

# Things Not Seen

## *A Mystery*

by  
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## CHARACTERS

*In order of appearance*

PROFESSOR THOMAS MALLORY (M), *a middle-aged professor*

FATHER PETER HOWARD (M), *a middle-aged priest*

SISTER ALICE MIDLIN (F), *a Benedictine nun in her mid 20s*

SISTER VERONICA STEELE (F), *a Benedictine nun in her early 60s*

BROTHER LUKE BERNHARD (M), *a Benedictine monk in his late 20s*

FATHER ANTONIO VESCONI (M), *a priest in his late 60s*

TOTAL ROLES: 6

(2 female, 4 male)

SCENE 1

(Afternoon. Lights up on the living room of a large, old-fashioned house that has been converted into a Catholic retreat center. The front door of the house is at upstage right and there are windows in the upstage wall. At upstage left an exit leads to a flight of stairs, as well as a hallway that in turn leads to rooms beyond. An unseen landing lies about halfway up the stairs. Downstage right a door leads to the study and the library, as well as the back stairs. Downstage left a door leads to the dining room and the kitchen. The house is arranged such that it is possible to exit through any door, except the front door, and return through a different door. The room contains a variety of religious decoration, including a crucifix, a picture of the current Pope, and iconic artwork. Various books and notes lay scattered throughout the room.)

FATHER PETER HOWARD and PROFESSOR THOMAS MALLORY, both middle-aged, enter engaged in a heated discussion. SISTER ALICE MIDLIN, a Benedictine nun in her mid 20s, sits nearby, ostensibly reading a book.)

MALLORY

Now don't take it like that, Father. You have to address this.

HOWARD

The Greek is fine, Professor. I've been over it and over it.

MALLORY

I'm telling you there's something wrong with the grammar. I can't put my finger on it, but it's there. What has Father Vesconi said?

HOWARD

He's still reviewing the translation. I'm sure he'll clear up any misconceptions.

MALLORY

Look, Father, I'm only asking the questions everyone else will ask.

HOWARD

And I am doing what I can to answer them.

MALLORY

You can't hope to do a thorough study on your own. You really ought to bring this manuscript to the university.

HOWARD

When it's time. But as you've said, we must be prepared. I trust I can count on your discretion.

MALLORY

Father Vesconi trusts me.

HOWARD

I wish he'd asked me before speaking to you.

MALLORY

I'm here to help, Father.

HOWARD

You're determined to prove my manuscript a forgery.

MALLORY

You're the one brandishing a piece of a 2000-year-old census. If you don't see that the burden of proof lies with you... But perhaps I'll have another look at that translation.

HOWARD

I hope you find where you went wrong.

MALLORY

Well. It has happened.

(He exits DSR.)

MIDLIN

Don't let him get to you, Father.

HOWARD

Sister, I didn't see you there. How are you?

MIDLIN

What did Father Vesconi invite him for?

HOWARD

Apparently Professor Mallory is something of an expert in dating ancient papyrus.

MIDLIN

Well, still, he should be helping you prove your manuscript, not tearing it apart.

HOWARD

One would hope. I trust you'll keep this to yourself. We're not ready to go public.

MIDLIN

Oh I won't say anything, really.

HOWARD

Tell me about yourself, Sister. You seem rather young to have taken vows.

MIDLIN

Twenty-six. I became a novice as soon as they'd let me. I'm going to be a teacher.

HOWARD

I always wondered if I should have tried teaching. I've been a priest at St. Jerome's for over twenty years. I never thought to do anything else.

MIDLIN

I'm sure you're a great comfort to your parishioners.

HOWARD

Where will you be teaching?

MIDLIN

At the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

HOWARD

Wonderful school. I know Father Ashton.

MIDLIN

I'll tell him you said hello. Father, if there's anything I can do to help...

HOWARD

That's very kind of you. I didn't intend for so many people to know about the manuscript, not yet, at least.

MIDLIN

I won't tell anyone, I promise. You're very blessed to have made this discovery.

HOWARD

Thank you. If you'll excuse me, I have some work to do before dinner.  
(He exits DSR.)

MIDLIN

(Prays)

Lord, help Father Howard, and defend him evermore by the might of Thy holy cross.  
(There is a knock at the front door. MIDLIN answers it and admits  
SISTER VERONICA STEELE, a Benedictine nun in her early 60s.)

Hello, Sister.

STEELE

Good afternoon. I'm Sister Veronica. Father Vesconi is expecting me.

