

Scene 3

The Sacresti. There is a large, heavy cupboard, a bookcase, a safe, a large pascal candle, a stool and a small pew. It is dark. We hear the sound of a large bunch of keys being tried impatiently. finally, Elden enters through a heavy door. He is unfamiliar with the room. He searches for a light switch. collides with furniture.

Elden Cursed darkness.

He feels around and finds the pascal candle. He lights it and carries it around to find the light. Muttering. He puts the light on. Looks around. Reacts to the pascal candle and quickly puts it out. Looks again. Goes to the bookshelf and looks through the books with a smile. He finds a tape player on the shelf. Presses a button and smiles in reverie as he hears sacred music. He mouths the latin words.

He comes to the large cupboard with its heavy doors. He tries them Locked. He looks through the bunch of keys. Tries a few. It opens. looks inside. Stops. Goes to the door he entered through, closes and locks it. He returns to the cupboard. Opens the door wide to show an array of vestments. He touches the material. Looks through them.

He walks away from them without taking his eyes off them, looks sideways to the safe. Looks closely at the lock. chooses the right key immediately and opens it. A bright light is activated inside the safe. There are a collection of chalices. He gingerly picks one up and lifts the lid. He takes out a host. Looks closely at it. Reacts sharply to it and tries to replace the lid. It is noisy and awkward. He puts the chalice back in the safe, shutting and locking the door. He crosses himnsel and genuflects to the safe. He backs away.

He looks again at the vestments. Runs his hand through them. He is seduced. He takes out a white under-garment and hangs it on the door. Then he chooses a coloured over-garment. He takes off his coat and puts the white garment on very hurriedly, looking towards the door. He is l.ike someone passionately un dressing. He ties a white cord around his waist. Then he stops. He takes the coloured over-garment which is deep, blood red with a golden cross. There is great ceremony about it. He mumbles. He thinks angels are helping him. He gathers the

garment up and holds it above his head. When he drops it it falls across his outstretched arms and down to his knees with unbelievable grace. The music continues. Dressed, he goes to the pew. Lifting the cassock quaintly he kneels and joins his hands in prayer.

He raises his head. His eyes raised coyly to heaven.

Elden Impersonating an officer. Is it a crime? I know it must be a sin. I don't know how black. (Wait) These could have been mine. Couldn't they ? I know you had other plans. I understand that.

He hears noises off stage. Panic. He tries to get the garments off. He can't. The cord is knotted tightly and he gets himself caught in the cloth. As he hears the sound of a person approaching he changes tack. He kneels again.

A young girl, Sarah enters through a curtain on the other side of the stage. she has just caught the end of these actions. She stands with her eyes down, looking at his back. She waits a respectable time.

Sarah Father. (Wait) I've been waiting for confession. (Wait) Is it on? (Wait) I knew they'd send a stand-in priest. (Wait) Though I think Fr Thomas is coming home. (Wait) Father !

She kneels besides him. Closes her eyes in prayer. He opens his and looks at her. Closes them again.

Sarah (Quietly) Did you know Mrs Mooney ? I expect you didn't. She was my Auntie. Great Auntie.

He opens his eyes in surprise and then closes them.

Sarah Will you pray for her with me ?

He nods but doesn't speak. She looks around and sees his coat lying on the floor. She stands and backs away.

Elden Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name... (He continues. Sarah watches and then comes back and kneels.)
We pray for the repose of the soul of our..... sister..... Mrs Mooney. And for all those loving family members she has left behind. (He sees Sarah looking at him) Now let us pray quietly.

He watches her until she puts her head down. He looks around.

Sarah Will you hear my confession, Father?

Quiet. She moves very far away from him. He stands and turns.

Elden I'm sorry.

Sarah **(Raging)** How dare you. how dare you. You will never be forgiven. Who are you ? I came to have confession. You're not a priest. Are you? You're filthy. Filthy. You prayed for my Auntie and you're not a real priest. How dare you?

He takes off the outer garment and fiddles with the cord. She looks at his face. More scared.

Sarah Do you know me ? Who are you? You look like.... I don't know..... like my dad. **(He walks towards her)** Jesus. No. You're him aren't you ? You're Satan!

Elden No. No. Please, Sarah.....

Sarah How do you know my name then ?

Elden Mrs Mooney, Sarah.....

Sarah Don't say that, she's dead.

Elden Sarah....

Sarah seizes the nearest object to defend herself... a silver crucifix on a long stand. He walks straight up to her. She points it at him like a lance.

