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# FORGET-ME-NOT

A Drama by

**Paul DiLella**

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# Forget-Me-Not

by Paul DiLella

## CHARACTERS

4M, 2F

ANGELINA FRANCHER: *30s, a social worker*

E. H. "MONK" FLANDERS: *50s, veteran reporter*

MAGGIE NEWHOUSE: *20s, cub reporter*

JIM WETHERSBY: *30s, Angelina's associate*

DEREK "D.J." ANDREWS: *20s, reporter*

CLARENCE ALAN "CAP" PETERSON: *50s, city news editor*

## TIME

*Late October 1992*

## SETTING

*Newspaper conference room at the Claytonia Chronicle  
in a city in upstate New York*

## PRODUCTION NOTES

The section of the play where Monk condemns Angelina (and she responds in Latin) is meant to move quickly. For tempo, for dramatic conflict, the director can break up or overlap the speeches as necessary to achieve the desired effect.

*\*The music to "Monk's Song" on p. 67 is royalty-free. It can be found at:  
<http://incompetech.com/music/royalty-free/index.html?feels%5B%5D=Humo...>  
The tune is called "Breaktime," copyright 2007 by Kevin MacLeod*

### Note from the Playwright

*Forget-Me-Not* is a work of fiction based on an urban legend I had heard as a child. My grandparents lived next door to a convent. Across the street was a Catholic church. When visiting my grandparents, I'd occasionally see a nun or priest walk from one place to the other. One question we neighborhood boys had was, why would a priest visit the convent? What was he doing there? The rumors got more pointed as years passed. A friend said his father told him all of the nuns had to be replaced because of some "horrible" business that happened in the convent. No one was sure, but the scuttlebutt was it had something to do with "babies." The rumor mill ground it out for years. I lost track of the "life" of the legend when I went to college.

All of the people (except public figures), all of the place names (except states and well-known cities) and all institutions (with one exception the "Church") are the products of my overactive imagination. It is not my intention to besmirch the Catholic Church for the events described in these pages; the Church is the device on which to hang the story. The events at "St. Steven's" are secondary to the unmasking of the central character, Angelina Francher. Her shrouded identity is the mystery that propels the play.

That said, allegations and prosecutions of child abuse in the Catholic Church continue to make the news. One of the more recent outcomes is the conviction of Philadelphia Monsignor William Lynn who was sentenced to 3-6 years on June 22, 2012 for covering up abuses by priests. On June 15, 2013, Anonymous Content, Rocklin/Faust, and Participant Media announced they would co-produce a film about the Boston Globe's investigation of allegations that the Catholic Church for decades hid knowledge of pedophile priests in Massachusetts. That investigation resulted in the resignation of Cardinal Bernard Law. On Jan.17, 2014, The *New York Times* reported the Vatican defrocked 384 priests for child abuse dating back to 2011 and 2012. John Patrick Shanley's play *Doubt* debates the same issues. Although my play isn't about child abuse *per se*, what greater form of child abuse is there than murder?

Be advised, this play contains mature language and themes.

### Staged Reading

On May 7, 2013, the playwright directed the following actors in a staged reading of the play at Pahrump Valley High School [Pahrump, NV]:

<i>Angelina Francher:</i>	Annalise Pickthall	<i>"Monk" Flanders:</i>	Colton Hall
<i>Jim Whethersby:</i>	Mitchell White	<i>"Cap" Peterson:</i>	Tanis Wright
<i>Maggie Newhouse:</i>	Abigail Whitener	<i>Derek Andrews:</i>	Josh Little

Additional support for this reading came from Gabrielle Connors and Abby Gripp.

## *Dedication*

To:

Ashlyn Ellis and Allison Furnish  
Thank you for your input and support

"If you wish to preserve your secret, wrap it up in frankness."

---Alexander Smith

"A man's most open actions have a secret side to them."

---Joseph Conrad

"A wonderful fact to reflect upon, that every human creature is constituted to be  
that profound secret and mystery to each other."

---Charles Dickens

## Forget-Me-Not by Paul DiLella

*SETTING:* The day before Halloween 1992. Lunch time. Conference room of the Claytonia Chronicle, an evening paper. A window. Table and chairs. Phone. Egg timer on the table. A door. Occasional sounds of traffic.

*AT RISE:* Three reporters are eating lunch: **MONK FLANDERS**, aged veteran of the newsprint wars and unshaven, sits at the table eating a homemade sandwich. His clothing is casual: open neck flannel shirt, baggy slacks, glasses, loafers. A floppy bucket hat dons his head. He's not really listening to the chatter between the others. Occasionally, he yawns. **MAGGIE NEWHOUSE**, a cub reporter, is amused at the animated talk of re-write man **DEREK ANDREWS**. He wears a dress shirt, tie, slacks, and dress shoes. Maggie is enthusiastic and over-dressed. Derek puts down his sandwich.

**DEREK**

Boy, I just can't eat. Any moment our son is going to be born. Our son. I can't wait.

**MAGGIE**

Guess that takes care of your Halloween.

**DEREK**

Only this year. I got plans. When Jonathan is a year old, I'm going to dress him up as a devil baby and put him in the stroller on our porch. Scare some kids witless.

**MAGGIE**

Me, I'd rather write a front page Halloween horror story---pile-up on the interstate, abduction or a murder. Something grisly. Something I can sink my writer's fangs into. What about you, Monk?

**MONK**

Most holidays I sleep.

**DEREK**

You could always wear your Jim Beam outfit and wobble down the street.

**MONK**

Then the newbie could report it.

**DEREK**

Right. Should we give her a byline on this one?

**MAGGIE**

Oh, you guys. Lay off.

DEREK

I'll give you a Halloween horror story. Last 4th of July, we had a family reunion at Lake Tamarack. Uncle Carmen said he'd heard of some paranormal investigators from one of those institutes poking around old Fort Rogers, looking for the ghost of Ellie Fowler. Ellie was on a Halloween day field trip to the fort with her 5th grade class. Seems she wandered off. Legend has it she was picking Claytonias when she got abducted. Hundreds of volunteers scoured the forest, the hills, the caves. Never did find her. She could've been carried off by a bear, a crazed hermit. Maybe a UFO. A year or so later, some hikers noticed something unusual. There were patches of bare ground in the Claytonia cover. Nothing's grown on those patches since. Some say that's where her body parts were scattered. Her spirit is still there. Scaring off hunters and animals. Warning them her attacker still lives. On calm nights, you can hear her crying, so they say. Hey, I hear the paranormal guys are coming back!

MAGGIE

Good story. Interview the investigators and crew. I could do that.

MONK

Hogwash. Nothing but fairy tales for the enfeebled. Save it for the Inquirer. I like hard news with legs.

MAGGIE

I'll chase a story even with a ghost attached.

MONK

Newbies. All flame and no fire.

DEREK

Don't let Monk scare you. All that sour mash has left a bitter taste in his mouth.

MAGGIE

I'm not intimidated by Mr. Flanders. I'm here to learn from him.

MONK

Humph.

*MONK puts his feet up on the table and tips his hat over his eyes.*

DEREK

Lunch's over. Time to bail.

MAGGIE

What? But I'm—

DEREK

Custom.

*DEREK packs up his uneaten lunch and MAGGIE does the same. She tries to speak but DEREK hushes her. He sets the egg-timer on the table, grabs MAGGIE by the arm, and turns off the light as they exit. LIGHTS dim. MONK snoozes. After a few moments, the timer goes off. MONK doesn't move. More moments pass. DEREK re-enters, switching on the light. LIGHTS up. It's been "twenty" minutes.*

DEREK

Monk. Monk. Psst. Monk.

*MONK stirs.*

DEREK, *Continued*

Monk. Four-five to deadline. Monk.

MONK

I hear you. I'm on top of it.

DEREK

Right.

MONK

Lead, middle done. Just need fifteen minutes. Re-set the timer, would you?

DEREK

What if Cap sees you here?

MONK

He prowls at 10:15, 12:30, and 3:45. Predictable as a bus.

DEREK

What if he's "off-schedule"?

MONK

Tell him I'm doing sleep apnea research.

DEREK

You're cruisin' for a bruisein'.

MONK

I'm wearing padded clothing. Army-Navy special.

DEREK

Still the wise-ass.

MONK  
Sarcasm is always in season.

DEREK  
Monk, do you care about anything?

MONK  
A good story. But right now, my nap.

DEREK  
Say “hi” to the Sandman for me.

*Monk readjusts his position, closes his eyes. DEREK leaves. MONK sits up and resets the timer, then leans back and puts his feet on the table. A moment of peace. The door opens. DEREK escorts two people: ANGELINA FRANCHER followed by her associate, JIM WETHERSBY. ANGELINA wears black slacks, a white long sleeve blouse, scarf around her head. She wears a forget-me-not in her lapel. JIM wears black pants, grey dress shirt, tie, dress shoes, and carries a briefcase.*

*From the outer room, we hear intermittent sounds of a newsroom: talking, shouting for copyboys; clacking of typewriters, ringing telephones, occasional cursing and laughter.*

DEREK, *Continued*  
Have a seat, Miss—

ANGELINA  
—Francher. Angelina Francher.

