



*Mourning Pictures*

by

Honor Moore

*Mourning Pictures* received its British Premiere from **Monstrous Regiment** in 1981; the company also performed a BBC Radio 4 version the following year. The play had first been produced at the Lenox Arts Center, Massachusetts, in 1974, then moving on to the Lyceum Theatre, Broadway. Further information about the Monstrous Regiment production of the show is provided in the Production pages of this website.

The script for the play was first published in 1977 by Vintage Books (New York) in *The New Women's Theatre: Ten Plays By Contemporary American Women*, edited and with an introduction by Honor Moore. This script, a recent copy of which has kindly been provided for this website by the author, formed the basis for the Monstrous Regiment production.

All requests for permission to perform or translate the play should be addressed to: The Wylie Agency, 250 West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 2114, New York, NY 10107 (email Sarah Chalfant <SChalfant@wylieagency.com>), or 17 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3JA

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# MOURNING PICTURES

a play by Honor Moore

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

The mourning picture, which usually showed a gravestone with the survivors grieving beside it, was an art form popular in the early nineteenth century, especially in New England. Young women stitched or painted them for bereaved friends.

## CHARACTERS

MARGARET, twenty-seven. A poet. Lives in New York City, but spends time at an old house in Kent, a small town in Connecticut.

ABIGAIL, nineteen. A student. Shares an apartment with David, her boyfriend.

DAVID, twenty. A student. His twentieth birthday occurs during the play.

MAGGIE, fifty. A mother of nine (including Margaret and Abigail) who has finished bringing up her children and is on the threshold of a new, independent life.

PHILIP, fifty-two. Maggie's husband. His life work has been helping people. That he is a clergyman is almost incidental.

DR. RUMBACH, about fifty. The surgeon. There are traces of his German background in his speech.

DR. THOMAS BERRYMAN, early forties. The vitamin therapist. Psychiatrist who has been converted to organic medicine.

DR. POTTER, about eighty. A chiropractor-nutritionist. Has been healing people for fifty years. Folksy.

DR. CASSIDY. A young surgeon.

## SINGER

The doctors should be played by one actor. The songs, sung by a woman singer on stage but far to one side, are a counterpoint to the action.

*The action takes place during a recent year, in Washington, D.C., with certain incidents in New York City and Connecticut. Places should be suggested with lighting and with minimal scenery and props in specific areas of a unit set.*

[Additional production notes are located at the end of the script]

## Part One

*March through May*

*March 29. Afternoon*

*Kent, Connecticut*

MARGARET

The telephone rings. I answer.  
Hello? I hear nothing.  
It frightens me.

MAGGIE

Margaret.

MARGARET

It's my mother. It doesn't sound  
like her. A week ago I wrote  
her, I love you.

MAGGIE

Margaret.

MARGARET

Not the perfunctory "I  
love you." A new one. The real one.

MAGGIE

I went to the gynecologist.  
She examined me.  
Tomorrow I go to  
the hospital for tests. She found—

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MARGARET

Alone in a red coat she walks  
down a long white hall—

MAGGIE

She

found a lump in my right  
side. Margaret—

MARGARET

In bed in a room. They  
hold her wrist.

MAGGIE

I'm scared!

MARGARET

I love you.

MAGGIE

Why is this happening?

MARGARET

I'm here, Mom. I love you.

I refuse to share her terror.  
My new ability to say  
“I love you” right out to  
my own mother is an  
act of courage great enough to  
save the whole world.

*March 31. Two A.M.  
Kent, Connecticut*

MARGARET

I am sleeping. The phone rings. It is dark.  
The clock says two. It is my father.

PHILIP

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I just  
want to tell you—Maggie’s  
in the hospital.

MARGARET  
I was sleeping. Wasn’t  
it just for tests?

PHILIP  
We don’t know for sure —

MARGARET  
I don’t want to wake up.

PHILIP  
— the surgeon  
says it’s probably cancer.  
The question is how far the tumor’s spread.

MARGARET  
I can’t comfort him. I want to go back  
to sleep.

PHILIP  
I’m sorry.

MARGARET  
I’ll call—

PHILIP  
I’ll call after  
we know more.

MARGARET  
I know this call  
at two a.m. means he wants more than to  
tell me —

PHILIP  
Good night, Margaret.

MARGARET

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– but I am cold.  
I run to bed. It is easy to sleep.

*April 3. Eight A.M.  
New York Airport*

MARGARET

The next phone call, she has cancer.  
They must remove a tumor  
    from her colon or  
she will die immediately.  
While they operate  
    they will biopsy  
her liver to learn if the lump  
under her breast is malignant.

Eight a.m. in the Air Shuttle  
Terminal. I am going  
    to see her. I buy  
*Newsweek* and the *New York Times*. I  
stand in line for Washington.  
    I see an old friend  
pass. He doesn't see me. I don't  
give up my place to say hello.

*April 3. Afternoon.  
Washington DC Hospital*

*(Maggie is in a hospital bed. There is a basket of spring flowers in the room)*

MARGARET

I want to see her before the surgery.  
    *(After seeing her)*  
She looks different than she did  
just two weeks ago at her fiftieth

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birthday party.  
She is a sick woman.

*(Margaret kisses her mother then sits down beside the bed)*

MAGGIE  
*(Warm)* Hi. When did you get in?

MARGARET  
I came straight from the airport.

MAGGIE  
Did someone meet you?

MARGARET  
I rented a car. I wanted to be independent.

MAGGIE  
Good idea.

MARGARET  
  
When will they operate?

MAGGIE  
Seven-thirty a.m. Tomorrow.

MARGARET  
I thought Thursday!

MAGGIE  
They moved it up.

MARGARET  
*(Taking card from basket)* I love opening things! *(Looks at card)*  
It's from the Lawrences.

MAGGIE  
She had it.

MARGARET  
I didn't know that –

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MAGGIE

Years ago. The she had something in her stomach last month. They were terrified, but it was just a cyst. Nothing. Nothing like mine. *(After a silence)* Everything was just starting! Do you have a Kleenex? *(Margaret gives her one)* I just want you to know I've made a new will. It's harder this way, but your father and I promised we wouldn't have secrets. We've asked Dr. Rumbach to tell us both everything at the same time. And we planned my funeral, just in case tomorrow isn't successful.

*(Maggie and Margaret are quiet during the song, as if each is alone.)*

SONG

A ring or two.  
The turquoise beads  
The green-striped chair  
What will she leave me  
Except alone by myself?  
No one to have the final word!  
What will she leave me –  
A will,  
A legal sheaf of papers  
Sealed with blood-red wax –  
They put it in a vault until you die–  
Not forever–  
Just until you die!  
A ring or two  
The painting on the stairs  
Her mother did  
Of her asleep at three  
That looks a lot like me –  
Will she leave me that?

The turquoise beads  
The green-striped chair  
The old French silverware  
The antique quilt  
I bought for her –  
Will I get it back?

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*April 5*  
*Washington DC Hospital*  
*Ultra-modern intensive care unit*

DOCTOR RUMBACH

Our surgery to remove the tumor has been successful.  
We were able to sew her colon back together.

It will mend.

Now we wait for the results of her liver biopsy. If  
the tests are positive, there is only time. Liver  
cancer is inoperable.

PHILIP

Margaret and I go to see her in the new intensive-care  
unit. She has two IV's stuck in her arm.

MAGGIE

*(Waking)*

Doesn't

this look like a spaceship?

MARGARET

Yes.

PHILIP

How do you feel?

*(Doctor Rumbach comes into the room)*

MAGGIE

Hello, Doctor.

*(He leans over, takes Maggie's hand and whispers that her tests are positive, that the cancer  
has spread to her liver. The audience doesn't hear him. Maggie moans)*

There's no hope, no hope at all!

MARGARET

*(Walks out of the room)*

Do you know when something terrible is happening  
to you – or you think it is, you're not sure –  
the relief you feel  
when you find out it's really true?

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When you finally  
know your mother has cancer and might die,  
how you feel, at last, legitimate?

*April 6  
Washington DC Hospital  
Intensive-care unit.*

*(Maggie sits up abruptly, as if healthy)*

MAGGIE

I was in this hospital three years ago  
in an identical room after  
the impact of a STOP- running car hitting  
broadside socked a Volkswagen gearshift  
stick straight into my abdomen. Right after,  
I felt fine. Hours after, I complained  
my stomach hurt. On the table they found my  
body cavity filled with flood. It  
took nine hours. They cut away seven-tenths of  
my liver. Luckily the surgeon  
on duty was a liver man. Within five  
months my liver grew back (it is the  
only human organ that can.) I got well  
and we all thought I was good as new,  
better, and I was, probably, for a while.

