

thought he was on course, but there was no way to be certain. As the days rolled on, and he wasted away with fevers, thirst and starvation, he began to have doubts. Had he set his course right? Was he still going on towards his home? Or was he horribly lost and doomed to a terrible death? No way to know. The message of the constellations — had he imagined it because of his desperate circumstance? Or had he seen Truth once and now had to hold on to it without further reassurance? That was his dilemma on a voyage without apparent end. There are those of you in church today who know exactly the crisis of faith I describe. I want to say to you. Doubt can be a bond as powerful and sustaining as certainty. When you are lost, you are not alone. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen. (*He exits.*)

SISTER
ALOYSIUS

SISTER
JAMES

TWO

The lights crossfade to a corner office in a Catholic school in the Bronx. The principal, Sister Aloysius Beauvier, sits at her desk, writing in a ledger with a fountain pen. She is in her fifties or sixties. She is watchful, reserved, unsentimental. She is of the order of the Sisters of Charity. She wears a black bonnet and floor-length black habit, rimless glasses. A knock at the door.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Come in. (*Sister James, also of the Sisters of Charity, pokes her head in. She is in her twenties. There's a bit of sunshine in her heart, though she's reserved as well.*)

SISTER JAMES. Have you a moment, Sister Aloysius?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Come in, Sister James. (*She enters.*) Who's watching your class?

SISTER JAMES. They're having Art.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Art. Waste of time.

SISTER JAMES. It's only an hour a week.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Much can be accomplished in sixty minutes.

SISTER JAMES. Yes, Sister Aloysius. I wondered if I might know what you did about William London?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. I sent him home.

SISTER JAMES. Oh dear. So he's still bleeding?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Oh yes.

SISTER JAMES. His nose just let loose and started gushing during the Pledge of Allegiance.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Was it spontaneous?

SISTER JAMES. What else would it be?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Self-induced.

SISTER JAMES. You mean, you think he might've intentionally given himself a nosebleed?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Exactly.

SISTER JAMES. No!

SISTER ALOYSIUS. You are a very innocent person, Sister James. William London is a fidgety boy and if you do not keep right on him, he will do anything to escape his chair. He would set his foot on fire for half a day out of school.

SISTER JAMES. But why?

SISTER ALOYSIUS. He has a restless mind.

SISTER JAMES. But that's good.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. No, it's not. His father's a policeman, and the last thing he wants is a rowdy boy. William London is headed for trouble. Puberty has got hold of him. He will be imagining all the wrong things, and I strongly suspect he will not graduate high school. But that's beyond our jurisdiction. We simply have to get him through, out the door, and then he's somebody else's project. Ordinarily, I assign my most experienced sisters to eighth grade, but I'm working within constraints. Are you in control of your class?

SISTER JAMES. I think so.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Usually more children are sent down to me.

SISTER JAMES. I try to take care of things myself.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. That can be an error. You are answerable to me, I to the monsignor, he to the bishop, and so on up to the Holy Father. There's a chain of discipline. Make use of it.

SISTER JAMES. Yes, Sister.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. How's Donald Muller doing?

SISTER JAMES. Steady.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Good. Has anyone hit him?

SISTER JAMES. No.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Good. That girl, Linda Conte, have you seated her away from the boys?

SISTER JAMES. As far as space permits. It doesn't do much good.

SISTER ALOYSIUS. Just get her through. Intact. *(Pause. Sister*