

# why birds fly

by

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## WHY BIRDS FLY

A tragic comedy on the nature of the patriarchy, two women try to put their lives back together after a terrible storm. Drawn from the Persephone/Demeter myth, Judeo-Christian tradition and the Beckett-esque physical clown-theatre, these hard-scrabbling women each seek a new beginning. Grace wants to put her family back together, but Mary is desperate to break free.

## CHARACTERS

OLDER WOMAN (GRACE)

could be the mother of YOUNGER WOMAN (MARY). She has a head wound that is bleeding. She is also leaking breast milk. She is perhaps as young as twelve to fifteen years older than Mary.

YOUNGER WOMAN (MARY)

very pale as if she hasn't seen the light of day in many months. She bleeds down her thighs and has recently given birth. Leaking colostrum from her breasts. As young as an adult can play her without making her seem childish although she might be child-like. She is somewhere between fourteen and twenty. Desperate to leave.

## SETTING

After a terrible storm, a home has been uprooted and destroyed. There is the door to the refrigerator propped against the entrance to a cellar below. Everything is in shattered pieces. The kitchen sink upended. The oven ripped from its wall. Stuff all over. Shingles and siding. Nails. A rifle in a case. Iconic American items (Minute Rice, Wonder Bread, etc) strewn about. The inside has become outside, but by the end of the play this is reversed as Grace turns all this into her nest in her attempt to keep Mary in it.

## TIME

The present. The play runs in "real time" from lights up to lights down in one unending sequence of actions, but if the theatre prefers an intermission, this could occur on p. 47.

## THANKS and ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

to Alan MacVey, Martin C. Jenni, Art Borreca, Erik Ehn, Nilo Cruz, John C. Beaird, Tanna Frederick, Pauline Tyer, Dorothy Png, and the University of Iowa for development and encouragement.

## WHY BIRDS FLY

(There is a pistol on the floor near a trail of fresh blood which leads toward the refrigerator door barricade. OLDER WOMAN holds a pair of men's suspenders stunned. There is a struggle below. SHE moves away, toward the outside searching. SHE finds a Wonder Bread bag and glams onto it. The sounds of choking and thuds from below. SHE needs birds and begins to feed them crusts of bread, but they won't eat.)

### OLDER WOMAN

Why won't you eat something? Huh? No desire?

Waste.

I'd eat if I were you. But I'm not you, so don't get any ideas. But you should eat. Never know when your next meal is coming.

You think I poisoned it? Cause I'm a nurse? Was a nurse? Working with all that medicine? You think I got access to poison?

(laughs)

Want to make a bet?

(pretending to eat some, as one would with an infant)

Mmmmm, good. You think it'll kill you?

(OLDER WOMAN seizes up as if someone is choking her. SHE struggles and goes for the pistol on the floor.)

### OLDER WOMAN

Angel of death! I see you coming. I feel your long cool fingers at my throat... I spit on you!

(laughs, then to birds)

Had you fooled, didn't I? Hah!

(laughs)

So what's wrong with you? I was only kidding. It's good. Promise.

Aimless. You lost all your instincts, that's what. Wouldn't recognize a morsel if I shoved it down your throats. Born that way, weren't you? Mama bird came and stuffed you full of it, and you spend your whole life trying to find the same taste in your mouth again. Rummagers. That's what you are. Rummagers. Whatever Mama found that Day One to shut you up, that's your life's work to recreating. True? Well, I'm not your mama.

(YOUNGER WOMAN crawls our from behind the refrigerator unseen by OLDER WOMAN. If this process of overcoming the crude barricade makes noise or disturbs the wood planks or the tree bark on the refrigerator, OLDER WOMAN doesn't want to notice it although it may terrify her. OLDER WOMAN speaks over it.)

OLDER WOMAN

Not even gonna peck at it? Come on. Won't bite you.

No sense of smell. That's your problem. No instinct left. No sense of hunger. No sense of need. No sense of anything you ever had before all this. Big storm. Anyone said only the roaches would survive. Said that a lot, he did. But you and me, we outlasted them too, didn't we?

Didn't we?

I'm not hungry. I'm nothing.

Trees all rotted up. You go up to them, bark falls right off. No trouble in the prying. And I thought I'd find a universe beneath her skin but she's smooth and empty. Petrified like stone. I know. I went. I saw. I did it.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Did what?

OLDER WOMAN

Pulled the bark off the... Where did you – ? How did you get here?

YOUNGER WOMAN

Tell me.

OLDER WOMAN

Nothing to tell. You're the stranger.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Am I?

OLDER WOMAN

No! I didn't mean it. I was talking to the birds.

YOUNGER WOMAN

What birds?

OLDER WOMAN

We were playing. Just a game. To pass the time, see? Time is funny now. I can't tell how much goes and how much more there might still be. I don't even know if the hospital's still there. If I even have a job or how I'd manage it if I did. Anyone used to know those things.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Anyone's not here.

OLDER WOMAN

Then you're not the Angel of Death?

YOUNGER WOMAN

Would I tell you if I was?

OLDER WOMAN

Would you forgive me?

YOUNGER WOMAN

For what?

OLDER WOMAN

It was an honest mistake. Anyone could have done it.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Anyone's dead, and besides, he didn't. Someone did.

OLDER WOMAN

I didn't mean it. I swear I didn't. Anyone's dead?

YOUNGER WOMAN

He's gone. I'm here.

OLDER WOMAN

But a minute ago you weren't. There was only me. No one.

YOUNGER WOMAN

I'm here now.

OLDER WOMAN

I was alone. I didn't think I'd offend a soul. I didn't think Anyone was here.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Not Anyone. Me. Besides, where else would I be?

OLDER WOMAN

Nowhere. I looked for you. I was trying to find someone.

YOUNGER WOMAN

You found me.

OLDER WOMAN

Are you sure? Seems you found me.

YOUNGER WOMAN

I was looking for you.

OLDER WOMAN

When I was looking, when I first started looking, I thought I'd do the finding. I was out to make the discoveries. I looked everywhere. Even places where no one could be.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Like the inside of trees?

OLDER WOMAN

And underneath rocks.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Where the bugs are.

OLDER WOMAN

Not anymore they're not.

YOUNGER WOMAN

They're gone?

OLDER WOMAN

Every living thing.

YOUNGER WOMAN

You don't know that. Every tree? There's a tree.

OLDER WOMAN

Dead. Every plant, every spore, every cell, except for us of course, but...

YOUNGER WOMAN

What?

OLDER WOMAN

How do I know you're not dead?

YOUNGER WOMAN

Have you lost your mind?