MIDLIN

Of course. I'm Sister Alice.

STEELE

Pleasure to meet you.

MIDLIN

It's just a lovely house, isn't it?

STEELE

Yes, I've always been quite fond of it.

MIDLIN

You've been here before?

STEELE

I've known Father Vesconi a long time, although I don't have the opportunity to visit as often as I would like. Is he at home?

MIDLIN

I think he's in his study. Would you like me to find him?

STEELE

Please.

MIDLIN

Oh and Sister, you must have a talk with Father Howard. He's made the most amazing discovery.

STEELE

Yes?

MIDLIN

Except I promised I wouldn't say anything.

STEELE

Then perhaps you should keep that promise.

MIDLIN

I'll find Father Vesconi for you.

(MIDLIN exits DSR. There is a knock at the front door. STEELE answers the door and admits BROTHER LUKE BERNHARD, a novice Benedictine monk in his late 20s.)

STEELE

Good afternoon.

BERNHARD

Hello, Sister. Is this the Gethsemane Retreat Center?

STEELE

It is. Sister Veronica Steele.

BERNHARD

Brother Luke Bernhard.

(FATHER ANTONIO VESCONI enters from DSR carrying an old book. He is in at least his late 60s with a mind that is still sharp. MIDLIN enters after him.)

VESCONI

Ah, Sister Veronica, how very good to see you again.

STEELE

And you, Father. I trust you are well.

VESCONI

I have my health and such studies as keep the mind occupied. How long has it been?

STEELE

Five years.

VESCONI

But now you are to be my neighbor at the convent. You must visit often.

STEELE

I will have no other occupation.

VESCONI

Yes, yes, my condolences on the closing of your school.

STEELE

Thank you, Father.

VESCONI

And you must be Brother Luke. Father Antonio Vesconi. Welcome.

BERNHARD

Thank you.

MIDLIN

(To STEELE)

You taught at St. Anne's.

STEELE

For over thirty years.

VESCONI

Sister Veronica is one of the finest teachers I have ever met.

MIDLIN

I'd love to hear more about St. Anne's. I wanted to go there.

STEELE

You're to be a teacher?

MIDLIN

At the Immaculate Heart of Mary. But I'm helping Father Vesconi for the summer.

VESCONI

I need young hands to tend my garden.

BERNHARD

That sounds wonderful.

MIDLIN

It's too bad St. Anne's had to close.

STEELE

I don't see that it had to, but it did.

VESCONI

Yes, it is most unfortunate.

BERNHARD

Are you going to another school then?

STEELE

The bishop has seen fit to reward my service by allowing me to spend my remaining years in quiet contemplation.

BERNHARD

I see.

MIDLIN

God always opens a new door.

STEELE

Does He now.

MIDLIN

You'll see.

STEELE

And if I prefer the calling to which I have devoted myself for the past thirty years?

MIDLIN

But Sister, the bishop—

STEELE

Is not God.

MIDLIN

No, Sister, of course not.

VESCONI

Brother Luke, he too shall be pursuing the contemplative life. At St. Jude's, yes?

BERNHARD

That's right. I'll be taking my solemn vows soon. Abbot Delfino thought I should spend some time away from the monastery. To prepare.

STEELE

Indeed.

MIDLIN

Your family must be very proud.

BERNHARD

I'm sure they would have been.

VESCONI

Such a calling requires great sacrifice. Not everyone is meant for it.

MIDLIN

Brother Luke is, I can tell.

BERNHARD

I've been told I have the aptitude.

STEELE

That is not the same as passion.

VESCONI

Quite true. Now, I trust you shall both be comfortable here. It is my great pleasure to provide this place where the men and women of God may find solace. Should you require anything, Sister Alice or I will be happy to assist.

(To MIDLIN)

Perhaps you might show Brother Luke his room.

MIDLIN

Certainly, Father. The blue one?

VESCONI

Across from mine, yes.

MIDLIN

This way, Brother.

(She and BERNHARD exit DSR.)

VESCONI

Well?

Father?

STEELE

Speak what is on your mind, Veronica.

VESCONI

The bishop is a fool.

STEELE

The schools do not have the students they once did. Something must close.

VESCONI

Not St. Anne's. We've been growing for years.

STEELE

The building is old, it is costly to maintain. The Immaculate Heart and St. Matthew's have room for your students.

VESCONI

If the bishop would just listen to me...

STEELE

Perhaps you take the closing of your school more personally than it is intended.

