

START ✓

I don't know why, but somehow

ould.

g pot! Who'd buy it anyway?

LENNY. Wait—I think that's them. Yeah, that's Chick's car! Oh, there's Babe! Hello, Babe! They're home, Meg! They're home. (Meg hides.)

BABE'S VOICE. Lenny! I'm home! I'm free! (Babe, 24, enters exuberantly. She has an angelic face and fierce, volatile eyes. She carries a pink pocketbook.) I'm home! (Meg jumps out of hiding.) Oh, Meg—Look, it's Meg! (Running to hug her.) Meg! When did you get home?

MEG. Just now!

BABE. Well, it's so good to see you! I'm so glad you're home! I'm so relieved. (Chick enters.)

MEG. Why, Chick; hello.

CHICK. Hello, Cousin Margaret. What brings you back to Hazlehurst?

MEG. Oh, I came on home... (Turning to Babe.) I came on home to see about Babe.

BABE. (Running to hug Meg.) Oh, Meg—

MEG. How are things with you, Babe?

CHICK. Well, they are dismal, if you want my opinion. She is refusing to cooperate with her lawyer, that nice-looking young Lloyd boy. She won't tell any of us why she committed this heinous crime, except to say that she didn't like Zackery's looks—

BABE. Oh, look, Lenny brought my suitcase from home! And my saxophone! Thank you! (Babe runs over to the cot and gets out her saxophone.)

CHICK. Now that young lawyer is coming over here this afternoon, and when he gets here he expects to get some concrete answers! That's what he expects! No more of this nonsense and stubbornness from you, Rebecca Magrath, or they'll put you in jail and throw away the key!

BABE. Meg, come look at my new saxophone. I went to Jackson and bought it used. Feel it. It's so heavy.

MEG. It's beautiful. (The room goes silent)

CHICK. Isn't that right, won't they throw away the key?

LENNY. Well, honestly, I don't know about that—

CHICK. They will! And leave you there to rot. So, Rebecca, what are you going to tell Mr. Lloyd about shooting Zackery when he gets here? What are your reasons going to be?

BABE. (Glaring.) That I didn't like his looks! I just didn't like his stinking looks! And I don't like yours much either, Chick-the-Stick! So, just leave me alone! I mean it! Leave me alone! Oooh! (Babe exits up the stairs. There is a long moment of silence.)

CHICK. Well, I was only trying to warn her that she's going to have to help herself. It's just that she doesn't understand how serious the situation is. Does she? She doesn't have the vaguest idea. Does she now?

LENNY. Well, it's true, she does seem a little confused.

CHICK. And that's putting it mildly, Lenny honey. That's putting it mighty mild. So, Margaret, how's your singing career going? We keep looking for your picture in the movie magazines. (Meg moves to light a cigarette.) You know, you shouldn't smoke. It causes cancer. Cancer of the lungs. They say each cigarette is just a little stick of cancer. A little death stick.

MEG. That's what I like about it, Chick—taking a drag off of death. (Meg takes a long, deep drag.) Mmm! Gives me a sense of controlling my own destiny. What power! What exhilaration! Want a drag?

LENNY. (Trying to break the tension.) Ah, Zackery's liver's been saved! His sister called up and said his liver was saved. Isn't that good news?

MEG. Well, yes, that's fine news. Mighty fine news. Why I've been told that the liver's a powerful important bodily organ. I believe it's used to absorb all of our excess bile.

LENNY. Yes—well—it's been saved. (The phone rings. Lenny gets it.)

MEG. So! Did you hear all that good news about the liver, Little Chicken?

CHICK. I heard it. And don't you call me Chicken! (Meg clucks like a chicken.) I've told you a hundred times if I've told you once not to call me Chicken. You cannot call me Chicken.

LENNY. ... Oh, no! ... Of course, we'll be right over! 'Bye!
(*She hangs up the phone.*) That was Annie May—Peekay and
Buck Jr. have eaten paints!

CHICK. Oh, no! Are they all right? They're not sick? They're
not sick, are they?!

LENNY. I don't know. I don't know. Come on. We've got to
run on next door.

CHICK. (*Overlapping.*) Oh, God! Oh, please!! Please let them
be all right! Don't let them die!! Please, don't let them die!!
(*Chick runs Off howling with Lenny following after. Meg sits
alone, finishing her cigarette. After a moment, Babe's voice
is heard.*)

BABE'S VOICE. Pst—Psst! (*Meg looks around. Babe comes
tiptoeing down the stairs.*)

BABE. Has she gone?

MEG. She's gone. Peekay and Buck Jr. just ate their paints.

BABE. What idiots.

MEG. Yeah.

BABE. You know, Chick's hated us ever since we had to mov
here from Vicksburg to live with Old Grandmama and Old Grand-
daddy.

MEG. She's an idiot.

BABE. Yeah. Do you know what she told me this morning while
I was still behind bars and couldn't get away?

MEG. What?

BABE. She told me how embarrassing it was for her all those
years ago, you know, when mama—

MEG. Yeah, down in the cellar.

BABE. She said our mama had shamed the entire family, and
we were known notoriously all through Hazlehurst. (*About to
cry.*) Then she went on to say how I would now be getting just
as much bad publicity and humiliating her and the family all
over again.

MEG. Ah, forget it, Babe. Just forget it.

BABE. I told her, "Mama got national coverage! National!"
And if Zackery wasn't a senator from Copiah County, I probably
wouldn't even be getting state-wide.

MEG. Of course you wouldn't.