

meant as much as those three do. Oh, I was never a devout Catholic—my doubts about the faith began when I was six—but when Marie died I walked away from religion as fast as my mind would take me. Mama never forgave me. And I never forgave the Church. But I learned to live with my anger, forget it even . . . until *she* walked into my office, and every time I saw her after that first lovely moment I became more and more . . . entranced. (*silence*) Marie. Marie.

ACT ONE

SCENE 7

~~AGNES. Yes, Doctor?~~

DOCTOR. Agnes, I want you to tell me how you feel about babies.

AGNES. Oh, I don't like them. They frighten me. I'm afraid I'll drop them. They're always growing, you know. I'm afraid they'll grow too fast and wriggle right out of my arms. They have a soft spot on their heads and if you drop them so they land on their heads they become stupid. That's where I was dropped. You see, I don't understand things.

DOCTOR. Like what?

AGNES. Numbers. I don't understand where they're all headed. You could spend your whole life counting and never reach the end.

DOCTOR. I don't understand them either. Do you think I was dropped on my head?

AGNES. Oh, I hope not. It's a terrible thing, one of the great tragedies of life, to be dropped on your head. And there are other things, not just numbers.

DOCTOR. What things?

Doctor & Agnes

AGNES. Everything, sometimes. I wake up and I just can't get hold of the world. It won't stand still.

DOCTOR. So what do you do?

AGNES. I talk to God. *He* doesn't frighten me.

DOCTOR. Is that why you're a nun?

AGNES. I suppose so. I couldn't live without Him.

DOCTOR. But don't you think God works through other religions, and other ways of life?

AGNES. I don't know.

DOCTOR. Couldn't I talk to Him?

AGNES. You could try. I don't know if He'd listen to *you*.

DOCTOR. Why not?

AGNES. Because you don't listen to Him.

DOCTOR. Agnes, have you ever thought of leaving the convent? For something else?

AGNES. Oh no. There's nothing else. It makes me happy. Just being here helps me sleep at night.

DOCTOR. You have trouble sleeping?

AGNES. I get headaches. Mummy did too. She'd lie in the dark with a wet cloth over her face and tell me to go away. Oh, but she wasn't stupid. Oh no, she was very smart. She knew everything. She even knew things nobody else knew.

DOCTOR. What things?

AGNES. The future. She knew what was going to happen to me, and that's why she hid me away. I didn't mind that. I didn't like school very much. And I liked being with Mummy. She'd tell me all kinds of things. She told me I would enter the convent, and I did. She even knew about this.

DOCTOR. This?

AGNES. This.

DOCTOR. Me?

AGNES. This.

DOCTOR. How did she know . . . about this?

AGNES. Somebody told her.

DOCTOR. Who?

AGNES. I don't know.

DOCTOR. Agnes.

AGNES. You'll laugh.

DOCTOR. I promise I won't laugh. Who told her?

AGNES. An angel. When she was having one of her headaches. Before I was born.

DOCTOR. Did your mother see angels often?

AGNES. No. Only when she had her headaches. And not even then, sometimes.

DOCTOR. Do you see angels?

AGNES. (*a little too quickly*) No.

DOCTOR. Do you believe that your mother really saw them?

AGNES. No. But I could never tell her that.

DOCTOR. Why not?

AGNES. She'd get angry. She'd punish me.

DOCTOR. How would she punish you?

AGNES. She'd . . . punish me.

DOCTOR. Did you love your mother?

AGNES. Oh, yes. Yes.

DOCTOR. Did you ever want to become a mother yourself?

AGNES. I could never be a mother.

DOCTOR. Why not?

AGNES. I don't think I'm old enough. Besides, I don't want a baby.

DOCTOR. Why not?

AGNES. Because I don't want one.

DOCTOR. But if you did want one, how would you go about getting one?

AGNES. I'd adopt it.

DOCTOR. Where would the adopted baby come from?

AGNES. From an agency.

DOCTOR. Before the agency.

AGNES. From someone who didn't want a baby.

DOCTOR. Like you?

AGNES. No! Not like me.

DOCTOR. But how would that person get the baby if they didn't want it?

AGNES. A mistake.

DOCTOR. How did your mother get you?

AGNES. A mistake! It was a mistake!

DOCTOR. Is that what she said?

AGNES. You're trying to get me to say that she was a bad woman, and that she hated me, and she didn't want me, but that is not true, because she did love me, and she was a good woman, a saint, and she *did* want me. You don't want to hear the nice parts about her—all you're interested in is sickness!

~~DOCTOR. Agnes, I cannot imagine that you know nothing about sex . . .~~

~~AGNES. I can't help it if I'm stupid.~~

~~DOCTOR. . . . that you have no idea who the father of your child was . . .~~

~~AGNES. They made it up!~~

~~DOCTOR. . . . that you have no remembrance of your impregnation . . .~~

~~AGNES. It's not my fault!~~

~~DOCTOR. . . . and that you don't believe that you carried a child!~~

~~AGNES. It was a mistake!~~

~~DOCTOR. What, the child?~~

~~AGNES. Everything! Nuns don't have children!~~

~~DOCTOR. Agnes . . .~~

~~AGNES. Don't touch me like that! Don't touch me like~~