DRINKING HABITS 2:
Caught in the Act
a farce

by Tom Smith

10 PAGE SAMPLE
DRINKING HABITS 2

ACT I, Scene Three
Two weeks later. Another rehearsal. Paul is examining a monk’s robe for the show.

Paul
This is just fine. It looks very authentic.

Sister Philomena
Oh, it is. Lucky for us, the church maintains excellent records of holy garments. We created a perfect replica of a monk’s robe from 1858. I even wove the cloth myself.

Paul
But it looks exactly like a contemporary monk’s robe. Couldn’t you have pulled one from the high holy closet and just used that?

Sister Augusta
That’s what I said.

Sister Philomena
But it’s not the same shade of brown. The new ones are Russet, not Chocolate.

Paul
Ah, well then, my mistake. It’s absolutely perfect.

Sister Augusta
I told you he wouldn’t notice!

Sister Philomena
But maybe someone in the audience will.

Sister Augusta
Who? How many hundred year old monks do you think are coming to see this show?

Paul
And this must be the gown for the Blessed Mother.

Sister Augusta
Yes. We’ve had to take the seams out twice already. Kate’s gaining weight faster than a jackrabbit drinking espresso.

Sister Philomena
We made a second gown—a bit larger—in case she outgrows this one.

Sister Augusta
This veil goes with it.
PAUL
Well, it looks splendid. Pop will use his own cloak and hat, and, since Bernadette was a nun later in life, Mother Superior will simply wear her own vestments.

SISTER AUGUSTA
Have you given any more thought as to how we can make Mother Superior look younger?

PAUL
I have, but I still haven’t come up with any solutions. We’ll only really see her face; maybe we could get her different glasses. We still have another week before opening to decide. Speaking of, how is she?

SISTER PHILAMENA
The same as yesterday. And the day before that and the week before that. Mother Superior truly believes she had a vision and that the Blessed Mother came to her with a message. She’s been praying non-stop for another visit ever since.

SISTER AUGUSTA
She says she’s been chosen, but she doesn’t know for what.

PAUL
Well, I’m not sure what she did or didn’t see that night, but I hope she gets back to normal soon. She’s been sleeping less and less ever since it happened.

SISTER PHILAMENA
Only three hours last night. But she did take a nap today.

SISTER AUGUSTA
For ten minutes.

PAUL
She’s simply got to get a full night’s sleep. Oh, about the props. We seem to have everything now except for the wine that the monk drinks.

SISTER AUGUSTA
We found an empty wine bottle in the pressing room and we’ll use grape juice. George can use the bottle for rehearsals but we thought we’d save the juice until Opening Night. We’d hate to add anything else that might confuse him.

PAUL
Good thinking. Thank you again, Sisters, for all your work on this. I couldn’t have done it without you. 
(He goes off check on a few props on the table.)

SISTER PHILAMENA
About that grape juice...
SISTER AUGUSTA
Don’t worry, Sister Philamena. We had two boxes of grapes left over from when we made the you-know-what a few weeks ago. I pressed them today—just pressed them, nothing else—and put the juice in bottles with white labels. The hundred bottles of you-know-what all have red labels.

SISTER PHILAMENA
White label means grape juice.

SISTER AUGUSTA
Exactly. I put the other bottles away in boxes, so there won’t be any confusion.

SISTER PHILAMENA
How do they look? The ones with the red labels?

SISTER AUGUSTA
From what I can tell, they’ll be ready just in time.

SISTER PHILAMENA
Glory be!

FATHER CHENILLE
(Crossing over to Paul at the table.)
Ah, Paul, great news!

PAUL
Oh, hey, Pop. What’s up?

FATHER CHENILLE
I’ve been working all day on a new trick. I thought there might be a more interesting way to make Blessed Mother appear.

PAUL
More interesting how?

FATHER CHENILLE
Like this!
(He unfurls a scroll-like banner.)
Abraca-luijah!
(He drops the banner to reveal nothing.)

