



## Martyr

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### CHARACTERS:

BRIDE: 20s. Emotional, angry, desperate. Deeply Catholic.

SISTER: 20s. Yearning for connection. Not Catholic anymore.

MUM: 40+. Emotional punching bag. Voice of reason. Catholic.

PRIEST: Voice of reason. Emotional punching bag. Catholic.

### NOTES ON DIALOGUE:

*Italics* indicate *stressed* words.

**Bolded** words are stressed in a **different** way.

/ indicates overlapping dialogue.

- indicates interruption.

(!) indicates feigned surprise.

(?) indicates a rhetorical question.

## SCENE 1

*The back rooms of a Catholic Church. The cold room, where the kids are sent during Mass. There are Jesus-themed toys and photocopied colouring-in sheets scattered everywhere.*

*Offstage, the Bridal March sounds.*

*The murmured call-and-response of wedding vows, muffled. Think the teachers from Charlie Brown, but with feeling.*

*Pause.*

*A different, muffled voice.*

*Another pause.*

*A long, shrill, feminine scream.*

*The scream continues, getting closer, and is accompanied by the stomping of feet.*

*BRIDE, the source of the scream, bursts in wearing the biggest, poofy-est wedding dress that will realistically fit on stage. She continues to scream.*

*She is followed by MUM, wearing a mother of the bride dress too small for her and a fascinator too big for anyone. MUM is dragging SISTER in by the elbow. SISTER is wearing a conservative bridesmaids dress in a colour that doesn't suit her. The dress has sleeves that have been added after the fact by MUM, and SISTER's tattoos are almost visible under the thin fabric.*

*BRIDE paces the room, letting out short, staccato screams.*

MUM: Darling.

*BRIDE continues to scream.*

MUM: Darling, people can hear you.

*BRIDE continues to pace, continues to scream.*

SISTER: Please, please calm down.

*BRIDE's screams turn into a growl.*

BRIDE: Calm! - you, you've got some fucking nerve -

MUM: PLEASE don't SWEAR you're in CHURCH -

BRIDE: Fucking Church - why's she here?

MUM: Because she's your sister.

BRIDE: So?

MUM: She's your sister.

BRIDE: Don't care.

MUM: Oh -

SISTER: Can we not just talk about this?

BRIDE: Nothing to talk about. I am never. Speaking. To you. Again.

MUM: Darling, I do think that's a touch dramatic -

BRIDE: I don't. How could you say that? She's been shagging my fiancé, mum, I don't think it's possible for me to be -

*There is a knock on the door. MUM walks with purpose over to it and opens it just a crack, enough for her head to pop out.*

MUM: Hiiii. Yes we're fine, we'll be out in a minute. No, don't let anyone leave, just. Just shuffle the playlist and put it back on, they won't notice. Thanks! Thanks, Father. Thank yooouuuu...

*MUM shuts the door with force and stands in front of it protectively.*

MUM: (to her daughters) Sit down.

*SISTER instinctively drops down on one of the child-sized chairs.*

MUM: Both of you.

BRIDE: I can't, my dress.

MUM: *Well sit on the floor, then.*

*BRIDE slowly lowers herself onto the dirty carpet.*

MUM: Right. Your father and I have paid for seventy-odd people to sit in there and watch a wedding today and if it doesn't happen they're going to have questions. I have questions. So.

*MUM speaks directly to SISTER*

MUM: What the fuck is going on?

BLACKOUT.

## SCENE 2

*Single spotlight on SISTER's face.*

*The PRIEST's voice is only heard from offstage.*

*Confessional Booth.*

*SISTER squints into the unfamiliar light of the spotlight.*

SISTER: Er. Fforgive me, Father, for I have sinned, it has beeeeeeen... er.... probably like eight years since my last confession. If there's another bit after that, I've forgotten the words, just. When do I tell you about all the sins?

PRIEST: Did you cross yourself?

*SISTER goes to raise her hand to her forehead, but stops herself.*

SISTER: Yes.

PRIEST: Let us pray.

SISTER: Right.

*SISTER instinctively bows her head but peers up periodically.*

PRIEST: Oh God, we pray that we will find some peace through our time with You. That despite our sinful ways, when we live our lives with you in our hearts, we will never stray too far from the light. In Jesus's / name, we pray. Amen.

SISTER: / Jesus's name. pray. Amen. Beautiful, Father, thank you.

PRIEST: So. What's been troubling you, my child?

SISTER: I ruined my sister's wedding. I stood up and I told everyone that I've been shagging her fiancé in the middle of their wedding, and I think I've fucked it.

