

The Cloistered Soul

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Characters

Sister Agatha, a nun
Sister Geraldine, a younger nun
Mother Marie-David, the Mother Abbess
Bridget, a postulant

Time

Present

Place

St Catherine's Convent, an enclosed Benedictine Order in a remote part of northern
England

Note on punctuation and formatting:

Some sentences lack concluding punctuation to indicate that the speaker
does not finish the sentence, voluntarily or involuntarily.

Line breaks between speeches indicate a pause or beat.

SCENE 1, INT. CHURCH, DAY

THE ANUNCIATION BELL TOLLS, THEN WE HEAR MUSIC
FROM THE OFFICE OF COMPLINE (INTROIT EXSURGE:
TRACK 2), MELODIC WOMEN'S VOICES, RISING AND FALLING.

Agatha (v/o) The silence starts after Compline, according to St Benedict's Rule. Mother Abbess moves down the aisle, sprinkling us with Holy Water.

On the days she pauses to give a blessing, I keep my eyes averted. Look down at the black and white tiles, praying: 'please, don't choose me.'

Geraldine (v/o, whispering)

Please choose me.

Agatha (v/o) I hear my heart pounding in my ears. But she stops and makes the sign of the cross in front of Sister Geraldine.

Sister Geraldine, who has just been elected Choir Mistress.

Geraldine (v/o) I hear them in my head - Vigils, Lauds and Mass – all the melodies we'll sing tomorrow. I won't sleep tonight. The silence is like – it's like a blank stave, waiting to be filled with music.

A SHORT SILENCE, THEN RESUME INTROIT EXSURGE
(TRACK 2)

Agatha (v/o) We preserve the silence until morning. We're allowed no written messages. No visitors.

SCENE 2, EXT. CONVENT, NIGHT

HEAVY RAIN. KNOCKING AT THE FRONT DOOR OF THE
CONVENT. IT IS BRIDGET, HAMMERING PERSISTENTLY.

SHE STOPS, THEN STARTS UP AGAIN.

Bridget Come on. Come on! Answer the door.

Geraldine (v/o) She came in the night. I heard the knocking but Mother and Sister Agatha got there first so I hid on the landing 'cause I had to know what she was like.

SCENE 3, INT. CONVENT HALLWAY, NIGHT

BRIDGET'S URGENT KNOCKING ON THE OUTSIDE CAN BE HEARD IN THE HALL. SISTER AGATHA APPROACHES, SIGHS, UNCERTAIN AS TO WHETHER TO OPEN THE DOOR.

MOTHER ABBESS DESCENDS THE STAIRS.

THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN AGATHA AND MOTHER ABBESS IN THIS SCENE OCCURS IN VERY LOW VOICES, AS THOUGH THEY'RE AFRAID TO SPEAK UP. BRIDGET IS MUCH LOUDER.

Mother Abbess Sister?

Sister Agatha. Will you open the door?

Agatha But the Rule, Mother

Mother Abbess It must be the postulant. We can't keep her waiting on the doorstep, not in this rain. She'll be after catching pneumonia.

Agatha Why didn't she come when she was supposed to?

Mother Abbess We owe her a welcome. Whatever the hour of the day.

Geraldine (v/o) There was something about her, even then, something -
I couldn't work it out. Not at first.

MOTHER ABBESS SLIDES BACK THE BOLT AND OPENS THE DOOR. THE SOUND OF THE POURING RAIN IS HEARD MORE CLEARLY.

Bridget Oh. At last. This is it, right? St Catherine's?

Geraldine (v/o) Something about her, something - her clothes are wrong. The wimple – it's too big. Can't they see?

Mother Abbess You *are* Bridget? Sure, you must be. Mother Cecilia said you'd be - oh look, you're wet through. Come in. She didn't remind you to avoid the silence?

BRIDGET ENTERS THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR

Bridget The – oh, sorry. I didn't think.

 You got the letter, though, right?

Mother Abbess She said you were due this afternoon.

 But you're welcome here, all the same. It's such a happy day for our Congregation. I'm Mother Marie-David. This is Sister Agatha.

Bridget I missed the train. Then I got lost. It were a nightmare. The directions – feel my coat. See? Totally soaked.

Agatha Please. Keep your voice down. You'll wake the others.

Mother Abbess You're right, it's very late. Tomorrow is the time to talk things through. Now, Sister Agatha will show you to your cell, won't you Sister?

AGATHA AND BRIDGET WALK DOWN THE CORRIDOR.

THERE IS THE CLANGING SOUND OF THE ENCLOSURE GATE BEING SHUT AND LOCKED, A METALLIC, ECHOING, RING.

SCENE 4, INT. BRIDGET'S CELL, NIGHT

AGATHA OPENS THE DOOR TO BRIDGET'S NEW CELL. THEY ENTER THE ROOM

Bridget Oh, this is

Agatha Is something wrong?

Bridget No, no. It's fine.

Agatha You can put your luggage down now.

Bridget Right, yeah. Thanks.

 So how long have you been at St Catherine's?

Agatha You must be tired from the journey. And eager to be out of those wet things. Here, you can use this to get dry.

AGATHA HANDS BRIDGET A TOWEL

Bridget Thanks.

BRIDGET SNIFFS THE TOWEL

 It smells of lavender.

Agatha Yes, it's sent out from our Congregation in France. Sister Ignatius sews it into linen bags for the laundry.

Bridget You didn't answer me. About how long you've been here.

