

UNCONVENTIONAL

written by

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## ACT ONE

EXT. SAINT MARY'S CONVENT - MORNING

DING! DONG!

Pigeons scatter from the rooftop of an old-fashioned tudor estate, shrouded in ivy as if hiding from architectural developments of the last century.

It's attached to a daunting brick cathedral, still proudly toting the same stained glass windows and bell tower it unveiled to much excitement in 1950.

Grungy SKATEBOARDERS grind down the long front railing leading up to the main entrance, a rare sign of activity.

A NUN comes out to shoo them away. They laugh and ignore her.

She *tsks* and goes back inside. *Troublemakers.*

A sign hangs by the door: SAINT MARY'S CHURCH AND CONVENT

INT. CHAPEL - MORNING

Several NUNS pray with rosary beads.

Making sure no one can see her, one of them takes a bite of her beads, revealing it's a candy necklace.

INT. COMMON ROOM - MORNING

An elderly nun sits in the corner, reading the bible. A younger nun is about to walk up to her when she's stopped by the LIBRARIAN.

The elder nun is actually sleeping. She gently snores.

EXT. COURTYARD - MORNING

A nun sweeps leaves off of the sidewalk.

A moment later, they reappear.

Annoyed, she looks over to a nun raking the leaves off the grass.

They growl at each other. The eternal battle continues.

INT. LOBBY - MORNING

Underneath a dingy plaque that reads ABBESS, a nun removes a faded portrait of a very old woman.

In its place, she hangs a poorly-timed picture of a petite young nun, fear in her eyes, hair cut short. Beneath, she presses another plaque to the wall: ELIZABETH FISHER.

In the picture, Elizabeth is clearly taken by surprise, her eyes partially closed. This was still the best picture they had.

INT. ELIZABETH'S OFFICE - MORNING

The office is relatively bare, as if its new occupant doesn't really know what even goes in an office.

Elizabeth stands in front of a hanging mirror. She slips on a small crucifix pendent, the symbol of her position as Abbess.

She takes a deep breath. *Don't panic.*

ELIZABETH

Hello, I'm Abbess Elizabeth -

She suddenly gives up, runs to the window, and starts climbing out.

Elizabeth is half way out the window when her office door opens and SISTER KATHY GREEN walks in.

Where Elizabeth is petite, Kathy is imposing. Where Elizabeth is quiet, Kathy is orotund. Kathy thinks of her vows more as helpful suggestions. Maybe not the best nun but a great friend and isn't that what really matters?

KATHY

Oh no you don't!

Kathy runs to the window and pulls Elizabeth back inside.

ELIZABETH

This isn't fair! It's not fair! I didn't ask to be elected Abbess.

KATHY

Well young lady, you're in charge now so you'll just have to get used to it!

ELIZABETH

No! This is all your fault!

Kathy snickers, plopping Elizabeth down in a chair.

KATHY

Well sure, the joke got a bit out of hand. But let's be real, they would have voted for anyone who wasn't Sister Claudia.

ELIZABETH

Sister Claudia should have won. I don't know how to lead anything!

KATHY

Oh come on, it's not that bad.

ELIZABETH

Kathy, I've never even been in charge of a bake sale.

KATHY

Not very popular, huh?

ELIZABETH

Once, in High School, the cool kids locked me inside the library.

KATHY

At least you love books.

ELIZABETH

I actually didn't know they did it until the janitor came to let me out. But that's not the point! I'm not like you, I can't talk in front of people, I don't like confrontation!

KATHY

Look, being Abbess is easy. And you've already got your first opportunity to make your mark. Mister Hendricks just made a huge donation, right?

ELIZABETH

Yes. And I have to decide what to do with all that money. Everyone's watching, I have to choose the right thing. I just have to -

She's starting to panic.

KATHY

Ok Liz, deep breaths, here we go.

Kathy leads Elizabeth in some breathing. Elizabeth's breaths come out staggered.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Need a belt?

ELIZABETH  
Kathy, we can't have alcohol.

KATHY  
Psh! Joking! But if you change your mind, you know, just let me know.

ELIZABETH  
How am I supposed to know what to do with the donation?

KATHY  
You could ask the other nuns what they think.

ELIZABETH  
...yeah. Yeah, whatever they want is fine. I don't even care. Whatever makes this day end.

KATHY  
That's thinking like a leader! Come on, we'll ring for a morning meeting!

Kathy leads Elizabeth out the door by the shoulders.

INT. REFECTORY - DAY

An open, casual space used for communal activities like meals, meetings, or dodgeball (though mostly the first two). Low-pile carpet. Cafeteria-style seating. No dodgeballs.

