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A MODEL FOR MATISSE

A play by Barbara F. Freed and Joe Hanrahan, adapted from the documentary film, A MODEL FOR MATISSE, written and directed by Barbara F. Freed.

CHARACTERS

Monique Bourgeois; becomes Sister Jacques-Marie

Henri Matisse

SETTING

A small studio/living area.

A canvas on easel, back to audience, and a window (CL); chair for posing, stool for painter; a table for paints; a couch, another small table to hold items, Matisse's larger fan chair, a large Philodendron or two (L); a table and two chairs, paper and drawing instruments on table, with paisley cloth. Vase of fresh flowers on table. (R). Depending on playing space, a screen (R) for costume change.

Screen upstage (C) for projections.

PROJECTIONS

Projections noted are either taken from the FILM; artwork approved from the MATISSE estate; or researched STILLs

NOTE

In many instances in the script, particularly when projecting a number of pieces of art or Chapel design, usually supported by music, there will be a longer period of time to sit on and review the images, longer than typical pauses.

1

Lights Fade Up

MUSIC into PROJECTION, then MUSIC under and out

PROJECTION - STILLS: Window, with curtains, seeing flowers, trees. Into images of Nice and surrounding hill towns. Each slowly, gradually dissolving into the next.

MATISSE on couch L, sitting up to write something. MONIQUE enters stage R.

MONIQUE: Ours is the story of...an improbable relationship. A true friendship, full of support and care...and love. A friendship which started with...an almost imperceptible spark...an instant mutual recognition of a similar character...and endured due to the repeated times that fate stepped in. A story of a deep attachment that resulted in a magnificent work of art, a timeless testimony to the spirit.

(MONIQUE moves RC)

It began in 1942. Everywhere, there was war. My family had been ruined by it, and later in that year my father would pass away from injuries he'd suffered in the previous war. Life had always been very hard. I had moved away from my home and mother, who still lived in one of the perched medieval villages outside of Nice, to attend nursing school in the city. Now I needed to help out with a little money.

So I looked for a job. One day I saw an ad posted on a board in the nursing school

MATISSE: (lying on couch, crossing out a word or two as he writes) Artist Henri Matisse...is looking for...a young...night nurse...(crossing out) ...looking for...a young...pretty...night nurse.

(pause)

MONIQUE: Well...I'm young. But I don't know about the rest.

MATISSE: (to audience) One should always strive to surround oneself with beauty.

MONIQUE: My friends said, "Go ahead, apply." I didn't know he was a famous artist. They said, "You've never heard of Henri Matisse?" "No", I said. But I was scared just knowing he was an artist.

And...I had only finished my first year of nursing school. But I didn't mention that. (small laugh)

(decides, and moves a few steps L)

PROJECTION: from FILM: The Regina

I went to apply for the position. Monsieur Matisse lived in a very imposing apartment building. The Regina. A woman answered the door. A very tall, very blonde, very beautiful woman.

2

MONIQUE (cont): With a strong accent, she said “He is a sick man, who will need a great deal of attention. He lives in constant pain, which he tries to hide. And he has terrible trouble sleeping. He’s a very important man, so you will have to take the best possible care of him.”

(pause)

“Would you like to come and meet Monsieur Matisse?”

(MONIQUE moves L towards MATISSE on couch.)

MONIQUE: As I entered into the front hall, the first thing I saw was a tall statue...of a Greek, I think. And there...staring me right in the face...was an enormous penis.

(pause)

I thought, “This might be fun.”
And then I met Monsieur Matisse.

(MATISSE on couch. Eyes closed. After a bit, he peeks at her. She pretends not to notice. He closes eyes again. Peeks again.)

MONIQUE: Monsieur Matisse. I am Monique Bourgeois.

(MATISSE opens eyes a bit wider. Nods grudgingly.)

MATISSE: Madame Lydia! She’ll do.

PROJECTION: from FILM, still of Lydia

MONIQUE: Madame Lydia was his assistant and secretary. She was Russian. With the most beautiful white skin and deep blue eyes I had ever seen.

She told me Monsieur Matisse had spent three months in a hospital in Lyon, where he had abdominal surgery. His stomach muscles were cut, and he had great difficulty standing. She explained everything I was to do for him.

(MONIQUE moves to the couch, moves his writing tablet and pen to a table, adjusts his pillow and blanket as she talks.)

MONIQUE: I prepared food for him. Warm milk with wheat germ. I bathed him. Changed his dressings. He talked very little. And barely opened his eyes.

(MONIQUE stands, waiting for next duty)

MATISSE: Go get a book. Read to me

3

MONIQUE: I went to a room that had a tremendous number of books. I didn't know anything about libraries. I grabbed the first book I saw.

(MONIQUE starts to sit in chair next to couch; mimes opening a book)

MATISSE: No. Put that back where you found it. That one's not for you. Get another one.

MONIQUE: I got another one. I sat down next to him and read. It helped him fall asleep. I stayed beside him all night. At times I fell asleep, too. (MONIQUE bows her head, then starts with a sound.)

MATISSE: (waking her) What's that?

MONIQUE: Sorry...I...

MATISSE: I'm the one who's supposed to fall asleep.

MONIQUE: (a small laugh, then) On my second night there...we began to talk.

MATISSE: So, Mademoiselle Monique...where are you from?

MONIQUE: The village of Vence. Above Nice.

MATISSE: Is your family there?

MONIQUE: Yes...(smiles, trying to evade the topic.) My mother lives there. (pause) We were originally from Metz, and we were sent there by cattle car. It was awful.

MATISSE: Mmmm. Then, Did they encourage you to move here, become a nurse?

MONIQUE: No.

MATISSE: Did you always want to be a nurse?

MONIQUE: (small laugh) No.

(MATISSE laughs)

MONIQUE: I wanted to be an artist.

(MATISSE groans. MONIQUE small laugh, changing his groan to a smile)

MATISSE: Tell me about your family. Was your childhood happy?

MONIQUE: Mm...My father is a soldier. He always treated us like we were in the military. He was injured in the war...the one some years ago...and he's in a hospital now.

4

MATISSE: That war. This war. Mmph.

MONIQUE: Before...the war, my parents talked of sending me to art school. But, everything changed.

MATISSE: Consider yourself lucky not to have gone to art school. You would have lost all your creativity.

(pause)

MONIQUE: And your family, Monsieur?

MATISSE: My wife is in Paris. Now Madame Lydia assists me. First she helped my wife. Then she was one of my models.

MONIQUE: She's very beautiful.