Agatha Long enough. I'll just – could you pass the sheets, please, from that cupboard behind you?

BRIDGET TAKES THE SHEETS FROM THE CUPBOARD

Agatha I expect you'll get used to it – the smaller cell.

Bridget Smaller?

Agatha Than at Marymount.

Bridget Oh yeah - I don't mind. Am I – everyone's on this corridor, right? All the rooms are next to each other?

Agatha Of course. It's just like Marymount. Mother Cecilia prepared you, I hope? For being here.

Bridget Course she did. Yeah.

Agatha (v/o) She watches me, chewing the ends of her hair. I feel her eyes on me as I make up her bed.

 What is it Mother says? 'Obedience is love in action'. But all the time, I keep thinking: why me?

 Why was it me who answered the knock?

REFRAIN FROM INTROIT EXSURGE (TRACK 2)

SCENE 5, INT. CHURCH, DAY

THE ANUNCIATION BELL TOLLS, CALLING THE NUNS TO PRAYER. THE GATE TO THE CLOISTER IS UNLOCKED AND OPENED.

THE NUNS FILE IN TO CHURCH AND BEGIN TO SING LAUDS (INVITATORY SURREXIT DOMINUM – TRACK 1)

Agatha (v/o) It isn't until Lauds that my fear is dispelled. Another night of not sleeping. Crushed by the darkness, and doubt.

The day I committed myself to this life, was I blinded by what I thought faith was?

Geraldine (v/o) Lauds is dead joyful. It's about renewal, like when the apostles discovered Jesus, after he rose again. It's hard to stick to the tune though, so I listen for the bits where it goes off key.

We can sing it loads better. When we're in the middle of the Divine Office, though, all together, all the Sisters, I hear everything. I can feel the whole sound and, at the same time, all the different tones, and I know. Every voice comes straight from God.

REPRISE OF (INVITATORY SURREXIT DOMINUM – TRACK 1)

SCENE 6, EXT. CONVENT GARDEN, DAY

GERALDINE IS GARDENING WITH HER HEADPHONES ON, LISTENING TO THE PSALM FROM LAUDS (INVITATORY SURREXIT DOMINUM – TRACK 1). WE HEAR THE MUSIC AS THOUGH IN HER HEAD. IT'S AN INTERNAL SOUNDTRACK, ACCOMPANYING HER AS SHE WORKS

Agatha (from very far away)

Sister Geraldine!

WE HEAR AGATHA'S WORDS, VERY MUFFLED, AS THOUGH FAR AWAY AND ON THE EDGES OF GERALDINE'S CONSCIOUSNESS

Agatha

Sister Geraldine!

AGATHA CALLS GERALDINE AGAIN, INCREASINGLY EXASPERATED. AS SHE MOVES TOWARDS GERALDINE, HER VOICE BECOMES LOUDER AND MORE AUDIBLE

SCENE 7, EXT. CONVENT GARDEN, DAY

AGATHA IS UP CLOSE TO GERALDINE, TRYING TO GET HER ATTENTION. BUT GERALDINE CAN'T HEAR HER BECAUSE OF THE HEADPHONES AND BECAUSE SHE IS SINGING ALONG TO THE PSALMS.

WE HEAR THE SCRAPE OF HER TROWEL AS SHE WORKS.

Agatha

Sister Geraldine!

GERALDINE SUDDENLY STOPS SINGING.

Geraldine Oh! You gave me a fright there.

GERALDINE REMOVES HER HEADPHONES

Agatha Sister Eustochium needs you in the Bakehouse. There's a delivery of hosts to send out.

Geraldine Sorry. These headphones. What did you say?

Agatha Sister Eustochium is expecting you. Should you be – what is that?

Geraldine An ipod. The bees knees, isn't it? Me mam sent it as a congratulations present. And before you ask - Mother Abbess gave permission. She said it's a tool of the trade.

Agatha The trade?

Geraldine Being Choir Mistress.

Agatha Ah. Of course.

Geraldine Pass us that bucket, will you?

SCRAPE OF THE BUCKET ON PAVING STONES AS AGATHA HANDS IT OVER TO BRIDGET

I can't believe I'm weeding the kale. Of all things. I swear, if I have to look at another dish of it.

Agatha It's very nutritious.

Geraldine It's dead chewy.

Agatha Not if it's cooked properly. My mother used to grow it. When we had a glut she would bake it. It came out of the oven all crispy. I'm not sure what she added but it was delicious.

Geraldine You never talk about it much. Home.

Agatha There's nothing to tell.

Geraldine Don't you have brothers and sisters?

Agatha Yes, I've a brother.

Geraldine One brother? Blimey, your house must have been dead quiet, compared to ours. I can't even imagine it. There were eight of us so you could never make yourself heard. There was always something going on, one of the boys playing piano or guitar or singing.

Does he have a name, then, your brother?

Agatha (v/o) It was fierce, the way I loved him. I was responsible for him.

He was three when he went to hospital. They thought it was meningitis. I watched Mother bathe him with ice and sponge him down every hour. I made a pact: if you save him, God, I'll pray every single day. I thought my prayers would make him – God – love me, and spare my brother.

And he lived.

Agatha He's. His name is – Benjamin.

Geraldine I've never heard you talk about him.

Agatha There's nothing to say. He's – not really in my life any more. Actually, he's quite a – recluse.

Geraldine That's one thing you've got in common, then. Don't look at me like that – I mean you know, with you in here and

Agatha What about you? Don't you miss it? Home.

