

## Barbed-wire Minute



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Hailey: 17.

Georgia: 43. Hailey's mother.

Dialogue is fast. Old wounds—new arguments.

A half submerged store room near the border  
between Arizona and Sonora, Mexico. Dusk.  
Shadows and sporadic light.  
Voices in the darkness.

HAILEY

Who do you love more? Me or Jesus?

GEORGIA

Jesus.

(Lights up. HAILEY and her mother GEORGIA  
kneel on the grass beside the store room, each  
holding a pump-action shotgun.)

HAILEY

Why?

GEORGIA

He gave me you.

HAILEY

That's not an answer. Love me more!

GEORGIA

OK.

HAILEY

You're not.

GEORGIA

That's right.

HAILEY

What's he done?

GEORGIA

He gave me you.

HAILEY  
Stop saying that!

GEORGIA  
OK.

HAILEY  
What about dad?

GEORGIA  
Jesus tests me too.

HAILEY  
He punished you.

GEORGIA  
He didn't punish me. He tested me.

HAILEY  
If you love Jesus, he shouldn't have made Dad lose his job. You shouldn't hurt people who love you. The Bible must say that somewhere.

GEORGIA  
It's OK if you don't believe in him.

HAILEY  
I believe in him, I just don't agree with him. Teachers test you. The DMV *tests* you!

GEORGIA  
And so does Jesus.

HAILEY  
I thought you prayed.

GEORGIA  
I did.

HAILEY  
He's not listening.

GEORGIA  
I think he is.

HAILEY  
Then he's cruel. And I'll shoot him if he comes around again.

It's OK to be angry.

GEORGIA

Stop talking!  
(Pause)  
Hello?

HAILEY

I'm not talking.

GEORGIA

(GEORGIA makes the motion of zipping her lips.)

I didn't mean literally—just about that.

HAILEY

How's school?

GEORGIA

Can't you think of a new question?

HAILEY

I just want to make sure that you're doing OK here.

GEORGIA

I'm fine. School is fine. People in Arizona are the same as people in New Mexico. Covered in dust. Covered in turquoise, covered in....skate boarding stuff. The whole freakin' state is just fine.

HAILEY

It's alright if you don't want to talk. Let me know if you need private time.  
(Pause)

GEORGIA

You used to tell me to be quiet all the time on the way back from Albuquerque Elementary. "I'm thinking, Mom!" Remember?

No!

(Pause)

HAILEY

You know what I was thinking about?

What?

GEORGIA

Robbing banks. HAILEY

Robbing banks? GEORGIA

Well, *a* bank. The Wells Fargo on Fulton . I was going to steal your handgun from behind the lazy chair. But the bank was on the other side of the street, and I still couldn't cross the street by myself.

(They both laugh.)

Really? GEORGIA

No. Leave me alone. HAILEY  
(Pause)

(excited) Do you hear that? (Rustling in the bushes.)

Where? GEORGIA

I think I see something moving. Between the tree and the fence. HAILEY

What are you doing? (GEORGIA stands and cocks her gun.)

(Playful, hunting) GEORGIA  
Shhh!

Mom! HAILEY

Hailey, come on. (HAILEY pushes down violently on the barrel of GEORGIA'S shotgun.)

GEORGIA

HAILEY

Wait, we don't know what it is yet.

GEORGIA

What?

HAILEY

You don't know if it's a rabbit or a runner!

GEORGIA

A runner?

HAILEY

Across the border.

GEORGIA

(Looking for the rabbit)

You said you saw a rabbit in the bushes.

HAILEY

I *heard* something. It's dark.

GEORGIA

It's probably a rabbit.

HAILEY

You don't know that.

GEORGIA

I know it's dangerous to be sneaking around the bushes when people are hunting. Those people should be careful.

HAILEY

We're not really hunting rabbits, are we?

GEORGIA

We are really hunting rabbits. They are getting out of control. I told you how they're breaking into the store room and leaving trails of rice and freeze dried peas all over the place. If you don't deal with the problem, they go and tell all their buddies and pretty soon it's an infestation.

HAILEY

What if it turns out it's Mexicans who are stealing the food?

GEORGIA

I guess that's a possibility.

HAILEY

Then you'd have to shoot them.

GEORGIA

Hailey.

HAILEY

You'd have to deal with the "infestation."

GEORGIA

Rabbit populations can easily get out of control. It's up to the responsible home owner to regulate it.

HAILEY

You're trigger happy.

GEORGIA

I'm not shooting anyone! (Laughing) I didn't even get that rabbit.

HAILEY

What if it *was* a person?

GEORGIA

Well, whatever it is, it's gone now!

HAILEY

I bet it was a person.

GEORGIA

I'm just saying, it's dangerous. People who decide to break the law, trespass into places they're not supposed to be, need to be careful. But I would never shoot anyone. Are we clear?

