

FATHER CHENILLE. Wait a minute! George?

GEORGE. Father?

FATHER CHENILLE. Might I ask a favor of you?

GEORGE. Certainly, Father.

FATHER CHENILLE. There's a new priest here, Father Paul. I can't explain what I'm about to ask you; I can only say that it would mean a great deal to me if you would... I want you to spy on Father Paul!

GEORGE. Spy, Father?

FATHER CHENILLE. The fate of the entire church is in your hands. Here's what I'd like you to do...

(He begins to whisper a plan as the lights fade to black.)

Scene 2

(The next morning. The trunk has been moved out of the way. AUGUSTA and PHILAMENA are working on finishing the robes. Both are exhausted.)

SISTER AUGUSTA. I can't believe I fell asleep in my oatmeal. Mother Superior must think I'm narcoleptic.

SISTER PHILAMENA. I don't know why you're so tired! I had to press and bottle all the...you-know-what...no thanks to you!

SISTER AUGUSTA. I was in Mary Catherine's room all night, putting subconscious thoughts into her head. I read about it in a book last month. This woman wanted to stop smoking, and she made a recording that she played when she slept telling her, "Stop smoking. Stop smoking." And when she woke up the next day, she gave up smoking.

SISTER PHILAMENA. But Sister Mary Catherine doesn't smoke.

SISTER AUGUSTA. I know that! But I wanted her to expose herself as a spy. So I snuck into her room and whispered over and over, "Confess! Confess!"

SISTER PHILAMENA. Did it work?

SISTER AUGUSTA. We'll find out this morning.

SISTER PHILAMENA. Well, we finished and that's the important thing. Now remember, the bottles with the red labels are the... you-

know-what...and the ones with the white labels are the real grape juice.

SISTER AUGUSTA. Red: you-know-what, white: grape juice. I'll remember.

SISTER PHILAMENA. I put the last two bottles of grape juice on the very edge of the shelf so we'll remember to take those first. The whole pressing room smells like...you-know-what...so we must keep Mother Superior out of there if we can. At least until I can clean it up this morning.

SISTER AUGUSTA. Got it! I'm going to go find George ask him to go into town and pick up our bottles.

SISTER PHILAMENA. Can't we go? If he happens to look in the box...

SISTER AUGUSTA. We still have all these robes to repair. We'll just get George to do it for us; he's very trustworthy.

GEORGE. (*Entering, dressed as a priest:*) Good morning, Sisters.

SISTER PHILAMENA. George!

SISTER AUGUSTA. What are you wearing? That's sacrilege!

GEORGE. Oh, no. It's a cassock!

SISTER PHILAMENA. George, why are dressed like that?

GEORGE. Father Chenille's put me on a secret mission. From now on, I'm Father George.

SISTER AUGUSTA. Father George?

GEORGE. Until he tells me it's ok to be groundskeeper George again.

SISTER PHILAMENA. I don't understand.

GEORGE. I can't explain it to you just yet. Just remember, I'm Father George.

SISTER PHILAMENA. All right. Now, George— (*He clears his throat. She corrects herself:*) —Father George, we have a favor to ask you.

SISTER AUGUSTA. There's a box of bottles we've ordered that needs to get picked up from town. Can you get them for us this morning?

GEORGE. I don't know. Father Chenille told me to stay here all day.

SISTER AUGUSTA. Please! It's very important we get those bottles today.

SISTER PHILAMENA. We'd go ourselves, but we have to finish our sewing.

GEORGE. Well, Father Paul was still asleep when I left my cabin this morning... Maybe if I go right now I can be back before he's up.

SISTER AUGUSTA. Thank you, Geo—

(He clears his throat.)

Father George.

(He exits as MARY CATHERINE enters.)

SISTER MARY CATHERINE. Good morning, Sisters.

SISTER PHILAMENA. Good morning, Mary Catherine.

SISTER AUGUSTA. *(Moving to the other side of MARY CATHERINE and checking her out:)* Good morning.

SISTER MARY CATHERINE. Is something wrong, Sister?

SISTER AUGUSTA. How are you feeling this morning, Sister Mary Catherine? Anything you'd like to tell us?

SISTER MARY CATHERINE. What do you mean?

SISTER AUGUSTA. Anything to...confess?

SISTER MARY CATHERINE. Actually, there is.

SISTER AUGUSTA. *(Excited:)* I knew it!

SISTER MARY CATHERINE. I drank the last of the grape juice at breakfast this morning.