Elizabeth fidgets nervously as the fifteen or so nuns take their seats. They all chat, paying no attention to her.

Except for one nun, sitting off in the corner. She slowly taps her fingers on the table, watching resentfully.

This is SISTER CLAUDIA BARTON (60s), the woman who always seems to know better. She can look down at you lying flat on her back.

ELIZABETH  
Alright, um, everyone!

No one pays her any attention. Two nuns compare the size of their bibles.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
Yes, we're going to start the  
meeting...here...uh...

One nun has stolen another's headpiece and won't give it back. Sister Claudia rolls her eyes.

Kathy, sitting in the front row, shouts:

KATHY  
The Lord be with you!

All the nuns respond in perfect unison.

NUNS  
And also with you.

ELIZABETH  
Thank you. Um hello, everyone. So  
you all know we got a big donation  
from Mr. Hendricks and well, uh, I  
was wondering whether any of you  
might have an idea of what we  
should do with it?

The nuns stare in confusion. After a moment, a brawny nun with a tough expression, MARGOT, speaks up. She occasionally wipes her runny nose.

MARGOT  
You're asking us?

ELIZABETH  
Yeah. We're trying something new.

MARGOT  
Well, I think we should get a  
weight set to keep us in shape.  
Honestly, we're looking pretty  
small, guys. Come on.

ELIZABETH  
Ok that's not a bad idea -

RUTH  
A Hummer!

Elizabeth looks to RUTH, an elderly nun with a wiry frame and a crazed look in her eye. She can't weigh over a hundred pounds but she'd scare an NFL linebacker.

ELIZABETH

What for?

RUTH

To go places! We're nuns sure, we can still go places, why not go in style?

ELIZABETH

Oh, I don't think it's that much money.

Other nuns start shouting out their ideas.

BERNICE

A new coffee maker!

AMY

Three new coffee makers!

BERNICE

(quietly)

Get your own ideas, Amy.

RUTH

I'm telling you, it's a Hummer or I'm out of here!

Elizabeth is losing control. Claudia chuckles.

ELIZABETH

Please, everyone, let's take turns! Like over here: Angelica, thank you for raising your hand. What's your idea?

A very shy, younger nun, ANGELICA, stands with a gulp.

ANGELICA

Uh, I was thinking we could get a statue of Jesus, one of those ones where he's uh all muscular and...strong. You know.

ELIZABETH

What do you mean?

ANGELICA

You know where his hair is just long and really wavy and it's a hot day so he's, uh got a little sweat.

KATHY

I love this idea.

MARGOT

Weights have got to be more  
important than that!

RUTH

Like hell they are!

Everyone starts to yell at each other.

ELIZABETH

Please, everyone! Please!

But it's no use - she's totally lost control. The arguing  
continues to escalate until Sister Claudia finally stands,  
her chair screeching against the floor.

Everyone goes quiet.

CLAUDIA

Alright, meeting over. Get to work.

The nuns all leave. Sister Claudia makes eye contact with  
Elizabeth and beckons with one finger: *come with me*.

Elizabeth follows Claudia out of the room like a student on  
her way to the principal's office.

INT. SISTER CLAUDIA'S ROOM - DAY

Elizabeth enters Claudia's room, an immaculate pastel parlor  
that would make any grandma giddy. There's not enough space  
for a couch but if there was it would be covered in plastic.

Claudia sits down at her desk and gestures for Elizabeth to  
take a seat next to her.

Elizabeth trips over her skirt a bit as she does.

CLAUDIA

What was that?

ELIZABETH

Sorry, I just tripped a bit there—

CLAUDIA

Not that. The meeting. Why in His  
holy name would you open the  
floodgates to that madness?

ELIZABETH

Wow, I don't know. It was just  
like...blah! You know? I thought it  
was a good idea.

Claudia laughs derisively.

CLAUDIA

Clearly not. There are ways things are done, Elizabeth. We can't change them. As Abbess, you should already know what the money should be spent on.

ELIZABETH

Right, obviously. Of course. But like...what?

CLAUDIA

We're three years overdue for a new jeweled crucifix in the chapel.

Elizabeth can't help but frown. *Ew.*

ELIZABETH

Oh. Don't we already have a couple of those?

CLAUDIA

If I may be frank, Abbess, you are not well suited to the role of leader. Would you agree?

Elizabeth is a little bit hurt by this.

ELIZABETH

Oh. Yeah, I guess not.

CLAUDIA

And yet, despite my decades of experience managing this convent and learning from our dear departed former Abbess, it seems our sisters would prefer you. So trust me when I say donors expect certain things from their generosity. The Church expects certain things. The more time you waste on inconsequential nonsense, the less time you'll have to deal with convent's real issues.

