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Nunsense

by Dan Goggin
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NUNSENSE was first produced at the Cherry Lane Theatre in New York City on December 12, 1985. The performance was directed by Dan Goggin, with sets by Barry Axtell, lighting by Susan A. White, musical direction and arrangements by Michael Rice, and musical staging/choreography by Felton Smith. The Production Stage Manager was Trey Hunt. The cast was as follows:

SISTER MARY CARDELIA ....................... Marilyn Farina
SISTER MARY HUBERT ......................... Vicki Belmonte
SISTER ROBERT ANNE ......................... Christine Anderson
SISTER MARY AMNESIA ....................... Semina De Laurentis
SISTER MARY LEO ............................. Suzi Winson
CHARACTERS

SISTER MARY REGINA, MOTHER SUPERIOR (REVEREND MOTHER) – A feisty overweight Sophie Tucker-type who can’t resist the spotlight.

SISTER MARY HUBERT, MISTRESS OF NOVICES – The second in command, she is always competing with the Mother Superior.

SISTER ROBERT ANNE – A streetwise tough character from Brooklyn. A constant source of aggravation for the Mother Superior.

SISTER MARY AMNESIA – This nun lost her memory after a crucifix fell on her head. She is very sweet.

SISTER MARY LEO – The novice, who has entered the convent with the firm desire to become the first nun ballerina.

NOTE: In the Original New York Production the Mother Superior was named Sister Mary Cardelia. In all subsequent productions the Mother Superior is named Sister Mary Regina, while Sister Mary Cardelia is the nun who modeled for the convent greeting cards.

SETTING

Mt. Saint Helen’s school auditorium.

TIME

The present.
AUTHOR’S NOTE

I spent a great deal of my life around nuns. And most of my experiences left wonderful memories. I wrote *Nunsense* because I wanted to share what I knew to be “the humor of the nun.” Though it may be hard to believe after you read this script, each of the Little Sisters of Hoboken is based on a real-life nun.

SISTER MARY REGINA was to the outside world a model Mother Superior even if she was overweight. But to those who knew her, she was an outrageous, quick-witted soul who knew how to get a laugh. She tried to convince you that she was strict, but everyone knew that her “bark was worse than her bite!”

SISTER MARY HUBERT was a kind person who would always try to be understanding and diplomatic. She taught the Novices the ground rules, and was supposed to be dignified. But with the slightest bit of encouragement she was ready to kick up her heels.

SISTER ROBERT ANNE was a tough streetwise nun who had a heart of gold. All the kids adored her because she spoke their language. And she could hit a baseball “out of the park.”

SISTER MARY AMNESIA was the picture of innocence. She couldn’t remember her past and so looked at each new day with a childlike joy.

SISTER MARY LEO had been a professional dancer before she entered the convent and was always eager to display her talent. She was very impressionable because she was young and could easily be led astray.

In the context of *Nunsense*, Sister Mary Regina (Reverend Mother), Sister Mary Hubert, and Sister Robert Anne are the only nuns who actually worked in the Leper Colony. Sister Mary Amnesia and Sister Mary Leo only know of the Leper Colony through stories told by the others. Reverend Mother and Sister Hubert have a healthy rivalry (somewhat like Marne Dennis and Vera Charles in *Auntie Mame*). Each is always trying to outdo the other. But, Reverend Mother is always quick to remind everyone that she is the Mother Superior. Sister Robert Anne is Reverend Mother’s nemesis. She would probably be thrown out of the convent if it weren’t for the fact that Reverend Mother really knows that Sister Robert Anne is, underneath it all, a very dedicated nun. Everyone likes Sister Mary Amnesia because she is so innocent. Except for her first entrance when she appears a bit shy, she is unafraid. When she realizes that the audience is friendly nothing can dampen her childlike enthusiasm. Sister Mary Leo is frustrated by Reverend Mother in her attempt to shine as a nun-ballerina. For this reason she is easily led astray by her “buddy” Sister Robert Anne.
Before the performance and during intermission the sisters wander through the auditorium, on the stage, etc., as they please. For, after all, they are in their own school. They are very much “at home.” As the performance progresses they become equally “at home” in the spotlight!

The script indicates that the sisters are performing on the set of the “eighth grade production of Grease,” and they are accompanied by a band. However, it should be noted, that the sisters could just as easily present their “benefit” in a church basement with an old upright piano and no set at all. Nunsense is a musical comedy for everyone-everywhere!

