

Saint Jude and the Hopeless Cause
by Shayne M. Kennedy
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The Office of Saintly Intercession, Heaven. This is the outer office, or greeting area. There is one desk, belonging to Genesisius of Arles. The upstage wall is a grid of mail slots. From behind them, an unseen hand slides pink “memo slips” into the various slots throughout the play, as indicated by the dialogue. There are two doors; one to the rest of heaven and one to the inner office, in which the patron saints meet with God. At the outset, GENESIUS OF ARLES is behind his desk. He is amazingly efficient, impeccably dressed, and looks smart.

ARLES

(into intercom) Zita, Patron of Housekeepers, attention please. Zita, this is your two minute call. You have two minutes remaining.

JUDE enters, moving and speaking with forced cheerfulness.

JUDE

What up, G?

ARLES

Jude, my name is Genesisius of Arles, and I expect to be addressed as such. In no part of heaven am I your “G.”

JUDE

Oh. Just trying to make you smile.

ARLES

It can't be done. *(After a lengthy pause)* Do you have business here? *(JUDE struggles to answer)* If you've got business here, it must be with me, because I know you don't think you're going in there! *(gesture to God's door, JUDE continues to struggle)* You are kidding me! Jude, you have got to be kidding me! *(no response)* Jude, you need . . . Well, you need to leave. Your intercession appointment isn't until this evening. Listen, our God is awesome, merciful and just, but our God is also BUSY—really, really busy! Now grab your messages and come back here at the appropriate time! *(JUDE grabs his messages. The stack is huge. He fans them like a hand of cards and looks at ARLES with a face that says, “You know this is wrong.” ARLES shrugs as ZITA exits God's office. ARLES turns on the charm.)* Zita, all set?

ZITA

Yes, Genesisius of Arles, it's all taken care of! *(begins dusting ARLES' desk)*

JUDE

What's all taken care of Zita?

ZITA

A housekeeper in Italy, praying for better compensation.

JUDE

(Aghast) That was your hardest request?

ZITA

Oh, no Jude. *(Checks empty mail slot, speaks into it)* Helloooo Christopher! *(To JUDE)* That was my only request! Good day, Genesisius of Arles. And thank you!

ARLES

Bye-bye, Zita. See you next Monday!

ZITA exits.

JUDE

(Raging with suspicion) How much time does she get?

ARLES

(Alarmed) What?

JUDE

Zita, the Patron Saint of Housekeepers. How much time does she get?

ARLES

The same as most patrons—12 minutes a week! Jude, you know all--

JUDE

She gets 12 minutes to plead one prayer?!?

ARLES

Some weeks she has more than one. *(JUDE looks doubtful)* Sometimes she has upwards of 10! *(JUDE still doubts)* One time she had 10.

JUDE

10? 10? Her all time high? That's *(calculating)* 70 seconds per prayer!

ARLES

It's actually 72. Jude, don't pick on Zita. She does a good job. She's had that position for over 300 years.

JUDE

I like Zita. A lot. She's a good person. But I'm trying to point out to you, Genesisius, that our system is unfair.

ARLES

Jude this is heaven. Nothing is unfair. Everything is as it should be. And you listen here--I am Genesius of Arles! You will call me Genesius of Arles!

LIDWINA enters, carrying ice skates and a thermos. ARLES turns on the charm.
Hello, Lidwina. *(Takes her hand)* Got any business today?

LIDWINA

(Glancing at empty mailbox, then wistfully) Nope! Looks like none, but I brought some hot toddies. God and I like to have a warm drink together.

ARLES

That's great. God will really like that. *(Into intercom)* Lidwina, of Schiedham. *(To Lidwina)* Go on in! *(LIDWINA does)* You know she died when she was over 50? Then her body was restored to its 16 year old state. Remarkable.

JUDE

This is absurd! The Patron Saint of Ice Skaters has nothing to ask for. She's got 12 minutes, right?

ARLES

Yes.

JUDE

12 minutes to chit chat with God?

ARLES

She gets busy around the Winter Olympics. That's her crazy time.

JUDE

But what has she got today?

ARLES

Nothing.

JUDE

Do you agree with me that this is absurd? *(No response)* Why can't I have some of her time?

ARLES

Jude, you already get more time than anyone!

JUDE

20 minutes! Total!

ARLES

Shhhhhh. You were granted that because you are overburdened. I realize that.

JUDE

I average a little over 1000 requests per week. *Average. 1000. Week. Per.* That gives me, oh, a quick 1.2 seconds for each prayer.

ARLES

God has no more time to give.

JUDE

Ha! God has an *infinite amount* of time!

ARLES

Well, I can't give you anymore time.

JUDE

You know, for the Patron Saint of Office Staff, you fail miserably at time management.

ARLES

Well I'm sorry you feel that way, because, for the Patron of Hopeless Causes, I think you're just perfect.

JUDE

You're ridiculous, Genesisius. (*ARLES looks sharply at JUDE*) Of Arles. (*JUDE turns to exit*)

ARLES

Jude? (*JUDE turns*) Don't forget your messages!

JUDE looks in his mail slot, which is nearly full again. He grabs the slips and exits angrily. On the way out the door, he runs into MARGUERITE D'YOUVILLE. He does not excuse himself.

ARLES

I'm sorry about that, Marguerite. He's angry, but that's no excuse for that kind of behavior.

MARGUERITE

Some people just can't manage to function politely. (*Pause*) I just thought I'd take a look at my messages before my appointment tomorrow.

ARLES

I do appreciate the way you stay on top of your duties.

MARGUERITE

It's the only way to do a good job. (*MARGUERITE retrieves her messages. There are about 8*)

ARLES

Quite a few there, I see.

MARGUERITE

Well, there are a lot of unhappy married people. (*rethinking*) I mean, a lot of married people are unhappy. (*another pause*) Marriage is just hard. It's hard.

ARLES

That's true. (*short pause, then risking it*) People struggling in their marriages have a good patron in you.

MARGUERITE

Sometimes I don't think I'm up to the task.

ARLES

Take it from me, you're one of the most competent patrons up here.

MARGUERITE

You don't have to say that, Genesis of Arles.

ARLES

I wouldn't say it if it weren't true.

MARGUERITE

Thank you. I know I can fulfill the duties of the job, the nuts and bolts of it. But I wonder why I was chosen as the intermediary for these particular prayers.

ARLES

The church recognizes what you endured as a married woman—

MARGUERITE

That's it exactly. I endured my marriage. I don't know what a good marriage is.

ARLES

That hasn't stopped you from being a good patron, Marguerite.

MARGUERITE

In my heart, Genesis of Arles, I know that is true. I just can't imagine a time that the idea of marriage won't make me want to cry. (*Pause*) This is ridiculous. I'd better be going.

ARLES

Until tomorrow, then!

MARGUERITE exits without answering.

Scene 2. A table at the Patron's Club, a casual eatery in heaven into which only patron saints are allowed. JUDE sits, skimming over his massive pile of memo slips. He is frustrated, alone, without recourse.

JUDE

Ugh! I feel like I'm reading the same prayer over and over. Oh, wait. It's a novena. (*Stacks nine slips together*)

GENESIUS THE ACTOR enters.

ACTOR

(*like Cary Grant*) Judy, Judy, Judy! What's up?

JUDE

Hey, Genesisus—Genesisus the Actor. Nothing . . . except work.

ACTOR

Dude, that's too bad. You're busy tonight, then?

JUDE

Yeah. Look at this stack. Whatever I don't get through in tonight's appointment I have to prep for next week. Then next week, there's a whole new stack and I sort those and--

ACTOR

I wish you could free yourself up, man.

JUDE

Why? What's going on?

ACTOR

I got a date with Lidwina, of Schiedham. She's got a friend and she wants to double. We're meeting here at the Patron's Club for drinks. (*no response*) Hey—three's a crowd, four's a party!!

JUDE

I just saw Lidwina at work. You're going out with *her*? Genesisus, she's 16!

ACTOR

No, man. She's over six hundred years old. She's a lot younger than my third century self, but don't let her fool you. She only *looks* 16. There's never been a more perfect woman. And she's an ice skater. How hot is that?

JUDE

She's not really. She fell down at an ice skating party and got an infection from her injury. She laid in bed for 37 years, barely eating, performed some miracles and died. She wasn't an Olympian or anything.

