OUISER. All right. As long as there's no more gunshots, I'll stay. *(To Annelle.)* What is your name? Did you tell me?

ANNELLE. Annelle.

OUISER. Fine. Are you new in town? I know everyone. I don't recall ever seeing you before.

ANNELLE. I just moved to town not too long ago.

OUISER. With your family?

ANNELLE. No'm. I don't have any family to speak of.

OUISER. With your husband?

ANNELLE. Uh…my husband? That's hard to say…I…uh…I don't know.

OUISER. You don't know?

ANNELLE. I'm not sure.

OUISER. I'm intrigued. Are you married or not? These are not difficult questions.

ANNELLE. Uh…we're not…he's not…I can't talk about it.

CLAIREE & TRUVY. Of course you can.

ANNELLE. I'm not sure if I'm married or not…he's gone!

OUISER. Honey. Men are the most horrible creatures.

ANNELLE. Everything is horrible. Bunkie…that's my husband. He left. We only moved here a month ago. He just vanished last week.

CLAIREE. No idea where he went?

ANNELLE. Nobody knows. He took all the money, my jewelry, the car. Most of my clothes were in the trunk.

TRUVY. There might have been foul play. Have you been to the police?

ANNELLE. No...but they've been to me. He's in big trouble with the law. Drugs or something. He never paid the rent so I got thrown out of our house and had to move in at crazy old Mrs. Robeline's. The police keep questioning me. But I don't know anything. They say my marriage may not be legal...

TRUVY. You should've said something.

ANNELLE. I was scared to. I need a job in the worst way and I didn't know if you'd hire someone who may or may not be married to someone who might be a dangerous criminal. But I swear to you that my personal tragedy will not interfere with my ability to do good hair.

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?

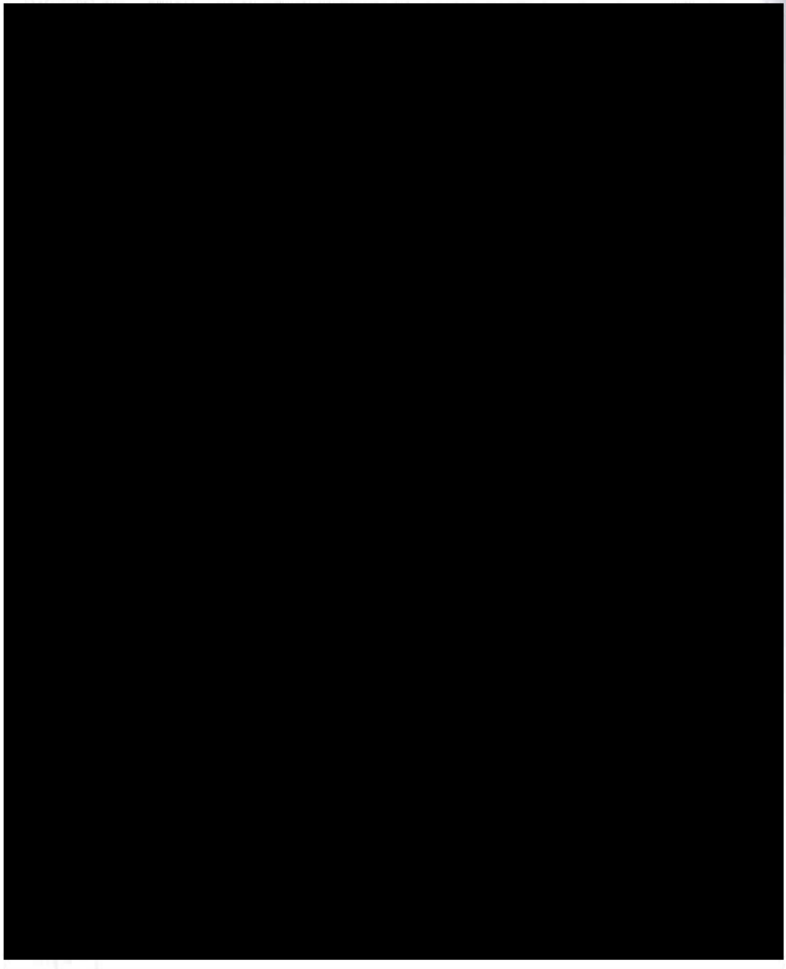
OUISER. Shelby. I managed in just a few decades to marry the two most worthless men in the universe and proceed to have the three most ungrateful children ever conceived. The only reason people

are nice to me is because I have more money than God. I am not about to open a new can of worms.

CLAIREE. Do I detect a negativity in your tone?

M'LYNN. If this is really the way you feel, Ouiser, it isn't healthy. Maybe you should think about coming down and talking to someone at the Guidance Center. We're there to help.

OUISER. I'm not crazy. I've just been in a very bad mood for forty years.



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.

OUISER. Take some tomatoes back home with you. There's plenty. Boy! Your hair's short. Looks good!

SHELBY. Thank you, Miss Ouiser. Jack Jr. loves tomatoes...he smears them on the cafe curtains in the kitchen.

TRUVY. Your mama says you have become an incredible gourmet cook.

SHELBY. I try. When we first married all Jackson wanted was meat and potatoes and vegetables just the way his mama made them... cooked to mush. But I've broken him of that. I even got some pâté down him last week. He swore it was dog food. Jack Jr. loved it, though.

OUISER. Clairee. How many tomatoes do you want? Tomatoes have no calories and are full of... *(She throws away a wormy rotten one.)* ...things.

CLAIREE. *(Crosses to Shelby and examines her arms.)* It looks like you've been driving nails into your arms. What's going on here?

SHELBY. Shall we tell them, Mama?

M'LYNN. I guess so. No point in keeping it a secret any longer. Shelby's been driving nails into her arms.

EVERYONE. M'Lynn?!/Stop that./Be serious./What's going on?

SHELBY. It's my dialysis. *(Except for M'Lynn, the room is in shock.)*

ANNELLE & OUISER. What?

SHELBY. Dialysis. It's when...

ANNELLE. I know what it is.

TRUVY. Please tell us what's going on, honey!

SHELBY. It's not any big thing. No big thing. Don't look at me like that.

OUISER. How long have you been doing this dialysis?

SHELBY. A couple of months.

CLAIREE. Mary Lynn Eatenton! I am without words! Why haven't I been told?

SHELBY. We, uh...there was no point. Sometimes you don't want to talk about things.

M'LYNN. What would have been the point? There's nothing you could do.

ANNELLE. We could have done something.

CLAIREE. I can't believe you didn't say anything. This is selfish. This is very selfish of you.

SHELBY. Hold it. You're all talking like this is something.

TRUVY. This isn't something?

SHELBY. Having Jack Jr. put too much strain on my kidneys and now they're kaput. That's all. The doctors said this would probably happen.

TRUVY. That's all? That's all, she says...

SHELBY. I'm responding beautifully to dialysis. Do I look bad?

TRUVY. You look beautiful, but...

CLAIREE. Well? Maybe you'll let us in on what's going to happen?

OUISER. Do you do this dialysis forever?

SHELBY. I could I suppose. But that's not real convenient when you are trying to keep up with a fifteen-month-old ball of fire. So. I'll just have a kidney transplant and I'll be fine.

OUISER. Is it that easy?

SHELBY. Sure. They do them all the time in Shreveport. Three or four a week.