

BELLES TAKE THE BIG EASY

by Alicia Lane Dutton

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ISBN: 978-1-61588-575-6

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SYNOPSIS: Five women travel from Alabama to New Orleans to strike Mardi Gras off their bucket list. At a flamboyant designer's French Quarter boutique, the ladies film an episode of Celeste's new web series, "Say Yes to Anything but A Wedding Dress." Out of Flovilla, Alabama, and now out of control, Regina is ready to cut loose at the slightest opportunity, including getting the "walk" signal at the crosswalk. Uptight Catherine has a new lease on life after her ex-husband drops a bomb shell which has her and the other ladies celebrating with more than coffee and beignets at Café du Monde. At the famed Bacchus Mardi Gras Ball, a fortune teller delivers some disturbing news which sets the ladies on a journey with Marie the Merry Maid, who Celeste believes is VooDoo Queen Marie Laveau reincarnated. After a stop at The Old Absinthe House, the six ladies make their way through the French Quarter and the St. Louis Cemetery to collect the items needed to ward off a perceived curse. With additional adventures on The Cajun Critters Swamp Tour, and at a day spa with a python massage on the menu, the ladies take The Big Easy as only they can.

DURATION: 120 minutes.**TIME:** Present day.**PLACE:** Various locations, interchangeable vignette set.**CAST OF CHARACTERS***(6-9 females, 2-3 males)*

CELESTE (f) (40-60) A little Hippie-ish, digs Yoga but belongs to the Country Club. *(217 lines)*

BREE (f) (40-60) A little uppity, very fashion conscious. *(114 lines)*

REGINA (f) (40-60) Cares about her friends not her appearance. *(147 lines)*

CATHERINE (f) (40-60) A little uptight, career minded. *(112 lines)*

MARY GRACE (f) (40-60) Hates her mother-in-law, loves Google. *(115 lines)*

BOBBIE (f).....	(20-80) Waffle Barn Waitress. (3 lines)
CHERRY (f).....	(40-70) Owner of the Lah Tee Dah Day Spa. (16 lines)
THIBAUT (m)	(40-60) Owns Cajun Critters Swamp Tour. (69 lines)
BLAISE (m).....	(20-70) Owns Ball Gowns by Blaise, flamboyant. (27 lines)
VOODOO PRIESTESS (f)	(20-70) A VooDoo Priestess. (10 lines)
MARIE (f).....	(20-70) A Merry Maid. (19 lines)
WAITER/PARADE PARTICIPANT (m)	(20-40) Waiter at The Old Absinthe House/Dancing parade guy. (3 lines)

OPTIONAL DOUBLING

- BOBBI/CHERRY/VOODOO PRIESTESS/MARIE
- BLAISE/PARADE PARTICIPANT/WAITER

PRODUCTION NOTES

SET: One vignette is used for the Waffle Barn/Café Du Monde/Bacchus Ball/Absinthe House by changing the tablecloth and hanging a panel with different signs/covers.

The La Tee Dah Day Spa is the French Quarter Flat with covers draped on the couch and chairs. Remove covers and change art work for the French Quarter Flat.

The St. Louis Cemetery was an inexpensive metal arch downstage.

CAR: For the car you can use the front of a car from the junk yard, painted and two chairs and three bar stools for the front and back seat draped in black fabric. The car doubles as the swamp raft covered in tattered fabric/net/moss. The car/raft is not used at all in Act Two removing it from downstage and opening up the stage for the preset French Quarter Flat.

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

Belles Take the Big Easy was first produced in Natchez, Mississippi at The Storyville Cabaret and Dinner Theater. The show was directed by Alicia Lane Dutton.

CELESTE	Tracy McCartney
BREE	Alicia Lane Dutton
REGINA	Quincy Vidrine
MARY GRACE	Malori Byrd Giannaris
CATHERINE	Marilyn Gibson
THIBAUT	Joe Wild
BLAISE/WAITER	Dylan Brocato
CHERRY	Saylor Leake
VOODOO PRIESTESS/BOBBI/MARIE	Tammi Scales

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

CELESTE is sitting in the driver's seat of a car. The car can be as basic or detailed as you'd like. There must be two seats in front and three raised in the back so we can see the occupants later. BREE, wearing a patterned dress and sunglasses, enters with a rolling suitcase.

CELESTE: Are those really your traveling clothes? Surely you could at least slum it while we're in the car.

BREE: I am slumming it. This is last year's pattern.

BREE puts her suitcase in the trunk and gets in the front seat. CATHERINE enters with a rolling bag, matching make up case, and duffel. She has on a scarf tied almost like an ascot. She waves to the ladies and spends a long time in the back, unseen, arranging the bags.

CELESTE: What are you doing back there?

CATHERINE: I'm arranging the luggage in a spatial distribution that is most efficient.

CELESTE: You're what?

CATHERINE gets in the back seat annoying BREE in the process.

CATHERINE: We are going to have five ladies in one car with all their luggage. We have to be careful how we stack things so that we'll have enough room.

BREE: Don't look at me. I'm not the one who brought three bags. I learned my lesson after my Louis Vuitton took flight out of the back end of that hybrid car truck thing you had when we went to Vegas.

CELESTE: It was an environmentally friendly flexicab.

BREE: Well, whatever that eyesore was, somehow you thought it was my fault that my bag flew out and not the way you took that curve.

CELESTE: You brought seven pieces of luggage! It was Vegas. How many items of clothing does one need? It was so hot I would have gone naked had they let me.

BREE: You actually would have.

CELESTE: Yes, I would have Miss Prude.

BREE: Hippie Wannabee.

CATHERINE: Can we not relive the Vegas incident again?

BREE: That's easy for you to say. Your bandoulière did not take flight into the desert somewhere between the airport and the triple threat alien welcome center, cafe, and BROTHEL.

CELESTE: It was good thinking to have the girls who were in between clients wait tables. Now that's efficiency.

MARY GRACE enters. She waves to the ladies and places her bag in the back.

BREE: I love the new fountain, Mary Grace. I saw it on my way to the gym Thursday night.

MARY GRACE makes her way into the back seat.

MARY GRACE: You do, huh? Tell that to Lillian. She said it looks like something a nouveau riche lottery winner would put in front of a double wide.

BREE: I do not know how you put up with that evil mother-in-law of yours.

