

SISTER ACT

by

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SISTER ACT

FADE IN:

INT. ST. ANNE'S ACADEMY - AKRON, OHIO - CLASSROOM

We are in a parochial school classroom, in the late Sixties. The children all wear uniforms and sit at little desks. SISTER IMMACULATA stands at the front of the room; she is a middle-aged nun, very severe. The children are all terrified of her.

SISTER IMMACULATA

Who can name all the Apostles? Yes?

ANGLE ON CHRISTINE CARTER

A thirteen-year-old girl sitting at a desk. She raises her hand.

SISTER IMMACULATA

Christine?

CHRISTINE

Sister, may I be excused?

SISTER IMMACULATA

Christine...

CHRISTINE

It's an emergency. Real bad.

Sister Immaculata nods, pursing her lips. Christine stands and heads for the door.

CUT TO:

INT. GIRLS ROOM

Christine is now in the deserted St. Anne's girls room. She is standing on tiptoes, looking in the mirror. She has taken her hair out of its neat barrettes; she is combing it out. She applies lipstick.

Christine reaches into her schoolbag; she pulls out a stack of glittery bracelets and slips them on. She unbuttons the top few buttons of her stiff white blouse. She sprays herself with dime store cologne.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALLWAY

Christine opens the girls' room door; she looks both ways. No one is around; she saunters down the hall.

ANGLE ON A DOOR MARKED BROOM CLOSET

Christine opens this door. She looks into the closet. There is a very nervous thirteen-year-old BOY waiting for her inside.

CHRISTINE

Hi, Jimmy.

Christine slips inside the closet and closes the door behind her.

ANGLE ON SISTER IMMACULATA

striding down the hall, with a bloodthirsty look in her eye, and a nasty-looking wooden ruler in her hand. She flings open the broom closet door.

ANGLE ON CHRISTINE AND JIMMY

in the broom closet. Jimmy's face is covered with lipstick. Christine's hair is awry. The couple has clearly been making out.

SISTER IMMACULATA

(outraged)

Miss Christine Carter! Again! Don't you know what happens to girls like you? Don't you know what they become?

INT. CHRISTY'S APARTMENT - ANGLE ON A LARGE, TATTERED POSTER - NIGHT (TODAY)

taped over a crack on a wall. The poster shows a glittering CHRISTY VAN CARTIER: singing star of a fifth-rate Vegas lounge. Christy wears tight spangles and a major wig on the poster. She has clearly lived up, or down, to all of Sister Immaculata's expectations.

The CAMERA PANS through the dark bedroom in which the poster hangs; a neon sign flashes outside the window, casting a red and blue haze over the premises. A dressing room table is cluttered with dozens of bottles of nail polish and makeup, and garish clothing and flashy jewelry are scattered everywhere.

We hear the movement of BED SPRINGS as someone sits up in the dark.

CHRISTY'S VOICE

Come on, Vince -- hold me a minute.

VINCE'S VOICE

I'd love to, babe -- but I've got to go. It was great. Like usual.

CHRISTY'S VOICE

It was twenty minutes. Like usual.

VINCE'S VOICE

The best.

VINCE LARocca stands at the mirror, adjusting his clothing and checking his hair. Vince is a powerful, charismatic man who rules an organized crime empire with personal magnetism and threat. Vince's hold over Christy is obvious, if unfortunate; he can seem expansive and generous one minute, ruthless and dangerous the next.

VINCE

(half to Christy, half
to the mirror)

You are something else.

Christy turns on a lamp and lights a cigarette.

CHRISTY

Come on -- stay. Just a little. We can talk, I'll get a pizza. Pizza in bed, we'll have fun. And you still haven't told me what happened. What did she say?

VINCE

What did who say?

CHRISTY

Who? The other woman. Your wife.

Vince turns to face Christy, turning on the charm.

VINCE

You are so damn sexy.

CHRISTY

Vince...

VINCE

How did I get so lucky? What is it now, five years we've been together? Who do I thank?

CHRISTY

(not buying it)

Today was the deadline, Vince.

Vince sits on the bed. He takes Christy's hand, and kisses it.

VINCE

I want us to be together. Like people. Honest, decent people. In the eyes of God. Babe, today... I went to confession.

CHRISTY

You did what?

VINCE

For the first time in I don't know how long. I wanted everything done right. Open and above board. I told Father Antonelli I was in love. I told him it was a special love, for all the ages.

CHRISTY

(starting to fall for it)
You said that? And what did he say?
Did he say you could leave her? Did he say we'd be happy?

VINCE

(looking deep into her eyes)
He said that if I got a divorce I'd burn in Hell. For all eternity.

Vince kisses Christy's hands again and drops them. He turns away and starts putting on his shoes.

CHRISTY

(outraged)
What?

VINCE

You want me to go against a priest? Get excommunicated? You think I'm nuts?

CHRISTY

You bastard!

VINCE

(trying to calm her)
We can still see each other. Just like always. It's a different kind of sin. Smaller.

CHRISTY

You pig!

Vince backs off, and starts searching for his jacket.

VINCE

Babe, it's not me! I love you! It's God!

CHRISTY

You lying sleazeball! The best years of my life! What am I, garbage? Am I lint?

Vince ducks as Christy throws an ashtray at him, and it smashes against the wall.

VINCE

You're upset. I understand. I should go. I hate to.

A CLOCK-RADIO hits the wall beside Vince's head.

CHRISTY

Get out of here! And never come back!

A LAMP hits the wall, as Vince dodges it. He makes a phone gesture with his hand.

VINCE

I'll call.

Vince kisses two fingers, and blows the kiss to Christy. He leaves.

Christy is left standing on the bed, holding a particularly garish stuffed animal she was about to hurl. With Vince gone, she slumps to the bed, cradling the stuffed animal. She is caught between tears and rage.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAS VEGAS - NIGHT

ANGLE on various neon Vegas landmarks -- the Golden Nugget, Caesar's Palace, Bally's, etc. Scrunched in between two larger hotels and casinos is the MOONLIGHT HOTEL AND CASINO. The Moonlight isn't all that small, it's just seen better days.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

A spotlight hits a solitary figure on a small stage. The man is caped and dramatic, but not especially talented; an Elvis impersonator who's just a shade off in voice, looks and style.

ELVIS

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Are you lonesome tonight? Welcome to the Moonlight Hotel and Casino's incredible Platinum Oldies Spectacular.

Backstage, there's still a look of resolve in Christy's eye as she waits to go on with MICHELLE and TINA, her back-up singers.

MICHELLE

But you can't quit. What'll happen to us?

(to Tina)

Tell her she can't quit.

TINA

I told her. She stuck pantyhose in my mouth.

Onstage, Elvis glances into the wings to be sure the Ronelles are ready.

ELVIS

Please welcome our own girl group
extraordinaire, our beehives of beauty
-- the fabulous Ronelles!

Elvis disappears. The spotlight hits Christy, who wears a high beehive wig and a sequinned, early Supremes-style gown. Michelle and Tina wear matching gowns and wigs. The band begins a doo-wop vamp.

CHRISTY

Oh, girls.

RONELLES

Yes, Betty?

CHRISTY

This prom is a real drag.

RONELLES

Uh-huh.

CHRISTY

(gasping)

Oh my!

RONELLES

What is it, Betty?

CHRISTY

Look at that. Get a gander.

RONELLES

(sighing)

Oh my!

CHRISTY

He's so dreamy. He's like... a Greek god. He's the cutest guy here. He's boss. He's fab. He's...

RONELLES

Yes, Betty?

CHRISTY

(singing)

HE'S SO FINE.

RONELLES

DOO-LANG, DOO-LANG, DOO-LANG.

CHRISTY

WISH HE WAS MINE. THAT HANDSOME BOY
OVER THERE, THE ONE WITH THE WAVY HAIR.

As they sing, their moves and gestures are carefully choreographed in vintage girl group style.

A lot of talent and hard work has clearly gone into the number. While Christy does her best, her singing voice is not on a par with those of the other Ronelles.

The lounge itself is practically empty, except for a few drunken Shriners and a couple of college kids. POLICE LIEUTENANT EDDIE MULCAHY sits at a ringside table with his eyes locked on Christy. An easygoing charmer, Eddie gives her a wink, but she responds with an up-yours look and a turn to the other half of the room as the song continues.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - LATER

A small, cramped room with cracked plaster walls and a sputtering fan for ventilation. Christy has her own dressing table and mirror, and the Ronelles share a table a few feet away. Clothing and costumes hang on nails or are draped over chairs as the girls change into streetwear.

CHRISTY

Screw this dump. It's a roach motel with sequins. Every guy I meet is either married, a cop, or a lush from Des Moines.

MICHELLE

But what about us?

TINA

You taught us the act. The songs, all the moves.

CHRISTY

And where did it get me? I'm stuck in this rathole! You're holding me back, just like Vince! I should be headlining!

A pock-faced weasel of a man named JOEY opens the door and leans into the room.

CHRISTY

What do you want? This is a private area! Get lost!

JOEY

You ain't got nothin' I ain't seen.

CHRISTY

Then stop trying to memorize it. Hit the road.

Joey takes a step into the room and sets a box on the chair near Christy.

JOEY

From Vince.

CHRISTY

His ashes?

JOEY

"With love."

Joey leaves. Michelle and Tina hover around the box, very excited. They pick it up, trying to tempt Christy.

MICHELLE

From Vince!

TINA

With love!

Michelle and Tina can't restrain themselves; they open the box. Inside is a rather gaudy fur coat. Michelle and Tina are impressed.

MICHELLE

It's a fur!

TINA

It's new!

CHRISTY

It's a bribe. Five years of my goddamned life!

MICHELLE

So you earned it!

TINA

Vince owns the casino! Cash in!

CHRISTY

I should throw this in his face!

There's a KNOCK on the door, and Tina opens it. Lieutenant Eddie Mulcahy enters. Christy is not pleased.

CHRISTY

Oh, Jesus. What is going on here?
(to heaven)
Why me? Whose dog did I kill?

MICHELLE

Hi, Lieutenant.

TINA

Hello, Eddie.

Eddie picks up the coat.

EDDIE

From Vince? What a guy. Doo-lang, doo-lang.

CHRISTY

At least he's not a cop. At least he can afford a decent gift.

EDDIE

I used to buy you stuff. On your birthday. When we were seeing each other.

CHRISTY

Yeah, like what? Quilted coat hangers, that your mother picked out? Lottery tickets? A travel iron?

EDDIE

So I don't shop.

CHRISTY

'Cause you're always out, arresting people. Making trouble. I don't know why I went out with you in the first place, it was embarrassing! I couldn't hold my head up, I used to tell people you were a security guard!

EDDIE

Oh, yeah? Well, how do you think I felt? You were singing in bowling alleys back then. I told people you were a hooker!

MICHELLE

Calm down, you two. It's always like this.

EDDIE

Yeah, well now she goes out with a better class of people. Vince LaRocca.

CHRISTY

He's a businessman.

EDDIE

A what? When are you gonna wake up?

CHRISTY

When are you gonna get off my case? Have you got a search warrant? What do you want -- cheap thrills?

EDDIE

Information, baby. I thought maybe somebody around here might have a conscience.

CHRISTY

Think again! And get out of here.

EDDIE

I'm going. My regards to Vince. And the Mrs.

Christy hurls a jar of cold cream at Eddie's head. He ducks, and the jar hits the door.

EDDIE

Ladies.

Eddie leaves. Christy is standing, absolutely furious.

CHRISTY

That's it! I'm not taking it from him, and I'm not taking it from Vince! From now on, it's all about me! And if I can't spend it, drink it, or sleep with it -- it's gone. Like Sister Immaculata used to say, "Life is short, and then you fry." So long, girls -- see you in church!

Christy grabs the mink and heads out the door.

INT. VINCE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

ERNIE SCHMIDT sits across the enormous mahogany desk from Vince. The young man's throat is dry; he's sweating bullets. The presence of Joey the weasel and WILLY, a brutal thug, increases Ernie's tension.

VINCE

Ernie Schmidt. How long you been with us, Ernie Schmidt?

ERNIE

Three years, Mr. LaRocca. One behind the bar, two as croupier.

Vince gestures to the lush office and its furnishings.

VINCE

Ernie, you know what's important to me? What counts? It's not all this. This is -- what? Frosting. Loyalty. That's me, Ernie. That's home.

Vince gestures to Joey, who takes out a revolver and points it at Ernie's head.

VINCE

You ain't been loyal, Ernie. What did you tell the cops?

Ernie's eyes open wide with denial as the gun comes closer to his temple.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY

Holding the coat, Christy waits by the elevator. It arrives; she gets in.

INT. VINCE'S OFFICE

The interrogation continues.

ERNIE

I didn't tell the cops anything. I swear!

VINCE

Joey?

Joey slams Ernie on the side of the head with the gun.

INT. CORRIDOR

Christy steps out of the elevator and faces a maze of office cubicles with half-wall partitions. The floor is deserted and dark as she makes her way through the cubicles.

INT. VINCE'S OFFICE

Vince is standing over Ernie, holding his head up by the hair.

VINCE

Who else, Ernie? Who else was in on it?

ERNIE

(moaning)

No one...

VINCE

(dropping Ernie's head
in disgust)

Why am I wasting my time?

INT. EXECUTIVE CORRIDOR

Beyond the cubicles, Christy strides down a lush corridor to an executive suite. She tries the knob, but finds the door locked. Pulling a key from her purse, she unlocks the door to the suite and enters a large outer office with a reception area and doors to several inner offices. She tosses the key onto the receptionist's desk.

CHRISTY

Won't need that anymore. Ta-ta.

Crossing to Vince's office, Christy squares her shoulders and narrows her eyes with anger as she reaches for the doorknob. She pauses for a second, and then doubles her resolve.

INT. VINCE'S OFFICE

VINCE

(to Joey)

Do it.

ANGLE on the door to the office, which opens. Christy appears, with the mink coat in her arms.

CHRISTY

Stuff this up your...

A GUNSHOT is heard, O.S. Christy's eyes widen, and her jaw drops, at what she has just witnessed.

ANGLE on the office. Ernie is slumped in the chair, dead. Joey stands over him, holding the revolver. Joey, Willy and Vince stare at Christy.

VINCE

(icy calm)

Babe.

Christy tries to speak; she can't.

VINCE

Christy. Is there a problem? With the coat?

Christy glances around the room; she doesn't move. She quickly sizes up the situation. She tries to appear matter-of-fact, unaffected by what she's just seen.

CHRISTY

No... it's fine.

VINCE

Yes?

CHRISTY

Thanks. A lot.

VINCE

Is that why you came up here, Christy?
To thank me?

CHRISTY

Sure.

VINCE

And to say you're sorry. About this afternoon. And the things you said. Forgotten. Completely. Do you understand? Forgotten.

CHRISTY

(catching the subtext)

Right. Yeah. Forgotten.

Vince crosses the room, to Christy. He takes her hands in his, and kisses them.

VINCE

That's my girl. My girl in mink. Will you be home? Soon?

Christy kisses Vince, quickly.

CHRISTY

Right. I'll be... at the apartment.
Call me. Thanks. Again.

Christy reaches for the doorknob, without looking at the door. She fumbles a bit. She finds the door.

CHRISTY

Mink. Wow.

Christy walks backwards, out the door. She turns; she is gone.

JOEY

Vince -- is she... okay?

VINCE

(considering this)
Maybe.

WILLY

I mean, won't she talk? She seemed kind of upset.

VINCE

She did.
(making a decision)
Bring her back. Now. For a talk.

JOEY

And if she runs?

VINCE

(icy)
Take care of it.

With guns drawn, Willy and Joey run after Christy.

INT. RECEPTION AREA

Christy, clearly terrified, is walking quickly away from Vince's office. She passes through a glass door which leads to the cubicle area.

LONG SHOT of the cubicle area, which resembles a darkened maze. Christy hears Joey approaching; she runs into the cubicle area.

JOEY

Christy? He only wants to talk to you!

ANGLE on Christy, crouched behind a half-wall. She is clutching the coat.

WILLY

Christy?

There is a stuffed toy, a "Garfield the Cat," attached to the wall near Christy, with suction cups. Christy tries to pull the cat's feet off the wall, very quietly.

JOEY

Christy?

Christy finally just yanks the cat off the wall. She hurls it as high and as far as she can, to the opposite end of the room.

ANGLE on the flying stuffed cat.

Joey sees the blur of the cat; he SHOOTs it, and the cat explodes.

JOEY

Come on, Christy! There's no place to go!

Christy steadies herself against a Xerox machine. She accidentally activates the machine, which lights up and starts HUMMING.

ANGLE on Willy, as he hears the Xerox machine. He quickly moves toward the SOUND.

Willy reaches the Xerox machine; the area is deserted. He starts moving quickly down the aisle. A chair, the kind on casters, comes rolling out of one of the cubicle doorways; the chair hits Willy and he falls.

Christy runs out of the cubicle; Willy is on the floor, struggling to get up. As Christy sprints away, Willy SHOOTs at her. He misses, but a glass partition SHATTERS.

Christy runs for an open elevator, but it has been summoned from another floor and the doors are beginning to close. She runs even faster. A BULLET whistles past her ear and hits the back wall of the elevator. She reaches for the doors a moment too late, and the elevator is gone.

Christy scrambles to the door beside the elevator and runs into a stairwell as two more BULLETS bite pieces out of the door.

INT. STAIRWELL

Taking the stairs three at a time, Christy is flying, still clutching the mink. The thugs are gaining on her. A BULLET hits metal and RICOCHETS off several walls and steps.

At the next landing, Christy opens the door and ducks into a corridor.

INT. CORRIDOR

Exhausted but powered by adrenaline, Christy sprints past doors to the end of the hall, still with the mink. Joey appears from the stairwell just as Christy ducks into a supply room.

INT. SUPPLY ROOM

Christy shoves a cleaning cart aside and wades through a pile of dirty linen. Joey opens the door just as Christy dives head first into the laundry chute.

INT. LAUNDRY CHUTE

Christy, lying atop the mink, flies through the chute like a subway train through a tunnel.

