pure collaboration. It is our most artistically successful play, so far; it's the most well constructed. We really stuck to plot with the help of our wise dramaturg Sybille Pearson. It has been the most satisfying process for us.

Prologue
Cooney Lumber Mill

(Lights go dark as a sound cue comes up of chainsaws, which turns into the sound of a man screaming, which turns into the sound of secretaries laughing, which turns into the sound of secretaries clicking and giggling, which turns into the sound of keyboards clicking. [Note: “clicking and giggling” refers to a secret secretarial language made up of rapid chipmunk-like clicking, sucking and popping sounds made with the tongue, intermingled with giggling.] Lights up on the office. On the wall is a calendar which reads: COONEY LUMBER MILL IS PROUD OF 28 ACCIDENT-FREE DAYS. DAWN, ASHLEY, PATTY and PEACHES are at their desks. They type rhythmically while they chant.)

ALL. Enter, enter, enter, enter

Save

Type and type and type and type and type and type and type and type and type.

We welcome you to Big Bone

To share with you our story

We'd like to warn you from the top it gets a little gory.

DAWN. *(spoken, not in rhythm)* Shit! My nail!

ALL. We are secretaries

Like we always dreamed we'd be

We get to wear nice clothes and we get paid a salary.

ASHLEY. *(spoken, not in rhythm)* I'm done with this.

ALL. Ninety words a minute

A hairdo that would stop a truck

Two weeks paid vacation

Sincerely, Mr. Kembunkscher. *(All giggle and click.)*

ASHLEY. (*spoken, not in rhythm*) Hey!

ALL. We are a clique

We type and click

We type and giggle and click.

We copy, fax and type real quick

Some people say we are a clique

Some people say we are a cul –

(SUSAN CURTIS *walks through and takes her place in her office.*)

ALL (*spoken, not in rhythm*) Good morning, Miss Curtis.

(*back in rhythm*) The year is 1994. The company is Cooney,

In town they say the secretaries here are a bit loony.

We are secretaries and we do things secretarial

And once a month we kill a guy and cut him up for
burial

Sssshhhhh! Sssshhhhh! Sssshhhhh!

(*Lights fade out.*)

Scene One The Office

(A regular workday at the office. The accident sign has been changed to: 1 ACCIDENT-FREE DAY. Throughout the play the numbers increase, culminating in 28. DAWN, PATTY and PEACHES are at their desks. ASHLEY enters.)

DAWN. Hail, Secretary of the Month!

ASHLEY. Oh, cut that would you. October's almost over. Now *you* can claw your way to the top.

DAWN. Me? Never. I can't get Susan Curtis to spit on me. *(She slurps a SlimFast.)* Delicious!

(DAWN, ASHLEY and PEACHES freeze.)

PATTY. *(to audience)* I guess the question I have to ask myself is, "How did a decent girl like me get involved with a cult of murderous secretaries?"

ASHLEY. Patty! *(She laughs and freezes again.)*

PATTY. *(to audience)* I mean, I come from a good family. I have an excellent education most girls would envy, attending one of the finest institutions in the nation with an advanced degree in secretarial sciences with an emphasis on foreign study and international keyboards. That must have been why Susan Curtis hired me. Only the best secretaries in the world work for Cooney Lumber Mill in Big Bone, Oregon; the world's largest supplier of fine pine. When I graduated, it was the only place I applied. On a million to one shot, I got lucky.

(SUSAN enters in a hunting hat and a man's plaid hunting jacket, brushes off sawdust and dumps her jacket and hat on ASHLEY's desk. ASHLEY hangs them beside three others. SUSAN goes into her office.)

ASHLEY. What's today?

DAWN. Strawberry.

ASHLEY. Mmmmm.

(DAWN, ASHLEY and PEACHES all click and giggle.)

PATTY. It's Wednesday.

(They all stop the clicking and giggling. Phone rings.

PATTY answers.)

Cooney Lumber Mill. One moment, please. (over the P.A.) Sawmill. Sawmill. Pick up on two.

DAWN. It burns my ass you were hired on as receptionist. Didn't Mr. Kembunkscher read your resume? I mean, you only have an advanced degree from one of the finest schools in the country. You speak six languages, don't you?

ASHLEY. We all have to start somewhere, Dawn. Right, Patty?

PATTY. I don't mind, Dawn. Mr. Kembunkscher said he wanted me to learn the lumber biz from the bottom up.

DAWN. Bottom up. What do you want to bet those were his exact words?