April 6. Washington DC Hospital.  
*Margaret waits at home alone for news. Abigail and David wait in a consulting room.  
Doctor Rumbach comes in.*

DOCTOR RUMBACH

I wish I had never met you mother. I am so sorry. I regret I made hr well after the accident.  
You know the liver tests were positive. What can I tell you?

ABIGAIL

The cancer has spread through all five lobes. . .

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MARGARET

Off-white against the wine color the liver is,  
like a web, irregular, like the patterns fat makes  
in raw beef –

DOCTOR RUMBACH

. . .to the stomach and the top of the lungs.

ABIGAIL

Is her liver still working?

DAVID

Some of it has to be.

DOCTOR RUMBACH

Twenty percent is still working. The liver is a vital organ. Without a liver, we don't  
survive.

ABIGAIL

One tumor?

DOCTOR RUMBACH

You know we took the tumor out of the colon. This gives her more time – but we cannot  
operate and the tumor next to the liver is the size of a grapefruit.

MARGARET

A large soft ball, the size of a softball  
women use to play.

ABIGAIL

How long –

MARGARET

Floating.  
Attached delicately with strands.

ABIGAIL

How long do people with this kind of cancer usually live?

DOCTOR RUMBACH

Six months. At the most.

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MARGARET

He tried to tell us more.  
He said we have to prepared ourselves.  
I didn't want to hear any more.  
The walls in that room started to move.  
I didn't want to hear.

*April 10. Night  
Kent, Connecticut*

ABIGAIL

*(In Washington, answering the telephone)*  
Hello?

MARGARET

Hi. I wanted to know how things are.

ABIGAIL

Aunt Julia got here last night. She looks so sad.

MARGARET

I'll be down Friday. Will she still be there?

ABIGAIL

Until Saturday, when Pop gets back.

MARGARET

Oh.

ABIGAIL

He went up to New York to see that liver cancer specialist.

MARGARET

How's Mom?

ABIGAIL

Out of intensive care, in one of those big rooms for a few days.

MARGARET

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Like after the accident –

ABIGAIL

Yes.

MARGARET

Is she feeling any better?

ABIGAIL

I think so. David and I took some clothes over this morning and she was all smiley. Then she fell asleep. I woke up this morning crying. I guess my dreams couldn't handle all my grief.

MARGARET

I'm dreaming a lot –

ABIGAIL

Margaret –

MARGARET

I was sleeping.

MARGARET

Oooh. I'm sorry. You go back.

ABIGAIL

I'm sorry. I mean, I love you. I just can't talk any more.

*April 11. Afternoon*

*Washington DC. Hospital*

*(Flowers and presents surround Maggie's bed.)*

MARGARET

At the hospital with Julia, my mother's sister, it's like party – she wears a pretty nightgown and sits up. I forget she is sick. I forget where I am. In the middle of a conversation

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about the weather, the children and flowers:

MAGGIE

Julia, I'm leaving Mark Mumma's engagement ring to give his bride someday. I want you to wear it until then, it's so pretty. You wouldn't mind giving it to Mark?

MARGARETT

Julia says, "No Maggie, I wouldn't mind." I feel like an intruder, a child, six, overhearing parents' plans for Christmas. All of a sudden she is quite yellow.

MAGGIE

I'd like to take a nap now. I loved seeing you girls. Why don't you come back tomorrow?

*(Margaret moves away from the room)*

MARGARET

Outside the room in a vestibule with one aqua wall, Julia's face goes red. I hold her as she cries:

*(As Julia)*

Why do these terrible things happen to the people you love!

*April 15. Morning*

*Washington DC. Hospital*

MARGARET

She is sleeping. I watch her. I calm my breathing. I shut my eyes and concentrate on what I feel inside my body.

I open my eyes. The room is full of sun. She's still there, on her right side, on the blue sheets, breathing.

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In some primitive birth rituals, the father mimes  
labor contractions nearby as the woman gives birth.

With my mind I try to feel what she feels and send  
her some of my health.

MAGGIE

*(Opens her eyes)* Hi, sweetie.

*(Dr. Cassidy walks in jauntily, wearing a white lab coat)*

MAGGIE

Good morning! Have you met my oldest daughter?

DR. CASSIDY

No, I don't believe I have. *(He shakes Margaret's hand)*

MARGARET

How do you do?

MAGGIE

Will you get some golf in later?

DR. CASSIDY

I sure hope to.

MAGGIE

You're lucky. It's such a beautiful day.

DR. CASSIDY

*(To Margaret)*

You have quite a mom.

MARGARET

Yes.

DR. CASSIDY

Will you excuse us a moment?

MARGARET

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Sure. *(She goes out into the corridor)*

DR. CASSIDY

Well, how are we feeling today?

MAGGIE

Uncomfortable still.

DR. CASSIDY

That will continue for a few days.

*(Dr. Cassidy shuffles through his bag, finds his stethoscope and begins the examination, which continues as Margaret paces outside.)*

MARGARET

I go out to wait. This is the penthouse wing.  
Huge rooms. Carpets. To make you forget.  
Flowers – white, pink – through a half-open door.  
Drawn faces watch a presence on a bed  
the door blocks. I see lumps,  
feet under a sheet. Do they still walk? Will  
she take more than six months to die? Will I  
have an invalid mother? I'm tired of waiting.

DR. CASSIDY

Margaret –

MARGARET

I make my walk casual–

DR. CASSIDY

Your mother wants you.

*(Dr. Cassidy exits. Margaret goes back into the room)*

MAGGIE

Will you help me walk?

*(Margaret gets Maggie's bathrobe from a hook near the bed and helps her put it on. Maggie extends her arms. She is ready to stand up. Margaret, not knowing what to expect,*

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*but finding Maggie lighter than she thought, helps her mother to her feet. They walk lowly up the long corridor once and back again. Margaret holds Maggie around the waist to help her balance)*

This helps me heal, but god it hurts!

MARGARET

We pass a white-haired man. A bent woman with glasses helps him.

MAGGIE

*(As if the old man is where the audience is)*

Good morning. How are you today?

*(They get back to Maggie's room. Margaret carefully helps her off with the slippers and bathrobe and back into bed, then stands waiting, holding the bathrobe)*

That's all right. I don't need anything.

*(About the bathrobe)* Just hang it up.

*(Dr. Cassidy pokes his head in)*

DR. CASSIDY

Just wanted to say goodbye—

MAGGIE

My daughter took me on a walk all the way up the hall and back. Pretty good, don't you think?

DR. CASSIDY

Terrific! *(He exits)*

MAGGIE

I'm so pleased about our walk! Yesterday I went only half as far.

MARGARET

It must really hurt.

MAGGIE

Not as much today

MAGGIE

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How much longer do you think you'll be here?

MAGGIE

It depends what I do next.

MARGARET

What do you think you will do?

MAGGIE

Not chemotherapy. I remember Mrs. Falk. She had it. I'm not going to do it. IT's just a holding action, never a cure. I want my last days, if they are my last days, to be as happy as they can be.

MARGARET

I agree.

MAGGIE

I want the little ones to remember me as me – not as some charred, alienated vegetable they can't know.

*(Margaret kisses her mother goodbye and moves out of the hospital area)*

MARGARET

I drive to the airport, return  
the rented car, fly back to  
New York, to my life.  
That night I go out with close friends—  
I say little. I hear voices. I can't  
distinguish words. I hate  
the way they look at me. I want  
to be in Washington, that room with  
the flowers. With her.

*May 5. Afternoon.*

*Washington, DC*

ABIGAIL

Today Poppy and David and I went to the hospital to bring Mom back. Not back home, but to the Simons', our neighbors, who live down the street. They both work during the day, so

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Mom thought she would have more peace and quiet there than she would at home with all the kids running in and out. People will come to stay with her for a few days at a time – Margaret comes early tomorrow morning. Ann, my other older sister who's married and twenty-four, will have the next shift. And I'll be there a lot.

May 6. Morning  
Washington DC. The Simons' house

*(Philip sits studying. Maggie is asleep upstairs. Margaret comes in carrying an overnight bag.)*

MARGARET  
Hi.

PHILIP  
*(Gives her a big hug and kiss)* So glad you're here.

MARGARET  
Phew. God, I hate to fly. It exhausts me for a week!

PHILIP  
*(Apologetic about the coffee)* Would you like some freeze-dried coffee?

MARGARET  
No, I don't think so, thanks.

MARGARET  
He looks so out of place.

