

and Belle nonsense. I hope they reconcile with Marshall. Speaking as a parent, they better get their act together. I do not approve of friction between parents and children.

CLAIREE Oh, I think it'll all blow over. I have to admit. He did go about it the wrong way.

TRUVY What did he do?

* **CLAIREE** He marched in unexpected from Los Angeles while Drew and Belle were preparing for the annual Marmillion shrimp boil. Marshall without so much as a hello says, "Mama and Daddy. I have something to tell you. I have a brain tumour. I have three months to live." Well, naturally Drew and Belle became hysterical. Then Marshall says, "Hey folks, I'm just kidding. I'm only gay."

SHELBY That was his idea of breaking the news gently?

* **CLAIREE** Drew became incredibly distraught and started throwing wet shrimp at him, screaming at him to get out of his sight, so Marshall came to my house, smelling like a can of cat food.

TRUVY What do you think Drew and Belle are feeling right now?

* **CLAIREE** I don't know. They just considered themselves to be a model family for so long. First with Nancy Beth dethroned from her Miss Merry Christmas title after that unfortunate motel thing...

SHELBY What motel thing? I don't live here anymore, remember?

TRUVY Nancy Beth was discovered in a nearby motel with a high political official.

CLAIREE They were both high. They'd been smoking everything but their shoes.

TRUVY To be the only Miss Merry Christmas in history caught with her tinsel down around her knees was a very humiliating experience for the Marmillion family.

SHELBY How do you feel about Marshall?

CLAIREE Haven't really thought about it. But I want you to know he's always welcome at my house. I'm very proud of him. He built up that chain of sportswear stores all by himself without a penny of family money. He says, "I am a self-made man. I pulled myself up by my own jockstraps."

TRUVY He could always turn a phrase.

TRUVY is about to use a bottle of something for SHELBY's manicure, but she realizes the bottle is empty. She turns to ask ANNELLE for some, but ANNELLE is in silent prayer. Uncomfortable, TRUVY waits for ANNELLE to finish. The others also notice ANNELLE.

ANNELLE Amen.

TRUVY Amen. Annelle? I'm out of uh... *(She holds up the bottle)*

ANNELLE Is it still next to...?

TRUVY No. It's over the...

ANNELLE OK.

ANNELLE exits.

SHELBY Was she praying?

TRUVY Yes.

SHELBY Why?

TRUVY Got me. Maybe she was praying for Marshall and Drew and Belle. Maybe she was praying for us because we were gossiping. Maybe she was praying because the elastic is shot in her pantyhose. Who knows? She prays at the drop of a hat these days.

SHELBY How long has she been this way?

TRUVY Ever since Mardi Gras. She had her choice of going to a Bible weekend with her Sunday School class or to New Orleans with me and two other sinners. She left that Friday a pleasant, well-adjusted young lady and she returned on Tuesday a Christian.