

THE STICKER TREE

by Grace Cavalieri

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*(*Author's note: The play, originally titled "Best of Friends" received 4 productions on two coasts in the 1970's, 80's and a national Theater award from La Pensee Theater, Seattle.)*

NEW YORK PRODUCTION:

Produced by the Quai Theater, Will Lieberson, Artistic Director

Directed by: Shela Xoregos

Original songs by Nicholas Levin

with: NYC Cast

MARY TAHMIN

ALEX PAUL

KIA GRAVES

DAWN KELLY

Hartley House 413 West 46th Street, NYC
for ten performances November 30-December 11, 1987

by Grace Cavalieri

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Cast:

Mary (child)

Little Mary (child)

Cassandra O'Neill (middle aged woman)

Rocky Sprague (middle aged man)

Time:

1930's, rural America

Actors together until time to participate

The play is a continuous flow of action utilizing stage space to represent change in time and place. Split stage some scenes

Synopsis:

Little Mary comes to live with her cousin, Big Mary. Big Mary's form of love is complete control. She manipulates her younger cousin into playing games which continually keep her submissive using God and Jesus as sources of power. This domination/submission is in parallel to the relationship between the other two characters, Cassandra O'Neill and Rocky Sprague, old circus performers, who live in a shack near the tracks. Mary fears she is losing

control of her cousin, and is jealous of Little Mary's affection for Rocky. She makes up the story that Little Mary has been molested by him. The town's people seize and kill Rocky. Little Mary is taken to live elsewhere and Big Mary loses her, just as Cassandra loses Rocky.

CHARACTERS:

Big Mary - - 12 years old
Little Mary - - 9 years old

Cassandra O'Neill
Rocky Sprague

Setting

RURAL AMERICA, 1930'S

THE PLAY IS DESIGNED TO BE A CONTINUOUS FLOW OF ACTION UTILIZING STAGE SPACE TO REPRESENT CHANGE IN TIME AND PLACE.

Prologue

Mary

(STANDING HIGH ON SOMETHING TO SUGGEST A TABLE. SHE HAS A BLANKET OVER HER SHOULDERS LIKE A CAPE. SHE IS RECITING A STORY.)

I stood by this window and saw light wake up in the morning and holding my arms out from my gown, I felt two mother birds float in and stand up on my hands. Two motherbirds floated in. Really. Real angels came in this window. Or else it was the white light which stood up on my hands like motherbirds.

Little

(APPLAUDS)

Mary

(JUMPS DOWN.)

Shut up. That was not a show. That was a prayer.

Little

But I liked it.

Mary

How would you know what you liked.

Little

Well. It makes me feel warm in my stomach.

Mary

So does a stomachache.

Little

I guess I know what I like.

Mary

That what you saw is great art, and you couldn't possibly know what great art is. You're too young.

Little

Oh well. . . . I guess I'll like art that's not great.

Mary

You'll never find it without my help.

Little

You don't own me so I can find it.

Mary

If you love me, I own you.

(LITTLE AND MARY ARE JUMPING ROPE. THEY SING A SONG. CASSANDRA AND ROCKY ARE ON STAGE WITH GLASSES. THEY CLICK GLASSES AND DRINK EACH TIME THE REFRAIN SAYS "UM-THIS-WAY, UM-THAT-WAY")

Little and Big

Lucy was a baby / a baby / a baby.
Lucy was a baby/ a long time ago.

*She went um-this-way, um-that-way
a long time ago.

Lucy went to school/ went to school/ went to school.

**REPEAT REFRAIN*

Lucy was a teenager/ . . .

**REPEAT REFRAIN*

(CASSANDRA SINGS THE LAST FOUR VERSES AS GIRLS CONTINUE JUMPING IN THE BACKGROUND, ALTERNATING WITH THE GIRLS.)

Cassandra

Rocky got married/ got married/ got married.

**REPEAT REFRAIN*

Little and Big

Lucy had a baby/ had a baby/ had a baby.

**REPEAT REFRAIN*

Cassandra

Rocky's wife died/ wife died/ wife died.

**REPEAT REFRAIN*

Rocky died himself/ died himself . . .

**REPEAT REFRAIN*

Rocky

(PASSED OUT, OR SLEEPING IN THE GRASS. ARMS OUTSPREAD.)

Mary

See, what did I tell you?

Little

I forgot.

Mary

He died for our sins.

Little

I didn't do anything sinful.

Mary

We should at least have a burial.

Little

Mary, he's sleeping and I didn't do anything sinful.

Mary

We all do things sinful. We should have a proper funeral.

Little

Is that another thing you got from your letters to God?

Mary

(SPRINKLING GRASS ON HIS STOMACH.)

Yup, and also talking to God.

Little

Ha! I never saw God's pink cloud come in the window like you said. Did you really, Mary? Did you ever?

Mary

(AVOIDING.)

"Everybody rang the church bell. Everybody dug the grave."

Little

Who said that?

Mary

(PUTTING CLOVER CHAIN ON HIS HEAD.)

God, in my latest letter.

Little

How do you write back to him?

Mary

I mail it.

Little

Huh! In what?

Mary

In special mailboxes.

Little

Special. Where?

Mary

I find them.

Little

When?

Mary

When you're not looking. Very special mailboxes. Old ones - - old mailboxes
(HISSING) - - that are getting ready to die.

Cassandra

What are you up to! Scat brats, scat!

Rocky

Have you ever noticed how we get what we hate? We attract it.
Like flies to a sore, or maggots to a corpse, or ants to sweets.
Now my Aunt Esther hated death so bad, yet both her children died,
then her father, then her husband had a stroke by the telephone, and
his mother-in-law hung out the upstairs window screaming.
Then she died. The mother-in-law, then Aunt Esther's older brother Fred.
She'd brought him a dinner every Sunday since he'd retired.
Then Uncle Joe who was her favorite baby brother, though he'd been in the
workhouse once for taking numbers but ever since he'd been working a little
farm behind his place - - 20 years maybe - - all in all. Aunt Esther had one
hard summer one year. She said it to me. She said, "It's been a hard, hard
year and we get what we hate." Then she up and died. Didn't I tell you?
I told you we attract what we hate.

(LITTLE AND MARY SEEN LYING ON THEIR BACKS. FEET TOWARD EACH

OTHER, SOLES OF FEET TOGETHER PEDDLING AS IN ON A BICYCLE. THEY GET A RHYTHM MOVEMENT COUNTING ALOUD: "1, 2, 3" AT A GIVEN NUMBER, MARY THRUSTS HER FEET BETWEEN LITTLE'S LEGS AND SHOUTS, "TIGER" AS IF SCORING A TARGET. BOTH COLLAPSE WITH LAUGHTER. MARY YELLS, "SPIN DEEPER!" THEY RESUME PADDLING UNTIL MARY SCORES "TIGER" THREE TIMES IN A ROW. ALWAYS CALLING, "SPIN DEEPER!" FINALLY LITTLE WINS. MARY IS ANNOYED STANDS.)

(DIALOGUE KEEPS THE SAME RHYTHM AS FEET PADDLING.)

Mary

What do you want to do now?

Little

What day is it?

Mary

Wednesday

Little

Wednesdays you said we would walk from one to three.

Mary

Is it one yet?

Little

(OPENS DRAWER TO LOOK AT CLOCK.)

One - - two - - no, but soon. Soon it'll be three.

* * * * *

Cassandra and Rocky

(DRUM ROLLS. ON STAGE STEPS CASSANDRA, DOING A NIGHTCLUB ROUTINE FOR ROCKY, WHO ACTS AS IF HE IS A VISITOR IN A CHEAP NIGHTCLUB. EVERY REMARK IS ACCOMPANIED WITH APPROPRIATE GESTURING.)

Cassandra

Introducing the Greatest Show on Earth. Me! Cassandra ONeill.

She walks! She talks! She slithers!

(SHE PUTS HER BREASTS UP TO FACE OF ONE THE AUDIENCE. @)

I have a little magic act.

It's called (DRUM ROLL) s (DRUM) e (DRUM) x (DRUM)

(COVERS HER MOUTH IN MOCK EMBARRASSMENT. CANNED LAUGHTER.)

I sing! I dance! I'll do anything for a chance! (LAUGHTER)

Name a song Any song . . . and I won't remember it. (LAUGHTER)

(SITS ON ROCKY'S LAP.)

Cassandra

Sir, did you lose something?

(CUDDLING ROCKY. PULLS OUT WOMAN'S RING FROM HER BRA.)

(CANNED APPLAUSE. CASSANDRA STANDS DRAMATICALLY.)
And the show is just beginning!
(CHUCKS ROCKY UNDER HIS CHIN. APPLAUSE.)

Little and Big
(KISSING AND ROLLING DOWN HILL.)

Little
If you love me.

Mary
I own you. (REPEATED OVER AND OVER . . .)

END OF PROLOGUE . . .

