

Jim Nolan

BRIGHTON



Gallery Books

Brighton

was first published
simultaneously in paperback
and in a clothbound edition
on the day of its première,
1 May 2010.

The Gallery Press

Loughcrew
Oldcastle
County Meath
Ireland

www.gallerypress.com

© Jim Nolan 2010

ISBN 978 1 85235 492 3 *paperback*
978 1 85235 493 0 *clothbound*

A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library.

All rights whatsoever in this play are strictly
reserved. Requests to reproduce the text in whole
or in part, and application for performance in any
medium, by professional or amateur companies,
or for translation into any language should be
addressed in advance to the publishers.

Characters

LILY

JACK

DAVE

Time and Place

ACT ONE

The present. The Sisters of Calvary Nursing Home, Hammer-smith Road, London.

ACT TWO

As above and, a few weeks later, in a private room in Brighton General Hospital.

Brighton was first produced, in association with Kevin O'Shea, at Garter Lane Theatre, Waterford, on Saturday, 1 May, 2010, with the following cast (in order of appearance):

DAVE	Andrew Macklin
JACK	Mark Lambert
LILY	Gillian Hanna

<i>Direction</i>	Ben Barnes
<i>Design</i>	Joe Vanek
<i>Lighting Design</i>	John Comiskey
<i>Sound Design</i>	Mark Graham

*for John Rogan
and in memory of Kitty Howells*

ACT ONE

Scene One

The garden of the Sisters of Calvary nursing home on Hammersmith Road, London. It's early morning in late autumn and DAVE, a young Care Assistant, is leading JACK into the space. JACK is sixty and confined to a wheelchair.

DAVE (*As he enters*) And now . . . the centrepiece of this morning's tour! Our haven of the Hammersmith Road, our sea of tranquillity in this ocean of storms — Mother St Benedict's Garden of the Orient!

JACK Mother St Benedict?

DAVE You got it, Jack, aka Nanette Duvalier, foundress of the Sisters of Calvary — and closet Zen Buddhist to boot! Gave thirty years in a mud hut on the banks of the Yangtze River she did and brought this little corner of the East home to heathen London. (*Gestures to garden*) What you think?

JACK It's a *garden* — what am I supposed to think?

DAVE Not the green fingers type, then, are we? Never mind — I'm no Monty Don neither. Still, you feel a dose of cabin fever coming on, at least you'll know where to go. You fancy a stroll? Metaphorically speaking, of course.

JACK No. Not today.

DAVE You're the gov'nor! So . . . let's see. We've done the library, the TV room, the conservatory, the hairdressers and the shop. Next stop's the chapel. (*Looks at his watch*) Mass is ten o'clock. Fr Mackey is getting on a bit and inclined to hang the dog but the old dears should be out by now.

JACK If you don't mind, I'll pass on the chapel.

DAVE I'm obliged to give you the full tour, Jack.

JACK We're the only ones who'll ever know you didn't.
DAVE Whatever you say. Right then, a little recap and I'll be on my way. Morning call, 7.15. Breakfast in bed, 7.30. Shower and personal needs, 9 o'clock. Daily Mass — for them that's minded — 10 am. Lunch in the Dining Room's at midday, tea in your room, 5.30, supper, ditto, at 8 o'clock. That's the drill, Mr Dunhill! In between, as long as it's legal, you do as you please.
JACK I'm paralysed from the waist down — my options are somewhat limited.
DAVE True. But that's where Dave here comes in. Your beck and call, Mr D! Tonic to your gin, Laurel to your Hardy — this time next week, you'll be wondering what you ever did without me.

LILY enters. She walks with the aid of a walking stick and is dressed to go out.

Ah! Here she comes — Lily the Pink! How are you today, my darlin'?

