

M'Lynn and Shelby

Scene Two

The same. December.

It is the Saturday before Christmas. Not much in the shop has changed. Only half of the lights are on in the shop. When the lights eventually come back on, we see the subtle changes. The radio SHELBY has given TRUVY, and a small but festive Christmas tree, and several grotesque handicrafts.

When the curtain rises, M'LYNN is sitting under a dead hair-drier. SHELBY enters, mystified by the lack of light and the lack of activity.

M'LYNN Shelby!

SHELBY Mama? Where is everybody?

M'LYNN I thought you weren't coming to town until after lunch.

SHELBY We got an early start because of the traffic. We wanted to drop in on Jackson's parents on the way down here.

M'LYNN *(sarcastically)* What a treat!

SHELBY And you have to catch them early. On Saturdays they leave the house at the crack of dawn to start hunting furry little creatures.

M'LYNN You must not have visited long.

SHELBY We didn't. I could tell they were anxious to start killing things. We stopped by the house first. Nobody was there. Where's Truvy?

M'LYNN She and Annelle are out back sticking pennies in the fuse box. They decorated that little tree and when I plugged it in all the lights blew.

SHELBY *(pointing to a pair of tacky ear-rings)* What are those things?

M'LYNN Red plastic poinsettia ear-rings. They are a gift from Annelle. She has discovered the wonderful world of Arts and Crafts.

SHELBY Are Tommy and Jonathan home yet?

M'LYNN Yes. Jonathan got home yesterday morning. He loves his classes. It's all he can talk about. I think the main thing architecture school has taught him is how much he should hate his parents' house. Tommy arrived last night and immediately started terrorizing your father. It's nice having the family home for Christmas.

SHELBY Some things never change.

M'LYNN And how are you, honey?

SHELBY I'm so good, Mama. Just great.

M'LYNN You're looking well. Is Jackson at the house?

SHELBY No. You know how twitchy he gets. I sent him to look for stocking stuffers.

M'LYNN Good thinking.

SHELBY Uh. Jackson and I have something to tell you. We wanted to tell you when you and Daddy were together, but you're never together, so it's every man for himself. I'm pregnant.

M'LYNN Shelby?!

SHELBY I'm going to have a baby.

M'LYNN I realize that.

SHELBY Well...is that it? Is that all you're going to say?

M'LYNN I...what do you expect me to say?

SHELBY Something along the lines of congratulations.

M'LYNN Congratulations.

SHELBY Would it be too much to ask for a little excitement? Not too much, I wouldn't want you to break a sweat or anything.

M'LYNN I'm in a state of shock! I didn't think...

SHELBY In June. Oh, Mama. You have to help me plan. We're going to get a new house. Jackson and I are going house-hunting next week. Jackson loves to hunt for anything.

M'LYNN What does Jackson say about this?

SHELBY Oh. He's very excited. He says he doesn't care whether it's a boy or girl...but I know he really wants a son so bad he can taste it. He's so cute about the whole thing. It's all he can talk about... Jackson Latcherie Junior.

M'LYNN But does he ever listen? I mean when doctors and specialists give you advice. I know you never listen, but does he? I guess since he doesn't have to carry the baby, it doesn't really concern him.

SHELBY Mama. Don't be mad. I couldn't bear it if you were. It's Christmas.

M'LYNN I'm not mad, Shelby. This is just...hard. I thought that... I don't know.

SHELBY Mama. I want a child.

M'LYNN But what about the adoption proceedings? You have filled so many applications.

SHELBY Mama. It didn't take us long to see the handwriting on the wall. No judge is going to give a baby to someone with my medical track record. Jackson even put out some feelers about buying one.

M'LYNN People do it all the time.

SHELBY Listen to me. I want a child of my own. I think it would help things a lot.

M'LYNN I see.

SHELBY Mama. I know. I know. Don't think I haven't thought this through. You can't live a life if all you do is worry. And you worry too much. In some ways it's a comfort to me. I

never worry because I know you're worrying enough for the both of us. Jackson and I have given this a lot of thought.

M'LYNN Has he really? There's a first time for everything.

SHELBY Don't start on Jackson.

M'LYNN Shelby. Your body has been through so much. Why do you deliberately want to—

SHELBY Mama. Diabetics have healthy babies all the time.

M'LYNN You are special. There are limits to what you can do.

SHELBY Mama...listen. I have it all planned. I'm going to be very careful. And this time next year, I'm going to be bringing your big healthy grandbaby to the Christmas festival. No-one is going to be hurt or disappointed, or even inconvenienced.

M'LYNN Least of all Jackson, I'm sure.

SHELBY You are jealous because you no longer have any say-so in what I do. And that drives you up the wall. You're ready to spit nails because you can't call the shots.

M'LYNN I did not raise my daughter to talk to me this way.

SHELBY Yes you did. Whenever any of us asked you what you wanted us to be when we grew up, what did you say?

M'LYNN Shelby, I am not in the mood for games.

SHELBY What did you say? Just tell me what you said. Answer me.

M'LYNN I said all I wanted was for you to be happy.

SHELBY OK. The thing that would make me happy is to have a baby. If I could adopt one I would, but I can't. I'm going to have a baby. I wish you would be happy, too.

M'LYNN I wish I... I don't know what I wish.

SHELBY Mama. I don't know why you have to make everything so difficult. I look at having this baby as the opportunity of a lifetime. Sure, there may be some risk involved. That's