

M'LYNN. Oh, sure. Basically . . . after the transplant failed, she went back on dialysis . . . you knew that. She'd been doing fine the last few months. But last Monday, everything went wrong. It was like dominoes. They thought they could correct things with a little surgery. As they wheeled her down, she said, "Mama. I'm going to feel so good when this is over." They gave her the anesthetic . . .

ANNELLE. In a way she was right. Maybe she knew she was going to be with her king.

M'LYNN. (*A little shaken.*) Yes, Annelle. Maybe so.

ANNELLE. We should be rejoicing.

M'LYNN. You go ahead. I wish I could feel that way. I guess I'm a little selfish. I'd rather have her here.

ANNELLE. Miss M'Lynn. I don't mean to upset you by saying that. You see. When something like this happens, I pray very hard to make heads or tails of it. I think in Shelby's case, she wanted to take care of that baby, of you, of everybody she knew . . . and her poor body was just worn out. It wouldn't let her do everything she wanted to do. So she went on to a place where she could be a guardian angel. She will always be young. She will always be beautiful. And I personally feel much safer knowing she's up there on my side. I know some people might think that sounds real simple and stupid . . . and maybe I am. But that's how I get through things like this.

M'LYNN. (*Gentler.*) Thank you, Annelle. I appreciate that. And that's a very good idea. Shelby, as you know, would not want us to get all mired down and wallow in this. She would look on it as just one of life's occurrences. We should deal with it the best way we know how . . . and get on with it. That's what my mind says. I wish somebody would explain that to my heart.

TRUVY. Tommy said you didn't leave her side.

M'LYNN. Well. I wasn't in the mood to play bridge. (*Beat.*) No. I couldn't leave my Shelby. It's interesting. Both the boys were very difficult births. I almost died when Jonathan was born. Very difficult births. Shelby was a breeze. I could've gone home that afternoon I had her. I was thinking about that as I sat next to Shelby while she was in the coma. I would work her legs and arms to keep the circulation going. I

told the ICU nurse we were doing our Jane Fonda. I stayed there. I kept on pushing . . . just like I always have where Shelby was concerned . . . hoping she'd sit up and argue with me. But finally we all realized there was no hope. At that point I panicked. I was very afraid that I would not survive the next few minutes while they turned off the machines. Drum couldn't take it. He left. Jackson couldn't take it. He left. It struck me as amusing. Men are supposed to be made of steel or something. But I could not leave. I just sat there . . . holding Shelby's hand while the sounds got softer and the beeps got farther apart until all was quiet. There was no noise, no tremble . . . just peace. I realized as a woman how lucky I was. I was there when this wonderful person drifted into my world and I was there when she drifted out. It was the most precious moment of my life thus far.

TRUVY. (*Putting the finishing flourishes on M'Lynn's hair.*) Well I don't know how your insides are doing. But your hair is holding up beautifully. All it needs is a flick and a promise. Did you have it done in Shreveport?

M'LYNN. No. I did it myself . . .

TRUVY. Hold it, Missy. I don't want to hear that kind of talk.

M'LYNN. Doing my own hair was so odd. I had no idea about the back . . .

TRUVY. You did a lovely job. I just smoothed out the rough spots. In fact, I'm going to be looking for temporary help when Annelle goes on maternity leave . . . interested?

M'LYNN. (*Struggling for control.*) It was just with so much going on, I didn't know if I would have time . . . would feel like coming here. But this morning I wanted to come here more than anything. Isn't that silly?

TRUVY. No.

M'LYNN. Last night I went into Shelby's closet for something . . . and guess what I found. All our Christmas presents stacked up, wrapped. With her own two hands . . . I'd better go.

TRUVY. (*Handing M'Lynn a mirror.*) Check the back.

M'LYNN. Perfect . . . as always. (*M'Lynn continues to gaze into the mirror.*) You know . . . Shelby . . . Shelby was

right. It . . . it does kind of look like a blond football helmet. (*M'Lynn disintegrates.*)

TRUVY. Honey. Sit right back down. Do you feel alright?

M'LYNN. Yes. Yes. I feel fine. I feel great. I could jog to Texas and back, but my daughter can't. She never could. I am so mad I don't know what to do. I want to know why. I want to know why Shelby's life is over. How is that baby ever going to understand how wonderful his mother was? Will he ever understand what she went through for him? I don't understand. Lord I wish I could. It is not supposed to happen this way. I'm supposed to go first. I've always been ready to go first. I can't stand this. I just want to hit somebody until they feel as bad as I do. I . . . just want to hit something . . . and hit it hard. (*Everyone is unable to react, overcome with emotion. Eventually, Clairee has an idea. She pulls Quiser next to M'Lynn and braces Quiser as if Quiser were a blocking dummy.*)

CLAIREE. Here. Hit this! Go ahead, M'Lynn. Slap her!

QUISER. (*Dumbfounded.*) Are you crazy?

CLAIREE. Hit her!

QUISER. Are you high?

TRUVY. Clairee! Have you lost your mind?

CLAIREE. We can sell T-shirts saying "I Slapped Quiser Boudreaux!" Hit her!

QUISER. Truvy! Dial 911!

CLAIREE. Don't let her beauty stand in the way. Hit her!

ANNELLE. Miss Clairee. Enough!

M'LYNN. Hush, Clairee. (*Everyone is beginning to lighten up.*)

CLAIREE. Quiser, this is your chance to help your fellow man. Knock her lights out, M'Lynn!

TRUVY. Clairee. You're gonna piss God off if you're not careful!

QUISER. Let go of me! (*Clairee does so.*)

CLAIREE. Well, M'Lynn. You just missed the chance of a lifetime. Most of Chingquapin Parish'd give their eyeteeth to take a whack at Quiser.

QUISER. You are a pig from hell.

CLAIREE. O.K. Alright. Hit me, then. I deserve it.

QUISER. Whatever would we do without Clairee's own special brand of humor?