KATE
(Waddling out from the kitchen, much, much larger than before, eating a roll. She has an apple in her other hand.)
Sorry! I missed my cue! I saw these in the kitchen—
(Holds up the food.)
—and they looked so good. My goodness, these cravings! They come out of nowhere!

PAUL
I’ll think about it, Pop. But for now—

FATHER CHENILLE
I know, I know. Just stick with the flowers.

KATE
Does anyone have a dill pickle? Or a pork roast!

FATHER CHENILLE
By the way, I ran into Mr. and Mrs. Ripp this morning at the market. They were highly complimentary of your sermon this morning.

PAUL
All thanks to you. Two weeks in a row now. That hypnotism seems to have worked.

FATHER CHENILLE
I knew it would. In fact, I think we’re finally ready to invite Cardinal Bluejay to observe you so you can be ordained.

PAUL
After the show opens, Pop, all right? One major event at a time.

KATE
Oh, watermelon! Did anyone happen to bring a watermelon to rehearsal?

SISTER AUGUSTA
(Aside to Sister Philamena.)
It looks like she’s smuggling one under that dress.

PAUL
All right, everyone, let’s get started. Opening Night is a week away!
(Everyone looks a little nervous.)
Tonight’s our deadline to be off-book so I hope you’ve all be working on your lines. I’ll be following along with the script, just in case anyone needs prompting. So, let’s all have fun and break a leg!
(Everyone does final preparations. Paul looks around the room.)
Where’s George?

GEORGE
(Entering.)
Sorry, I was in the kitchen running lines. Did your trick with Kate work, Father Chenille?

FATHER CHENILLE
Not even close.
KATE
(Holding up the remains of her food.)
It was my fault. I took a detour.

PAUL
Has anyone seen Mother Superior?

SISTER PHILAMENA
She was in her room a few minutes ago. Praying for another vision.

PAUL
(Calling down the hallway.)
Mother? Come on out now. You can pray all you want the 21 hours a day we don’t have rehearsal.

(During the following, Sister Philamena helps George on with his monk’s robe, which goes over the top of his normal clothes. Sister Augusta puts the Blessed Mother’s gown over Kate, who doesn’t want to put down her roll or apple. Father Chenille grabs his magician’s cape and top hat from the high holy closet and puts them on.)

SISTER PHILAMENA
Here, George, let me help you.

SISTER AUGUSTA
This would be much easier if you put your food down.

GEORGE
Thank you, Sister Philamena.

KATE
Could you get me some butter for my roll?

SISTER AUGUSTA
I’m not a Harvey Girl, dear.

PAUL
Now, let’s take it from the top and work our way through. Mother? Where’s that vibrant, young Bernadette?

MOTHER SUPERIOR
(Entering. She looks utterly exhausted. Her moves are sluggish and she yawns every now and again.)
Here I am.
PAUL
Mother, you look like you’ve hardly slept.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
I try, but instead I come out here every night in hopes of seeing her again.  
(Big yawn.)

PAUL
You’ll make yourself sick. Please get some sleep tonight. I’m worried about you.

FATHER CHENILLE
The boy is right, Margaret.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
And miss the chance of receiving another holy message? Never!

PAUL
Mother!

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Let’s begin. The sooner rehearsal is over, the sooner she may come to me.

PAUL
All right, everyone. Places for the top of the show.  
(Everyone gets into their proper places.)
So, there’s music, music, music. Music fades, curtain opens and...

FATHER CHENILLE
(Walks center stage and quickly turns to see the audience. He speaks in a strange and unidentifiable accent. Maybe British, maybe New England. Definitely not his normal voice.)
“Why, hello there! What a mighty fine looking crowd!”

PAUL
Pop, you’re doing that thing with your voice again.

What thing?

FATHER CHENILLE
That thing. Just use your own regular voice.

PAUL
I am.  
(Back to the strange stage voice.)
“What a mighty fine looking crowd. And you, madam, why you’re just as pretty as a—
—bouquet of Spring flowers. Oh, no, that wasn’t a miracle you just saw. It was a trick. An expertly executed magic trick by one of the greatest magicians the world has ever known. Whom you can hire for birthday parties and other celebrations at a reasonable price.”