Dan Goggin
MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT ONE

Overture ............................................. Orchestra
Veni Creator Spiritus ..................................... Sr. Anne & All
Nunsense Is Habit-Forming ................................. All
A Difficult Transition ..................................... All
Benedicite. ............................................. Sr. Leo & Hubert
The Biggest Ain’t The Best ................................. Sr. Hubert, Sr. Leo
Another Suprise ......................................... Sr. Anne
Playing Second Fiddle ..................................... Sr. Anne
Second Fiddle Conclusion ................................ Sr. Anne
So You Want To Be A Nun ................................. Sr. Amnesia
Mock Fifties ............................................ Srs. Leo & Anne
Turn Up The Spotlight ................................... Rev. Mother
Lilacs Bring Back Memories ......................... Srs. Hubert, Leo, Amnesia
& Rev. Mother

Turn Off That Spotlight/Tackle That Temptation ................. All

ACT TWO

Growing Up Catholic ............................... Srs. Anne, Leo, Hubert, Amnesia
Clean Out The Freezer ............................... Srs. Hubert, Amnesia, Anne, & Leo
Just A Coupl’a Sisters. ................................. Sr. Hubert & Rev. Mother
Second Fiddle (Reprise) ................................ Sr. Anne
I Just Want To Be A Star ................................. Sr. Anne
The Drive In. ................................. Srs. Anne, Amnesia & Leo
I Could Have Gone To Nashville .................. Sr. Amnesia
Gloria In Excelsis Deo .................................. All
Holier Than Thou ..................................... Sr. Hubert & All
Nunsense (Reprise) ..................................... All
(Music Cue 00: **OVERTURE**)

(The musicians enter. They are part of the religious community and are dressed in their religious garb. They begin playing the overture. **SRS. HUBERT, ROBERT ANNE, and LEO** come into the auditorium and begin visiting with members of the audience. In general, they warm up the crowd. After about three or four minutes **SR. ROBERT ANNE** goes up on the steps leading to the stage.)

**SR. ROBERT ANNE.** Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention please. Reverend Mother is on her way over here and I thought maybe you would all do me a big favor and help put her in a good mood. Cause believe me, there is nothing worse than a crabby Reverend Mother. What I’d like you to do is, when she arrives give her the Mount Saint Helen’s cheer. If you don’t remember it, here’s how it goes. *(raising her fist in the air)* Wo! Wo! Wo! Let’s try it on the count of three. Wo! Wo! Wo! That’s great. Now do we have any whistlers in the audience?

*(STAGE MANAGER or ASM comes on stage through the stage right door followed by **REV. MOTHER.**)*

**STAGE MANAGER.** Here she is folks. Our own Reverend Mother, Sister Mary Regina!

*(REV. MOTHER comes to the front of the stage acknowledging applause. She then surveys the stage and notices a poster of Marilyn Monroe in a bathing suit. She is visibly upset and orders **SR. LEO** to get a drape off the easel announcing the performance. She goes up the stage left stairs and pins the drape to Marilyn while **SR. LEO** takes the easel offstage. REV. MOTHER rings a bell summoning the others to the stage. They come up*
immediately as REV. MOTHER conducts the band. On stage SR. HUBERT sits at the lunch counter. SR. ROBERT ANNE sits on the stool next to the juke box. SR. LEO sits on the bed. REV. MOTHER conducts the band faster and faster to the end of “Stars and Stripes.”

SR. HUBERT. Let’s hear it for the Mount Saint Helen’s Band!

REV. MOTHER. (taking center stage) Are we ready to begin?
SR. HUBERT. Reverend Mother, where’s Sister Amnesia?
REV. MOTHER. (looking around) Sister…Sister Amnesia? (SR. AMNESIA peeks out the stage left door.) Oh, there she is. Come out, Sister. It’s okay. They’re all friends.

(REV. MOTHER goes to the door and leads SR. AMNESIA to the bed and puts her next to SR. LEO and pats her on the head.)

REV. MOTHER. (to audience) She’s a little nervous. (While walking back to center stage, she adds:) She’s a big mess is what she is! (to SR. HUBERT) Now, are we ready?

(SR. HUBERT nods yes.)

(REV. MOTHER clicks her clicker to summon the spotlight operator.)

REV. MOTHER. (if audience laughs) Brings back memories, huh?
(if small or no laughs) Not many Catholics here tonight (today)!
Alright, may I have some light please?
(The spotlight comes on in the wrong place then moves erratically around the stage as REV. MOTHER hollers directions trying to get the light on her face. Finally the light is right.)

REV. MOTHER. That’s Sister Mary Myopia – our archery instructor.
Good evening, friends. (She pauses as all on stage conduct the audience in responding, “Good evening, Sister.”) Oh, we sure can train ‘em, can’t we Hubert? On behalf of the
Little Sisters of Hoboken, I’d like to say: “Welcome to the theatre of Mount Saint Helen’s School!” And may I extend our gratitude to each and everyone of you for coming here to participate in our fund-raising activities. Now, before we begin, I’d like to clear up what seems to be some confusion about the set here. You see, our eighth graders are putting on the musical, “Vaseline” and I gave –

**SR. HUBERT.** *(rushing over to REV. MOTHER)* It’s *Grease.*

**REV. MOTHER.** *(looking at her white collar)* Where?

**SR. HUBERT.** *(turning REV. MOTHER around to see the set logo)* *Grease!*

**REV. MOTHER.** Oh! – It’s *Grease.* Who knew?

*(SR. HUBERT goes back to her seat and as she is walking waves her hand over her head indicating that REV. MOTHER is clueless.)*

Well, anyway, I promised the children that we wouldn’t disturb their handiwork during our benefit and so that’s why things may seem a bit incongruous at times. Now, we have a wonderful introductory song, but before we begin the festivities, let us ask the Lord to bless us in our endeavors. Sister, *(indicating SR. ROBERT ANNE)* if you will.