Sorry. Probably shouldn't say fuck in Church. Or shag, actually.

PRIEST: It's fine.

SISTER: I have slept - I have lain with my sister's betrothed. Bit more Biblical.

PRIEST: It's fine.

SISTER: Dunno what would replace the word 'fuck', though. Fuck's one of those catch-all words that just means what it means, like Aloha. Or Shalom. That's Biblical n'all.

PRIEST: Please. Stop talking.

SISTER: Okay.

PRIEST: Why did you lie?

SISTER: I didn't lie.

PRIEST: That's a lie as well.

SISTER: Alright (!)

PRIEST: It's a sin, you know. Lying. One of the major ones.

*Pause.*

SISTER: How the fuck do you -

PRIEST: I'm a priest. We just. Know.

SISTER: Fucking creepy.

PRIEST: I know.

PRIEST: (cont'd) Why did you lie?

SISTER: I had to stop the wedding.

PRIEST: Why?

SISTER: Because she shouldn't marry him.

PRIEST: Why?

SISTER: Because she doesn't love him.

PRIEST: And that means she shouldn't marry him?

SISTER: No. Course not. What a stupid - Of course one of you would say that. No. She should marry someone she loves.

PRIEST: And you thought the best course of action was to lie about sleeping with her fiancé? You didn't sleep with her fiancé at all, we both know that.

SISTER: Sorry, what is this? I thought you just listened to my sins then told me to do some Hail Marys and say sorry. Didn't realise it was gonna be this full fucking interrogation.

PRIEST: Not an interrogation. You can't just go to confession and confess. You have to know what you're saying, what you mean. You have to be truly sorry for your actions. Otherwise, God won't forgive them.

SISTER: (childishly) Who says I believe in God?

*Beat.*

SISTER: Sorry.

PRIEST: No... (!)

SISTER: No, really, I / dunno why I said that.

PRIEST: / I get it all the time.

*Beat.*

SISTER: Have I made it weird? I feel like I've made it weird.

PRIEST: Not at all!

SISTER: No, really if I've made it weird I can, like go or something, I. I don't wanna make you feel weird at like, work.

PRIEST: Did you want to make your sister feel weird? At her, *like*, wedding?

*SISTER is taken aback.*

SISTER: Alright. Bit uncalled for.

PRIEST: Did you?

SISTER: Yes, actually. Because it's the only way I could get her to stop. Bit of public shame, that's what you people respond to. I don't need to apologise to God, or to my sister. She'll fucking thank me later. God probably will, too.

*Beat.*

My bum's numb, can we pray and wrap this up?

BLACKOUT.

### SCENE 3

*Lights up on the back rooms. Nothing has changed.*

SISTER: I couldn't just sit there, I had to say something.

BRIDE: Yeah, you just had to make today all about you.

SISTER: It's not about that, it's never about that, I just wanted to protect you.

BRIDE: Oh, fuck off.

MUM: Girls, please.

BRIDE: You can't ruin this for me. After everything, this was the one - the one thing I could hold onto.

SISTER: But it wasn't right. Surely you can see that it was never going to work, you and him never could've worked.

*The door knocks again. MUM gives a look to BRIDE and SISTER and opens the door slightly.*

MUM: (Into the doorway) Yes - oh, it's you. No. They're sorting it. I don't know how long it'll take. Keep the music going. Don't let my sister sing, she'll ruin the whole day. I can't speed them up, they're your daughters too, you know what they're like. No. Alright. Go away.

MUM shuts the door with force.

MUM: (to SISTER) Marriage is about making it work. They both agreed to it. They could've made it work. Well. Not now, I suppose.

BRIDE: No, not now you've ruined my life.

SISTER: Oh please. I've saved you from ruining your own life and taking him with you.

BRIDE: He's not your concern. And neither am I.

SISTER: You're my sister.

BRIDE: Oh, don't start with that again.

SISTER: You are. And I care about him as well.

BRIDE: He's not yours to care about.

SISTER: He's not yours, either.

BRIDE: What's this, then? What's all of this, if not me making him mine? What's today, and everyone here, and this fucking dress if it's not me - if it's not us standing up in front of youse lot and God and saying: "Right. We've decided. This is who I want. This is what I want." What the fuck else would it be?

SISTER: .

BRIDE: No, seriously. Please.

*BRIDE attempts to stand but is unable to get up around her skirts.*

What do you think I'm trying to do, here?

*SISTER looks straight at BRIDE.*

SISTER: I know that you're trying.

