

# *Lovestruck Librarians: Epilogue*

## **First Annual Niceville Film Festival**

### Jury Members

Camille Lane, Award-Winning Actress (*The Quiet Dignity of Miss Charlotte Painbourne*)

Miles O'Connor, Award-Winning Television Star (HATV's *The Naked Carpenter*)

Wesley Ramirez, Founder of Swim for Success/Formers Mayor

### Featured Film Premiere

*Typhoid!: The Musical*

### Local/Amateur Short Film Showcase

Eugene Andriotti, "Crust of Doom"

Ulysses and Petal Bollinger, "Learning Birdcalls...and How to Love: Life in a Tiny Treehouse"

Jonah Danbury, "Poison in the Well: A Conspiracy Thriller"

Clarence Shipley and Sharon Decker, "Booty: A Pirate's Adventures with Love & Pillaging"

Earl Garner and Bob Killen, "Horror on the Course: The Bloody Putter, Part I"

Yolanda and Tasha Potter, "Racking It Up: Queer Women of Color and Business"

Frank Skagway, "A Hard Problem to Solve: Nice County's Plague of Phalluses"

Marsha Smythe-Price, "My Sincere, Award-Worthy Love for the Library's Children"

Pauline Whipler, "The Playboy (Not At All Associated with The Bachelor)"

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Angie shifted in her seat. "This movie is making me horny. Also pee-y. If that's a word."

"It isn't, which you well know," Penny whispered. "And how the hell could a musical about orphaned children on the Oregon Trail dying of typhoid possibly make you horny?"

"Anything and everything does the trick these days. Sexy horse rustlers stealing a child's only means of transportation." She nodded toward the screen. "Sexy wagon train leaders dying from infected snake bites. Sexy grass growing. Sexy dust motes floating in the air. I'm really not picky."

On her other side, Con snickered. "Like that's a new development. You've always been sluttier than an oyster with a Pornhub subscription."

Penny leaned forward so she could see Con. "You suck at metaphors, Chen."

"Didn't you pee like two minutes ago, Burrowes?" Sarah hissed from the row behind them. "Do you have some sort of terrible, bladder-shrinking disease, or are you trying to flee from this never-ending movie before we all die of boredom and starvation?"

"It's the baby." Angie waved a hand in dismissal. "The same thing happens to a lot of

women.”

God, pregnancy really blew sometimes. Although she had to admit, she’d found the process of getting knocked up immensely enjoyable. And she didn’t really mind the constant horniness, as long as her husband didn’t mind servicing her day and night.

Which he didn’t. She’d made very, very sure of that.

She leaned to the right, where Penny had just grabbed a handful of popcorn. “I have big plans for Grant when we get home. That new anthology we got today is *amazing*. Full of great ideas for pregnant hussies and their devoted mates.”

Penny’s brow furrowed. “Which one?”

“*Eating Out for Two*.” She pressed her legs together, attempting to conquer two biological urges at once.

“You’re incorrigible.” Penny pointed toward the back of the theater. “Just go. Better a quick bathroom break than constant squirming.”

Angie gave up and fled for the women’s room, ducking her head and muttering apologies as she went. Oh, Lord, it felt great to pee. And she needed a good leg stretch too, given the marathon length of the film they were watching. So instead of immediately returning to her seat, she stood in the back of the theater and surveyed the scene with satisfaction.

For the first time in months and months, her whole crew was back together. Miles and Wes—and thus Mary and Helen—had been obliged to take seats near the front of the theater, away from everyone else, since they were judging the films. But at least all the women were gathered in the same place at long last.

Only a week ago, Mary had returned to Nice County for the summer. Miles—hopeful that she might join him in LA, despite her reservations—had written a provision in his new contract

guaranteeing a three-month hiatus each year. He'd done it specifically so Mary could see her friends and family for an extended period of time between seasons of *The Naked Carpenter*. Before leaving for LA, he'd even visited Angie to confirm that a part-time summer job in the library might be available, if Mary wanted it.

