



CLAIREE. Hello, darling!

SHELBY. Can I get you some tea?

CLAIREE. Yes, that would be nice. I'm sorry I'm late. I overslept. We didn't get back into town until one o'clock. It was a dazzling victory over Dry Prong.

ANNELLE. I heard you on the radio last night. You were wonderful.

SHELBY. What were you doing on the radio?

CLAIREE. They let me be the color announcer for the Devils. I was fabulous. I was too colorful for words.

SHELBY. That was nice of them to let you talk on the radio.

CLAIREE. Nice nothing. I own the radio station.

SHELBY. Oh! You bought it?

CLAIREE. Yes!! KPPD. The station of choice in Chinquapin Parish!

TRUVY. Shelby? How do you like Clairee's new short and sassy look?

SHELBY. I love it.

TRUVY. Just wait 'til I jack it up.

SHELBY. It makes you look younger, Miss Clairee.

CLAIREE. My hair looks younger. My face looks just as old.

ANNELLE. There is so much going on! The state championship last night, the Christmas festival today, the Messiah sing-along tomorrow...

TRUVY. Life in the big city will spoil you.

SHELBY. Who's Miss Merry Christmas this year?

CLAIREE. My niece, Nancy Beth, of course.

TRUVY. She was here at seven this morning. I had to position her tiara properly on her head so it wouldn't slip around during the parade. I sprayed her hair within an inch of its life.

SHELBY. Why did I have to ask? I should have known. All you Marmillions are gorgeous. Beauty is genetic in your family.

CLAIREE. Nancy Beth is a pretty girl. Do you know she is Miss Merry Christmas, Miss Soybean, and Miss Watermelon?

TRUVY. But dumb as a post.

CLAIREE. Empty is the head that wears the crown.

TRUVY. You have to admit God did a little dance around that family. Drew is so successful. Belle does her own hair. Their children are perfect. They're like a family on TV. They don't have a care in the world.

M'LYNN. That's not necessarily true.

TRUVY. Oh?

M'LYNN. That's all I'm saying.

TRUVY. Oh.

SHELBY. I should've won Miss Merry Christmas the year I ran. My talent was very showy.

CLAIREE. We told you at the time, Shelby. Fire batons are not everyone's cup of tea.

SHELBY. Mama didn't approve of my twirling fire batons.

M'LYNN. I just don't approve when you insist on doing dangerous things.

SHELBY. Mama hated those fire batons.

M'LYNN. I have never hated anything, Shelby. I supported you, but I just couldn't watch you. Your father, on the other hand, had a field day. He got so much pleasure out of standing in the backyard for hours watching you practice, holding the garden hose so he could put you out when you caught fire.

SHELBY. My entire pageant ensemble was coordinated in shades of pink...soup to nuts. I twirled to the music from *Hawai 5-0*. It was my theme song.

M'LYNN. But we were proud of her.

TRUVY. The year I competed, the swimsuit competition was my downfall. Most women look for a swimsuit that will lift and separate; I look for one that will divide and conquer. I've always been built for comfort, not for speed.

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. Anelle's gotta gift wrap your head.