VESCONI

It's not only the school, Father. I can still be of use.

STEELE

You are always welcome here. I meet many who would benefit from your wisdom.

VESCONI

And what of those who need a good teacher? If Sister Alice is what they're putting out these days...

STEELE

Ah, she is young and full of zeal. Do you not remember when we were the same? Ready to move mountains with our bare hands? You have a gift for education, Veronica, but you are not, what is the word, politic.

VESCONI

I speak my mind. I am not ashamed of that.

STEELE

Nor should you be. But the closing of St. Anne's has given the bishop an opportunity.

VESCONI

To put me where I can't make trouble, you mean.

STEELE

VESCONI

I shall speak to the bishop, but you must first offer the olive branch. Let him see how you are needed, and in a year, perhaps...

STEELE

I will try, Father. I will. Although I may have already said too much.

VESCONI

Then the time has come for a new journey, yes? It is a great, wide world. Who knows what Sister Veronica Steele may yet accomplish.

MALLORY

(Entering, to VESCONI)

I wish you'd speak to Father Howard about that translation. No self-respecting Roman would ever... Sorry, more company, and here I am revealing state secrets. Professor Thomas Mallory.

STEELE

Sister Veronica.

MALLORY

A pleasure. Here for the peace and quiet, or is Father Vesconi putting you to work as well?

STEELE

The former, I'm afraid.

MALLORY

My condolences.

HOWARD

(Entering)

Father, there you are... Hello.

VESCONI

Allow me to introduce Father Howard.

HOWARD

How do you do? Did you find it, Father?

VESCONI

(Handing HOWARD a book)

Yes, yes, here it is. I could not think where I had left it.

HOWARD

Thank you.

VESCONI

Father Howard has come to consult me on a scholarly matter, although he prefers we keep it to ourselves for the time being.

STEELE

Of course.

MIDLIN

(Entering USL with BERNHARD)

And I'm sure he'll tell you all about it, it's just remarkable. Here's Father Howard now.

BERNHARD

Brother Luke. Sister Alice was just telling me—

HOWARD

Was she now.

MIDLIN

Oh Father, I'm sorry.

(To BERNHARD)

I promised not to tell.

BERNHARD

I didn't know.

MALLORY

Not to worry, Brother, this has to go public sooner or later. Thomas Mallory.

HOWARD

(To VESCONI)

You may as well explain things to Sister Veronica.

MIDLIN

I really am sorry.

VESCONI

Father Howard has discovered a fragment of a Roman census, dating back to 6 A.D, which shows the Holy Family in Nazareth.

STEELE

Extraordinary. Where did it come from?

MALLORY

I'm afraid this manuscript is of a rather dubious origin.

HOWARD

I found it in an antique store in Chicago.

MALLORY

As I said.

STEELE

And does it actually mention them by name?

MALLORY

"Joseph, profession *tehton*." That is to say, a carpenter. "Wife, Mary. Son, Jesus." The whole lot. Even James and Jude, Jesus' half brothers, or Joseph's sons, depending on how you care to look at it. Rather convenient, wouldn't you say?

BERNHARD

That doesn't prove it's a fake.

HOWARD

Professor Mallory's not much interested in proof.

VESCONI

Father, please.

MALLORY

Well. Why bother with evidence when you've made up your mind already.

HOWARD

Don't you lecture me about jumping to conclusions.

MIDLIN

So, Brother, St. Jude's.

MALLORY

There's something wrong with the Greek, I'm certain of it.

VESCONI

Perhaps this might wait until after dinner.

MALLORY

Yes, that's your area of expertise, Father. The papyrus, on the other hand...

STEELE

Have you been able to determine how old it is?

MIDLIN

It's old enough, that's what Father Howard said.

MALLORY

Is that right?

HOWARD

The radiocarbon test suggests that it may be...

MIDLIN

You see?

HOWARD

...although it wasn't conclusive.

MALLORY

Well. It's not just a question of age. Papyrus can be reused. Even if it dates from the correct period, the text itself may still be a medieval forgery. A thorough analysis of the writing style is needed.

BERNHARD

So when does it go to the experts?

HOWARD

I beg your pardon?

BERNHARD

I don't mean any disrespect.

VESCONI

Father Howard wishes first to take some time to—

HOWARD

We have the situation well in hand, Brother.

STEELE

Surely we're not the only ones who know of it.

BERNHARD

Shouldn't the bishop at least—

MALLORY

The bishop? I see they have you well trained.

