

MEG. Babe! (*Meg throws the box down and runs to pull Babe's head out of the oven.*) 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. Sit down! Will you sit down!

BABE. I'm okay. 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.*) Here.

BABE. Thanks.

MEG. Are you okay?

BABE. Uh-huh.

MEG. Are you sure?

BABE. Yeah, I'm sure. I'm okay.

MEG. (*Getting a damp rag and putting it over her own face.*) Well good. That's good.

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?

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. You'd be afraid to meet 'em all alone. So it wasn't like what people were saying about her hating that cat. Fact is, she loved that cat. She needed him with her 'cause she felt so all alone.

MEG. Oh, Babe . . . 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 Barnette giving up his vendetta; then Willie Jay, heading north; and—Zackery called me up. (*Trembling with terror.*) He says he's gonna have me classified insane and 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.

BABE. I'm not?

MEG. No! He's trying to bluff you. Don't you see it? Barnette's got him running scared.

BABE. Really?

MEG. Sure. He's scared to death—calling you insane. Ha! 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.*) Come on now. Look, we've got Lenny's cake right here. I mean don't