

Thomas Kilroy

**CHRIST  
DELIVER US!**

after Wedekind's  
*Spring Awakening*



Gallery Books

*Christ Deliver Us!*

is first published  
simultaneously in paperback  
and in a clothbound edition  
on the day of its première,  
16 February 2010.

The Gallery Press

Loughcrew  
Oldcastle  
County Meath  
Ireland

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ISBN 978 1 85235 488 6 *paperback*  
978 1 85235 489 3 *clothbound*

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

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translation into any language, to  
Alan Brodie Representation Ltd,  
Fairgate House, 78 New Oxford Street,  
London WC1A 1HB.

*Setting*

A provincial Irish city with its own Diocesan College (Secondary  
School) and its own Industrial School for 'difficult' boys.

*Time*

Late 1940s/early 1950s.

## *Characters*

### *Teenagers*

WINNIE BUTLER  
MONICA and TESS, *her friends*  
MICHAEL GRAINGER  
MOSSY LANNIGAN  
VIVIE

### *College Boys*

SHELLY  
CAREY  
LINK  
COADY

### *Industrial School Boys*

MAHON ('GOUGER')  
O'NEILL ('RATSER')  
SHEA ('BLADE')  
BULGER

### *Parents*

MRS BUTLER  
MR GRAINGER  
MRS GRAINGER

### *Priests*

THE CANON  
FR SEAMUS  
FR JACK  
FR JOSEPH  
FR KIERAN

### *Christian Brothers*

FIRST CHRISTIAN BROTHER  
SECOND CHRISTIAN BROTHER

*Christ Deliver Us!* was first performed in the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, on Tuesday, 16 February 2010, with the following cast:

WINNIE BUTLER	Aoife Duffin
TESS	Liz Fitzgibbon
MONICA	Caoilfhionn Dunne
VIVIE	Ruth McGill
MICHAEL GRAINGER	Aaron Monaghan
MOSSY LANNIGAN	Laurence Kinlan
MRS BUTLER	Eleanor Methven
MRS GRAINGER	Cathy Belton
FR SEAMUS	Tom Hickey
THE CANON	Denis Conway
FR JOSEPH	Peter Hanly
FR KIERAN / MR GRAINGER	Michael McElhatton
FR JACK /	
SECOND CHRISTIAN BROTHER	Karl Quinn
PREFECT /	
FIRST CHRISTIAN BROTHER	Diarmaid Murtagh

### BOYS

Keith Burke, Gavin Fullam, Seamus Brennan, Eamonn Owens, Brian Bennett, Robert Bannon, Sean Flanagan, Simon Boyle, Stephen O'Rourke

### *Director*

### *Set Design*

### *Lighting Design*

### *Costume Design*

### *Composer*

### *Choreography*

### *Sound*

### *Fight Director*

### *Assistant Director*

### *Voice Director*

### CSM

### DSM

### ASM

Wayne Jordan

Naomi Wilkinson

Sinéad Wallace

Joan O'Clery

Caoimhín O Raghallaigh

Colin Dunne

Ben Delaney

Paul Burke

Tara Robinson

Andrea Ainsworth

Anne Kyle

Stephen Dempsey

Orla Burke

# ACT ONE

*for my daughter, Hannah May Kilroy*

*The stage is on two levels. The lower level, downstage, is the main acting area, the world of the three young teenagers, WINNIE, MICHAEL and MOSSY. The upper level is used for more public scenes such as the college, the Industrial School, cemetery etc. This area is dominated by a high, grim wall which becomes the tower of the final scenes.*

*Lights up on upper level: A Diocesan College. Sound of a piercing bell. A group of schoolboys rush on, gathering beneath the wall. They furtively light up cigarettes. They walk back and forth beneath the wall in twos, dragging on the hidden cigarettes in the palms of their hands. A schoolboy rushes on and hisses, gesticulating off. Cigarettes hastily stubbed out.*

*A prefect, a clerical student, early 20s, in clerical black, soutane, biretta, coat, briskly on. He observes the walking boys, turns, leaves. They are about to light up again when he comes back on again, very quickly, this time accompanied by FR JOSEPH carrying a cane. The boys are lined up and a caning on the hands begins by the priest, six wallops to each hand. Lights down as the beatings continue.*

*Sounds up of spectators, off, watching a game of hurling, roars and shouts: 'C'mon Joseph's!', 'Get it, Kelly!', 'G'man Murphy, bate the hell outta him!'*

*A flare of bright light brings a new dynamism on stage: a highly choreographed sequence of boys hurling. Four boys in contrasting black and white/green and white jerseys, togs, socks and boots. First they compete for a throw-in, hurleys clashing for the ball between their feet. One raises the ball, catches it in his hand and tries to strike it. He is hooked by one of the others and the ball is at their feet again, hurleys clashing once more. Then the ball is tossed upwards, over their heads, and they rise together, hurleys clashing aloft over their heads as they leap. One of them connects and all four watch the ball flying away. Then they run off in pursuit of the ball to more shouts of encouragement.*

*Lower level. Slow lights up on the Butler kitchen. WINNIE, a pretty*

*fifteen-year-old and her mother, mid-50s. WINNIE is holding up a dress for her mother.*

WINNIE (*Dress*) You've gone and made it longer, Mammy. What'd ya do that for?