She had wanted it. So—to Angie's great joy—for this summer and every summer thereafter, the Battlefield Bitches would reunite as a team. And even though she missed her most diligent employee and her sweetest friend during the rest of the year, a single season with Mary was better than none at all.

She had to admit it: Miles was a good man, even though he'd drawn Mary away from Battlefield. Angie supposed she could forgive him.

Especially since he'd pulled together this whole ridiculous enterprise to please his fiancée, knowing how much she loved film and still wanted to contribute to the community where she'd grown up. Coordinating with Helen, he'd even managed to get a decent number of local businesses to chip in some money.

Sure, the winners of the festival were taking home silicone statuettes that doubled as a butt plugs, but those were the breaks when you relied on sponsorship from Niceville Java and Intimate Emporium. And as far as Angie was concerned, the shape made anyone receiving a statuette a double winner.

On the screen in front, yet another child plastered her arm across her forehead and slumped over in a heap.

*Good, Angie thought. Ten down, four to go. Come on, kids. Can't some of you die from exposure or while fording a river? Do we really have to wait for the disease to spread through every single wagon?*

This movie was never going to end. And they had their first real girls' night out planned at Nice Rack that evening, so she wanted to get on with things, the sooner the better.

She retrieved her phone and tapped out a message. *I've had enough. Let's start girls' night out right now via text.*

Sarah: *I'm in. God, anything to stop this torment.*

The other agreements arrived in a flood. Even Mary's, to Angie's surprise. She supposed Mary was eager for their night together to begin too, despite her love of tearjerkers.

Angie: *Are the rest of the guys hanging out tonight? I didn't ask Grant before I left this morning. Poor baby. I wore him out. He and Not-So-Little Grant needed some rest.*

At the front of the theater, Mary buried her face in her hands. Apparently some things hadn't changed, despite the glow of self-confidence Angie's friend had acquired out in LA.

Con: *I think they're watching Sam's hockey game.*

Mary: *Miles will play next week, by the way. He's excited to break out his prosthesis and find out what it can do on ice.*

Helen: *I enjoy seeing him with that new arm. It may not be high-tech, but it still makes him look a little like a cyborg, which really works for me.*

After Mary's departure, the women had made a standing date to watch *The Naked Carpenter* together every week. In the show's season premiere, Miles had briefly discussed the loss of his arm and shown viewers how his new, body-powered prosthesis worked. And then he'd gotten back to his show's normal routine with a smile that seemed only a little forced.

Since then, he hadn't worn his prosthesis all that much. He did what he could without it and employed it when necessary, without seeming bothered either way. And sometime around the fifth episode, he'd begun going shirtless again, which Angie considered a good sign. Also a

gift to humanity, given his impressive body.

Penny: *How's Miles doing, Mary? In general? Is he handling the public scrutiny well? Because I would hate it. I have no idea how you stand it either.*

Before Mary could answer, Con shared her opinion. *I think he's doing fine. Did you notice that he's making more and more puns in his newer episodes? You can tell he's comfortable on camera again.*

Angie: *God, you're such a Naked Carpenter ho. If I were Mary, I'd be pissed.*

She had to admit that Constance had a point, though. The last episode, he'd told his assistant he'd give his left arm for a little help with the jigsaw. And later in the hour, he'd asked his sound guy to give him a hand. And then he'd winked at the camera, full of boyish pleasure at his stupid puns.

Yeah. He was definitely feeling better. Certainly, he didn't at all resemble the unkempt, frightened recluse who'd appeared in her library almost a year and a half ago.

Mary: *Better every day. He loves his work, and he's seeing an amputee group whenever we're in LA. It helps. And while we're here, he's even doing a few repairs at Minnie's Mini-Golf Massacre, ones where Jessie could use some assistance.*

Sarah: *Jesus. Minnie's? Really? How much life insurance does he have?*

Mary: *Don't worry. He'll be fine. And I'm fine too, Penny. I won't claim being in the public eye isn't hard at times, but I'm handling it. And all our travel really helps. Speaking of which...Sarah, aren't you and Chris going on a beach vacation soon?*

Sarah: *Yeah. The bike shop is making enough money to afford one now. Probably because I forced him to put a few bikes in the front of the shop, so it doesn't look quite so much like a Spanish Inquisition is about to break out there at any moment.*

Angie snickered. Typical DQ.

