

MRS. MULLER. Know more about it than you.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. I believe this man is creating or has already brought about an improper relationship with your son.

MRS. MULLER. I don't know.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. I know I'm right.

MRS. MULLER. Why you need to know something like that for sure when you don't? Please, Sister. You got some kind a righteous cause going with this priest, and now you want to drag my boy into it. My son doesn't need additional difficulties. Let him take the good and leave the rest when he leaves this place in June. He knows how to do that. I taught him how to do that.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. What kind of mother are you?

MRS. MULLER. Excuse me, but you don't know enough about life to say a thing like that, Sister.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. I know enough.

MRS. MULLER. You know the rules maybe, but that don't cover it.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. I know what I won't accept!

MRS. MULLER. You accept what you gotta accept, and you work with it. That's the truth I know. Sorry to be so sharp, but you're in here in this room ...

SISTER ALOYSIUS. This man is in my school.

MRS. MULLER. Well, he's gotta be somewhere, and maybe he's doing some good too. You ever think of that?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. He's after the boy.

MRS. MULLER. Well, maybe some of them boys want to get caught. Maybe what you don't know maybe is my son is ... that way. That's why his father beat him up. Not the wine. He beat Donald for being what he is.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. What are you telling me?

MRS. MULLER. I'm his mother. I'm talking about his nature now, not anything he's done. But you can't hold a child responsible for what God gave him to be.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Listen to me with care, Mrs. Muller. I'm only interested in actions. It's hopeless to discuss a child's possible inclination. I'm finding it difficult enough to address a man's deeds. This isn't about what the boy may be, but what the man is. It's about the man.

MRS. MULLER. But there's the boy's nature.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Let's leave that out of it.

MRS. MULLER. Forget it then. You're the one forcing people to say these things out loud. Things are in the air and you leave them

alone if you can. That's what I know. My boy came to this school 'cause they were gonna kill him at the public school. So we were lucky enough to get him in here for his last year. Good. His father don't like him. He comes here, the kids don't like him. One man is good to him. This priest. Puts out a hand to the boy. Does the man have his reasons? Yes. Everybody has their reasons. You have your reasons. But do I ask the man why he's good to my son? No. I don't care why. My son needs some man to care about him and see him through to where he wants to go. And thank God, this educated man with some kindness in him wants to do just that.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. This will not do.

MRS. MULLER. It's just till June. Sometimes things aren't black and white.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. And sometimes they are. I'll throw your son out of this school. Make no mistake.

MRS. MULLER. But why would you do that? If nothing started with him?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Because I will stop this whatever way I must.

MRS. MULLER. You'd hurt my son to get your way?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. It won't end with your son. There will be others, if there aren't already.

MRS. MULLER. Throw the priest out then.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. I'm trying to do just that.

MRS. MULLER. Well, what do you want from me? *(A pause.)*

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Nothing. As it turns out. I was hoping you might know something that would help me, but it seems you don't.

MRS. MULLER. Please leave my son out of this. My husband would kill that child over a thing like this.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. I'll try. *(Mrs. Muller stands up.)*

MRS. MULLER. I don't know, Sister. You may think you're doing good, but the world's a hard place. I don't know that you and me are on the same side. I'll be standing with my son and those who are good with my son. It'd be nice to see you there. Nice talking with you, Sister. Good morning. *(She goes, leaving the door open behind her. Sister Aloysius is shaken. After a moment, Father Flynn appears at the door. He's in a controlled fury.)*

FLYNN. May I come in?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. We would require a third party.

FLYNN. What was Donald's mother doing here?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. We were having a chat.

FLYNN. About what?