MRS BUTLER You're still growing, Winnie.

WINNIE It's ruined, so 'tis! Look at the cut of it! Who wants to get bigger if it means ruining something lovely?

MRS BUTLER It's not a bit ruined. You can't go round for the rest of your life in a doll's dress.

WINNIE I'd take a doll's dress any day a' the week instead of a yoke that looks like someone's nightshirt. Please, Mammy! Just let me keep it the way it was. Please! Just till summer. Then I'll be sixteen and you can dress me up like a scarecrow for all I care.

MRS BUTLER Do you know, I used to be the same at your age. Never wanting to grow up. Where did it all go, I ask ya?

WINNIE I want to be grown up. It's just I want everything to stay — beautiful, like. OK?

MRS BUTLER You can twist me round your little finger, Winnie. God knows what you'll be like when you do grow up.

WINNIE Maybe I won't grow up at all. Ever.

MRS BUTLER What'd ya say?

WINNIE 'S nothing.

MRS BUTLER (*Upset*) Is so! I just hate it when you talk that way, Winnie — hate it! Flying in the face of God, saying terrible things like that —

WINNIE Sorry — Sorry.

MRS BUTLER 'Clare to God I don't know where such talk comes from!

WINNIE Said sorry! Alright?

MRS BUTLER Frighten me, so you do —

WINNIE Don't mean to frighten you, Mammy. 'Tis the way it comes outta me mouth, like.

MRS BUTLER (*Kissing her*) Here. We'll say no more about it, so.

WINNIE It's only when I can't sleep at night I get these — y'know? It's like everything has come to an end. Nothing left at all. Do you think that's a sin, Mammy? To be thinking that way?

*Her mother looks at her, not knowing what to say. Then she grabs the dress.*

MRS BUTLER Here! Gimme that! Let me take off that auld hem altogether.

WINNIE Other times I go in the other direction entirely — thinking everything's grand and that there's nothing bad in the world. Up and down, up and down. You must think I'm raving, Mammy?

MRS BUTLER I think ye're a precious angel, that's what I think. Now the others are all gone outta the house you're all I have. Ya can wear what ya like. Just as long as you don't catch yer death a' cold.

WINNIE But it's nearly summer, Mammy! I just love having me legs bare. I love to feel the air on me skin. It's like — drinking something scrumptious. That's the opposite of getting sick, in't it? I feel so great! You should thank your lucky stars, Mammy, that I don't just throw off all me clothes! Just like that! And, you know something else? I could be wearing rags and I'd still feel like a princess underneath. (*She pirouettes*) Oh, don't look so shocked, Mammy! Nobody can ever know how I really feel underneath. Nobody!

*Her mother watches her, worriedly. WINNIE twirls slowly, lost. MRS BUTLER looks at the dress in her hands and the lights come down on both of them.*

*Lights up on upper level as before, boys walking, two by two, back and forth by the wall.*

MOSSY and MICHAEL, *fifteen- or sixteen-year-olds, wheel their bicycles on downstage. Three boys run forward towards MOSSY and MICHAEL.*

SHELLY Hey, Mossy! Are ya goin' home? Will ya buy some fags for me downtown?

CAREY Ye're not supposed to be talking to day-boys, Shelly, after class.

SHELLY Feck off, Carey! *(To mossy)* Will ya, Mossy?

MOSSY What d'ya want, so?

SHELLY Packet a' Craven A. *(To third boy)* Hey, Link! Will ya go halves on a packet a' ten?

LINK Shag off, Shelly, I have me own fags.

SHELLY *(Throwing coins)* Catch, so!

MOSSY Hey, there's only a couple of threepenny bits here.

CAREY & LINK *(Jeering)* Fork it out, Shelly! G'wan awr that, Shelly!

SHELLY *(Throwing more coins)* Jays! I'm broke!

CAREY Hey, lads, will ya get us a bar of Cadbury's while ye're at it?

MOSSY What d'ya think we are? Is it messenger boys? Let's go, Michael —

CAREY & LINK *(To mossy)* Go on with ya, Lannigan! Ye're only a suck, Lannigan! Ye're only an auld shite!

MICHAEL Lave him alone!

MICHAEL and MOSSY *cycle off. Lights down on boys by the wall.*

*Bright light on the other side of the stage and into the light stroll WINNIE and her pals, MONICA, who is moody, and plump TESS.*

MONICA Don't ye just love this weather?

