

Scene Six

(ISABELLE is now with JOAN while the GUARD unshackles JOAN wrists and feet. The GUARD tosses ISABELLE a rough, white linen gown — the burning dress.)

~~GUARD. She has to strip those clothes off and put this on. (He stands there, waiting to see JOAN naked.) ISABELLE. We'd like some privacy, please.~~

~~(The GUARD doesn't move.)~~

~~For the love of God, have some decency.~~

~~GUARD. No witchy business, now.~~

~~(The GUARD leaves.)~~

ISABELLE. Stand up, sweetheart, there you go.

(JOAN stands and ISABELLE starts to help her unlace her jerkin.)

JOAN. Tell me some stories, Mama.

ISABELLE. Well, let's see. We had our lambing season and it all went fairly well. Twelve of the ewes had babies and only one was a stillborn. But one of the ewes got killed by some dogs so we had an orphan lamb. So it all worked out. Your da was able to tuck the orphan in with the ewe that lost her lamb and she was happy to have it.

JOAN. Glad the little lamb found a mama.

ISABELLE. Oh yes, they're both very content. And let's see, what else can I tell you... The Bonheur boy got married.

JOAN. Good for him. He needed a girl.

ISABELLE. Yuh, seems he found the right one.

JOAN. Don't be sad that I never had a fellow, Ma. I would have made a lousy wife.

ISABELLE. I know, honey, you would've been a wretch. (ISABELLE helps JOAN off with the rest of her clothes — down to her undershorts and the cloth that's binding her breasts. ISABELLE dips a rag in a bucket of water and starts to gently wash her daughter.)

And what else. We've been havin' a lovely spring this year. The fields are greenin' up and there're wild flowers everywhere. The fairy tree girls have been out there, pickin' them to make their silly flower crowns.

JOAN. Silly girls.

ISABELLE. They are. But they have their fun.

JOAN. Does the air smell sweet?

ISABELLE. Oh very sweet. And you should see all the bees diggin' into those blossoms. Did I tell you — your da set us up with a couple 'a hives. We'll have our own honey in a month or two.

JOAN. I remember when you'd take me to the fair. You'd buy me a chunk 'a honeycomb from the bee man. I liked to chew the wax after I sucked all the sweet out of it.

ISABELLE. Oh, you loved your honeycomb.

JOAN. And I loved the puppet shows.

ISABELLE. You did.

JOAN. I laughed when the puppets hit each other. Don't know why. It was cruel.

ISABELLE. They were just puppets, sweetheart, that's why you laughed.

JOAN. But I believed it.

ISABELLE. Yes, you did.

JOAN. Mama, do you remember that little rag doll you made for me?

ISABELLE. Yes.

JOAN. I was so mean about it. I threw it on the floor. I was mad that I couldn't go out with Da and the brothers and the doll made me feel like a baby. I didn't mean to throw it on the floor. It was soft and you stitched a smile on her face. And I just threw it on the floor. I loved that dolly, Mama. I'm so sorry...

(JOAN is crying.)

ISABELLE. Oh honey, you were just a little girl, I know you didn't mean it.

(ISABELLE gently wipes at her tears. JOAN is trembling.)

Here, let's get you covered up now.

(ISABELLE helps JOAN on with the burning dress. JOAN's knees start to buckle with terror.)

JOAN. Oh God... Mama...

(ISABELLE holds on to her.) ISABELLE. Come, let's sit for a bit.

(ISABELLE cradles JOAN.)

JOAN. I'm scared.

ISABELLE. I know, Love.

JOAN. Oh God, it'll hurt.