ACTOR

Dude, she wears the outfit. That's hot.

JUDE

Whatever. It's hot, I guess. I don't have of time these days to think about women.

ACTOR

That's sad. I make the ladies a priority.

JUDE

Don't you have your intercession appointment before mine?

ACTOR

Yeah, I'm ready.

JUDE

Don't you have hundreds of prayers from little high school kids hoping they'll get perfect parts in the big school play?

ACTOR

Yeah, I get those. But I . . . uh . . . I throw them out.

JUDE

You what?

ACTOR

(speaking of himself in the third person) Genesis is the Patron Saint of Actors, not auditioners.

JUDE

You don't intercede for auditioners?

ACTOR

The patron saint of auditioners can handle that.

JUDE

Is there a patron of auditioners?

ACTOR

I don't believe so.

JUDE

You don't ask God to help the little high school hopefuls?

ACTOR

It's my policy not to.

JUDE

Genesis of Arles—he gave this “policy” his approval?

ACTOR

What do I need to deal with that guy for? He's my nemesis, my arch-rival. He's like the anti- Genesis. So bossy. So uptight. I wasn't going to get into it with him about something this minor.

JUDE

You made this decision on your own?

ACTOR

Yes, I did.

JUDE

Okay. So there are requests being made of you that you are ignoring.

ACTOR

In a nutshell.

JUDE

And no one's noticed?

ACTOR

Not so far.

JUDE

Interesting. Who else do you toss out?

ACTOR

What?

JUDE

I'm guessing that, besides people in the audition process, you throw out some other ones.

ACTOR

Well . . .

JUDE

Come on.

ACTOR

I'm the patron of actors, right? So anybody who's not an actor gets the hook.

JUDE

Like auditioners.

ACTOR

Exactly. Auditioners, game show hosts, models, “reality” tv participants . . .*(suddenly proud of his system)* and when actors do ask for my help about something unrelated to the craft, I let those fall by the wayside as well.

JUDE

So you intercede only for actors praying about acting?

ACTOR

That’s how I roll. *(Pause)* Genesisus can’t just give it up to anybody that asks. Genesisus is selective, can’t spread himself too thin.

JUDE

I get it.

ACTOR

Do you?

JUDE

I think so. As the Patron of Hopeless Causes, I’m overwhelmed. But are all these causes really hopeless? I don’t need to handle the ones that aren’t. They’ve fallen into my vicinity through error. Human error.

ACTOR

Exactly. It’s not your job to plead prayers that have come to you by mistake.

JUDE

Okay. So let me look for some in here that are actually hopeless. *(Choosing a memo slip)* “St. Jude, please make my parents get me a pet.” Not hopeless. *(Tosses it aside, takes another)* “St. Jude, please help my prayers for employment be heard.” Not hopeless. There are jobs. *(Tosses it aside, takes a third)* “Saint Jude, I am utterly without hope. Please help me.”

ACTOR

Well, keep that one. But listen—sort out the rest, meet with the Boss, and then catch up with me and the ladies after you’re through.

JUDE

Fantastic. Thanks so much for all this help.

ACTOR

Glad to do it. *(Begins to leave)*

JUDE

Hey! My date better be a patron! Don't fix me up with some random angel!

ACTOR

Genesisus has it under control.

(ACTOR exits. Lights fade on JUDE as he sorts.

Scene 3. The Patron's Club, later that evening. GENESIUS THE ACTOR, LIDWINA and MARGUERITE D'YOUVILLE sit at a table for four.

MARGUERITE

Shall I get the attention of the waiter? Do you two know what you want?

LIDWINA

Oh, we're still expecting one more person, Marguerite.

MARGUERITE

Were you expecting this person on time or late?

ACTOR

He's a friend of mine, and he'll be here. He was all stressed out about his intercessions. He's under a lot of pressure.

MARGUERITE

Well, so am I. I'm stressed. I get a lot of requests. But I can still be somewhere when I say I'm going to be there. I'm mature enough to be on time.

LIDWINA

It's no big deal, Marguerite. Sometimes guys are late for things.

MARGUERITE

Right. And sometimes they lie to you, sometimes they cheat on you, and sometimes they lose all of your money running illegal businesses out of your home! *(Pause)* I'm going to the bathroom.

MARGUERITE exits.

ACTOR

She's kind of hot when she gets mad.

LIDWINA

Genesius! She's still really upset about what happened to her on earth.

ACTOR

It's been over 200 years since she died.

LIDWINA

I know. Just be nice.

ACTOR

I'm trying. Hey, does she even know she's on a date?

LIDWINA

No. She wouldn't come if I told her that. I let her think it was going to be me and her. She got kind of mad when we walked in and you were here.

ACTOR

That's great. I'm sure she's just the one to take Jude's troubles off his mind.

LIDWINA

She needs to get out, Genesisus. She needs to be with people, and you have to start being much nicer. I'll go calm her down. See if you can figure out where he is. *(Pause)* Hey! You didn't say if you like my outfit!

ACTOR

It's beautiful. Baby, you're gorgeous!

LIDWINA

It reminds me of what that little Sarah Hughes girl wore in the Winter Games. Remember how she went from fourth place to first? *(ACTOR nods)* I had **everything** to do with that! *(She kisses ACTOR)* Don't go anywhere!

LIDWINA exits.

ACTOR

That's a good looking woman! *(Pause)* Okay, where's my boy? *(Short pause before JUDE enters)* Hey, Jude! Don't be afraid . . .

JUDE

Yeah, I never hear that.

ACTOR

Sorry. It's a good tune. I don't have a theme song. Nothing rhymes with Genesisus. *(Suddenly remembers JUDE'S lateness)* Hey, where've you been? I've been sitting here stalling . . .

JUDE

My intercessions went great! Faster than ever. I was out of there in 19 minutes, 49 seconds. 11 seconds to spare!

ACTOR

Then why in heaven are you so late?!?

JUDE

Well, Genesisus of Arles was all over me. You should've seen him. *(Imitating ARLES)* "Oh, Jude! You managed to finish up on time? How ever did you do it? Nose to the grindstone? See what a little hard work can do? Why, by the time you leave, you're usually crying!" *(Ends imitation)* What is it with that guy?

ACTOR

I do everything I can to avoid him. You know, when he comes over the intercom, giving me my two minute, he says my name like it's offensive. Like, "Genesius, *the actor*, this is your two minute call!" Like saying my name makes him want to throw up. Sometimes I want to say something to God about it, but then I might look like I can't handle myself, you know? I don't want God to think I'm some kind of whiner.

JUDE

Me neither. I didn't even respond to Arles tonight. I just let him think his little lecture this afternoon made me able to do it all!

ACTOR

Hmmm. He probably liked that. Sit down. The girls will be out in a minute.

JUDE

Who's my date?

ACTOR

Marguerite.

JUDE

D'Youville?

ACTOR

I think that's her last name.

JUDE

Genesius, no! You've got to be kidding me!

ACTOR

What? She's feisty!

JUDE

She's the Patron of grieving children and difficult marriages! Her husband on earth was a philanderer and a bootlegger. She's coming to this with an awful lot of baggage!

ACTOR

Well, I hate to be the one to point this out to you, but you're a little complex as well, my friend.

JUDE

What's that supposed to mean?

ACTOR

How do I pitch you to a girl? “You know, Jude! He was the cousin of Jesus, he was beaten to death with clubs . . .?”

JUDE

I know, I know. I just can’t see Marguerite being a real good time girl.

ACTOR

And you’re in the market for a good time girl?

JUDE

(surprised) I don’t know. Maybe.

ACTOR

Really? One talk with me and you’ve turned your whole attitude around. Maybe I should petition to be the patron saint of life coaches.

JUDE

You think?

ACTOR

No, actually. My advice is usually ignored. But let me offer you one more little piece. Give Marguerite a chance. She’s friends with Lidwina. Lidwina’s great. Maybe Marguerite will surprise you.

JUDE

I can see why you’re usually ignored.

ACTOR

Anyway, she doesn’t even know it’s a date. Lidwina was afraid she wouldn’t come if she knew it was a fix up.

JUDE

Then we’re all set for a disastrous evening.

LIDWINA

(re-entering with Marguerite) Hi, Jude! I’m glad to see you. Look, Marguerite, it’s Jude!

