

The Miracle
By Kyle John Schmidt

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Cast

Sister Calliope – a nun with a Vision

Novice Angelica – a novice with a bright future

Dustin Day – a reporter for *The Daily Herald*

Sigbert – The Mute of Marlin Street

Lawrence – The Grump of Gaston Avenue

Sister Ruth – a nun with a Need

Setting

The medieval chambers of a nun in a convent.

(SISTER CALLIOPE, a nun, sits at a table in her chambers. A pitcher of water sits in front of her. She tries to turn it into wine.)

SISTER CALLIOPE

(Waving her hands.) Wine. *(Touching the water.)* Wine. *(Blowing on the water.)* Wine. *(Closing her eyes.)* Water. In. To. Wine. *(She opens her eyes. It's still water.)*

(ANGELICA, a novice, enters. She's young and bright; a very promising person.)

ANGELICA

Sister Calliope?

SISTER CALLIOPE

Angelica! My favorite novice.

ANGELICA

I'm here for my lesson.

SISTER CALLIOPE

Of course. But first: the most magnificent thing happened to me.

ANGELICA

Is it related to our lesson on chastity?

SISTER CALLIOPE

No, Angelica. This is more important than chastity.

ANGELICA

Sister Ruth says nothing is more important than chastity.

SISTER CALLIOPE

This is. I haven't told anyone. My colleagues. My friends. The clergy. No one. But you're my favorite novice. A wonderful student. Tremendous potential. I trust you.

ANGELICA

What is it?

SISTER CALLIOPE

I had a Vision.

ANGELICA

A Vision?

SISTER CALLIOPE

Last night. In a dream. I saw my face emblazoned on coins. And a small statuette of me on a table setting at Christmas. And a little boy at a desk praying to me for help on a test.

ANGELICA

What does it mean?

SISTER CALLIOPE

I think it was a foretelling. Divine prophecy! Harbinger of future happening. I believe I'm destined for sainthood.

ANGELICA

You? A saint?

SISTER CALLIOPE

Yes! A performer of wonders. A spinner of miracles. One prayed too. Asked upon. Designated special for all of eternity.

ANGELICA

And you get a feast day!

SISTER CALLIOPE

I've never thought of myself as special. Kind, maybe. Supportive, of course. But special? It's taken me all morning to even acclimate myself to the prospect. I can't stop smiling.

ANGELICA

But aren't you a little old to start the path to sainthood?

SISTER CALLIOPE

Old? No. Why?

ANGELICA

My parents put me on a plan to canonization before I could read. My younger brother already has a consecrated Order. And I heard there was a teenager two towns over who has already performed two miracles. All before graduating high school!

SISTER CALLIOPE

Surely the window of time for accomplishment isn't so small.

ANGELICA

Sister Ruth says the early bird—

SISTER CALLIOPE

Gets the worm.

ANGELICA

No. Starves the other birds. That's why I was hoping for that private lesson you promised. I need to get serious about my chastity if I want to make Honor Roll.

SISTER CALLIOPE

I haven't time today, Novice Angelica. I'm expecting a reporter. From the paper. I'm going to reveal my Vision.

ANGELICA

But Sister Ruth says Visions are a dime a dozen.

SISTER CALLIOPE

Sister Ruth doesn't know everything.

ANGELICA

That's not what Sister Ruth says.

SISTER CALLIOPE

I don't like you associating with Sister Ruth.

ANGELICA

Why not?

SISTER CALLIOPE

Sister Ruth was my rival. When we were novices. Always competing. She would feed my poor and heal my lepers. I couldn't bear losing my favorite pupil, the one I've brought beneath my wing, to one so odious as her. Especially not when I'm on the precipice of such tremendous things.

ANGELICA

Sister Ruth says it takes three miracles for any potential saint to be taken seriously anyway.

SISTER CALLIOPE

Then I'll perform three miracles. Today. In front the reporter. He'll write about it in the paper. And all will know: I'm special.

ANGELICA

Let me know how it goes. I better get to my "Bandaging the Sick" tutor. Tonight it's lesions!

SISTER CALLIOPE

You're not going to help me? I've given you lessons. Written you recommendations. Encouraged your growth. Why wouldn't you help?

ANGELICA

Because I'm not the teacher. You're supposed to help me. That's your job. What you exist for.

SISTER CALLIOPE

But now, today, after my Vision, I exist for something more.

(DUSTIN DAY, a newspaper reporter, enters.)

