

A BAYOU MYSTIC FILMS PRODUCTION

BOUDREAUX

THE 13TH SACRIFICE

Written & Directed by Antonio R. Ward Jr. • New Orleans, 1938

CASTING SIDES — SELF-TAPE

SISTER FRANCIS

PRINCIPAL • AGE: 25–35

THE CHARACTER

The warmest presence at St. Catherine's — an open face, quick warm eyes, and a kindness so unrehearsed it rearranges a room. She oversees the new girls and most of their happiness, never scolds, and becomes, within a day, the sister Scarlet was never given — arriving seventeen years late and just in time.

Francis is carrying two secrets: a love she was forbidden, and a child she has just learned of. The role demands radiant, effortless warmth in the first half of the film — and then, in one midnight scene, the courage of a woman who chooses the truth over her own safety, at full cost. Her final speech is one of the film's moral high-water marks.

ABOUT THE SCENE

CONFIDENTIAL SIDES — this scene contains a major plot turn; please do not share or discuss it publicly. Midnight in the chapel. Francis tells David the truth, watches who he actually is arrive in his face, and refuses — out loud — to be quiet or to disappear. Play the hope first; the speech only devastates if she truly believed he'd be glad. The reader plays FATHER DAVID.

SELF-TAPE INSTRUCTIONS

- Slate: name, height, location, representation (if any), and the role you are reading for.
- Frame from the chest up, in good light, with a neutral background. Reader off-camera.
- Period voice welcome, but truth first — do not let the accent drive the scene.
- Two takes maximum. Label your file: LASTNAME_FIRSTNAME_SISTER.

INT. ST. CATHERINE'S - CHAPEL - NIGHT

Midnight. The candles are down to a few. The gilt of the altar glows low. Incense hangs in the still air. This is their hour -- the one they've kept since spring, after the students sleep and the chapel is theirs.

We find them after. In the low candlelight, half-dressed, wrapped in each other on the floor of a side chapel behind the altar rail, in the hush of two people who have just been as close as two people get. We are discreet -- this is tenderness, not spectacle -- his hand in her hair, her head on his chest, the quiet of a love that has learned to live in stolen hours. For one moment it is the warmest image in the film: two people who found each other in the one place they were forbidden to, at peace.

FATHER DAVID
(quiet, into her hair)
I withdrew the transfer again.
Third time this year.

SISTER FRANCIS
(a soft breath of a laugh)
You always do.

FATHER DAVID
I keep meaning to be strong. I get
about as far as this door.

She smiles against him. And then the smile fades, because she has been carrying something all night, and there is no more room to carry it.

SISTER FRANCIS
David. I have to tell you
something. And I need you to
just... let it be good news for
one second before it's anything
else.
(a breath)
I'm pregnant.

The words land in the still chapel and do not echo. They just hang there.

And here is the whole film's thesis in one man's face: the moment that should be joy, curdling, in real time, into fear. He sits up. Away from her. The warmth going out of the frame like heat out of an opened door.

FATHER DAVID
(barely)
...you're -- are you certain?

SISTER FRANCIS

Three weeks certain. I've been
trying to find the right night to
tell you. There is no right night.
So. Now you know.

She watches his face for the thing she needs to see there.

And it doesn't come. What comes is the arithmetic -- a man
calculating what this costs him.

FATHER DAVID

(low, fast, not looking at
her)

If anyone finds out -- Mother
Agnes, the diocese -- we are
finished, Francis. Not sent away.
Finished. You in a home somewhere
and me -- me defrocked, disgraced,
my whole life--

(and here it comes, the
ugly thing)

There are women in the city.
Discreet women. It could be
handled before anyone ever--

SISTER FRANCIS

(the floor going out of
her)

...before anyone ever knew. That's
the end of that sentence, isn't
it. Before anyone ever knew.

She's on her feet now, pulling her habit straight, hands
shaking, putting the church back on over the woman.

SISTER FRANCIS

I gave up everything I am for you.
My vows. My soul. Whatever's
waiting on the other side of all
this -- I spent it gladly. And I
find out what you're made of in
the one minute it costs you
something.

(at the altar rail,
wrecked, turning back)

I'm keeping it, David. Do you hear
me? I don't care what it costs me,
I don't care what they do to me --
I am keeping this child, and I am
not going to be quiet, and I am
not going to disappear into some
discreet arrangement to keep you
in your collar.

And there it is. The thing that turns the key in him. Not the pregnancy. The refusal to be *quiet.*

FATHER DAVID
(very still now, a
stillness that is worse
than the panic)
...you'd tell them.

SISTER FRANCIS
I'd tell the truth. There's a
difference, though you've clearly
never learned it.

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