(DAWN and ASHLEY click and giggle.)

PEACHES. Anybody want anything from the watercooler? I'm going.

ASHLEY. Get me a strawberry from the fridge, will you, Peaches?

DAWN. And could you put my SlimFast can in the recycling, please?

PEACHES. Sure, Ashley. Sure, Dawn. (concentrating hard) Strawberry. Recycling. Patty? Anything? I'm going.

PATTY. No, thanks, Peaches.

PEACHES. Suit yourself. Oh, and Patty. A word to the wise. (She gestures to a giant on-off switch.) This switch controls the entire mill. Whatever you do, don't turn it off. It will shut everything down. Take it from me.

(PEACHES exits. ASHLEY and DAWN go over to PEACHES's inbox and sort through her assignments.)

ASHLEY. Good workout this morning?

DAWN. Jude's class. I missed you.

ASHLEY. Did he kill you?

DAWN. God, my quads and my abs and my whatever you call them, like all over the place. I'm aching.

ASHLEY. He's good, right? I told you.

DAWN. (*handing ASHLEY a document from PEACHES's inbox*)
Here, you're better with tables. (*turns to PATTY*)

ASHLEY & DAWN. (*referring to PEACHES*) Charity case.

(*ASHLEY and DAWN freeze.*)

PATTY. (*to audience*) They all seemed to know each other so well. I thought I'd never fit in. And I wanted to. Almost more than anything. I worried constantly about what they thought of me.

(*PEACHES reenters.*)

PEACHES. Here you go, Ashley. (*She hands her a strawberry SlimFast.*)

ASHLEY. Thanks, Peaches. Anyone want to split this with me?

PATTY. Is that stuff any good?

ASHLEY. You never tried it?

DAWN. Look at her. Her body's only perfect.

PEACHES. I envy you, Patty. I never see you eating.

PATTY. Oh, I eat plenty. I'm having a salad for lunch today.

DAWN. From where?

PATTY. I made it at home.

PEACHES. Can we see it?

(*PATTY shows them the salad.*)

Mmmmm. I don't know why I'm so hungry. I'm just getting over my period.

DAWN. That is cool. How do you - ?

PATTY. Salad shooter. It's so easy.

ASHLEY. Don't cucumbers have a lot of calories?

PATTY. I don't know. Probably fifteen calories for a medium cucumber.

ASHLEY. Hmm. That's what I thought. Still, you manage to stay so thin.

(SUSAN's voice comes over the intercom.)

SUSAN. Ashley, cover the phones. Patty? Join me in my office a moment, will you?

(PATTY goes into SUSAN's office. ASHLEY hits the monitor button on the intercom.)

SUSAN. *(over the intercom)* – 's next Monday sound?

PATTY. *(over the intercom)* That would be fine, Miss Curtis.

SUSAN. *(over the intercom)* Fine, then. That's all for today. You may go.

PATTY. *(over the intercom)* Yes, Miss Curtis. And, thank you.

(ASHLEY quickly turns off the intercom as PATTY enters.)

PATTY. Oh, my god! Oh, my god you won't believe it! They made me a secretary!

ASHLEY. *(through gritted teeth)* Good for you, Patty!

PEACHES. *(hugging her)* Congratulations, Patty!

DAWN. Ashley better watch her back. It won't be long before you're Secretary of the Month. Forget that salad! We're taking you out to the "Sleazy Barn." Our treat! Hats and jackets, girls!

(DAWN, ASHLEY and PEACHES put on their hunting caps and plaid jackets.)

ASHLEY. OW! My hair!

PATTY. Where did you all get those gorgeous jackets?

ASHLEY. It wasn't easy.

DAWN. Yeah, just try getting a lumberjack to part with his jacket!

(DAWN, ASHLEY and PEACHES giggle and click.)

PATTY. Is this some secret secretarial tradition I need to learn about?

DAWN. It's hunting season, Patty.

PEACHES. We don't want to get hit by any bows.

ASHLEY. Actually, Peaches, it's the arrows we're worried about. To the Breezy Barn!

(DAWN, ASHLEY and PEACHES laugh and freeze.)

PATTY. *(to audience)* That was my first lunch at the Breezy Barn. My first day of being a real true secretary. The very beginning of it all.

(lights out)

Scene Two
The Breezy Barn

*(The Breezy Barn, local roadhouse dive. Madonna's "Into the Groove" plays as the girls dance, drink beverage bowls and yell over the music. *)*

DAWN. You can have the rest of my beverage bowl, Patty.

