

SAINT LOUISE, PRAY FOR US

Sample Packet

By Maggie Smith

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SYNOPSIS: In the wake of their youngest sister's death, two young women take the logical next step in deciding to canonize her as a saint. In diving into the details of her life, however, the two learn much more about her than they bargained for.

CHARACTERS

GEN — (she/her, 22) a lighthearted and carefree curveball, the charismatic sibling used to all of the attention on her

TONI — (she/her, 18) a busybody who sets her mind on an objective and follows through, decides to get her youngest sister canonized as a saint upon her unexpected death

LOUISE — (she/her, 16) recently deceased, seemingly perfect but harboring guilt enough for three people; remembered as a symbol of purity and perfection

MARY — (she/her, 40's-50's), mother of the Coughlin family, grieving the loss of her youngest daughter and attempting to carry on; a woman in need of help no one around her can give

EMMA — (she/her, early to mid-20's) Gen's closest friend from high school, a source of comfort and understanding

TYLER — (he/him, 16) Louise's classmate; carrying the weight of a five-year-old secret and thousands of dollars in cash

FATHER LEO THOMSON — (he/him, 30's-50's) Gen, Toni, and Louise's uncle on their father's side; petitioned into helping the sisters with the canonization

SETTING

Coughlin Family Basement, Somewhere in the United States

ACT ONE
SCENE SIX
WE'RE FRANKENSTEINING A SAINT

[GEN and TONI sit in the basement across from their uncle, FATHER LEO THOMSON. He sits in the beanbag chair stiffly, looking severely out of place. The girls look at him, expectantly.]

THOMSON

Is someone sick?

TONI

No.

THOMSON

Is someone dying?

GEN

Not anymore.

THOMSON

Do you... Want counseling?

TONI

Of the sort.

THOMSON

Death... Can be difficult. Especially when it happens to someone so young. But Louise was a good girl. And I hope you can find some comfort in that.

TONI

Oh, no. Not that kind of counseling.

GEN

Yeah, Louise is dead. We know that.

TONI

We've been grieving properly.

THOMSON

Oh. That's good. And don't get me wrong, you two are great. But why am I here?

GEN

We want to get Louise canonized as a saint.

[THOMSON takes this in. This is A Lot.]

THOMSON

This... Is irregular.

GEN

Would you expect anything less from me?

THOMSON

I'll admit, this is the first time someone's asked me to help with anything remotely close to this. You know, I studied canonization intensely when in the seminary. Of course, then I never thought...

TONI

[Prompting] Thought?

THOMSON

That my brother's children would ask for my assistance with the process.

GEN

What can I say? The Coughlins are full of surprises.

THOMSON

Well, some of the Coughlins are, at least.

TONI

[Cutting in] We have our own research. It might be basic, maybe. But we know what we're talking about.

THOMSON

And would that research be with you?

GEN

[Before she can even think to stop herself] And with your spirit.

[TONI looks around, and finds the stack of thirty pages, which she hands to FR. THOMSON.]

TONI

These were the best I could find. They had the most information.

THOMSON

I'm surprised there was even this much information available online. There aren't many interested in giving a complete description of the process. Most explanations are... Oversimplified. And when studied in elementary and high schools, they often focus on miracles. But before the miracles there are steps. It's difficult for younger minds to learn. I don't blame their teachers for simplifying it. But there is more to it than being "Blesséd" and "Saint." I also have studied the subject.

GEN

Yeah, but is your research a thirty-page printout stapled together after fifteen minutes of Internet searches?

THOMSON

No. Only a myriad of a few hundred-something-paged books based on a holy process in which I devoted a considerable amount of time in the seminary to.

GEN

I'm sure that would work, too.

TONI

Where do we start?

THOMSON

Why do you want this to happen now? Why Louise?

TONI

Louise is special.

GEN

Yeah, what's more special than someone dying super young?

THOMSON

Martyrdom, for one. In fact, the Church sees that as an immediate sign that someone is in Heaven.

GEN

Can we just say she died in a car accident in the name of Jesus Christ?

THOMSON

Let me rephrase the question. Take out the "now." Why do you want this at all?

TONI

Because she is a saint.

THOMSON

Not yet, she isn't.

GEN

Listen, Father Uncle Leo, I was like you before. I was caught off guard. A bit hesitant. But there was this moment when Toni brought this all to me where she... I don't know, she had this look in her eyes. This look that was telling me that this wasn't just something that she wanted, it was something that needed to happen. Toni's logical. And this, admittedly, is not. And that's why I think this is real. This doesn't really need to be about logic. It's defying logic. And when you

GEN (cont.)

think of Louise, it all makes sense. It just feels right. Toni said it best. She's a saint. She's good. Never did a bad thing in her life.

THOMSON

That can't be true.

TONI

No, it is. She never hit anyone. She loved everyone. Every time we fought I was the one who would bite her.

GEN

That went on until she was six, it was a problem.

TONI

Sure, she may do things accidentally. But sins are intentional, aren't they?

THOMSON

Well, we're all born with original sin.

GEN

And then we got her baptized. You remember that, right? First baptism you ever did! And what happened?

THOMSON

She was spiritually cleansed.

TONI

She didn't cry.

GEN

Right! And how many babies don't cry after being baptized.

