

Rev. 03/20/86 (Blue)
Rev. 04/15/86 (Yellow)

CRIMES OF THE HEART

The Pulitzer Prize-Winning Comedy

by

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Producer: Freddie Fields
Director: Bruce Beresford

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REVISED VERSION

February 1, 1986

PLEASE NOTE:
ALL SCENE NUMBERS HAVE BEEN CHANGED
IN THIS VERSION

CRIMES OF THE HEART

FADE IN:

1 INT. BOTRELLE MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

1

A white suitcase is laid out on a huge ornate canopy bed. LENNY MAGRATH, a thirty-year-old woman with a round figure and face, is removing various items from a bureau and placing them into the suitcase. The items include: frilly clothes; a toy bear with one eye missing; pink hair rollers; and an old scrap book.

The OPENING TITLES of the film are SUPERIMPOSED over this sequence.

LUCILLE BOTRELLE, 52, a richly-dressed woman with sharp, dark features stands with her arms crossed, stiffly watching. There is an enormous sense of tension between the two women as Lenny nervously rushes back and forth, packing the suitcase.

LUCILLE

The damage to the spinal column
has not yet been determined.

A look of terror flickers across Lenny's face as she continues packing.

LUCILLE

(continuing)

But his breathing's stabilized and
the liver's been saved.

Lenny nods weakly, as she picks up a saxophone and places it into its beat-up black case.

LENNY

Well, that's good news.

LUCILLE

None of this is good news, Lenny
MaGrath. It's all a grueling
nightmare. And, mark my words,
those responsible will pay dearly.

2 EXT. BOTRELLE MANSION - MORNING

2

A magnificent five-story antebellum Greek Revival mansion set high up on a hilltop. Lenny comes out of the front door, carrying the suitcases. Her battered car is in the foreground.

2A EXT. BOTRELLE ESTATE

2A *

Lenny steers her car down the driveway.

*

3 EXT. MAGRATH HOUSE - MORNING 3

The McGrath house is a small rundown white frame house with a big rambling yard. There is a giant oak tree with a tattered rope swing tied to one of its huge craggy limbs. The swing twists slowly back and forth in the morning breeze. Lenny's old Ford pulls into the gravel driveway.

OPENING TITLES END.

4 ANOTHER ANGLE 4

CHICK, 29, a brightly-dressed matron with yellow hair and shiny red lips, eagerly watches from her yard next door.

As Chick catches sight of Lenny's car, she quickly turns and starts giving instructions to her maid, ANNIE MAY JENKINS, a sullen overweight black girl who is babysitting Chick's two red-headed children, BUCK JR. and PEEKAY.

CHICK

Annie May! I'm on my way. Now you be sure to defrost that chicken for supper. There's a can of Vienna sausages in the cupboard for your lunch. Fix peanut butter and jelly for the kids. And, whatever you do, don't let them get ahold of any matches or combustible explosives. I don't want any repeats of last week's near fatal disaster. Is that clear?

In the b.g., we see Buck Jr. and Peekay using toy bows to shoot toy arrows at their menagerie of pets.

5 INT. MAGRATH'S KITCHEN - MORNING 5

Lenny enters from the back door carrying the white suitcase, the saxophone case, and a brown paper sack. After glancing quickly at the door, she gets the cookie jar from the kitchen counter, a box of matches from the stove and then brings both objects back down to the kitchen table. Excitedly, she reaches into the brown sack and pulls out a package of birthday candles. She quickly opens the package and removes a candle. She tries to stick the candle onto a cookie... it falls off.

CHICK (O.S.)

Lenny! Oh, Lenny!

(CONTINUED)

5

CONTINUED:

5

Lenny quickly stuffs the cookie and candle into her dress pocket. Chick enters from the back door.

LENNY

Hi.

CHICK

It's just too awful! How I'm gonna
continue holding my head up high
in this community I do not know.
Did you remember to pick up those
pantyhose for me?

*

LENNY

They're in the sack.

Chick gets the package, tears it open and proceeds to
take off one pair of stockings and put on another, during
the following dialogue:

CHICK

Daddy has called me twice already.
He says we gotta get ourselves
to town t'help take care of this
thing with Babe before they change
their simple minds.

*

LENNY

(hesitantly)

I was hoping Meg would call.

CHICK

Meg?

LENNY

I sent her a telegram about Babe
and...

CHICK

A telegram?! Couldn't you just
phone her up?

LENNY

Well, no. 'Cause her phone's...
out of order.

CHICK

Out of order?

LENNY

Disconnected. I don't know what.

Chick sneers with indignant superiority.

(CONTINUED)

5

CONTINUED: (2)

5

CHICK

Well, that sounds like Meg. And, just what all did you say in this 'telegram' you sent?

LENNY

I, well, I just told her to come on home.

CHICK

To come on home! Listen, Lenora, Babe's gonna be incurring some mighty negative publicity around this town. And Meg's appearance isn't gonna help out a bit.

(who now has the
tights on)

My, these are snug. Are you sure you bought my right size?

LENNY

(looking at
the box)

Size extra petite.

CHICK

Well, they're skimping on the nylon material.

Struggling to pull up the stockings. She finishes on one leg and starts on the other.

CHICK

(continuing)

Anyway, Meg is known all over Copiah County as cheap Christmas trash. Why, the whole town knows about her dealings in that sordid affair with Doc Porter, leaving him a cripple.

LENNY

A cripple... he's got a limp. Just kind of, barely a limp.

CHICK

Well, his mother was going to keep me out of the Ladies' Social League because of it.

LENNY

Oh, please, Chick. I'm sorry. But you're in the Ladies' League now.

(CONTINUED)

5

CONTINUED: (3)

5

CHICK

(as she brushes
her hair)

Yes, that's true, I am. But
frankly, if Mrs. Porter hadn't
developed that tumor in her
bladder, I wouldn't be in the
club today, much less a committee
head. Anyway, you stay right here
and wait for Meg to call, so's you
can convince her not to come back
home. How's my hair?

LENNY

Fine.

CHICK

Not pooching out in the back, is
it?

LENNY

No.

CHICK

All right then, I'm on my way.

Chick cleans the hair from her brush, drops the ball of
hair onto the floor, then goes to put the brush back into
her purse.

CHICK

(continuing)

Oh! Oh! Oh! I almost forgot.
Here's a present for you. Happy
birthday to Lenny, from the Buck
Boyle's!

Chick takes a wrapped package from her bag and hands it
to Lenny.

LENNY

Why, thank you, Chick. It's so
nice to have you remember my
birthday every year like you do.

CHICK

(modestly)

Oh well, now, that's just the way
I am, I suppose. That's just the
way I was brought up to be. Well,
why don't you go on!

LENNY

All right.

(CONTINUED)

5

CONTINUED: (4)

5

She starts to unwrap the gift.

CHICK

It's a box of candy... assorted
cremes.

LENNY

Candy... that's always a nice
gift.

CHICK

Oh, speaking of which, remember
that little polka dot dress you
got Peekay for her fifth birthday
last month?

LENNY

The red and white one?

CHICK

Yes; well, the first time I put
it in the washing machine, I mean
the very first time, it fell all
to pieces. Those little polka
dots just dropped right off into
the water.

LENNY

(crushed)

Oh, no. Well, I'll get something
else for her then... a little toy.

CHICK

Oh, no, no, no, no, no!

THROUGH the window we see a pickup truck pull up the
driveway. DOC PORTER, an attractively worn man, gets out
of the truck and heads toward the back door carrying a
sack of pecans.

CHICK

(continuing)

We wouldn't hear of it! I just
wanted to let you know so you
wouldn't go and waste any more of
your hard-earned money on that
make of dress. Those inexpensive
brands just don't hold up.

(spotting Doc)

Oh my word! It's Doc Porter!

Chick rushes out the back door. Lenny follows behind
her.

6

EXT. MAGRATH BACK YARD - MORNING

6

CHICK

Well, how in the world are you
doing? I can't stay. I've got
people waiting on me. It's all
this Babe business. Well,
farewell and goodbye.

Chick rushes across the yard to her driveway.

LENNY

'Bye.

DOC

(to Lenny)

Hello.

LENNY

Hi. I guess you heard about the
thing with Babe?

DOC

Yeah. Lenny...

LENNY

What?

DOC

(not able to go on)

Um...

LENNY

Yes?

DOC

Here, some pecans for you.

He hands her the sack.

LENNY

Why, thank you, Doc. I love
pecans.

(CONTINUED)

DOC

My wife and Scotty picked them up
around the yard.

LENNY

Well, I can use them to make a
pie. A pecan pie.

DOC

Yeah. Look, Lenny, I've got some
bad news for you.

LENNY

What?

DOC

Well, last night, Billy Boy died.

LENNY

He died?

DOC

Uh-huh. He was struck by
lightning.

LENNY

Struck by lightning? In that
storm yesterday?

DOC

That's what we think.

She moves away from him and goes to sit on a green
trellis swing. As Doc follows after Lenny we notice he
has a slight limp. The limp, however, seems to add
rather than detract from his quiet seductive quality.

LENNY

Gosh, I've had Billy Boy for so
long. You know. Ever since I
was ten years old.

DOC

Yeah. He was a mighty old horse.

LENNY

(stung)

Mighty old.

(beat)

Hey, today's my birthday. Did
you know that?

DOC

No. Happy birthday.

(CONTINUED)

6

CONTINUED: (2)

6

LENNY

Thanks.

She begins to cry.

DOC

Oh, come on now, Lenny. Hey, now.
You know I can't stand it when you
MaGrath women start to cry. You
know it just gets me.

*

LENNY

(getting up)

Oh-ho! Sure! You mean when Meg
cries! Meg's the one you could
never stand to watch cry! Not me!
I could fill up a pig's trough!

Lenny stumbles over to the mimosa tree and holds on to
its smooth slim trunk.

DOC

Now, Lenny... stop it. Come on.
Jesus.

LENNY

I don't know what's wrong with me.
All this stuff with Babe and Old
Granddaddy's gotten worse in the
hospital and I can't get in touch
with Meg.

*

*

DOC

Is Meggy coming home?

LENNY

Who knows. She hasn't called me.

DOC

She still living in California?

LENNY

Yes, in Hollywood.

DOC

Well, give me a call if she gets
in. I'd like to see her.

LENNY

Oh, you would, huh?

DOC

Yeah, Lenny, sad to say, but I
would.

They stare at each other, then look away.

7

INT. BUS - CLOSE ON MEG MAGRATH - AFTERNOON

7

A thin strange woman with sad magic eyes. She wears a purple velvet beret with a faded paper rose on top. Her legs are thrown up over a large tote bag.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal other passengers on the bus. They are generally poor country types.

Meg smokes a cigarette as she stares out the window, slowly she starts to smile grimly.

In the b.g. we see a WOMAN about 30, sitting with two children and her MOTHER. The Mother, about 60, a plain woman dressed in overalls, whispers to her daughter and points toward Meg.

*
*
*

MOTHER

Is that the other sister?

*
*

DAUGHTER (WOMAN)

Yes, the one that moved to Hollywood.

*
*
*

8

EXT./INT. MEG'S POV - AFTERNOON

8

A billboard that reads, "You'll Love Hazlehurst."

CUT TO:

9

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF HAZLEHURST - AFTERNOON

9

The Greyhound bus heads down the road past the poor black section of town.

10

INT. BUS - AFTERNOON

10

Meg swallows Empirin tablets from the bottle. She sucks on the aspirin as she watches the sights through her window.

11

EXT./INT. MEG'S POV - AFTERNOON

11

Skinny black children feed goats tin cans and dirty paper.

A trashed-out auto garage littered with broken car parts and moss-covered equipment.

Dilapidated houses set up on bricks with white paint worn so thin you can see the grey splintered wood beneath.

12 INT. BUS - AFTERNOON 12

Meg turns from the window and knocks the bottom of the Empirin bottle into the center of her tightening chest.

13 INT. MAGRATH KITCHEN - CLOSE ON COOKIE - AFTERNOON 13

A burning candle drips hot wax onto a cookie. The CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal Lenny holding the candle over the cookie. She sticks the candle on top of the cookie and sings the "Happy Birthday" song to herself. She pauses, makes a wish, and blows out the candle.

Lenny waits a moment, impulsively reaches for the matches, and relights the candle.

Lenny sings the "Happy Birthday" song to herself, pauses, makes a wish, and blows out the candle.

Lenny's face lights up and she reaches for the matches again. The CAMERA PANS UP TO the kitchen bulletin board. On it we see an old photograph of Lenny and Billy Boy. *

14 EXT. HAZLEHURST TOWN SQUARE - AFTERNOON 14

The Greyhound bus drives into the town square.

15 INT. BUS - AFTERNOON 15

Meg looks pale and drained as she gazes out at the familiar surroundings of her former home.

16 EXT./INT. TOWN SQUARE - MEG'S POV - AFTERNOON 16

The red brick post office with an eagle over the door.

The deserted movie house with a sign in the window reading "Closed."

Two black men sitting in front of the yellow brick court house in green folding chairs.

The granite statue of a soldier with the dedication that reads: "To the Memory of Our Confederate Soldiers, 1861."

17 INT. MAGRATH KITCHEN - CLOSE ON PILE OF BURNT MATCHES - 17
AFTERNOON

The CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal Lenny still sitting at the table singing "Happy Birthday" and making wishes on the melted-down candle stuck in the cookie. Her mood has changed. She is now gay and happy.

(CONTINUED)

MEG (O.S.)

I'm home!

We hear MEG WHISTLE the family whistle.

MEG (O.S.)

(continuing)

Anybody home?!

Lenny leaps out of her chair in excitement.

LENNY

Meg? Meg!

Lenny flies out the kitchen door. The CAMERA FOLLOWS her through the dining room to the living room. Lenny unlocks the screen door and flings it open.

MEG

Lenny!

LENNY

Well, Meg! Why, Meg! Oh, Meggy! Why didn't you call? Did you fly in? You didn't take a bus, did you? Why didn't you give us a call?

MEG

(overlapping)

Oh, Lenny! Why, Lenny! Dear Lenny!

(taking in

Lenny's face)

My God, we're getting so old! Oh, I called, for heaven's sake. Of course, I called!

LENNY

Well, I never talked to you...

MEG

Well, I know! I let the phone ring right off the hook!