Geraldine Well, this is home now, isn't it?

Agatha You're always so - unequivocally positive, Sister.

Geraldine Not really. I hate kale, for one thing. And I tell you what, I *hate* being Sister Bog Roll. I'm fed up of carting them to the top of the house. And then they all slide off each other and bounce back down the stairs.

Agatha I hated that too!

THEY BOTH LAUGH

Agatha Well I suppose we should remember that it's love in action. Service, I mean.

Geraldine We all need bog roll, that's for sure.

 Sister - I wanted to say - we missed you. This morning. At practice.

Agatha This morning? I had reading to do.

Geraldine You always avoid it.

Agatha Do I? I don't think so. It's just - there's so much to do. Mother asked me to write this paper for the

Geraldine It's important. You know that, don't you? It's the core of

Agatha So is *Lectio Divina*.

Geraldine For you it is.

Agatha For all of us.

Geraldine Ah, you know, it's such a shame you weren't there. You should hear her voice. Bridget's. It's amazing.

Agatha You're teaching her?

Geraldine Is that a problem?

Agatha We don't know who's been appointed yet to

Geraldine No sense in wasting time. If she's staying, well

Agatha How do you know she'll stay? It's only a trial. She might prefer Marymount.

Geraldine No. She's dead committed. Haven't you heard her? Loads of questions about who's here and who used to be here and exactly when each Sister arrived.

Agatha You're quite the confidante.

Geraldine I'm just making her welcome. Nothing wrong with that, is there? She seems

Agatha What?

Geraldine At home. That's all. Like she belongs already.

SCENE 8, INT. MOTHER ABBESS' OFFICE, DAY

Agatha I'm not ready.

Mother Abbess I think you are.

Agatha I'm sorry, Mother. I don't wish to sound churlish. But it's too big a responsibility.

Mother Abbess I prayed for guidance. No one would be better. Think of it as God's will, Sister.

Agatha She's so young.

Mother Abbess She's a postulant. You were once – remember? You've the makings of a perfect Novice Mistress.

Now, start with the Old Testament. Get her going on that before you ease her into the Latin. She's a beginner so, as you know, you'll need to start with the basics.

MOTHER ABBESS' WORDS GRADUALLY FADE OUT

SCENE 9, INT. CONVENT LIBRARY, DAY

*SILENCE. THERE'S THE OCCASIONAL TURNING OVER OF
PAGES, AND BRIDGET SIGHING WITH FRUSTRATION*

Bridget I still don't get it. Can't *you* tell me what it means?

Agatha It doesn't work like that.

Bridget All the talking. The different languages. How is that a punishment from God?

Agatha Didn't you cover this at Marymount?

Bridget I'm asking you.

Agatha The thing about *Lectio* – it's a personal relationship with the words. It isn't just slow reading. It's active. You have to ask questions of the text, and yourself.

Bridget I can't see the point.

Agatha It's fundamental.

Bridget You find it easy. But then you studied it. Geraldine told me.

Agatha Yes. I read Theology at Oxford.

Bridget Blimey. I bet that were riveting.

Agatha I found it – absorbing.

Bridget Why?

Agatha Well, for me, the Old Testament and the gospels - it's the basis of everything. The stories we tell ourselves.

Bridget I never thought about it like that. But what about all that stuff – about sacrifice and an eye for an eye. It's proper violent.

Agatha That's not how I see it. In part it's a - a treatise on justice. And redemption.

Bridget The problem with this *Lectio* – the language gets in the way. See, to me, faith is all about – doing stuff. Being involved in things. Geraldine

Agatha *Sister Geraldine.*

Bridget Yeah. Sister Geraldine talks a lot about faith in action. For her, it's music, isn't it, that's her thing. Cause for some people faith has to be totally hard core. All about discipline and stuff like that. But with the singing there's this feeling of - I can't really describe it.

Agatha Feeling?

Bridget Like a – vibration. The notes are different but they all fit together somehow. And it needs all the other voices to make sense of it. I never thought it'd be like that at all. It's like – well it's like magic in a way, don't you think?

*SILENCE, THEN AGATHA BEGINS TO TURN THE PAGES OF
THE BOOK THEY'RE STUDYING*

Agatha I think we should probably

Bridget There was something else I wanted to ask. About Latin. 'Cause it's been bothering me how long it might take me to learn it.

Agatha Don't worry, you'll pick it up.

Bridget It's alright for you to say. You did it at school.

Agatha Well, yes.

Bridget I suppose it was a posh one. Were it Catholic?

Agatha No, I - I converted. After University.

Bridget *After* University. That's random. Why?

Agatha I had no choice.

Bridget What do you mean, no choice?

Agatha Simply that – it was my calling, that's all.

Agatha (v/o) Calling my name. Benjamin, But this time, he wasn't a baby in hospital. He was a grown man who'd made a

I saw the anger in him, in his eyes. I'd be throwing my life away, he said, all for – nothing. He was paying for it already.

For a stupid, blind moment of anger; that man's life. There was no need for *me* to pay, he said. No need to imprison myself.

But I'd made my deal. I thought I could save his soul.

I left him. I walked down the corridor. And there was the terrible sound of the gate closing behind me.

Bridget You'd never guess.

Agatha Sorry?

Bridget That you weren't *born* Catholic.

Agatha Look, we should get back to Babel.

BRIDGET SIGHS AND BEGINS TO RECITE FROM GENESIS.
FADE TO SILENCE AS SHE READS.