OLDER WOMAN

No. I keep it in my head at all times, right behind my eyes. If I even begin to forget where it is I look to where I used to lose my eyeglasses.

(patting the top of her head)

See? It's always exactly where I left it. Never moves.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Hmmph.

OLDER WOMAN

How do I know you're not the Angel of Death?

YOUNGER WOMAN

Is that who you think I am?

OLDER WOMAN

Because I wronged someone?

YOUNGER WOMAN

You know you have.

OLDER WOMAN

Then you're here to take your revenge?

YOUNGER WOMAN

Maybe.

To take my life?  
OLDER WOMAN

Is that a fair price?  
YOUNGER WOMAN

No.  
OLDER WOMAN

Is that what you're offering?  
YOUNGER WOMAN

No... Who are you?  
OLDER WOMAN

Would you like to play a game?  
YOUNGER WOMAN

No.  
OLDER WOMAN

I bet you're lonely.  
YOUNGER WOMAN

Is that the game? I don't want to play.  
OLDER WOMAN

I – uh, uh, I don't feel so good.  
YOUNGER WOMAN

Wait. Sit. I've got something for you. It's here somewhere. Wait I've got... here. Drink.  
OLDER WOMAN

Water man don't come no more?  
YOUNGER WOMAN

After a storm like that? Everything has to start again from scratch. It's good. I had some. I'm fine. Been fine the whole time.  
OLDER WOMAN

What whole time?  
YOUNGER WOMAN

The storm. You know ...  
OLDER WOMAN

No. A storm did this?  
YOUNGER WOMAN

It wasn't Anyone, for a change. Anyone's dead??  
OLDER WOMAN

He is.  
YOUNGER WOMAN

But I've been fine.  
OLDER WOMAN

Surprised? Thought you couldn't live without him, huh?  
YOUNGER WOMAN

Drink. No? You think it's me? There's something in me that survives? Some immunity?  
OLDER WOMAN

That's what Anyone said. "No one's left up there," he said. That's what he said. He said, "the whole world's poisoned." On and on. Over and over. "Only the immune survive."  
YOUNGER WOMAN

We must be immune then. Here. Drink. It's new. It's not from the world, if that's what you think. I had it the whole time. Not much left, but I got more. You can have it. Go on.  
OLDER WOMAN

No, I—  
YOUNGER WOMAN

Please.  
OLDER WOMAN

Why?  
YOUNGER WOMAN

You're not well. OLDER WOMAN

Why else? YOUNGER WOMAN

You need it. OLDER WOMAN

And? YOUNGER WOMAN

It's the right thing to do. Huh? OLDER WOMAN

Why? YOUNGER WOMAN

Is this a test? OLDER WOMAN

Of what? YOUNGER WOMAN

I can still recognize thirst, even if someone can't. Even if someone lost all their instincts. OLDER WOMAN

I have not. YOUNGER WOMAN

You have or you'd drink. OLDER WOMAN

I'll drink then. I'll drink. Bleccchh! It's – it's – YOUNGER WOMAN

It's all I got. OLDER WOMAN

Milk? You'd give me milk?  
YOUNGER WOMAN

Sorry.  
OLDER WOMAN

Sorry? Sorry!  
YOUNGER WOMAN

The Angel of Death would have known not to drink it.  
OLDER WOMAN

You wouldn't have offered.  
YOUNGER WOMAN

She wouldn't get sick on me.  
OLDER WOMAN

On you? I'm not on you.  
YOUNGER WOMAN

You're the only one left.  
OLDER WOMAN

Most recent. Not last.  
YOUNGER WOMAN

The only person I've seen.  
OLDER WOMAN

There could be others. You haven't looked.  
YOUNGER WOMAN

No. You said. Not Anyone.  
OLDER WOMAN

Besides Anyone. You don't know.  
YOUNGER WOMAN

OLDER WOMAN

I've looked.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Where?

OLDER WOMAN

Around. I don't want to tell you what I've seen.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Something bad?

OLDER WOMAN

No bugs anymore. Not even under rocks. Always thought we were weaker than bugs.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Bugs don't step on us.

OLDER WOMAN

They might if they were bigger. Shame though if the bugs are gone.

YOUNGER WOMAN

If the bugs are gone, we don't have much longer. The bugs keep us alive from our insides out. All that cleaning in the hospitals and it's the bugs keeping us alive.

OLDER WOMAN

Imagine giant bugs coming like the years of cicadas. The world's flipped upside down. Think of six legs: boom boom boom boom boom boom! Like shots from a gun.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Do you have one?

OLDER WOMAN

What?

YOUNGER WOMAN

A gun?

OLDER WOMAN

If I had a gun, I wouldn't tell you about it.

YOUNGER WOMAN

You don't.

OLDER WOMAN

You can't know that.

YOUNGER WOMAN

I can look. I can see that you're not right in your head.

OLDER WOMAN

That's not true.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Imagining giant bugs?

OLDER WOMAN

I'm not wrong. I'm unsure. There's a difference.

YOUNGER WOMAN

You're afraid of someone. You hide things. Breasting your poker hand? Your face gives you away. I can read it.

OLDER WOMAN

I lie.

YOUNGER WOMAN

I know you do.

OLDER WOMAN

But I told you the truth.

YOUNGER WOMAN

When?

OLDER WOMAN

When my daughter was born and they put her in my arms I gave her everything I had. All for her: my life's blood, my last breath, the strength of every muscle, and my breasts – can't forget how she took the milk from my breasts. For years, even after I went back to hospital work, she was at me, sucking.

But I'm not her? YOUNGER WOMAN

No, you're not. OLDER WOMAN

Then who would I be? YOUNGER WOMAN

She's dead. OLDER WOMAN

You saw her? YOUNGER WOMAN

Saw her trying to leave. OLDER WOMAN

Trying isn't leaving. She didn't leave. YOUNGER WOMAN

Then Anyone must have... She left. Left. Dead. All the same to me. OLDER WOMAN

None of those. YOUNGER WOMAN

No? When was it, six months back? OLDER WOMAN

The day the sky fell in? YOUNGER WOMAN

I suppose. Then it was Anyone? That day? That was the day. OLDER WOMAN

When the sky fell in. YOUNGER WOMAN

OLDER WOMAN

Maybe it did.

YOUNGER WOMAN

It did.

OLDER WOMAN

Must have. It was different before. Anyone's gone?

YOUNGER WOMAN

Gone.

OLDER WOMAN

Seems impossible. You think nothing will ever change, but back then everything was changeable, changing all the time.

YOUNGER WOMAN

The sky?

OLDER WOMAN

And now it's stopped. I stopped. I've come to the end.

