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DUSK

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First Printing, 2011

Printed in U.S.A.

DUSK

A Play In Two Acts

by

James McLindon

DUSK was developed as part of the GTC New Play Initiative. It premiered at GTC Burbank in 2007. It was directed by Kevin Cochran. The cast was as follows:

NANA—Patricia Place

MARIE—Jane Macfie

FATHER TERRENCE—Robert Dionne

BISHOP BUCKLEY—Jerry Hoffman

DUSK

ACT ONE: Easter Monday, morning to afternoon, April, 2000

ACT TWO: Afternoon to early evening, the same day

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(In Order Of Appearance)

NANA—AN ELDERLY GRANDMOTHER

MARIE—NANA’S DAUGHTER, IN HER FORTIES

FATHER TERRENCE—A PRIEST, MARIE’S NEPHEW, MID-TWENTIES

BISHOP BUCKLEY—A BISHOP, IN HIS FIFTIES

DARK MAN—MALE OF INDETERMINATE AGE
(TO BE PLAYED BY THE ACTOR WHO PLAYS BISHOP BUCKLEY)

A YOUNG MAN—A MALE, MID-TWENTIES
(TO BE PLAYED BY THE ACTOR WHO PLAYS FR. TERRENCE)

SETTING: The setting is the living room of a modest apartment on the ground floor of a triple-decker somewhere in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The time is the earliest spring of the year 2000. The setting may be minimally depicted, with little more than chairs, a few props and the suggestions of doorways. Or it may be as detailed as something like the following. The furniture is old, but sturdy and the apartment is neat and clean, with one exception: next to an old Morris chair in the center of Downstage stands a small table somehow managing to hold a teacup, a police scanner, a TV remote, a stack of books, a cordless telephone, a hairbrush, the day's *Boston Globe*, a box of Kleenex, a tangle of miscellaneous papers and other household items. Next to the table is a small wastebasket. A worn but clean sofa sits to the Morris chair's Stage Right side. An old, overstuffed chair sits companionably to the Morris chair's Stage Left side.

Against the back wall is a large window revealing the first green haze of spring on the trees sparkled by the sunny day outside. (The day will progress from morning to dusk over the course of the play.) Also against the back wall is the apartment's front door, which opens onto a porch. Next to the door is a coat tree. A wall clock may also be present. On the Stage Right wall, a wide doorway leads to the largely unseen kitchen offstage. Upstage from it is a door leading to a small bathroom, also unseen. Downstage, there is a small writing desk and chair, with two other chairs facing it, to serve as Bishop Buckley's office. On the Stage left wall, three doors lead to three bedrooms. The walls separating the bedrooms from the living room ideally should be such that an interior light renders them transparent. (If this is impossible for a given production, the scene is Sean's bedroom may be played in a corner of the living room.) At least one bookcase overflowing with books somewhere in the room is a nice touch.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This play is set in the earliest spring of the year 2000, the last moments of an uneasy innocence when the laity still believed that the sexual abuse of children by priests was rare rather than widespread, and that the Church's mishandling of it was haphazard rather than systematic.

DUSK

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: MARIE'S LIVINGROOM

(The curtains are drawn, admitting a flood of springtime morning light into the apartment. In the Morris chair sits Nana, in her seventies, still supple in mind and tongue if not in body. Although often caustic and joking, she is not a frivolous woman and indeed is sometimes domineering. She wears a simple, worn housedress. Nana frequently blows her nose or wipes her mouth with a Kleenex, and a number of crumpled Kleenexes lie in concentric circles around the waste can next to her. Adding to the lack of tidiness, some items have also fallen from the table next to her to the floor, like the calves of a glacier. At the moment, she is finishing a book, The Scarlet Letter, which she suddenly snaps shut.)

NANA: Oh my God! It takes them till the last page to figure out Dimsdale is Hester's lover!? When he's got the letter A burnt right onto his chest!? Didn't he ever go swimming!? No, 'course not, he was a Puritan. What a bunch of psychos!

(Nana tosses the book onto the table, picks up her rosary beads and closes her eyes, her lips moving silently. After a few moments, static crackles as the scanner comes to life.)

FIREFIGHTER 1: Engine 4, false alarm, 1226 Mass. Ave. All clear.

NANA: Aaaahhhh. There's never a good fire when you need one. Fires are just like men.

DISPATCHER: Engine 4. All clear. 8:47 and 40 seconds.

(Nana turns and regards the front door, then tunes the scanner. She finds the hollow sounds of a cell phone, a harried Wife.)

WIFE: ... Why can't you make dinner for once? I've already got to leave work early to take them to practice—

(Nana snaps off the scanner.)

NANA: Boring! *(Speaking to the overstuffed Chair as if to someone in it)* Oh, what's the harm, Jimmy!? ... Well, of course you never listened to cell phone calls, you died before they were invented! Oh, hush now.

(Nana turns the scanner on. The front door opens quietly. Marie enters and hangs up her jacket. She is in her forties, but already carries some of the weariness of the old, a condition often masked by acerbic outbursts. Today, she is somewhat preoccupied. As Nana tunes, Marie looks disapprovingly at her.)

