

# NURSE CADDEN

By  
Kate Mickere

## NURSE CADDEN

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NURSE CADDEN

*For all of the strong Irish women in my family, present and past.*

## NURSE CADDEN

*Nurse Cadden* was developed with The Vagrancy in their 2018-2019 Writer's Group. The brilliant and supportive members of that cohort were: librecht baker, Tracy Held, Howard Ho, Ilana Turner and Katherine Vondy. The Vagrancy's Artistic Director is Caitlin Hart.

*Nurse Cadden* won First Place in the inaugural A is For Playwriting Contest and received a staged reading, directed by Claire Karpen, with the following cast:

Mamie Cadden.....	Ann Dowd
Woman 1.....	Lecy Goranson
Woman 2 .....	Jenn Lyon
Woman 3 .....	Celeste Den
Man .....	Garret Dillahunt

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CAST: 4 W, 1 M

MARY ANNE “MAMIE” CADDEN, a backstreet abortionist who was the last woman sentenced to death in Ireland. Vain and cruel, but also very funny.

### WOMAN 1 PLAYS:

MARY MAGDALENE, a saint with a cause

SISTER MARY MARGARET, a nun on a mission

ELLEN THOMPSON, a young maid who’s been raped by her employer

ALSO: SNOTTY GIRL, PRIESTESS, REPORTER 1

### WOMAN 2 PLAYS:

ST. BRIGID, a great gal

BRIGID BRESLIN, a dancer involved with a rich married man

MISS BRADY, a seventeen-year-old patient

ALSO: STUDENT, AISLING, CALLAHAN, REPORTER 2

### WOMAN 3 PLAYS:

VIRGIN MARY, mother of our Lord and Savior

MOLLY O’GRADY, Mamie’s sometimes accomplice

HELEN O’REILLY, an in-trouble mother of six

ALSO: TEACHER, PRIESTESS/PREGNANT NUN, PHOTOGRAPHER,  
BRUNNIECH

### MAN PLAYS:

RADIO ANNOUNCER, PATRICK CADDEN, PRIEST, ST. CIARAN,

BALD MAN, LAWYER, ST. GERARD, STANDISH O’GRADY, AED

MAC BRICC, FALLON, JUDGE

Setting: Dublin, Ireland – (1925-1959)

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ACT ONE

SCENE 1

*THE VIRGIN MARY, MARY MAGDALENE and ST. BRIGID are playing cards. They are smoking and drinking and having a grand gal's night in. They are listening to the radio, which is broadcasting the end of a Catholic Mass (it's mostly just organ music.) The Virgin Mary views her cards, then smugly places them down on the table.*

**VIRGIN MARY.** Read 'em and weep, ladies!

**ST. BRIGID.** We did enough of that when we were alive, thanks very much. *(Brigid puts her cards down.)* I guess I fold. AGAIN.

**MARY MAGDALENE.** *(Mary Magdalene adds her cards to the pile.)*

Mary, I don't care if you ARE the Mother of God... if you don't let us win the occasional hand, we'll find somebody new to play with!

**VIRGIN MARY.** You're just jealous because you're both shite at cards! *(They're interrupted by the sound of the ANNOUNCER on the radio.)*

**RADIO ANNOUNCER.** That, of course, was the evening Mass, broadcast to you live from St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin.

**VIRGIN MARY.** Oh, how I love a good Mass!

**MARY MAGDALENE.** I don't know. Don't you think they should do away with the Latin to make the Mass more accessible for the common people? *(St. Brigid and the Virgin Mary roll their eyes.)*

**ST. BRIGID.** Deal 'em, Mags. *(As the radio announcer continues, Mary Magdalene shuffles and deals the cards.)*

**RADIO ANNOUNCER.** Up next, a special report on why Irish people are so prone to constipation.

**MARY MAGDALENE.** You'll want to listen to that, Brigid.

**ST. BRIGID.** Oh, feck off!

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**RADIO ANNOUNCER.** But first, some news. Listeners may remember that Nurse Cadden was recently sentenced to hang for the murder of Mrs. Helen O'Reilly, a mother of six. If you're feeling sorry for the victim, STOP IT RIGHT NOW. Mrs. O'Reilly had gone to Nurse Cadden to terminate a pregnancy, so she got what she deserved. Anyway, Nurse Cadden has been declared insane. She will be moved from Mountjoy Prison to the Criminal Lunatic Asylum later this week. Nurse Cadden is an unmarried, childless woman who doesn't believe in God. Doctors say that is proof enough of her mental instability.