*(Music Cue 02: *VENI CREATOR SPIRITUS*)

**SR. ROBERT ANNE.**

*VENI CREATOR SPIRITUS.*

**ALL.**

*MENTES TUORUM VISITA.*

*IMPLE SUPERNA GRATIA.*

*QUAE TU CREASTI PECTORA.*

*(Music Cue 03: *NUNSENSE IS HABIT-FORMING*)

**ALL.**

*SOME FOLKS THINK OF CONVENTS AS THE PLACES WHERE WE PRAY.*

*But let us tell you convents are much more than that today.*
ALL. (cont.)

WE’RE DEDICATED PEOPLE
BUT WE LIKE TO HAVE OUR FUN.

REV. MOTHER.

WE’RE HERE TONIGHT (TODAY) TO SHARE WITH YOU
THE HUMOR OF THE NUN!

ALL.

NUNSENSE IS HABIT-FORMING
LET US TELL YOU WHY.

REV. MOTHER.

WHEN A SISTER GETS APPLAUSE,
IT’S A SPECIAL “HIGH.”

ALL.

THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO
ONCE WE GET A LAUGH OR TWO.
IT’S SOMETHING WE CANNOT CONTROL
ONCE WE’RE ON A ROLL!

SR. ROBERT ANNE.

HAVE YOU HEARD THE ONE ABOUT THE TRAVELING
SALESNUN
WHO REALLY DREW A CROWD?
IT SEEMS THIS FARMER HAD A HORSE
RATHER WELL-ENDOWED –

REV. MOTHER.

SISTER! NUNSENSE MAY BE HABIT-FORMING
BUT LET’S DRAW THE LINE!

SR. HUBERT.

CUT THE CHEAP SHOTS!
WHY BE COMMON?

REV. MOTHER.

WE CAN BE DIVINE!

ALL.

EVERYBODY’S HERE SO LET’S TELL ‘EM WHO WE ARE:

REV. MOTHER.

THIS IS SISTER ROBERT ANNE.
SHE SINGS AND DRIVES THE CAR.
SISTER MARY AMNESIA
DOESN’T KNOW HER REAL NAME.

ALL BUT SR. AMNESIA.
A CRUCIFIX FELL ON HER HEAD.
HER MEMORY’S GONE. WHAT A SHAME!

SR. ROBERT ANNE.
SISTER HUBERT IS OUR NOVICE MISTRESS
AND OUR GUIDING LIGHT.

SR. LEO.
SHE’S SECOND IN COMMAND
AND STANDS AT REVEREND MOTHER’S RIGHT.

SR. HUBERT.
SISTER LEO IS THE YOUNGEST
AS A NOVICE SHE’S BRAND NEW.

REV. MOTHER.
AND I’M YOUR REVEREND MOTHER,
SISTER MARY REGINA, THAT’S WHO!

ALL.
NUNSENSE IS HABIT-FORMING,
THAT’S WHAT PEOPLE SAY.
WE’RE HERE TO PROVE THAT NUNS ARE FUN,
PERHAPS A BIT RISQUE.
WE STILL WEAR OUR HABITS
TO RETAIN OUR MAGIC SPELL.
THOUGH WE’RE ON OUR WAY TO HEAVEN,
WE’RE HERE TO RAISE SOME HELL!

REV. MOTHER. Sell it, girls!!

ALL.
NUNSENSE IS HABIT-FORMING,
THAT’S THE REASON WE ARE
UP HERE ON THE STAGE TONIGHT (TODAY)
HOPING YOU’LL AGREE.

REV. MOTHER, SRS. ROBERT ANNE & HUBERT.
NUNSENSE IS HABIT-FORMING,

SRS. AMNESIA & LEO.
WE’RE HOOKED,
ALL.

AND ALL WE KNOW IS:
WE JUST CAN’T KICK IT,
THOUGH SOME FOLKS MAY PICKET,
WE JUST CAN’T KICK THIS NUNSENSE.
SO ON WITH THE SHOW!

(Quick blackout, lights up. All of the SISTERS are congratulating each other as SRS. ROBERT ANNE, AMNESIA, LEO, exit stage right door. REV. MOTHER is center. SR. HUBERT stands at her right.)

REV. MOTHER. Oh, thank-you. Thank-you so very much. Now, just in case there is anyone here who hasn’t heard what our little fund-raiser is all about – we’ve had a small disaster back at our convent. You see, a short time ago, our cook, Sister Julia–

(both cross themselves)

– Child of God, served some vichyssoise soup and nearly every sister died instantly of botulism!

SR. HUBERT. It was kind of like the last supper! (She laughs at her little joke.) That’s a little convent humor!

(REV. MOTHER is not amused at SR. HUBERT’s stealing the spotlight.)