NANA: *(To the Chair)* Now, I'm just going to look for Tracy. She was out with her new boyfriend last niiiight ... Oh, yeah, now you're interested.

(Nana finds a call. Marie begins to sneak up behind her.)

TRACY: ... and oh my God, first he brushes my hair for, like, 15 minutes. And then he, he ... oh, I can't tell you!

WOMAN 1: What? You have to!

NANA: You have to!

(Marie, now right behind Nana, freezes, interested in spite of herself.)

TRACY: Okay, okay, so he takes the hairbrush and- no, God, I can't!

WOMAN 1: Oh, come on, you have to tell me now!

NANA: Tell her, Tracy.

TRACY: He blindfolds me with a scarf and, and ...

NANA: C'mon, Tracy.

MARIE: Mother!

NANA: Ohhhhh!

(Marie snaps the scanner off.)

NANA: For God's sake, don't sneak up on me like that!

MARIE: Nana, you promised! No more cell phone calls!

NANA: Well, I didn't mean to. I must've hit the wrong button looking for the emergency band.

MARIE: Do you have any respect for other people's privacy?

NANA: No. You sound just like your father.

MARIE: *(Gesturing to Jimmy's Chair)* Was Daddy here again?

NANA: A man's entitled to the run of his own house.

MARIE: Not after he's dead, he's not. You do know he wasn't really here.

NANA: You know I know he wasn't! Now, there were no fires to listen to again this morning. How much peace can a person take?

MARIE: I could take a lot today. If I set a fire down the block, will you go back to the emergency band?

NANA: Will there be injuries? *(Pause)* Did you get me the Oscar Wilde?

MARIE: Crap. I forgot all about the library.

NANA: Then it's all your fault if I listen in again.

MARIE: *(Picking up the Kleenexes)* And why are there more Kleenexes on the floor!?

NANA: You always focus on the few I miss.

MARIE: How can you miss!?! You just have to drop them in!

NANA: *(Missing a Kleenex hook shot)* I like a challenge.

MARIE: You've got one tiny corner of the world to keep neat, why is it always a mess?

NANA: Diligence. Oh, Adam fell, darlin'. No corner of this world stays neat for long. *(Pause)* Did you stop by to see Kevin?

MARIE: Yeah. Remind me to bring him fresh flowers.

NANA: And how was Jimmy's Mass, then?

MARIE: It was nice. Oh, but Fr. Johnny's retiring.

NANA: That's a shame. Did he say Mass then?

MARIE: No, Fr. Mushabi said it. I think.

NANA: You think? Well, was he 6'5" and white or 5'8" and black?

MARIE: I mean, I think he was saying the Mass.

NANA: Oh, now, the African priests are all hard to understand at first, till you fall into the rhythm of their English.

MARIE: He's been here five years.

NANA: Unless they're from the Irish missions, I'm saying. Jesus, the Irish accent on top of the African, it's hopeless. The Yankees could never understand what the Irish were saying when we came over, that's why they hated us so much, you know.

MARIE: They hated us because they thought we were a superstitious horde of subhumans loyal to the Pope.

NANA: Well, there was that bit, too.

MARIE: It would've been nice if you'd come to Daddy's anniversary Mass.

NANA: Isn't it enough I paid for it?

MARIE: I paid for it.

NANA: Well, isn't it enough I reminded you to?

MARIE: I really don't get you. You hate the Church and yet you make me give money to them.

NANA: I hate Boston Gas, too, but they have all the heat. I owe it to Jimmy to hedge his bets, but I'll be damned if I ever go back to Holy Redeemer.

MARIE: Well, don't worry, I won't have any Masses said for you.

NANA: Now, Marie—

MARIE: Kidding. Where's Terry? I thought he'd be here by now.

NANA: Terrence. By God, I hate that name. With a name like Terrence, there's only two things a boy could become. A priest ... or a fag.

MARIE: Don't call him that.

NANA: As you wish. Terrence, the Fairy Priest, called to say he was delayed with a sick parishioner. So he says.

MARIE: You don't believe your own grandson, the priest?

NANA: Pfff. There's a third thing you can be, if you're named Terrence: a weasel. A priest, a fairy or a weasel. Apparently, our Terrence couldn't make up his mind, so he became all three.

MARIE: Nana ...

NANA: Ah, now you've always been quick to see the good in a person, Marie. That is a dangerous habit.

MARIE: All of a sudden, you are so down on him.

NANA: There's no all-of-a-sudden about it. I've always said there's something about that boy that's not quite honest.

MARIE: He's just ... reserved. Just because he filters things through his brain before he says them out loud doesn't make him dishonest.

NANA: Ha. Why do you like him anyway?

MARIE: I don't know, he's always seemed ... holy.

NANA: Thin is the line between the holy and the weasely.

MARIE: This is all since you decided he might be gay. That's why you're so critical.

NANA: He is gay.

MARIE: You think everyone's gay. Even Yeats.

NANA: He wrote poems. About fairies! Do the math.

MARIE: Your dog, Yeats. Because he would only hump men, remember?

NANA: Oh, him. Well, he was.

MARIE: Terry isn't gay. Not that it would matter.

NANA: Not that it would—? He's a priest! Oh, let's not quarrel. There's plenty to dislike about him without resort to prejudice. So ... I guess you don't want to know how I know Terry is a fairy.

