

window was open and I could see mountains of snow all around. Below me on a table lay a woman prepared for a caesarean. She began to scream and I knew I had to cut the baby out as quickly as possible. I slipped a knife into her belly, then reached to my wrists inside. Suddenly I felt a tiny hand grab hold of my finger and begin to pull, and the woman's hands pressed down on my head and the little creature inside drew me in, to the elbows, to the shoulders, to the chin, and when I opened my mouth to scream it filled with blood, I couldn't breathe -- and I woke up, gasping, to find my sheets spotted with blood. *My blood.* My rather sporadic menstrual cycle had ceased altogether some three years ago, but on that night it began again.

(*Silence.*)

What would I have done with a child? Nothing. Nothing.

(*Silence.*)

The next day I asked for and received an order from the court allowing Agnes to return to my care. I was so sure I was right. As a doctor, perhaps, I should have known better, but as a person...

(*She begins beating her chest with her fist.*)

I am not made of stone. I am made of flesh and blood... and heart... and soul...

(*She continues viciously beating her chest in silence. Tears come. She stops. Silence.*)

This is it. The last reel. No alternate in sight.

(*MOTHER enters.*)

→ **MOTHER.** Well, you've won, haven't you?

DOCTOR. Not at all, not yet.

MOTHER. You've decided to take... (her apart.)

DOCTOR. I've decided to hypnotize her again.

MOTHER. Hasn't she had enough?

DOCTOR. And I want to ask you a few questions that I wasn't able to ask you before...

MOTHER. My God, but you're vindictive.

DOCTOR. ...because you very cleverly steered me away from them.

MOTHER. Then ask!

DOCTOR. Did Agnes ever say anything to you about not feeling well, while she was carrying the child?

MOTHER. Yes, she did.

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

MOTHER. She wouldn't go. She was afraid.

DOCTOR. Of what? That he might find something out?

Is that what she told you or did you guess that?

MOTHER. If you're going to continue to persecute us...

(I'll stop this conversation immediately.)

DOCTOR. I'm not persecuting you, I'm asking you a question.

MOTHER. I'm a nun and you... (hate nuns.)

DOCTOR. Did you know that she was pregnant?!

MOTHER. Yes!

(*MOTHER tries to fight back tears.*)

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

MOTHER. It was too late.

DOCTOR. What do you mean?

MOTHER. I didn't guess it until...

(*MOTHER can't finish the sentence.*)

DOCTOR. Until when? Don't waste those tears on me, Mother. Until when?

MOTHER. Until it was too late.

DOCTOR. For what? An abortion?

MOTHER. Don't be absurd.

DOCTOR. Too late for what?!

MOTHER. I don't know -- too late to stop it!

DOCTOR. The baby?

MOTHER. The scandal! It was too late but I had to try. I had to keep it quiet. I made her promise not to tell anyone. I had to have time to think.

DOCTOR. And you didn't get it, did you?

MOTHER. No! That night when she was ill, I knew...

DOCTOR. That time had run out?

MOTHER. Yes.

DOCTOR. So you went to her room to help her with the birth.

MOTHER. She didn't want help.

DOCTOR. But *you* wanted the child out of the way.

MOTHER. That's a lie.

DOCTOR. You hid the wastepaper basket in the room.

MOTHER. I didn't hide it! I put it there for the blood and the dirty sheets!

DOCTOR. And the baby.

MOTHER. No!

DOCTOR. You tied the cord around its neck...

MOTHER. I simply wanted her to have it when no one was around. I would have taken the baby to a hospital and left it with them. But there was so much blood, I panicked.

DOCTOR. Before or after you killed the child?

MOTHER. I left it with her! I went for help!

DOCTOR. I doubt that's what *she'll* say.

MOTHER. Then she's a goddamn liar!

End → *(Silence. MOTHER covers her face with her hands. AGNES is heard singing.)*

AGNES.

~~AGNUS DEI, QUI SOLLIS PECCATA MUNDI, MISERERE~~

~~NOBIS. AGNUS DEI, QUI SOLLIS PECCATA MUNDI,~~

~~MISERERE NOBIS. AGNUS DEI, QUI SOLLIS PECCATA~~

~~MUNDI, DONA NOBIS PACEM.~~

~~**MOTHER.** All right. Let's finish this once and for all.~~

(MOTHER leaves, goes to AGNES. She gently takes AGNES' face between her hands, then ushers her into the room.)

DOCTOR. Hello, Agnes.

AGNES. Hello.

DOCTOR. I have some more questions I'd like to ask you. Is that all right?

AGNES. Yes.

DOCTOR. And I'd like to hypnotize you again. Is that all right too?

AGNES. Yes.

DOCTOR. Good. Sit down. Relax. You're going to enter the pool of water again. Only this time, I want you to imagine that there are holes in your body, and the warm water is flowing into those holes, behind your eyes, warm, so warm, so clean, like prayer; your eyes are so heavy, so...sleepy. Close your eyes. When I count to three, you'll wake up. Agnes, can you hear me?

AGNES. Yes.

DOCTOR. I'm going to ask you a few questions, and I'd like you to keep your eyes closed. All right?

AGNES. Yes.

DOCTOR. I would like you to remember, if you can, one night about a year ago, a Saturday night, when one of the sisters in the convent died.

MOTHER. Sister Paul.

DOCTOR. The night when Sister Paul died. Do you remember?

AGNES. Yes.

DOCTOR. What's the matter?

AGNES. I liked Sister Paul.

DOCTOR. Agnes, what happened that night?

AGNES. She sent me to bed early.

DOCTOR. Who did?

AGNES. Mother.