LENNY

Well, as a matter of fact, I was out most of the morning seeing to Babe.

Lenny picks up Meg's tote bag and takes it into the living room. Meg follows.

(CONTINUED)

17

CONTINUED: (2)

17

MEG

Now just what's all this business about Babe? How could you send me such a telegram about Babe? And Zackery! You say somebody's shot Zackery?!

LENNY

Yes, they have.

MEG

Well, good Lord! Is he dead?

LENNY

No. But he's in the hospital. He was shot in the stomach.

MEG

In his stomach! How awful! Do they know who shot him?

Lenny nods.

MEG

(continuing)

Well, who? Who was it? Who? Who?

LENNY

Babe! They're all saying Babe shot him! They took her to jail! It's horrible! It's awful!

MEG

(overlapping)

Jail! Good Lord, jail! Well, who? Who's saying it? Who?!

LENNY

Everyone!! The policemen, the sheriff, Zackery, even Babe's saying it! Even Babe herself!!

MEG

Well, for God's sake. For God's sake.

LENNY

(overlapping as she falls apart)

It's horrible! It's horrible!
It's just horrible!!!

(CONTINUED)

*

17

CONTINUED: (3)

17

MEG

Now calm down, Lenny. Just calm
down. Would you like a Coke?
Here, I'll get you some Coke.

*
*

The CAMERA FOLLOWS as Meg rushes to the kitchen and grabs
a Coke out of the refrigerator. She opens it and downs a
large swig. The CAMERA FOLLOWS as she comes back into
the dining room.

*

MEG

(continuing; handing
the Coke to Lenny)

*

Why? Why would she shoot him?
Why?

LENNY

Oh, I hate to say this... I do
hate to say this... but I believe
Babe is ill. I mean in-her-head
ill.

MEG

Oh, now, Lenny, don't you say
that! There're plenty of good
sane reasons to shoot another
person and I'm sure that Babe had
one. Now what we've got to do is
get her the best lawyer in town.
Do you have any ideas on who's the
best lawyer in town?

LENNY

Well, Zackery is, of course; but
he's been shot!

MEG

Well, count him out! Just count
him and his whole firm out!

LENNY

Anyway, you don't have to worry,
she's already got her lawyer.

MEG

She does? Who?

LENNY

Barnette Lloyd. Annie Lloyd's
boy. He just opened his office.
And Uncle Watson said we'd be
doing Annie a favor by hiring him
up.

(CONTINUED)

17

CONTINUED: (4)

17

MEG

Doing Annie a favor? Well, what about Babe? Do we want to do her a favor of thirty or forty years in jail?! Have you thought about that?

LENNY

Now, don't snap at me! I try to do what's right!

*
*

Lenny rises from the table, picks up a set of towels from the sideboard and heads upstairs. Meg grabs her tote bag and heads after Lenny. The CAMERA FOLLOWS.

MEG

Well, boo hoo, hoo, hoo.

LENNY

And what was that you said about how old we're getting? Only you didn't mean we -- you meant me -- didn't you? My face is getting all pinched up and my hair is falling out in the comb.

MEG

Why, Lenny! It's your birthday, May 30. How could I forget. Happy birthday! My God, we're getting so old.

*

They are now in the upstairs hall where there is a window seat that looks out over the front yard. Meg glances toward the dark oak-panelled door that leads to Old Granddaddy's room.

MEG

(continuing)

Is Old Granddaddy here?

LENNY

Why, no. Old Granddaddy's at the hospital.

MEG

Again?

Meg moves into the sisters' bedroom. Lenny looks after her, perplexed.

LENNY

Meg!

(CONTINUED)

17

CONTINUED: (4A)

17

The long room has three beds... two double beds and a single... three old bureaus and three footlockers. Different knick-knacks and memorabilia still remain from the time when the sisters shared the room together.

There is a door that leads to the roof that, due to age, has become somewhat precarious to walk on.

Meg drops down onto her bed and begins going through her bag for cigarettes.

MEG

What?

Lenny enters carrying the towels.

(CONTINUED)

LENNY

Don't you remember? I wrote you
about all those blood vessels
popping in his brain?

MEG

Popping...

Meg lights up a smoke.

LENNY

And how he was so anxious to hear
from you and to find out about
your singing career. Didn't you
get my letters?

MEG

Oh, I don't know, Lenny. I guess
I did. To tell you the truth,
sometimes I kinda don't read your
letters.

LENNY

What?

MEG

I'm sorry. I used to read them.
It's just, since Christmas,
reading them gives me these
slicing pains right here in my
chest.

LENNY

I see. I see. Is that why you
didn't use that money Old
Granddaddy sent you to come home
Christmas; because you hate us
so much?

MEG

Oh, Lenny! Do you think I'd be
getting slicing pains in my chest
if I didn't care about you? If
I hated you? Honestly now, do
you think I would?

LENNY

No.

Lenny drives the car purposefully.

(CONTINUED)

18

CONTINUED:

18

Meg sits on the front seat smoking a cigarette and staring at a white suit with pink trim hanging in the back seat along with a pink pocketbook decorated with a jewelled poodle.

MEG

So, Babe shot Zackery Botrelle, the richest and most powerful man in all of Hazlehurst, slap in the gut. It's hard to believe.

LENNY

It certainly is. Little Babe... shooting off a gun.

MEG

Little Babe.

LENNY

Do you remember how Old Granddaddy used to call her his Dancing Sugar Plum? Why, he was so proud and happy the day she finally married Zackery.

MEG

Yes, I remember. It was his finest hour.

LENNY

He remarked how Babe was gonna skyrocket right to the heights of Hazlehurst society.

MEG-

Oh, Lordy, Lordy. And what does Old Granddaddy say now?

Lenny pulls the car to a halt in front of a country store.

LENNY

Well, I haven't had the courage to tell him all about this as yet.

*

19

EXT. FRONT OF COUNTRY STORE - LATE AFTERNOON

19

Meg jumps out of the car and heads into the store. Lenny quickly follows.

20

INT. COUNTRY STORE - LATE AFTERNOON

20

Lenny and Meg hang over the icy freezer. Meg grabs a Nutty Buddy, tears off the wrapper and bites into the ice cream.

MEG

Brother, I know Old Granddaddy's gonna go on about my singing career. Just like he always does.

LENNY

Well, how is your career going?

MEG

It's not.

Lenny picks out a large carton of Chocolate Swirl ice cream.

LENNY

Why, aren't you still singing at that club down on Malibu Beach?

MEG

No. I'm not singing. I'm not singing any at all.

Meg heads down the grocery aisle. Lenny follows her, picking up the Nutty Buddy wrapper that Meg dropped.

LENNY

Oh, well, what do you do, then?

MEG

What I do is, I pay cold storage bills for a dog food company. That's what I do.

LENNY

(trying to be helpful)

Gosh, don't you think it'd be a good idea to stay in the show business field?

MEG

Oh, maybe.

(CONTINUED)

LENNY

Like Old Granddaddy says, 'with talent all you need is exposure. Then you can make your own breaks!' Did you hear his suggestion about getting your foot in one of those blocks of cement they've got out there?

MEG

Yeah. I think I've heard that. And I'll probably hear it again.
(to the STORE CLERK)
Hey, do you have anything to drink around here... to the tune of straight bourbon?

STORE CLERK

No, there's no liquor.

MEG

(under her breath)
Hell.

Meg notices a barrel of pecans.

MEG

(continuing)
What's this? Pecans? Great, I love pecans!

Meg takes out two pecans and tries to open them by cracking them together.

MEG

(continuing)
Come on... Crack, you demons!
Crack!

LENNY

They have a nutcracker!

MEG

(trying with her teeth)
Ah, where's the sport in a nutcracker? Where's the challenge?

LENNY

(going to get the nutcracker)
It's right over here tied on to the side of the barrel.

(CONTINUED)

As Lenny gets the nutcracker, Meg opens the pecan by stepping on it with her shoe.

MEG

There! Open!

Meg picks up the crumpled pecan and eats it.

MEG

(continuing)

Mmm, delicious. Delicious. Let's get us some fresh pecans.

LENNY

We don't need any pecans. Doc Porter brought us a whole sack over.

Meg starts suddenly as she hears Doc's name. Lenny sets the Nutty Buddy wrapper and the ice cream carton down on the checkout counter. The Store Clerk starts ringing up the bill.

MEG

Doc. Gosh, the last I heard of Doc, he was up in the East painting the walls of houses to earn a living.

(amused)

Heard he was living with some Yankee woman who made clay pots.

LENNY

Joan.

MEG

What?

LENNY

Her name's Joan. She came down here with him. She gave me one of her pots.

Lenny scrounges in her change purse for the money to pay the bill.

LENNY

(continuing)

Doc's married to her.

MEG

Married...

(CONTINUED)

20

CONTINUED: (3)

20

LENNY

Uh-huh.

Lenny heads out of the store, carrying a sack of ice cream. Meg follows her.

21

EXT. FRONT OF COUNTRY STORE - LATE AFTERNOON

21

Lenny comes briskly out of the store. Meg follows in a stupor.

MEG

Doc married a Yankee?

LENNY

That's right; and they've got two kids.

Lenny gets into the car.

MEG

Kids...

Meg slams into the car.

22

INT. LENNY'S CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

22

LENNY

A boy and a girl.

Lenny STARTS UP the car MOTOR.

MEG

God. Then his kids must be half Yankee.

Lenny starts backing up the car.

LENNY

I suppose.

Meg sits in hopeless shock.

MEG

God. That really gets me. I don't know why, but somehow that really gets me.

LENNY

I don't know why it should.

23

INT. TOWN JAIL - LATE AFTERNOON

23 *

Lenny stands nervously twisting her purse handle back and forth.

BABE (O.S.)

Lenny! I'm free! I'm free!

Lenny turns and sees BABE, 24, coming flying down the dark hallway. Babe has an angelic face and fierce volatile eyes. She wears the white suit with pink trim and waves the pink pocketbook exuberantly.

BABE

(continuing)

Take me home! I wanna go home!

Lenny rushes to Babe.

LENNY

Oh, Babe! You're going home!
We'll go home.

Lenny hugs Babe tightly.

LENNY

(continuing)

Oh, Babe. Babe.

Meg suddenly jumps out from behind a post. Babe sees her and screams with joy and amazement.

BABE

Oh, Meg... look, it's Meg.

The sisters rush to hug each other. In the background we see Chick and UNCLE WATSON, a pudgy old man. Uncle Watson is finishing up some business with the officials behind the desk. Chick is fuming at the sight of Meg.

BABE

(continuing; to Meg)

Oh, it's so good to see you! I'm
so glad you're home. I'm so
relieved.

The three sisters hug each other joyfully as they walk out of the building to the town square.

24

EXT. HAZLEHURST TOWN SQUARE - LATE AFTERNOON

24 *

Babe smells the fresh air with relief, spins in a circle and tosses her purse up into the air.

(CONTINUED)

24

CONTINUED:

24

In the b.g., we see some of the town locals staring at her and whispering. Lenny notices this and hurries Babe on across the town square towards the car.

Uncle Watson and Chick come out of the jail building and join the sisters. Uncle Watson carries Babe's pink overnight case.

UNCLE WATSON

Why, hello, Margaret. You're looking mighty good. It's good to see you.

MEG

Thank you, Uncle Watson. And how have you been?

UNCLE WATSON

Oh, not bad for an old, tired, fat man.

BABE

Uncle Watson thinks he's fat.

CHICK (O.S.)

He is fat. I have him on a diet.

Meg turns and sees Chick.

MEG

Why, chick, hello.

CHICK

Hello, cousin Margaret. And what brings you back to Hazlehurst?

MEG

Oh, I came on home. I came on home to see about Babe.

25

INT. MAGRATH KITCHEN - CLOSE ON BABE - LATE AFTERNOON

25

*

Babe eats chocolate swirl ice cream out of a carton with a spoon.

MEG (O.S.)

How are things with you, Babe?

The CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal the rest of the family, watching Babe eat ice cream on the kitchen counter top.

(CONTINUED)

25

CONTINUED:

25

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.

BABE

(ignoring Chick)

Oh, look, Lenny brought my suitcase from home! And my saxophone! Thank you!

Babe jumps off the counter and gets out her saxophone.

BABE

(continuing)

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.

CHICK

(overlapping)

Now that young lawyer expects to get some concrete answers! No more of this stubbornness from you, Rebecca MaGrath, or they'll put you in jail and throw away the key!

The room goes silent.

CHICK

(continuing)

Isn't that right, Daddy? Won't they throw away the key?

UNCLE WATSON

(who is stealing cookies
out of the cookie jar)

Well, honey, 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? What are your reasons going to be?

(CONTINUED)

25

CONTINUED: (2)

25

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, leave me alone! I mean it! Leave me alone! Oooh!

Babe runs out of the room carrying the saxophone. 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.

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.

CHICK

(continuing)

You know, you shouldn't smoke. It causes cancer of the lungs. They say each cigarette is just 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.

MEG

(continuing)

Mmm! What power! What exhilaration! Want a drag?

(CONTINUED)

25

CONTINUED: (2A)

25

LENNY

(trying to break
the tension)

Oh, did I tell y'all that
Zackery's liver's been saved? His
sister, she told me his liver was
saved. Isn't that good news.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED: (3)

25

UNCLE WATSON

Well, yes, that's fine news.
Mighty fine news. Did you hear
all that news about the liver,
Little Chicken?

CHICK

I heard it.

MEG

(like a chicken)

Cluck.

CHICK

And don't call me Chicken!

MEG

(like a chicken)

Cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck.

CHICK

(overlapping Meg's
clucks)

I've told you a hundred times if
I've told you once not to call me
Chicken. I'm not twelve years old
anymore!

Chick leaves for her own house, slamming the kitchen door
behind her.

26 EXT. SECOND-FLOOR TERRACE - NIGHT

26

Babe and Meg are sitting. Meg smokes a cigarette. Babe
combs out her wet hair.

27 BABE'S POV

27

Chick's house: smaller than the McGrath house, neat, but
without any charm. Chick's shrill voice can be heard in
the distance.

CHICK (O.S.)

I said to get to bed now, or I'll
send you both to reform school!
How would you like that?!

28 RETURN TO SCENE

28

Babe parts her freshly washed hair.

