

PERUSAL SCRIPT



# CANDLEDANCING

The Voice of Julian of Norwich

A Play in Two Acts

by

**Coni Ciongoli Koepfinger**

with a music score by **Robert Hugill**

*When you ask God to be your dance partner, the music never stops.*



Leicester Bay  
THEATRICALS

**Newport, Maine**

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## DEDICATION

*To my mother, Eleanor; my husband, Joseph; and my daughters, Katharine and Mary, for their endless love and patience.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CANDLEDANCING was first presented by The Acting Company as a reading and then moved to The Veronica Veil Players for a staged reading by Denny Martin in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, April 1999.

## ENDORSEMENT

The power of life to lift and transform us is so easily and so often obscured by our own power and politics. In choosing not to look, not to see, not to participate in life, the warm and beautiful light of even a single candle dancing against our darkness can be ignored or dismissed as distracting, unimportant, or irrelevant. But Truth eventually and inevitably wins. Climbing “up the mountain of enlightenment” takes the temerity of a Mother Agnes, the perspicacity of a Sister Kate, the purity and inspiration of our own Will. In *CANDLEdancing*, Coni Koepfinger invites us to center ourselves in all of these personal aspects, all of these parts of our own psyche, soul, and spirit. She weaves a medieval myth that allows us to envision “spiritual horizons” knowing that the garment she made will, like a baptismal garment, cover the “new person,” the one reborn into higher consciousness. May you be enlightened by this tale and choose to be the *CANDLEdancing*. — **Stephen Steinbeiser, Duquesne University**

“*Candle dancing* can be a well-developed, lyrical, important play. Koepfinger has a mission here that's clear and sincere. The playwright's strength is the passion of her dialogue.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

*Dramatis Personae*

6M, 4F, 1B + CHOIRBOYS and CHOIR ADULTS

**FR. PETER ANDREWS:** Benedictine monk, in his mid forties, who acts as music minister of the East Abbey. He has a fascination for ancient art history and literature, with emphasis on the origin of language. Father Peter is quite charismatic and strongly attractive yet not typically masculine; his resolute character would be to be found in a determined woman.

**WILL:** As the central figure, Will is the young street urchin who appeared unexpectedly on the doorstep of East Abbey. He is thin, blonde, with pale skin and blue eyes. The boy, responding peculiarly to the flame of a particular candle, proves to have quite an enchanting voice and a flair for writing. Will, who is later the mouthpiece for Julian of Norwich, should be played by a lyric soprano to attain the very luminous vocal quality.

**SISTER MARY KATHARINE DUNN:** Affectionately known as SISTER KATE, she teaches art, music, and social studies at the East Abbey. Though she has only been there a few years, Sr. Kate has grown an intense attachment to Fr. Peter and sees him as a vehicle to achieve her professional goals. Her plans to save humanity through art preoccupy her life so much that she often steps on people on her climb to accomplish the greater good. Her brawny, masculine, physique has advanced her appearance well beyond her years.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES PARLASKY:** Mother superior at the East Abbey. She is in her late forties yet looks much younger. She's genteel though she appreciates the value of discipline and obedience. Mother Mary Agnes is sympathetic to Fr. Peter and cherishes their life-long friendship. Yet her "duty" to God means more to her than anything or anyone in this world.

**ANNA VALKO:** An obsequious young woman who runs the East Abbey cafeteria by day and the laundry by night. She is considering becoming a novice.

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** The district official of the diocese where the East Abbey is located.

**JONATHAN and DAVID:** Choirboys at the Abbey.

**CARDINAL SANTORI:** Second Seat for the Tribunal.

**CARDINAL BONATELLI:** Third Seat for the Tribunal.

**FR. DENNIS MALCOLM:** Prosecutor for the office of the Defender of the Faith and Secretary to the Cardinal. Recently ordained and a Canon lawyer. Handsome, somewhat in shape.

**SISTER BLANDINA:** The Cardinal's aging secretary.

**DEEP VOICE:** an offstage cantor

**CHOIRBOYS:** For chanting.

**ADULT CHOIR:** For chanting.

**TIME:** Present Day

**PLACE:** East Abbey, a Thirteenth Century Benedictine monastery just outside of Norwich, England, near Mousehold Heath, an area of woodland that lies in northeast Norwich. It is a semi-natural woodland with wildlife, a public open rural space near the city.

## **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES AND MUSICAL SEQUENCES**

*Prologue:* Julian, Will, and the Church Choirs

### **MUSIC #I.0 — PROLOGUE**

*No music for “DIES IRAE” use some standard public domain arrangement*

*Act I Scene 1* Two Weeks Ago THE TRIBUNAL — The Official Tribunal in Cardinal Roland’s office. Accused of teaching heresy, Fr Peter Andrews is interrogated by Fr. Dennis Malcolm, Cardinal Roland’s Secretary/Prosecutor for the Defender of the Faith.

### **MUSIC #I.1 — Ominous Entracte Sound**

*Act I Scene 2* The Present THE VERDICT — Pronounced to remain in claustration until delivery of the verdict, Fr. Peter paces about in his cluttered study in the dilapidated old ruins of the East Abbey, a Thirteenth Century Monastery waiting to hear the fate of truth that he balances in his hands.

*Act I Scene 3* A Few Hours Later THE BREAKDOWN — After the word of The Official Tribunal is handed down, Fr. Peter realizes that he has seen the light of God, unadulterated and true. He has recognized the magnificence of a pure unfettered channel for the Great Divine. He has this great truth of light from the dark ages.

### **MUSIC #I.3-2 — Medieval Entracte**

*Act I Scene 4* Six months earlier that year THE ARRIVAL OF GOD'S WILL — The choirboy is found in the dimly lit interior of the chapel at East Abbey transfixed by the flame of one particular perpetual light candle, hearing the voice of a mystic from the Medieval Times.

### **MUSIC #I.4-1 — WILL’S ALLELUIAS**

*Act I Scene 5* Three weeks before the trial THE CROWNING OF THORNS — Sr. Kate is in the chapel setting up for a funeral. The sanctity of her solitude is broken by the brash sounds of street activity and disturbing dialogue that is happening offstage. Intrigued, Kate eavesdrops until Will comes in with a thorn in his eye. He is followed shortly thereafter by Anna and sent back out. Moments later we hear by warning that Will is in extreme danger.

*Act II Scene 1* Moments later THE ACCIDENT — Peter is in his cell, asleep over his books. Kate knocks, sees that he has nodded off, then enters. She tells Peter that Will has been hurt. As she does so, “Agnus Dei” is sung. The scene ends with Peter contesting the accident of fate. "This cannot be God's plan. This must be man's inhumanity to man!"

### **MUSIC #II.1-1 — AGNUS DEI**

### **MUSIC #II.1-2 — Short Ominous Entracte**

*Act II Scene 2* The Next Day THE DEATH SENTENCE — The Condemning to Death in The Cardinal's office. Having set up the past events, the Cardinal is eager to find out what he can about public perceptions. He summons Sr. Kate and Sr. Mary Agnes to his office.

*Act II Scene 3* Later that day THE FINAL WARNING — After their visit to the Cardinal, Mary Agnes warns Peter of his fate. Kate comes to tell them of Will's sudden death.

*Act II Scene 4* Ten days before the trial THE REQUIEM AETERNAM

### **MUSIC #II.4-1 — REQUIEM AETERNAM (as noted in the score)**

A mystical occurrence is experienced during Will's Funeral Mass; a miracle ensues.

### **MUSIC #II. 4.2 — KYRIE [SEE SCORE FOR ALL DETAILS]**

### **MUSIC #II.4-3 — WILL’S DANCE [AS SPECIFIED IN SCORE]**

*Postlude:* ANGELS IN PARADISE

As Peter prepares to leave, “In Paradisum” is sung as they progress back to the Nave use some standard public domain arrangement

## PROLOGUE

*(FR. PETER pacing nervously about his small room in old ruins of the East Abbey, which in the shadow of the stage LIGHTS appears to be a jail cell. We can hear the haunting of Julian of Norwich, a medieval mystic, that is obviously driving FR. PETER into neurosis.*

### **MUSIC 1.0: PROLOGUE**

**JULIAN:**

IT IS GOD'S WILL.

IT IS GOD'S WILL.

**WILL:**

IT IS GOD'S WILL.

IT IS GOD'S WILL.

**JULIAN:**

WE SHALL RECEIVE THREE THINGS.

**WILL:**

WE SHALL RECEIVE THREE THINGS.

**JULIAN:**

THREE THINGS FROM HIM AS GIFTS.

**WILL:**

THREE THINGS FROM HIM AS GIFTS.

**JULIAN:**

TO SEEK, TO WAIT, AND TO TRUST.

**JULIAN / WILL:**

TO SEEK, TO WAIT, AND TO TRUST.

**JULIAN / WILL:**

TO SEEK WITH JOY, ALLELUIA.

TO WAIT WITH LOVE, ALLELUIA.

AND TO TRUST WITH FAITH.

ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, AMEN ALLELUIA.

FOR TO KNOW HIM IS TO LOVE HIM

SUDDENLY

AND BLESSEDLY

THE BELOVED SHALL APPEAR

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WITH SUCH GLORIOUS GRACE.  
WE SHALL BE REDEEMED TO SEE HIS FACE.

*(WILL echoes back JULIAN'S melodious chants until after several rounds JULIAN simply conducts and WILL carries it as his own solo. The music continues as the LIGHTS slowly fade out on WILL and JULIAN. Suddenly the LIGHTS downstage left, as the same music erupts with energy from the boy choir.)*

### **WILL:**

IT IS GOD'S WILL.

### **BOY CHOIR:**

GOD'S WILL WE SHALL RECEIVE.

### **WILL:**

THREE THINGS AS GIFTS:

TO SEEK, TO WAIT, AND TO TRUST.

### **BOY CHOIR:**

SEEK, WAIT, AND TRUST.

SEEK, WAIT, AND TRUST.

SEEK, WAIT, AND TRUST.

### **WILL:**

TO SEEK WITH JOY.

### **BOY CHOIR:**

ALLELUIA.

### **WILL:**

TO WAIT WITH LOVE.

### **BOY CHOIR:**

ALLELUIA.

### **WILL:**

AND TO TRUST WITH FAITH.

### **BOY CHOIR:**

ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, AMEN ALLELUIA.

*(MUSIC out as the choirs come from behind stage and progress with candles to the balcony singing "Dies Irae." Once they have cleared the audience, the LIGHTS fade.)*  
**(BLACKOUT)**

## ***ACT ONE***

**SCENE 1 — THE TRIBUNAL — TIME:** *The recent past. — PLACE:* *Cardinal Roland's office.*

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** For the record, Fr. Peter, please state your full name and titled position.

**FR. PETER:** My name is Fr. Peter Andrews. I am a Benedictine monk, and I presently hold the position of music minister of the East Abbey.

