

STEEL MAGNOLIAS

ACT ONE

SCENE I

The curtain rises on Truvy's beauty shop. There are the sounds of gunshots and a dog barking. Annelle is spraying Truvy's hair with more hair spray than necessary.

* [ANNELLE. Oops! I see a hole.

TRUVY. I was hoping you'd catch that.

ANNELLE. It's a little poofier than I would normally do, but I'm nervous.

TRUVY. I'm not real concerned about that. When I go to bed I wrap my entire head with toilet tissue so it usually gets a little smushed down anyway in that process.

ANNELLE. In my class at the trade school, I was number one when it came to frosting and streaking. I did my own.

TRUVY. Really? I wouldn't have known. And I can spot a bottle job at twenty paces. (*Studying her hairdo.*) Well...your technique is good, and your form and content will improve with experience. So, you're hired.

ANNELLE. (*Overcome.*) Oh!!

TRUVY. And not a moment too soon! This morning we're going to be as busy as a one-armed paper hanger.

ANNELLE. Thank you, Miss Truvy! Thank you...

TRUVY. No time. Now. You know where the coffee stuff is. Everything else is on a tray next to the stove. (*Truvy removes her smock.*)

ANNELLE. Here. Let me help you. (*Dusts her off.*) You've got little tiny hairs and fuzzies all over you.

TRUVY. Honey, there's so much static electricity in here I pick up everything except boys and money. (*Points Annelle toward the kitchen.*) Be a treasure. (*Annelle exits into the kitchen. Truvy immediately starts redoing her hairdo.*) Annelle? This is the most successful shop in town. Wanna know why?

ANNELLE. (*Offstage.*) Why?

TRUVY. Because I have a strict philosophy that I have stuck to for fifteen years... "There is no such thing as natural beauty." That's why I've never lost a client to the Kut and Kurt or the Beauty Box. And remember! My ladies get only the best. Do not scrimp on anything. Feel free to use as much hair spray as you want. (*Annelle returns with the tray. The sound of a gunshot makes her jump, but she recovers.*) Just shove that stuff to one side, it goes right there. (*Pointing out the room.*) Manicure station here...

ANNELLE. There's no such thing as natural beauty...

TRUVY. Remember that, or we're all out of a job. Just look at me, Annelle. It takes some effort to look like this.

ANNELLE. I can see that. How many ladies do we have this morning?

TRUVY. I restrict myself to the ladies of the neighborhood on Saturday mornings. Normally that would be just three, but today we've got Shelby Eatenton. She's not a regular, she's the daughter of a regular. I have to do something special with her hair. She's getting married this afternoon. Now. How long have you been here in town?

ANNELLE. A few weeks...

TRUVY. New in town! It must be exciting being in a new place. I wouldn't know. I've lived here all my life.

ANNELLE. It's a little scary.

TRUVY. I can imagine. Well...tell me things about yourself.

ANNELLE. There's nothing to tell. I live here. I've got a job now. That's it. Could I borrow a few of these back issues of *Southern Hair*?

TRUVY. Uh...sure. It's essential to keep abreast of the latest styles. I'm glad to see your interest. I get *McCall's*, *Family Circle*, *Glamour*, *Mademoiselle*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, every magazine known to man. You must live close by. Within walking distance, I mean. I didn't see a car.

ANNELLE. My car's... I don't have a car. I've been staying across the river at Robeline's Boarding House.

TRUVY. That's quite a walk. Ruth Robeline...now there's a story. She's a twisted, troubled soul. Her life has been an experiment in terror. Husband killed in World War II. Her son was killed in Vietnam. I have to tell you, when it comes to suffering, she's right up there with Elizabeth Taylor.

ANNELLE. I had no idea. (*There is a loud gunshot and barking.*) Is that a gunshot?

* TRUVY. Yes, dear. I believe it is. Plug in the hotplate, please.

ANNELLE. But why is someone firing a gun in a nice neighborhood like this?

TRUVY. It's a long story. It has to do with Shelby's wedding and her father. (*More gunfire and barking.*) You'll be happier if you just ignore it like the rest of the neighborhood.

CLAIREE. (*Entering.*) Knock, knock!

TRUVY. Morning, Clairee!

CLAIREE. Morning, Truvy.

TRUVY. I tried to call you and tell you I was running late. No answer.

CLAIREE. I was at the high school. I was out at the crack of dawn.

TRUVY. Annelle, I want you to meet the former first lady of Chinquapin, Mrs. Belcher. Clairee, this is Annelle. She's taking Judy's place.

ANNELLE. Pleased to meet you.

CLAIREE. I'm a little embarrassed. If I had known I was meeting new people, I would have taken a little more pride in my appearance. I have been at the dedication of our new football field. I am not always this windblown.

TRUVY. Annelle. They named the stadium after her late husband... Lloyd Belcher Memorial Coliseum. The team has voted her all sorts of special titles.

CLAIREE. I have the pom-poms to prove it. What is your name, dear?

ANNELLE. Oh. My married name's Dupuy.