

Steel Magnolias

Character Descriptions

TRUVY JONES – 40ish. She is the owner of the beauty shop in fictional Chinquapin Parish, Louisiana, where *Steel Magnolias* is set. Truvy loves her work as a hair stylist and is, in fact, obsessed with everything having to do with *hair* (e.g., “Baltimore is the hair capital of the world!”). She is married to a “slug” who spends most of his time parked in front of the TV and is the mother of twin 18-year-old sons (“Poot” and Louie) who will soon be moving out and leaving her “nest.” She may be a bit vain in terms of being honest about her age and size. Physically, she is, in her own words, built for “comfort not speed” and could be described as a bit “top heavy” (or buxom). She’s a frustrated romantic and apprehensive about soon being alone with only her negligent husband. A church-going woman (a Methodist), Truvy is a gossip – but never a mean or vindictive one. She soon becomes a surrogate mother of sorts for Annelle, her “semi-daughter.” Truvy is a bit naïve about the world at large, but, like all the “magnolias” in the play, she is kind, caring, and resilient. The actress will have to be believable styling hair and manicuring nails onstage (training will be given).

ANNELLE DUPUY-DeSOTO – age about 19 (one of the other characters describes her by saying: “she can’t be more than 18”). A young hairstylist, when the play begins she is applying to Trudy’s beauty salon for a job. Recently married to a shady character named Bunky Dupuy, her fugitive husband has taken off with her car, money, and even most of her clothes, leaving her in an understandably fragile state. She is justifiably nervous and concerned about her finances and her future. From Zwolle, Louisiana, she is naïve about the ways of the world. She has quite an emotional arc over the course of the play: moving from a shy, insecure, anxious girl to a young woman who gradually finds confidence and maturity with a new job and enthusiastic interest in the local Baptist church. She becomes a surrogate daughter of sorts to motherly Truvy and, over the course of the play, meets a young man named Sammy DeSoto, marries him, and becomes pregnant with her first child. Very good at heart, at times she gets over-zealous with her religious beliefs. A lovable, sweet girl, Annelle is shy, private, and creative. The actress will have to be believable shampooing and styling hair onstage (training will be given).

CLAIREE BELCHER – age late 60s to early 70s. The former “First Lady of Chinquapin,” she is a “grande dame” who has only recently lost her husband (Lloyd) of almost 50 years, the former Mayor of the town. She is still adjusting to being a new widow. Clairee is from a wealthy and distinguished family (the Marmillions) and is confident in her social position in the town. Physically, she has a sweet tooth and is likely a little plump, a feature which she exaggerates; she is also attractive and stylish. She has a son and daughter-in-law who live in Tickfaw, Louisiana; is next-door neighbor to the Eatentons; best friend forever to Ouiser Boudreaux; and an enthusiastic gossip. She develops three interests that shape her life over the course of the play: the local high school football team; the local radio station KPPD, which she eventually buys; and viewing theatre. She is described as having “a smart mouth” and also has a self-deprecating type of humor as she frequently makes fun of herself. She has “plenty of money.” In one scene, Clairee has a hoarse voice from yelling herself silly at a football game; the actress must pull off the hoarseness without being inaudible to the audience.

SHELBY EATENTON-LATCHERIE – age about 25. Shelby is the “prettiest girl in town.” She is ideally blonde (can be wigged if necessary), slim, charming, ebullient, and appealing. The daughter of M’Lynn and Drum Eatenton, sister to Tommy and Jonathan, and soon to be wed to Jackson Lacherie, Shelby is free-spirited and tends to speak her mind, which often brings her into conflict with her mother. She takes her life in her hands when she decides to get pregnant despite doctors’ warnings of her fragile physical condition (she is severely diabetic). She works as a pediatric nurse in a hospital with newborn babies, including premature ones, a career path which increases her resolve to give birth to her own child. There is something ethereal, dainty, elegant and graceful about Shelby – one senses that she has always been beautiful and popular and, despite her health challenges, an easygoing and happy person. After giving birth to her child (an event that happens between Acts I and II), Shelby is elated to have a baby but, as a result, suffers more severe medical problems as well as the onset of marital problems with her challenging husband. The actress must pull off a creditable diabetic attack in Act I.

M’LYNN (Mary Lynn) EATENTON – age early 50s, though she has the look and constitution of someone a decade younger. Socially prominent in the town, married to Drum Eatenton, a successful and affluent man, M’Lynn is herself a career woman who works as a counselor at the local Mental Guidance Center. She is mother to Shelby and two sons, Tommy and Jonathan. She worries a great deal about her headstrong daughter and the two clash frequently over some of Shelby’s life choices, specifically Shelby’s choice to have a baby. M’Lynn challenges her daughter only because of a genuine and deeply-felt concern and worry for her child. M’Lynn also has some marital problems with her husband which eventually get better when they together find peace later in the play’s action. In Act II, we learn that M’Lynn and Drum have just marked their 30th wedding anniversary. M’Lynn is smart, articulate, concerned, and kind. The actress playing M’Lynn has a difficult acting challenge to pull off in Act II, Scene 2, the day of Shelby’s funeral, in a scene which requires a display of legitimate and heartfelt emotions as she suffers a wrenching breakdown over the loss of her child. It is a tall acting order.

OUISER (pronounced “Weezer”) **BOUDREAUX** – age late 60s to early 70s. A wealthy curmudgeon, she is acerbic but ultimately lovable. Possessed of a sharp tongue, she can be sardonic, severe, sarcastic, scathing, severe, snarky, and stinging – BUT the barbs must never totally mask that a good, kind, and caring woman exists beneath the veneer of a brittle older woman. She is dear friends with the ladies in the neighborhood, though she and M’Lynn’s husband Drum are opposing parties in a longtime feud. Ouiser is a single lady, having been previously married to “two total deadbeats”; she is also the mother of “three ungrateful children.” In her own words, she has “more money than God.” She and Clairee are friends of many decades and, likely because of this, they tease, taunt, and torment each other relentlessly. Her closest companion is her mangy and disreputable old dog, Rhett, for years on his “last legs.” As Ouiser herself says, “I’m not crazy – I’ve just been in a bad mood for forty years.” The actress playing Ouiser needs to have a strong sense of comic timing and to not be afraid to “go there” with a strong attack on the character’s outward bile and nastiness. Also, we may explore having Ouiser smoke onstage (but we would use herbal stage cigarettes).

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Annelle Audition Monologue #1

I'm not sure if I'm married or not ... He's gone! Everything is horrible. Bunkie – that's my husband – he left. We only moved here a month ago. He just vanished last week. Nobody knows where he went. He took all my money, my jewelry, the car. Most of my clothes were in the trunk ... The police have been to see 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 ... I should've said something, but 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 that might be a dangerous criminal. But I swear to you that my personal tragedy will not interfere with my ability to do good hair.

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Annelle Audition Monologue #2

(Regarding SHELBY's recent death:)

In a way Shelby was right. Maybe she knew she was going to be with her king. We should be rejoicing ... Miss M'Lynn, I don't mean to upset you by saying that. You see, when something like this happens, I pray very hard to make heads or tails of it. 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 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 Audition Monologue #1

Lloyd and I missed being married for fifty years by three months. That stinker. Bless his heart. He tried. He just couldn't make it ... I remember everything about my wedding. The flowers, the food. Ouiser was my maid of honor. Shelby, I hope you and Jackson will be as happy as Lloyd and I were. We had such a good time. Until last November ... At least he hung on through the state playoffs ... I miss the whirlwind of being a mayor's wife. It's not easy being just one. I don't like going to things by myself. If I go with another couple, I'm a third wheel. If I go with a friend, we're just a couple of old biddies ... I really do love football. But it's hard to parlay that into a reason to live.

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Clairee Audition Monologue #2

My brother can be very hotheaded when he wants to be. But he really didn't throw Marshall out. Marshall just came over to my house while his daddy cooled off. I adore Marshall. We stayed up half the night talking last night ... I think it'll all blow over. I have to admit, Marshall did go about it the wrong way. He marched in unexpected from Los Angeles while Drew and Belle were preparing for the annual Marmillion shrimp boil. Marshall without so much as a hello says, "Mama and Daddy, I have something to tell you. I have a brain tumor. I have three months to live." Well, naturally Drew and Belle became hysterical. Then Marshall says, "Hey folks, I'm just kidding. I'm only gay." Drew became incredibly distraught and started throwing wet shrimp at Marshall, screaming at him to get out of his sight. And Marshall came to my house smelling like a can of cat food ... I want you to know Marshall's always welcome at my house. I'm very proud of him. He built up that chain of sportswear stores all by himself without a penny of family money. He says, "I am a self-made man. I pulled myself up by my own jockstraps."

