

NUN OF THE ABOVE

CHARACTERS: (2)

NUN, in nun's garb, age 25-45

MAN, somewhat creepy and mysterious, any age between 25-65

SETTING: Two seats side by side on an airplane. Two chairs will serve.

(At rise, the NUN is sitting in her "window" seat. The seat next to her is empty. The MAN enters. He goes directly to the seat next to the NUN.)

MAN I believe this is mine. (Sits) Ah.

NUN (Smiles vaguely at him, looks away)

MAN I hope the flight isn't too terrible. I hate to fly. Especially on these small prop planes.

NUN (noncommittally) Yes.

MAN (turning to her) I find you very attractive.

NAN I beg your pardon?

MAN I believe you heard me.

NUN I'm a nun.

MAN Is that what you say to all the boys, or just to me?

NUN It's really none of your business.

MAN Have I made you uncomfortable?

NUN No . . . Well, yes.

MAN What if I'd said I find you very unattractive? Would you have felt the same impulse to move to another seat? You do feel like moving, don't you?

NUN I do.

MAN Has no one else ever said they found you attractive?

NUN Not since I entered the convent.

MAN Do you enjoy being a nun?

NUN Well enough.

MAN Could I become a nun?

NUN Sir, I don't know what your problem is exactly, but you're bothering me.

MAN Thinking about calling the Attendant?

NUN As a matter of fact, yes.

MAN She won't come.

NUN What?

MAN She won't come.

NUN Well, we'll see about that. ((Pushes the button on the "armrest"))

MAN It doesn't work, does it?

NUN (reluctantly) . . . No.

MAN Shall I call her for you?

NUN I'll call her myself. (Turns to call, can't do it.)

MAN Having a problem?

NUN My throat seems . . .

MAN Tight?

NUN Yes.

MAN Still thinking about moving to a different seat?

NUN Yes, let me out.

MAN No, you're not moving.

NUN Yes, I am!

MAN No, you're not. I have something very important to tell you.

NUN (angrily) What?

MAN Not yet. In time.

NUN Well, I'm afraid I'm not staying here to find out. (Tries to get up but can't)

MAN . . . Comfy?

NUN What is this?

MAN Your name is Sister Romina, is it not?

NUN How did you know that?

MAN And you work as a nurse in a retirement center, but you prefer to be called a caregiver, correct?

NUN Have you been following me?

MAN Heavens, I don't have to. It's all right here in my little black book. (Takes a little black book out of his pocket) See?

NUN What is that?

MAN A history of your life up to now. I'm sorry to say it's only mildly interesting.

NUN Then why bother? Throw it away. Here, let me unburden you. (Offers to take the book)

MAN Not so fast. I'm not finished with it quite yet.

NUN (flustered) I don't think what you're doing is legal.

MAN (Laughs dismissively) Not legal. Tsk, tsk on me.

NUN What's your name? Let me start a little book on you.

MAN You know my name.

NUN I do not!

MAN Oh, but you do, Sister.

NUN I've never seen you before in my life.

MAN True, but you know my name.

NUN Are you a policeman?

MAN (smiling) Sort of. (Looks at his watch) Good. I'm right on schedule. Make contact. Establish rapport with subject. Should take about three minutes.

NUN I don't think you've really established rapport.

MAN Close enough.

NUN What do you want? Why are you here?

MAN Why is anyone here? But of course I know you don't mean it that way. You've got all the answers, haven't you, Sister? The big answers for the big questions?

NUN No, I'm sure you have them, though.

MAN As a matter of fact, I do. Want to hear them?

NUN Do I have a choice?

MAN Not really.

NUN You have an incredible amount of nerve, do you know that?

MAN (pleased) Don't I, though? I don't really find you attractive, by the way. I just said that.

NUN I don't care! I'm a nun!

MAN Do you know why I sought you out, why I sat beside you?

NUN I'm not interested.

MAN Oh, but you are.

NUN I am not.

MAN Did I hear you say you aren't? Oh, but you are. You find me absolutely fascinating.

NUN You flatter yourself.

MAN Shall I tell you the reason? Or do you want to figure it out for yourself?

NUN I don't care about the reason. It's your reason, not mine.

MAN All right. I won't tell you.

NUN Good.

(Pause)

MAN You're wondering, aren't you?

NUN Not at all.

MAN Yes, you are.

NUN (deliberately doesn't answer)

MAN About five minutes into visit, inform subject of the reason for the visit.
(Looks at his watch) Right on time.

NUN I'm not listening.

MAN I came for your soul.

NUN What?

MAN Are you hard of hearing, Sister?

NUN You came for my soul?

MAN Yes.

NUN Well, you can't have it.

MAN Oh, but I can. Not that I care that much. As souls go, yours is quite, quite small.

NUN Perhaps you should try somebody else's then. (Points) How about that woman over there? I'm sure her soul is much, much bigger.

MAN You know what, Sister? You're almost funny.

NUN You know what, Mister? You're not the least bit funny.

MAN Oh, this is great. You want to exchange witticisms? Trading quips with a nun on an airplane. I must say it's a first for me.

NUN You've said all I want to hear, ever.

MAN Alas, Sister Romina, that's not the way it's going to be.
NUN You're telling me you're the Devil?

MAN I didn't say that. Do you think the Devil would bother with you? Come on!

NUN I refuse to be baited anymore. I'm sure I'm a complete non-entity and the less attention paid to me the better.

MAN You know, I'd agree with you, Sister, except for that one little thing.

NUN One little thing?

MAN Yes, that one little thing you did that you shouldn't have done. That's attracted our attention.

NUN And what would that be?