(CONTINUED)

BABE

You know, Chick's hated us ever since we had to move here from Vicksburg to live with old Grandmama and Old Granddaddy.

MEG

She's an idiot.

BABE

Yeah. Do you know what she told me this morning when 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. 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.

BABE

(after a pause)
Gosh; sometimes I wonder...

(CONTINUED)

MEG

What?

BABE

Why she did it. Why Mama hung herself.

MEG

I don't know. She had a bad day. A real bad day.

BABE

And that old yellow cat. It was sad about that old cat.

MEG

Yeah.

BABE

I bet if Daddy hadn't of left us, they'd still be alive.

MEG

Oh, I don't know.

BABE

'Cause it was after he left that she started spending whole days just sitting there and smoking on the back porch steps.

MEG

Yeah. Well, I'm glad he left. God, he was such a bastard.

BABE

I thought if she felt something for anyone it woulda been that old cat.

MEG

Really, with his white teeth, Daddy was such a bastard.

BABE

Was he? I don't remember.

Meg blows out a mouthful of smoke and stares up at the moon.

29

EXT. MAGRATH HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

29

SHOT of the dilapidated white frame house. The rope swing twists back and forth in the morning breeze.

We hear commotion coming from Chick's house next door.

CHICK (O.S.)

Do you want me to jerk both of you
bald-headed?

The CAMERA PANS OVER TO Chick's house. Chick is trying to get her two screaming kids into her station wagon. Both of the kids are crying and fighting with her and each other.

*
*

CHICK

(continuing)

If you both don't shut up and get
in this car, I'm gonna call up
Santa Claus and tell him to come
down the chimney and eat you both
up! I mean it!

30

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

30

Lenny and Meg are seated at the table, eating their breakfast. Meg chews on a piece of bacon. Lenny sips her coffee.

Babe is all over the kitchen, dashing back and forth, making up this enormous pitcher of lemonade.

Lenny clears her throat, nervously.

LENNY

Babe. Why won't you tell anyone
about shooting Zackery?

BABE

Oooh.

LENNY

Why not? You must have had a good
reason. Didn't you?

Babe sighs and starts chopping lemons with a huge butcher knife.

BABE

I guess I did.

LENNY

Well, what was it?

(CONTINUED)

30

CONTINUED:

31

BABE

I... I can't say.

MEG

Babe, why not?

BABE

'Cause... I'm sort of...
protecting someone.

LENNY

Oh, Babe, then you really didn't
shoot him?! I knew she couldn't
have done it!! I knew it!!

BABE

No, I shot him all right. I meant
to kill him. I was aiming for his
heart, but I guess my hands were
shaking and I... just got him in
the stomach. So, I'm guilty. And
I'm just gonna have to take my
punishment and go on to jail.

MEG

(collapsing)

I see.

*
*
*

LENNY

(on the verge of
tears)

Oh, Babe...

Babe violently squeezes lemons and slings them into a
pitcher.

BABE

Don't worry, jail's gonna be a
relief to me. I can learn to play
my saxophone. I won't have to
live with Zackery anymore. And I
won't have his snoopy old sister,
Lucille, coming over and pushing
me around. Here's your lemonade.

MEG

Thanks.

BABE

It taste okay?

MEG

Perfect.

(CONTINUED)

30

CONTINUED: (1A)

30

LENNY

I really don't feel very thirsty.

(CONTINUED)

BABE

Well, I like a lot of sugar in mine. I'm gonna add some more sugar.

Babe dumps sugar all over the floor and counter. Lenny jumps up completely distraught.

LENNY

Oh, now, Babe, don't make such a mess here! And be careful with this sharp knife. Honestly now, all that sugar's gonna get you sick!

Lenny picks up her torn sun hat and garden gloves and heads out the back door to the garden. She is in an emotional frenzy.

BABE

(watching her go)
Boy, I don't know what's happening to Lenny.

MEG

What do you mean?

BABE

She's turning into old Grandmama.

Babe moves out to the screened-in porch to watch, as Lenny lumbers across the yard to the garden gate.

MEG

You think so?

BABE

More and more. Look there, she's even taken to wearing old Grandmama's torn sun hat and her lime green garden gloves. Lenny works out in the garden wearing the lime green gloves of a dead woman.

Meg paces about the room and comes across the box of candy Lenny got for her birthday.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

BABE

(continuing)

Oh, no! Yesterday was Lenny's
birthday!

MEG

That's right.

BABE

I forgot all about it.

MEG

I know. I did, too.

(starts to unwrap
the candy box)

Oh, God, that Chick's so cheap!

BABE

What?

MEG

This plastic has poinsettias on
it.

32 CLOSE ON BOX OF CANDY

32

Red and green poinsettias decorate the Christmas plastic
that covers the box of candy.

33 BACK TO SCENE

33

Babe growls in disgust. Meg rips the plastic off the box
of candy.

MEG

Poor Lenny. She needs some love
in her life. All she does is work
out at that brick yard and take
care of Old Granddaddy.

Meg sits on the freezer. She flips the top off of the
box of Lenny's birthday candy. She takes little nibbles
out of each piece, throughout the rest of the scene.

BABE

Yeah. But she's so shy with men.

MEG

Probably because of that shrunk
ovary she has.

(CONTINUED)

33

CONTINUED:

33

BABE

(sucking on a lemon
from her drink)

Yeah, that deformed ovary.

MEG

Old Granddaddy's the one who's made
her feel self-conscious about it.
It's his fault. The old fool.

(offering Lenny's
birthday candy)

Candy?

*
*
*

BABE

No thanks.

*

MEG

God... you know what? I bet
Lenny's never even slept with a
man. Bet she's never even had it
once.

BABE

(slyly)

Oh, I don't know. Maybe she's...
had it once.

MEG

She has?

BABE

Maybe. I think so.

MEG

When? When?

BABE

Well... maybe I shouldn't say...

MEG

Babe!

BABE

(rapidly telling
the story)

All right then; it was after Old
Granddaddy went back to the
hospital this second time. Lenny
calls me up and asks me to come
over and to bring along my
Polaroid camera.

*

33A

FLASHBACK - INT. SUN PARLOR - DAY

33A

Lenny is waiting in the sun parlor all dressed up. She has made tea and is nervously eating a handful of nut cookies. Babe comes into the room carrying her Polaroid camera.

BABE (V.O.)

Well, when I arrive she's waiting for me in the sun parlor.

LENNY

(to Babe)

Now, Babe, I need you to take some snapshots of me. Swear you won't tell a soul, but I'm sending my picture into one of those lonely hearts clubs. It's called Lonely Hearts of the South. I saw their ad in a magazine.

33B

FLASHBACK - INT. UPSTAIRS ROOM - DAY

33B

Lenny and Babe sit looking at all the photographs of men that are spread all over the bed. Babe keeps trying to hunt out some possibilities as Lenny lies shaking her head in despair.

BABE (V.O.)

Two weeks later she receives in the mail this whole load of pictures of available men, most of 'em fairly odd-looking.

33C

INT./EXT. SCREENED-IN PORCH.- MORNING

33C

Babe sits talking on the swinging sofa. Meg eats candy as she leans against the freezer.

BABE

But one of 'em, this Charlie Hill from Memphis, Tennessee, well, he calls her up.

MEG

He does?

BABE

Yeah. And time goes on and she says he's real funny on the phone. So they decide to get together to meet.

(CONTINUED)

33C

CONTINUED:

33C *

MEG

Yeah?

BABE

Well, he drives down here to Hazlehurst 'bout three or four different times and has supper with her. The one weekend she goes up to Memphis to visit him; and I think that is where it happened.

MEG

What makes you think so?

BABE

Well, when I went to pick her up at the bus depot, she ran off the bus and threw her arms around me and started crying and sobbing as though she'd like to never stop. I asked her, I said, 'Lenny, what's the matter?' And she said, 'I have done it!'

Meg sits down with Babe on the swinging sofa.

MEG

And you think she meant that she'd done it?

BABE

I think so.

MEG

Well, Goddamn. --

They laugh with glee.

BABE

But she didn't say anything else about it. She just went on to tell me about the boot factory where Charlie worked and what a nice city Memphis was.

MEG

So, what happened to this Charlie?

BABE

Well, he came to Hazlehurst just one more time. Lenny took him over to meet Old Grandaddy at the hospital and after that they broke it off.

(CONTINUED)

33C CONTINUED: (2)

33C *

MEG

'Cause of Old Granddaddy?

BABE

Well, she said it was on account of her missing ovary. That Charlie didn't want to marry her on account of it.

MEG

Ah, how mean. How hateful.

BABE

Oh, it was. He seemed like such a nice man, too... kinda chubby, with red hair and freckles, always telling these funny jokes.

MEG

Hmm, that just doesn't seem right. Something about that doesn't seem exactly right.

34 OMITTED

34 *

35 EXT. FRONT OF MAGRATH HOUSE - MORNING

35

A car pulls up and parks in front. BARNETTE LLOYD, 26, gets out of the car and heads toward the house. He carries a briefcase and wears a dark suit. He is an intelligent young man with an almost fanatical intensity that he subdues by sheer will.

36 EXT./INT. SCREENED-IN PORCH - MORNING

36 *

BARNETTE (O.S.)

Hello! Hello! Is anybody home?

BABE

Who's that?

MEG

I don't know.

Babe runs to the front of the house. The CAMERA FOLLOWS.

*

37 BABE'S POV

37

Barnette knocking determinedly on the front door and then peering through the front door screen.

(CONTINUED)

37

CONTINUED:

37

BARNETTE

Hello! Hello, Mrs. Botrelle!

Babe turns to Meg who has joined her in the living room.

BABE

(whispering)

Oh, shoot! It's that lawyer. I don't want to see him.

MEG

(whispering)

Oh, Babe, come on. You've got to see him sometime.

BABE

No, I don't.

Babe turns and runs through the house and up the stairs. *

BABE

(continuing)

Just tell him I died.

MEG

Oh, Babe! Will you come back here! Babe! Babe! Oh, shit!

Meg turns and heads around to the front door, swinging her arms angrily.

MEG

(continuing; calling to Barnette)

Hey! Ah, hi!

Barnette sees her. She opens the door and joins him on the porch.

BARNETTE

How do you do. I'm Barnette Lloyd.

MEG

Pleased to meet you. I'm Meg McGrath, Babe's older sister.

BARNETTE

Yes, I know. You're the singer.

MEG

Well, yes...

(CONTINUED)

37

CONTINUED: (1A)

37

BARNETTE

I came to hear you five different times when you were singing at that club in Biloxi. Greeny's, I believe was the name of it.

MEG

Yes, Greeny's.

BARNETTE

You were very good. There was something so sad and moving about how you sang those songs. It was like you had some special sort of vision.

*

(CONTINUED)

37

CONTINUED: (2)

37

MEG

Well, thank you. You're very kind. Now... about Babe's case...

BARNETTE

Yes?

MEG

We've just got to win it.

BARNETTE

I intend to.

MEG

Of course, but, ah... Ah, you know, you're very young.

BARNETTE

Yes, I am. I'm young.

MEG

It's just, I'm concerned, Mr. Lloyd...

Meg walks across to the gazebo. Barnette follows.

*

BARNETTE

Barnette. Please.

MEG

Barnette; that, ah, just maybe we need someone with, well, with more experience. Someone totally familiar with all the ins and outs and the this and the thats of the legal dealings. And such as that.

BARNETTE

Ah, you have reservations.

MEG

(relieved)

Reservations. Yes, I have... reservations.

BARNETTE

Well, possibly it would help you to know that I graduated first in my class from Ole Miss Law School. I also spent three different summers taking advanced courses in criminal law at Harvard Law School. I made A's in all the given courses.

(CONTINUED)

37

CONTINUED: (3)

37

MEG

Relax. Relax, Barnette. Let me think this out. Now, just how would you intend to get Babe off? You know, keep her out of jail.

She takes out a cigarette.

He lights it for her.

BARNETTE

(confidentially)

It seems to me that we can get her off with a plea of self-defense, or possibly we could go with innocent by reason of temporary insanity. But basically, I intend to prove that Zackery Botrelle brutalized and tormented this poor woman to such an extent that she had no recourse but to defend herself in the only way she knew how!

*
*
*
*
*

MEG

I like that!

BARNETTE

Then, of course, I'm hoping this will break the ice and we'll be able to go on to prove that the man's a total criminal, as well as an abusive bully and contemptible slob!

MEG.

That sounds good! To me, that sounds very good!

BARNETTE

It's just our basic game plan.

MEG

But, now, how are you going to prove all this about Babe being brutalized? We don't want anyone to commit perjury.

BARNETTE

Perjury? According to my sources, there'll be no need for perjury.

MEG

You mean it's the truth?

(CONTINUED)

37

CONTINUED: (4)

37

BARNETTE

This is a small town, Miss Magrath.
The word gets out.

MEG

It's really the truth?

BARNETTE

(taking a folder out
of his briefcase)

Just look at this. It's a
photostatic copy of Mrs.
Botrelle's medical chart over
the past four years.

*

MEG

(looking over
the chart)

What! What! This is madness!
Did he do this to her? I'll kill
him; I will... I'll fry his blood!!
Did he do this?

BARNETTE

(alarmed)

To tell you the truth, I can't
say for certain what was
accidental and what was not.
That's why I need to talk with
Mrs. Botrelle. That's why it's
very important that I see her!

38

EXT. GRAVEYARD - EARLY AFTERNOON

38

Babe is putting a mason jar of hand-picked flowers beside
a tombstone that reads: MARGARET DECKER MAGRATH,
1935 - 1967.

MEG (O.S.)

What did Zackery do to you? Did
he hurt you?

The CAMERA PULLS BACK. We see Meg standing above the
tombstone, looking down at Babe.

MEG

Did he? Goddamnit, Babe...

BABE

Yes, he did.

MEG

Why? Why?

(CONTINUED)

38

CONTINUED:

38

BABE

I just started finding it impossible to laugh at his jokes the way I used to. I'd fall asleep just listening to him at the dinner table. He'd say, 'Hand me some of that gravy!' Or, 'This roast beef is too damn bloody.' And suddenly I'd be out cold like a light.

MEG

Oh, Babe. Babe, this is very important. I want you to tell me what all happened right before you shot Zackery.

BABE

I told you I can't tell you on account of I'm protecting someone.