(Marie busies herself with tidying up, refusing to ask. Nana eyes her smugly, waiting her out. Finally:)

MARIE: Okay, how!?

NANA: When Joseph cut my hair last week, I got him to tell me all about how they spot each other.

MARIE: Ohhhh. Joseph is the one who says Terry is gay.

NANA: Yes. Joseph met him for all of 15 seconds that time Terry dropped me off last year, but he was pretty sure. And he told me exactly how to find out.

MARIE: That's stupid.

(Nana pulls some notes out of the tangle of papers, again knocking several items to the ground. The Downstage bedroom door, apparently ill-fitting, pops open a few inches around now.)

NANA: You'll see. Four tests give them all away, he says. When Terrence gets here, I'll work all four into the conversation.

MARIE: Don't you dare.

(Marie, having noticed the open Downstage bedroom door, goes to close it.)

NANA: Marie, that door is just going to pop open again. Oh, come here now.

MARIE: *(Closing the door firmly)* Why?

NANA: Your mother wills it. You look exhausted.

MARIE: Yeah, well, not sleeping does that to you.

(Marie reluctantly goes to her. Nana begins to rub her neck. Marie relaxes somewhat. Nana begins to sing the "The Castle of Dromore.")

NANA:

Bring no ill will to him nor us,
My helpless babe and me.
Dread Spirits all of Black Water,
Clan Owen's wild banshee,
And Holy Mary, pitying us,
To Heaven for grace doth sue.
Sing hushabye loo, low loo, low lan—

(Marie has grown agitated and now jumps up.)

NANA: You won't get through the mediation today without you take an even strain. I made you tea.

MARIE: I wish I'd never brought Kevin's case.

NANA: Did you see the dusk this morning. Lovely, it was.

MARIE: Dusk is only at night.

NANA: No, each day has two dusks. One is just the reverse of the other.

MARIE: There's no dusk in the morning. Why do you like it so much anyway? It's gloomy.

NANA: It's dark and day at the same time. The earth is night, the heavens are light, held in balance for a few moments. And for those few moments, if you didn't know what time it was, you wouldn't know which is going to win, the light or the darkness. It recapitulates ... all of philosophy, all of religion, all of history ... all of life.

MARIE: *(Pause, staring at Nana)* I need caffeine.

(Marie exits. Nana addresses Jimmy's Chair unhappily.)

NANA: Her soul's lost all its poetry, Jimmy.

(The cordless phone rings. Nana answers it.)

NANA: Yes. ... Aluminum siding!? Oh, for God's sake—! Wait, wait, yes, I was just thinking I'd put some on this spring. Do have any in vermillion. ... Huge house, yes. ... Oh, yes, do come by today, that would be perfect. 2121 Newton Road, Boston. See you in an hour.

(Nana tosses the phone on the table, triggering a small avalanche. Marie enters from the kitchen with a cup of tea.)

MARIE: Was that Maureen? We had this patient last night who—

NANA: I told your Maureen they have plenty of other nurses and if she bothered you before your shift tomorrow, I'd request her as my nurse the next time I'm in.

MARIE: That must've scared the crap out of her. So, what's new here?

NANA: I still haven't moved my bowels and my gas is worse.

MARIE: Thanks for sharing. Sorry to disappoint you, but Dan thinks it might settle today.

NANA: That is disappointing. So why are you brooding then? That's what you want.

MARIE: I don't know what I want. And I'm not brooding.

(Marie gazes out the window, brooding.)

NANA: Fine, brood.

MARIE: I saw the change in him, Nana ... but I thought well, he's just hitting puberty and—

NANA: You need to stop blaming yourself.

MARIE: But where was I? What was I thinking? What's a grown man so interested in?

NANA: He was a priest. It was his God damn job to be interested! We all thought he was a godsend after Brian died.

(A knocking from the kitchen interrupts.)

MARIE: Who would've come up the backstairs?

NANA: A weasel.

(Terrence Flynn enters, a handsome man in his mid-twenties, he is dressed in the simple black of a priest. Terrence is warm and intense, inclined to laugh, yet with an air of piety that is never insincere. He is affectionate towards Marie. With Nana, some intimidation on his part is evident, which he often tries to mask with joviality.)

TERRENCE: Hi, Aunt Marie. *(Mock brogue)* And how's me sainted grandmother?

NANA: I haven't moved my bowels in three days. Have you got a prayer for that?

TERRENCE: There's a prayer for everything, Nana. Please.

(He beckons them to pray, raises his hands over Nana, and bows his head gravely. Nana, surprised, bows her head, as does Marie.)

TERRENCE: Heavenly Father, look down with favor upon the bowels of your servant, Margaret Mary. Make her bathroom a place of ease and comfort and not one of weeping and lamentation. And if it be thy will, increase her peristalsis, even so that her intestines flow down again like a mighty river. This we pray, Amen. There, now, don't stray far from that bathroom.

NANA: Very funny.

TERRENCE: *(Kindly)* Well, don't tease me if I can't tease you, Nana. It's good to see you.

NANA: I'm not teasing. Why'd you come up the back?

TERRENCE: An excess of caution, I guess. Technically, we're on opposite sides of this case. It's best people don't think you're getting special treatment.

