

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.

SHELBY

Well, I just think it's awful of Drew to throw his son out of the house. Parents should never throw their children out of the house.

CLAIREE

My brother can be very hotheaded when he wants to be. But he really didn't throw Marshall out. Marshall just came over to my house while his daddy cooled off. I adore Marshall. We stayed up half the night talking last night.

SHELBY

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 Marmillion 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.

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

OK.

*(she exits)*

SHELBY

Was she praying?

TRUVY

Yes.

SHELBY

Why?

TRUVY

Got me. Maybe she was praying for Marshall and Drew and Bell. 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... 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 the subject.*

CLAIREE

And Marshall is so thoughtful. He brought me this pin  
(*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.

Every one laughs.

OUISER

*(entering, 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.