YOUNGER WOMAN

But you said you were looking.

OLDER WOMAN

For six months, looking.

YOUNGER WOMAN

For your daughter?

OLDER WOMAN

She was beautiful. Like you in ways, but not so, so swollen up which can make a person softer, but you seem hard.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Am I hard now?

OLDER WOMAN

Harder than she was. When she left.

YOUNGER WOMAN

And what about you? Are you harder now too?

OLDER WOMAN

I don't have to be.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Is there a choice?

OLDER WOMAN

If you would stay and be my daughter, I'd be soft and sweet and sing, all the lullabies I've forgotten. I would brush someone's hair and kiss someone's cheek and stroke her forehead while someone sleeps.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Is that the game you want to play?

OLDER WOMAN

For real I would.

YOUNGER WOMAN

What about winning?

OLDER WOMAN

No one has to win.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Who would be the loser then?

OLDER WOMAN

We could both be winners.

YOUNGER WOMAN

You think I want a mother?

OLDER WOMAN

Don't you? You must be lonely. You must be tired. And I know you're not well in yourself. You fell before. I had to help you.

YOUNGER WOMAN

You never wanted a daughter with troubles. You didn't ask to take care of someone.

OLDER WOMAN

Didn't I? My own daughter started out so weak. There was fluid in her chest, from birth, y'see? I spent every night with a glass to her lips watching for breath, rubbing her back, kneading her arms and legs to keep the blood circulating. Little bluebird I called her. Little blue.

YOUNGER WOMAN

I bet you hated her for it. Held it against her. All those nights of sleep you lost.

OLDER WOMAN

I held up the glass. She made me old.

YOUNGER WOMAN

She made you nothing.

OLDER WOMAN

Yes.

YOUNGER WOMAN

No, no, no. How can she make you when you made her?

OLDER WOMAN

Wasn't fair.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Let's play a game.

OLDER WOMAN

No.

YOUNGER WOMAN

We'll make it fair.

OLDER WOMAN

What are the rules?

YOUNGER WOMAN

We'll make them up.

OLDER WOMAN

I want to go first.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Okay.

OLDER WOMAN

You be my daughter come back.

YOUNGER WOMAN

What's my name?

OLDER WOMAN

Mary. Since I'm Mary too, and you were named for me, and my Mama, but I want to be Grace.

YOUNGER WOMAN

Grace.

GRACE

But you'll call me Mother or Mama or Mommy or Ma.

MARY

Mama.

GRACE

Yes, that's good. And you will be well.

MARY

Unharmd.

GRACE

Innocent, as you were before you left.

MARY

Tried to leave.

GRACE

Wandered.

Got taken.	MARY
Fell.	GRACE
Broke.	MARY
Left.	GRACE
No. Trapped. And hurt.	MARY
All those things.	GRACE
Forgotten?	MARY
Never happened.	GRACE
I'll be new.	MARY
Grown, like before.	GRACE
Young.	MARY
Unknowing.	GRACE
Fresh, as in ripe.	MARY

But unplucked. GRACE

Unbruised. MARY

Perfect. GRACE

No.\* No. MARY

(simultaneous with second no)  
\*No? It's my turn. GRACE

Not perfect. MARY

Perfect to me. And I'm gonna teach you all you need to know, and then you'll be tested, and you will not fail. GRACE

You say. MARY

I know it. GRACE

Are you going to start? MARY

(GRACE searches. SHE is lost already.  
MARY sees GRACE needs help. MARY  
finds the crusts of bread.)

Mama, how do birds fly? MARY

GRACE

Birds got wings to beat the air.

MARY

When birds beat the air, does the air hurt?

GRACE

No Mary, air doesn't feel pain. We feel the air, and sometimes, if we're not good, the wind comes and pushes the air against our skin so hard it hurts us. But the air's not hurt.

MARY

Why aren't we good?

GRACE

We have to listen, pay attention, and do all the things we're told to do. Then we'll be good.

MARY

Does attention cost a lot of money?

GRACE

Remember the carvings you used to make for me on Mother's Day? Attention's a gift we give when we're trying to be good. It doesn't cost nothing but care.

MARY

What's good?

GRACE

Beauty's good.

MARY

What's beauty?

GRACE

A smile. That's beauty. Yes, beauty.

(GRACE retrieves a Saltine from a box in the dirt. GRACE breaks the cracker in half and shares it with MARY placing it in her mouth. MARY eats her half. GRACE puts hers back.)

GRACE  
Beauty.

MARY  
Is the whole world beauty, Mama?

GRACE  
Remember how the sun came up over the fields? Birds would sing, and flowers turned their petals east. The bed was soft and fresh and clean, and the bread rose under its cloth, and the oven lit. The house was warm with a fire?

MARY  
Oven's still lit.

GRACE  
Don't say that.

MARY  
Why not?

GRACE  
Oven doesn't work and you know it.

MARY  
I do not.

GRACE  
If the oven still worked, I'd stick my head in it.

MARY  
Just make you puke probably.

GRACE  
Nothing in me to puke.

MARY  
Wouldn't kill you Mama. There are no walls to hold the gas.

GRACE  
That's always been my problem.

Huh?

MARY

I got to fix these walls.

GRACE

Are you going to shut yourself in and suicide?

MARY

I had a hammer too.

GRACE

I know you won't. Can't.

MARY

Don't start telling me what I can't do.

GRACE

It's a sin that.

MARY

So's murder.

GRACE

Anyone said –

MARY

I don't care what Anyone said!

GRACE

Beauty, beauty, beauty, beauty, beauty, beauty, beauty.

MARY

(MARY belches.)

GRACE

That is not beauty.

MARY

That's my belly. Is my belly beauty Mama?

GRACE  
Not when it makes noise.

MARY  
The air is gonna punish me.

(MARY slaps her belly hard – painfully –  
until GRACE stops her.)

GRACE  
Stop it. Stop it. Stop it. Stop it. Stop it. Stop!  
(continues with “stop its” until MARY stops)  
You started me off all wrong. I wanted to start.

MARY  
I was only trying to help.

GRACE  
You can't. You're ignorant. I'm the one in charge now.

MARY  
Is that why you had me?

GRACE  
Shut up.

MARY  
I won't play like that.

GRACE  
You have to.

MARY  
I'm leaving.

GRACE  
I'll stop you.

MARY  
You can't do anything.

GRACE

You don't know that. You don't know me.

MARY

If I spent nine months in your cunt I know you, ate you, slept you, drank you, shit you. I know the thoughts in your head and the dance to your heartbeat, the smell of you inside and out, and I know your body. I sucked on your tits ingesting every code that makes you tell me to shut up. Let me go!