NANA: Oh, yes, we've received all sorts of special treatment.

MARIE: Thanks for coming, Terry.

TERRENCE: Of course. Oh, and I brought you both Communion.

(Terrence removes from his pocket a small golden pyx containing Communion hosts.)

MARIE: Thanks, Terry, but I had Communion at Daddy's Mass.

TERRENCE: No worries. Did you go to grandpa's Mass, too, Nana?

NANA: No. *(Stuffing toast in her mouth)* Oh, dear, but I've just eaten.

TERRENCE: The best laid plans, then.

(Terrence picks up the clutter around Nana's table. As he replaces things, Nana fiddles with them, intentionally knocking items to the ground. Terrence patiently persists.)

NANA: What're you gonna do with those leftover hosts now?

TERRENCE: Any left at the end of the day, I'll take myself.

NANA: Provided you're in a state of grace, I hope.

MARIE: Nana ...

NANA: Otherwise it's straight to hell with you.

TERRENCE: Provided I'm in a state of grace, yes.

NANA: Make sure you are, because our men die young. Marie's husband wasn't 40. My son, Jackie, was 19.

MARIE: They don't all. What about Daddy?

NANA: My Jimmy was scarcely more than a boy.

MARIE: Daddy was 68, Mom.

NANA: Well, but he was a young buck to the end. That's what killed him, my selfishness. Once was never enough for me, oh no—

MARIE: Nana, stop! You told us he had a heart attack in the middle of the afternoon.

NANA: *(Smiling at Jimmy's Chair)* Well ... he did. And he died happy.

MARIE: *(Starting to grin)* Oh, Jesus!

NANA: Oh, the man your father was, Marie, I could tell you stories—

MARIE: Mother! For God's sake, I don't want to know this!

NANA: I said, I could tell you stories, but I'm too discreet. Now, c'mon, Terrence, we're supposed to be keeping Marie's spirits up today. And I have just the thing that would help: Music! I have a new Barbra Streisand album. It's all show tunes.

(NANA covertly raises one finger for MARIE's benefit.)

TERRENCE: I hate Streisand.

NANA: Really. Well, I've also got—

MARIE: Terry, how's your new job going?

TERRENCE: So far, so good. I'm still in my probationary period. But, hopefully after, the Cardinal will confirm me as Assistant to the Auxiliary Bishop.

MARIE: Well, good luck.

NANA: What was wrong with your parish? Not grand enough for you?

TERRENCE: I loved my parish, but you have to go where you're called, Nana. I was lucky enough that Bishop Buckley remembered me from a seminary class he taught.

NANA: Oh, right, and your sense of duty to our noble Auxiliary Bishop Buckley is the only reason you've gone to the Chancery.

TERRENCE: What? I have some ambition, sure. There's nothing wrong with that.

NANA: Well, no one said there was, Terrence.

TERRENCE: I mean, when you get something done at the Chancery, you don't affect just one parish, you affect all of them. And, okay, I've been to Rome once and I wouldn't mind going back.

NANA: And now you're on the fast track to the Vatican, aren't you?

TERRENCE: Maybe. And I don't apologize for that either—

NANA: Well, no one said you should apologize either. He seems pretty defensive about this subject, Marie.

TERRENCE: No, Nana, I'm not. Being in the Chancery leverages, amplifies, your accomplishments.

NANA: And your mistakes.

MARIE: Nana, enough.

TERRENCE: And your mistakes, too. I'll have far more impact there.

NANA: What impact do you think you're going to have on Buckley?

TERRENCE: I can influence how they handle a situation like this if it ever happens again for one thing.

NANA: So, you admit things need changing.

TERRENCE: Yes. I do.

NANA: Then why aren't you "influencing" Buckley at the mediation?

TERRENCE: Nana, I've told you, I can't work on Kevin's case because I'm his cousin. But I do hear the scuttlebutt and thought maybe I could explain some things to Aunt Marie.

NANA: Well, let me explain some things to you. We're going to trial. You haven't offered a dime.

MARIE: That's not your decision.

TERRENCE: They haven't. Well, obviously that's going to change or they wouldn't have agreed to mediate.

MARIE: I hope so, Terry. I'd really like to settle this.

TERRENCE: I don't blame you, Aunt Marie. No one would want to relive what happened.

NANA: A trial won't exactly be a tickertape parade for you guys when it comes out how you treated us.

TERRENCE: Look, I ... I know. I'm not real proud of how this was handled. I imagine you want a decent offer, something that says they're sorry.

MARIE: I want them to actually say they're sorry.

TERRENCE: Sure. So let me explain, from the Cardinal's perspective, why settling is hard. First, he's got the priest's rights to think of, he can't just throw him under the bus. Second, the insurance company controls the litigation. The Cardinal ends up rather limited in what he can do.

NANA: Oh, the poor, impotent man.

TERRENCE: But the biggest problem is, it's hard to know what exactly happened so many years later.

MARIE: I told them what exactly happened.

TERRENCE: Of course you believe Kevin, he's your son. But he's not the insurance adjuster's son, so that guy needs proof before he'll pay.

NANA: Pffft. She gave your Bishop Buckley all the proof he needed five years ago, right after Kevin finally told us.