Bridget Genesis. Chapter 11. Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east that they found a plain in the land of Shinar.....

BRIEF SNATCH OF A SOLO VOICE SINGING (LAMENTATION
ORATIO JEREMIAE: TRACK 3)

SCENE 10, INT. CONVENT COMMON ROOM, DAY

RECREATION TIME. BRIDGET AND AGATHA ARE READING.
THERE'S THE SOUND OF A TICKING CLOCK IN THE
BACKGROUND

GERALDINE ENTERS

Geraldine Postie's been. There's a ton of parcels for Sister Ignatius.

Bridget Is it her birthday?

Geraldine No. It's her stuff from eBay.

Bridget What stuff?

Geraldine Linen bags for the drawer scents. Apparently, it's cheaper online. She says she's saving us loads of money but, to be honest, I reckon she's addicted. You should see her when she wins. She runs up the corridor, and she kind of - thumps the air, it's dead funny.

Bridget You're kidding?

Agatha Sister Ignatius wouldn't be impressed by you speaking that way.

Geraldine Why? It's not a secret. She's always gassing to the postie about her bargains. They've got this bet on about how many bids she'll win by the end of the year.

Bridget Is she allowed to talk to the postman? I thought

Geraldine She's in charge of mail and grocery orders, so yeah, she's allowed. You should hear her gossiping to the Tesco delivery bloke.

Agatha (admonishing her)

Sister Geraldine.

Geraldine Oh. Sister Agatha. I forgot.

GERALDINE CROSSES THE ROOM AND HANDS A LETTER TO
AGATHA

Geraldine This one's for you. It's from

Agatha Thank you. I'll open it later.
Geraldine What's 'Letterbox Link' anyway?
Agatha They put people in touch with each other.
Bridget In touch? Can I see?

BRIDGET SNATCHES THE LETTER

Geraldine Bridget!
Bridget I just want to see it.

 So it's for, like, people who're looking for someone?
Bridget Why are they writing to you? Are you
Agatha I'm a volunteer.
Bridget You're a – but you. I don't get it. How can you volunteer when
 you're not allowed to leave the convent?
Agatha It's a trust that works with prisoners. I write letters, that's all.
 To prisoners who need support - or comfort.
Geraldine Do they write back?
Agatha Sometimes. Once I had a reply from a young girl who served a
 sentence for theft. She'd been a drug addict.
Bridget A drug addict.

Agatha She had a little girl she had to leave behind. She worried that
 the child would think she'd abandoned her. And I helped her to
 – to focus, that's all. On the future.

SCENE 11, INT. CONVENT CHURCH, DAY

**THERE IS A BRIEF SNATCH OF THE NUNS SINGING MASS
(COMMUNION PANIS: TRACK 10)**

Mother Abbess (saying the Intercessions)

We pray for the sick in our Congregation. And for those in our parish who have sent intercessions, for those who mourn or who need comfort, especially our parishioners Jessica McGowan, Arthur Thomas and Evelyn Byrne.

**BRIDGET RUSHES OUT OF THE CHURCH SUDDENLY. THE
DOOR SLAMS BEHIND HER.**

Mother Abbess May God's love bring them hope and a new strength of purpose.

Lord hear us.

Congregation Lord, graciously hear us.

SCENE 12, EXT. CONVENT GARDEN, DAY

Agatha Bridget! What is it?

Bridget I'm alright. You don't have to follow me.

Agatha Why did you rush out? Are you unwell?

Bridget I thought I were going to faint.

 Did I miss anything?

Agatha What do you mean?

Bridget The intercessions.

Agatha It was just the usual prayers from the parish.

Bridget (relieved) Right.

 Thank you, though. For coming after me. It means – it's important to me that - that you care.

Agatha Put your head down.

Bridget What?

Agatha You need to sit with your head down if you're feeling faint. To get the blood back to your brain.

Bridget You know that's an old wives tale? You're supposed to - you have to lie down and your feet need to be higher than your head.

Agatha Then perhaps you should lie down on the

Bridget Down there? You're kidding me, aren't you?

Agatha If you're not ill, you can't stay here. You can't miss the Office.

Bridget When I were little it happened all the time. In church, mostly.

 Did you ever get that?

 Oh, sorry. You never went to Mass as a kid, did you?

Agatha Why does it bother you so much?

Bridget It's not that. I

Agatha It doesn't diminish one's faith.

Bridget I didn't mean that. I just want to know. Where you – where people - come from. What makes people join, and that.

Agatha People join for all kinds of reasons.

Bridget Well, doh. Obviously. Like, your thing – what matters to you most – it's studying, isn't it? And the other day. You said you converted after Uni. But, I mean, if you loved your studies so much why didn't you carry on with them?

Agatha I couldn't.

Bridget Why not?

Agatha It wasn't possible. Something - happened.

Bridget What? What happened? Were you in

Agatha I can't - the only thing I can say is that I. Well. I saw what I needed to do. It was a sudden realisation. But it was very powerful.

Bridget If it was sudden – you must have, you know, left things behind. Something.

Agatha It wasn't an impulse. I prayed a great deal. I thought it would be – the right thing. I could give my life in – service – if you understand. I could withdraw.

Bridget Isn't there anyone you miss?

Agatha There's – there was - someone.

Bridget Tell me. Please.

Agatha I can't – I'm sorry. I'm afraid I can't talk about it.

SCENE 13, INT. AGATHA'S CELL, NIGHT

Agatha (v/o) Her questions puncture the silence.

Bridget (v/o, whispering)

Why did you choose this life?