MARGUERITE

Yes, it is. I didn’t recognize you at first, since you’re not nearly knocking me over.

JUDE

What? Oh, right . . . I’m sorry about that.

MARGUERITE

I don't want apology. I want reform. *(A long silence, then to JUDE)* Have you been drinking?

JUDE

Um, no.

MARGUERITE

Have you been at the track? Or having amorous encounters with multiple women?

JUDE

No.

MARGUERITE

Right. *(A pause, then quickly)* Then where were you?

JUDE

After work I got caught up in a conversation with Genesisus.

MARGUERITE

Genesisus is here.

ACTOR

The other one.

MARGUERITE

You should refer to him as Genesisus of Arles. Then people would know about whom you were talking. *(A pause, no one has a response so MARGUERITE continues)* Genesisus . . . of Arles is a model of efficiency. And such a gentleman. You can always count on him to be where he's supposed to be, when he's supposed to be there. And he manages his work so - - -

JUDE

So Lidwina, how's it going?

LIDWINA

Um, all right. You look a lot better than when I saw you earlier.

JUDE

I was under a lot of stress—but I think I've got it under control now, thanks to your man over there.

LIDWINA

Really? *(To ACTOR)* You helped Jude out?

ACTOR

Genesisius did what he could.

LIDWINA

Oh, my helpful guy!

She sits on ACTOR'S lap, they cuddle.

JUDE

So let me get a round of beers, since I held everybody up.

ACTOR/LIDWINA

(ad lib) Thanks. Great.

MARGUERITE

I'll have a glass of milk.

Lights down.

Scene 4. The Office of Saintly Intercession

ARLES is at his desk straightening things that are already straight as the lights come up. JUDE exits God's office.

ARLES

All done, Jude?

JUDE

(Heading for the door) Yep.

ARLES

This is the third week in a row that you've finished in less than your allotted twenty minutes.

JUDE

I finally figured out how to buckle down, and get it all done.

ARLES

(under his breath) Get it all done. *(Full voice)* Where are you headed now?

JUDE

I'm meeting Genesius for a drink. *(ARLES looks puzzled)* Genesius the Actor.

ARLES

That lowbrow? What are you doing running around with him? He's about the worst role model you could choose.

JUDE

He's not my role model--he's my friend. He's a cool guy.

ARLES

At best, he's a slacker—and at worst, a con artist.

JUDE

What?!?

ARLES

Well, I don't want to break up the gang, but you should know that a lot of angels around here think his "miraculous conversion" was a publicity stunt. They say he was bombing as a comedian and to charge up his career – he converted – on stage– mid-performance!!

JUDE

You know as well as I do that he got beheaded for his conversion! His devotion to God cost him his life!

ARLES

So he left behind a floundering stage career and became a saint. Not a bad trade, I'd say. I guess I'm not all that surprised that you've gotten so tight with him. You've always struck me as a hanger-on. All through Jesus' ministry you sort of followed in the background—the apostle off to the side. Then, come the Last Supper, suddenly you're pressuring Jesus to reveal himself to the whole world!

JUDE

I did not pressure him!

ARLES

Then once Jesus ascended, you followed Simon all the way to Mesopotamia!

JUDE

We were missionaries!

ARLES

Now you're playing side-kick to a slickster who's conversion was a ploy to jump start--

JUDE

You know what? Leave him out of this. If you're mad at me for being able to do my job—say it to my face. Don't rag on my friends.

ARLES

Oh, Jude. I'm not mad at you for being able to do your job. My greatest desire is to serve God by running this office run as efficiently and as effectively as I possibly can. It is difficult to achieve that goal, however, when I am being undermined by the likes of you!

JUDE

What's that supposed to mean?

ARLES

After the first week that you sailed out of here, I got a little suspicious. I wanted *so badly* to believe that you had really mastered the system and were finally ready to perform to your alleged abilities. But something in me wouldn't make that leap.

JUDE

Oh no?

ARLES

No. So I kept track of your prayer requests the following week. In fact, I had the mailman (*indicating the man behind the mail slots*) keep duplicate copies of every request you received. I then met with God, shortly after your intercession appointment, and it became clear to me that you had ignored roughly 30% of your requests.

JUDE

“The mailman?”

ARLES

Don't try to change the subject. You know who's back there and you know why. You need to tell me why you've been dodging your responsibilities.

JUDE

(caught) I set aside the requests that weren't truly hopeless.

ARLES

Set them aside?

JUDE

Yes.

ARLES

Did you imagine coming back to them?

JUDE

At some point, yes. If I ever had a light week, I thought I'd throw a few of them in.

ARLES

Have you ever had a light week? *(No response)* Since you were martyred, canonized and given patron status, Jude, have you ever had a light week?

JUDE

No. But Genesius, I think we—Genesius of Arles—I think we need to revisit my situation. If we look at it again we might—

ARLES

You can look at it all you want, I have other things to do. You need to figure out how to *do your job*. Your *whole* job.

JUDE

I can't imagine how that will be possible.

ARLES

Perhaps you should consider stepping down.

JUDE

Why? So I can end up like him? Pushing requests into mail slots?

ARLES

It's an option.

JUDE

No it isn't.

ARLES

Well, run along now. Go imbibe with your Thespian friend. Perhaps he can teach you how to "act" like a real patron saint. (*Grabs the memos from JUDE'S box, hands them to him*) Just so you're aware, I'm going to continue keeping copies of these.

JUDE

Whatever.

JUDE exits. ARLES sits at his desk for a moment and then speaks into his intercom.

ARLES

Bernard of Methon, Patron of Mountain Climbers, this is your two-minute call. Bernard, you have two minutes remaining.

CHRISTOPHER

(from behind the mail slots) You should be nicer to him.

ARLES

Excuse me?

CHRISTOPHER

You should be nicer to him.

ARLES

Have you no requests to sort? Is all of *your* work finished, and *you* now have time to pester me?

CHRISTOPHER

(emerging, ideally he is a big, big man) I'm simply saying you should be nicer to him. He's not a bad person.

ARLES

No one in heaven is, Christopher.

CHRISTOPHER

He's trying, Genesis of Arles, and you've got to respect that.

ARLES

Interestingly enough, I don't. I don't respect effort, I respect success. Niceness and the ability to try hard do not a patron saint make!

CHRISTOPHER

What qualities do? Vindictiveness and a short temper?

ARLES

Don't cross that line, Christopher. You have me to thank for letting you stay around this office. When your patron status was stripped from you, no one knew where you would go. I found you a spot here, sorting mail. Just because you're not the Patron of Travelers anymore didn't mean there wasn't a place for you in the upper tiers of heaven. I found a place for you!

CHRISTOPHER

But that's not true.

ARLES

Oh, it's not? Then how do you imagine you ended up here?

CHRISTOPHER

When I lost my patron status, it was a very dark time for me. And be honest with yourself, Genesius of Arles, you had no intention of giving me a job. What were my earthly skills? I put people on my back and carried them across a dangerous stream. What good is that going to do me in an office environment? None. So I prayed, Arles, I prayed for myself. And I asked Jude to pray for me.

ARLES

That's ridiculous. Saints don't pray for other saints.

CHRISTOPHER

Oh yes we do. We just keep you out of it.

ARLES

Right.

CHRISTOPHER

So Jude prayed for me. Very hard. Took more than a minute out of his intercession appointment to do so. And God saw fit to change your heart. *(Pause)* Go easy on him, Arles. He's done right by a lot of people in the afterlife.

Lights fade as Christopher recedes to his place behind the mail slots.

Scene 5. The Patron's Club. ACTOR and JUDE are sitting together at a table. They may be drinking and snacking on something.

JUDE

Fun while it lasted, I guess.

ACTOR

And what was that? All of three weeks?

JUDE

About.

ACTOR

I hate seeing you like this, man. You're like . . . downtrodden, or something.

JUDE

I know. It's darkly ironic, but I'm actually hopeless.

ACTOR

(laughing) That's hilarious. Is there a Patron of Comedians? You could apply for that!

JUDE

I think comedians fall under your umbrella, to tell you the truth.

ACTOR

Oops. Too late now. *(Pause)* Think about it though—maybe a career change is what you need. Not comedians, necessarily, but something more specific than “hopeless.” *(Pause, JUDE thinks it over, with a face that says he's not really considering it)* How about toothaches?

