

White-Collar Crime
By Andy Accioli
An excerpt.

Act 2, Scene 6
The Rectory
Next Day ~ Morning

Doorbell.

HEBERT passes doorway to open the door.

CALLAHAN (*offstage*)

Hello, I'm here to see Fr. Gallo.

HEBERT (*offstage*)

Come on in. I'm Mitsy Hebert; the rectory housekeeper.

CALLAHAN and HEBERT enter parlor...

CALLAHAN

Bob Callahan.

HEBERT

Fr. Gallo was called out on an emergency. You went to our school, didn't you?

CALLHAN

A lot of years ago.

HEBERT

Fr. Gallo had to go to Haven Crest Nursing Home; they called him for Sister Angelis Marie this morning.

CALLAHAN

I'm sorry to hear that. She was my principal when I was here at Sacred Heart.

HEBERT

I'm sure the Lord's waiting for her. And believe me, when she meets up with Him, she's going to give Him an earful about Him letting her school close.

Doorbell.

Excuse me.

Door opening sound.

HEBERT (*offstage*)

Hello Derek.

SPENCER (*offstage*)

Good morning, Mrs. Hebert. Fr. Gallo called and left a message.

HEBERT (*entering*)

Come on in.

CALLAHAN and SPENCER nod a hello to each other.

Derek Spencer, this is Mr. Callahan.

They shake hands.

CALLAHAN

Bob Callahan.

Pause.

HEBERT

I expect Father to be back any second now. I was just saying how he had to go to Haven Crest to give one of our own nuns the –

Sound of door opening.

Here he is, now.

GALLO hurriedly enters room, removes coat.

GALLO

I'm sorry I'm late. I had an emergency. You must be Bobby Callahan.

CALLAHAN

Good to see you Father. How's Sister Angelis?

GALLO

She's a tough old bird, Bobby. They thought she was dying this morning. I get there and she gets all this fight back in her. Started screaming at me for closing her school. Quite frankly, don't get me wrong, I love her dearly but the woman is evil. She's going to put all of us in the grave before we put her in her's. .

Pause.

Would you boys like some coffee?

CALLAHAN

Love some.

SPENCER

Sure.

HEBERT

I'll be right back.

HEBERT exits

Pause.

GALLO

It's been over 25 years since your family moved out of the parish. How'd you end up back in Middletown?

CALLAHAN

My dad was transferred to Georgia when I was in the 5th grade. I came back north to go to college. I interned at the Herald. They had me on the grunt assignments at first: writing about school committee meetings and houses of the week.

GALLO

As I recall you broke Mayor Crandall's bribery story.

SPENCER

Isn't that the guy who was caught on FBI tape stuffing envelopes full of cash into his brief case?

CALLAHAN

Right. That story finally got me into the newsroom.

GALLO

You have turned into a gifted writer.

CALLAHAN

Thanks to Columbia.

GALLO

And Sacred Heart School.

CALLAHAN

Of course.

Brief pause.

GALLO

Clears his throat.

Over the past couple of years, Bobby, you have been hard on the church.

CALLAHAN

Undeservedly?

GALLO

Not at all. Sometimes we have to get slapped on the side of our head, gets our attention. It's guys like you who have exposed the scandals some wanted to keep well hidden.

CALLAHAN

Think about if we didn't expose the scandals.

GALLO

Good Lord. Most of we clergy didn't know it, didn't realize it but we were rotting from within. I didn't even know such a thing as abuse existed until I read it in the papers. I'm sure most of our priests didn't know.

HEBERT enters with coffee & muffins.

HEBERT

Here you go. There's fresh blueberry muffins.

CALLHAN

Thank you.

SPENCER

Thanks, Mrs. Hebert.

They are served their coffee and muffins.

GALLO

Why I called you last night, why I wanted both of you here this morning, we too have a situation right here at Sacred Heart...

CALLAHAN

Should I take notes?

GALLO

Absolutely. I had this fine assistant priest, Fr. James Cummings...

CALLAHAN

Fr. Gallo, wait. From what I've been told of Bishop Keane, he can be extremely vindictive. Before you say anything I want you to know that if I take notes everything's on the record. I'll try to protect you as my source but if the diocese is successful at securing a court order, you will have to be named as my source. Do you understand?

GALLO

Ah, that's Gallo...with 2 L's.

Lights out.

End of Act 2, Scene 6.

Act 2, Scene 7
Bishop's Office
Tuesday - Noonish

Private phone rings.
Rings again.
Rings again.
Silence.
Private phone rings.
KEANE enters. Picks up phone.

KEANE

Hello... You know every Tuesday morning I attend the Little Sisters of the Poor's prayer breakfast, mother... Did I see what? ... I just got in. Hold on, it must be here somewhere... OH MY GOD..."Bishop Dumps Rebel Priest"... Bishop Lawrence Keane who has presided over the Diocese of Middletown for the past 10 years has..." I'll call you back, mother... I don't give a rat's ass what you tell them at bingo tonight...

Hangs phone up.
Continues to read... occasionally reading a line aloud.

...schemed along with Father Paul Grady, pastor of St. Brendan's Parish, to remove former Sacred Heart parish's Father James Cummings from active duty in the Middletown diocese...
Continues reading

Derek Spencer, a vulnerable, recovering addict was used in Keane's plot as...

Private phone rings.

for which Spencer received a settlement check of \$25,000.

Phone rings.

Turns out the payment was actually payment for a job well done not the result of a priest's sexual assault. .

Checks to see who wrote the story.

Callahan. You son of a bitch.

Gruffly picks up phone.

What is it?

Expression changes... he becomes like a little lamb.
It's CARDINAL EATON on the phone.