(GRACE shoves MARY to the ground. Seeing MARY there, GRACE feels terrible yet panicked. GRACE straddles MARY pinning MARY to the ground. GRACE grabs MARY's wrists and moves MARY's clenched fists over and then away from MARY's face repeatedly. GRACE plays baby games.)

GRACE

Aaaaah boo! Aaaah boo! Go away! Aaaah boo! Go away! Go away!

(As GRACE plays with MARY, MARY unclenches her hands and plays along, growing even younger.)

(When GRACE starts enjoying the game, MARY changes the grip of their hands and bites GRACE's hand hard.)

(GRACE pulls away. MARY stands over GRACE.)

GRACE

You bit me!

MARY

Comes with the territory. Bye!

GRACE

What are you doing?

Leaving. MARY

You don't know anything yet. GRACE

I know enough to leave. MARY

You don't know where you're going. GRACE

Does it matter to you? MARY

You matter. GRACE

Liar. I'm taking your stuff. MARY

I give it to you. GRACE

It's mine anyway. MARY

Take it. GRACE

Don't want it. MARY

Take it anyway. GRACE

Don't need it. MARY

Don't know how to use it, huh? GRACE

Wouldn't care to – came from you. MARY

Just like you did. Scared and useless. GRACE

I'm not scared. MARY

Wouldn't have the sense to be scared yet. GRACE

What do you know? MARY

Everything. I'm your mother. GRACE

Prove it. MARY

(GRACE opens her blouse and shows her tit.)

See that mark? Above the nipple there? GRACE

So? MARY

That's from you. GRACE

(MARY makes a tooth mark on her own hand, compares the two.)

Doesn't match.

MARY

Baby teeth. I got 'em.

GRACE

(GRACE searches for the baby teeth.)

GRACE

After the storm, they were one of the first things I looked for.

(GRACE gets the teeth and marks herself on her hand with them.)

GRACE

See? Do you see them? See how they match?

MARY

They're not mine.

(GRACE shows the recent mark on her own hand and compares it to the mark on MARY's hand.)

GRACE

This does.

MARY

Doesn't mean anything. I just did that.

GRACE

You bite women regular?

MARY

No.

GRACE

But you bit me.

So?

MARY

Cause you bit me before.

GRACE

You don't know that.

MARY

You'd only bite me!

GRACE

Huh?

MARY

It's your instinct coming back. Getting the better of you, if you ask me.

GRACE

I wouldn't.

MARY

You don't know nothing yet.

GRACE

Then tell me!

MARY

Don't be curious. It's a bad habit.

GRACE

What's a bad habit?

MARY

Something we do we shouldn't, but we can't keep from doing it.

GRACE

Like seeing what doesn't concern us? Pulling the bark off trees? Breathing?

MARY

GRACE  
Maybe.

MARY  
Is it the opposite of a good habit?

GRACE  
No. That's what nuns wear.

MARY  
Tell me something that'll keep me alive out there.

GRACE  
Don't walk into traffic, or traffic in stolen goods. Don't steal. Always be good, and don't forget to smile. Don't stare like that. Traffic: when a lot of buses come on the same day.

MARY  
There's only one bus here. One bus once a week.

GRACE  
Don't walk near it.

MARY  
I'll think on that.

GRACE  
No. Memorize it. Thinking involves too much risk. Go stand over there. Now walk this way. Keep walking. Head up. Smile.

MARY  
Like this?

GRACE  
No eye contact. Glaze. Glaze your eyes. Be tough but soft on the outside. You stopped smiling. Smiling is the soft part. Good.

(GRACE walks into MARY knocking  
MARY off balance.)

Hey!

MARY

Hay is for horses. Be a lady. Say excuse me.

GRACE

I didn't walk into you.

MARY

Watch where you're going.

GRACE

I can't see it if I'm not there yet.

MARY

Anticipate. Imagine. Invent. Try again. Good. Forward. Never look back. Tough and soft. Head up. See but don't get caught looking. Smile. Soft. Good. Eyes. Watch your eyes.

(GRACE crashes into MARY who lands on the ground.)

MARY

You hit me.

GRACE

You got to learn your lesson. You failed.

MARY

Let me up.

GRACE

You looked at me.

MARY

You're in my face.

GRACE

Eyes down.

(MARY spits in GRACE's face. GRACE slaps MARY.)

MARY

Your lesson stinks.

GRACE

Eyes down. You fail again.

MARY

You're hurting me!

GRACE

What do you do?

(MARY lunges at GRACE and knocks GRACE over. MARY moves to grab GRACE's stuff and leave. GRACE pulls out pistol.)

GRACE

Stop right there. I said stop. You want to stay alive? That's better.

(GRACE puts her gun away.)

GRACE

Give me a hug! I'm your mother! I love you. One hug. That's better, isn't it?

MARY

Can I see your gun?

GRACE

Take it. It's a toy. Doesn't work.

(MARY aims the gun at GRACE, then playfully fires the gun into the air. It goes off. It is not a toy.)

MARY

You lied. I could have shot you.

I took a chance.

GRACE

I could have killed you.

MARY

I wouldn't mind.

GRACE

You wouldn't, would you?

MARY

I love you Mary.

GRACE

You'd have me kill you to let me rot in Hell, "you love me." Take it.

MARY

It's yours now.

GRACE

I don't want it.

MARY

I give it to you.

GRACE

I don't want to kill you. I don't want to want to kill you.

MARY

You wanted me to show you how to keep yourself alive.

GRACE

This is it? With a gun?

MARY

My gun.

GRACE

MARY

I know whose gun it is, and I know where his rifle is too.

GRACE

Where?

MARY

In the case where it always is.

GRACE

You want to shoot me with that one?

MARY

I don't know how you survived so long.

GRACE

Same way you did. We're immune.

MARY

Hah!

GRACE

Then why haven't you dropped dead yet, huh? If you're not immune you'd be dead like Anyone.

MARY

Anyone didn't die of poison in the air.

GRACE

You don't know that.

MARY

Yes, I do. And just cause Anyone's dead doesn't mean everyone is. We're not.

GRACE

You sucked at my breast Mary. You're the only one who did. We're the same code in the same cells: alive.

MARY

Then why do I need this? Who am I protecting myself from?

Me. GRACE

You would kill me? MARY

If I had to, same way you'd kill me. And for the same reasons. GRACE

Why? MARY

You know why. GRACE

Remember that trucker who got stuck in the snow up on Black's Ridge? Sat in his cab writing those sappy letter to his wife and boys until he starved to death. When all he had to do was climb out of that truck and walk to Lucy's. MARY

Maybe he was cleansing himself. GRACE

Damn fool if you ask me. MARY

Maybe he was trying to get to heaven. GRACE

If we're immune, then I'm going into town and get me some clothes and things and taking the bus as far as it'll go. MARY

There is no bus. GRACE

There's always a bus. Every week. I could hear it passing by. Every week for six months. How I knew the time. MARY

There's no bus!