PHILIP  
Maggie's sleeping. I was just finishing up for Sunday.

MARGARET  
A sermon?

PHILIP  
Someone else is taking the morning service. This is just a little talk for some students in the afternoon.

MARGARET  
You're going to keep working?

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PHILIP

I want time with her. After I pull together some last things, I'm going to take a short leave.

MARGARET

Why didn't she go straight home?

PHILIP

It would have been easier –

MARGARET

Things have been –

PHILIP

Heavy. The surgery made her very weak.

MARGARET

What's going to happen?

PHILIP

She's decided against chemotherapy.

MARGARET

She told me. But what else –

PHILIP

There's a whole cancer-cure underground.

MARGARET

I thought it was too far along for us to have any hope –

MAGGIE

*(Shouts from her bedroom upstairs)* Philip! Philip!

PHILIP

Yes.

MAGGIE

*(Shouting)*

What are you saying about me?

MARGARET

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We should go upstairs  
*(They go to Maggie's bedroom)*

MARGARET  
Hi, Mom.  
*(Maggie says nothing.)*

PHILIP  
Can I get something for you,  
sweetie?  
*(Margaret goes toward her)*

MAGGIE  
How can you talk behind my  
back? You don't understand!  
What were you saying about  
me! I'm not a child. *(Like a  
child)* You don't understand.  
I'm lost. Everything's gone.  
Lost.

PHILIP  
Do you want to sit up for a  
while?

SONG  
*(Margaret's point of view)*  
"What are you saying about  
me now?"  
Can't you see my father and I  
are trying to speak?

You say our sounds come  
from the mouth of a prison warden!  
You say our sounds come  
From the mouth of a reform school  
matron!

What are you staying about me now?  
That we are two against one?  
That we are the living who conspire  
against the dying?

In blue she sees wisteria,  
bright lavender she planted  
With her own hands, before  
Any of this began.

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MARGARET  
I'll sit with you.

The sound we make surrounds her –  
“Please understand how far  
I'm lost.

MAGGIE  
I want to go downstairs. Why  
don't you go? Margaret can  
help me.

MARGARET  
We'll manage. You go on.

She is like a cat gone mad, hissing  
from fear –

PHILIP  
I'll be back. (*Philip exits*)

I am afraid to touch her.

MARGARET  
She is like a cat gone mad, hissing  
from fear. I am afraid to touch  
her. I don't know where  
the wound is.

I don't know where the  
wound is.

*(Margaret helps Maggie into her slippers, supports her as she stands. They begin the walk to the living room. They had both imagined Maggie was more recovered than she is)*

MAGGIE  
*(A yelp)* Jesus!

MARGARET  
Are we going too fast?

MAGGIE  
No. No. I'm fine. *(After a few steps)* It hurts like hell!

MARGARET  
*(Adjusts her grip)* We're almost there.

*(They reach the sofa. Margaret carefully sits Margaret down)*

MAGGIE  
I didn't think it would be this hard. I'm sorry.

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MARGARETT

It's all right. It hurts. Just . . . just. . . Why don't you . . . Can you sleep?

MAGGIE

I'll shut my eyes a little while.

PHILIP

*(From another area)* In the beginning I thought she should have chemotherapy. I thought refusing was her way, after all our truth, of denying what was happening to her. Then Doctor Rumbach said he agreed – that chemotherapy has side effects which change the emotions. He suggested we take a bottle of Johnny Walker Black and a Caribbean cruise – *Carpe diem!* – but Maggie's never been the kind to sit around doing nothing.

*(Abigail and David come in. Abigail is carrying a bag of groceries. When they see Maggie is asleep, they quiet down, but they are still full of giggles.)*

MAGGIE

*(Wakes up)* Where's Abigail?

DAVID

In the kitchen. We brought some ginger ale.

MAGGIE

Oh! Can I have some?

*(Margaret leaves the room)*

DAVID

Would you like me to rub your feet?

*(Maggie offers a foot. Margaret and Abigail come in. Abigail carries a glass of ginger ale. She gives it to Maggie. David is still rubbing Maggie's feet)*

MAGGIE

I feel so much better! It's the mornings. I wake up at five and feel I'm no one no where. I can't do anything for myself. Ooooooooooh, David! That feels divine!

ABIGAIL

It's great to rub your feet. In China, there are doctors who treat each organ by running a different part of your foot.

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MAGGIE

MMMmmmmmmmm.

*(David continues to rub Maggie's feet with Abigail looking on as Philip speaks again)*

PHILIP

When I first heard about the O'Briens, I was suspicious. Probably because I'm an old square at heart. But I wanted to give Maggie as many options as I could, so David and I went to see them. Eighteen months ago, doctors told Mrs. O'Brien she had six months – she's only twenty-five – but she and her husband were enough into the counterculture bit not to despair. They began to read everything they could and eventually were put in touch with some people in the Southwest, a psychic and a nutritionist, to whom they sent a blood sample and a photograph. The psychic analyzed the blood sample and the photograph – not chemically, but with something – a small weight on the end of a string – which apparently went boop-de-doop, doop, every which way. Then the nutritionist prescribed certain herbs and diet supplements. It sounded nuts to me, but Mrs. O'Brien really seems to have recovered. More important, though, is the kind of people they are – really open and genuine – and in my life, the Church, I've met a lot of quack healers.

MAGGIE

*(David is telling her a story)* And then what happened?

MARGARET

Well, he said, "Rewrite it!"

MAGGIE

God.

MARGARET

*(Comes in)* Ready, Abbie?

ABIGAIL

Mom, we're going to take a walk.

MAGGIE

See you soon.

*(Margaret and Abigail go "out" – to another area of the stage.)*

MAGGIE

*(To David)* So you like it there still.

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DAVID

Yes, I'm really learning. When I quit school, I never thought I'd go to college, but here I am –

MAGGIE

I know what you mean. When I started taking the courses last fall, I thought, how extraordinary to be able to do this, after nearly thirty years and nine children, back in school and learning so much!

*(She stops talking, puts her hand across her face, shakes her head)*

I'm sorry.

*(David helps Maggie on with her bathrobe and back to her bedroom, careful to support her)*

That's what I said to Margaret this morning. "I'm sorry." It bores me so! I'm tired of asking.

DAVID

Yes –

MAGGIE

Margaret's strong, but I didn't know how bad I'd be when I asked her to be here. *(Takes herself in hand)* Well, I won't say any more about that! *(David helps her into bed)* You take care of Abigail so well! *(He just looks at her)* Will you refill my ginger ale? *(David goes out, and returns after a while with a new glass of ginger ale. Simultaneously Margaret and Abigail walk, stopping occasionally)*

ABIGAIL

. . .all my time with her. Even before this I wanted that. We could have gone away to school –

MARGARET

– you and David –

ABIGAIL

– but we came here. We finally got our own apartment, but we'd come home twice a week!

MARGARET

Strange –

ABIGAIL

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Then I took the same  
prose-writing class she did. I used to stare  
as if I had to memorize her. Now  
I want to touch her. I  
brush her hair, rub her feet, wrists, back – to help  
her energy, read to her when she’s tired.  
At school Thursdays is  
when I miss you most. I have my Coke alone  
our free half hour, try hard to picture her  
on the next counter stool  
and, sometimes, when a funny thing from school  
flashes through my mind, I hear her laugh!

MARGARET

I’m so glad you exist.

*May 8. Evening  
Washington DC. The Simons’ porch.*

MARGARET

You must understand I came home wanting  
the good talks we always had, but she’s too weak.  
Three days I cook, carry her up, down stairs,  
watch visitors come, go.  
But because she is weak, she is no one.  
I am alone in a house I cannot  
make familiar and I am tired Each  
morning at six, five: My  
name. My name. I climb out of a dream, stumble  
to her, she yelping with fear – I suppress  
mine, soothe hers. I’m locked up in her – why  
am I so selfish? Last  
night she wanted a bath. Abigail  
asked to do it. I was relieved. This morning  
she said, “Abigail has such a gift for  
healing. She gave me the  
most gentle bath, made me feel my body  
was mind again.” What do I have a gift for?

MOURNING PICTURES

Later Mrs. Simon said, "Come with me."

She took me, showed me trees—  
Spring is early here – she told me her dreams,  
plans, and asked nothing, just that I walk slow  
with her through the night, past houses, dark, dogs. . .  
The air is cool. I breathe.  
I will go home and rest, come back next week.