INT. BASEMENT

The chute spits Christy out like a bullet into a huge bin of dirty linen. Two workers glance around as they load large washing machines with laundry. Christy climbs out of the bin and dashes for a door. Working in a hotel, the workers have seen everything.

INT. LAUNDRY CHUTE

Joey flies through the chute.

INT. BASEMENT

Joey suddenly flies into the bin. He climbs out with his gun in sight.

JOEY

Which way?

The workers point to the door, and Joey rushes across the room. One of the workers is now wearing the mink coat.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Joey comes out of the hotel and finds an empty street. He looks in every direction, but the nearby streets have swallowed Christy into safety for the moment.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

The central offices of the Las Vegas Police Department.

INT. MULCAHY'S OFFICE

Eddie's office is a glassed-in area set in the middle of the station's main floor.

Christy is huddled in a chair, surrounded by Eddie and two other detectives, CLARKSON and TATE.

CHRISTY

Right between the eyes! Down and out!
The guy was gone! I... I couldn't
believe it!

EDDIE

You couldn't believe it? Vince the
Prince?

CHRISTY

I never said he was an altar boy, okay?
But he sent his goons after me! They
tried to kill me! I'm not kidding!

CLARKSON

Tough break. Whoa.

EDDIE

What did you expect? Vince is as dirty
as they come. We've been finding bodies
around here for years.

CHRISTY

I don't know anything about bodies! I
mean, he didn't bring it home. He was
good to me... sometimes. He was sweet.
He took care of me. Who am I supposed
to go out with? He owns a casino. He
let me sing.

EDDIE

He didn't do you a favor.

CHRISTY

Screw you!

TATE

Come on, she'll sing great. When she
sings for us.

CHRISTY

Sing -- like testify? Are you nuts? I
just want you to protect me! You're
cops!

TATE

Busy cops. We don't have time to be
bodyguards for anyone who comes in here
with some cockamamie story. Mink coats
and laundry chutes.

CLARKSON

Unless, of course, you're willing to
testify.

CHRISTY

What is this, some squeeze play? Can't
you just protect me without any strings?

The three detectives move in closer now and really apply
the pressure.

EDDIE

We could put you into our witness
protection program.

TATE

A hiding place.

CLARKSON

A new identity.

EDDIE

But you'd have to agree to testify. The
whole nine yards.

CHRISTY

And if I don't?

EDDIE

Then you run.

TATE

You wait.

CLARKSON

You listen for the footsteps.

EDDIE

Then one day they find you.

TATE

They open a window.

CLARKSON

It's ten flights up.

TATE

Ten flights down.

CHRISTY

I'd fight!

EDDIE

You'd lose. You'd die. All over the
sidewalk. And into the street.

CHRISTY

All right! I get the picture! I'll do
it! I'll testify!

EDDIE

(to Tate)
Get a stenographer.

Tate leaves. Christy looks to Eddie for a bargain now.

CHRISTY

Okay, here's what I want. I know about this stuff. A five-star hotel. With room service.

EDDIE

Maybe Hawaii.

CLARKSON

Diamond Head.

CHRISTY

Yeah. And I'll need a new look. Like a disguise.

EDDIE

Maybe Armani.

CLARKSON

No -- Calvin Klein.

CHRISTY

For sportswear. And a limo. And my hair -- up?

CLARKSON

It could work.

EDDIE

Jesus, what do you think this is -- "Wheel of Fortune"? Let me spell it out for you. You have to hide like you don't even exist. You have to get so far hidden away that you never see sunlight.

CHRISTY

(confused)

Okay -- no limo.

EDDIE

No nothing.

CHRISTY

What're you gonna do, put me in a bag and bury me?

EDDIE

I'm gonna put you in the last place on Earth that Vince would ever look for you.

Eddie smiles. Christy doesn't like the sound of this at all.

INT. STAINED GLASS WINDOW - DAY

Jesus delivers the Sermon on the Mount in vibrant red, blue and green stained glass. An ORGAN plays a hymn -- badly. Notes are missed, skipped over and mutilated.

PAN DOWN to a procession of nuns who march into a chapel at the ancient St. Katherine's Convent. The organ isn't getting any better, and we see it is being played by SISTER ALMA, a seventy-year-old nun with arthritis and a hearing aid. Apparently the hearing aid is malfunctioning, because Sister Alma doesn't seem to realize how badly she's playing.

As the last nun in the procession enters the chapel, she closes the door behind her. Across the lobby, the front door opens and Eddie enters with a very reluctant Christy.

CHRISTY

(to Eddie)

I hate you. I totally hate you.

EDDIE

Safest place in the world. You think Vince would look for you here?

As Christy looks around the lobby, various religious artifacts loom at her; we see them from her terrified POV. ANGLE on a crucifix, casting an ominous shadow, a stack of hymnals, and a large, framed Sunday School-style portrait of St. Katherine. Christy shudders.

CHRISTY

Nuns, Eddie. There are nuns here. Everywhere. It's crawling with 'em.

EDDIE

It's a convent. All you have to do is shut up, behave yourself, and get along.

CHRISTY

With nuns? With rulers? No way. I'm gonna go back, work things out with Vince.

Christy turns to head back to the entrance, but Eddie catches her arm.

EDDIE

Vince has put out a contract on you. A hundred grand. You've seen him in action.

Christy searches his eyes for a lie, but realizes he's telling the truth.

CHRISTY

But... but Vince loves me. How could he... I mean, five years...

EDDIE

And one bullet. That's all it's gonna take.

CHRISTY

(suddenly scared)

But Vince has contacts all over the place! This is San Francisco! They'll be looking for me!

EDDIE

Everywhere but this little hole-in-the-wall convent. Nobody knows you're here but me. We're trying to get a quick court date. A month, maybe two, tops. I'll spring you as soon as I can.

CHRISTY

(panicking)

I can't stay here! I'll crack up! Eddie, what am I gonna do?

EDDIE

(smiling)

Pray.

From inside the chapel, the CHOIR begins to sing a hymn -- horribly. The voices don't blend, and individual notes are real migraine material. Christy looks aghast. Eddie urges her into a corridor, and she follows.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S OFFICE

The office is bare and austere. MOTHER SUPERIOR sits at her desk with her hands folded. Like all the nuns at the convent, she wears the traditional full-length habit and wimple.

Mother Superior is in total command of all she surveys, and she seldom raises her voice or her blood pressure as she rules. Control is her passion; within the walls of the convent, she has created a world she can trust because it's a world she controls.

But Mother Superior is not in control at this particular moment. BISHOP GEORGE O'HARA stands before her with a majestic presence and some bad news.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Absolutely not. I am very sorry, but no.

O'HARA

We can save this young woman's life, and imprison a parasite -- all in one gesture.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

But she's been exposed to the underside of life. She is the underside of life.

O'HARA

And therefore an ideal prospect for rehabilitation.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

We're a small convent, Bishop. Surely there are... more appropriate shelters.

O'HARA

Your small convent is in danger of closing, Reverend Mother. The Las Vegas Police Department has offered to make a generous financial donation.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

But, Bishop...

O'HARA

St. Katherine's is a Benedictine Order. You have taken a Vow of Hospitality. To all in need.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

I lied.

O'HARA

(smiling)

I know.

Mother Superior's jaw locks. She realizes she is stuck with the situation and will have to control it as best she can. There is a KNOCK at the door, and Eddie and Christy enter.

O'HARA

Welcome, Lieutenant. Everything is in order.

EDDIE

Aces. Bishop -- maybe a cup of coffee, down at the corner?

The thought of being left alone with Mother Superior panics Christy, like a child left in the principal's office.

CHRISTY

Hey, you're not leaving me alone...

O'HARA

(reassuringly)

You're never alone in this house, my child.

Eddie touches her gently on the arm.

EDDIE

One month, two tops. Behave yourself.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

(a last-ditch attempt)
Bishop...

O'HARA

(opening the door to leave)
Lieutenant?

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CONVENT - A FEW SECONDS LATER

Eddie and Bishop O'Hara are leaving, by the convent's front door. As they exit, they hear the CHOIR, singing horribly. They both wince at the sound, and then chuckle.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S OFFICE

Christy is pacing, outraged at her new situation.

CHRISTY

A convent? They put me in a convent?
What's the problem? Wasn't there any
more room in Hell?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

(very calm)
What is your full name? Your Christian
name?

CHRISTY

Mother Theresa. Gandhi. Don't you
understand? This is all a mistake. I'm
the good guy. I'm the witness. And I'm
being punished!

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Your name?

CHRISTY

Christy. Christy Van Cartier.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Enough joking.

CHRISTY

That's my real name! Currently! I'm a
singer. Sort of.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Very well.

CHRISTY

Oh my God. This isn't happening, tell
me this isn't happening. It's a
nightmare, I'm back at St. Anne's!

MOTHER SUPERIOR

St. Anne's?

CHRISTY

Parochial school. Akron. St. Android's.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

You were unhappy?

CHRISTY

I was expelled! When I was fifteen!

MOTHER SUPERIOR

The reason?

CHRISTY

Beats me! What do you think? Smoking!
Heavy petting, without a chaperone.
Heavy petting, with the chaperone. And
wearing a black bra, under my uniform.
The demon bra.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

I see.

CHRISTY

You see? You see? I have to get out of
here! I have to make a phone call.
Don't you get it? I'm in a convent!
You're a nun!

MOTHER SUPERIOR

(very stern)

Sit down.

CHRISTY

What?

Mother Superior rises. She is an extremely imposing woman.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Sit.

Christy sits in a wooden chair across from Mother Superior.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Miss Van Cartier.

CHRISTY

(belligerent)

What?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Your cigarette -- out.

Christy inspects her cigarette.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

(ruefully)

It has come to pass.

CHRISTY

What?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

I joined this convent some thirty years ago. At that time, the world knew some measure of peace. And hope. Our order was a beacon of hospitality, to families, to children, to a neighborhood filled with promise. And, as the years have passed, I have watched that promise destroyed. Drugs. Gangs.

(staring at Christy's outfit)

Spandex. And so I have made this convent an oasis, a retreat from horror. And now that horror has invaded these sacred walls.

CHRISTY

Are you talking about me?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

And all those like you.

CHRISTY

You mean black people?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Absolutely not. I mean the wicked. The heedless. And their Las Vegas concubines.

CHRISTY

(very suspicious)

What's a concubine?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Check your driver's license.

Christy stands, facing off with Mother Superior.

CHRISTY

Fine. Got it. Look, the way I see it, I'm stuck here, right? I mean, I'm here or I'm target practice. So here's the deal -- I don't bug you, you don't bug me. I'll catch up on some sleep, watch some tube, lay back and lay low. So just get me a key and show me to my room, and do not disturb. Capisce?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

(suspiciously gracious)

Of course. But it's almost lunch.

CHRISTY

Cool. Is there a menu? Or buffet?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Before we do, you might like to freshen up. And you'll certainly want to change.

CHRISTY

(sniffing her clothes, the same outfit she's had on since the night at Vince's office)

Deal.

INT. CONVENT CHANGING ROOM

A small room, with a sewing machine, some bolts of fabric, and several wooden cabinets. There is a wooden screen in a corner, marking a changing area. Christy is behind the screen; we hear her, but do not see her. Mother Superior stands beside the screen, catching the various items of clothing which Christy tosses to her.

CHRISTY (O.S.)

How about a robe? One of those big terry cloth jobs, with like embroidery on the pocket. "Guest of St. Katherine's".

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Would you like that?

Mother Superior takes Christy's skirt and blouse, and tosses them down a chute marked "INCINERATOR."

CHRISTY (O.S.)

You should hand-wash that blouse, and send somebody out for some things. I look good in reds, purples, hot pink -- and shoes. Five-inch heels. Fuck-me pumps. Oh, man -- sorry. 'Scuse my mouth.

Mother Superior carries Christy's lacy bra at the end of a ruler; it goes down the incinerator.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Excused. Open the cabinet to your left. You will find appropriate attire.

CHRISTY (O.S.)

Can do.

INT. CHAPEL

A group of nuns are praying, their heads bowed. They hear a muffled SCREAM, from elsewhere in the convent. They look up, puzzled.

INT. CONVENT CHANGING ROOM

Christy is standing before a full-length mirror, staring at herself, in complete shock. She now wears a habit and wimple. Mother Superior is doing final adjustments on the wimple.

CHRISTY

(almost unable to speak)

No! No! I can't do this!

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Normally dressed, you are a sore thumb, and you endanger us all. While you are here, you will conduct yourself as a nun. Only I shall know who, and what, you truly are. You will not disrupt the convent. You will not influence the Sisters with your colorful street talk. You will draw no attention to yourself in any way.

CHRISTY

(furious, in disbelief)

But look at me! Look at this! I'm a nun! I'm invisible! I'm a penguin! I'm... I'm...

MOTHER SUPERIOR

As of now, and until you leave, you are Sister Mary Clarence.

CHRISTY

(outraged)

Mary Clarence? Like a guy? Like a dumb guy?

INT. CONVENT HALLWAY - A MINUTE LATER

Mother Superior is striding down the hall. Christy is beside her, trying to get the hang of her new outfit.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

The Mary is in deference to the Holy Mother, the Clarence in honor of Saint Clarence Loyola. There are three vows that every nun must accept. The vow of poverty...

CHRISTY

(pulling out her pockets)

No problem.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

The vow of obedience.

CHRISTY

Like to who?

MOTHER SUPERIOR
And the vow of chastity.

CHRISTY
I'm outta here.

Christy starts to leave; Mother Superior grabs her by the wimple.

INT. CONVENT DINING HALL

A large, whitewashed gothic room, with oak beams and a crude iron chandelier. There is a long, central wooden table, with rough wooden benches.

The convent's population is standing around the table in silence. There are about thirty nuns in all.

Mother Superior moves to the head of the table, with Christy following her. She motions for Christy to stand at her right.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Good afternoon, Sisters. I apologize for my tardiness. I would like you to welcome a new member of our order, Sister Mary Clarence.

ANGLE on SISTER MARY ROBERT, the nun standing beside Christy. Sister Mary Robert is naive and mouse-like, but very sweet. She has only been at the convent a few years; she wears the simpler habit of a novice. She sneaks a look at Christy. Her eyes widen, and then she resumes staring at her hands.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Mary Clarence comes to us from a somewhat more progressive convent. She is eager for a more disciplined life, and will make every effort to conform to our ways.

Everyone sits, including Christy. SISTER MARY PATRICK, a nun seated at the middle of the table, waves her hand. Mary Patrick is extremely cheerful, a truly upbeat person.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Yes, Mary Patrick?

MARY PATRICK
Reverend Mother, on behalf of the sisters, I'd like to welcome Mary Clarence to St. Katherine's.

ANGLE on Christy, looking thoroughly disgusted.

MARY PATRICK

As part of our welcome, I've had a little thought, just for fun. Could we have our new friend offer today's blessing?

ANGLE on the nuns, watching Christy.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

(reluctantly)

Very well. Mary Clarence, rise please.

Christy stands up slowly, aghast.

CHRISTY

A blessing? Like, for lunch?

ANGLE on Mary Patrick, beaming. She and the other nuns bow their heads.

CHRISTY

(trying to recall a blessing)

For what we are about to receive...

So far, so good. Mother Superior has one eye open.

CHRISTY

... may the Lord... prepare us and... watch us and... walk through the valley and be our shepherd and... to the republic for which it stands... God bless us every one, hallowed be thy name. Hallelujah. Ave Maria. Boyardee. Amen.

ANGLE on the nuns, staring at Christy.

Mother Superior rises, very quickly.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Sisters, for the rest of the day we shall declare a Vow of Silence.

CHRISTY

A what?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Surely you are familiar with this practice, Mary Clarence. Only when our lips are silent, can our prayers truly be heard.

CHRISTY

Silence? No talking? All day?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Until sundown.

CHRISTY
 (mouthing the words,
 without speaking aloud)
 Oh my God.

Christy reaches for a piece of bread.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
 And Mary Clarence?

Christy looks up.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
 As a new member of our order, I think
 you might also enjoy a ritual fast.

CHRISTY
 (mouthing the words)
 A what?

MOTHER SUPERIOR
 A fast. To remind us of the poor, of
 those who must endure without enough to
 eat.

CHRISTY
 (mouthing)
 No food?

MOTHER SUPERIOR
 (taking away Christy's plate)
 No food. Not until sundown.

ANGLE on Christy, clutching her fork, hungrily watching the
 other nuns eat.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Vince leaves the police station with his henchmen, Joey and
 Willy, and LARRY MARREN, an attorney. Vince is steaming as
 they walk through the parking lot.

VINCE
 They grilled me for six hours in there.
 And my hotshot lawyer -- where the hell
 were you?

LARRY
 It takes time, Vince. Slow and steady.
 We've been through this before.

Vince reaches his car. As Joey opens the door for him,
 another car drives by, and stops. Eddie is driving; he
 leans out the window.

EDDIE
 So long, Vince. See you soon.

Vince lurches toward Eddie; Larry restrains him. Eddie drives off, chuckling.

VINCE

He's so damn cocky. This is different.

JOEY

It's a bluff, Vince.

VINCE

You know so much. They've got Christy, and we've got to find her. Get her 8x10, from in front of the lounge. Fax it to every contact we got.

Larry covers his ears with both hands.

LARRY

I can't hear this. I'm an attorney, Vince, and you're just an honest casino owner. Object of a witch hunt. Innocent victim.

VINCE

Keep the message vague, but let 'em know. The price has gone up. Christy Van Cartier -- a quarter of a million. Dead or nearby.

Vince looks grim and vindictive, as he gets into the car.

EXT. CONVENT VEGETABLE GARDEN - DAY

The vegetable patch is located behind the convent, on a patch of land surrounded by high walls. Various sections have been partitioned with string and then furrowed.

Several nuns are working in the patch, weeding and raking. They wear large, ungainly straw hats over their wimples.

Christy has been given a hoe and a straw hat. She is hacking at the dirt, with great disinterest. She picks up a carrot from the vegetable patch; she looks around to see if anyone is watching. She starts to gnaw on the carrot. She becomes aware that someone is watching her. She looks up.