THOMSON

Louise was the only one I've ever seen who hadn't.

GEN

Sounds like the sign of a holy person.

[Beat.]

THOMSON

You're really passionate about this.

GEN

I prefer stubborn.

THOMSON

That, too. If you really want to succeed in this, I'd suggest gathering evidence.

TONI

Like?

THOMSON

Accounts from her. Accounts from others. Any kind of evidence. A lot of evidence. Proof of her being a charitable person, whatever you can find. And tell me anything of note. Miracles that occur, that sort of thing.

TONI

Miracles?

GEN

[To TONI] What did I say? I told you this was going to be an issue!

THOMSON

There are a few different kinds of miracles. One example would be to see if her body's incorruptible. But I would suggest not exhuming the body until you reach the stage of needing to test for non-cultus.

GEN

You're saying all of these words and I know that you know that I don't know what they mean.

THOMSON

Some saints don't decay after dying.

GEN

So we dig up Louise's body!

THOMSON

Do not dig up Louise's body. Not until we get to a later stage where we double-check that no one has sacrilegiously disturbed her grave. Nothing improper—That's the non-cultus.

TONI

And when would we do that?

THOMSON

Much later. Other examples would be seeing if her blood stays liquid or if it dries up. I don't suppose you have a vial of it?

GEN

[Sarcastic] Oh, yeah, I left it in the kitchen, let me go get it.

TONI

No, we don't.

THOMSON

Many of the miracles have to do with her posthumously. However, if you have any accounts of her levitating? Exorcised any demons? Maybe she saw a vision of Mary, or watched a statue cry? Or she could have healed someone?

GEN

One time she gave me CPR after I almost drowned in a swimming pool.

THOMSON

That's not a miracle, that's the first step in babysitting training.

TONI

If she did any miracles you'd know about them already.

THOMSON

Did she ever receive the stigmata?

GEN

Oh! That's the one where she gets those injuries Jesus got when he was crucified, right?

THOMSON

Yes.

GEN

No.

THOMSON

Well, some might occur later on. I'd suggest praying to her. See what you can find. I'll leave you both with all of that information, and check in with you soon. That is, unless there are any more questions?

TONI

What are our chances?

THOMSON

Mathematically? Low. Many cases don't make it to the Pope, if I'm being honest. I don't know if this one would even have a chance of the Bishop looking over it.

GEN

And if you weren't being honest?

THOMSON

Would you rather me not be?

TONI

No. Thank you for your time.

THOMSON

Of course. And I'll see you at Mass on Sunday?

TONI

Just like always.

THOMSON

For you, yes, Antonia. Just like always. But we haven't seen Genesis in some time.

GEN

I'm in mourning.

[TONI rolls her eyes as FR. THOMSON smirks, then follows him upstairs. Transition into:]

ACT ONE
SCENE SEVEN
IT'S SUPPOSED TO BRING COMFORT, RIGHT?

[TONI kneels by the arm of the couch, facing its center. She holds her arms in prayer against the couch's arm, a rosary between her hands. Her fingers are on the first bead of the first decade.]

TONI

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blesséd art thou amongst women, and blesséd is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

[TONI moves to the second bead.]

TONI

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

[LOUISE enters, and mirrors TONI, praying at the opposite end of the couch.]

TONI

Blesséd art thou amongst women—

LOUISE

Hey, Riley.

TONI

And blesséd is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

LOUISE

How are you?

TONI

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners—

LOUISE

I'm good. I think you know that, though. You probably do, at least. I don't really know how it works up there. Do you, like, have a TV you can watch me from?

TONI

Now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

[TONI moves to the third bead.]

TONI

Hail Mary—

LOUISE

Do you like it there?

TONI

Full of grace—

LOUISE

Do you know anyone?

TONI

The Lord is with thee.

LOUISE

Do you forgive me?

TONI

Blesséd art thou amongst women, and blesséd is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

LOUISE

I see your brother a lot.

TONI

Holy Mary, Mother of God—

LOUISE

A lot.

TONI

Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

LOUISE

He kind of sucks.

LOUISE

I had a dream about you last night. I'm not sure if a dream is the right word. Kind of a memory, maybe. Something gross and in-between. You looked older.

TONI

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blesséd art thou amongst women, and blesséd is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

LOUISE

We were by the tree. The tall one, in the middle of the park. The one you fell from, where you—
You know the one.

TONI

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

LOUISE

It was bigger than I remember. But I guess that's why we chose it, right? Big trees are fun to climb, or whatever it was you said.

TONI

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

LOUISE

It was a gross one, though. I touched it. Lots of sap on it. Sticky. If you had to die that day... I wish we had chosen a different tree. The worst thing in the world is dying, but I'd bet the second worst thing in the world is dying with sticky hands.

TONI

Blesséd art thou amongst— Wait.

LOUISE

You weren't afraid to touch the tree, though.

TONI

Wait, wait, wait. Was that the third Hail Mary or the fourth one?

LOUISE

It was like you were a part of it. Like you had grown into its roots and sprouted its leaves, bent with the wind and survived.

TONI

No, no, no, no, no. It has to be perfect.

LOUISE

Like you had survived.

LOUISE

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. It's all my fault. I really didn't mean to—

TONI

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

[Transition into:]

[END OF EXCERPT]

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