Mary
You're visiting I heard them. They say you're visiting.

Little
Visiting.

Mary
This is my room you're in now. Do you realize that?

Little
Your room.

Mary
Are you some idiot retard or something?

Little
(SWINGS OUT, KNOCKING MARY DOWN AND THRASHING HER.)

Mary
(STANDS UP AND HOLDS HER.)
Hey, hey now, Dolly. Don't get crazy. I can see you're all right. I know. I heard the nuns locked you up all night sometimes in the cellar. When you were three. I heard the older ones telling it in the kitchen.

Little
Who?

Mary
Tell me. Tell me about it. Was it as scary as anything could be and all black?
Or did it make you cry and scream and bang against the door forever . . .
screaming and crying, banging and banging.

Little

What do you want to know for anyway?

Mary

Oh come on. Please. I love things like that. Scary. It's all the same when you're scared, in or out. I've had scares too, as bad as that I'll bet. Now tell me and I'll tell you the most superlative of all secrets. In fact, a secret to end all other secrets.

Little

To end all secrets?

Mary

Yes.

Little

Well, ummmmm. They locked the door and I . . . I don't remember it all. It was when I was small I lived there anyway.

Mary

(TURNS AWAY IN DISAPPOINTMENT.)

Little

But I - - I cried . . . a lot. Does that please you?

Mary

A little.

Little

And once I was made to kneel all night on my bed. All night long for being bad and I had to pray and when I slipped back and fell or got tired, the nun slapped me.

Mary

To order.

Little

Yes, and I was up again - - on my knees.

Mary

Okay, that was a good one.

Little

Thank you.

Mary

Any whippings?

Little

No.

Mary

Oh.

Little

I'm sorry.

Mary

It's all right. It's not your fault I suppose.

Little

There may have been some whippings that I could've forgot.

Mary

Fat chance. You'd have remembered whippings all right.

Little

You still owe me anyhow. Whippings or not.

Mary

Ha! It's my room you're in.

Little

I told you all I could remember. I've been living with Aunt Doris since then. It was a long time ago and I was only three.

Mary

Well, you don't have to tell me what I owe. I am totally and always aware of my obligations. I promised to tell you the secret and you will get it. You shall.

Little

I shall?

Mary

You shall. (PAUSE) Ready?

Little

Oh yes! Ready as anything.

Mary

Well, once I was direly ill. Beyond all possible repair. Beyond all possible repair.

Little

Oh no!

Mary

Yes. I was put on a table and they operated on me and cut me open.

Little

How much?

Mary

Enough.

Little

And you were bleeding?

Mary

As profuse as possible, but, listen. When they opened me up the noise got louder and louder.

Little

The noise?

Mary

The banging like the sound of a heart - - louder and louder. Beating like a drum in a terrible parade.

Little

I love parades.

Mary

Boom. Boom! Boom!

Little

Oh, my

Mary

And when they got to the center of me, through the bone and blood, what do you suppose?

Little

I can't imagine what to suppose.

Mary

There was a brick swinging in the middle of my body like a heart, swinging and swinging, hitting against my ribs. It made an awful thunder.

Little

And then what?

Mary

They sewed me up again, stupid. They sewed me up. People don't go around letting their bricks show. Hospitals do not allow it and also hospitals do not tell what they have seen. Or what they have heard. Hospitals can be trusted. That's why I like hospitals, proper ones. Also that's why I like you.

Little

You do?

Mary

Because you can be trusted.

Little

I can?

Mary

Of course. Trusted not to repeat the awful truths I bestow upon you, because I can trust you. Therefore, kneel.

Little

Down?

Mary

Kneel down. Of course down stupid.

Little

(KNEELS GINGERLY)

Mary

(STAGE DARKENS. SHE TAKES A STICK AND RAISES IT OVER LITTLE'S HEAD. LITTLE CRINGES IN FEAR AS MARY BRINGS THE STICK DOWN ON HER SHOULDERS GENTLY.)

I dub thee Little Mary, named thusly after me, your patron saint, Me. You will be called Little Mary.

Little

(WHISPERING) Excuse me, but my name isn't Mary at all. You got it wrong in the beginning. It is - - my name is Marion.

Mary

Your name was Marion. It is now Little Mary for however long you are here.

Little

(RISING.) Oh, well then, that'll be okay. I'm leaving soon. This is a visit, so it'll be awfully good fun anyhow, but you forgot something, Mary.

Mary

Yes, little Mary.

Little

The secret . . . Well, that was a fine one. But you said a surprise too. You did say a surprise for me.

Mary

Yes, of course.

Little

It's a quarter past three already and I don't know how long we'll have

together. I might have to go anytime now, so the sooner you could tell me . . .

Mary

You're going to stay here with us. You are going to be mine. My little sister. You will belong now. You will belong to me. *(PULLS CARPET BAG FROM CLOSET.)*

Little

My clothes. *(SHE RUNS TO THE WINDOW, THEN THE DOOR, THEN THE WINDOW.)* But she didn't say it! She didn't say it was here! *(SCREAMING. CRYING.)*

Mary

Look! Look! The surprise. The surprise . . . *(PULLS BED SPREAD FROM BED, DRAPES HERSELF LIKE A ROBE . . . MAKES A HONEY FACE. SHE PUTS SPREAD OVER HER HEAD, BRINGING LITTLE UNDER TO SEE IT.)*

Little

(STOPS WEeping.)

Mary

You are the only one to ever see that.

Little

Thank you.
(MARY HOLDS HER. LITTLE CLINGS.)

(ENTER CASSANDRA WITH A FLOURISH OF PIANO MUSIC.)

Cassandra

(BOWS AND TAPS.) I'm singing in the rain . . . *(ONE CHORUS. ENDS POSING THROWING KISSES. THROWING CREPE PAPER STREAMERS TO AUDIENCE. FREEZES WITH ARMS UP, POSING WITH CAMERA FLASHES GOING OFF.)*

Little and Big

(LIGHTS UP. THEY ARE PLACING STREAMERS ON STATUE OF VIRGIN MARY ON MAY ALTAR. LITTLE KNEELS. MARY HOLD BATON TO CIRCUS MUSIC WHICH BECOMES "ROCK OF AGES." LITTLE SINGS CONCURRENTLY WITH CASSANDRA'S REPEAT OF CHORUS: SINGING IN THE RAIN. CASSANDRA DOING STRIP WITH LONG GLOVES, ROPE PEARLS, FEATHER BOA, ETC. TO HER TUNE . . . WHILE MARY LEADS LITTLE SINGING.

Little

Holy Mary
Full of Grace

Cassandra

I'm singing in the rain
Just singing in the rain

How I love
Your lovely face

What a wonderful feeling
I'm happy again.

Little
Holy Mary
Mother of all
How we dream
To be so tall.

(MARY RAISES LITTLE TO HER FEET, AND THEY EACH SING TOGETHER THE FOLLOWING HOMEMADE VERSION OF ROCK OF AGES. LIGHTS OUT ON CASSANDRA.)

Little and Big

It is now the month of May
We do not wish to run and play,
We just wish to hang around and pray
Dearest Virgin bless us today.

Holy Mary, we love you true
We will work and suffer for you
For in the end Christ will die for us
On his holy wooden cross.

Mary

(PLACING HANDS ON LITTLE'S SHOULDERS) Little Mary, no matter how
bad I treat you, you are not a bad girl.

Little

Thank you. *(BOTH KNEEL, CLASP HANDS IN PRAYER.)*

Mary

Beauty and Goodness

Little

Beauty and Goodness

Mary

Won't go through the skin

Little

Won't go through the skin

Mary

So we promise

Little

So we promise

Mary

Never more to sin

Little

Never more to sin

Mary

No. N'ere more to sin. N'ere is more religious.

Little

N'ere more to sin.

(BOTH STAND. MUSIC IN BACKGROUND IS PINNOCHIO'S "GOT NO STRINGS")

Mary

Now the seven deadly sins are *(COUNTING ON FINGERS)* avarice, adultery, greed, gluttony, and *(UNSURE)* lying and I think benediction.

Little

That's only six.

Mary

Oh, yes, then there's disobedience. Makes seven.

Little

Does there have to be seven?

Mary

Of course there has to be seven. Somebody made it up that way.

Little

You lied once.

Mary

Never knowingly. So it doesn't count.

Little

You lied about birds, saying you saw a cross and all that, saying stuff about birds and weather. Remember that day? Then you said you didn't really see a crow.

Mary

Yes. Admission of one's sins is a virtue.

Little

Does that cancel out lying?

Mary

Right out. Clean as anything.

(BOTH STAND)

You'll be fine. You'll like it "here" with me.

(MARY INDICATES THE AUDIENCE AND THE THEATRE. SOUNDS OF

WOMAN'S VOICE CALLING "DINNERTIME, DINNERTIME" CHILDREN GO TO DINNER.)

Little

Could I see the honey face again. I stopped crying.