MARY GRACE: Oh, I just smile and think about the fact that any riche is good riche and after she kicks the bucket Kenneth and I will be a lot more riche. So I just don't let Lillian bother me. I used to let it bother me and I actually had contemplated whispering to her on her deathbed that my three children were really compliments of my favorite bag boy at Piggly Wiggly, kind of like a Braveheart moment, but I'm past that.

BREE and CELESTE look at one another a little scared of MARY GRACE for a moment.

CELESTE: OK. Time to go get Regina.

CATHERINE: She couldn't meet at the park and ride like the rest of us?

CELESTE: It's on the way. She said she needed a little more beauty sleep. You know she's a night owl.

CATHERINE: She's only a night owl because she stays up eating Cheez-Its and binge-watching raunchy Netflix movies.

BREE: She claims it's necessary research for work.

CELESTE: Why did we ever let her invest in that one nine hundred number?

MARY GRACE: As Regina says...

ALL: It pays the bills!

CELESTE: Who would have ever thought you could make so much money yelling at men?

MARY GRACE: I yell at Kenneth all the time and it hasn't made me a dime.

CELESTE: *(In a sultry voice.)* Maybe you're just not doing it right.

MARY GRACE: Apparently not.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

REGINA is lying in a bed under the covers, wearing a night mask. Her phone rings. She fumbles for it then answers it.

REGINA: I'm ready.

REGINA yanks off the covers revealing she is fully clothed including flip flops. She stumbles around, removes the night mask, and grabs the handle of her suitcase. Her hair is crazy. She approaches the car and waves to the ladies. She disappears behind the car for a moment but reappears still with her suitcase.

CATHERINE: Why didn't you put your bag in the trunk?

REGINA: I didn't want to mess up that luggage Jenga game you've got going on back there.

CATHERINE gets out of the car.

CATHERINE: Give me that.

CATHERINE takes REGINA'S bag and heads to the back of the car.

REGINA: Maybe you can relax when we get to New Orleans.

CATHERINE reappears without the bag.

CATHERINE: I am relaxed.

REGINA: You have on an ascot.

CATHERINE: It's not an ascot, it's a scarf.

REGINA: No one who is headed to the French Quarter would wear an ascot OR a scarf, unless they're uptight.

CATHERINE pouts, removes the scarf and hands it (or tosses it across "the car") to REGINA and gets into the back of the car. REGINA smiles, puts on sunglasses smugly, and gets into the back, obnoxiously bumping into everyone. She plops into the seat.

REGINA: Goodbye Downton Abbey, hello New Orleans!

REGINA swings the scarf like a lasso above her head and lets it fly toward the back of the car.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

The ladies are still in the car. They clearly have been riding a while. They are napping, doing nails, playing on phone etc.

REGINA: I need a break.

CELESTE: What?! We've already stopped to pee three times and once to get ice cream. You're like a toddler.

REGINA: I've had three toddlers so now I pee like one. There's a Waffle Barn! Pull in! Pull in!

The LADIES exit the car and seat themselves in a circular booth (or round table with chairs.)

REGINA: If I were ever forced to eat at one restaurant for the rest of my life it would be Waffle Barn. They have steaks, salads, breakfast all day.... They have pies, everything.

BOBBIE enters and heads to the booth.

BOBBIE: Good morning! Welcome to Waffle Barn. What can I get for y'all?

REGINA: I'll have a glass of baby juice, a double order of hashbrowns scattered, smothered, covered, chunked, and country. And Adam and Eve on a raft.

BOBBIE doesn't flinch and writes it down.

BOBBIE: And what can I get for you, hon?

CATHERINE: (To REGINA.) Adam and Eve on a raft?

REGINA: Two eggs on toast.

CATHERINE: Why didn't you just say two eggs on toast?

REGINA: Because it's fun. You should try it sometime.

CELESTE: I'll take a veggie omelette.

REGINA: Booring!!!

MARY GRACE: I'll have a pecan waffle.

CATHERINE: I'll have two eggs over medium and an order of bacon.
Or should I say something like two chicken littles with a porky pig?

REGINA: That's the spirit!

BREE: I'll have a cup of mud, blonde with sand, a heart attack on a rack, and a Noah's boy.

BOBBIE: Coming right up!

BOBBIE flits off leaving the others staring at BREE.

CELESTE: What's a Noah's boy?

BREE: Ham of course. I may or may not have worked in a diner when I was younger. And, I may or may not have been crowned Miss Interstate 55 Exit 29A Waffle Barn Queen. How do you think I paid for nursing school?

MARY GRACE: Our Bree working in a diner. Who knew?

BREE: Practiced my talent song to the Jukebox. Louisiana Woman, Mississippi Man. Brought the house down or at least the Waffle Barn that is.

CATHERINE: Who knew we were in the presence of a queen?

BREE: Met my Ronald on a slow Friday night. I became his Louisiana woman and he became my Mississippi man.

CATHERINE: You mean to tell us you met your doctor husband at a diner and not at the hospital?

BREE: Diners are the great equalizers of society. You can meet all kinds of folks in a diner.

MARY GRACE: It's true. Look at us, a booth full of ladies from Flovilla, Alabama taking off to The Big Easy to experience Mardi Gras before we kick the bucket.

CATHERINE: Mary Grace, can we just say to check it off our bucket list?

MARY GRACE: If that makes you feel better about doing it before we kick the bucket.

REGINA: Did y'all know FEMA rates disasters by whether or not Waffle Barn is open?

CATHERINE: You've got to be kidding.

REGINA: I'm not kidding. It's called The Waffle Barn Index. After a big hurricane or whatever if Waffle Barn is open and serving their full menu, it's code green. If it's on a limited menu, it's code yellow. If Waffle Barn is closed, it is serious. That's code RED. They'll call out the National Guard without even having seen the damage.

BREE: Lucky for us it's code green and you know what that means! ... Jukebox time!

BREE heads toward a jukebox offstage singing a snippet of Conway Twitty's "Louisiana Woman, Mississippi Man."

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

All five LADIES are back in the car napping, listening to headphones etc.

BREE: Oo! Oo! Look at that billboard! The La Tee Dah Day Spa. Voted the best day spa in Bayou George, Mississippi.

MARY GRACE: It's probably the only day spa in Bayou George, Mississippi.

CATHERINE: Who names a town Bayou George?

REGINA: Somebody fun, that's who, by George!

BREE: I don't care if it's Bayou George or Bayou Fred, Mississippi. All I know is that it has a day spa and we could probably all use a little break. We'll still get to New Orleans in time for supper. Come on ladies let's treat ourselves.

CELESTE: Treat ourselves? I kind of thought heading to New Orleans on a girls' trip was treating ourselves.