Sister Mary Robert is watching Christy eat the carrot, breaking her fast. Christy drops the carrot on the ground, as if it burned her. Mary Robert resumes hoeing in the next furrow over.

Christy stares at Mary Robert, narrowing her eyes. Christy looks around; all the other nuns are busy at their tasks. Christy decides that she will try and make Sister Mary Robert talk. She picks up the carrot and tosses it at Mary Robert. Mary Robert jumps. She waggles a finger at Christy, scolding her. Mary Robert resumes hoeing.

Christy is now determined. She takes her hoe, and tiptoes nearer to Mary Robert. Very gently, she uses the handle of the hoe to lift Mary Robert's skirt, and gooses her.

Mary Robert yips, very loudly. All the other nuns turn and stare at Mary Robert, scolding her. Christy waggles her finger at Mary Robert, scolding her.

Christy, giggling to herself, resumes hoeing. She sees Mother Superior, standing at the end of the furrow. Mother Superior looks extremely grim; she has not missed anything.

EXT. SUNSET - THAT NIGHT

LONG SHOT of the sun going down, ending the nuns' Vow of Silence.

We hear Christy SCREAM, O.S.

INT. CONVENT HALLWAY - THAT NIGHT

This hallway is marked by a series of heavy wooden doors with tiny, grilled windows. These are the cells where the nuns sleep. Nuns are entering their cells and closing their doors for the night.

Mother Superior glides down the hall, followed by a dusty, bedraggled Christy. Christy is devouring a slice of brown bread.

CHRISTY

Is this all the food I get?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Yes. Until breakfast.

CHRISTY

That's tomorrow! Don't you have any snacks? Machines?

They stop by a door.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

This shall be your cell, Mary Clarence.

CHRISTY

My what?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Your cell. Your room.

INT. CHRISTY'S CELL

The door swings open, and Mother Superior and Christy enter. The room is tiny, with bare plaster walls. There is a narrow wooden bed, with a thin muslin-covered mattress. There is a small nightstand and a wooden stool.

CHRISTY

(looking around)

You were right the first time. Is this like, solitary? The cooler? Where's the furniture?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Our lives are simple. We have little need for material possessions.

CHRISTY

Right, sure thing. But what about, like, appliances? Like a little color portable? Boom box?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Useless distractions.

CHRISTY

(sinking to the bed)

It's like the Stone Age. The room time forgot. What about a phone?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

And whom would you call?

CHRISTY

Oh, I don't know... Satan?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

(not amused)

Your cell is more than adequate.

CHRISTY

Right. So what do we do now? Ping-pong? Row over to the monastery?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

It is nine p.m. Pleasant dreams.

CHRISTY

Wait. No. You're kidding. Lights out? At nine? My day's just starting.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

I'm sure. If I were you, I would use this time, to think about my life. And its direction. Or lack thereof.

CHRISTY

(indignant)

What's wrong with my life?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

From all I've heard, just about everything. Your singing career seems all but nonexistent, and your married lover wants you dead.

(MORE)

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)

If you're fooling anyone, it's only
yourself. God has brought you here.
Take the hint.

Mother Superior leaves.

After the door shuts, Christy stands and looks out the one
small window in her cell. She leans her head against the
wall. She is trying not to think about what Mother
Superior has said. Still, the mess her life has become
overwhelms her. She fights back tears.

EXT. CONVENT - DAY

The sun is just barely rising, as the convent BELL tolls.

INT. CHRISTY'S CELL

Christy is fast asleep. There is a RAPPING at the door.

MARY ROBERT (O.S.)

Sister Mary Clarence!

EXT. CONVENT HALLWAY

All the nuns are proceeding, in their simple robes and
nightshirts, down the hallway.

Christy's door opens; she is still in her nightshirt, and
her hair is a mess.

CHRISTY

What?

Mary Robert, in her nightshirt, stands outside.

MARY ROBERT

Come on, we're late.

CHRISTY

What? What time is it?

MARY ROBERT

It's after five. We have to bathe.

CHRISTY

(groaning)

Five a.m.?

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE BATHING ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Christy is standing on line in the hall, along with several
other nuns; they are waiting to take showers. They carry
soap and towels.

MARY PATRICK

(sincerely)

Isn't it a glorious morning? Good morning, Mary Clarence. Sleep well?

CHRISTY

Right.

MARY ROBERT

Is this like your old convent?

MARY PATRICK

Which convent was that, Sister?

CHRISTY

Which convent? It was, um, the Little Sisters... of the Moonlight. In Vegas. Everybody used to come to Mass. Frank. Dean. Sammy. Right at ringside.

MARY LAZARUS

Enough jabber.

MARY LAZARUS is a much older nun; she is very no-nonsense, a hard-liner.

CHRISTY

What?

MARY LAZARUS

Progressive convents. Vanity. It sounds awful. It sounds just like this place.

CHRISTY

Like this place?

MARY LAZARUS

I like my old convent, in Vancouver. Out in the woods. It wasn't all modern, like here. No electricity. Cold water. Bare feet. Those were nuns. It was Hell on earth, but I loved it. This place is a Hilton.

INT. BATHING ROOM

A stone room that is very medieval-looking. One wall is divided into stalls by wooden partitions. In each stall is a nun, standing beneath a crude shower head that releases a thin stream of lukewarm water. We see only the nuns' heads and shoulders.

Still sleepy, Christy leans against the wall of her stall, her eyes closed. Lost in thought, she begins singing softly to herself.

CHRISTY
MY BOYFRIEND'S BACK
AND YOU'RE GONNA BE IN TROUBLE

A FEW OTHER NUNS
(very softly)
HEY-LA, HEY-LA

Christy looks up from her reverie; she looks around. The other nuns are bathing, their eyes down. There is no sign of singing. Christy decides to try a test.

CHRISTY
MY BOYFRIEND'S BACK
HE'S GONNA SAVE MY REPUTATION

A FEW OF THE NUNS
(still very softly)
HEY-LA, HEY-LA

CHRISTY
IF I WERE YOU,
I'D TAKE A PERMANENT VACATION

A FEW OF THE NUNS
HEY-LA, HEY-LA
MY BOYFRIEND'S BACK

The nuns giggle.

CHRISTY
Where did that come from?

MARY PATRICK
I haven't heard that song in ages. The Ronettes?

MARY LAZARUS
(very grouchy)
Shirelles.

CHRISTY
You know that song?

MARY PATRICK
1961? '62? Mary Clarence, that's when many of us took final vows. It's the last secular music we recall.

CHRISTY
No.
HEY -- HE KNOWS THAT YOU BEEN CHEATING
NOW YOU'RE GONNA GET A BEATING

ALL THE NUNS
HEY-LA, HEY LA

MARY LAZARUS
 (cutting off the song)
 That's enough. We've got to get to chapel.

Mary Lazarus leaves the bathing room, and the other nuns resume scrubbing themselves. Christy looks around.

CHRISTY
 Anybody got conditioner?

INT. CHAPEL - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Bishop O'Hara is leading the Sunday mass. He stands in the pulpit. The choir nuns stand in a fenced-in area to his left. The remaining nuns, including Christy and Mother Superior, sit in the first few pews.

O'HARA
 We are a small congregation this morning. Too many mornings. Something has gone terribly wrong. Where is faith? Where is celebration? Where is everyone? Still, rather than regret the absence of our neighbors, let us rejoice in the fellowship of those present. Our choirmistress, Sister Mary Lazarus, has informed me that our choir, while always superior, has been toiling especially hard on this week's selection. Sister?

Mary Lazarus raises her hand, and the choir begins singing. They sing a traditional hymn, "Let Thy Thoughts Be Guided." As always, their singing is dreadful; they have no tempo or pitch, and the hymn becomes an off-key drone.

As the hymn continues, the CAMERA PANS OVER the chapel. Aside from the nuns, it is almost empty; only a few elderly people are in attendance.

ANGLE ON CHRISTY

sitting with the other nuns. She is clearly about to fall asleep. Then the choir hits a particularly horrendous note, and Christy jerks awake. She immediately tries to assume a pious expression, tilting her head and folding her hands in prayer; she looks like a somewhat demented Sunday School calendar.

EXT. LAS VEGAS POLICE DEPARTMENT

Detective Clarkson gets out of his car and hurries into the police station.

INT. POLICE STATION

Clarkson crosses the busy room to Eddie's glass-walled office. Along the way, he signals Detective Tate to follow him.

INT. MULCAHY'S OFFICE

Eddie looks up from his desk as the two detectives enter.

CLARKSON .

There was a raid on a pawnshop in L.A. this morning. The place was fencing stolen property. They found this.

Clarkson gives Eddie a fax sheet, showing a publicity photograph of Christy.

EDDIE

Jesus. Data-base hoods. It's a wonderful world.

(reading the fax sheet)

"Beloved daughter missing. Reward of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Please find our adored angel, we miss her so. Dead or alive."

TATE

Vince is getting desperate. Where is she, Eddie? Where'd you stash her?

EDDIE

Where's who?

TATE

You won't even tell us?

EDDIE

I wouldn't even tell the Pope.

INT. CONVENT SCHOOLROOM - AN HOUR LATER

A plain whitewashed classroom, with battered student-style desks. A group of about eight local TEENAGE GIRLS has gathered. The Girls wear extremes of hair, makeup and clothing; they are bored and scruffy, clearly the local bad Girls. Sister Mary Patrick is leading the class, in her usual perky manner.

MARY PATRICK

Good afternoon, young ladies. And welcome to our Christian Youth Group.

The Girls make grunting noises.

MARY PATRICK

Hi. I hope we'll have some fun, and maybe learn a little something, too. Now, today's topic is something very up-to-date -- "Teenage Promiscuity." My. Now, can anyone tell me -- just what is "promiscuity"?

ANGLE on the Girls, exchanging glances and rolling their eyes.

MARY PATRICK

Anyone? Yes?

Mary Patrick points to a Girl in bicycle pants, a bustier and a leather baseball cap. Her name is LaWanda.

LAWANDA

Uh, it's like, you know, doin' it. A whole lot. Till your head falls off.

MARY PATRICK

(blushing)

Well, yes. That is one way to put it.

Mother Superior enters the classroom, accompanied by Christy.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Sister Mary Patrick?

MARY PATRICK

Yes?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

I need to see you, at once. Girls, please excuse Sister Mary Patrick for a few moments. Mary Clarence?

CHRISTY

Yeah?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Girls, this is Sister Mary Clarence. She'll be minding you until Sister Mary Patrick's return. Mary Clarence, please assign a biblical passage. Do not attempt discussion. Am I understood?

CHRISTY

I got it.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

(to Mary Patrick)

Come, Sister.

Mother Superior and Mary Patrick leave the classroom. Christy now stands at the front of the room. She is visibly uncomfortable.

CHRISTY

So, hi there. I'm... Sister Mary Clarence. And you're... young Christians. I guess I should assign you this passage. What's good? What were you talking about?

LAWANDA

We were talking about the wild thing. "Teen promiscuity."

CHRISTY
(after a beat)
Really.

CHARLENE
Yeah. Sister Mary Pat was discussing
it. You know she thinks it's a sin.

CHRISTY
(trying to behave)
Well... yes. Yes it is.

LAWANDA
(goadng Christy)
How come? Sister?

CHRISTY
(still trying to behave)
Well... because it's in the Bible.
"Thou shalt not..." Thou shalt not.

The Girls all laugh and make jeering noises.

CHRISTY
Excuse me -- just what are you all doing
here? At Sunday School?

LAWANDA
'Cause we love it so damn much. And
'cause we gotta come here. Probation.

CHRISTY
Probation?

CHARLENE
Yeah. We all got caught. Shoplifting.
Cuttin' school. Cuttin' up some bitch
with a blade. So we gotta come here. So
we'll be good, in the future. So we'll
learn valuable lessons. And I learned
mine. I will be incredibly good, I will
never rip out nobody's nose-ring by
accident ever again. Can I go now?

CHRISTY
(getting fed up)
Yeah, you learned a whole lot, I can
tell.

LAWANDA
Well, what would you know about it,
anyway? What do any of you nunheads
know about anything? About doin' the
nasty, or gettin' high?

CONCHITA
Leave her alone, LaWanda, she's just
some ol' nun! Don't pick on no nun,
it's bad luck!

CHRISTY

(fed up)
Shut up!

All the Girls look up, stunned by Christy's language.

CHRISTY

Okay, so maybe I'm a nun -- so, you want to ask me something? You want to listen, for once in your little lives? You want to pay some attention?

CHARLENE

What about crack? You a user?

CHRISTY

I said I was a nun, not an asshole.

All the girls jeer at Charlene.

KESHIA

Got you, Charlene!

CONCHITA

Dunked by the nun!

LAWANDA

(more sincerely)
Well, what about the sex stuff? What if some dude is after you, and he's always saying stuff, comin' on sweet and mellow. Like, oh, baby, you know you'll love it. Oh, baby, if you loved me, you'd stay.

CHRISTY

And you listen to that?

LAWANDA

No, but... I don't know... sometimes.

CHRISTY

Hey, I know, it's hard. But do what I do.

LAWANDA

(puzzled)
What you do?

CHRISTY

Just tell him, I do love you, but I can't -- I'm a nun.

The girls all laugh; they are really beginning to like Christy.

CHARLENE

But, like what if you are doin' it?
What about protection? Who's
responsible?

CONCHITA

What about them things, you know, for
the guy? Aren't they like, a mess to
put on? Don't they kinda mess up the
mood?

CHRISTY

Deal with it, sweet thing. It's
important, nowadays. You just practice
at home, with a balloon and a banana.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (O.S.)

Mary Clarence!

Mother Superior has returned, with Mary Patrick. Everyone
has been so wrapped up in the discussion, that no one has
noticed their entrance.

CHRISTY

(thinking on her feet)

Because a banana is part of a balanced
breakfast. And don't forget fiber.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S OFFICE - LATER THAT DAY

Mother Superior is seated behind her desk; she is very
angry. Christy sits across from her.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

A balloon and a banana! Tell me, Mary
Clarence, what were you thinking?

CHRISTY

Those girls were asking questions.
They've got it rough. I wish somebody
had talked to me about that stuff when I
was their age. I wish somebody would
talk to me about it now.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

This is a convent, not a clinic. We
offer moral guidance, not hardware.

CHRISTY

Have you been out in those streets? Do
you know what those kids are up
against? You should help them!

MOTHER SUPERIOR

We are nuns. We seek solutions through
prayer.

CHRISTY

Sometimes it's not enough!

MOTHER SUPERIOR

You are correct. Sometimes prayer alone cannot help a situation. Such as your own, for example. How do you feel about physical labor?

CHRISTY

It never solves anything.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Do you recall the words of Saint Peter, in Ecclesiastes 1:27? He spoke unto a wastrel youth. He said, "Take up thy task, and know ye the path of contentment."

CHRISTY

In English?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

How to put it... ah, of course, Mary Clarence. "No pain, no gain."

Mother Superior smiles in a rather evil manner.

INT. VINCE'S OFFICE - DAY

Vince is on the telephone in his office at the Moonlight Hotel and Casino. He clearly has a new mistress or two.

VINCE

(very seductive)

Baby, you know I do... of course... I feel it too... I'm blushing... can you hold?

A second telephone RINGS, and Willy answers it. Vince meanwhile has pushed a button on his phone and is involved in a second romantic call.

VINCE

Soon, you gorgeous thing... tell me... how lonely?

WILLY

It's that call you were expecting, Vince.

VINCE

Can you hold? Can you try?

Willy passes the phone to Vince.

VINCE

Have you found out where Christy is yet? Hey, bozo, you're on my payroll! You want to try making it on a cop's salary? Find her, and find her now!

Vince passes the phone back to Willy.

VINCE

Raise the ante to three hundred grand.

Willy heads for the fax machine. Vince regains his composure, and picks up his own phone; he pushes a button.

VINCE

Sorry, baby... you are? Totally? Not a stitch?... Yeah, I'm naked too... inside...

INT. CONVENT CRAFTS ROOM

This is a large, open room where the nuns create various gift items which the convent sells to support itself. Several nuns sit at a table, diligently hand-painting Christmas cards and making Christmas tree ornaments.

On the other side of the room is a large, free-standing loom, which resembles a grand piano. The loom is wooden; a tapestry is half-completed. Mary Patrick is seated at the loom, which is a complicated mechanism. Christy stands beside her.

MARY PATRICK

The minute I saw you, I said to myself, she's a weaver. Have you ever used a loom?

CHRISTY

Not in years.

MARY PATRICK

Well, it all comes back, in just a jiffy. I'm working on a wall-hanging, of the convent.

CHRISTY

Why?

MARY PATRICK

To sell, of course. I hate to say it, but we're in terrible trouble here at St. Katherine's. We need a new roof, the furnace is going, and there's no money.

CHRISTY

But don't you get money? From the Vatican?

MARY PATRICK

Mary Clarence. Goose. We're completely self-supporting. Like all convents. Like yours.

CHRISTY

Oh, right. At my old place, we used to... wash cars. Groom dogs. So... nice loom.

MARY PATRICK

Isn't it lovely? Now I'll demonstrate, and then you can hop right in.

(as she deftly works
the loom)

You just draw your beater in, keep it pressed against the pick, and open the shed. Then pass your shuttle, beat, and open the next shed. Shuttle, beat, shed, shuttle, beat, shed. Keep tension on the warp. Is that clear?

CHRISTY

(pretending to be
fascinated)

Just about. Show me again.

MARY PATRICK

You betcha.

CRAFTS ROOM - AN HOUR LATER

ANGLE on the wall hanging, which has progressed considerably.

ANGLE on Christy, leaning against the wall, thumbing through a magazine.

ANGLE on Mary Patrick, hard at work at the loom.

MARY PATRICK

Shuttle, beat, shed. And watch your heddles.

CHRISTY

I love my heddles. Show me again.

Mother Superior appears.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Mary Clarence -- how is your weaving progressing?