**CARDINAL BONATELLI:** Do you, Fr. Peter, know why you are here today?

**FR. PETER:** Yes, I do. I believe that I have just been asked to defend my dissertation on the concept of homonovus.

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** Let us simply review the said charge. For the record, I, Cardinal Xavier Roland, have found the dissertation studies of Fr. Peter Andrews to be in direct opposition to and therefore heretical in the eyes of the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

**FR. PETER:** Your Eminence, I respectfully disagree.

**CARDINAL SANTORI:** Do you understand the authority that this tribunal has?

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** If I may continue, I have sent documentation on my opinions to the scholarly office of the defender of the faith for the Holy Father in Rome to further purport the contention that Fr. Peter's concept of homonovus is blasphemy...

**FR. PETER:** This is absurd, Roland.

**CARDINAL SANTORI:** Fr. Peter, let me remind you that this is an official church proceeding; please do not let your irreverence for language...

**FR. PETER:** Irreverence? Your Eminence, I...

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** Fr. Peter, your chair at once, please! Now, I call Fr. Dennis Malcolm to begin as the local interrogator for the Office of the Defender of the Faith.

**FR. MALCOLM:** Thank you, Cardinal Roland.

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** Fr. Malcolm, you may proceed with your questioning of the witness.

**FR. MALCOLM:** Fr. Peter Andrews, can you explain for the tribunal the general scope of your current academic dissertation?

**FR. PETER:** My research for theorists on linguistics based on composition pedagogy lies on a universal understanding of the roots of language and its inference of gender, and my theory will hopefully aide the elimination of such continued subterfuge. My focus on the purification of language gives rise to an emphasis on certain motifs, which seem quite incongruous with post-structuralist theory.



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**FR. MALCOLM:** Can you give us a more concrete example?

**FR. PETER:** For instance, all articulations are acts of communion between socially positioned individuals, either in same sex or opposing gender dialogues. Certain pronouns and inferences are used to create and refract the biological difference in the hierarchy of social strata. In my research, I wish to deny that and regard language as a closed system without gender ultimately in the philosophical tradition of idealism. In an attempt to develop a refined and realist account of language, I believe the Church has the power to institute such a challenge and perhaps even conclude with the elimination of gender altogether or create the true synthesis of Christ.

**CARDINAL SANTORI:** Fr. Peter, enough said, we do not wish to shock the tribunal with your fanatical ideas. Let us return to the said charge.

**FR. MALCOLM:** Fr. Peter, can you please explain to the tribunal how the concept of homonovus emerged in your theological construct?

**FR. PETER:** As director of the East Abbey choir, the sudden controversy over "all-inclusive language" opened my eyes to a gender conflict exposing the male dominance within the church. I realized that the whole power struggle was resting on mere words, and thus, the actual truth didn't matter. He who has the power to change the words can change the world. I decided it was time to create a new kind of liturgical dialectic that could break through the bondage of words.... and suddenly the concept of homonovus began emerging in the findings of my research.

**FR. MALCOLM:** Specifically, how did you create this new dialectic?

**FR. PETER:** Well, it began when I started to notice similarities and parallels between the gender and the language. Certain veils of illusion began lifting, I mean... I would be in church, singing, watching my music, "performing." Then a friend would come by and smile, breaking the "fourth wall." And I would realize that this was not a performance...it was life. I was performing the action of the Church for real life. It was a strange feeling, but I knew I was onto something every time I was conscious of the text and its sexual context. I would recognize someone in the congregation of the opposite sex, thus degenerating the language of divinity within the individual's particular soul, and these parallels then led to my research. You see, I have always had this theory about God: God is our creator, and thus creative... he made a giraffe, a rhino, a frog...and if we are to live in His image; we need to be creative.

**CARDINAL BONATELLI:** Thank you, Fr. Peter, enough now. We have plenty of...

**FR. PETER:** We all must express divine spirituality through performance, through art, which eliminates expression for the sexual nature.

**CARDINAL BONATELLI:** Fr. Peter, enough. Let me remind you that these are official...

**FR. PETER:** Yes, you must see, simply we have transposed the creative nature of the soul for exposition of the sexual side of the physical body, all of which was achieved through a history of male-dominated language. With homonovus, we are actually getting some...

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**CARDINAL ROLAND:** Fr. Peter. This is my final warning. We must see that order be...

**FR. PETER:** ...where. I can test and prove these theories. The Church will at last be able to remedy a century of pain and ugly frustration created by the bondage of this sexual exploitation.

**FR. MALCOLM:** Fr. Peter! Silence please. Your insubordination in the presence of church authority here today shall be noted and you shall be held accountable for it. Now then, let us return to your questioning. Certain allegations are in direct opposition to church teaching and are therefore considered heretical... For the record, this homonovus, this construct of yours, is it an original idea?

**FR. PETER:** According to Thomas Hanna, "The homonovus is no battleground, no split personality, but an image of man unified, unique, fully synergic with life, seeking fulfillment for himself and others in highly effective ways." Those of us who have worked with these ideas have the feeling of being immersed in a worldwide shift in human thought, sweeping forward like a great tide: deep, compelling, and invincible.

**FR. MALCOLM:** So let me see if I understand this, the image of this new man, the homonovus, is quickly becoming a reality, and demanding us to change our way of life. Perhaps another *aggiornamento*. Correct?

**FR. PETER:** "The full import of its ascendancy can only be dimly perceived from our present vantage point, but vaguely discerned, its promise and potential for all aspects of human existence staggers the imagination. What is needed now is the widest possible recruitment of persons from every walk of life for the task of exploring and advancing the full implications of this new image of man as quickly and as thoroughly as is possible." The times we live in, your eminencies, are desperately in need of this hope and revitalization.

**FR. MALCOLM:** And to what import do these secular concepts have on Creation Theology?

**FR. PETER:** This text—these words have the power to transform our society back into a paradise! Homonovus is a concept that can explain the surge that you feel when you hear Vivaldi, Beethoven, Mozart. We can feel. We can sense.

**FR. MALCOLM:** *We* can feel and sense what?

**FR. PETER:** Love! We become real and authentic and are able to enter into I-Thou relationships with others rather than viewing them as objects to be manipulated or controlled. This love is non-possessive and allows us to love non-judgmentally as Jesus taught us! With this new insight, the human person sees the world differently and begins to change its reality in terms of these new perceptions.

**FR. MALCOLM:** But your term homonovus is not even found in the common dictionary. Is it, Fr. Andrews?

**FR. PETER:** No, you won't find homonovus in the dictionary. But he is real. Very real. I met him on the doorstep. A veritable fledgling. A street urchin. I brought him into the East Abbey, transformed him into the choirboy of choirboys, whose song manifested a greater truth than all; and now I find myself facing

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seclusion because of this truth!

**FR. MALCOLM:** Perhaps there is good reason, Father. Why do you think it was left out?

**FR. PETER:** Why on earth is the word homonovus left out of the dictionary? Who in the hell, excuse me, who are these guardians of the hallowed halls of knowledge? Who proofs the pages of words that are allowed rite of passage? Into our minds? The editor of the dictionary? I don't think so.... It's not that simple. Ultimately someone is controlling the word power that has transformed our thoughts into this wretched reality that we call civilized society. Who exactly started regulating the words, the actual verbiage used in prayers and hymns in our churches? Mother-Father God. New Age? Ha! That is not even a new concept; study the women of the medieval church, Julian of Norwich, Marjorie Kempe, and Hildegard! Inclusive language. Multi-cultural, Politically correct. Paradigm shift! Somebody is controlling things, and that somebody knows exactly what they are doing! That Snake! Somebody is trying to play God. The tree of the fruit of knowledge of good and evil. Whatever happened to the Laws of God? He still is chief author of this story! As Shakespeare said: "All the world's a stage, we are merely the players." *We* may even try to be directors, yet ultimately, He is the Great Divine Director! He, Our Heavenly Father is the producer! We can try, yet we can only fool ourselves with this grand illusion we've created.

**FR. MALCOLM:** Your eminencies, I think we have heard and read enough of Fr. Peter's belief in this new creature, the homonovus of it being made a reality in this person of the choirboy, and how we should all act in Shakespeare's comedies of life! But, your eminencies, we are about God's business, and I, for one, have not heard that addressed here today. I plead with you, as the Holy Roman Catholic Church made visible, to uphold our beloved teachings that have been given to us through Jesus Christ.

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** This tribunal will take the testimony presented before it under consideration and will render our judgment at the appropriate time; it shall reconvene at a later date to be announced, and until that time you, Fr. Peter Andrews, shall be confined to your cell at the Abbey Church and forbidden to exercise your teaching authority, grant absolution or shall you have any contact with the choirs or any members of this Abbey. *Deo Gratias.*

**PETER and OTHERS:** *Deo Gratias!*

**(BLACKOUT)**

**MUSIC #1.1 — Ominous Entracte Sound**

**SCENE 2 — THE VERDICT — TIME:** *A few weeks later.* — **PLACE:** *Fr. Peter's cell (his private purgatory).*

*(The LIGHTS come up on the study of FR. PETER ANDREWS. It is a humbly furnished den with a flair for antiquity. The decor shows an apparent love of learning, and true homage for the classics of music, literature, and art, especially the art of the Middle Ages. Twelve large freestanding, candles frame the scene; they are lit with the preset. He is seated on a chair at the*

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*table. He reorganizes the stacks of papers. He chants the "Gloria" to himself for several seconds. Church bells chime a familiar hymn far off in the distance. The mammoth stained-glass window, upstage left, has one large, oblong panel open just enough to allow streams of light to pour in across the table. The sounds of nature tell us that we are situated deep in a wooded area. FR. PETER, dressed simply in his shorts, begins pacing to and fro, obviously restless. Suddenly there is a frenzied tapping at the door, accompanied by the frantic whispers of SISTER KATE.)*

**SISTER KATE:** *(Offstage)* I've finished the translations, Fr. Peter! I'll slip them under the door.

*(Slight pause)*

Fr. Peter, are you awake? Listen! I've finished the translations! I've got to go before someone finds me here. They will take away my writing implements, if I am caught with you. Hurry, pick up the papers! I must go.

*(He stands, leans toward the apron pretending to whisper to the audience.)*

**FR. PETER:** *(Lecturing)* One must never underestimate the power of the spoken or written word. The entire church is built upon the Word of God.

*(Sighs and picks up papers on the floor by the door)*

And our whole civilization can crumble from the words of mankind. From its meanings!