BRIDE: What? What are you talking about?

MUM: Leave it.

BRIDE: No, no, let her speak. If she knows so much.

SISTER: I see you trying to love him well, trying to convince us that you love him. We know. We all know.

MUM: (to SISTER) Stop it now.

BRIDE: Know - know what? Mum, what's she - what the fuck are you saying?

SISTER: (softly) Come on. You can stop now. This - all of this - can stop now.

*Pause.*

BRIDE: I -

BLACKOUT.



#### SCENE 4

*Single spotlight on BRIDE's face. The priest's voice is only heard from offstage.*

*Confession.*

*BRIDE squints into the spotlight, but adapts to it much faster than SISTER did.*

BRIDE: Oh! Hiya.

PRIEST: Hello.

BRIDE: Felt weird not coming earlier in the week. Been. Busy. Obviously. Wedding.

*Beat.*

BRIDE: I know I don't have to come, like, all the time. I know I come more than other people, but. I feel better when I. You know.

So!

*BRIDE gulps in a deep breath,*

FatherForgiveMeForIHaveSinnedItHasBeenEightDaysSinceMyLastConfession.

*Beat.*

Right! Now you go. Your bit.

PRIEST: *My bit?*

BRIDE: You know.

PRIEST: Would you prefer to lead the prayer?

BRIDE: No, I like when you do it.

PRIEST: Fine. "Our Father, who art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy "

BRIDE: Hang on, do I not get a personalised one?

PRIEST: Oh -

BRIDE: I've not seen you in ages! Come oooooonnn. You're killing me.

PRIEST: All right.

*Slight rustling of paper is heard.*

PRIEST: Oh God, we pray that we will find some peace through our time with You. That despite our sinful ways, when we live our lives with you in our hearts, we will never stray too far from the light. In Jesus's name, we pray. / Amen.

BRIDE: / Amen. Beautiful, Father.

So!

I am feeling. The same lust as usual. But I've also got a lot of, like, wrath(?), I suppose(?). My sister. Ruined the wedding.

PRIEST: I saw.

BRIDE: Yeah. It's been a bit of a mad day. I cried a lot this morning, but this has all been a bit. Much.

PRIEST: I can imagine.

BRIDE: I spent a lot of time on this wedding. I saved up and planned everything out and worked so hard to get everything perfect.

PRIEST: Why?

BRIDE: Because I wanted a beautiful wedding.

PRIEST: Why?

BRIDE: Because I wanted a good start to my marriage.

PRIEST: Why?

BRIDE: Because I want a good marriage.

PRIEST: Why?

BRIDE: You know why.

*Beat.*

PRIEST: Do you want to talk about it?

BRIDE: No.

PRIEST: This would be a good time to talk about it. That is, if you don't want to talk to the people in your life about it.

BRIDE: But you're a person in my life.

PRIEST: I am an ominous voice in the dark.

BRIDE: Hmph.

PRIEST: You don't have to talk about it.

BRIDE: Seems like we are talking about it.

PRIEST: If you want to talk about it

BRIDE: Talk about what?

PRIEST: The lust.

BRIDE: (faux shock) ... Father (!)

PRIEST: I'm just saying.

BRIDE: No, I.

I just didn't want to think about this on my wedding day.

PRIEST: That's understandable. So. You... Want to confess the wrath you feel? For your sister?

BRIDE: Yes! YES!

PRIEST: Okay.

BRIDE: Yes! So! I understand that she's lonely, she's always been a bit of a, the Black Sheep of the family, you know. But of all the men she could've - literally any other man, you know? She had to have - and today, today of all days! She had to choose today to do this, it had to be

today that she'd - It's my wedding day! Everyone I know is on the other side of that wall and they all came here to watch me get married to that man and now, now it's all fucked because she couldn't keep her big fucking mouth fucking shut!

*Beat.*

Sorry, Father.

*Beat.*

PRIEST: You seem more upset that she's ruined your wedding day than that she's sleeping with your fiancé.

BRIDE: Well -

PRIEST: Are you upset? That she's sleeping with your fiancé?

BRIDE: (too quickly) Yes!

*Beat.*

No.

*Beat.*

I don't really care.

Is not caring about your future marriage a sin?

PRIEST: Sort of. The Bible isn't as clear cut as a lot of people make it out to be.

BRIDE: Like the *love thy neighbour* people who don't care about homeless people?

PRIEST: Yes. But I'd also say that it's far more important to love yourself than your neighbour. Have you watched RuPaul's Drag Race? "If you can't love yourself, how the hell are you gonna love somebody else"? Do you know it?