MATISSE: Yes. She is. One of my favorite models. Now, a great help to my work.

MONIQUE: And, do you have children?

MATISSE: Two sons, and a daughter. My daughter...she is with the Resistance. I'm not sure where she is, how she is. If she's even alive.

(pause)

MONIQUE: Did you always want to be an artist?

MATISSE: No. (They both laugh a little) I pursued a law degree. But I fell ill when I was young. And while I was recovering, I began to draw.

MONIQUE: So your family didn't encourage you to be an artist?

(pause)

MATISSE: No!

(They both laugh)

MONIQUE: (standing) Eventually, his strength began to return.

(MONIQUE helps MATISSE from couch; helps him put on jacket.)

MATISSE: Come. Let me show you some of my paintings.

(MONIQUE holds his arm as they walk downstage, then walks ahead as she looks at the paintings.)

PROJECTION: 3 MATISSE PAINTINGS - plus backs of canvases to indicate a larger number of artworks

MATISSE: This is...the little marble room.

MONIQUE: So...many...

(pause, as she surveys paintings; she looks at him, then back at paintings)

MATISSE: Do you dislike them that much?

MONIQUE: No...no, I...

MATISSE: What do you think?

MONIQUE: (pause, as she formulates answer) Oh, the colors. I like the colors a lot. Yes. (pause) But the drawing? (She shakes her head.) Not so much.

MATISSE: Now that...is a very good answer.

MONIQUE: Oh, well...

MATISSE: That is an excellent answer. At least you didn't say, "Oh, dear Master, your work is just wonderful."

(MATISSE laughs, MONIQUE small laugh. She walks him back to his easel.)

MONIQUE: He knew I liked to draw, and asked to see my little drawings. So I brought him some of my work. (She hands Matisse drawings from the table. He places it on easel. He looks at it for a time.) (Matisse turns a drawing upside down) Why are you looking at them upside down?

MATISSE: If you want to see the strength of the lines, the force or depth of the strokes, it's good to turn a drawing upside down.

MONIQUE: He taught me about perspective, and more. I began to understand...about painting...about his painting, too.

As he grew stronger, we would walk. We visited the Roman ruins in the park near his apartment.

PROJECTION from FILM: Roman ruins

6

(MONIQUE takes his arm, they begin a small circle of the stage, coming down R, then circling to down L)

MATISSE: Here...all around here...this was once a city the size of Pompeii. Shops, homes. Most of it is gone, but these are ruins of the bath, the spa. A very popular Roman activity.

MONIQUE: And he talked of his work. Always his work.

MATISSE: Many of my paintings...drawings...are still in Paris. In storage at the Banque de France. When...the Germans...came in, I was afraid. Afraid they might confiscate it all. Or destroy them as they had with other artists. Life is so terrible for everyone, isn't it? But, Pablo agreed to serve as my authorized representative. And he's let me know they're safe.

MONIQUE: Pablo...?

(they stop their walk)

MATISSE: (looks at her, shakes his head a bit.) Picasso.

MONIQUE: (As they continue walk.) He would lean on me though I wasn't that strong. We would return from the walks, both exhausted. Eventually, he bought a car. That was much easier, on both of us.

In time, his regular nurse returned, and I was no longer needed.

(MATISSE moves upstage to easel. MONIQUE moves R)

I returned to my nursing studies. He returned to his work.

MATISSE: Au voir.

MUSIC, in, then out

PROJECTION: STILLS of Nice

Then one day - totally out of the blue - he called.

MATISSE: I want you to come pose. Will you be a model for me?

MONIQUE: To pose?

MATISSE: Yes.

(pause)

MATISSE: What?

7

MONIQUE: Monsieur, I just...I certainly didn't expect that.

MATISSE: Why are you so surprised?

MONIQUE: It...well...when I was young...my parents told me that I was ugly.

MATISSE: What? Oh, my...(laughter)

MONIQUE: But I told them, "Well, it's not my fault. You made me the way I am!"

MATISSE: Good for you.

MONIQUE: Yes, Monsieur. I'll be honored to pose for you.

(MONIQUE moves back to one of chairs, stage R, where she removes a jacket, and there is something she can put over her simple garb, exposing her arms. Plus a necklace and bracelet that she puts on. She lets down her hair.)

MONIQUE: Madame Lydia provided me with something different to wear...along with jewelry... fake jewelry, costume jewelry. She said there should always be jewelry. And my arms had to be bare. Always bare arms

(MONIQUE moves to stool, stage L)

MATISSE: (regarding her, up and down) Not bad. Not bad at all. Have a seat. (continues regarding her, MONIQUE sits on stool.)

MONIQUE: I must tell you. I've never worn makeup in my life. (MATISSE nods, begins to draw) I was just a Girl Guide. (MATISSE looks quizzical) A Girl Guide. For trips for...the girls. And all your books...I've never read a book without my mother's permission. (MATISSE nods again.)

MATISSE: Mmmm.

MONIQUE: But I am very happy to be your model.

MATISSE: Be still. You know, when I paint, I...I have difficulty painting without a human presence. I require a model.

My wife modeled for me. Then, there were all the...pretty, young film extras. Then professional models. Some I worked with for many years. Like...Madame Lydia.

MONIQUE: Your art, Monsieur...

MATISSE: Be still. (pause, drawing) I don't paint like everybody. It's my gift. And my curse.

8

(MATISSE stands back.. Looks to Monique.)

MATISSE: Come.

(MONIQUE stands, comes around to view.)

PROJECTION: MONIQUE from MATISSE

(MONIQUE looks a long time. Looks to MATISSE. Back to canvas)

MONIQUE: I...(small laugh)...expected a...a real portrait. One of those beautiful portraits like the great artists painted. I'm not sure about...

MATISSE: It's called...'MONIQUE.'

MONIQUE: I don't see myself here. But, yes... Monique is my name.

MATISSE: Well? So?

MONIQUE: I...don't...really like it. And it doesn't look like me. Really.

MATISSE: If you want reality, take a photograph.

PROJECTION: Monique paintings from MATISSE

MONIQUE: (sits again on stool, MATISSE back to work) But he kept asking me to pose. He painted four different portraits of me in oil and many, many charcoal sketches. Whenever we had an appointment, he would call, or send me a note, with an envelope that he decorated himself. And always, he would tell me...

MATISSE: Make sure and wash your hair. I want it soft...natural.

MONIQUE: He loved my hair. He would, sometimes, tease me. So I teased him. Back.
(pause) I'm thinking...yes, I plan to cut my hair. Very short.