ELIZABETH

(scared)

What are its real issues?

CLAUDIA

How about the delinquents who have been riding their skateboards down our front railing every morning, putting us all in danger, desecrating the house of God! They should be sternly reprimanded and referred to the authorities.

ELIZABETH

Oh yes, of course. I should, um, call the police on the children.

Claudia pulls back, her eyes full of contempt.

CLAUDIA

That is, of course, your prerogative, Abbess. Your competency as a leader will determine our fate.

Claudia gestures towards the door.

Elizabeth realizes she's being dismissed and hastily leaves, tripping again as she gets up.

After she's gone, Claudia glances in her direction and *tsks* dismissively.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

## MONTAGE - ELIZABETH DOES HER DUTIES

A) Elizabeth's Office - Elizabeth stares at a sea of ledgers and spreadsheets. She slowly lifts up a pen...then freezes.

B) Chapel - Elizabeth, sweaty and nervous, leads her nuns in prayer. But she talks so quickly and so quietly that none of them can hear her.

C) Elizabeth's Office - Elizabeth is still frozen above the ledgers. With a sudden look of understanding, she begins to lean in...then stops short of the paper once more.

D) Courtyard - The two leaf-sweeping nuns argue their cases to Elizabeth. She slowly backs away. When they look over for judgement, she is gone.

E) Hallway - Elizabeth throws open a window and tries to climb out once more. Sister Kathy appears and pulls her back.

F) Elizabeth's Office - Kathy plops Elizabeth back down in front of the ledgers. Elizabeth slams her head into the endless facts and figures.

## INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Elizabeth slams the door to her office, sighing with frustration.

As she walks past an open door, she's distracted by someone blowing their nose incredibly loudly.

She looks through the door and sees Sister Margot with a red nose, surrounded by tissues.

## INT. MARGOT'S ROOM - CONT.

ELIZABETH

Sister Margot, you're sick!

Margot quickly wipes away some of the tissues.

MARGOT

What? No! I'm great, I'm better than you!

ELIZABETH

Are you sure?

MARGOT  
Yes. Absolutely. And how dare you.

ELIZABETH  
Alright, sorry to interrupt.

Elizabeth starts to leave but Margot SNEEZES so ferociously that Elizabeth returns.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
Ok, Margot, I suspect you're not actually absolutely ok.

MARGOT  
(very stuffy)  
Actually I hadn't noticed before but maybe I've got a little congestion.

ELIZABETH  
Do you have a cold?

MARGOT  
No. It's no big deal, the incense at morning mass irritates my allergies a little bit.

ELIZABETH  
You're like this every day?

MARGOT  
Maybe. It doesn't even bother me.

Margot trumpets into a tissue. Elizabeth frowns.

ELIZABETH  
Sister Margot, this is no way to live. Someone should—

Slowly, it dawns on her.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
I am the Abbess.

MARGOT  
...yes.

Elizabeth slows down, talking to Margot like she's laying out an insane, secret plan.

ELIZABETH  
Sister Margot. I can talk to the Sisters. I can tell them not to use incense at morning mass.  
(MORE)

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

And then they will do that. Because I am the person who makes those decisions.

MARGOT

Right. But it's tradition. The smoke lifts our prayers up to the Lord.

ELIZABETH

Well, I think He can hear your prayers without smoke, Sister. Don't worry about that.

Sister Margot is grateful.

MARGOT

I mean, I was fine, but if you want to talk to them, that'd be ok.

ELIZABETH

I just hope our plan works.

Margot is confused: *Why wouldn't it work?* Elizabeth pats her on the shoulder and exits with determination.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

Off-key singing echoes among the vaulted ceilings and stained glass windows as worshippers sing a hymn.

The nuns kneel at their pews, singing along with the sparse congregation.

Elizabeth looks around. Both the space and its inhabitants have seen better days. Chipping paint. Fading colors. The ever-present holy dust.

As the hymn concludes, a mousey, middle-aged priest with more freckles than charisma, FATHER STUART KEITH, rises to the pulpit.

STUART

Faith. That's the whole thing when it comes to Christ, isn't it? A lot of people out there they wonder...rather, they ask me. "Father Stuart," they say, "how can I be a better Christian?" And I always think the same thing - woh, big question!

He chuckles a bit and holds for laughter. It doesn't come.

Father Stuart clears his throat.

STUART (CONT'D)  
 Right, well, it all comes down to  
 faith. To be Christian means we  
 believe in Christ. Like really  
 believe. If anyone comes up and  
 says like "that Jesus, I don't buy  
 it." Of course we would have to  
 disagree.