REV. MOTHER. Why, we wouldn’t be here now if it hadn’t been for the fact that we were off playing bingo with some Maryknolls. (to SR. HUBERT) What a bunch of cut-throats they turned out to be, huh?

SR. HUBERT. (rather excitedly) I still say their Mother Superior cheated when she didn’t call B-15! I know she had it.

REV. MOTHER. Now, calm down, Sister. Lord knows, she’s not pretty, but she doesn’t cheat.

SR. HUBERT. She does, too. B-15 – I saw her slip it right up her sleeve. It was all I needed to win. (very indignantly) But that’s alright, cause God don’t like ugly! MMM–MMM.
REV. MOTHER. (to audience) The point is when we got back to the convent we found fifty-two of our sisters lying face down in that soup!

SR. HUBERT. Now, we had no idea what to do so we all began praying for guidance.

REV. MOTHER. Then I had a vision. It was either Saint Catherine of Siena or Saint Thomas Aquinas in drag. (pause) I never could tell ’em apart – (pause) Never have seen ‘em together! Anyway, I was instructed to start a greeting card company to raise funds. Well, of course I did – and it was a huge success!

SR. HUBERT. So we took the money and buried forty-eight of the fifty-two dead sisters and then Reverend Mother bought a Plasma TV for the convent. (pause) Personally, I thought we should have buried all of the sisters before we bought the Plasma TV, but as Mistress of Novices I’m only “number two” around here so one tries hard not to question Reverend Mother.

REV. MOTHER. (getting very irritated) And one will try – BOTH. – harder in the future!

REV. MOTHER. That’s right, dear!

(REV. MOTHER points the index fingers of both hands at SR. HUBERT’s face and makes a “ZZZZZZTT” sound as if to zap her.)

The worst part is, we had to put the last four sisters in the freezer!

SR. HUBERT. And the Ben & Jerry’s ain’t tasted the same since!

REV. MOTHER. That’s why we’re putting on this little show. We’ve got to raise enough money to bury those last four dead sisters!

SR. HUBERT. We hope you’ll forgive the limitations put on us by the loss of so many of our sisters, but if they hadn’t died, we wouldn’t have to bury them, and then there wouldn’t be this little show in the first place.
REV. MOTHER. (to SR. HUBERT) But they did, we have to, and there is, so there you are!

(Using the index fingers of both hands and pointing them at each others faces they “zap” each other in unison: ZZZZZZTT. Then REV. MOTHER continues to the audience:)

REV. MOTHER. (cont.) Now, about a week ago I held tryouts for our show and I picked the sisters whom I felt were the very best – of what’s left of us – and I asked each one of them to prepare something that best displayed her talent.

SR. HUBERT. But first, I thought you might be interested in knowing some of the history of the Little Sisters of Hoboken and that’s what our next song is all about.

REV. MOTHER. (sarcastically) Thank-you, Hubert.

SR. HUBERT. Don’t mention it.

(SR. HUBERT exits stage right door and immediately returns with the rest of the cast while REV. MOTHER continues with the audience.)

REV. MOTHER. You see, we started out running a leper colony. Oh, I know some of you probably think that’s a bit distasteful, but all the other causes were taken! You see, it all began when we –

(The cast is in place but SR. AMNESIA is in SR. LEO’s spot and SR. LEO interrupts REV. MOTHER by whispering something in her ear. Without another word, REV. MOTHER takes SR. AMNESIA by the shoulders and moves her to the proper position. SR. LEO goes to her spot.)

(to SR. AMNESIA) Wasn’t that a fun trip?!!!

(SR. AMNESIA nods.)

Alright, are we ready? Let’s do it!

MUSICAL DIRECTOR/CONDUCTOR. Five, six, seven, eight!

(Music Cue 04: A DIFFICULT TRANSITION)
ALL.

AVE MARIA! IT’S SO HEAVENLY TO BE A MEMBER OF A GROUP THAT’S PUTTIN’ ON A SHOW!

SR. ROBERT ANNE.

IT’S GREAT!

ALL.

ALTHOUGH IT IS A DIFFICULT TRANSITION FOR WE STARTED OFF AS MISSIONARIES WHICH, OF COURSE, IS OBVIOUSLY MUCH MORE APROPOS.

SR. AMNESIA.

BUT THEIR MISSION GOT IN TROUBLE.

SR. LEO.

AND THAT BURST THEIR HOLY BUBBLE.

REV. MOTHER.

WE WERE CAUGHT IN AM IMBROGLIO,

SR. HUBERT.

AND WE FINALLY HAD TO GO.

ALL.

SO WE HOPE YOU’LL UNDERSTAND IF WE’RE NOT ABSOLUTELY GRAND.

SRS. AMNESIA & LEO.

FOR WE FEEL A LITTLE QUEASY,

ALL.

WE’RE UNEASY IN THIS SHOW.

REV. MOTHER. Let me start from the beginning. Now pay attention! We’re going to give you the history of our order and you’re going to be quizzed on it afterward.

