

when their hands are not employed, always keep them out of sight beneath the panel of their habit.)

MOTHER ABBESS

I think we should be pleased with our efforts. Out of twenty-eight postulants, sixteen or seventeen are ready to enter the novitiate. Let's consider the doubtful ones again. There's Irmagard...

SISTER BERTHE

Reverend Mother, there's no doubt about Irmagard – the religious life is no place for the pious.

MOTHER ABBESS

You mean the pretentiously pious, Sister Berthe. There's Christina – and there's Maria.

SISTER BERTHE

Well, after last night I don't think there can be any doubt in the Reverend Mother's mind about Maria.

MOTHER ABBESS

I gave her permission to leave the Abbey for the day.

SISTER MARGARETTA

I told you, Sister Berthe –
(There is a knocking sound.)

MOTHER ABBESS

Ave!
(SISTER SOPHIA enters, comes to above desk.)

SISTER SOFIA

Reverend Mother, I've brought Maria. She's waiting.

MOTHER ABBESS

Sister Sophia, the Mistress of the Postulants and the Mistress of the Novices do not see eye to eye about Maria. How do you feel about her?

SISTER SOFIA

I love her very dearly. But she always seems to be in trouble, doesn't she?

SISTER BERTHE

(Crosses downstage left.)
Exactly what I say!

MUSIC 4: "MARIA"

She climbs a tree and scrapes her knee,

HER DRESS HAS GOT A TEAR.