JUDE

It's covered. St. Apollonia.

ACTOR

Hmmm. Tornados?

JUDE

Swithun. Actually, he covers all hazardous weather. Oh, except storms. That's Scholastica.

And floods. I almost forgot. That's St. John Nepomuk.

ACTOR

Okay. *(Pause)* I got it. Paratroopers.

JUDE

Sorry. Michael the Archangel. He's got a bunch of little ones—EMTs, Law Enforcement people, paratroopers, those in battle danger, Papua New Guinea and the Northern Solomon islands, and one other place . . . hold on . . . Germany! I can't believe that almost slipped my mind.

ACTOR

You're unbelievable! You know everybody!

JUDE

I guess. A lot of people have come to me for help, you know?

ACTOR

No one up here comes to me for help.

JUDE

I guess there aren't a lot of actors in heaven. (*ACTOR concedes*) Anyway, I don't want to change jobs. I like being there for people in their darkest times, being the one they turn to. I like watching God turn things around for them, you know?

ACTOR

Yeah. My requests aren't that intense. You know, "Saint Genesius, please pray that I am able to discern the best interpretation of the role of Harold Hill, and that I am able to milk every moment of 'Seventy Six Trombones' . . ."

JUDE

Well, I love my job. I love it so much that I want to do more of it. I want more time with God.

ACTOR

(*thoughtful pause*) So instead of figuring out how to get you out of this, you want me to help you figure out how to get deeper in?

JUDE

Yes.

ACTOR

We need to convince Genesius of Snarls to see things your way.

JUDE

I've tried that.

ACTOR

You've tried it your way.

JUDE

How else should I have tried it?

ACTOR

I don't know. Mine?

JUDE

Wasn't your way to ignore half my requests?

ACTOR

That was my way of lightening your burden. That had nothing to do with Genesis of Arles.

JUDE

Oh.

ACTOR

How about a strike? The patrons refuse to intercede until you're given more time.

JUDE

That wouldn't affect Genesis. It just hurts the people who are praying. And God would get really mad.

ACTOR

But you know so many people. You've helped a lot of the saints. I bet they'd do it for you.

JUDE

They might do it for me, but I'd never ask them to.

ACTOR

Dude, you've done all these favors! Now's the time to call them in!

JUDE

I'm not comfortable doing that. I didn't pray for my friends expecting something in return. I did it because I knew they needed help.

ACTOR

That's great. You're a saint. You truly are. But it's going to take more than you and me working on this thing to get Arles to come around.

JUDE

Maybe. But I don't want to put anybody out.

ACTOR

Man, you're a tough guy to help! I'm trying to put a plan together here and you're stepping----

JUDE

Hold on! Look at that! Is that . . . ?

ACTOR

Well, saints be praised. I think it is.

JUDE

(standing and waving) Hey, Christopher! C'mon over here!

ACTOR

You want him to sit with us?!?

JUDE

He's a good guy.

ACTOR

I heard he's a real downer. Ever since he lost his patron status, he can't catch a break.

JUDE

That's not true. Look, he retained his Patron Club membership. He's nice. He's just kind of floundering right now.

(CHRISTOPHER enters.

CHRISTOPHER

Hi, Jude. Hi, Genesisus the Actor. Thanks for inviting me over.

JUDE

No problem. Are you on lunch or something?

CHRISTOPHER

Just a quick something to eat and I have to get back. Zita is doing the slots while I'm out. Genesisus of Arles likes her to sub for me. She's a sweet woman, and she's really orderly.

ACTOR

All that housekeeping will do that for you, I guess.

JUDE

Is the job going well for you?

CHRISTOPHER

It is. It is. I'm grateful to be of use, you know? I miss interceding.

JUDE

I know. If the church could've found proof that you carried the Christ child across that river, they never would've de-patronized you.

ACTOR

But Jesus is here. And God is omniscient. They know that you carried the kid across the raging waters!

CHRISTOPHER

They do. But it's not the Lord that decides who's a patron and who isn't.

ACTOR

Well, you'd think some things could get overruled, you know?

CHRISTOPHER

You can't ask God to do everything for you, Genesisus. Some things you have to deal with on your own. Even if God re-instated me, I wouldn't get that many requests anymore, probably. I'm not official on earth.

JUDE

You want requests? You can have some of mine.

CHRISTOPHER

Funny, I actually wanted to talk to you about that. I overheard the argument you had with Genesisus of Arles earlier. I thought he was out of line.

JUDE

Well, thanks for saying that, Christopher. It's appreciated. *(Pause)* I can't figure out how to deal with that guy.

ACTOR

Jude's got to call in a few favors. He's got IOUs all over heaven. He's got to capitalize on those.

JUDE

That's not my style.

CHRISTOPHER

I understand. *(Pause)* But what if one of the saints you'd helped was to come to you? What if I was to say I'd like to repay what you did for me?

JUDE

That's not part of prayer, Christopher. There's no payback.

ACTOR

Listen to the man, Jude!

CHRISTOPHER

What if we don't think of it like payback? What if I'd like to help you out, as your friend?

JUDE

Totally unrelated----

CHRISTOPHER

Totally unrelated to anything you've done for me in the past.

JUDE

I might consider it.

ACTOR

I feel a deal coming on.

CHRISTOPHER

Genesis of Arles wants something. As soon as I told him that patrons pray for other saints, he's been submitting the same request. He's been putting it in about every thirty minutes.

JUDE

Really?

ACTOR

Is he asking for a better personality?

CHRISTOPHER

No.

ACTOR

Better hair?

CHRISTOPHER

No.

ACTOR

A winning smile?

CHRISTOPHER

No! Now, I can't discuss individual requests outside the office. That's part of my contract. But I will tell you that he's been submitting his request to the wrong slot. This prayer is hopeless, Jude. It's absolutely hopeless. I'm going to start making a copy of it and putting it in your slot.

ACTOR

You're going to help Jude by adding to his workload? What a plan!

CHRISTOPHER

You can do this, Jude. You can get this prayer answered.

JUDE

I don't know, Christopher. I can't get through my requests as it is.

CHRISTOPHER

You have to find time for this one, Jude.

JUDE

I can try, I guess. Does he put his name on it?

CHRISTOPHER

No. But I'll make a note. In the corner, I'll write "Offero."

ACTOR

You'll write *what*?

JUDE

"Offero." It's Christopher's original name.

CHRISTOPHER

When you see my name, you'll know it's his.

ACTOR

I don't like this plan. Arles is treating you like garbage, so you're going to increase your work load—you're going to take on MORE on his behalf? How can that possibly help?

CHRISTOPHER

Genesius, God teaches us to love our enemies. It's difficult to have an enemy on earth or in heaven. But I think this will work.

JUDE

I do too. I feel good about this.

ACTOR

Oh, you're such a martyr!!

JUDE

Clubbed to death, baby, clubbed to death!

ACTOR

Tortured and beheaded, dude! They cut off my head!!!

CHRISTOPHER

(rising) I'm leaving.

JUDE

Wait! Wait! We're sorry. Let me ask you one thing. Who was Genesius sending his prayer to, if not to me?

CHRISTOPHER

You don't need to know that. You'll get the request the next time it comes through.

ACTOR

But if he had an idea, he could get a head start!

CHRISTOPHER

Here's a tip—the saint's name starts with V. Keep an eye out for Offero.

CHRISTOPHER leaves.

ACTOR

The only patron that starts with V is Valentine. Is Genesius in love?!?!?

JUDE

You're wrong there. There are six major patrons that start with V.

ACTOR

Okay, hit me.

JUDE

Valentine, as you said. Vincent de Paul, Patron of Charitable Organizations.

ACTOR

Why would he be praying about that? Heaven *is* a charitable organization.

JUDE

I agree, it doesn't seem right. Okay. Vincent Ferrer, Patron of builders, construction workers and plumbers.

ACTOR

You think he wants to work construction? That is hopeless!

JUDE

Maybe he wants to improve the workplace. The plumbing or something.

ACTOR

Okay. Keep that one around.

JUDE

Next is La Virgen de los Treinte y Tres.

ACTOR

The what now?

JUDE

The Virgin of the Thirty Three. She's the patron of Uruguay.

