

DOCTOR. You lied to me.

MOTHER. About what?

DOCTOR. You said you never saw Agnes until she set foot in the convent.

MOTHER. I didn't. I was a good deal older than my sister. I was already married before she was born. She was imbalanced, even as a child. She ran away from home at an early age. I lost touch with her. God knows what sort of life she led. When my husband died and I entered the convent, she started writing to me. She told me about Agnes, and asked me to watch over her in case anything happened.

DOCTOR. And Agnes' father?

MOTHER. Could have been any one of a dozen men, from what my sister told me. She was afraid that Agnes would follow in her footsteps. She did everything to prevent that.

DOCTOR. By keeping her home from school.

MOTHER. Yes.

DOCTOR. And listening to angels.

MOTHER. She drank she did drugs. That's what killed her.

DOCTOR. Do you know what she did to Agnes?

MOTHER. I don't think I... (care to know.)

DOCTOR. She protested her.

(*A beat.*)

MOTHER. Oh dear Jesus.

DOCTOR. There is more here than meets the eye, isn't there? *Lots* of dirty little secrets. Pull back the sheets and what do you find? A niece.

MOTHER. I didn't tell you because I didn't think it was important.

DOCTOR. No, it just makes you doubly responsible, doesn't it?

MOTHER. Had I known what Agnes was suffering...

DOCTOR. Why didn't you? My God, you knew she was keeping the child from school. You knew she was an alcoholic, an addict.

MOTHER. I knew that *after*... (the fact.)

DOCTOR. Why didn't you do anything to stop her?!

MOTHER. I didn't know!

(*A beat.*)

And that's no excuse, is it?

(*Silence.*)

DOCTOR. What did you find in the daybook?

MOTHER. Agnes was sick the Sunday before she told me about the sheets. If she burned them then, they probably became stained on Saturday night. Unfortunately on that night one of our elder nuns passed away. I have no recollection of any visitors to the convent. I was needed in the sickroom.

DOCTOR. Were the Last Rites given on that night?

MOTHER. Yes, of course.

DOCTOR. So Father Marshall would have been present.

MOTHER. Yes, but I can't believe... (that Father Marshall could have done it.)

DOCTOR. *Somebody* has to be responsible for that child. It if wasn't Father Marshall, who else could it be?

(*Silence.*)

Start

Well, we'll find out soon enough. I've gotten Agnes' permission to hypnotize her.

MOTHER. And *my* permission?

DOCTOR. I don't think you have anything to say in this matter.

MOTHER. I'm her guardian.

DOCTOR. She's twenty-one years old; she doesn't need a guardian.

MOTHER. But she must come to me first and ask permission.

DOCTOR. Does that mean you'll deny it?

MOTHER. I haven't decided that yet.

DOCTOR. This woman's health is at stake.

MOTHER. Her spiritual health.

DOCTOR. I don't give a good goddamn about what you call... (her spiritual health.)

MOTHER. I know you don't.

DOCTOR. Sentence her and be done with it, that's what you're saying. Well, I can't... (do that yet.)

MOTHER. What I'm saying is that you have a beautifully simple woman...

DOCTOR. An unhappy woman.

MOTHER. But she was happy with us. And she could go on being happy if she were left alone.

DOCTOR. Then why did you call the police in the first place? Why didn't you throw the baby in the incinerator and be done with it?

MOTHER. Because I'm a moral person, that's why.

DOCTOR. Bullshit!

MOTHER. Bullshit yourself!

DOCTOR. The Catholic Church doesn't have a corner on morality, Mother.

MOTHER. Who said anything about the Catholic Church?

DOCTOR. *You just said...* (that you, her Mother Superior...)

MOTHER. What the hell does the Catholic Church have to do with you?

DOCTOR. Nothing. Absolutely... (nothing.)

MOTHER. Don't deny it. Oh, I can smell an ex-Catholic a mile away. What did we do? Burn a few heretics? Sell some indulgences? But those were in the days when the Church was a ruling body. We let governments do those things today.

DOCTOR. Just because you don't have the power you once had...

MOTHER. Oh, I'm not interested in the Church as power, Doctor. I'm interested in it as simplicity and peace.

I know, it's very difficult to find that in *any* institution nowadays. But tell me. What did we do to *you*? You wanted to neck in the back seat of a car when you were fifteen and you couldn't because it was a sin. So instead of questioning that one little rule....

DOCTOR. It wasn't sex. It was a lot of things but it wasn't sex. It started in the first grade when my best friend was hit by a car on her way to school. The nun said she died because she hadn't said her morning prayers.

MOTHER. Stupid woman.

DOCTOR. Yeah.

MOTHER. That's all?

DOCTOR. That's all?! That's enough! She was a beautiful little girl and to explain... (away her death like that...)

MOTHER. Every child is beautiful – what has that... (got to do with it?)

DOCTOR. I wasn't! And I hadn't said my morning prayers either!

(**MOTHER laughs.**)

It's not funny.

MOTHER. (*Sobering.*) Of course it isn't.

(**MOTHER laughs again, then sobers.**)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. So – you hate the Church because of one stupid nun.

DOCTOR. No, because...yeah, okay, I hate the Church because of one stupid nun. And guess what?

MOTHER. What?

DOCTOR. That's also why I hate you.

(**MOTHER laughs.** *After a moment the DOCTOR... smiles, then laughs in spite of herself. Their laughter is interrupted by AGNES' singing.*)

End

AGNES.

~~SANCTUS, SANCTUS, SANCTUS, DOMINUS DEUS SABAOTH.
PLENI SUNT COELI ET TERRA GLORIA TUA, HOSANNA~~