

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 & Mother

(*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.*

MOTHER. Agnes . . .

AGNES. That's because they're suffering. Suffering is beautiful. I want to be beautiful.

MOTHER. Who tells you these things?

AGNES. Christ said it in the Bible. He said, "Suffer the little children, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." I want to suffer like a little child.

MOTHER. That's not what . . . (He meant.)

AGNES. I *am* a little child, but my body keeps getting bigger. I don't want it to get bigger because then I won't be able to fit in. I won't be able to squeeze into Heaven.

MOTHER. Agnes, dear, Heaven is not . . . (a place with bars or windows.)

AGNES. (*cupping her breasts*) I mean look at these. I've got to lose weight.

MOTHER. (*reaching toward AGNES*) Oh my dear child.

AGNES. I'm too fat! Look at this—I'm a blimp! God blew up the *Hindenburg*. He'll blow up me. That's what she said.

MOTHER. Who?

AGNES. Mummy! I'll get bigger and bigger every day and then I'll pop! But if I stay little it won't happen!

MOTHER. Your mother tells you this? (*silence*) Agnes, dear, your mother is dead.

AGNES. But she watches. She listens.

MOTHER. Nonsense. I'm your mother now, and I want you to eat.

AGNES. I'm not hungry.

MOTHER. You have to eat *something*, Agnes.

AGNES. No I don't. The host is enough.

MOTHER. My dear, I don't think a communion wafer has the Recommended Daily Allowance of *anything*.

AGNES. Of God.

MOTHER. Oh yes, of God.

AGNES. What does that word mean? Begod?

MOTHER. Begod. You don't know?

AGNES. That God's my father?

MOTHER. Only spiritually. You don't know what that means? Begod?

AGNES. Begod. That's what *she* calls it. But I don't understand it. *She* says it means when God presents us to our mothers, in bundles of eight pounds six ounces.

MOTHER. Oh my dear.

AGNES. I have to be eight pounds again, Mother.

MOTHER. You'd even drop the six ounces. Come here. (*MOTHER reaches out for an embrace. AGNES avoids the embrace, keeping the one hand concealed in her habit. MOTHER stares at the hidden hand.*) Now what's wrong?

AGNES. I'm being punished.

MOTHER. For what?

AGNES. I don't know.

MOTHER. How? (*AGNES presents a hand wrapped in a bloody handkerchief.*) What happened? (*AGNES removes the handkerchief.*) Oh dear Jesus. Oh dear Jesus.

AGNES. It started this morning, and I can't get it to stop. Why me, Mother? Why me?

DOCTOR. How long did it last?

MOTHER. It was gone by the following morning.

DOCTOR. Did it ever come back?

MOTHER. Not that I know of, no.

DOCTOR. Why didn't you send her to a doctor?

MOTHER. I didn't see the need. She began eating again, and that's . . . (all that seemed important at the time.)

DOCTOR. You thought that's all there was to it? Get