(spoken:)

FILLED WITH GREAT ANXIETY SISTER HUBERT SAILED WITH ME AND SISTER ROBERT ANNE TO A LAND OF UNKNOWN CIRCUMSTANCE.

WE REACHED OUR DESTINATION WITH A BIT OF TREPIDATION FOR WE’D COME TO ORDER LEVERS BACK TO WORK IN SOUTHERN FRANCE.
SR. ROBERT ANNE.

NO!

SR. HUBERT.

NO!

SR. LEO.

NO!

SR. AMNESIA.

NO!

REV. MOTHER. Oh, no! That’s not right! We’d come to join an order working with lepers on an island south of France. That’s it!

ALL.

EACH OF US, AS BEST WE COULD,
CUT A TREE AND CHOPPED SOME WOOD
WHICH THEN WAS USED IN BUILDING
HUMBLE HUTS FOR QUARANTINE.

WHEN SISTER MARK YVONNE
HAD FINISHED UP THE PORTA-JOHN,
WE ALL SAT DOWN AND WAITED
FOR THE FIRST OF THOSE UNCLEAN.

REV. MOTHER. And they came from everywhere!

SR. ROBERT ANNE.

THERE WERE HOTTENTOTS WITH ROTTEN TOTS
IN BASKETS ON EACH MOTHER’S HEAD.

SRS. AMNESIA & LEO.

AND ZULUS, THEY CONCLUDED
NEVER UNDERSTOOD A THING THEY SAID.

SR. HUBERT.

UBANGIS WHO WERE GANING UP
ON NATIVES WHO WERE BEING FED.

SR. ROBERT ANNE.

AND SWAZI WHO WERE GOOSING
ALL THE BUSHMEN IN THE LINE AHEAD.

ALL.

IT WAS DREADFUL!
THE PYGMIES HAD THEIR NOSES
STUCK IN EVERYBODY’S BUSINESS
WHILE WATUSIS HAD THEIR BUSINESS
STUCK IN EVERYBODY’S NOSE.

BUT THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER,
IF YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW,
WAS THAT EVERYBODY’S BUSINESS
WAS ABOUT TO DECOMPOSE.

REV. MOTHER.

HUBERT, ROBERT ANNE, AND I
ARE LUCKY THAT WE’RE STILL ALIVE
FOR SISTERS WENT TO PIECES
AT A DEVASTATING RATE.

WHEN A NOVICE SPILLED HER FOOD,
AT FIRST, WE THOUGHT HER RATHER CRUDE
TILL WE REALIZED HER HAND
WAS ON THE FLOOR WITH HER FORK AND HER PLATE!

ALL. Wait!

REV. MOTHER. There’s more!

SR. HUBERT.

THE PROTESTANTS, IT SEEMS,
HAD SET OUT TO WRECK OUR DREAMS.

ALL.

WE HAD HUMBLE HUTS
WHILE THEY BUILT LEPER CONDOS-BY-THE-SEA.

REV. MOTHER.

COMPETING FOR EACH LEPER
PUT OUR MISSION WORK IN JEOPARDY.
SO WE DEVISED A PLAN
TO AVOID CATASTROPHE.

SR. HUBERT

WE CHALLENGED THEM TO RACE
CAUSE WE THOUGHT WE’D TRUMP THEIR ACE
IN THE HUNDRED METER DASH
WHEN WE ENTERED SISTER ROSE.

SR. ROBERT ANNE.

BUT AS SHE WAS VICTORY-BOUND,
HER SCHNOZ FELL ON THE GROUND.
ALL.

IF IT HADN’T FALLEN OFF
SHE’D HAVE WON IT BY A NOSE!

REV. MOTHER.

POOR ROSE!

ALL.

OOOOHHHHHH...BUMMER!

REV. MOTHER.

HUBERT, ROBERT ANNE, AND I
HAD MANAGED ONCE MORE TO SURVIVE
BUT THIS TIME WE KNEW
WE WERE IN A TRULY HOPELESS SPOT.

SR. ROBERT ANNE.

SO WE PACKED UP WHAT WAS LEFT,
FEELING TOTALLY BEREFT,
AND GOT OUT WHILE THE GOING
WAS STILL ABLE TO BE BE GOT.

REV. MOTHER, SRS. ROBERT ANNE & HUBERT.

WE CAME BACK HOME TO HOBOKEEN
BUT WITH SPIRITS SO BROKEN
NO ONE REALLY KNEW
IF WE’D PULL THROUGH.

SRS. AMNESIA & LEO.

THEN REVEREND MOTHER PRAYED
THERE WOULD BE A NEW CRUSADE.

ALL.

AND WE WERE DOING GREAT
TILL SISTER JULIA MADE THAT STEW!

(eyes heavenward) MON DIEU!

AVE MARIA, IT’S SO HEAVENLY TO BE A

REV. MOTHER.

MOTHER!

SRS. ROBERT ANNE, LEO, & HUBERT.

SISTER!

SR. AMNESIA.