MARY GRACE: Bree may have a point, Celeste. There's nothing wrong with pampering ourselves a little. I was so busy helping plan the Pig Jig I haven't had time to go by Fancy Fingers this week.

CATHERINE: Look, I don't want to end up at the bottom of some swamp in a backwoods Mississippi town. Can't we wait until we get to a rest area to stop? We can pamper ourselves with a trip to the toilet and a few nice vending machine items.

REGINA: You think a rest area is going to be safer than a Bayou George, Mississippi day spa?

MARY GRACE: I'm not worried. I'm carrying.

CATHERINE: Carrying what?

BREE and REGINA: Me too.

MARY GRACE, BREE, and REGINA pull out handguns from their purses.

BREE: *(Points with her gun.)* There's the exit! 14B!

CELESTE: I can't believe I'm doing this, but we are on vacation.

BREE: That's the spirit!

CELESTE: Exiting.

EVERYONE leans in the same direction as the car "exits" the interstate.

MARY GRACE: Oo! It's pink!

CATHERINE: It's cinder block.

MARY GRACE: Cinder block is just like cellulite. It looks much better in pink.

CATHERINE: What?

MARY GRACE: Why do you think strip clubs all have pink lighting? It makes the girls' skin look flawless.

CATHERINE: How would you know about lighting in a strip club, Mary Grace?

MARY GRACE: Ladies, Catherine has evidently never been in a strip club.

CELESTE, REGINA, and BREE: Really?

CATHERINE: You all have?

CELESTE: I forgot she wasn't in our circle of friends when we went to Swinging Richard's for MiMi MacIntyre's fourth bachelorette party.

CATHERINE: Swinging Richard's?

REGINA: It's a coed strip joint near the county line. They've got female and male strippers. You can have a bachelor's or a bachelorette party there or I guess anything in between if you're confused about your gender.

BREE: Can we go in already? I can't wait to check out The Lah Tee Dah Day Spa, ladies!

ACT ONE, SCENE 5

The La Tee Dah Day Spa. CATHERINE, REGINA, CELESTE, BREE, and MARY GRACE enter the spa. The front counter is tufted in hot pink leather and lined with faux zebra fur. From the back, CHERRY, a pretty, older woman in a velour track suit with bouffant hair enters. She has on a nametag that says Cherry.

BREE: Hi there! Cherry, is it? We're on our way to The Big Easy and we want to look and feel our very best on our vacation.

CHERRY: You have come to the right place. Would any of you ladies like a mimosa?

ALL: I would!

CHERRY: Five mimosas coming up! Feel free to browse our menu cards.

CHERRY exits. BREE passes menu cards to all the ladies and keeps one for herself.

CELESTE: What is a prickly pear wrap?

REGINA: I think the bigger question is what is Vajazzling? It kind of sounds like putting your little princess down in a tub filled with fizzy water.

MARY GRACE: Your little princess?

CELESTE: The aromatherapy massage looks enticing, especially after driving half the day.

CHERRY enters with a tray of six mimosas (one for her.)

CHERRY: Here we are! Have you ladies had a chance to look at the menu?

CELESTE: I was thinking about the aromatherapy massage.

CHERRY: Oooo, good choice. Our masseuse, Brigitta, has strong hands and you'll feel like a mushy biscuit covered in gravy after you're done.

CELESTE looks slightly frightened.

BREE: I have a few questions.

CHERRY: Shoot.

BREE: I'm extremely curious about the Vajazzling service.

CHERRY: Oh, the Vajazzling! We used to have Vajazzling on the Vault menu only, but it was so popular we moved it right on to our La Tee Dah menu. It's basically like bedazzling your hoo-ha.

REGINA: I think she's referring to your little princess, Bree.

CATHERINE: Piercing your princess with rhinestones?!

CHERRY: Oh no, honey! That sounds painful! We don't do piercings at La Tee Dah. I frankly think it's kinda tacky. With Vajazzling, little crystals are applied to your... little princess with an adhesive backing, after a Hollywood wax of course.

MARY GRACE: Every year my Nana gives me one of those crystal figurines for Christmas. Next year I'll just say, Nana, I want the crystal butterfly, but not the little statuette kind, I want its wings spread right across my hoo-ha!

MARY GRACE takes a long swig of her mimosa.

BREE: And what exactly is Naked Tan?

CHERRY: Nekkid tan? That's the brand of spray tan we use. We used to use Turbo Tan but some of the ladies thought it made them look jaundiced. (*"Jaundice" is whispered loudly.*)

REGINA: Since Bree seems to be finished with her little spa inquisition, I'd like to know what The Vault Menu is. It says The Vault Menu is available upon request. I'm officially requesting it.

CHERRY reaches behind the counter and takes out small black cards with red writing.

CHERRY: OK. Y'all asked for it. (*CHERRY passes out cards.*) The Vault is a bunker room underneath the spa. We really needed to expand but the only place we could go was down into an old tornado safe room. We decided to put our more sensitive, personal services down there.

REGINA: Python massage.

CELESTE: Vattooing?

REGINA: I think they mean tattooing your—

CELESTE: Little Princess!! Yes, I get it Regina but good Lord!

MARY GRACE: Candle Waxing?

CATHERINE: A Spa Spank?

BREE: Cherry, with all due respect you seem to be in somewhat of a small, rural town. Do you have much Vault type clientele?

CHERRY: Oh yes, Honey! I know Bayou George isn't exactly a bustling metropolis, but we get loads of folks on their way to the beach, or to New Orleans like you ladies, on their way to gamble in Biloxi, or folks who are on their way to catch cruise ships. We even have alternative life clubs from Atlanta come in on field trips. Brigitta and her partner, Ilka, oversee all The Vault activities. Our python massage is performed by their Ball Python, Lucille. It's all the rage in Europe and now right here in the Delta!

CELESTE: I think I'll just have a massage which is, I guess, the missionary position equivalent of the offerings here at The Lah Tee Dah.

CHERRY: I'll get Brigitta to come up from the vault!

ACT ONE, SCENE 6

Lah Tee Dah Day Spa. CELESTE, MARY GRACE, REGINA, CATHERINE, and BREE are in matching aqua terry robes. MARY GRACE has cucumbers on her eyes and is holding a mimosa. The other ladies are in various states of "spa-ness"; wrapped hair, drying nails, etc. CHERRY is also holding a mimosa.

CATHERINE: This was the best idea you've had in a long time, Bree.

