

SISTER ALOYSIUS: Have you noticed anything, Sister James?

SISTER JAMES: About what?

SISTER ALOYSIUS: I want you to be alert.

SISTER JAMES: I don't believe I'm following you, Sister.

SISTER ALOYSIUS: I'm sorry I'm not more forthright, but I must be careful not to create something by saying it. I can only say I am concerned, perhaps needlessly, about matters in St. Nicholas School.

SISTER JAMES: Academically?

SISTER ALOYSIUS: I wasn't inviting a guessing game. I want you to pay attention to your class.

SISTER JAMES: Well, of course I'll pay attention to my class, Sister. And I'll try not to perform. And I'll try to be less innocent. I'm sorry you're disappointed in me. Please know that I will try my best. Honestly.

SISTER ALOYSIUS: Look at you. You'd trade anything for a warm look. I'm telling you here and now, I want to see the starch in your character cultivated. If you are looking for reassurance, you can be fooled. If you forget yourself and study others, you will not be fooled. It's important. One final matter and then you really must get back. Sister Veronica is going blind.

SISTER JAMES: Oh how horrible!

SISTER ALOYSIUS: This is not generally known, and I don't want it known. If they find out in the rectory, she'll be gone. I cannot afford to lose her. But now if you see her making her way down those stone stairs into the courtyard, for the love of Heaven, lightly take her hand as if in fellowship and see that she doesn't destroy herself. All right, go.

THREE

The lights crossfade to Father Flynn, whistle around his neck, in a sweatshirt and pants, holding a basketball.

FLYNN: All right, settle down, boys. Now the thing about shooting from the foul line: It's psychological. The rest of the game you're cooperating with your teammates, you're competing against the other team. But at the foul line, it's you against yourself. And the danger is: You start to think. When you think, you stop breathing. Your body locks up. So you have to remember to relax. Take a breath, unlock your knees—this is something for you to watch, Jimmy. You stand like a parking meter. Come up with a routine of what you do. Shift your weight, move your hips... You think that's funny, Ralph? What's funny is you never getting a foul shot. Don't worry if you look silly. They won't think you're silly if you get the basket. Come up with a routine, concentrate on the routine, and you'll forget to get tensed up. Now on another matter, I've noticed several of you guys have dirty nails. I don't want to see that. I'm not talking about the length of your nails, I'm talking about cleanliness. See? Look at my nails. They're

long, I like them a little long, but look at how clean they are. That makes it okay. There was a kid I grew up with, Timmy Mathisson, never had clean nails, and he'd stick his fingers up his nose, in his mouth.—This is a true story, learn to listen! He got spinal meningitis and died a horrible death. Sometimes it's the little things that get you. You try to talk to a girl with those filthy paws, Mr. Conroy, she's gonna take off like she's being chased by the Red Chinese! (*Reacting genially to laughter*) All right, all right. You guys, what am I gonna do with you? Get dressed, come on over to the rectory, have some Kool-Aid and cookies, we'll have a bull session. (*Blows his whistle.*) Go!

FOUR

Crossfade to a bit of garden, a bench, brick walls. Sister Aloysius, in full habit and a black shawl, is wrapping a pruned rosebush in burlap. Sister James enters.

SISTER JAMES: Good afternoon, Sister.

SISTER ALOYSIUS: Good afternoon, Sister James. Mr. McGinn pruned this bush, which was the right thing to do, but he neglected to protect it from the frost. *To correct*

SISTER JAMES: Have we had a frost?

SISTER ALOYSIUS: When it comes, it's too late. *To specify*

SISTER JAMES: You know about gardening?

SISTER ALOYSIUS: A little. Where is your class? *To redirect*

SISTER JAMES: The girls are having Music.

SISTER ALOYSIUS: And the boys? *To clarify*

SISTER JAMES: They're in the rectory. (*Sister James indicates the rectory, which is out of view, just on the other side of the garden.*)

SISTER ALOYSIUS: With Father Flynn. *To confirm*

SISTER JAMES: Yes. He's giving them a talk.

SISTER ALOYSIUS: On what subject? *To investigate*

SISTER JAMES: How to be a man.

SISTER ALOYSIUS: Well, if Sisters were permitted in the rectory, I would be interested to hear that talk. I don't know how to be a man. I would like to know what's involved. Have you ever given the girls a talk on how to be a woman? *To reveal*

SISTER JAMES: No. I wouldn't be competent. *To connect*

SISTER ALOYSIUS: Why not? *To explore*

SISTER JAMES: I just don't think I would. I took my vows at the beginning... Before... At the beginning.

SISTER ALOYSIUS: The founder of our order, the Blessed Mother Seton, was married and had five children before embarking on her vows. *To educate*

SISTER JAMES: I've often wondered how she managed so much in one life. *To contradict*

SISTER ALOYSIUS: Life perhaps is longer than you think and the dictates of the soul more numerous. I was married. *To surprise*

SISTER JAMES: You were! (*Sister Aloysius smiles for the first time.*)

SISTER ALOYSIUS: Have you noticed anything, Sister James?

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