

TEMPERANCE

All right, Mrs. Lynch, we have Dorethea listed as a severe epileptic. Frequent and, at times, violent fits which may last several minutes.

BARBARA

Poor baby. Worstest thing I ever saw. When they first started up, don't know which one a' us was more scared. Wore her plum out too.

TEMPERANCE

Her verbal and reasoning skills are listed as those of an average three year—

MARY TOM

Prettiest smile you ever saw.

TEMPERANCE

Limited motor skills and hand/eye coordina—

MARY TOM

And lovin'!

BARBARA

Oh, yes, ma'm, never a minute a' trouble. When momma was livin', she stayed with her whilest I worked, but—

TEMPERANCE (Continues reading from the file.)

Has not yet begun her monthly cycles, but her mother agrees it is in the subject's best interest to—

BARBARA

I felt kinda' bad at first even thinkin' 'bout, 'bout that operation 'till you talked with me so nice, Ms. Walker.

MARY TOM

I'd do the exact same thing in your shoes, if I was blessed with such a angel.

TEMPERANCE

-Sterilize.

MARY TOM

Best thing in the world.

BARBARA

And it ain't gonna hurt her, right?

START HERE

MARY TOM

Not much, and she'll be asleep when they—

TEMPERANCE

Won't be as bad as when she had her appendix removed. Just two small incisions on either side of her—

BARBARA

Thank God, that busted 'pendix 'bout killed her.

MARY TOM

And, when they do the procedure, the doctors will be able to go right in those same scars—same places they did the appendix.

BARBARA

She only got the one scar from her 'pendix, right here. (She points to the right side of her lower abdomen.)

MARY TOM

Oh, no, honey, appendectomies leave two, iddy biddy little scars, on either side a' your belly button. You musta' missed it. I had to have one myself, not long after we was married, lucky for me, my husband, the late Dr. Walker, was a surgeon. Iddy biddiest littlest scars.

BARBARA

Don't think I missed that other one, could it be different on little chilrun? 'pendix bound to be smaller. Maybe one's enough.

MARY TOM

You probly jus' missed that other one. Okay, anything else? We got your signature, and as next of kin, that's all the board requires. Once it gets approved by the board—they meet the first Wednesday of every month—we'll get her scheduled.

BARBARA

Can I be there when they, they do it? I don't want her wakin' up alone.

MARY TOM

Yes, sugar. They always try to operate locally. I'll let you know when they set the date, and tell you what, I'll drive you down to Goldsboro myself. We'll go together. Be glad to.

BARBARA (Stands and comes around the table.)

Ms. Walker?

MARY TOM

Ma'm?

BARBARA

You mind if I hug you?

MARY TOM

Why, course not. Come on over here.

(The two women hug for several seconds, MARY TOM holds herself apart. TEMPERENCE watches.)

BARBARA

It's a pure shame you never had youngins a' your own. Got a mamma's heart, that's for sure.

MARY TOM

We all got our crosses to bear, Ms. Lynch, but that one 'bout broke me.

BARBARA

Um, hum. Wouldn't be right let my Dorethea get in the family way. I see what you was tellin' me. Got to keep on protecting her long as I can.

MARY TOM

That's right. And long after me and you is gone.

BARBARA

Yes, Jesus.

END

TEMPERENCE

Mrs. Lynch, I'll need one more signature, right here on this line marked 'Next of Kin', please sign and then write in 'Mother' over where it asks for relationship.

(BARBARA signs, stands and takes TEMPERENCE's hand.)

BARBARA

You doin' good work, too, miss. For all a' us. Thank you.

TEMPERENCE

Oh. Well. You are welcome.