The small group waits for some sort of point, but Father  
 Stuart seems ready to throw in the towel.

STUART (CONT'D)  
 And with that in mind, let us raise  
 our voices to his Holiness in  
 joyful worship.

He gestures for the congregation to stand. They do. Stuart  
 starts to chant.

STUART (CONT'D)  
 (chant)  
 Kyrie elei -

Too high. He stops and tries again, higher. Elizabeth  
 grimaces sympathetically.

STUART (CONT'D)  
 Kyri -

Really bad. He calms himself then starts over, way too low.

STUART (CONT'D)  
 Kyrie eleison!

The congregation repeats it back, also way too low.

Stuart sighs, defeated.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Elizabeth is walking towards the exit alongside several of  
 her nuns when Father Stuart scurries up behind her.

STUART  
 Pardon me! Sister Elizabeth, do you  
 have a moment?

ELIZABETH  
 Father Stuart! Of course. Great  
 sermon today.

STUART

Ah well. It certainly happened, didn't it? If only the priesthood stopped at managing the church timetable. But never mind that. Mister Hendricks wants to meet you.

ELIZABETH

Me? Why?

STUART

He wants to make sure his donation is still in good hands after the passing of the former Abbess, God rest her soul.

ELIZABETH

Oh. Well I can try to reassure him.

STUART

Good. Good good good. Good.

ELIZABETH

Should we be worried?

STUART

Worried? No, of course not. Well, you've surely noticed attendance is somewhat poor lately at the church and the Bishop has, in the past, mentioned the possibility of closing the convent.

ELIZABETH

What?!

STUART

No no, it's fine, really. Just as long as we keep Mr. Hendricks happy and the donations continue, the Bishop wouldn't do that. Come this way, I'll introduce you.

Elizabeth, overwhelmed, allows herself to be led away.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

Elizabeth and Father Stuart re-enter the cathedral. MISTER HENDRICKS, a short, slim man in his 70s, roams around the altar with a perpetual expression of disgust and dissatisfaction. He'd make a great gargoye.

HENDRICKS

Look at these candelabras, Stuart,  
do these look polished to you? What  
would Christ say?

STUART

Of course, Mister Hendricks, I'll  
polish those right away. I've  
brought the new Abbess, Sister  
Elizabeth, to meet you.

Hendricks turns to Elizabeth with a judging eye.

HENDRICKS

So you probably know what happened  
to the incense.

ELIZABETH

Excuse me?

HENDRICKS

I've been coming to this church for  
over forty years and never once, in  
all that time, have the nuns failed  
to bring incense to morning mass.

ELIZABETH

Wow, you really love incense.

HENDRICKS

I believe in our history. We do  
things the way we do them for a  
reason and I come to Saint Mary's  
because I believe in a traditional,  
Catholic mass. Can you offer me  
that or not?

STUART

Of course we can, Mister Hendricks,  
I'm sure this was a freak, one-time  
oversight. Don't worry, it will be  
taken care of with terrifying  
efficiency.

Elizabeth is uncomfortable, but holds her tongue.

HENDRICKS

Good. Now, I trust my donation will  
be well invested at the convent?

ELIZABETH

Yes, of course.

HENDRICKS

...on what?

Elizabeth feels a tiny, angry fire spark to life inside her.

ELIZABETH

Is it important that you know?

HENDRICKS

If you ever want another one it is.

Stuart is worried but tries to keep the mood light:

STUART

Elizabeth, stop your wild, insane  
fooling around. Just tell him!

Elizabeth hesitates for a moment but, seeing the fear in  
Stuart's eyes, concedes:

ELIZABETH

Of course. We're ordering a new  
bejeweled crucifix for the chapel.

HENDRICKS

Mm. Yes. That should be fine. Thank  
you, Sister, I look forward to  
working with you in the future.

Hendricks looks back to the alter. Stuart sighs in relief.

STUART

Thank you, Mister Hendricks, it's  
always a pleasure seeing you! I  
love your shirt today. What a great  
shirt.

He ushers Elizabeth out, leaving Hendricks alone.

EXT. SAINT MARY'S CONVENT - DAY

Elizabeth and Kathy walk back towards the convent.

KATHY

Bullshit.

ELIZABETH

Kathy!

KATHY

The Bishop wouldn't close the  
convent. Is he a dick? Sure.

(MORE)

KATHY (CONT'D)  
A ferret? I mean, yeah. A nightmare  
human being?

ELIZABETH  
Kathy, he's the Bishop!

KATHY  
Sorry, his holiness the dickish  
ferret.