MATISSE: What!?! Don't you dare! (MONIQUE small laugh)

MONIQUE: As he painted, I began to understand him and his art. I saw how his work revealed his emotion, let his feelings come through the painting.

MATISSE: I don't paint a table. Or a portrait. I paint the emotions they produce in me.

MONIQUE: And sometimes the emotions were hard to reveal.

MATISSE: MERDE! (MATISSE takes drawing from easel, crumbles it. Starts on another)

LYDIA (Voiceover/SFX): Merde!

MONIQUE: When Matisse cursed, Madame Lydia would repeat his curses.

MATISSE: That Cossack!

MONIQUE: (imitating him) That Cossack! (MATISSE laughs)

MONIQUE: From his art, and then from his company, I learned he was a joyful man. Not the cold, serious one that everyone described.

He was a very sensitive, and fun-loving man who would always tease me.

(MATISSE comes over to her, whispers something in her ear, she laughs)

But he was always very gentle with me.

MATISSE: Merci, Mademoiselle.

(MONIQUE up, moves R. She will remove jewelry, clothing she put on to model; MATISSE steps back, regards work)

PROJECTION from FILM: War ruins in the City of Nice

MUSIC: In, under and then out

MONIQUE: Outside the studio, it was not a happy time.

MATISSE: Since the beginning of the war, everyone was afraid that Germany's allies, the Italians, would come across the border and occupy our city. Everyone was frightened, no one had enough food.

MONIQUE: There was great deprivation. (MONIQUE moves L, towards MATISSE.)
Maman tries to grow food, but she can't.

MATISSE: The soil around Nice is not good. It's good for flowers, but...

MONIQUE; We ripped the flowers out to plant vegetables. But it didn't work. There's not much of anything for anyone.

MATISSE: You...your mother...are hungry?

MONIQUE: Maman sometimes goes to the market at 5am. And returns with nothing. There are days when we have nothing to eat. We've started trading wine for milk.

MATISSE: I can help. You have to eat better.

MONIQUE: Monsieur Matisse gave us tickets for food and sugar. But he would not deal with the black market.

MATISSE: You have to eat more. You're too flat-chested.

MONIQUE: (looking down at her chest and then after a small laugh) He also helped his fellow artists in the area. He gave Bonnard canvas, and he gave oils to Rouault.

(MATISSE moves to sit on couch)

MATISSE: By 1943, there were threats of evacuation. Air attacks - bombings - were expected all along the Riviera. (MONIQUE moves to him near couch)

MONIQUE: What will you do?

MATISSE: What will I do? I left Paris to come to Nice a long time ago. Long before this terrible war.

Now, with the Germans occupying Paris, more and more people are heading for the South. And now, my friends...my family...are urging me to leave France altogether.

MONIQUE: Maybe you should.

MATISSE: But how? It would be like deserting. If everyone who has any value leaves France...if I leave, if Picasso would leave...then what remains of France?

MONIQUE: (Moving Right, turning Center) We soon heard that the Americans had landed. In North Africa. So it was then that the Italians came into France. And Matisse agreed to move. To the hilltop village of Vence, 20 miles inland from Nice. He moved and I stayed to continue my studies.

MUSIC in, under

PROJECTION: STILLS, Vence countryside

MATISSE: (stands) I rented a villa called Le Reve - "The Dream." It was small and simple. It had to be. (MATISSE looks around) But beautiful. Lush vegetation all around. An escape from the war.

MONIQUE: And then, for the first time, fate...destiny...serendipity...call it what you will...played an unexpected role in my friendship with Monsieur Matisse. I had never been physically strong...and at that time..I became seriously ill.

My mother sent me to recuperate at a convalescent home run by Dominicans. In...Vence, of all places. Directly across the street from Matisse's villa.

In my time with him, I had always felt...free, lighter, able to breathe. His studio, his home, was a haven of peace.

11

MUSIC: Picks up pace, continues for a bit under, then out

MONIQUE: So I was near Matisse once more. I went to visit him and we renewed our friendship.

(MONIQUE moves L; she and MATISSE bow to each other)

MONIQUE: Monsieur Matisse.

MATISSE: Mademoiselle. So wonderful to see you.

MONIQUE: Yes.

(MONIQUE sits on stool; he draws)

MONIQUE: I helped him as much as I could. He asked me to pose for him again. He did lots of sketches.

MATISSE: (painting, sketching) It puzzles me. This simple, innocent, lively girl. More than any other model...she has renewed my determination to push forward into unknown territory.

MONIQUE: How have you been feeling?

MATISSE: I always fight the pain. My body is fading, even my eyes. But aaaah...those doctors...they won't say for sure, but I get the impression they won't have me to work on for too much longer.

MONIQUE: Oh, I hope...I hope not....

MATISSE: Don't worry. I have vowed to live my life on my terms. The past few years...the solitude...I have looked on as private preparation for the art I am yet to create. I've been like a pianist practicing scales. An acrobat rehearsing balancing techniques before heading out on the high wire.

MONIQUE: For Monsieur Matisse, painting was as physically wearing and emotionally draining as ever. And so he renewed a technique of cutting sheets of colored paper into large cutouts, something he'd done years before, but now it was with a gleeful abandon.

MUSIC: Jazz theme in and under

PROJECTION from FILM: MATISSE paper art

(MONIQUE has two large sheets of brightly colored paper. She hands one to MATISSE, who has scissors and starts to cut. She sits by him.)

MATISSE: Here! Paint this for me.

MONIQUE: I would color the paper for him. Yards and yards of paper...in every color. He seemed to thrive in this world. This is beautiful!

MATISSE: (as he cuts) This...is...painting with scissors. Like a sculptor...carving into color. It is the graphic equivalent...of the sensation of flight.

MUSIC: Continues for a bit as MATISSE cuts, joyfully. Many bits of colored paper falling on the floor around her.

MATISSE: I'm recreating the exterior world. The sea, sky, birds and animals. I get out so little.

(After a bit, MONIQUE comes downstage R. MUSIC will fade as she talks.)

MONIQUE: I was happy, working with Monsieur Matisse once more. But, still, I worried about my health. Would I recover? Would I ever be strong enough? What kind of life can I have? I so appreciated the loving care of the nuns. I admired them. I think I envied them. And so I decided. If I am going to have half a life, why not spend it working for the benefit of others.

I decided I was going to become a nun.

I confided in Madame Lydia first. She said "Whatever you do, don't tell Monsieur Matisse!" But he found out.

