

## Start

(**AGNES** appears. Throughout the scene, one of her 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 not?

**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 to embrace her.*) Oh my dear child.

**AGNES.** (*Pulling away.*) I'm too fat! Look at me – 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?

(**AGNES** says *nothing.*)

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. Begot. You don't know?

AGNES. That God's my father?

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

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. Only now does MOTHER notice 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. Blood seeps from a hole in her palm.)*

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. Did she do it herself?

*(AGNES leaves the scene.)*

MOTHER. No, I don't believe so. It was gone by the following morning.

DOCTOR. Did it ever come back?

MOTHER. Not that I know of, no.

**End**

~~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 some food down her throat and she's all better?~~

~~MOTHER. Of course not. Look, I know what you're thinking. She's a hysteric, pure and simple.~~

~~DOCTOR. Not simple, no.~~

~~MOTHER. I saw it. Clean through the palm of her hand. Do you think hysteria did that?~~

~~DOCTOR. It's been doing it for centuries – she's not unique, you know. She's just another victim.~~

~~MOTHER. Yes, God's victim. That's her innocence. She belongs to God.~~

~~DOCTOR. And I mean to take her away from Him – that's what you fear, isn't it?~~

~~MOTHER. You bet I do.~~

~~DOCTOR. Well, I prefer to look upon it as opening her mind.~~

~~MOTHER. To the world?~~

~~DOCTOR. To herself. So she can begin to heal.~~

~~MOTHER. But that's not your job, is it? You're here to diagnose, not to heal.~~

~~DOCTOR. That is a matter of opinion.~~

~~MOTHER. The judge's... (opinion.)~~

~~DOCTOR. *Your* opinion. I'm here to help her in whatever way I see fit. That's my duty as a doctor.~~

~~MOTHER. But not as an employee of the court. You're to make a decision on her sanity as quickly as possible and not interfere with due process of law. Those are the judge's words, not mine.~~

~~DOCTOR. As quickly as I see fit, not as possible. I haven't made that decision yet.~~

~~MOTHER. But the kindest thing you can do for Agnes is to make that decision and let her go.~~

~~DOCTOR. Back to court?~~

~~MOTHER. Yes.~~