

FATHER FLYNN

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Ireland and you were there for it. That's fascinating. Yes. I was wondering if you would be so kind as to remove a tree limb that's fallen in the courtyard of the church. Sister Veronica tripped on it this morning and fell on her face. I think she's all right. She doesn't look any worse, Mr. McGinn. Thank you, Mr. McGinn. *(She hangs up the phone and looks at her watch, a bit anxious. A knock at the door.)* Come in. *(The door opens. Father Flynn is standing there in his black cassock. He doesn't come in.)*

FLYNN. Good morning, Sister Aloysius! How are you today?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Good morning, Father Flynn. Very well. Good of you to come by. *(Father Flynn takes a step into the office.)*

FLYNN. Are we ready for the meeting?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. We're just short Sister James. *(Father Flynn steps back into the doorway.)* Did you hear that wind last night?

FLYNN. I certainly did. Imagine what it must've been like in the frontier days when a man alone in the woods sat by a fire in his buckskins and listened to a sound like that. Imagine the loneliness! The immense darkness pressing in! How frightening it must've been!

SISTER ALOYSIUS. If one lacked faith in God's protection, I suppose it would be frightening.

FLYNN. Did I hear Sister Veronica had an accident?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Yes. Sister Veronica fell on a piece of wood this morning and practically killed herself.

FLYNN. Is she all right?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Oh, she's fine.

FLYNN. Her sight isn't good, is it?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Her sight is fine. Nuns fall, you know.

FLYNN. No, I didn't know that.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. It's the habit. It catches us up more often than not. What with our being in black and white, and so prone to falling, we're more like dominos than anything else. *(Sister James appears at the door, breathless.)*

SISTER JAMES. Am I past the time? *(Father Flynn takes a step into the office.)*

FLYNN. Not at all. Sister Aloysius and I were just having a nice chat.

SISTER JAMES. Good morning, Father Flynn. Good morning, Sister. I'm sorry I was delayed. Mr. McGinn has closed the courtyard to fix something so I had to go back through the convent and out the side door, and then I ran into Sister Veronica.

FLYNN. How is she?

SISTER JAMES. She has a bit of a bloody nose.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. I'm beginning to think you're punching people.

SISTER JAMES. Sister?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Well, after the incident with ... Never mind. Well, come in, please. Sit down. *(They come in and sit down. Father Flynn takes Sister Aloysius' chair. He's sitting at her desk. She reacts but says nothing.)* I actually have a hot pot of tea. *(Closes the door but for an inch.)* And close this but not quite, for form's sake. Would you have a cup of tea, Father?

FLYNN. I would love a cup of tea.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Perhaps you could serve him, Sister?

SISTER JAMES. Of course.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. And yourself, of course.

SISTER JAMES. Would you like tea, Sister Aloysius?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. I've already had my cup.

FLYNN. Is there sugar?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Sugar? Yes! *(Rummages in her desk.)* It's here somewhere. I put it in the drawer for Lent last year and never remembered to take it out.

FLYNN. It mustn't have been much to give up then.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. No, I'm sure you're right. Here it is. I'll serve you, though for want of practice, I'm ... [clumsy] *(She's got the sugar bowl and is poised to serve him a lump of sugar with a small pair of tongs when she sees his nails.)* Your fingernails.

FLYNN. I wear them a little long. The sugar?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Oh yes. One?

FLYNN. Three.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Three. *(She's appalled but tries to hide it.)*

FLYNN. Sweet tooth.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. One, two, three. Sister, do you take sugar? *(Sister Aloysius looks at Sister James.)*

SISTER JAMES. *(To Sister Aloysius.)* Never! *(To Father Flynn.)* Not that there's anything wrong with sugar. *(To Sister Aloysius again.)* Thank you. *(Sister Aloysius puts the sugar away in her desk.)*

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Well, thank you, Father, for making the time for us. We're at our wit's end.

FLYNN. I think it's an excellent idea to rethink the Christmas pageant. Last year's effort was a little woebegone.

SISTER JAMES. No! I loved it! *(Becomes self-conscious.)* But I love all Christmas pageants. I just love the Nativity. The birth of the Savior. And the hymns of course. "O Little Town of Bethlehem,"

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” ...

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Thank you, Sister James. Sister James will be co-directing the pageant with Mrs. Shields this year. So what do you think, Father Flynn? Is there something new we could do?

FLYNN. Well, we all love the Christmas hymns, but it might be jolly to include a secular song.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Secular.

FLYNN. Yes. “It’s Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas.” Something like that.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. What would be the point of performing a secular song?

FLYNN. Fun.

SISTER JAMES. Or “Frosty the Snowman.”

FLYNN. That’s a good one. We could have one of the boys dress as a snowman and dance around.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Which boy?

FLYNN. We’d do tryouts.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. “Frosty the Snowman” espouses a pagan belief in magic. The snowman comes to life when an enchanted hat is put on his head. If the music were more somber, people would realize the images are disturbing and the song heretical. *(Sister James and Father Flynn exchange a look.)*

SISTER JAMES. I’ve never thought about “Frosty the Snowman” like that.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. It should be banned from the airwaves.

FLYNN. So. Not “Frosty the Snowman.” *(Father Flynn writes something in a small notebook.)*

SISTER ALOYSIUS. I don’t think so. “It’s Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas” would be fine, I suppose. The parents would like it. May I ask what you wrote down? With that ballpoint pen.

FLYNN. Oh. Nothing. An idea for a sermon.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. You had one just now?

FLYNN. I get them all the time.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. How fortunate.

FLYNN. I forget them, so I write them down.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. What is the idea?

FLYNN. Intolerance. *(Sister James tries to break a bit of tension.)*

SISTER JAMES. Would you like a little more tea, Father?

FLYNN. Not yet. I think a message of the Second Ecumenical Council was that the Church needs to take on a more familiar face. Reflect the local community. We should sing a song from the radio