SISTER AUGUSTA. Is that all?

SISTER MARY CATHERINE. *(Unsure:)* And...I'm sorry? Listen, Sisters, may I ask you something? Is this building very old?

SISTER PHILAMENA. Not really. Why?

SISTER MARY CATHERINE. I heard strange noises all night last night. I thought maybe it was building settling.

SISTER AUGUSTA. Noises? What kind of noises? Did the noises make you want to...tell us something?!

SISTER MARY CATHERINE. I know this sounds silly, but they sounded almost...human. Like a voice, telling me the strangest things.

SISTER AUGUSTA. Oh, really? Like what?

SISTER MARY CATHERINE. They just kept saying, "confess, confess."

SISTER AUGUSTA. Maybe you have a heavy heart about something. Perhaps a secret weighing you down? Something you need to...confess?

(Both Sisters stare at MARY CATHERINE.)

SISTER MARY CATHERINE. *(Very nervous:)* I think I'll take my sewing outdoors. I'd like some quiet time to reflect.

SISTER AUGUSTA. I'll come along.

SISTER MARY CATHERINE. I don't mean to be impolite, Sister Augusta, but I'd like to go alone.

SISTER AUGUSTA. Good, me too. We can go alone together.

(As they exit, AUGUSTA whispers behind her: "Confess! Confess!" MARY CATHERINE turns around but AUGUSTA stops pretending to scratch her head. It continues as they exit.)

MOTHER SUPERIOR. *(Entering, heading towards the pressing room:)* How's the sewing coming along?

SISTER PHILAMENA. We should be done very— Mother Superior, where are you going?

MOTHER SUPERIOR. The pressing room. We've run out of juice.

SISTER PHILAMENA. I'll get you some.

MOTHER SUPERIOR. Nonsense. You keep sewing.

SISTER PHILAMENA. *(Pushing her way in front of the pressing room door:)* Mother Superior, wait! The pressing room's a mess.

MOTHER SUPERIOR. I'm just retrieving some bottles, Sister Philamena, not photographing it. Unless there's some other reason you don't want me to go in there?

SISTER PHILAMENA. ...uh...uh...

(MOTHER SUPERIOR nudges PHILAMENA aside and enters the pressing room.)

Grab the bottles with the white labels on the edge of the shelf! They're...more what you're looking for.

MOTHER SUPERIOR. All right.

(A small crash is heard.)

SISTER PHILAMENA. What happened?

MOTHER SUPERIOR. *(Within:)* It's all right. Just a little spill. *(Coming out with red label bottles:)* Could you please get a mop and bucket and help me clean up the broken glass?

SISTER PHILAMENA. Mother Superior, I told you to get the bottles with the white labels!

MOTHER SUPERIOR. The ones with the white labels fell off the shelf. Someone put them dangerously close to the edge.

SISTER PHILAMENA. But—

MOTHER SUPERIOR. The mop and bucket are in the kitchen. Grab them and put these bottles away and we'll clean up that mess before it stains. I've spilled a little on my gown and need to wash it off.

(She exits into the kitchen.) **SISTER PHILAMENA** exits into the kitchen.

(frantic. PAUL and SALLY enter from the hall.)

PAUL. You look awful!

SALLY. Do you know the last time I woke up at four thirty in the morning, Paul? Never! That's when!

PAUL. Now, look, we both agreed: ask a few questions, find out nothing's going on, and leave, right?

SALLY. I still don't know why you're so nervous about all this.

PAUL. Look at me! Do you know how many rosaries I'll have to say for impersonating a priest?

SALLY. You know, you look pretty good in uniform!

PAUL. (Flattered:) You think so? This robe doesn't make me look fat?

SALLY. No, not at all. It accentuates your broad shoulders.

PAUL. Thanks. I've been doing a little weight-lifting with the fellas after work lately, and— (Remembering his mission to Sally,) No, seriously! Let's just do this and get out of here.

SALLY. All right, all right. I'll check on Sister Mary and Sister Augusta. You find Mother Superior and Sister Philamena. We'll meet back in an hour, trade notes, and figure out what to do from there.

(She exits outside as PAUL runs back out the hall.)

(FATHER CHENILLE enters from outside.)

FATHER CHENILLE. George! Where are you?

SISTER PHILAMENA. (Entering from the kitchen with a mop and bucket. She sees FATHER CHENILLE who is faced away from her.) Father George, are you back with the bottles already?

(FATHER CHENILLE turns around.)

Oh, good morning, Father Chenille.