CHERRY: Y'all are lucky you came today. This is normally the day The First Hope of the Last Chance Ladies' Bible Study comes. They had to cancel because they had their Soul Sisters Searching for Salvation Conference this week.

MARY GRACE: A Ladies' Bible Study group meets at The Lah Tee Dah Day Spa?

CHERRY: Every week. All the ladies from The First Hope of the Last Chance Baptist Church are clients.

BREE: I would be so right with the Lord if I was in that Bible study group.

CHERRY: The motto of The First Hope of the Last Chance Ladies' Bible Study Group is... "studying the word of the Lord while taking care of his temple."

REGINA: Amen! *(She lifts her glass.)*

CELESTE: Looks like you've got a fine business here, Cherry.

CHERRY: La Tee Dah is my pride and joy. Being raised in Bayou George, I'd see the tourists come through on a final stop for gas or the restroom. They'd have their luggage racks full, all excited about their vacation. About the only vacation my family went on was when we'd picnic alongside the Mississippi River and we'd have spam sandwiches and cantaloupe wedges. Daddy couldn't afford too many days away from work with a wife and seven kids to feed. But now I'm doing just fine and I even have my own condo at the beach, so if a van load of sissies wants to have a python squeeze on them until they're relaxed then so be it.

CATHERINE holds up her mimosa for a toast.

CATHERINE: To Cherry and The La Tee Dah!

BREE, MARY GRACE, REGINA, and CELESTE: Here! Here!

CHERRY: Now, thanks to The Lah Tee Dah, y'all are all ready for The Big Easy!

ACT ONE, SCENE 7

CELESTE, MARY GRACE, REGINA, CATHERINE, and BREE are back in the car. REGINA is reading a book.

REGINA: Mmmmmm... (*Giggles a little.*) Uhhh Huhhh (*Seductively.*)
Mmm huh hummm mmm mmm.

MARY GRACE: Are you reading smut over there?

REGINA: It's not smut, it's research.

BREE: You need to do research on how to yell at men over the phone and tell them you're going to beat their butts?

MARY GRACE: You could just record me yelling at my kids, especially after Jackson cut off his sister's ponytail. I'm still trying to get over it.

CELESTE: Oh Mary Grace, Emma Jane's hair looks good in that pixie cut.

MARY GRACE: You and I both know Emma Jane's got ears like a Lord of the Rings Elf. I'm praying Jackson doesn't lob any more of her hair off before it reaches the tops of her ears, bless her heart.

REGINA: Mmmmm Hmmmm.... Tell him girl! That's exactly what that whip's for!

CELESTE: Could you do your research silently? It's distracting, and since we're going across the world's longest bridge I need to focus and make sure we don't all go swimming in Lake Pontchartrain.

CATHERINE: Correction. It used to be the world's longest bridge but some bridge in China just beat it out.

MARY GRACE: Those dad-gum Chinese. Normally they take our stuff and make it smaller like computers and cell phone components. Now they're beating us out with big stuff.

REGINA: Well, we've got 'em beat on eating utensils. Ever try to eat Bar B Que with a chopstick?

BREE: Speaking of Bar B Que, are y'all going to help me and Mary Grace on the Pig Jig Committee this year?

CELESTE: How many times have I told you, Bree? I'm happy to help with the Fire Ant Festival because it actually celebrates one of God's most hated creatures. I'm not sure why but... whatever. Anyway, as a vegetarian I cannot be a party to the exploitation of pigs.

REGINA: For God's sake Celeste, we're not exploiting them, we're eating them. You act like we're humiliating them or something.

MARY GRACE: That's true Celeste. It's hard for something to feel exploited if it's dead.

CELESTE: It's the Pig Jig. At first it sounds innocent like pigs dancing the polka but in reality, it's a bunch of people with gazillion dollar smokers engaging in a contest to see who can char innocent pigs the best. It's barbaric.

MARY GRACE: It might be Celeste, but it's a boon to Flovilla's economy.

BREE: It's not just about charbroiling delicious swine meat. Don't forget the rides for the kids and the carnival games. You could head up the kids' carnival. You'd never have to see a pig, dead or alive.

CELESTE: But I'd have to see a carnie!

BREE: A what?

REGINA: A Carnie. A politically incorrect name for a traveling carnival employee usually identified by their multiple tats, piercings, or restraining orders filed against them.

CELESTE: A carnie tried to get me to go behind the lobster boy exhibit with him at the state fair one year. Scared the beJesus out of me so I will not be your liaison between the Pig Jig committee and the carnival folks.

BREE: Celeste, I will excuse your vegetarian self, but the rest of you ladies have no excuse to not help out me and Mary Grace.

MARY GRACE: Go ahead and sign me up for the carnival liaison. *(Brandishes her gun.)* I got this.

REGINA: You know I can't help out. Richard only needs to win two more sanctioned Bar B Que contests before he qualifies for the Chillin' and Grillin' Championship in St. Louis. I can't be on the Pig Jig committee or someone might think I'm trying to rig it for Richard.

MARY GRACE: How convenient Regina. That leaves you, Catherine. Since you're an accountant you can be in charge of the score sheets and present the winners using the sealed envelope like the accountants at the Oscars.

CATHERINE: No can do. The last thing I want is to be party to some La La Land/Moonlight debacle. I might accidentally call The Church of Swinetology as the winner when it was really Team Kill It and Grill It. And the last thing I want is a team of rednecks called Kill It and Grill It after me. No Thanks.

CELESTE: Uh oh.

BREE: Uh oh what?

CELESTE: We're really low on gas.

BREE: Don't you have one of those little lights that warns you?

CELESTE: Yes, Bree. I have one of those little lights.

MARY GRACE: I wouldn't be too worried about it. I can go twenty more miles after the little light comes on.

CELESTE: The problem is I'm not sure when the little light came on.

REGINA: Does yours not ding?! Mine dings!

CELESTE: Yes, it dings Regina! However, I didn't hear it! Probably because SOMEONE insisted that I turn up Sweet Home Alabama because according to a certain someone when Lynyrd Skynyrd says turn it up, you do, because if you don't it's some sort of southern mortal sin!

REGINA: Don't be hating on Skynyrd, Celeste! Just because you listen to all that new age mumbo jumbo.

CELESTE: *(Having a total come apart.)* IT RELAXES ME REGINA!

BREE: Now I understand the uh oh.

MARY GRACE: According to Google, after we cross the lake, there's still two miles of bayou to go over before we get to solid ground which translates to a gas station.