MARY PATRICK

Oh, she's doing just fine, Reverend Mother.

CHRISTY

Really catching on.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Good. Mary Patrick, I need you in the office. Mary Clarence, carry on.

Mother Superior gestures to the loom. Christy sits at the loom, and waves as Mother Superior and Mary Patrick exit.

Christy stares at the loom; a look of horror crosses her face. She has not been paying attention to Mary Patrick's instructions. She cracks her knuckles, as if she were about to play the piano. She grabs two parts of the loom, at random. She moves these parts.

ANGLE on the loom. As a result of Christy's movements, the loom collapses, piece by piece. The tapestry unravels, the many skeins of wool snap, and the mechanical apparatus disintegrates, until finally the entire loom shudders and falls to the floor, as Christy watches, aghast.

INT. CORRIDOR

Mother Superior is striding down the hall; she is livid. Christy trails behind her, trying to keep up.

CHRISTY

I'm sorry, I'm not a weaver!

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Months of work, and the loom, absolutely ruined!

CHRISTY

Look, this isn't my kind of thing! I wasn't cut out to make little tapestries, or knit little sweaters! I don't do that! I'm a star!

Mother Superior stops dead in her tracks; she turns and stares at Christy. Then she smiles, in a rather frightening manner.

MONTAGE - CHRISTY

- A) on her hands and knees. scrubbing the stone floor of a convent hallway.
- B) crawling along between the pews in the chapel, oiling every inch of wood with a bottle of polish and a rag.
- C) crawling along the convent roof, cleaning out gutters with a trowel. She discovers a dead rat in one of the gutters.

D) sewing; she is repairing a hole in a habit. The CAMERA PULLS BACK. Christy is sitting in a small stone room, surrounded by piles of torn habits, linen and other mending.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S OFFICE

Christy is on the phone in the darkened office. She keeps checking the door, to make sure no one is listening.

CHRISTY

(into phone)

Let me talk to Detective Eddie Mulcahy. It's an emergency. Real bad.

EDDIE'S VOICE

Mulcahy.

Christy cups her hand around the phone and speaks quietly and frantically. INTERCUT between Christy and Eddie.

CHRISTY

Eddie, you've got to get me out of here.

EDDIE

Not again. You can't keep calling. Somebody's going to catch on to where you are.

CHRISTY

But I'm going insane! All these people do is pray and work, work and pray! I don't get it -- when's the weekend? They have gruel, Eddie, that's what they call food! Gruel -- it's like Alpo for nuns! I sleep in a cell, on a board, and I pray five times a day! Do you know what I pray for, Eddie, do you have any idea? Check your crotch, Eddie -- anything fall off yet? Get me outta here!

EDDIE

Calm down. Look, I didn't want to tell you this, but we've had some problems with our protection program lately.

CHRISTY

Like what?

EDDIE

Keeping our witnesses alive. We hide them, but there's a leak in the department, and they end up dead.

CHRISTY

You son-of-a-bitch!

EDDIE

I just need a few more weeks.

CHRISTY

But it's a nightmare! Mother Superior
is out to get me! She hates my guts!
She keeps thinking up new kinds of
torture!

In the distance, Christy hears the CHOIR practicing; they
sound even worse than usual.

CHRISTY

(holding the phone out)
Do you hear that? That choir? Eddie,
in here, that's what they call music!

EDDIE

Don't call again. It's not safe. I'll
be in touch.

As the line goes dead, Mother Superior enters. Christy
takes her dust rag and pretends to polish the receiver.
She sings as she works.

CHRISTY

THE HILLS ARE ALIVE
WITH THE SOUND OF MUSIC...

Still singing, Christy breezes out of the room. Mother
Superior looks mystified.

INT. CHRISTY'S CELL - MIDNIGHT

Christy is lying flat out on her bed, in her habit, utterly
exhausted by the week's hard labor. There is a meek
SCRATCHING at her door.

CHRISTY

(without moving)
Yeah?

Sister Mary Robert enters, very shyly. She barely looks
up.

CHRISTY

What? What does she want now? I did
the dishes. I oiled the pews. I dusted
the hymnals. Two hundred hymnals. Why
can't people share?

MARY ROBERT

(not speaking above a
whisper)
I... I...

CHRISTY

What?

MARY ROBERT

I... I brought you something.

CHRISTY

A cigarette?

MARY ROBERT

An extra heel of bread. Please take it, you need your strength. You've been working so hard.

Mary Robert holds out a rather rugged crust of brown bread. Christy takes it.

CHRISTY

Thanks. So which one are you? Sister Bruce? Sister Doug?

MARY ROBERT

(still almost whispering)
Mary Robert. I'm... Mary Robert.

CHRISTY

Right. Okay. Bob. Nice to know you.

Mary Robert nods, and resumes looking at her hands. She doesn't leave, but she's still tongue-tied. Christy is at a loss.

CHRISTY

So, Bob, how long have you been in? At St. K's?

MARY ROBERT

Three years. Sister.

CHRISTY

Three years. A rookie.

MARY ROBERT

A novice.

CHRISTY

Yeah, like a learner's permit, right? When do you hit the big time? You know, when do you take the final vows?

Mary Robert bursts into tears.

CHRISTY

Whoa! Bob! What's going on here? What'd I say?

MARY ROBERT

(still sobbing)

You have to help me!

CHRISTY

Right, sure, but what's the problem?
Are they keeping you a prisoner here?
Do they drug you? Did Reverend Mother
like, kidnap your parents? We can call
the Enquirer.

MARY ROBERT

No, you don't understand -- I don't want
to get out! I want to get in!

CHRISTY

Excuse me?

MARY ROBERT

Oh, Mary Clarence, I'm so unworthy. I
want to take my final vows, I would do
it tomorrow, but Reverend Mother won't
let me!

CHRISTY

She won't? Why not?

MARY ROBERT

She says I should wait. She says that
no one should become a nun as an escape
from life. She says that I'm not
experienced enough to make the decision
yet. In a mature manner.

CHRISTY

She said that? Reverend Mother?

Mary Robert nods, solemnly. Suddenly, from the streets
outside the convent, we hear a BLAST OF hot dance MUSIC,
and the SOUND of laughter and carefree conversation.

CHRISTY

Well, then there's only one thing to do.

MARY ROBERT

What?

CHRISTY

Reverend Mother says you need
experience, right, in life. In order to
make a responsible decision. This is
going to be very painful for me. You
know how much I love this little room.
This whole convent. Wait.

Christy stands, and goes to the crucifix hanging on the
wall. She speaks to the crucifix, and listens, as if Jesus
is advising her.

CHRISTY

(to Jesus)

Must I do this thing, O Lord? Please help me... yes, I know... I must put my selfish cares aside... I must think of others... yes, she's here...

(she gestures to

Mary Robert)

He says hi... yes, I understand... let thy will be done. Amen. You too.

Christy turns to Mary Robert, having received a holy message.

CHRISTY

We must do this sacred thing, Mary Robert.

MARY ROBERT

(desperate)

Of course! We must do it! It's the will of God! What is it?

CHRISTY

(shutting her eyes, for the full spiritual effect)

We must... get you some experience. We must... leave this place.

MARY ROBERT

Are you sure?

Another BLAST OF MUSIC from the street. Christy turns to the crucifix. She gets confirmation.

CHRISTY

(to Jesus)

We hear you.

EXT. STREET

The outer wall of the convent. A door swings open, and Christy sticks her head out. She looks both ways, and steps outside. She beckons to Mary Robert, who appears from behind her. Mary Robert looks very wary. Christy pulls her along.

EXT. A STREET NEARBY

Christy and Mary Robert walk along a street a few blocks from the convent.

MARY ROBERT

(looking around cautiously)

Are you sure this is what Reverend Mother had in mind?

CHRISTY

I know it is. It's life. Experience.
Take a deep breath.

Christy breathes deep, and then lets out a whoop. She spins, letting her habit billow around her.

MARY ROBERT

(shocked)
Mary Clarence!

CHRISTY

Now you.

Mary Robert's eyes widen. She points to herself -- "Me?" Christy nods. Mary Robert lets out a tiny little whoop, and does a little, timid hop.

CHRISTY

It's a start.

EXT. SOCIAL CLUB

A neighborhood hang-out, the windows bright with neon beer signs. The exterior is colorfully painted; the club all but explodes with good times. A group of teenagers lounge on the steps, sipping beers and smoking. Among the teenagers are the girls from Christy's Christian Youth group. Christy and Mary Robert approach, and the group falls silent.

CHRISTY

How're you doing.

LAWANDA

(puzzled)
Hey, Sisters. Are you going in there?

CHRISTY

You know it.

MARY ROBERT

We need experience.

CHRISTY

(remembering she's a nun)
It's part of St. Katherine's new community outreach program. How old are you? You shouldn't be smoking. Have you ever seen a diseased lung? Hand 'em over.

LaWanda reluctantly hands over her cigarettes. Christy turns to a TEENAGE BOY who's drinking beer.

CHRISTY

And you, with the devil's brew passing
through your lips.

(holding out her hand)

A mind is a terrible thing to waste.

The Boy hands over the beer. Christy and Mary Robert enter the club.

INT. SOCIAL CLUB

Christy enters the club and grins. She takes a drag on the cigarette. Mary Robert grabs the beer from Christy's hand, and takes a swig.

CHRISTY

(shocked)

Bob!

MARY ROBERT

Experience! Right?

CHRISTY

Right.

The club is alive with activity; the bar is crowded, couples are making out at small tables, and the dance floor is packed. The atmosphere is a combination of hazy darkness and colored lights; the club should have the feeling of a hot neighborhood party, with people of all ages and races. The MUSIC percolates, and Christy starts to move to it. She and Mary Robert find a table in the corner, and signal a nearby waitress.

CHRISTY

A couple of bowls of chili.

(holding up the beer)

And another round of these.

The waitress looks at the two women strangely; the club has never hosted nuns before.

MARY ROBERT

(to the waitress, confidentially)

I have to do this. So I can become a nun.

CHRISTY

(to the waitress)

Initiation. You understand. Later on, we make her wear her underwear on her head.

MARY ROBERT

Really?

CHRISTY
 (to the waitress)
 And she wants to be a nun.

The waitress leaves, shaking her head. Christy and Mary Robert watch the action at the club.

Across the room, MIKE the bartender stares at the nuns, especially Christy; he tries to place her.

MARY ROBERT
 Who are all these people?

CHRISTY
 This is your neighborhood. Your turf.
 You should get to know 'em.

From across the room, Mike the bartender continues to study Christy's face. He takes out a copy of Vince's fax photo and stares at it. He covers Christy's hair in the photo with his hands, creating a wimple. There is no question in his mind; the two are the same. Mike has a dangerous look in his eyes as he takes a gun from the drawer and slips it into his pocket beneath his apron.

There is a LIVE BAND on a small stage at one end of the club. They start playing a hot dance number, and the club really begins to cook, as the dance floor fills. Christy and Mary Robert, both still seated, start to move with the music.

A very good-looking LOCAL DUDE comes over to the nuns' table. He is clearly amused at their presence.

DUDE
 Hey, Sisters -- how you doin'?

CHRISTY
 (flirting)
 Better now.

DUDE
 How come they let you out? Out of that convent place?

CHRISTY
 Time off. For bad behavior.

DUDE
 Oww! A nun havin' fun! I don't believe it! It's good to have you ladies in this fine establishment. So... anybody on the move?

MARY ROBERT
 (standing up)
 I am.

CHRISTY

Bob! What're you doing?

Mary Robert leads the Dude out onto the dance floor.

MARY ROBERT

I'm getting experience.

CHRISTY

(to the Dude)

You watch yourself!

Christy decides she'd better keep an eye on Mary Robert; she grabs another DUDE, and heads for the dance floor.

As the music percolates, Christy and Mary Robert dance; Christy is very hot, and Mary Robert picks up on her moves. The CLUB PATRONS are delighted, and cheer as the nuns start to get down.

CLUB PATRON #1

Do it, Sisters!

CLUB PATRON #2

Sway and pray!

As the song, and the nuns' exuberant dancing, peak, the Club Patrons cheer, shouting "Hallelujah!" and "Amen!"

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Christy and Mary Robert are walking back to the convent. They are both in very good spirits.

MARY ROBERT

Those people are wonderful! Why don't we ever see them in church?

CHRISTY

Good point. Especially that dude you were with. I'd like to see him down front.

MARY ROBERT

(giggling)

Mary Clarence! You're so... different from the other sisters. Sometimes, well... sometimes you sound more like a layperson.

CHRISTY

Honey.

As the two women laugh together, they don't notice the car that begins to follow them, creeping slowly forward with its headlights out.

MARY ROBERT

I can't wait to tell Reverend Mother about all my experiences. I've learned so much.

CHRISTY .

Well, you know, you don't have to tell her everything. I mean, nothing really happened. We just... took a walk.

The car's bright lights suddenly switch on, and the nuns turn, startled. The car hurtles toward them. They scream, and Christy grabs Mary Robert and throws her out of the car's path; the two women land on a pile of garbage bags.

Struggling to her feet, Christy sees the car go into reverse, and then pull forward again. She sees a glint of light reflect off a gun as the car's driver (Mike the bartender) leans out the window.

CHRISTY

(to Mary Robert)

Run!

Christy shoves Mary Robert towards an alley. As she does so, the gun GOES OFF with a red flash. The shot misses the two women and SHATTERS a plate glass window of the store behind them.

EXT. ALLEY

Running up the alley, Christy and Mary Robert hear Mike's FOOTSTEPS chasing them, growing louder as he gains on them.

MARY ROBERT

Mary Clarence!

CHRISTY

Keep moving!

Christy grabs the ladder of a fire escape, and shoves Mary Robert up the ladder ahead of her.

CHRISTY

Climb! Now!

As Christy and Mary Robert climb the fire escape, another GUNSHOT ECHOES in the alley, ricocheting off the fire escape.

The nuns climb higher up the building. Mike pursues, looking for a shot between the steps and the landings, but not finding any openings. He takes the steps two at a time and begins to gain ground.

At the fourth floor landing, Christy's heel gets stuck in the grating. She pulls frantically at the laces.

CHRISTY

Goddamn it!

MARY ROBERT

Mary Clarence!

Mike arrives at the landing just as Christy twists her foot out of the shoe, and surprises him with a lunge for the gun. Mike's hand is knocked back against the metal frame of the fire escape, and the gun flies loose, RATTLING down the metal steps to the landing below. Christy shoves Mary Robert into the open window of an apartment, and follows her in.

INT. TENEMENT APARTMENT

Christy and Mary Robert leap into the bedroom of an Hispanic couple, their arms wrapped around each other in bed. At the women's entrance, the couple looks up, stunned to see two nuns in their bedroom.

MARY ROBERT

Oh my Lord!

CHRISTY

(pushing Mary Robert forward)

Experience!

The couple continues to look stunned as the nuns race out of the room.

EXT. CONVENT - NIGHT

Christy and Mary Robert run up to the side door of the convent; they catch their breath.

MARY ROBERT

What was all that? Who was that man?
Why would he shoot at us?

CHRISTY

I don't know, some people just don't
like nuns. I wish I had a ruler.

MARY ROBERT

We could have been killed! But you
saved me!

(throwing her arms around
Christy)

Thank you, Mary Clarence!

The door to the convent swings open. Mother Superior is waiting.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Yes -- thank you so much.

INT. CONVENT CORRIDOR - DAY

Christy sits alone outside Mother Superior's office, listening to the loud TICKING of the clock on the wall. She seems small and vulnerable, like a child sent to the principal's office.

The door opens and Eddie emerges from the office.

CHRISTY

What'd she say?

EDDIE

You blew it -- big time. She doesn't want you back.

CHRISTY

Does she know people are trying to kill me out there?

EDDIE

She's counting on it. She's concerned for your safety, but she wants me to try and find another convent that will take you. Or a carnival.

CHRISTY

So what am I supposed to do in the meantime?

EDDIE

Go in and talk to her. It can't hurt.
(urging her)

Go.

Reluctantly, Christy rises and approaches the door. She looks at Eddie, who motions her to go in. She finally does.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S OFFICE

Mother Superior is working on some papers at her desk as Christy enters. Christy is trying to figure out a strategy.

CHRISTY

So... hi there.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

(not amused and not looking up)
I don't believe we have anything to say to each other.

CHRISTY

Look... I know I shouldn't have, I'm incredibly sorry about Mary Robert, I wasn't thinking, I didn't know that would happen!

Mother Superior glances up from her work. She is justifiably outraged.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Mary Robert's life was in danger! Your behavior was inexcusable!

CHRISTY

I know! I'm sorry! I didn't mean for it to happen! And I was the one they were shooting at!

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Mary Clarence, I have given you every opportunity. To change. To make a decent life for yourself.

CHRISTY

A decent life? Excuse me? As what? A janitor?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Clearly, you have learned nothing. And you present an ongoing threat, both to this convent and to yourself.

CHRISTY

But you can't kick me out! Guys want to kill me! You're a nun! A big nun! Aren't you supposed to have compassion? For the wayward sheep? I mean, I'm a major sinner! All-time great! Hall of Fame! Aren't I, like, your dream come true? Your Olympic event?

Mother Superior stares at Christy.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Mary Clarence, perhaps you are correct.

CHRISTY

(surprised)

I am?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

You may stay. But I shall restrict your activities to but a single task.

CHRISTY

(with great dread)

What?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

You have, I believe, some minimal background in music. Therefore, you are to join our choir.

(MORE)

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
You will sing, and you will sleep; that
is your schedule until you depart. As
almost no one attends Mass, you will be
unable to cause further damage.

CHRISTY

No. No.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

(smiling)
You're my Olympic event.

CHRISTY

Not the choir, please, anything but
that. The choir -- I mean, have you
heard them? I'll do anything, scrub
floors, toilets, you name it, but not
that!

MOTHER SUPERIOR

(in triumph)
The choir, Mary Clarence. Go for the
gold.

INT. CHOIR REHEARSAL ROOM - THAT DAY

There are twelve nuns in the room, going over sheet music.
Mary Lazarus is the group's leader; Mary Patrick and Mary
Robert are also in the choir. Christy appears at the door,
grimacing.