MATISSE: Don't tell me that! Don't...! You can't do that! (standing) What are you doing? What are you thinking? No! No! No! You're out of your mind!

MONIQUE: I thought about it and I...

MATISSE: You thought wrong! How did you ever come up with such an idea? I wanted to teach you to draw! You have talent! You can become an artist!

MONIQUE: ...and I decided...

MATISSE: Listen...forget this and...money...I can give you money!

MONIQUE: (stage whisper to audience) "It was a lot of money." No. I don't want any. I won't need...

MATISSE: This cannot be...

MONIQUE: I'm sorry.

(MATISSE sits on couch.)

MONIQUE: He stopped working for several months. And he stopped speaking to me.

(MONIQUE moves upstage) I would be leaving Vence to begin my novitiate. I couldn't promise to write him because I wasn't sure if I'd be allowed to. I received a money order from him...500 francs, and a short note that said...

MATISSE: (writing) "With my warmest wishes. Use this money to go see your mother or for something else that will make her happy."

MONIQUE: I hated to leave. But I had made up my mind.

(MONIQUE exits for costume change into Dominican habit)

PROJECTIONS from FILM: Matisse letters - Decorated envelopes

MATISSE: (sits, crossing out as he writes) "Dear...Sister?...Sister...Monique Bourgeois. Very often I've wanted to write to you but I did not know how to do it - I am so far from your current life - I know however that this distance is only superficial because like you, all my strength is focused on a spiritual realm. But for me it is through continued hard work on my painting. We are on parallel roads under the same spiritual domain.

I may, however, speak to you about my work. I started several illustrations of the work of poets. They were a great success.

Are you still drawing?

And how is your health? I also think of this sometimes - you need to take care to preserve it.

I have just spent two weeks with my daughter. She was a prisoner of the Germans for six months. She came out of it alive, although she suffered torture.

Dear Sister, believe in my warm memories, and don't forget me in your prayers."

She answered my letter immediately. And, true to her character, she got right to the heart of the matter.

(MATISSE picks up letter from Sr. Jacques)

MONIQUE (Voiceover/SFX): Monsieur, you are wrong. Our distance is not superficial. The thing that separates us...is the sacraments. Our Lord said there is no salvation for those outside the church.

MATISSE: Hmpff!!!

(MATISSE roams, upset, around the stage. Then settles back down to write. Starts writing then crumples up and throws down several pieces of paper, before he resumes to his satisfaction.)

MATISSE: After a lifetime of dedication, I don't need any lectures about religion. And I don't need sacraments to glorify the name of God. Art can glorify him.

My contemplation cannot be simply admiring, but I must be active. I put it in movement with all my creative resources to raise the spirit of my fellow humans towards a region which transports them beyond their everyday lif

I have gone as far as Tahiti to admire the beauty of the light he created, so that I might share it with others in my work.

(pause)

MATISSE (cont): This is for you, dear Sister. This is my profession of faith. You...your letters... have provoked me to find...in my deepest self...things which I never formulated in words, because I have never felt the need to explain to others.

I thank you for your prayers. If you would, ask God to grant me the spirit to stay in touch with him. And to give me the health and life to continue my long, laborious career, in an effort to provide the earthly nourishment of my art in order to reveal the manifest glory of his creation to those who are blind to it.

And you. Please...please...stay in touch with me.

(MATISSE puts down writing tablet, pen; stands, grabs paper cuts a bit. MONIQUE, now SR. JACQUES-MARIE enters R)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Although his letters were full of professed faith and the spirit., I could tell he was furious. That last letter was ten pages long. With lots of things crossed out. (small laugh)

MATISSE: We continued writing. And I stopped crossing things out. Finally, the war ended. And...life...came back. And then, one day, in 1946...Miraculously...She came back to see me.

MUSIC: In and under, then out

(MATISSE walks C stage, stops, regards SR. JACQUES-MARIE. Laughs heartily, she giggles.)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Monsieur.

MATISSE: Madamoi...Soeur...?

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Soeur Jacques-Marie. Now.

MATISSE: Soeur Jacques!

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: When I took my final vows, I was given the name Sister Jacques-Marie. And, fate...fate touched us directly once more. In a very unusual break with Dominican tradition, I was assigned to the town where I came from, I was sent back to Vence.

To serve as a nursing sister, in the very Dominican home that had treated me. As luck would have it, Matisse was still living in Le Reve, right across the street from the convent.

PROJECTION from FILM: Convent in Vence

15

And our relationship resumed. As if I had never left him.

(Sr. Jacques sits at table R)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: He still loved teasing me.

(the following is a ritual game they've played a few times.)

MATISSE: Tea?

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: No thank you.

MATISSE: What? Why?

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: You know I can't accept it.

MATISSE: Why not? You always used to have a cup of tea when you visited.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: I'm not permitted to drink anything while I'm out of the convent.

MATISSE: (shaking his head) Madame Lydia, would you please bring the sister a cup of tea that she can take back to the convent. And make sure she brings that cup back to us!

(MATISSE gives her a stern look, SR. JACQUES-MARIE laughs, then gives him a fierce look. They both laugh.)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: And he would do the same with candy. He'd open a box and...

MATISSE: Just one, Soeur Jacques?

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: No, thank You.

(MATISSE covers his eyes)

MATISSE: I won't look. And I won't tell anyone.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: I teased him back, all I could. Then I learned I might have to be operated on, for appendicitis troubles. Matisse learned of this.

MATISSE: Oh, when you're in the hospital, I'll bring you flowers. Or, I could bring you drawings of flowers. Which would you like?

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: (thinks a moment) Both! (they laugh)

The day of my surgery, he called at eight in the morning to check on me. I was still on the operating table! The day after, I received a note from him, saying Madame Lydia would be visiting, bringing me some oranges. But the next day who should be there but Monsieur Matisse him

self, with an armful of flowers...magnificent yellow parrot tulips, and large bouquets of anemones. Plus candy, a book, and oranges.

I think he was hoping to see my without my wimple and veil. To see my hair once more.

(MATISSE moves L, obviously disappointed at not seeing her hair. SR. JACQUES-MARIE rises, goes C stage)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Madame Lydia was surprised by our friendship. She referred to it as a...spirited... flirtation. (giggles)

MATISSE: Lydia is crazy! (to SR. JACQUES-MARIE) I'm kidding.
(offstage to LYDIA) I'm kidding! (walking back to couch, to grab letters)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Monsieur Matisse called it...