DUSTIN DAY

Sister Calliope? Dustin Day. With the *Daily Herald*. We had an appointment.

SISTER CALLIOPE

(To DUSTIN DAY:) One moment, Mr. Day. *(To ANGELICA:)* Angelica. Please. I'll teach you techniques in Contemplation. Give you a history of Ablutions. I'll take you to the Genuflecting Gym.

ANGELICA

I want lessons. Whenever I want. For a year.

SISTER CALLIOPE

But then I won't have time for myself.

ANGELICA

Time is more valuable when you're young. There's more possibility to manage. Would you want me blighted with squandered chances and forgone opportunities when I get to your age?

DUSTIN DAY

Sister?

SISTER CALLIOPE

Find me three souls needing a miracle and all my time is yours. But hurry. My whole eternity depends on it.

(ANGELICA exits.)

SISTER CALLIOPE

Sorry to keep you waiting, Mr. Day. Won't you sit down? Would you like some water? Or wine? *(She tries to turn the pitcher into wine again. It doesn't. A look of disappointment flashes across her face.)*

DUSTIN DAY

Unfortunately, I can't stay. I just got a hot tip that a teenager two towns over performed a miracle this morning. His third. Can you imagine? Three miracles before graduating high school.

SISTER CALLIOPE

If you could just wait. I need to explain. About myself. I had a Vision.

DUSTIN DAY

Oh, we just put those on the Revelations page. Under the Classifieds.

SISTER CALLIOPE

But this was important. An important Vision.

DUSTIN DAY

We have bold type. And italics. We've never used underline, but you could request it.

SISTER CALLIOPE

In my Vision I foresaw that I was destined to be a Saint.

DUSTIN DAY

Really?

SISTER CALLIOPE

A coin with my face. A Christmas statue. And a little boy. Praying. For my help.

DUSTIN DAY

Have you performed any miracles?

SISTER CALLIOPE

Not yet. But I'm going to. Today. If you just stay. For a moment.

DUSTIN DAY

I heard the boy two towns over flew. Like a bird. Onto a building. During a fire. Rescued a little girl. Can you imagine? Just a teen. Think of the miracles he'll be performing in ten years.

SISTER CALLIOPE

Mr. Day. I know I'm not the prettiest. Or smartest. Brave or terribly kind. But you must believe that there is something special. A divine spark. In here. With me. There must be. Or I don't know why I'm living.

DUSTIN DAY

Sister. I believe you. I do. I truly do. But, barring a miracle, I can't write your story for the paper.

(ANGELICA enters with SIGBERT. He is also known as The Mute of Marlin Street.)

SISTER CALLIOPE

Look! Someone who needs a miracle.

ANGELICA

This is the Mute of Marlin Street.

DUSTIN DAY

The Mute of Marlin Street! I've heard of him. He hasn't spoken in years. No one even knows his real name.

SISTER CALLIOPE

And curing muteness is well-trammeled ground in miracle-making. Good work, Angelica.

ANGELICA

This is good practice for the Hardship Identification team. Maybe I'll make first string this year!

(ANGELICA exits.)

SISTER CALLIOPE

Now, in order to divine this cure, I must ascertain how he became mute. Tell me, good sir. Why are you mute?

(SIGBERT says nothing.)

DUSTIN DAY

I heard he was struck silent after he lost his entire family. And cannot speak until their killer is brought to justice.

SISTER CALLIOPE

Who killed his family?

DUSTIN DAY

A bad batch of chili.

SISTER CALLIOPE

And there's no justice there.

DUSTIN DAY

So he's never talking. But in spite of this terrible tragedy, he still has the wherewithal to dispense instructional homilies to passersby on Marlin Street.

(SIGBERT hands SISTER CALLIOPE a homily and shakes his head dourly.)

SISTER CALLIOPE

"If the meat is pink or starts to stink, don't eat that chili, don't even think."

DUSTIN DAY

Poor man! If anyone needs a miracle it's him!

SISTER CALLIOPE

Then a miracle he'll get. By my honor and talents! I'll lay Hands upon him.

(SISTER CALLIOPE tries to lay her hands upon SIGBERT.

He bares his teeth.

She stops. He goes to normal.

She tries to lay her hands upon SIGBERT again.

He bares his teeth.

She stops. He goes to normal.

It becomes a strange game: he bares his teeth to the degree that she raises her hands.

She tries sneaking. Trickery. Sudden movements. Etc.

Until:)

DUSTIN DAY

Perhaps it is best if I come another day.