CHRISTY

Is this... choir practice?

MARY PATRICK

Sure is! Come on in, and sing a spell.

Christy spots Mary Robert.

CHRISTY

Mary Robert, I am so sorry about last
night...

MARY ROBERT

Now stop that. You didn't shoot at me.
You were only trying to help, to give me
experience. I tried to explain that to
Reverend Mother, but -- I don't know if
she understood.

Mary Lazarus cuts off this chitchat, thrusting a hymnal at
Christy.

MARY LAZARUS

Soprano or alto?

CHRISTY

(very gloomy)

Whatever.

Mary Lazarus hands Christy a hymnal, and raps her baton. The choir begins to sing; Christy doesn't even bother trying. She is horrified; the choir is the worst-sounding group in history. They seem to be singing in several random keys, and they even have trouble with the words. No one looks up from their hymnals. Sister Alma, the organist with the hearing aid, is plodding along.

INT. BLUE COLLAR BAR - DAY

Mike the bartender is taking chairs off tables and setting them on the floor as Joey and Willy enter.

JOEY

We're looking for Mike.

MIKE

You found him -- but we're not open yet.

Willy grabs Mike's arms and bends them behind his back.

MIKE

Hey -- the till's empty!

Willy slams Mike's face into the wall, stunning him. Joey lifts Mike's groggy face and offers sympathy.

JOEY

I'm sorry -- I don't know what gets into him.

MIKE

Who are you guys?

JOEY

We're the guys from Vegas. You had Christy last night, but you let her get away. It's upsetting.

Willy hammers Mike's face into the wall again.

MIKE

But you didn't tell me!

JOEY

We didn't tell you what?

MIKE

That she's a nun! That chick you're looking for -- she's a nun!

WILLY

What? Christy?

JOEY

A nun?

MIKE

I'm telling you!

Willy and Joey look at each other, and consider this. Then they burst out laughing. They refuse to believe Mike's story.

WILLY

Gimme a hand here.

Willy and Joey pick Mike up, and hurl him over the bar. Then they exit, still laughing.

JOEY

A nun!

INT. CHOIR REHEARSAL ROOM - DAY

The choir continues its dreadful rendition of the hymn "Let Thy Thoughts Be Guided." Christy is not singing; she is clearly in pain. Mary Lazarus stops the song. One of the nuns has to nudge Sister Alma to stop her playing.

MARY LAZARUS

Mary Clarence, are you with us?

CHRISTY

Um, I don't really know this one...

MARY ROBERT

Mary Clarence has a background in music. That's what Reverend Mother said.

MARY PATRICK

(eagerly)

Really, Mary Clarence? Were you a choirmistress?

CHRISTY

Sure. Kind of... free-lance.

MARY LAZARUS

(circling Christy)

Free-lance? Oh really? You think I don't see? You think I took vows yesterday? I know what you're up to. You and Reverend Mother.

CHRISTY

What?

MARY LAZARUS

You're a ringer. She brought you in to replace me. Out with the old.

CHRISTY

Hold on.

MARY PATRICK

Mary Clarence, could you? Mary Lazarus,
you're terrific, but...

(to Christy)

Could you help us?

ANOTHER NUN

Please?

ANOTHER NUN

You've heard us.

MARY LAZARUS

Well.

Everyone falls silent. Mary Lazarus walks across the room,
eyeballing each member of the choir.

MARY LAZARUS

There's a word for this -- mutiny.

(to Christy)

So, Mary Clarence, you think you can do
better. I believe I'd like to see that.

(she hands Christy her
pitchpipe and baton)

I'm out to pasture. Dry dock. The glue
factory. Go ahead, Sister -- make 'em
sing.

Everyone watches Christy.

CHRISTY

Well...

(to Mary Lazarus)

With all due respect... let's have a
look at this.

Christy goes over to the piano. She examines the sheet
music for "Let Thy Thoughts Be Guided." She sits at the
piano, beside Sister Alma. Christy picks out the hymn on
the piano, accompanying herself.

CHRISTY

LET THY THOUGHTS BE GUIDED
LET THY SOUL BE HEALED

Christy's singing voice is, as usual, not very good. She
stops singing. For perhaps the first time in her life, she
has really heard herself.

CHRISTY

Man. I sound like you guys.

MARY LAZARUS

(victorious)

Very nice. Sisters, have we learned our lesson? I won't hold this little episode against anyone. I'll try not to.

CHRISTY

(standing)

Mary Robert.

Mary Robert jumps, startled by the attention.

MARY ROBERT

What?

CHRISTY

Mary Robert, I've watched you. You never really sing. You whisper. Nothing comes out.

MARY ROBERT

I don't want to mess anyone up...

CHRISTY

(to Sister Alma)

Give me a C.

(because Sister Alma is
hard of hearing)

A C!

Sister Alma plays the note. Christy points the baton at Mary Robert. Mary Robert whispers the note.

CHRISTY

Louder! Like you're onstage.

Mary Robert sings a little louder.

CHRISTY

Like people are eating, and there's silverware, and you want them to hear you.

Mary Robert sings louder still.

CHRISTY

Think about that guy you were dancing with!

Mary Robert finally lets out her full voice, which is huge and glorious. After singing a single perfect note, she stops abruptly; she has scared herself.

MARY ROBERT

Oh my!

CHRISTY

You see? We've got the voices. They're just all over the place. I've heard all of you, in the shower -- you're decent. Better than me. We just need charts -- harmony -- chops.

MARY PATRICK

(puzzled)
Chops?

CHRISTY

The goods. The sound. The sale. Let's rearrange a few things. Mary Patrick, you're not a natural soprano, you're an alto. Get over here. Mary Robert -- with the sopranos.

The two nuns trade places.

CHRISTY

Sister Alma -- a G.

Sister Alma plays the note, and the nuns try to duplicate it, but the results aren't much better than before. Christy uses her pitchpipe; she circulates among the nuns, giving each her note, urging them closer to pitch.

CHRISTY

Middle section, hold that note, for dear life. Sopranos, an A. Sister Alma?

Sister Alma hits the note. Christy shuffles a couple of more nuns to other sections, then gets a third note going with the altos, using her pitchpipe.

For one moment, the nuns all realize they are singing a perfect chord. They are elated.

MARY PATRICK

We did it! We actually sang a chord!

MARY ROBERT

(thrilled and disconcerted)
That was exciting!

CHRISTY

Yeah, for one second. That was the blend -- you've got to listen to each other. Be a group.

MARY LAZARUS

(under her breath)
I knew that.

CHRISTY

Mary Lazarus, I get the feeling that you like discipline. Hard work.

MARY LAZARUS

Of course. I'm a nun. Four Popes now. The Lord hates a loafer.

CHRISTY

I hear you. How many days a week do you rehearse?

MARY PATRICK

Two days. An hour or so.

CHRISTY

No way. We're a choir, right? Headliners. The big room. Two days a week won't cut it. Every day.

MARY LAZARUS

(impressed)

She's good.

MARY ROBERT

(to Christy)

Do you really think we could do it? Get better?

CHRISTY

I don't know. Mary Lazarus, what do you think? They're pretty raw.

MARY LAZARUS

Wet behind the ears.

CHRISTY

A bunch of real mama's girls.

MARY PATRICK

Oh, please? Can't we try?

Christy and Mary Lazarus look at each other, as real comrades. Christy leans on Mary Lazarus' shoulder.

CHRISTY

It'll be hell.

MARY LAZARUS

Tell me about it.

Christy and Mary Lazarus shake hands, firmly. Christy turns to the choir, very businesslike.

CHRISTY

Ten-hut!

INT. CONVENT LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

This is a basement utility room. A large industrial washer-dryer stands along one wall; the machine makes a repetitive CHUNG-CHUNG sound.

The choir nuns are busily doing laundry; some iron, others fold sheets, others stack towels and garments on a long table. Christy is helping Mary Patrick fold a sheet; everyone is working rhythmically, to the drone of the washer-dryer.

CHRISTY

That machine.

MARY PATRICK

I know. It's ancient.

CHRISTY

It's a rhythm section. The beat.

Christy starts clapping her hands to the sound of the washer-dryer; gradually, the other nuns join her.

CHRISTY

Mary Patrick -- do you remember the Dixie Cups?

MARY PATRICK

The Dixie Cups? Oh my. I was just a girl. Of course.

(singing)

SPRING IS HERE

THE SUN WILL SHINE

CHRISTY

(stopping the beat)

Hold it. Mary Patrick, you're a pretty cheerful person, aren't you?

MARY PATRICK

Am I?

There is a murmur from all the other nuns -- "Oh, yes."

MARY PATRICK

(as a confession)

All right, I am, I know it! All my life, I've just been... upbeat. Optimistic. Perky. I can't help it. Even when I was little, I remember my mother used to say, "That child is pure sunshine. She'll either be a nun -- or a stewardess."

CHRISTY

So use it. When we sing hymns, they're usually about rejoicing, right? Celebration. Most music is. So don't hold back. Let all that joy go right into your voice. Make me happy. Let me hear it. Perk out. Perk down.

MARY PATRICK

(with real joy)

SPRING IS HERE
THE SUN WILL SHINE
I'LL BE HIS
AND HE'LL BE MINE
WE'LL LOVE UNTIL
THE END OF TIME
AND WE'LL NEVER BE LONELY ANYMORE

CHRISTY

Because we're...

ALL THE NUNS

GOING TO THE CHAPEL
AND WE'RE GONNA GET MARRIED
GOING TO THE CHAPEL
AND WE'RE GONNA GET MARRIED
GOING TO THE CHAPEL
AND WE'RE GONNA GET MARRIED

MARY PATRICK

GOING TO THE CHAPEL OF LOVE!

The nuns have really gotten into the song, with Christy encouraging them verbally. They are sounding better and better.

SISTER MARY FREDERICK, a member of the choir, steps into the laundry room and lets loose with a sudden, piercing whistle. The nuns immediately stop singing, and a moment later Mother Superior enters.

The room is quiet except for the sound of the washer-dryer. The nuns all get very busy at their laundry tasks.

NUNS

(in unison)

Good morning, Reverend Mother.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Good morning, Sisters.

Mother Superior takes one more glance around, then leaves.

Now that the coast is clear, the singing begins again, quietly, to the rhythm of the machine.

NUNS

GOING TO THE CHAPEL...

INT. CHAPEL

Bishop O'Hara is leading the Sunday Mass.

BISHOP O'HARA

Welcome this Sunday morning, o ye few
and faithful.

As usual, the chapel is almost empty, except for the nuns. The choir is in place behind the pulpit.

BISHOP O'HARA

The choir, I am told, has elected a new director -- Sister Mary Clarence, who will lead them in Hymn 127.

Christy nods to the Bishop, and signals to Sister Alma, who begins the accompaniment.

CHOIR

LET THY THOUGHTS BE GUIDED
LET THY SOUL BE HEALED

They sound fantastic. Their voices blend with a heavenly harmony as they sing the slow, melodic hymn. Mother Superior is startled by this new sound.

EXT. STREET

LaWanda and her friends glance at the convent with curiosity as the beautiful MUSIC drifts out to the street. A few other heads turn, but with only mild reactions.

INT. CHAPEL

At the end of the first verse, Christy signals the choir to stop. There's a hush in the chapel as Christy glances at the vacant pews. Then she turns to Sister Alma and nods. Sister Alma strikes a bold, stirring chord.

Several of the nuns blink. Bishop O'Hara glances at the organ with surprise. Mother Superior sits up with a stiffened back and a severe expression.

As the chord grows in force, Christy gives the choir a beat.

CHRISTY

One, two, three...

The choir begins a radically new version of the same hymn. Christy strides up and down in front of the choir, transforming the song into a rousing gospel anthem, with a passionate call-and-response format.

CHOIR

LET THY THOUGHTS BE GUIDED

CHRISTY

What'd you say?

CHOIR

LET THY SOUL BE HEALED

CHRISTY

But how?

CHOIR

BY A VOICE YOU HEAR FROM ON HIGH

CHRISTY

I think I hear it!

CHOIR

LET THY THOUGHTS BE GUIDED

CHRISTY

You know, I just might!

CHOIR

LET THY SOUL BE HEALED

CHRISTY AND CHOIR

LET THY SPIRIT TAKE WING AND FLY!

Spontaneous reactions from everyone in the church.

EXT. STREET

The gorgeous, exciting MUSIC pours into the street. Everyone turns to look. Windows open and people glance out. The street takes on a new movement.

INT. CHAPEL

The choir really lets loose now.

CHRISTY AND CHOIR

LET THY THOUGHTS BE STRENGTHENED

LET THY PRAYERS BE HEARD

LET OUR LORD REJOICE IN YOUR PRAISE

LET HIS GOODNESS LIFT YOU TO A HIGHER PLACE

AND LET LOVE AND PEACE FILL YOUR DAYS

LaWanda and her friends peer in at the back door of the chapel. Bishop O'Hara sees them, and beckons them to come in.

CHRISTY

Sister Alma!

Sister Alma, inspired by Christy and the choir, burns up the organ with a solo. More people from the street begin to enter; tentative, curious, drawn by the music.

At the end of the solo, Christy makes a gesture to the choir, and each member produces a tambourine. The chapel is full of energy, music and life.

CHRISTY

Mary Robert!

Mary Robert sings, really letting the power of her voice ring out. She is astonishingly good.

MARY ROBERT
 LET THY THOUGHTS BE GUIDED-
 LET THY SOUL BE HEALED
 BY A VOICE YOU HEAR FROM ON HIGH
 LET THY THOUGHTS BE GUIDED
 LET THY SOUL BE HEALED
 LET THY SOUL TAKE WING AND FLY!

The new visitors to the church begin to clap in rhythm to the music, and after a few beats, the nuns join in. Mother Superior is aghast.

The choir builds to a huge gospel finish, all keeping their eyes on Christy.

CHOIR
 LET THY SPIRIT

CHRISTY
 You know what we're saying!

CHOIR
 LET THY SPIRIT

CHRISTY
 I think they hear you!

MARY LAZARUS
 LET THEY SPIRIT

CHRISTY AND CHOIR
 LET THY SPIRIT TAKE WING AND FLY!

After the final note, everyone in the chapel is exhilarated -- everyone except Mother Superior. Christy looks out at the congregation that has increased by a dozen or more, including LaWanda and her friends. Christy looks happier than she has in years.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

The members of the choir are all gathered outside Mother Superior's office, leaning close to the door and listening to her harangue Christy. They are surprised to find themselves joined suddenly by Bishop O'Hara, and part to let him through. He leans down to the keyhole and listens.

INT. OFFICE

Mother Superior is livid.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
 Gospel. A jazz solo on the organ. What next? Jesus goes to Rio? Good Friday-a-go-go? What were you thinking?

CHRISTY

I was thinking Las Vegas. Get some butts in those seats.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

And what next? Popcorn? Curtain calls? This is not a theater. Or a casino.

CHRISTY

(sincerely)

Exactly. People like going to theaters and casinos. But they think church is for Grandma -- we could change that. Pack the joint.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Through blasphemy? You have corrupted the entire choir!

CHRISTY

Hold on. That's not fair. I worked hard with them. They gave up their free time, and they loved it. Those women are happy. And we can get even better. We can wake this place up.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Out of the question.

CHRISTY

Please let me try. I'm begging you.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

And I am refusing. As of tomorrow, Mary Lazarus will resume her leadership of the choir.

Christy is crestfallen. There is a KNOCK on the door, and Bishop O'Hara enters. The other members of the choir are packed in behind him like sardines.

BISHOP O'HARA

Reverend Mother, I just wanted to congratulate you.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Oh?

BISHOP O'HARA

I haven't enjoyed Mass this much in years. What a marvelous program. Innovative. Inspiring. You are to be commended.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Well... thank you.

BISHOP O'HARA

I can't wait until next Sunday, when the choir performs again. Did you see the people walk right in from the street? That music, that heavenly music -- it called to them.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Perhaps.

BISHOP O'HARA

I must tell the Cardinal. I'll send him a personal letter, describing your efforts, your bold new fight to keep your little convent alive.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Really?

Christy has just been eating this up with a spoon.

CHRISTY

Excuse me, Bishop. Reverend Mother has some other ideas too. She's too modest to talk about it, but she thinks we should get out of the convent and into the neighborhood more.

(putting her hands on

Mother Superior's shoulders)

This woman.

Mary Patrick jumps forward.

MARY PATRICK

Bless her! There are so many problems in this neighborhood that we could help solve. That's why many of us became nuns. It's marvelous, Reverend Mother.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

(confused by the turn
things have taken)

Really...

CHRISTY

(with regard to Mother
Superior)

You know Reverend Mother. Hides her light under a bushel. She has plans for us to move right onto the streets. Get to know people. Work with 'em.

BISHOP O'HARA

(to Mother Superior)

You're a pioneer.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

But, Bishop, surely you realize -- this is a most dangerous neighborhood.

O'HARA

And you'll face that danger head-on. As if I could stop you. And you have my complete support in this matter. Anything you can do to revitalize this neighborhood would be a blessing.

CHRISTY

(hugging Mother Superior from behind)

Don't you love her?

EXT. CONVENT - DAY

The nuns are out in force, painting the walls of the convent, mostly with rainbows and flowers and bright, shining suns. The CAMERA PANS to Christy, who is adding her own original touch to the mural, using cans of spray paint. Christy's section includes an image of a nun in a miniskirt and spike heels, accompanied by neon letters that read "St. Katel". People gather in the street, watching the nuns' activities. The convent begins to crackle with energy and life.

A drug deal is going on in a house up the street, but the DEALERS give only a curious glance to the action at the convent.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S WINDOW

From the window of her office, Mother Superior watches the painters and feels her control slipping away.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Christy leads the members of the choir down the middle of the street. They get lots of attention each step of the way. As each nun raps, the other nuns make rhythmic boom-box noises.