Agatha (v/o) 'If the sin-sickness of the soul is a hidden one, let her reveal it only to the Abbess who knows how to cure her own and others' wounds'.

Bridget (v/o, whispering)

Isn't there anyone you miss?

Agatha (v/o) That last visit, before I took the veil. I couldn't bring myself to touch him, couldn't comfort him. I remembered when he was ill, - how I stroked his cheek. It was so hot.

What does it mean? A life sentence. Life. I believed I could balance things out.

The pact. I was an adult when I made it, but now I think - I must have had the blind faith of a child. There's no faith left. Only this: the sin-sickness of the soul.

SCENE 15, EXT. CONVENT GARDEN, DAY

BRIDGET AND GERALDINE ARE PLAYING BADMINTON. THEY
BAT THE SHUTTLECOCK BETWEEN THEM FOR A WHILE,
LAUGHING AND JOKING WITH EACH OTHER. THEN
GERALDINE MISSES IT.

Geraldine No way! That was miles out.

Bridget Go and fetch it. Hurry up!
 You're a right slow coach.

Geraldine (walking away)

 Give me a chance.

Bridget (catching up with her)

 Geraldine. I need to know something. About Sister Agatha.

Geraldine What about her?

Bridget Does she ever say anything about – you know, what happened
to her? Before she came here.

Geraldine Nah. She keeps dead quiet about everything.

Bridget She said there was – is – someone. But

Geraldine If she's told you that – well, she must trust you. Maybe she'll
tell you.

Bridget Do you really think she trusts me? Yeah. You're right. Maybe
she will.

 Are we going to finish this game, or what?

BRIDGET STARTS RUNNING

 I'll race you.

Geraldine Oh you're not serious are you? Not in this get up.

Bridget Totally. Come on.

Geraldine That's so not fair. Your skirt's shorter than mine.

BRIDGET RUNS OFF. WE HEAR HER VOICE FROM A
DISTANCE, GLEEFUL AND LIGHT

SCENE 16, EXT. CONVENT GARDEN, DAY

Geraldine (v/o) When she came, I couldn't work out who she was. Only that
she was different from any other postulant.

SCENE 17, INT. MUSIC ROOM, DAY

**GERALDINE AND BRIDGET ARE PRACTISING, DOING VOICE
WARM-UP EXERCISES AND MAKING FACES AT EACH OTHER**

Geraldine We got to bar 20, last time, didn't we? Let's go from there.
 And remember what I said. You have to feel the music around
 you, like a – pretend it's a blanket.

Bridget Mine's proper scratchy.

Geraldine Use your imagination, then.

 Let's try it again, from here. See, you pronounce it like this:
 Gaudete in Domino semper.

Bridget I can't get the words.

Geraldine Alright, forget the words. Just think about the tune. Hum it.

**BRIDGET HUMS THE TUNE ((INVITATORY SURREXIT
DOMINUM – TRACK 1) QUIETLY**

Geraldine That's good. But you need – you haven't got it, not yet. It's
 supposed to be joyful. See what I mean? What do the words
 mean?

Bridget I don't know.

Geraldine 'Rejoice in the Lord always'. St Paul. It's the only entrance
 chant in the Mass from the New Testament. You must know
 that.

Bridget I do know that.

Geraldine Yeah, right. I believe you. What have they been teaching you
 at Marymount?

Bridget They did. I mean – I do. It's just – I can't

BRIDGET BEGINS TO GET EMOTIONAL.

Geraldine Oh, I didn't mean to upset you. Bridget! I'm sorry.

What? What is it?

A SILENCE FALLS BETWEEN THE TWO WOMEN

Geraldine (v/o) And then, I hear it. Her pain. It comes – like it's from her soul.
I'm hearing *her*. And her story, what she's hiding.

SCENE 18, INT. CHURCH, DAY

THE ANUNCIATION BELL CALLS THE NUNS TO PRAYER. THE
GATE TO THE CLOISTER IS UNLOCKED AND OPENED.

THE NUNS FILE IN TO CHURCH AND BEGIN TO SING PRIME
(ALLELUIA COGNOVERUNT: TRACK 9)

Agatha (v/o) After Vigils, after Lauds and breakfast, the day unfolds into Prime. In his writings, Thomas Merton says: 'Prime makes me safe and free'. I want to feel that. I pray for freedom.

But still, I watch her: Bridget. I wonder at her lightness of spirit.

Geraldine (v/o) In Prime we pray for protection. The Antiphon's like a plea for safety. And it's the music that keeps us safe. Cause when we sing the same phrases at the same time, every day, it gives us refuge.

I pray for Bridget. That she'll find the truth. And what she's looking for.

SCENE 19, INT. CONVENT, DAY

Bridget I don't want to.

Agatha But the ones you're wearing don't fit you. That skirt

Bridget I like it. It's mine. The pockets are useful.

Anyway, isn't it better to be comfortable? No one can even see us from behind the grille. How will they know?

Agatha They're all spares. We might as well find you something more suitable.

AGATHA TAKES OUT A GARMENT AND HANDS IT TO BRIDGET

This one should do.

Bridget Please, Sister Agatha, I don't

Agatha Change behind there look, that screen.

BRIDGET GOES BEHIND THE SCREEN TO GET CHANGED

Bridget (from behind the screen)

I'm telling you, it'll swamp me. I'll – I just need to

BRIDGET GOES BEHIND THE SCREEN TO CHANGE. THERE'S THE SOUND OF UNZIPPING AS SHE TRIES ON A NEW SKIRT

Agatha (v/o) She drops something. It must have been in her pocket. It floats out from under the screen.