Hello, cardinal...Yes, I just saw it. Haven't even finished the article...It's all a lie, of course. It's that Catholic bashing Callahan over at the Herald...I, I, I don't know what to say...Fr. Cummings? No, I don't know where he is...I know he's nowhere in the diocese...But, but this is all a misunderstanding. There was some rumbling of, of an independent priests' association...Then this fellow came forth on his own accord about, about a claim of abuse by Cummings...But, but that's nothing I couldn't handle...I don't understand ...No, let me explain. ..Yes, I'll be there...Fr. Cummings? I'll, I'll try and get Fr. Cummings there as well. But I don't...He'll be there, cardinal. I'll be sure he's there too.

Cardinal has hung up.

KEANE pauses...phone still in his hand.

Good-bye, your eminence.

Pause. He's thinking.

Intercom buzzes Marge.

Marge, get Fr. Gallo over at Sacred Heart on the phone for me.

Female Voice (*over intercom*)

Yes, bishop.

Goes over to liquor. Pours himself a shot,
Downs it. Pours another shot, downs it.

Bishop Keane, Fr. Gallo is out...I have Mrs. Hebert on the line.

RECTORY SET lights up.

KEANE: (*hurriedly pushes phone button*)

Mitsy...Do you know when Frank will be back?...

HEBERT (*into phone*)

Around 6.

KEANE

Six is too late. Can you reach him, it's urgent.

HEBERT

I'll try but it's his day off. He likes to go driving.

KEANE

Can't you reach him on his cell phone? What's his number?

HEBERT

I call him Fr. Old Fashioned. He claims he doesn't need or want one.

KEANE

Okay, okay. This article, in today's Herald. Have you seen it?

HEBERT

First thing this morning. The phone's been ringing off the hook all day.

KEANE

Callahan quotes from an anonymous source at Sacred Heart. Any idea who that might be?

HEBERT

Could have been most anyone, bishop. Everyone loved Fr. Jim.

KEANE

It wasn't Frank, was it?

HEBERT

You've known Fr. Frank a long time. Do you think he'd discuss church business with a stranger, a reporter?

KEANE

Of course he wouldn't. Tell me, any idea how I can reach Jim?

Private phone rings.

HEBERT

After he left Sacred Heart he stayed with some of his friends in Stoughton.

KEANE

That was over six months ago.

HEBERT

We did get a post card from him just before Thanksgiving.

KEANE

Where, where is he? How can I reach him.

Private phone rings.

HEBERT

His postcard said he was working somewhere in Ecuador.

KEANE

As in South America?

HEBERT

Yes, bishop.

KEANE

Mother of God, South America. Oh....If you hear from Frank before 3 tell him to call me. It's URGENT.

Private phone rings again.

HEBERT

Yes, Bishop.

Rectory set lights fade.

KEANE picks up private phone.

KEANE

What??? ... Oh, Grady. Good one, Grady...Of course I read it. And so didn't Eaton. I've got to meet with him this afternoon...I can wipe my ass with that kid's statement, that's how much it's worth...Don't be anxious you told me, it'll work to our advantage you told me . I don't fucking like what's happening. I go down, you go down with me.

Slams receiver down.

Lights out.

End of Act 2, Scene 7

Act 2, Scene 8
The Rectory
Spring - Sunday Afternoon

GALLO is at desk. Using adding machine to total the collections for the week.

HEBERT (*offstage*)

Father, it's on the table. Come on.

GALLO continues to add another number.
Pauses. Looks at tape.

HEBERT (*offstage*)

FATHER.

GALLO

Hold on, hold on.

Hits total a couple of times.

GALLO (*smiles*)

Yes!!!!

HEBERT appears at doorway wearing apron and one oven glove.

HEBERT

For the love of God, would you come to the table now?

HEBERT exits.
Puts papers he was working on in drawer and locks it.

GALLO (*exiting, going offstage*)

We did it again, Mitsy. Over 8 grand again this week.

They're off stage.

HEBERT (*offstage not really caring*)

Okay, okay. Fr. Numbers. Now sit down while it's hot.

Phone rings.

GALLO (*offstage*)

I'd better get that.

Phone rings.

HEBERT (*offstage*)

No. The machine will get it.

Phone rings 2 more times.

Answering Machine: (GALLO's voice)

Thank you for calling Sacred Heart. Weekday masses are every morning at 7. Weekend masses are as follows: Saturday night at 5 o'clock. Sunday morning at 7, 9 and 11AM. The church is located at the corner of Main Avenue and Fourth. If you would like to leave a message wait for the beep. God Bless you...

We hear background noise of the answering machine being rustled during the search for the button to end the outgoing message recording.

GALLO (*voice on machine*) Now what do I do?

HEBERT (*voice on machine*) It says to press the gray button.

GALLO (*voice on machine*) I can't find the blasted gray button. Here's a red one.

HEBERT (*voice on machine*) Right there. This one.

GALLO: (*voice on machine*) Oh.

The message tone/beep sounds.

CUMMINGS (*voice leaving a message*)

I'm impressed: finally an answering machine. Sacred Heart has reached the 21st century. Frank, Mitsy it's Jim. I'm still in Gualaquiza with Clergy Without Borders. I just called Mark over at Blessed Sacrament. He told me about Gulick becoming your new bishop. Mark said the newspaper article quotes an anonymous source from Sacred Heart Parish. I always knew you were a rebel in the ranks, Frank. I'll be home for a couple of weeks toward the end of July, beginning of August. I'll stop and visit then. I've been missing your cooking, Mitsy. God bless.

Sound of phone hanging up.

Answering machine is heard going through it's end of recording cycle as lights fade to out.

End of Act 2, Scene 8

End of Act Two

End of play

Curtain