CHRISTY

(rapping)

WE'RE THE SISTERS OF THE SACRED HEART
WE DO OUR BIT, NOW DO YOUR PART

MARY ROBERT

(rapping)

HONOR THY MOTHER AND THY FATHER TOO
DON'T KILL, DON'T STEAL, IT'S BAD FOR
YOU

MARY PATRICK

(rapping)

BELIEVE IN THE LORD, HIS WILL BE DONE
COME TO CHURCH, IT'S TONS OF FUN

MARY LAZARUS

(rapping)
DIG DOWN DEEP, GIVE ALL YOU CAN
TRUST ME, CHILDREN, THERE'S A HEAVENLY
PLAN!

The parade goes on, the crowd gathers, and a general air of jubilation prevails.

INT. REHEARSAL ROOM - DAY

The rehearsal room is filled with high energy as the choir is separated into several groups. Christy has got the whole thing running like a disciplined Broadway cast.

Mary Patrick leads one group in the corner as they practice synchronized movements with tambourines. Colorful streamers are tied to the tambourines, and they make colorful patterns in the air.

Sister Alma pounds the piano with newfound energy, as Mary Robert and the sopranos reach higher and higher for notes they've only dreamed of in the past.

Christy and Mary Lazarus have coralled the rest of the nuns into a practice of intricate dance steps, somewhat like the Temptations in skirts. Mary Lazarus keeps the beat with a yardstick.

CHRISTY

Don't look at your feet, and I don't want to see anybody counting. Make it look easy. Again!

MARY LAZARUS

Right, right, cross with the left, spin and turn!

CHRISTY

Hopeless!

MARY LAZARUS

Amateurs!

CHRISTY

Babies!

MARY LAZARUS

Again!

EXT. CRACK HOUSE - NIGHT

One of the drug dealers stands outside the crack house as a car suddenly pulls up to the curb. He starts toward the car as the DRIVER rolls down the window, but before he gets there, Christy and several nuns surround the car.

CHRISTY

We're here to pray for you, brother.

DEALER

What? Get the hell out of here.

CHRISTY

We know you don't want to sell drugs. You just had an unhappy childhood, and maybe a learning disability. You just need someone to pray for you.

MARY PATRICK

We know you don't want to bring pain and misery to your friends and neighbors. We'll pray to find you some honest work.

CHRISTY

And we know that, even though most people would call you a leech and a parasite, the lowest slug of humanity, we know that deep down inside, you're probably even worse. And so you truly need our prayers.

DRIVER

What is this? Outta my way!

The nuns give him room, and the Driver zips off down the street. A small crowd has begun to gather, and it is growing by the moment, murmuring encouragement for the nuns. Christy turns to the Dealer, as other cars drive slowly past.

CHRISTY

Yes, prayer is the answer, and prayers are free. We're going to give free prayers to everyone who drives up to this house.

MARY ROBERT

(to the Dealer)

We're nuns!

MARY PATRICK

(to cruising cars)

Free prayers right over here! Drive up and get your prayers!

DEALER

You're hassling my customers! That's not legal! I know my rights. This is restriction of trade.

CHRISTY

You wanna call a cop?

The Dealer's eyes turn ugly as he takes a gun from his pocket. Mary Patrick steps forward.

MARY PATRICK

Are you going to shoot us all, tough guy?

MARY LAZARUS

Is it worth it? A lot of witnesses here.

CHRISTY

(to the crowd)

Can I get a witness?

The Dealer glances at the surly crowd, then gives the nuns a disgusted look. He puts the gun away.

DEALER

So I'll find another neighborhood to do my business. You can't stop me.

CHRISTY

If we can stop you here, they can stop you there.

The Dealer turns and walks back to his house with anger. The crowd APPLAUDS and CHEERS.

The picture suddenly becomes GRAINY, and we hear the voice of a NEWS REPORTER.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)

It was a truly remarkable scene, as the nuns from St. Katherine's literally drove the crack dealers from the neighborhood, led by the feisty Sister Mary Clarence.

CAMERA PULLS BACK and we see a TV screen with an image of the nuns and neighbors still celebrating. On top of the TV are several framed photographs of Vince LaRocca, his wife and children.

INT. VINCE LaROCCA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CONNIE LaROCCA, Vince's wife, watches the TV NEWS STORY and calls to Vince in the kitchen.

CONNIE

Vinnie, get in here. You gotta see this!

Carrying a roast beef sandwich and a can of beer, Vince appears from the kitchen and glances at the TV screen to see a shot of the convent. He looks at Connie and makes a sour face.

VINCE

What? Nuns? You got me in here to see nuns? Isn't there a ball game on or something?

Vince turns away from the TV just as a closeup of Christy appears on the screen.

CONNIE

Look -- she's adorable!

Vince leaves the room, and we see Christy again as she leads the choir.

INT. EDDIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Eddie is cooking spaghetti in his efficiency apartment and watching the NEWS on TV at the same time. He pours himself a glass of wine and stirs the spaghetti sauce.

NEWS REPORTER

This tiny convent has experienced an amazing turnaround. The sisters have revitalized and taken back their neighborhood, all due to the energy and talent of the convent choir, a group led by this gifted young nun. Tell us, Mary Clarence, what makes you so special?

CHRISTY

(trying to appear modest and nun-like)

Oh, I'm not special, Bob. It's just hard work... and prayer.

Eddie all but spits out his wine. His eyes are wide as he watches Christy being interviewed. In one stride, he grabs his hat and coat and is out the door on the run.

EXT. CONVENT - DAY

The Sunday morning bell is CHIMING as crowds of people stream into the convent. The entire neighborhood looks cleaner, and the people walk with a spring in their step. Three local TV stations have remote news crews on the scene doing follow-ups on the story.

INT. CHAPEL HALLWAY

Last in line, Christy follows the other choir members down a hallway toward the chapel. Suddenly, a hand reaches out and grabs her, and a second hand covers her mouth as she is pulled into an empty cell.

INT. CELL

Shocked and terrified, Christy struggles to free herself, but is suddenly relieved to see that her abductor is Eddie.

Eddie releases her, and she falls onto the bed.

CHRISTY

Eddie! You scared the hell out of me!

EDDIE

What if I was Vince? You'd be dead right now. What are you doing giving interviews on TV?

CHRISTY

It wasn't my fault! They just showed up. It's helping the convent.

EDDIE

You're supposed to be hiding out!

CHRISTY

I really can't talk about it now. The place is packed. SRO. I've got a show to do.

EDDIE

Listen to yourself. This isn't a career opportunity.

CHRISTY

I know that. This isn't about me. It's about the choir. You should hear them. They're good. Really good. And I taught them.

EDDIE

Jesus, look at you. You're glowing.

CHRISTY

I am?

EDDIE

Yeah. You look... great. I mean it.

CHRISTY

(flirting)

Really? Lieutenant?

EDDIE

I've been worried about you.

Eddie sits on the bed beside Christy.

CHRISTY

You mean -- worried about my testimony?

EDDIE

No -- worried about you. Personally.

CHRISTY

Well... thanks. I've been thinking about you... sometimes. I mean, there aren't a lot of guys around here. I mean, sometimes I feel like... a nun.

EDDIE

Me too.

CHRISTY

You're not... seeing anybody?

EDDIE

No. Most of the time I'm thinking about you. And now... you've really changed.

CHRISTY

I have?

EDDIE

You're sort of... radiant. Your eyes are shining. You're really different...

Eddie and Christy are gazing into each other's eyes; they are just about to kiss. Their lips are less than an inch apart.

EDDIE

You're... you're a nun.

Eddie and Christy jump apart; their intimacy has frightened them both, particularly given Christy's outfit, and their location.

CHRISTY

We're in a convent!

Christy goes to the door.

CHRISTY

I've got to go.

EDDIE

Just remember -- you're a target. Don't you think Vince has a TV?

CHRISTY

(trying to think straight)
I know, I know. I'll be careful. I'll try.

Christy begins to leave, and then she turns, filled with a performer's excitement.

CHRISTY

Magic time!

Christy hurries toward the chapel, leaving Eddie to shake his head and wonder.

INT. CHAPEL

Sister Alma plays the organ, and the choir hums quietly as Christy addresses the congregation. Cameras from several TV stations are focussed on her from various places in the chapel.

CHRISTY

This Sunday's hymn is inspired by the lesson of Mary Magdalene. You know the one. Mary Magdalene was a young lady with a past. She was no stranger to sin. She was no stranger to practically everybody. Many condemned her. The whole neighborhood. But one man refused to do so. One man said, hey now, wait a minute. Listen to the story.

Sister Alma starts playing a doo-wop vamp. Mary Patrick and Mary Robert step forward from the choir, standing beside Christy the way the Ronelles used to do.

CHRISTY

Hey, girls.

MARY PATRICK AND ROBERT

Hail, Mary.

CHRISTY

Jerusalem is a real drag. Everybody hates me.

MARY PATRICK AND ROBERT

Uh-huh.

CHRISTY

People throw stones. They call me names. I mean, really.

MARY PATRICK AND ROBERT

Really.

CHRISTY

But -- wait.

MARY PATRICK

What is it, Mary?

CHRISTY

That man -- who is he?

MARY ROBERT

He's a carpenter.

MARY PATRICK
He's not like other guys.

MARY ROBERT
He's decent.

MARY PATRICK
He's kind.

CHRISTY
He's... dreamy. He's...

CHOIR
Yes, Mary?

CHRISTY
HE'S SO FINE...

The full choir sings back-up while Christy, Mary Patrick and Mary Robert perform intricate girl group choreography.

CHOIR
DOO-LANG, DOO-LANG, DOO-LANG.

CHRISTY/MARY ROBERT/
MARY PATRICK
WISH HE WAS MINE
THAT HANDSOME GUY OVER THERE
THE ONE WITH THE WAVY HAIR

Sister Alma is surrounded by several STREET KIDS who play guitar, bass and drums to accompany the organ and choir.

LaWanda and her friends sit in a pew, moving joyously to the music.

Eddie stands in the back of the chapel, watching a Christy he has never seen before. Christy is now glowing with happiness and confidence.

As the song continues, we see the chapel is packed to the rafters. A tin bucket is passed around as a collection plate, and it overflows with money.

EXT. CONVENT

Church services are over, and happy people stream out of the convent, but they don't hurry home. Standing in groups, they talk pleasantly and make plans for the day. There is a real sense of neighborhood up and down the block.

Eddie comes down the steps, glances back at the convent, smiles to himself, then crosses the street to his car.

INT. CHAPEL

Christy and the choir stare at the collection plate that is filled with money.

CHRISTY

Jackpot! Two buckets!

MARY PATRICK

This is so exhilarating! All week long,
I can't wait till Sunday, when we sing.

MARY ROBERT

I'd rather sing than do anything!

MARY PATRICK

It's better than ice cream.

MARY ROBERT

It's better than springtime.

CHRISTY

It's better than sex!

Everyone looks at Christy with astonishment.

CHRISTY

(catching herself)

I imagine.

Everyone's attention suddenly turns to Bishop O'Hara as he approaches.

O'HARA

Better and better, Sisters, you are
truly an inspiration. And I bear
gladsome tidings.

The choir gathers around O'Hara with curiosity.

O'HARA

I've kept the Cardinal informed of your
progress in the neighborhood. He has
been most impressed. And he has invited
you to attend a special evening Mass at
St. Matthew's Cathedral on Sunday night,
to sing for the Council of Cardinals.

The choir reacts with an excited buzz: "The Council of
Cardinals!", "What shall we sing?", etc.

Mother Superior appears, from the center aisle.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

That is indeed glorious news, Bishop.
We will be honored to appear.

(MORE)

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)

And on such an occasion, I feel a completely traditional program will be best.

CHRISTY

What do you mean?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

The Council of Cardinals is perhaps the most esteemed body in the entire Catholic church. They command the utmost respect. Your more... secular entertainments would be wholly out of place.

MARY PATRICK

But, Reverend Mother -- everyone loves our new style.

MARY ROBERT

It's brought people back to the church.

CHRISTY

Isn't that why we were asked to sing for those Cardinals?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

I believe this can be settled by a simple vote.

CHRISTY

A vote?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Of course. Mary Clarence, a convent is not a totalitarian state. Most major decisions are made by the membership as a whole. A membership that, I am certain, will vote in a rational and pious manner. All those in favor of allowing Mary Clarence to select a program?

All the nuns look at one another. Then, slowly, one by one, they all raise their hands.

Mother Superior is pure steel at this moment; her expression betrays no emotion. Christy, on the other hand, is quite confused.

CHRISTY

But... wait a minute...

MOTHER SUPERIOR

The majority has spoken.

BISHOP O'HARA

Reverend Mother, as always, you are a true leader. Gracious and understanding.

MARY ROBERT

It will be wonderful, Reverend Mother. You'll see.

MARY LAZARUS

(gesturing to Christy)
She's a pro.

CHRISTY

What?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

I am certain the presentation will be a great success. Congratulations, Mary Clarence. And congratulations to you all.

The nuns cheer, and cluster around Christy, chattering about the upcoming concert, as Mother Superior strides off.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Seated at her desk, Mother Superior glances up as Christy enters.

CHRISTY

You sent for me?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

You have a phone call.

Mother Superior continues with her paperwork as Christy picks up the phone.

CHRISTY

Hello?

EDDIE'S VOICE

Good news, kid. I pulled a few strings -- the judge has agreed to move the trial up. We'll be in court in a couple of days.

With mixed emotions, Christy speaks softly.

CHRISTY

That soon?

Mother Superior is a very interested eavesdropper.

EDDIE'S VOICE

Forty-eight hours -- and you'll be a free woman.

CHRISTY

Great. That's good to hear.

EDDIE'S VOICE

Hey, don't thank me or anything.

CHRISTY

Right, right -- thanks.

Christy hangs up the phone. She looks at Mother Superior.

CHRISTY

Hey -- your prayers have been answered. I'm leaving. In just a couple of days.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Really. Well, that makes two of us.

CHRISTY

What?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

I have submitted my resignation to Bishop O'Hara. Privately. I have asked to be relocated as soon as possible.

CHRISTY

But -- why?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

I must go where I can be of use.

CHRISTY

But -- there's so much more to do right here. And look, if it's about me, I mean, I'm gone.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Indeed. After how long? A few weeks? I have been here thirty years. And yet, it would seem, I know nothing.

CHRISTY

But everything that's happening is good! You can be a part of it!

MOTHER SUPERIOR

A part of what? Mary Clarence, it is one thing to rabble rouse, to sweep into town and declare a holiday. You have raised the Sisters' expectations, you have excited and confused them. They imagine this neighborhood to be some sort of delightful ongoing block party.

(MORE)

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)

You and I know that life is not so simple. There will be disappointments. Rude shocks. And you will have vanished. How... fortunate.

CHRISTY

Okay, so I just got things started. But you could build on that. You could keep it going.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

I am sorry, Mary Clarence. I seem to have misplaced my tambourine. Good day, Mary Clarence.

CHRISTY

But...

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Good day.

Christy, frustrated, leaves the room. Mother Superior looks up; she is truly torn, a proud woman unsure of her choices.

EXT. CONVENT - NIGHT

The moon casts shafts of silver light down to the courtyard of the convent. Most of the lights in the neighborhood are out at this late hour.

CHRISTY'S VOICE

(whispering)

Come on... I've got a surprise...

INT. CONVENT KITCHEN - NIGHT

The kitchen is dark, lit only by a flickering candle carried by Christy. Three more candles appear, carried by Mary Robert, Mary Patrick and Mary Lazarus. The door to the freezer opens, and light spills out. Christy removes several pints of ice cream and distributes them to the nuns.

MARY ROBERT

(delighted)

Ice cream!

MARY PATRICK

Mary Clarence -- you shouldn't have. Where did you get this?

MARY LAZARUS

It's a sin. It's a wicked indulgence. Is this butter almond?

Christy and the nuns sit on stools, enjoying their ice cream by candlelight.

CHRISTY

It's contraband. Don't ask. But I wanted to give you a treat. A sort of... thank-you gift.

MARY ROBERT

A thank-you? For what? You're the one we should be thanking.

MARY LAZARUS

Is there any syrup?

CHRISTY

Well... see, at my old convent, I wasn't always... real popular. I was sort of selfish and... not real helpful. Okay, I'll say it -- I wasn't much of a nun. But now, thanks to all of you... maybe I'm shaping up.

MARY ROBERT

Mary Clarence, don't be silly. You're an example to us all. You've taught us so much. We're singing for the Cardinals, and then -- who knows? Maybe the choir can travel -- to schools, and nursing homes.

MARY PATRICK

Maybe we can get some of the local kids to sing with us.

MARY LAZARUS

We could cut a demo. Look for a label.

CHRISTY

(knowing she has to leave)
That's true, wouldn't that be great. Of course, we never know when things are going to change. Any one of us could be transferred to another convent, tomorrow.

MARY ROBERT

(worried)
Are you leaving us?

CHRISTY

(sincerely)
Oh no. We'll always be together.

MARY LAZARUS

That's what Diana Ross said.

Christy and the nuns giggle, and continue eating their ice cream, in a spirit of true friendship.

Mother Superior watches this scene, hidden in the shadows by the door to the kitchen. She has begun to see Christy in a new light. She looks thoughtful, and walks off.

INT. LAS VEGAS POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Tate sits at his desk in the detective room, reading the sports section. HENRY PARKER, the accountant for the police department, looks stressful as he enters the room and heads for Eddie's glassed-in office. Tate glances up as Parker passes his desk.

TATE

You're too late. Mulcahy just left.

PARKER

I need his signature on some things. They can't be processed without it.

TATE

Leave 'em. He'll sign 'em later.

Parker looks annoyed -- he doesn't like deviations from procedure -- but after a moment of indecision, he sets the file folder on Tate's desk and walks away.

Tate finishes the newspaper and shoves it aside. Bored, he looks at his watch, then flips the file folder open and glances at its contents: routine money vouchers for equipment, supplies, etc. Tate is about to close the folder and shove it aside when something catches his eye.

TATE

What the hell is this...?

He examines a money voucher for a generous donation to St. Katherine's Convent in San Francisco. It only takes a moment to put two and two together, and Tate scrambles for his phone and dials a number.