SISTER!
(REV. MOTHER gives SR. AMNESIA the eye for not singing “Sister” with the others.)

ALL.

MAKING A DEBUT IN FRONT OF YOU.
IT’S A DIFFICULT TRANSITION
FOR THE MISSIONER’S POSITION
WAS UP TILL NOW THE ONLY ONE WE KNEW,
IT’S SAD, BUT TRUE.

SO WE HOPE YOU’LL UNDERSTAND
IF WE’RE NOT ABSOLUTELY GRAND.
BUT WE WILL DO OUR BEST
TO SEE THAT YOU’RE IMPRESSED.
WE HOPE WE’LL PASS THE TEST.
NOW THE REST IS UP TO YOU! AMEN!

(Quick blackout. Lights up.)

(REV. MOTHER & SR. HUBERT stay toward center stage as SR. LEO exits left door. SR. ROBERT ANNE exits right door followed by SR. AMNESIA.)

SR. HUBERT. (seeing SR. AMNESIA leaving) Sister Amnesia. Sister Amnesia, where are you going?

SR. AMNESIA. (pointing to the exit) I was just going with what’s-her-veil.

SR. HUBERT. But aren’t you in charge of the quiz?

SR. AMNESIA. Oh, I forgot.

(SR. AMNESIA goes to the locker to get her ruler.)

SR. HUBERT. I just can’t seem to get through to her, Reverend Mother.

REV. MOTHER. I know. I keep hoping if she remembers who she is, we’ll discover she belongs to the Franciscans.

(REV. MOTHER exits left door as SR. AMNESIA comes center.)

SR. HUBERT. Now, Sister Amnesia. Try to remember what I teach in the novitiate: Gentle, but firm. (She stomps her foot.)
SR. AMNESIA. Gentle, but firm!

(Pause...SR. HUBERT points to SR. AMNESIA’s foot and she stomps it. SR. HUBERT exits left door making the sign of the cross as she goes. SR. AMNESIA takes a deep breath and snaps to attention, ruler in hand.)

SR. AMNESIA. (cont.) Alright! Sit up straight! Eyes forward! Pay attention! Do you know what time it is!!?

(She hits the palm of her hand with the ruler. It obviously hurts and she grimaces, rubbing her hand on her thigh. She reverts to her wide-eyed innocent self.)

You know, I always know what time it is. Because back at the convent we have this huge clock with the twelve apostles pasted on it. And I always know when the big hand is on the John and the little hand is on the Peter it’s time for the sisters to go down on their knees... and pray!

And now it’s time for that quiz that Reverend Mother warned you about. (She takes the index cards with the questions out of her pocket and hooks the ruler on her belt.) Okay! Here are the questions that you should have the answers to, if you were paying attention to that last song. Could I have some lights, please?

(house lights up)

Oh, thank-you.

Now if you know the answer, raise your hand. Are you ready?

(She waits for response, which is usually weak.)

Are you ready!!!?

(response)

Good! Question number one: The leper colony was established on an island south of __________.

(Audience yells out France.)
SR. AMNESIA. (cont.) I asked you to raise your hands! Alright. I’m going to give you one more chance – same question. The Leper colony was established on an island south of__________.

(She calls on someone.)

Would you have known the answer if everyone hadn’t blurted it out?

(Audience member responds.)

Good, you’re honest. I have a prize for you.

(She goes into the audience. As she goes down the steps, she hollers to the balcony: “Now you people in the balcony, don’t feel left out. After all, you’re closer to heaven!”)

(She goes to the winner, holding the prize up for all to see.)

Look everybody, it’s a genuine Saint Christopher Motorist Prayer Card! And see, it says here, “I am a Catholic. In case of accident, please call a priest.

(to winner) Are you Catholic?

(if yes:) Oh, good! Then (if no:) I knew that. You know why? If you were Catholic you’d know that you’re supposed to stand up when Sister calls on you.

Who do you call?

(Winner answers.)

Well, then you just scratch this out and write in “I am a _________. In case of accident please call ________.”
SR. AMNESIA. (cont.) Now I must tell you. Saint Christopher is no longer a saint. Yeah. I think he must’ve had an accident or something. I guess that’s why we got these at a discount. So I would buckle up if I were you. Give our winner a hand everybody!

(SR. AMNESIA returns to the stage.)

Okay. Question number two. This is harder than the first one. Why? (She pauses for a moment and then realizes there is more to the question.) Oh! Why did the sisters leave the leper colony?

(Music Cue 05A: QUIZ TIMER)

(The timer music plays until SR. AMNESIA hears the correct answer. The answer is: “They lost the race to the Protestants.” But SR. AMNESIA usually accepts anything to do with the race/condos etc. to keep the show pace up. If no hands raise she says, “I’ll give you a hint.” She mimics racing and indicating her nose falls off. Whatever answer she gets she says “Close enough!”)

(Music Cue 05B: QUIZ FANFARE)

(Shes goes into the audience to the next winner, making sure the winner stands up. She holds the prize up for all to see.)