LILY Above the ground — though it's early yet.
DAVE Survive another Fr Mackey Special, then?
LILY Yes. We prayed, as always, for your deliverance — though with receding hope of a positive outcome.
DAVE I hear it's not the only positive outcome you've been praying for. I hear you've got Fr Mackey saying Novenas for Saturday's game.
LILY We save our Novenas for desperate cases — to wit, the salvation of your immortal soul. Compared to which, Fulham beating Arsenal on Saturday is a foregone conclusion. I'm just on my way out and thought I'd come by to welcome our new arrival.
DAVE Forgive me! This is Jack Dunhill, Lily. Lily the Pink Thompson, Jack — terror of the third floor and, for her sins, condemned to a life sentence of supporting Fulham Football Club!
JACK Pleased to meet you, Lily.
LILY Your name goes before you, Jack.
JACK I'm flattered.

DAVE What she does best! I'd lock my door at night if I was you; this one's a veritable man-eater!
LILY You'll be relieved to know there's a different Care Assistant on each shift, Jack. You'll find the *others* are very pleasant boys.
DAVE Yeah but not half as much fun! An' you love me really, don't you, Lil?
LILY Somebody has to, I suppose.
DAVE Me an' Lily's cut from the same cloth, Jack. Lily's an old Paddy, see — same as my dad. Only difference is my dad had the savvy to pitch his tent in Islington which made him — an' later me — an Arsenal supporter. God's Chosen People! Isn't that right, Lily?
LILY (*To JACK, as she sits beside him*) As you've probably gathered, David here has a distressingly simple view of the world. As far as he's concerned there exists only two dimensions —
DAVE The Gunners — and the rest of suffering humanity! Speaking of which, where do *you* stand, Jack?
JACK I don't.
DAVE (*A brief halt to his gallop*) Oh. (*And recovers*) Well, at least you didn't say you was a Spurs fan. *That* could make for some very interesting bath times. Now, Mr Walker's enema is pending — I'll leave you in Lily's more than capable hands. (*As he's about to leave*) You fancy a little wager on Saturday's game, Lily?
LILY How much?
DAVE Let's say a fiver. Anything more would be immoral.
LILY Make it *ten* — and maybe I *will* say a Novena!
DAVE You're on!
LILY By the way, how's that young man of yours?
DAVE (*His mood darkens*) He's okay.
LILY That doesn't sound too good. Have you been fighting again?
DAVE You know Enzo . . .
LILY I certainly do! Enzo is David's partner, Jack. And an actor, just like yourself.
JACK I see.
LILY *Maltese*, if you don't mind. A lovely boy and *very* hand-

some but somewhat mercurial in temperament. They're planning to get married — David tells me it's all the rage now — but we fear the bold Enzo will have to be dragged screaming to the altar, don't we, David?

DAVE 'Sowing' and 'wild oats' come to mind, Jack. You know how it is.

JACK Fond memory brings the light. I'm sure it will all turn out for the best.

DAVE I hope so. Anyway . . . Your beck an' call, as I say — give me a shout if you need anything.

JACK There *is* one thing.

DAVE What's that, then?

JACK That shop we passed on our tour. Do they sell newspapers?

DAVE No. But I do — an' delivered on your breakfast tray, too. It's *Mirrors* and *Suns* and *Daily Stars* for the most part — not too many in training for University Challenge round here — but I'd put you down for a *Guardian* reader, right?

JACK I was looking for the *Racing Post*, actually.

DAVE Well, I live and breathe! Fond of the gee-gees, are we?

JACK I have a passing interest, yes.

DAVE And nothing wrong with that, is there, Lily? Your wish is my command, Jack — I'll have a copy of the *Post* with your googy egg first thing in the morning.

JACK Do I pay you now?

DAVE You don't pay me at all. I'm like royalty, Jack — I never handle money. I'll tell Accounts to put it on your bill. Catch you in the next movie, Lil.

LILY I can hardly wait.

DAVE That's what Mr Walker said when I told him about his enema!

DAVE *exits.*

LILY He's as daft as a brush, that boy.

JACK So I notice. We're about to become intimate acquaintances.

LILY I had a call from a mutual friend yesterday. Fr Bernard.