Rocky

(COMES ON STAGE AND ADDRESSES AUDIENCE AS HE STANDS BETWEEN THE LITTLE GIRLS.)

Now I'm a man who likes to be alone.

Sure I know that makes me out to be a queer or some sort of wino because I live down here.

I eat out of cans. I sit in that chair there and look around all day.

(TAKES OFF GLASSES.)

My glasses came from the 5 and 10. that rack you all walk by . . . but they see okay for me.

Depends on what you're looking for. And believe me - - at this time of life - - it's enough just remembering things fills the day. I'm not looking for visitors - - or pleasure - - or things to do - - or things not to do.

I just stay. If a man stays to himself he can't get into trouble now, can he.

Because we can get used to being alone and we can get used to loneliness, if that's what you call it, but - - you never get used to pain.

Take it from me. Stick to yourself.

Because some things you never get used to and you'll never forget.

Little

Could I see the honey face again. I stopped crying.

Mary

Yes, you could, but I don't want you to. It has to be later, maybe later.

It's something we earn. It's like God's love. It has to be earned.

You'll get to see it again, whenever you deserve it.

Little and Big

(PEEKING OVER HILLTOP)

Little

What's that down there?

Mary

You'll see.

Little

It's just a railroad track and an old house.

Mary

I know we're not allowed there, or here for that matter.

Little

Is that why we're here?

Mary

No, stupid, that's why we like it here . . . but that's not why we're here.

Little

Who says I like it?

Mary

You do. There's Queen Anne's lace, and you can lie in it and stare at that man.

Little

It smells like weeds to me.

Mary

What you say is what you are, and what you think is what there is.

Little

Weeds.

Mary

Lace.

Little

Weeds that look like lace.

Mary

To stare through.

Little

With your face.

Mary

Good, good. Good girl. Then we'll see him.

Little

The man?

Mary

Yup. I call him the outlaw because he lives way out here past town.

Little

Oh.

Mary

Once I saw a man by that tree. Elaine was with me. He took his thing out

and rubbed it against the tree.

Little

What for?

Mary

Maybe it itched.

Little

Wouldn't the bark hurt it?

Mary

No, well, I don't know. I was scaring Elaine and I said, Athat man is following us, and I looked back and he was and I took her hand and ran back up those banks of the canal and Elaine's feet never touched the towpath and we spotted an old guy raking the hill and we told him about the man following us he took out after him with the rake. I think he was following us, anyway.

Little

Did he catch him or what?

Mary

(*SHRUGS*) Don't know. We ran like hell all the way home, well, part of the way home to be honestly truthful, which is something I always try to be.

Little

Who's Elaine?

Mary

Somebody. I can't play with her anymore because I called her brother a cross-eyed monkey. He was too.

Little

Was it that guy we're going to see sitting down in that rocker?

Mary

No, dummy. That guy was colored and this guy isn't. If I'd have told the cop they'd have lynched that man that chased us. Elaine says so. Simple as that. She knows. Her aunt married a fireman and they hold a lot of information like that.

(THEY MOVE CLOSER. LOOK THROUGH SPY GLASS.)

Little

What does this man do?

Mary

No one knows. He can not speak or hear.

Little

Shoosh!

Mary

Neither can he dance, probably.

Little

How come?

Mary

Do I have to tell you everything? Can't you make up anything in your own head? Ever?

Little

I wanted to know the real truth! Not what I make up.

Mary

Well, then, the real truth is he probably talked up to the mayor about how poor he was.

Little

Yes. He doesn't even have glass in his windows.

Mary

Right! See how the truth works? It grows on you.

Little

Yeah.

Mary

Well, the mayor tied his tongue to a horse and cart and tied his arms behind him and when he got tired the horse didn't and there! (*SNAPS FINGERS AND CLICKS TONGUE.*)

Little

Yuk!

Mary

It does not pay to complain to people in authority. Remember that.

Little

I will!

Mary

He was probably an opera singer and famous before.

(THEY NEAR THE HOUSE. ROCKY APPEARS.)

Little

(LOUDLY) Why can't he hear?

Mary

(SHUSH) Because when his tongue came out, it pulled the works with it. Everything's attached inside you know. You think things just rattle around loose?

(ROCKY ROCKING IN HIS ROCKER. LOOKING UP AT SKY. DRINKS FROM MUG. GOES INSIDE, LEAVING GLASS ON TABLE.)

Little

Let's see through his glasses. (LOOKS THROUGH) He looks funny.

(ROCKY ENTERS. GIRLS START TO RUN.)

Rocky

Would you girls like to join me for some tea? Or whiskey?

Little and Big

Mary No thank you **Little** Yes thank you.

Rocky

Well I see you know your manners. Sit down. Sit down.

Mary

We were just on our way through.

Little

We saw you through the Queen Anne's Lace.

Rocky

Isn't that kind of dangerous?

Little

Queen Anne's Lace?

Rocky

Could be snakes up there.

Mary

I never saw one there. Course I've never been there before, hardly.

Rocky

You allowed down here by the tracks?

Mary

No.

Little

Well, I've never seen a train go by so what's so dangerous about it?

Rocky

Train goes by at midnight and noontime. Ever hear it?

Little

No.

Mary

I have.

Little

When have you been up at midnight?

Mary

When I take my life medicine.

Rocky

Life medicine?

Little

For what?

Mary

To save my life, that's for what.

Cassandra

(ENTERING) For what?

Mary

Dying.

Rocky

Of what?

Mary

Ummmmmm . . . living.

Cassandra

Oh, is that right now?

Mary

Yup.

Little

Mary, I'm scared.

Mary

Don't worry, Little. As long as I get my medicine at midnight, everything=s fine.

Cassandra

What's the name of it?

Mary

Uh - - spin deeper . . .

Little

What???

Mary

Elixir!

Rocky

Of what?

Mary

Of . . . flotsam and jetsam.

Little

Spin deeper of flotsam and jetsam?

Rocky

Tha'ss what the little lady said, and I=ll bet it works, too.

Little

Do you think?

Rocky

Sure enough. She's alive, ain't she? Just look.

Little

Yeah.

Cassandra

I'm on borrowed time myself.

Mary

Oh really? Borrowed?

Cassandra

Yup. Just renting a little clearing in the forest here with the birds. It's just temporary.

Mary

How long?

Cassandra

Not long . . . the rest of my life.

Mary

Wow.

Rocky

She=s crazy. It's from being big when other people are small. Gives you this

malady.

Little

We're not small. I'm 9. She's 12. Mary soon will have boys clamoring. She says so - - in a bout a year or two.

Cassandra

They will, huh. Then what will you do?

Little

Feed the dolls for her, I guess.

Mary

Don't tell family matters, Little. Little is living with us . . . learning how to obey. I'm teaching. Somebody has to do something 100 times over to learn how to obey.

Cassandra

And it only takes a few seconds to do, think of that!

Little

I don't get it.

Mary

Of course you wouldn't. you're the ingredient we're discussing. Ingredients don't get - - they are gotten.

Little

I always have to be the 'gredient.

Rocky

What does she have to be?

Little

Mary? Mary is the name of the Queen. Mary is the name of the queen of heavenly hosts.

Cassandra

Jesus! What are you?

Little

I'm Little Mary - - I used to be Marion. She changed my name.

Mary

For her own good.

Little

I am her slave. Not the bad kind of slave that's unhappy. The good kind. All I do is things like hold my breath.

Mary

Just to twenty. Anybody could.

Little

Every morning for exercise, and play doggy and things like that.

Mary

Be quiet, Little.

Little

Feed the dolls in the middle of the night. I told Aunt Helen, too.

Mary

You're going to get it, Little.

Little

I told Aunt Helen Mary said she was servant of God.

Rocky

What did Aunt Helen say about that?

Little

(VOICE DROPS) She says, "We're all servants of God, my child."

Mary

(STOMPS OFF.) I'm leaving you here!

Little

Wait up!

Rocky

Where are you girls going?

Little

Are you mad, Mary? Are you mad? *(REPEATS UP HILL.)*

* * * * *

Cassandra

(PUTS ON HER "COSTUME" OF LACE AND BOA. LOOKING THROUGH A BOTTLE AS A TELESCOPE, PLAYS GAME WHICH IS A RITUAL.)

Hey, Skipper!

Rocky

Cassandra O'Neill . . . how'd you find me?

Cassandra

Rocky Sprague, I'd find you at the bottom of the sea. Give Cassandra a boom boom *(STRETCHES LIPS TO HIM. HE KISSES HER CHEEK.)* You old runaway in a lean-to in the woods yet. *(PICKS UP TEACUP.)* What's this? No more gin? When did you give that up?

* * * * *

Little

That's because you have no heart, just a brick.

Mary

(SILENCE)

Little

I said, that's because you have no heart.

Mary

(SILENCE)

Little

Why won't you talk to me? Do you want to play doggy? Where you bite my chest? I won't cry.