PAUL

Stick to the script, Pop.

FATHER CHENILLE

“It was a trick. A miracle is something greater. Something very few people in the world have seen. But I know someone who not only encountered a miracle, but encountered 18 of them. I’m referring, of course, to the sprightly and spirited young girl, 14 year old Bernadette Soubirous.”

(He rushes off. Sister Philamena silently applauds his performance.)

MOTHER SUPERIOR

(Entering heavy-footedly and speaking in monotone.)

“Tra-la-la. Tra-la-la. Hear me sing my song.”

PAUL

Mother, you’re supposed to be skipping in. And singing.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

(Ignoring him.)

“In my 14 years of life I have had nary a care or worry in the world. Although poverty-stricken and sickly, I know that there is a great and wonderful plan for me. I am filled with song and life. I am youth, personified. Why, look, it’s the friendly monk from the monastery next door.”

GEORGE

“Hello there,—“

(Unable to remember his line.)

PAUL

If you need your line, George, just say “line.”

GEORGE

Line.

PAUL

Right.

GEORGE

No, line.

PAUL

That’s right.
No. Line?

GEORGE

Oh. “Bernadette.”

PAUL

“Hello there, Bernadette. How lovely to see—” Line.

GEORGE

“You.”

PAUL

“—you.” Line.

GEORGE

“Where are you going?”

PAUL

Nowhere. I thought I’d say my line right here.

GEORGE

No, that’s line.

PAUL

Oh, right. “Where are you going?”

GEORGE

“I’m off to the grotto to dip my toes in the water.”

MOTHER SUPERIOR

“Enjoy your—” Line.

GEORGE

“self.”

PAUL

“self. I drink—” Line.

GEORGE

“To your youth.”

PAUL

“to your youth.” Line.
Now you drink.

“Now you drink.”

No, just drink.

“Just drink.”

No, George, you drink from your bottle now.

Oh, right.

(He takes a drink, expecting liquid that isn’t there.)

There isn’t anything in it.

There will be. We’ll use grape juice for the show. For tonight, just mime it.

Got it.

(Puts the bottle down and mimes drinking from it.)

No, I mean you can use the bottle, just mime the— Never mind!

“Goodbye, dear monk. Tra-la-la. Tra-la-la.”

And, again, Mother, you’d be skipping and singing there.

“Why look, the grotto Massabiele. I’ll dip my toes in the waters, just a bit.”

(Entering. Sister Philamena and Sister Augusta have small strips of silk on sticks they wave back-and-forth as Bernadette’s vision (Kate) appears. Saying her line with her mouth full of food and spitting a bit.)

“Good evening, Bernadette Soubirous. I am the Blessed Mother.”

(Mother Superior takes off her glasses to wipe off some food which Kate has accidentally spit on them.)
“Have you ever seen a vision as beautiful and benevolent as me?”

MOTHER SUPERIOR  
(Gets hit in the eye. Breaking character.)
She spit food in my eye!

KATE  
I’m so sorry, Mother!
(She takes a step towards Mother Superior but gets tangled in the silks.)

SISTER PHILAMENA  
Wait!

SISTER AUGUSTA  
The silks!

KATE  
Oh no!

GEORGE  
I’ll help you, Kate.  
(Accidentally kicks over the bottle he left on stage.)
The bottle!  
(Picks up the bottle.)

SISTER AUGUSTA  
(To Kate.)
Stay still!

KATE  
Sorry!

FATHER CHENILLE  
Paul, I’ve got an idea!

MOTHER SUPERIOR  
(Using her veil to wipe her eye.)
Does anyone have a tissue?  
(George bumps her as he rushes to Kate. She drops her glasses.)
My glasses!  
(Starts feeling around for them.)

GEORGE  
Sorry, Mother Superior!  
(Puts the bottle down next to Kate and comes back to help Mother Superior get her glasses.)