

SHELBY. Isn't that nice. Are your boys coming home for Christmas?

TRUVY. No. Louie brought home his girlfriend at Thanksgiving. The nicest thing I can say about her is that all her tattoos are spelled correctly. Guess it's just me, the old man . . . and Annelle. (*Offers Shelby the plug for the lights.*) Do the honors, missy. And hope it doesn't blow up again. (*Shelby lights the tree. Applause all around.*)

SHELBY. (*Triumphantly to M'Lynn.*) See. I know what I'm doing.

TRUVY. I know your mother is so happy you could get in early enough to make the festival. I hear it's going to be the best ever. More fireworks, a nativity made entirely of sparklers, and a huge new sign on the riverbank that says, "I Heart Chinquapin Parish." It's going to be spectacular. And guess who the grand marshall of the parade is? Wayne Newton!

SHELBY. I wouldn't miss a Christmas festival for the world. (*Truvy and Annelle begin decorating. Shelby gets M'Lynn's attention from under the dryer.*) Oh. Mama. While I'm thinking. I brought some white chocolate cherry cheesecakes for our open house.

M'LYNN. That doesn't sound like finger food to me.

SHELBY. They're bite sized. Like this.

M'LYNN. Fine. I'm sure you know what you're doing. TRUVY. (*Seeking Annelle's approval on decoration placement.*) Annelle?

ANNELLE. Perfect.

SHELBY. And, Mama? I've been cleaning out closets . . . getting rid of stuff. I've brought you some things I don't want that I've hardly worn. I thought maybe your patients might be less disturbed if they had something stylish to wear.

TRUVY. (*Wondering where to put some decorations.*) Annelle?

ANNELLE. The chair. (*To Shelby.*) Uh. Excuse me, Shelby? Uh. If you don't have any special plans for the clothes . . . could I have them? Riverview Baptist has a

clothes closet for the poor. We're real low on women's dresses.

SHELBY. Sure. That's a wonderful idea. They're in the car. I'll get 'em in a minute.

TRUVY. It breaks my heart that she won't come to the Methodist church with me. I think Riverview Baptist is a little too . . . "Praise the Lord" for my taste.

ANNELLE. (*With an edge.*) Some of them do get a little carried away. But there's nothing wrong with that.

SHELBY. No. A lot of Mama's mental patients are born again Christians. I mean that only in the best sense of the word.

TRUVY. We're just glad to see that Annelle is settling down and finding her way. She's had a few rough months, haven't you, honey?

ANNELLE. Oh. After they finally threw Bunkie Dupuy behind bars and I was rid of him, I went wild. I was drinking, running around, smoking . . .

TRUVY. Jezebel!

ANNELLE. But Truvy helped me see the error of my ways. I've realized I have something to offer. I joined a church last month. Truvy's helped me see I have talents. I've done guest lectures on beauty at the trade school . . .

TRUVY. Our little Annelle has become one of the hottest tickets in town.

ANNELLE. Truvy. Stop. I am enjoying the city more. And I am so excited about the Christmas festival today. I've wanted to come to it all my life. And now I live here!

TRUVY. Tell her who you have a date with.

ANNELLE. Truvy, will you hush?

TRUVY. Tell her, missy. Shelby is pretty much totally responsible for the whole thing!

ANNELLE. Sammy DeSoto.

TRUVY. He has a body that doesn't stop anywhere.

SHELBY. How am I responsible?

ANNELLE. He was bartending at your wedding reception last spring. That's when I met him. He makes a mean cherry coke.