Mary

(SILENCE)

Little

I won't tell on you.

Mary

(SILENCE)

Little

I didn't tell on you!

Mary

(SILENCE)

Little

Why won't you speak to me.

Mary

(SILENCE)

Little

You know how scared I get.

Mary

(SILENCE)

Little

And when you know, you do it more. That's true. That's true. Whatever scares me you do more and the more you do it, the more scared I am.

Mary

(SILENCE)

Little

And now I'm scared. I'm scared. I'm scared. I'm scared.
(DROPS TO THE FLOOR, COVERING FACE.)

Mary
(STEPPING GINGERLY OVER BODY, LIFTING SKIRTS.)
We will now play kickball!

Little
(HUGGING MARY'S KNEES) With just two people?

Mary
(SPREADS ARMS MAJESTICALLY) Kickball!

(CASSANDRA AND ROCKY MOVE TOWARD EACH OTHER FROM ACROSS A
WIDE DISTANCE OF THEATRE SPACE.)

Cassandra
Some improvement from the Big Top you made, Sprague. Living like a tramp
here.

Rocky
I got my rights. I'm not bothering nobody here.

Cassandra
So where is it? Where's the ring you stole?

Rocky
Here. (OPENS MOUTH) Under this gold tooth.

Cassandra
Ha.

Rocky
You don't believe me?

Cassandra
Rocky Sprague, you renegade son of a bitch, I believe the shit out of you.

Rocky
Come here and feel it.

Cassandra
Not me.

Rocky
Come here. (OPENS MOUTH) See? This molar. The rock is nice and safe
underneath.

Cassandra
(MOVES CLOSER.)

Rocky

Nice and safe and warm and snug where nobody's getting it 'til I'm ready for it to be gotten.

Cassandra

Nobody?

Rocky

Nobody but me and my closest friends, maybe.

(TAKES HER HAND. PUTS HER FINGER ON HIS BACK TOOTH.)

Cassandra

This is really it? You swear?

Rocky

(REMOVES HER HAND) Does that bring you pleasure? Feeling gold on top of a diamond? Here, feel. *(PUTS HER FINGER BACK IN HIS MOUTH. WITHDRAWS IT.)* Smooth? Shiny? *(PUTS HER FINGER BACK ON THE TOOTH. BITES DOWN.)*

Cassandra

Ouch! You son of a bitch.

Rocky

(GRABS HER BY THE WAIST, SWINGING HER AROUND, LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY TO MERRY-GO-ROUND MUSIC.)

Cassandra

That's torture!

* * * * *

Mary

He made her touch something did you hear that? Something she didn't want to touch.

Little

What was it?

Mary

I couldn't see, but he said, "here, give me you hand."

Little

Then what did he do with her hand?

Mary

Made her touch something.

Little

What?

Mary

How do I know? Did you hear her scream? And he said, "did that bring you pleasure?" if he ever asks you to touch anything, don't do it.

Little

I won't. don't worry. What would he ask me for anyway?

Mary

You might be down there alone sometime. That's all. And you heard the lady scream.

Little

Whatever she touched, hurt.

Mary

Of course, or she wouldn't have screamed. Though he said, "does it feel smooth?"

Little

Well, don't worry because I'll never be down there again alone, anyway.

Mary

Oh yes you will.

Little

How will I?

Mary

You know. The final test you have to go through.

Little

The final test!

Mary

To gain God's love.

Little

God's love.

Mary

To prove you trust God.

Little

I do! I do!

Mary

No, you have to prove it by the final trial.

Little

What is it?

Mary

Trial by retribution.

Little

Trial by I can't say it.

Mary

It doesn't matter. I can.

Little

What does it mean?

Mary

Standing on the tracks at midnight.

Little

Just so long as you're there.

Mary

Alone.

Little

I can't.

Mary

You've got to. Just jump off when you see it coming. You know, like we do during the day.

Little

What if I forget?

Mary

You won't. He'll save you.

Little

Who?

Mary

Christ will save you. Remember? He is all seeing and knowing. You'll jump. He'll see to it. You lack faith, Little Mary, and that's why this trial by retribution is necessary. The truly faithful need not prove their faith . . . just others like you do.

Little

What if I won't?

Mary

Anything could happen. Anything at all. You might get sent back to the

convent to live. So I suggest you do it. Tonight.

Little

You can't order me.

Mary

A suggestion is not an order, Little Mary. An order is said loud, very loud. Let us pray.

Rocky

The sobriety test?

Cassandra

Yes.

Rocky

I'm tired of being afraid, Cassandra. I'll take any test.

Cassandra

If you take this test you have to pass the test, so we can see if you are sin, or the opposite of sin. You're either a crook or you're not, Rocky Sprague.

Rocky

Yes.

Cassandra

The egg test.

Rocky

Yes.

Cassandra

You throw this egg and if it breaks, that is a sin.
(LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY. MUSSING HIS HAIR PLAYFULLY.)

Mary

This is a forest. It's called Chinese Checkers.

Little

You are making that up again, so I'll start shaking.

Mary

No, no. there are jelly fish here. I've heard them groan.

Little

See? You are doing that to frighten me.

Mary

You refuse to believe that I'm not attacking you. You are crazy and sick.

Little

You are too.

Mary

But, Little Mary, I act well.

Little

You are two people. Nice . . . and mean . . .

Mary

Temper, temper. I act nice even when I am mean. That's an important lesson for you.

Little

You make me imagine things.

Mary

The things you imagine are real.

Little

There are no jelly fish in the forest.

Mary

The jelly fish you are afraid of are real. See?

Little

Are you going to pay me this time for walking through the forest?

Mary

No, you are doing this because you love me

Little

I do?

Mary

And you are doing this for other reasons.

Little

What?

Mary

This sixty cents.

Little

What if I don't want it?

Mary

I'll find someone else who does.

Little

(*TAKES IT.*)

Mary

You are sad now.

Little

No I'm not, I'm happy.

Mary

You look sad.

Little

(*NEAR TEARS*) This is how I look when I'm happy.

Mary

Then come on. Let's go and don't step on them please. Stop that groaning.

Little

I haven't opened my mouth.

Mary

I can hear you groan even when you don't open your mouth.

Little

Oh. I'll be more careful next time. (*POINTS*) Look! At the wide, wide river.

Mary

They're railroad tracks and you know it.

Little

Maybe it's the boardwalk at the beach.

Mary

No. it will be whatever you want. It's a wide wide river and I love you very much . . . that is called real emotion . . . emotion is what one must feel.

Little

Oh?

Mary

Emotion is why we're going back there.

Little

To the shack and the man.

Mary

But too much emotion will make you sick like too much motion. That's why those two words are spelled alike.

Little

Are we going back to Mr. Sprague's?

Mary

Yes, he invited us for tea and I'll tell you a secret.

Little

Another one? I can't remember them all.

Mary

You will this one. He's Jesus Christ.

Little

No he isn't. Jesus Christ got hung on a sign. He was all over the convent and to kill him was a sin.

Mary

He's resurrected and lives down by the railroad tracks. To be resurrected is the opposite of sin.

Little

I'm not going to visit any Jesus Christ. I thought he was Mr. Sprague.

Mary

I'm going without you and you will probably be found here, alone, by a Russian with a beard.

Little

(SHIVERS)

Mary

So for your own good we're going.

Little

I wish you wouldn't do so many things for my own good.

Mary

I wouldn't want to have you here near the jellyfish, that's all. It is their natural place, not yours and for that there are no cures of any kinds.

Little

Are you sure?

Mary

Well, I cannot say for sure, nothing is for sure but one thing; that I'm trying to help you.

Little

How? There are stickers on my legs and it's dark.

Mary

I wanted to save this to say last but, you are going to almost die soon, and Mr. Sprague will bring you back to life.

Little

(STARTS SCREAMING AND SCREAMING . . .)

Rocky

What dues are you collecting? Don't you give up?

Cassandra

You are like money owed to me, Rocky. You are something to me, like a relative or something. We share. When people were something to each other, that's something to share.

(LIGHT ON LITTLE AND MARY WALKING ACROSS A FENCE, ARMS OUT FOR BALANCE. ACROSS A LARGE SPACE TOWARD EACH OTHER.)

Cassandra

You just don't go off like you did. I been carrying fruit for you, Baby, and it's waiting to drop, one could say, nice and ripe.
(ARMS AROUND ROCKY'S NECK.)

Rocky

I'm staying alone this time and you can rub your fruit against somebody else for a change . . . before it rots.

Cassandra

NoNoNoNoNoNoNoNoNo, Rocky Sprague. I'm not asking you for a place to stay. I'm telling you.

Rocky

Like they say in the movies; huh Cassandra?

Cassandra

I'm not asking you.

Rocky

Good.

Cassandra

I'm telling you.

Rocky

And what if I say you don't own me.

Cassandra

I say we own what we take like you own what you took.

