

SIDE ③: CLAIREE, SHELBY, TRUVY,
ANNELLE, OUISER

ACT TWO

In the blackout before curtain, we hear the radio. It is a male D.J. for KPPD. Totally fatuous and self-possessed, it is his voice we hear over the radio throughout Act II.

D.J. You're listening to KPPD, the station of choice in Chin-quapin Parish. Now stop by the shopping center this afternoon. I'll be broadcasting al fresco . . . that means out of doors for those of you that aren't Latin scholars. There'll be prizes, and a battle of the bands, all sponsored by KPPD. Swing on by and meet me in person. See how good-looking I really am. Coming up now . . . a half hour of nonstop music so I can make it over to the shopping center. Let's hope none of these records has a scratch on 'em, 'cause I'm outta here. I'm gonna kick things off with one of my personal all-time favorites. *(Song starts to play.)* See ya at the shopping center!

SCENE I

It is June, eighteen months later. The radio is playing. Nothing much in the shop has changed. Maybe new curtains and a Mr. Coffee. Truvy is cutting Shelby's hair. The hair is very short, very boyish. There is an underlying uneasiness in Shelby's behavior. Clairee is being "done" by Annelle. Shelby's radio plays, but fades in and out. Truvy and Annelle have to whack it from time to time to make it play. Clairee has been regaling them with a story and they are laughing.

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SHELBY. But didn't he scare you to death coming by so late?
CLAIREE. It wasn't that late. About 9:30, I guess.
SHELBY. Still, somebody knocking on my bedroom window after dark would scare the daylight out of me.
CLAIREE. Not me. Hope springs eternal, I suppose. I was so disappointed when I realized it was only my nephew.

getting a trim. I wasn't up to a big debate with her this morning. Now! Truvy! Let's do my nails!

TRUVY. This is a treat! No one around here ever wants a manicure. I don't even know what to charge for a full day of beauty.

SHELBY. I want the works. I want to feel completely pampered today. Mama's gonna want a manicure, too.

TRUVY. I am going to paint my front door red and change my name to Elizabeth Arden.

CLAIREE. Manicures, saucy new hairdos. What's going on?

SHELBY. ~~We're always up to something . . . you know that.~~ *(Changing subject.)* But I want to get back to this Drew

and Belle nonsense. I hope they reconcile with Marshall. Speaking as a parent, they better get their act together. I do not approve of friction between parents and children.

CLAIREE. Oh, I think it'll all blow over. I have to admit. He did go about it the wrong way.

TRUVY. What did he do?

CLAIREE. He marched in unexpected from Los Angeles while Drew and Belle were preparing for the annual Mar-million shrimp boil. Marshall without so much as a hello says, "Mama and Daddy. I have something to tell you. I have a brain tumor. I have three months to live." Well, naturally Drew and Belle became hysterical. Then Marshall says, "Hey folks, I'm just kidding. I'm only gay."

SHELBY. That was his idea of breaking the news gently?

CLAIREE. Drew became incredibly distraught and started throwing wet shrimp at him, screaming at him to get out of his sight, so Marshall came to my house, smelling like a can of cat food.

TRUVY. What do you think Drew and Belle are feeling right now?

CLAIREE. I don't know. They just considered themselves to be a model family for so long. First with Nancy Beth dethroned from her Miss Merry Christmas title after that unfortunate motel thing. . . .

SHELBY. What motel thing? I don't live here anymore, remember?

TRUVY. Nancy Beth was discovered in a nearby motel with a high political official.

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CLAIREE. They were both high. They'd been smoking everything but their shoes.

TRUVY. To be the only Miss Merry Christmas in history caught with her tinsel down around her knees was a very humiliating experience for the Marmillion family.

SHELBY. How do you feel about Marshall?

CLAIREE. Haven't really thought about it. But I want you to know he's always welcome at my house. I'm very proud of him. He built up that chain of sportswear stores all by himself without a penny of family money. He says, "I am a self-made man. I pulled myself up by my own jockstraps."

TRUVY. He could always turn a phrase. (*Truvy is about to use a bottle of something for Shelby's manicure, but she realizes the bottle is empty. She turns to ask Annelle for some, but Annelle is in silent prayer. Uncomfortable, Truvy waits for Annelle to finish. The others also notice Annelle.*)

ANNELLE. Amen.

TRUVY. Amen. Annelle? I'm out of uh . . . (*Holds up the bottle.*)

ANNELLE. Is it still next to . . . ?

TRUVY. No. It's over the . . .

ANNELLE. O.K. (*Annelle exits.*)

SHELBY. Was she praying?

TRUVY. Yes.

SHELBY. Why?

TRUVY. Got me. Maybe she was praying for Marshall and Drew and Belle. Maybe she was praying for us because we were gossiping. Maybe she was praying because the elastic is shot in her pantyhose. Who knows? She prays at the drop of a hat these days.

SHELBY. How long has she been this way?

TRUVY. Ever since Mardi Gras. She had her choice of going to a Bible weekend with her Sunday School class or to New Orleans with me and two other sinners. She left that Friday a pleasant, well-adjusted young lady and she returned on Tuesday a Christian.

SHELBY. What does her boyfriend say?

TRUVY. Sammy's so confused he doesn't know whether to scratch his watch or wind his butt. He's crazy about her. He says he could deal with another man in her life, but he has

trouble with the father, the son, and the Holy Ghost.

SHELBY. Well, I'm pretty religious, but that stuff makes me feel kind of creepy.

TRUVY. Well, I'm torn. I've got two sons that I'm afraid are going to hell in a handcart and a semi-daughter that strives to be the kind of girl Jesus would bring home to Mama. I don't know what to think. I don't understand those people . . . but they sometimes seem to have a peace about things that I've never had. Maybe I'm just jealous. (*Annelle enters, smacks the radio to make it play. Clairee changes subject.*)

CLAIREE. And Marshall is so thoughtful. He brought me this pin. (*Clairee reveals a piece of jewelry under her beauty smock.*) It's gold and enamel.

TRUVY. It's a bug.

CLAIREE. It's fine jewelry. It's little eyes are rubies, my birthstone.

SHELBY. Does Marshall have a . . . uh . . . you know . . . friends?

CLAIREE. We talked a little bit about that. I'm such a nosy old thing. I asked him how he . . . met people. 'Cause in my day you could tell by a man's carriage and demeanor which side his bread was buttered on. But today? In this day and age? Who knows? I asked Marshall, "How can you tell?" and he said, "All gay men have track lighting. And all gay men are named Mark, Rick, or Steve." He is such a nut . . . track lighting. (*Everyone laughs.*)

OUISER. (*Enters carrying a sack.*) 'Morning.

TRUVY. 'Morning, Ouiser!

OUISER. What's so funny?

SHELBY. Miss Clairee was just telling us the true story of track lighting.

OUISER. I love mine. It highlights my new artwork.

CLAIREE. Since when do you have track lighting?

OUISER. About three weeks. It's in my foyer and up the stairs. It was my grandson's idea.

SHELBY. I haven't seen him in ages. How is he?

OUISER. Steve's fine. I brought you all some tomatoes. First of the season. I didn't expect to see you in town, Shelby.

SHELBY. Well, I'm here.

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