*May 10. Washington DC*

DR. BERRYMAN

Mononucleosis at forty. Fever  
a hundred and four – I could not lift myself  
from bed for months.  
You feel you have no blood. My body was  
burning, burning. They couldn't heal me. Heal  
myself or burn away –

I began to feed myself to make me  
live: minerals, wheat sprouts, kept, alfalfa,  
lemon, lime, anything  
real. I gave up force, chemicals, the knife.  
I accepted magic "Heal like with like"  
learned what stories a dark

speck in your eye's iris can tell. I waited  
to think with my body, let the sun come  
freely through my skin –  
I didn't burn. Meditating day after  
day, listening to my breathing, my blood,  
I found my way back.

*May 20. Noon  
Washington DC Outdoors*

*(Dr. Berryman shows Maggie meditating postures, and how to breathe, as they speak.  
The others watch)*

MOURNING PICTURES

DR. BERRYMAN

At noon each day without rain, stand fifteen  
minutes – no less, full abdomen exposed –  
in the sun. Shut your eyes.  
In your mind, see dark poisons leave you,  
leave your body free to heal itself –

MAGGIE

Leave my body, leave me.

At the same time I try to feel them leave,  
then I lie down flat, under the sun, half  
an hour, middle bare  
again – a kind of trance – and, eyes hut, form  
a message – my insides make the words – sweet  
clear sun, come into me.

I'm sure the neighbors think I'm crazy. Why  
doesn't she just relax and die? But I  
will not. I feel something  
being wrenched down there. It hurts, then I feel  
the sun-heat baking me, and like magic,  
some diamond-sweet relief.

*May 20. Afternoon.  
New York City. Dr. Potter's office.*

MARGARET

I go to an eighty-year old chiropractor and  
nutritionist. I want to be massaged, healed with someone's hands.  
I need care. I sit in a wing chair, ache for his hands –  
First he talks to me about my structure, points out disasters  
on a lit-up, full-length X-ray of my spine.  
He starts the interview gently.

MOURNING PICTURES

DR. POTTER

How's your energy?

MARGARET

I can't work in the afternoon.

DOCTOR POTTER

What kind of work do you do?

MARGARET

I'm a poet.

DOCTOR POTTER

How often are the headaches?

MARGARET

Most days.

DOCTOR POTTER

Do you sit up straight when you type?

MARGARET

I try.

DOCTOR POTTER

How much mental  
work do you do each day?

MARGARET

About four hours.

DOCTOR POTTER

Did you know that mental work uses fifteen times the  
energy of physical work?

MARGARET

No.

DOCTOR POTTER

Do you exercise?

MOURNING PICTURES

MARGARET

Some.

DOCTOR POTTER  
Can you nourish yourself?

MARGARET

What?

DOCTOR POTTER  
Do you know how to feed  
your children the right foods?

MARGARET

I'm single. I eat balanced meals.

DOCTOR POTTER  
Do you cook properly?

MARGARET

I try to.

DOCTOR POTTER

Often  
cooking drains all the nutritious properties –

MARGARET

I know.

DOCTOR POTTER  
– from our foods and we don't know it. We've eaten fodder,  
cotton batting! The blood has gotten nothing. Then your  
body must eliminate all the waste, which sometimes it just  
can't do entirely.

MARGARET

Yes.

DOCTOR POTTER

We're not perfect!  
Congestion, constipation result. You don't feel well;

MOURNING PICTURES

toxins collect and irritate, finally poison your tissues.  
This is why we recommend the vegetable juices.  
Purification. Begin with a quart of carrot each day,  
fourteen days, then switch to half-beet-half-carrot—

MARGARET

Yes.

DOCTOR POTTER

— ten more days. Then the last week you add the green juice.

MARGARET

What kind?

DOCTOR POTTER

Any of your greens: celery, cucumber, lettuce —  
then we'll have your blood free of toxicity, back to  
zero! Of course, you can't get back more than you started out with!

MARGARET

I get a juicer.

DOCTOR POTTER

Not just any juicer.  
Most machines we see are centrifugal. They don't grind  
sufficient to release the minerals which digestion can't.  
Only the Walker machine. Expensive, very rare —

MARGARET

Where do I get one?

DOCTOR POTTER

You see, the secret's elimination.  
Draining out all the wastes. And prevention. Pre-  
ven-tion! Why, I had a lady with cancer in here  
just a few months ago and we cleared it up with vegetable  
juices. So you hear what I'm telling you, my dear! We've  
got to free your circulation, get a fresh clean blood supply  
to your nerves —

MARGARET

MOURNING PICTURES

STOP! Stop. I can't hear these things now.  
You see, my mother has cancer. Her liver,  
and all through her . . .

DOCTOR POTTER

*(Genuine.)* I'm sorry. I didn't know.

*May 20*

*New York City*

MARGARET

Ladies and gentlemen, my mother is  
dying. You say "Everyone's mother dies."  
I bow to you, smile. Ladies, gentlemen,  
my mother is dying. She has cancer.  
You say "Many people die of cancer."  
I scratch my head. Gentle ladies, gentle  
men, my mother has cancer, and short of  
some miracle, will die. You say "This has  
happened many times before." You say "Death  
is something which repeats itself." I bow.  
Ladies and gentlemen, my mother has cancer  
all through her. She will die unless there's  
a miracle. You shrug. You gave up religion  
years ago. Marxism too. You don't believe  
in anything. I step forward. My mother  
is dying. I don't believe in miracles.  
Ladies and gentlemen, one last time. My  
mother's dying. I haven't got another.

MOURNING PICTURES

PART TWO

June through September

*June 1. Early afternoon.  
Washington DC, the house.*

*(Maggie is up and around. She has recovered from her surgery. Everyone is enthusiastic about the new cure)*

DAVID

Maggie's been on Dr. Berryman's treatments  
fourteen days, and she's looking much better—

PHILIP

Someone gave us those restaurant food racks  
on wheels. They're out back, tall with lots of shelves,  
layers of aluminum trays. Each tray  
can be a planter for some of the wheat.

DAVID

Wheat is loaded with vitamin A and  
minerals, but it tastes terrible, like  
watercress when you're not in the mood — that  
green taste. You think a leaf is edible —  
but you're wrong!

MOURNING PICTURES

MAGGIE

No one else would go near it, but he didn't think I should have to drink alone.

PHILIP

When you've used up a tray of sprouts, empty it on the compost out back, refill it with earth and a little fertilizer and put it in a warm oven for two hours. This sterilizes it, then you're ready to plant. Let each batch germinate in the cellar in the dark. After three –

ABIGAIL

No, four

PHILIP

Too many cooks. After four days, move them outdoors onto one of the racks. And then –

ABIGAIL

–when the grasses are six inches tall –

DAVID

– cut off a bunch with kitchen shears and put it through that huge grinder on the kitchen counter. It's specially made, from Vermont, but, unfortunately, you have to crank it!

MAGGIE

I take a cup a cay, quick like this, then someone gives me a sprout poultice at four –

PHILIP

I'm going. I'll be back for supper.

MAGGIE

Have a good game!

DAVID

MOURNING PICTURES

Bye, Philip.

ABIGAIL

See you later!

You cut cheesecloth into square and put them in a bowl of wheat sprout juice to soak. When you're ready to start the poultice, you wring each piece slightly (so it doesn't get all over) then build a gloppy green cloth mound on her belly.

DAVID

The quickest route to the liver is right through the skin.

MAGGIE

Then

I'm supposed to nap. I'm always sure I can't sleep, but Berryman always says "Just close your eyes." So I do, and the poultice starts to vibrate! My mind is ver clear – then I feel calm all over and – poof! – dreamland!

DAVID

What is just the weird part. She has to take a hundred – more – vitamin and mineral pills a day, all at different times, to build up the strength. We put them all in bottles on top of the bookshelf in her room. Breakfast Pills, After Breakfast Pills, Lunch Pills, Before Nap Pills, Supper Pills, Bedtime Pills. Six rows, all coded so anyone can do them.

ABIGAIL

Next to the pills on the shelf is a blue spiral notebook we keep for Berryman. We check off the pills there and write down how she's feeling, and what she says about it so when the doctor comes in the evening, we'll remember to ask him everything.

MOURNING PICTURES

*July 12*  
*Kent, Connecticut*

MARGARET

We spent the first summer here clearing –  
we cut down saplings and planted grass seed  
to extend the lawn to the brook–  
And we have roses! My mother gave me  
seven my twenty-seventh birthday. They  
arrived in April brown and dry. We dug  
holes two feet deep, build mounds in the bottoms  
to support the pyramids of sleeping  
roots, and flooded the plants with water,  
centering each in a gelatinous pack  
of mud and humus. In May the red spuds  
became new canes. We've had rose three weeks.

MARGARET

*(Answering the telephone)* Hello.