MATISSE: A "flower-tation." Our conversations are a shower of flowers. In our words, we throw rose petals at each other. Our tenderness needs no words. Yet it overflows from them.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Flower-tation?

MATISSE: There are always flowers. For those who want to see them.

PROJECTION from FILM: Matisse decorated letters, envelopes

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Later, I was able to read letters he wrote at this time. To one friend, he said...

MATISSE: (sitting at couch, writing letter) My nun visited me today. She is still truly a marvelous person. When I see her ride by on her bicycle, I can think of nothing better to do than to watch her.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Part of my job was to pay regular visit to my patients. So I always rode my small bicycle.

(SR. JACQUES-MARIE brings a piece of art downstage, stands C)

PROJECTION from FILM: Sr. Jeanne

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: In my nursing duties, I took special care of an elderly nun, Sr. Jeanne. She had been in the convent for many years, served as Sacristan, and had always wanted a real chapel for us.

Our chapel at Vence was a chapel in name only. In fact, we prayed in an old garage. Falling down. With a leaky roof. We used wash tubs to catch the rain. (small laugh)
Before she died Sr. Jeanne told me, "You'll get your chapel. I'll take care of it when I'm up in heaven." (SR. JACQUES-MARIE rolls her eyes) Well. It was a nice thought.
I sat with her at the end.

PROJECTION from FILM: Sr. Jacques' Assumption

As I sat with her with her I started to sketch, the Assumption, the ascension of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven. I don't know why I did that at the time, but once more coincidence... fate...stepped in. This simple sketch was to take on proportions I could never have imagined.

(MATISSE walks center. SR. JACQUES shows him the sketch, he regards)

MATISSE: (looks a long time) This...is...(he looks towards her, nods) This...could be a stained glass window. Yes. This must be a stained glass window. You will put it in your chapel.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: We...have no chapel. Just a...a garage.

MATISSE: You have no chapel? (SR. JACQUES-MARIE shakes her head. MATISSE stands, walks a few steps L, turns) Just a garage?

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: A garage with holes in the roof.

MATISSE: This will be a stained glass window. You'll make a stained glass window of this.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: I don't know how to make a stained glass window.

MATISSE: I'll show you how. (pause)
And then...I'll design a chapel. A chapel that will honor this drawing.

(MATISSE sits on couch L, takes pen/paper, begins to sketch)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: A chapel?

MATISSE: A chapel.

(SR. JACQUES-MARIE moves C)

MUSIC: upbeat classical passage begins, and will run throughout the story of the Chapel

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: A chapel. (pause) I was dedicated to Monsieur Matisse, but I still had to tell my superior, the Reverend Mother what he had said. She looked confused at first. "We have no plans for a new chapel. No, no chapel. He can't be serious. And he, above all, cannot do a chapel. Not with all those half-dressed women he paints. The church will never allow it. (pause) Let him keep talking about it. He'll forget all about it anyway."
But I knew Matisse. When he had an idea, he would never let go.

PROJECTION from Film: Rayssiguier.

And then, yet once again, fate was watching over us. There was a young monk - Brother Louis Rayssiguier - convalescing with the nuns in a nearby village. He asked if there was anyone in-

teresting to meet in the area. (giggle) They told him Matisse lived nearby. Brother Rayssiguier had always been interested in art and architectural studies, and he asked how he could meet him. He was told go and tell him you're an architect. And say you want to talk to him about Sr. Jacques' chapel.

When Brother returned from his visit to Monsieur Matisse, he announced..."A new chapel will be built!" He and Matisse had planned it all.

MATISSE: I already have the whole thing my head!

SR. JACQUES-MARIE (cont): Whew. I had been in trouble with Reverend Mother. But maybe now I would be off the hook. (small laugh)

Once again, the Reverend Mother said to me, there will be no chapel. But...Matisse will talk, I told her.

And he did. Soon there it was...in the newspapers. Reverend Mother was furious. My life became harder and harder. She made it difficult in every way she could. But for me, given who I am, the harder she made this for me, the more determined I became. I was as tough as nails.

PROJECTION from FILM: Couturier

And Monsieur Matisse gained a champion. Perf Marie-Alain Couturier, who was in Paris. He was an artist in his own right, with a true appreciation for Matisse's work. He wanted to bring modern art into Catholic houses of worship after the war. So he intervened with the church hierarchy, and soon he had Reverend Mother calmed down. (small laugh)

So Monsieur Matisse set to work. And for the next four years, no detail would escape his eye.

MUSIC picks up a beat

PROJECTION from FILM: plays/blueprints of Chapel

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: (moving L) Brother Rayssiguier suggested we bring in an architect to help.

MATISSE: Yes.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: (moving up R to table) Who...?

MATISSE: Brother suggested Le Corbusier. Well...(laugh)...now he's good. (pause) But I'll talk to Auguste Perret. He'll do as I say. (standing)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: In 1949, The cornerstone was to be laid in a benediction ceremony.

MATISSE: I do not want to attend.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: But Monsieur...

MATISSE: I don't want the attention. It should be on the Chapel.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: We...I will miss you there.

PROJECTIONS from FILM: Laying of cornerstone, and workmen

MATISSE: But Frere Couturier told me about the ceremony later. You were there.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Yes.

MATISSE: And you tried to stay in the background.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: I was afraid. I thought the attention would cause more trouble.

MATISSE: But the construction crew spotted you. And called you over.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Oh, you know the way workmen are. (giggle, then imitating workmen)
"Hey Sister! Hey ! Sister Jacques! Over Here!"

MATISSE: You walked over to them, trying to shush them. But, there were the photographers in the crowd. And there you are, in the center of the photos.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: The Bishop saw our Mother Superiors, Mother Gilles and Mother Agnes rushing up. He said, "You should have seen them hurrying to get in the picture. They were visibly upset. They were jealous."

(they both laugh, heartily)

MATISSE: But it was only right. You are the true initiator of the project.

SR. JACQUE-MARIE: Oh no. No. It's you. It's you.

MATISSE: It's you.

SR. JACQUES: No, it's...(pause)...what I did, I was...(turning center)...I assisted him. I was a liaison for the project. With my religious order. With the artists he worked with. And...with the public.

MATISSE: And assist me, she did. She observed. She commented. She certainly served as a spiritual guard against the critics. And she created an essential piece for the Chapel, at the very beginning of the process.

(MATISSE moves to small table, L. Starts sorting through plans)

PROJECTION from FILM: Designs/blueprints

MATISSE: Soeur Jacques, I need you to do something. I want you to build me a model of the Chapel, based on my design. Just...say, 1/10th the size of the Chapel.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: (moving L) A model? One-tenth the size! I have no idea how to do that!