GRACE

Coming any minute now.

MARY

(GRACE tosses a knife to MARY.)

Stop it. Stop with the weapons.

MARY

You could help a person out one time.

GRACE

Not like that. It's sinful.

MARY

I'm asking you.

GRACE

It's not my nature.

MARY

GRACE

(offering knife again)

It's mine. It's Anyone's. Only he'd do it one day at a time, real slow like to get you to hold his sins for him. And keep it clean. And if it's his and mine, then it's yours too. You pluck the chickens.

MARY

That's different. Twist their necks first. That's for food.

GRACE

So? Think I'd be tough?

MARY

Stop it.

GRACE

Why not? All's we got's some beans.



MARY

I used to love grilled cheese and tomato soup. Remember?

GRACE

I used Velveeta.

MARY

I survived. Real butter too.

GRACE

Didn't mean it.

MARY

You have to stop this.

GRACE

Stop what?

MARY

Apologizing. Feeling sorry for yourself.

(MARY continues to amass objects, things she might take with her. SHE finds a hammer. Puts it in the pile of stuff.)

MARY

I wish I had an appetite.

GRACE

I'm glad we don't. It's poison that.

(GRACE takes back the hammer.)

GRACE

I could use this now. Fix the place up.

MARY

Huh?

(GRACE picks up a wooden board, nails it to the remains of a wall. )

GRACE

After the storm, I just couldn't work. I couldn't find a reason to.

MARY

You found a reason to work?

GRACE

I'm keeping you safe.

MARY

(the question she has to ask)

How could you let it happen?

GRACE

Whatever you think, I'm not in charge of the world.

(GRACE nails boards and weaves in found objects that MARY tries to amass between the cracks.)

MARY

I don't mean the storm, Mama.

GRACE

There's things. Things beyond our control.

MARY

Why didn't we leave?

GRACE

Why didn't we leave? Why didn't we leave? Why didn't we leave?

MARY

Mama.

GRACE

Well? Why didn't we? Why not? Why not? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?

MARY

Mama!

GRACE

You ask so many stupid, stupid, stupid questions. I wonder what God put in your head on Brain Day. Why this? Why that? Why do birds fly?

MARY

There is nothing here I want to take. There's nothing helpful.

GRACE

Why is that? Huh? Do you think I have an emergency aid first alert hamburger helper dream kitchen kit here? Easy answers to hard questions by Dr. Spock translated by Mama?

I've got rags to stop the bleeding. I've got a tourniquet for other kinds. I've got alcohol to clean a wound. I've got a hammer. I've got a saw. I've got a wrench for the pipes that don't work. I've got a bottle of hydrogen pyroxide for my gums. I've got bits of paper for the commode. I've got a knife. I gave you my gun. Oh-oh-oh and I got hard candy suckers in butterscotch and lemon-honey. What am I supposed to have? What am I supposed to give you?

MARY

You tell me.

GRACE

We're two of a kind Mary. Marked for extinction but never destroyed.  
Where is your child?

MARY

What child?

GRACE

Don't lie to me.

MARY

What are you talking about?

GRACE

The child you had in you when you left. The one that brought your milk on.

(MARY looks down at her chest and sees  
SHE is leaking.)

MARY

Oh God, oh my God.

GRACE

I never stopped. Like a curse it was. Every day. I never said anything about it. I was afraid  
Anyone'd get the idea to hire me out as a wet nurse. And no one's ever sucked on these but  
yourself.

But one thing is, you keep your milk on, you won't get in the way again.  
Nothing Anyone can do about it either. Sure will make him mad though. Start to think he's  
shooting blanks.

And it's a blessing with all the poison in the air. Don't have to purify anything.  
Don't have to worry about thirst. So? Where is he? Is that why you left me?

MARY

I didn't leave you.

GRACE

Been gone almost six months.

MARY

I never left.

GRACE

To have your child. The cat always hides in the back of the barn. I understand.

MARY

You don't know me.

GRACE

I carry the shadow of you in my womb. You know what that is now. You've been filled and  
spilled out of too.

MARY

You don't know.

GRACE

To help you breathe I sucked the snot from your nose. Don't need to be ashamed in front of me.

GRACE (cont'd)

It was Anyone's wasn't it?

MARY

It came from God.

GRACE

Then so did you.

MARY

No!

GRACE

Same difference.

MARY

Don't say that.

GRACE

I said it.

MARY

It isn't true.

GRACE

Why do you think I made you call him Anyone?

MARY

I called him Papa.

GRACE

Not in front of me alone.

MARY

It can't be true.

GRACE

Not just your Papa, Mary.

It's wrong.	MARY
He was my Papa too.	GRACE
No.	MARY
Not "Papa." Couldn't be.	GRACE
It's bad, sinful –	MARY
Lord.	GRACE
Evil –	MARY
We're sisters, Mary.	GRACE
No!	MARY
Don't be sad.	GRACE
I hate you.	MARY
Why?	GRACE
I despise you.	MARY

GRACE  
For what?

MARY  
You, you...

GRACE  
For telling the truth? For being just as weak as you are?

(MARY picks up the gun to kill GRACE.)

GRACE  
For letting Anyone touch me? For bearing you? For loving you? For hating you? For telling you about it? For being a woman? Why?!

(MARY hurls the gun into the distance.)

GRACE  
Come on. You can do it. One step at a time. That's it. Here I am. Baby steps. That's it. Good girl! There's no sin in you, child. Let your tears and your milk flow into the earth. This earth so dry, it'll never get enough.

MARY  
Then the floods come, and it's all too much.

GRACE  
Out of balance, that's what we are.

MARY  
You should go back to yoga class.

GRACE  
If only I could...

MARY  
Tell me he's gone.

GRACE

Before he went he said to me, "Girl, you get Mary and drag her kid up out of there with her," and I thought that's about the most impossible task I ever had, especially since I'm a good girl, never disobeyed a word from Anyone. Never wet the bed. Never spilled at the table. Never went where I wasn't supposed to go, and I'm not supposed to go down to the cellar.

And he showed me how the whole world was dying and going to heaven. Brought in rabbits, last of the hens, little chicks, all dead.

And without Anyone I'd never have a roof over my head, he said that. He said that a lot.

And everything I touched turned to black and rot, and I didn't want to hurt you, if by God I found you.