They come into view of the skateboarders, still sliding down  
the front railing of the church.

Elizabeth stops, taking a deep breath.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Are you going to deal with this?

ELIZABETH  
I have to. The convent is my  
responsibility.

Determined, Elizabeth starts walking towards the  
skateboarders. Kathy follows a couple paces behind.

As she gets close, however, one teenager, a little taller  
than the others, NATHAN, does a sick kick flip off the rail.

It's very impressive. Elizabeth is taken aback.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
Holy shit!

KATHY  
(delighted)  
Elizabeth!

Elizabeth's outburst attracts the attention of the other  
skateboarders, who look over warily.

ELIZABETH  
That was amazing! How did you do  
that?

A little surprised, Nathan steps forward:

NATHAN  
Oh yeah, it's a pretty basic kick  
flip. I've been working on it for a  
while.

ELIZABETH  
How do you spin the board when  
you're jumping off it?  
(MORE)

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
Wait, no, how do you stand on the  
board while it's moving?

The skateboarders are amused.

NATHAN  
Do you wanna try?

ELIZABETH  
Oh no no no no no, I can't.

KATHY  
She definitely does.

The skateboarders are pretty excited now. A few of them stand  
up and one of them offers her his board.

ELIZABETH  
Oh no, I really don't do x-sports.  
This isn't a good idea.

NATHAN  
Just chill. Step on here and hold  
our arms.

Very hesitantly, Elizabeth steps on to the skateboard,  
keeping an iron grip on Kathy and Nathan with either arm.  
She's completely stationary.

Nathan steps away, so Elizabeth is only hanging on to Kathy.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
Now just push off.

Carefully, very carefully, Elizabeth gives the tiniest push  
off of Kathy. She moves an inch, maybe two.

ELIZABETH  
Oh my goodness, I did it!

Overjoyed, she steps off the board. The skateboarders  
hesitantly applaud: *oh, I guess that's it.*

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
I can't believe it. I'm a  
skateboarder.

KATHY  
You really are, Elizabeth, that's  
amazing.

Kathy looks to the skateboarders: *Isn't she adorable?*

Elizabeth turns to Nathan.

ELIZABETH

Thank you for teaching me. What's your name?

NATHAN

It's no big deal. I'm Nathan.

ELIZABETH

You know, it can't be safe doing all your skating here. Shouldn't you be at a skate park or something?

NATHAN

I wish. The closest one's two hours away.

ELIZABETH

Well that's unfortunate.

NATHAN

Yeah. But who has the money to build a skate park for a bunch of random kids?

Elizabeth's eyes slowly widen. *She has an idea.*

ELIZABETH

Oh. Yes. Well, bye now.

She hurries away.

KATHY

Ok. It was nice meeting you, boys.

NATHAN

Uh thanks. For sure.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Elizabeth yanks Kathy into the convent and slams the door behind her.

KATHY

What's wrong?

ELIZABETH

I had an idea.

KATHY

Right. Well I understand the terror then.

ELIZABETH

Just forget it. If anyone asks,  
I've never thought of anything.

KATHY

Liz! What's the idea?

Elizabeth looks over both shoulders before whispering:

ELIZABETH

What if...we used the donation to  
build a half pipe for the  
skateboarders?

Kathy laughs wickedly.

KATHY

Wow. I love it. Just one thing:  
why?

ELIZABETH

I don't know, they have no place to  
go. And the church is supposed to  
be a place of welcome right? And if  
we're so worried about attendance  
being down wouldn't having some  
young faces around help that? Gah!  
I'm an idiot. So dumb, so dumb!

KATHY

Liz, no, that's actually good!

ELIZABETH

No, it's insane. We've never done  
anything like this.

KATHY

I think everyone's going to love  
it!

ELIZABETH

You think so?

KATHY

Definitely. Let's call another  
meeting and you can tell everyone  
the plan. I promise, they're going  
to think you're a genius.

INT. COMMON ROOM - EVENING

Elizabeth stands in front of the group. They stare back at  
her, flabbergasted.

RUTH  
That...is a terrible idea.

The other nuns fall into an uproar. *What the heck is this?!*

RUTH (CONT'D)  
Bad enough we can't have the great car we all want, how would half a pipe help us?

ELIZABETH  
Please, everyone! Please, one at a time! Angelica, thank you again for raising your hand.

ANGELICA  
Yes, well, do children really need a skate park?

The other nuns shout out in agreement.

ANGELICA (CONT'D)  
If anything, we should be building a sports space for fully-grown men.

The nuns agree a little more hesitantly.

ANGELICA (CONT'D)  
And after they lift and stretch we could, uh, let them use our showers to get clean and uh, towel off—

KATHY  
Easy, Sister.

