

A Lovely Day for Revolution

By Doni Tamblyn and Leann Lewis

Cast:

JONQUIL (60s-70s), the leader. The epitome of genteel Southern charm, she speaks warmly, with much modulation—a combination of the perfect hostess and a benevolent Sunday school teacher.

CELIA (60s-70s), Jonquil’s right-hand lady. Like all the women in this group, she comes from an old Southern family, and, although she is perhaps a touch more fragile than Jonquil, this fact informs everything she does.

ANNABELLE (50s-70s) is the straight-talking eccentric that every Southern community endures but accepts because she, too, is from “one of the best families.” Indeed, her occasional scandalous outbursts are secretly enjoyed by those more tightly wrapped in propriety—until she goes too far, which inevitably she does.

TISH (40s) is of a new generation. She feels it’s time to be a bit more confrontational. Her style is earnest—almost, but not quite, shrill.

SOUTHERN LADIES (50s-70s). Also from the best families (no one here would in fact associate with anyone who wasn’t), they are unfailingly charming and cordial.

At rise: JONQUIL, CELIA, ANNABELLE, TISH, and SOUTHERN LADIES *enter*. *All wear pearls, gloves, and perfectly-coifed, rather large hair. There is much chatter.*
JONQUIL, *dressed in short-sleeved suit, takes her place at mic.*

Jonquil:

Is it working now? (*Taps mic*) Oh, yes. Lovely. Ladies! Ladies!

(*Chatter stops.*)

Ladies, it seems we have our sound system. Mr. Caldwell, the custodial engineer, has rescued us—and on his day off, too, isn't he wonderful? Thank you, thank you, Mr. Caldwell, whatever would we have done without you?

(*Gives the invisible man a brilliant smile. The others do likewise. Their smiles, accompanied by murmurs of "Very kind" and "So accommodating," follow his invisible exiting form.*)

Jonquil:

And now, Ladies, may we please take our seats and begin?

(*The ladies sit.*)

Thank you. Ladies, as you know, today marks an historic occasion. It gives me great pride as your elected speaker to move that we open the first annual meeting of the "Zelda Fitzgerald Society for Tasteful Feminism." All in favor say "aaah."

Ladies:

Aaaaaah

(*Gloved applause*)

Jonquil:

The ah's have it. (*Raps gavel, becomes serious*) Ladies, as the nation's premier debutantes, we have long defended the virtues of charm and good breeding. And only we can know the hardship we have faced since the advent of Feminism. Heaven knows it has not been easy to secretly support a movement while publicly condemning it. But we had no choice. We could hardly mingle with women who never modulated their voices, who were strangers to low-heeled pumps, gloves, and (*clears throat*) depilatories. We have always held to the sacred tenet that you can fight ignorant, oppressive, and abusive males without making yourself unattractive to them.

Ladies:

(*Murmurs of decided assent*)

Jonquil:

Yet now do we find that, left to themselves for lo these many decades, without our superior social skills to guide them, our sisters to the North have made Feminism into something as crass and unappealing as— as— well, as Feminism.

(*Ladies buzz*)

Jonquil:

In so doing, our Northern sisters have created a backlash so bad we all require neck braces. It used to be fun to be a strong woman! Self-confident men once found us fascinating! Now they find us

(JONQUIL, cont'd) creepy. Once we received a gallant apology for unintended slights. Now we get a letter, held out at arm's length, referring us to their lawyers; it is all so ungracious....

Ladies:
(Murmurs of assent)

Jonquil:
(Dropping voice) Ladies. The time has come to put the “femme” back in “Feminism.” It is time for a Feminism people can meet at the front door... a Feminism they can invite into the parlor... a Feminism that never shows up without a hostess gift, and always wipes its feet. The time has come, Ladies, to raise the battle cry *(raises gloved fist)*: “Knock, knock! Y'all got company!”

Ladies:
(Thunderous gloved applause)

Jonquil:
(Nodding serenely)

That's right....

(Applause dies down. Murmur to ANNABELLE:)

Annabelle, honey— a little powder....

(ANNABELLE hastens to comply. To the ladies:)

Now, we know that we may well endure disrespectful jocularly from those of the other camp, who say that one cannot fight for women's rights dressed in taffeta. To them we reply: If you can organize a society wedding with 800 guests, a florist who indulges in libations, and an ice sculpture of General Lee that keeps threatening to melt down till it looks like Gumby, well—! A revolution is a day in the park.

Ladies:
(Murmurs of decided assent, scattered applause)

Jonquil:
And now I move we get down to business. All in favor say “Aah.”

Ladies:
Aaahh.

Jonquil:
The ah's have it. *(Rap gavel)* I now yield the floor to Mrs. Celia Waterston. Celia?

Celia:
Thank you, Jonquil. Ahem. *(Reads:)*

(CELIA, cont'd) "Knowledge is power! An educational symposium on female poverty, wife battering, and other unpleasant subjects will be held Tuesday at 1 PM at the Daughters of the American Revolution Hall. There will be a short film on the history of... (*dropping voice*) carnal abuse... (*raising voice*) after which we will break up into small groups to discuss the inborn tendency of the male sex toward violence and dominance. (*Charming smile*) Refreshments will be served."