PATTY. I don't think I should drink anymore.

ASHLEY. Nonsense! We're celebrating your promotion. Come on! With all you ate, the alcohol won't even affect you!

PEACHES. *(longingly)* She didn't finish her cheeseburger or her potato logs.

PATTY. I offered to share, Peaches. They give you so much food! You all should have had some.

ASHLEY. We do the SlimFast Plan, Patty. It's healthier than food.

PATTY. Why? You're only the most gorgeous secretaries I've ever worked with.

ASHLEY. See? It works.

DAWN. It's what makes us secretaries so strong.

PEACHES. You should try it, Patty.

PATTY. Well, you know, actually, I never needed to lose thirty pounds is the thing. I mean, I was always kind of the shape – since high school I've been this shape. So, I never really need to go on diets.

DAWN. You have a great body, Patty.

PATTY. Thanks, Dawn.

ASHLEY. It's not just for looks, Patty. It's for fitness, too. Do you work out?

PATTY. Not really. I guess I should, huh?

ASHLEY. You ought to get yourself down to the Cooney Recreational Center. They have terrific step classes. Besides, it'll lower the premium on your Cooney Comprehensive Care.

* Please see Music Use Note on Page 3.

PATTY. Maybe I'll check it out.

ASHLEY. All right! Drink up, everyone! To Patty!

DAWN & PEACHES. To Patty!

(DAWN and PEACHES hoist their beverage bowls. DAWN shares her drink with PATTY.)

PATTY. This place is wild! I can't believe these drinks!

DAWN. Everything in Big Bone is lumberjack size, Patty. This is a Cooney town and Cooney takes care of the town. You know your performance bonuses start right away. One year of work with no absences and you get to choose one gift from the list: toaster oven?

DAWN, ASHLEY & PEACHES. No!

ASHLEY. A six-month subscription to the *Cooney Chronicle*?

DAWN, ASHLEY & PEACHES. No!

PEACHES. Five shares of Consolidated Cooney Corporation?

DAWN, ASHLEY & PEACHES. No!

DAWN. A Cooney .45 automatic from the firearms collection?

DAWN, ASHLEY & PEACHES. YES!

(ASHLEY pulls out her giant six-shooter and waves it around as DAWN and PEACHES whoop and holler.)

PATTY. I was wondering why you had that pistol in your bag, Ashley.

ASHLEY. I only need eighteen more months of an unblemished attendance record for the assault rifle, fully automatic.

PATTY. You're all so sweet. You make me feel so excited. Like I have nothing to be nervous about.

ASHLEY. There is nothing to be nervous about, except Dawn.

PATTY. Dawn?

ASHLEY. She only goes after secretaries. She wouldn't stoop to a lowly receptionist. Now you're in trouble.

(DAWN, ASHLEY and PEACHES laugh.)

DAWN. Don't listen to her, Patty. Ashley's just jealous because I never asked her out.

PATTY. Dawn! Are you a gay?

DAWN. Does the Big Bone Mall only accept Cooney Cards?

PATTY. I had no idea! You're so pretty.

ASHLEY. She gives the Big Bone Organization for Women a bad name! The lumberjacks think we're ALL lezzies.

PEACHES. You should join BOW, Patty, now that you're gonna be a secretary.

DAWN. You're a Cooney girl, now.

(DAWN, ASHLEY and PEACHES squeal with delight. A secretary whoop.)

PATTY. I'm planning to. Miss Curtis already mentioned it to me.

ASHLEY. (*crushed*) Really? Great.

DAWN. How are you liking Cooney, Patty?

PATTY. This is the best job I've ever had. Miss Curtis is a tough boss, but a really fair one. I never thought I would like working for a woman, but I think Miss Curtis is incredible.

DAWN. Who doesn't?

PEACHES. She's even better, once you get to know her.

ASHLEY. Susan's casual wear is as elegant as her work clothes. She's such a good dresser.

PEACHES. And she smells so good.

PATTY. Yeah, what is that?

ASHLEY. It's "Reckoning" by Don LeBon.

PATTY. Isn't she pretty? She's so pretty.

ASHLEY. I try to be a good dresser, but I'm not so good.

PATTY. Really? I think you look really smart.

ASHLEY. Do you?

PATTY. I do.

ASHLEY. Even in my sweater?

PATTY. Does she really give you cashmere sweaters every time you make Secretary of the Month?

PEACHES. Just the first time.

PATTY. I think it looks really neat. And this blazer –

ASHLEY. Do you like my blazer?