(Pause)

HAILEY

(Singing with gusto, to the tune of "Ants go Marching")

Mom goes marching to the wire, Hurrah, Hurrah.  
Mom goes marching to the wire, Hurrah, Hurrah.  
Mom goes marching to the wire,  
Takes aim, shoots, and fires,  
And the runners all go down—to the ground,  
To get out of...

(Hailey tries to think of a rhyme for "ground")

GEORGIA

The rain?

HAILEY

Abject poverty I was going to say, but thanks.

GEORGIA

Maybe they should get a job.

HAILEY

Maybe *you* should get a job.

GEORGIA

Hailey.

HAILEY

“God loves a hypocrite.”

GEORGIA

I have a job, it’s raising you. I love my job.

HAILEY

Dad has a job, you just sit around and bug me about school.

GEORGIA

Dad *had* a job.

HAILEY

I know. You think I don’t know? You think I need you to *remind* me what happened? That Jesus, who you love sooo much, decided to waltz...

GEORGIA

Hailey, come on.

HAILEY

Decided to WALTZ into Albuquerque, right past all the murderers and people who *have* robbed banks. Right past Mrs. Clarkson who kicks her cats, and Daniel who steals silverware from Mrs. Clarkson, and Mr. Hammond who set up that video camera to tape the Anderson kids swimming in their back yard, decided to waltz right on past to our house and walk in our door and lay Dad off. I remember, Georgia. You don’t need to test me.

(Pause)

What?

GEORGIA

I didn't say anything.

HAILEY

Then why are you talking now!!

(Pause)

What?

GEORGIA

I wish you wouldn't take things out on me, Hailey. I know you're upset about Dad and having to move and...

HAILEY

We need to fix that fence.

GEORGIA

...I know the last couple weeks haven't been easy on you.

HAILEY

Right there, where I heard the rustling before.

GEORGIA

We can do that next weekend if you want, if you're not busy hanging out with new friends.

HAILEY

Why did you change the fences to barbed wire, anyways, it's not as stable.

GEORGIA

It's a better deterrent.

HAILEY

But the spaces in between are just as big.

GEORGIA

It's not a wall.

HAILEY

Yeah. Not yet.

(Pause.)

And it's not a deterrent. Runners are still gonna try to squeeze through. Now they'll just get all cut up and leave trails of blood and...eyeballs.

GEORGIA

Well, then maybe they shouldn't be trying to squeeze through. If they don't want to hurt their...

HAILEY

Eyeballs. It's cruel.

GEORGIA

It's a fence!

HAILEY

Stop it!

GEORGIA

What?

HAILEY

Can't you agree with me about anything?

GEORGIA

What do you want me to agree with?

HAILEY

The fence, Jesus, Dad, anything... Why do you have to be so closed minded?

GEORGIA

That's your opinion. You are entitled to it.

HAILEY

Who's in Arizona and who's not has nothing to do with you. It doesn't affect you in any way other than you think you're going to lose something if you don't keep everyone else out of it. It's selfish.

GEORGIA

That's not fair.

HAILEY

You shut everyone out.

GEORGIA

Do you know how many people called me when your father got fired? Do you know how many people came to our door and expressed their sympathy after Jesus apparently "waltzed" in? No one. Not Mrs. Clarkson. Not Pat Anderson. Not even Richard Hammond who we all *know* knew what was going on. No one asked if I was OK. No one mentioned it in the supermarket. They asked me about the car we traded in. They wanted to know if the new Saturn had a lot of miles. If I got a fair exchange. These are

friends I let into my life, into my home, and couldn't even call me when my husband's locked himself crying in the bathroom.

I shut some people out. But they deserve to be.

(Louder rustling in the bushes. They both hear it. )

OK, there's another rabbit. Are you going to give me the third degree about my position on *illegal* immigration, or are you going to let me do what we are out here to do?

(HAILEY steps in front of her mother. Cocks her gun.)

HAILEY

I can do it.

GEORGIA

Hold it steady, keep a grip on the choke, center the target area in the view finder.

HAILEY

I know how to do it!

GEORGIA

Fine!

(HAILEY stands with gun locked and loaded, looking for the source of the rustling noise, which continues.)

HAILEY

No, it's not fine. Nothing about this is fine. What happened to Dad wasn't fine. When you wanted to move, because it turned out you didn't *actually* have any friends after all, it wasn't fine. But I've done everything you asked. I do all this stuff for you and Jesus ruins our lives and you *still* love him more.

Well, you know who *Jesus* loves more, don't you, you know who he loves more?

(Pause. Rustling gets louder.)

He loves this rabbit.

(HAILEY fires her shotgun. Sound of something falling to the ground. Perhaps someone gasping. Someone dying.)

BLACKOUT.