Good thing Chris seemed to get off on Sarah's dramatics. He might remain taciturn, but he obviously adored his woman. When they met as a group, he spent most of his time trying not to laugh at Sarah's soliloquies, one hand constantly poised to pat her very cute, very ample butt.

Helen: *Wes and I are going with them for the first few days. I love my job, but I need a break. Helping to coordinate this film festival with the city was a bitch.*

Mary: *Wes can step away from his nonprofit for a bit?*

Helen: *Swim for Success has enough infrastructure in place now. He can take some time off. And God knows, Chris and Wes enjoy grunting meaningfully at each other as they bike across vast distances, so Sarah and I can get massages or whatever without worrying about them entertaining themselves.*

Sarah: *They might go run a marathon too. I don't care, as long as I don't have to break a sweat with them.*

Helen: *Speaking of breaking a sweat, did I tell you about Wes's reaction the first time he read Jack's smutty book about Angie? Wes got to the tenth chapter, and the next thing I knew, he was ripping open one of our pillows to get some feathers. But they weren't the right type. The ones he eventually ordered are washable and can be used in all sorts of*

Mary: *Oh, my goodness.*

Penny: *Oh, God, please stop. Please please please.*

Helen: *You wusses never let me finish my stories.*

Con: *I love you, honey, but there's a reason poor Wes's face never heals from his cringe-laugh injury. Your stories are horrifying.*

Hell, even Wes admitted that. And he pretty much thought his fiancée was a goddess

fallen to earth.

Helen: *Hey, MY fiancé didn't write the damn book, Penny. Your husband did. Which is kinda weird, given that Angie's your BFF.*

Penny: *For the millionth time, IT'S NOT ABOUT ANGIE. It's about someone...Angie-esque.*

Angie: *It's totally about me. And it's HAWT. In a literary way. Remind me, Helen, what happens in Chapter 10 again? Was that the scene where, if you read between the lines, you could figure out they were using a tickle-whip?*

Penny: *I don't want to think about it. Hey, did I mention my idea for a film I might enter into the festival next year?*

Helen: *Chaaaaaaaanging the subjeeeeeeeeect.*

Penny: *Yup. Anyway, I was thinking it could be a variation on*

Sarah: *Jane Eyre*

Angie: *Jane Eyre*

Helen: *Jane Eyre*

Mary: *Jane Eyre?*

Con: *Jane fucking Eyre*

Penny: *Well, yes. It'd be set in Thornfield Hall for the most part. But in this version, she'd accept St. John's proposal. Oh, Sinnnnnjinnnnn. So much hotter than Saint John. And I'm going to find that Rochester stripper again and see if he's interested in starring. He seemed very invested in the role. Also very limber, which is good for a few additional scenes I had in mind.*

Mary: *How does Jack feel about the idea?*

Penny: ...



Angie: *Come clean, woman.*

Penny: *Aggrieved. But Jane will end up with Rochester in the end, of course.*

Con: *Who'd have guessed.*

Despite his grumpiness, they all knew Jack would support whatever Penny wanted to do. Angie had never seen such a cranky hermit look so happy, or give his time and energy so wholeheartedly to help his family and friends.

She hoped his adorable daughter, Casey, might think of Angie and Grant's baby like a little sister. Especially since Penny and Jack didn't plan to have any more children of their own.

Mary, Sarah, and Helen had better start pumping out kids soon, because Angie wanted lots of playmates for Penelope Junior. Also friends who could commiserate with pregnancy woes. Con—who'd decided not to have kids over a decade ago—was a lost cause, of course.

Speaking of which...