*(FR. PETER listens intently by the door.)*

**SISTER KATE:** *(Offstage)* I must go now. Cardinal Roland's here. They are downstairs, are you dressed? Please get dressed and, and ... Fr. Peter, I just want you to know this... I know that your work is truly divinely inspired. I know that Will is angelic. Last night, he came to my bedside. Maybe it was a dream. I'm not sure, but I know I saw him.... He stood beside me, dressed in his choir robes, and told me that someone is trying to stop the truth that he was bringing forth from the Middle Ages. That we must not let that happen. That Hildegard and Julian were great mystics, and that they were denied a hearing for their work solely because they were women. Those were not the Dark Ages! Not at all! In fact, it was a point of extreme light. The mystics understood the creative power of God's love. The men of the church were afraid because they could not grasp the power; they were trying to control it rather than letting it flow...

*(Gasps)*

Oh no, Father, Roland's coming... I must go.

*(He tries to look through the keyhole then returns to his previous oration.)*

**FR. PETER:** *(Aside, smiling directly to the audience)* Hmmph! The word is not in there. I'm really not surprised. Are you? Webster only puts into his dictionary what Webster wants us to understand. Right? Well, who is Webster to tell us what we should know. For that matter, who is Webster today anyway! Who selects these words that shape our minds, that mold our society, that pre-curse our destiny? The

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problem is what these words are doing to. Homonovus is a term that, if properly understood, could erase gender boundaries and allow God's love to flow through all of His children everywhere. Words are important. Yes, words are vital to the very fabric our society.

*(Stands, quoting zealously)*

“In the beginning, was the Word. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us!” Please, I am sorry. That is not like me at all.

*(Looks up)*

I am...

*(FR. PETER slowly puts on his robe and sandals. There is a sudden and heavy knock at the door. A key is turned, and the door opens as CARDINAL ROLAND and MALCOLM enter.)*

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** Fr. Peter, you're dressed. That's a good sign. I heard that you were refusing to eat or bathe for a few days. You remember Monsignor Malcolm, don't you?

*(Hands MALCOLM an envelope)*

This is the official decision.

**FR. PETER:** Monsignor?

*(Laughing)*

Don't you work fast, Malcolm?

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** *(Reproving PETER)* Fr. Andrews, have your favorite chair. Fr. Malcolm, Monsignor Malcolm has something to read to you

*(In his face)*

And it's not a bedtime story, Peter. So perhaps you had better keep all the friends, you can.

**FR. PETER:** Monsignor and I go way back, Roland. Don't you recall? Or are we trying to forget those days?

*(To MALCOLM)*

Don't gloat like that; the evil will start to become you. Don't you know that Roland's disease is highly contagious? He's in the last stages of psychosclerosis, a hardening of the attitudes, induced by repeated acts of heartlessness.

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** *(To MALCOLM)* He had the same chance as you, Malcolm. He chose to turn away from us... Don't let his charm distract you. Now sit, Peter! *(Bellowing)* Now. And listen to the voice of authority for a change! It might some day save your immortal soul.

*(PETER sits)*

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You may begin, Malcolm.

**FR. MALCOLM:** *(Reading in a sovereign tone)* And in its final ruling, the church shall conclude its findings.... Thus, so be it the holy opinion of the council, in conjunction with these findings, that on this day forward, our Father Peter Andrews be sanctioned to return to seclusion, that the East Abbey reassigns all of its religious life to St. Sebastian's. The administration shall make it so that all of the choirboys are given adequate housing at the convent at St. Vincent's. And lastly, not knowing the religious history or condition nor state of true of grace, said person, known simply to church officials as Will, has been denied burial in the church, or on holy ground near its surrounding properties.

*(A moment of silence)*

**FR. PETER:** *(Looks up to the heavens)* Father, forgive them.

*(Shakes his head)*

Forgive them.

*(Stands and erupts at ROLAND)*

You can not do this, Roland!

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** *(Looks away)* I just did.

**FR. PETER:** Roland, this is not a vendetta between us; this boy is from God. He is the homonovus. His spirit is still here; it is real. You must continue the investigations.... Let me continue my studies. He is the proof that we have been searching for.... He can make God's love real for so many people who would otherwise turn away. Why, it may even lead to world peace.... Roland, look at me!

*(Looks up to the heavens)*

Father, tell them. Make him see. Please, God! I beg you! Please!

*(On his knees)*

Please, God! Please!

*(Sobbing)*

Please! Please!

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** *(Stands laughing)* Peter, humph! I don't think I've ever seen you on your knees before; what a pitiful sight!

*(Starts out)*

**FR. MALCOLM:** Shall we go then, Roland?

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** Leave the decree on his table

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*(SMIRKING)*

with all his other research. He'd better study it so it can sink in!

*(ROLAND and MALCOLM start to leave, as PETER suddenly grabs ROLAND by the leg. ROLAND stumbles but is caught mid fall by MALCOLM. PETER screams, ROLAND gasps, and MALCOLM comforts FR. PETER.)*

Nooooooooooooooooooooo!

*(Grabbing at ROLAND'S heels)*

Please, this boy is from God, I tell you! Roland! It is your soul! You shall burn a thousand times.

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** *(Falling)* Oh my God! He's mad!

**FR. MALCOLM:** *(Helping ROLAND to his feet)* Cardinal, are you all right?

**FR. PETER:** *(Frantic, turns to MALCOLM)* Malcolm, you've heard they know at the University. It's not our secret to squash. You've heard him. They are going to give us money to rebuild the chapel because of him. They just resurrected another steering committee for the linguistics department.

*(Turns to ROLAND)*

And what about the money he brought with him, the money for the new roof? These are truly miracles, Cardinal, honest-to-God miracles!

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** Peter, Peter, Peter. Perhaps you should have prostrated yourself before me a long time ago. It's too late now. There are no miracles here. The boy is very wise—a crafty demon. The money was stolen, Peter. I had it investigated. He brought nothing but bad news. He must go and you must stay.

**FR. PETER:** *(Stands)* Then I shall leave the church and fight this! God has directed my research. He puts ideas in the minds of men, and He guides His servants to seek the Truth. You and I both know that this boy was sent by God to illustrate the idea that gender is an imaginary boundary to keep separations between people. This the key to peace on earth, but as long as we allow social constructs to order our thoughts our true love for the one true God, our Creator, is impossible. This is why we have wars and poverty and senseless violence and all sorts of man's inhumanity to man. God sent Will as an example of how man should be— without boundaries, unfettered, and alive with the love of God so that he can feel the creativity within his own life. If man is not creative, he will be destructive, you can be sure of that. Homonovus is a new model for us, an example of how we can open up to God's will, hear His music, and engage in the dance of life with Him.

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** *(Laughs)* You can't, Fr. Peter, you are either committed here or to an asylum. Choose your poison. You don't really think we can let you loose on the world? We can't afford that now, the world being what it is. The last thing the church needs is more bad press. We need to come out on top in this one, Peter. It's our turn. He will come to his senses. Sooner or later. He has no choice but to

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see it our way.

**FR. PETER:** (*Blocks the door*) Wait! Wait! There's the blood and water! That's proof of a miracle, isn't it?

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** Peter, you're raving, and now playing with fire. Stop this talk at once. The Church will not tolerate talk against its...

**FR. PETER:** (*Clutching ROLAND'S coat*) No, the blood and water! The miracle in the lav!

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** What?

**FR. PETER:** (*Raving*) The miracle that happened in the lav with the blood and water!

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** That was not in the testimonies. There is no proof of a miracle.

**FR. PETER:** I had the blood carbon dated at the lab. We had it tested, and it's dated back to the time of Christ! I have a friend at the genetics lab at the University and he said that...

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** Rubbish! I will hear no more!

*(Pushes past FR. PETER)*

Malcolm, look into this nonsense and have it dissolved before we get accused of medieval alchemy! We need to get rid of all record and memory here! This really needs to die down. We can't afford the bad press. God forbid further investigations.

**FR. MALCOLM:** (*Escorting ROLAND out*) Yes, Your Eminence. I will take care of everything. You can be sure of it. I have friends at the University as well.

**CARDINAL ROLAND:** (*Glancing back at PETER quickly*) Too much thought can drive a man mad, Malcolm, remember that. Look at him. Poor Peter! Intoxicated by his own ego!

*(They exit and shut the door in PETER'S face)*

**FR. PETER:** Please, wait! Please! This is God's divine will. Not mine! Please. Ask Mary Agnes! It was her miracle, not mine. She saw the miracle in lav, she will tell you. She knows that it is God's will.

*(Falls down at the door, sobbing)*

God's will! God's Will. Will. Open your eyes, boy...please, I will make them see. Please, God, please. God, please.

**(BLACKOUT)**

**SCENE 3 — THE BREAKDOWN — TIME:** *Later that night.*

*(FR. PETER sits at the table in his cell pounding his fist. The only book on the table now is a large edition of the Bible and a copy of the letter that ROLAND gave him. He holds one in each*



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*hand, weighing them like the scales of justice. He laughs hysterically then breaks into a spontaneous fit of tears. He tosses the letter aside then collapses his face into the pages of the open Bible. After a while, FR. PETER blesses himself with the sign of the cross then begins quoting from the very small text that he has taken from his pocket. He kisses this book reverently, genuflects, kneels. A slight tapping is heard at the door.)*

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** *(Offstage)* Peter, it's me, Mary Agnes.

*(Slight pause)*

I've brought you your nerve medicine. Talk to me, Peter, before I open the door. They said that you were raving. Roland is telling everyone you've gone mad. And Malcolm swears to it as well. They said that you were violent this morning. I told them that you'd never hurt me, Peter. Please, Peter, talk to me before I open this, I must be sure that you take your medicine. Please take it today. I told them that you've been taking it all along. Cardinal Roland is insistent on your medication now. He said you really attacked him physically. He's afraid of our well-being here. He thinks you are dangerous to yourself and others.

*(Pause)*

Peter, please. Don't torture yourself like this. There has been talk about the asylum. I won't let them take you there. I won't. I love you, Peter.

*(Sobbing)*

I won't let you do this to yourself. I won't. I won't.

*(Stops)*

We all know the truth, Peter. We just don't have the power to change the rules.

*(Pause)*

Roland's coming back with a doctor in three days. Please. Please. You can't go berserk again. This medicine will calm your nerves. Tell me you'll take it. I know why you're edgy. You're going stir-crazy in there without your books. Besides, what good can you do if you're locked up? Your work will be meaningless! At least here you have a chance at getting back to your work.

*(Sobbing)*

I have to go, I hear someone, and I'm afraid Roland has talked to some of the others. There may be spies. I'm going to tell them you took it; that you took the medicine quite politely. I'll leave it here inside the dumbwaiter.

*(Pause)*

Peter, if you take your medicine, I'll bring you your notebooks.

*(Suddenly, PETER lunges at the door)*

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**FR. PETER:** Mary Agnes! Wait! I'll take it.

*(MOTHER MARY AGNES opens the door slowly. PETER embraces her, looks out, then stands at attention with his hand out like a good patient. MOTHER MARY AGNES laughs heartily.)*

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Now see. You listen to reason. You're not crazy.

