

STEEL MAGNOLIAS – CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

(Southern “Louisiana” accents are encouraged, not required.)

TRUVY JONES—40ish. Owner of the beauty shop. Lovable gossip.

ANNELLE DUPUY-DESOTO—19. Beauty shop assistant. Quirky and shy. Bible-loving.

CLAIREE BELCHER—66ish. Widow of former mayor. Grande dame.

SHELBY EATENTON-LATCHERIE—25. Prettiest girl in town.

M’LYNN EATENTON—50ish. Shelby’s mother. Socially prominent career woman.

OUISER (“Weezer”) BOUDREAUX—66ish. Wealthy curmudgeon. Acerbic but lovable.

AUTHOR’S NOTE: The women in this play are witty, intelligent, and above all, real characters. They in no way, shape or form are meant to be portrayed as cartoons or caricatures.

THE STORY: The action is set in Truvy’s beauty salon in Chinquapin, Louisiana, where all the ladies who are “anybody” come to have their hair done. Helped by her eager new assistant, Annelle (who is not sure whether or not she is still married), the outspoken, wise-cracking Truvy dispenses shampoos and free advice to the town’s rich curmudgeon, Ouiser, (“I’m not crazy, I’ve just been in a bad mood for forty years”); an eccentric millionaire, Miss Clairee, who has a raging sweet tooth; and the local social leader, M’Lynn, whose daughter, Shelby (the prettiest girl in town), is about to marry a “good ole boy.” Filled with hilarious repartee and not a few acerbic but humorously revealing verbal collisions, the play moves toward tragedy when, in the second act, the spunky Shelby (who is a diabetic) risks pregnancy and forfeits her life. The sudden realization of their mortality affects the others, but also draws on the underlying strength—and love—which give the play, and its characters, the special quality to make them truly touching, funny and marvelously amiable company in good times and bad. (from Dramatists Play Service)

*****PREPARE A FAMILY FRIENDLY JOKE FOR AUDITIONS*****

BELOW ARE 2 POSSIBLE AUDITION CUTTINGS:

AUDITION CUTTING #1

TRUVY. Taking the gun was a stroke of genius, M'Lynn.

M'LYNN. I know.

ANNELLE. What if he comes over here and tries to get his gun back?

M'LYNN. Drum would never set foot in a beauty shop. This is women's territory. He probably thinks we all run around naked or something.

ANNELLE. *(Catching a glimpse out of the window.)* There's somebody coming! A strange lady with a strange dog!

CLAIREE. That would be Ouiser.

ANNELLE. That is one ugly dog. What kind of dog is that?

CLAIREE. If Rhet had hair, he would be a collie.

START

TRUVY. Lord. Give us strength. *(The door bursts open. It's Ouiser, very upset.)*

OUISER. This is it. I've found it. I am in hell!

TRUVY. 'Morning, Ouiser.

OUISER. Don't try to get on my good side. I no longer have one.

TRUVY. You're a little early. You're not expected 'til elevenish.

OUISER. That's precisely why I'm here. I have to cancel. *(The phone rings. Ouiser picks it up and hangs up on the caller.)* I have to take my poor dog to the vet before he has a nervous breakdown. My dog I mean. The vet is perfectly healthy. *(To Annelle.)* You must be the new girl.

ANNELLE. Hi.

OUISER. May I have a glass of water? I have been screaming this morning. *(Exit Annelle.)*

M'LYNN. I'm sorry this whole thing has gotten out of hand, Ouiser...

OUISER. It's not your fault, M'Lynn. I used to think that you were crazy for marrying that man. Then I thought for a few years that you were just a glutton for punishment. Now I realize that you must be on some mission from God. I have not slept in days. I look like a dog's dinner. However, when I got up this morning, I decided I would try to rise above it. I would start anew. Whatever that man has done, I would overlook it in honor of your wedding day, Shelby. I thought I would make myself a little presentable and floss up the

house in case somebody wanted to drop in...it being a big day in the neighborhood and all. So I go out to cut some fresh flowers for the living room. I go down to my magnolia tree and there is not a bloom on it!

M'LYNN. Ouiser. The judge has not decided whose tree that is exactly.

OUISER. It's mine! (*Enter Annelle with glass of water.*) Be that as it may...it would not be too much to ask for me to have one blossom to brighten my home. I am all alone except for my dog.

CLAIREE. You need something in your life besides that dumb animal...

OUISER. Put a lid on it, Clairee. I was standing there looking at my...*my* naked magnolia tree when I saw Drum across the way loading what appeared to be a cannon. I asked him what happened to all those magnolia blossoms. He said the wind probably blew them off during the night. Then I asked him how the wind managed to blow them all off into your pool. Then he fired at me! Is that rude or what?

M'LYNN. They're blanks. And Drum would never aim a gun at a lady.

OUISER. He's a real gentleman. I'll bet he takes the dishes out of the sink before he pees in it.

M'LYNN. That's uncalled for.

OUISER. All I know is my poor animal has to be sedated. He has a condition.

SHELBY. Are you sure that's true? Rhett is a very old dog.