MATISSE: Of course you do.

(pause)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: So, I found some plywood, and a little handsaw. And got to it.

MATISSE: Now it must have everything! Windows! Everything!

PROJECTION from FILM: Sr. Jacques' Model

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Monsieur Matisse was delighted with my model. And he used it for everything.

(She moves C) Mother Superior was not happy when she heard I'd built the model. She said "You have no time to do that, You should be attending to your work." I told her "But he asked me. I had to do it."

She insisted once again the Chapel would never be built.

I said, "Well, maybe you're right. But they're working on it right now!" (pause, then small laugh)

She said, "You have no right to be involved. Besides, this won't be a place to pray. It will be like being in a circus tent." (small laugh)

That was just the start of criticism. But I had big problems of my own. I was the youngest sister, and had only taken my temporary vows. But now I was given the tacit responsibility for this project. Amidst the resistance from my superior, and hesitation from the rest of the sisters, I was caught right in the middle. No matter. Matisse stayed on track, and spoke movingly of the work.

MATISSE: I am putting my body and soul into this project. It will be the culmination of my career. Everything I've done...my paintings, drawings, sculpture, cut-outs...the motifs...will be represented.

It will enable me to create vast distances within a limited space. The goal of representational art is to expand the surface so that the viewer is no longer aware of the dimensions of the world. There will be white walls. With drawings in black. The color will come through the windows.

SR. JACQUE-MARIE: The drawings...what color?...black?

MATISSE: Black is a real color.

PROJECTION from FILM: Stained glass window studies

MATISSE: The most important element will be light. The light will be reflected on the tiles, on the ceramics. And the light will bring everything to life.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: He did many different studies for the stained glass windows.

MATISSE: In one, I wanted to contrast the color with the black and white habits of the Dominicans I have come to know.

PROJECTIONS from FILM: Final window, above altar

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: For the study of the window above the altar, he used a design based on the prickly pear fig, a plant that grew all over the area.

PROJECTIONS: Prickly pear fig, then back to window

MATISSE: The final window...which I will call The Tree Of Life...will act...as a stage curtain. Ready to reveal the drama to happen.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: The colors of the windows were blue, green and yellow. The sky and sea...the plants of the earth...the sun. (pause)

But, Monsieur...Those colors...will make people look terrible.

MATISSE: You worry about the people. I'll worry about the chapel.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: But...Oh, when the sun comes through the windows...

MATISSE: ...they'll change color.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Sometimes blue, sometimes yellow, but...

MATISSE: ...sometimes...often...mauve and pink.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Beautiful, Monsieur.

MATISSE: We'll have a chapel; a chapel which is a place of happiness. Where everyone can find hope. Whatever their burdens, they can leave them at the door. Just as Muslims leave their dusty sandals outside the entrance to their mosques.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: But all the windows...we'll be able to see everything outside.

MATISSE: You should not be cutoff from the outside world. You have to pray for the people out there, too. (MATISSE focuses on work)

PROJECTION from FILM: Vintage Paris Match, other headlines

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: (stepping down L) The press started to go wild. The great artist, Henri Matisse, collaborating with the church to build this chapel. (Back to MATISSE L) A reporter from Paris Match wanted to talk with me.

MATISSE: What happened?

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: He asked if you ever painted me nude. I said, "No!" "But what if he had asked?" I told him you would never have asked. "Why not? I told him "Because he knew I would never have done it." I stood on the door step and stared him down.

(MATISSE laughing)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Vogue magazine used a drawing that made me look like a movie star.

MATISSE: (laughing) Oh, my goodness!

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: With a headline, 'Great Artist Enticed By Pure Young Nun Into The Embrace Of The Catholic Church.'

MATISSE: (serious) Oh, no.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: And there were other headlines, like 'The Two Women In Matisse's Life.' (shaking head)

MATISSE: Only two?

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: And one headline. "Matisse Sacrifices 800 Million Francs For Sr. Jacques, The Dominican Nun."

MATISSE: Mmmm. I'll bill you.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: They've gone too far.

(pause)

MATISSE: Don't worry. Today's newspapers will be tomorrow's trash.

PROJECTION: STILLS of Vence, countryside

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: (moving down C) But Matisse worried. He was often anguished. About everything. The work on the Chapel, certainly. Also his health. Money. His standing as an artist. He received many letters, some containing terrible, personal insults. They hurt him. Even other artists took after him.

PROJECTION STILLS: Different Picasso shots

MATISSE: Picasso asked why I was doing a chapel. 'Why not a market? You could paint fruit, flowers, yellow, orange.' He asked, 'Do you believe in God?' (pause) I answered, when I work. When I work, I feel assisted by...something...by someone. Someone who can help me do more than I've done before. He asked if I felt I had the moral right to do this. (laughs a bit, shakes head) When I work, I am in a state close to prayer.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: He told me many stories about Picasso. It was a complicated relationship. They were great friends. And rivals. Matisse was a kind of older brother to him.

MATISSE: We met at one of Gertrude Stein's salons in Paris. Some 50 years ago. In those days, I was somewhat of a star there. Stein had bought one of my early works, and displayed it prominently, I was not reserved, I was the life of the party, a leader of all the talk. Pablo sat in corner. He couldn't speak French, only Spanish. And he dressed like a mechanic.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Even before they knew each other they were aware of each other.

MATISSE: No one ever looked at our work as closely as we looked at the other's.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: They would exchange paintings. Giving each other some of their least favorite work.

MATISSE: We could point out the weaknesses of the other. And thus, learn.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: But they were different personalities.

MATISSE: Picasso, the Spaniard. The man of the south. He was warm, and when he got to know you, outgoing, exuberant. I was the man from the north. Colder. More distant.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: But no, you're not that.

MATISSE: (shrugs, then) Picasso once said, "God is another painter. Like me." (laughs)

The way we worked was very different.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: How?

MATISSE: I paint from nature, from feeling. Picasso from his imagination. And women? All my life, I have appreciated, I have cultivated relationships with strong women...like you...

(SR. JACQUES-MARIE blushes, looks down)

MATISSE: To Picasso, women are either goddesses...or doormats. (laughs)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: I wish he understood what we're doing...

MATISSE: Ah, he understands. He has his own take on religion. He said, "Why don't you design a brothel?" And I said, "Because I haven't been asked!"