CATHERINE: Oh Lord please don't let us break down in a bayou.

BREE: Why not Catherine? The last bayou we were in was Bayou George, Mississippi and they had a day spa!

CATHERINE: That was not a real bayou, Bree! That was a town with a name that was a play on words. A TOWN with solid packed ground, not a marshland full of alligators and snakes.

REGINA: Don't forget wild boars. We smoked a wild boar for the Bacon County Bodacious Butt Bar B Que Contest and won most original flavor last year.

CELESTE: Well, this is just great. We come on our first bucket list trip and because of me we might end up in a bayou being charged by a wild boar.

REGINA: Or eaten by an alligator.

BREE: You're really not helping Regina.

REGINA: Listen, I AM helping. I'm offering options. I would rather be snatched by an alligator and rolled under the swamp water until I drowned not knowing about all that gnawing he'd do on me later. I'll take that route to my maker instead of being gored to death by a giant boar. After all the pigs Richard and I have smoked and consumed, it would be my worst nightmare.

CELESTE: Can we stop talking about all the ways to die in a bayou?! We might not run out of gas and all this talk will have been completely futile.

The LADIES jerk forward a few times.

BREE: Uh oh.

MARY GRACE: Pull over and get out of the lane! If we cause a traffic jam on this bridge, we'll die by Louisiana Cajun with a bad case of road rage.

CELESTE turns the wheel indicating she is pulling the car off the side of the road.

BREE: Put on your hazards. I'll just be a minute.

CELESTE: Where are you going?

BREE: I'm doing something your feminazi ways won't allow you to do apparently. I'm using what the good Lord gave me.

BREE gets out of the car and walks around to the driver's side. She pulls her neckline down a little, raises her skirt etc. and stands in a seductive pose.

CELESTE: I can't believe you!

BREE: You know miss, "I am woman hear me roar," sometimes actions speak louder than words to get us rescued from this bridge. Or, you can start walking. In a few miles you'll be at the end of the bridge and the beginning of the alligator infested waters of the Bayou Sauvage Wildlife Area according to the map.

CELESTE contemplates this. She then jumps out of the car and joins BREE trying to look seductive.

CELESTE: Oo! I think that truck is slowing down!

BREE: He's pulling over!

CELESTE: Get back in the car!

CELESTE and BREE race to get back into the car.

MARY GRACE: Lock the doors!

THIBAUT enters and approaches CELESTE on the driver's side.

THIBAUT: Good afternoon. Name's Thibaut. (*Pronounced TEE-BOE.*)

ALL: (*Ad lib.*) Good afternoon, Hi there etc.

CELESTE: Hi, Thibaut. I'm Celeste. This is Bree, Regina, Mary Grace, and Catherine.

THIBAUT: Nice to meet you ladies.

REGINA: I can assure you the pleasure's all mine.

THIBAUT: It doesn't look like you're running hot.

REGINA: (*Fanning herself.*) Oh, we're running hot alright.

THIBAUT: Excuse me?

CELESTE: She meant we're not running hot. We're out of gas.

THIBAUT: I figured. I've got a Jerry Can in the truck with a few gallons in it. I keep it on hand.

CATHERINE: Clearly not your first rodeo with this little situation.

REGINA: Ooo... Thibaut the Rod-e-o Cowboy. Do you know how to use a whip?

CELESTE, BREE, MARY GRACE, and CATHERINE: Regina!

REGINA: Here's my card. I'm always looking for inspiration.

A few of the OTHER LADIES push REGINA'S out stretched hand away from THIBAUT'S direction.

CELESTE: I'm so sorry. We checked her out of the... institution to bring her on her... final death wish trip.

THIBAUT: Excuse me?

CATHERINE: She means her... Make a Wish Trip for mentally unstable sex perverts... who are locked up for their own good.

THIBAUT: *(Backs away nervously.)* I'm just gonna put a little gas in your car so y'all can be on your way. No need to thank me.

THIBAUT exits, gets gas can and re-enters putting the gas in the side of the car. Looking suspiciously toward the ladies to ensure no one gets out of the car.

CELESTE: My Lord, Regina! Normally people out of gas on the side of the road should be scared of a stranger approaching, but in this case we managed to turn the tables.

MARY GRACE: Look at him. He can't get that gas in this car fast enough. He's as nervous as a minnow in a bass pond.

CELESTE: Well, I wonder why?! He thinks there's an escaped sex pervert in the car. What were you thinking Catherine?

CATHERINE: I'm sorry Miss, she's on her DEATH WISH TRIP!

THIBAUT finishes, and waves as he exits, nervously.

REGINA: I don't know about y'all, but this supposed sex maniac is ready to get over this bridge and into the French Quarter! I need a drink. Drive on James! Wuh Tow! *(Making whip crack noise.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 8

REGINA, CELESTE, CATHERINE, BREE, and MARY GRACE enter the living area of an opulent French Quarter Flat. The ladies are each holding a mixed drink, purse, and dragging a rolling suitcase.

REGINA: I like this plan of striking things off a list before we kick the bucket! To New Orleans! Cheers!

CATHERINE: For heaven's sake, striking things off the BUCKET LIST. When y'all say kick the bucket it sounds like a dreadful foreboding.

MARY GRACE: It is a dreadful foreboding, Catherine. Everybody's going to kick the bucket sooner or later.

CATHERINE: True, but we don't have to keep referring to our list as that.

BREE: I like calling it that. It's like a kick in the pants to have fun before you kick the bucket.

CATHERINE: Please, Bree!

CELESTE: She's right. There's more of a sense of urgency about striking things off the list. It's easy to procrastinate about doing the things on a bucket list, but start calling it a kick the bucket list and it helps get things moving.

BREE: Exactly! My list is long, so we've got to keep up the momentum ladies. I'm all about having as much fun as possible before I die.

CELESTE: Really?! We couldn't tell with the detour to the La Tee Dah Day Spa on the way to New Orleans.

BREE: You're welcome!

MARY GRACE: This place is something.

REGINA: I feel like a madam and all of you are my girls.

CATHERINE: What?!

REGINA: Nothin'.

BREE: Yeah, I think I'd call this design style, contemporary French Bordello.

CELESTE: It's classic New Orleans French Quarter and we're lucky to be here. Blaise got it for us for free.

MARY GRACE: Free! That's my favorite style.

REGINA: Blaise?

BREE: Who or what may I ask is Blaise?

CELESTE: Blaise is the designer I'm featuring on my new web series.

REGINA: A toast! To Blaise! And free flats!