It’s a Holy Card of a saint! Do you know who he is? (Hint: He liked animals and little birds…) It’s Saint Francis! You know some people think Saint Francis was a sissy! But that’s not right! Reverend Mother explained to me that he was of Assisi. That’s very different. Give our winner a hand.

(Winner sits down.)

Okay…how many Catholics do we have here tonight! (She picks someone.) I have a prize for you just for being Catholic! I bet you never thought it would pay off! (giving prize) For you I have a medal of a saint. You can stick it anywhere you like! That’s Saint Dymphna.
She’s the patron saint of people with mental disorders. Reverend Mother says I should pray to her everyday!

*(SR. AMNESIA goes back to the stage.)*

Now I have one last question that Sister Hubert wanted me to ask.

*(REV. MOTHER opens the stage left door slightly to hear what’s going on.)*

Do you think it was wrong for Reverend Mother to buy a Plasma TV before all of the sisters were buried?

*(REV. MOTHER comes rushing on and whisks SR. AMNESIA off through the stage right door. SR. AMNESIA protests, “But they didn’t answer.”)*

*(Music Cue 05C: QUIZ FANFARE)*

*(REV. MOTHER returns to center stage.)*

**REV. MOTHER.** Well, I think that’s about enough time on the quiz. Now, I’d like to present Sister Mary Leo in her interpretation of “Morning at the Convent.” Sister –

*(Music Cue 06: BENEDICITE)*

*(SR. LEO enters left wearing a bathrobe and huge fluffy slippers which are covering her pointe shoes. She carries a Teddy Bear. She sits on the bed.)*

**SR. LEO.**

I WAKE UP ALL BLEARY  
WHEN I FIRST HEAR THE  
AGE OLD QUERY.

**SR. HUBERT.** *(sticking her head in stage left)*

BENEDICITE. *(then disappears)*

**SR. LEO.** Dominus.

THANK GOD WE CAN’T SPEAK TO EACH OTHER,  
I’M NOT IN THE MOOD TO BE CHEERY.

*(She stands and removes the robe. She is underdressed in her habit.)*
SR. LEO. (cont.)

PUT ON THE TUNIC AND SCAPULAR,
THEN THE WIMPLE – LOOK, NO MIRROR!
THE GUIMPE AND VEIL
COMPLETE THE NUN’S COUTURE.

(He sits back down on the bed.)

AT AN UNGODLY HOUR
THE BELL IN THE TOWER
SIGNALS A WARNING.

(The school bell rings loudly.)

WE’VE MADE IT THROUGH
ONE MORE NIGHT.
IT’S TIME TO GREET A NEW MORNING.
BUT BEFORE I GO DOWNSTAIRS
I CLEAR MY HEAD OF WOES AND CARES
BY DANCING MY WAY
THROUGH MY MORNING PRAYERS.

(He removes her slippers revealing the pointe shoes and the dance begins.)

DANCING IS THE WAY I PRAY.
I CAN HAVE A PERFECT DAY,
IF I START OFF WITH A TOUR JETE!

(Strip music starts and SR. LEO starts belting the song.
SR. HUBERT sticks her head out the door.)

SO IF YOU WAKE UP FEELING BLAH,
TRY MY PROVEN FORMULA.

(SR. LEO sees SR. HUBERT and looks appropriately apologetic. SR. HUBERT disappears.)

POINTE YOUR TOES AND PLIE.
ONCE EACH DAY!

(Music Cue 06A: BENEDICITE PLAYOFF)

(SR. LEO acknowledges applause. SR. HUBERT enters stage left door.)

SR. HUBERT. Sister Mary Leo that was just wonderful. I wish I could dance like you do!
SR. LEO. Well, you could have seen a lot more but Reverend Mother won’t let me wear a tutu.

SR. HUBERT. *(moving toward the bed)* Now, you know how Reverend Mother feels about the traditional habit.

SR. LEO. I know. “If God had wanted everyone to look like people…

BOTH. …He wouldn’t have invented nuns!”

*(They both “ZZZZZZT” each other with their index fingers mocking REV. MOTHER.)*

SR. HUBERT. That’s right.

SR. LEO. But when I entered the convent I planned to dedicate my life to God through the dance. If I can’t wear a tutu, I’ll never become a famous nun ballerina!

*(Music Cue 07: THE BIGGEST AIN’T THE BEST)*

SR. HUBERT. Sister Mary Leo! Have we forgotten about humility?

*(SR. LEO looks embarrassed. SR. HUBERT moves downstage center and sings directly to the audience.)*

I’VE ALWAYS TAUGHT THE NOVICES THAT GOD IS ON THEIR SIDE, WHEN THEY’RE LOOKING FOR THE STRENGTH TO AVOID THE SIN OF PRIDE.

SR. LEO. *(sitting on the bed responds)*

I KNOW THAT BEING HUMBLE IS A VIRTUE WE HOLD DEAR. BUT HOW CAN I BE HUMBLE AND ADVANCE IN MY CAREER?