MEG

But, Babe, you've just got to talk to someone about all this. You just do.

BABE

Why?

MEG

Because it's a human need. To talk about our lives. It's an important human need.

Babe walks off. Meg follows.

BABE

(after a moment)

All right. Well, do you remember Willie Jay?

Meg shakes her head.

BABE

(continuing)

Cora's youngest boy?

MEG

Oh, yeah, that little kid we used to pay a nickel to, to run down to the drugstore and bring us back a cherry Coke.

(CONTINUED)

38

CONTINUED: (2)

38

BABE

Right. Well, Cora irons at my place on Wednesdays now, and she just happened to mention that Willie Jay'd picked up this old stray dog and that he'd gotten real fond of him. But now they couldn't afford to feed him anymore, so she was gonna have to tell Willie Jay to set him loose in the woods.

MEG

(trying to be patient)

Uh-huh.

BABE

Well, I said I liked dogs and if he wanted to bring the dog over here, I'd take care of him.

MEG

Uh-huh.

BABE

So, the next day, Willie Jay brings over this skinny, old dog with these little crossed eyes. Well, I asked Willie Jay what his name was, and he said they called him Dog.

*

MEG

Uh-huh.

*

BABE

Yeah. Anyway, when Willie Jay was leaving, he gave Dog a hug and said, 'Goodbye, Dog. You're a fine old dog.' Well, I just felt something for him, so I told Willie Jay he could come back and visit with Dog anytime he wanted, and his face just kinda lit right up. Anyhow, time goes on and Willie Jay keeps coming over and over. And we talk about Dog and how fat he's getting and then, well, you know, things start up.

MEG

No, I don't know. What things start up?

(CONTINUED)

38

CONTINUED: (3)

38

BABE

Well, things start up. Like sex.
Like that.

MEG

Babe, wait a minute... Willie Jay's
a boy. A small boy, about this
tall-

*

She gestures with her hand around chest high.

BABE

No! Oh, no! He's taller now!
He's fifteen now. When you knew
him, he was only about seven or
eight.

MEG

But, even so... fifteen. And
he's a black boy; a colored boy;
a Negro.

BABE

(flustered)

Well, I realize that, Meg. Why do
you think I'm so worried about
his getting public exposure? I
don't want to ruin his reputation!

MEG

I'm amazed, Babe. I'm really,
completely amazed. I didn't even
know you were a liberal.

BABE

Well, I'm not! I'm not a liberal!
I'm a democratic! I was just
lonely. And he was so good. I'd
never had it that good. We'd
always go into the garage and...

MEG

It's okay. I've got the picture;
I've got the picture! Now, let's
just get back to the story. To
yesterday, when you shot Zackery.

BABE

All right, then. Let's see...
Willie Jay was over. And it was
after we'd...

MEG

Yeah! Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

38

CONTINUED: (4)

38

BAEE

And we were just standing around
on the back porch playing with
Dog...

39

FLASHBACK - EXT. BOTRELLE MANSION - EARLY MORNING

39

*

WILLIE JAY, 15, a wiry black boy with warm brown eyes, stands with Babe on the back veranda. They are laughing as they throw jelly beans up in the air for Dog to eat.

Suddenly, an ominous shadow falls from around the side of the house. Babe starts when she sees the shadow.

BABE (V.O.)

Well, suddenly, Zackery comes from around the side of the house. And he startled me 'cause he's supposed to be away at the office.

40

ANOTHER ANGLE

40

ZACKERY BOTRELLE, 47, a heavyset man with sandy hair and small mean eyes, heads toward Willie Jay. Zackery wears a business suit and carries a heavy black briefcase.

ZACKERY

(to Willie Jay)

Hey, boy, what are you doing back here?

BABE

(to Zackery)

He's not doing anything.

(to Willie Jay)

You just go home, Willie Jay!

You just run right on home.

Zackery pushes Babe aside and knocks Willie Jay across the face with the black briefcase. The blow sends Willie Jay reeling down the steps of the veranda. DOG YAPS loudly. Babe freezes with blank horror.

Willie Jay skids across the concrete and skins his arm up badly. Tears of rage appear in his soft brown eyes.

Zackery goes after him. Babe tries to come between them. Zackery shoves her again and she falls over DOG, who starts to YELP. Zackery kicks Willie Jay with his steel-toed boot. Willie Jay writhes in pain and humiliation. Gasping, Babe supports herself against a pillar.

ZACKERY

(still kicking

Willie Jay)

Don't you ever come around here again, or I'll have them cut out your gizzard.

(CONTINUED)

40

CONTINUED:

40

Willie Jay gets up quickly and runs off across the yard.
DOG follows after him, BARKING loudly.

41

EXT. GRAVEYARD - EARLY AFTERNOON

41

Babe and Meg are still walking along the path.

BABE

After that, I don't remember much
too clearly, let's see...

42

FLASHBACK - INT. BOTRELLE'S DINING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON 42

*

There is a cold, elegant, opulence about the dining room,
which is richly decorated with dark oak panelling,
antique furnishings, brocaded curtains and a shimmering
crystal chandelier. The back DOOR is heard SLAMMING.
The CHANDELIER TREMBLES.

*

Babe enters through the dining room door. Her face is
flushed red and her eyes are filled with tears of rage
and disgust.

Babe goes to a small desk, opens a drawer and pulls out
a pistol. She stares at the gun for a moment, as she
holds it in her small, delicate hand.

Babe slowly brings the gun up to her white orchid ear.
She puts the gun deep inside her ear, then puts her
finger on the trigger and slowly cocks the pistol.

43

END OF FLASHBACK - EXT. GRAVEYARD - EARLY AFTERNOON

43

Babe talks with growing excitement. Meg watches her
with wide eyes.

BABE

I was gonna shoot off my own head!
That's what I was gonna do. Then
I heard the back door slamming and
suddenly, for some reason, I
thought about Mama... how she'd
hung herself. And here I was
about ready to shoot myself. Then
I realized... that's right, I
realized how I didn't want to
kill myself. And Mama... she
probably didn't want to kill
herself. She wanted to kill him,
and I wanted to kill him, too.
I wanted to kill Zackery, not
myself. 'Cause I... I wanted
to live!

44

FLASHBACK - INT. BOTRELLE'S DINING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON 44

*

BABE (V.O.)

... So, I waited for him to come
on into the living room.

Babe breathes softly, removes the gun from her ear and uses it to gently brush fallen curls away from her damp forehead. She breathes again, then aims the gun carefully at the dining room door.

The door swings open.

Zackery, shot in silhouette, looks at Babe and starts moving toward her, shaking his head condescendingly.

ZACKERY

You little idiot.

Babe pulls the trigger and FIRES. Rapidly, she pulls the trigger again... the GUN CLICKS.

Zackery falls against a drop-leaf table, the antique CHINA on display CRASHES to the floor. He drops to his knees, holding his side.

ZACKERY

Aah. God. Jesus. God.

Beads of sweat suddenly begin dripping from his face. He looks at his hand; it is covered with blood. He collapses to the floor and lies among the shattered china. Blood flows slowly from his wound as he groans in agony.

45

INT. BARNETTE'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

45

The tiny office is sparsely decorated with used furniture. Two diplomas hang on the wall along with a picture of Barnette's mother. The bookshelf is empty except for certain vital law books and a Christmas angel made of paper. The scratched-up oak desk is clean except for a tall stack of brand new business cards, a can of perfectly sharpened pencils, and unused ashtray, and a sack lunch.

Babe and Barnette are sitting at the desk together. Barnette has removed his jacket and loosened his tie. He is writing and rechecking notes with explosive intensity. Babe has changed into a suit, hat, and gloves.

She sits daintily dropping Planter's peanuts into her Coke bottle.

(CONTINUED)

BARNETTE

Let's see, ah, where were we?

BABE

I just shot Zackery.

BARNETTE

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.

Throughout the following, Barnette stays glued to Babe's every word.

BARNETTE

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?

(CONTINUED)

45

CONTINUED: (2)

45

BABE

Right. I made it just the way I like it, with lots of sugar and lots of lemon... then I added two trays of ice and stirred it up with my wooden stirring spoon.

BARNETTE

Then 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

Hmm.

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.

45A

FLASHBACK - INT. BOTRELLE KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

45A *

Babe stands in the kitchen with an empty glass in her hand. She looks dazed and far away, almost amused. She turns to the living room and calls out to Zackery.

*
*
*

BABE

Zackery! I've made some lemonade. Can you use a glass?!

(CONTINUED)

45A

CONTINUED:

45A

Babe waits a moment. There is no response. She sighs and takes down a clean glass, pours some lemonade, then walks slowly back into the living room. The CAMERA FOLLOWS.

Zackery lies on the rug, bleeding. He looks up at Babe and starts to grunt and moan with a piteous desperation.

BABE

(continuing)

What?... Lemonade?... You don't want it? Would you like a Coke instead?

*

Zackery motions angrily to the phone.

Babe looks to the phone, then looks back to Zackery. Zackery continues to grunt, as he motions to the phone.

Babe stares at him calmly, as she drinks the glass of lemonade.

45B

INT. BARNETTE'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON (RETURN TO PRESENT)

45B

Babe gazes out the window as Barnette works frantically on his notes.

BABE

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... was 'cause 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.

(CONTINUED)

45B

CONTINUED:

45B *

BABE

I think so. I mean, in fact, that's just what did happen. Yes, here I am just practically on the brink of utter doom. Why, I feel so alone.

BARNETTE

Now, now, look -- Why, there's no reason for you to get yourself all upset and worried. Please, don't. Please.

(as they look at
each other for
a moment)

Don't you worry, Mrs. Botrelle, we're going to have a solid defense.

BABE

Please, don't call me Mrs. Botrelle... My name's Becky. People in the family call me Babe; but my real name's Becky.

Barnette and Babe stare at each other for a long moment.

BABE

(continuing)

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!

(CONTINUED)

45B

CONTINUED:

45B *

BARNETTE

Right.

BABE

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

BARNETTE

You do remember.

BABE

I remember it very well.

The PHONE begins to RING. Barnette answers the phone.

BARNETTE

(into the phone)

Hello, this is Mr. Barnette Lloyd speaking... Yes, that's correct. I'm Mrs... ah, Becky's attorney.

46

INT. ZACKERY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

46

An unsavory entourage surrounds Zackery's bed. It includes: his three law partners; a big, blundering security guard; Zackery's pink-haired concubine; Mr. Pete, a scrawny Cajun with sunken, evil eyes; and Dr. Slates, Zackery's thin, red-eyed personal physician.

Botrelle is on some sort of breathing machine.

ZACKERY

(into the phone)

Well, listen to this, Mr. Barnette Lloyd. You get your attorney-butt over here around eight o'clock tonight and I'm gonna show you some really blackening evidence I've got against your little lily-white client.

*
*

47

INT. BARNETTE'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

47

BARNETTE

(cold as steel,
into the phone)

Why, certainly, Mr. Botrelle. I'd be more than glad to check out any pertinent information that you may have... Fine, goodbye.

*

He hangs up the phone and looks over to Babe. She looks back at him with fearful eyes.

48

INT. OLD GRANDDADDY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DUSK

48

Lenny rigidly sits in a chair as she watches OLD GRANDDADDY's face beaming. Old Granddaddy is extremely sick and emaciated, but Meg is putting a real glint of joy into his watery eyes as she talks and laughs and tells him her stories.

MEG

R.C.A.'s releasing the album this spring. I'm gonna have my picture on the cover. I'm gonna be eating a big pineapple under a palm tree.

*

OLD GRANDDADDY

Now won't that be just cute as a bug. Oh Lord, child, we sure have missed you. We thought you'd be here Christmas. I was mightily ashamed when you didn't come.

MEG

Oh, I'm sorry, Old Granddaddy. I really am. I tell you the reason I didn't use that money you sent me to come home Christmas was I was right in the middle of making this huge multi-million-dollar motion picture. And I was just under too much pressure.

OLD GRANDDADDY

Why, sure you were. Listen, don't you give Christmas another thought. Just tell me all about this new motion picture you're in.

MEG

Oh... Well, it's coming out in the spring and it's called Singing in a Shoe Factory. But I really don't have a large leading role. It's more of a small leading role.

Old Granddaddy's face beams with admiration and pride. The CAMERA PANS OVER TO Lenny who is steaming with fury.

49

EXT./INT. SCREENED-IN PORCH - EARLY EVENING

49

Babe sits on the swinging sofa painting her toenails pink.

*

*

BABE

(to herself)

'My real name is Becky. Goodbye, Becky. Goodbye, Barnette. Goodbye, Beck.' Ooooh.

(CONTINUED)

49

CONTINUED:

49

Lenny bursts in through the back door. She is fuming.

BABE

(continuing)

Lenny, hi! How's Old Granddaddy?

LENNY

Oh, he's fine! Wonderful! Never been better!

Lenny spots her opened and eaten box of birthday candy on the freezer where Meg left it.

LENNY

(continuing)

Who ate this candy?

BABE

(hesitantly)

Meg.

LENNY

My one birthday present, and look what she does! Why, she's taken one little bite out of each piece and then just put it back in! Ooh! That's just like her!

BABE

Lenny, please...

LENNY

I can't help it! It gets me mad! It gets me upset! Why, Meg has always run wild. She started smoking and drinking when she was fourteen years old, she never made good grades -- never made her own bed. But somehow she always seemed to get what she wanted. She's the one who got singing and dancing lessons. Why, so you remember how Meg always got to wear twelve jingle bells on her petticoats, while we were only allowed to wear three apiece? Why?! Why should Old Grandmama let her sew twelve golden jingle bells on her petticoats and us only three!?

BABE

I don't know!! Maybe she didn't jingle them as much!

(CONTINUED)

49

CONTINUED:

49

LENNY

I can't help it! It gets me mad!

BABE

Things have been hard for Meg.
After all, she was the one who
found Mama.

LENNY

Oh, I know; she's the one who
found Mama. But that's always
been the excuse.

BABE

But I tell you, Lenny, after it
happened, Meg started doing all
sorts of these strange things.

LENNY

Like what?

BABE

Like things I never wanted to tell
you about.

Lenny stares at her strangely, then moves in closer.

LENNY

What sort of things?

Babe leans into Lenny and with difficulty begins telling
her story in a whisper.