And I didn't want to watch you die on me either, like those chicks, but Anyone said --

MARY

Papa said. Papa.

GRACE

Said I had to go down there, and I -- I couldn't go. I'd heard the screaming in the night.

MARY

My baby coming out.

GRACE

And I was sure he'd sent me to get a good look at you, all twisted up from the poison, and and and and I -- I couldn't go.

MARY

See? You knew where I was the whole time.

GRACE

Did I?

MARY

You didn't have to push him down there.

GRACE

Didn't I?

MARY

Stop it. You don't know anything.

GRACE

I know what I've done.

MARY

He told me that the earth would blow away if I didn't make you stop crying. Said the earth would die.

GRACE

He couldn't have said that. He's gone.

MARY

I was with him last. You want me to show you? Come on.

GRACE

I won't go down there.

MARY

Well don't shoot me. I'm not forcing you.

GRACE

He was trying to.

MARY

And that's why you shot him. I figured that much already. You got to clean up this blood.

GRACE

No water for it.

MARY

Use your spit.

GRACE

I can do better than spit. He was a Man.

MARY

He was the Lord, the way you act.

GRACE

Mary, please.

MARY

And I'm the Immaculate Conception!

GRACE

There's more milk. It's always trickling out. Yours too, just like me.

MARY

Least we won't die of thirst.

GRACE

He's a sound sleeper huh?

MARY

Mama, you know he's not sleeping down there.

GRACE

You going to bring him up now?

MARY

Baby's gone, Mama.

GRACE

You took him someplace?

MARY

All my life I've tried to get out of here.

GRACE

You see? You see that? You don't want to play at all!

MARY

I like a different game.

GRACE

I don't play that one. You know I won't.

MARY

Then I won't play yours either. I played it this time. I let you make the rules. It's my turn now. I let you go first.

GRACE

Now that you're back I've been thinking that the wind's changed. We might get rain.

MARY

Rain won't hold. Not here. Not just rain.

GRACE

A lot of rain.

MARY

We'd have to be flooded out.

GRACE

The way it used to be, in the springtime.

MARY

We got a long way to go before the spring comes.

GRACE

That's my favorite time. When the birds come back to nest.

MARY

Thought you said everything was dead?

GRACE

It's a cycle Mary. Just like reading the bible. You going to bring up your child?

MARY

You want to see him?

GRACE

He's real quiet. Haven't heard a peep since...

MARY

Since you shot Papa and threw him down the stairs. He was trying to get you to help me, he was. He was trying to get you to come down and help me with the baby. He said it was all turned wrong and choking on its chord. He wanted you to help me.

GRACE

But you'd run off. I didn't know where you were.

MARY

I was locked in the cellar Mama. You heard me. I know you did.

GRACE

Did I? Never. I was never supposed to go down there.

MARY

But he was asking you nicely. I heard him.

GRACE

I thought it was a test. I was trying to be good.

MARY

Oh, you were good. You know what he did when he got there? He wasn't dead, Mama. You didn't kill him. I did. I killed him. So you can stop worrying about going to hell cause you're still the saint you ever was.

Did you hear me? Come see. Come see how I did it. Without a knife. Without a gun. Come down into the cellar Mama. I want to show you my baby!

(GRACE slaps MARY. MARY grabs GRACE and throws her down into the cellar.)

GRACE

No, please Mary,  
please don't make me go down there.

MARY

It's not your fault if I make you.  
See?

(GRACE falls down the steps and cries out while falling. MARY covers her ears and slumps to the ground. After a while, MARY takes her hands from her ears and speaks to the box of crackers as if it were her baby.)

MARY

But you weren't choked at all, were you? He only wanted to stick his hand up there and say something to sound important. Came out just fine the minute he went up.

And I licked you clean just like the cat does. I saw you take your first breath.

(gasps, then smiles)

And I loved you that moment as much as I'd hated you all that time in the cellar waiting. And you were all I had.

(GRACE enters from cellar speechless. SHE takes all the wood boards she can find. She works nailing up boards in silence while MARY sits with the box of crackers. This work goes on in silence for a long time. Then GRACE begins to feel something rising up inside.)

GRACE

Mm. Huh. Nn. Mm. Tuh. Suh. Stuh. Ster. Struh. Strin. String and suh-soil, thin. Twigs. Kkk. Crushed, leaves. Nn. Oh. See? String and branches. This-this this-this-this earth, Mary. Ever been? Ever seen? Ever been as dr-dr-dry's this? Couldn't-couldn't-couldn't grow. Couldn't grow a nettle in it. Weeds. Twisted. Thorns. Even if you wanted to. Couldn't grow. Been so dry. Ever since. Ever since you got. Kkk. C C-Carried away. Carried away. You. Even the spring. Spring gave out the very same day. Had to call a man. Called a man to... Dig a well. Nothing under ground. Nothing under ground. Nothing. Had to call a man to deliver water. Five gallon jugs after that. Forty dollars a week. Nothing under ground. Weeds. That's why Papa died. Weeds. Nettles. The water, not the money. Sticks sticking out. String. Twisted. But but but the money didn't help. That and the curse in my fingers turning everything black. I-I-I mentioned that. And of course the end of the world was a problem.

MARY

Not the end of the world, Mama. Just a storm. Just a storm.

GRACE

Pretty big storm if you ask me, Mary. One hell of a storm.

MARY

Not the end of the world. Say it!

GRACE

He put his hands in me and... He said everything was poisoned. The last of the hens... He... He... Crushed leaves. String. Cords. Cords. String. Weeds. Nothing. Nothing growing... Hell...

(MARY begins to pack things in a flour sack and an old hat box. This energizes GRACE, and she begins to build faster.)

GRACE

You see what's happened, what's happened here? You think it's all gone to hell because you went away? Gone to hell? It's not just you. The world does not revolve around you Mary if that's what you think.

There was a... there was a... devastation here. There was a tragedy. You know what that is?

MARY

I already told you I never left, and you already knew. And you've been to the cellar and you saw what I did. And I'm leaving. For real this time.

GRACE

I'm a nester. That's what I am. Give me a nest and I'll set myself down and wait for my grub to come to me.

MARY

That's what happens when you get to living with Anyone. He made the world so small, after a few days, it was hard to remember what it means to take a walk, to look at the sky, to watch a bird fly. He made it so you hardly could stand standing up at all.

GRACE

I can stand.

MARY

I'm going to stretch my legs. I'm going off.

GRACE

Mary? Where have you flown to now? Ma-ry! Don't think I'm letting you go, child. You and me, the last people left on earth, and you with a baby I haven't even held yet? My own flesh and blood in some cold under the ground place. Suh-soft and w-warm. Sticks sticking out -- string.

