

THE MEMORY OF WATER

Shelagh Stephenson

MARY: Hello? . . . What time is it? . . . I wouldn't be talking to you if I was, would I? I'd be unconscious . . . Where are you? . . . Jesus . . . you're what? So will you want meet to pick you up from the station?

The door opens and TERESA comes in.

TERESA: Oh . . .

MARY: Hold on . . . *(To Teresa.)* It's not for you.

TERESA: Who is it?

MARY: *(to caller)* What? She's gone where? . . . OK, Ok. I'll see you later. Are you sure you don't want me to pick you up -

(She's cut off.)

Hello? . . . Shit.

TERESA: Who was that?

MARY: A nuisance caller. We struck up a rapport.

TERESA: He's not staying here, is he?

MARY: Who?

TERESA: I'm presuming it's your boyfriend.

MARY: How much sleep have I had?

(She picks up a portable alarm clock and peers at it.)

TERESA: How's his wife?

MARY: Jesus. Two and half hours.

She flops back on the pillows. Looks at TERESA

Why are you looking so awake?

TERESA: I've been up since quarter past five. Presumably he's leaving her home, then.

MARY: You've got that slight edge in your voice. Like a blunt saw.

TERESA: I'm just asking -

MARY: Of course he's bloody leaving her at home. She's gone to stay with her mother.

TERESA: I thought she was ill.

MARY: Maybe she went in an iron lung. Maybe she made a miracle recovery. I don't know. I didn't ask.

TERESA: Where's he going to sleep?

MARY: What?
 TERESA: You can't sleep with him in that bed.
 MARY: He's staying in a hotel.
 TERESA: I thought it might be something important.
 MARY: What?
 TERESA: The phone. Funeral directors or something.
 MARY: We've done all that. Can I go back to sleep?
 TERESA: And where's Catherine?
 MARY: She said she might stay over with someone.
 TERESA: Does she still have friends here?
 MARY: Probably. I don't know.

She turns away, settles down, and shuts her eyes. TERESA watches her for a while.

TERESA: She could have phoned to say. Anything could have happened to her. It's still snowing.
 MARY: She's thirty-three, Teresa.
 TERESA: The roads are terrible.
 MARY: She'll get a taxi.
 TERESA: Probably just as well she didn't come home. She'd have probably drunk four bottles of cider and been brought home in a police car. And then she'd have been sick all over the television.
 MARY: She was thirteen when she did that.
 TERESA: She was lucky she didn't get electrocuted.
 MARY: It wasn't switched on.
 TERESA: Yes it was, I was watching it. It was The High Chaparral.
 MARY: No it wasn't. I wish you'd stop remembering things that didn't actually happen.
 TERESA: I was there. You weren't
MARY gives up trying to sleep. Sits up.
 MARY: I was there.
 TERESA: That was the other time. The time when she ate the cannabis.
 MARY: That was me. I ate hash cookies.
 TERESA: It was Catherine.
 MARY: It was me.
 TERESA: I was there.

MARY: So where was I?

TERESA: Doing your homework probably. Dissecting frogs. Skinning live rabbits. Strangling cats. The usual.

MARY: Teresa, I'd like to get another hour's sleep. I'm not in the mood, OK?

(She tries to settle in the bed, and pulls something out that's causing her discomfort: a glass contraption with a rubber bulb at one end. She puts it on the bedside table and settles down again. TERESA picks it up.)

TERESA: Oh, for God's sake . . . Is this what I think it is?

MARY: I don't know. What d'you think it is?

TERESA: A breast pump.

MARY: I found it on top of the wardrobe. I think I'd like to have it.

TERESA: Why?

MARY: Because you've got the watch and the engagement ring.

TERESA: For Lucy. Not for me. For Lucy.

MARY: OK. So you want the breast pump. Have it.

TERESA: I don't want it.

MARY: Good. That's settled. Now let me go to sleep.

TERESA: You can't just take things willy nilly.

MARY: You did.

TERESA: Oh, I see. I see what this is about.

MARY sits up.

MARY: It's not about anything, it's about me trying to get some sleep. For Christ's sake, Teresa, it's too early in the morning for this.