Bridget Sorry. This zip's proper awkward.

Agatha (v/o) I step forward to trap it with my foot. What if it's something private? Something

Bridget I told you. It's way too big.

BRIDGET COMES OUT FROM BEHIND THE SCENE. SHE SEES AGATHA HOLDING A PRAYER CARD.

 What have you -?

Agatha Where did you get this?

Bridget I – I can't say.

Agatha It's St Benedict.

Bridget I know who it is.

 Why are you asking me where I got it? You *know*.

Agatha Chapter 33. 'Let no one presume to give or receive anything, or have anything as her own.'

Bridget Is that all you can do? Quote St Benedict's Rule. When I – why can't you tell the truth?

Agatha What are you talking about?

Bridget Don't act like you don't know. You're hiding here. I can see it in your face, all through the Office. You're hiding from your responsibilities.

Agatha I'm not hiding. He was

 You – you can't possibly understand.

Bridget You don't want to be here, do you? So why don't you leave? 'Cause you've done it before, haven't you? Run away from what matters. You did it when

Agatha You don't know anything about it.

Bridget I *know*. I've got proof, haven't I? This

Agatha Proof - ? How can you have proof?

Bridget So you're just going to deny it? Deny me.

I could go to Mother, you know. I could tell her everything.

Agatha Mother? No. No, don't do that.

Bridget (getting angry)

What are you doing, anyway? You bring me here. Spying on me while I get undressed. Snooping in my things.

Agatha That's a lie, Bridget. It won't help.

Bridget Why wouldn't she believe me?

Agatha (moving towards her)

If you'll just

Bridget No! Do you think I'd let you anywhere near me? After this? After trying to get me – making me take my –

Stay away from me! Stay away or I'll tell everyone about you. What you're like and who you really are.

BRIDGET STORMS OUT OF THE ROOM AND SLAMS THE DOOR

Agatha Bridget!

AGATHA RUSHES TO THE DOOR AND OPENS IT, SHOUTS INTO THE CORRIDOR

Bridget!

SCENE 20, INT. CONVENT CORRIDOR, DAY

**BRIDGET RUSHES OUT OF THE DOOR AND BUMPS INTO
GERALDINE, WHO IS STARTLED**

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Geraldine | Bridget! |
| Bridget | Don't start. |
| Bridget | I was just – she |
| Geraldine | She? |
| Bridget | Sister Agatha. |
| Geraldine | What's happened? Come on, it can't be that bad. Shall we go in to the music room? |
| Bridget | No! |
| Geraldine | What did she say? |
| Bridget | She found something I dropped. But it's mine. I've had it for years. Why shouldn't I bring it with me? |
| Geraldine | I don't understand. |
| Bridget | I tried to – Oh, I can't tell you. Not – not yet. I need to talk to <i>her</i> . |

SCENE 21, INT. CHURCH, DAY

THE PEAL OF ANNUNCIATION BELLS SIGNALS THE START OF MASS. THE GATE TO THE CLOISTER IS UNLOCKED AND OPENED.

THE NUNS FILE IN TO CHURCH AND BEGIN TO SING THE MASS (COMMUNION PANIS: TRACK 10)

Agatha (v/o) All through Mass, I watch her. Who is she, to doubt me? All those questions. Chapter 6: 'I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue.'

Who am I? I thought I knew: But all this time, have I been hiding?

MUSIC FROM THE MASS (COMMUNION PANIS), TO FADE

SCENE 22, INT. CHURCH, DAY

Mother Abbess (saying the Intercessions)

We pray for the departed of our parish, including Grace Furley and Kenneth Brown. We remember in our prayers the intercessions of our parishioners. Of Judith and Allan Nichols, whose daughter is missing. We pray that you hear their anguish and that their faith will keep them strong. We pray she will be restored to them safely. Lord hear us.

SCENE 23, EXT. CONVENT GARDEN, DAY

*SOUND OF THE ANUNCIATION BELL TOLLING IN THE
BACKGROUND AS THEY LEAVE MASS, BRIDGET IN A HURRY
AND GERALDINE FOLLOWING.*

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Geraldine | Wait! |
| Bridget | I'm busy. |
| Geraldine | It's important. I need to talk to you. I saw you, in Mass – just now. What's going on? |
| Bridget | I'm fine. |
| Geraldine | Why didn't you tell me? |
| Bridget | Tell you what? |
| Geraldine | That you'd run away. |
| Bridget | I don't know what you mean. |
| Geraldine | You're her, aren't you? |
| Bridget | Who? |
| Geraldine | The missing daughter. |
| | Don't pretend. I saw your face when Mother read the bidding prayers. |
| Bridget | No! |
| Geraldine | It's not the answer. If you talk to us, we'd understand. |
| Bridget | If I tell you – you'll send me away. I can't leave. I can't. Not yet. |
| Geraldine | Everyone'll know now, anyway. I bet Mother's looking for you already. |
| Bridget | She won't want to believe it. She needs me. You all do. You need a new postulant. |

Geraldine I haven't got a clue how you managed to – to lie to us. How did you -?

The letter. You forged it, didn't you?

Bridget So I forged it. So what? You want the truth? I lied because I *have* to be here. I belong here. I know it: in my voice, in my bones. Right from when I heard the music - it were like - there were this sense of - of home. And I were telling myself the truth – for the first time.