I'm coming. I am on your trail, and yours is a scent I'll never lose. As sure as my mind is behind my own eyes.

MARY

Going someplace Mama?

GRACE

No place but up.

MARY

Well, there is it, Mama. When are you going?

GRACE

You could help me. You could...

MARY

You're no bird! You don't know anything about flight. You don't know anything about anything. I always thought if I could get you to say enough you'd tell me something useful. Never did. Can you even see me?

GRACE

Of course I can Mary.

MARY

I don't know what you see. Sometimes I like to think a hundred pairs of eyes are watching, cause then nothing bad would ever happen, cause if it did, someone surely would have to speak up and stop it, and then I couldn't do anything bad to Anyone, cause I'd know that someone would see me, and they'd know and I'd be punished. Are you watching me now? Is Anyone watching me? Anyone?

GRACE

I could get out the strap if you want it. Better now than later.

MARY

You mean punish me here instead of in heaven? Let me be.

(MARY packs. GRACE rebuilds.)

MARY

I don't know if it's true what he said about the air, but if it is, then wouldn't we be dead too? I'm going to find out. I am not staying here, so you'll have to forgive me now. Mama?

GRACE

You lost any sense you ever had.

MARY

Sense? What kind of sense did I ever have? If I had any sense I would have left here long ago.

I didn't mean it mean-like, only... GRACE

Then what, Mama? MARY

Just a figure of speech. GRACE

MARY  
You know what sense I got, Mama? I'm alive! And you know what else? I feel good! This end-of-the-world stuff won't work on me, Mama! I'm healthy! Clean! Immaculate! Hail to me, I'm full of Grace and Grace's milk. I'm a savior.

GRACE  
Good girl! For once a little life's back in you.

MARY  
I'm not a girl anymore Mama.

GRACE  
You'll always be a girl to me. Even when you're old.

MARY  
I'm getting there.

GRACE  
A baby'll do that. Let's play a game. Your turn.

MARY  
I don't know the rules.

GRACE  
Make them up.

MARY  
I'll lose.

GRACE  
Not if they're your rules.

MARY  
I lost already. They made the rules.

GRACE  
Always did. Anticipate. Imagine. Invent.

MARY  
A game? Is that all you want?

GRACE  
Not for me. For you.

MARY  
They're watching.

GRACE  
Who?

MARY  
They can hear us.

GRACE  
What better reason than to put on a show!  
(to cellar)  
Hello down there! I'm Mary's mother, Grace. Very pleased to make your acquaintance.  
See? I'm not afraid.

MARY  
Mama stop.

GRACE  
You don't want to play? I'll make up my own game.

MARY  
You don't have to talk to the cellar. They got cameras all over.

GRACE  
Where?

MARY  
Like periscopes.

GRACE

Where? Where?

MARY

Hidden in the brush. Sometimes they catch the light.

GRACE

There is no light to catch.

MARY

At dawn sometimes. Or when the sun goes down. Whenever it's closest to the earth.

GRACE

The sun doesn't move.

MARY

But when the rays come down --  
sometimes you're so infuriating Mama I could scream.

(MARY rummages for a mirror.)

MARY

Here. Let me show you.

(MARY pans with the mirror until light is  
reflected from it.)

MARY

Like that. See?

GRACE

Could be a piece of metal in the dirt, mica reflecting out of some rocks, anything.

MARY

But it's not. It's glass and mirrors and lenses and whatever it is. It snakes its way up here and puts our image on a hundred video screens underground.

GRACE

A thousand pairs of eyes?

MARY

Not that many but a bunch.

GRACE

The last people left on earth and we're the entertainment? Let's play!

MARY

They're probably not even watching.

GRACE

But you said they were. Now you say they're not? Forget the game. Forget the rules

MARY

This is my game. We'll both get to win.

GRACE

Tell me the rules.

MARY

It's about leaving.

GRACE

I'll be the tree.

(GRACE pretends to be a tree.)

MARY

The wind'll come and blow me away.

GRACE

You are not a leaf. You are bigger than that. Be the wind.

MARY

Then I'm the wind. Okay Mama. I can twist and blow and whip my way out of here.

GRACE

Oh no! There's too much wind. My roots are weak. My branches snap right off.

MARY

You can't do that. You're the tree. You stay forever.

GRACE

When the spring comes, will you grow back out of me?

MARY

I am the dying leaves. I only make you old.

GRACE

You said we'd both win.

MARY

Maybe we will.

GRACE

Win by dying? Never.

MARY

You thought I was the Angel of Death.

GRACE

You are my immortality, child. This is a morbid game.

MARY

From now on every five minutes the rules changes.

GRACE

Is that a rule?

MARY

Yes, but that won't change.

GRACE

What's next?

MARY

Saying good-bye.

(The wind stops.)

GRACE

As part of the game.

Whoever does it best can win.

MARY

What's best?

GRACE

Without regret.

MARY

You start.

GRACE

Wait. There's more. The person saying good-bye has to do it so that it's accepted by the other person and have no regrets.

MARY

So you can't just walk away.

GRACE

You have to make it feel good for both players.

MARY

Saying good-bye?

GRACE

You start.

MARY

I lost already. I couldn't hardly even do that when I had to go off to the hospital and work my shift. Saying good-bye was what I'd dread every single day. Anyone said I was lazy and didn't want to work, but it was the good-bye to you that broke my heart every time.

GRACE

I said you start.

MARY

I don't want to say good-bye. I don't want to leave you.

GRACE

MARY

That's good. You're good at this. Have you played before?

GRACE

Not by these rules.

MARY

Start again.

GRACE

I can't.

MARY

You won't.

GRACE

I'm staying.

MARY

There's no where else for you.

GRACE

I...

MARY

I know. Me too.

GRACE

You understand.

MARY

Better now. Okay, ready?

GRACE

No.

MARY

But you're getting ready, yes?

GRACE

I'll try.

MARY

Okay. The day I left I took my bags down the road a bit. They weren't heavy. I didn't have much.

GRACE

You put everything in a flour sack and my old hatbox.

MARY

I wanted to take something of yours. It seemed the most practical.

GRACE

And romantic. I didn't mind.

MARY

I never thought you even noticed. I walked down to where the bus stops. I hoped I had enough money to get on it.

GRACE

You stole from him. I'll never hear the end of that.

MARY

I stole from you. You were the one working at the hospital.

GRACE

Everything I made I gave to him.

But I was proud of you. I was glad you got away.

MARY

He brought me back Mama. He brought me back and stuck me down there and made me have that child you saw.