PATTY. You look great. You look really pulled together.

ASHLEY. Good.

PATTY. You look like her.

ASHLEY. (*flattered*) Huh? Do I?

PATTY. Yeah. There's something about you. I don't know. You're just so – both so beautiful.

ASHLEY. Patty. Thanks.

(*ASHLEY hugs PATTY and gives her a peck on the cheek.*)

PATTY. (*joking*) You're not a gay, too, are you?

(*They all laugh.*)

DAWN. Come on. Let's dance! Let's do our secretarial duty and drive those lumberjacks wild!

(*Lights out as they all dance to Whitney Houston's "I'm Every Woman."***))

**Please see Music Use Note on Page 3.

Scene Three
The Loading Dock

(PATTY steps out onto the loading dock at the mill. She clutches an invoice in her hand and dings the service bell. She is harassed by the offstage voices of HANK and SANDY.)

HANK. WOOWEEEE.

SANDY. Hey! Hey, you're new around here, aren'tcha?

HANK. We haven't seen you before. You're a very attractive lady. Do you know that?

SANDY. Hey, I think my friend here likes you.

HANK. You look nice in that dress. I'll tell you that much.

SANDY. How 'bout a pretty smile for us guys working over here.

HANK. Yeah. Come on, honey. How 'bout a little smile.

SANDY. Come on. One smile ain't gonna hurtcha.

HANK. Loosen up, for Chrissakes. All we're asking for is a smile. What's your fuckin' problem?

SANDY. Hey sweetheart, do I have to come out there and make you smile?

PATTY. Fuck you!

HANK. Ooooooh.

SANDY. You're a tough one.

(PATTY turns to leave and runs headlong into BUZZ BENIKEE.)

PATTY. Oh!

BUZZ. Geez! Sorry! Are you...

PATTY. Let me go...

BUZZ. Is that an invoice? Who sent you...?

SANDY. Hey, Buzz! Get her number, man. Get her phone number.

HANK. Yeah! Find out who she is.

BUZZ. *(to the men, in a deep voice of authority)* Hey! Cut that out, you guys.

SANDY. Oh, come on, man. She's a total fox.

HANK. Get her phone number. Find out who she is.

BUZZ. I'm serious, you animals, cut it! I mean now!

HANK & SANDY. (*muttering*) Yeah. All right. Whatever.

PATTY. What's wrong with those people?

BUZZ. Here, let me take that. (*He takes the invoice.*) My personal apologies, ma'am. Who the hell sent you out here on the loading dock all by yourself?

PATTY. No one sent me. I just thought I'd take care of this myself. I'm new at Cooney. I just made secretary.

BUZZ. We're up in the woods a lot of the time – we don't see too many women. I know that's no excuse but the company hires a lot of the guys from the prison or halfway houses in town. They're good loggers but they don't have the best manners, I guess.

PATTY. I'll say.

BUZZ. I'm Buzz Benikee.

PATTY. I'm Patty. Patty Johnson. What's a nice guy like you doing in a place like this?

BUZZ. I grew up in Big Bone. Mr. Cooney was like a second father to me and offered me the job as foreman when I got back from the Peace Corps. There's not a lot of intellectual stimulation but I do love being outdoors.

PATTY. Well, it's nice to meet you, Buzz.

(*She shakes his hand.*)

You seem like a really terrific guy.

BUZZ. And you have really soft skin.

PATTY. Thanks.

BUZZ. Oh, oh, Jesus. I can't believe – you know, I just took a sexual harassment workshop and that's exactly the kind of thing I'm *not* supposed to say!

PATTY. No, no, no, no, no. I'm flattered. I mean, I'm no feminist. I can take a compliment.

BUZZ. You're terrific, you know that? What's a nice secretary like you doing in a place like this?

(They both laugh.)

PATTY. Thanks, Buzz.

BUZZ. You wouldn't...I mean, I hope this isn't out of line but would you...oh, hell, I'll just say it. Would you like to go to the movies with me tomorrow, Patty Johnson? There's a little art cinema in town. I think that Dutch film, *The Nasty Girl*, is showing there now.

PATTY. Oh, *ik wil graag naar de film met je*, Buzz.

BUZZ. What?

PATTY. It's Dutch for. "I'd love to."

BUZZ. You are something! Patty Johnson. Pretty, pretty Patty Johnson. Until tomorrow.

PATTY. Until tomorrow.