**FR. PETER:** Except for you, Mary Agnes, I'm just crazy for you.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** What a scholar won't say for a pencil! Have you no shame, Peter Andrews?  
Toying with a woman's heart.

**FR. PETER:** Your heart was bought by the Lord years ago.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** All the more a sin, Father! All the more.

**FR. PETER:** *(Finishes the medicine)* Okay!

*(Kneels like a St. Bernard)*

Pencil and papers, please!

*(Barks)*

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** I take that back.

*(Laughing)*

You are crazy.

*(She takes a few books and notebooks from her satchel)*

Gone to the dogs!

**FR. PETER:** No, no.

*(Stands)*

Haven't you heard the verdict from the Tribunal?

*(Playfully)*

Why yes, I've been canonized and renamed "St. Bernard." You know, he actually witnessed the medieval truths, really.

*(Searching his books)*

Where are my pens?

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Oh, here, here.

*(Notices someone passing in the hall)*

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Peter, I'm frightened. I know what I saw. I know that the boy is from God. And I still see him here in our halls. His spirit is here to stay. I think about him everyday, Peter. True, I do not have to nerve to stand up to them, but I will not desert you.

*(Hands him his papers and pencil)*

You document what we have seen here, and I promise I will get it out to the world. I have friends out there too! Peter, the world will believe you. The world was waiting for this. You never said that this boy was the second coming. I know that. That was a lie manufactured by Cardinal Roland because he didn't understand the choir boy. We saw him. We experienced his love. It was beautiful and rare and true! I believe in your work, Peter. That boy was the homonovus, the new man that you've been writing about all of these years. It is not so easy for those with a hardened heart to be open to such a revelation. But, Peter, we shall get the word out. "If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart." I shall help you get the Word out! God's Will shall become flesh again through the divine word! Now start back to work! Let us share with the world what we had here! It is God's will.

*(Passionately, MOTHER MARY AGNES hugs him then swiftly exits, locking the door behind her. FR. PETER starts to work like a vulture on his prey. Flipping pages, FR. PETER sets his pen down, scans the left side of the dictionary with his finger, then begins to read aloud.)*

**FR. PETER:** Nordic, norm, Norse, north, Norwegian, Nostrum, notation, notice, hmmm, Nostrum? Noun, a quack remedy; a patent medicine of doubtful efficacy; a pet scheme, pushed by some visionary, from the Latin meaning our. Noun, nourish, nova, novena, novice, now, nowhere, nuance, nucleus. Homonovus. H-o-m-o, Novus, n-o-v-u-s. I'm really not surprised. Who selects these words that shape our minds, that mold our society, that shape our destiny. The New Man! The New Man for the New World Order! It's quite exciting research! "The homonovus is no battleground, no split personality, but an image of man unified, unique, fully synergic with life, seeking fulfillment for himself and others in highly effective ways. Those of us who have worked with these ideas have the feeling of being immersed in a worldwide shift in human thought sweeping forward like a great tide, deep, compelling, and invincible. The image of the homonovus is rapidly coming into being, bringing with it the need for great changes in our ways of life and new hope for persons everywhere. The full import of its ascendancy can only be dimly perceived from our present vantage point, but even vaguely discerned, its promise and potential for all aspects of human existence staggers the imagination. The times we live in are desperately in need of the hope and rejuvenation that a truly noble conception of man and his possibilities can bring us. "Homonovus... an image that helps modern man rediscover his humanity... the individual becomes increasingly more open to experience, more aware of his feelings at deeper levels." Why? Why on earth is the word homonovus left out of the bloody dictionary! As if that could have changed their minds! As if that could have saved me! Who exactly started regulating the words, the actual verbiage, used in the hymns in our churches? Mother-Father God. New Age? Ha! That is not a new concept; study the women of the medieval church... Julian of Norwich, Marjorie Kempe! Inclusive language. Multi-cultural. Politically correct. Paradigm shift! Somebody is controlling things, and that somebody knows exactly what they are doing! No, you won't find homonovus in the dictionary. But he is real. Very real. I met him on the streets. A veritable fledgling! A street urchin. I brought him into the East Abbey, transformed him

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into the choirboy of choirboys whose song sang a greater truth than all.

*(Frantically rushing about the stage, raving)*

Where's my book? Who took my books from me!

*(LIGHTS fade to black as we hear FR. PETER'S fading words.)*

"And in its final ruling."

*(Screams into the blackness)*

Will! Will! Will! Sing to me again, boy! Will! Sing again! I can make them listen!

**(BLACKOUT)**

**MUSIC #I.3-2 — Medieval Entracte**

**SCENE 4 — THE ARRIVAL OF GOD'S WILL — TIME:** Ten months earlier — **PLACE:** The chapel.

*(The HOUSE LIGHTS fade to black as the stage LIGHTS come up on the silhouette of WILL, a young choirboy, who chants while kneeling in front of the perpetual light candle in the chapel. The wall behind it shows a mural depicting Moses breaking the Ten Commandments. The candle LIGHTS flicker in opposition to the rhythm of his breathing in the chanting. A DEEP VOICE slowly but precisely declares each of the Ten Commandments in a monotone, grating manner.)*

**MUSIC I.4-1— WILL'S ALLELUIAS**

**WILL:** *(Softly)*

ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA.

**DEEP VOICE:** I am the Lord, thy God, thou shall not have any other gods before Me.

**WILL:** *(Softly)*

ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA.

**DEEP VOICE:** Thou shall not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain.

**WILL:** *(Softly)*

ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA.

**DEEP VOICE:** Thou shall remember to keep holy the Sabbath.

*(The noises of a busy city street: sirens, whistles, passing traffic, car horns, and people clamoring try to interrupt his song, still he continues as these sounds weave a pattern of interference. The stage LIGHTS show us more of the surrounding chapel with the gradual intensity of the glow of the scene.)*

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**WILL:** *(Louder)*

ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA.

**DEEP VOICE:** Thou shall honor thy father and thy mother.

**WILL:** *(Softly)*

ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA.

**DEEP VOICE:** Thou shall not kill.

**WILL:** *(Softly)*

ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA.

**DEEP VOICE:** Thou shall not commit adultery.

**WILL:** *(Softly)*

ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA.

*(The majestic sound of a rushing waterfall blends in to drown out chaos of the clamor of the busy city street. WILL'S chanting becomes even louder. The stage LIGHTS now fade slowly as the waterfall sound diminishes. The DEEP VOICE of the Ten Commandments continues at its present volume. As if unaffected by any other sight or sound, it continues like the breath of a massive locomotive that stops for nothing.)*

*(Louder still)*

ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA.

**DEEP VOICE:** Thou shall not steal.

**WILL:** *(Softly)*

ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA.

**DEEP VOICE:** Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

*(The stage now slowly fades to black, except for the gentle flickering of the flame of the perpetual light candle, as all of the noise slowly defuses.)*

**WILL:** *(Very softly)*

ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA, ALLELUIA.

**DEEP VOICE:** Thou shall not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his male or female slave, nor his ass, nor anything else that belongs to him.

*(MUSIC OUT. A sustained silence follows, except for the DEEP VOICE completing the last words of the litany of the Ten Commandments. As soon as it stops, WILL blows out the flame of the candle, then releases a horrifying, sonorous scream of anguish. It is joined with the SFX: cry of a police siren, faintly heard in the distance. The siren fades when the scream commences, then there is a brief moment of silence. The stage remains somewhat dark throughout the following*

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*dialogue.)*

**ANNA:** (*Shuffling through the dark with a small candle*) Hello? Who is it? Who's here? Mother Mary Agnes? Mother Mary Agnes, come quickly.

*(To herself)*

Oh, glory be to Jesus, I'm so afraid. It's that boy again. That new choirboy.

*(Still afraid)*

Sister, answer me. Glory be, Jesus, just say who you are!

**SISTER KATE:** It's Sister Kate. Anna. It's me, Anna. It's Kate. Don't be afraid? Is he on the floor again?

*(Stumbling, knocking something over)*

Where is the boy?

**ANNA:** He's always here in the dead of the night. He's over there by the Perpetual Light. There by the Moses wall. Come here, he's just over there.

*(Excitedly)*

Oh, glory be, don't fall. Come over here, come here to me so you don't stumble and fall onto the boy...

**SISTER KATE:** (*Fumbling about in the dark, speaking simultaneously*) Just stay still, Anna. Be still. I will come to you. Hold your light still. I need to light my seeker's candle. Stop where you are. I'll come to your light.

**ANNA:** Yes. Oh, glory be, Sister Kate! I'm over here! Watch the boy. He's passed out on the floor over there, to my right. It's our new choirboy, William. He must have had some kind of a seizure again. He's out cold again.

*(Lighting her candle)*

My Lord, Sister Kate, where were you coming from? You look exhausted, as if you've been up all night. Is something wrong?

**SISTER KATE:** Yes, I have.

*(Abruptly)*

Was the boy screaming long? You know, this certainly isn't the first occurrence since he's come. Well, you know. Something incredibly strange is going on at this Abbey. And this boy, Will, William... Oh, he has no last name on record, you know...

**ANNA:** I'm somewhat afraid.

**SISTER KATE:** I don't blame you. He's truly a queer one.

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*(Steps aside, holding her candle over him)*

Don't you think? What is he doing here in the church all the time? Always by himself. Don't you think that it's unnatural for a young boy...

**ANNA:** Glory be, Sister, there is absolutely nothing natural about that boy. Mother Mary Agnes says that he comes to pray at the candle, that he is uncontrollably drawn to it. He says that someone is calling to him. He hears this voice and he must come. Mother Mary Agnes says that he calls her the anchorage, this voice he hears. She says that a boy this young would have no idea what an anchorage was unless he was telling the truth. I don't know. I have no idea what an anchorage is...

**SISTER KATE:** I can't recall exactly. Something...something about...

**ANNA:** Well, I've never heard of it before.

*(Pause)*

Makes me nervous. Glory be to God, though, he does have piercing eyes. I know that. And I think he is good. There's a certain light in his eyes. His eyes touch my soul. Yet I'm afraid, people are talking. There must be something to it. He came and a week later we magically got a new roof. There was a large sum of money involved, huh? The inspector had already ordered a work party to tear down this old chapel.

*(Almost whispering)*

I heard that he accepted a payoff. That Fr. Peter...well, I just happen to know one of the boys who works for the county road crews. He said that this choirboy came with tons of money. Did you know? Imagine that! This building is like a relic. Can you believe they would demolish it! If these walls could talk...I'm sure they would have something to say after all this time standing still on the earth! Listening to people, watching the church grow and change.

**SISTER KATE:** Perhaps they really are talking, Anna. And that's not a joke. The boy here claims to hear that voice. They say it's from a long time ago.... Medieval maybe. I don't know the whole story here. But I know this anchorage business is something about someone once within the walls of this chapel. I'm not so sure about all the details, but I do recall studying something about hermits in the walls of churches, and I think this may be one of them.