DEREK  
And Mr.—

JIM  
—Jim Wethersby.

*They sit.*

DEREK  
The man you want is snoozing in that chair.

ANGELINA  
This is the gung-ho investigative reporter I spoke with?

DEREK

Don't let his inertia fool you, M'am. He's husbanding his energy.

JIM

Hibernating, if you ask me.

DEREK

No. He's really good. You'll see. *(To Monk)* Monk. Monk. Got visitors.

MONK

Tell Cap—

DEREK

—Monk, it's not Cap.

*MONK opens his eyes, adjusts his hat. Stares.*

MONK

If it's about my subscription to *Field and Stream*—

ANGELINA

*(Rises)* My name is Angelina Francher. I spoke with you this morning. And this is Jim Wethersby, my...my...—

JIM

—Associate.

ANGELINA

Associate.

*ANGELINA extends her hand. Monk straightens up. JIM gets up to shake his hand.*

MONK

Pleased to meet you. Sure you're not bill collectors?

ANGELINA

Assuredly not, Mr. Flanders. Actually, we're here to pay a bill. Of sorts.

*DEREK tries to sneak off.*

MONK

D. J. Coffee. The usual. Can I offer you anything?

ANGELINA

I've given up coffee among things. Thank you, though.

JIM

Coke, if you got it.

MONK

Okay, D. J. Got your marching orders.

DEREK

Monk, what do I gotta do to get you to call me Derek? Only my wife calls me D.J.

MONK

When you get your byline. Now scoot.

*DEREK leaves. Shuts door.*

MONK

(To ANGELINA) We spoke this morning, you say. This...this is important?

ANGELINA

In the cosmic scheme of things, no. In the earthly scheme, yes.

MONK

Since I'm a prisoner of this earthly realm, chained to a clock, I can only give you a few minutes. No heavenly reward will stave off my Grim Reaper of an editor if I miss deadline. I got forty minutes. Thirty years in the business, some things never change. Never get easier.

ANGELINA

Did you look into the connection between the Catholic Diocese and the city of Claytonia?

MONK

No. No. Didn't have time. Repeat what you said over the phone.

ANGELINA

Don't you have notes? I thought reporters took notes.

MONK

I'm sorry. I might have scribbled your name somewhere, but it's buried on my desk.

ANGELINA

If you're that disorganized, maybe I should talk with someone else.

MONK

If I took every lead seriously, I'd be chasing my tail. I replace my shoes every six months depending on wear, tear, and pain. Flat feet will ruin the heels of shoes quicker than anything. In that time, I walk about three, four hundred miles. I don't have patience for strange tales from strangers. No offence.

ANGELINA

I'm on a deadline, too. The convent will be razed in three days. In three days, Brantley University takes possession of the Sisters of St. Magdalene Convent. Three days. Not much time to get an outcry to stop it.

MONK

You against urban renewal?

ANGELINA

I'm against destroying evidence.

MONK

Of what?

ANGELINA

A crime.

MONK

Black Market Communion wafers and red wine?

*DEREK enters. Sets mug on table. Hands coke to JIM.*

JIM

Thanks.

*DEREK leaves. MONK takes a flask out of his pocket, unscrews the top, and pours a splash into the mug. He does this nonchalantly, as if to signal "Yes, I drink. Got a problem with that?" He puts the flask away. ANGELINA stares at him. JIM turns his head.*

MONK

*(Deflecting)* For my arthritis. April still brings shivers. Now, we were talking about---

ANGELINA

—Multiple crimes.

MONK

Lady, I may be a reformed agnostic, but I don't take kindly to church scandals. I'm tired of priests who pontificate and fornicate, of ministers who skim millions---all that crap. I'm sure the public is tired, too. Any scandal of the cloth is bad for faith, you know. We haven't recovered from the "Jimmies," Bakker and Swaggart.

ANGELINA

You think it's easy for me to do this?

MONK

I don't know anything at this point. If you think there's been a crime or crimes, why don't you go to the police?

ANGELINA

I have.

MONK

And?

ANGELINA

It got complicated. I tried telling my story. I showed the officer a picture and gave him a name. He frowned, excused himself and left the room. Ten minutes later another officer showed up. She began interrogating me. Where did I get this photo? What relationship do I have with the man I named? Where am I from? Am I a U.S. citizen? Where do I live? Am I employed? Am I a former employee of any Catholic church in the Claytonia Diocese? What do I have against St. Steven's Church? I felt like a criminal. I was speechless. I told the officer I thought none of these questions were pertinent, and I wouldn't answer them. She just stared at me. I got mad. I yelled, "Stop staring!" I got up to leave. The officer stood. I asked about my photo. She said internal affairs needed it. If I would write down my name and address—well, that was it. "What does it take to get someone's attention?" I shouted. Then I left.

MONK

You have to understand, our boys in blue have bigger bastions to storm: herd the homeless out of city parks, ticket cars at expired meters, stop motorists for broken taillights.

ANGELINA

For all I know, the city cops are on the Church's payroll.

MONK

Don't spoil a good thing. I'm hoping they'll put the paper on its payroll, too.

ANGELINA

For a man on deadline, you're pretty flip, Mr. Flanders.

MONK

Just testing your resolve. If the police weren't going to investigate, why did they keep the photo?

ANGELINA

Didn't matter. It was a copy.

MONK

Do you think you're over-reacting?

ANGELINA

Over-reacting? Maybe you think I'm making this up?

MONK

Maybe they wanted to make sure you were legit.

JIM

Miss Francher cannot be personally involved.

MONK

Police station. Newspaper office. She's personally involved.

ANGELINA

I can give you the story and the evidence. You can guarantee my anonymity. The police can't. That's my price.

MONK

If you're a witness or an accomplice to a crime, I can't help you.

ANGELINA

I haven't committed a crime! Jim, tell this man I'm not guilty. I have to tell someone!

JIM

Calm down, Angelina. One step at a time like we discussed. Mr. Flanders will listen. Won't you?

MONK

Miss Francher. I need something tangible. Real quick. What have we got? Brantley University buys church property—

ANGELINA

—*steals it*. The property's worth 2.4 million. University got it for 1.3. Private sale.

MONK

Huh. You don't say. Okay, the University gets a smokin' deal. The cops play dead. You come to me to stop demolition. What's in that place? Gold chalices? Silver trays? Diamonds, emeralds, shiny baubles?

ANGELINA

Bodies.

MONK

Bodies.

ANGELINA

Babies.

MONK

Babies.

Babies.  
ANGELINA

One, two? How many?  
MONK

Don't know. Maybe a dozen. Maybe more. But it's infanticide. Enough to call it that.  
ANGELINA

Jesus Christ!  
MONK

*ANGELINA crosses herself.*

Would that he would pardon all of us.  
ANGELINA

And you think the police are in collusion with the Church to cover up this mess.  
MONK

Yes.  
ANGELINA

Babygate.  
MONK

That's heartless!  
ANGELINA

Poker is heartless. But I never bet unless I have a strong hole card. What's your hole card?  
MONK

*ANGELINA rises. Takes out an envelope from her purse. Hands MONK a plane ticket.*

Eastern Airlines. Swell. The only trip I'm taking is back to my desk.  
MONK

Look at the date.  
ANGELINA

1957. Get this at a yard sale?  
MONK

Look at the itinerary.  
JIM

MONK

Claytonia to Syracuse. Syracuse to New York. New York to Miami. Miami to Ciudad de Flores. All on a DC-7. Big deal. Expensive trip just for cigars.

ANGELINA

Count the passengers.

MONK

Ah, departure...ah...four. Mr. and Mrs. Olarsson. Miss Evelyn Smith and Karen Smith.

ANGELINA

Karen Smith was a baby. How many returned?

MONK

Just the Olarssons. So?

ANGELINA

Isn't that odd that Evelyn Smith and her daughter stayed behind?

MONK

Maybe they had relatives there. Maybe she fell in love and got married. What does this have to do with the convent, Brantley University, and the Catholic Church? What, in God's name, is the point of this?

ANGELINA

I wish you'd stop taking the Lord's name in vain. Jim, please tell him to stop.

MONK

I wish you'd get to the point. I'm on deadline!

JIM

Miss Francher is sensitive about profanity. Please excuse her. The point is, Mr. Flanders, the Archdiocese of Claytonia is involved in a cover-up of monstrous proportions dating back to 1957.

MONK

Back to 1957. In this business, that's like a century ago. Who cares?

ANGELINA

There is no statute of limitation on murder.

MONK

Murder? You base this on the supposition that one woman and child stayed behind in Ciudad de Flores? Give me a break.

ANGELINA

A nun and her child.

MONK

*A nun? Her child?* What the hell? How do you know this? All you have is a plane ticket for god sakes. That's not enough.

ANGELINA

I have more than one hole card.

