

(A knock is heard at the door. DOÑA SEBASTIANA picks up her cart and begins to exit. Referring to the person knocking at the door.)

Chale! You're not *even* gonna believe how *she* dies! *(Laughing, she starts to tell LA TULES but another knock changes her mind.)* I'll tell you later. After you're dead! Ay te watcho, chica! *(Exits.)*

(Another knock. LA TULES opens the door to SISTER JANE, who is dressed in nightclothes and carrying the santo of San Francisco.)

SISTER JANE

I am exceeding sorry to stir you from your drowse.

LA TULES

I do not sleep.

START HERE

SISTER JANE

I am compelled to return your doll. I imagine Saint Francis is the name by which we would refer to such things. Saints, that is. If we had them. Which we don't. *"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."*

(LA TULES accepts the santo from SISTER JANE absent-mindedly. Crosses to look for DOÑA SEBASTIANA out the window, hardly listening.)

I must now appear from my covert and confess I have gone and found myself adrift and for aught I know, unmoored in a foreign land with no means of support. I *did*. I did not enter even the skirts of Kentucky destitute. Only my God and I know the rectitude of my conduct and I guess God has struck me down thus. The cause – my pride. I had great pride in the work that lay ahead. I had long held something in train. A school. A Protestant school. I had a mind to teach your little ones how to read, and write – *English* – be *good* Christians. Bless their hearts, yet elevated in the ways of Protestant learning. Indeed, I have been prideful and, perchance, it is a trial the Good Lord has sent me. My heart is trouble-laden, Miss Tules. Should I be asked to weather alone this unlucky complexion, well, that would be one thing but – *(Noticing LA TULES isn't listening.)* Are you well, Miss Tules? You are pale.

LA TULES

I am...tired. That is all.

SISTER JANE

Ah! Lord Jesus, I am weary in Thy work, but not of it. *(Producing a small, drawstring coin purse.)* My every utterance is God's truth, Miss Tules. I have in my possession twenty-seven dollars. Twenty-seven dollars is all I have left of the twenty thousand dollars I once had before leaving Kentucky. I spent naught one penny on myself. Not one. The twenty thousand dollars was meant entirely for the Lord's school.

LA TULES
(*Doing the math.*) Twenty-seven dollars?

SISTER JANE
I know it is meager –

LA TULES
You had twenty thousand. And now you have twenty-seven?

SISTER JANE
I am embarrassed. Ashamed to say aloud what –

LA TULES
You have lost a good deal of money.

SISTER JANE
Indeed.

LA TULES
Nineteen thousand, nine hundred and seventy-three dollars. To be precise.

SISTER JANE
(*Suspiciously.*) You are dreadfully good at reckoning.

LA TULES
I have to be.

SISTER JANE
In gold coin.

LA TULES
Of course.

SISTER JANE
Taken by savages.

LA TULES
What else did these...*savages*...take from you?

SISTER JANE
Nothing more that I recall. Gold. It was their sole interest.

LA TULES
They did not take your pistols? Food? Blankets? Goods they could trade?

SISTER JANE
I fancied they could later buy all that with the gold they took.

LA TULES
You saw them.

SISTER JANE
(*Caught.*) It was a tight scratch.

(*Beat.*)

LA TULES
If you are seeking my help, Sister Jane, speak it plainly.

SISTER JANE
I must have that money.

LA TULES
What do you expect me to do?

SISTER JANE
Teach me your trade.

LA TULES
Monte?

SISTER JANE
Yes.

LA TULES
It is gambling.

SISTER JANE
I understand.

LA TULES
It involves a great deal of –

SISTER JANE
Deception. Manipulation.

LA TULES
Perception. Astuteness. And the ability to read people. And their intentions. (*Pouring drinks.*)
And whiskey.

SISTER JANE

Indeed. And flesh.

LA TULES

Flesh?

SISTER JANE

The selling of it, I figure.

LA TULES

I am the most respected woman in Santa Fe. And the wealthiest. I earned both with my head. I run a profitable enterprise. I make money. I invest. Why should I help you?

SISTER JANE

Because you are able. And God would have it thus.

LA TULES

Our customs, our whiskey, our gambling – they are an affront to you. Are you as flexible in your judgments of us as you are in your principles, Sister Jane?

SISTER JANE

I will do what I am called to do, Miss Tules. And I leave the judging to God.

LA TULES

This is the frontier. Our government abandoned us, the men are all dead, and the Archbishop is French. Whiskey and gambling are the least of God's concerns. (*Beat.*) Speak to no one of the twenty thousand in gold coin. The only way you will find it – and *live* – is if no one knows you are looking.

SISTER JANE

Have we a deal?

LA TULES

Sister Jane, welcome to the Hall of Final Ruin.

(The women drink. End of Act I.)

INTERMISSION