**ANNA:** Makes me nervous and edgy.

**SISTER KATE:** I just want to know why Fr. Peter is suddenly so secretive! No one really wants to talk to us about it. I think we deserve to know. What are they so afraid of? Ironically, I was told that he wouldn't be a good mentor for me. My writing is very similar. I've studied St. Bridget, Joan of Arc, and Hildegarde. If you look to the women of the early church in Medieval times, you'd see that the concept of homonovus is not really new. It is merely a mental construct that embraces the spiritual call to God's physical work here. I wish Peter would talk to me about my work. I understand his work and my research could probably help him understand his own better. The funny thing is, he speaks about a genderless "new man" who is spiritually driven, yet he still operates from the social constructs that are

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embedded in his brain from media and methodology. What it comes down to—I am a woman and what I have to say can't be as important as what a man has to say. That's just the way most men think. He used to believe in my work. Fr. Peter is so caught up with this choir boy that he won't even give me the time of day anymore. If we're in danger...I feel like writing to Cardinal Roland. He was a good friend of my father's. He's a very smart man. He'd know what to do with this child. I think Fr. Peter is making much too much out of this. Besides, I don't like the whole thing about the money... Yes, Anna, our beloved choirboy here seems to be possessed by something. They say that this voice channels a divine message, a holy message, but I'm not so sure I believe...

**ANNA:** *(Cutting her off)* Oh, glory be, it truly is very queer.

*(Speaking very fast)*

My mother said that the whole town, just about everyone's talking about the boy. They say he's possessed too. Do you think he's good or evil? Do you think this boy is from God? Glory be, I don't wish to judge him. I know he's just a little boy; a very loving, tender boy with the voice of an angel.

*(Pause)*

But some people say he may be evil because he...well, especially people outside East Abbey. Everyone really is talking about us. Especially since Fr. Peter took him to the University. There is such a fuss about his divine writings and his solemn recitations, incantations...they don't even know about his catatonic fits! Sister Kate, I'm afraid. Fr. Peter told me to keep silent about his seizures. Why, Sister? Why? What is going on here?

*(Frantically)*

People are saying that he is possessed by a very crafty demon that can lure us in with this pretty, poetic speech. Especially since he came with money, people say he's...well, the money is evil, isn't it? They say it was all stolen!

*(The first rays of early morning sunlight begin to trickle in and fill the stage with a yellow cast as SISTER KATE continues. Completely enthralled in her own ideas and totally absorbing the impressionable ANNA, SISTER KATE dramatically dances to the melody of her own words, being quite emphatic, cherishing the sound of each one. Neither one of them notice MOTHER MARY AGNES as she enters. At first, she appears to be rushing in, but then she stops quite suddenly, halting in her tracks, hiding in the shadows, as if not to disturb SISTER KATE in her moment of glory. MOTHER MARY AGNES crouches down and tries to listen across the room from the far left side of the chapel.)*

**SISTER KATE:** *(Interrupting, obviously irritated)* Well, I don't know what to think, but I know Fr. Peter had no right to take the child's "poetry" to the university. He was supposed to take my work to them! This child is only a little boy! He's got his whole life to write, besides, it's really not so rare as all that. Imagination comes naturally to children. I haven't seen any of these wondrous writings. They won't let me, but it's a craft. You just don't sit down and write! This "stream of consciousness" stuff is for the



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birds! In fact, most children are more creative than adults. That's why Christ tells us to become like little children!

*(Dreamily)*

I can recall sitting at the casement windows, looking out longingly after my sisters had gone to school. I used to have these wretched allergies, pollen and ragweed; I wasn't allowed to be out playing in the weather. So I sat inside always, staring out, chewing on the window blind cord in frustration, until one day my imagination just opened up for me. I began creating such wonderful characters. My thoughts, my perceptions, at age six, were spirited with such truth and sincerity. I still remember. I would look through the glass and create a stage, where my characters could sing, dance, and fly about in harmony with the music of their souls! They were radiant with grace!

*(SISTER KATE embraces ANNA with her overwhelming joy. ANNA looks to her in astonishment and surprise but then responds with warmth as SISTER KATE coaxes her to join in a little dance of jubilation.)*

Oh, Anna, Anna, Anna, Anna! I've been carrying these vibrant creations for over thirty years, Anna. These people in my poetic dramas deserve a hearing! Their souls have suffered in silence and exile for too long. My notebooks are no longer a fit place for them to live. They cannot survive! They need to be released into the world, and the world needs them! They will soon suffocate in my desk. These folks offer our society a sanctuary of repose from the false passion of violence. Fr. Peter was reviewing my work when Will came. He promised to help me get published. We were in the midst of revising a wonderful work of art for the university competition when his attention suddenly was stolen!

*(Resentfully)*

Temptation approached, as always, dangling its bag of silver or gold. Anna, how can the boy be from God when human weakness won the battle?

**ANNA:** Oh, Sr. Kate! I'm so sorry. You must feel so terrible.

**SISTER KATE:** Anna, I care not for my own recognition! True, Fr. Peter was the first man to recognize the truth of my verse! He says that I am mystic poet, just like John of the Cross. And he is in the position to help me. And so he shall, Anna! So he shall! I won't let the temptation of this young boy come between us! God will make clear a path! He will part the waters to avoid bloodshed.

*(Grasps her hands in jubilation)*

Anna, it is wonderful to know such faith! My God has given me this divine gift to express myself in dramatic form. I do it to please no one else. It is God's will. Even as a child, I saw the desecration of humankind! I felt an intense emptiness even in a room full of people. Then I was offered this gift of greater vision to see and know and converse with the heavenly host that walk among us! Many are present here today. They keep silent. They watch. They are waiting for a metaphysical drama to indoctrinate them into ordinary society. My metadramas are not mere conversations, Anna! They are not soap operas! This universal theatre will steer people back on a proper course.

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**SISTER KATE:** Our human race is constantly driving on the edge. We're off course! And it can't last! There's too much tension, and we're moving way too fast! Our tires are wearing thin. We need to center ourselves, to see the transcendental truth, and climb up the mountain of enlightenment to see our spiritual horizons...to find rest in God's garden once again.

**ANNA:** Why, glory be to God! Sr. Kate!

*(Deeply moved)*

That is absolutely tremendous! I never knew. I mean, you do these little operettas here with the boys, but I never thought! Do you have any of this published?

**SISTER KATE:** No, not yet. In fact, we were working on that Fr. Peter knows the chancellor at the University.

*(MOTHER MARY AGNES stumbles intentionally as she crosses over toward them. It appears that she doesn't want them to know that she has been listening. To be sure, she clears her throat to obviously interrupt them.)*

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** (Loudly) Sister Kate! Anna! What's the trouble here? Who was screaming? The new boy again? Sr. Kate, why are you out here so early? What are you doing up?

**SISTER KATE:** Well, I...

**ANNA:** *(Startled)* Oh, Mother Mary Agnes!

*(Stammering)*

I-I-I was passing by with the first of the morning wash loads. I passed by when I heard the screaming...the boy, the new boy, the choir boy, he was screaming...like before. The seizures...the choirboy. I think, well the others say, he comes in to the candle. That he is drawn in, in a stupor, and that he becomes transfixed by the flame. Mother Mary Agnes, do you think it could just be epilepsy? I heard Fr. Peter telling Brother Bernard that the boy was possessed by a medieval anchoress...

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** *(Interrupting)* Yes, well, enough now, Anna. You may think what you like, but don't dare say it, Anna. Seeds of gossip often tempt us into plantation. We must be strong. We do not judge; we do not gossip. Now go on about your duties. Go and get back to your early wash loads before it's time to serve breakfast. Sr. Kate and I will care for the boy now. He will sleep for now. We must let the boy rest.

*(Motions for ANNA to be on her way)*

Thank you, Anna. Sr. Kate and I will attend to the child. We will wait here to watch him until he awakens.

**ANNA:** Yes, Sister.

*(Bows to SISTER KATE)*

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Good day, Sr. Kate.

*(Starts off, then stops suddenly when KATE reaches out her arm)*

Oh, glory be, Sister Kate, there's fresh blood on your sleeve!

**SISTER KATE:** Yes, I was trying to save a wounded dog at the gate. He'd been hit by a black car that had swerved off the road. The accident happened right in front of my eyes. It was pitiful. The man just drove off, even though the dog was howling dreadfully.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Oh, my sister, it's all over your skirt as well.

**SISTER KATE:** No. No, that's just mud. I just finished burying the little darling in the garden, beneath the rose bush. By the time I returned with water for him, he'd bled to death. He was quite small. Possibly even a pup.

**ANNA:** *(To SISTER KATE as she exits)* You are so strong, so kind, Sister. Bring me your clothes. I can remove those stains with a touch of vinegar water.

*(MOTHER MARY AGNES paces as she watches ANNA leaving the chapel. SISTER KATE starts to leave, but MOTHER MARY AGNES blocks her way quite purposely.)*

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** You know that it is a sin to cloud Anna's young mind with ill thoughts of another of God's creatures.

*(Sternly)*

You do know that, don't you, Sister Kate?

**SISTER KATE:** Yes, Mother Mary Agnes.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Our little Anna is training to become an associate. Perhaps she would eventually like to join our order. She has quite a bit to think about already. The outside world fills her with quite enough false hope and "theatrical illusions," don't you think? I believe truth is to be one of our virtues here, Sister. Gossip is not to be taught at this convent.

*(Pause)*

It would be a sin to discourage a possible vocation these days. Don't you think?

**SISTER KATE:** Yes, Mother Mary Agnes.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** And this boy, William—to let the seeds of evil sprout on the precious flesh of his young soul. Filling his very being with "disharmony and disease" in the eyes of others...have you heard what Fr. Peter said about him?

**SISTER KATE:** Yes, Mother Mary Agnes. I was there.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** I thought that you were in conference with us. Then you must remember that

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he said that this boy,

*(Pointing to WILL)*

our little choirboy, may well be a mystic.

*(Excitedly repeats herself)*

A mystic poet!

**SISTER KATE:** Yes.

*(Grumbling)*

I heard him say it.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** This child is but twelve years old and writes with the eloquence of a scholar and the passion of...well, have you seen any of his verse, Sr. Kate?

**SISTER KATE:** No.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** It reminds me of St. Teresa or John of the Cross. It most certainly resounds with an air of holiness, Sr. Kate.

**SISTER KATE:** So I've heard.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** *(Reprimanding)* And for that alone I would not speak ill of the boy!

*(Warning)*

God protects His own...you'd best be wary.

**SISTER KATE:** Yes, Mother Mary Agnes.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** *(Shouting)* I am serious, Sr. Kate!

**SISTER KATE:** Yes, Mother Mary Agnes. I know.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Fr. Peter is also having some of his writings investigated by the Benedictines at Carrow. His verse is not only competent in its English, but it's fluent and flawless in its French as well.