MAN You know very well. A lifetime of basically good deeds, and then that one that's going to cost you your soul for all eternity.

NUN I don't know what you're talking about.

MAN I'm not even referring to the sexual sins, Sister. The Devil understands. Thought I didn't know about those, didn't you?

NUN You're creepy.

MAN Aren't I, though? Is your flesh crawling yet?

NUN Almost.

MAN And there have been a few other misdemeanors, infractions. Nothing to write home about. I'm not even talking about those. My, people have such an inflated notion of their sins.

NUN I'm sure yours are lulus.

MAN I'd love to discuss mine, but this is about you. And I have to be leaving soon. I have a very busy schedule today. Believe it or not, I will dropping in on His Holiness himself later on. Now there's a man with sins.

NUN (sarcastically) Tell him a said hello.

MAN That's good, Sister. I liked that. I bet you make all your patients smile, don't you?

NUN Well enough.

MAN What about that man you killed? Did he smile?

NUN What?

MAN He wasn't that old really. Only fifty-seven.

NUN I don't know what you're talking about.

MAN Mr. Schmidt, wasn't it? You gave him an overdose of morphine.

NUN I did not!

MAN Sister, you did. Think about it. He was complaining about pain, about wanting his morphine drip adjusted. You came in — the night shift, right? . . . And then what happened? Hmm?

NUN It wasn't my regular shift.

MAN Of course it wasn't.

NUN It was sort of dark in the room. A light bulb was burned out.

MAN That place is like that, isn't it? Always something broken.

NUN It's true.

MAN You don't have to try to convince me, Sister. And then what happened?

NUN He insisted that I give him some more morphine.

MAN And you said that it was the doctor's responsibility, didn't you?

NUN I did.

MAN But Mr. Schmidt wasn't having it, was he? He got very loud.

NUN He screamed at me.

MAN He was in pain. But he wasn't a very nice man in general, was he?

NUN No, he wasn't. He'd been in the hospital unit before.

MAN And every time he was a big troublemaker, wasn't he? Complaining, interfering, fighting with the other patients, with the staff.

NUN He made some of them cry.
MAN I know! A thoroughly unpleasant individual.

NUN He was!

MAN So you gave him . . . ?

NUN Extra morphine.

MAN That's right. And how much did you give him?

NUN Just a little bit more.

MAN Sister, this is me you're talking to. How much?

NUN . . . Twice as much.

MAN So you doubled his dose?

NUN Yes.

MAN And you were aware that you were doing that, weren't you? Wasn't it actually four times as much?

NUN It was late. I was tired.

MAN Mitigating factors, certainly. But think back to that precise moment when you made the decision. Your nursing home, much to your dismay, doesn't have the modern equipment that you'd like. No infusers. Just those old-fashioned IV's with the morphine drips and the codes to operate them. You reached up, adjusted the dose for grumpy old Mr. Schmidt, then left the code on his bed, as though by mistake. And he used that code, didn't he?

NUN He did.

MAN And you knew he was using it.

NUN I did.

MAN You knew that he was going to die because the IV was so busy pumping too much morphine into his vein, didn't you?

NUN I . . .

MAN And yet you didn't stop him.

NUN . . . No.

MAN In fact, you stood there and watched as he began breathing more and more shallowly, right? And you took back the code you had given him, and when Mr. Schmidt's doctor asked what had happened, you said that Mr. Schmidt must have altered the morphine bags and memorized the code. They all believed you, did they not? Because Mr. Schmidt was a shit — everyone agreed on that. While you were Sister Romina, a nun who had devoted her life to tending to the sick. Good, caring Sister Romina. Oh, there were a few doubts about you, but they were quickly alleviated at the enquiry. Have I gotten it all correct?

NUN . . . More or less.

MAN Thank you, Sister. That wasn't so difficult, was it?

NUN (no answer)

MAN And where do we go from here, Sister Romina? What exactly is your destination. I forgot to ask. Making a connection somewhere?

NUN I'm taking some time off.

MAN From the nursing home.

NUN Yes.

MAN Good idea. And then what? Will you be going back to nursing?

NUN I don't know for sure.

MAN Right. It's the time to ponder these things. Sort them out. Very wise.

NUN They've asked me to come back.

MAN Of course they have. You do a lot of good there.

NUN I do!

MAN Just this one little . . . foul-up. Is that the word? Foul-up? Or is it murder?

NUN It wasn't . . . I didn't mean to . . .

MAN Only you did, Sister. You did. And you know what? You can never un-do it.

NUN I have saved hundreds of lives as well!

MAN It's not fair, is it? One little blot wipes out everything else. Maybe if you don't think about it, it'll go away. You think? . . . Hmm?

NUN . . . No, I guess it's not going away.

MAN Because?

NUN Because you're here.

MAN Very good, Sister. Very good.

NUN I don't know what to do. . . . I don't know what to do.

(Pause)

MAN I believe the exit door in the back isn't that hard to open.

NUN The exit door?

MAN I made sure you'd be able to use it, if you needed to. Do you need to? You do, don't you? (Pats her arm) You'll feel so much better once it's over.

(Pause)

(The NUN nods and tries to get out of her seat.)

MAN Excuse me, Sister. I'm in your way. (Points) It's back there, on the left.

(The NUN hesitates, then takes a deep breath, then turns and heads in that direction.)

NUN . . . Yes.

MAN Lovely talking with you, Sister. (Looks at his watch) How about that? Must be a record. Ten minutes from start to finish for a nun's soul. (Puts a check mark in his little black book) Give or take a few seconds. (to audience) Excuse me, I've got to go shut a door. Now, now, no tasteless jokes about flying nuns, all right? . . . All right?

BLACKOUT