

too. I may want to borrow that sometime.

OUISER. You're welcome to it.

CLAIREE. You don't like it, do you?

OUISER. It's perfect for me. A print this busy'll never show dog hair.

ANNELLE. My feet are like two blocks of ice.

OUISER. (*Sips coffee.*) This tastes like it was made in a rubber tire.

TRUVY. Annelle, remember to get that new thing for the Mr. Coffee.

ANNELLE. (*After a beat.*) Have any of you seen her this morning?

CLAIREE. I haven't. I went directly to the house when I got in. Only the boys were there.

ANNELLE. Do you think she'll come by?

OUISER. I doubt it. I'm sure her hair is the farthest thing from her mind.

TRUVY. Who knows what's on her mind. But she might need something and I just wanted to be here for her.

CLAIREE. I'm glad you decided to stay open today.

OUISER. How are the boys?

CLAIREE. As well as can be expected . . .

TRUVY. My husband and I are taking some barbecue over there later.

CLAIREE. I have never seen so much food.

ANNELLE. You can never have enough at times like these. My husband's back at the apartment cooking up a storm. He's convinced that his red beans and rice will make everyone feel better.

TRUVY. Maybe he's right. That's why we call it soul food. I'm gonna have to get his recipe.

ANNELLE. You'll have to ask him. Sammy runs me off whenever he starts cooking. That kitchen is so tiny he's scared he'll hit me in the stomach with a spatula.

CLAIREE. When are you moving, Annelle?

ANNELLE. Next month.

TRUVY. You had to bring it up. I can't stand it that she's moving away now that I'm about to be a semi-grandmother.

ANNELLE. It's just down the street, Truvy. A hop, skip, and a jump. That apartment is so squunched Sammy and I

have to step outside to change our minds. You're toying with me, aren't you?

TRUVY. A little bit. Not a lot. Guess it's just me and the old man.

CLAIREE. Truvy. Be thankful. You'd miss him if he were gone.

TRUVY. (*Chuckles.*) You know? Last night, he actually got up off the couch and said, "Let's go out to eat." Well . . . after I came to, I asked him, "What's the matter?" I thought Deputy Dawg had been preempted. Then he said he's got a good shot at doing the electrical contracting for the new college library! I'm not supposed to tell anybody! (*Everyone is excited. M'Lynn enters. No one knows what to say. M'Lynn is very together.*)

M'LYNN. Hello everybody. (*They all hug her.*) Welcome home, Clairee. How was Paris?

CLAIREE. Perfectly beautiful. I ate too much. I brought you something pretty.

M'LYNN. You shouldn't have. (*The radio is playing something inappropriate. Truvy goes to turn it off.*) Don't turn off Shelby's radio. I like the noise.

CLAIREE. There's special programming today. I had Jonathan go down to the station and pull music that Shelby would have liked and they're going to play it until noon.

M'LYNN. He told me. I think you're going to be surprised at some of the stuff you hear.

CLAIREE. That's O.K. It's for Shelby.

OUISER. M'Lynn. Just tell us. What can we do?

M'LYNN. Thank you. Truvy? Do you think you could work a little magic? I know I look like ten miles of dirt road.

TRUVY. Let me get my wand and my fairy dust! (*M'Lynn sits.*) How are you doing honey?

M'LYNN. I'm fine. I am a little worried about Drum. The boys got in last night. I really don't know how they're doing. Jackson is . . . Jackson. And he has his hands full with Jack Jr. I will admit it's hard to be somber with a baby running around.

CLAIREE. M'Lynn. I'm beside myself. Wasn't Shelby fine when I left? Can you talk about it?

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
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
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