The actor's chaplain, I believe.

JACK If brandy-fuelled spiritual counselling in the watering holes of the West End qualifies on that score — then yes, I suppose that's what you'd call him.

LILY He's indisposed.

JACK Drying out, you mean.

LILY I wasn't sure if you knew.

JACK It's hardly a secret. Bernard's been drying out on and off for as long as I've known him — and that's more than twenty years.

LILY He was my Parish Priest at Holy Cross before I came here. Many's the Sunday I had to call him for First Mass after a night on the tiles with some of your lot. The only thing would get him to the sacristy would be the promise of altar wine for a cure. 'I'm the walking proof of our flawed humanity!' he'd say. Anyway, he called to tell me one of his 'distinguished actor friends' would be joining us and asked if I'd keep an eye out for you.

JACK (*Wary*) That's very kind of you.

LILY I saw you coming in last night but I didn't want to intrude. It can be quite a shock, can't it?

JACK Yes. Although nine months in Stoke Mandeville Rehab prepares you for most things.

LILY Fr Bernard told me about your terrible accident. I'm very sorry.

JACK I was a bit put out myself. But we move on, don't we?

LILY As we must. (*Tentatively*) Was that your daughter who came in with you last night?

JACK (*This rankles*) No. Alison is my partner.

LILY Lucky you! She's a *very* attractive young woman.

JACK She's *forty-two* actually.

LILY All the more remarkable!

JACK Yes. Quite.

LILY And may I ask if you have children?

JACK (*This rankles even more*) You *may* and we *don't*. Alison and I made our fair share of noise of one sort or another but of the patter of tiny feet nothing was heard.

LILY I'm sorry — I shouldn't have asked.

JACK (*Icily courteous*) You *did* ask. We met two years after my

divorce. My *wife's* name was Helen. We were married for more than twenty years during all of which time we *also* successfully avoided procreation. That's about it, really. There *were* other runners — but down the field, as they say.

LILY (*Sailing on regardless*) Albert and I didn't manage it either. Albert was my *husband* of course — we didn't go in for partners where I hailed from. I think he would have liked a boy — if only to accompany him to Craven Cottage on match days. But . . . it wasn't to be, and instead the club got *me*. (*Beat*) I'm sorry. I'm talking too much.

JACK (*He's had enough*) Not at all. But I'm sure our paths will cross again.

LILY They don't *have* to. Fr Bernard warned me you're a very private man. Believe it or not, I tend to keep myself to myself, too. Though I *do* like to maintain a signal. There's our weekly bingo, of course, the fleeting collegiality of the dining room and our occasional outings on the community bus. Other than that I like to plough my own furrow and assure you I won't get in the way of yours. It was a pleasure to meet you, Jack.

JACK Did you say you were going out?

LILY I most certainly did.

JACK Do you mind if I ask where?

LILY Not very far, I'm afraid. Depending on the direction of the wind and the vagaries of the Green Man it's a seventeen-minute walk from the gate to the concourse of Hammersmith Tube Station. I go there every day, fair weather or foul. It's a modest excursion but, I like to think, a small triumph in its own way.

JACK Be careful on the escalators — I speak from experience!

LILY So I hear. I never go further than the concourse, but it has its own delights. There are bookstores and hairdressers and jewellery stalls. There's Starbucks for a hundred different kinds of morning coffee. I'm afraid I couldn't tell my lattes from my mochas if you paid me but then I don't go there for the coffee. Every day for two years I've parked myself on a bench in the middle

of the mall and watched the world go by. It doesn't sound like much and, save the nodding acquaintance of the flower seller on the Piccadilly Line gate, I remain for the most part invisible. But, as I said, I like to maintain a signal and sitting on that bench constitutes a small statement to the planet that Lily Thompson hasn't quite gone away! (*As she leaves*) Have a good day, Jack.

JACK You too.

LILY Oh I *intend* to.

Music in and lights down as JACK watches LILY leave.