

SIDE #3

Doublewide, Texas

GEORGIA DEAN, LARK

*A spotlight comes up downstage left on a bench covered in a lumpy mound of clean restaurant towels, uniforms, aprons, etc. A coat rack with an apron and a flyswatter on it is nearby. Georgia Dean Rudd gregarious ball of fire, hurries in stage left in jeans, ruffled shirt, big earrings, neck scarf, all in her signature color: hot pink. Talks on her phone, seriously ticked off.*

GEORGIA DEAN. Hoyt, this is Georgia Dean at Bronco Betty's Buffeteria and yes, I am leaving you yet *another* message: *Where the devil's my food order?! I've got a café full of ranchers, truckers and senior citizens out there and all I've got left to feed 'em is vy-enna sausage and saltines – truckers will eat anything that doesn't fight back, but the seniors are not having it!* You know I'm doin' the work of two since Marva's hip blew out, so call me back A.S.A.P. or I'm never goin' 2-steppin' with you again, *comprende?! (Hangs up.)* Have I found the most useless man on the planet or what?!

WOMAN'S VOICE. *(Under the laundry.)* Depends. Is he a good dancer?

GEORGIA DEAN. *(grabs flyswatter, brandishes it.)* Who said that?

WOMAN'S VOICE. I did. *(A bespectacled young woman, Lark, guileless, sits up, covered by the laundry. Georgia Dean screams, Lark screams.)*

GEORGIA DEAN. Who the heck are you?

LARK. I'm Lark and I'm not dangerous! Could you drop the flyswatter?

GEORGIA DEAN. Well, *Lark*, don't you know it's bad manners to eavesdrop? And you look to be about 20-nothing. What could you *really* know about men? *(Lark pushes the laundry off, struggles to her feet; she's hugely pregnant.)* O-kay. So, there's *one* thing you know about men. But what are you doin' in my storage room, *Lark*?

LARK. Actually, it's Larken but back home in Oregon I'm just Lark. I'm ... uh, seeing the country before the baby's born or *was* until I ran out of gas. I saw your backdoor open with that big welcome mat so I said to myself, "that's a sign!" I'm very sensitive to signs and I thought maybe I could use your bathroom but it was occupied and I ... guess I just fell asleep. And from the way you're looking at me, I'm assuming it's a *sign* I should leave. *(Turns to go.)*

GEORGIA DEAN. *(Sighs.)* I may regret this but ... do you *have* anyone?

LARK. I *did*. You know how some guys refuse to read instructions for *anything* because they just *know* they can figure it out on their own? That was my husband, Jason. Turns out it's a terrible quality to have ... especially if you're a *first time skydiver*. *(Teary.)* And now I'm the widow Barken.

GEORGIA DEAN. Oh Hon, how awful! Is – Wait. Your name's Larken Barken? *(Off Lark's nod.)* Is there anything I can do ... I mean besides urgin' you to change your name *immediately*?

LARK. Yes! The truth is, I'm out of money. I really need a job and you just said on the phone you're short-handed here. Don't you see? It's a *sign*! And this place smells so good, like a ... big warm hug!

GEORGIA DEAN. That's cause everything we dish up here is comfort food, which means f-r-i-e-d! Here at the buffeteria our motto is "The higher the cholesterol, the closer to God."

LARK. Oh, please give me a chance. You won't be sorry. I'm not due for over a month and I'm tough.

GEORGIA DEAN. *(Her phone rings. Glances at it.)* Tough, huh? Well, this is Hoyt and I guarantee he's calling with *more delays and excuses*. If you can get that man and my order here pronto, you've got yourself a job.

LARK. I'm on it! *(Grabs the phone.)* Hoyt? This is Lark and listen here, Mister, Georgia Dean wants me to tell you to get that order here right now because she wants to um ... *(Georgia Dean mimes kicking him.)* kiss ... *(Georgia Dean shakes her head "no" kicks again, points to her own behind.)* that's right, *kiss* both your *cute cheeks* the minute you pull up to the back door. ... Got it! Bye! *(Hangs up.)* He'll be here in five.

GEORGIA DEAN. Well, I am a woman of my word. Larken Barken, you are *hired*!

LARK. *(Squeals, hugs her.)* When I saw that welcome mat, I *knew* something would work out! I told you it was a sign! *(Georgia Dean gets apron off the coat rack, ties it around Lark.)*

GEORGIA DEAN. Well, just understand it is hard work. And I know what I'm talkin' about because I've been at it a *loooooong* time.

LARK. But you're not thinking about giving it up, are you?

GEORGIA DEAN. Oh darlin', I could easily retire and live off my savings. *(Puts an arm around Lark.)* But what I'd do the week *after* that, I have no idea. *(Laughs. Blackout.)*