SISTER CALLIOPE

Don't go. I need to warm up. I haven't stretched out. Miracles don't just come out of nowhere! (*SIGBERT gives her another homily.*) "If at first you don't prevail, give up because you've failed."

(*ANGELICA enters with LAWRENCE, also known as the Grump of Gaston Avenue.*)

SISTER CALLIOPE

And look! Another man in need of a miracle.

ANGELICA

This poor fellow claims that all he sees are dark clouds and rainy days.

DUSTIN DAY

Oh! It's the Grump of Gaston Avenue!

LAWRENCE

The Grump has a name. And it's Lawrence. But it's true. Bad days, clouds, and rain. I haven't seen sun in years. It's all darkness. Getting darker. Each day is worse and everything makes me unhappy. Even you. And you. And especially you.

(*SIGBERT passes LAWRENCE a homily.*)

LAWRENCE

Oh. Look. A homily. This might brighten my day. (*Reading:*) "I am a zoo, you are a zoo. Keep your feelings in cages or no one will like you." Oh. Worse. This is why I never go on Marlin Street. But it's better than staying home.

DUSTIN DAY

Your novice truly found the two people in town most in need of a miracle.

ANGELICA

I've always had a talent for attracting the needy. Right, Sister Calliope? Off to find the third!

(*ANGELICA exits.*)

LAWRENCE

I think my teeth are falling out. And I'm hungry because no one made me breakfast. And I'd ask for food. But you'd probably make it wrong. And I'd have to say something polite. But I'm not good at lying. So you'd probably get mad. And I'd like you less than I do now. Which is not at all.

SISTER CALLIOPE

I'm going to soothe and anoint you.

LAWRENCE

I hope you can do that from a distance. Because you've probably heard I've got that fungus. Which is why my wife left. And my kids don't visit. Or maybe it's because I smell. And my house isn't fun.

(SIGBERT hands LAWRENCE another homily.)

LAWRENCE

Oh. Another homily. Maybe this one will help ease my pain. *(Reading the homily:)* "When you cry and carry on, it makes me smile all day long." Oh. No. That didn't ease anything at all.

DUSTIN DAY

I should really go.

SISTER CALLIOPE

But you haven't given me a good enough chance. There are miracles within me. I know it.

*(SISTER CALLIOPE tries to touch SIGBERT.
He bares his teeth.
SISTER CALLIOPE tries to touch LAWRENCE.)*

LAWRENCE

Fungus.

(SISTER CALLIOPE chooses not to touch LAWRENCE.)

DUSTIN DAY

Sister, you must understand: I'm unable to write your story.

SISTER CALLIOPE

Is it because I'm not special?

DUSTIN DAY

No, it's because I'm unable to write!

SISTER CALLIOPE

What? Why?

DUSTIN DAY

I have writer's block! Every day I search for a story. Any story. Something that will expel the invisible demons binding my hands. But each time I put pen to paper, all that comes are doodles. Unfortunate sketches. Chicken scratches! I would give all I could to help you now, but my poor talents are impossibly constrained. Tender expectation humiliated by cruel limitation! I hoped your miracles might draw that demon away. But it stays, holding tight, so I must not remain.

(ANGELICA enters followed by a nun, SISTER RUTH.)

SISTER CALLIOPE

Angelica! And Sister Ruth? Why is she in my chambers?

ANGELICA

Sister Ruth needs a miracle.

SISTER CALLIOPE

You need a miracle?

SISTER RUTH

Yes. A trinity if you can spare!

SISTER CALLIOPE

Certainly. Three miracles. We can try. *(Aside:)* Wonderful fortune! *(To SISTER RUTH:)* What's the matter?

SISTER RUTH

Last night I had a Vision.

SISTER CALLIOPE

A Vision?

SISTER RUTH

A Vision! I saw my visage on a ducat. A statuary of myself beside a Christmas ham. And then the cutest little boy praying to me for help.

SISTER CALLIOPE

On a test?

SISTER RUTH

Yes! And I got him an A+! I woke and knew I was destined to be special. Notable! Worthy! A Saint!

SISTER CALLIOPE

But you don't have any miracles.

SISTER RUTH

Exactly. And just as I was agonizing over my dreadful un-miraculous fortune, Angelica came around the corner, searching for someone who needed a miracle. What providence!

SISTER CALLIOPE

Well, you're not allowed to do miracles in my chambers, Sister Ruth.

ANGELICA

Yes, that's Sister Ruth.

