

Steel Magnolias Audition Packet

Characters:

Truvy: 40-year-old owner of a small town beauty shop. She knows everyone's business and shares it with anyone who will listen. Southern Belle. She always has advice for you, and they often come in the form of country sayings.

Annelle: very shy twenty-year-old hair-dresser. She goes from a very soft-spoken person to a bible-loving Christian with her heart on her sleeve.

Clairee: 60-year-old widow of the former mayor of Chinquapin. She is wealthy and also knows everyone's business. She is the sarcastic member of the group. She loves to laugh and poke fun at the little things that others cry over. She is very close with Ouiser.

Shelby: Roughly 25-year-old diabetic young lady. Prettiest girl in town, and loved by all. She has a weird relationship with her mother, and often rebels just for the sake of rebellion.

M'Lynn: 50-year-old mother of Shelby. She is over-protective at times and finds the need to have a firm grasp on the world at all times. She is a busy woman who worries too much for her age.

Ouiser (pronounced Weezer): She is the same age as Clairee. She is a wealthy old bitty. She is a loveably miserable lady, though. Her unique personality and sense of humor is a great relief in the serious scenes. She is very close to Clairee.

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.

Truvy (talking to Annelle about the local gossip. She obviously knows it all)

I have a strict philosophy that I have stuck to for fifteen years... "There's no such thing as natural beauty". Remember that, or we're out of a job. You must live close by. Within walking distance, I mean. I didn't see a car. You live over at Robeline's, right? Ruth Robeline, now there's a story. She's a twisted, troubled soul. Her life's been an experiment in terror. Husband killed in Vietnam. I have to tell you, when it comes to suffering, she's right up there with Elizabeth Taylor.

Annelle (talking to M'lynn about Shelby's death)

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 to 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.

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Clairee (*while telling everyone about her gay nephew*)

I'm such a nosy old thing. I asked him how he...met people. 'Cause in my day you could tell by a man's carriage and demeanor by which side his bread was buttered on. But today? In this day and age? Who knows? I asked Marshall, "How can you tell?" and he says "All gay men have track lightin. And all gay men are named Mark, Rick, or Steve." (laughs) He is such a nut...track lightin (laughs).

Shelby (*talking to her mom about her pregnancy and her possible health problems*)

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 true for anybody. But you get through it and life goes on. And when it's all said and done there'll be a piece of immortality with Jackson's looks and my sense of style...I hope. Mama, please. I need your support. I would rather have thirty minutes of wonderful than a lifetime of nothing special.

M'Lynn (*talking, through tears, about the last minutes with Shelby*)

I stayed there. I kept on pushing...just like I always have where Shelby was concerned...hoping she'd sit up and argue with me. But finally we all realized there was no hope. At that point I panicked. I was afraid that I wouldn't survive the next few minutes while they turned off the machines. Drum couldn't take it. He left. Jackson couldn't take it. He left. It struck me as amusing. Men are supposed to be made of steel or something. But I couldn't leave. I just sat there holding Shelby's hand while the sounds got softer and the beeps got farther apart until all was quiet. There was no noise, no tremble. Just peace. I realized as a woman how lucky I was. I was there when this wonderful person drifted into this world, and I was there when she drifted out. It was the most precious moment of my life so far.

Ouiser (*arguing with Clairee over going out to get cultured in New York*)

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 mini-series. And as far as Owen is concerned, Clairee, a dirty mind is a terrible thing to waste. We are friends. He would like more. I'm dealing with that. But I am old and set in my ways. Besides, I can't help that men find me desirable.

Side 1 - Clairee, Truvy, Shelby, M'Lynn

CLAIREE. Truvy, you shouldn't give up your Sundays.

TRUVY. Well, you know how neurotic Janice Van Meter is about her appearance.

CLAIREE. (To Annelle.) Janice is the current mayor's wife. (Sweetly.) We hate her.

TRUVY. Now Shelby ... fill me in on the reception.

SHELBY. There's going to be ferns and twinkly lights. There'll be magnolias in the pool.

M'LYNN. I just hope your father doesn't get any magnolias from Ouiser's side of the tree. We'll never hear the end of it.

SHELBY. The wedding cake will be by the pool. The groom's cake will be hidden in the carport.

M'LYNN. Shelby and I agree on one thing.

SHELBY. The groom's cake. It's awful! It's in the shape of a giant armadillo.

TRUVY. An armadillo?

SHELBY. Jackson wanted a cake in the shape of an armadillo. He has an aunt that makes them.

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CLAIREE. It's unusual.

M'LYNN. It's repulsive. It has gray icing. I can't even think of how you would make gray icing.

SHELBY. Worse! The cake part is red velvet cake. Blood red! People are going to be hacking into this animal that looks like it's bleeding to death.

M'LYNN. The rehearsal supper was an experience.

SHELBY. It wasn't that bad. It was out at Jackson's uncle's place on the river.

M'LYNN. They served steak and baked potatoes. They went to a lot of trouble.

SHELBY. His family loves to barbecue.