OUISER. I am simply going on what the vet tells me.

CLAIREE. Which vet?

OUISER. Whitey Black.

CLAIREE. That's your first mistake. Whitey Black is a moron. I'm not even sure he has opposable thumbs.

SHELBY. Miss Ouiser, Daddy is not trying to drive you crazy. He's just trying to make my reception nice. His heart's in the right place.

OUISER. But he cannot do this to my dog! My dog is on his last legs! What am I going to do with the poor animal?

CLAIREE. (*Holding up the recipe box.*) I've got a lot of good recipes here.

OUISER. (*To Annelle.*) Darling...whatever your name is...would you look out the window and check on my dog while I smack Clairee on her smart mouth? You may not believe this, but these are the dearest friends I have in this town.

ANNELLE. His color's good. His skin is real pink.

SHELBY. I know for a fact there will be no more gunshots. So why don't you relax, Miss Ouiser? Have some coffee.

TRUVY. Ladies. This is going to work out beautifully. I'm almost through with Shelby. Annelle can shampoo Ouiser. See. Life can be wonderful.

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. Of course it won't...

ANNELLE. I really don't think things could get any worse.

OUISER. Of course they can.

SHELBY. You are so brave.

TRUVY. You must be made of courage.

ANNELLE. I'm totally alone. Checks are bouncing everywhere. Everything is going wrong. I keep asking myself...why me?

SHELBY. We are awful. We are all hateful, awful people. Here all we've been talking about is weddings and psychotic animals. We've been tearing you up inside, haven't we? I can't tell you how sorry I am. And you've had such a terrible time. Sometimes we don't know how lucky we are.

CLAIREE. What can we do to help?

SHELBY. I know one thing I can do. Tonight, you are going to drop by my house and have some bleeding armadillo groom's cake. It's going to be a great party.

ANNELLE. Oh, I couldn't. I still get real emotional sometimes...

SHELBY. I can't stand the thought of someone being unhappy or

alone tonight. And if you feel yourself start getting sad, just watch my husband dance. It's very funny.

ANNELLE. You're all so nice.

TRUVY. We enjoy being nice to each other. There's not much else to do in this town.

ANNELLE. But I don't have anything to wear...

SHELBY. No problem. I'll bet I have something that'll do. I'll call the house. *(Shelby dials the phone.)*

TRUVY. Now. If you're interested, my garage apartment will be available soon. My son is living there now. Give me a day to straighten it up and sweep out the bed, then come look at it. I'm sure we can work out some arrangement with the rent.

ANNELLE. *(Overcome.)* Oh...

SHELBY. *(On phone.)* Good! Jonathan. You have to do me a favor. Yes, now! Go in my closet and bring me two or three of my Sunday things. Just anything. Use your judgement. Very well. Bring the pink dress with the white collar, the pink suit with the cherries pinned on the jacket and the pink and white polka dot. No, Jonathan. Mama doesn't have Daddy's gun. Don't you have better things to do? What? Well stop him! Now! *(She hangs up. She is nervous.)*

CLAIREE. Is something the matter?

SHELBY. We'll see. *(There is a huge explosion.)* Yes.

OUISER. What in the hell!!! *(They all go to the window. The dog begins to bark uncontrollably.)*

M'LYNN. What happened?

SHELBY. Daddy tied explosives to Jonathan's GI Joe bow and arrow and shot them into the trees.

OUISER. Shut up Rhett!

M'LYNN. I hope nobody was hurt!

TRUVY. Well, the birds are flying every which-a-way. And there's white smoke billowing up from your backyard.

CLAIREE. Looks like Drum has set his trees on fire or he's just elected a new pope.

AUDITION CUTTING #2

The man prides himself on never having any tension. Which is amazing considering the amount he has created over the years...
Hm...listen to me. I've got to stop taking potshots at Drum all the time. He's a good man, he's crazy, but he's a good man.

OUISER. He seems to be behaving himself lately. He was most civil in the Piggly Wiggly yesterday. I was caught off guard and smiled before I could help myself.

M'LYNN. The most bizarre thing has happened. Drum and I seem to be rediscovering those things that brought us together in the first place. I don't know if we buried them or became blind to them.

SHELBY. Used to be, the thought of our parents being romantic made me and my brothers sick to our stomachs, but it's actually very sweet. It's been a lovely week.

M'LYNN. Every now and then Drum and I seem to find these moments of magic. I don't know. I don't know if I'm lucky to have what I have...or lucky to know what I have.

CLAIREE. That's too deep for me. I have to go get my tires rotated.

ANNELLE. *(She's ready to shampoo Ouiser.)* Miss Ouiser...?

TRUVY. M'Lynn. Maybe you should write a romance novel based on your recent experiences. I could help you with the dirty parts.

M'LYNN. No one would believe it. Shelby. You look a little pale.