**SISTER KATE:** Yes, I've heard that too.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Did you hear that Fr. Peter took some of the boy's work to the University?

**SISTER KATE:** Yes.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** His friend Chancellor Lindsey offered to help him. Fr. Peter wants to see if the boy's writing, these verses that the boy has written, suggest divine reference to manuscripts that had circulated throughout Europe in the late 1300s. If they do, then we think that the voice the boy hears

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may be Julian of Norwich. Our little choirboy may well be a conduit for a truly divine voice. There is absolutely no way he could have learned about Julian's work. It's rarely taught at all. And if so, not until postgraduate theology school.

**SISTER KATE:** *(Thinking aloud)* Julian. Julian of Norwich. Hmmm. I'm sure I've heard of him.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** *(Shaking her head)* He's a she. Julian was a woman. We don't even know her actual name. As was the practice, she took the name of the church at which she lived, which was here at St. Julian's. During the medieval times, these people, their congregation, existed on our very grounds. This very same chapel where we stand is believed to be one of the original buildings of St. Julian's parish. We are not exactly sure about the rest of the buildings here at the East Abbey, but we know that our chapel could well have been a landmark from their original church. Manuscripts, notebooks, journals were found here. They think the author was Julian. Everything was sent to the University years ago. Some of the documents were forwarded to the monks at Carrow.

*(Pause)*

Julian wasn't very popular.

**SISTER KATE:** Why? What did she do?

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** I guess you could say that she was something of a medieval spokeswoman for equal rights.

**SISTER KATE:** In the Middle Ages?

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** *(Smiles)* Some things just never change, huh?

*(They share a laugh.)*

It seems that the whole concept of Christian counseling by a woman in the church was frowned upon and got pushed aside by the active church administration. Some say that she had quite a feminist viewpoint.

**SISTER KATE:** A feminist in the Middle Ages!

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** As I said before, she really isn't studied in mainstream theology.

**SISTER KATE:** What else do you expect?

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** They try to avoid her discourses, but they can't ignore her work artistically. Truly, she's a brilliant poet.

**SISTER KATE:** Is she in our library here?

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Oh, I have a couple of books on her. And I have the one she wrote herself. I'll bring it to your room after vespers.

*(Pause)*

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I guess it wasn't what she did as much as what she really said and thought. She had quite a unique tone of voice. Her words, though picturesque and fanciful, exposed her controversial vision of God. Being an anchorage was simply the custom of the day; it was a life of seclusion. It was truly a life of utter solitude, prayer, and contemplation, a denial of worldly passions and pleasures; yet the anchorage had to live inside the walls of the church so that she could receive the Holy Eucharist and hear the Word of God daily. People came to her for guidance, in quest of her divine wisdom. They spoke to her by way of a small window on the outside of her hermitage cell. The narrative of her writings tells us that she was gifted with over a dozen "showings" of the love of God. Her visions were often called "dramatic revelations." At one point in her life she was not a member of the cloistered religious; in fact she had been very, very ill and was even administered last rites at the age of thirty. It is thought that these "showings" inspired her vocation to become the anchorage at St. Julian's.

*(To herself)*

Perhaps her spirit is still with us.

**SISTER KATE:** She really had to live inside the walls of the church. I've heard this before...perhaps I did study about her at the University.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Oh, they let you study about her. She's undeniably a part of history...

**SISTER KATE:** Oh yes, well, His story excludes an in-depth look at many women. Especially...

*(The dawn sunlight slowly filters in illuminating the entire chapel. An extremely radiant beam figures prominently on the slight, frail figure of the choirboy, who lies sleeping peacefully below the wall of the church that shows a mural of the biblical account of Moses bringing the Ten Commandments down to his people. The details of the masterpiece can be very clearly seen now. An angry Moses dominates the scene amidst the mountains.)*

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** It is very, very interesting. In medieval times, this solitary life was not so rare. As I said before, her hermitage was there so that she could see the Blessed Sacrament on God's altar and receive Holy Communion through an opening in the church wall. She willfully withdrew from the social world in order to devote herself to contemplation and prayer. She offered counseling other Christians who came to her window; they considered her to be a direct channel to the Divine. Accounts say that Julian had quite a following; her guidance and divine ideas are found quoted in many texts by other historians of her day. Not to mention her dramatic writings. They are said to be quite aesthetically stunning, unlike the so-called artistic trash we put in people's minds today.

**SISTER KATE:** Was this really considered a sacred practice within the church? It seems a bit perverse.... You don't have to be a cloister to hear a divine voice. Many of us hear His call in daily life. In fact, inspiration comes right off the street at times. People have such misconceptions about it. God is in our presence all the time. We turn away. We reject His beauty, His grace, and His truth. It's not so unusual.

*(Resentfully)*

Besides, anyone at all could say he or she hears the voice of God.

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*(Under her breath)*

Just like our little choirboy here.

*(Clears her throat)*

Anyone could offer advice and say it's divinely inspired.... It's just like all of these secular, psychological counselors out there today. They tear open the hearts of fragile young people and leave them to wander about as the walking wounded in a spiritual wasteland.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** *(Excitedly defensive)* Oh, no, it's not! No, no, no. It's not at all like today. In order to become an anchorage, one had to convince the bishop that she had a totally sincere sense of calling from the Lord. One also had to have adequate means. The church did not support Julian. And there was the process...after completed investigation and trial, there was a solemn ceremony.... A very special mass was celebrated afterwards, then the new anchoress was escorted to her anchorage in the church walls where she would live out the rest of her life without ever leaving. Julian of Norwich died at the age of seventy-four; which was quite astonishing in itself considering that the country went through three outbreaks of the bubonic plague during her lifetime. No, no. Not like today at all, Sr. Kate. Things were allowed to be sacred then. Holiness was considered to be a goal. God's laws were taken seriously. And God's Word was the word of the day. Julian of Norwich was not a farce! You didn't dare test God in those days. God was truly apparent in their lives. Even pagans knew God's wrath. The trouble was, just like pagans today, they refused to accept His love.

*(Pause)*

This was truly considered to be a divine office. Her spirit, strong and vital, may well be using Will's voice to be heard today. Right here. Right now in our very chapel.

**SISTER KATE:** Nevertheless, we are living in the twenty-first century. I've been in this convent for seventeen years, Mother Mary Agnes. I say there's something quite queer about this boy.

*(Tenaciously)*

What if it isn't holy? Just what if it's evil?

*(WILL stirs, moaning as if startled by her loudness.)*

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Sssshhh! Sr. Kate, control yourself! You'll rouse the boy. We must wait and let him awake naturally. Fr. Peter said we must never disturb him in his divine condition; otherwise, we may interfere with his revelations. We may interrupt the flow of grace or thwart God's divine plan.

**SISTER KATE:** Why here? Why now? Why this boy?

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Why not? The world needs divine intervention more than ever today! All of this stream of consciousness stuff. It's disconnected humanity from its divine source. We need to tap into the roots that sink deep into our beings, to the tree of life where still waters run deep. Look at the child, Sr. Kate! He is in a deep sleep. They that say our subconscious never sleeps! And I know that God never

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sleeps either.... When that boy awakes he brings true revelation from God back with him. Perhaps he brings promise of a dream come true for us all. Perhaps he holds the dream of Eden. The dream of peace for us today.

**SISTER KATE:** Come on, Sister, this is the real world!

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Sister Mary Katharine, pardon me.... But the last I looked, it was still God's world. Can man make a tree? Or a flower or a bee?

*(Reprimanding)*

God is very, very real to me, and may I suggest a retreat for you if you have lost sight of Him.

**SISTER KATE:** I am sorry, Sister.

*(Pause)*

But how do we know this choirboy is from God?

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** So how do we ever know anything? Must all the world be so very concrete! Look in your heart. Or is it made of stone, too? You can feel the truth unless you are heartless. And you can see the light when you focus on His love! This you know—I know you know these things. Yet we become blinded by ambition or we stand frozen with fear. This boy is luminous with God's love. It was a miracle alone that this boy came with an enormous monetary gift to rebuild our little precious chapel. Our lovely landmark here would have well been ashes by now, Sr. Kate. And you must admit that the boy's voice instills a sense of calm in us all. Many of the others have commented. The boy is blessed. Now how can we possibly deny God's presence? It is here; it is deliberate. There will be a miracle even greater than the saving of this building. I am sure. I can feel it.

*(spoken)*

The other day, in religion class, we were studying in the Old Testament where Moses brought down the Ten Commandments. I swear, with my very mortal eyes I saw a vivid halo about the boy's head. He had his hand raised. He asked a question, something about, "When or where did God rebuild the stone tablets?" I can't recall exactly. I was intent on trying to figure out where this light was coming from, so I asked him to come up and stand before the class. The sincere humility of the child embarrassed him, yet he obeyed me without question. As he walked to front of the classroom, this, this halo stayed with him. Just like that.

*(Points to the halo about the head of Moses on the mural.)*

Then suddenly a mighty thunder roared and lightening cracked open the heavens, the power went out, the room was still, not one child laughed as they normally giggle when the LIGHTS go out. Everything was so still and silent, and in my mind, God's voice spoke ever so clearly: "Do you dare to test the angel of the Lord? Do you challenge the validity of your God?"

*(Sighs heavily.)*



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I wanted to cry. I ran out of the room and down the corridor to the washroom. As I entered the lavatory the electrical power resumed. I stood before the mirror at the sink, trembling. "Had I the nerve to question my Lord Jesus Christ?" Tears streamed from my eyes, and as I looked into the old, broken mirror, I saw His face!

*(Shouts)*

Not mine! His! The very same image of Christ that Veronica had on the cloth on Good Friday!

*(Sighs.)*

I went to wash away the tears, thinking perhaps, a bit of cool water would restore my normal vision, but when I turned the faucets on...

*(Almost whispering)*

Blood and water flowed out.

*(spoken)*

I just about fell faint. I ran out of the lavatory. I found Fr. Peter in the lecture hall. Sister Mary Katharine, I tell you, this boy is from God! Father Peter witnessed the last trickles of blood on the sides of the sink. It was really blood. He said not to talk with anyone about this...to avoid scandal. Do not dare question this! This child is holy, and if we...

*(Sighs heavily.)*

Well, let's just say that Fr. Peter said that we just need to be obedient now. We needn't question. We need to wait and see and obey. This is God's Will!

*(joyfully)*

Truly, it is!

*(enamored, yet emphatic)*

The boy watches the candle dancing; it is the Light of the world. Can't you see? You must believe.

*(shaking SISTER KATE by her arms)*

He brings focus to the light of God's love! He brings revelation. He brings the Good News to our dark world. We must wait, we must watch! God works in mysterious ways, and when He wants to talk to us, we must listen! Not only with our ears, Sister, but with our whole mind, our whole heart, and our whole soul. We must be open. Just wait, you will see.

*(Quoting from the Bible)*

"Eye has not seen, ear has not heard... what God has ready for those who love him." Hmmm?