WINNIE It's what the sun does to yer skin, the burning — for hours after —

TESS It's too feekin' hot for me, I can tell ya. Aren't ye roasted, the pair of ye?

WINNIE Ye're goin' to hafta lose a few pounds, Tess,

me love.

TESS Who're ya tellin'! Ma says I'm getting like a turkey.

WINNIE Let's go up the river, girls. Ya never know who we might run into. Did ye see the raft the lads put out? They say Michael Grainger nearly drowned off it.

MONICA That fella thinks he's posh, so he does —

TESS But isn't he a fierce swimmer, Michael Grainger, like?

WINNIE Don't matter. That wouldn't stop him being drowned. There's always something in the world that's stronger than us. *(The others look at her, puzzled)* Then you just have to — give in to it! Surrender! I said the same thing to Michael Grainger, so I did!

*The other two look at one another, still confused. WINNIE marches off. They follow.*

*Immediate lights up on MICHAEL leading MOSSY as they cycle downstage. They throw down bicycles and school bags, and sit. The effect from now on is cross-cutting between the boys and girls at either side of the stage.*

MICHAEL You're a right auld softie, Mossy, with them fellas, so y'are. Cadbury's how are ya!

MOSSY I feel fierce sorry for them boarders, Michael. Locked up in that place day and night. Least we get to go home after school. There was another fierce fight in the Senior Dorm the other night. I'd go outta me mind if I had to put up with that sorta stuff, fightin' 'n stuff.

MICHAEL Ya'll get six of the stick on either hand if ye're caught buying them fags.

MOSSY Don't care what happens to me anymore, so I don't. *(Pause)* What are ya thinking about, Michael?

MICHAEL Oh, just what ya said. What's the point of it all?

MOSSY D'ya mean school?

MICHAEL I mean life. I mean why we're in the world at all. It means — nothing!

MOSSY Last time ya said something like that it made me feel terrible for weeks.

MICHAEL Nothing at all —

MOSSY And now I have them headaches back again. Could I ask ya something, Michael?

MICHAEL Fire ahead.

MOSSY D'ya think am I any good?

MICHAEL Any good at what?

MOSSY Just any good, full stop. Sometimes I think I'm no good for anything at all. And I feel sort of ashamed all the time, so I do. Why do I feel ashamed like that, Michael?

MICHAEL It's the way we're born.

MOSSY It's priests.

MICHAEL Naw, it's the way we came into the world. Suppose you wanted to strip off, now — you wouldn't be able to. That's not priests. It's something else entirely. Even if you're all alone with your best friend. Unless, of course, he was to strip at the same time.

MOSSY I hate that feckin' college. Michael, I — I failed the mock maths.

MICHAEL How d'ya know? That ya failed?

MOSSY Oh, I know. Michael, I have to tell ya something. I changed the paper.

MICHAEL Ya what?! Jays!

MOSSY I stole into the room of the Spirit Lamp and changed the calculus to the right answer. D'ya think he'll notice? The Spirit Lamp?

MICHAEL Ya mean Father Jimmy? Ya went in his room and changed the sums! I didn't think ya had it in ya.

MOSSY (*Quickly*) Don't tell! I had to do it! I had to! If I failed, me father'd lather me. He's a killer, so he is, me father! Ya know when I get married and have kids I'll let them all sleep together. In

the one bed if they want to.

MICHAEL Look, Mossy, if you had brothers and sisters in the wan bed they'd soon get randy, the boys'd be getting — ya know. It's nature, that's what it is.

MOSSY (*Doubtfully*) Oh, I know, I know, but still and all — ya know? Anyways —

MICHAEL (*Looks at him for a moment*) Ye're gas, Mossy, ya know that? Ye're just gas. I can't believe what ya done. Changing an exam paper! Christ!

MOSSY (*Up*) Course, if I did have children I'd make them do what was right. (*Down*) Only thing is I don't know meself what's right half the time, so I don't.

MICHAEL From now till summer I'm going to sleep in me pelt, so I am.

*He lies back and closes his eyes with mossy staring at him. Lights down on the boys and up on the three girls who are now sitting in a group.*

TESS Arragh look at ya, Mon, the way yer plaits have all come out!

MONICA It's driving me bats, me hair. Course I can't have short hair like you, Tess. Oh, no siree! Certainly not! And I can't have a fringe like Winnie there! No, it has to be long and flowing. *Flowing!* Just to keep me two aunties happy. The aggravation of it!

WINNIE Tomorrow during Religion class I'll come behind ya with a big scissors and go snip-snip, snip-snip!

MONICA That's not funny, Winnie, so it's not! If anything like that happened I'd be walloped.

WINNIE (*Pause*) Does he really bate ya, Mon?

MONICA Yeah.

WINNIE (*Pause*) What does he hit ya with? Is it his belt? Or a switch?

MONICA Oh, what does it matter what he hits me with?