**VIRGIN MARY.** Turn that off. *(Someone does.)*

**MARY MAGDALENE.** That diagnosis was shite. Just another example of men throwing around psychology to manipulate women. I should intercede on that Nurse Cadden's behalf.

**VIRGIN MARY.** You heard the man on the radio. She's an atheist!

**MARY MAGDALENE.** So?

**VIRGIN MARY.** We can't be getting involved with backstreet abortionists.

**ST. BRIGID.** In my day, abortion wasn't a sin, it was a miracle! Just because that man with the pointy hat has a problem with it--

**VIRGIN MARY.** Are you talking about the POPE, Brigid?

**ST. BRIGID.** I'm just saying, a woman wears a pointy hat and she's a witch, but a man who wears one is God's representative on Earth?

**MARY MAGDALENE.** Yes! For centuries, men have been vilifying women to take away their power and I'm sick of it! Like how they're always saying I'm a prostitute...

**VIRGIN MARY.** Ooooh, were you not a prostitute, though?

**MARY MAGDALENE.** Absolutely not. That rumor is all Pope Gregor's fault.

**ST. BRIGID.** I always thought Mary just called you a prostitute because she was mad you were dating her son, the Lord and Savior.

**VIRGIN MARY.** That's ENOUGH. *(St. Brigid and Mary Magdalene bow their heads in subservience.)* We do not help unrepentant abortionists. Do you understand?

**ST. BRIGID AND MARY MAGDALENE.** Yes, Blessed Mother.

**VIRGIN MARY.** Good! I never want to hear about Nurse Cadden again!



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### SCENE 2

*Dublin, 1959. A cell in the Criminal Lunatic Asylum. There's a single cot, a wooden chair, a framed painting of Jesus... and not much else, aside from the wailing and howling of the asylum's patients. The tiny room is occupied by MAMIE CADDEN, a middle-aged woman with a hard face and a mop of hair that's a blend of dark roots, bottle blonde ends and unruly grays. She bangs on the wall.*

**MAMIE.** Jesus Christ, I can barely hear myself THINK! Shut up! *(Just then, the cell door creaks open and a large shadow appears in the threshold. Mamie trembles as the thing approaches. It steps into the room and Mamie realizes that it's worse than a ghost or a monster, it's a NUN! Mamie screams. The nun is SISTER MARY MARGARET, a timid woman in her mid-20s.)*

**SISTER.** Ms. Cadden? I'm Sister Mary Margaret.

**MAMIE.** You scared the BEJESUS out of me. FECK. *(Sister Mary flinches with each swear word.)*

**SISTER.** I've come to sit with you for a while.

**MAMIE.** Why?

**SISTER.** Wouldn't you like some company, Ms. Cadden?

**MAMIE.** I'd thank you to call me NURSE Cadden. After all, I did complete a six-month course at the DUBLIN MATERNITY HOSPITAL, even though that certificate is of little use to me here.

**SISTER.** A midwife? That's very important work, Nurse Cadden. *(She tentatively takes a seat beside Mamie's cot.)* Perhaps you'd like to tell me a little more about that?

**MAMIE.** NO. Listen, Sister...as much as I relish the opportunity to converse with someone who isn't screaming or drooling... I'm not sure why you're here.

**SISTER.** I visit with all of the patients.

**MAMIE.** Well, I'm NOT a patient. They just moved me here because I KNOW TOO MUCH. *(Mamie waits for Sister Mary Margaret to ask her what she knows. She doesn't.)*

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**SISTER.** So, you came here from Mountjoy Prison then.

**MAMIE.** I was sentenced to death for the murder of a pregnant woman. Poor bitch. *(The nun blesses herself.)*

**MAMIE.** Can you believe they actually condemned me to HANG? Me, a weak old woman who's practically crippled with the arthritis?

**SISTER.** You must be grateful that your sentence was commuted. God is kind and merciful.

**MAMIE.** I don't know about that. Yesterday, three schizophrenics asked me to judge their hula hoop contest. I think I'd rather be back in prison.