BABE

Well, for instance, back when we
used to go over to the library,
Meg would force herself to look
through this old, black book called
Diseases of the Skin. It was full
of the most sickening pictures.
Things like rotting-away noses and
eyeballs drooping off down the
sides of people's faces and scabs
and sores and eaten-away places
over all parts of people's bodies.

LENNY

Babe, please! That's enough.

(CONTINUED)

49

CONTINUED: (2)

49

BABE

It was the same way she used to force herself to look at that poster of crippled children stuck up in the window at Dixieland Drugs. You know, the one where they want you to give a dime. Meg would stand there and stare at their little crippled legs. Then she'd purposely go and spend her dime on a double scoop ice cream cone and eat it all down. She'd say to me, 'See, I can stand it! I can stand it. Just look how I'm gonna be able to stand it!'

*

*

LENNY

Well, I suppose you'd have to be a pretty hard person to be able to do what she did to Doc Porter.

*

BABE

(exasperated)

Oh, shoot! It wasn't Meg's fault that hurricane wiped Biloxi away. Just because that roof fell in and crunched the Doc's leg. It wasn't her fault.

LENNY

Well, it was Meg who refused to evacuate. She wanted to stay because she thought a hurricane would be... oh, I don't know... a lot of fun. Then everyone says she baited Doc into staying with her. She said she'd marry him if he'd stay.

*

*

*

*

BABE

(taken aback by this new information)

Well, he has a mind of his own. He could have gone.

*

*

LENNY

But he didn't. 'Cause... 'cause he loved her. And then Meg just left. She just left him there to leave for California... 'cause of her career, she says. It took almost a year for Doc's leg to heal and after that he gave up his medical career altogether. He said he was tired of hospitals.

50 EXT. FRONT OF MAGRATH HOUSE - NIGHT

50

Meg comes up the walk carrying a newspaper and a bottle of bourbon in a brown paper sack. Her gait slows down as she approaches the front door.

Meg stops, opens the bourbon bottle, takes a long slug, screws the top back onto the bottle, bangs her chest with the heel of her hand, then heads on towards the door.

51 INT. SISTERS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

51

Lenny sits at her dressing table, putting lotion on her hand. Babe sits up in her bed rolling her hair. The door opens. Meg steps into the room.

MEG

Hello.

BABE

Hi, Meg.

Meg glances toward Lenny who is quietly buffing her nails, avoiding Meg's eyes.

MEG

(handing newspaper
to Babe)

Here's your paper.

BABE

Thanks.

Babe grabs the newspaper and opens it enthusiastically to the front page.

52 CLOSE ON NEWSPAPER

52

The headline reads: "SENATOR BOTRELLE IN STABLE CONDI-
TION! WIFE OUT ON BAIL!"

BABE (O.S.)

Oh, here it is, right on the
front page!

53 BACK TO SCENE

53

Babe gets the scissors and glue out of a drawer and begins cutting out the newspaper article.

(CONTINUED)

53

CONTINUED:

A few moments pass, filled only with the SNIPPING of SCISSORS. Meg lights up a cigarette. Meg looks at Lenny. Lenny looks away.

MEG

(suddenly whirling
on Lenny)

All right -- I lied! I couldn't help it... When I saw how tired and sick Old Granddaddy'd gotten -- those stories, they just flew out! All I wanted to see was him smiling and happy.

BABE

Oh, Meg, he is sick, isn't he --

MEG

Why, he's gotten all white and milky -- he's almost evaporated!

LENNY

(gasping and turning
to Meg)

But still you shouldn't have lied! It just was wrong for you to tell such lies.

MEG

Well, I know that! Don't you think I know that? I hate myself when I lie for that old man. I do. I feel so weak. And then I have to go and do at least three or four things that I know he'd despise just to get even with that miserable, old, bossy man!

LENNY

Oh, Meg, please, don't talk so about Old Granddaddy! It sounds so ungrateful. Why, he went out of his way to make a home for us. All he ever wanted was the best for us.

*

MEG

(with a hopeless
sigh)

Well, I guess it was; but sometimes I wonder what we wanted.

(CONTINUED)

53

CONTINUED: (2)

53

Babe goes to her suitcase and gets out an old photo album.

BABE

Well, one thing I wanted was a team of white horses to ride Mama's coffin to her grave. That's one thing I wanted.

Lenny and Meg exchange looks while Babe glues the news article into her photo album.

LENNY

Really, Babe, I don't understand why you have to put in the articles that are about the unhappy things in your life. Why would you want to remember them?

BABE

I don't know. I just like to keep an accurate record, I suppose.

Babe begins flipping through the photo album.

BABE

(continuing)

Look, here's a picture of me when I got married.

MEG

Let's see.

Meg and Lenny come and hover over her.

54

CLOSE ON WEDDING PHOTO

54

Babe is spinning around madly in a long white gown with a flowing net veil.

LENNY (O.S.)

My word, you look about twelve years old.

BABE (O.S.)

I was just eighteen.

55

BACK TO SCENE

55

MEG

You're smiling, Babe. Were you happy then?

(CONTINUED)

55

CONTINUED:

55

BABE

(laughing)

Well, I was drunk on champagne
punch. I remember that!

LENNY

Oh, there's Meg singing at
Greeny's!

BABE

Ooooh, I wish you were still
singing at Greeny's! I wish you
were!

56

CLOSE ON MEG'S PHOTO

56

A picture of Meg five years ago looking fresh and
beautiful, as she sings a sad song gaily.

LENNY (O.S.)

You're so beautiful.

BABE (O.S.)

Yes, you are. You're beautiful.

57

BACK TO SCENE

57

MEG

Oh, stop! I'm not...

LENNY

Look, Meg's starting to cry.

BABE

Oh, Meg...

MEG

I'm not...

BABE

Quick, better turn the page we
don't want Meg crying...

She flips the page.

LENNY

Why, it's Daddy.

MEG

Where'd you get that picture, Babe?
I thought she burned them all.

(CONTINUED)

57

CONTINUED:

57

BABE

Ah, I just found it around.

LENNY

What does it say here? What's that inscription?

58

CLOSE ON DADDY PHOTO

58

A youthful man with flashy eyes and a flashy smile doing antics at the beach.

BABE (O.S.)

It says, 'Jimmy... clowning at the beach... 1956.'

*

LENNY (O.S.)

Well, will you look at that smile.

MEG (O.S.)

Jesus, those white teeth. Turn the page, will you; we can't do any worse than this!

59

BACK TO SCENE

59

They turn the page. The room goes silent.

BABE

It's Mama and the cat.

LENNY

Oh, turn the page...

BABE

That old yellow cat. You know, I bet if she hadn't of hung that old cat along with her, she wouldn't have gotten all that national coverage.

60

CLOSE ON MAMA/CAT PHOTOS

60

Two old photographs. One of Mary McGrath, a thin sad woman, peeling potatoes on the back porch steps with a huge yellow cat sitting beside her. The other photograph was cut from the newspaper; two supine bodies under police tarps with one body notably smaller than the other body.

(CONTINUED)

60

CONTINUED:

60

MEG (O.S.)
(hopelessly)
Why are we talking about this?

LENNY (O.S.)
Meg's right. It was so sad.

BABE
It was awfully sad.

61

FLASHBACK - INT. SISTERS' BEDROOM - MORNING

61

The three sisters sit together on the middle bed. LITTLE LENNY is 14, LITTLE MEG is 11, LITTLE BABE is 8. They are dressed in black and are crying inconsolably.

LENNY (V.O.)
I remember how we all three just sat up on that bed the day of the service all dressed up in our black velveteen suits crying the whole morning long.

*

There are wads of Kleenex tissue lying on the bed and floor. Little Babe reaches for another handful of tissue, but the box is empty.

LITTLE BABE
Look here, we used up this whole big box of Kleenex.

A spry Old Granddaddy walks into the room dressed in a black suit and tie. He stands in the doorway a moment and lights up a Camel cigarette.

OLD GRANDDADDY
Hush all this crying chillun. Old Granddaddy's gonna take you out for some breakfast. Whatever you want -- you gonna have it.

62

FLASHBACK - INT. DINER - MORNING

62

The three little girls sit in a booth with their grandfather -- all of them eating banana splits. There are several empty dishes, evidence of banana splits that have already been devoured.

LITTLE LENNY
Banana splits for breakfast!

Old Granddaddy yells orders at the amazed waitress.

(CONTINUED)

OLD GRANDADDY

(to Little Meg)

Looks like you need some more
slivers of nuts.

(to the waitress)

Bring this little lady a plate of
some of those nut slivers!

(about Little Babe)

And this one here's ready for
another round. Remember, no
pineapple topping, but plenty of
syrup! Oh, just go on and bring
her a king-size bowl of that
chocolate syrup!

Scene FLOWS ON FROM the FLASHBACK.

BABE

... Banana splits for breakfast!
I think I ate about five!

MEG

God, we were so sick!

LENNY

Oh, we were!

MEG

(laughing)

Lenny's face turned green...

LENNY

I was just as sick as a dog!

BABE

Old Grandmama was furious!

LENNY

Oh, she was!

MEG

The thing about Old Granddaddy is
he keeps trying to make us happy
and we end up getting stomach
aches and turning green and
throwing up in the flower
arrangements.

(CONTINUED)

63

CONTINUED:

63

BABE

Oh, that was me! I threw up in
the flowers! Oh, no! How
embarrassing!

LENNY

(laughing)

Oh, Babe...

BABE

(hugging her sisters)

Oh, Lenny! Oh, Meg!

MEG

Oh, Babe! Oh, Lenny! It's so
good to be home!

LENNY

Hey, I have an idea...

BABE

What?

LENNY

Let's play cards!

BABE

Oh, let's do!

MEG

All right!

LENNY

Oh, good! It'll be just like
when we used to sit around the
kitchen table playing hearts
all night long.

BABE

I know.

(getting up)

I'll go down and fix us up some
popcorn!

MEG

(getting up)

And hot chocolate. Don't forget
hot chocolate!

LENNY

Oh, yes!

Babe rushes out of the bedroom, heading for the kitchen.
Meg and Lenny follow. They hurry down the stairs.

(CONTINUED)

63

CONTINUED: (2)

63

LENNY

(continuing)

Oh, yes! Now, let's see, I think
I have a deck of cards down here
somewhere.

BABE

Gosh, I hope I remember all the
rules... are hearts good or bad?

MEG

Bad, I think. Aren't they, Lenny?

The sisters burst into the kitchen. There is a flurry of
activity as Lenny searches for cards while Babe and Meg
start to make popcorn and hot chocolate.

LENNY

That's right. Hearts are bad, but
that black sister is the worst of all...

MEG

Oh, that's right! And the Black
Sister is the Queen of Spades.

BABE

(figuring it out)

And spades are the black cards
that aren't the puppy dog feet?

MEG

(thinking a moment)

Right. And she counts a lot of points.

BABE

And points are bad?

MEG

Right. Here. I'll get some paper
so we can keep score.

The PHONE begins to RING. Lenny finds an old deck of
cards.

LENNY

Oh, here they are!

MEG

I'll get it...

(CONTINUED)

LENNY

Why, look at these cards! They're years old!

BABE

Oh, let me see!

MEG

Hello... No, this is Meg McGrath...
Doc. How are you? Well, good...
You're where? Well, sure. Yeah,
come right on over... All right.
'Bye.

Babe and Lenny stare at Meg, as she puts down the phone.

MEG

(continuing)

That was Doc Porter. He's down
the street at Al's Grill. He's
gonna come on over.

LENNY

He is?

MEG

He said he wanted to come and see
me.

LENNY

Oh.

(a pause)

Well, do you still want to play?

MEG

No, I don't think so.

LENNY

All right.

Lenny starts to shuffle the cards, as Meg brushes her
hair. Babe holds the POPCORN over the fire. It starts
to POP.

LENNY

(continuing)

You know, it's really not much
fun playing hearts with only two
people.

MEG

I'm sorry; maybe after Doc leaves,
I'll join you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

LENNY

I know; maybe Doc'll want to play,
then we can have a game of bridge.

MEG

I don't think so. Doc never liked
cards. Maybe we'll just go out
somewhere.

Lenny puts down the cards.

LENNY

Meg...

MEG

What?

LENNY

Well, Doc's married now.

MEG

I know. You told me.

LENNY

Oh, well, as long as you know
that.

(pause)

As long as you know that.

MEG

Yes, I know. She made the pot.

Meg flicks her cigarette ash at a strangely shaped piece
of modern pottery, dripping with brightly glazed colors.

LENNY

(leaving the table)

Ah, Meg? Could I... could I ask
you something?

MEG

What?

LENNY

I just wanted to ask you...

MEG

What?

Unable to go on with what she really wants to say, Lenny
runs out to the screen-in porch, picks up the box of
candy, and brings it back into the kitchen.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

LENNY

Well, just why did you take one little bite out of each piece of candy in this box and then just put it back in?

MEG

Oh. Well, I was looking for ones with nuts.

LENNY

The ones with nuts?

MEG

Yeah.

LENNY

But there are none with nuts. It's a box of assorted cremes... all it has in it are cremes!

MEG

Oh.

LENNY

It says right here on the box 'Assorted Cremes,' not nuts! Besides this was my one and only birthday present to me; my only one!

MEG

I'm sorry. I'll get you another box.

LENNY

I don't want another box. That's not the point!

MEG

What is the point?

LENNY

I don't know; it's... it's... you have no respect for other people's property! You just take whatever you want. Why, remember how you always had layers and layers of jingle bells sewed onto your petticoats while Babe and I only had three apiece?

(CONTINUED)

MEG

Oh, God! She's starting up about those stupid jingle bells!

LENNY

Well, it's a specific example of how you always got what you wanted!

MEG

Oh, come on, Lenny, you're just upset because Doc called.

LENNY

Who said anything about Doc? Why, I've long since given up worrying about you and all your men.

MEG

(turning in anger)

Look, I know I've had too many men. Believe me, I've had way too many men. But it's not my fault you haven't had any... or maybe just that one from Memphis.

LENNY

(stopping)

What one from Memphis?

MEG

(slowly)

The one Babe told me about. From the... club.

LENNY

(turning quickly to Babe)

Babe!

BABE

(turning quickly to Meg)

Meg!!