SR. HUBERT. Sister Mary Leo! Your vocation *is* your career. *(to audience)* Would you excuse me for a moment? *(She goes and sits on the bed next to SR. LEO.)* Sister, I’d like to say something before this goes any further. You see, I wanted to be a nun ever since I was a little girl. My dream was to enter the convent… *(She looks off to stage right where REV. MOTHER exited to be sure she isn’t listening.)*...work my way up to Mother Superior, and then turn the Little Sisters of Hoboken into – *(She
stands and with great gusto shouts.) – the BIG SISTERS OF NEWARK!!! Well, the first lesson I had to learn upon entering the convent was that we do not strive for position – just perfection. Besides (She imparts her strategy.) she who exalts herself shall be humbled. But she who humbles herself (again with gusto) shall be exalted!

(SR. HUBERT sits back down on the bed and continues the song.)

REVEREND MOTHER IS THE BOSS
AND SO I MUST OBEY.
BUT AS MISTRESS OF THE NOVICES
I SHINE IN MY OWN WAY.

SR. LEO.
YOU MEAN IF I’M REALLY HUMBLE
I COULD HAVE A SHOT
AT A BIT OF EXAULTATION
WITH MY SIMPLE LOT?

SR. HUBERT. You, got it, kid!
THE BIGGEST AIN’T THE BEST.
VERY OFTEN WE’RE IMPRESSED
BY A TINY DIAMOND CHIP
 THAT SEEMS TO OUTSHINE ALL THE REST.

SO PAY ATTENTION NOW.
HERE’S WHAT YOU MUST DO.
DON’T DEMAND THE SPOTLIGHT.
LET THE SPOTLIGHT COME TO YOU.

(The spotlight comes on to SR. HUBERT and then moves to SR. LEO.)

SR. LEO. I’m beginning to see the light.

SR. HUBERT.
REMEMBER SISTER HILDA
WHOSE ENDOWMENT WAS SO GREAT?

SR. LEO.
WHEN SHE PUT ON HER COLLAR
IT STOOD OUT LIKE A PLATE.
(SR. LEO holds her collar out straight.)

SR. HUBERT.
WELL, ONE DAY WHEN THE BISHOP CAME
AND SHE WENT TO THE DOOR,
AS SHE KNEEL TO KISS HIS RING
SHE FELL FLAT OUT ON THE FLOOR –
(SR. HUBERT starts to fall forward off the bed. SR. LEO grabs her so she doesn’t hit the floor.)
– AND PROVED:

BOTH.
THE BIGGEST AIN’T THE BEST,
AS THE BISHOP WILL ATTEST.
THE LORD TELL US THE LEAST
ARE OFTEN THOSE THAT ARE THE BLEST.

SR. HUBERT.
SO LET THAT BE A LESSON TO YOU.
TRY TO UNDERSTAND.
THE PEOPLE WITH THE BIGGEST DRUMS
DON’T ALWAYS LEAD THE BAND!

BOTH. (moving down center)
OH, THE BIGGEST AIN’T THE BEST
VERY OFTEN WE’RE IMPRESSED
BY A TINY DIAMOND CHIP
THAT SEEMS TO OUTSHINE ALL THE REST.

SR. HUBERT.
SO DO WHAT YOU DO WELL.

SR. LEO.
I KNOW I’LL BE FINE.
(She crosses herself.)

SR. HUBERT.
JUST REMEMBER TO BE HUMBLE.
(SR. LEO genuflects.)

BOTH.
AS WE PROUDLY GO AND –

SR. HUBERT. Smile, Baby!
SR. LEO. Sparkle, Neely!

BOTH. Sing out, Louise!

– AND SHINE!

(REV. MOTHER enters from stage right door, applauding.)

(Music Cue 08: ROBERT ANNE’S SURPRISE)

(SR. ROBERT ANNE enters left on upper platform and then comes down right stairs to REV. MOTHER. She has her veil twisted into a turban with artificial fruit hanging from it. She is shaking maracas.)

SR. ROBERT ANNE. Well, what dy’a think? I call it the Convent Miranda look.

(SR. LEO and SR. HUBERT realize there is going to be trouble and sneak off stage left taking the bathrobe, slippers and Teddy Bear with them.)

REV. MOTHER. Sister! I am appalled! Now, you show some respect!

SR. ROBERT ANNE. C’mon…chill out, Rev. (She puts her props on the lunch counter and fixes her veil properly.) Listen, I’ve got another little surprise for you.

REV. MOTHER. Another surprise?

SR. ROBERT ANNE. (to REV. MOTHER) See, I realized when you arranged the program you hadn’t included a solo for me and so I’ve been working on a special song with (Father/Sister Musical Director’s name) and I thought you could find a spot for it in the show. Listen to this. Hit it, Father.

(During the above speech REV. MOTHER is trying to stop SR. ROBERT ANNE. She shakes her head no, etc.)

(Music Cue 08A: ANOTHER SURPRISE)

WHEN I BECAME A NUN,
AT A VERY EARLY AGE.
I HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN –
FINISH READING THIS SCRIPT

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