BERNHARD

All I meant was—

MALLORY

(To HOWARD)

But he's right, you know. You're so convinced you've found proof of the Gospels...

HOWARD

I have spent months...

MALLORY

(Continuing over him)

...so convinced that you have failed to consider the damage that would be done if this manuscript is shown to be a fake. You've done all you can, Father. Time to let this go.

HOWARD

Perhaps I could if I were able to get some real work done.

MALLORY

Meaning what?

HOWARD

Meaning that if you have nothing constructive to add, please go back to your university and leave me alone.

(He exits.)

VESCONI

I had best speak with him. Charity, Professor.

(He exits after HOWARD.)

STEELE

You appear to have stirred up quite the hornet's nest.

MALLORY

I believe in doing due diligence.

MIDLIN

You're supposed to be helping him.

BERNHARD

Isn't it possible you've jumped to your own conclusions? If it's real, then...

MIDLIN

Then it's a miracle.

MALLORY

Sister, for a piece of papyrus to survive two thousand years is no miracle. To prove it genuine beyond a shadow of a doubt may take one.

MIDLIN

But think of what it will mean. It's proof.

STEELE

Of what?

MIDLIN

That our Savior lived in Nazareth.

STEELE

I believe Saint Matthew has covered that already.

MIDLIN

You know what I mean.

STEELE

Certainly I know that the truth of the Gospel does not lie in scraps of paper.

MALLORY

Papyrus. The fact of the matter is we may never know for certain when this manuscript was written. It's unfortunate, really, that it mentions Christ at all.

MIDLIN

Why?

STEELE

It is not likely to be judged on its own merits.

MALLORY

As much as you want this manuscript to be genuine, others won't, regardless of the evidence.

MIDLIN

Like you.

MALLORY

Well. Perhaps I don't need it to be.

MIDLIN

I didn't say I did.

BERNHARD

You know people will see this differently than the book of Matthew. Maybe if people had outside proof...

MALLORY

It wouldn't matter, Brother. Think of the Pharisees. They watched Christ heal the blind and raise the dead, and they still called Him a devil.

MIDLIN

But if God gave us this manuscript then—

MALLORY

Then the evidence will support it.

MIDLIN

But—

STEELE

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

MALLORY

Precisely. I've been a scholar all my life, and still the deepest faiths I know are those born of the heart. A faith that knows God, that reflects His love back into the world, that's a faith worth more than all the first century manuscripts put together.

STEELE

Hear, hear.

MIDLIN

Sometimes people need something to hold on to.

BERNHARD

Even if we don't need proof, what about those who do?

MALLORY

Look, it won't be easy to separate the questions of faith this manuscript raises from the scholarly ones. But we mustn't confuse the two, or else it becomes a foundation of sand. Which is why we must be careful, why we must subject this manuscript to the most rigorous examination possible. Then, if it is genuine, you'll be ready to answer the critics.

BERNHARD

And maybe Sister Midlin's right.

MALLORY

Perhaps. At any rate, my job is to follow the evidence.

MIDLIN

Is that what you think you're doing?

MALLORY

As best anyone can. So, Sister, what did you say you'll be teaching?

MIDLIN

History.

MALLORY

Well. Far be it from me to question the methods of a Catholic education. I did enough of that in my day.

BERNHARD

You went to Catholic school?

MALLORY

Which is exactly why I'm Protestant. Excuse me.  
(He exits.)

BERNHARD

You're excited to start.

MIDLIN

Oh yes. Only I hear the students are terrible to new teachers.

STEELE

I remember my first day. I believed the joy of learning would be enough. My second day was quite different.

MIDLIN

I can't imagine anyone disobeying you.

STEELE

You must be firm from the beginning.

BERNHARD

I'm sure you'll do fine.

STEELE

I always found a surprise quiz effective at stamping out mischief.

BERNHARD

I'm glad I didn't have you as a teacher.

STEELE

Do not let them forget who has the authority. I think I shall offer Father Vesconi a hand in the kitchen.

(She exits DSL.)

BERNHARD

It's too bad about her school.

MIDLIN

She shouldn't have talked like that about the bishop.

BERNHARD

I'm sure it's difficult for her, that's all.

MIDLIN

The bishop has his authority from the cardinals, who have theirs from the Holy Father, who—

BERNHARD

I'm familiar with the hierarchy of the Church, Sister.

MIDLIN

Of course. So, St. Jude's. They're very devout.

BERNHARD

Yes.

MIDLIN

How wonderful for you.