*MONK walks to the door. Opens it. Yells.*

MONK

D. J.! Derek! Get your ass in here. *(To ANGELINA)* How do you know this started in 1957?

*DEREK arrives.*

MONK, *Continued*

D. J., I'm on deadline. Something's breakin' here. Can you finish my by-line?

DEREK

I can't. I'm on rewrite. Scott's out sick.

MONK

Damn flu. Who else is available? Dominick? Mason?

DEREK

Dunno. It's pretty busy out there. Sung Air crashed. Looks like we'll have to re-paste.

MONK

Oh, Christ. When it rains news, it really pours. Isn't there anybody?

DEREK

The new fish.

MONK

God, no. Cap would throw the copy back in my face.

DEREK

You're on your own, bucko.

*DEREK exits. Shuts door.*

MONK

*(To ANGELINA)* I'm sorry. This will have to wait. I'm on deadline.

ANGELINA

So am I! This can't wait! Day One: write the story. Day Two: story is published. Day Three: uproar gets an injunction. Demolition postponed. Police get court order to search the convent. Bodies found.

MONK

There are other papers. Other reporters.

ANGELINA

You're special.

MONK

Special. I'm a burned out beat reporter crawling his way to retirement. One more DUI and I'm history. Cap's already picked out my replacement. I think he spends the day holding the phone in his hand. The thought of getting rid of me makes him salivate. Gave him a drool bucket for Christmas.

ANGELINA

You have clout.

MONK

I have a deadline in a...twenty minutes.

ANGELINA

Jim, help me here. He's not listening.

JIM

You won a Pulitzer. A Newhouse Award. People listen.

MONK

People don't give a rat's ass for what I have to say. People didn't award me a Pulitzer. A committee did.

ANGELINA

You are a voice!

MONK

Not if I miss my deadline!

ANGELINA

You are my voice. You are their voice.

MONK

Jesus Christ. Stop trying to work me.

ANGELINA

Stop thinking of yourself! Innocent voices need a voice to expose their abuse. Helpless children need a voice to expunge their anger. Dead babies, Monk. Who's going to punish their killers? Be their voice, Monk.

MONK

Stop! Stop! Stop! If I miss my deadline, I'll be fired!

ANGELINA

They won't fire you. Suspend you, maybe. They won't let you go because the Courier will snap you up in a heartbeat. You are the only voice this newspaper has. Be the children's voice.

*MONK paces, growling to himself.*

ANGELINA

Decide. It's news or history.

*MONK decides. He crosses to the door, opens it, yells.*

MONK

Maggie! Maggie! Yeah. You, Newbie. Get in here. *(To ANGELINA)* This had better be sweeter than wine.

*MAGGIE enters. She's young, fresh, eager, talented.*

MONK

*(To MAGGIE)* What are you working on?

MAGGIE

Updating Blume's story on the school bus accident. No one was hurt. Kids just shaken up. Driver of the truck that rammed the bus failed a sobriety test.

MONK

All the kids were safe, so no one gives a shit anymore. Zip it and finish my piece.

MAGGIE

But the city editor—

MONK

Screw Cap. I'll talk to him later.

MAGGIE

If I get fired—

MONK

—nobody's going to get fired, except maybe me. I'll take full responsibility. Who knows? You may end up with my job. You got nothing to lose.

MAGGIE

For your job, I'll risk it.

MONK

My desk---the one with the ship in the bottle—

MAGGIE

—and the nicotine patches in the drawer—

MONK

—Jesus, does everybody know about that? There's a story in my typewriter. Notes on desk. Finish it. You got fifteen minutes. Can you do it?

MAGGIE

Handwriting legible?

MONK

Prettier than a doctor's.

MAGGIE

I'll give it a shot.

MONK

Finish the damn thing. We can retract or add later.

MAGGIE

Gotcha.

*MAGGIE goes to the door.*

MONK

Newbie. Qualifications.

MAGGIE

SU. Newhouse. Editor, The Daily Orange.

MONK

Your last name is Newhouse.

MAGGIE

Yeah.

MONK

Good pedigree. Maybe you can do this.

MAGGIE

In my sleep.

*As she leaves, she notices ANGELINA's flower.*

MAGGIE

Nice flower.

ANGELINA

Forget-me-not.

MAGGIE

Say again?

ANGELINA

It's a forget-me-not.

MAGGIE

An odd name.

ANGELINA

Legend has it a knight and his lady-love were walking near a river bank. As he bent down to pick some flowers, he slipped into the water, and his armor dragged him under. He tossed the flowers to his beloved and implored, "Forget me not."

MAGGIE

Cool story.

*MAGGIE exits. MONK yells after her.*

MONK

Use a dictionary! Show me the finished copy! *(To ANGELINA)* Good pedigree. I have hope. *(To himself)* In for a penny, in for a pound. *(To ANGELINA)* What the hell. Twenty minutes. You were saying?

ANGELINA

I was about to say I'm offended by your constant proclivity to blaspheme.

MONK

Come by it naturally.

ANGELINA

I hope you're as good an investigative reporter as you are a heretic.

MONK

Well, Miss, even us heretics have to eat. (*Pause*) What's your other hole card?

JIM

She has the whole story.

MONK

(*Unsure who to listen to*) This information came...to you...from—

ANGELINA

—I am...Jim, help me here.

JIM

An acquaintance of the Olarssons.

MONK

Olarssons.

ANGELINA

The ones who went to Caribēna. Gustoff Olarsson, a Swedish chemist and Olga, his wife.

MONK

And who is this “acquaintance”?

JIM

That's confidential.

MONK

We can print the story – assuming it's legit – without naming the source, but to verify facts, I have to know who it is. The paper doesn't want to get sued.

JIM

We understand. When the time comes, we'll reveal our sources.

MONK

You know, I love old game shows. Concentration, What's My Line, Beat the Clock. Sounds like we've got one of our own. Stump the Reporter. Well, that's not too good. Maybe you can think of a better title. Who are these people again? In case there's a quiz.

ANGELINA

Gustoff Olarsson and his wife Olga.

JIM

Olga was a "sensitive."

MONK

A what?

ANGELINA

A person attuned to the vibrations of the ethereal world.

JIM

A psychic.

MONK

I'm psychic enough to know these people are probably nut cases. This is fodder for some sleaze rag, not us.

JIM

No, no, she's legit.

MONK

So's a circus. But that don't make it real. Anything she dreamed up wouldn't be admissible in a court of law.

ANGELINA

She also drank. Her testimony would be unreliable. Besides, both are dead.

MONK

There you have it. Game over.

ANGELINA

It's not what Mrs. Olarsson believed. It's what she convinced her husband to believe. It started with nightmares.

JIM

Aka delirium tremors.

ANGELINA

A conclusion by most doctors and psychiatrists. Easy label. Easy answer. Dead end. He said her nightmares were about babies crying and screaming.

MONK

Did she ever lose a child?

ANGELINA

As a matter of fact, yes. I think that made her more sensitive. More nervous. More afraid. More dependent on alcohol and pills.

MONK

How bad did it get?

ANGELINA

Extreme.

MONK

Did Mr. Olarsson seek treatment for her? Sanitarium or AA?

ANGELINA

A...I'm not sure...

JIM

Over the years, he had her committed several times. She threatened suicide the first time, and she actually attempted it another. As out of control as she was, she was hysterical but not self-destructive when she was at home. Olga refused to go to AA. She claimed she didn't have a problem. The problem, she said, was the walls.

ANGELINA

Yes, the walls.

MONK

Explain.

ANGELINA

Olga figured it out. The cries she heard were not in her head but in the walls of the house. In the bedrooms. She dreamt of babies screaming, suffocating, fighting their way to get out. One night, Gustoff woke to find his wife gone. When she did not return in a reasonable amount of time, he went looking for her. He found her in their daughter's room. He heard whimpering. When he opened the door, the light from the hall caught her rubbing her hands across the wallpaper, as if she were trying to find an opening. She said, "They're in there. They're in there. We have to let them out!" Gustoff had no idea what she was talking about. "My babies!" she cried. "My babies are in there!" Gently, Gustoff escorted his wife downstairs. He made her some ginseng tea. Hopefully, she could rest after she drank that. She looked at her husband accusingly. He had to do something, her eyes said. Gustoff assured her he would examine the walls in the morning. With that promise, she went to bed.

MONK

This might make a good movie. But I'm not convinced.

JIM

You're privy to the most unconscionable event in the history of Catholicism—next to the Vatican's refusal to denounce Nazism—and you don't even know it.

MONK

I don't believe either of you.

ANGELINA

That's it. It is a matter of belief. The power of belief and the consequences for the believers. The next morning Gustoff examined the walls. He ran his hands up and down. He looked for cracks. He peeled back some of the wallpaper to see if there was anything behind it. He placed a level on the top, the middle, and the bottom of the walls to see if there was the slightest bulge or irregularity. Nothing. Nothing at all. When he told Olga, she bowed her head and cried. Then went upstairs for the rest of the day. That night, she had another dream. Instead of hearing babies cry, she saw eyes. Big blue eyes darting at her head, imploring her to see. See what? Gustoff watched her closely. For the next couple of days, Olga seemed okay. She didn't talk much, but then again, she didn't rant either. During...during...during...