BRIDE: No. I don't really care about that sort of stuff.

PRIEST: What do you care about?

BRIDE: I care that I can't exactly marry him now, can I? Not after everyone's found out. And he was so perfect, he was local, and religious - well, he wasn't all that religious, in the end...

PRIEST: And did you love him?

*Pause.*

BRIDE: Come on, now.

PRIEST: It's a fair question.

BRIDE: It was never about! Father, I. I loved him the only way I could.

PRIEST: And what way is that?

BRIDE: I loved what he could do for me. I loved him in spite of him. Being him.

*Beat.*

BRIDE: I love my faith.

PRIEST: And that's in the present tense?

BRIDE: Sorry?

PRIEST: You loved him. You love your faith. The tenses, they're -

BRIDE: - I don't really think it matters as much as you're making it out and after everything that happened when I got sent away I thought you'd be a bit more understanding and anyway what do you even know you're exempt from this relationship-py stuff cos you're a priest.

*Beat.*

BRIDE: Sorry.

*Beat.*

PRIEST: Can I be honest with you?

*Pause.*

PRIEST: I almost got married. I was a bit younger than you, mind, but I thought if I just married her then that would fix everything. The bad thoughts would stop, the sinful anyway, I couldn't go through with it. My parents were mortified and told me that I should either join the priesthood or I'd be out of the family. So. Here I am.

BRIDE: So. Should I become a nun?

PRIEST: No. The habit would do nothing for you. My point is, I got sent away too. I was almost married, I had to become a priest to get my family to leave me alone. Your sister would rather stand up, ruin your wedding and have you hate her forever than have you trapped in a marriage that could never make you happy.

*Beat.*

PRIEST: No-one stood up for me.

BRIDE: I'm sorry. Have I upset you?

PRIEST: No.

*Beat.*

PRIEST: Have you upset yourself?

BRIDE: ...Yes.

PRIEST: Would you like to pray?

BRIDE: I'm not sure I should.

*Beat.*

PRIEST: That's when you need it most.

BLACKOUT.

## SCENE 5

*Back rooms, as before.*

MUM: Girls.

*SISTER looks at BRIDE. BRIDE doesn't break her eye contact with the floor.*

MUM: Girls. You're both gonna have to go back out there. We should... We should know what we're going to say. When people ask.

BRIDE: And what are we gonna tell them?

*Beat.*

SISTER: We're gonna tell them the truth.

*Beat.*

MUM: What is the truth?! I still don't really understand what's going on here -

BLACKOUT.

**SCENE 6**

*Confessional booth.*

PRIEST: Hello.

MUM: No. No. Absolutely not.

*BLACKOUT.*

## SCENE 7

*Church back rooms.*

SISTER: Mum. It's fine.

MUM: Wh. What's fine? Darling, we -

*(to BRIDE)*

You were supposed to get married. You. You love him.

BRIDE: Mum, I - I think it's over.

MUM: No. No it can't be over because I haven't said it's over and, and I haven't said it's over because it's not over until you're married!

*The door knocks.*

MUM: Oh for -

*MUM goes over to the door.*

MUM: *(Out the door)* HELLO. Sorry, darling, I didn't think it'd be you. Don't be silly, we're just sorting things out.

SISTER: *(to BRIDE)*: I never slept with him, by the way. I just wanted to stop you getting married.

BRIDE: *(to SISTER)* I don't care. I don't want to marry him.

SISTER: *(to BRIDE)* I know. You don't have to.

BRIDE: *(to SISTER)* Yes I do.

SISTER: *(to BRIDE)* You can go home. We can go back to mum's and forget this ever happened if you want.

MUM: *(Out the door)* Noooo, we're nearly there. Just the last few knots and tangles. Sisters, you know? Always bickering.

BRIDE: *(to SISTER)* I can't keep running away.

SISTER: *(to BRIDE)* You'd be running to, though. Running to something better than this. Where you can be yourself.

MUM: *(Out the door)* You'll see it yourself, when you two have your own. If you're cursed with daughters, that is.

BRIDE: *(to SISTER)* I don't even know who I am away from this.

SISTER: *(to BRIDE)* You could find out. This is your life. You can't spend it hiding.

MUM: *(Out the door)* Yes, absolutely, she's just getting ready to come out now. Aren't you, darling? Are you ready to come out?

*Pause. Everyone looks at BRIDE, waiting. BRIDE opens her mouth to speak...*

*BLACKOUT.*

*END.*