(Bishop Buckley, fifties, enters, his first line below calling Marie into Scene Two. The lights come up over his office, and go down elsewhere.)

SCENE 2: BISHOP BUCKLEY'S OFFICE

(Marie takes a seat in front of the desk, somewhat intimidated, as Bishop Buckley sits down behind it. He wears a bishop's skull cap. He is accustomed to wielding power, but gracious and not unkind.)

BISHOP: Come in, Mrs. Jordan. Sorry to keep you waiting, His Eminence is off to Rome tonight and we're all in an uproar getting him ready. Thank you now for calling me. When misunderstandings arise, it's always best to clear the air.

MARIE: Yes, Bishop.

BISHOP: I apologize for the delay, but it's taken awhile to track down the people who were at Holy Redeemer back then.

MARIE: I, I really appreciate your efforts.

BISHOP: Of course. Now, let me be clear. No one I spoke with had ever seen or heard of any incidents with boys. They did say Fr. Marchand's style was very loving, very affectionate to all. And they wondered if Kevin perhaps had just misunderstood things.

MARIE: I, I don't follow you.

BISHOP: Mrs. Jordan, I believe your husband, Brian, died shortly before Fr. Marchand came to Holy Redeemer.

MARIE: That's right.

BISHOP: And that was a hard thing for Kevin, I'm sure, a young boy, just becoming a man. A very confusing time.

MARIE: Yes, sure.

BISHOP: So, you add a warm, compassionate priest to the mix, one who takes an interest in him, a pastoral interest now. Well, you know ... it wouldn't be so hard for that boy to get confused.

MARIE: Confused about what, Bishop?

BISHOP: Well, a well-intentioned hug could be misunderstood by a boy who's desperate for some male attention, who's experiencing all these physical changes—

MARIE: It wasn't a hug, Bishop.

BISHOP: Well, I used that only as an example—

MARIE: It was far more than that.

BISHOP: So your son says.

MARIE: I believe him.

BISHOP: You're his mother, of course you do.

MARIE: Not because I'm his mother. Not just because. Kevin couldn't know the things he knows, if he were lying.

BISHOP: What things?

MARIE: That, that Father had a blue quilt on his bed. That he kept Johnny Walker Red in his pajamas drawer. That he wore checkered boxers. How does a boy know things like this, Bishop—?

BISHOP: Well, Fr. Marchand kept an extensive baseball card collection in his room. I'm told it was very popular with the boys in the parish.

MARIE: Other boys went up to his bedroom?

BISHOP: Well, I didn't say that, but that's where he kept it. Kevin may have been looking at it while the housekeeper put the laundry away, he may have seen things in the drawers—

MARIE: What does Fr. Marchand say?

BISHOP: He denies the accusations. Categorically.

MARIE: You need to talk to Fr. McCarthy then.

BISHOP: Well, he's retired out West somewhere.

MARIE: You need to find him. He walked in on them once when he was living at the rectory.

BISHOP: While your son says they were And what does he say happened?

MARIE: Fr. McCarthy just said it was late, that Kevin should go home.

BISHOP: He walked in on ... that, and that's all he said. Now, Mrs. Jordan, I have to ask you, does that sound credible?

MARIE: I know, but Has anyone else accused Father of, of—?

BISHOP: That would be a private matter, if someone had, and I don't say anyone has. Now, I will try to reach Fr. McCarthy. In the meantime...

(Bishop Buckley comes out from behind the desk. Marie stands.)

BISHOP: ... let's keep this matter to ourselves. Best for Kevin, and Father, and you. We must all be careful of slander.

MARIE: Slander?

BISHOP: Yes. We don't know anything for sure yet, and a careless word from any of us could destroy Father's reputation. That's only fair. *(Exiting.)* Now, I'll be in touch.

(As the lights go down over the office, Nana's first line below calls Marie back to the living room, where the lights come up.)

SCENE 3: MARIE'S LIVINGROOM

NANA: And do you think that self-righteous little son of a—

TERRENCE: Nana. Please.

NANA: Well, he is. Do you think your Buckley ever called?

MARIE: And all those months, Kevin's drinking and drugging were getting worse—

NANA: Self-medicating, that's what Dr. Hanlon called it.

TERRENCE: I'm truly sorry. All I can say is, this was a new situation for them and they did a lousy job. But today we have a chance to make up for that—

NANA: We don't need you here to make excuses for them.

TERRENCE: I'm just trying to explain how this went so badly—

NANA: No, explain this. Whose side are you on? What do you think happened anyway!?

TERRENCE: It's not a matter of sides, Nana

NANA: It sure as shit is!

MARIE: Nana, back off.

NANA: No. He was serving Mass for Marchand right along with Kevin when it started. *(To Terrence)* You really didn't see anything!?

TERRENCE: For the hundredth time, Nana, no! I never saw Marchand do anything to Kevin! *(Pause)* But I still believe my cousin.

MARIE: Thank you, Terry.

NANA: So, why didn't Marchand ever try anything with you, huh?

TERRENCE: He picked Sean, Nana. Who knows why? Sean was unlucky, I guess.