SHELBY. *(Gently.)* I'm fine, Mama. How are you? *(Clairee takes off smock, tips Annelle, leaves money on counter.)*

CLAIREE. Well, ladies. If you're out and about this afternoon, stop by the Dixie Plaza Shopping Center. The radio station is sponsoring a summer fiesta with lots of prizes and a live band. They call themselves "Single Bullet Theory." *(Truvy is working on Shelby's nails. Truvy pushes Shelby's sleeves back to get them out of the way and sees Shelby's bruised arms...)*

TRUVY. Shelby?! What have you done to yourself?

SHELBY. Oh. It doesn't hurt.

TRUVY. What have you been doing? Have you seen this, M'Lynn?

M'LYNN. Yes, I have.

SHELBY. The doctor's just been trying to strengthen my veins. They're in terrible shape.

Start

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.

ANNELLE. They do. Our Sunday school class was praying for one just the other day.

OUISER. But the hard part is finding the kidney, isn't it?

CLAIREE. I saw something about it on the news. It's so dramatic. These medical teams fly all over the place taking hearts and kidneys and who knows what else. And you know the thing that impressed me the most? They carry those organs in beer coolers.

TRUVY. Stop.

CLAIREE. I would not lie in a moment as serious as this. Those doctors take out their six-packs, throw in some dry ice and a heart and get on the plane.

SHELBY. She's right.

ANNELLE. But you never know when one will pop up, do you?

SHELBY. No. I'm registered on the nationwide transplant computer.

TRUVY. How long do you have to wait?

SHELBY. There are people at dialysis that have been waiting for years.

TRUVY. That must be agony.

SHELBY. I suppose. But I'm lucky. I don't have to wait anymore. Mama's going to give me one of her kidneys. (*More shock all around.*)

EVERYONE. What?!/M'Lynn!/You're not serious!/No!/Etc.

CLAIREE. When?

SHELBY. We check in tomorrow morning.

CLAIREE. You're giving Shelby a kidney tomorrow and you haven't even mentioned it?

M'LYNN. Truvy. Please do my hair. I'm in a bit of a rush.

TRUVY. I never thought there'd ever be a time that words would fail me...but I think this is it.

OUISER. Why didn't you tell us?

M'LYNN. We just told you. We haven't known that long. We were all just tested last week. I'm the closest match.

ANNELLE. What do you mean, match?

M'LYNN. There are four categories for an organ match. I matched the best.

ANNELLE. Categories?

SHELBY. Swimsuit, evening gown, talent, and personality interview.

CLAIREE. I'm going to yank you bald-headed, smarty.

OUISER. We are very upset here.

TRUVY. I passed upset a long time ago...

SHELBY. I'm sorry. That's Tommy's joke. I think it's very funny.

TRUVY. No wonder your whole family's in town.

M'LYNN. I'm just so relieved it was me. The boys are young. I would never want them to go through it. And who would want one of Drum's mean old organs? But! The best thing about all this is that with all the tests and stuff, I have discovered I have the constitution of someone ten years younger. How about that?

OUISER. It must be so painful.

SHELBY. Not really for me. My operation's simple. Mama's is awful. They basically have to saw her in half to get the kidney. It's major, *major* surgery for her.

TRUVY. They have to saw you in half?

M'LYNN. They do it on *Circus of the Stars* all the time.

CLAIREE. This is no laughing matter!

SHELBY. Trust me, Miss Clairee. There have been more than enough tears.

M'LYNN. It'll make my waist smaller because they take out my bottom ribs to get my kidney out.

TRUVY. Cher had her ribs taken out to have a smaller waist.

CLAIREE. Please. That woman's out of her mind.

OUISER. Look. Shelby? Earlier this morning I said I'd be better off when my body wears out. I didn't mean that. You know better than to pay any attention to anything I say.

SHELBY. Miss Ouiser. Forget it.

OUISER. Well, uh...I'm a terrible person.

CLAIREE. No you're not, Ouiser. You'd give your dog a kidney if he needed one.

OUISER. Absolutely.

TRUVY. But you two seem so calm and collected...

M'LYNN. I'm happy. Look at the opportunity I have. Most mothers only get the chance to give their child life once. I get a chance to do it twice. I think it's neat. And Shelby needs her health to chase after that rambunctious kid of hers. I've got two kidneys and I only need one. I'm just glad we can get it over with before it gets too hot.

SHELBY. Ain't that the truth.

ANNELLE. I'm going to postpone my vacation a day so I can sit with your husband during the operation. I can run get Co-Colas and things.

M'LYNN. That's sweet of you...but don't change your plans.

OUISER. We'll make sure Drum has enough food.

CLAIREE. Yes. You must put your house out of your mind. We will take care of everything.

M'LYNN. I appreciate that. And I know Drum does too.

OUISER. M'Lynn. You are brave, you are brave.

ANNELLE. You know? If I didn't know better, Shelby, I wouldn't even know you'd ever been sick a day in your life.

SHELBY. That's the biggest compliment anyone has ever paid me.

OUISER. Poor Shelby...

SHELBY. *(Firmly.)* Don't say that. I have my baby. I'm very happy. If this is part of the price I have to pay, then I have to pay it. I can deal with it. *(Beat.)* Now. If I'm not mistaken, someone has a present to open.

TRUVY. *(Noticing package.)* Ooo. Is this for me?