JIM

During the night of the third day—

ANGELINA

—I got it. I got it. During the night of the third day—

MONK

What? Are you her coach?

JIM

Mr. Flanders, these events have so traumatized Miss Francher that she sometimes needs help in recalling details. I assure you, everything she says is true and in her own words.

MONK

How can she be so traumatized? Unless she witnessed these events.

JIM

That's not possible. She's too young. Angelina, why don't you continue?

ANGELINA

Gustoff heard terrible banging. His first impulse was to call the police. Someone had broken into the house. The pounding came from the same bedroom. Cautiously, he approached. He inched the door open. Olga was swinging a hammer. Bang! She made a hole in the wall. Bang! This time chips of wallpaper and plaster fell to the floor. Bang! The hole was bigger. Bang! He caught her hand and pulled the hammer from the hole. He cradled her in his arms and took her out of the room. He had her lie down on her bed and put a wet compress on her forehead. While she was resting, he called their doctor. Dr. Hines came, gave her a sedative, and promised to call in the morning. Gustoff sat by her bedside all night. The only sound was the whirring of the fan. The walls were quiet.

MONK

Anything in the walls?

ANGELINA

There was nothing. Nothing. He led Olga to the room to show her. There was nothing. Nothing. Nothing to her fears. She didn't say anything but took to her bed again for several days. Gustoff didn't know what to do. How could he live with her fears and irrational acts? Then again, how could she?

MONK

So he finally decided to commit her?

ANGELINA

No. No. It didn't come to that. Gustoff called a carpenter to get an estimate on replacing the wall. While the men talked, Olga wandered off. Gustoff was frantic. He imagined her wandering in the street and being hit by a car. He scoured the neighborhood. No sign of her. He called the police, and they said she'd have to be missing for twenty-four hours before they could do anything. While Gustoff was on the phone, the doorbell rang. Standing on the front stoop were a nun and Olga. He let them in. Olga had wandered over to the convent next door. Seeing that she seemed confused, the nuns invited her in. After a short talk, Olga confided where she lived, and a nun escorted her home. The nun was Sister Mary Augustine. After thanking her, Gustoff took Olga upstairs to lie down. He brought her some Lavender tea. Olga didn't touch it. Instead she bragged about the Chamomile tea the nuns served her.

*Agitated, ANGELINA starts twirling an "invisible" ring with her other fingers.*

ANGELINA

As she tested the temperature of the tea, Olga casually mentioned she knew where the "baby" was. "What baby?" asked Gustoff. "The baby. It's in her belly," said Olga. "Whose belly?" asked Gustoff. "Why, Sister Mary Augustine. I could feel it." "She let you touch it?" "No, silly," said Olga. "I could feel its vibrations. I knew, I mean, I understood for the first time what it means to be a child of God."

MONK

A pregnant nun. And Gustoff believed her?

JIM

Not right away. Not until later. It seems that Olga had a standing invitation to go next door any day mid-afternoon, between morning mass and evening service. She went twice the following week and then every weekday thereafter.

MONK

He must have loved her very much to ignore another sign of her breakdown. That, or he was a masochist.

ANGELINA

No, no. He loved her deeply. He doted on her. He never talked much. Let her carry the bulk of the conversations. Yet, he was gregarious with neighbors and strangers.

MONK

I retract what I said. He's not a masochist. He's a martyr. Someone willing to shoulder the blame for someone else.

ANGELINA

It was only after Olga started talking about the other babies that Gustoff became concerned. And later, a believer.

MONK

*Other babies?*

ANGELINA

Olga said all of the young nuns were having babies. The sisters let her touch their stomachs. "Heart-beats as tiny as the pulse of my wrist," Olga said.

MONK

Holy crap! Why in hell would nuns have babies?

ANGELINA

They were told that because a priest's body has been sanctified to have sex with him wouldn't be a sin. In fact, much was made about a nun entering the priest's "bridal chamber." It was quite a ritual. The "bride" dressed in white. The "groom" dressed in burgundy. Each nun was given a keepsake picture. Of her night with the Christ-substitute.

MONK

And they believed that? What a crock.

ANGELINA

If you're told by Mother Superior and by the priests and by any nun who's had sex that you'll get a special blessing if you give your body to a man of God, it's hard to dismiss that invitation.

JIM

Who could turn down spiritual brownie points?

ANGELINA

Jim, I'm feeling faint.

JIM

Time to eat. (*To MONK*) She's hypoglycemic. Is there a place where she can get a drink and eat her snack?

MONK

Yeah. Go down the hall. Off to the left there's a break room with vending machines. Some tables. Miss Francher, when you pass Newhouse, tell her Monk said to get it in gear.

ANGELINA

Mr. Flanders, it's not my place to tell her anything.

MONK

Go ahead. It's okay. If I didn't nag her, she'd think no one cares.

ANGELINA

You're sure?

MONK

Absolutely. Tell me what she says.

JIM

Go ahead, Angelina. We'll be fine.

ANGELINA

Okay. Won't be long.

She picks up her satchel and opens the door. We hear brief sounds from the newsroom. Monk has leaned back in his chair to catnap.

*JIM fidgets, drinks some water. After a moment— "CAP" PETERSON, the city editor enters. He looks at MONK and then at JIM.*

CAP

Excuse me. Am I interrupting anything?

*JIM stands, extends his hand. CAP shakes it.*

JIM

Hello. I'm Jim Weathersby. My associate and I are briefing Mr. Flanders about events at St. Steven's.

*CAP looks at MONK. Still asleep. Feet on table.*

CAP

I can see you're getting a lot of work done.

JIM

We're waiting for Miss Francher.

CAP

Monk's on deadline.

JIM

He gave his story to the newbie – I mean Miss Newhouse – to finish.

CAP

Oh, he did, huh.

*CAP tilts the table. MONK stirs.*

MONK

What the hell? Oh, Cap. You're early.

CAP

I'm on my "off-schedule" schedule.

MONK

Pretty sly.

*MONK covers his coffee mug with his hand.*

CAP

Do I smell your best friend, Jim Beam?

MONK

Perish the thought.

CAP

Perish your job.

MONK

Now, Cap—

CAP

Cut the crap.

MONK

Yes, Cap.

CAP

You know what my classmates in high school called me?

MONK

Perish the thought.

CAP

Give it a try.

MONK

"Clarence the Clown"?

CAP

Hardly. You were referring to *Clarabelle* the Clown—Howdy Doody?

JIM

Can I guess?

CAP and MONK

Stay out of this! /Butt out!

MONK

I give up. Surprise me.

CAP

"Big Sniffer." That's right. "Big Sniffer."

*MONK and JIM look away, smirking.*

*CAP, Continued*

That's right, laugh you hyenas. I inherited this incredible gift of smell from my grandmother, who could identify a woman's perfume two rooms away. I'll have you know I saved the high school from burning down. I was going to class and I smelled something. Ran to the office to tell the principal. Told him something was burning downstairs in the area of the auto shop. He investigated. Some student had left a trail of acetone on the floor near the metal grinder. Sparks lit it and it raced towards the paint cabinets. Whoosh! Fire city. I got a commendation from the mayor and a big article in the paper. Guess what the headline was? "Sensitive Sniffer Saves School!" November 14, 1956. Every anniversary, the school board sends me a congratulatory card. With a nose like mine, I could've gone places. I could've been a contender. A world class vintner or a sommelier. A champion perfumier. When I saw my face on the front page and inhaled the aroma of fresh ink, I knew in my heart I was destined to become a newsman. My nose led me in another direction, that's all. So don't kid me, Monk. I smell liquor in this room.

MONK

Cap, we're not so different. You smell alcohol. I drink it.

CAP

Not funny.

MONK

Aw, Cap, I know I'm on a short leash—

CAP

—you ran out of leash, buddy.

MONK

Please, Cap, not today.

CAP

What's so special about today?

MONK

St. Steven's is having a fire sale. The convent and property are up for grabs.

CAP

Heard Brantley snapped it up for a song.

MONK

That's what I'm investigating. With the help of Mr. Wethersby and Ms. Francher.

CAP

You're on deadline and you dump your story on Newhouse? She's got her own assignment.

MONK

Don't bust a gut. Insurance won't cover it. All it needed was the wrap-up. Newhouse can do it.

CAP

Monk, if I weren't allergic to alcohol, I'd take up drinking just to see what makes you tick.

MONK

There's a big story here, Cap. Maybe a scandal. Let me fish it.

CAP

I should can you and hire two know-it-all newbies. Maybe three.

MONK

You been saying that for years.

CAP

Time I took my own advice. The one New Year's resolution I haven't kept.

MONK

Of the three, you'll get one who's average, one who can type, and one who knows how to wear a tie.

CAP

Then I'll reload my rolodex from Pulitzer Prize winners.

*He looks at Jim then back at MONK.*

CAP, *Continued*

A scandal you say?

MONK

Looks that way.

CAP

A scandal spikes circulation. Got you some more leash, Monk.

MONK

Thanks, Cap.

*ANGELINA enters.*

ANGELINA

Oh, excuse me. Am I interrupting?