**SISTER KATE:** I know the boy becomes transfixed with the flame of the candles. It is special, it is holy.

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We can all see that. I agree. But still it's unnerving, and it is unnatural his wanting to be in here alone all the time in between duties, running off after vespers. He's more devout than most of the monks. Perhaps he's truly mad? It might just be a mental illness, a mere derangement, and we may all be being misdirected...driven onto a course of corruption. It might be something very evil!

*(Snaps)*

You asked me what I was doing up? I followed him! I've been following him every night he wanders out! And I must keep following him! I know I do not have anyone's permission, but I feel that I must keep watch on him. I feel something's about to happen, and I think.... Well, I.... I just...

*(Shouting again)*

Well, just think of it, Sister, one minute he is in complete contemplation, then the next we hear screaming in terror and find him in seizure in here alone, next to that candle, looking dead calm. It's unnatural.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Sr. Kate, I know what I saw!

*(Tries to comfort SR. KATE, taking her hand, speaks very gently)*

There is the empty calm that belongs to the death chamber in the cemetery, and there is the calm quietness that belongs to life, to nature. A spring flower grows in that sort of calm. That is certainly not unnatural. The calm state this boy is in now is not a seizure; it is full and perfect and creative. Man makes clamor, Sister...but calm is made by God.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** "Be still and know that I am God." Out of the depths of stillness, God creates. I told you Sister, this boy is merely sleeping. Sleeping in the cradle of God's own arms. He is but beautifully still, yet he is teeming with life's precious energy. Look at him.... He is the picture of God's perfect stillness. God refreshes and restores him in his sleep. He's not ordinary. Of course, he's not ordinary. But he is not unnatural...and he is surely not to be feared. He is God's gift to us. Here and now. He is genuine and real; without pretense he fulfills the will of God. There has been no other like him here. He's quite a different breed. He's pure and gentle and kind. Fr. Peter says that even his poetry alone may transform our life of poverty here. Therefore, we mustn't draw attention to any such peculiarities.... Father has entered his writings in the competitions at the University. That's how all of these investigations began. This anchorage talk of Julian and such. In fact Fr. Peter just got a letter from Cardinal Roland's office. I bet they are planning a visit here. I suspect they should wish to come here to see Will for themselves. Perhaps we can have the boys prepare a ceremonial pageant to welcome them. Maybe we can get Anna to come sit with the boy,

*(She puts her arm around SISTER KATE as they start to exit.)*

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Sister Mary Katharine, would you like to write one your splendid little musical dramas for the boys to perform!

*(Smile)*

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Such joyous excitement! This is truly blessed!

*(Laughs)*

Now, let us go and prepare for such honored guests!

*(As SISTER KATE and MOTHER MARY AGNES begin to exit, the brilliant sunlight now floods the scene; even the entire chapel can be seen very clearly in the background. WILL is awakening, very, very slowly. Only his face moves; his body still remains lifeless as he softly intones a tender yet solemn voice. The Sisters stop and stare at him as he begins speaking.)*

**WILL:** But God forbid that you should say or assume that I am a teacher, for that is not and never was my intention; for I am a woman, ignorant, weak, and frail. But I know very well that what I am saying, I have received by the revelation of Him who is the sovereign teacher.

*(WILL'S body slowly molds into fetal position with the exception of one palm reaching out and upward. The Sisters step back but then stand motionless.)*

But it is truly love that moves me to tell it to you, for I want God to be known and my fellow Christians to prosper, as I hope to prosper myself, by hating sin more and loving God more.

*(WILL'S eyes open wide. He comes to his knees, stares at his hands, and slowly extends them outward toward SISTER KATE and MOTHER MARY AGNES.)*

But because I am a woman, ought I therefore to believe that I should not tell you of the goodness of God, when I saw at that same time that it is His will that it be known? You will see this clearly in what follows, if it is well and truly accepted. Then will you soon forget me who am a wretch - Do this, so that I am no hindrance to you, and you will contemplate Jesus.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Certainly not the words of a twelve-year-old boy.... These are the words of a woman. A very wise and noble woman. I tell you...we must watch. We must wait.

**(BLACKOUT)**

**SCENE 5 — THE CROWNING OF THORNS — TIME:** Weeks before the funeral — **PLACE:** The schoolyard just outside the chapel.

*(It is recess and we can hear the noise from outside. FR. PETER stands in the doorway of the gate that opens to the schoolyard. He silently watches SISTER KATE and ANNA as they clean and prepare the altar for an upcoming funeral.)*

**SISTER KATE:** ANNA! These cloths are stained!

**ANNA:** I'm sorry, Sr. Kate

**SISTER KATE:** This is not like you!

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**ANNA:** I'm sorry. There was blood in the wash water.

**SISTER KATE:** What do I have to do, wash them myself? Like I don't have enough menial labor to do around here! Well, they'll just have to do for tomorrow. We must prepare the altar. Funerals cannot be postponed just because we can't get the stains out.

**ANNA:** I'm sorry, Sr. Kate. Truly, from now on I will double and triple check. I promise to take more interest in my duties. I won't....

*(Starting to sob)*

I haven't been sleeping well and...

**SISTER KATE:** *(Hugs her)* Oh, there, there now. It's just laundry. Who cares? I hate this drudgery. I am a writer. I should be working on my book right now.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Tsk, tsk, tsk! Your heart's not in your work, Sr. Kate! Something else on your mind?

**SISTER KATE:** Mother! Now just how long have you been standing there watching us?

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** *(Walks closer to them)* Anna, you look lovely as ever. How are you today?

**ANNA:** Well, very well, Mother. And you?

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Very well. Speaking of writing, Kate...

**SISTER KATE:** *(Excited)* Why, yes, I'm almost finished with the last chapter

**ANNA:** *(Overlapping)* Mother, tell us about the new boy, Will.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Will, yes, Anna...I need to see Will actually.

**ANNA:** Mother, may I be frank? Everyone is talking about this boy. I mean, I don't want to gossip but....

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Oh my!

*(Looks at her watch)*

Look at the time! Hurry Anna, before recess is over, go and fetch Will for me.

*(Sits by the altar)*

I've got some wonderful news from the Chancellor! Oh! Sister! Sister! Sister! It's so unbelievable!

**SISTER KATE:** Mother, you're unbelievable!

*(WILL—a frail, pale boy, obviously underweight with whitish-blond curly hair that falls loosely over his eyes—enters humbly, almost bowing to MOTHER MARY AGNES. He nods and bows to SISTER KATE, as if he were afraid to speak above a whisper.)*

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**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** Will! Will!! This is truly wondrous!

*(Hugs WILL excitedly)*

Some of your verse matches word for word with Julian of Norwich. But there's more, some of your writing suggests dates even farther back. Professor Lindsey, the Chancellor at the University, is developing a "special tasks" study group just to investigate your work. One scholar, who is reviewing your work, thinks that some parts of the transcripts may be Julian, speaking in the here and now...and perhaps maybe she comes with divine wisdom for modern man.

*(To SISTER KATE)*

I know that's what it must be!

**WILL:** Yes, Mother.

**SISTER KATE:** Oh, by the way, Mother, I need to get back soon, but I was wondering if you would have soon time to talk to me later this afternoon.

**MOTHER MARY AGNES:** *(Glancing at her watch.)* Oh, good golly, Sister Kate, thank you for reminding me. I must have transcended time.

*(Laughs)*

I'm late for my spirituality class.

*(Running off)*

Will, walk with me.

*(WILL follows obediently after MOTHER MARY AGNES, while SISTER KATE stops, then proceeds with determination.)*

**SISTER KATE:** *(Momentarily offended, then calls after her at the gate)* Mother, wait! Wait! Mother, really, I only need a moment of your time.

*(Throws down the altar cloths and sits down on the floor)*

God, please forgive me for what I'm about to say. But I know you know what's on my mind. What's worse? What's in my heart! I can feel nothing but contempt for this, this, stranger. I don't like him. He has taken all of Mother's and Peter's attention. And you know, he is not only my joy. He is my passion. Forgive me, for my sins, Father, but you created passion. Even your son, Christ, experienced passion. Oh, God, forgive. But how do I know the boy isn't just a fake? Oh, I wish he would just go away. I can't stand how jealous I've become of him.

*(A moment later, KATE can hear the offstage voices from out in the courtyard; the boys are playing in the playground. She stands by the gate, eavesdropping with extreme interest. The boys are playing keep-away from WILL, taunting and teasing him, throwing his music folder back and forth. The SFX: of a busy, nearby construction site can be heard in the background —*

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*thundering jackhammers, steel hammering, mix with the intermittent shouting of demands from the workers on the job offstage to create a chaotic atmosphere.)*

**DAVID:** Get it, Jonathan! Here, get his folder! We'll tell Fr. Peter that we found it in the lav!

*(Throws WILL'S folder)*

Here! Catch it. This way! What's the matter, Will? Not feeling so good, Will? Ha! Good Will!

*(Mockingly)*

Are you a good Will or a bad Will? Some people are saying he's possessed! What do you think, Jonathan?

**DEEP VOICE:** *(Offstage)* Hey, okay, heads up! Watch out below.

**JONATHAN:** *(Catches it)* Oooo—evil! Keep away!

*(Laughing)*

Watch!

*(Trips WILL, who falls face down)*

Wait! He's down! Down for the count! One, two, three...

**DAVID:** That's not so good, Will! If you're divinely protected, how come you fall? Tripped up so easily by us lesser mortal souls!

*(Laughing)*

What a geek!

**WILL:** *(Trying to get up)* Even Jesus fell.

**DEEP VOICE:** *(Offstage)* Watch now! Those are stone slabs there!

**DAVID:** *(Kneeing WILL in the side)* So, you think you're as good as Jesus Christ now?

**WILL:** *(Falls again)* Stop it.

**JONATHAN:** *(Bellowing)* Blasphemer!

*(Knees WILL from the other side)*

You shall burn in hell for that!

*(Laughing)*

Mr. Know-it-all!

**WILL:** *(Falls again)* Stop it, please.

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**DEEP VOICE:** *(Offstage)* Okay, come on...now stop, stop, stop it right there!

**DAVID:** You don't even get it, do ya, Good Will! You see, we've been asked by the student body to welcome you to the Abbey.

**JONATHAN:** *(Mocking WILL)* Stop it!

**DAVID:** Even the choirboys feel you are a bit queer. They asked us to talk to you, to let you in on a little secret.

*(Helping WILL up)*

You see, most of us here are poor boys. Many of us here ain't got nobody. We think you may give our little church some publicity, and then we will have to clean up our acts. We'll have to work twice as hard if the press comes 'round. The bishops, the clergy, they wouldn't like the dormitories the way they is.... The nuns would get all tense, and it would be all of us working twice as hard. All the while, you'd probably be left to praying—.