Sarah Stay away from me. Stay away. I'll use it.

Elden Sarah, put it down. It's a crucifix.

Sarah Scared of crosses, are you?

Elden No, Sarah, it's a sacred object.

She gives it to him. Then screams.

Elden Please, Sarah. Please. Mrs Mooney is my sister. I know your name because I've only got one niece. You.

Sarah Stay away.

Elden Uncle Frank.

Sarah No, you're not.

Elden Yes. Uncle Frank. I've been at your house.

Sarah Uncle Frank's in America.

Elden I was. You're right. I couldn't make the funeral. I came as soon as I could. I want to be with my family. With you. My sister

was very special to me. I know that she was to you too. She told me.

Sarah I've never seen you.

Elden I've seen you though. Last time I was back was fifteen years ago. When your grandmother died. I nursed you. I fed you. You won't remember. But I do. (Quiet) I'm sorry. I shouldn't have scared you.

Sarah You've got children.

Elden Your cousins.

Sarah Priests don't have children in America do they?

Elden Not ordinarily. I mean, no. I'm not a priest.

Sarah This is terrible.

Elden But I am chair of my parish council.

Sarah You would have heard my confession.

Elden No. Never, Sarah. That's why I stopped. I was just being silly. I thought the door was locked.

Sarah What are you doing here ?

Elden I've got Mrs Mooney's keys. Your Dad gave them to me. Sorting out.

Sarah You shouldn't be in here.

Elden I know. I was just getting the feel.

Sarah Why did no-one say you were coming.

Elden It was last minute. Anyway, your Dad says you're not talking to them.

Sarah Dad would have told me.

Elden He must've forgotten.

Sarah I nearly confessed to you.

Elden No. I wouldn't have. Not a sacrament. I'm sure you've no sins to confess.

Sarah You'd be surprised.

Elden I'm sure.

Sarah I need confession. There's a mass for Mrs Mooney.

Elden God will forgive you.

Sarah How do you know ?

Elden He always does.

Sarah Does he? You don't know?

Elden Trust me, Sarah.

She looks at the vestments he is still wearing.

Sarah The last thing I said to her was a lie. I knew I wouldn't see her again. And I lied to her.

Elden I'm sure you had your reasons.

Sarah I did.

Elden Then God will forgive you.

Sarah **(Thinking)** I want Mrs Mooney to.

Elden She will.

Sarah How do you know ?

Elden She's with God. And God will forgive you.
(Quiet) I'm sure the priest....

Sarah Fr Thomas

Elden Father Thomas.... will hear your confession.

Sarah He's discharged himself. He's on his way back.

Elden So you say.

Sarah She's still 'alive'... but somewhere else.
Isn't she ?

Elden In the next room.

Quiet. He finally gets off the garment.

Sarah Why are you wearing those ?

Elden I was just..... (He offers the garment) It's such beautiful cloth. I thought I was alone.

Sarah touches the cloth tenderly.

Sarah I've never touched it. **(She puts it against her cheek)** It's beautiful. **(Quiet.)** She will have ironed this.

Elden Garments of this quality probably don't need ironing.

Sarah She ironed everything.

Elden I'm sure. (Quiet) You won't mention this will you ?

She shakes her head. Quiet.

Elden You were very close to her.

Sarah Yes.

Elden She told me.

Sarah When

Elden In letters. She sent me a video.

Sarah She told me.

Elden We all had a great laugh about that. All the family gathered around the main tv. It was the last we heard from her.

Sarah She didn't talk much about the rest of the family.

Elden Nor to me. For many years. She cut herself off. No-one heard from her. Until about two years ago.

Sarah When the illness started.

Elden We didn't know that. You probably know more about her than me.

Sarah She lived here twenty eight years with Fr Thomas. She used to take me out. Even when I was little.

Elden She had none of her own.

Sarah We'd been bowling.

Elden You have bowling here, now ?

Sarah Mainly we used to go for walks. I know it looks like the middle of the city.... but there's fields. Out the back. They go for miles. Along the river. Some of it's golf course.

Elden Golf !

Sarah It was her favourite place. Around here.

Elden I'd like to see it.

Sarah I'll take you. (She looks at the keys in his hand.) I bought her that key ring. From holiday.

Elden It's lovely. **(Sarah cries)** Please don't, Sarah. It's not what she would have wanted.

It's not. She's watching you right now.

Sarah She is, isn't she?

Elden Jesus said so, Sarah.

She goes to him. He embraces her awkwardly.

Black.