JIM

No, Angelina. You're just in time. (To CAP) I'm sorry. We haven't met.

*CAP offers his hand to ANGELINA.*

CAP

I'm Clarence Peterson, city editor. And you are—

ANGELINA

Angelina Francher.

CAP

And you are—

MONK

(To ANGELINA) —about to continue your story.

CAP

(To ANGELINA) Your story. (To MONK) Remember, I got a rolodex of hungry reporters waiting to fill your spot.

*He sniffs. Smells ANGELINA's flower.*

CAP

I detect a faint aroma of earth tones, harmonious and healing. Comforting as a setting sun. It is...a—it's on the tip of my tongue—a—

ANGELINA

—Forget-me-not.

CAP

Yes, of course. I'd know that fragrance anywhere. I must remind my wife to plant some. *(To ANGELINA and JIM)* Good to have met you. *(To MONK)* Give me a story and I'll burn my rolodex.

*He exits. MONK walks after him to shut door. Hollers after him.*

MONK

Bet your sweet ass I will!

JIM

Angelina, how we feeling?

ANGELINA

Much better thanks. Ate my cheese'n'crackers and took my meds. With water, not soda.

JIM

Good girl. Feel up to it? Another round?

ANGELINA

I'm game.

MONK

Why don't we sit down?

*They sit. Awkward pause.*

MONK

*(To ANGELINA)* What did she say?

ANGELINA

Who?

MONK

The newbie. Newhouse.

ANGELINA

What makes you think she said anything?

MONK

She's got spunk, that's why. What did she say?

ANGELINA

Well, after she cussed you out, she said she had finished your story and showed it to Cap—

MONK

—that rat bastard jerking me around—

ANGELINA

—and she said because you sent me to check up on her, she cut up your nicotine patches.

MONK

I knew it! I knew that girl had moxie. Doesn't take crap. She'll be a reporter yet!

JIM

Mr. Flanders, Miss Francher tires easily. Couldn't we let her continue?

MONK

Sure. Sure. Lead on Macduff.

ANGELINA

Okay. Where was I?

JIM

Let me check my notes.

*JIM pulls some papers out of his satchel.*

MONK

What, she's got this memorized? What's going on here?

JIM

Mr. Flanders, this is a long and complicated story. Angelina is determined to recount the events as accurately as possible. She and I have discussed the details and sequences of events. I don't have a transcript – if that's what you're thinking – just rough notes. Just a minute. Ah, something about “tiny heartbeats” I believe. Start there.

ANGELINA

Okay. (Takes a deep breath) For a while Olga stopped the daily visits because she became engrossed in a new project. She was determined to learn how to crochet, so she could knit booties and shirts for the newborns. As wild as her idea sounded, Gustoff went along with it because her activity kept her focused and calm. They got books from the library and shopped at craft stores. Olga sat on the couch with all of her materials snug around her like a nest and slowly learned to crochet.

MONK

Wasn't Gustoff worried that other people might hear Olga's gossip and start a rumor-mill? You'd think the nuns would be worried about innuendo, too. A fake scandal can do as much damage as a real one.

ANGELINA

Absolutely. Gustoff went next door to apologize to the sisters for Olga's behavior, but he wasn't invited in. The nun at the door was elderly, too old to bear children. There was no way he could ascertain whether any nun was pregnant. The old nun allayed Gustoff's fears. She said she was aware of Olga's quirky behavior. It would be best for all if she didn't visit for awhile. She warned Gustoff if Olga persisted in giving gifts of baby clothing, the sisters would donate the items to needy families in the parish. In the meantime, the sisters would pray for Olga's recovery.

MONK

How could Gustoff keep Olga from wanting to visit the nuns?

ANGELINA

He distracted her. He planned excursions to arboretums, museums, art shows, visits to family in-state and out, even vacations outside the country. They traveled to Florida in 1954, bought a house for the winter in Felixburg. They made their first trip to Caribēna in 1955. Life was predictable and pleasant.

MONK

I get the feeling they were living in the eye of a hurricane.

JIM

Very much so.

MONK

Earlier you said Gustoff became a "believer." What converted him?

ANGELINA

One night, Gustoff was having trouble sleeping. He got up and went downstairs to the kitchen for a glass of milk. He remembered he had forgotten to turn off the sprinkler. He went outside in his boxers. It was three A.M. Who would be awake at that hour? He didn't care if anyone saw him. He turned off the spigot. As he was coiling the hose, he heard faint screams. They came from the convent. He walked over to the elevated rock garden that separated his property from the church's. He climbed to the top and listened. There were faint, intermittent screams. Puzzled, he went back to the house. The next morning, he didn't tell Olga about the screams. That afternoon he walked over to the convent. This time a young nun cracked open the door. Gustoff could only see her face. He inquired politely about the screams he had heard and asked if anyone was ill. The nun told him one of the sisters had a high fever and stomach cramps, making her delirious and yell out. Everything was under control she said. Gustoff volunteered to help in any way he could. The sister thanked him and he returned home.

*Absentmindedly, ANGELINA twirls her "ring" finger.*

MONK

You used to wear a ring.

ANGELINA

Oh, that. Force of habit I guess. Was married once. Now divorced.

MONK

Me, too. Twice. I'd offer condolences, but sometimes divorce is the right thing to do.

ANGELINA

Not in my case. I regret the whole thing. I can't forget it.

JIM

I've tried many times to have Angelina to get rid of the ring.

*She lifts a chain from around her neck. On it is the ring.*

ANGELINA

Even though I can't wear it, it's still a part of me. A reminder of my penance.

*She tucks the chain under her blouse.*

MONK

Do I make you nervous? Playing with your ring finger. Avoiding eye contact.

ANGELINA

No. No. Not you. Well, I feel like I'm testifying. Under oath. I have to be careful what I say. God punishes liars.

MONK

Then why did He make so many politicians?

JIM

Without them, you wouldn't have much to write about.

MONK

Thank God for small favors. Too bad every year isn't election year. We have so much fun, our fingers chuckle as we type.

*ANGELINA doesn't laugh at the joke. Her head is bowed as if she were a little girl who's been reprimanded.*

JIM

Angelina, is anything the matter?

ANGELINA

I hate conflict. I hate remembering these things.

MONK

Remembering?

ANGELINA

Remembering the things I've told others. Told Jim. These things were so horrible. Sometimes I get confused. Mostly, I want to forget what I know.

JIM

What you've been *told*.

ANGELINA

Yes. What I've been told.

MONK

Who told you?

ANGELINA

You won't leave it alone.

MONK

Give me one source.

JIM

Mr. Flanders, this can come out later.

MONK

One source.

ANGELINA

Mr. Olarsson.

MONK

Oh, come on!

ANGELINA

Before he died!

MONK

I don't believe you!

ANGELINA

1985! Olga died in 1979. Gustoff kept a lid on his grief and poured it out to me.

MONK

Why would he tell you? Who *are* you?

ANGELINA

A social worker. With a Master's degree. Over 3,000 hours of supervised clinical experience. With a specialty in grief counseling for the elderly.

MONK

That tells me *what* you are, not *who* you are. Why would he confide in you and not in any of his friends?

ANGELINA

Gustoff was afraid his friends would talk. He felt he had not done enough to help Olga. He felt ashamed. So ashamed that in 1986 he blew his head off—like Hemingway.

MONK

Do you have anything tangible besides the airplane ticket?

*ANGELINA looks at JIM. He takes a small book from his briefcase and lays it on the table. MONK stands to get the book, but ANGELINA puts her hand over it.*

ANGELINA

You can look at it when we're done.

MONK

A diary.

ANGELINA

Olga's. Deranged as she was, she could still record her dementia. That's admissible.

MONK

All of this...in her diary?

ANGELINA

Yes.

MONK

The ravings of a mad woman wouldn't help your case in court.

ANGELINA

A jury could see she had lucid moments, too.

MONK

Maybe. Go on.

ANGELINA

The roles changed. Olga slept fine. Gustoff had the nightmares. He thought it might be indigestion. He cut out sugar and potatoes. The nightmares continued.

JIM

Understandable, given the stress he had been under.

MONK

What kind of nightmares? Like Olga's?

ANGELINA

Yes, but more vivid. Babies suffocated. Babies crushed.

*She taps into primeval memories and begins to relive them.*

ANGELINA

Babies boiled like lobsters. Babies ripped apart! Babies bashed with hammers!

*She stands. Her memories play out before her.*

ANGELINA, *Continued*

Contorted faces. Screams of the suffering! Wails of the wretched! Blood red! Blood red butchery! Red, bleeding broken babies! Red baby blood!

*ANGELINA crumples, but Jim catches her. She is sobbing.  
MONK comes around the table to them.*

JIM

Angie, Angie. There now. It's all right. It's over. It's past. You're safe. Let go. Let go.

MONK

Jim, take her outside. Where she can recoup. I'm going to make a few notes. If she's able, we'll continue.

JIM

Sounds like a plan.