BERNHARD

To be honest, I'm still surprised Abbot Delfino accepted me.

MIDLIN

Don't be. You're going to do great work. Funny, though, that he sent you here.

BERNHARD

No two people walk the same path, that's what he always tells me.

MIDLIN

Well, God's will be done. I should be helping Father Vesconi too. Dinner is at six. Don't be late.  
(She exits DSL and the lights fade to black.)

SCENE 2

(Later that night. The room is dark.)

VESCONI

(Offstage)

Hello? Is there anyone there? I thought I heard...

(He cries out.)

Father! Sister!

(He enters USL.)

Please, someone. I need—

BERNHARD

(Entering DSR)

Father, what's going—

VESCONI

Brother, thank heavens. It is terrible.

BERNHARD

What is it?

VESCONI

On the stairs, he—

STEELE

(Entering DSR)

What's happened?

VESCONI

Sister.

STEELE

Are you all right?

BERNHARD

What's going on, Father?

VESCONI

The stairs, there.

(We hear a scream from USL. STEELE exits that direction.)

Brother, the police.

BERNHARD

(As he crosses to the phone.)

Do we need an ambulance?

(VESCONI shakes his head.)

STEELE  
 (Offstage)  
 This way, Sister.  
 (She re-enters USL with MIDLIN.)

MIDLIN  
 He's dead.

STEELE  
 Don't think on it.

VESCONI  
 Brother, please ask for Sheriff Kimball.

BERNHARD  
 Father, what should I—

HOWARD  
 (Entering DSR)  
 I heard screaming. What's—

MIDLIN  
 That was me. I'm sorry.

STEELE  
 We understand.

HOWARD  
 But what—

BERNHARD  
 Father?

VESCONI  
 Professor Mallory, he is dead.

HOWARD  
 Dead. You're certain?

STEELE  
 Lord, have mercy.

MIDLIN  
 You should sit, Father.

VESCONI  
 Yes.

HOWARD  
How did it happen?

VESCONI  
An accident, he fell.

HOWARD  
Fell?

MIDLIN  
And we're sure he's...?

VESCONI  
Quite sure.

STEELE  
And you said the professor slipped? And broke his neck?

(VESCONI nods. HOWARD reacts. BERNHARD speaks into the phone.)

MIDLIN  
Father?

HOWARD  
I'm all right. I...

MIDLIN  
Maybe some tea?

VESCONI  
For everyone, please.

MIDLIN  
Of course.

(She exits DSL.)

VESCONI  
We commend our brother Thomas to you, Almighty God.

STEELE  
You don't look well, Father.

HOWARD  
No, I'm... It's a shock, that's all.

BERNHARD

(Into the phone)

Thank you.

(Hanging up, to VESCONI)

There's been a car accident on the highway. Sheriff Kimball's there now. She won't be able to come until morning.

VESCONI

These small towns.

HOWARD

Are we going to...? I mean, shouldn't we...?

VESCONI

Brother, did the police say what we should do?

BERNHARD

They said if we're sure it was an accident, we can go ahead and move the body.

STEELE

And what if we are not sure?

BERNHARD

Aren't we?

VESCONI

But of course we are.

HOWARD

Why wouldn't we be?

VESCONI

(To BERNHARD)

Perhaps you might assist me.

(He stands and pauses.)

STEELE

Father?

VESCONI

Too much excitement.

HOWARD

I can do it, Father.

STEELE

Perhaps we should wait.

What for?  
BERNHARD

For the sheriff.  
STEELE

And just leave him there?  
BERNHARD

I think that would be best.  
STEELE

I have known Sheriff Kimball for many years. She will understand.  
VESCONI

I'll give you a hand, Brother.  
HOWARD

(BERNHARD and HOWARD exit USL.)

Veronica?  
VESCONI

Antonio, this does not feel right. What if this was not an accident?  
STEELE

What else could it be?  
VESCONI

I would have thought the alternative was obvious.  
STEELE

These are the people of God.  
VESCONI

And it would not be the first time the people of God have strayed. I do not like to think it, but we should not jump conclusions.  
STEELE

If you have any concerns, Sister, you are more than welcome to discuss them with the sheriff.  
VESCONI

She will want to examine the scene.  
STEELE

I will confess I was not thinking along those lines.  
VESCONI

STEELE

Of course not. I'm not even sure what made me... How did you come to find the professor?

VESCONI

I heard a noise. I still cannot believe... Watch, O Lord, with those who wake.