(SR. JACQUES-MARIE laughs)

PROJECTION from FILM: White tiles of chapel/cracking tiles/drawings

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: But despite the opposition...from artists and the public...we kept working earnestly on the Chapel.

Matisse wanted to use handmade ceramic tiles. He would paint the tiles in white, then fire them. His plan was to draw the major figures in simple black lines. But the tiles kept breaking. Matisse was in despair. It was then, his friend supported him.

MATISSE: Picasso encouraged me. He told me not to give up. And he came to my rescue And he recommended a very good ceramics studio he used in the town of Vallauris.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: And we kept working. There were to be only three major images in the church: St. Dominic, our order's patron saint; we were the Order of the Rosary, so naturally the

Virgin and Child, who would be surrounded by roses and stars; and, of course, the Stations of the Cross.

PROJECTION from FILM: early and final St. Dominics

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Your St. Dominic...

MATISSE: Yes?

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Every...treatment...looks like a woman.

PROJECTION from FILM: St. Dominic from chapel

MATISSE: Every Dominican I know is a woman.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: But St. Dominic was not a woman.

MATISSE: Yes, that is true.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: So finally Fr. Couturier came to the rescue. And posed for him.

PROJECTION from FILM: Couturier, than back to final St. Dominic

MATISSE: He's the perfect model. Very tall. Distinguished looking. He looked at my sketch-books of the previous drawings, and said I had more Dominican nuns in the book than there were in the convent.

PROJECTION from FILM: Virgin and Child treatments; image of young girl model

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: For the Virgin and Child, he wanted to convey the purity of childhood. So he used a young girl as the model. Surrounded by stars and roses. But eventually he took those out.

25

MATISSE: Simplicity.

PROJECTION from FILM: Early individual station drawings

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: He began his studies for the Stations of the Cross. I loved his individual renderings. They were very powerful. Then, one day...

MATISSE: Soeur Jacques! Come. I want to show you something.

PROJECTION from FILM: final grouping of station drawings

(SR. JACQUES is looking at the floor)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: I couldn't believe what I saw. There on the floor...there were all the stations...together. I don't know if anyone had ever seen the stations...like this. It was a new way of seeing them. I was used to...to seeing...all the stations...one by one...all around the church, so you could pray and reflect on each one. But here they were. All in one...scene. As if...as if...the Way of the Cross was one...

(It dawns on her what MATISSE is doing. She looks up at him. He nods gently.)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: I wondered how I could get the nuns to accept this.

(MATISSE moves to lay on couch)

I said nothing and left at the end of the day. I was accustomed to his style. But I didn't know what the other sisters would think. (SR. JACQUES-MARIE moves to sit L, next to him) And then, one day...Matisse was resting. We were talking. He seemed worried.

MATISSE: What do you think of the Stations?

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: (pause) They are so different from everything else in the Chapel.

MATISSE: But this...these...the Stations of the Cross...they are the drama!

(pause)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: I knew...I had been there while Matisse was sleeping...He seemed to sketch in his sleep, crossing out what he didn't like ...working on the Chapel...and from time to time...Matisse would blurt out...like he was coming out of a dream...

MATISSE: "Oh. How Jesus suffered."

(pause)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: The stations...

26

MATISSE: Yes?

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Go ahead with this. You will make it work.

(pause)

(SR. JACQUES-MARIE moves C)

He drew the initial images on tile on the floor...but he would do the final rendering on tiles on the wall.

(MATISSE rises; takes long bamboo stick with rag at end; comes down center, mimes drawing on wall)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE (cont): He would draw using a long, stiff bamboo stick. He'd then attach a thick brush, drenched in black enamel...and draw. Sometimes for hours. Then he would climb on a kind of scaffolding to review his work close up. And then climb down again, and do it over.

He was eighty years old. He was not in perfect health. I don't know how he did it.

MATISSE: (as he paints on wall) I have always tried to hide...my efforts. I wish my work to have the light joyousness of springtime. Which never lets anyone suspect the labors it has cost me.

(MATISSE puts down bamboo pole, moves to small table, stool L)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: During these times of constant work, we didn't speak of some delicate matters, of the differences between us. But one year at Easter time, I felt the need to talk to him about the Easter communion.

MATISSE: I don't feel the need to confess or take Easter communion.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Monsieur...

MATISSE: I've been trying to decide if I could take Confession "just to please you." Well, the answer is no! I can't do it.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: But he certainly respected the traditions of other holidays. I visited him to extend best wishes for the New Year.

(SR. JACQUES offers a handshake)

MATISSE: (laughing) Don't I get to kiss you today?

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Monsieur! Then Madame Lydia told me, on New Year's Day, the boss kisses all his personnel. If you like, Monsieur.

27

MATISSE: So, Sister, can we kiss?

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: If you like.

(a kiss; once on each cheek, then her hand)

MATISSE: Bon annee!

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Bon anniversaire!

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: How could I refuse an old man to whom I owed so much...to whom we owed so much.

The poor man. As the Chapel began to take shape, there was criticism everywhere. From the congregation. From visitors. People were just not used to Modern Art, especially in churches. Some people would say, "Children can draw like that. Only better." Matisse kept working.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE (cont): He oversaw everything...every detail.

PROJECTION from FILM: Priests' vestments

Even the priests' vestments. I colored many sheets of paper. And he cut out the patterns. Bright colors that corresponded to the feast days of the church.

He sculpted the crucifix.

PROJECTION from FILM: Chapel Crucifix

Despite the criticism that he had received from every direction, for almost everything he was trying to do...absolutely everyone loved the Crucifix.

PROJECTION from FILM: Chapel Altar

He chose the stone for the altar. It was stone from a small French town, Rognes. Beautiful texture, with many tiny shells in it. Matisse thought it resembled bread.

PROJECTION from FILM: Chapel Candelabras

The design of the candelabras reflected his favorite flowers.

MATISSE: Anemones.

PROJECTION: STILL: Anemones

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Nothing escaped the attention of Monsieur Matisse. For the vestibules, the area just inside the entrance, he didn't want smooth glass, but a special type of glass with a rough finish, something called "cathedral glass," which is richer than ordinary glass.

PROJECTION from FILM or STILL: Chapel Vestibule or Cathedral Glass

MATISSE: When I was thinking about the type of glass I wanted...I thought of a river of water, full of life and clear as crystal that flows from the throne of God and the Lamb.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: And the confessional?

PROJECTION from FILM: Moroccan hanging from Matisse house; Chapel Confessional

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: In his house, Matisse had a Moroccan wall hanging. This formed the basis for the confessional door. Depending on the time of day, different colors crept through the door. Colors of pink, blue and mauve. A lovely, sacred space.