*JIM escorts the distraught ANGELINA outside. MONK stands in thought. Trying to make sense of what he's heard. He has an idea. He opens the door.*

MONK

D.J.! D.J.! Get your ass in here!

*He takes a pad off the table and writes.  
MAGGIE enters.*

MAGGIE

I don't do coffee. Get it yourself.

MONK

Don't want coffee. I want D.J.

MAGGIE

He left. His wife is having a baby.

MONK

Suddenly, everything is about babies.

*He hands her a piece of paper.*

MONK, *Continued*

Maggie, I want you to make some calls. Brantley University. Their financial comptroller. Find out if they hired a building inspector to evaluate the convent. It's Sisters of St. Magdalene. Ask if the inspector found anything unusual. Call the Archdiocese. Imply we have evidence of an impropriety at St. Steven's.

MAGGIE

Impropriety?

MONK

Nuns having babies. The Archdiocese sanctioning a cover-up.

MAGGIE

Whoa!

MONK

Let's stir the pot.

MAGGIE

Betcha they lawyer up.

MONK

If they're smart. One more thing. I want you to call Claytonia Social Services to find out if Angelina Francher and Jim Wethersby work for them. And how long. If that's a dead end, call area hospitals and private agencies to see if they're on payroll with them. It's all on the paper. Whatever you find, write it down, and bring it to me.

MAGGIE

This will be fun!

*MAGGIE exits. CAP enters.*

CAP

I saw that woman in the hallway. She's pretty upset. What did you say to her?

MONK

Wasn't me. She did it to herself.

CAP

Story, yet?

MONK

We're fishing. Maggie's making a couple of calls. Brantley University. Archbishop. See if anyone takes the bait.

CAP

Careful. Don't want our asses sued.

MONK

Cost of doing business.

CAP

Better be a solid story. If Old Man Gunther gets his nuts in a ringer, you're gone.

MONK

I know.

CAP

Gonna make some calls. May need to have your replacement ready.

*CAP exits.*

MONK

Shit. What do publishers know anyway?

*JIM and ANGELINA return. JIM helps her to her seat. He sits.*

MONK

Miss Francher, if this is too much for you, we can postpone this. Come back when you're feeling better.

ANGELINA

No. No. I'm fine, really.

JIM

Are you sure you want to do this?

ANGELINA

Yes, of course. If I don't finish, I never will.

JIM

Okay.

MONK

Okay. He confided in you. Three years later he commits suicide. Because he had nightmares? Out of guilt? What powered his guilt? What was his sin?

ANGELINA

Evelyn Smith.

MONK

Haven't I heard this name today?

JIM

Evelyn Smith. The visitor to Caribēna. Who stayed behind.

MONK

Why would she stay if she were visiting?

ANGELINA

"Smith" was her cover. She was really Sister Mary Clare.

MONK

Was she assigned to a church there?

ANGELINA

No.

MONK

Then why did she stay?

ANGELICA

Sister Mary was accepted by the priests of La Iglesias de Mártir.

MONK

She's not reassigned, but she stays. How long?

ANGELICA

The rest of her life.

MONK

That's a long visit. Unless...she's...hiding. Now why would a nun have to hide from the Church in a church? Out of the country?

JIM

Connect the dots.

MONK

A nun would have to hide because of some, some embarrassment to the Church.

JIM

Yes.

MONK

An embarrassment. It---it can only be an embarrassment if---if what was done was witnessed by someone, someone who could talk and make the event public. If public, then the Church would have a difficult time explaining it.

JIM

Yes.

MONK

Gustoff.

JIM

Keep going.

MONK

Gustoff and Sister Mary.

JIM

Bingo.

ANGELINA

One night, after drinking, Gustoff stumbled off the front stoop to relieve himself in the yard. He heard soft crying. Searching, he found a dark form huddled by the garden. It was Sister Mary Clare. She was in labor. Gustoff tried to get her to go into the house, but she was in too much pain. She said her water had broken. Mary couldn't tell anyone in the convent lest she be restrained until delivery. Once her child was born, it would be disposed of like the others. She fled and collapsed in Gustoff's yard. Her fear only speeded her delivery. Gustoff took off his shirt to wrap the baby. He used what was left of his vodka to sanitize his hands. Huffing and puffing, Mary pushed the baby out. With his pen knife---the one he used every morning to core an apple at breakfast--- Gustoff cut the umbilical cord. A slap, the baby wailed. He had no sooner wrapped the newborn when another head appeared. Twins. A blue lump slid out, the cord wrapped around its neck. Gustoff cut the cord, uncoiled it, and slapped the lifeless shape. Nothing. He slapped again. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing. Gustoff lay the dead child on the grass and walked Sister Mary and her baby to the house. After he had gotten them settled – Olga was beside herself with joy – he buried the child – a boy – in the garden. Later, he would mark the grave with forget-me-nots.

*ANGELINA glances at the flower she is wearing.*

JIM

You could see why Gustoff couldn't call an ambulance or take the mother and child to a hospital.

MONK

There would be questions. An official record. An investigation. A problem for the Church.

JIM

Exactly.

MONK

Surely the nuns were looking for Sister Mary.

ANGELINA

The first place they looked was Gustoff's. He explained matter-of-factly what had happened. Mother Superior asserted that Sister Mary would be better in their care. Gustoff refused to let them take her. He demanded to see Reverend Father Ranelli, the head pastor. For ten minutes, Mother Superior danced around his request until Gustoff threatened to call the hospital. When Father Ranelli arrived, he took one look at Sister Mary and the baby and asked to speak to Gustoff alone. They were only gone a few minutes, but it was clear when they returned they had a meeting of minds. Father Ranelli took Mother Superior aside. With instructions, she and the other nuns left. Father Ranelli said any expense for Sister Mary and the baby's care would be paid by the diocese. He promised a check by morning. He said a prayer for the newborn and left.

MONK

The "embarrassment" was alive. The Church couldn't hide this one in the walls.

ANGELINA

The sexual escapades of the priests and nuns might not stop, but the "fruit" of their "labor" had to be dispatched differently.

MONK

Why not local adoption?

ANGELINA

Too many questions. Too many lies. Too close to home. What if this were only the first of many surviving births? Any kind of paper trail had to be far, far away.

MONK

Caribēna.

ANGELINA

Caribēna. 1957. Open. Close to Miami. Catholic. Controllable. Haven for mother and child.

MONK

Brilliant. Gustoff and Olga were fronts, ordinary citizens enjoying a tropical vacation. All expenses paid by her Holy Mother the Church.

ANGELINA

Yes.

MONK

Except for one thing. Why would Gustoff help the Church? Why didn't he expose the crimes and the conspiracy?

JIM

Perhaps he was afraid of what would happen to Sister Mary, her child, and all the other nuns who had children if left to the devices of the Church.

MONK

Then he would have turned them in. I don't think that's it.

ANGELINA

I wondered that, too. I asked Gustoff, but he wouldn't say. After his death, I received a box of his books. Gustoff knew I had always been an avid reader. The note inside the box read, "Gustoff wanted you to have these." A very eclectic mix. There were pulp novels, lurid mysteries, some classics, a few children's books, and a Bible. The Olarsson family Bible as it turned out. The spine was creased and the cover kept opening to a page loose from the binding. There was the record of the birth of a daughter, Nellie Olarsson. Born November 1, 1950. Died November 1, 1950. A piece of yellow yarn marked an inside page. In pencil, a Psalm was underlined. What was it again, Jim?

JIM

Let me check our notes.

*He thumbs through his pages.*

JIM, *Continued*

Ah, it was...Psalm 72:4.

ANGELINA

Read it, please.

JIM

"He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor." My note is "Save the children of the needy" was underlined twice.

MONK

Isn't it odd the relatives didn't save the family Bible?

JIM

It was a Gideon's. Ordinary looking. A souvenir from some hotel room. Who would have known? The notation wasn't in Gustoff's handwriting. Probably Olga's.

MONK

That doesn't answer the question.

JIM

The answer wasn't in the Bible. That's for sure.

ANGELINA

I think it was a clue. I scanned newspaper microfiche archives. I checked the hospitals. With what I knew of the Olarsson family history, it was easy to convince the nurses I was a family. There is no record anywhere of any child with the name Olarsson born on November 1, 1950 in the city of Claytonia.

MONK

A home birth.

ANGELINA

A home death. Something must have gone wrong. Gustoff never called a doctor, a hospital, or the police. Olga wasn't in any condition to protest.

MONK

Seems he didn't want an inquiry.

JIM

Something to be kept private.

MONK

Are you suggesting Gustoff was guilty of the same crime as the nuns who killed their babies?

ANGELINA

We'll never know.

JIM

Nellie's death could have been the result of a birth defect, human error, stupid accident. Having known the suffering from the loss of a child, perhaps Gustoff felt he could atone by helping the nuns and their babies find a safe haven.

MONK

He was taking quite a risk. He could have been arrested.

ANGELINA

After the death of one's only child, what is the risk? A parent can't feel any more pain.