Angie: *How are your sibling-children doing, Con? Are they adjusting to their new brother-in-law-slash-daddy?*

Penny: *Wow. That sounded wrong.*

Con: *They're great. Becoming more independent month by month.*

Helen: *And Con won DOTY this year, Mary.*

Mary: *Congratulations! That's wonderful!*

Con: *Thank you. And yes. Oh, yes. At long last, the Bookmobile Bitches took Department of the Year, and it was fucking glorious. Marsha from the Children's Department never stood a chance.*

Angie: *Ugh. Marsha. What a bitch.*

Penny: *I've never meant an emoji pile of poop quite this sincerely.*

Helen: *I keep hoping some sort of wormhole will open up in Children's and transport her to an alternate dimension, where she'll have to do perpetual toddler storytimes.*

Penny: *Ouch.*

Angie: *Whoa. Dude.*

Con: *That's fucking harsh, Hel. Harsh but fair. Anyway, Sam and I want the IT department to win DOTY next year. I'll help him however I can, just like he helped me this year.*

Mary: *I love how you and Sam dote on each other, Con. It's so sweet.*

Almost sickeningly sweet, actually. But not surprising. Con hid a huge heart beneath that no-nonsense exterior. She'd do anything for her loved ones, and God knew she loved Sam with the fierce devotion of a lioness. And Sam was not only willing to serve Con, but eager to do so. He got off on it, from what Angie could tell.

Not sexually.

Wait. Sexually?

She and Con really needed to have a long chat at some point.

Con: *He just likes me because I put out.*

Angie: *That's why ALL the boys liked Con back in the day.*

Helen: *Consider yourself high-fived, Angie.*

Con: *Bitches. So many bitches.*

Mary: *Angie, how was your latest checkup? Everything still going okay?*

Angie rested a hand on her belly. A baby. She and Grant, her semi-debauched, Excel-loving choirboy husband, were having a baby. She could hardly believe it.

Well, that wasn't quite true. Thrice-hourly trips to the toilet tended to reinforce the pregnancy's reality. As did her incessant need to have Grant's talented mouth between her legs

whenever she couldn't have his equally talented cock there.

That morning, she'd heard him mutter the word *succubus* in his sleep, and to be honest, she couldn't blame him.

Angie: *All systems go. Three more months, and Penelope Junior will be here.*

Mary: *I'm so glad. ♥*

Penny: *I can't even imagine how many spreadsheets Grant created for the pregnancy.*

Helen: *Let me guess their file names. Impregnation Information? Pregnancy Particulars?*

Angie: *You're a genius, Murphy.*

Helen: *No, just familiar with your husband's abiding love for alliteration.*

Angie: *Speaking of life-altering events, am I going to be organizing a bachelorette party for you soon, Sarah? Because I was so sick in my first trimester that I couldn't really enjoy mine like I thought I would. I'd planned all sorts of exciting things we didn't end up doing.*

Mary: *Really? I thought it was pretty*

Mary: *...*

Con: *Spit it out. Angie won't mind.*

Mary: *adventurous.*

Sarah: *By ADVENTUROUS, Mary means SUPER-SLUTTY, everyone.*

Angie: *Nah. By my standards, that was funereal.*

Mary: *Oh, my.*

Angie: *For whatever bachelorette party I throw next, I have some new games in mind. Possibly ones involving a spare festival statuette, which just happened to end up in my possession.*

Con: *"Just happened." Right.*

Angie: *So what's the deal, DQ? You getting hitched or not?*

Sarah: *It may happen. It may not. Neither one of us cares much about the legalities. That said, he's been kind of squirrely lately, and he's hiding something in his bedside drawer. I figure it's either a ring or an embarrassing sex toy. I'm good either way.*

Helen: *If you decided to get married, you'd be a gorgeous bride. Although, to be honest, you'd kind of look like a well-shaven hobbit next to Chris. That dude is TALL.*

Sarah: *Thanks a lot, Murphy. You're just jealous you don't have a mutant man-beast as your boyfriend.*

Mary: *Speaking of weddings...*

Penny: *Yes?*

Helen: *Well? What is it?*

Con: *Don't leave us in fucking suspense!*

Angie: *WHAT? WHAT?*

Sarah: *I ALREADY KNOW WHAT SHE'S ABOUT TO SAY HAHAAAAAAAAHA*

Mary: *Miles and I just got engaged. He proposed at the cabin. No ring yet, because we haven't had a chance to go shopping for one.*

Angie heard a muffled squeal from the theater seats. Four squeals, actually. Five, if she included her own yelp of surprise and happiness.

