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# “SARAH: BEFORE MOUNT MORIAH”

## BY MADELEINE L’ENGLÉ

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L'Engle, Madeleine. *The Ordering of Love* (Writers' Palette Book) (p. 343). Originally published in her collection *A Cry Like a Bell* (1987). The Crown Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Like a small mouse  
I am being played with.  
Pushed around, sent from home,  
passed off as a sister,  
free to be the sport of others  
(nobody asked me).  
Nobody asked if I wanted  
to leave home and all my friends  
(the cat never asks the mouse).  
Would my womb have filled  
if we had stayed where we were  
instead of following strange promises?  
My maid, giving my husband a child for me,  
then made mock of me.  
So, when the angel came  
announcing—promising—  
a child in my womb long dry  
what could I do but laugh?  
And then warmth came again, and fullness,  
and my child was born,  
my laughter, my joy.

But do not play with me any more!  
What kind of logic lurks in your promise  
that the sky full of stars  
is like the number of our descendants  
and then demand the son's life who makes  
that promise possible?  
Can I trust a breaker of promises?  
What kind of game is this?



Are you laughing at my pain  
as I watch the child and his father  
climb the mountain?  
Am I no more than a mouse  
to be played with?

I am a woman.  
You—father-God—  
have yet to learn  
what it is to be a mother,

and so, perhaps, have I.  
And if you give me back my laughter again,  
then, together we can learn  
and I will say — oh, I will sing! —  
that you have regarded the lowliness  
of your handmaiden.