RUTH  
Margot, didn't you want weights or something? This is insane, right?

Margot, significantly less congested, considers before speaking:

MARGOT  
I'm not sure. It's definitely unconventional, but who knows? Maybe doing things differently could be...good?

The nuns are confounded by the very idea. Elizabeth looks to Margot, grateful.

RUTH  
Sister Claudia, what do you think?

The nuns all swing away from Elizabeth towards Claudia, who sits silently in the back row.

CLAUDIA

It's your choice to make, Abbess.  
It could be very interesting.

This positively shocks the nuns, who turn back to Elizabeth with reluctant acceptance.

ELIZABETH

Ok well, uh, good. I'll talk to a carpenter tomorrow and we'll see what we can do. Thank you, everyone.

Elizabeth exits as Kathy hypes her up (much to Elizabeth's embarrassment).

As the nuns mill out, Ruth approaches Claudia.

RUTH

Do you really think this is a good idea?

CLAUDIA

Of course not. It's a childish, irresponsible waste of a donor's generosity. It may very well end her stint as Abbess. But we'll let Elizabeth find that out for herself.

INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - NIGHT

Alone in her pajamas, Elizabeth checks out the door to make sure no one's listening.

The coast is clear. She turns on a record of an old musical.

Moonlight shines through her window. She walks over and looks down into the courtyard.

Soft candlelight glows behind stone columns. Bushes rustle in the breeze. A couple nuns walk past, arguing. Elizabeth smiles.

She glances over to her desk, where the crucifix pendant hangs from a lamp.

Her smile turns to a frown. Sighing, she turns off the lights.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Elizabeth and Kathy ride their bikes through the square.

It's quiet, with a dried-out fountain in the center and some not-so-busy storefronts across the street. Once the center of an up-and-coming city, now a storage space for historical plaques and broken benches.

KATHY

When was the last time you left the convent?

ELIZABETH

I don't remember. Years ago.

KATHY

Oh, this is exciting!

ELIZABETH

More like terrifying. You know what's outside the convent?

KATHY

What?

ELIZABETH

Everything.

They pass the fountain.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Why isn't the fountain going?

KATHY

I don't know. Maybe it's broken.

ELIZABETH

Oh. That's a shame.

They walk across a street into a store: SUTTON LUMBER.

INT. DEWALT LUMBER - DAY

A burly, bearded man in flannel, JERRY SUTTON, looks up in surprise as the two nuns walk through his door.

JERRY

Well hiya, sisters, it's not often we see you outside the church. Are you lost?

ELIZABETH

Uh, no, we actually want to talk to you about a project. If you've got a moment.

JERRY

Are you kidding? I'm up to my ears in moments!

KATHY

Is business slow?

JERRY

Oh yeah. I'm not sure if you know, sisters, but with interests rates high and lumber scarce, not a lot of people can afford to build.

ELIZABETH

I'm so sorry. Can we do anything to help?

JERRY

You're already doing it! Tell me about this project.

ELIZABETH

Well, we wanted to build a skateboarding half-pipe.

Jerry tries to be cool and casual about this strange request.

JERRY

Uh huh. Where?

ELIZABETH

At the church.

Another pause.

JERRY

Of course. Anything else?

ELIZABETH

Well, if there's any way you could do it in secret, that would be great.

JERRY

...secret from who?

KATHY

Definitely the priest.

Jerry almost loses it, but pulls himself together:

JERRY

I love it. This all sounds great.

Elizabeth and Kathy smile excitedly.

JERRY (CONT'D)

But I'll warn you: half-pipes are no small project. And if you want it safe, there's no going halfway. They aren't cheap.

ELIZABETH

How much do you think one would cost?

JERRY

Oh I don't know. Maybe something like...this?

He runs some numbers on a piece of paper and circles one at the bottom.

Elizabeth looks at it.

ELIZABETH

Oh. Oh my.

Kathy looks.

KATHY

Oh sweet little Jesus in heaven. That much?

JERRY

Like I said, lumber is scarce. And you'll need a lot of it.

ELIZABETH

Of course. One second.

She pulls Kathy aside.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I'm not sure the donation will cover that.

KATHY

Forget the donation, we'd have to starve ourselves for a month.

ELIZABETH

What does this mean?

KATHY

Well, put simply, we're fucked.

INT. HALLWAY - CONVENT - DAY

Elizabeth and Kathy walk back towards Elizabeth's office.

ELIZABETH

I'll go talk to Father Stuart.  
Perhaps there are additional  
donations we've been saving.

She opens the door to her office.

INT. ELIZABETH'S OFFICE - CONT.

