

CLAIREE. Since when do you have track lighting?

OUISE. About three weeks. It's in my foyer and up the stairs. It was my grandson's idea.

SHELBY. I haven't seen him in ages. How is he?

OUISE. ~~Steve's fine~~ I brought you all some tomatoes. First of the season. I didn't expect to see you in town, Shelby.

SHELBY. Well, I'm here.

OUISE. Take some tomatoes back home with you. There's plenty. Boy! Your hair's short. Looks good!

~~SHELBY. Thank you, Miss Ouse. Jack Jr. loves tomatoes...he smears them on the cafe curtains in the kitchen.~~

~~TRUVY. Your mama says you have become an incredible gourmet cook.~~

~~SHELBY. I try. When we first married all Jackson wanted was meat and potatoes and vegetables just the way his mama made them... cooked to mush. But I've broken him of that. I even got some pâté down him last week. He swore it was dog food. Jack Jr. loved it, though.~~

OUISE. Clairee. How many tomatoes do you want? Tomatoes have no calories and are full of... *(She throws away a wormy rotten one.)* ...things.

CLAIREE. Ouse, you're almost chipper today. Why are you in such a good mood? Did you run over a small child or something?

OUISE. Do you or do you not want tomatoes?

CLAIREE. Don't give me all of 'em.

OUISE. Somebody's got to take them. I hate 'em. I try not to eat healthy food if I can help it. The sooner this body wears out the better off I'll be. I have trouble getting enough grease into my diet.

ANNELLE. Then why do you grow them?

OUISE. I am an old Southern woman. We're supposed to put on funny-looking hats and ugly old dresses and grow vegetables in the dirt. Don't ask me why. I don't make the rules.

~~CLAIREE. You should get some gloves. Your hands look like a couple of T bone steaks.~~

SHELBY. Health is the most important thing, Miss Ouiser. Trust me on this.

OUISER. And. While I have everyone's attention. This morning I went to my mailbox and found that someone... (*Directed at Annelle.*) has put me on the mailing list for the Riverview Baptist Church. Lucky me. I am now receiving chain letters for Christ.

ANNELLE. They aren't chain letters. They're part of my prayer group's "Reach out and touch" project. We were each supposed to write somebody in the community that we thought might be in spiritual trouble and invite them to worship. (*Ouiser plops down a big wad of mail.*) I guess you made everybody's list.

OUISER. I think it is in the worst possible taste to pray for perfect strangers.

CLAIREE. "Reach out" to Ouiser and you'll pull back a bloody stump. Shelby! I just realized! You've saved me a phone call. Next Friday Sis Orelle and I are driving up to Monroe and we'd like to take you and Jackson to dinner if we may.

~~SHELBY. Uh...I can't Friday night. I'm sorry. What's the occasion?~~

~~CLAIREE. This is going to sound a little silly, but we're coming up to go to the Little Theatre. (We have tickets to a play.)~~

~~TRUVY. I didn't know you went to see anything that didn't have a goalpost at either end.~~

~~CLAIREE. Up to now, I haven't. But Sis and I decided at bridge one day that we needed to keep up. We wanted to expose ourselves to a little more culture. And that's not easy to come by in this neck of the woods.~~

~~TRUVY. Exactly what are you "exposing" yourself to?~~

~~CLAIREE. I don't know. Something. The last thing we saw there was pretty good. It was Shakespeare. I was a little apprehensive at first, but you know what? When you get right down to it...he writes pretty straightforward stuff. I have to admit when they hide behind curtains and put little masks over their faces to fool people...that got kind of silly. Sis fell for it, but I didn't.~~

~~OUISER. Sis Orelle is so dumb. She thinks Sherlock Holmes is a subdivision.~~



CLAIREE. Anyway. Sis and I like it so much, we're planning a theatre trip to New York.

TRUVY. New York?! Oh, Clairee. I'm green with envy. Promise me you'll go to the first floor of Bloomingdale's and come back and tell me everything. *Woman's Day* says it's impossible to walk through there and not get made up.

CLAIREE. We're just talking. I'm scared to death of getting on a plane.

TRUVY. It's a piece of cake. You're safer flying than you are in a car. ~~Just sit in the rear. That's the best place to survive the crash.~~

→ SHELBY. Miss Ouiser. Why don't you go to Monroe with Miss Clairee?

OUISER. I am not exposing myself to anything.

CLAIREE. You should broaden your horizons.

OUISER. You broaden your horizons your way. I'll broaden my horizons mine. I have plans next Friday. I'm going to Shreveport to have my colors done.

CLAIREE. Your what?

OUISER. I'm going to get my colors done. I'm going to find out if I'm a summer or spring or fall or winter. It's a present from Owen.

CLAIREE. What are you talking about?

OUISER. Every person has a particular coloring...summer, spring, so on. You determine what season you are, then you know what colors look best on you. Then you're given samples of the colors that are in your palette. It's most helpful when you shop for clothes. It gives you fashion courage.

CLAIREE. That is the stupidest thing I have ever heard of.

OUISER. It's all the rage.

SHELBY. A lot of my friends in Monroe have had it done.

~~TRUVY. There's a quiz on that very topic in that *Family Circle* right over there. I am the epitome of winter.~~

→ OUISER. Why don't you have it done, Shelby? You're so fashion-conscious.

SHELBY. No. I'm scared to. I might find out that pink is not in my palette and I'm not sure I could live with that.

CLAIREE. I have heard it all. Well. I am going to the theatre. I am going to support the arts in our area.

OUISER. I'll write a check. I will support art. I just don't want to see it.

CLAIREE. It wouldn't harelip you, you know.

OUISER. Let's get one thing straight. I don't see plays because I can nap at home for free. I don't see movies because they're all trash and full of naked people. And I don't read books because if they're any good, they'll be made into a miniseries.

SHELBY. I'm surprised you and Daddy don't get along any better than you do. Miss Ouiser? How're things with Owen? I try to check up on you, but I haven't been able to lately.

OUISER. They're alright. I enjoy his company...on occasion.

CLAIREE. I can report that the Sherwood Florist delivery truck stops by her house at least twice a week.

OUISER. He knows I like fresh flowers.

CLAIREE. And I can report that a strange car is parked in her garage at least once a week.

OUISER. There. My secret's out. I'm having an affair with a Mercedes-Benz.

TRUVY. Ouiser. Forgive me. I have been dying to ask this. Are you and Owen...you know?

CLAIREE. Wait, wait wait! I have to get a mental picture of this.

OUISER. A dirty mind is a terrible thing to waste. Not that it's any of anyone's business, but no. We are friends. He would like more. I'm dealing with that. But I am old and set in my ways.

~~SHELBY. You are playing hard to get.~~

~~CLAIREE. At her age she should be playing "Beat the Clock." She's just like her old dog...both have trouble with their new tricks.~~

~~TRUVY. Ah! No talking trash in my shop!~~

~~OUISER. I can't help it if men find me desirable.~~

~~TRUVY. Shelby? When are you going to bring that baby of yours by?~~

~~SHELBY. Oh! I brought a picture of him. Let me show you!~~

~~TRUVY. Has he gained any weight?~~