STEELE

I'm sorry, Father, is there anything I can do for you?

VESCONI

Tea, that is what I need. But I am glad to have you here in such a time as this.

(MIDLIN re-enters DSL with a tray set for tea.)

MIDLIN

Here you are, Father. Chamomile.

(She pours out the cups.)

VESCONI

Ah, Sister, thank you.

(He takes a cup.)

MIDLIN

Sister?

STEELE

Please.

(MIDLIN hands her a cup.)

Did you hear anything?

(BERNHARD and HOWARD re-enter USL.)

MIDLIN

You mean before the professor...? Should I have?

BERNHARD

I did.

STEELE

Oh?

BERNHARD

Before I heard Father Vesconi, I heard someone arguing. At the top of the stairs, I think.

STEELE

These stairs?

(She points USL.)

BERNHARD

That's right. It was ten twenty, maybe ten thirty.

STEELE

And you heard this from your room?

BERNHARD

Yes.

MIDLIN

I didn't hear anything.

STEELE

Father?

HOWARD

What? No, I didn't hear an argument.

STEELE

Curious.

BERNHARD

It's true.

MIDLIN

Tea?

(HOWARD and BERNHARD each accept a cup.)

HOWARD

But I did hear footsteps.

STEELE

When?

HOWARD

Before Sister Alice screamed. Someone went past my room.

VESCONI

Please, Sister, cannot this wait?

STEELE

You're right. We can settle all this in the morning.

MIDLIN

What is there to settle?

HOWARD

It was dark. I'm sure he simply...

STEELE

Yes?

HOWARD

He fell. Why must it be anything more than that?

MIDLIN

Perhaps it was Providence.

BERNHARD

Providence?

MIDLIN

For working against Father Howard.

STEELE

I hardly think God goes around pushing people down stairs.

HOWARD

Who said he was pushed?

STEELE

A poor choice of words.

MIDLIN

Father, he wasn't Catholic. Do you think he...?

VESCONI

I do not believe Saint Peter will have turned him away.

MIDLIN

If you say so.

VESCONI

Professor Mallory was a scholar. A skeptic, perhaps, but always he sought the truth. If you fear for his soul, Sister, then you will not offend him with your prayers.

(He exits USL, followed by HOWARD.)

MIDLIN

Well, good night.

(She starts to exit USL, stops, and exits DSR instead.)

BERNHARD

Sister, when Father Howard and I...

STEELE

Yes?

BERNHARD

Something's not right. I mean, if the professor had been going upstairs, shouldn't he have been facing that way? Not down?

STEELE

I wondered the same. Perhaps he had forgotten something.

BERNHARD

Or was arguing with someone.

STEELE

Was it the professor you heard?

BERNHARD

I think so.

STEELE

Well, assuming it was an accident...

BERNHARD

It wasn't. I mean, I thought so too, but... I can't explain it, Sister, but when I saw him I knew it wasn't.

STEELE

You understand the alternative.

(BERNHARD nods.)

I am inclined to agree with you. I had a student once, William Jones. Intelligent boy, but always in trouble of one sort or another. So when the gymnasium caught fire everyone was certain he was responsible.

BERNHARD

But not you.

STEELE

It was too convenient. I identified the true guilty party soon after. We will share our concerns with the sheriff. No doubt she shall conduct a thorough investigation.

BERNHARD

The police seemed fine believing it was an accident.

STEELE

If that is the case, then someone must act.

BERNHARD

Well, good night, Sister.

STEELE

One thing still puzzles me. How is it only you heard voices before the professor fell?

BERNHARD

I'm sure I don't know.

(He exits DSR as the lights go to black.)

SCENE 3

(The next morning. HOWARD is working as MIDLIN enters.)

	MIDLIN
Good morning, Father.	
	HOWARD
Good morning, Sister.	
	MIDLIN
How did you sleep?	
	HOWARD
Not well, I'm afraid.	
	MIDLIN
Of course not, I'm sorry.	
	HOWARD
It helps to work. Father Vesconi and I are looking over the translation.	
	MIDLIN
What you're doing is important. I hope you know that.	
	(VESCONI enters USR through the front door.)
	HOWARD
You're very kind.	
	MIDLIN
	(To VESCONI)
Who was at the door, Father?	
	VESCONI
Sheriff Kimball.	
	MIDLIN
And?	
	VESCONI
We need not be concerned.	
	MIDLIN
That's good. Is there anything I can do for you?	
	VESCONI
No, no. Father Howard and I are reviewing the professor's notes.	