Penny: *Congratulations to you both! I'm SO happy for you!*

Helen: *He'd better be good to you. If he's not, I'll open a can of whoop-ass on him the likes of which he's never seen before.*

Sarah: *As Chris can tell you, she ain't lying. Also: I ALREADY KNEW HAHAAAAAAAAHA!!!*

Con: *So delighted for you, sweet Mary. And rest assured: If he doesn't make you as happy as you deserve, I'll have Sam take out his kneecaps with a hockey stick during their next game together.*

Angie: *YESSSSSSSSSSSSSS! BACHELORETTE PARTY!*

Mary: *Angie, I'm not sure that's*

Angie: *STRIPPERS!!! COCK-SHAPED CAKES!!! PIN THE BUTT PLUG IN THE BOOTY!!!*

Mary: *No. I'm sorry, but no. No no no.*

Con: *Mary's classier than you, Angie. Let her keep her dignity.*

Angie: *Oh, it'll be dignified. Never fear. Here's a small taste of what's in store...*

Mary: *Why are you sending out eggplant and peach emojis?*

Sarah: *Angie, was that peach a butt or a vagina? Because it's unclear without more context.*

Con: *Where's your goddamn creativity, Burrowes? Let me show you how it's done.*

Mary: *What in the world? A hot dog and a taco?*

Helen: *Oh, you're all amateurs. Watch a master at work.*

Mary: *A banana and honeypot? Oh. OH. Listen, ladies, I don't think*

Penny: *You have to get metaphorical for best results, everyone.*

Mary: *Penny, I didn't expect this from you, of all people. A train in a tunnel and a spouting whale? Really?*

Penny: *I make no apologies. Classic literature is full of metaphors for sex. I'm simply translating them into emoji form.*

Angie: *C'mon, Mary. You try. Let us corrupt you. Just a little. Just this once.*

Helen: *WE WANT SEX EMOJIS*

Sarah: *SEX EMOJIS (unless you're too uncomfortable, babe)*

Penny: *SEX EMOJIS*

Con: *SEX FUCKING EMOJIS*

Mary: *All right, all right, all right. Give me a minute.*

Angie: ....

Con: *Nice.*

Sarah: *I always knew you had it in you.*

Helen: *So to speak. Heehee.*

Penny: *A cat and a shrimp? I salute you, Mary Higgs.*

Angie: *I certainly hope Miles doesn't resemble that shrimp.*

There Mary went. Hands back over the face, before she lowered them to tap out another message.

Mary: *Fine. If you must know...*

Helen: *Wow.*

Con: *A HAMMER? DAMN, WOMAN.*

Mary: *Well, he is the Naked Carpenter. It's appropriate.*

Sarah: *I think the longest movie in the history of humanity is finally ending. Nice Rack in half an hour?*

Mary: *I wouldn't miss it for the world. Really.*

Penny: *I'll be there.*

Con: *The bitches are back!*

Helen: *So. Many. Stories. To. Tell. Mary.*

Angie: *Let's do this!*

Penny: ♥

Con: *Fine. I'll be sloppily sentimental too. Goddammit. ♥♥*

Helen: *Look, everyone! Con is expressing emotion! Like an actual human, instead of a replicant! ♥♥♥*

Mary: *Oh, goodness. Here we go. ♥♥♥♥*

Angie: *One heart for each time I had sex with Grant on the Battlefield workroom table! (Don't tell Tina.) ♥♥♥♥♥*

Penny: *Ew.*

Sarah: *I'm going to have the most hearts! HAHAAAAHA. ♥♥♥♥♥♥*

Angie: *I love all of you.*

Angie: *In a platonic way. Not a romantic way.*

Angie: *Or a sexual way.*

Angie: *Well, maybe in a sexual way. Let's see how the evening goes.*

Penny: *Put a cork in it, Burrowes. The librarians are ROLLING OUT.*

Angie: ♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

THE END

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