Begin

SISTER ALOYSIUS. A third party is truly required, Father.
FLYNN. No, Sister. No third party. You and me are due for a talk.
(He comes in and slams the door behind him. They face each other.)
You have to stop this campaign against me!
SISTER ALOYSIUS. You can stop it at any time.
FLYNN. How?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. Confess and resign.
FLYNN. You are attempting to destroy my reputation! But the result of all this is going to be your removal, not mine!
SISTER ALOYSIUS. What are you doing in this school?
FLYNN. I am trying to do good!
SISTER ALOYSIUS. Or even more to the point, what are you doing in the priesthood?
FLYNN. You are single-handedly holding this school and this parish back!
SISTER ALOYSIUS. From what?
FLYNN. Progressive education and a welcoming church.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. You can't distract me, Father Flynn. This isn't about my behavior, it's about yours.
FLYNN. It's about your unfounded suspicions.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. That's right. I have suspicions.
FLYNN. You know what I haven't understood through all this? Why do you suspect me? What have I done?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. You gave that boy wine to drink. And you let him take the blame.
FLYNN. That's completely untrue! Did you talk to Mr. McGinn?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. All McGinn knows is the boy drank wine. He doesn't how he came to drink it.
FLYNN. Did his mother have something to add to that?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. No.
FLYNN. So that's it. There's nothing there.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. I'm not satisfied.
FLYNN. Well, if you're not satisfied, ask the boy then!
SISTER ALOYSIUS. No, he'd protect you. That's what he's been doing.
FLYNN. Oh, and why would he do that?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. Because you have seduced him.
FLYNN. You're insane! You've got it in your head that I've corrupted this child after giving him wine, and nothing I say will change that.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. That's right.
FLYNN. But correct me if I'm wrong. This has nothing to do with

the wine, not really. You had a fundamental mistrust of me before this incident! It was you that warned Sister James to be on the lookout, wasn't it?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. That's true.
FLYNN. So you admit it!
SISTER ALOYSIUS. Certainly.
FLYNN. Why?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. I know people.
FLYNN. That's not good enough!
SISTER ALOYSIUS. It won't have to be.
FLYNN. How's that?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. You will tell me what you've done.
FLYNN. Oh I will?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. Yes.
FLYNN. I'm not one of your truant boys, you know. Sister James is convinced I'm innocent.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. So you talked to Sister James? Well, of course you talked to Sister James.
FLYNN. Did you know that Donald's father beats him?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. Yes.
FLYNN. And might that not account for the odd behavior Sister James noticed in the boy?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. It might.
FLYNN. Then what is it? What? What did you hear, what did you see that convinced you so thoroughly?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. What does it matter?
FLYNN. I want to know.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. On the first day of the school year, I saw you touch William London's wrist. And I saw him pull away.
FLYNN. That's all?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. That was all.
FLYNN. But that's nothing. *(He writes in his book.)*
SISTER ALOYSIUS. What are you writing now?
FLYNN. You leave me no choice. I'm writing down what you say. I tend to get too flustered to remember the details of an upsetting conversation, and this may be important. When I talk to the monsignor and explain why you have to be removed as the principal of this school.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. This morning, before I spoke with Mrs. Muller, I took the precaution of calling the last parish to which you were assigned.

FLYNN. What did he say?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. Who?
FLYNN. The pastor?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. I did not speak to the pastor. I spoke to one of the nuns.
FLYNN. You should've spoken to the pastor.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. I spoke to a nun.
FLYNN. That's not the proper route for you to have taken, Sister! The Church is very clear. You're supposed to go through the pastor.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. Why? Do you have an understanding, you and he? Father Flynn, you have a history.
FLYNN. You have no right to go rummaging through my past!
SISTER ALOYSIUS. This is your third parish in five years.
FLYNN. Call the pastor and ask him why I left! It was perfectly innocent.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. I'm not calling the pastor.
FLYNN. I am a good priest! And there is nothing in my record to suggest otherwise.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. You will go after another child and another, until you are stopped.
FLYNN. What nun did you speak to?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. I won't say.
FLYNN. I've not touched a child.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. You have.
FLYNN. You have not the slightest proof of anything.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. But I have my certainty, and armed with that, I will go to your last parish, and the one before that if necessary. I will find a parent, Father Flynn! Trust me I will. A parent who probably doesn't know that you are still working with children! And once I do that, you will be exposed. You may even be attacked, metaphorically or otherwise.
FLYNN. You have no right to act on your own! You are a member of a religious order. You have taken vows, obedience being one! You answer to us! You have no right to step outside the Church!
SISTER ALOYSIUS. I will step outside the Church if that's what needs to be done, though the door should shut behind me! I will do what needs to be done, Father, if it means I'm damned to Hell! You should understand that, or you will mistake me. Now, did you give Donald Muller wine to drink?
FLYNN. Have you never done anything wrong?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. I have.