M'LYNN. For dessert they served an original creation called "Dago" pie. I think that says it all. Jackson is from a good old Southern family with good old Southern values. You either shoot it, stuff it, or marry it.

SHELBY. They are simply outdoorsy, that's all.

TRUVY. Did you all do anything especially romantic?

SHELBY. We drove down to Frenchman's Point and went parking.

M'LYNN. Shelby, really.

TRUVY. Oh, boy. The romantic part. This is what really melts my butter.

SHELBY. Then we went skinny dipping and did things that frightened the fish.

M'LYNN. Shelby.

CLAIREE. It's been a long time since we've had a youngster in this place, hasn't it?

SHELBY. We talked, and talked, and talked.

TRUVY. I love those kinds of talks ... in the arms of the man you love.

SHELBY. Actually we fought most of the time.

TRUVY. What?

SHELBY. Because I told him I couldn't marry him. (Shock all around.)

M'LYNN. What?

CLAIREE. Why would you go and do a thing like that?

SHELBY. It's O.K. now. We worked it all out.

TRUVY. Oh. It was just one of those last minute jitter things.

SHELBY. No. But the wedding's still on.

TRUVY. Thank goodness. (Pointing to Shelby's hairstyle.) 'Cause this is going to be in the hairdo hall of fame.

CLAIREE. You scared us, Shelby. That wasn't a nice thing to do to your mama. You should never say something like that to a woman who's marinating fifty pounds of crab claws.

Side 2 - Ouiser, Clairee, Truvy, Shelby, M'Lynn, Annelle

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.

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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.

Side 3 - Ouiser, Clairee, Truvy, Shelby, M'Lynn, Annelle

SHELBY. I should've won Miss Merry Christmas the year I ran. My talent was very showy.

CLAIREE. We told you at the time, Shelby. Fire batons are not everyone's cup of tea.

SHELBY. Mama didn't approve of my twirling fire batons.

M'LYNN. I just don't approve when you insist on doing dangerous things.

SHELBY. Mama hated those fire batons.

M'LYNN. I have never hated anything, Shelby. I supported you, but I just couldn't watch you. Your father, on the other hand, had a field day. He got so much pleasure out of standing in the backyard for hours watching you practice, holding the garden hose so he could put you out when you caught fire.

SHELBY. My entire pageant ensemble was coordinated in shades of pink ... soup to nuts. I twirled to the music from Hawaii 5-0. It was my theme song.

M'LYNN. But we were proud of her.

TRUVY. The year I competed, the swimsuit competition was my downfall. Most women look for a swimsuit that will lift and separate; I look for one that will divide and conquer. I've always been built for comfort, not for speed.

SHELBY. Who got the title your year, Miss Clairee?

CLAIREE. Oh, child. Nobody. There wasn't even a Christmas festival when I was in high school. Why Jesus wasn't even born until I was a junior in college. I remember it distinctly. My friends and I were all out watching our flocks by night ...

TRUVY. Get over here, Clairee. Annelle's gotta gift wrap your head.

OUISER. (Entering in a huff) I could just spit.

TRUVY. 'Morning Ouiser.

OUISER. The parade doesn't even start for four hours and already people are parking on my lawn. It will flatten my grass.

CLAIREE. (Mock sincerity.) Here. Let me hold you.

OUISER. I hate out of town tourists.

SHELBY. Hello!

OUISER. Shelby! What are you doing here?

SHELBY. Being a tourist, I guess. But I won't flatten your grass, I promise.

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OUISER. Good God. You've had the good sense to move away from this festival madness. I can't understand why you'd drag yourself back for a couple of firecrackers and drunk teenagers earping on your shoes.

SHELBY. I like it.

ANNELLE. Miss Ouiser. I think you need a healthy dose of Christmas spirit. (Annelle interrupts conditioning Clairee to get a present from the tree.)

OUISER. I have so much Christmas spirit I could scream.

ANNELLE. (Handing her a present.) Merry Christmas!

OUISER. (Opening present.) I just finished putting out my yard decorations.

CLAIREE. Ouiser. Keep off the grass signs are not Christmas decorations.

OUISER. They are bordered in holly. (Pulls out poinsettia earrings.) You made them, didn't you?

ANNELLE. With my own two hands.

OUISER. Your present is ... uh ... back at the house. I haven't wrapped it yet.

SHELBY. How's Rhett?

OUISER. He's getting along. As a matter of fact, he's the poster dog for the Christmas festival. (Ouiser points to a poster on the wall with a picture on it.)

TRUVY. That is Rhett! I didn't recognize him.

CLAIREE. It's nice to see Rhett with some hair again.

Side 4 - Ouiser, Clairee, Truvy, Shelby, M'Lynn, Annelle

SHELBY. I have to run some errands but before I go ... Miss Ouiser. I have met an old friend of yours.

OUISER. Oh?

SHELBY. Owen Jenkins.

OUISER. Oh.

CLAIREE. Owen? Now there's a blast from the past.

SHELBY. Do you remember him? He remembers you.

OUISER. Of course I remember him. He had the longest nose hair in the free world.

SHELBY. He doesn't now. He hardly has any hair anywhere.