I don't care if it sounds daft.

Geraldine It doesn't. Not to me.

How old are you, Bridget?

Bridget Please. Please don't say anything. I'll be gutted if I have to go now. It could be our secret, just yours and mine.

Geraldine Even if we tried – it won't be long before

There's something else. Isn't there?

BRIDGET INHALES, TAKES A DEEP BREATH OUT

AGATHA APPROACHES

Agatha I've been looking for you.

Bridget What for?

Agatha You can't lie any more, Bridget. Your parents – they'll be terribly worried.

Bridget They're not my parents. You *know* they're not.

It's you. Isn't it?

Agatha What?

Bridget You're my mother. My real mother.

Don't worry. I'm not angry any more. I mean, I was – when I found out but now

Agatha Bridget, what are you

Bridget You left me, didn't you? You didn't have the courage to look after me, so you brought me here to be protected by St Benedict. That's why I've got the – and that's why you decided to come – so you

Agatha That's ridiculous!

Geraldine (warning) Sister Agatha.

Bridget Sorry, I forgot. You don't do truth, do you, Sister Agatha? You spend all your time hiding from it.

Agatha I'm not hiding anything.

Agatha (angry, to Geraldine)

Sister Geraldine. Did you know about this? That she'd run away?

Bridget Stop talking like I'm not here! They did it all the time.

Geraldine I've only just

Bridget Look! Do you need proof? To show you who I am? Here!

BRIDGET TAKES THE PRAYER CARD FROM HER POCKET AND THRUSTS IT AT THEM

Here's your proof. St Benedict. The last thing I've got. The one thing that matters. Because – you left it with me when you had me adopted and they took me. Only they wouldn't let me trace you. They said I were too young. But the card. I knew it would lead me to you. Like a clue.

Geraldine Oh, Bridget. That prayer card – it doesn't mean anything.

It doesn't mean your mother left you here. Or even that she - you've built it up into something – it's just a story. A story you've been telling yourself all these years. Can't you see?

Agatha (gently) I'm not your mother.

Bridget You've got no idea what it's like. All these years, I haven't known the real truth. About who I really am. And what the birth were like and whether I

Bridget (to Agatha)

Tell me. Please tell me what it was like when you – gave birth to me. When you – when you heard me cry for the first time.

Agatha Bridget, I'm so sorry. I'm not

Bridget You've got to be. Because if you're not – if you're not *her*. Then - who am I?

BRIDGET STARTS TO CRY.

Who am I?

Agatha Please. Don't get upset.

AGATHA MOVES TOWARDS HER

Agatha Don't distress yourself. It's alright. It's alright. Here, let me

AGATHA TAKES BRIDGET INTO HER ARMS TO COMFORT HER

Agatha (voice breaking with emotion)

Oh, child.

THERE IS SILENCE AS AGATHA HOLDS ONTO BRIDGET,
BRIDGET SOBBING, THEN TRYING TO CALM HERSELF WITH
LONG, DEEP BREATHS

Bridget Thank you.

 You're crying and all.

Agatha (still upset) I'm

Bridget I wish it could be you. That - you could be her.

 It's all I wanted. To see her, that's all. Just to, like, look at her face and – touch her.

Agatha Yes.

Bridget Do you understand?

Agatha I think so. I – don't know if I can

 Your mother – I'm sure she'd want you to make the best choices. To live the right life. I'm not her but I – we - Sister Geraldine and I – we can help you.

Bridget Do you mean it?

Geraldine Course. But it means you'll have to face up to things, too.

Bridget You mean, the truth?

Geraldine Yes. But I know you can do it. You're dead strong.

Bridget You said though – do you mean it? I won't be on my own?

Geraldine When you love – when people love each other. You take responsibility for each other.

Agatha When people love each other.

MUSICAL INTERLUDE (LAMENTATION ORATIO JEREMIAE:
TRACK 3)

SCENE 24, INT. CHURCH, DAY

THE ANUNCIATION BELL TOLLS, CALLING THE NUNS TO PRAYER. THE GATE TO THE CLOISTER IS UNLOCKED AND OPENED.

THE NUNS FILE IN TO CHURCH AND BEGIN TO SING VESPERS (ANTIPHON NONNE COR NOSTRUM, MAGNIFICAT, TRACK 16)

Geraldine (v/o) The last prayer of Vespers, the Magnificat. Giving thanks for the day we've had. For everything we've learned.

Agatha (v/o) The *Salve Regina*, echoing the final words of Vespers. The Magnificat. Mary visiting pregnant Elizabeth and singing *my soul magnifies the Lord*. It's my favourite story.

If the story changed, who would they be?

SCENE 26, INT. CONVENT HALLWAY, DAY

GERALDINE AND BRIDGET ENTER THE HALLWAY

Geraldine You've got everything?

Bridget I didn't bring much.

Geraldine You look better without that wimple.

Bridget It kept slipping off. I don't know how you ever get used to wearing it.

Geraldine When you come back, we'll get you the right size.

Agatha (V/O) I don't have the courage to say goodbye. I can't face any more of her questions.

Geraldine Are they here, yet?

Bridget They're out in the car. Mother Abbess said she'd see me off. But I wanted to – well, to say goodbye.

Geraldine They'll be dead chuffed to have you home.

Bridget I think so – yeah. I gave them a right lot to worry about, though. I'm sorry for that.

 And, Geraldine, I want to say, as well

Geraldine Sssh! There's no need.

Bridget You helped me so much.