MAGGIE

Hello, dear.

MARGARET

Is that you, Mom?

MAGGIE

I feel wonderful.

MARGARET

Your voice sounds so much stronger.

MAGGIE

Yes.

MARGARET

Dr. Berryman.

MAGGIE

I can't tell you what a difference he makes. I feel myself getting stronger, and I have no

MOURNING PICTURES

pain. I'm taking *nothing* for pain.

MARGARET

I hear you take a lot of vitamins.

MAGGIE

It's disgusting! I thought I'd taken a lot of pills in my time, but forty at once is over the line.

MARGARET

Have you been going out?

MAGGIE

Well, I'm not quite ready for tennis, but Mrs. Claremont lent us the pool, and I've been once. It's just heaven. And I've been rocketing along with my writing.

MARGARET

You have?

MAGGIE

Dictating two hours a day. I'm never going back to the other. Never. Dictation's a breeze. Edith sits with her back to me, takes it all down, and comes back the next day with typed pages!

MARGARET

I'm so jealous!

MAGGIE

We're determined to get me into print.

*July 12. Afternoon.*

*Washington DC. The house.*

MAGGIE is sitting in the living room editing transcripts of her writing. DR.

BERRYMAN comes in.

MAGGIE

MOURNING PICTURES

Hello, Dr. Berryman. Take a load off your feet.

DR. BERRYMAN  
*(Sitting down)* How is it today?

MAGGIE  
*(Pats her stomach)* Much less pain.

DR. BERRYMAN  
*(Puts a thermometer in her mouth)* I want to start you on more citrus juices.

MAGGIE  
*(In spite of the thermometer in her mouth)* Orange?

DR. BERRYMAN  
All of them. Mixed. Lemon, lime, grapefruit.

MAGGIE  
I can still have ginger ale –

DR. BERRYMAN  
You decided. Whenever you can, I want you to take citrus as your liquid. We want as much C in natural form as we can get *(He takes the thermometer out of her mouth)*  
You've been normal since last night?

MAGGIE  
Yes.

DR. BERRYMAN  
Good.

MAGGIE  
when do we start phase two?  
*(The examination continues as PHILIP speaks)*

PHILIP  
*(From another area)* When Tom Berryman took Maggie's case, he said he'd start by building her up physically. Surgery under any circumstances is exhausting and she's had so much, we have to be very careful. When she's strong, we start a second phase – actually destroying the cancer cells. Sometimes this treatment turns the body around. The process of the disease reverses, tumors shrink, disappear. These remissions do

MOURNING PICTURES

happy, but usually in cases less advanced than Maggie's.

DR. BERRYMAN

We'll start Monday, but you have to be prepared for more discomfort.

MAGGIE

I know.

DR. BERRYMAN

Pain.

MAGGIE

I'm ready.

DR. BERRYMAN

I don't want to start before you can take it.

MAGGIE

I want to be healed. Otherwise, what's the point of all this? We could go on forever having pleasant interesting conversations.

DR. BERRYMAN

Monday.

MAGGIE

Doctor. Tom. You will be honest with me. Please tell me. Is there hope?

DR. BERRYMAN

There is some hope, some chance. You are one of the most determined patients I have ever had. I believe there is some hope.

*July 20. Afternoon.*

*Washington, DC. The house.*

*(MAGGIE is sitting in the living room)*

MAGGIE

No change of plans allowed. I said "Get out."  
Polly to Cape Cod with her friend Laura;

MOURNING PICTURES

Sarah to camp, Laughing  
Lakes a third time, and James to survive with  
adult sanction in Wyoming for six weeks.  
Outward Bound – they spend five

days at the end in small groups and no food,  
just knives and canned heat. Mark's in Mexico.  
Susan called from Duluth  
*en route* West: "Hello, the Volvo broke down!"  
It's quieter. Philip leaves tomorrow –  
he needs to get away.

My trip? Here. Full air-conditioning.  
Friends. Sprouts. Older children: Abbie, David,  
Ann with husband Ted;  
Margarett, consort Tim; Paul from Oregon.  
My sister Julia. One at a time for  
easy company and help.

PHILIP

*(From another area)* I don't really want to leave. I want to be with her now. She wants  
me to go away. She says I need a rest. I need a rest? Will I rest when I think of her  
every second? Yes, I will go. It's her life.

*(DR. RUMBACH comes in. PHILIP watches from his area)*

DR. RUMBACH

How are you – long time.

MAGGIE

Doctor Rumbach. *(Stands slowly)* I'm feeling really well.

DR. RUMBACH

I see! You got the tan without taking the cruise!

MAGGIE

I like to get my vitamins from natural sources.

DR. RUMBACH

What is he giving you for the pain?

MOURNING PICTURES

MAGGIE

I have no pain.

DR. RUMBACH

None?

MAGGIE

*(Touches her stomach)* I feel this from time to time, but nothing I'd call pain.

DR. RUMBACH

You really seem yourself.

*(Takes MAGGIE'S pulse. PHILIP comes in)*

PHILIP

How is she?

DR. RUMBACH

I tell you, it's really fantastic. She's so much better than I would have expected.

PHILIP

She's been very much herself the last two weeks.

DR. RUMBACH

It's extraordinary.

PHILIP

What do you think of my going away?

DR. RUMBACH

She wants you to – you could use the mountain air – Go ahead.

PHILIP

So you think there's hope.

DR. RUMBACH

We always proceed as if there is hope. But what do I think? I can't really say. I don't know this treatment. What I will say is that she is doing wvery well, much better than I had hoped.

MOURNING PICTURES

*July 25. Afternoon  
Washington, DC. The house.*

MARGARET  
*(With a bouquet of roses from her garden)*  
I brought these all the way from Kent wrapped in newspaper. I wanted her to see some of the roses she gave me. It's almost a month since I've been here.

*(She comes into the living room)*

MAGGIE  
Hi, sweetie.

MARGARET  
*(Holding out the flowers)* I brought you these!

MAGGIE  
They're so huge. What have you been feeding them?

MARGARET  
Just ordinary food.

MAGGIE  
You look beautiful.

MARGARET  
You're so healthy! How do you feel?

MAGGIE  
I had a bad day yesterday, but today –

MARGARET  
Emotionally?

MAGGIE  
No. Pain. He's increased the lemon drops.

MARGARET  
Lemon drops?

MOURNING PICTURES

MAGGIE

Phase two. The mysterious illegal vitamin from Europe.

MARGARET

Oh.

MAGGIE

We swore to Berryman we'd never utter its true name.

MARGARET

They hurt?

MAGGIE

They're supposed to hurt. The more they hurt, the more cells are being destroyed, the better I'm getting.

*(ABIGAIL comes in. MARGARET rushes to her. THEY hug)*

MARGARET

Hi!

ABIGAIL

*(To MAGGIE)* It's time for your Lunch Pills.

MAGGIE

Ugh. Will you get them for me?

MARGARET

I'll do it. *(SHE leaves)*

MAGGIE

I always seem to be worse when Margaret comes.

ABIGAIL

You're feeling much better than yesterday. He said it would be this way at first.

MAGGIE

You'll call when you get to your apartment.

ABIGAIL

Yes. Goodbye.

MOURNING PICTURES

(MARGARET comes in carrying a clear plastic glass brimming with pills)

MARGARET  
You're going?

ABIGAIL  
To class. See you later. (SHE leaves)

MAGGIE  
(Pouring pills, all different shapes, sizes, colors, into her hand)  
Have you ever?

MARGARET  
No.

MAGGIE  
(Takes pills, lots, five or six at a time during the conversation) I can't wait for you to meet Berryman.

MARGARET  
He's here every day?

MAGGIE  
We never know!

MARGARET  
His clock is organic too –

MAGGIE  
Every other day, in the evening.

MARGARET  
Why at night?

MAGGIE  
He starts his rounds in the afternoon, and he takes a lot of time with each patient, getting your vibes.

MARGARET  
You talk –

MOURNING PICTURES

MAGGIE

Yes, and he examines you: stethoscope, blood pressure, so on. Sometimes he sits and holds my hand very hard and looks into my eyes, deeply. Fascinating!

MARGARET

You get a sense of what's going on in there.

MAGGIE

He makes me feel I have some control over my life.

MARGARET

You haven't finished all your pills.

MAGGIE

*(Puts the remaining pills in her pocket)* Some control over my life. *(As they walk toward the bedroom)* Listen. I'm going to take my nap, then I thought we'd have early supper, just the two of us. I don't feel like lots of people tonight.

MARGARET

I'll meet Abbie later.