MONK

Wait a minute. You said “nuns and their babies.” Plural. You mean—

ANGELINA

Gustoff and Olga made many trips to Ciudad de las Flores before Caribēna. closed. During that time, an orphanage was built. When possible, discrete adoptions were allowed at a price.

*She takes a bundle of tickets from her bag and dumps them on the table.*

ANGELINA, *Continued*

See for yourself.

*MONK leafs through the stack.*

MONK

Holy Christmas. There must be twenty—thirty here.

ANGELINA

Give or take.

MONK

Oh, my God.

ANGELINA

Out of adversity comes opportunity. Instead of looking at these orphans as liabilities, a church official had the idea of offering these children to staunch middle class Catholic parents who were previously turned down for adoption. The children became a cash-cow, more than paying for the expenses to house them.

MONK

Oh, my God.

ANGELINA

I wish you wouldn't say that.

MONK

Oh, my God. Somebody's got to say it.

JIM

Believe her now?

MONK

All of these couldn't have come from the Sisters of St. Magdalene's Convent.

ANGELINA

True. Since Gustoff was a willing servant, any nun from the Claytonia diocese who was in trouble accompanied him to Ciudad de las Flores.

MONK

Did this deportation ever stop?

ANGELINA

When Hernando Sanchez came to power, Caribēna closed. After the 1960 presidential election, the Vatican reassigned the Archbishop of Claytonia. Priests and nuns were reassigned, too.

MONK

A papal purging to clean house.

ANGELINA

Everything seemed to quiet down.

JIM

Of course, this is just speculation. We can't verify anything that happened after 1959. The orphanage was destroyed in the revolution to depose de Torrez.

MONK

We can't verify anything. We got Olga's diary, some airline tickets, and hearsay testimony of Gustoff. With priests and nuns reassigned, it would be hard to track them down. Even if we knew who they were. The Church will cry confidentiality. Some of the perps may be dead. Caribēna's out. Impossible to get in. With Sanchez's spies, unlikely we'd find someone who'd talk to us.

ANGELINA

The proof is in the walls of the convent.

MONK

So you say. Need proof to get an injunction to examine the building. But the proof is inside the walls. Good time for Gustoff to speak from the grave.

*ANGELINA takes out a dog-eared document from her satchel, lays it on the table and shoves it to MONK.*

ANGELINA

Will this do?

*MONK grabs it and starts perusing.*

MONK

Gustoff's testimony.

ANGELINA

Witnessed and notarized.

MONK

You kept this from me because—

ANGELINA

You were testing me. I was testing you. See if you asked the right questions. See if you could persevere until you were satisfied.

MONK

Hot damn! Jesus Christ! We're back in the game!

ANGELINA

Stop taking the Lord's name in vain!

MONK

You get me all worked up, and you expect me to be calm?

ANGELINA

I expect you to be discrete. Protect your sources.

MONK

I protect my sources. Once I know who they are.

ANGELINA

What do you mean?

MONK

Who are you really?

ANGELINA

I already told you.

MONK

You know too much not to be personally involved.

ANGELINA

I am not *involved*.

MONK

*Connected* in some way.

JIM

Mr. Flanders, Miss Francher's credentials are authentic, I assure you.

MONK

What about yours? Since when does a social worker need an associate?

JIM

This is a very unusual case.

MONK

I bet. Who are you?

JIM

I'm...I'm Angelina's associate.

MONK

A social worker?

JIM

Er...no.

MONK

You're like some caretaker.

ANGELINA

Is this necessary? We gave you the story.

MONK

Let's see some identification from both of you.

JIM

You're kidding, right?

MONK

I need to know my sources are legit.

*MAGGIE enters.*

MAGGIE

'scuse me.

*Hands paper to MONK. He glances at it.*

MONK

Is that all?

MAGGIE

Pithy, isn't it?

MONK

I haven't heard that word in twenty years. Where'd you get it?

MAGGIE

My self-improvement program. "Word of the Day."

MONK

Tomorrow, try this word—*fraudulent*.

MAGGIE

Know it. How 'bout *encapsulate*?

MONK

"to close in." The babies were *encapsulated* in the walls.

ANGELINA

I don't want to hear that!

MONK

Thanks, Maggie.

MAGGIE

(*As she leaves*) Encapsulate, encapsulate, encapsulate.

JIM

Angelina, I think we should go.

ANGELINA

All right.

*They stand.*

MONK

You might want to hear this.

*They look at each other.*

MONK

A spokesman for Brantley University said the convent was indeed inspected, and nothing unusual was found.

ANGELINA

You couldn't expect them to look inside the walls.

MONK

I know. At least we have it on record there was an inspection. The structure is over fifty years and old poorly maintained. A fire trap they say. That's why it's being torn down. As to the allegation that the Church knew of nuns having babies and covering up that fact, their response was to contact their law firm, Fischer, Frankel, and Fineman. Very old, very rich, very ruthless. Who would have thought—Jews protecting Catholics.

JIM

The Church's response indicates that we have a case.

MONK

They're probably preparing an injunction to prevent the paper from publishing anything. If they succeed, we're dead fish in the water.

ANGELINA

You can't let this die. I'm risking everything!

MONK

So am I.

JIM

What do you want us to do? Alert Brantley University so they can cancel the sale?

MONK

Brantley has got such a smokin' deal that they won't care what's buried in the rubble. It all goes to the dump.

JIM

How do you beat an injunction?

MONK

Convince a judge we have evidence and credibility.

ANGELINA

You have the evidence.

MONK

We don't have credibility.

JIM

Yes, we do. If we weren't being above board on this, we could have blackballed the Church. They would've paid us *beaucoup* to go away.

ANGELINA

This is not about money.

MONK

Who are you people? Maggie checked with social service agencies, public and private, and hospitals. No one has heard of you Miss Francher. You're not in the phone book.

JIM

She doesn't have a phone.

MONK

As for "Mr. Jim Wethersby," he's invisible, too. There is a J. J. Wethersby employed by the Helmer Institute, a private facility for people with psychological disorders.

ANGELINA

I am who I say I am! I am a social worker!

MONK

You're a fraud, Miss Francher—if that's your real name.

ANGELINA

That's my adopted name.

MONK

Adopted? "Curiouser and curiouser," cried Alice. What was your birth name?

ANGELINA

I don't remember. It might be on my birth certificate. But that's buried somewhere.

MONK

When were you adopted?

ANGELINA

Shortly after birth.

JIM

What are you fishing for, Mr. Flanders?

ANGELINA

If my responses will convince him to publish our story, I will answer any question.

MONK

Where were you born?

ANGELINA

Here. Claytonia.

MONK

Local girl.

ANGELINA

Born here, raised in Kirkwood, Ohio.

MONK

Quite a jump—Claytonia to Kirkwood. How'd you do it?

ANGELINA

My adoptive parents lived there.

MONK

I mean where did your parents adopt you?

ANGELINA

You'd have to ask them. They never told me the circumstances.

MONK

Siblings?

ANGELINA

Brother.

MONK

Your religion?

JIM

What's that got to do with anything?

ANGELINA

Catholic.

MONK

Where did you go to school?

ANGELINA

Prospect Elementary.

MONK

High school?

ANGELINA

St. Augustine's.

MONK

What kind of school—

JIM

—Don't tell him, Angelina!

MONK

Do you believe in the Bible, Angelina?

ANGELINA

With all my heart.

MONK

Then perhaps I'll hear the truth. Why do you object to my cussing?

ANGELINA

It's not the cussing, exactly. It's taking the name of our savior in vain.

MONK

You love Jesus, don't you?

ANGELINA

With all my heart.

MONK

He's real to you, isn't he?

ANGELINA

As real as you or me.

MONK

You married him, didn't you?

JIM

Don't be preposterous!

ANGELINA

No.

MONK

How 'bout "mystically betrothed"? Is that better?

JIM

Flanders—

ANGELINA

—No.

MONK  
Liar.

ANGELINA  
I do not lie.

MONK  
Liar.

ANGELINA  
I cannot lie.

MONK  
Liar.

JIM  
You can stop, Angelina. Stop, and we can go.

ANGELINA  
I've never been married.

MONK  
Legally.

ANGELINA  
No.

MONK  
Physically.

ANGELINA  
No.

MONK  
Not married.

JIM  
Didn't you hear what she said?

MONK  
What do you call a woman who gives her body over to the work of the Christ?

ANGELINA  
A nun.

MONK

Confess, *Sister*.

ANGELINA

I am not a nun.

MONK

Then I'm the Holy Ghost.

ANGELINA

Blasphemer!

JIM

Angelina, you're getting worked up.

ANGELINA

I am not a nun! I am not a nun! I am not a nun!

MONK

You were! Confess!

JIM

That was Angelina years ago. She's a different person now.

MONK

I don't think so.

JIM

Based on what?

MONK

She has the ring. Still. *(To ANGELINA)* Don't you, Sister?

ANGELINA

Yes.

JIM

What's your point?

*MONK comes around the table to face her.*

MONK

You just can't get rid of him, can you? So here's your life. You became a nun. You probably had sex with a priest, traumatizing you. You felt conflicted. Left the order. Became a social worker as you say. But your guilt, your guilt of having betrayed Christ made you depressed.