Geraldine I'm glad.

Bridget They've found me a Latin tutor. Can you believe it? Mother Abbess talked to them and – well, I'll be able to learn the Office quicker now. When I come back, I mean.

Geraldine That's great. Those two years they'll fly by.

 I'll miss you though. Get a move on and grow up!

Bridget I'll try.

THEY LAUGH

Bridget You'll still be here, won't you? When I come back?

Geraldine I'm not going anywhere.

Bridget Everything kind of stops in here, doesn't it? Not time, I mean.
All the noise and the anger. Do you – well you know what I'm
on about.

Geraldine You can take it with you, you know. The music and the silence.
You can hold onto it. Until you come back.

GERALDINE HUGS HER

Agatha (v/o, whispering)

 Longing. To stroke his cheek. Longing for touch.

Geraldine You'll stay in touch?

Bridget Course I will. I'll Facebook you – oh. No. Can't do that.

Geraldine You can email me.

Bridget I might even write. Like, an old fashioned letter. We could be
penfriends!

 Oh! I forgot – will you give this to Sister Agatha? I couldn't find
her.

BRIDGET FUMBLES IN HER POCKET FOR THE PRAYER CARD

Agatha (v/o, whispering)

 Me? She's chosen me.

Geraldine Yeah, if you want. What is it?

Bridget This.

BRIDGET HOLDS OUT THE PRAYER CARD

Geraldine Oh.

But isn't that - you sure you don't want to keep it?

AGATHA DESCENDS THE STAIRS

Agatha You can give it to me yourself. If you like.

Bridget You're here. I thought you'd – I didn't think I'd see you.

BRIDGET HANDS OVER THE PRAYER CARD TO AGATHA

Agatha I can't accept this.

Bridget I thought it were all I had of her. It's – well, it's not worthless.
But. It's sort of – lost its value.

Agatha It's the last thing – from your childhood. Don't you want

Bridget You helped me see straight. About the truth and that. I'd like
you to have it.

Thing is, I've been thinking, it were – symbolic, wasn't it? But
it's not any more. I might never find her and I don't think a bit
of card will help. And anyway, I were just sort of – clinging to
what I thought it meant. I don't want it to hold me back from
what I should be doing.

Agatha Bridget.

Bridget Yeah?

Agatha Before you go – I want to say thank you.

Bridget Why? I'm the one as should be thanking you! Both of you.

Agatha Coming here. It was brave. Really brave
Bridget That means a lot, Sister.

BRIDGET TAKES A DEEP BREATH

 Right. Better not keep them waiting.
Geraldine Safe journey.
Bridget I mean it. Thanks. For everything.

BRIDGET LEAVES, CLOSING THE DOOR BEHIND HER

Agatha She's brave. Braver than I am. This card, it was a talisman for her. So to have the strength to let it go
Geraldine Hang on. Turn it over again.
Agatha What?
Geraldine Look.
Agatha 'Sometimes what we're looking for is inside us all the time.'
Geraldine You didn't tell her, then? About you leaving.
Agatha It didn't feel right. She's got enough to deal with. I'll write to her. I'd like her to know how – how instrumental she's been.
Geraldine What do you mean?
Agatha Helping me to see. That I don't belong here. I'm not sure I ever did.
Geraldine I still can't believe you're going.
Agatha Can't you? I tried so hard - to hide it. The not belonging. I thought – I thought if I stuck to the routine and the rules - to St Benedict's Rule – I'd be fine. That no one would find me out.
Geraldine You're so suited to it, though. The *Lectio* and the studying and everything. More than any of us.

Agatha On the surface, perhaps. I was – I realise now I was adhering blindly to some – story. It's like you said to Bridget. But it wasn't the truth. I was just - pretending to myself.

Geraldine What will you do?

Agatha I don't know. I made a choice, coming here. I left him – Benjamin – behind. I thought at the time – well, I know now that I did the wrong thing. I should have helped him face it, not run away.

Geraldine Know what, Sister Agatha? You've got real guts, I reckon.

Agatha Do you? It doesn't feel like it. To tell you the truth, it feels completely terrifying.

REPRISE OF ANTIPHON NONNE COR NOSTRUM, MAGNIFICAT, (TRACK 16).

SCENE 27, EXT. CLOISTER GATE, DAY

Agatha (v/o) The freedom of my unveiled head.

 Who am I?

 Is it true, what Geraldine says, that our lives are stories? We invent them for others, and for ourselves, and we cling to them. But when the truth surfaces, we have no choice. We have to listen.

 Five years. He might be released in two. And the best thing I can do is – to go to him. Be there when they open the gate.

SCENE 28, EXT. CLOISTER GATE, DAY

Geraldine So. This is it?

Agatha I suppose it is.

 Geraldine?

Geraldine Yeah?

Agatha You'll close the gate after me?

Geraldine 'Course.

Agatha Thank you.

THE CLANGING SOUND OF THE CLOISTER GATE CLOSING.

AGATHA WALKS AWAY FROM THE CONVENT. WE HEAR HER
FOOTSTEPS, THE CRUNCHING SOUND OF THE GRAVEL.

AGATHA STOPS. THERE IS THE SOUND OF BIRDSONG.
THEN SILENCE.

AGATHA RESUMES HER WALK. FOOTSTEPS, THE
CRUNCHING SOUND OF THE GRAVEL.

Agatha (v/o) This is it. This is me. Rewriting my story.

REPRISE OF INTROIT EXSURGE: TRACK 2