ACTOR

Can we let that go?

JUDE

Yes. We can probably also let go of the Virgin of La Altagracia—virgin of High Grace. She's Patron of the Dominican Republic.

ACTOR

Out the window. Who's left?

JUDE

Vitus. Patron of Epileptics and Dancers.

ACTOR

Strange combo.

JUDE

Yeah, it is. I don't think Genesius is epileptic, but maybe he is. Or maybe he wants to be a good dancer.

ACTOR

So we have Valentine—love. Vincent Ferrer—plumbing and such. Vitus—dancers and epileptics.

JUDE

That's about the size of it.

ACTOR

Let's get to work.

Lights down as JUDE and ACTOR begin planning.

Scene 6. The Office of Saintly Intercession. ZITA is cleaning while ARLES is working quietly.

ZITA

I'm about finished. It looks pretty good, I think.

ARLES

Zita, bless you for coming in and restoring order. The patron of gardeners always leaves quite a dirt trail behind him.

ZITA

St. Phocas doesn't mean any harm.

ARLES

I know, but it's certainly kind of you to clean up after the messy saints have been in.

ZITA

I don't think of it as cleaning—I think of it as caring.

ARLES

For whom?

ZITA

For Phocas, for you, for the office, and for God.

ARLES

What if I adjusted the schedule so that all the mess-makers came in one right after the other? Patron of gardeners, then farmers, then horse-riders, then bakers! Then we'd only need to clean up once.

ZITA

Don't go to the trouble. I'd come in anyway. *(a gesture toward CHRISTOPHER, behind the slots)*

ARLES

Oh that's right. Can I ask what you---? No, excuse me. That's not my business.

ZITA

What I see in Christopher? *(no response)* I'm not embarrassed to tell you. He's kind, and funny, and gentle. Most of all, in his heart, he truly wants the best for every person, every angel, and every saint.

ARLES

He's kind of sloppy.

ZITA

That just gives me more chances to care for him. Have a nice day!

JUDE and ACTOR enter. The friends clearly have an agenda, and much of what they say here has been thought of in advance. ZITA crosses paths with them on her way to see CHRISTOPHER behind the slots. They may exchange a casual greeting.

ARLES

Oh hooray. I can't wait to hear what this is about.

ACTOR

We just stopped by to pick up our messages.

ARLES

(to ACTOR) You don't have any. *(HE looks at JUDE, shrugs and points at the slot, full to bursting)*

JUDE

Great. Can't wait to tackle these.

ACTOR

What's new Genesis of Arles?

ARLES

Nothing. Did you get your messages? That'll be all then.

ACTOR

(to JUDE) Hey, Lidwina and I are going to go dancing tonight. Want to meet us at the club?

JUDE

Yes! Dancing sounds great. *(A pause, JUDE and ACTOR stare at ARLES)* But . . . um . . . sometimes I feel silly when I dance. How about you, Genesis of Arles?

ARLES

What? I don't dance. I don't like to dance.

ACTOR

Oh, well. It would be hard to dance if you were having a seizure. *(JUDE glares at him)*

ARLES

What did you say?

ACTOR

I meant to say that it must be difficult to struggle with epilepsy.

JUDE

Anyone who struggles with dancing or epilepsy should pray to St. Vitus. Isn't that right, Genesis of Arles?

ARLES

What, are you quizzing me? Of course that's right. Can you two make your evening plans elsewhere? I'm trying to keep this office running.

JUDE

That's your job all right! Did you ever want a different job? Like construction?

ACTOR

Did you ever want to build things, Genesis of Arles?

ARLES

Right now I would like to build a wall between me and the two of you.

JUDE

Ha,ha. Does any construction work or plumbing need to be done around here?

ARLES

No. I inspect the building every day. If there were physical problems with it, I would call on—

JUDE and ACTOR

St. Vincent Ferrer!!

ARLES

Exactly. Bye bye now.

ACTOR

One last thing, before we go dance and build things. Do you have any plans this weekend, Genesis of Arles?

ARLES

I plan to do what I do every weekend. Review the previous week and plan the week ahead.

ACTOR

Do you want any company?

ARLES

I don't really like seeing you for 3 minutes a week, why would I want your company over the weekend?

ACTOR

Oh not me! I, um . . . I made friends with a new angel and she's really lonely up here and I was wondering if you'd like to . . . um . . .

JUDE

We were wondering if maybe you'd like to spend some time with this new angel. I've seen her. She's pretty.

ARLES

(flustered) This is ridiculous! I'm going to suggest that the two of you stop drinking in the morning. You're not pulling it off. *(HE begins to sort of push them toward the door)*

JUDE

But she's nice too! And she's very orderly. She might make a good patron some day!

ARLES

Please go away. I don't want to talk about this.

JUDE

You should give it a chance.

ARLES

To whom I give chances is no business of yours. Goodbye.

He has succeeded in removing them. The door is shut and he returns to his desk, exasperated. He sits and works as lights fade.

Scene 7. The Patron's Club, later. ACTOR and LIDWINA are together.

ACTOR

So that's it.

LIDWINA

You think Genesisius of Arles wants a girlfriend?!?!

ACTOR

It definitely wasn't dancing, epilepsy or construction.

LIDWINA

(wistfully) And he's been praying for love, to all the wrong patrons.

ACTOR

Only Valentine. But now Jude is going to step in, and try to get it done.

LIDWINA

Do you think he can do it?

ACTOR

I don't know, baby. I was thinking . . . *(trails off)*

LIDWINA

What? You were thinking what?

ACTOR

I think Jude needs to think that he's done it. If Arles wants love, he should get it, and Jude should think he had a big role in making it happen. Then everyone's self-esteem gets a boost, Arles feels a bit indebted to Jude, so he goes easier on him, and some charitable woman hangs with the Patron Saint of the Anal Retentive for the rest of eternity. But I feel like I want to give it a push in the right direction. I want to find a woman for Genesisius of Arles.

LIDWINA

What woman would want to go out with him?

ACTOR

A tricky question indeed. *(Pause)* Is there a patron of boredom?

LIDWINA

No.

ACTOR

We need someone easy to trick. Is there a patron of barflies?

LIDWINA

No—well, Saint John of God is the Patron of Alcoholics, but I think he’s really more about helping people to stop drinking then getting them really drunk and facilitating ill-fated hook ups.

ACTOR

Probably true. Is there a patron of perfectionists? Of people who obsess over order and punctuality?

JUDE enters. He is ambling, slowly, looking through a large stack of messages for the one with Christopher’s mark. He does not notice, and is not noticed, by ACTOR and LIDWINA.

LIDWINA

No, Genesisus. You need to think more broadly if you’re going to make this work. What about Brigid of Ireland?

ACTOR

Patron of—?

LIDWINA

Nuns.

ACTOR

Way too much fun for Arles.

LIDWINA

Our Lady of Guadalupe? She’s really nice. She’s the patron of Mexico! Ole!

JUDE

(JUDE has found the memo) Offero!

ACTOR

(startled) Dude! I didn’t even see you there.

LIDWINA

What did you yell?

JUDE

Oh, sorry. Um, “Offero.”

ACTOR

That’s the code word, baby.

JUDE

You told her?

ACTOR

Yeah, it's no big deal.

JUDE

It is a big deal. Christopher could get in a lot of trouble.

ACTOR

She's not going to say anything, are you baby?

LIDWINA

No.

ACTOR

It's cool. *(Pause)* So what does it say? *(JUDE reads to himself)* Is it what we thought?

JUDE

I've got to go.

JUDE runs off the way he came.

ACTOR

Okay. Back to the plan.

LIDWINA

He doesn't seem like he needs your help.

ACTOR

Oh, he needs my help. He just doesn't know how much.

LIDWINA

You don't even know what the prayer is for!

ACTOR

What else could it be? Genesis wants love. Jude's a good intercessor, but God has bigger things to deal with than, "please get this saint a girl." Now, name some more of your friends.

LIDWINA

Okay. *(She thinks)* It's hard to think of a girl who would want to go out with someone so uptight.

ACTOR

Whoever you pick, it's going to be a hard sell.

MARGUERITE enters, making entries in some kind of notebook.

LIDWINA

(to ACTOR) Hey!

ACTOR

(Seeing MARGUERITE) Oh no. I don't think that's even an option.