Father Stuart is waiting inside, worriedly pacing behind her desk. Sister Claudia is seated across from him, looking smug.

STUART

Sister Elizabeth, please come in!  
Close the door behind you.

Kathy and Elizabeth share a glance. *Uh oh.*

Elizabeth does as she's told, waving goodbye to Kathy.

STUART (CONT'D)

I've asked Sister Claudia to join  
us. I think her steady hand could  
help us here.

Elizabeth nods, trying not to take offense.

STUART (CONT'D)

Now. Please tell me the rumors  
aren't true.

ELIZABETH

Rumors?

STUART

That you're using Mister Hendricks'  
donation to build a half-pipe on  
church grounds.

ELIZABETH

Oh yes, that rumor. Silly, isn't  
it?

Stuart laughs, relieved.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
But yes, that is the plan.

Stuart's face immediately falls.

STUART  
Sister Elizabeth, you can't. You absolutely cannot. You met Mister Hendricks. Does he strike you as the sort of man who would appreciate your misplaced community outreach? I doubt there's anything that would offend him more.

ELIZABETH  
But shouldn't we use the money on something that will actually help?

STUART  
Help?! How will it help when the Bishop finds out we've lost our largest donor and shuts the convent? Where will your nuns go?

ELIZABETH  
I...don't know.

STUART  
Worse, what will become of the souls in this town without our guidance? Is one kind gesture towards a couple troublemakers worth sacrificing our lasting influence in Granger?

ELIZABETH  
I just thought it might be something to make them feel welcome at the church.

CLAUDIA  
Grow up, Elizabeth. No one is doubting your heart, but faith demands sacrifice. There are financial realities at play. How much was your little experiment going to cost?

Ashamed, Elizabeth hands Father Stuart the paper Jerry gave her.

Father Stuart looks at it and nearly passes out. He recovers just in time to nearly throw up.

FATHER STUART  
Oh merciful father, please.

Claudia looks at the paper as well, her smugness dropping into genuine anger for a moment.

FATHER STUART (CONT'D)  
Elizabeth, I cannot make this choice for you. The money was donated to the convents account, which you have control over. But please. Our fates are in your hands.

CLAUDIA  
Young lady. Leaders have to make hard decisions for the good of those under them. Do you want to be responsible for the closure of this convent?

Elizabeth, overwhelmed, buckles under the pressure.

ELIZABETH  
No. No. I'm sorry. Forget the half-pipe. I'll get the bejeweled crucifix, like I said.

Stuart and Claudia breathe a sigh of relief.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
I just wanted to help, you know?

CLAUDIA  
Yes, we know. Some people just aren't suited for the position. But we forgive you. Don't we, Father Stuart?

STUART  
Yes, of course. Your intentions were good, but the church is built on tradition. Sometimes change just isn't plausible. You have my gratitude, sister. Thank you.

They exit the room, leaving Elizabeth distraught and alone.

INT. HALLWAY - CONT.

Stuart and Claudia walk out of Elizabeth's room, still recovering from the meeting.

STUART  
Well, I'm glad that's over.

CLAUDIA  
Agreed.

STUART  
Sister Claudia, keep on your toes.  
Be prepared to take the reigns if  
anything gets...shaken up.

CLAUDIA  
Of course.

Father Stuart exits. Sister Claudia smiles slyly and walks  
the other way.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. ELIZABETH'S ROOM - NIGHT

Hopes dashed, Elizabeth sits with Kathy drinking (milk).

ELIZABETH

Another.

KATHY

I don't know, Elizabeth, you might want to take it easy. Doesn't your stomach give you problems?

ELIZABETH

Just pour.

Kathy gives in, pouring Elizabeth another milk.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I mean, I had to do it right? I couldn't risk the whole convent.

KATHY

Of course not.

ELIZABETH

And a crucifix for the chapel will be good right? We only have two right now.

KATHY

Yeah, it'll be great!

Elizabeth is still bummed.

ELIZABETH

I was just starting to feel good about this Abbess stuff.

KNOCK KNOCK. Someone's at the door.

Confused, Elizabeth answers it. Sister Margot is standing outside.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Sister Margot, are you feeling alright?

MARGOT

Of course. Because I always am. And always was.

ELIZABETH

Oh. Yes. You know, Sister, I'm so sorry but I spoke with Father Stuart -

Margot cuts her off with a wave of the hand.

MARGOT

Don't worry about that. I actually came because someone wanted to speak with you.

ELIZABETH

Who?

Margot moves aside to reveal Nathan, the skateboarder, standing behind her.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Nathan! What are you doing here?