SISTER RUTH

No! I'm his sister.

SIGBERT

Ruth!

DUSTIN DAY

I thought he lost all his family.

SISTER CALLIOPE

To chili.

ANGELICA

And would never speak again.

SIGBERT

When I found that ill-boiled black cauldron of germs had slain my entire family, I could not speak. But now with my sister seemingly before me, I can! What divine intervention brought you here? How did the entirety of my relations painfully pass that wicked night and you somehow survive?

SISTER RUTH

I'm a vegetarian.

SIGBERT

To lose all, but win one is not justice. But in this world where all can go lost, a little gain saves a lot of pain. My voice is returned!

(SISTER RUTH and SIGBERT embrace.)

ANGELICA

It's a miracle! Sister Ruth performed a miracle.

SISTER RUTH

I guess I did.

SISTER CALLIOPE

You did not. That was coincidence.

LAWRENCE

Oh! My eyes! My eyes!

SISTER RUTH

Is he alright?

LAWRENCE

I see light! Day! All of you! It's so bright!

SISTER CALLIOPE

What? Why?

LAWRENCE

Seeing the possibility of love return to one so lost has given me optimism. Hope! Sister Ruth, you've risen the sun, bright and burning, where before I only saw darkness, sad and churning!

ANGELICA

It's another miracle!

SISTER CALLIOPE

Stop that.

SISTER RUTH

Two miracles in matter of minutes. I'm remarkably efficient at this.

LAWRENCE

And my fungus! (*Everyone gasps!*) It's still there, but I don't mind it as much.

SIGBERT

We need to tell the everyone.

LAWRENCE

Sister Ruth might become a saint!

SISTER CALLIOPE

She's not done!

SISTER RUTH

What's the matter, Sister Colostomy?

SISTER CALLIOPE

It's Calliope. And you haven't completed a third miracle. A saint needs three miracles and you've only performed two.

DUSTIN DAY

Oh my.

ANGELICA

Something's happening.

SISTER RUTH

Are you okay?

DUSTIN DAY

My writer's block. It's falling. It's crumbling. It's gone!

SISTER CALLIOPE

How?

DUSTIN DAY

I see Sister Ruth, the wonder of her actions, the beneficence of her presence, and the demon blocking my pen from paper has evaporated. I'm free! Finally! After all this torture. I'm inspired!

ANGELICA

The third miracle!

DUSTIN DAY

I'm going to tell your story, Sister Ruth. All will know your deeds.

SISTER RUTH

Dreams do come true.

SISTER CALLIOPE

But not for all.

SIGBERT

A homily. "Good works should be heralded with a whisper. Except when done by one as awesome as my sister!"

LAWRENCE

Let's go celebrate!

DUSTIN DAY

Proclaim to the world!

ANGELICA

About my new hero!

SISTER RUTH

Before we go and proclaim these astonishing events, I must give honor and veneration to the one heavenly sent to collect these miracles for me to complete. (*Earnestly:*) I'll never forget you, Sister Circus Music.

(SISTER RUTH, DUSTIN DAY, LAWRENCE, and SIGBERT exit.)

ANGELICA

Sister Calliope, are you going to celebrate?

SISTER CALLIOPE

I find I must quietly contemplate such a humbling day.

ANGELICA

You're right, it is a humbling experience to witness such great works. I need to study if I'm going to live up to Sister Ruth's example! But I enjoyed my lesson today.

SISTER CALLIOPE

I didn't teach you anything.

ANGELICA

No. You did. You taught me some people have to fail. That way it's more impressive when some of us succeed.

SISTER CALLIOPE

Angelica.

ANGELICA

Yes?

SISTER CALLIOPE

Can you promise me something?

ANGELICA

Certainly.

SISTER CALLIOPE

When you become a saint. If you become a saint. Can you. Say that I helped. That I taught you something. Or remember something I said. Let me be a part.

ANGELICA

I'll try, Sister Calliope.

SISTER CALLIOPE

Yes. Try. Try. That's all we can do. Try.

(ANGELICA exits. SISTER CALLIOPE stands alone.)

SISTER CALLIOPE

Sister Calliope. Poor. Old. Dumb. Sister Calliope. Small. Stupid. Insignificant. Sister Calliope *(Pause.)* For not being enough. For having too little. For expecting too much. I forgive myself.

Now. If only I could believe it. That would be a miracle.

(SISTER CALLIOPE pours herself a glass of water. It turns to wine in the glass.)

And what a miracle it was.

THE END