MARIE: It wasn't luck. They choose their victims carefully, Nana, they choose vulnerable kids, that's what everyone says. And who is more vulnerable than a boy who just lost his father?

(Marie's cell phone rings. She answers it.)

MARIE: Hello ... *(To the others)* It's the lawyers, they're taking a break. *(To phone)* Hi, Dan.

(Marie settles into a chair. Nana grunts and points sternly to the kitchen.)

NANA: Marie. Go.

(Marie exits to the kitchen.)

NANA: Dan says, if I overhear their conversations, your lawyers could question me about it. Let 'em try, I'd tell 'em to pucker up and kiss my big, fat Irish—

TERRENCE: Okay, got it.

(Terrence turns toward Nana and is brought up short by her baleful look. Uncomfortable, he walks over to the bookshelf and examines a book, then looks back at Nana, who is still gazing at him.)

TERRENCE: I've had a feeling lately, Nana, that you don't really care for me so much anymore. *(Pause)* This is where you say, "Oh no, Terry, how could you possibly think that."

NANA: *(Flatly)* Oh no, Terrence, how could you possibly think that?

TERRENCE: Well ... I'm glad we had this talk.

NANA: Sorry, but at my age, I don't have time to edit myself. The truth is, your own kids, you have to like. But with grandkids, you can pick and choose a bit.

(Terrence's cell phone rings.)

TERRENCE: Father Terry ... Yes, hang on for a moment. *(To Nana)*
May I borrow a bedroom?

NANA: What for?

TERRENCE: Can you believe we hear Confession from nursing homes
by phone?

NANA: You can't be bothered to go see them.

TERRENCE: More like, we don't have enough priests to be every-
where anymore. May I?

NANA: *(Gesturing to middle bedroom)* Use Marie's, mine's a mess.

TERRENCE: Thanks. *(To phone)* Go ahead, now.

(Terrence exits into the bedroom and closes the door.)

NANA: So. Confession, is it? On a cell phone.

(Nana reaches for the scanner. She pauses, looking irritated at the Chair.)

NANA: I wasn't really going to listen in to Confession! I do so have
limits! ... Well, I don't know for sure, but I think he's gay and I
need to find out. Today. ... Ten bucks? You got a bet. ... Now let's
see if Tracy's talking.

*(Nana turns the scanner on. Two voices: Tracy and Woman 2, twenties,
cynical.)*

WOMAN 2: ... three times!?! All with a hairbrush!?

NANA: All what with a hairbrush?

TRACY: It was amazing.

NANA: What was!?! *(To Chair)* Now look what you made me miss,
Jimmy!

WOMAN 2: I wonder if Jeffrey would do that to me?

*(Marie enters unnoticed. She glares at Nana when she hears the
voices.)*

NANA: No one named Jeffrey is gonna do anything to you with a hair-
brush.

WOMAN 2: Oh, I so hate you!

(Marie grabs a book and holds it up high.)

TRACY: Why?

WOMAN 2: Because you're always having incredible sex.

NANA: Details, now.

(Marie drops the book, which lands with a crash. Nana lunges for the scanner and snaps it off, then casually glances toward Marie.)

NANA: Oh. I didn't hear you come in, Marie.

MARIE: What is it with this hairbrush!?

NANA: Her boyfriend used it for sex—

MARIE: Yuuuuuck ... how?

NANA: I don't know, you won't let me find out.

(Terrence enters from the bedroom, oblivious, as he puts his cell phone away.)

MARIE: Nana! Why ... why can't you just watch TV all day and rot like a normal old person!?

NANA: Never you mind. Tell me the news.

MARIE: We demanded \$750,000, they offered 20.

NANA: See, a complete waste of time.

MARIE: All your negativity is not helping me, you know. *(To Terrence)* Dan thinks he can get them to 50, maybe 100.

TERRENCE: Would that do it, Aunt Marie? If you got that much, could you put this in the past?

MARIE: I will never put this in the past. I don't need money. I told you, I need someone to say, "I did wrong."

TERRENCE: But Fr. Marchand won't. He denies all of it—

MARIE: I don't mean Marchand.

(Nana grabs her notes from Joseph and flashes two fingers at Marie behind Terrence's back as she interrupts him.)

NANA: You. Who do you prefer: Judy Garland or Ella Fitzgerald.

TERRENCE: Judy Garland or Ella—

NANA: Quick. Don't think about it.

TERRENCE: Ella Fitzgerald. (*To Marie*) What else do you need—?
(*Nana, frowning, flashes three fingers at Marie.*)

NANA: Elton John or Billy Joel?

TERRENCE: Billy Joel.

(*Nana grunts, flashing four fingers behind Terrence's back.*)

NANA: The Wizard of Oz or Casablanca?

TERRENCE: Casablan— Nana, what is with all the questions!?

(*Nana throws the notes down.*)

NANA: Nothing. Stupid Joseph. (*To Marie*) Don't you say another word, Dan said not to talk.

MARIE: Stop telling me what to do. (*Wearily*) What do I need? I need to know how I could've been so blind. Marchand was classic. Pick out a troubled kid and shower him with attention. As soon as he showed up, he was taking you two to the Red Sox, buying you ice cream, signing you up for altar boys. So interested in how Kevin was coping after his father died, so sympathetic. I can't believe I didn't see it.