Rocky

I didn't steal anything this time.

Cassandra

Sure sure sure sure. Who believes it more than me. Cassandra O'Neill. (SHOWS HANDS.) Look at this palm. The lines. Trusting. I'd believe a weed if it said it was a flower. Poor ol' Cassandra here. She's known for her trust in people.

Rocky

Are you on the run?

Cassandra

You and I could do a job in the city together or live quiet for a while here. Once a person knows everything about another person, then person number one has quite a bit going for her and certain person number two has to be quiet and listen to person number one. I wish you no harm! When a certain person like me has friends, good friends like you, the world is hers. Yes? A law of nature, one might say. So in a way, I own you!

Rocky

Owning is not loving.

Cassandra

You said Love, not me. I never brought it up.

Rocky

Can't you find somebody else?

Cassandra

A lady shouldn't be left alone, Rocky. It's not polite. People shouldn't be left alone - - to grow old - - on their own.

Rocky

We have a right to be with who we choose or to be alone.

Cassandra

Life chooses us. We don't choose it Dummy. That is the way it is.

* * * * *

Mary

(SHOUTING) Cross your fingers.

Little

Crossed.

Mary

Twice each hands.

Little

(ALMOST LOSING BALANCE.) Best I can.

Mary

Good. Now pray!

Little

For what?

Mary

That I'll tell you later.

Little

When?

(Meeting In The Center.)

Mary

When I'm ready.

* * * * *

Rocky

(SHOUTING) You can't treat people like animals, making them do tricks.

Little and Big

(STARING OVER "HILL", EAVESDROPPING.)

Cassandra

Why do we have to fight, Rocky man? Why do we always have to fight.

Rocky

I'd rather live alone, that's all.

Cassandra

O.K. Honey. I didn't know you were this upset. You should be left alone. I'm going. I'll bring something to warm your insides.

Rocky

No liquor. I'm off.

Cassandra

Sure Rocky. Sure you are. Me too . . . until we're on.

Rocky

Does that really bring you pleasure, Cassandra?

* * * * *

Mary

What are they arguing about?

* * * * *

Cassandra

Cassandra don't want to cause problems, Rocky.

Rocky

I got two problems.

Cassandra

What?

Rocky

Booze and you. Everything a man needs.

Cassandra

Now it's only one problem.

* * * * *

Little

What did he say?

Mary

He has two problems.

Little

What are they?

Mary

(UNSURE) Uhhhhh. Everything.

Little

(PUZZLED.) That's only one problem.

* * * * *

Little and Big

(GO TO PROP BOX AND GET PAPER AND PENCIL. LIGHTS FULL UP.)

Little

I did it! I did it!

Mary

I did too.

Little

I went around all the blocks on my side and wrote down every house number.

Mary

Each on a separate page?

Little

Yup.

Mary

Let's see. (LOOKS.) Wait. Not that one.

Little

You said write every one down on a separate white sheet.

Mary

We can't have that one. 219. Cross it out.

Little

O.K.

Mary

That's Mrs. Larkin's. she said I scratched her car with my finger.

Little

Well, in my notebook, there will be no number for Mrs. Larkin's house.

Mary

(PUTS ARM AROUND LITTLE.)

Little

Whose map in Mr. Sprague's house on?

Mary

Mine.

Little

Does he have a number.

Mary

Shhhhhhhh.

Little

Why doesn't he have a number. He's nice.

Mary

He's an outlaw. I told you. Living out there. Poor and all. He can't have a number! Have you ever seen a number on his house?

Little

Never.

Mary

He has no number in my notebook. He's our invisible friend.

Little

(LOOKS UP. ROLLING EYES TOWARD HEAVEN.)

(BOTH RUN DOWN HILL.)

* * * * *

(LITTLE AND BIG SIT BY ROCKY.)

Mary

Hush, little, we are guests.

Little

It's fun to come to Mr. Sprague's for tea.

Rocky

(ENJOYING ROLE AS INSTRUCTOR.) Now. This stone found by the river, tear shape. It's quiet in our hand. If you hold it to your heart, it will feel warm. If you hold it to your lips, it will feel cold.

Little and Big

(RESPOND TOGETHER. RITUAL.) One thing is always sure. A stone found by the river is a stone to keep forever.

Rocky

Amen.

Little and Big

(CLAP AND SHOUT!) More! More!

(GEORGIAN CHANTS SWELL AND RISE, THEN SOFTEN.)

Rocky

(HANDS UP TO CUT APPLAUSE.)

About water. Water, my children, *(puts scarf over arm like a magician, then pours water from a pitcher)* is a wriggly rope.

Little and Big

(NOD SOMBERLY)

Rocky

You can't hold it. You can't fall off. You can try with two hands, but water is something you can't ever hold. Try all you want! Another thing about water - - as nice as it is - - as silky as it is - - and as smooth as it is - - you can't blow a whistle under it - - under water. Try. You'll see!

Little and Big

What a place not to be able to blow a whistle

(APPLAUSE. LIGHTS OUT. LIGHTS ON.)

Rocky

You'd better be getting home. You can come visit another time, girls.

Mary

But you said we were your friends. Then you say we have to go home. The Jenny story! After that we'll go.

Rocky

(AS IF TOLD BEFORE.)

Well there was Jenny when I was about your age. Jenny had a guinea pig, remember . . . And when we saw her . . . maybe we were a little younger . . . anyways, we'd yell to this girl, Jenny, "Hi Guinea, how's your Jenny pig?"

Little

Then one day it died.

Rocky

Then one day it died. His two hind feet stopped walking first. Then it died. Later somebody in the crowd must've forgot and called, "Hi Guinea, how's your Jenny pig." And everybody forgot to laugh, and it got too quiet, and we all ran home.

Cassandra

(ENTERS. SILENCE.)

Little and Big

(APPLAUD. APPLAUSE. GIRLS BACK AWAY SLOWLY.)

Cassandra

(ROUGHLY.) Dinner's ready, Rocky.

Rocky

Oh, dinnertime.

Little and Big

(LEAVE SLOWLY.)

Cassandra

Yeah. We're having pig. Pink pig. Pink pig. It's getting cold on your plate. You can cook a thing to death, you know, and then it's worse yet to let it get cold on the plate.

Little and Big

(RUN OFF UP THE HILL.)

Rocky

That wasn't very nice to say with the story I was telling.

Cassandra

Ham then! Okay? Ain't ham pig when all is said and done?

Rocky

(RISES AND FOLLOWS HER IN.)

* * * * *

Little

I wish Mr. Sprague was my father.

Mary

Whatever are you talking about, Little Mary?

Little

He's nice. Real nice.

Mary

(*JEALOUSLY*) He is not.

Little

Why not?

Mary

He's just not. That's all. Why would he live alone all day if he was nice with that horrible lady. Nice people don't do that. He has to prove himself to God. Then he'll be nice.

Little

He could be lonely with no small children.

Mary

Naturally not, Stupid. He's not even human.

Little

Oh. What is he?

Mary

(*WHISPERS.*)

Little

How do you know. He looks like a regular man to me.

Mary

So did "you know who". (*BLESSES HERSELF. GENUFLECTS.*)

Little

If he was "you know who" he wouldn't spend his time with you and me. That's just sensible thinking. Anybody could figure that.

Mary

What would you know about sensible thinking. If Christ had any sense he wouldn't get hung. He's not supposed to have any sense. He's just supposed to die for our sins. Can't you remember anything!

Little

Oh, yes. Now I remember.

Mary

Try to do better next time.

Little

Doing what?

Mary

Remembering.

Little

It's hard remembering all to say.

Mary

But not impossible. I remember all I say.

Little

You're older.

Mary

You will be too. Don't worry, Little.

Little

I still wish he was our father.

Mary

He is. He is.

Little

Not that kind. Just a regular old man-father. He tells wonderful things about the circus.

Mary

I can too. *(TO DRAWER, RUMMAGES. BRINGS OUT BALL OF YARN. STRETCHES IT ON FLOOR.)* There! We can play circus without Mr. Sprague. Just us two.

Little

What's that?

Mary

The tight rope.

Little

The tight rope.

Mary

Sure.

Little

On the floor?

Mary

It's better this way. You won't fall off this way. Go ahead. Try!

Little

Seems silly.

Mary

Oh, Little Mary. Try. We can do all sorts of tricks on it together. *(TAKES HER ARM.)* And we won't fall off!

* * * * *

(MARY ALONE. LIGHT ON MARY'S FACE. BLACK STAGE.)

Mary

Did you like that? These flowers I picked for you? The Queen Anne's Lace? The green that makes you sneeze? The rabbit I made you play with? My old clothes? Having my very own name I let you use? Touch this. Try this on. Eat this. I've chewed it up for you. It's delicious. Take my word for it. You don't try to be happy. That's your trouble. People try to give you things. But you just don't try. I've done everything for you. Everything. Is there anything I own I wouldn't let you play with? You aren't grateful. You don't like presents. You are a bad girl. You should be punished. Unless you do what I say, take what I give you, and say Thank you. And Love me.