NATHAN

Hey. I heard you were thinking of using your donation or something to build us a half-pipe?

ELIZABETH

We were thinking about it.

NATHAN

Well, don't do that. That's nuts.

This takes Elizabeth by surprise.

ELIZABETH

Really? Why not?

NATHAN

If you're getting a bunch of cash, you should use it on yourselves. You need it.

ELIZABETH

Nathan, we've taken vows of poverty. We have everything we need.

NATHAN

Still. I don't want people even more pissed off than usual. Seriously, it's super nice, but it's ok. We don't want it.

Elizabeth is touched.

ELIZABETH  
Alright. Thank you, Nathan. You are  
a very kind young man.

NATHAN  
Psh, whatever.

Margot leads Nathan away. Elizabeth softly closes her door  
and puts her hand on her chin, deep in thought.

KATHY  
Nice kid.

Elizabeth nods. She looks out the window at the courtyard, as  
before. She touches her necklace.

ELIZABETH  
Kathy, I need to make some calls.

EXT. SAINT MARY'S CONVENT - DAY

Father Stuart, nervous to the core, accompanies Mister  
Hendricks as they walk from the church to the convent.

STUART  
Are you sure you want to visit the  
convent today, Mr. Hendricks?  
Thursdays are usually better.

HENDRICKS  
I'm sure. You said this purchase  
will help improve attendance?

STUART  
It might.

HENDRICKS  
Well that's good. A nice mural or  
something like that?

STUART  
Something like that.

They round the corner and see the now-finished half-pipe. The  
skateboarders are having a great time on it.

A few nuns watch excitedly.

HENDRICKS  
(furious)  
What is this?!

Elizabeth walks up.

ELIZABETH  
Oh, uh, hello there.

HENDRICKS  
Young lady, did you spend all my  
money on this useless nonsense?!

ELIZABETH  
Oh well um...yes.

HENDRICKS  
Why?!

ELIZABETH  
I don't know. It seemed nice.

HENDRICKS  
Nice? Idiotic more like, a waste of  
thousands of dollars. The bishop  
will hear about this, I can promise  
you that, and don't expect another  
dime from me -

NATHAN  
Hey! Grandpa!

Hendricks is taken by surprise. He looks over. Nathan is  
waving from the half-pipe.

HENDRICKS  
Nathan?

Nathan runs up, to the surprise of everyone.

HENDRICKS (CONT'D)  
Nathan, what are you doing here?

NATHAN  
Just hanging out. Do you know  
Elizabeth?

HENDRICKS  
Uh...yes.

NATHAN  
She's a real one. Thanks again,  
Liz.

ELIZABETH  
Tubular!

NATHAN  
...oh wow.

Nathan runs back to his friends. Hendricks seems affected. Stuart and Elizabeth wait with baited breath.

HENDRICKS  
That's my grandson. His  
parents...don't believe like I do.  
I don't know if he's ever set foot  
in a church.

ELIZABETH  
Oh, he has! He came in for some  
sandwiches yesterday.

Hendricks ponders deeply.

HENDRICKS  
This...skating thing. Whatever it  
is. Maybe it wasn't the worst idea.  
Maybe. I'll have to think about it.

ELIZABETH  
Thank you, Mister. Hendricks.

STUART  
Maybe not the worst idea, excellent  
excellent, good good!

Mr. Hendricks turns away and Stuart leans in, whispering:

STUART (CONT'D)  
Where did you get the rest of the  
money?

ELIZABETH  
I sold one of our bejeweled  
crucifixes.

STUART  
Oh good. Wait, what?!

ELIZABETH  
Don't worry, we still have one.

STUART  
Oh. Oh right, I guess that's fine.

Father Stuart ushers Mr. Hendricks away. Elizabeth turns to look at her handiwork.

The nuns and teens laugh as Margot attempts to ride a skateboard and stumbles.

Jerry packs away the last of his tools and waves to Elizabeth gratefully as he leaves.

Sister Claudia approaches.

ELIZABETH

Sister Claudia. Thank you for your guidance. I'm sorry I went in another direction.

CLAUDIA

Well, it seems the donor may agree with you, even if I don't. Perhaps this isn't a total disaster.

Elizabeth smiles. *Maybe she's getting the hang of this.*

Sister Kathy runs up, out of breath.

KATHY

Elizabeth! I just got a call. Church leadership knows about the half-pipe.

ELIZABETH

What?

KATHY

Somebody must have told them and they are not happy. They're sending the Bishop!

ELIZABETH

What?!

KATHY

He'll be here tomorrow.

This stops Elizabeth dead in her tracks.

CLAUDIA

Then again...

END OF PILOT