*(Yanks him up then throws down into a thorn bush.)*

Just ain't fair!

*(JONATHAN laughs as WILL yelps.)*

**WILL:** This is a thorn bush.

*(Looks to JONATHAN)*

Please, help me up!

**DEEP VOICE:** *(Offstage)* You operate a really mean crane, Hal.

**DAVID:** Go ahead. Help him up, Jonathan!

**WILL:** *(Crawls about, whimpering)* I've got a thorn in my eye.

*(Reaches out his hand)*

Please, David, will you?

**DEEP VOICE:** *(Offstage)* Hey, hey, hey. Where's your hard hat, buddy?

**DAVID:** I said, help him, Jonathan.

**JONATHAN:** Why should I? You did it. Why should I?

*(SISTER KATE witnesses the boys' unkindness to WILL. She calls them all into the chapel.)*

**SISTER KATE:** *(Bellowing)* Boys! Come in here at once! All of you! Right now!

*(WILL comes in; the other two make a run for it)*

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Will, did these boys do this to you?

**WILL:** Sister, they didn't know...they didn't mean...

*(Reaching out for assistance)*

Can you please, Sister...

*(Weeping)*

I think that there's a thorn stuck under my eyelid...

**SISTER KATE:** *(Helping WILL)* That must be so painful.

*(Drawing him closer to her to examine his eye)*

Now let me see...I can't see anything.

*(Reaches into her vestments to get a handkerchief, sprinkling some holy water on it)*

Here just let the water trickle through it to wash the thorn out. Water is our most healing gift. How's that?

**WILL:** *(Lifting his head)* I think it's out.

*(Smiles)*

Thank you, Sister.

**SISTER KATE:** Does it still hurt?

**WILL:** No.

*(Starts to leave)*

May I be excused, Sister?

*(A bell is ringing to denote recess is over.)*

**SISTER KATE:** No, Will, stay here. Come, sit over here with me.

**WILL:** Thank you, Sister Mary Katharine. You are very kind to me. Everyone here is so kind to me. Everyone is very, very kind.

**SISTER KATE:** Yes, yes.

*(Sighs)*

Was there really a thorn in your eye, Will?

**WILL:** I believe there was.

**SISTER KATE:** Perhaps you were just saying that to get the other boys to stop teasing you...



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**WILL:** I felt a thorn, or something.

**SISTER KATE:** Will, I saw nothing in your eye. Do you truly believe that there was a thorn?

**WILL:** Sister, I can only believe what I feel. I felt a thorn; perhaps it was not a thorn. Whatever you washed out was what was causing me the pain. I'm sorry if it was not a thorn.

**SISTER KATE:** What if I tell you there was nothing there to remove?

**WILL:** *(Head drops)* I can only tell you what I was feeling.

**SISTER KATE:** Oh well, Will, it's alright. We all do things to get attention...don't we now? I just wanted to be sure you were not getting into the habit of making up stories. It's all right.

*(Moves closer to WILL and hugs him gently)*

You are so very frail for a young boy, Will. Why is that? Do you practice your sports as well as you should? Do play ball with the others at all? You seem to spend an awful lot of time in the chapel, Will. Why is that?

**WILL:** *(Beginning to tremble)* I am sorry, Sister.

*(His head drops, even lower, into his sinking chest)*

**SISTER KATE:** No, no, Will...I am not reproving you. I am simply curious if you can see yourself as different. Do you, Will? Do you see yourself as different?

**WILL:** *(Timidly)* No.

**SISTER KATE:** No? You don't see any difference between yourself and the other boys here?

**WILL:** *(Dropping his head again)* I do not see myself at all.

**SISTER KATE:** You don't.

*(Pause)*

All right. Okay.

*(Sighs)*

You spend much of your time alone, William. What do you think about?

**WILL:** *(In a very meek voice)* Love.

**SISTER KATE:** Love?

**WILL:** Yes.

**SISTER KATE:** What kind of love?

*(There is an awkward silence. WILL gives SISTER KATE a piercing glance, and for a moment it's*

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*as if she feels perhaps she had no right to ask him that question.)*

I mean, whose love? How do you know love, Will? Whom do you love, Will?

**WILL:** God.

**SISTER KATE:** God?

**WILL:** Yes. I love God very much.

**SISTER KATE:** Did you ever love any people here on earth, Will?

**WILL:** I can recall loving me mummy. I love Mummy very much still. She is very beautiful and kind.

**SISTER KATE:** How long has it been since you've seen your mother, Will?

**WILL:** *(Sighs)* Not long.

**SISTER KATE:** When did you see her last?

**WILL:** Maybe five, six, seven years.

**SISTER KATE:** You miss her. Don't you, Will? You long for her?

**WILL:** No.

**SISTER KATE:** No? Why not?

**WILL:** I can still feel her love for me. Here, in my heart.

**SISTER KATE:** You're not angry that she left you?

**WILL:** No.

**SISTER KATE:** Weren't you afraid?

**WILL:** No.

**SISTER KATE:** How did you live? Where did you live?

**WILL:** Can't recall.

**SISTER KATE:** Where were you living just before you came here?

**WILL:** Can't recall.

**SISTER KATE:** What was your mother's name?

**WILL:** Can't recall.

**SISTER KATE:** Your father?

**WILL:** Can't recall.

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**SISTER KATE:** You mean to say that you have absolutely no idea where you were, say, even the night right before you came here to us.

**WILL:** Can't recall.

*(Pause)*

Sorry. Truly I am.

**SISTER KATE:** And all that money in the bag that you had brought with you....

*(Shouting)*

You mean to tell me that you have absolutely no idea where you got those thousands of dollars?

**WILL:** *(Trying to soothe her)* Truly, I can't recollect at all who he was, but I know a man gave me that bag and asked me to bring it here, to give it to Fr. Peter. Honest, that is all I know, Sr. Kate. That is all I know. Please don't be angry with me. I really know only the truth, and I can't understand anything else. So I don't know why you don't want to believe me.

*(Slowly he rises, desperately)*

Sometimes I am sure I have no idea what a memory is supposed to be. I truly feel I have none. I know I do very well in my studies, but I assure you otherwise I am quite empty. And I have no ideas about who I might be.

*(Pause)*

The other boys tease me, saying that I am a girl, Sister. Or that I should have been one. Jonathan said that God made a mistake with me, that everyone else's voice is changing yet my voice stays the same. They say that I am queer; that I'm possessed. I know that all this doesn't matter in God's eyes. That I am His son. But I am afraid for only one reason, Sister. I feel that something dreadful shall soon happen to me. It never really mattered to me about all this; I don't know, but with everyone questioning me, they are forcing me to try to understand who I am.

*(Starts to cry)*

Now, I'm becoming afraid. I'm sorry.

*(WILL kneels before SISTER KATE, clutching onto her robes, sobbing gently. KATE realizes that perhaps she is part of his problem and tries to make amends.)*

**SISTER KATE:** *(Stroking his hair)* No, Will, it is I that needs to be sorry.

**WILL:** I just am who I am. I never really thought about it before, and when I do, I feel like I am going crazy.

**SISTER KATE:** I understand. That's really quite normal, Will.

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**WILL:** Sister Katharine, why does it matter who I am? All I know is that God loves me...and I love Him. He asks me to sing, and I sing. He asks me to pray, and I pray! I never question God's will. Yet, when they tease me...when you question me, I start to question myself. I start to question my very self worth. I wonder if I'm really worth this wonderful life. I am fine and blissful by myself, but then the others seem to put thoughts in my head with their unkind words. I'm easily affected. My skin bruises easily too. I just seem to think sometimes, perhaps, that I do not belong in this world.

*(ANNA rushes in frantically. Her condition causes them both to rise promptly upon her sudden entrance. SISTER KATE nervously clutches WILL to her side.)*

**ANNA:** Oh, Sister Kate! I must speak with you alone! I... I am...

*(Falls to her knees sobbing)*

Sister, I am frightened!

**WILL:** Pardon me, Sister. I will leave you alone.

*(Bows to ANNA, touches her head)*

I will pray for you now, Anna.

*(Bows to SISTER KATE)*

Thank you.

*(Rushes off)*

**SISTER KATE:** What? What is it, Anna?

*(Kneeling next to her)*

It's all right, really; you can talk to me.

*(Consoling her, stroking her brow)*

You're quivering. Oh what has happened to you?

*(Seeing she is still afraid)*

Whatever it is, we can ask our Lord for help. Even Jesus fell. In fact, the other evening, I was out all night when I knew I shouldn't have been. I've been wanting to talk with you about it. But now is not the time...

*(Hugs her)*

Now is the time for you to confide in me. Now is the time for you to lighten your soul, and I am here to hear your troubles. Really, you can talk to me. I am not your judge, Anna. I am your friend. Your confidante.

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**ANNA:** Oh, Sr. Kate, I am so afraid. I had the most terrifying dream! It was very futuristic.

*(Speaking very fast, like she only had one last breath to tell the story)*

Like a science fiction movie...the United States was being evacuated! You were passing out church assignments during choir practice in this huge room at this very large house. Somehow a group of very bizarre-looking theatre people got my attention, and I drifted off with them to this strange party. It sounded like the people there were trying to make music, but they couldn't...the sounds they were making were real weird...and were certainly not music. When I got back to the "choir house" as it was called, all of the people I knew had been shipped out. Everyone from the church, including all of the musicians in—the United States and all of my friends and family were going to Venice. You had a pass card for me, but I'd missed getting it because I stole away to this strange party.

*(Sighs heavily)*

The rest of the entire country was "being placed" in Saudi Arabia. The "Choir House" had now taken on the appearance of an industrial kitchen. I reported to the office that all of my community was sent to Venice and that I was supposed to go there too. That you had a card for me, and that I should have gotten it during rehearsal. The soldier in charge said that I could look for you, or that if I could find a record of my pass number then I could go to Venice. Otherwise I would have to go to Saudi Arabia to what they called the "reformist plan living." I searched frantically, but I could not find you or anyone familiar at all. An alarm went off, and I knew that I was out of time. The soldiers hunted me down and said that I would have to go to Saudi Arabia. They shook me and demanded that I realize that ...

*(Shouting)*

...there would be no more talk of God, or music or church. or I would be shot immediately! I screamed. Then I was shackled and carried aboard a large gray plane.

*(An off-stage voice screams "watch out" as other screams and calls chime in. SISTER KATE and ANNA freeze there on-stage as if in suspended animation. All of the following voices offstage overlap with rapid-fire dialogue to create a strong sense of desperate chaos. Church bells faintly tinkle in the distance, as if they were very far away. The rhythm of the scene keeps a uniform pulse, although everything happens extremely fast.)*

**DEEP VOICE:** *(Offstage, screams)* Hey! You down there! Look out, kid! Oh my God. The stone is...watch out!

**(BLACKOUT)**

**INTERMISSION**

**24 pages in ACT TWO**

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