

Mother Side #2

~~black spots in front of them, and she tells me things like—right now she's crying Marie! Marie!" but I don't know what that means, and she uses me as a sing. It's as if she's throwing a sing hook through the air and it catches me under my ribs and tries to pull me up but I can't move because Mummy is holding my feet and all I can do is sing in her voice. It's the Lady's voice, God loves you. (silence) God loves you. (silence)~~

~~Doctor. Do you know a Marie?~~

~~Agnes. No. Do you? (silence)~~

~~Doctor. What should I?~~

~~Agnes. I don't know. (silence)~~

~~Doctor. Do you hear them often, (these voices?)~~

~~Agnes. I don't want to talk anymore, all right? I just want to go home.~~

START

ACT ONE  
SCENE 5

MOTHER. Well, what do you think? Is she totally bananas or merely slightly off center? Or maybe she's perfectly sane and just a very good liar. What have you decided?

Doctor. I haven't yet. What about you?

MOTHER. Me?

Doctor. Yes. You know her better than I do. What's your opinion?

MOTHER. Well . . . I believe that she's . . . *not* crazy. Not is she lying.

Doctor. But how could she have a child and know nothing of sex and birth?

MOTHER. Because she's an innocent. She's a slate that hasn't been touched, except by God. There's no place for those facts in her mind.

Doctor. Oh, bullshit.

MOTHER. In her case it isn't. Her mother kept her home almost all of the time. She's had very little schooling. I don't know how her mother avoided the authorities but she did. When her mother died, Agnes came to us. She's never been "out there," Doctor. She's never seen a television show or a movie. She's never read a book.

Doctor. But if you believe she's so innocent, how could she murder a child?

MOTHER. She didn't. This is manslaughter, not murder. She did not consciously kill that baby. I don't know what *you'd* call it—whatever psychological medical jargon you people use—but she was not conscious at the time. That's why she's innocent. She honestly doesn't remember. She'd lost a lot of blood, she'd passed out by the time I'd found her . . .

Doctor. You want me to believe that she killed that baby, hid the wastepaper basket, and crawled to the door, all in some sort of mystical trance?

MOTHER. I don't care *what* you believe. You're her psychiatrist, not her jury. You're not determining her guilt.

Doctor. Was there ever any question of that?

MOTHER. What do you mean?

Doctor. Could someone else have murdered that child? (silence)

MOTHER. Not in the eyes of the police.

Doctor. And in your eyes?

MOTHER. I've told you what I believe.

END

DOCTOR. That she was unconscious at the time, yes, so someone else could have easily come into her room and . . . (done it.)

MOTHER. You don't honestly think . . . (something like that happened.)

DOCTOR. It's *possible*, isn't it?

MOTHER. Who?

DOCTOR. I don't know, perhaps one of the other nuns. She found out about the baby and wanted to avoid a scandal.

MOTHER. That's absurd.

DOCTOR. That possibility never occurred to you?

MOTHER. *No one* knew about Agnes' pregnancy. *No one*. Not even Agnes. (*silence*)

DOCTOR. When did you first learn about this innocence of hers, about the way she thinks?

MOTHER. A short while after she came to us.

DOCTOR. And you weren't shocked?

MOTHER. I was appalled. Just as you are now. You'll get used to it.

DOCTOR. What happened?

MOTHER. She stopped eating. Completely.

DOCTOR. This was before her pregnancy?

MOTHER. Almost two years before.

DOCTOR. How long did this go on?

MOTHER. I don't know. I think it was about two weeks before it was reported to me.

DOCTOR. Why did she do this?

MOTHER. She refused to explain at first. She was brought before me—sounds like a tribunal, doesn't it?—and when we were alone she confessed.

DOCTOR. Well?

MOTHER. She said she'd been commanded by God.

(*AGNES appears. Throughout the scene, one of AGNES' hands is inconspicuously hidden in the folds of her habit.*) He spoke to you Himself?

AGNES. No.

MOTHER. Through someone else?

AGNES. Yes.

MOTHER. Who?

AGNES. I can't say.

MOTHER. Why?

AGNES. She'd punish me.

MOTHER. One of the sisters?

AGNES. No.

MOTHER. Who? (*silence*) Why would she tell you to do this?

AGNES. I don't know.

MOTHER. Why do you think?

AGNES. Because I'm getting fat.

MOTHER. Oh, for Heaven's sake.

AGNES. I am. There's too much flesh on me.

MOTHER. Agnes . . .

AGNES. I'm a blimp.

MOTHER. . . . why does it matter whether you're fat or not?

AGNES. Because.

MOTHER. You needn't worry about being attractive here.

AGNES. I do. I have to be attractive to God.

MOTHER. He loves you as you are.

AGNES. No He doesn't. He hates fat people.

MOTHER. Who told you this?

AGNES. It's a sin to be fat.

MOTHER. Why?

AGNES. Look at all the statues. *They're thin.*

END

TRATS