



Rummage Theatre

# CLEANSED

'The mouth of them that speaks lies shall be stopped'

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### CLEANSED

The stage is divided into three playing areas – Stage Right: The Laundry, two large sink units, an old-fashioned clothes dryer, and piles of laundry – everything is painted a dismal grey. Stage Left: A retirement home, armchair, end table with a statue of Mary. Centre Stage has a black block and stool and is used as a multi-role space. A washing line with laundry representing each era of the play hangs the width of the stage as a backdrop.

This piece plays with time – often Mother Brigid & the Magdalene's are interacting as if in the same scene, but occupy a different time and setting. This adds to Mother Brigid's confusion as an elderly lady.

An old lady (BRIGID) is sat in a chair, stage left. She is watching 'Countdown'. BRIGID is a nun in her eighties; she is quite fragile and uses a walking stick to get around. She still dresses in her full nun outfit.

A carer (MARY) is hanging washing on the line, Centre Stage. MARY is in her forties; blonde, downtrodden, wearing a dull work dress.

MARY: (shouting at the TV) Soiled!

BRIGID: (annoyed by Mary's input) Idolised.

The TV confirms BRIGID's choice of word. She changes the channel to Teletubbies, sports channel, then a news report on the Magdalene Laundries.

MARY comes to watch the report. BRIGID stares at MARY until she leaves.

BRIGID changes to a music channel, blaring some dance music.

MARY enters with a tray of food, which she slaps down in front of BRIGID. She turns off the TV.

Brigid refuses to feed herself so MARY impatiently shovels food into her mouth.

Once dinner is finished MARY helps BRIGID get out her rosary beads and joins in a prayer.

BRIGID/MARY: Hail Mary, full of grace,  
Our Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

(CATHERINE has entered Stage Right, kneeling in front of the sinks and joins in the prayer)

Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners,  
now and at the hour of our death.  
Amen.

CATHERINE exits.

MARY goes to exit with the tray.

BRIGID: Molly!

MARY freezes.

MARY: My name is Mary.

Music – 'THINK by Aretha Franklin'. MARY moves centre stage and puts on a brightly coloured 60's style dress. She goes to the washing line and is hanging washing.

This monologue is light and flirty at first. She talks out to the audience at an imagined Thomas Carty.

MARY: Hello...I'm not supposed to talk to you. (laughs girlishly) What's that? You want to watch your mouth Thomas Carty, talking to a good Catholic girl like that! No wonder me Ma says to keep my distance! (Pause – we imagine THOMAS has moved closer) Saturday evening? I'm not that kind of girl, Thomas. (Pause) Dinner? I thought you had to have a chaperone for it to be proper courting? I'll only be having dinner, that's it, Thomas! Don't you be thinking you'll be getting anything else!

CATHERINE is washing at the sinks.

BRIGID: (Sat in her armchair, talking out front) Girl! Scrub properly!

CATHERINE scrubs harder

BRIGID: For goodness sake child, look at the mess your making! Mop it up!

CATHERINE uses a towel to mop up

BRIGID: Oh lord preserve us, find a mop you stupid girl!



*CATHERINE gets a mop*

CATHERINE: *(under her breath)* Bossy cow...

BRIGID: What's that?

CATHERINE: Nothing Mother Brigid.

*MARY has applied some make-up.*

MARY: *(out front)* Back again Thomas Carty? I had a lovely evening. Ma & Da didn't even notice I'd gone out! I'm sure they'll understand when we explain. They'll see how perfect you are...I love you Thomas Carty... *(She is embarrassed by her own forwardness)*

Sorry. That was a bit brazen of me. I shouldn't just assume...*(he says something she likes)*

You do? Really? Oh, you're so romantic! *(Pause)* A kiss? Oh, just one...

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Mary? What you doing?

MARY: Oh, that's my sister.

OFFSTAGE: I'm telling da!

MARY: I've got to go Thomas. I'm going to tell them all about you. Maybe you can come to tea one evening!

*MARY now addresses the audience directly. She is taking off her dress during this monologue.*

They didn't understand. They didn't even let me explain. Da dragged me in the house before I had a chance to get to the front door. Thomas beat on the door until I thought it was going to burst from its hinges. I kept saying "he loves me! Da! He loves me!" but he said he'd heard it all before. Ma just sat in the kitchen and cried. *(Pause)* It's for my own good, apparently. If I spend a little time learning how to be a decent girl, then I'll be able to lead a normal life. I'm not a decent girl right now. I'm depraved. Just a little time, Ma says. Some more education – only this is the moral kind. To make me a better person from the inside.

**Scene 2**

*MARY stands in her underwear; CATHERINE enters stage right with a pile of clothes. BRIGID is still in her chair, doing a crossword. This scene is delivered out front.*

BRIGID: Ah, hello dear. You're the new volunteer, aren't you?

MARY: Volunteer...? I suppose so....

BRIGID: Ah, yes. I can see the trouble with you right away. All that lovely blonde hair. Makes a man go giddy! We must do something about that. Why do you think you're here, dear?

MARY: *(looks at CATHERINE, who keeps her head bowed)* Well, my parents are very angry at me...

BRIGID: No, dear! Their not angry. Their frightened for you. They take your spiritual purity very seriously. It's such a shame *you* don't. Throwing yourself at the poor boys. You're here to wash away those sins and...

MARY: Sins? I only...

*CATHERINE looks up at MARY with interest. BRIGID's face is stony*

BRIGID: I'm not going to discuss you're failings. That is something you must discover for yourself. And then *perhaps*, you will find salvation in.....Child, why are you still stood there in your underwear?

MARY: You told me to take my clothes off....

BRIGID: That might have been the kind of thing you did outside but not in here. I don't want to see those thighs, and goodness knows what kind of boy would want to...Catherine, quick! This is your uniform from now on.

*CATHERINE hands her some clothes. MARY quickly puts them on*

MARY: When do I get my own clothes back?

BRIGID: *(Laughs)* The day you leave here.

MARY: When will that be?

BRIGID: *(pause)* What's your name?