LIDWINA

Why not? She's nice.

ACTOR

She's as nice as Genesis is easygoing.

LIDWINA

(Stands up, calls to her) Marguerite! Would you like to join us?

MARGUERITE looks pleased to see LIDWINA, but her expression turns when she spies ACTOR. She walks over, because there is no other appropriate choice.

MARGUERITE

Hi, Lidwina. Good afternoon, Genesis the Actor.

ACTOR

How's it going?

LIDWINA

Did you just get out of work?

MARGUERITE

Yes. I had a lot of intercessions to get through this week. It seems like as soon as I ask God to repair one marriage, another takes a bad turn.

LIDWINA

It must be hard. There are a lot more married people than actors or ice skaters, I imagine.

MARGUERITE

Yes, there are. I maintain a detailed record of what I ask for. I check in a few days after I intercede, to see if things are better. Usually they are. If they're not improved, I repeat the request at my next appointment.

LIDWINA

You re-plead prayers on your own? That's awesome!

ACTOR

That's crazy.

MARGUERITE

What did you say?

ACTOR

I said, "That's crazy." That's not part of the job. Why can't you just do the job? If everyone met their requirements, things would stay on a nice even keel.

MARGUERITE

And if everyone exceeded their requirements, heaven and earth would be infinitely more pleasant.

LIDWINA

Let's not let this get out of control. You disagree, and that's fine. Marguerite, you're really efficient, and a super hard worker. Genesisus, you fulfill your responsibilities to the letter. Both of you are doing your jobs. And that's really great.

MARGUERITE

It's too bad we can't say the same for your friend Jude.

ACTOR

Don't you say a word against Jude. He's got it harder than anybody up here, and he does the very best he can.

MARGUERITE

Of course he does. Too bad it's not enough.

ACTOR

Listen. Lay off him. He's working on it! He's been at that office all day!

MARGUERITE

He was hanging around while I had my appointment. And today's not even his day. I'm surprised Genesisus of Arles lets him loiter around like that.

ACTOR

Loiter?!? You need to—

LIDWINA

Did you see Genesisus of Arles before your appointment?

MARGUERITE

Of course I did.

LIDWINA

Can you think of anyone who'd like to go out with him?

ACTOR

Lidwina!

MARGUERITE

No.

LIDWINA

You wouldn't want to, would you?

MARGUERITE

Of course not!

LIDWINA

Oh, I know you've said before—

MARGUERITE

that I admire him. He is a hard worker, an effective patron, and extremely organized. He's devoted to his job. A woman in his life would detract from that. And that would be a shame.

LIDWINA

He's all those things, and he's nothing like the husband you landed on earth—Wouldn't you just consider Genesis of Arles? (*a cold stare from MARGUERITE*) Listen, how long have you been here?

MARGUERITE

A bit over two hundred years.

LIDWINA

Well, you're practically still the new girl! And everybody loves the new girl. Right Genesis?

ACTOR

Oh, yeah. Everybody loves you, Marguerite.

MARGUERITE

I'm pretty busy right now with my sainthood and patronage. I won't consider it, Lidwina.

ACTOR

You're going to be up here a long time, Margie.

MARGUERITE

Goodbye, Lidwina.

MARGUERITE exits and LIDWINA looks at ACTOR with exasperation.

ACTOR

I like to get her riled up! She's better looking when she's flustered! Besides, she didn't even want to do it!

LIDWINA

She was our best prospect!

ACTOR

If she's the best we've got, then we're sunk.

LIDWINA

That's not funny, Genesisus. She's a nice person. Maybe a little stern, but nice. Genesisus of Arles would be lucky to get a girl like that.

ACTOR

Lucky. *(thinking)* I got it. Baby, I'm a genius.

LIDWINA

Who?

ACTOR

The Queen of Clean has been spending a lot of time around the office lately.

LIDWINA

Zita!?!

ACTOR

Maybe she already has a thing for him! This could be a breeze.

Lights fade as LIDWINA considers it. ACTOR looks pleased with himself.

Scene 8. The Office of Saintly Intercession. ARLES is working at his desk, with intensity. JUDE ambles in, unseen by ARLES. He is in a pleasant mood. JUDE strolls to his mail slot, pulls out a large stack of memos, begins perusing them. He may whistle, or hum, or sing.

ARLES

What?!? Oh, when did you walk in? I didn't see you come in.

JUDE

Me? Oh, I've only been here for a minute or so.

ARLES

What are you doing here?

JUDE

I'm trying to do my job. I don't mean to sound rude. I mean I'm really, really trying to do my job.

ARLES

That's good. Good to hear. *(Pause)* What's the latest gimmick?

JUDE

What?

ARLES

What's your latest scheme? What corners are you cutting?

JUDE

Actually, none.

ARLES

You expect me to believe that?

JUDE

I'm no liar, Genesis of Arles. And you were right about my first plan. I was skipping out on part of my job. I was doing things wrong.

ARLES

Yes you were. *(Into intercom)* Zita, Patron of Housekeepers, attention please. Zita, this is your two minute call. You have two minutes remaining.

CHRISTOPHER

(enters from behind mail wall) Zita's in there?

ARLES

Yes. What are you doing out here?

CHRISTOPHER

I'm caught up for the next few minutes. Hi, Jude. How's it going?

JUDE

Chris, it's going really well. I appreciate all your support lately.

ARLES

What's that supposed to mean?

JUDE

It means I appreciate the support he's given me of late.

ARLES

You'd better not be messing with his requests.

CHRISTOPHER

I'm not.

ARLES

Letting some fall on the floor? Accidentally disappearing?

CHRISTOPHER

I'm not.

JUDE

Listen. He's not doing anything wrong. Unless being a friend to me is a sin.

ARLES

Let's not get extreme! I don't hate you, Jude. You have a million friends, you're everyone's "go to guy" up here, apparently, but I *do* hate that you can't seem to get it all done.

CHRISTOPHER steps towards ARLES. JUDE refuses to let them fight.

JUDE

This is stupid. Genesis of Arles, I'm improving my performance . . . honestly. Chris, take it easy. Go back and finish your work and I'll see you later on, okay?

CHRISTOPHER leaves. ZITA emerges, dusting.

ARLES

Zita! Thanks for your promptness and efficiency today. You're certainly a valued part of the patron program.

ZITA

Oh, Genesisus of Arles, thank you for saying that. I feel lucky to have you as my supervisor.

*A burst of memo slips from behind the wall, through Jude's mail slot.
CHRISTOPHER emerges, to take care of the mess. ZITA helps.*

CHRISTOPHER

Now how did that happen?!? Oh, Zita! I didn't know you were here! Now stop that, you don't have to help me with this.

ZITA

Don't be silly, Christopher! I don't mind a bit!

CHRISTOPHER

Things got a bit out of hand back there, with Jude's messages! He gets twice as much as any other patron.

ARLES

No he doesn't!

CHRISTOPHER

Yes he does.

ZITA

Well, he gets a lot. Everyone knows that.

JUDE

That's enough, everybody. I get as many as I should get, and I do my best to handle them.

CHRISTOPHER

And handle them he does.

ARLES

So he's beloved by one and all! We get it. Now get back there and do your work.

ZITA

Need a hand, Christopher?

ARLES

No. He said he had it all under control a little while ago.

ZITA

Would you like some company then?

CHRISTOPHER

I wouldn't mind that at all. In fact, I'd like that, Zita.

CHRISTOPHER and ZITA exit to behind wall.

ARLES

I don't get it. *(Sits at his desk, begins working)* Why are you still here?

JUDE

Just sorting my requests. *(Short pause)* You don't get what?

ARLES

Zita? And Christopher? That's absurd.

JUDE

Why?

ARLES

Hmmm. For starters, she was gainfully employed on earth. He carried people across a river for money! She's a patron now, and a good one. He was stripped of his patron status. He's from Canaan, she's Italian! It'll never work.

JUDE

Pretty pessimistic.

ARLES

Just realistic.

JUDE

So what if they're taking a chance? They like each other. They want to spend time together.

ARLES

They're taking a chance all right. Why even undertake an endeavor that has such an enormous chance of failing? *(JUDE laughs)* That's not funny.

JUDE

It is coming from you. Of everyone up here, patrons, saints, angels . . . nobody risked more than you did, and few of us had a smaller chance of success than you.