Oh?

MIDLIN

VESCONI

I see why he took issue with your translation, Peter. I am not, however, convinced of his interpretation.

HOWARD

I trust your expertise.

VESCONI

But it is good he brought this to our attention. As for his other concerns...  
(He picks up the notes and looks through them.)

MIDLIN

That many?

HOWARD

Perhaps some aspirin.

MIDLIN

Of course.  
(She exits.)

VESCONI

Professor Mallory played an important role. To see what we do not wish to see, to ask the questions we do not wish to hear.

STEELE

(Entering)

Good morning, Father.

VESCONI

Good morning. You slept well? Ah, a foolish question.

STEELE

When do you expect Sheriff Kimball?

VESCONI

You have just missed her.

STEELE

Why didn't you call me?

VESCONI

She came for but a moment. I shared your concerns and while she was most appreciative, she assured me that an accident was most probable.

STEELE

Most probable? I wasn't aware this was a question of mathematics. I would have liked to speak to her.

VESCONI

And she would have enjoyed making your acquaintance. Another time. The accident on the highway was very bad. It may take some time to complete the investigation.

STEELE

I see.

VESCONI

All we can do for the professor now is pray for his soul.

(He sits with a book. MIDLIN returns and gives HOWARD the aspirin and water, then she occupies herself as well.)

STEELE

And how are you this morning, Father?

HOWARD

Tired. I didn't sleep much.

STEELE

I don't blame you. I wonder who it was Brother Luke heard arguing last night. Strange that no one else heard anything.

HOWARD

I don't see that it's strange.

STEELE

Don't you? Well, you didn't hear anything and the stairs are next to your room. I saw you there when I went up. Just after ten, I think it was.

HOWARD

That's right.

STEELE

And did you come down again before we found the professor?

HOWARD

What are you suggesting?

STEELE

I am not suggesting anything.

HOWARD

I think you are. What I can't see is why.

STEELE

I'm sorry, Father, I don't mean to cause you any distress.

HOWARD

What do you want to know all this for? Where were you, if it comes to that?

STEELE

In my room.

HOWARD

And how are we supposed to know? I was in bed.

STEELE

Of course. Father Vesconi is the one who invited the professor, is that right?

HOWARD

To push me into making the manuscript public.

STEELE

Don't you wish to?

HOWARD

When I'm ready. But I won't be bullied, least of all by... I don't wish to speak ill of the dead.

STEELE

Professor Mallory did have the necessary expertise.

HOWARD

Oh it's his field, all right, but he was convinced it was a forgery from the start. He's made a career of tearing down other people's work.

VESCONI

Peter, please. Thomas was the kindest critic you could hope to have. He feared this manuscript of yours could never be proven one way or the other. He was quite reluctant, in fact, to become involved.

HOWARD

I didn't need his help.

VESCONI

And while he felt the time had come to bring this manuscript to light, he respected your wishes. But you are right. I should never have asked him here. If only I had known.

STEELE

It is not your fault.

VESCONI

An accident is no one's fault.

HOWARD

You're right, of course. Perhaps I'll work in the study.  
(He exits DSR.)

VESCONI

You would do well to remember that, Sister.

STEELE

How's that?

VESCONI

Do you think I cannot see why you ask these questions?

STEELE

I am merely curious, Father.

VESCONI

Yes, and look where that has brought you. The bishop, Sister, he does not like you.

STEELE

No.

VESCONI

And your students, they did not like you.

STEELE

Because I asked them to work for their education.

VESCONI

Because you cannot help but stir up trouble. Not here. There is such a thing as coincidence.

STEELE

I do not believe in it.

VESCONI

And if Sister Veronica does not believe in it, then it must not be true.

STEELE

There is more to this, I'm certain of it.

VESCONI

The sheriff is satisfied.

STEELE

Are you?

VESCONI

There is no mystery as to what has happened, and I forbid you to bother Father Howard with these questions.

STEELE

Someone must ask them.

VESCONI

And that is why God invented police. Now, I too have work to do. Or do you question my authority in the Greek as well?

STEELE

No, Father.

VESCONI

A minor miracle. It does not do to share each and every opinion you possess. Perhaps you might take the time to reflect upon that.

(He exits DSR.)

STEELE

And how are you this morning, Sister?

MIDLIN

Just fine. Can I get you some breakfast?

STEELE

Thank you, but no. I don't seem to have the appetite for it.