LENNY

How could you?! I asked you not to tell anyone! I'm so ashamed! Who else have you told? Did you tell anyone else?

BABE

(overlapping;
to Meg)

Why'd you have to open your big mouth?!

(CONTINUED)

MEG

(overlapping)

How am I supposed to know! You never said not to tell!

BABE

Can't you use your head just for once?!!

(then; to Lenny)

No, I never told anyone else. Somehow it just slipped out to Meg. Really, it just flew out of my mouth...

LENNY

I'll never, never, never be able to trust you again!

Lenny turns and starts up the stairway. The other two rush after her.

MEG

(furiously, coming to Babe's defense)

Oh, for heaven's sake, Lenny, we were just worried about you! We wanted to find a way to make you happy!

LENNY

Happy! Happy! I'll never be happy!

MEG

Well, not if you keep living your life as Old Granddaddy's nursemaid...

Lenny rushes into the upstairs room and slams the door shut.

BABE

Meg, shut up!

MEG

I can't help it!

Meg bursts into the room after Lenny. Babe follows.

(CONTINUED)

MEG

I just know that the reason you stopped seeing this man from Memphis was because of Old Granddaddy.

LENNY

What... Babe didn't tell you the rest of the story...

MEG

Oh, she said it was something about your shrunken ovary.

BABE

Meg!!

LENNY

Babe!!

BABE

I just mentioned it!

MEG

But I don't believe a word of that story!

LENNY

Oh, I don't care what you believe! It's so easy for you... you always have men falling in love with you! But I have this underdeveloped ovary and I can't have any children and my hair is falling out in the comb... so what man can love me?! What man's gonna love me?

MEG

A lot of men!

BABE

Yeah, a lot! A whole lot!

MEG

Old Granddaddy's the only one who seems to think otherwise.

LENNY

'Cause he doesn't want to see me rejected and humiliated.

MEG

Oh, come on now, Lenny, don't be so pathetic! Just tell me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MEG (CONT'D)

Did you actually ask that man
from Memphis all about this?

LENNY

(breaking apart)

No; I didn't. Because I just
didn't want him not to want me...

MEG

Lenny...

LENNY

(furious)

Don't talk to me anymore! I just
think I'm gonna vomit... I just
hope all this doesn't cause me to
vomit!

Lenny runs sobbing into the bathroom.

MEG

See! See! She didn't even ask
him about her stupid ovary! She
just broke it all off 'cause of
Old Granddaddy! What a jackass
fool!

BABE

Oh, Meg, shut up! Why do you have
to make Lenny cry? I just hate it
when you make Lenny cry! Lenny!
Oh, Lenny...

Meg sighs with fury and turns and leaves the room. Babe
knocks gently at the bathroom door.

Meg sits on the steps smoking and drinking Old Crow.
A shudder runs through her when she hears the ROAR of a
MOTOR and then the sound of a PICKUP TRUCK coming to a
HALT. Meg takes another slug from the bottle as she
sees the truck door opening and shutting. After a few
moments Doc comes walking toward the house.

MEG

Well, Doc. Well, it's Doc.

DOC

So, Meggy... You're home.

(CONTINUED)

65

CONTINUED:

65

MEG

Yeah, I've come on home. I've
come on home to see about Babe.

DOC

And how's Babe?

MEG

Oh, fine, well, fair. She's fair.
Hey, you wanna drink?

DOC

Sure, whatcha got?

MEG

Bourbon.

Meg hands out the bottle to Doc, he takes a swallow and
hands it back to her; she takes a swallow.

DOC

So... wanna go for a ride in the
country and look at the moon?

Meg looks at him for a long moment. He looks back at
her.

66

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

66

The pickup truck drives down an empty country road lined
up with giant pine trees.

67

INT. DOC'S TRUCK - NIGHT

67

The windows are down; wind sweeps through the truck,
blowing Meg's wild hair. MUSIC PLAYS on the RADIO. Doc
and Meg are passing the bourbon bottle back and forth.

MEG

So, how's your wife?

DOC

She's fine.

MEG

I hear ya got two kids.

DOC

Yeah. Yeah, I got two kids.

MEG

A boy and a girl?

(CONTINUED)

67

CONTINUED:

67

DOC

That's right, Meggy, a boy and a girl.

MEG

That's what you always said you wanted, wasn't it?

DOC

Is that what I said?

They turn away from each other.

*

68

EXT. DELTA LOCATION - NIGHT

68

*

Doc's pickup truck is parked. Meg jumps out of the door and goes to lean up against the hood of the truck. After a moment Doc comes out after her. He slams his door shut.

*

DOC

Well, it's been a long time.

MEG

It has been a long time.

DOC

Let's see... when was the last time we saw each other?

MEG

I can't quite recall.

DOC

Wasn't it in Biloxi?

MEG

Ah, Biloxi. I believe so.

DOC

And wasn't there a... a hurricane going on at the time?

MEG

Was there?

DOC

Yes, there was, one hell of a hurricane. Cordelia, I believe they called it. Hurricane Cordelia.

*

*

(CONTINUED)

68

CONTINUED:

68

MEG

Yes, now I remember. It was a beautiful hurricane.

DOC

We had quite a time down there. Drinking vodka, eating oysters on the half shell, dancing all night long. And the wind was blowing.

MEG

Oh, God, was it blowing.

DOC

Goddamn, was it blowing.

MEG

There never has been such a wind blowing.

DOC

Oh, God, Meggy. Oh, God.

MEG

I know, Doc. It was my fault to leave you. I was crazy. I felt choked!

DOC

I felt like a fool.

MEG

No.

DOC

I just kept wondering why.

MEG

I don't know why... 'Cause I didn't want to care. I did care though. I did.

DOC

(after a pause)

Ah, hell...

He jumps off the hood of the truck and goes to the edge of the bank. He watches the rushing water. *

DOC

(continuing)

You still singing those sad songs?

(CONTINUED)

MEG

No.

DOC

Why not?

Meg comes to stand by him.

MEG

I don't know, Doc. Things got worse for me. After a while, I just couldn't sing anymore. I tell you, I had one hell of a time over Christmas.

DOC

What do you mean?

MEG

I went nuts. Ended up in L.A. County Hospital. Psychiatric ward.

DOC

Ah, hell, Meggy. What happened?

MEG

I don't really know. I couldn't sign anymore; so I lost my job. All I could do was sit around in chairs, chewing on my fingers. Then one afternoon I ran screaming out of their apartment with all my money and jewelry and valuables and tried to stuff it all into one of those March of Dimes collection boxes. That was when they nabbed me. Sad story. Meg goes mad.

Doc stares at her, then takes her in his arms and holds her.

DOC

God, there sure is a moon out tonight.

MEG

Is there?

Meg looks up at Doc; he looks down at her and kisses her full on the mouth. Meg pulls away.

(CONTINUED)

68

CONTINUED: (3)

68

MEG

(continuing)

I don't know, Doc. I don't wanna start up. It'll be too hard if we start up.

DOC

Who says we're gonna start up? We're just looking at the moon. For one night just you and me are taking a ride in the country and looking out at the moon.

MEG

One night? Looking out at the moon?

DOC

You got it.

Meg closes her eyes and starts to laugh.

MEG

Well... all right.

69

INT. MAGRATH LIBRARY - NIGHT

69

*

Babe stands holding her saxophone in the moonlight, wearing only a slip. She caresses the golden instrument and blows hard on the reed, yearning desperately to hear a sound.

Suddenly, a horrifying screech floods out of the horn. Babe's eyes widen with fear and ecstasy. She blows into the sax again. It screeches loud.

Babe revels in the agonized scream, as though the horrible passionate sound could exorcise with it all the pain and anger and loneliness that she has felt for so long.

There is a LOUD KNOCK on the front door.

*

BARNETTE (O.S.)

Becky! Becky, is that you?

Babe puts down the saxophone.

BABE

Just a minute. I'm coming.

Babe puts a raincoat on over her slip and goes to answer the door. Barnette comes in.

*

(CONTINUED)

He is troubled, but is making a courageous effort to hide the fact.

BABE

(continuing)

Hello, Barnette. Come on in.

BARNETTE

Look, I, ah, I met with Zackery over at the hospital.

BABE

Oh?

BARNETTE

It seems... Well, it seems his sister, Lucille, was somewhat suspicious.

BABE

Suspicious?

BARNETTE

She hired a private detective.

He hands Babe a small envelope containing several photographs. Babe opens the envelope and begins looking at the pictures in stunned silence.

BARNETTE

(continuing)

They were taken about two weeks ago. It seems, she wasn't going to show them to Botrelle straight away. She, ah, wanted to wait till the time was right.

Babe looks up at Barnette slowly as she puts the photos back into the envelope.

BABE

These are pictures of Willie Jay and me... out in the garage.

BARNETTE

(looking away)

I know.

BABE

You looked at these pictures?

BARNETTE

I... well... professionally, I looked at them.

(CONTINUED)

69

CONTINUED: (2)

69

BABE

Oh, mercy. Oh, mercy! We can
burn them, can't we? Quick, we
can burn them...

BARNETTE

It won't do any good. They have
the negatives.

Babe suddenly slams her body hopelessly into the desk. *

BABE

Oh, no!

Barnette leaps after her as she throws over the chairs. *

BARNETTE

(overlapping)

There... there, now... there...

BABE

(overlapping)

Oh, no; oh, no! Oh, no...

LENNY (O.S.)

Babe! Are you all right? Babe...

Babe freezes with horror, then rushes to hide the
envelope high up on a bookshelf. Barnette helps lift her
up. *

BABE

What? I'm all right. Go on back
to bed.

Lenny comes down the stairs. She is wearing a robe and
wiping white night cream off of her face with a wash rag.

LENNY

What's the matter? What's going
on down here?

Lenny stops when she sees Barnette lifting Babe up in the
air with his arms around her waist holding her from
behind.

BABE

Nothin'!

Babe begins dancing ballet-style around the room.

(CONTINUED)

69

CONTINUED: (3)

69

BABE

(continuing)

We're... we're just dancing. We
were just dancing around down
here.

Babe signals to Barnette to dance. Barnette makes a vain
attempt to join in.

LENNY

Well, for heaven's sakes you
frightened me to death. I
thought...

The PHONE RINGS. Lenny moves to answer the phone.

LENNY

(continuing)

... I don't know what I thought.

(into phone)

Hello... Yes, this is Lenny
McGrath.

*
*

A look of grave concern crosses Lenny's face, as she
listens to the news on the other end of the phone.

70

INT. OLD GRANDDADDY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

70

Old Granddaddy lies in a coma. He is being kept alive by
various tubes and a respirator. Every breath he takes
appears to be his last.

Lenny and Babe sit beside his bed watching him in solemn
silence.

71

EXT. CLEARING IN WOODS - DAWN

71

Meg and Doc are lying together in a clearing of pine
needles. Huge green pine trees tower all around them.

Meg slowly sits up and softly begins singing to Doc.

MEG

(singing)

Oh, give me land, lots of land,
Under starry skies above,
Don't fence me in --

Meg continues singing to Doc as he gazes from Meg's face
to the morning sky and then back to Meg's face.

72

OMITTED

72 *

73

EXT. FRONT OF HOSPITAL - EARLY MORNING

73

An exhausted Babe and Lenny come out of the hospital and head for the car. *

LENNY

Babe; I feel bad. I feel real bad.

BABE

Why, Lenny?

LENNY

Because I... I wished it.

BABE

You wished what?

LENNY

I wished that Old Granddaddy would be put out of his pain. I wished on one of my birthday candles. And now he's in this coma, and they say he's feeling no pain. *

BABE

Well, when did you have a cake? I don't remember you having a cake.

LENNY

Well, I didn't... have a cake. But I just blew out the candles anyway.

BABE

Oh. Well, those birthday wishes don't count unless you have a cake.

LENNY

They don't?

BABE

No. A lot of times they don't even count when you do have a cake. It just depends.

(CONTINUED)

73

CONTINUED:

73

LENNY

Depends on what?

BABE

On how deep your wish is, I
suppose.

74

EXT. MAGRATH HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

74

Chick is pacing back and forth in her yard eating a chocolate doughnut. She sees Lenny's car slowly turn into the driveway.

Chick comes running across her yard waving and yelling as the car comes to a halt at the side of the MaGrath house.

Babe and Lenny get out of the car looking dangerously fatigued. Chick seems fresh and bright.

CHICK

Lenny! Oh, Lenny!

Lenny looks sadly at Babe, then turns and looks at Chick.

CHICK

(continuing)

Well, is he still in the coma?

LENNY

Uh-huh.

CHICK

Well, it seems to me we'd better get busy phoning.

(removing a list
from her pocket)

Now, I've made out this list of all the people we need to notify about Old Granddaddy's predicament. I'll phone half if you'll phone half.

Lenny wearily tears the list into halves as Babe sits on the steps to wait for her. Chick takes her half of the list and turns to head across the yard towards her house.

Lenny turns and wearily goes into the house. Babe gets up from the steps and follows her.

Lenny is slowly cracking eggs into a mixing bowl. Babe sits at the table staring blankly away.

LENNY

Gosh, I wonder when Meg's coming home.

BABE

Should be soon.

LENNY

I guess it hurts my feelings, a little, the way Old Granddaddy's always put so much stock in Meg and all her singing talent. I think I've been, well, envious of her 'cause I can't seem to do too much.

BABE

Why, sure you can.

LENNY

I can?

BABE

Sure. You just have to put your mind to it; that's all. It's like how I went out and bought that saxophone, just hoping I'd be able to attend music school and start up my own career. Of course, now it just doesn't look like things are gonna work out for me. But I know they would for you.

LENNY

Well, they'll work out for you, too. Listen, I heard up at the hospital that Zackery's already in fair condition. They say soon he'll probably be able to walk and everything.

BABE

Yeah. And life sure can be miserable.

Lenny looks at her and then runs to open the waffle iron. The waffles are black and smoking. She starts to cry.

76

EXT. FRONT OF MAGRATH HOUSE - MORNING

76

Doc's pickup TRUCK pulls up in front of the house and comes to a SCREECHING halt.

LOUD MUSIC and laughter soar from inside the truck. The passenger door swings open. Empty liquor BOTTLES and beer CANS RUMBLE out with a broken high heel shoe.