NANA: None of us saw it because you've just described Bing Crosby, when he was a priest.

TERRENCE: Bing Crosby was a singer—

NANA: Do you prefer him or Judy Garland!?

TERRENCE: Him.

NANA: My butt! Bing Crosby in Going My Way was your classic pedophile priest. What's the first thing he does in his new parish? He seeks out the troubled boys. Takes them to ball games, starts a boys choir. He's hip, he's cool— oh, he's got them all fooled, but not me. I always knew there was something a little off about him, especially when he got around that creepy Danny Kaye. To this day, White Christmas gives me the willies—

MARIE: Nana! Stop!

TERRENCE: You know, when you didn't hear from Bishop Buckley, you could've called me to help.

MARIE: Oh, yeah, that would have done your career a lot of good.

NANA: My little scam was better, admit it, Marie.

MARIE: Well, I admit it worked. Nana called the Diocesan Development Office and told them she was old, rich, and making out her will.

NANA: I could hardly get them off the phone. I told them I'd only talk to Bishop Buckley because he'd given the most beautiful sermon I'd ever heard at a retreat in 1975.

TERRENCE: You remembered a sermon Bishop Buckley gave 25 years ago?

NANA: Ha! I'd never seen him before.

(As the lights go down, as before, Bishop Buckley's first line calls Nana into the next scene. Marie follows her.)

SCENE 4: BISHOP BUCKLEY'S OFFICE

(The lights come up over the office. An uncomfortable Marie remains in the shadows. A more vigorous Nana sits down by the desk.)

BISHOP: Mrs. Flynn, so wonderful to see you again.

NANA: It is, isn't it?

BISHOP: Yes. Well ... first, I'm touched that you remember a homily from so long ago. I have to confess, I don't remember it myself.

NANA: Oh, you were grand, Bishop, just grand.

BISHOP: Well, thank you. *(Picking up his phone)* Now, we usually have someone from Development sit in on a conversation like this—

NANA: Oh, don't trouble them. You remember my daughter, Marie.

(Marie steps forward timidly into the light. Bishop Buckley stands, extending a hand, then squints at her.)

BISHOP: We've met, haven't we?

NANA: Fr. Marchand introduced you. So to speak.

BISHOP: Oh. I see. So this is all just a game—

NANA: Get over it! What's going on with your investigation?

MARIE: Look, I'm sorry, Bishop, but—

NANA: Don't be apologizing to him.

MARIE: —but you never called me back.

BISHOP: Well, I guess you're here now. Please, have a seat.

(Bishop Buckley gestures them to take chairs. For the rest of the scene, he is reporting events, but never apologizing for, or defensive about, them.)

BISHOP: Because, as it turns out, I do have some news. Father is taking a medical leave of absence.

MARIE: You believe us then.

BISHOP: I did not say that. "Why" he is on leave is confidential.

NANA: You've gotten another complaint.

BISHOP: Now, it's all too easy to make a complaint. Rumors start going around. Street hustlers and lawyers smell money. But we think it best he get some spiritual counseling.

MARIE: So, he won't be around kids?

BISHOP: No, he won't. Mrs. Jordan, You have to understand, this can be a very lonely life. It takes a toll on some men—

NANA: You understand this. She's talked to a money-smelling lawyer.

MARIE: Nana.

BISHOP: That's neither wise nor necessary. For either Fr. Marchand or your son.

NANA: About Marchand, I could give a rat's—

MARIE: Nana.

BISHOP: Well, let's talk about Kevin. Obviously, the best thing for him, too, is to keep this quiet.

MARIE: This other complaint, Bishop, what happened?

BISHOP: You said there was one, not me. And if there was, that's between His Eminence and Fr. Marchand—

NANA: Well, and this other boy that son of a bitch has molested.

BISHOP: Now that's enough, ma'am! I would appreciate a little civility.

NANA: So would we, Francis Buckley.

BISHOP: *(Standing)* All right, then, this interview is over.

(Marie puts an arm in front of Nana to cut her off as she starts up again.)

MARIE: Nana! Let me talk to him.

NANA: Forget it, we're going.

MARIE: *(Quietly angry)* No! I'm not.

NANA: Be my guest, then.

(Nana withdraws.)

MARIE: Why should I keep this quiet for Kevin?

BISHOP: Well, no good can come from exposing him as a homosexual.

MARIE: Kevin isn't gay.

BISHOP: What else would you call a boy who does what he says he did?

MARIE: A victim.

BISHOP: I'm sorry, Mrs. Jordan. But the world is not as kind as the mother.

(Marie, followed by Nana, leave the office. As the lights go down over the office, Marie and Nana return to the living room where the lights come up.)

SCENE 5: MARIE'S LIVINGROOM

(As Nana speaks, an agitated Marie begins to pick up around her table. The Downstage bedroom door has popped open again.)

NANA: If I'd've been 30 years younger, he'da found himself contemplating how badly in need of paint his ceiling had become.

MARIE: I trusted them, I just trusted them to do the right thing.

NANA: I didn't. I trusted men to do the right thing 30 years ago, and they sent me my son home in a bag for my trouble.

MARIE: They told me to keep quiet and let them handle it, and I just obeyed, like a God damn sheep!