(She crosses to the window and looks out.)

MIDLIN

Have you seen Brother Luke?

STEELE

He's there, in the gardens.

(She points out the window.)

MIDLIN

I'm worried about him. He hardly talks about St. Jude's.

STEELE

Perhaps there is a reason for that.

MIDLIN

He's about to take his vows.

STEELE

He may not yet be ready.

MIDLIN  
Oh don't say that to him.

STEELE  
Whyever not?

MIDLIN  
You'll only discourage him. I'll talk to him.

STEELE  
Allow him to find his own path, Sister.

MIDLIN  
About last night. The sheriff said that—

STEELE  
I know what the sheriff said.

MIDLIN  
Father Howard doesn't need any more trouble.

STEELE  
What he needs is the truth.

MIDLIN  
I should see if I can help Father Vesconi.

(MIDLIN exits DSR, while BERNHARD enters USR through the front door. He carries a small new testament, which he sets down in this scene and does not pick up again.)

STEELE  
Good morning, Brother. Enjoying the gardens?

BERNHARD  
They're beautiful. Are they Father Vesconi's work?

STEELE  
He is a man of many talents. So, Brother, you are to take your solemn vows.

BERNHARD  
That's right. If you don't mind, Sister, I'd like to—

STEELE  
What led you to pursue such a vocation? If you do not wish to speak of it...

BERNHARD

It's not that. I volunteered at St. Jude's when I was in high school. That's when I met Brother Claude. He runs the workshop. Woodworking. I'd never met anyone more sure of his purpose.

STEELE

Woodworking. Is that what you do?

BERNHARD

Yes. After the... well, after I finished high school I became a novice.

STEELE

And do you enjoy it? The woodworking?

BERNHARD

I would never say anything against the Lord's own profession. Not to Brother Claude, anyway.

STEELE

I would not have the temperament for it.

BERNHARD

I like finding the pattern in things. Making things make sense.

STEELE

You prefer order, everything in its place.

BERNHARD

Which doesn't always describe Brother Claude's workshop.

STEELE

Ah, a true artist.

BERNHARD

He has a gift for what he does. He's a patient teacher.

STEELE

Brother, you will never find the right path until you admit you are on the wrong one.

BERNHARD

It's a little late to reconsider.

STEELE

One can only hope it is never too late to discover our true purpose.

BERNHARD

Sister, I've never doubted I belong in the Church.

STEELE

If you cannot be honest with yourself...

BERNHARD

What about you? Will you talk to the bishop?

STEELE

That door is closed. God uses all things, although He does have a way of setting us on paths we do not expect.

BERNHARD

Did you always know, Sister? That you were meant to be a teacher?

STEELE

I recall Sister Helen telling me I had a gift for it. I often helped my classmates, particularly with mathematics.

BERNHARD

Is that what you taught?

STEELE

Not everyone appreciates its elegance.

BERNHARD

"Mathematics is the language with which God has written the universe."

STEELE

Galileo.

BERNHARD

You'll miss it.

STEELE

Very much.

BERNHARD

And now you're going to the convent.

STEELE

May you never know, Brother, what it feels like to be tossed aside. When you discover where you are meant to be, you will know it. And when you do, nothing shall sway you from your path. But to have purpose and lose it, that is a terrible thing.

BERNHARD

I saw I missed the sheriff.

STEELE

As did I.

What did she say?  
BERNHARD

An accident.  
STEELE

So what now?  
BERNHARD

That depends. Do you believe the truth matters?  
STEELE

Of course.  
BERNHARD

Because we shall have to get at it ourselves, and over Father Vesconi's objections.  
STEELE

We.  
BERNHARD

I cannot do this alone, Brother.  
STEELE

But solving a murder, if that's what it is... We don't know it wasn't an accident.  
BERNHARD

Precisely, we do not know and that is what troubles me.  
STEELE

But if Father Vesconi—  
BERNHARD

I shall worry about Father Vesconi.  
STEELE

We're guests.  
BERNHARD

Under the circumstances I hardly think we're bound by social etiquette.  
STEELE

It's not our place.  
BERNHARD

And what of the guilty party? What is his place? The Church? To commit God knows what other acts of evil?  
STEELE

BERNHARD

But we don't know.

STEELE

Then look me in the eye, Brother, and tell me the coincidence is not too great to ignore.

To read the remainder of the script,  
please contact T. James Belich at [tjamesbelich@gmail.com](mailto:tjamesbelich@gmail.com)