(SIMULTANEOUS SCENES.)

Rocky

Cassandra O'Neill, how in hell you found me, I'll never know.

Cassandra

Don't be scared, Baby, I wouldn't turn you in for nothing!

Rocky

What would you turn me in for?

Cassandra

Relaaaaax. Relaaaaax. We've always been good friends, working through the circus, how many years? Hoofing it around, close as a diamond on its ring.

Rocky

So you think I took the rock?

Cassandra

Nononononono, Heaven forbid! Cassandra sees no evil . . . But the circus manager, now he's tough, that man. He used to count the take twice each night and God knows how often he'd polish that ring.

Rocky

Well, why worry about him. If he had some take to count, why'd he need the ring?

Cassandra

No reason 'cept he dreamed it was his, I guess. Guess that was because it was on her finger. And because he bought it. He was simple headed that way, wasn't he?

Mary

You've got to.

Little

I can't.

Mary

You've got to.

Little

I can't.

Mary

Why can't you?

Little

I'm scared.

Mary

That's not a reason.

Little

For you it's not. For me it is.

Mary

This is your last chance to be saved.

Little

I'd rather not be saved. It isn't doing me any good anyhow.

Mary

All you have to do is . . .

* * * * *

Rocky

I was in jail once and it wasn't my fault. I'm sitting pretty this time.

Cassandra

But it's the law. You can't live by the tracks, property of the U.S. Government.

You'll get caught, Rocky Sprague. You got caught once for stealing, didn't you. You can't homestead like this without paying the consequences.

* * * * *

(STAGE BLACK. SCREAMS OF ONE CHILD OVER SCREAMS OF TRAIN WHISTLE AND APPROACHING TRAIN. LIGHTS UP. CHILDREN HUGGING EACH OTHER HYSTERICALLY PANTING, LAUGHING. TRAIN SOUND IN DISTANCE.)

Little

I was first off.

Mary

I think we were even. Don't scream next time.

Little

I can't help it. When it gets up close enough to see, I can't help screaming.

Mary

I never say a word.

Little

But you can't scream. You told me. It was up to me.

Mary

I changed my mine. No screaming. I don't know why I can't. I want to. It won't come out.

Little

What if Aunt Helen ever saw us down here.

Mary

(CHANGING SUBJECT) I know what!

Little

I'm tired and we have that hill to go up. No races today, okay?

Mary

No. No races. This game is called the Dragon's Claw.

Little

Who says?

Mary

An ancient Chinaman I knew.

Little

Ha.

Mary

Here, I put my arms around you and squeeze you tight and you count to 20 and hold your breath and I let you go and you'll be on a merry-go-round.
(GRABS HER AND SWINGS HER AROUND TO THE SOUND OF MERRY-GO-ROUND.)

* * * * *

(SPOT ON MARY AND LITTLE.)

Mary

(HOLDING UP DOLL BY NOOSE, SWINGING IT.)

Little

That's torture.

Mary
(HOLDS OUT OF REACH. RUNS AWAY.)

(LIGHTS UP)

Mary
If I said it, it's true. Have I ever lied?

Little
No.

Mary
But you did once.

Little
When?

Mary
Once.

Little
Tell me, Mary. It's only fair.

Mary
When I set the clock for our baby.

Little
Yes. It was my job to feed her at night.

Mary
So I set the clock. I did my part.

Little
And I always feed the baby.

Mary
(GOES TO BOX, PULLS OUT RUBBER DOLL.) Look. She died.

Little
No. NO.

Mary
When the alarm went off at two, you woke up and you got out of bed but you didn't feed the baby. (HOLDS DOLL BY FEET.)

Little
I was sleepy, Mary.

Mary

You turned off the alarm.

Little

I was tired.

Mary

And you went back to bed.

Little

I'm sorry Mary.

Mary

And you didn't feed the baby.

Little

Just that once.

Mary

Now, she's dead.

(PRETENDS TO DROP HER OUT THE WINDOW.)

Little

Bring her back to life, Mary.

Mary

(TAUNTING) Out the window, through the tree, then down, spinning deeper like sliding on shiny paper until she's in the ground dead.

Little

No she'll come back to life.

Mary

If we were sorry for our sins . . .

Little

We are! We are!

Mary

If we cried.

Little

We do cry.

Mary

If we do not sin again . . .

Little

Oh, never again. Bring her back.

Mary

Retribution is what we have to do.

Little

What is it?

Mary

It's not a "that". It's something you do which scares the tar out of you, and then retribution brings things back to life.

Little

How do you know?

Mary

I ought to. I was dead once but retribution brought me back.

Little

How do we do it?

Mary

One of us has to climb out that window, over the edge, on to the branch, down the limb fast . . .

Little

Like shiny paper . . .

Mary

To the ground . . .

Little

Alone . . .

Mary

Of course alone. It has to scare the tar out of you.

Little

Then she'll be alive?

Mary

Then we'll all be alive.

Little

I'm really scared of retribution, Mary. *(STARTS TO CRY.)*

Mary

Of course you are. We all are. It's the only way.

Little

(CLIMBS OUT WINDOW. MARY GRABS DOLL BACK. CRYING OUT OF SIGHT.)

Mary

Little Mary. Little Mary. (*HELPS HER BACK IN.*)

Little

(*HUGGING HER. SOBBING.*)

Mary

It's all right. I told you I'd take care of you and I did. See. Your Mary did.
Take care of you. And look! Baby!

Little

(*GRABS DOLL.*)

Mary

Is alive!

* * * * *

Cassandra

(*PUTTING ON A SHOW, SINGING TO ROCKY.*)

Lucy had a baby.
She named him Tiny Tim.
She put him in the bathtub
to see if he could swim.
He drank up all the water.
He ate up all the soup.
He tried to eat the bathtub
but it wouldn't go down his throat.
Lucy called the doctor.
The doctor called the nurse.
The nurse called the lady with the alligator purse.
They took out all the water.
They took out all the soap.
They tried to get the bathtub out
but it wouldn't come up his throat.
Out ran the doctor.
Out ran the nurse.
In ran the lady with the alligator purse.

(*SHOUTS AT ROCKY.*) He died!

Rocky

(*DRINKING.*) Hmmmm.

Cassandra

(*DRINKS.*) These shoes.

Rocky

I see 'em.

Cassandra

They kick people.

Rocky

Better get a new pair.

Cassandra

Kick people where it hurts.

Rocky

Where's that?

Cassandra

In your ass, Rocky. You treat me like I'm trash. Like you don't love me.

Rocky

That a fact.

Cassandra

Yup. Like you don't love me at all.

Rocky

I do huh.

Cassandra

No you don't. Not at all.

Rocky

Well, don't cry about it.

Cassandra

I won't.

Rocky

Good.

Cassandra

Are you listening, you rat?

Rocky

To what?

Cassandra

To me.

Rocky

To you?

Cassandra

Not crying.

Rocky

Good for you.

Cassandra

Hear me you rotten bum.

Rocky

Yeah. I hear you not crying.

Cassandra

You'll never get me to cry over you Rocky. Never.

Rocky

Good.

Cassandra

Never.

Rocky

Good.

Cassandra

Never. These shoes. They could dance.

Rocky

Once.

Cassandra

They still could.

Rocky

Do yourself a big favor.

Cassandra

Yeah?

Rocky

Get yourself a new pair. (*DOWNS GLASS.*)

* * * * *

(MARY AND LITTLE LOOKING IN ROCKY'S "WINDOW." STAGE DARK.)

Little

What's he doing?

Mary

He's on top.

Little

What's she doing?

Mary

They're sitting up. (*QUIZZICALLY.*) They're playing TIGER!

Little

Tiger!

Mary

Shhhh. (*LISTENING.*) He said, "Did that bring you pleasure?"

Little

Playing Tiger???

* * * * *

Mary

(*AT JUDGE'S STAND.*) And then Little Mary said he said to her, "Did that bring you pleasure."

Sounds crazy to me.

* * * * *

(*BIG AND LITTLE ARE IN DRESS-UPS. THEY LOOK SOMEWHAT LIKE CASSANDRA . . . IN BOA AND BEADS.*)

Rocky

I got this (*HOLDING STARFISH*) off the coast of Florida when I was . . . oh, years ago. Had it in the shoe box with my valuables.

Little

I can't believe it was ever soft.

Rocky

You never saw one inch along? Like this? (*SHOWS WITH HIS HAND*) girl? Nobody ever took you to the beach?

Little

(*HOLDS IT*) Stiff as anything. Dead. But not smelly. I love it.

Rocky

Take it. Don't prick yourself. It's scratchy.

Little

Take it to keep?

Rocky

I got another one somewhere.

Little

Thank you.

Rocky

I got another one somewhere.

Little

Thank you.