MAGGIE

Tomorrow.

MARGARET

After supper –

MAGGIE

*(Insists)* Tomorrow.

MARGARET

But you're going to bed.

MAGGIE

*(Sudden anger)* You can see her any time!

MARGARET

*(Stunned)* Okay.

MAGGIE

MOURNING PICTURES

I'm a little fragile.

MARGARET  
I'm sorry, Mom.

MAGGIE  
Lets talk about it after my nap. (SHE *lies down and goes to sleep.*)

MARGARET  
(*Leaves the bedroom*) I've been trying not to notice. Her stomach's swollen. The liver. The tumor. (SHE *walks to another area*) I walk around the block, go talk to Mrs. Simon. I feel better.

(MAGGIE *has finished her nap.* MARGARET *comes in* )

MAGGIE  
While you were out, Abigail called and I asked them for supper. I thought, what the heck! I've got you here three days.

ABIGAIL  
(*From another area*) I was eight when Margaret went away to college, so I always think of her as a visitor. But I think that's changed. I even think she's changed – I guess since she started living with Tim three years ago. Loving a person makes you more open, more feeling. She always used to be running.

(*It is after supper and MAGGIE is in bed*)

MARGARET  
It was great to see you out on the porch! I loved you sitting there, feet up like Cleopatra, waving to everyone!

MAGGIE  
I really have been very well. How's Tim?

MARGARET  
He'll be down with me the next time.

MAGGIE  
I envy you. You've been so wise about yourself. Both of you. Your choices –

MARGARET

MOURNING PICTURES

I don't think of them as choices. I just think I bumbled fortuitously. I wonder about children for instance.

MAGGIE

You'd be crazy to have children.

MARGARET

You love your independence too much. Not that you wouldn't be a good mother –

MARGARET

You had enough for both of us.

*July 26. Morning  
Washington, DC*

MARGARET

By the time I wake up at ten, Berryman has called. They've decided to stop the lemon drops for a day so her body can consolidate, so she can get some rest. (*A flash*) And I had a dream! Mom in a wheelchair in a green field with light around her. The tumor has died, but she hasn't. She's getting better.

*July 26. Afternoon  
Washington, DC*

DAVID *is at the house.* PHILIP *calls from the mountains where he is on vacation with the younger children.*

DAVID

(*Answering the telephone*) Hello.

PHILIP

Hi. What's the report?

DAVID

She's not having the lemon drops today and she feels better.

MOURNING PICTURES

PHILIP

Margaret's there?

DAVID

She and Abigail went shopping. I'm holding the fort.

PHILIP

Well, Sarah and her little friend from camp got here last night, and Polly gets in on a bus this afternoon.

DAVID

What's it like there? It's so hot here, I can't believe it!

PHILIP

Bright. Sunny. About seventy degrees.

DAVID

Mmmmmmmmmmmmm.

PHILIP

Jamie and his group are rocketing around. He's insisted we climb a mountain this afternoon.

DAVID

Silver?

PHILIP

No, Long Tom. The only one with no trail.

DAVID

Have fun!

*July 26. Late night.  
Washington DC. The house.*

MARGARET

## MOURNING PICTURES

She says she will have dinner.  
She says she wants one of the lamb chops.  
I bought exactly enough: two apiece.  
I didn't count her.  
She didn't want meat last night.  
I take her a plate,  
the chop cut into tiny pieces,  
corn on the cob, salad.  
She doesn't feel well enough to come down.  
I ask David to take the food to her  
because I am too hungry.  
Later she calls me.

MAGGIE

Margaret.

MARGARET

I go to her room. She has not touched  
the lamb. One long hand is wrapped around her  
eyes. Crying. We've been  
laughing downstairs.  
I know she wants me  
to take her plate away. I say "Do  
you want me to take your  
plate away?" She nods, her face still covered.  
I take the plate noisily. "Do you want  
something to drink?" Her hands still  
hide her face. "I'll get your some  
ginger ale." I take the dirty glass,  
dirty plastic straw. I leave the room, close  
the door behind me,  
prevent myself from slamming  
it. Halfway down the  
stairs, I stop and put the dishes down,  
sit there and remember  
as hard as I can where I am, hard as  
I can. I am myself, a woman,  
nursing a woman who may be dying.  
My mother can't feed me any more.

MOURNING PICTURES

*July 28. Late night.  
New York Airport.*

MARGARET  
I see Manhattan, a map  
in lights. The island shape  
disappears. We are landing.  
Tim meets me.  
Summer's half over.

*August 10. Night*

*(PHILIP calls from the mountains. MARGARET is in Kent, Connecticut. ABIGAIL is  
at the house in Washington)*

PHILIP  
*(On the telephone)* It's me.

MARGARET  
How are you?

PHILIP  
I'm flying to Washington. Maggie's in the hospital tonight. Berryman thought she'd  
have less pain if they could drain the excess fluids.

MARGARET  
Pip?

PHILIP  
Yes?

MARGARET  
Do you think she'll ever get out?

ABIGAIL  
*(From another area)* We brought her back from the hospital. She feels lighter, she says,  
like after having a baby.

MARGARET  
*(Answering the telephone)* Hello?

MOURNING PICTURES

*(It is the next day. PHILIP is in Washington. HE has moved to the bedroom area)*

PHILIP

She's even stronger today. Amazing!

MARGARET

What are your plans?

MAGGIE

*(Insistent. From her bed)* I'm fine. I want the little girls to finish their vacation with a parent!

PHILIP

Maggie, they know!

MAGGIE

Please darling, I want some time.

PHILIP

*(To MARGARET on the telephone)* I'll go back on Friday.

MARGARET

If you change your plans for her, she has to give up.

*Labor Day weekend. Afternoon.*

*Washington DC. The house.*

*(MAGGIE is taking more naps and feels great discomfort and pain, both exacerbated by the heat)*

MARGARET

If she could only sleep.

Her body is an ochre barrel made  
of shiny skin.

She rolls from right to left, from left  
to right on the white sheets.

If she could only sleep. Her mouth is a line.

Her eyes flicker open, no energy to see, close.

She rolls back the other way.

MOURNING PICTURES

(SHE goes to MAGGIE'S bedside)

The new-painted cabinets are bright white. The beige rugs I bought last month have settled on the children's floors upstairs. I tell her so.

MAGGIE

(*Drowsy*)

I want the little ones to have nice things.

MARGARET

The light woodwork is wonderful!

MAGGIE

(*Suddenly clear*)

I think Susan's room lacks something.

MARGARET

We decide that six-foot Susan's specially ordered seven-foot bed needs a dust ruffle, then she falls asleep.

(*Stage-whisper*)

Mom! Mom! I'm going to Woodward and Lothrop to get the dust ruffle! Because I have known her voice for twenty-seven years, I know she answers

MAGGIE

(*Barely audible*)

Yes, darling.

MARGARET

(*Echo*)

Yes, darling.

I am afraid to touch the shiny skin,  
but I do, my arms spread wide  
enough for a barrel.

I have thought the cancer was in my control.

MOURNING PICTURES

If I decide she will recover, it will go away.

*September 10. Early evening.  
Washington DC. The house.*

MAGGIE *is in bed.* DR. BERRYMAN *is at her side.*

MAGGIE

Oh, Doctor! I'm in such pain. (*Grabs his arm*) Doctor! I'm so damn scared. I can't do it. (*A spasm of pain*) Doctor!

DR. BERRYMAN

Maggie. Maggie. (*He takes her hand from his arm and takes both her hands*) I want you to let the fear give you some rest.

MAGGIE

(*Shouts*) Ahghhh!

DR. BERRYMAN

You're in a dark place. Wild darkness. Something down there pulls –

MAGGIE

(*Jerks her hand from his, rage*) I'm the one that's here. You're – why, you're standing up!

DR. BERRYMAN

I'm going to give you something for the pain.

MAGGIE

I didn't want to give up, Tom, but I couldn't – !

(*BERRYMAN makes one more calming gesture and leaves her. ABIGAIL is waiting*)

ABIGAIL

(*To BERRYMAN*) Way down since past night?

DR. BERRYMAN

These things go in cycles.

MOURNING PICTURES

ABIGAIL

She'll come up?

DR. BERRYMAN

Should a little. Give her the pain medicine any time she asks for it. Pull back on the pills, she doesn't have enough strength.

ABIGAIL

The protein?

DR. BERRYMAN

Her body knows things we don't. Don't force anything.

MARGARET

*(From another area)*

There are practical nurses around the clock now. They sit outside her room, hands clasped, waiting. My mother's usual caring is gone – all she has for these night strangers is a forced smile. I would like to sit here all night, but I would have to do it from love, and love is an insufficient nursing school.