ARLES

What are you talking about?

JUDE

On earth! You know, I got up here way before you did. I saw it happen down there. You don't think it was risky to study Christianity in secret?

ARLES

It wasn't that risky. It was the year 300. I was in France!

JUDE

Why did you do it?

ARLES

I did everything I did because of the love I have for God.

JUDE

And God wants us to love each other. God wants us to find happiness in all of creation—and that includes other people.

ARLES

I don't put myself out there like you . . . like Christopher, Lidwina, all of you . . . I undertook my studies privately and prayed privately.

JUDE

Okay then. What about when your boss gave you a dictated order to begin the formal persecution of Christians. What did you do?

ARLES

I threw my pen.

JUDE

And?

ARLES

Denounced the order and any who would follow it.

JUDE

Where did that land you?

ARLES

Jail.

JUDE

And then?

ARLES

They killed me.

JUDE

There you go. So don't try to tell me you're not about taking a risk. You're one of the most courageous guys up here. You took a huge risk.

ARLES

(softening slightly) And it got me martyred.

JUDE

Well, that can't happen again, can it? *(ARLES chuckles)* Any chance I could get in a few minutes early for my intercession appointment tonight? I've got something really big cooking.

ARLES

Hold on, let me check the book. *(Stands perfectly still)* Nope. Doesn't look good.

JUDE

(laughing) Okay. See you later on!

JUDE exits. ARLES returns to his desk, but does not work. He seems lost in thought, as lights fade.

Scene 9. A table at the Patron's Club. ACTOR and LIDWINA are eating, drinking.

ACTOR

Seriously, if you're throwing me a surprise party, I'm going to be really, really mad.

LIDWINA

I'm not! *(Giggle)* I promise I'm not. *(Giggle)* I truly am not throwing you a surprise party. I don't even know why I'm laughing.

ACTOR

Okay. Swear?

LIDWINA

I swear. *(Giggle)* I'm sorry. I can't stop.

ACTOR

I'm excited about my feast day, I really am. But I just want to hang out with you, you know? There's been so much tension lately, with the Jude thing, and the whole deal with Marguerite . . . I mean, I know she's your friend and everything, but she really doesn't like me. She's not even polite.

LIDWINA

Well. You could be a lot nicer to her, you know.

ACTOR

What?!? There's no way to be nice to her! She's a cold, cold woman.

LIDWINA

Genesisus—

ACTOR

I don't want to fight. Let's not fight. But, honestly, if I see no one except you tomorrow, it will be the feast day of my dreams.

LIDWINA

You're sweet. *(Kiss, pause)* Don't forget, though.

ACTOR

Forget what?

LIDWINA

It's not just *your* feast day.

ACTOR

What? No!

LIDWINA

It's common courtesy, Genesisius.

ACTOR

Baby, of all the saints I don't want to see on *my* feast day, Genesisius of Arles tops the list.

LIDWINA

Well, I guess that's too bad. Your feast days are the same. You have to wish him a good day.

ACTOR

His feast day is the same as mine, his name is the same as mine—there's no escape!

LIDWINA

Please don't throw a fit. It will be a two minute stop. Besides, you don't want to miss the fireworks!

ACTOR

What fireworks?

LIDWINA

I saw Zita yesterday and reminded her that it was Genesisius of Arles' feast day. She said she *already had plans* to stop by. Plus, she said she wanted to go and wish him a happy day, but she also had "other business."

ACTOR

Funny business?

LIDWINA

That was the implication!

ACTOR

Oh boy!

LIDWINA

We'll swing by the office, say hello, good day, watch it all go down, and then we'll scoot along and have a super fun day!

ACTOR

We'll scoot along? (*LIDWINA nods*) You promise there'll be scooting? (*LIDWINA nods, ACTOR sighs*) Okay. But I'm going to go rest awhile. I'm going to need to bank my energy for my encounter with the nemesis. I'll see you later.

GENESIUS kisses LIDWINA and exits. Momentarily, MARGUERITE enters.

MARGUERITE

Hello, Lidwina. Are you here by yourself?

LIDWINA

Oh, I was eating with Genesisus—

MARGUERITE

Oh—

LIDWINA

But he just left. So if you want to sit, I'd love to visit. (*MARGUERITE sits, with a smile*) His feast day is tomorrow and he wants to spend it with me!

MARGUERITE

I'm sure you'll have a lovely time.

LIDWINA

I thought so too, but he left here in a bit of a huff. I told him we need to stop by the office tomorrow before we start celebrating, and he doesn't want to. You know how he feels about Genesisus of Arles.

MARGUERITE

I know how Genesisus of Arles feels about him. Why do you want to start your day like that?

LIDWINA

Because when you share a feast day with another saint, the courteous thing to do is to wish them well on that day.

MARGUERITE

Tomorrow is the feast day of both Genesisuses? That's right!

LIDWINA

Uh-huh.

MARGUERITE

Poor Genesisus of Arles. (*Pause*) You're going by there first thing in the morning?

LIDWINA

Not too early. I know Genesisus of Arles likes to get things up and running there before he starts seeing people.

MARGUERITE

Yes, that's true. Perhaps I'll meet you there.

LIDWINA

Why?

MARGUERITE

Is that a problem?

LIDWINA

No. Of course not. Um, I just don't know why you'd want to be around Genesisus. My Genesisus, I mean.

MARGUERITE

I don't particularly want to be around your Genesisus. Or any Genesisus, for that matter. I just think there ought to be a buffer between the two feast day celebrants. I think you tend to side with the Actor more readily than might be considered wise. So I'll just be there as a calming influence.

LIDWINA

Well, I guess. I mean, it's a free afterlife. You can be wherever you want.

MARGUERITE

And I'd like to wish Genesisus of Arles a happy feast day. *(A look from LIDWINA)* And the Actor. I'll wish him a happy feast day, too.

LIDWINA

That's fine. *(Pause)* In fact, it's terrific! It might be just what you need.

MARGUERITE

I don't need anything.

LIDWINA

Oh, Marguerite! Everytime the subject of love, or romance comes up, you get all huffy! I don't know if it makes you nervous, or mad, or what, but tomorrow morning is going to be filled with that kind of stuff, and I think it will be good for you to see the magic happen.

MARGUERITE

Magic?

LIDWINA

Genesisus of Arles has been praying for love. And tomorrow, his prayers will be answered.

MARGUERITE

That man has a full plate already, just running the office. He can't possibly want to take on something like that. Where did you come by that silly little bit of gossip?

LIDWINA

I have sources.

MARGUERITE

The Actor?

LIDWINA

Oh, Marguerite, he's so connected! He finds out everything up here!

MARGUERITE

And if he doesn't, he makes it up!

LIDWINA

That's not true. Genesius of Arles wants a girlfriend. Zita wants to be his girlfriend.

MARGUERITE

The housekeeping Patron?

LIDWINA

Yes. And I just know it will help you to see two people fall madly, happily in love! You show up tomorrow and just wait and see if I'm not right!

MARGUERITE

Lidwina, I'll see you in the morning.

MARGUERITE exits. LIDWINA is left pouting, as lights fade.

Scene 10. The Office of Saintly Intercession, the next morning. ARLES is busily moving around his desk, the office. He gives no sign that today is anything special for him. CHRISTOPHER enters, reporting for the day's work.

CHRISTOPHER

Good morning, Genesisus of Arles!

ARLES

Good morning, Christopher. Quite a few requests came in overnight.

CHRISTOPHER

And I will see to each of them, but not before I wish you a happy feast day.

ARLES

What? Oh, thank you. It's kind of you to remember.

CHRISTOPHER

You did an admirable thing there on earth, Genesisus. You stood up for what you believed was right—not just for Christianity, but for the right to learn what one wants to learn. You stood up—literally—and refused to be a part of a system that was intent on oppressing—

ARLES

Yes, I remember. And I thank you, sincerely. But you know what would please me more than hearing a litany of my own achievements? Having a smooth day here in the office. Are you going to head back there now?

CHRISTOPHER

Sure, sure I am. *(He starts to go, then pauses)* I had a wonderful evening with Zita. Thank you for asking. I appreciate your interest in my happiness.

ARLES

Well, I can't keep up with all the romantic intrigue around here.