MARY GRACE: The night is young Regina. You've been finding any excuse to make a toast. You'd better ease up.

BREE: Yeah, you made a toast to the crosswalk giving us the go signal.

CATHERINE: And don't forget we drank a toast to the fact that we could openly drink a toast on Bourbon Street.

REGINA: Another toast! To open container laws!

CELESTE: Blaise told me this place used to be a convent. The nuns are probably rolling over in their graves about now.

REGINA: A toast to the nuns!

CELESTE: Regina!

REGINA: Hey! They're Catholic! They imbibe. *(She takes a swig.)*

CATHERINE: I wonder if this place is haunted. New Orleans is supposed to be the most haunted city in America.

BREE: Maybe since it used to be a convent, all the bad spirits have stayed away.

MARY GRACE: *(Looking at her phone.)* According to Google, this building was a lot of things after it was a convent.

REGINA: Do tell!

MARY GRACE: It was built as a convent in 1733 but after a while the nuns and the orphans they took care of outgrew the building. The famous pirate, Jean Lafitte, turned it into a warehouse for the things he pillaged. After that it became one of the most famous sporting houses in New Orleans.

BREE: What kind of sport?

REGINA: Probably like a quail plantation.

MARY GRACE: *(Holds her phone closer inspecting what's written.)* Oh my! They weren't chasing quail! They were chasing tail! This place WAS a bordello! That's what a sporting house is!

BREE: I told y'all! I know my interior design. I know a bordello when I see it.

MARY GRACE: After the brothel closed down, a voodoo priestess bought the building.

CATHERINE: Nuns, prostitutes, and voodoo priestesses.

REGINA: And now us! A toast!

CELESTE, BREE, MARY GRACE, and CATHERINE: No!

CELESTE: Let's go down to Cafe Du Monde and get some coffee and beignets.

REGINA: A toast! To deep fried pastries!

ACT ONE, SCENE 9

The LADIES are sitting around a table. A Sign reads Cafe du Monde. There are coffee cups and saucers on the table.

REGINA: I never thought I'd find anything that could hold a candle to a Krispy Kreme doughnut but these dang beignets are close!

CATHERINE: Unfortunately for my figure I'm a fan of just about any deep-fried bread with sugar on top; doughnuts, beignets, funnel cakes. If I get anything terminal, I'm installing a deep fryer in my kitchen.

REGINA: A toast! To Catherine who's not going out with a bang, but a sizzle!

CELESTE: Somehow, it's just not the same with a cup of chicory coffee instead of a hurricane but cheers!

CATHERINE takes out a flask.

CATHERINE: Ladies, I know it might seem out of character—

MARY GRACE: You're holding a flask Catherine, that seems VERY out of character.

REGINA: I'm telling you. Once I made her remove that ascot it let the blood start flowing back to her brain. Now Catherine is all aboard the Mardi Gras party train!

CATHERINE: The fact is I have something better to toast tonight than the fact it's a day that ends in "Y," Regina.

REGINA: That was a valid excuse.

CATHERINE: Anyway, pass it around ladies. I've been holding this news in for a week.

The LADIES all add a dash of liquor from the flask into their coffee cups.

BREE: Do tell!!

MARY GRACE: Does this have anything to do with "the incident"?

CATHERINE: You know, you ladies have been referring to what happened to me as "the incident" for almost a year now. I am a grown woman. You can say it and it won't upset me. Besides... Dick has been paid back a hundred fold.

MARY GRACE: I knew it had something to do with the incident! I mean... Dick!

CATHERINE: You remember that little good for nothing trollop he left me for?

REGINA: The temp?

CATHERINE: Yes, the temp the agency sent to be his secretary for the day. The same temp that he kept around for a year even though she can't type or spell the word cat?!

CELESTE: Wait a minute. You said you weren't going to get upset.

BREE: Let her get upset. If Dick had done that to me, I'd have whacked him to death with my baton.

MARY GRACE: Baton? I thought you sang for your talent in the pageant.

BREE: I sang AND twirled. At the end I karate chopped a cinder block in half. I wore my black belt around my majorette unitard. I had to show them I was multi-talented.

CATHERINE: I'm sorry. I'm really more excited than upset.

CELESTE: Excited?

REGINA: A toast! Catherine is excited about something.

MARY GRACE: Cut it out.

CATHERINE: It turns out that Amber Lynn, the temp, is going to be full time from now on!

BREE: Full time? What do you mean?

CATHERINE: Turns out Dick is going to be a daddy again!

CELESTE, BREE, and MARY GRACE: What?!

CATHERINE: Oh yes, he finally gets ours through college and wham! He has to start over with Amber Lynn.

BREE: How do you know?

CATHERINE: He told me! Called me after about four scotches crying and carrying on. He found her birth control pills at the bottom of the bathroom garbage can. Lord knows the last time the trash was taken out. She's as lazy as a dog in August.

CELESTE: Karma!

CATHERINE: Right here at Cafe du Monde is where it ends. No more talk of the incident. I've finally gotten closure.

MARY GRACE: I'm sorry you've had to go through all this.

CATHERINE: Don't feel sorry for me! Let me tell y'all. I couldn't have wished a better revenge on the man. Raising a toddler with a dumb lazy wife. There is a God!

MARY GRACE: You're on Regina!

REGINA: A toast! Finally! To Dick and Amber Lynn's toddler! May he be wild as a buck and not sleep through the night—or potty train—until he's four!

ALL: Here! Here!

ACT ONE, SCENE 10

There is a sign that says Cajun Critters Swamp Tours. The "car" has been outfitted around the edges as a boat. A small platform sits to the side where Thibaut, the guide, will stand. A long stick lies beside the platform and is used by Thibaut to guide the boat.

BREE, MARY GRACE, CATHERINE, CELESTE and REGINA enter.

BREE: When you said you had a surprise for us I was thinking brunch at Muriel's. (*Dreamily.*) Brunch with a... a jazz trio playing while we're sitting on a balcony overlooking Jackson Square... eating shrimp and grits.

MARY GRACE: Yeah. Not driving to the ends of the earth down a dirt road to some place the *Deliverance* cast would be scared to go.

CELESTE: You guys are so unappreciative. I got us all a Groupon to one of the most highly rated things to do in New Orleans.

CATHERINE: And what exactly is out here in the middle of the woods that is so highly rated?

CELESTE: The Cajun Critters Swamp Tour!

