

START

SHELBY. Who got the title your year, Miss Clairee?

CLAIREE. Oh, child. Nobody. There wasn't even a Christmas festival when I was in high school. Why Jesus wasn't even born until I was a junior in college. I remember it distinctly. My friends and I were all out watching our flocks by night . . .

TRUVY. Get over here, Clairee. Annelle's gotta gift wrap your head.

OUISER. *(Entering in a huff.)* I could just spit.

TRUVY. 'Morning Ouiser.

OUISER. The parade doesn't even start for four hours and already people are parking on my lawn. It will flatten my grass.

CLAIREE. *(Mock sincerity.)* Here. Let me hold you.

OUISER. I hate out of town tourists.

SHELBY. Hello!

OUISER. Shelby! What are you doing here?

SHELBY. Being a tourist, I guess. But I won't flatten your grass, I promise.

OUISER. Good God. You've had the good sense to move away from this festival madness. I can't understand why you'd drag yourself back for a couple of firecrackers and drunk teenagers earping on your shoes.

SHELBY. I like it.

ANNELLE. Miss Ouiser. I think you need a healthy dose of Christmas spirit. *(Annelle interrupts conditioning Clairee to get a present from the tree.)*

OUISER. I have so much Christmas spirit I could scream.

ANNELLE. *(Handing her a present.)* Merry Christmas!

OUISER. *(Opening present.)* I just finished putting out my yard decorations.

CLAIREE. Ouiser. Keep off the grass signs are not Christmas decorations.

OUISER. They are bordered in holly. *(Pulls out poinsettia earrings.)* You made them, didn't you?

ANNELLE. With my own two hands.

OUISER. Your present is . . . uh . . . back at the house. I haven't wrapped it yet.

SHELBY. How's Rhett?

OUISER. He's getting along. As a matter of fact, he's the

poster dog for the Christmas festival. *(Ouiser points to a poster on the wall with a picture on it.)*

TRUVY. That is Rhett! I didn't recognize him.

CLAIREE. It's nice to see Rhett with some hair again.

SHELBY. I have to run some errands, but before I go . . . Miss Ouiser. I have met an old friend of yours.

OUISER. Oh?

SHELBY. Owen Jenkins.

OUISER. Oh.

CLAIREE. Owen? Now there's a blast from the past.

SHELBY. Do you remember him? He remembers you.

OUISER. Of course I remember him. He had the longest nose hair in the free world.

SHELBY. He doesn't now. He hardly has any hair anywhere.

CLAIREE. Owen's been gone from Chinquapin since God was a boy. I'd forgotten he'd ever existed.

SHELBY. Well now Owen lives in Monroe and goes to First Presbyterian. He sings in the choir. One night at choir practice we were doing an especially beautiful Mozart thing and I was moved to tears. He offered me his handkerchief and we got to talking. When he found out where I was from he asked me if I knew you. I said not only did I know you, but you were a neighbor and your dog has almost killed my father on numerous occasions. He's had a very interesting life. He lived in Ohio somewhere. His wife just died recently and he moved back down here.

OUISER. Does this story have a point?

SHELBY. No, not really. He just remembers you fondly, I think.

OUISER. Can't imagine why. He wasn't a bad fellow. But I managed to run him off and marry the first of two total deadbeats.

TRUVY. Unrequited love. My favorite.

SHELBY. Maybe sometime I could arrange for us all to get together.

OUISER. Maybe not.

SHELBY. Why not?

OUISER. Shelby. I managed in just a few decades to marry the two most worthless men in the universe and proceed to have the three most ungrateful children ever conceived