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Sure, sure, I know he did good things, more than most people know. I didn't find out myself until he died that he gave two thousand dollars to get the Credit Union started. And the Credit Union was the start of the Fishermen's Co-op and just about everything else in the village. But I know where he got the money. He got it from his brother. His brother would send him money from time to time for this and that. I was there once when he got a cheque to buy himself a car. It was a cheque for three hundred dollars. I'd never seen that much money before; it made quite an impression. I remember Father Aucoin laughing when he read the letter. He said to me, "How can I buy a car when half of my parishioners can barely put shoes on their children's feet?" Easy as pie, I told him. Your brother sent you the money for a car, buy a car, that was my advice. I was ready to go to Halifax and get him a Chevy. My sainted cousin also did more harm than most people know. I used to spend half my time trying to patch up his blunders. Sometimes I could and sometimes I couldn't. Remember the time, he preached against Dulcine Leblanc for not 'avoiding the occasion for sin'? Let me tell you, that wasn't pretty. There she was, completely alone in the world. Her brothers and sisters had all moved away. Her parents who were ancient and without two pennies to their name died leaving her nothing but a harbour shack and my good cousin got her fired from her job at the hospital in Cheticamp. It was the only job she ever had in the village. That was a wonderful thing, let me tell you. Just wonderful. No one would talk to her. She lived alone for months on a few people's charity. Finally, in the dead of winter, William Doucet was obliged to drive her to Inverness and put her on the train for Boston with nothing but one cardboard suitcase and a few dollars in her pocket I could have throttled my sainted cousin. Another time, I was invited to a house, not far from here and found this young man beside himself with rage and despair. He'd fallen in love with a young widow from Cheticamp and had asked her to marry him. She had agreed. I had nothing to do with it. The two had met and fallen in love all by themselves. This is a constant surprise to me, the way people decide that they are in love. It seems the most arbitrary thing in the world. One day, they're walking along minding their own business, the next day, they're in love. Anyway, the two of them had fallen in love and the young man had gone off happily to see Father Aucoin to arrange for the reading of the banns. Well, he finds my good cousin teaching some child how to hammer out her scales and he waits patiently in the kitchen for the lesson to end. Eventually, the priest appears. The young man explains that he has found the love-of-his-life and he would like Father Aucoin to read the banns at High Mass. My cousin agrees immediately, for the young man is from a fine family. Father Aucoin knows him well and would put him firmly on the improving side of the parish register. "And what is the name of the girl?" asks my cousin with his fountain pen cocked, ready to record her pedigree in the parish register. The young man tells Father Aucoin her name and explains that she is a young widow who lives just over the parish line in Cheticamp with three small children. The pen freezes in my cousin's hand. His lips tighten. His eyes narrow.



Father Aucoin is not pleased. He looks away from the young man. Puts his fountain pen down on the desk. He begins to drum his fingers lightly against his knees. A sure sign that he is displeased. Finally, Father Aucoin tells the young man in the voice he reserves for God. "I think you should reconsider. You deserve better." The young man is so shocked he can barely muster the voice to protest. All he can hear are the words, "I think you should re? consider. You deserve better." There is a long, long silence in the room. For the young man, it feels like he has been plunged to the bottom of the pond and is having trouble surfacing. There s lots of fun
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