REGINA: (*Somberly and with fear in her eyes, looking out toward the audience.*) The boars will come for me. I have murdered countless of their brethren and barbecued them for a few plastic trophies.

THIBAUT enters holding a backpack.

CELESTE: Oh my! It's you.

THIBAUT: I could say the same thing, but I would have to change it to "Oh my, it's Y'ALL."

REGINA: Good morning, cowboy.

CELESTE: We came for the swamp tour. What are you doing here?

THIBAUT: I happen to be the proprietor of the swamp tour.

CELESTE: The Cajun Critters Swamp Tour?

THIBAUT: Yep. That's the one. The one on the sign.

MARY GRACE: She just figured the swamp is so vast that perhaps there were several different swamp tours that might shove off from here, hopefully anyway.

THIBAUT: Nope. I'm afraid y'all are stuck with Cajun Critters.

REGINA: Mr. Thibaut, rodeo cowboy, doesn't sound so bad to me.

CELESTE: Don't start!

REGINA: OK, OK.

THIBAUT: Shall we? We can settle up with the Groupons later. Just... love those Groupons.

CATHERINE: Let's go. I've got a new lease on life. Bring on the gators. I'd rather be chased by a gator than to think I've got to chase a toddler in my fifties.

THIBAUT: Excuse me?

CELESTE: Ignore her. She's just happy about Dick.

THIBAUT: Excuse me.

CELESTE: Never mind.

EVERYONE takes their place on the "boat" with THIBAUT standing on the small platform on the edge holding the handle of the tiller steer.

THIBAUT: Ladies, the first thing we're gonna see are some alligator snapping turtles resting on that log up there.

MARY GRACE: My Lord. As if alligators weren't enough, the Louisiana swamps are full of alligator turtles?

THIBAUT: They're called alligator snapping turtles because of their powerful jaws and their ridged skin which looks like an alligator.

REGINA: I hope this boat is good and watertight.

THIBAUT: It hasn't had any leaks in a while.

MARY GRACE: In a while!

THIBAUT: I'm kidding. The alligator snapping turtle has a worm like appendage on his tongue. He lies real still with his worm like appendage hanging out like a lure. (*He stands still and sticks out his tongue.*) Then, when the prey gets close enough, he chomps down on it!

CELESTE: Worm like appendage? And laying real still til some food passes his way? He sounds like my ex-husband Earl.

THIBAUT: (*Points.*) There! On that log to the right!

REGINA: He's a monster! It's like The Land Before Time!

THIBAUT: That's old Alfred. The wildlife biologists in this area think he's around seventy years old. They can live up to a hundred and twenty and grow to be over two hundred pounds.

BREE: Yeah, he's a whopper. Scary!

THIBAUT: He's pretty docile as long as you don't mess with him. If an alligator snapping turtle is forced to leave its resting spot it will become agitated and very aggressive.

CELESTE: Old Alfred sounds more like Earl all the time.

THIBAUT: I don't know how many ex-husbands you've got but we're coming up on some pretty big gators up ahead, in case any of them look familiar.

CELESTE: Just the one ex-husband and he lasted less than a year.

BREE: It was kind of like a false start marriage, so she had to go back to the starting line.

CATHERINE: I don't see anything.

CELESTE: Oh, I see! I see their beady little eyes sticking up out of the water. If I had any more ex-husbands besides Earl, I'm sure there would be a resemblance.

REGINA: I'm just curious, Thibaut. When did you think getting out in a boat among all these prehistoric looking monsters was a good thing?

THIBAUT: I've been doing this my entire life. I was raised in a cabin on Barataria Bayou in Jefferson Parish.

CATHERINE: So, you're a real Cajun?

THIBAUT: My daddy was a full-blooded Cajun, descended straight from the Acadians.

BREE: The Acadians?

THIBAUT: The French who settled Novia Scotia but were run out when the Brits took over. Cajun, I guess, is a lazy way to say Acadian.

CELESTE: So, Cajuns are French Canadians who got run off into the wilds of Louisiana?

THIBAUT: That's right. Some of the Cajuns that live out in the swamps still speak only French.

MARY GRACE: What about Creole?

REGINA: Yeah Thibaut, do you have any Creole in your blood?

THIBAUT: I've got a dash of Creole. My mother descended from Spanish and Haitian lines.

REGINA: A dash of Creole, huh? So, I guess that makes you a spicy Cajun. Yum Yum.

CELESTE, BREE, MARY GRACE, and CATHERINE: Regina!

REGINA: I'm just saying's all!

THIBAUT: That's OK, Regina. My momma was a fiery woman. Taught me everything I knew about hunting and trapping.

CELESTE: Your MOMMA taught you those things?

THIBAUT: Yes, she did. She used to shoot rabbits, muskrat, and possum.

REGINA: And you ate it?

THIBAUT: I sure did. My father would be out for a month at a time crabbing, fishing, or shrimping. We had to eat while he was gone.

MARY GRACE: You're a real survivalist. You could actually live off the land if you had to.

THIBAUT: Most people who were raised in the bayou can. My mom made extra money by trapping river rats for fur coats. She made a pretty penny before the anti-fur freaks took over.

CATHERINE: A fur coat made out of river rat?

THIBAUT: The proper name is nutria but around here it's known as river rat or swamp rat. They're interchangeable.

CELESTE: Now listen here.

BREE: Heel Celeste.

CELESTE: I don't know how you could justify murdering a sweet harmless little creature just so people can stay warm.

THIBAUT: Celeste, is it? Have you ever been really cold? Somehow, I doubt it. Nutria are considered a "guilt free" fur, socially acceptable and environmentally friendly.

CELESTE: You expect me to believe that?

REGINA: Oo, I wish I had some popcorn.

THIBAUT: I don't really care if you believe it or not.

BREE: Oh no.

THIBAUT: Nutrias destroy the ecosystem and kill the vegetation hundreds of other creatures depend on. They aren't native to Louisiana. They're an invasive species.

REGINA: Damn it! This calls for popcorn.

THIBAUT: They live a cage free life unlike other animals raised for their fur and they're better for the environment than petroleum based fake fur. Plus you can eat them.

CELESTE: No one will ever accept it.

THIBAUT: Really? Because in the past few years Michael Kors and Oscar de la Renta have been using them for fur trims. Greta Garbo's favorite fur was Nutria back in the day.

CATHERINE: *(Points.)* An alligator!

MARY GRACE: Saved by the alligator. How ironic.

THIBAUT: That's Beauregard. He's the biggest gator in this bayou. As a matter of fact I've got a surprise for y'all.