Rocky

I got another one somewhere.

(AS THE GIRLS LEAVE - - RUN UP THE HILL - - THE LAST TWO LINES REPEATED AS NORMAL CONVERSATION.)

Cassandra

Oh, Rocky Sprague, why do you let those little girls come around? Unless you really love it. You do love it, don't you. Why you are sicker than I thought, getting kicks talking to little girls about the circus - - the sea - - sailing ships - - finding leaves - - shit! You play God, don't you, Rocky? Giving them all the God Almighty attention. Aren't you the oracle? Animals! Magnifying glasses! What are you, crazy or something?

(MOCKING HIM VOCALLY) This is not a magnifying glass. It's a magic flying glass. If you hold it to a leaf, it'll burn. If you look at melting fluffy snowflakes, they'll turn different fluffy shapes. Take a squirrel home to lunch! You are over the hill and loony. I throw myself on you and what do I get? Philosophy. "A man alone" written by Rocky. Seastones, seashells, landstones, sky stories, shit stories, magnifying glass, my magic flying ass! Why don't you go take up residency in an orphanage where they'll give you a crown and call you high priest? Why can't you talk to me - - a full grown woman? Why can't you talk sex-- talk sense? Talk grown. You're a twelve year old senile son of a bitch. Why don't you like to talk to me any? I know jokes. Do they know jokes? No, they don't know jokes. And they're trespassing on private government property coming around here ruining our love. What do you have to say for yourself, you pervert?

(LITTLE AND MARY PICKING DAISIES. LITTLE IS CARRYING STARFISH.)

Little

I love yellow.

Mary

So.

Little

No matter what you say to me I'd still love yellow.

Mary

Even if I said I didn't love yellow?

Little

I'd still be loving yellow.

Mary

Even if I told you the truth?

Little

What truth?

Mary

That yellow isn't a word.

Little

What is it then?

Mary

A color.

Little

I can still love something if I want even after somebody says yellow isn't a word.

Mary

Then you don't care about the truth.

Little

What truth?

Mary

The true truth. Whatever I say, remember, is the truth.

Little

Then I'll believe the fake truth.

Mary

You need more training in obedience. You're not ready for heavenly grace at all.

Little

I am too ready. I am too.

Mary

You'll have to prove it then.

Little

How?

Mary

By being strong.

(TRAIN SOUNDS IN THE DISTANCE.)

Little

I was strong.

Mary

How were you strong?

Little

By telling the truth. That I still love yellow.

Mary

(IGNORES HER.)

Little

(PAUSE.) Even if I said I didn't love yellow, I would still be loving yellow.

Mary

(GROANS.) You have many tests to pass before you pass God's test.

Little

(WHISPERS.) I still love yellow.

Mary

Many tests to pass.

Little

When do I have to pass these tests?

Mary

Someday.

Little

When is someday?

Mary

Someday comes after Monday.

Little

(SITS SILENTLY. EXAMINING STARFISH, PLACING IT ON THE GROUND WITH FLOWERS AROUND IT.)

* * * * *

(NOOSE OVERHEAD, SWING FROM TREE.)

Mary

(ADDRESSING JUDGE.) Oh, then it was just terrible. I heard him say, "Did that bring you pleasure?" and she was screaming. Oh yes. He also said, "Now that wasn't so bad, was it?" and then she was standing on the railroad tracks. Our mother told us not to go down there, not ever to go down there by the shack and Mr. Sprague. How were we to know. He invited us for tea. He seemed so nice to Little Mary here and me. I shall never know what he did to her. She's such a tiny thing. Doesn't even eat her meals. So fragile. We're taking care of her, temporarily, mama and me, and showing her a good life and religious one too. We trust in God, but that's not enough, I guess, if

there's man to reckon with. That's what Mama says. But you won't hurt Mr. Sprague, will you? Just because I said this? Told you the truth? As I see it and know it to be? That's all we can do, especially us small children, say things as we see them, as innocently as we can be. Mr. Sprague seemed so nice. What did you do with him. Nothing bad I hope. He was so nice. I wonder what he showed to Little Mary. She said it was something secret he took out and made her touch,

Mary

and well, I don't know what happened for sure, and teacher says if we don't see something with our very own eyes, we shouldn't talk about it, so . . . I won't. but he might have tortured her. I think he did, anyway, but poor Little Mary is a strange little girl. And we can't get her to talk now at all. Oh this is awful, just awful.

* * * * *

(NOTHING IS SEEN. CROWD VOICES ARE HEARD.)

* * * * *

(LITTLE MARY IS LYING DOWN STIFF. PLAYING DEAD. BIG MARY IS ARRANGING HER BODY. LITTLE KEEPS SITTING UP TO TALK.)

Little

I can't find it anywhere.

Mary

Dead starfish do not walk away.

Little

It was in my box.

Mary

Maybe we buried it with the broken record during the record's funeral.

Little

No. it was in the small shoebox and now it's empty.

Mary

Keep doing what I told you.

Little

(CLOSES EYES. MECHANICALLY PRAYS.)

Dear Saint Anthony. Look around. Something's lost. And can't be found.

Mary

(PLACES STARFISH ON GROUND. RUNS OFF.)

Little

(REPEATS PRAYER ONCE. OPENS EYES. FINDS STARFISH.)

Mary! You can come out now. I know you put it here, not Saint Anthony.
You!

Mary

The purpose of life is to serve God and I serve God.

Little

I'm going down to Mr. Sprague's house.

Mary

Alone? Cassandra will scream at you.

Little

(GOING DOWN HILL.) I didn't lose it. Somebody took it and somebody put it back.

Mary

She'll scream. You'll see.

* * * * *

(APPROACHING TRAIN SOUNDS SERVE AS TRANSITION. BLACK STAGE. ROARING OF TRAIN SCREAMING BY. LIGHT ON TREE THEN ON SHADOW OF MAN HANGING BY NOOSE, THEN LIGHTS FULL UP ON ROCKY HOLDING LITTLE MARY IN HIS ARMS. CASSANDRA STANDS UP.)

Rocky

What in the world?

Cassandra

She jumped off right before the goddamn train hit her.

Rocky

Speak to us, girl. What are you doing here on that track.

Little

(DROPS TO HER KNEES.) Bless me father for I have sinned.

Cassandra

What the hell, Rocky. *(CRADLES LITTLE.)* Get a blanket. She's gone looney. Whatever the hell she's doing here.

Rocky

Drink this.

Little

(SWALLOWS. CHOKES STIFF WITH FRIGHT.)

Cassandra

She's in shock or somethin'. Call somebody.

Rocky

Christ no. What the hell would we say to any cops . . . me living here and all.
(PUTS LITTLE DOWN.)

Cassandra

Bring her inside then.

(LIGHTS LIKE FLASHLIGHTS SEEN BEYOND HILL. VOICES IN DISTANCE.)

Cassandra

What the hell's going on here. There's people at midnight.

Rocky

Maybe out looking for her. Bring her in.

Little

(SEES LIGHTS. EXCITEDLY.) It was the Trial of Retribution. Tell them. Tell them I passed the test if anybody asks. You saw I passed the test but please don't make me touch anything. Please don't hurt me. Please don't hurt me. (SOBBING.)

Cassandra

She's hysterical, Christ!

Rocky

(TRYING TO SHUSH HER. REACHES IN POCKET.) Look. Look kid. Don't cry. Here is a starfish. Now you may have heard of a regular starfish who lives in the water, but not this. It's magic and lives near little girls and boys and makes them stop crying. Here take it.

Little

(HESITATINGLY TOUCHES IT.)

Rocky

This isn't a starfish. It's a starFISH and lives near the sticker tree and can fly without wings or fins. Here stop crying. Stop shaking. Here, it's yours. Does that bring you pleasure?

Little

(DROPS IT AND RUNS.)

* * * * *

Mary

(JUDGE'S STAND)

He made her drink Whiskey. She said it made her crazy and she can't remember anything afterwards. That woman helped. We're not allowed down there. I don't know how she got in his house unless he tricked her. And that lady! What would they want to do with a little girl like my cousin, Little Mary?

* * * * *

Rocky

(TO IMAGINARY CROWD. HE IS BACKED AGAINST A TREE.)

Why are you people here. I'm living on this property only for a short time. I didn't steal no diamond from the circus man. It's sort of a game me and Cassandra made up once about that we would. The little girl? She was here but I didn't bring her here. I don't know why she came. I heard her screaming and took her off the track in time before the train. I heard her screaming. I swear I don't know. Once she came here alone but mostly with her girlfriend. Cassandra there will tell you.

Rocky

I wouldn't violate no child. Why would I want to. I have a full-sized woman here in my home. The little girls only came over once in a while for tea. Teatime they called it. Those little girls are making up some game. I didn't tell her to touch nothing and I didn't touch. That's a sin on her. Or whoever said it. I wouldn't touch a kid.