(Appreciative applause)

Jonquil:

Thank you, Celia. And now for the first item of our agenda: Stopping... (*lowers voice*) carnal abuse.

Ladies:

(Murmurs)

Annabelle:

(Raises a hand)

Oh, Jonquil, Jonquil! Are we talkin' about sexual harassment here, or rape?

Ladies:

(A take)

Jonquil:

(A take; then, warmly)

Annabelle, your candor is always so refreshing. We are talking about... the latter.

(Carrying on quickly)

Now, I think we all agree it's important to confront this alarming social issue, since ignoring it has simply not proven effective....

Ladies:

(Murmurs)

Jonquil:

And to that end, I have someone very special to speak to us today. Miss Tish Madison writes for the *Atlanta Social Bee*, *Jove's Daughters Quarterly* and *The Kappa Kappa Gamma Newsletter*. A member of one of our oldest and best families, as a child she was dandled on the knee of the great senator Sam Nunn as he drafted the Department of Defense Reorganization Act. Ladies, Miss Madison is certainly a free thinker— indeed, to some she may seem to push the boundaries too far. But, Ladies, I exhort you to listen closely to her words today, for they are those of a forthright new movement— a movement from whose plucky style we might learn much. So without further ado, Ladies, it is my great honor to present... Miss Tish Madison.

(Takes a seat. TISH replaces her at podium.)

Ladies:
(Measured applause)

Tish:
Thank you, Miss Jonquil. *(To all:)* I would like to read for you today my latest composition, entitled, "Open Letter to Men." *(Begins to read:)*

"Open Letter to Men.

"Dear Men:

"For quite some time now, we ladies have been noticing that you rape us. Yes, you do. It has been going on for a good long while, and with alarming regularity.

"Men: Whatever *are* you *thinking*? Where are your heads?

"Now in all fairness to you, we have devised a theory. We think that somewhere back in time, some miscommunication may have occurred. One is brought to mind of that little parlor game, "Telephone." You know the one, when someone whispers a message and it gets progressively distorted as it goes down the line? Well, we can well imagine that, somewhere back in prehistory, one of us said, 'Ring-ring: Isn't that a fine, big mastodon you dragged back to camp.' Two million years later y'all got, 'Ring-ring: Date rape us in the back seat of your daddy's Chrysler, you big fools.'

"It could happen. We are open to that possibility.

"However, Men, for once and all, we would like to clear up any past confusion. Men: We do not like to come home from a date with one broken heel, grass and dirt in our hair and our skirts up around our hips. Please make a note of this for future reference, and post it in some prominent place.

Sincerely, Women."

Ladies:
(Awestruck applause)

Jonquil:
(Aside, to Celia)

Oh, straight talk...!

Tish:
(Holds up one hand for silence. Delivers payload:)

"PS. Now that we have addressed this issue, we would also appreciate an increase in pay." Thank you.

(Takes her seat with prim satisfaction. Thrilled and scandalized gloved applause goes on and on)

Jonquil:

(Dabbing flushed cheeks with hankie, rises and approaches podium.)

Brilliant, Tish! Pure Falkner! A thousand thanks!

(Nods triumphantly to those around her. Raises hand. Applause subsides.)

And now, Ladies, it is time now to finalize our plans for our “Take Back the Night” Bake Sale. I am delighted to see that so many of you have volunteered your culinary specialties. And if I may, I would like to propose that to drive home the seriousness of our cause, we *name* our baked treats.

Ladies:

(Buzz)

Jonquil:

(Holds up hand)

For example: “Susan Brownmiller Brownies.”

Ladies:

(Enthusiastic murmurs)

Jonquil:

Or: “Apple Brown Betty Friedan.”

Ladies:

(Enchanted murmurs)

Celia:

I’ve got one, I’ve got one! “No Means No” no-calorie fruit bars!

Ladies:

(Murmurs)

Jonquil:

Oh, that’s very powerful, yes.

Tish:

(Raises hand)

“Chipping Away at Injustice” chocolate chip cookies!

Ladies:

(Enthusiastic, genteel applause)

Celia:

“Changing-The-System-From-The-Inside” upside-down cake!

Jonquil:
(Caught up in the excitement)

“I’m Not Your Pumpkin” pumpkin bread!

Ladies:
(Scandalized delight)

Celia:
(Gaily, to Jonquil)

Oh, you’re terrible!

Annabelle:
“YOU BIG OLD MEAN MEN, JUST STOP RAPING US” LEMON SQUARES!!!!

Ladies:
(Long silence, frozen shock)

Jonquil:
(Mustering a brilliant smile)

Oh, how lovely! I was *so* hoping someone would bring lemon squares!

(Ladies quickly murmur appreciation. Just as quickly.)

And now, I move to adjourn. All in favor say “Aaaah.”

Ladies:
Aaaaaah!

(All turn in their seats and begin chattering excitedly to each other.)

Curtain