FLYNN. Mortal sin?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. Yes.
FLYNN. And?
SISTER ALOYSIUS. I confessed it! Did you give Donald Muller wine to drink?
FLYNN. Whatever I have done, I have left in the healing hands of my confessor. As have you! We are the same!
SISTER ALOYSIUS. We are not the same! A dog that bites is a dog that bites! I do not justify what I do wrong and go on. I admit it, desist, and take my medicine. Did you give Donald Muller wine to drink?
FLYNN. No.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. Mental reservation?
FLYNN. No.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. You lie. Very well then. If you won't leave my office, I will. And once I go, I will not stop. *(She goes to the door. Suddenly, a new tone comes into his voice.)*
FLYNN. Wait!
SISTER ALOYSIUS. You will request a transfer from this parish. You will take a leave of absence until it is granted.
FLYNN. And do what for the love of God? My life is here.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. Don't.
FLYNN. Please! Are we people? Am I a person flesh and blood like you? Or are we just ideas and convictions. I can't say everything. Do you understand? There are things I can't say. Even if you can't imagine the explanation, Sister, remember that there are circumstances beyond your knowledge. Even if you feel certainty, it is an emotion and not a fact. In the spirit of charity, I appeal to you. On behalf of my life's work. You have to behave responsibly. I put myself in your hands.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. I don't want you.
FLYNN. My reputation is at stake.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. You can preserve your reputation.
FLYNN. If you say these things, I won't be able to do my work in the community.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. Your work in the community should be discontinued.
FLYNN. You'd leave me with nothing.
SISTER ALOYSIUS. That's not true. It's Donald Muller who has nothing, and you took full advantage of that.
FLYNN. I have not done anything wrong. I care about that boy

very much.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Because you smile at him and sympathize with him, and talk to him as if you were the same?

FLYNN. That child needed a friend!

SISTER ALOYSIUS. You are a cheat. The warm feeling you experienced when that boy looked at you with trust was not the sensation of virtue. It can be got by a drunkard from his tot of rum. You're a disgrace to the collar. The only reason you haven't been thrown out of the Church is the decline in vocations.

FLYNN. I can fight you.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. You will lose.

FLYNN. You can't know that.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. I know.

FLYNN. Where's your compassion?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Nowhere you can get at it. Stay here. Compose yourself. Use the phone if you like. Good day, Father. I have no sympathy for you. I know you're invulnerable to true regret. *(Starts to go. Pause.)* And cut your nails. *(She goes, closing the door behind her. After a moment, he goes to the phone and dials.)*

FLYNN. Yes. This is Father Brendan Flynn of St. Nicholas parish. I need to make an appointment to see the bishop. *(Lights fade.)*

END

NINE

The lights crossfade to Sister Aloysius walking into the garden. It's a sunny day. She sits on the bench. Sister James enters.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. How's your brother?

SISTER JAMES. Better. Much better.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. I'm very glad. I prayed for him.

SISTER JAMES. It was good to get away. I needed to see my family. It had been too long.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Then I'm glad you did it.

SISTER JAMES. And Father Flynn is gone.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Yes.

SISTER JAMES. Where?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. St. Jerome's.

SISTER JAMES. So you did it. You got him out.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Yes.

SISTER JAMES. Donald Muller is heartbroken that he's gone.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Can't be helped. It's just till June.

SISTER JAMES. I don't think Father Flynn did anything wrong.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. No? He convinced you?

SISTER JAMES. Yes, he did.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Hmmm.

SISTER JAMES. Did you ever prove it?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. What?

SISTER JAMES. That he interfered with Donald Muller?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Did I ever prove it to whom?

SISTER JAMES. Anyone but yourself?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. No.

SISTER JAMES. But you were sure.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Yes.

SISTER JAMES. I wish I could be like you.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Why?

SISTER JAMES. Because I can't sleep at night anymore. Everything seems uncertain to me.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Maybe we're not supposed to sleep so well. They've made Father Flynn the pastor of St. Jerome.

SISTER JAMES. Who?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. The bishop appointed Father Flynn the pastor of St. Jerome Church and School. It's a promotion.

SISTER JAMES. You didn't tell them?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. I told our good Monsignor Benedict. I crossed the garden and told him. He did not believe it to be true.

SISTER JAMES. Then why did Father Flynn leave? What did you say to him to make him go?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. That I had called a nun in his previous parish. That I had found out his prior history of infringements.

SISTER JAMES. So you did prove it!

SISTER ALOYSIUS. I was lying. I made no such call.

SISTER JAMES. You lied?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Yes. But if he had no such history, the lie wouldn't have worked. His resignation was his confession. He was what I thought he was. And he's gone.

SISTER JAMES. I can't believe you lied.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. In the pursuit of wrongdoing, one steps away from God. Of course there's a price.