INT. CORRIDOR

Henry Parker waits for the elevator. When it opens, he's surprised to see Eddie step out.

PARKER

Tate said you were gone.

EDDIE

I get all the way down to my car, and, of course -- where are the keys?

PARKER

I left the money vouchers with him. He said you'd sign them in the morning.

Eddie nods and moves on as Parker enters the elevator. After a few steps, Eddie suddenly looks disturbed. He picks up his pace. A little panicky, he begins to jog toward the squad room.

INT. VINCE'S OFFICE

Vince is on the telephone. He signals Joey and Willy, and they move quickly toward him.

VINCE

This is it. Get ready to move. No mistakes. Grab her, get her to the Moonlight. We meet there, and we take care of her.

(into phone)

We're on it. Give me the address.

Vince begins to write down the address.

INT. SQUAD ROOM

Tate is hunched over the telephone, talking quietly with his back to the rest of the room. The voucher for St. Katherine's is in his hand as Eddie moves quickly toward him.

TATE

St. Katherine's Convent on East Barton. It's gotta be the place.

Tate hangs up the phone and BOOM! Eddie hits him from behind like a linebacker, drilling him to the floor. Other detectives look up from their desks with confusion and alarm. Eddie pins Tate to the wall and snatches the voucher from his hand.

EDDIE

You're the leak, you son-of-a-bitch!

Clarkson and another detective restrain Eddie before he can hit Tate.

EDDIE

Get him out of here! Downstairs, in the cell! I want his ass locked up now!

Nobody dares even question Eddie at this moment, and two detectives drag Tate away. Eddie grabs Tate's phone and dials long distance.

EDDIE

Clarkson, get on the other line. Call Frisco Central. Tell 'em to get two squad cars outside St. Katherine's convent, and stop anybody with an out-of-state license plate from getting near the place.

Clarkson dials quickly. Eddie listens to Tate's telephone as it RINGS and RINGS and RINGS.

INT. CONVENT - DAY

All the nuns are in the chapel as the choir rehearses a hymn, along with Gina and her girlfriends. Those who are not in the choir clap their hands in rhythm. Far in the background, we can hear the telephone RINGING.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Eddie's police car streaks past an entrance ramp with the SIREN screaming. It blazes through traffic, weaving in and out at breakneck speeds. A moment later, Joey and Willy pull onto the highway at a fast rate. The race is on, with Eddie securely in the lead.

INT. CONVENT - DAY

In the rehearsal room, the choir members are putting on their robes. Christy and several nuns are all trying to primp in front of one small mirror.

MARY ROBERT

The Council of Cardinals! I'm so nervous! What if I forget the words?

CHRISTY

Right to Hell. Just kidding. Where is that bus?

MARY PATRICK

It should be here any minute.

MARY LAZARUS

(with a clipboard)

Dress rehearsal at four, performance at 8:30. Sharp.

Christy looks out the window, but sees no bus.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Eddie's police car streaks toward L.A.

EXT. CONVENT - DAY

The neighborhood has turned out to see the choir off. Banners hang from the fire escapes of the building across the street: "ST. KATE'S - THE GREATEST!", "GOOD LUCK TONIGHT!"

A Catholic school bus pulls up to the convent and parks in front. Several nuns in choir robes come outside and hurry onto the bus. A moment later, Eddie's police car streaks up to the side entrance of the convent, parking around the corner from the bus.

INT. CONVENT

Eddie runs into the convent and finds Mother Superior at the bottom of the stairs.

EDDIE

Reverend Mother! Quick! Where's Christy?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

What's wrong?

EDDIE

They know she's here! They're on their way!

Mother Superior points up the stairs.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

The rehearsal room!

Mother Superior looks alarmed as Eddie takes the stairs two at a time.

INT. REHEARSAL ROOM

Looking out the window, Mary Robert sees the bus.

MARY ROBERT

It's here! Let's go!

Everyone makes a final check of their appearance, and then the group leaves the room to head for the bus. Mary Robert and Mary Patrick are the last to leave, except for Christy.

MARY PATRICK

Hurry, Sister!

CHRISTY

Get moving. I'm right behind you.

Christy primps in the mirror one last time, then leaves the room. She is puzzled to suddenly see Eddie running toward her from a side staircase.

CHRISTY

Eddie...?

Eddie grabs her hand and pulls her toward the side staircase.

EDDIE

Vince knows you're here.

CHRISTY

(shocked and scared)

How?

EDDIE

Long story. His goons will be here any minute. We've got to get you out of here -- now.

Christy and Eddie hurry down the steps to the side entrance, and she almost trips on her choral robes. Eddie opens the door and starts outside, but Christy stops in her tracks.

CHRISTY

I can't go with you.

EDDIE

What?

CHRISTY

I've got a show -- at St. Matthew's Cathedral. We're singing for the Cardinals.

EDDIE

You're gonna be singing for St. Peter if you don't get your ass out of here!

Eddie jerks her hand, and Christy follows him reluctantly to the car.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR

Eddie takes off at a fast clip up the street. As the car cruises through an intersection, Christy looks back at the bus with confusion and sadness. She sees the other nuns rushing back into the convent to look for her.

INT. REHEARSAL ROOM

Several members of the choir rush into the room with panic in their eyes.

MARY PATRICK

Mary Clarence! Sister!

MARY ROBERT

It's no use. She just isn't here.

MARY PATRICK

It doesn't make any sense. She was right behind me...

The HORN on the school bus blows loudly down in the street.

MARY ROBERT

We can't sing without her! What should we do?

MARY PATRICK

(calming herself)

We'll pray -- and she'll be there.

The nuns are calmed by the tone of Mary Patrick's voice. They leave the room to join the others on the bus.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Eddie's police car streaks through crowded streets.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR

Christy still looks unsettled.

CHRISTY

Eddie -- I've got to go back. They won't sing without me. I'm deserting them.

EDDIE

I think they'd understand.

CHRISTY

That's not the point! They need me!

Eddie glances at her, impressed by the influence the convent has had.

EDDIE

They need you? A bunch of nuns? For what? Moral guidance? Make-up tips?

CHRISTY

You don't get it! It's a big thing for them, it's like... Caesars Palace. Prime-time. They're singing for the Cardinals. It's like... "Star Search." If first prize was a trip to the Vatican. They've worked really hard, they deserve this.

EDDIE

(goads her)

Nuns?

CHRISTY

They're not nuns. They're like...
people. With one outfit.

EXT. CONVENT - DAY

Joey and Willy park their car in front of the convent, get out quickly and climb the steps to the front door. They ring the bell.

JOEY

So that guy in the bar was right? She's
like... some kind of nun?

WILLY

Yeah, right -- when I see it.

LaWanda and her friends watch Joey and Willy pounding on the convent door.

LaWANDA

You dudes looking for nuns? They all
went to St. Matthew's.

JOEY

St. Matthew's? Thanks.

LaWANDA

Praise the Lord.

Joey and Willy run past the girls, get into their car and take off.

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - DAY

Eddie glances at the dashboard and sees that the fuel gauge is close to empty. He wheels into a gas station and pulls up to the tanks. Christy starts to open the door, but he stops her.

EDDIE

What're you doing?

CHRISTY

Even nuns have to pee.

He lets her go, then gets out to pump gas.

INT. WOMEN'S ROOM

Christy enters the bathroom; it is deserted. She fondles her rosary beads, and sinks to her knees. This position doesn't work for her; she stands. She looks around her; she glances up, toward heaven. She decides to do things simply, and speaks in a matter-of-fact tone.

CHRISTY

Okay, it's me. Mary Clarence. Christy. It's Chris Carter. I need some help here. I can't believe I'm doing this. Okay, look, I know I should just get back in the car, and get the hell out of here. Save my skin. I mean, it's not wrong, Vince really wants to kill me. Why do you make guys like Vince? But if I don't sing at St. Matthew's... Mary Robert. Mary Patrick. It means so much to them. They're counting on me -- and I like that. Maybe Reverend Mother is right, maybe I am a bad influence, maybe I'm just some Vegas slut, but... can we cut a deal here? I mean, I still don't believe in, like, most of the Commandments, and stuff in church still gives me the willies, but -- if I go back and sing, if I do a good deed, will you promise I won't get killed? All I want is a sign. Lightning. Thunder. Anything.

Suddenly, Christy hears the toilet FLUSH in the next bathroom.

CHRISTY

(in disbelief)

No. No. Doesn't count...

Suddenly, Christy hears "AVE MARIA" coming from a radio or TV outside the bathroom. She looks up; a ray of sunlight illuminates a grimy, dime-store Christmas tree ornament hanging from a room deodorizer. The ornament is a glittery angel; it sparkles in the light.

Christy leaves the bathroom, still not quite sure.

EXT. GAS STATION

Christy looks through the grimy window of the gas station office. A bored Mechanic is watching a small portable TV. On the TV is an episode of "THE FLYING NUN": Sally Field, in full habit, is soaring along.

Suddenly, Christy hears the loud ROAR of a motorcycle starting up over by one of the gas pumps. The BIKER turns and looks at Christy: he has long hair, and a beard and moustache, and he looks, well, a bit like Jesus.

CHRISTY

Oh my God...

Christy runs up to the Biker.

CHRISTY

I'm late for church. Can I get a lift?

Christy swings onto the back seat; the Biker puts his Harley in gear and flies down the street. Eddie is shocked as he drops some money on the ground and jumps into his car to follow.

EXT. ST. MATTHEW'S CATHEDRAL - DAY

We see a network truck parked in front of the landmark cathedral.

INT. CHAPEL

There is a sense of chaos in the chapel as TECHNICIANS set up television equipment, and Mother Superior leads the choir as it rehearses. Near the back of the chapel, Bishop O'Hara looks concerned over the performance of the choir. A CARDINAL walks up to Bishop O'Hara.

CARDINAL

Is this the choir you've been speaking so highly of, Bishop?

O'HARA

They're just a bit nervous. They'll be fine.

The choir seems very demoralized as they finish the hymn. Mary Patrick is close to tears.

MARY PATRICK

We sound terrible! We need Mary Clarence.

MARY LAZARUS

We're losing it.

MARY ROBERT

I don't understand. Where is she?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Her whereabouts are unknown, and we must proceed without her. Pull yourselves together.

Clapping his hands briskly, the FLOOR DIRECTOR suddenly steps forward from behind the TV cameras and hustles the choir away from the altar.

FLOOR DIRECTOR

Okay, Sisters, we have to move on now. That was great, just great. Charlie, throw a spot on the pulpit. Let's get a balance.

Dispirited, the choir leaves the altar and walks toward the back of the church.

EXT. LOS ANGELES STREET

The motorcycle flies through the streets, breaking every traffic law on the books. Christy's robe flaps behind her in the wind, and she has a wide smile as she rides. As passersby stare at her, she holds out two fingers and blesses them.

EXT. ST. MATTHEW'S CATHEDRAL

Mary Robert stands alone in front of the cathedral, wringing her hands with worry. Suddenly, her face brightens like the dawn as she sees Christy ride up.

MARY ROBERT

You're here! Thank goodness!

INT. CATHEDRAL

Christy and Mary Robert rush down a side corridor, turn a corner and see two TV Technicians standing near some cables with the letters of the network embroidered on the backs of their jackets. Christy rushes up to them and taps them on the shoulders.

CHRISTY

Excuse me -- where's the rehearsal room?

The two Technicians turn toward her, and she is horrified to see they are Joey and Willy. Christy gasps as Willy sticks a gun in her ribs. Joey smiles at her.

JOEY

The rehearsal room is right this way.

Joey opens a door that leads to an alley behind the cathedral. Mary Robert looks confused.

MARY ROBERT

Wait, this isn't the way. Who are you?

CHRISTY

They're from my old convent.

Christy suddenly lifts her knee into Willy's groin, and he buckles over. She scrambles for the gun, but Joey beats her to it. Christy looks frantically at Mary Robert.

CHRISTY

Run! Take off!

MARY ROBERT

Again?

Revived, Willy lunges for Mary Robert and grabs her. The two men hustle the two struggling nuns out the door to the alley.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Joey and Willy wrestle the two nuns to the open door of their car. They shove Christy and Mary Robert into the back seat, and Willy climbs in next to them.

WILLY

Go!

Joey starts the car, and it takes off with SQUEALING tires. Willy has his gun pointed at Christy, who sits beside Mary Robert.

MARY ROBERT

But what do they want? Where are we going?

CHRISTY

(to Joey and Willy)

She's got nothing to do with this. Let her go.

JOEY

Yeah, right to the cops. No way.

CHRISTY

Mary Robert, don't panic. Remember what we talked about? Experience?

JOEY

What?

CHRISTY

(quickly, to Mary Robert)

You can handle this.

The car comes to a stop at an intersection. Christy reaches across Mary Robert and opens the car door. She shoves Mary Robert into the street.

CHRISTY

Go!

Mary Robert executes a perfect somersault onto the sidewalk. She looks to heaven, crosses herself and runs back to the cathedral.

Willy grabs Christy before she can escape.

JOEY

She's gettin' away!

WILLY

Forget her! We got the one we need!
Step on it!

Joey takes off again.

EXT. STREET

Eddie's car is tied up in traffic, but he turns on his blinker lights and peels over to the opposite lane. Cars stop to let him through.

INT. ST. MATTHEW'S CATHEDRAL - DAY

In the rehearsal room, Mary Robert has just finished telling the nuns what happened to Christy.

MARY PATRICK

You mean -- they kidnapped her?

MARY ROBERT

Yes -- two men -- and they had guns.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

She shouldn't have come back. She knew she was in danger.

MARY PATRICK

But -- why would anyone kidnap a nun?

MARY LAZARUS

Were they Catholics?

Mother Superior suddenly steps forward.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

She isn't a nun. Her real name is Christy Van Cartier, and she is a professional entertainer. She witnessed a vicious crime, and has been hiding in our convent.

The nuns all react with shock and emotion.

MARY ROBERT

An... entertainer?

MARY PATRICK

She wasn't a nun?

ANOTHER NUN

She lied to us?

MARY ROBERT

But... but... she was such a wonderful nun.

MARY PATRICK

Look what she did with the choir. She made us sing beautifully.

MARY LAZARUS

That should have tipped us.

MARY ROBERT

Well, I don't care who she is. We can't sing without her!

MARY PATRICK

She's our inspiration!

MARY LAZARUS

She's the act!

MARY ROBERT

Reverend Mother, I know that you and Mary Clarence didn't always agree, but -- we've got to help her.

MARY PATRICK

We've got to save her!

MARY LAZARUS

We can't leave it up to the Feds!

The nuns all look to Mother Superior for an answer.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Calm down. Think clearly. Mary Robert, do you have any idea who those men were?

MARY ROBERT

She said they were from her old convent.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

But... she was a showgirl. She didn't have an old convent.

MARY PATRICK

She told us about one. The Little Sisters of the Moonlight. In Las Vegas.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

All right. It's a beginning. Las Vegas, Nevada.

All the nuns hurriedly cross themselves.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Mary Lazarus, find the Bishop and tell him the situation. Everyone else -- follow me.

Mother Superior leads the way out the door.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The Driver sits at the wheel of the school bus, reading a sleazy novel. He looks up as the nuns all converge on the door.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Emergency! Open up!

The Driver opens the door.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
The San Francisco airport! Immediately!

The nuns are all zooming past the Driver, onto the bus.

MARY LAZARUS
(to the Driver)
Step on it!

Mary Lazarus grabs the Driver's sleazy novel, confiscating it. The Driver starts the engine. As the bus drives off, Eddie's car streaks INTO THE SCENE and parks in front of the cathedral.

INT. ST. MATTHEW'S CATHEDRAL

Eddie rushes into the lobby and sees Bishop O'Hara.

EDDIE
Where is she?

O'HARA
There was a kidnapping. We think Las Vegas.

Eddie turns and races back toward the car.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT - NIGHT

Several small planes are parked on the tarmac.

Mother Superior and the nuns are arguing with the MANAGER of the airport, a grouchy guy in grease-stained overalls.

MANAGER
Fifteen hundred for the run to Vegas.
Rock-bottom.

MARY PATRICK
But we don't have fifteen hundred!

MARY ROBERT
We're nuns!

The Manager starts back toward his office.

MANAGER
Can't help you. No exceptions.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Young man!

The voice has a powerful ring of authority to it, and the Manager looks around.

MANAGER

What?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

We are nuns. We pray.

MANAGER

So?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

We pray for good things. Food for the hungry.

MARY PATRICK

Peace on Earth.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

However, we can also pray for other things.

MARY PATRICK

Measles.

MARY ROBERT

Lawsuits.

MARY LAZARUS

Tax audits.

There is a pause, as the Manager stares at the nuns in horror.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Come, Sisters. Let's go to chapel.
Bring your beads.

The nuns begin to leave.

MANAGER

Wait!

EXT. NIGHT SKY - LATER

A plane sweeps through the desert sky, headed for Las Vegas. Through the windows of the plane, we see nuns staring out at the glittering city in the distance.

INT. MOONLIGHT CASINO - NIGHT

Packed with gamblers, the room is a flurry of activity. Joey works his way through the crowd, then spots Vince near the money cage.

JOEY

We got her.

Vince follows Joey out of the casino with a grim expression.

INT. STORAGE ROOM

Vince and Joey enter a storage room that is cluttered with boxes. Christy is tied to a chair in the back of the room, with Willy standing guard over her.

Christy sits very calmly, despite the anger she is in. She seems distinctly nun-like in her radiant serenity.

VINCE

(turning on the charm)

Babe.

Christy does not reply.

VINCE

Babe, what happened here? Look at you.

CHRISTY

Good evening, Vincent.

VINCE

What, Vincent? This is me, doll. I know you. What did you think you were doing? Running to the cops. Hiding out. No, no. You're sorry now, aren't you?

CHRISTY

I am sorry for all my sins. And yours.

Vince, Willy and Joey all look at each other, perplexed.

WILLY

She's a nun, Vince.

