

Mother Side #1

~~DOCTOR. I wasn't! She was the pretty one, and she died. Why not me? I hadn't said my morning prayers either. And I was ugly. Not just plain. Ugly. I was fat, I had big buck teeth, ears out to here, and freckles all over my face. Sister Mary Cleus used to call me Polka-Dot Livingstone. (The DOCTOR is laughing in spite of herself.)~~

~~MOTHER. So you left the Church because you had freckles?~~

~~DOCTOR. No, because... Yeah, I left the Church because I had freckles. And guess what?~~

~~MOTHER. What?~~

~~DOCTOR. (smiling) That's also why I hate nuns.~~

~~(AGNES is heard singing, then humming until indistinct.)~~

~~AGNES sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, domine Deus Sabaoth.~~

~~Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.~~

~~Sancta in excelsis.~~

~~Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.~~

~~Mosanna in excelsis.~~

~~DOCTOR. What is that so important to you, her singing?~~

MOTHER. When I was a child I used to speak with my guardian angel. Oh, I don't ask you to believe that I heard loud, miraculous voices, but just as some children have invisible playmates, I had angelic conversations. Like Agnes' mother, you might say, but I was a lot younger then, and I am not Agnes' mother. Anyway, when I was six I stopped listening and my angel stopped <sup>\*or scawny</sup>

START

speaking. But just as a sailor remembers the sea, I remembered that voice. I grew, fell in love, married and was widowed, joined the convent, and shortly after I was chosen Mother Superior, I looked at myself one day and saw nothing but a survivor of an unhappy marriage, a mother of two angry daughters, and a nun who was certain of nothing. Not even of Heaven, Doctor Livingstone. Not even of God. And then one evening, while walking in a field beside the convent wall, I heard a voice and looking up I saw one of our new postulants standing in her window, singing. It was Agnes, and she was beautiful; and all of my doubts about God and myself vanished in that one moment. I recognized the voice. (silence) Don't take it away from me again, Doctor Livingstone. Those years after six were very bleak.

~~DOCTOR. My sister died in a convent. And it's her voice I hear. (AGNES stops singing. Silence.) Does my smoking still bother you?~~

~~MOTHER. No, it only reminds me.~~

~~DOCTOR. Would you like one?~~

~~MOTHER. I would love one, but no thank you. DOCTOR. Once, years ago at the beginning of "the scare, I decided to stop. I had no idea how many cigarettes I smoked then, but I used a book of matches a day. So I came up with the ingenious plan of cutting back on matches. First a half book, then a quarter of a book, then down to three or four a day. And look at what happened. I can't even eat without a cigarette in my hand. I can't go to weddings or funerals, plays, concerts. But some days I can go fourteen hours on a single match. Remarkable, isn't it? Do you think the saint would have smoked, had tobacco been popular?~~

~~MOTHER. Undoubtedly. Not the cigarettes, of course, but, well, Saint Thomas More...~~