CLAIREE. Owen's been gone from Chinquapin since God was a boy. I'd forgotten he'd ever existed.

SHELBY. Well now Owen lives in Monroe and goes to First Presbyterian. He sings in the choir. One night at choir practice we were doing an especially beautiful Mozart thing and I was moved to tears. He offered me his handkerchief and we got to talking. When he found out where I was from he asked me if I knew you. I said not only did I know you, but you were a neighbor and your dog has almost killed my father on numerous occasions. He's had a very interesting life. He lived in Ohio somewhere. His wife just died recently and he moved back down here.

OUISER. Does this story have a point?

SHELBY. No, not really. He just remembers you fondly, I think.

OUISER. Can't imagine why. He wasn't a bad fellow. But I managed to run him off and marry the first of two total deadbeats.

TRUVY. Unrequited love. My favorite.

SHELBY. Maybe sometime I could arrange for us all to get together.

OUISER. Maybe not.

SHELBY. Why not?

OUISER. Shelby. I managed in just a few decades to marry the two most worthless men in the universe and proceed to have the three most ungrateful children ever conceived. The only reason people are nice to me is because I have more money than God. I am not about to open a new can of worms.

CLAIREE. Do I detect a negativity in your tone?

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M'LYNN. If this is really the way you feel, Ouiser, it isn't healthy. Maybe you should think about coming down and talking to someone at the Guidance Center. We're there to help.

OUISER. I'm not crazy. I've just been in a very bad mood for forty years.

SHELBY. Well, Annelle? What do you want me to do with these old clothes? I need to get them out of the back seat.

ANNELLE. Just bring 'em in.

SHELBY. O.K. Then I'll go finish my Christmas shopping, Mama.

TRUVY. I could shoot you. I haven't even started.

CLAIREE. Please. I haven't even washed the dishes from Thanksgiving.

ANNELLE. What did you get your mama?

SHELBY. I told her this morning what part of it was.

TRUVY. Well, let's hear it, missy.

M'LYNN. I think it's a secret.

OUISER. Obviously there's no such thing in this room.

M'LYNN. It's up to you, honey.

SHELBY. I'm going to have a baby. (Whoops and joy all around. Except for M'Lynn.)

TRUVY. Congratulations! No wonder you haven't said much this morning, M'Lynn. (Taunts.) Grandma! Aren't you excited? Smile! It increases your face value!

SHELBY. June 21.

TRUVY. And those doctors said you couldn't have children. What do they know? I guess you showed them.

M'LYNN. The doctor said Shelby shouldn't have children. There's a big difference. I guess you showed us all.

SHELBY.

SHELBY. I've got to get the clothes. Miss Ouiser? Are you bringing your shrimp meat pies to our open house tonight?

OUISER. Don't I always? They'll be there.

SHELBY. Good. So will Owen Jenkins. I opened the worms for you. (Shelby exits.)

Side 5 - Ouiser, Clairee, Truvy, Annelle

TRUVY. (Truvy remembers.) Now, ladies? Next Saturday we have to make time adjustments. I'm going to be here all by my lonesome. Annelle is taking a well deserved vacation.

CLAIREE. That's nice. Are you taking a trip?

ANNELLE. Yes, I am.

CLAIREE. Aren't you going to tell us where you're going?

ANNELLE. (Directed to Ouiser.) No.

OUISER. Please Annelle. I don't know how I'll get through the week without this information.

ANNELLE. You'll just make fun.

OUISER. Annelle. You know I love it when you go on and on about your spiritual growth. I just can't get enough.

TRUVY. She has a very nice little trip planned to Camp Crossroads in the Ozarks.

CLAIREE. I don't believe I've ever heard of a Camp Crossroads ...

ANNELLE. It's in the middle of Arkansas. It's a Christian camp. There's just cabins, a chapel, a dining hall in the middle of the mountains with a lake. I will spend a week in Bible study, prayer, and meditation. You're in the middle of nature, surrounded by the beauty of the Lord.

OUISER. Are there waterbeds?

CLAIREE. Ouiser, leave her alone.

OUISER. I'm just trying to find out more about Camp Cross-eyed. I might want to go...

CLAIREE. That's a laugh. You've never done a religious thing in your life.

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OUISER. That's not true. When I was in school, a bunch of my friends and I would dress up like nuns and go barhopping.

CLAIREE. Is your boyfriend going with you?

ANNELLE. No. He said he'd rather eat dirt.

OUISER. I'm going to check up on my granddaughter and make sure she's still going to the Episcopal church. This born again process seems awfully tedious.

ANNELLE. I have to say this, Miss Ouiser. And I don't mean to hurt you. But ... I worry about your faith sometimes.

OUISER. My faith is fine ... (Affecting a lisp.) Ith my hair that needth the motht work.

CLAIREE. Ouiser. One of these days somebody's going to cut the feet out of your stockings.

TRUVY. Ouiser, have you no shame? ..

ANNELLE. Oh, that's all right, Truvy. I love Miss Ouiser. I pray for her everyday ... sometimes twice.