VINCE

(kneeling by Christy)

I love you, Chris. I always will. I gave you so much. My time. My affection. A big-time career. And how do you repay me? What's the thanks I get? Where's the loyalty, huh? Where's the love?

CHRISTY

You will be judged, Vincent. We all will.

Vince stands; the charm hasn't worked. He's getting angry.

VINCE

What do you mean -- judged? I don't get judged, baby.

(MORE)

VINCE (CONT'D)

And who are you to talk? You were nothing. You couldn't even sing. I must have been out of my mind.

WILLY

She's acting weird, Vince. Ever since we picked her up.

JOEY

It's spooky. It's like she ain't even afraid or nothing.

Vince grabs the front of Christy's habit and squeezes it tightly around her throat.

VINCE

She's afraid. Come on, tell the boys you're afraid.

CHRISTY

(calmly)

I feel sorry for you, Vincent. And I forgive you.

This really throws Vince, and angers him further. He glares at Christy, and then releases her. He turns to Joey and Willy.

VINCE

Who gives a damn? Waste her.

Joey and Willy look a little unsure as Vince storms out of the room.

INT. PLANE

The nuns are mesmerized by the bright skyline with its colorful flashes of neon.

MARY PATRICK

It's so beautiful...

MARY ROBERT

And what a lovely name. Las Vegas...

MOTHER SUPERIOR

And Gommorah.

The plane sets down at the Vegas airport. Mother Superior and the nuns climb out.

INT. BAR AREA

Joey and Willy find Vince near the bar.

VINCE
It's done?

JOEY
Not... totally.

VINCE
(disturbed)
What's the problem?

WILLY
She's... she's a nun.

VINCE
Are you nuts? She's not a nun. It's
Christy. She's a babe!

JOEY
But, Vince, how do you know she didn't
like, join up and become a nun when she
was in that convent?

VINCE
It didn't happen.

WILLY
She was real quiet and peaceful all the
way back in the car.

JOEY
No smart-ass remarks or nothing.

VINCE
I can't believe this. Okay, I want both
you guys to go back there, and both of
you shoot her at the same time.

JOEY
Yeah...

WILLY
Right. That way we'd never know which
bullet got to her brain and killed her
first. It could always be the other
guy.

They all look happy with this solution as Joey and Willy
leave.

INT. STOREROOM

Christy still shows no signs of fear as Joey and Willy take
out their guns.

JOEY
Okay, we got one-two-three, and on three
we both shoot. Got it?

WILLY

Got it.

Joey points his gun at Christy's left temple, and Willy points his gun at her right temple.

JOEY

One... two...

Christy closes her eyes.

JOEY

Three!

Neither man shoots. They look at each other with anger. Christy opens her eyes.

JOEY

You didn't shoot!

WILLY

Neither did you!

JOEY

I figured if you were gonna, then I wouldn't have to.

WILLY

That's what I figured too.

EXT. LAS VEGAS HELIPORT

The nuns leave the terminal and stand on the sidewalk out front.

MARY ROBERT

Las Vegas -- she's here somewhere.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

But where?

MARY PATRICK

Look! There she is!

Mary Patrick is pointing to a group of billboards that feature huge ads for the local hotels and casinos. The center billboard has a splashy picture of a roulette wheel, the Elvis impersonator, and Christy and the Ronelles. The bottom part of the billboard shows the name of the Moonlight Casino and Lounge.

MARY ROBERT

The Little Sisters of the Moonlight!

MARY PATRICK

But how do we get there?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Stand back.

(she strides into the road)

Taxi!

INT. CASINO

Once again, Joey and Willy find Vince.

VINCE

Well?

JOEY

It didn't work, Vince.

VINCE

You were both supposed to put your guns
to her head and shoot.

WILLY

We both missed.

VINCE

Okay, so the problem is still the nun
outfit, right?

JOEY

Right.

VINCE

So, take it off.

WILLY

(shocked)

Strip down a nun? You want us to fry?

JOEY

For like, twelve zillion eternities?

VINCE

I'm telling you, she's not a nun! Get
her out of the nun outfit, and put her
in some clothes.

JOEY

Maybe pants.

WILLY

A sweater.

JOEY

And then we can ice her. No nun, no
evil eye.

Joey and Willy are very confident about this solution.
They strut off, pleased with themselves.

EXT. LAS VEGAS AIRPORT - NIGHT

Eddie strides out of the airport; he took a later flight than the nuns. A squad car is waiting; Clarkson beckons him.

CLARKSON

Lieutenant!

Eddie jumps in the car. Clarkson turns on the red bubble light and the SIREN, and the car zooms off.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

Joey and Willy return to the storage room, looking confident of their mission this time. Christy glances up at them as they enter, and Willy begins to untie her.

WILLY

We got it all worked out.

He works the ropes free, and Christy rubs her wrists to get circulation back again.

JOEY

Okay, Christy -- strip.

CHRISTY

What?

JOEY

That... thing. That nun thing. Take it off.

Christy suddenly drops to her knees and begins to pray.

WILLY

What's she doing?

JOEY

She's praying.

CHRISTY

And God bless Joey and Willy, who are only trying to do their jobs.

(faking Latin)

Pox fibula tibia vobiscum. Et marcus domino's pizza. Have mercy. Amen.

(she looks up at the guys)

I'm finished now. Help me up.

As Joey and Willy bend down to help her up, Christy suddenly grabs their neckties in each hand. With a fierce jerk, she pulls the neckties with all her might, smashing Joey's head against Willy's.

Stunned, Joey and Willy stagger backward, holding their heads. Christy scrambles out the door while the two men groan in pain.

INT. CORRIDOR

Joey and Willy burst out of the room with guns drawn. At the far end of the corridor, they spot a glimpse of black clothing as Christy starts down the stairs.

JOEY

There she goes! She's taking the stairs!

They run quickly after her.

INT. STAIRWAY

Christy runs down the stairs as a SHOT rings out. Christy screams and runs even faster.

INT. CASINO

A door swings open into the casino, and Christy appears, looking frantic. A MUFFLED SHOT is heard behind her, and she sprints into the casino.

Seconds later, Joey and Willy appear.

JOEY

Find Vince and tell him what happened.
I'll take this side of the room.

Willy hurries away to find Vince, and Joey starts searching the crowd.

EXT. THE MOONLIGHT HOTEL AND CASINO

Three cabs ROAR up in front of the building and nuns tumble out.

INT. CASINO ENTRANCE

The nuns enter the casino and stop dead in their tracks. Before them is a large room filled with glitter and sin, the SOUND of jackpots and crap tables.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Brace yourselves, Sisters.

In unison, the nuns all cross themselves.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Spread out and look for Mary Clarence.
Try to blend in.

The nuns spread to every part of the room, looking for Christy.

INT. CASINO

A blackjack table; a game is in progress, with several players. Mary Patrick rushes up to the table.

MARY PATRICK

Excuse me -- has anyone seen a nun?

MARY ROBERT

A Benedictine.

The CROUPIER and the players stare at the two nuns.

INT. CASINO

Christy is making her way past a roulette table. Suddenly, she sees Joey coming toward her, making his way through the crowd. Christy grabs the arm of a SALESMAN playing roulette.

CROUPIER

Place your bets.

CHRISTY

(to the Salesman)

Red 21.

SALESMAN

You sure? How do you know?

Christy looks up to heaven.

SALESMAN

(to the Croupier)

Red 21.

Joey stands at the opposite side of the roulette table, glaring at Christy. The crowd around the table watches Christy for a moment, then they all put their chips down on Red 21.

Joey starts working his way around the table toward Christy as the Croupier spins the wheel. The ball falls into a slot.

CROUPIER

Black 14.

Everyone at the table turns toward Christy, outraged. She gives them a reprimanding look.

CHRISTY

Did you learn something?

Christy suddenly realizes that Joey is almost at her side. She shoves the Salesman against him and runs away.

INT. CASINO

We see two long rows of slot machines, with gamblers working every machine.

Willy appears at one end of the row, scanning the area for Christy. He sees a nun crossing at the far end of the row, and she moves out of sight. Willy heads in that direction. Someone hits a JACKPOT behind him, and he turns toward the sound. As he does, he sees another nun crossing at the opposite end of the row of machines. Willy turns again -- now he sees three nuns crossing at the opposite end. He looks confused, and doesn't know which way to turn.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Eddie drives up in the squad car and parks near the back door.

EDDIE

(to Clarkson)

Close off the block, but don't move in till I tell you.

Eddie jumps out of the car and hurries inside.

INT. BLACKJACK AREA

As Christy moves past a blackjack game, she suddenly sees Vince moving toward her. Turning quickly, she moves away from Vince, but suddenly sees Joey coming toward her from the opposite direction. Trapped for a moment, she has panic in her eyes. Suddenly she is flanked by Mother Superior and Mary Patrick.

CHRISTY

What are you doing here?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Saving you. Move!

The nuns surround Christy and head through the crowd in a cluster. Joey and Vince pursue them from different directions. Just before they catch them, Mother Superior barks an order.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Break!

The nuns split up, each taking a different direction. Vince and Joey look bewildered.

VINCE

Get her!

JOEY

Which one!

VINCE

The nun!

Vince, Joey and Willy each pick a nun and follow her.

Vince catches up to a nun, whom we only see from the rear. He grabs her shoulder.

VINCE

Babe.

The nun spins around; it is Mother Superior.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Sweetheart.

Vince releases her and frantically searches the crowd again.

Joey catches up with his nun, only to find it is Mary Patrick. The shell game has worked; Christy has escaped for the moment.

INT. SLOT MACHINE AREA

We FIND Eddie scanning the floor and seeing nuns spread out everywhere. He talks quietly into his walkie-talkie.

EDDIE

Move in. Seal off the exits, but don't come inside till I tell you.

INT. CASINO

Vince, Joey and Willy run into each other in the center of the casino.

WILLY

There's nuns everywhere! Hundreds of 'em!

All the nuns suddenly come together, and see that the exits are blocked by Vince and his hoods. Vince spots Christy in the center of the group.

VINCE

There she is!

JOEY

Which one?

Christy sees Vince pointing at her.

CHRISTY

Quick, there's another way out of here. Follow me.

Christy runs toward a set of glass doors set off to one side. The other nuns follow her.

VINCE

She's heading for the lounge! Go!

Vince, Joey and Willy head for the lounge.

Across the room, Eddie sees Christy and the cluster of nuns head through the glass doors. He barks into his walkie-talkie.

EDDIE

Move in -- now!

INT. LOUNGE

The lounge is deserted between shows, and all the lights are out. The mobsters enter with guns drawn.

JOEY

I can't see anything in here!

VINCE

Willy -- hit the lights.

WILLY

Where?

VINCE

Find 'em!

Willy moves off to find the light switch. There is a flash of black and white fabric behind some chairs.

JOEY

There!

Before he can shoot, there is another flash of fabric on the opposite side of the room.

VINCE

(aiming)

No -- there!

And a third flash of fabric near the stage.

JOEY

Over there!

Willy has found the lights, and the lounge is suddenly brightly lit. The mobsters blink for a moment, then find all the nuns bunched together in a corner, trying to find an exit.

VINCE

Freeze! Everybody!

The nuns turn and face the mobsters, shielding Christy.

VINCE

Joey?

JOEY

Where is she?

Christy steps forward, to the front of the stage.

CHRISTY

Right here. Let the others go -- they have nothing to do with this.

VINCE

Joey -- do it.

JOEY

But, boss -- she's still, you know, a nun.

VINCE

She's a broad! Got it! Just some broad!

Mother Superior steps forward.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

(with authority)

I guarantee you, she is no broad. She is Sister Mary Clarence, of St. Katherine's Convent. She is a model of generosity, virtue and love. You have my word, gentlemen. She is a nun.

WILLY

Hear that? Now aren't you glad we didn't shoot her?

Vince has had enough. Facing Christy, he raises the gun and points it right between Christy's eyes, only inches away. The nuns all recoil with horror.

BLAM! The gun goes off, but Christy isn't hit. She blinks her eyes open, shocked to be alive. Instead, it's Vince who falls, crumpling to the floor, and clutching his shoulder.

Across the room, Eddie holds a smoking police revolver. The nuns all swarm around Christy joyously.

MARY ROBERT

Mary Clarence -- you're alive!

MARY PATRICK

(smiling)

Christy.

MARY LAZARUS
(also smiling)
Van Cartier.

CHRISTY .
You know? About me? About everything?

Christy breaks away from the jubilant nuns. She faces Mother Superior.

CHRISTY
Reverend Mother -- thank-you.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Oh?

CHRISTY
You saved my life.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
I'm a Christian.

Police pour into the room and gather up Joey, Willy and Vince. Eddie walks over to Christy and Mother Superior.

EDDIE
Don't you have a concert to go to?

CHRISTY
That depends. Sisters, you don't know this, but Reverend Mother's been making all sorts of noises about resigning. That's bad news. I don't know if we could sing, if we thought that was true.

MARY ROBERT
Not a note.

MARY PATRICK
Impossible.

Mary Lazarus coughs, and points to her throat, as if she has laryngitis. All the other nuns imitate her.

CHRISTY
(to Mother Superior)
Then I guess you're stuck. Life sentence. No parole.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Very well.
(she turns to Eddie)
I hold you responsible for all of this. For introducing a lounge act into my convent. For utterly disrupting our way of life. And for placing all of us in mortal danger.
(sincerely, with a smile)
Thank-you.

ANGLE on Christy, watching this. She grins.

CHRISTY

Yeah, Eddie, thanks a whole bunch.
Thanks for sticking me in a convent. So
you think, after all this, maybe I
really am a nun?

EDDIE

I don't know. There's only one way to
be absolutely sure.

CHRISTY

Yeah, like what?

Eddie takes Christy in his arms, and they begin a kiss. As
they do so, Vince struggles toward Christy, as two cops
hold him back. He is furious.

VINCE

I was good to you! You're nothing but
no-talent garbage! You're a two-bit
tramp!

CHRISTY

(staring at Vince, seeing him
for the scum that he is)

That used to be true, Vince. I was with
you. But something happened. And I'm
different now. Real different. I've
had, well, you might call it -- a
religious experience. And I've got just
two words for you. And those two words
are...

MARY ROBERT

(afraid Christy will curse)
Mary Clarence!

CHRISTY

(grinning, to Vince)
Bless you.

EXT. ST. MATTHEW'S CATHEDRAL

People are pouring into the cathedral. Among them we see
many Cardinals in their red uniforms.

INT. ST. MATTHEW'S CATHEDRAL

The choir has gathered together in a small room off the
main chapel. They are putting finishing touches on their
choral robes, and are waiting nervously to go on.

MARY PATRICK

(to Christy)

I just realized -- this is the last time
we'll all be together. We're going to
miss you so much.

Christy and Mary Patrick embrace. Mary Patrick is tearful.

CHRISTY

Hey -- you're supposed to be the cheerful one. Why do I suddenly feel like Snow White?

MARY LAZARUS

(to Christy, with humor)
You're okay -- for a civilian.

Christy and Mary Lazarus embrace.

MARY ROBERT

Reverend Mother?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Yes?

MARY ROBERT

Since Mary Clarence came to St. Katherine's, I've been shot at, kidnapped by Mafia hit men, and I've tasted beer. Is that enough experience yet? For final vows?

CHRISTY

I don't think so. What about sky-diving? A crank call to Billy Graham?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

You have evidenced great maturity, Mary Robert. We shall have a serious discussion.

CHRISTY

What about me, Reverend Mother? I think you were right. I'm just a bad influence. Sister show biz.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Perhaps not. Perhaps we can all use... a little Spandex.

CHRISTY

Really? And maybe shorter habits, and women priests, and sleeping late?

MOTHER SUPERIOR

Don't push it.

Christy and Mother Superior embrace.

INT. CHAPEL

The chapel is packed to the rafters. The first few rows of pews are occupied by Cardinals. Television cameras glide up and down the aisles, angling for shots of the altar.

The choir stands together on the altar with Christy in front. Behind them stands a much larger, all-city choir. Christy gives the nod to Sister Alma, and the organ vamp begins.

MARY ROBERT

I WAS DOWNHEARTED

CHRISTY

It's true!

MARY ROBERT

I WAS HELL-BOUND, YES THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY
SATAN WAS WAITING

CHRISTY

Don't you know it!

MARY ROBERT

BUT THE LORD CAME TO ME

CHRISTY

What did He say?

MARY ROBERT

HE SAID, SING THE DEVIL AWAY!

MARY PATRICK

MY SOUL WAS IN DANGER
I'D FALLEN FROM GRACE

CHRISTY

It's true -- I know her.

MARY PATRICK

DAMNATION WAS ALL I COULD SEE

CHRISTY

What a shame!

MARY PATRICK

BUT THEN CAME AN ANGEL
WHO WHISPERED THESE WORDS

CHRISTY

Pay attention...

MARY PATRICK

SING AND THE DEVIL WILL FLEE!

CHRISTY

Were you wicked?

CHOIR

SING!

CHRISTY

Were you tempted?

CHOIR

SING!
SING AND YOUR SPIRIT WILL SOAR!

In the front row, Mother Superior is trying to resist the music. She gives in, and starts bobbing her head to the beat. Beside her, Eddie looks very proud as his eyes meet Christy's.

CHRISTY

But I'm fearful!

CHOIR

SING!

CHRISTY

And I'm tearful!

CHOIR

SING!

CHRISTY

YES I'LL SING AND KNOW JOY EVERMORE

CHRISTY/CHOIR

DO YOUR TROUBLES BIND YOU
IF YOU'RE DEEP IN WOE
YOU CAN BANISH GLOOM IF YOU TRY
FIND A SONG WITHIN YOU
LET IT FILL YOUR DAYS
JUST SING

MARY ROBERT

SING!

CHOIR

JUST SING!

MARY PATRICK

SING!

MARY LAZARUS

JUST SING!

CHRISTY

Sing!

CHRISTY/CHOIR

SING AND SAY DEVIL, GOODBYE!

The entire congregation is ecstatic, as the song concludes with a glorious final flourish.

FADE OUT.

THE END