(lights out)

Scene Four
Back in the Office

(The next day. The sign on the wall now reads: ...3 ACCIDENT-FREE DAYS. DAWN, PATTY and ASHLEY are working. PEACHES enters balancing four cups.)

PEACHES. Somebody help me. Somebody help me. Somebody help me. Oh. Oh. Oh. Shit.

(DAWN takes one of the cups.)

Oh, good. Thanks. Oh, OK. Whew, that was a close one. Did everybody get what they wanted?

ASHLEY. Did you put the Equals in here?

PEACHES. Oh, yeah. *(She spills her drink on her desk.)* Oops. Oh, not my picture of Dusty! Oh shit! It's ruined! His wife will never give me another one.

PATTY. His wife...?

PEACHES. Oh, his wife, his ex-wife, his widow, whatever...

PATTY. He's dead?

ASHLEY. *(pointedly changing the subject)* So what did you do this weekend, Dawn?

PEACHES. Yeah, Patty. He's been dead about three days now... *(She gestures to the "accident calendar.")*

DAWN. Uh, Cooney Rec. Bonita's class.

ASHLEY. Which one?

DAWN. Buns and boobs. What did you do this weekend, Patty?

PATTY. Huh? I'm sorry. What? I'm sorry. How did he die, Peaches?

ASHLEY. Accident, of course. Oh, we lose a lot of men that way. Almost everyone here has lost someone to the heavy machinery.

DAWN. Yeah, they never found his body. They think it was dragged off by a big cat. *(handing PATTY a stack of papers)* Patty, can you take half of this?

PATTY. Sure, Dawn.

(SUSAN enters. The secretaries snap into work mode.)

SUSAN. (referring to PATTY's typing) Slow down, Patty. This is only the beginning. How fast do you type again?

PATTY. A hundred and twelve words a minute.

ASHLEY. (begrudgingly) Not bad.

SUSAN. Incredible! Would you mind...Can I look at your hands for a minute? Exquisite. These wrists. No carpal tunnel?

(PATTY shakes her head.)

Never? Amazing. These tendons in your forearms...

PATTY. Heredity. Guess I was just cut out to be a secretary.

SUSAN. (feeling up PATTY's arms to her neck) Strong shoulders, too. No neck strain. You must have excellent posture.

PATTY. That's nothing. We learned that first year.

SUSAN. Of course. (noticing PATTY's undergarment) Is this Victoria's Secret?

PATTY. (blushing) Yes. I noticed you had a lot of their catalogs in your office.

ASHLEY. I love Victoria's Secret. Don't you, Peaches?

SUSAN. I do order a lot. Do you like the way I dress?

PATTY. Yes! I guess. I mean –

SUSAN. It's OK. I love compliments. You should learn to accept compliments, Patty. I bet you get a lot of them. This is beautiful on you. Isn't it, girls? Let me know the number. Maybe I'll order one. What's it made of?

(SUSAN puts her hand down the front of PATTY's dress.)

Mmmmm. Nice. Comfortable?

PATTY. (entranced) Mmmmm. I really love you, Miss Curtis.

SUSAN. (feigning embarrassment) Oh my.

PATTY. (also embarrassed) No, I mean. I admire you. I admire you and your work and your – the way you are. I wish – I wish I was more like you.

SUSAN. Thank you, Patty. See? That's how easy it is to accept a compliment. Want to practice?

PATTY. (laughs) Oh, well. I don't think –

SUSAN. Nonsense. Ready? Patty, you have wonderful taste in clothes.

PATTY. Really?

SUSAN. No, Patty. You say, "Thank you." Accept the compliment, don't question it. Patty, your typing skills are superb.

PATTY. Oh. I – thank you. Thank you very much.

SUSAN. Good. Patty, your breasts are better than any set of implants.

PATTY. Miss Curtis!

SUSAN. Just say, "Thank you."

PATTY. Thank you.

SUSAN. Better. But I can see I'm going to have to work on you. I'm getting a little light-headed.

(turns PATTY's hand and looks at her watch)

Well, no wonder, it's way past my lunchtime. Would you like to join me for a shake in the cafeteria?

PATTY. Can you believe? I've never tried it.

SUSAN. No, well, with a figure like yours I don't know why you would have.

(PATTY blushes.)

PATTY. Well, I could say the same about you.

SUSAN. I drink them because they're fast, easy and delicious! And they're better than food, really. They were invented by a doctor.

ASHLEY. Susan? What about the Cooney Cares Foundation luncheon?