*(DAVID goes to MAGGIE'S bedside and begins to rub her feet, very carefully)*

DAVID

Hi.

*(MARGARET comes to the bedside and sits)*

ABIGAIL

*(From another area)*

I wonder how it makes her feel, all these visitors. I sit her juggling them on the telephone. The visitor from Indianapolis, her stepmother – who will come when.

Are they coming because they think they'll never see her again?

MOURNING PICTURES

(MAGGIE *comes out of her haze long enough to see MARGARET*)

MAGGIE

Oh darling, someday when I feel better, we'll go to Oregon, to the delphinium farms, to the place where roses come from, and some winter we'll take our trip to Milan, to the opera. And I'll come to visit you again.

(MARGARET *nods yes. MAGGIE dozes. MARGARET stays by her bedside. ABIGAIL brings juice, sits for a while, leaves, as the song is sung*)

SONG

There's so much I want to tell you  
about the garden:  
The lettuce and the carrots, how they  
tasted all summer, and  
The goes you gave me are still blooming,  
but it's late September  
How pretty you look  
How much I love you,  
but it's late September  
And everything I say says, I want –

It's my turn to feed you, but your lips  
are dry and cracked  
Your face so thin your mouth can't  
even open.  
I'd like to feed you the things you fed me:  
Chicken in fancy sauces and creme brûlée,  
Spinach made your special way –  
I'd like to tell you all my new recipes:  
Spaghetti you would love  
And salad made with mint!

But your lips are dry and cracked,  
Your face so thin your mouth can't  
even open –  
I want to come her giving, not  
wanting.  
But everything I say says "I want"  
I want to come to you giving, not

MOURNING PICTURES

wanting  
But everything I saw says “I want.”

*(During the end of the song, PHILIP comes into the bedroom. MARGARET and DAVID leave)*

MAGGIE  
*(Coming out of her haze,, sees PHILIP, tries to smile) I’d like to sit up. (PHILIP helps her by adjusting the bed)*

PHILIP  
Hard.

MAGGIE  
It as worse this morning. *(A spasm of pain. She winces. PHILIP wants to help)* No. No!  
*(Apologetic)* I didn’t want to put you through this.

PHILIP  
*(Takes her hand)* I love you.

MAGGIE  
I’m glad you’re back. Very glad.

*(PHILIP hugs her. She falls asleep)*

PHILIP  
I remember her on the beach, dark against the white sand. Her body was so beautiful – smooth, smiling. Oh God! I can’t believe this is happening!

*(MAGGIE shows pain again. PHILIP lowers the bed to a flatter position)*

MAGGIE  
*(Awakening)* I think Margaret better take some pictures of her house. I won’t be well enough to travel for quite a while.

SONG

*(PHILIP leaves, DAVID comes in*

It’s dark, almost noon–  
It’s been that way  
So many days I’ve tried to take

MOURNING PICTURES

*for his shift)*

the pictures you asked for:  
The house, painted new white,  
The wicker chairs you gave me,  
How they look on the porch –

MARGARET

*(From another area)*

Labor Day  
is over. I am back at my desk,  
paying bills. I can't write until  
I pay my bills.

*(The telephone  
rings twice)*

ABIGAIL

Have you sent pictures of  
Mom for the faith healer?

MARGARET

I'll send them today.

MAGGIE

Right now.

MARGARET

Yes. Yes.

If I called the weather man  
He'd say the suns been out  
Five days out of seven  
but I don't remember,  
I've only seen the dark.  
I've only seen the almost noon.

So I'll wait until the sun  
comes out, throws  
The shadow of the apple tree  
all over the lawn,  
Brightens the living room,  
Shows me the world again,  
the fields across the road.

MARGARET

We make love. I shut my eyes. I am her  
her with her eyes shut. I can't see myself. How  
do I know I'm me and not her? My lips  
dry. I run my tongue through the slot between  
my teeth and upper lip to clear out stale

MOURNING PICTURES

saliva. I have seen her to that. I  
touch my belly, imagine it a barrel.  
I am her. My eyes are closed. How do I  
know I am not her? I have always been her,  
and it's never mattered before who was  
who. I open my eyes, feel them flicker  
open like hers, open my arms. I am  
not moving. How do I know I won't have  
pain, as much as she does, when I move?

I see you. I love you. I don't want to die.

*September 17.*

*(MARGARET is in Connecticut. The others are in Washington sitting around  
MAGGIE'S bed)*

MARGARET

This morning on its door the A&P thanked us  
concisely for our "faithful patronage"  
and stopped selling for good.  
Noon: the phone, Abigail,

ABIGAIL

This is the end.  
Her fluids came back. She's saying strange things –  
last night,

MAGGIE

I feel like twins!

MARGARET

"Mind/body split," I hear my voice attempt.

ABIGAIL

I guess–

MARGARET

Abbie says–

MOURNING PICTURES

ABIGAIL

– she’s only half here,  
and later Tom came–

(DR. BERRYMAN goes to the bedside)

She said right to him–

MAGGIE

Oh Doctor, I’m gone!

MARGARET

I hang up. Lock the house. Drive the eighty  
miles, not fast. Will I  
be in time to talk to her again, see her?  
New York. I fell two bags, a week’s clothes, my  
long black dress–

ABIGAIL

I have never been here before.

DAVID

My friend has.

His two fathers died within three years, his  
natural father, then his stepfather.  
I ask him what he remembers. He says  
“Only the black ambulance that came before  
my second father died. It was terrible  
in those days when the ambulances  
and police cars were painted black.”

MARGARET

– call to say

which shuttle. Hear this:

PHILIP

She went – ambulance  
the hospital–half hour ago – too much pain–  
her fluids tapped again.

*(DAVID and ABIGAIL remove a coverlet, leaving only the  
sheets. When MARGARET arrives at the bedside, it has  
become a hospital bedside)*

MOURNING PICTURES

MARGARET

The hospital straight from the airport. She  
has oxygen feels in each nostril, their  
gurgling source is hitched to  
the flowered wall above her. Is it like fresh  
air, cool on her brain? There's an I.V. just  
below her shoulder. Food

straight into the blood. Her hands look like birds'  
claws on the sheets. They say she nearly died  
this afternoon; that's why  
she's all hooked up. I thought we were against  
keeping her going. The afternoon nurse  
comes in, gives her a shot

"It's for pain. Are you her daughter, dear? You  
look just like her. She's a lovely woman."  
*Mom. I don't say it out loud,  
but I want her awake, her eyes open.  
Hello, Mam. I love you so much. I'm here.  
I hold her hand. She sleeps.*

*September 20. Afternoon  
Washington, D.C. Hospital.*

MARGARET

Today she wants to go. I'm sure of it.

MAGGIE

*(Staccato bursts)*

I am on a bridge alone.

MARGARET

What?

DAVID

MOURNING PICTURES

On a bridge?

MAGGIE

*(Loud and fast)*

I can see all the people–  
Doctor.

DAVID

People.

MAGGIE

– on the other side. Oh, God!

*(ABIGAIL comes in)*

Where's the doctor?

*(Singsong)*

Goodbye. Goodbye.

I really must go now.

I love you, darlings.

I must go to sleep.

Such a long journey.

Abbie, you go downstairs and get

my red coat. David, you

get the care keys, top left

drawer. . .

*(MAGGIE starts vigorously  
to get out of bed. They  
restrain her, replace sheets.)*

MAGGIE

A man in orange. Bright.

A man in black.

*(Her body jerks, one long scream of terror)*

AAAaaaaahhhhhhh.

*(They hold her down)*

MARGARET

I press the call. The nurse comes,  
gives her a hypo, straightens the bed.

This calms her, maybe deprives her.

*(PHILIP enters the room, beckons to ABBIE  
and DAVID)*

MOURNING PICTURES

PHILIP

Paul's here.

ABIGAIL

My brother Paul!

SONG

Paul arrives from Oregon.  
Twenty-five, wearing maroon platform shoes,  
And a great big white cowboy hat.  
He's very tall and very thin—  
His shirts are flowered —  
He is from another place.  
In his white cuffed pants,  
HE looks gorgeous and seedy.  
My father says,  
Did he ride on a plane  
in those clothes?

*September 21. Night  
Washington D.C. Hospital*

*(MAGGIE is alone. SHE sits up as if totally well)*

MAGGIE

What has happened to all the cures?  
The miracle wheat sprout juice.  
The hundreds of vitamins.  
The predigested protein they gave me hourly  
that tasted like melted muscles.  
Where are the cruel hard chemicals they said  
could never cure? But I wonder —  
atom bombs do end wars.