MONK, *Continued*

Your guilt about holding back the secrets of St. Steven's drove you over the edge. All those dead babies. You knew, yet you did nothing. Toying with suicide has taken the place of saying the rosary. Am I right?

JIM

That's confidential. Don't answer!

MONK

Am I right?

ANGELINA

Yes!

MONK

You're a fine example. Betray Jesus. Betray broken babies. You've been lying to yourself. You've been lying to me—still.

ANGELINA

I am not lying!

MONK

You can take the nun out of Jesus, but you can't take Jesus out of the nun.

ANGELINA

I don't want to hear this!

MONK

You've committed the greatest sin of all—throwing away God's gift of life. You're going to hell with all those friggin' priests and whoring nuns—

*ANGELINA clasps her hands and kneels. JIM stands, comforting her.*

ANGELINA

[Latin]: Mea culpa. Mea culpa. Deus meus, ex toto corde poenitet me omnium meorum peccatorum, eaque detestor, quia peccando, non solum poenas

[English]: My fault. My fault. O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of Heaven—

MONK

—Sing to the Holy Void, Sister—

ANGELINA

[Latin]:—a te juste statutas promeritus sum, sed praesertim quia offendi te—

[English]:—and the pains of Hell, but most of all because I offend Thee—

MONK

—because you are as guilty and damned—

ANGELINA

[Latin]:—summum bonum, ac dignum qui super omnia diligaris. Ideo firmiter propono, adiuvante gratia tua,

[English]:—my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love—

MONK

—as those with infant blood on their hands!

ANGELINA

[Latin]:—de certo me non peccatum peccandique occasiones proximas fugitum. Amen.

[English]:—I firmly resolve with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, do penance, and amend my life. Amen.

MONK

Sing your song of sorrow, Sister.

ANGELINA

[Latin]: Deprecor te, elementissime Pater, propter misericordiam tuam, supplico et exorio,

[English]: I implore Thee, most compassionate Father, on account of Thy mercy, I beg Thee and pray Thee—

MONK

It won't do you any good. You're going to hell!

ANGELINA

[Latin]:—ut perducas me ad bonum finem, et ad veram paenitentiam, puram confessionem—

[English]:—that Thou wouldst lead me to a good end, to true penance, to a perfect confession—

JIM

Stop! Stop! Stop badgering her. You're scaring my patient!

MONK

—You are damned!

ANGELINA

[Latin]:—et dignam satisfactionem omnium peccatorum meorum. Amen.

[English]:—and to worthy satisfaction for all my sins. Amen.

*ANGELINA sobs. JIM comforts her.*

ANGELINA, *Continued*

Why do you torture me? I've told you the truth.

MONK

You torture yourself. You haven't told me everything.

ANGELINA

I swear.

*JIM confronts MONK, grabbing his shoulders.*

JIM

If she has a nervous breakdown, I'm holding you and this newspaper responsible!

*MONK pushes JIM away.*

MONK

You came here under false pretenses. I thought I was dealing with two sane, healthy people, not a patient and her doctor.

JIM

Is this how you get your stories? Badger the sick until they break?

MONK

I had to know.

JIM

Angelina. Angelina. Sit down.

*She sits.*

JIM, *Continued*

Take deep breaths. In. Out. In. Out.

*She breathes deeply and starts to relax.*

ANGELINA

Could I have some water please? Cold, if you have it.

MONK

See what I can do.

*MONK exits.*

JIM

Are you all right?

ANGELINA

I need a minute or two.

*She takes a deep breath, get up, walks around.*

ANGELINA

Jim, am I really going to Hell?

JIM

Angelina, you yourself have said that God is a merciful God. He understands what you went through and why you've waited so long to say anything about it. In fact, you're probably earning extra brownie points because you are finally dealing with it in a responsible way.

ANGELINA

But those things Mr. Flanders said. I—I—

JIM

—a reporter's trick. Goad you. Get you to spill secrets.

ANGELINA

He's not finished. I can tell. He wants more. What do I have to say—?

JIM

—It's up to you. If it's the only way he will write the story, you might have to. Remember, just because he's fishing, doesn't mean you have to get caught in his net.

*MONK enters and hands a glass of water to ANGELINA.*

MONK

Lucked out. Simmons had some ice in his cooler.

ANGELINA

Thanks.

*She sits.*

ANGELINA, *Continued*

Mr. Flanders, you are a mean son of a bitch!

MONK

I thought nuns don't cuss.

ANGELINA

I'm not a nun, remember?

MONK

Somehow, "son of a bitch" doesn't have the same effect coming from you.

ANGELICA

Son of a bitch! Son of a bitch! How about—Hell! Hot shit and damn!

JIM

Angelina, stop.

ANGELINA

But I'm learning!

JIM

Stop.

*ANGELINA giggles.*

MONK

Mr. Wethersby, I'd appreciate an explanation.

JIM

I am the J. J. Wethersby you alluded to. Jackson James. When I was growing up, I was known as "J.J." Most people call me "Jim." Angelina was recommended to me by St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center on an outpatient basis. She had been recuperating from head trauma suffered in an automobile accident. Even though her doctors felt there was no neurological damage, Angelina was suffering from severe depression accompanied by post-natal nightmares. Science has recently discovered that emotional stress experienced in the womb can later manifest itself in the adult psyche. I have been treating Angelina for four months. During this time, she has told me everything she has told you. Even with the proof she has, I cannot state conclusively her story is true. Who knows what details or events she has invented or embellished. I had hoped her retelling of these horrible events would allow her to begin the healing process. It didn't. I was the wrong person to confide in. Angelina needed someone she could confess to—a priest, a law enforcement officer, a reporter—someone with the power to right what she sees is a wrong.

MONK

So I'm the thug for her therapy.

JIM

If you want to put it that way.

MONK

I don't like being played.

JIM

I gambled. She won. I won't apologize.

MONK

You're either a very good doctor or you have a boat-load of malpractice insurance.

JIM

The former, I hope.

MONK

You said something about "emotional stress in the womb."

JIM

Yes.

MONK

Angelina. How old is your brother?

ANGELINA

He died in childbirth.

JIM

Fishing again?

MONK

Jesus was a fisher of men. Can't I be a fisher of nuns?

ANGELINA

You have me over a barrel. You know I am sworn to tell the truth.

MONK

You know so much not to be personally involved. Have you ever been outside the United States?

ANGELINA

Yes.

MONK

*Lived* outside the States?

ANGELINA

Yes.

Germany? France? Italy?

MONK

Caribēna.

ANGELINA

Caribēna. Where in Caribēna?

MONK

Casa Feliz. The orphanage.

ANGELINA

The Olarssons took you.

MONK

Yes.

ANGELINA

After your brother died.

MONK

Yes.

ANGELINA

You are the twin who survived.

MONK

Angelina, you don't have to say—

JIM

You despise yourself because you lived and he didn't. Isn't that it?

MONK

Mr. Flanders, you're not qualified to—!

JIM

—Tell the truth!

MONK

I—I— *(To Jim)* Jim, I—

ANGELINA

Enough! She's had enough! *(To ANGELINA)* It's okay. You don't have to say it. It's okay.

JIM

ANGELINA

My poor baby. Baby brother. I felt his spirit leave!

MONK

“Miss Karen Smith.”

ANGELINA

Yes. Now you know who I am.

MONK

I know who you are.

ANGELINA

Yes.

MONK

Now we have credibility, a case, and a story.

ANGELINA

My secret...a serpent...strangling my soul.

MONK

How did you know you were the daughter of a nun? You were too young to remember, and your adoptive parents weren't privy to that information.

ANGELINA

My mother—my real mother, Sister Mary Clare wrote a letter with instructions that it be forwarded to me when I reached eighteen. The letter was kept in my file, tagged with a red label that meant further action need be taken at a future date. That letter was sent to my adoptive parents, and they forwarded it to me.

MONK

Why did you leave the Order? It wasn't because of a priest, was it?

ANGELINA

All my life I wanted to be closer to God. I thought by becoming a nun I could have a special relationship with Him. My first assignment was at St. Cecilia's in Oberon, Florida. For a while I was happy. Then a sadness crept over me. I don't know what it was. It wasn't the priests, the nuns, or any of the parishioners. The places---the church, the convent---became oppressive. I felt like I was living in a cemetery. Morbid dreams tormented me. All of the people I knew died in my dreams violently. Hangings, beheadings, electrocution. I had to leave. Studying part-time, it took me six years to get my degree in social work from Gator State. I thought if I stayed away from the Church I could handle my feelings. I took it as a sign that I was doing the right thing because my nightmares were less frequent. My first job was in Felixburg where I met Gustoff in 1985. He spent his winters there, and, as I said, I

ANGELINA, *Continued*

tried to help him. He gave me Olga's diary and the airline tickets, I think, because he trusted me.

MONK

With deference to Mr. Wethersby, one can assume the razing of the convent is the trigger that set you off on this crusade. But you've been silent since Gustoff's death. Why the wait?

**This is Not the End of the Play**  
**Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes**