

Side 2 Sally, Paul, Mother Superior

PAUL. (Entering from the outside with SALLY:) That was close; they almost saw us!

SALLY. But they didn't. Geez, Paul, you're as nervous as a marshmallow at campout. Calm down.

PAUL. Easy for you to say! You didn't spend 12 years in Catholic school! You have no idea what these nuns are like! Sally, I feel really strange about all this...

SALLY. Why? This is just like any other story we've been assigned.

PAUL. Oh really? What other story required us to do an exposé on nuns?

SALLY. Well, somebody in this town has been making wine and they just won a half-million dollar prize. Besides, this will only be an exposé if these nuns are the ones making it.

PAUL. Still, this doesn't feel right...

SALLY. Listen, the chief promised whoever cracks this a year's worth of front-page stories. Front page, Paul! Do you know what that could do for our careers?

PAUL. I know, but...spying on nuns!?!

SALLY. Aren't you tired of writing for the Society section? I don't know about you, but I took this job to report hard news, not cake-walks and charity luncheons.

PAUL. Fine; let's just take a quick look and get out of here.

(Looking around:)

This place gives me the creeps. I've never been in a convent before.

SALLY. You just said you went to Catholic school!

PAUL. I did, but we never actually saw where those nuns lived. For all we knew, they were like bats and slept upside down in coat closets. Boy, I don't miss those days at all. Those nuns used to scare me to death: always staring, not saying anything. You'd confess to anything, guilty or not, just to stop that staring. There was this one nun at my high school: she gave me the willies so bad that I'd stutter; I couldn't get anything out. It was horrible!

SALLY. Don't you mean, horri-b-b-ble?

PAUL. That's not funny!

SALLY. (Opening the high holy closet:) Hey, look at this. (She pulls out a white robe.) Boo!

PAUL. Don't touch that, it's holy! (Quickly putting the robe away:) The nuns in this order sew and repair all the robes for the Church. If the Pope rips a hem, he sends it here to get fixed. These are very sacred things.

SALLY. (Looking around more:) This place isn't so bad; it's simple and kinda cozy. You know, I always thought that we'd have something like this for our summer home: a little vineyard, a lot of quiet.

PAUL. We would have—if you didn't leave me at the altar.

SALLY. Oh, Paul, you're not still sore, are you? What choice did I have? Cracking that Dillon Boys story finally got me noticed! I was the only reporter who covered it!

PAUL. Because everyone else was at our wedding, waiting for you

to show up!

SALLY. Look, Paul, we both agreed not getting married was the best thing to happen to our relationship.

PAUL. I know, I know! But it hasn't been easy since we started being assigned the same stories. The chief sure has a sadistic side...

SALLY. Thanks a lot.

PAUL. You know what I mean, Sally. It's just difficult sometimes... I still care about you. A lot.

(There is a brief charged moment where it looks like they may kiss.

SALLY breaks away.)

SALLY. So, all they do here is sew?

PAUL. They say they can pattern, cut, and sew a robe in less than five minutes.

SALLY. Not me. I flunked Home Ec so many times they made me take Woodshop with the boys instead. Where is everyone anyway?

PAUL. The chief said that there were just three nuns here. We saw two heading outside. Which means—

MOTHER SUPERIOR. (Off:) I've got to think!

PAUL. That must be the Mother Superior! Quick, hide! She can't know that we're here.

(SALLY rushes to the door leading out, as PAUL hides in the holy closet. SALLY sees PAUL isn't behind her.)

SALLY. Paul? Where'd you go?

(PAUL opens the door but quickly shuts it as MOTHER SUPERIOR enters. SALLY is caught.)

MOTHER SUPERIOR. (Entering:) Hello?

SALLY. Hello. You must be Mother Superior. I'm—

MOTHER SUPERIOR. No need for introductions! I know who you are!

SALLY. You do?

MOTHER SUPERIOR. Of course; I got the letter from Cardinal Redding. But come now, Sister Mary, where are your wimple and veil?

SALLY. But I'm not—

MOTHER SUPERIOR. (Looking disapprovingly at Sally's clothes:) You must be from one of those more modern orders, Sister. Here, you'll find us traditional in our dress.

(She opens the closet. PAUL hides deeper into the clothes. She does not notice him. She pulls out a nun's gown.)

This is what you'll be expected to wear here, Sister.

SALLY. I think you must be mistaken. I'm not—

MOTHER SUPERIOR. Not what?

SALLY. (Thinking twice:) Not...this size.

MOTHER SUPERIOR. Well, there are plenty of gowns in the high holy closet, Sister. If you can't find one that fits, I'm sure you can sew your own quickly enough. Now I'll go make sure your room is ready.

(She exits.)

PAUL. (Coming out from the closet:) She thinks you're a nun!

SALLY. Isn't that wonderful!

(She starts to put on the gown.)

PAUL. Why didn't you correct her?

SALLY. And blow my cover? Are you kidding me? She just handed me a golden opportunity!

PAUL. But you just lied...to a nun!

SALLY. I did no such thing! I just didn't tell her the truth.

PAUL. It's the same thing!

SALLY. Listen, if she thinks I'm Sister Mary then I'll be Sister Mary. This way I can meet the other nuns, gain their trust, and find out firsthand if there's any funny business going on around here.

PAUL. Do you realize how many sins you'll be committing if you impersonate a nun?

SALLY. Paul, listen: the chief doesn't take either one of us seriously. Why else would he send us here? Do you actually think there's a snowball's chance that three nuns are making award-winning wine? But if by some crazy miracle it's true, then I want to be the one to blow the cover off the story! Now you can either join me, or you can go back to writing about the cake walk at Shady Glenn Retirement Home.

PAUL. I'm not going to leave you here alone. But this is crazy!

MOTHER SUPERIOR. (Off:) Sister Mary!

SALLY. She's coming back. Hide!

(He hides back in the closet.)

MOTHER SUPERIOR. Sister Mary, I almost forgot. One of the things we honor here is a period of silence each day. When you hear the

church bells chime, you must remain silent and work in prayer and meditation. When the bells chime again, you may resume speaking.

SALLY. What time does that happen?

MOTHER SUPERIOR. Oh, it varies. If it's a high holy day, the bells might chime seven or eight times. On other days, just two or three times. We figure it's the least we can do for He who has sacrificed so much.

SALLY. Who's that?

MOTHER SUPERIOR. (Surprised; pointing up:) Him.

SALLY. (Looking up:) There's a second floor to this building?

MOTHER SUPERIOR. (Confused:) Jesus, dear.

SALLY. Oh, right. Him.

MOTHER SUPERIOR. What is the name of the order you transferred from again?

SALLY. The order...?

MOTHER SUPERIOR. Yes, dear.

SALLY. Oh, the order! I transferred from the order of...alphabetical.

MOTHER SUPERIOR. The...Alphabetical Order?

SALLY. Yes, we...filed things.

MOTHER SUPERIOR. I've never heard of it.

SALLY. We work quite closely with the...Numerical Order...

MOTHER SUPERIOR. (Shaking off her confusion:) Well, I'll let you get settled in. Where are your bags?

SALLY. I don't have any. I mean... I gave away everything I own before I arrived. I take my vow of poverty very seriously.

MOTHER SUPERIOR. How charitable!

SALLY. Yes, the poor need so much more than I.

MOTHER SUPERIOR. (Holding up Sally's coat:) I see you kept this old, plain coat.

SALLY. Plain? That happened to cost me 50 bucks— (Catching herself, and taking back the coat:) —and I'm holding on to it to give it to a family in real need.

MOTHER SUPERIOR. Let me take it, dear. There are numerous orphanages in Rome that could use it.

(There is a brief tug-of-war. MOTHER SUPERIOR takes it and puts it in the trunk.)

You'll be an excellent addition, Sister. Now, I'll leave you be. I'm sure you'll want to spend some quiet time praying.

SALLY. Yes, of course. Praying.

MOTHER SUPERIOR. Breakfast is served at four thirty. I'll see you then.

(She starts to exit.)

SALLY. Excuse me! Did you just say four thirty? Four thirty in the morning? That four thirty?

MOTHER SUPERIOR. Horrible, isn't it? We're embarrassingly lazy around here. Good night!