Meg stumbles out of the truck and collapses onto the ground. Doc reaches over and pulls Meg to her feet. They are both laughing uproariously. They embrace romantically and then Meg turns, grabs the high heeled shoe, and heads for the house. She has her red pantyhose tied to her waist.

77

INT. MAGRATH KITCHEN - MORNING

77

Babe and Lenny sit staring at a serving platter stacked with burnt waffles. Babe takes the honey jar, pours a pile of honey onto her plate and begins eating it with her finger. Suddenly they hear the front DOOR SLAMMING and then the sound of Meg's voice singing like a drunken angel. Meg bursts through the dining room door. She is laughing radiantly and limping as she sings into the heel of her broken shoe.

MEG

(spotting her
sisters)

Good morning! Good morning! Oh,
it's a wonderful morning! I tell
you, I am surprised I feel this
good. I should feel like hell.
By all accounts, I should feel
like utter hell! ..

Meg is looking for the glue.

MEG

(continuing)

Where's the glue? This damn heel
has broken off my shoe. La, la,
la, la, la! Ah, here it is!
Well, what's wrong with you two?
My God, you look like doom!

Babe and Lenny stare helplessly at Meg.

MEG

(continuing)

Oh, I know, you're mad at me
'cause I stayed out all night
long. Well, I did.

(CONTINUED)

LENNY

No, we're... we're not mad at you.
We're just... depressed.

Lenny starts to sob.

MEG

Oh, Lenny, listen to me, now,
everything's all right with Doc.
I mean, nothing happened. Well,
actually, a lot did happen, but it
didn't come to anything. Not
because of me, I'm afraid.

(smearing glue on
her heel)

I mean, I was out there thinking,
'What will I say when he begs me
to run away with him? Will I have
pity on his wife and those two
half-Yankee children? I mean, can
I sacrifice their happiness for
mine? Yes! Oh, yes, I can!' But
... he didn't ask me. He didn't
even want to ask me. Why aren't I
miserable! I should be
humiliated! Devastated! But I'm
happy. I realized I could care
about someone. I could want
someone. I sang all night long!
And none of it was to please Old
Grandaddy.

Lenny and Babe look at each other.

BABE

Ah, Meg...

MEG

What?

BABE

Well, it's just... it's...

LENNY

It's about Old Grandaddy.

MEG

Oh, I know. I told him all those
stupid lies. Well, I'm gonna go
right over there this morning and
tell him the truth. And if he
can't take it, if it sends him
into a coma, that's just too damn
bad!

(CONTINUED)

77

CONTINUED: (2)

77

Babe and Lenny look at each other. Babe cracks a smile.
Lenny cracks a smile.

BABE

You're too late... Ha, ha, ha!

They break up laughing.

LENNY

Oh, stop! Please! Ha, ha, ha!

MEG

What is it? What's so funny?

BABE

It's not funny.

LENNY

(still laughing)

No, it's not a bit funny!

MEG

Well, what is it then? What?

BABE

(trying to calm
down)

Well, it's just... it's just...

MEG

What?

BABE

Well, Old Granddaddy... he... he's
in a coma!

Babe and Lenny break up laughing.

MEG

(shocked)

He's what?!

BABE

(shrieking)

In a coma!

MEG

My God! That's not funny!

BABE

(calming down)

I know. I know. For some reason
it just struck us as funny.

(CONTINUED)

LENNY

I'm sorry. It's... it's not funny. It's very sad. We've been up all night long.

BABE

We're really tired.

MEG

Well, my God. How is he? Is he gonna live?

Babe and Lenny look at each other.

BABE

They don't think so!

They both break up again, laughing uproariously.

LENNY

Oh, I don't know why we're laughing like this. We're just sick! We're just awful!

BABE

We are....we're awful!

LENNY

(as she collects herself)

Oh, good; now I feel bad. Now, I feel like crying. I do, I feel like crying.

BABE

Me, too. Me, too.

MEG

Well, you've gotten me depressed!

LENNY

I'm sorry. It, ah, happened last night. He had another stroke.

They laugh again.

MEG

I see.

LENNY

But he's stabilized now.

They both choke back laughter as Meg stares at them in disbelief.

78

INT. OLD GRANDDADDY'S ROOM - CLOSE ON GLOOMY AQUARIUM -
EARLY AFTERNOON

78

We hear the tune "I'VE BEEN WORKING ON THE RAILROAD,"
playing on a PIANO. Dirty fish swim in filthy, grey-
green water. The CAMERA PANS SLOWLY AROUND the room.

It is filled with Civil War memorabilia; history books,
yellow maps and charts. Hunting rifles are hung on the
wall along with endless family photographs in frames.

The CAMERA PANS over TO Meg, who sits at the upright
piano, playing the song we've been listening to. Lenny
stands by, feeding the fish.

79

LENNY'S POV

79

Framed photograph of Old Granddaddy as a young man,
dressed in his wedding tuxedo.

LENNY (O.S.)

Things sure are gonna be different
around here... when Old Granddaddy
dies.

80

BACK TO SCENE

80

LENNY

Well, not for you two really, but
for me.

MEG

Oh, come on now, Lenny, you're
your own woman. Invite some
people over. Have some parties.
Go out with strange men.

LENNY

I don't know any strange men.

MEG

Well... you know that Charlie.

LENNY

(shaking her head)

I told him we should never see
each other again.

MEG

Well, if you told him, you can
just untell him.

(CONTINUED)

LENNY

Oh, no, I couldn't. I'd be too scared...

Lenny goes into the hallway. The CAMERA FOLLOWS. Babe is lying listlessly on the window seat in the hallway. Lenny looks at Babe, then turns... and heads down the stairway.

Meg yells at Lenny from the top of the stairs.

MEG

But what harm could it possibly do? I mean, it's not gonna make things any worse than this never seeing him again, at all, forever.

Lenny stops on the landing.

LENNY

I suppose that's true...

MEG

Of course it is; so call him up! Take a chance, will you?

Babe appears at the top of the stairs.

BABE

You've got to try, Lenny... I think you do.

LENNY

Really? Really, really?

MEG.

Yes! Yes!

BABE

You should.

LENNY

All right. I will! I will!

Meg smokes a cigarette as she slowly swings back and forth on the rope swing attached to the oak tree.

BABE

Meg --

(CONTINUED)

81

CONTINUED:

81

Meg looks up to find Babe perched high in the branches of the tree.

MEG

What?

BABE

Nothing.

MEG

(looking up)

You okay?

Babe climbs down towards Meg and drops an envelope into Meg's lap.

BABE

Here. Take a look. It's some evidence Zackery's collected against me. Looks like my goose is cooked.

Meg opens the envelope and looks at the photographs.

MEG

My God, it's... it's you and... is that Willie Jay? Well, he certainly has grown. You were right about that. My, oh, my.

82

CLOSE ON PHOTO

82

Shadowy picture of Willie Jay standing nude in the doorway with Dog at his side.

BABE (O.S.)

Please don't tell Lenny. She'd hate me.

83

CLOSE ON SECOND PHOTO

83

Shadowy photograph of Babe in a half-slip, making passionate love to Willie Jay in a wheelbarrow.

MEG (O.S.)

I won't. I won't tell.

84

BACK TO SCENE

84

Meg is putting the pictures back into the envelope.

MEG

What are you gonna do?

BABE

(leaning into the
branches of the tree)

What can I do?

85

INT. ZACKERY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - AFTERNOON

85

Zackery is sitting up in his bed, looking over pages in a folder. Barnette stands beside the bed, watching with cool eyes.

Zackery's aides are also present.

Zackery slings the folder aside.

ZACKERY

(confidently)

Those half-assed medical reports.
won't hold up in court. They
don't prove anything except that
I have a very clumsy wife.

BARNETTE

I also have some eye witnesses.
And they're not only willing to
testify; they're anxious.

ZACKERY

Everyone has their price.
Besides, the real dynamite is
in the vacation photos I've got
of my sugar wife and her yard boy.

BARNETTE

Actually, Senator Botrelle, I
don't think those photos are going
to flatter you at all. Folks
around here may start to question
certain aspects of your...
leadership abilities.

Zackery exchanges glances with his aides. They are
non-committal -- which endorses Barnette's statement.

(CONTINUED)

85

CONTINUED:

85

ZACKERY

Tell me, just what sort of a settlement did you have in mind?

BARNETTE

I don't want her serving any time.

ZACKERY

What? In jail? No, I don't think we have to send her to jail. The public wouldn't like seeing pretty little Babe sent off to the slammer.

BARNETTE

Then you'll drop all charges.

ZACKERY

I tell you what, I'm gonna seriously consider doing just that. But first you'd better do something about that nigger-kid of hers. Or he just could end up screwed, chewed and bar-b-qued.

*
*
*

86

EXT. BEHIND HAZLEHURST BUS DEPOT -- CLOSE ON YOUNG BLACK MAN - AFTERNOON

86

Seated at the window seat of a bus. He is wearing a pair of sunglasses, a sombrero and a poncho. It is Willie Jay... incognito. He holds Dog in his lap. The CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal Babe standing behind a post. She is grief-stricken. In the b.g. we see Meg and Barnette looking on in uncomfortable silence.

Babe looks up at Willie Jay and smiles sadly. He smiles back at her; DOG sticks his head out the window and WHINES. Babe silently sobs as the bus pulls away into the distance.

87

INT. BARNETTE'S CAR - AFTERNOON

87

Barnette drives Babe and Meg, who ride in the car silently. Meg has her feet propped up on the dashboard as she smokes a cigarette. Babe stares blankly out the window.

BARNETTE

I'm sorry, Becky. It seemed the only... way.

88 INT. MAGRATH LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

88 *

Babe sits on the window seat, sucking a lemon, rocking herself back and forth in despair.

BABE

Goodbye, Becky. Goodbye,
Barnette. Goodbye, Willie Jay.
Goodbye... Becky.

89 INT. UPSTAIRS ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

89

Lenny is standing in front of a mirror, spraying perfume all over herself. She looks totally frustrated and defeated. She turns and goes directly to the phone. She picks up the receiver. She puts it down, then up, then down. She looks at herself in the mirror, then shakes her head in furious disgust.

90 INT. MAGRATH LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

90 *

Lenny comes hurrying down the stairs in a fluster.
Babe stays lost in her own misery.

LENNY

Oh! Oh! Oh! I'm so ashamed!
I'm such a coward! I just couldn't
make the call!! My heart was
pounding like a hammer. Why, I
could actually see my blouse
moving back and forth! Oh, Babe,
you look so disappointed. Are
you?

BABE

(despondently)

Uh-huh.

LENNY

Oh, no! I can't stand it! I've
gone and disappointed my little
sister, Babe! Oh, no! I feel
like howling like a dog.

CHICK (O.S.)

Ooooh, Lenny!

Chick enters dramatically, dripping with sympathy.

CHICK

(continuing)

Well, I just don't know what to
say! I am so sorry for you! I
mean, to have such a sister as
that!

(CONTINUED)

LENNY

What do you mean?

CHICK

Oh, you don't need to pretend to me. I saw Meg stumbling out of Doc Porter's pickup truck and her looking like such a disgusting mess. You must be so ashamed. Why, I always said that girl was nothing but cheap Christmas trash!

LENNY

Don't talk that way about Meg.

CHICK

Oh, come on now, Lenny honey. Why, Meg's a low-class tramp and you need not have one more blessed thing to do with her and her disgusting behavior.

LENNY

I said, don't you ever talk that way about my sister Meg again.

CHICK

Well, goodness gracious, Leonara, don't be such a noodle... it's the truth!

LENNY

I don't care if it's the Ten Commandments. I don't want to hear it in my home. Not ever again.

CHICK

In your home?! Why, this is my grandfather's home! And you're just living here on his charity, so don't you get high-falutin' with me, Miss Lenora Josephine MaGrath!

LENNY

Get out of here...

CHICK

Don't you tell me to get out!
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CHICK (CONT'D)

Why, I've had just about my fill
of you trashy MaGraths and your
trashy ways; hanging yourselves
in cellars; carryin' on with
married men; shooting your
husbands!

LENNY

Get out!

Chick shakes her finger at Babe.

CHICK

And don't you think she's not gonna
end up at the state prison farm
or in some... mental institution.
Why, it's a clear-cut case of
manslaughter with intent to kill!

Babe looks at Chick with wild-eyed horror.

LENNY

Out! Get out!

She advances on Chick, who moves backwards toward the
kitchen as she speaks.

CHICK

(running on)

That's what everyone's saying,
deliberate intent to kill! And
you'll pay for that! Do you hear
me? You'll pay!

Lenny picks up a broom and threatens Chick with it.

LENNY

And I'm telling you to get out!

CHICK

You... put that down this minute...
Are you a raving lunatic?

LENNY

(beating Chick with
the broom)

I said for you to get out! That
means out! And never, never,
never come back!

(CONTINUED)

90

CONTINUED: (3)

90

CHICK
(overlapping as she
runs around the room)
Oh! Oh! Oh! You're crazy!
You're crazy!

Lenny chases Chick out the back door and through the
screened-in porch to the backyard.

91

EXT. MAGRATH BACKYARD - LATE AFTERNOON

91

Chick races across the yard with Lenny swinging the
broom after her.

LENNY
Do you hear me, Chick-the-Stick!
This is my home! This is my house!

Lenny takes a swat at Chick that sends her climbing
up the mimosa tree.

CHICK
Oh! Oh! Police! Police! You're
crazy! Help! Help!

92

INT. MAGRATH KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

92

Babe watches the scene through the window. She laughs
and jumps up and down, as she throws last night's
popcorn up into the air.

BABE
Yeehah! Yeehah!

The PHONE RINGS. Babe rushes to answer it.

92A

INT. LIBRARY

92A *

BABE
(into phone)
Hello?... Oh, hello, Zackery!...
Yes, he showed them to me!...
What do you mean? You can't
put me out to Whitfield Asylum.

93

INT. ZACKERY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

93

Zackery wears a red silk kimono. He has all the
illicit photos laid across his bed. He touches them
as he yells into the phone.

(CONTINUED)

93

CONTINUED:

93

ZACKERY

And no one will ever doubt that
you're a crazy lunatic. 'Cause
the whole town knows your mother
was as crazy as they come.