CHRISTOPHER

Oh, I think you're right on top of it.

ARLES

Excuse me?

CHRISTOPHER

Genesisus, I see every single piece of paper that comes back there. And sometimes, I stop and read one . . . especially if I recognize the handwriting.

ARLES

So . . .?

CHRISTOPHER

I know.

ARLES

Is that right?

CHRISTOPHER

And since you weren't in the habit of making requests, I took the liberty of correcting a mistake that you made.

ARLES

I'm not in the habit of making requests, nor am I in the habit of making mistakes. Exactly what did you change?

CHRISTOPHER

I redirected your prayer.

ARLES

To whom?

CHRISTOPHER

You don't direct a prayer for love to the patron of Couples in Love. *(Pause, a look from ARLES)* In your case, you direct it to the Patron of Hopeless Causes.

ARLES

You did not give it to Jude.

CHRISTOPHER

I did. I had to. I wanted it to be successful. Jude could make that happen. He's gifted!

ARLES

Stop. That prayer was private. You had no right—

CHRISTOPHER

I had every right to do my job. To make sure that requests gain the best chance at being answered!

ARLES

So Jude knows. Who else?

LIDWINA comes in, followed by a reluctant ACTOR.

CHRISTOPHER

Probably no one. *(Pause)* If Zita stops by, please send her back.

With a nod to LIDWINA and ACTOR, CHRISTOPHER retreats to his work area.

LIDWINA

Good morning, Genesisius of Arles.

ARLES

Good morning, Lidwina of Schiedham.

LIDWINA

Is Zita here yet?

ARLES

(puzzled) No. Do you need to see her?

LIDWINA

(giggling) No! We wanted to swing by this morning to wish you a happy feast day.

ACTOR

Right.

ARLES

(only to LIDWINA) Well, thank you.

LIDWINA

And to tell you that we really think you do a terrific job running our office. We're grateful for all the extra effort you put in to keep things humming along so beautifully.

ACTOR

Yes we are.

ARLES

(only to LIDWINA) Thanks again.

LIDWINA

And to let you know that we admire the courage you showed during your life on earth. We think what you did was remarkable.

ACTOR

Yes we do.

ARLES

(only to LIDWINA) Thank you.

ACTOR

Hey! I'm here too! How about thanking me?

ARLES

Perhaps if you expressed a thought for which I was grateful, I would thank you.

ACTOR

Okay. How's this? You're a super guy and I hope you get *everything* you're wishing for.

LIDWINA

Genesisius!

ARLES

What are you implying?

ACTOR

I'm not implying anything. I sincerely hope you get everything you're wishing for. We would have brought it to you, in fact, but there is no Patron Saint of dancing girls!

ARLES

How dare you come into this office, *my office*, and suggest—

ACTOR

It's not a secret, Genesisius! Everybody knows you're on the make!

ARLES

On the make? What does that even mean?

ZITA enters.

ZITA

Good morning, boss. And happy feast day.

ARLES

Thank you, Zita. I heard you had a nice time last night. I'm happy for you, but I hope you can maintain your responsibilities as a patron.

ZITA

I would never let down those who ask for my help.

ARLES

I trust that's true.

ZITA

Is Christopher back there?

ARLES

Yes. Go on back.

LIDWINA

(whispering) Genesisius of Arles, we know about your prayer for love. In fact, we found a girl for you.

ARLES

You've fixed me up with someone?

LIDWINA

Well, duh! Why do you think Zita is here?

ARLES

Well, I can tell you exactly why Zita--

ACTOR

Oh, c'mon! Will you just go with the flow on this? She likes you! Go out with her for heaven's sake!

ARLES

Zita spends her time with Christopher. They were out last night and now she's here to see him.

LIDWINA

The mail guy? (*Giggle*) That's so cute!

ACTOR

That's not cute. The entire plan is foiled. There isn't any girl for this one.

ARLES

I don't want *any* girl.

ACTOR

We know you've been praying for love.

ARLES

I've been praying that the love I feel be returned . . . by Marguerite.

ACTOR

d'Youville?

ARLES

Is there another one?

ACTOR

Well, no, thank God, but . . .

ARLES

But what?

ACTOR

Nothing. She's just a little . . . stern. Isn't she? For the object of one's affection?

ARLES

She's serious. She's steadfast. She's reliable and committed. And lovely.

LIDWINA

She said the same things about you. Except the lovely part.

ARLES

She did?

LIDWINA

We were at the Patron's Club. And she was saying how much she admired you.

JUDE

(entering with MARGUERITE) Look who I found outside!

ARLES

Hello, Jude. Marguerite.

LIDWINA

(alarmed) Oh, Marguerite! *(she attempts to communicate to Marguerite that Arles has expressed feelings for her—this may be done through pantomime, mouthing the words "HE LIKES YOU" repeatedly, semaphore flags—whatever)*

JUDE

Genesius of Arles, happy feast day. Genesius the Actor, happy feast day to you, buddy. Thanks for everything.

ACTOR

Thanks, man.

ARLES

Thank you, Jude. *(Pause)* Marguerite, are you here on official business?

MARGUERITE

No, Genesius. I'm actually here to wish you a happy feast day, as well.

ARLES

I certainly appreciate your making a special trip to wish me well.

MARGUERITE

You're a special man, Genesius of Arles, and you deserve the best in heaven. You work wonders around here. *(Big breath)* Speaking of wonders, I was wondering if I might take you for a cup of coffee and perhaps a bran muffin to celebrate your day. If I'm overstepping my bounds please let me know and I'll never speak of this again.

ARLES

(momentarily stunned, then recollecting) Christopher! *(CHRISTOPHER and ZITA enter from back)* Would you be able to run things here for a short time? I'd like to go have some breakfast with Marguerite.

CHRISTOPHER

I'd be happy to do that for you.

ZITA

I'll do the slots! *(runs back behind slots)*

LIDWINA

(shocked) We're going to scoot out of here as well. We've got a big day planned.

ACTOR

Let the scooting begin!

LIDWINA, ACTOR, and MARGUERITE exit.

ARLES

I'll be right along. I need to . . . uh . . . give Christopher the morning schedule. *(After the 3 are gone)* Jude, this is certain to be awkward, but I'd like to thank you for interceding on my behalf. I'm grateful to you, and of course, to God. When Lidwina told me that Marguerite was expressing feelings for me . . . well, I couldn't have been more surprised. You are an excellent Patron.

JUDE

It feels good to do good. You're welcome.

(Handshake. ARLES exits)

Wow. Quite a turn around there, huh?

CHRISTOPHER

Absolutely.

JUDE

Did he say Marguerite was talking about him? To Lidwina?

CHRISTOPHER

Yes, he did. I believe Lidwina said they'd spoken of Genesis at the Patron's Club.

JUDE

I was with them at the Patron's Club, and Lidwina's right! Marguerite did say some very nice things about Genesis.

CHRISTOPHER

That's right.

JUDE

But that was weeks ago! That was before I even interceded!

CHRISTOPHER

(knowingly) Is that right?

JUDE

God knew what Genesisus wanted before I asked. God probably knew what Genesisus wanted before Genesisus asked.

CHRISTOPHER

And God saw fit to grant the blessing of love on Genesisus.

JUDE

So what? My interceding had no effect?

CHRISTOPHER

Oh, I wouldn't say that. You proved what kind of heart you have—the kind that will help someone who isn't always nice to you.

JUDE

Right.

CHRISTOPHER

And you earned the respect of Genesisus. Now he knows what kind of man you are.

JUDE

So I came out on top, in a way. *(Pause)* Looks like I have a full day's work ahead of me. *(Walks to mail slot)* But if God already knows about all of these prayers, why do I need to intercede for them?

CHRISTOPHER

Because you were asked. And because people have faith.

JUDE

I know. I know.

CHRISTOPHER

Since you've got all that to sort through, would you mind sticking around here? Zita and I wanted to sneak in some canoodling.

JUDE

No problem.

CHRISTOPHER

You know, Genesius of Arles will probably be gone for a while. If you're interested, check out the morning schedule. St. Januarius, Patron of Bleeding, usually calls in sick, so God's got some free time coming up.

JUDE

Really?!?

CHRISTOPHER exits. JUDE grabs memos from his mailbox and enters God's office.

BLACKOUT
END OF PLAY