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M'Lynn Audition Monologue #1

Last week was our 30th anniversary. We've never considered it a major occasion before ... Drum prides himself on never having any tension. Which is amazing considering the amount he has created over the years ... Hmm. Listen to me. I've got to stop taking pot shots at Drum all the time. He's a good man. He's crazy, but he's a good man ... 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 ... 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.

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M'Lynn Audition Monologue #2

(Regarding SHELBY's recent death:)

Shelby, as you know, would not want us to get all mired down and wallow in this. She would look on it as just one of life's occurrences. We should deal with it the best way we know how ... and get on with it. That's what my mind says. I wish somebody would explain that to my heart ... I couldn't leave my Shelby. It's interesting. Both the boys were very difficult births. I almost died when Jonathan was born. Very difficult births. Shelby was a breeze. I could've gone home that afternoon I had her. I was thinking about that as I sat next to Shelby while she was in a coma. I would work her legs and arms to keep the circulation going. I told the ICU nurse we were doing our Jane Fonda. 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 very afraid that I would not 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 could not leave. I just sat there ... holding Shelby's hand while the sounds got softer and the beeps got further 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 my world and I was there when she drifted out. It was the most precious moment of my life thus far.

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Ouiser Audition Monologue #1

This is it. I've found it. I am in hell ... Don't try to get on my good side. I no longer have one ... I have to cancel. 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 ... M'Lynn, I used to think you were crazy for marrying that man. Then I thought for a few years that you were 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! ... 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 ... 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? ... He's a real gentleman. I'll bet he takes the dishes out of the sink before he pees in it.

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Ouiser Audition Monologue #2

I have plans next Friday. I'm going to Shreveport to have 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. 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 ... And, Clairee, I'll write a check for the little theatre. I will support art. I just don't want to see it. 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.

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Shelby Audition Monologue #1

Jackson's pretty swell. I thought he was a pest at first, but then he kind of grew on me. And now I love him. We met at a party at the Petroleum Club in Shreveport. I had no idea who he was, but I was getting a big kick out of watching him on the dance floor. It was painfully obvious he had never taken the time to dance in front of a mirror. There was something so attractive about how stupid he looked ... He's not really romantic. But he does give me flowers. And little presents if I bug him enough. He has promised to give me a red rose on every anniversary corresponding to the number of that anniversary. I think that's so sweet...

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Shelby Audition Monologue #2

Mama, I want a child ... 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 some feelers out about buying one ... I think a child of my own would help things a lot ... Mama, 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 ... Diabetics have healthy babies all the time. 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.

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Truivy Audition Monologue #1

Honey, there's so much static electricity in here, I pick up everything except boys and money ... Annelle? This is the most successful shop in town.

Wanna know why? 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 Kurl or the Beauty Box. And remember! My ladies get only the best. Do not scrimp on anything. Feel free to use as much hairspray as you want ... Just look at me, Annelle. It takes some effort to look like this ... Now, I restrict myself to 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.

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Truvy Audition Monologue #2

(Regarding ANNELLE's excessive praying:)

Got me. Maybe she was praying for Marshall and Drew and Belle. Maybe she was praying for us because we were gossiping. Maybe she was praying because the elastic is shot in her pantyhose. Who knows? She prays at the drop of a hat these days – and has ever since Mardi Gras. She had her choice of going to a Bible weekend with her Sunday school class or to New Orleans with me and two other sinners. She left that Friday a pleasant, well-adjusted young lady and she returned that next Tuesday a Christian ... Her boyfriend Sammy's so confused he doesn't know whether to scratch his watch or wind his butt. He's crazy about her. He says he could deal with another man in her life, but he has trouble with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ... I'm torn. I've got two sons that I'm afraid are going to hell in a handcart and a semi-daughter that strives to be the kind of girl Jesus would bring home to Mama. I don't know what to think. I don't understand those people ... but they sometimes seem to have a peace about things that I've never had. Maybe I'm just jealous.