And the faith healer who didn't know  
how sick I was, who told the doctor  
to get me through October fifteenth, then I'd survive.  
The childhood friends who waited on me,

MOURNING PICTURES

my daughters, sons, my neighbors.  
Helen, who brought a yellow cut to sweeten  
the vile nutritious teas.

Where are they?

I am swollen, drugged senseless and alone  
on a white bed in a small hospital room.  
You have all betrayed me.

September 28. Afternoon.  
Washington D.C. Hospital

*(Since BERRYMAN is not officially a medical doctor, he has not been seeing MAGGIE at the hospital, RUMBACH has. This is BERRYMAN'S first hospital visit. THEY speak slowly because SHE is very weak)*

MAGGIE

Oh Doctor – Thank God you've come! *(He takes her hand)*

DR. BERRYMAN

Yes.

MAGGIE

it wasn't my fault–

DR. BERRYMAN

We did our best.

MAGGIE

So long.

DR. BERRYMAN

Goodbye.

*October 1. Afternoon  
Washington D.C. Hospital*

*(As PHILIP speaks, ABIGAIL, DAVID, and MARGARET enter and sit around MAGGIE'S bed to give a sense of the larger group)*

MOURNING PICTURES

PHILIP

All the children packed in this small room: I hold Sarah, the youngest, on my lap – she fingers one blond braid, can't look. Jamie is solemn. Polly holds her mother's hand, and watches – she's seen dying creatures before. My oldest son, Paul, Mark, his dark hair wild, like Maggie's. Ann, hair pulled back, holds her blond husband. Very blue eyes. Tall Susan, blue-jeaned at the foot. Tim's arms hold Margaret, Abigail holds David. We're all touching – a wreath. Maggie opens her million-kilowatt eyes, turns her head from side to side. Is she counting?

She sees me. I know it.

MAGGIE

I love you, Philip. (*She looks around*) I love everybody!

ABIGAIL

(*Stands*)

Everyone has been here two weeks.  
We have begun to plan the funeral.  
The men have bought dark suits, but  
last night she seemed stronger.  
Aunt Julia has decided to stay. She asked  
me and I said I thought we all needed her.

*October 2. Afternoon*

*Washington D.C. The hospital room.*

(MARGARET is at MAGGIE'S bedside. As she speaks, she moves out of the room, into the corridor)

MARGARETT

The mouth is closed, determined. The eyeballs move under shut lids. The hands hake, grasp the metal. bed bars, then jiggle loose, lost

## MOURNING PICTURES

until they find something else to touch: bed  
surface, swollen stomach, white gown. She tugs  
her gown, kicks the sheets off, pulls  
her gown up. Naked, shaved. That's where I came  
from. I turn away. Something heaves through me,  
leaves me used up. I go out. It is hot,  
tropical. Black men in green suits pull beds-  
on-wheels rapidly from room to room, ward  
to operating theatre, X-ray lab—  
the steady metallic rattle does not  
disturb. Priest in black, doctor in white, stand,  
confer. The nurse finishes the PM  
shift. I am still here. I am counting squares.  
One foot's almost bigger than a square. I'm  
alone. My sandaled white feet  
are bigger than anyone else's, my  
health is an excess. I'm twenty-seven  
and I still feel the same. I am sixteen:  
Look at my pale feet, my sandals. Watch them  
swell – another tropical climate just as hot.  
Red-brown men in diapers what water  
buffalo home at dusk. Our speeding car  
stops for this even on The Mall, bordered  
with skinny sleepers suspended on hand-  
woven-webbing from hand-lashed frames; the poor  
in this country carry their beds on their  
backs. Here, Lahore. The sky sick-  
white. Pam trees bend above us, moisten the  
air. We wait. And old man, white hair to his  
muslin-covered genitals, sleeps, curled up  
on the ground. A woman, black face bubbled  
with scars, carries a wide-eyed, smooth-skinned child  
who begs with a handless wrist. A tonga  
shoots by. The driver strikes his broken mare;  
his fare, a woman in purdah. Her hands bounce  
on her linen lap— they are round, and young.  
We sit chewing pahn. Juice the color of  
blood dribbles from our mouths. We pick betel  
leaf from between our teeth.  
The hospital basement, steam table.  
Food. For waiting. I have no appetite.

## MOURNING PICTURES

“Iced tea, pleas.” I suck it through the punctured plastic top. The elevator stops. A young black man in a green suit pushes his cargo off. I tun from her old eyes, a brick row house crumbling, a front porch. September. Red climbing roses blousy without her pruning. Where is her daughter? “The food’s dirty here,. No wonder everyone dies all the time!” The sixteen-year-old, afraid to suck raw sugar cane that last day in Anarkali Bazaar, named for the girl dancer beheaded because some emperor of the Punjab loved her. Sixteen years old: “Will that old man simply die one day as he sleeps? How do you know he’s dad?” By the smell. “In America, my country, this could never happen. They care for you old and sick. No one dies here. My mother says she will live to be – well, old enough to have white hair down her back, sit on a porch rocking, sipping something without children, remembering her life.” I count the squares of asphalt tie–brown, off-white, eleven across some places, eight near the nurse’s station. One hundred and twenty-eight long. I just hold this in my head, then multiply. I have no paper, no pencil. I’ll count again tonight.

*(The music begins for DAVID’S birthday party. MARGARET moves downstage as the others enter and begin to sing the birthday song. The music is boisterous; they sing enthusiastically and dance.)*

### SONG

There is a birthday in this house. David is twenty.  
He lives with Abbie– they have bene here every day  
since June.  
Sometimes when they are needed, they spend the night.  
Sometime they stay because they want to.  
And when she wakes up, remembering each terrible

MOURNING PICTURES

thing about her life.  
David comes across the hall and talks to her about  
philosophy, about Samuel Beckett.  
And brings her something she'd like to eat: corn on the  
cob or Sara Lee.  
And in the morning, when she is feeling well,  
She sits up and eyes like diamonds with excitement  
She says, "David came in at four A.M. and made me milk  
and a piece of corn!  
And we had a great talk and we solved all the problems  
Of the world's great religions! He is such a lovely boy!"

*(They speak over the music)*

SINGER

He is such a lovely boy.

PHILIP

He is such a lovely boy.

MARGARET

He is such a lovely boy.

ABIGAIL

He is such a lovely boy.

ALL

Tonight he's twenty. Abbie arranged a party and we  
ordered a cake from University Pastry.  
And no one said anything at all about the greatest  
birthday party-giver of them all,  
Who couldn't be here tonight.

SINGER

Who couldn't be here tonight.

ABIGAIL

Who couldn't be here tonight.

DAVID

Who couldn't be here tonight.

MOURNING PICTURES

PHILIP

Who couldn't be here tonight.

*October 3. Evening*

*Washington D.C. Margaret's bedroom.*

*(DAVID and ABIGAIL appear)*

MARGARET *(Interrupted)*

I was just going to bed.

DAVID

We're going to the hospital. We thought you might like to come.

MARGARET

I've been up every night! I have to get some sleep.

DAVID

The night nurse says tonight –

MARGARET

She said that yesterday!

ABIGAIL

We're only going to stay a little. You go to sleep.

*ABIGAIL, DAVID and PHILIP go to the hospital room, sit next to bed where MAGGIE is lying peacefully. DR. BERRYMAN stands upstage in the shadows. In a moment it is clear that MAGGIE has died. PHILIP leaves the room to call MARGARET.*

MARGARET

*(Answering the telephone)* Hello.

PHILIP

Maggie died a few minutes ago. Maybe you want to come over to the hospital.

*(MARGARET comes into the hospital room)*

MOURNING PICTURES

MARGARET

Her dark hair is combed back,  
spread on the white pillow.

Her cheek flesh falls thin  
from the ones. The hollows  
are gentle. I kiss her on the  
forehead. She is not cold.

*The lights fade to darkness.*

*Mourning Pictures*

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION NOTES

The dates that substitute for scene numbers are for the benefit of the director/actors and need not be used in the production.

The songs, except for the birthday song, express Margaret's inner life, occasionally merging with Maggie's. There is a score by Noa Ain, available from the playwright or her agents.

Line breaks in the poems give a hint to subtext but are not intended to be strictly observed.

Some of Margaret's soliloquies are her inner life, others ("Does she have more than six months to live?") are asides to the audience.

The sets are meant to be minimal, the action continuous.

In 1974, when the play was written, chemotherapy was quite primitive, and especially futile for those with liver cancer.