(pause)

PROJECTION from FILM or STILL: details mentioned in following sentence

SR. JACQUES-MARIE (cont): As usual he obsessed over absolutely everything...the chairs, the cloth to cover the altar, the tabernacle, the spire and the bell, the roof tiles...

MATISSE: The chapel will be useless if it isn't perfect.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Until, finally, one day, after four years of ceaseless work...(SR. JACQUES-MARIE moves RC stage, MATISSE joins her there)

MATISSE: Four years.

(pause)

MATISSE: Ah, sister...the priests' vestments...remember, they must be...

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Polished once more. They're ready.

MATISSE: Ready. And...and the crucifix...it must be polished once more...

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: They're done. Beautiful.

MATISSE: And...and then there's the, uh....the...the

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Monsieur. Everything is ready. Everything is finished.

MATISSE: Finished. So...the Chapel...

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: The Chapel.

(MATISSE and SR. JACQUES link arms)

PROJECTION from FILM: The Chapel. Several different views during the remainder of the text.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: On June 25, 1951. The Chapel of The Rosary was consecrated.

(Music - Beethoven's ODE TO JOY - erupts as we view the images of the Chapel, transitioning from FILM of images of the consecration)

Matisse was ill and not able attend the consecration, but he sent this message.

MATISSE: (moving back to couch to ready message) Your Excellency. I present to you, in all humility, the Chapel of the Rosary of the Dominican Sisters of Vence. The project has taken over four years of exclusive and assiduous work, and it represents the result of my entire active life. I consider it, in spite of its imperfections, to be my masterpiece.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Soon after the consecration, he was able to visit the Chapel. To see it...in the way he wanted.

PROJECTION from FILM: More views , as MUSIC continues

(SR. JACQUES-MARIE moving to MATISSE near couch)

MATISSE: I would like to visit the Chapel. Tonight? 5pm?

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Certainly, Monsieur. But then there will be a Rosary at that time, followed by a Benediction, and then prayers from the sisters.

MATISSE: Will my presence disturb that?

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Not at all.

MATISSE: Then we will go.

(SR. JACQUES takes MATISSE by the arm. They move down C. MUSIC/prayers from Nuns; from FILM - PROJECTION of Mass, Chapel in Use. SR. JACQUES and MATISSE stand and view.)

MATISSE: I am so happy. To see my work connected to life, as I hoped it would. It is being used as intended. As a place of worship.

(pause, as they take in the Chapel, and the worship within)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: What do you think? Why don't we...do another chapel?

MATISSE: Oh, my, No!!! Anything but that!

(they laugh)

MUSIC ends (MATISSE returns slowly to couch)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: We had our Chapel. A year later, I...(small laugh) broke my leg, and went to our Mother House to recuperate. When I returned to Vence, I realized I couldn't stay there any longer. It was too hard, I'd suffered too much trying to work with my superior. No one realized just how painful it had been. (small sad laugh) I would have left before then, but I was tough. I had to stay to finish the Chapel. And even a bit longer. For him.

(SR. JACQUES moves far R)

MATISSE: I was very sad without Soeur Jacques here. The Chapel wasn't complete without her.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: I was assigned to be the Director of a Rehabilitation Center in a small Basque village in Southwestern France.

(pause)

If I'd known how close he was to death, I would have never left. He had expended his remaining health in completing the chapel. There is the expression...do something with all your heart. He sacrificed his heart to the Chapel.

(SR. JACQUES-MARIE moves to couch, stands next to him.)

I came back to visit him. He was no longer the same man. The spirit in his eyes...had faded.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: Monsieur.

MATISSE: Soeur Jacques.

(MATISSE & SR. JACQUES both look away, SR. JACQUES holding back tears. She sits. They hold hands)

MATISSE: I must confess, I wrote to your Mother General. I begged her to send you back here.

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: (after pause) I cannot. No matter how much I would like to be close to you...and the Chapel.

(after pause) Mother General and Pere Couturier have asked me to pass on a request to you. That you spend your eternal life in the Vence Chapel. They point out, it is your last work, they

think your most important. Who knows? Maybe one day I will be back in Vence, near where you are, and our prayers will be even closer to you. You would be with us body and soul.

MATISSE: (after pause) No, it is out of the question. (smiles at her) It would look like a lack of modesty, of misplaced pride. It would cast a shadow on the Chapel. It would lose its quality of an unselfish work of art and become, instead, a symbol of enormous egotism. And... (a small laugh that turns into a cough)...it would distort my real personality as someone who...usually... (he grips her hand tighter)...usually...worked alone.

(SR. JACQUES stands, moves down CL)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: We talked more, from the heart. It isn't possible for me to share the things we said...the depth of them, the tenderness. Only the Lord knows what transpires in our hearts. It was a beautiful and precious moment that touched me deeply.

(SR. JACQUES a small laugh, that's caught up in a tear)

SR. JACQUES: Madame Lydia told me that, on his last day, he asked her for a pen and paper. And he drew a few simple sketches of her. He looked at them and said...

MATISSE: It will do.

(pause)

SR. JACQUES-MARIE: People asked if he was in love with me. I don't know. What they said made me wonder. I always had a photo of him on my desk. I know we cared for each other a great deal.

They said it was like...the great love of a lifetime, yes?

I suppose. But I wouldn't describe it that way. It was more...affection. Gratitude.

He was like a grandfather to me. And I felt like a granddaughter to him. I don't know.

(SR. JACQUES moves C)

PROJECTION from FILM: Matisse funeral

Monsieur Matisse died in 1954. There was a very elaborate funeral. I was forbidden to attend. My order...I was not allowed. Maybe it was because of the commotion it might cause, the press. I don't know. The pain was terrible.

PROJECTION from FILM: images of The Chapel.

I know what we did together was extraordinary. He created the Chapel of the Rosary. Despite all else he'd done in life...despite all the great art he'd created...he considered it his Master-piece.

And, for this extraordinary journey, for this revolutionary work of art and faith...I was with him every step of the way.

32

(SR. JACQUES exits R)

PROJECTION: from FILM: Soeur Jacques with her arms stretched high above St. Dominic

PROJECTION: Type: Soeur Jacques-Marie died in 2005, at the age of 84.
Shortly before her death, she visited the gravesite of
Monsieur Matisse one last time.

PROJECTION from FILM: SR. JACQUES visiting Matisse's tomb)

MUSIC swells

PROJECTION: Final image of the Chapel

End Curtain