(ROCKY REPEATS THE SPEECH. THIS TIME RUNNING FROM RAMP TO RAMP WHILE SPOT IS ON MARY AND LITTLE SWINGING LEGS, SEATED ON A "FENCE" SINGING "PLAYMATE COME OUT AND PLAY WITH ME.")

Little and Big

Playmate come out and play with me.
And bring your dollies three.
Climb up my apple tree.
Come to my window.
Peek down my rain barrel.
Slide down my cellar door.
And we'll be jolly friends, forever more.

(REPEAT SECOND STANZA IN SILENCE FOLLOWING ROCKY'S SPEECH.)

Little and Big

Playmate I cannot play with you.
My dolly has the flu.
Boo hoo hoo hoo hoo hoo.
Can't see your rain barrel.
Can't slide down your cellar door.
But we'll be jolly friends, forever more.

* * * * *

(LIGHT ON NOOSE. SOUND OF TWIG SNAPPING. SOUND LIKE THAT OVER AND OVER. SNAP. SNAP. SNAP.)

* * * * *

(SPOT ON MARY SWINGING DOLL IN NOOSE.)

Little

Here. Give it here!

* * * * *

Cassandra

I guess you never had nowhere to be, Rocky. You and me. You never even dreamed you had a place to be and if I wear a veil, I'm the only one who would wear a veil for you or cry or even know you died for some sins of some little girls or some mistakes or something I don't understand yet. If you are here, I want you to know I didn't love you but I needed to live with you

Cassandra

and for that I'll put a cross here because if I didn't, who would? I don't understand why they killed you, why they lynched you, but I seen everything and I believe it all. They little girls, maybe they could've helped, maybe they couldn't. I'm not the one to ask any questions.

(SHE PLACES THE CROSS ON THE GROUND AND BEGINS ARRANGING THE BLACK VEIL ON HER HEAD.)

(LIGHT ON LITTLE AND MARY. SHAFT OF LIGHT AS IF IN CHURCH. LITTLE IS DRESSED IN WHITE. MARY HOLDS COMMUNION VEIL. SHE IS PLACING IT ON LITTLE'S HEAD.)

Mary

Don't be scared. The priest just puts holy bread on your tongue. You don't chew or bite. Even if it gets stuck on the roof of your mouth, leave it there until it melts. Now you remember this. Then pray. Or look like it and, here, you carry this. *(HANDS HER CRUCIFIX.)*

Little

I don't like it.

Mary

You've got to. Everybody carries it.

Little

(EXAMINING) I feel so spooky, and he's just hanging there watching me.

Mary

He died for our sins. That's where he's supposed to hang for all our sins. That's why he's hanging and you should be happy. This is the day you should be happy. The holy bread is nice. He gives it to you and then to your friends and then you're not supposed to be hungry anymore and neither are they.

* * * * *

Cassandra

Well, I should be happy. I found the ring. Only you would say it was under your tooth in your worthless head. It's something anyway. It'll tide me over, Rocky.

Oh, Rocky Sprague. Did they bury you with the rope still on your neck? Poor son of a bitch. The trouble is . . . I'll get over it. Fast. We all will. That's the real thing. Things happen worse than we imagine and the rest of us go right

on living.

Mary

(POURING TEA ON TOY TABLE. WICKER CHAIRS. ONE DOLL IS SEATED. ONE CHAIR IS EMPTY.)

Little Mary won't be here for tea today. They took her away to live somewhere else and I don't care. I have you and you have me. And we don't need her anyway. Only two chairs here and all. Besides Summer's over and soon it'll be Fall and then Winter and what with so many seasons coming and rain and snow and school to go to, I'd be busy anyway. She'd just be in the way.

(PLACES THIRD CUP ON TABLE.)

We could leave this out if they ever let her visit. Not to stay of course but if they ever let her visit. Just to come to tea one day. *(HUGGING DOLL.)* Oh, let her visit someday. *(PUTS DOLL ON CHAIR STERNLY.)* No crying.

You'll forget she lived here. Mother says people get over things. People forget. It's best for her to be away. We'll go right on playing. In fact, I'll write Little Mary a note saying

(GRABS PAPER AND WRITES.)

I have a new girl to play with all week. *(LOOKS UP.)* Of course, being a truthful person I'll add *(WRITES)* this part of the note is a lie.

(THINKS, THEN WRITES) If you come over tomorrow, beg them to let you, I will play with you all day and not the new girl. *(PAUSE)* I will write *(WRITES)* This part of the note was not a lie.

Cassandra

(TO AUDIENCE) (SHE STANDS ALONE)

No. I didn't marry any Rocky Sprague. If somebody heard on radio there were two robbers they'd ask me their names! Christ! Leave me alone. He's dead now, I wasn't his wife and I got no more to say.

Did I marry him? No. Did I love him? Probably not. There's the name of your two robbers. Probably and Probably Not. You can't keep me for questioning. I know my rights. *(WALKS OFF.)*

Mary

Writing may not let them bring you back but if you come, I'll show you something which lives near a sticker tree and has a long nose and can fly without wings and even without wheels it can make all the green traffic lights. Come back soon. Thank you for listening. Goodbye.

Cassandra

I thought I'd have you where I wanted you when you'd say my name every sentence. Now I have you where you can't get away.

Mary

I think I know where you live now. I think I saw a picture of your new house. It's in a book.

Cassandra

We weren't going to get away with living scot free, Sprague. Once bought, always caught, always a cage for people like us and there's no bringing you back from the dead.

Mary

Is it far away in another city? Does it have a door in the middle? And a window? Were you standing in the window crying? Did you have an apple in your hand? Were you there crying and holding an apple? Looking out your window?

Cassandra

They hung you like a dummy. You always were a dummy, at least I'll always know where you live now . . . that's for sure.

Mary

Yes. That's the one I saw.

Mary and Cassandra together

Mary: That's the house.

Cassandra: That's for sure. I know where you are now.

Mary: That's where you are.

Cassandra: I know where you live now.

(SPOTS ON CASSANDRA. FROZEN. ALONE. MARY ALONE.)

* * * * *

(FROZEN SCENE MELTS. LIGHTS UP FULL. BRINGING CHARACTERS BACK TO LIFE AS IF PLAY IS JUST BEGINNING. CONCURRENT SCENE WITH GREAT VITALITY.)

Rocky

Cassandra O'Neill, you found me. Don't you ever stop?

Cassandra

Sure. It all depends on your definition of stop.

Rocky

Stop trying to get what somebody don't want to give.

Cassandra

(CHUCKLING.) People give what they can afford to.

Mary

Hold my finger. *(STICKS OUT FINGER FOR LITTLE.)*

Little

(LOOKS DOWN.)

Mary

My finger.

Little

(TAKES HER FINGER.)

I'm embarrassed to go for a walk this way.

Mary

But now you won't get lost.

Little

I wouldn't get lost. The sun was over that and I'd remember it fell this way and follow it.

(DROPS FINGER.)

Mary

Suns change. *(EXTENDS FINGER ONCE MORE.)*

Little

(TAKES FINGER.)

(THEY WALK.)

Cassandra

(CHUCKLING BECOMES LOUDER.)

Rocky

I'm 45 years old. When does a man have a right to be alone.

Cassandra

(LAUGHING LOUDER.)

Rocky

If you don't understand me or love me, let me be.

Cassandra

(LAUGHING AND CHUCKLING AS IF HE WERE TELLING A JOKE.)

Rocky

I need certain things. Certain things.

I need to think about certain things.

Cassandra

If you have one other person, you don't need anything else.

(WIPING EYES FROM CRYING WITH LAUGHTER.)

Little

(INNOCENTLY) What do you mean by have?

Cassandra

(SITS. PUTS HER FEET ON THE BABLY. LAUGHS, SHAKING HEAD.)

Rocky

I keep being followed so I run. So I stop and I'm hounded. So I run. So I stop. So I'm caught. So I run so I stop. So I'm found. So I run and I'm caught and I'm tortured.

Cassandra

(WIPING EYES. BLOWING NOSE.) You're a card. A real card.

Rocky

I can't seem to follow your thinking. We don't communicate.

Cassandra

You're not listening. It's your main trouble . . . preoccupation with your own self and your own needs. Have a drink. Cassandra's here. She'll cheer you up.

Mary

(RUNNING AHEAD UP THE HILL.)

Little

I can't seem to catch up.

Mary

(CALLS BACK) Why not? I'm going the right speed.

Little

(RUNS FASTER.)

Rocky

You're like a cancer on me. Leave me be. A cancer. They cut cancers out. They cut them out. I have rights to go on living to escape the cancer. Cancer hurts.

Cassandra

Now, Baby. If your tongue hurt, would you cut that out? See, Rocky? You don't think straight.

Mary

Run. Straight up. Not crooked. You'll catch up.

(RUNS FASTER. LOOKS BACK.)
(STAGE DARKENS. LIGHTS ON EMPTY SPACE.)

THE END