(As Marie finishes, Nana misses the basket with her Kleenex.)

MARIE: Nana! For God's sake! I spend the entire day cleaning up after— Oh, let's just finish it off!

(Marie sweeps her arm across the table, knocking everything to the floor, then slams the bedroom door shut.)

MARIE: There! (*Pause; calming down*) Sorry, Terry, I'm just a little pissed off today.

(*Terrence picks up the debris.*)

NANA: Jesus! You'll put me in an early grave yet.

TERRENCE: I think that's a ship that's already sailed.

NANA: And if a couple of Kleenexes on the floor bothered you so, Marie, you should have said something.

(*Marie glares at Nana.*)

TERRENCE: Believe it or not, Bishop Buckley isn't such a bad guy. (*Off their reaction*) No, really, he's, he's not. You only saw his public face, but he's not an unfeeling man. I know if he had it to do over, he'd do it differently.

NANA: Why didn't he do it differently the first time?

TERRENCE: It's just that, you know, sexual matters aren't exactly the Church's forte. And he didn't want to believe it.

MARIE: After what they did ... how do I take their money and say, "It's all fine now"? How do I tell Kevin, "It's all fine now, darling, they gave me some money"? How do I live with that?

NANA: Exactly! You need a trial.

MARIE: Except I don't want Kevin's life laid out for the world to gawk at! But how can I not go to trial, and go on with myself?

TERRENCE: How can you go to trial, and go on at all? You're a, a—

MARIE: A mess, yes, thank you, I know.

TERRENCE: I just mean ... some things in life, you just need to let go, Aunt Marie.

MARIE: How do I do that?

TERRENCE: I don't know. Maybe prayer would work for you.

MARIE: Prayer? To a God who let this happen? To a God who clearly doesn't give a shit? I go to Mass because, because, that's what you do, but I can't pray, not since, not since Kevin ... not since Kevin— Damn it! I will not cry today.

(*Terrence steps toward her to embrace her. Nana rises and steps between them, embracing Marie herself.*)

NANA: Well, there's your problem. Stop praying to their God. And start praying to your own.

(Lights down.)

SCENE 6: MARIE'S LIVINGROOM

(Midday. Nana, in her chair, blows her nose. Used Kleenexes dot the floor. Nana closes her eyes, murmuring Hail Mary's and counting beads. Occasionally, Marie's voice on the phone in the kitchen is heard. As Nana prays, she glances toward the kitchen. She crosses herself and makes a tally on a pad of paper.)

NANA: 15,000 decades of the Rosary. That does it. The sins of my twenties are absolved! ... *(To Chair)* It did not take forever! ... Well, most of them were your fault! Heh, heh, heh. Now, for my thirties, I'll have to rest up a bit.

(Nana reaches for the scanner, then pauses.)

NANA: *(To Chair)* Oh, I'm just going to listen for a minute. ... Well, leave then if you think it's so wrong!

(Marie enters quietly as Nana reaches for the scanner. As Nana responds, Terrence enters from the middle bedroom.)

MARIE: *(Warning)* Nana....

NANA: I'm not doing any— *(Suddenly struggling to her feet)* My God!

MARIE: Nana?

TERRENCE: Are you all right!?

NANA: Sweet Christ, I've got to go.

TERRENCE: Where? Oh.

MARIE: Oh! Well, hurry, Nana!

(Although hurrying as indicated by her grimace, Nana walks slowly Upstage toward the bathroom. They urge her on.)

TERRENCE: Faster, Nana!

MARIE: Go, Nana, go!

NANA: Stop that! I'm not goddamn Seabiscuit!

(Nana exits into the bathroom. Marie, joined by Terry, begins to tidy up around Nana's table.)

MARIE: Well. Your first miracle, Fr. Terry.

TERRENCE: I used to think Nana might mellow in her old age, become a little less...

MARIE: Domineering?

TERRENCE: I was going to say, pain in the ass. I don't know how you do it, Aunt Marie.

MARIE: Well, it's a little easier if she doesn't hate you— Oh, crap.

TERRENCE: *(Pause)* Well, it's not like it's a secret.

MARIE: I'm sorry about all those ... music questions earlier.

TERRENCE: She's never been very subtle.

MARIE: No. Someone ... someone just gave her this stupid idea

TERRENCE: So I gathered.

MARIE: *(Pause)* It's just so stupid Right?

TERRENCE: Those were very stupid questions, yes . Now, are you getting hungry, because I'd be happy to run out for—

MARIE: It is stupid, right? The idea?

TERRENCE: Aunt Marie, since when do you care what Nana thinks?

MARIE: No, right, I don't. I just mean, not that it would matter, but ... you're not ... right?

(Terrence looks at her and hesitates, the sort of hesitation that involuntarily confirms all.)

TERRENCE: Not that it would matter.

MARIE: Oh my god.

TERRENCE: So this is why she's seemed so disgusted with me lately.

MARIE: No, oh no, really it's more she thinks you're a weas(el)—
(Catching herself) Terry, how can a priest be gay!?

TERRENCE: Do you really think I'm the only one?

MARIE: Well, yeah ... aren't you?

TERRENCE: No.

MARIE: No?