94

INT. LIBRARY - LATE AFTERNOON

94 *

BABE

Don't you call my mama crazy!
No, you're not! You're not
gonna! You're not!

Babe slams the phone down and stares wildly ahead.

BABE

(continuing)

He's not. He's not.

Babe walks back into the kitchen and over to the ribbon
drawer.

*

BABE

(continuing)

I'll do it. I will. And he
won't...

Babe opens the drawer; pulls out the rope; becomes
terrified; throws the rope back in the drawer and
slams it shut.

Lenny enters from the dining room door, swinging the
broom and laughing.

LENNY

Oh, I feel so good! I do! I feel
good!

*

BABE

(overlapping; insanely
delighted)

Good! Good, Lenny! Good for you!

They dance madly around the kitchen.

LENNY

(stopping)

You know what... I'm gonna call
Charlie!!! I'm gonna call him up
right now!

BABE

You are?

(CONTINUED)

LENNY

Yeah, I feel like I can really do it!

BABE

You do?

LENNY

My courage is up; my heart's in it. No more beating around the bush! Let's strike while the iron is hot!

Lenny goes to the phone in the library. Babe rushes over to the ribbon drawer. She begins tearing through it. *

LENNY

(continuing; with the receiver in her hand)

I'm calling him up, Babe... I'm really gonna do it!

Babe pulls out a red cord of rope. She tugs on it to test its strength.

BABE

Good! Do it! Good!

Babe takes the rope and goes up the stairs. Lenny finishes dialing the number. She waits for an answer.

LENNY

(into phone)

Hello?... Hello, Charlie. This is Lenny McGrath... Well, I'm fine. I'm just fine.

(an awkward pause)

I was, ah, just calling to see... how you're getting on... Well, good. Good... Yes, I know I said that. Well, the reason I said that before, about not seeing each other again, was 'cause of me, not you... Well, it's just I... I can't have any children. I... have this ovary problem... Why, Charlie, what a thing to say!... Well, they're not all little snot-nosed pigs!... You think they are! Oh, Charlie, stop, stop! You're making me laugh...

95 INT. UPSTAIRS ROOM - CLOSE ON BABE'S BARE FEET - 95
LATE AFTERNOON

We see her soft, white foot stepping onto a vanity stool.
She takes another step up to the vanity table, then a
final step up to her bureau.

96 INT. LIBRARY - LATE AFTERNOON 96 *

LENNY
(into the phone)
Yes, I guess I was. I can see now
that I was... You are? Well, I
don't know when, Charlie... soon.
How about, well, how about tonight?
... Oh, you will!... Well, yes.
Of course we can. Why, they're
just ripe for picking up.

97 INT. UPSTAIRS ROOM - CLOSE ON HEAVY LIGHT FIXTURES - 97
LATE AFTERNOON

The end of the rope is tied around the heavy fixture.
We see the rope jerk back and forth showing us how
tightly it has been secured.

98 INT. LIBRARY - LATE AFTERNOON 98 *

LENNY
(into phone)
All right. I'll be right here...
Goodbye, then, Charlie. Goodbye
for now.

Lenny hangs up the phone in a daze.

LENNY
(continuing)
Babe. Oh, Babe! He's coming.
He's coming!

Lenny runs to the staircase and calls up to Babe.

LENNY
(continuing)
Babe? Oh, Babe, where are you?

Lenny runs to the back door.

LENNY
(continuing)
Babe! Meg!

99

EXT. HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

99

Lenny looks up at the violet blue sky. A gentle breeze rocks the trees, slowly. The delicate muted colors of the day entrance Lenny and pull her out into the dark, shadowy magic of the late afternoon.

LENNY

Yes, those paw paws are just right
for picking up.

100

INT. UPSTAIRS ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

100

Babe stands on a tall bureau with a noose tied around her neck. The end of the rope is tied around the heavy light fixture.

Babe rocks back and forth on the tilting bureau, getting ready to make the final leap.

101

EXT. REAR MAGRATH HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

101

We see Lenny gliding far away in the yard toward the paw paw patch. The house stands silent.

Everything is still for a moment, then a LOUD, HORRIBLE THUD is heard coming from the upstairs room. Lenny did not hear the thud or the PHONE that now begins to RING. She moves gracefully through the paw paw patch, spinning her basket.

102

INT. LIBRARY AND KITCHEN - CLOSE ON BLACK PHONE - LATE AFTERNOON

102 *

It RINGS again and again. -The CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal that the room is empty. The PHONE RINGS THREE MORE TIMES before Babe comes hurrying down the stairs with a noose tied around her neck and a dangling piece of red rope with a broken light fixture awkwardly attached to the end of it.

BABE

(to the phone)

Will you shut up!

Babe is jerking the rope from around her neck. She grabs a knife, saws at the rope. Babe throws the rope violently around the room. The PHONE CONTINUES to RING. Babe furiously goes to stab the phone with her knife. The RINGING STOPS.

BABE

(continuing)

Thank God.

(CONTINUED)

Babe stands holding the knife in her hand. She looks at the knife and quickly decides to stab herself to death. She pulls the knife up and starts to bring it down into her heart. She shudders violently at the reality of the act and slings the knife aside. Babe turns slowly and looks at the stove. She goes over to it, and turns the gas on. The sound of GAS ESCAPING is heard. Babe sniffs it.

BABE

(continuing)

Come on. Come on... Hurry up...
I beg of you... Hurry up!

Finally Babe feels the oven is ready; she takes a deep breath and opens the oven door to stick her head into it. She spots the oven rack and furiously jerks it out. Taking another breath, she sticks her head into the oven. She stands there for several moments tapping her fingers furiously on top of the stove.

Babe speaks from inside the oven.

BABE

(continuing)

Oh, please. Please.

Babe reaches for a box of kitchen matches with her head still in the oven. She gets a match from the box and tries to strike it. It doesn't catch.

BABE

(continuing)

Oh, Mama, please!

Babe throws the match away and reaches for a second one. Suddenly she becomes alert.

BABE

(continuing)

Mama... Mama... So that's why you
done it!

In her excitement Babe starts to get up, bangs her head and falls back in the stove, unconscious. Babe lies there inside as the sound of HISSING GAS CONTINUES.

The door opens and Meg enters, carrying a huge pink box.

MEG

Babe!

Meg quickly puts down the box and runs to pull Babe's head out of the oven.

(CONTINUED)

MEG

(continuing)

Oh, my God! What are you doing?
What the hell are you doing?

BABE

(dizzily)

Nothing. I don't know. Nothing.

Meg turns OFF the GAS and moves Babe to a chair near the open door.

MEG

Sit down. Will you sit down!

BABE

I'm okay.

MEG

Put your head between your knees
and breathe deep!

BABE

Meg...

MEG

Just do it! I'll get you some
water.

Meg gets some water for Babe.

BABE

Meg...

MEG

Yes?

BABE

I know why she did it.

MEG

What? Why who did what?

BABE

(with joy)

Mama. I know why she hung that
cat along with her.

MEG

You do?

(CONTINUED)

BABE

(with enlightenment)

It's 'cause she was afraid of
dying all alone.

MEG

Was she?

BABE

She felt so unsure, you know, as
to what was coming. It seems the
best thing coming up would be a
lot of angels and all of them
singing. But I imagine they have
high, scary voices and little gold
pointed fingers that are as sharp
as blades and you don't want to
meet 'em all alone. So it wasn't
like what people were saying about
her hating that cat. She needed
him with her 'cause she felt so
all alone.

MEG

Oh, Babe... Why, Babe? Why?

BABE

Why what?

MEG

Why did you stick your head into
the oven?!

BABE

I don't know, Meg. I'm having a
bad day. It's been a real bad
day; those pictures; and Willie
Jay, heading north; and... and
Zackery called me up.

(trembling with
terror)

He says he's gonna have me
classified insane and then send
me on out to the Whitfield asylum.

MEG

What! Why, he could never do that!

BABE

Why not?

MEG

'Cause you're not insane.

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED: (4)

102

BABE

I'm not?

MEG

No! He's trying to bluff you. Ha!
Calling you insane. Why, you're
just as perfectly sane as anyone
walking the streets of Hazlehurst,
Mississippi.

BABE

I am?

MEG

More so! A lot more so!

BABE

Good!

MEG

But Babe we've just got to learn
how to get through these real bad
days here. I mean, it's getting
to be a thing in our family.

(slight pause as
she looks at Babe)

And you're not like Mama. You're
not all alone.

BABE

I'm not.

The sisters embrace.

MEG.

No. You're not. Where's Lenny?

103 EXT. BACK YARD - DUSK

103

Lenny is coming down the walk swinging her basket of paw
paws.

104 EXT./INT. PORCH - DUSK

104

MEG (O.S.)

Wait.... there she is coming.

Lenny! Oh, Lenny!

Meg appears on the back steps. She waves to Lenny in
furious excitement and confusion.

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED:

104

MEG
(continuing)
Come on! Hurry up! There's
something in the kitchen!

Babe joins them on the porch.

LENNY
What?

MEG
I don't know. Come see!

BABE
It's big! Hurry up!

Babe and Meg drag Lenny through the screened-in porch and
on into the kitchen.

105 INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

105

Meg covers Lenny's eyes with her hands.

LENNY
(terrified)
What?! What is it?! What?!!!

MEG/BABE
Surprise! Happy birthday! Happy
birthday to Lenny!

106 LENNY'S POV

106

A gigantic beautifully decorated cake with white icing,
red trim, and thirty burning candles. The message on
the cake reads, "Happy Birthday to Lenny -- Two Days
Late."

LENNY (O.S.)
Oh, no! Oh, me!! What a surprise!
I could just cry!

107 BACK TO SCENE

107

LENNY
Oh, look, 'Happy Birthday to
Lenny -- Two Days Late'! How
cute! My! Will you look at all
those candles... it's absolutely
frightening.

(CONTINUED)

BABE

(a spontaneous
thought)

Oh, no, Lenny, it's good! 'Cause
... 'cause the more candles you
have on your cake, the stronger
your wish is.

LENNY

Really?

BABE

Sure!

LENNY

Mercy.

The start the "Happy Birthday" song.

LENNY

(continuing; inter-
rupting the song)

Oh, but wait! I... I can't think
of my wish! My body's gone all
nervous inside.

MEG

For God's sake, Lenny... Come on!

BABE

The wax is all melting!

LENNY

My mind is just a blank, a total
blank!

MEG

Will you please just...

BABE

(overlapping)

Lenny, hurry! Come on!

LENNY

Okay! Okay! Just go!!

Meg and Babe burst into the "Happy Birthday" song. As
it ends, Lenny blows out all of the candles on the cake.
Meg and Babe applaud loudly.

MEG

Oh, you made it!

(CONTINUED)

BABE

Hurray!

LENNY

Oh, me! Oh, me! I hope that wish comes true! I hope it does!

BABE

Why? What did you wish for?

LENNY

(as she removes
the candles from
the cake)

Why, I can't tell you that.

BABE

Oh, sure you can...

LENNY

Oh, no! Then it won't come true.

BABE

Why, that's just superstition. Of course it will, if you made it deep enough. Now come on and tell us. What was it you wished for?

MEG

Yes, tell us. What was it?

LENNY

Well, I guess, it wasn't really a specific wish. This... this vision just sort of came into my mind.

BABE

A vision? What was it of?

LENNY

I don't know exactly. It was something about the three of us smiling and laughing together, but it wasn't for every minute. Just this one moment and we were all laughing.

BABE

What were we laughing about?

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED: (3)

107

LENNY

I don't know. Just nothing I
guess.

MEG

Well, that's a nice wish to make.

Lenny and Meg look at each other a moment.

MEG

(continuing)

Here, now, I'll get a knife so we
can go ahead and cut the cake in
celebration of Lenny being born!

BABE

Oh, yes! And give each one of us
a rose! A whole rose apiece.

LENNY

(cutting the cake
nervously)

Well, I'll try... I'll try!

MEG

(licking the icing
off a candle)

Mmmm... this icing is delicious!
Here, try some.

BABE

Mmmm! It's wonderful! Here,
Lenny!

Lenny laughs joyously as she licks icing from her fingers
and cuts huge pieces of cake that her sisters bite into
ravenously.

LENNY

Oh, how I do love birthday cake!
How I do!

FREEZE FRAME of the sisters laughing and catching cake;
the lights change and frame them in a magical, golden,
sparkling glimmer.

A SAXOPHONE is heard playing somewhere in the DISTANCE...

FADE OUT.

THE END

TOM
I'm not leaving without Ronnie.

SARA
Ronnie's in no position to
leave. Let her sleep it off.

TOM
That's alright. I'll wait. She
might wake up any minute.

SARA
(growing anger)
I wouldn't count on it. The
evening is over, Thomas. You
should leave right now.

TOM
Forget it. I'm staying till Ron
wakes up.

A pause.

SARA
(recomposing herself)
OK. OK. Maybe some coffee would
help.

TOM
What are you going to do, pour
it down her mouth while she's
out?

SARA
Of course not. When she wakes
she'll be groggy. Coffee will
help.

TOM
So make some.

SARA
I don't have any.

TOM
Jesus! Don't you have anything
in this fucking house?

SARA
Tom, go get some coffee right
now.

37

CONTINUED: (4)

37

BARNETTE

This is a small town, Miss Magrath.
The word gets out.

MEG

It's really the truth?

BARNETTE

(taking a folder out
of his briefcase)

Just look at this. It's a
photostatic copy of Mrs.
Botrelle's medical chart over
the past four years.

MEG

(looking over
the chart)

What! What! This is madness!
Did he do this to her? I'll kill
him; I will... I'll fry his blood!!
Did he do this?

BARNETTE

(alarmed)

To tell you the truth, I can't
say for certain what was
accidental and what was not.
That's why I need to talk with
Mrs. Botrelle. That's why it's
very important that I see her!

38

EXT. GRAVEYARD - EARLY AFTERNOON

38

Babe is putting a mason jar of hand-picked flowers beside
a tombstone that reads: MARGARET DECKER MAGRATH,
1935 - 1967.

MEG (O.S.)

What did Zackery do to you? Did
he hurt you?

The CAMERA PULLS BACK. We see Meg standing above the
tombstone, looking down at Babe.

MEG

Did he? Goddamnit, Babe...

BABE

Yes, he did.

MEG

Why? Why?

(CONTINUED)