THIBAUT reaches into his backpack.

CATHERINE: Please don't throw Celeste in. I know she can be overbearing but she IS our friend.

THIBAUT pulls out an alligator.

THIBAUT: This is one of Beauregard's babies. She got orphaned when someone killed her momma for her meat and didn't realize she had babies. Each of us guides took a baby to foster. This is Evangeline. When she's big enough, I'll release her back in the bayou with her daddy. I just hope Beauregard doesn't eat her.

REGINA: See Celeste. You think the humans are always the bad guys.

THIBAUT: Baby alligators only have a three to four percent survival rate.

MARY GRACE: This is like a real Trials of Life video.

CELESTE: I guess you guys are right. Nature can be a bitch.

REGINA: Maybe you should apologize to Thibaut. For heaven's sake, the man is a surrogate mother to an alligator. That takes someone pretty special.

THIBAUT: Well, thank you ma'am.

CELESTE: I'm sorry.

THIBAUT: Apology accepted.

BREE: Let me see that baby. I got to hold a baby alligator when I was on a commercial for the Mississippi State Zoo.

CATHERINE: How'd you get that gig?

BREE: I went on to win Miss Waffle Barn Mississippi. Weirdly after I won Miss Waffle Barn Interstate 55 Exit 29A, my biggest competitor at the state pageant was the Queen right across the bridge, Miss Waffle Barn Interstate 55 Exit 29B. But unfortunately, there was an "incident," and I won the state crown.

CATHERINE: The "incident" didn't have anything to do with a baton or a karate chop, did it?

BREE: (*Whispering to the baby alligator.*) We'll never tell. Will we, Evangaline?

THIBAUT: Now on to see the wild boars!

REGINA: Oh no!

INTERMISSION

ACT TWO, SCENE 1

The flat. There is a sign that reads Ball Gowns by Blaise. BLAISE enters, holding a clipboard. He is dressed to the nines. He brushes off the shoulders of his suit with his palm and straightens his suit jacket.

BLAISE: *(Addressing an invisible cameraman out toward the audience.)* Yes. The camera should go right there... A little to the left... No! No! My left, your right. *(There's a pause.)* You need to do a sound test? Hmmm. Testing. 1, 2, 3. *(Another pause.)* Tell a joke? Let me think... *(Clears throat.)* Oh, OK I've got one. What happens when you sing country music backwards? You get your wife and your job back. How do you know if you are trailer park trash? Your house moves but your twelve cars don't! You know you're a redneck if you think a Nutcracker is jumping off the high dive. Oh honey, I could do this all night. *(Pause.)* Oh, we're good now?

CELESTE enters in a beautiful ball gown.

CELESTE: Oh Blaise! I haven't had time to thank you for letting us use this gorgeous apartment. And to think it's right on Bourbon Street!

BLAISE: It's vacant for the next two weeks. It belongs to my friends, Troy and Rodney. They got into a little lover's spat so Rodney took Troy on a cruise to the French Riviera to make it up to him.

CELESTE: Earl used to think that putting his own supper plate in the dishwasher or picking his underwear up off the floor was good enough to make up with me. And you're telling me Mr. Troy got a cruise? Maybe I'm playing for the wrong team.

BLAISE: Or maybe you just haven't found the right person. I know a good man is hard to find, but I bet he's out there.

BLAISE and CELESTE: *(Cross their fingers.)* Let's hope!

CELESTE: Are you ready to get started?

BLAISE: Absolutely! I noticed you've gotten thirty thousand more followers since you called me.

CELESTE: I must admit the web series really is taking off. I've been contacted for a possible pilot!

BLAISE: Pilots are the best! Both kinds!

CELESTE looks out at the imaginary camera man.

CELESTE: Ready? ... OK Blaise you stand here. Ready girls?!

ALL: *(Off stage.)* Yes!

REGINA: *(Off stage.)* Ready as I'll ever be!

CELESTE: *(Looks out at the "camera man".)* 3.. 2.. 1..Hello! And welcome to another episode of Say Yes to Anything But a Wedding Dress. That's right. Say yes to any other type of dress that can make you happy when you slip it over your head without the commitment of a wedding dress. Anything but a dress that symbolizes the binding of your body, mind, soul, and bank account to a man who might turn out to be not your soul mate but a person that you actually despise waking up to day after day after day...

REGINA: *(Off stage.)* They get it Celeste. You hated Earl. Move on!

CELESTE: Today we're in The Big Easy. That's right. New Orleans. I'd like to welcome our guest, Blaise Benoit, owner of Ball Gowns by Blaise, located right here in the French Quarter on Royal Street. Welcome to Say Yes to Anything But a Wedding Dress, Blaise.

BLAISE: I'm thrilled to be here, Celeste... with you and your friends who, by the way America, are not models, but FRIENDS you've brought with you from Flovilla, Alabama. Welcome to New Orleans!

CELESTE: That's right y'all. My friends and I have come to the great crescent city to experience Mardi Gras up close and personal. While here, we'll be attending one of the most famous Mardi Gras Balls, the Bacchus Ball.

BLAISE: Celeste, these balls have been a traditional Mardi Gras event since Louisiana was just a French colony.

CELESTE: Blaise, what are some of the challenges of designing gowns for one of these traditional balls?

BLAISE: I'd say the most important thing is the fabric. These balls can be extremely sweaty. All the dancing and merry making and extreme humidity make for some very hot and steamy balls.

CELESTE: Anything else?

BLAISE: Yes, since the balls are BYOB I try not to design gowns with trains since the guest will possibly be dragging a cooler behind her.

REGINA: *(Off stage.)* BYOB?! Hallelujah! That's gonna save us a bundle!

CELESTE: We are ROLLING REGINA!

REGINA: (*Off stage.*) Sorry!

CELESTE: You were saying?

BLAISE: One fun thing about the balls is that the floats actually come straight from the parade route right into the convention center. One year a float driver was so drunk he took out a few revelers, but the party kept going. As the French say, c'est la vie!

CELESTE: Oh my! Could you explain the tradition of the mask that is worn by Mardi Gras participants?

BLAISE: Oh yes. The tradition of the mask goes back ages. You see, everyone wanted to get all the partying and sin out of their system before they had to commit to Lent, which is basically giving up anything enjoyable for forty days. Thank the good Lord I'm not Catholic. As I was saying, people wanted to get all of the naughtiness out of their system so they'd go bat shit crazy, oh wait... can I say that on air?

CELESTE: We can edit that out.

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