SUSAN. Oh! Right. I'll tell you, Patty, if my head wasn't bolted on...Well, let's take a rain check on that lunch, sound good? Don't let me forget that, all right, Ashley?

ASHLEY. I'll make a note.

SUSAN. In the meantime, here's my Cooney Gold Card. *(She hands it to ASHLEY.)* Why don't you girls fix Patty up with a shake and show her around the Big Bone Mall? Get Patty something special. Get yourselves something special.

ASHLEY. Susan, we couldn't.

DAWN. *(snatching the card)* Yes, we could.

PEACHES. Thanks, Susan.

SUSAN. Toodles.

(All freeze except PATTY.)

PATTY. *(to audience)* I got my first taste of Big Bone on Susan Curtis's Gold Card. I could see why she'd appeared on the cover of Executive Secretary Quarterly three times. She really knew how to motivate. I had a lot to learn.

(lights out)

Scene Five
The Video Store

(PATTY is in the video store. SUSAN enters wearing her hunting hat and plaid jacket.)

SUSAN. Patty? How nice to see you. Imagine running into you in the Dutch filmmakers' section. What are you renting?

PATTY. Oh, I don't know. I haven't decided yet. Maybe this.

SUSAN. *A Question of Silence?* Hmmmm. Sounds intense.

PATTY. I guess. Last night I went to see *The Nasty Girl*.

SUSAN. Now, that sounds like my kind of movie.

(They laugh.)

Oh well, a video on a Saturday night. A couple of lonely single girls, aren't we?

PATTY. Oh, I'm not lonely, Miss Curtis. I often watch a video by myself on a Saturday night.

SUSAN. Now, Patty, do you mean to tell me you wouldn't rather be cuddling up with a big strong lumberjack on the sofa watching *The Bodyguard*?

PATTY. Well, that does sound nice, now that you mention it.

SUSAN. Of course it does, Patty. You don't have to hide your feelings from me. I know why you're at the mill. For the same reason I came to the mill. My mother was a secretary, my sister was a secretary. It's a good way to meet lumberjacks.

(They laugh together.)

Now listen. The idea of going home and watching *Blood Sport* all by myself and stuffing myself with popcorn is about as appealing as having my pubic hair plucked. But it'd sure be a lot more fun if you'd come home and watch with me.

PATTY. Miss Curtis, I don't want to impose.

SUSAN. Call me Susan, Patty. We're not in the office anymore.

PATTY. Very well, Susan. I think I will take you up on that offer.

(SUSAN puts her arm in PATTY's. She puts her hat on PATTY's head.)

SUSAN. We're gonna have to get you a jacket. It's dangerous out there.

(They exit. Blackout.)

Scene Six
The Chorus

DAWN, ASHLEY & PEACHES. (*at their desks, rhythmically typing and chanting*)

Susan says, "Reveal, Patty." Alt F3.

Patty Flushes, Right. Alt F6.

Bold F6, Move F4, Susan. Watch out, Patty

Shift F1, Set Up.

(blackout)

Scene Seven
First Club Meeting

(The office, after work hours. The sign now reads: 5 ACCIDENT-FREE DAYS. DAWN, ASHLEY and PEACHES are wearing pink sweaters. They are milling, clicking and giggling. PATTY enters. She's also wearing a pink sweater.)

ASHLEY. Forget something, Patty?

PATTY. Isn't this the meeting of the Big Bone Organization for Women?

PEACHES. Patty! You got your sweater.

DAWN. Congratulations, Patty.

ASHLEY. *(disingenuous)* Patty Johnson, Secretary of the Month. That's terrific. Congratulations, Patty.

PEACHES. I'm so happy for you. You look so beautiful. Secretary of the Month. I haven't been Secretary of the Month since before they invented the carriage return. I've got a little bit of an appearance issue. It doesn't matter. Doesn't she look great, Dawn?

DAWN. *(staring at PATTY)* What? Oh, yeah.

PATTY. I'm so embarrassed. Secretary of the Month and I've only been here a week. Ashley, I don't know what to say. You were Secretary of the Month for such a long time, I understand.

ASHLEY. Yes, well, that's the way it goes. I'm sure you've done plenty to earn it.

(They all sit, except PATTY.)

DAWN. Here, Patty. You can sit by me.

(PATTY sits next to DAWN.)

PATTY. I'm a little nervous. I've never joined a group of only women before, unless you count the Brownies.

DAWN. Oh, Brownies count.

PEACHES. Wanna shake, Patty?

PATTY. No, thanks. I just had dinner.

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