GRACE

Stop it. I didn't see a child. We're playing a game now.

MARY

I don't have that money anymore.

GRACE

Bus'll take you anyway. If the bus comes. If the roads still carry buses. If the buses still carry people. If the world still spins round.

MARY

You won't come marching out toward me like you used to?

GRACE

I told you I'd be proud. I'd come marching empty handed.

MARY

You mean you lost the strap?

GRACE

Storm took most of everything.

MARY

I'm leaving Mama.

GRACE

I'm putting those beans on for supper.

MARY

Did you hear me?

GRACE

You be sure to wash before he comes up.

(GRACE goes to the sink that sits in the brush and starts to drag it in.)

MARY

Need a hand with that?

GRACE

You know a woman's got to be right in her head at all times, Little Blue. You start to feel something different inside and they'll accuse you of losing your mind or living in your female parts or just plain old simple nerves and hysteria. Once that's on you, no one even thinks twice about your point of view. And that's knowledge. That's what I always used to think, but it's only point of view to them. You don't forget that.

GRACE (cont'd)

You were right though. We didn't need the gun. I'm already dead.

MARY

That's not true Mama. You're messing up the game.

GRACE

I'm living through you the way you'll come to live through your son.

MARY

Think clearly Mama.

GRACE

(toward heaven)

Because he'll go farther than both of us combined.

MARY

Why's that?

GRACE

Because he can.

MARY

That's probably true Mama.

GRACE

Of course it is.

MARY

Do you know what I want? When that bus comes, I want to imagine that you see a bluebird on that tree out there.

GRACE

Standing by the kitchen sink staring out the window like?

MARY

Exactly.

GRACE

Rinsing the beans.

MARY  
If you like.

GRACE  
And I see that bird and then what?

MARY  
You think of me, your Little Blue, and you say --  
Well first your words get caught in your mouth and you go (gasps)

GRACE  
(gasps)

MARY  
And then the bird takes off from out of the tree, and you say, "fly."

GRACE  
Fly.

MARY  
Fly Little Blue!

GRACE  
Fly Little Blue!

MARY  
And the bird flies so high up you have to shade your eyes to block the sun. Did you hear me  
Mama? You have to shade your eyes.

GRACE  
Okay. I'm shading.

MARY  
And even when you can't see it anymore, you say "fly!" Say it Mama. Fly!

GRACE  
Fly!

MARY

And you think to yourself that I'm doing just fine, where ever I may be. Are you thinking Mama?

GRACE

Just fine.

MARY

And you think back on all the smiles.

GRACE

All the beauty.

MARY

That's right.

GRACE

Yes.

MARY

And you know that the world is a good and shining place, and you thank God for all his blessings.

GRACE

I taught you, didn't I?

MARY

All I know.

GRACE

And the baby? What you did with the baby?

MARY

He was all I had.

GRACE

Like you to me.

MARY

I loved him Mama.

GRACE

Your son?

MARY

I didn't mean it. I didn't. He was all I had, and Papa coming at me.

GRACE

And the cord, Mary. You had that.

MARY

Attached. I used it too. I tried. I used the cord first. I - you saw. You saw it. I didn't mean it.

GRACE

I would never use you as a weapon.

(Pause.)

(GRACE goes to get the hammer.)

GRACE

Know what I'll do next time I see that bird? Get that shotgun and shoot it.

MARY

No Mama.

GRACE

Have something better to eat than beans for dinner.

(GRACE breaks into the rifle case with her hammer and takes out the rifle. Armed SHE hammers up the last of the wood, sealing them inside the space on all sides.)

GRACE

You want to win this game?

MARY

We can both win, Mama. Let me go.

GRACE

I know what you really want child.

MARY

I want to be free, from here, from this place, from you.

GRACE

(as if she didn't hear her)

You want what you had that Day One. Am I right?

MARY

I want to go Mama.

(GRACE takes out her breast, the one with  
the bite mark on it.)

GRACE

It still gives milk, see? It's yours. You can have it.

MARY

I'm a grown woman, Mama.

GRACE

Never too grown for this.

MARY

You're not playing fair.

GRACE

I know you want it.

MARY

You just want me to want it.

GRACE

You said we'd both get to win this time.

MARY

Is this what you want?

GRACE

I want you to take it in your mouth and taste it, swallow it,

MARY  
Mama, you sound just like Anyone,

GRACE  
and tell me true you love me,

MARY  
stop it, please,

GRACE  
and then if you still want to leave, then you can.

MARY  
You'll let me go?

GRACE  
I promise.

MARY  
And you'll be happy?

GRACE  
I'll be resigned.

MARY  
Even if I leave, even if it turns out different than you plan?

GRACE  
I'll let you go.

MARY  
It's not a game now Mama. I'll be leaving for real.

GRACE  
I don't know what you think is out there.

MARY  
Whatever it is, I want to find it.

GRACE

Everything you need is right here.

MARY

If I leave and find that out, then I'll come back.

GRACE

You could lose your way.

MARY

I won't. I'm going to leave first, and if you're right about what's out there, then I'll come back.

GRACE

That is not part of the rules.

MARY

But the rules change.

GRACE

It's your turn. You made the rules. You said we both get to win. We both get to be happy.

MARY

If I do this, this thing, you'll be happy.

GRACE

You got to do it. You said we'd both win.

MARY

And this is what will make you happy?

GRACE

You said we'd both win.

MARY

Even if I leave?

GRACE

I said so, didn't I?

MARY

All right then.

(MARY nurses at GRACE's breast.)

GRACE

Good girl You're such a good girl, Mary.

(GRACE closes her eyes. With all the hammering she did, the places looks like a tight little nest.)

(Down the road, the bus can be heard.  
GRACE moves her hands to cover MARY's ears.)

GRACE

(sings)

Hush little baby don't say a word. Mama's gonna buy you a mockingbird. If that mockingbird don't sing, we'll cook it and we'll eat it with a jello ring...

(MARY pushes GRACE's hands off her ears, climbs out of the nest.)

MARY

Wait! Wait for me!

(GRACE takes her rifle, aims and shoots.)

MARY

You shot me?

GRACE

Wave the bus off Mary. I'm coming.

MARY

You shot me!

GRACE

I can dress your wound. I got a tourniquet to stop the bleeding.

I got to go Mama.

MARY

I got alcohol to keep it clean. Wave the bus away.

GRACE

I'm coming!

MARY

Come back, Mary. Say bye-bye bus!

GRACE

Bye bye Mama.

MARY

I'm coming to save you Mary!

GRACE

Bye bye Mama!

MARY

Mama's here.

GRACE

END OF PLAY