

ACT II

*The lights go up on the kitchen. It is later that evening on the same day. Meg's suitcase has been moved upstairs. Babe's saxophone has been taken out of the case and put together. Babe and Barnette are sitting at the kitchen table. Barnette is writing and re-checking notes with explosive intensity. Babe, who has changed into a casual shift, sits eating a bowl of oatmeal, slowly.*

START

BARNETTE. *(To himself.)* Mmm-huh! Yes! I see, I see! Well, we can work on that! And of course, this is mere conjecture! Difficult, if not impossible, to prove. Ha! Yes. Yes, indeed. Indeed—

BABE. Sure you don't want any oatmeal?

BARNETTE. What? Oh, no. No, thank you. Let's see, ah, where were we?

BABE. I just shot Zackery.

BARNETTE. *(Looking at his notes.)* Right. Correct. You've just pulled the trigger.

BABE. Tell me, do you think Willie Jay can stay out of all this?

BARNETTE. Believe me, it is in our interest to keep him as far out of this as possible.

BABE. Good.

BARNETTE. *(Throughout the following, Barnette stays glued to Babe's every word.)* All right, you've just shot one Zackery Botrelle, as a result of his continual physical and mental abuse—what happens now?

BABE. Well, after I shot him, I put the gun down on the piano bench and then I went out into the kitchen and made up a pitcher of lemonade.

BARNETTE. Lemonade?

BABE. Yes, I was dying of thirst. My mouth was just as dry as a bone.

BARNETTE. So in order to quench this raging thirst that was choking you dry and preventing any possibility of you uttering intelligible sounds or phrases, you went out to the kitchen and made up a pitcher of lemonade?

BABE. Right. I made it just the way I like it with lots of sugar and lots of lemon—about ten lemons in all. Then I added two trays of ice and stirred it up with my wooden stirring spoon.

BARNETTE. Than what?

BABE. Then I drank three glasses, one right after the other. They were large glasses, about this tall. Then suddenly, my stomach kind of swoll all up. I guess what caused it was all that sour lemon.

BARNETTE. Could be.

BABE. Then what I did was... I wiped my mouth off with the back of my hand, like this... *(She demonstrates.)*

BARNETTE. Hmmm.

BABE. I did it to clear off all those little beads of water that had settled there.

BARNETTE. I see.

BABE. Then I called out to Zackery. I said, "Zackery, I've made some lemonade. Can you use a glass?"

BARNETTE. Did he answer? Did you hear an answer?

BABE. No. He didn't answer.

BARNETTE. So, what'd you do?

BABE. I poured him a glass anyway and took it out to him.

BARNETTE. You took it out to the living room?

BABE. I did. And there he was; lying on the rug. He was looking up at me trying to speak words. I said, "What? ... Lemonade? ... You don't want it? Would you like a Coke instead?" Then I got the idea, he was telling me to call on the phone for medical help. So I got on the phone and called up the hospital. I gave my name and address and I told them my husband was shot and he was lying on the rug and there was plenty of blood. *(Babe pauses a minute, as Barnette works frantically on his notes.)* I guess that's gonna look kinda bad.

BARNETTE. What?

BABE. Me fixing that lemonade, before I called the hospital.

BARNETTE. Well, not . . . necessarily.

BABE. I tell you, I think the reason I made up the lemonade, I mean besides the fact that my mouth was bone dry, was that I was afraid to call the authorities. I was afraid, I—I really think I was afraid they would see that I had tried to shoot Zackery, in fact, that I had shot him, and they would accuse me of possible murder and send me away to jail.

BARNETTE. Well, that's understandable.

BABE. I think so. I mean, in fact, that's what did happen. That's what is happening—'cause here I am just about ready to go right off to the Parchment Prison Farm. Yes, here I am just practically on the brink of utter doom. Why, I feel so all alone.

BARNETTE. Now, now, look—Why, there's no reason for you to get yourself so all upset and worried. Please, don't. Please. (*They look at each other for a moment.*) You just keep filling in as much detailed information as you can about those incidents on the medical reports. That's all you need to think about. Don't you worry, Mrs. Botrelle, we're going to have a solid defense.

BABE. Please, don't call me Mrs. Botrelle.

BARNETTE. All right.

BABE. My name's Becky. People in the family call me Babe; but my real name's Becky.

BARNETTE. All right, Becky. (*Barnette and Babe stare at each other for a long moment.*)

BABE. Are you sure you didn't go to Hazlehurst High?

BARNETTE. No, I went away to a boarding school.

BABE. Gosh, you sure do look familiar. You sure do.

BARNETTE. Well, I—I doubt you'll remember, but I did meet you once.

BABE. You did? When?

BARNETTE. At the Christmas bazaar, year before last. You were selling cakes and cookies and . . . candy.

BABE. Oh, yes! You bought the orange pound cake!

BARNETTE. Right.

BABE. Of course, and then we talked for a while. We talked about the Christmas angel.