**SISTER.** You know what might help, Nurse Cadden? A nice pray.

**MAMIE.** I don't think so, Sister. I'm an atheist.

**SISTER.** Are you sure that's a good idea?

**MAMIE.** Is a sudden belief in God going to get my solicitor to return my phone calls?

**SISTER.** Anything is possible with God's help.

**MAMIE.** In that case, forget the solicitor... and ask God to give me a night with John Wayne instead!

**SISTER.** This isn't a joke.

**MAMIE.** May I remind you that you came in here uninvited? Feck off to the convent and leave me be.

**SISTER.** Your soul is in torment. I think I can help.

**MAMIE.** And if a priest ever puts you in the family way, I can help you with that. Is that an even trade, do you think?

**SISTER.** So that's what you--

**MAMIE.** It's been harder to do the procedure since the arthritis kicked in...but it's worth the risk. At least that's what Helen O'Reilly thought.

**SISTER.** I think it's time for me to go.

**MAMIE.** There's my prayers answered.

**SISTER.** I'll be back sometime next week—

**MAMIE.** Not on my account, I hope.

**SISTER.** I'll be praying for you, Nurse Cadden.

**MAMIE.** Eugh! Bloody. Prissy. NUN. *(Sister Mary Margaret exits. Mamie watches her go. Once she's safely out of earshot, Mamie makes a fart noise while flipping the finger. Suddenly, Mamie hears a voice.)*

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**VOICE.** *(Off.)* Would it kill you to be nice, Mamie? *(It's the voice of her long-gone father, PATRICK CADDEN.)*

**MAMIE.** Da? *(Perhaps we hear a bit of Irish fiddle, confirming that it IS her Da... PATRICK enters.)*

**PATRICK.** Your mammie is worrying herself sick over you!

**MAMIE.** I don't believe that for a second.

**PATRICK.** You ARE the reason for most of her gray hairs, 'tis true, but she's still your mother! She cares about you, Mamie.

**MAMIE.** Maybe so. *(Pause.)* Da? I'm a bit scared.

**PATRICK.** That's only natural. Dublin is a big and scary place! If you wanted to stay here with us on the farm, we wouldn't blame you.

**MAMIE.** The farm? That's long gone. *(Mamie realizes that her father's voice is just a memory. She decides to play along.)*

**PATRICK.** I wish I could have given it to you, instead of your brother. You have a much better head for the business side of things.

**MAMIE & PATRICK.** And his wife's a cow.

**PATRICK.** You'd be bored here, stuck at home with your mammie and da... while your younger siblings are off having families of their own.

**MAMIE.** I suppose so.

**PATRICK.** Just wait till everyone in Mayo hears that Patrick Cadden's daughter is a CERTIFIED midwife...

**MAMIE.** I have to take the course first.

**PATRICK.** And to go back to school at such an ADVANCED age—

**MAMIE.** 33 isn't anywhere near advanced, you old fool.

**PATRICK.** I am so proud of you, Mamie.

**MAMIE.** Really?

**PATRICK.** You're my greatest achievement. *(Mamie doesn't notice that Patrick has disappeared.)*

**MAMIE.** Well, don't be counting your chickens yet, da. They'll only disappoint you. *(Mamie waits for a response. There isn't one.)* Da?

## SCENE 3

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*A classroom in the Dublin Maternity Hospital, 1925. The room is set up for a party: desks are pushed aside, there's a punch bowl and a few lackluster streamers. A banner reads something along the lines of "CONGRATULATIONS MIDWIVES OF '25!" A PRIEST addresses a group of (mostly unseen) young MIDWIFERY STUDENTS and their TEACHER.*

**PRIEST.** Humble Mary of Nazareth, You were chosen by God to bear within you our world's greatest gift, The Savior of All Humanity. *(At some point during the prayer, a now 34-year-old Mamie sneaks into the room. At this age, Mamie vibrant and almost glamorous – in a gaudy sort of way, with platinum blonde hair and bright red lips.)* I come to you now on behalf of these, um... newly certified Midwives. Assist them now as they prepare to embark on their careers. Gently guide their hands, so that they may safely deliver God's newest creations who through Holy Baptism will grow to love our Lord Jesus Christ above all else in this world. In Your Name we pray, Amen.

**ALL.** Amen. *(Everybody (apart from Mamie) blesses themselves. The teacher joins the priest at the front of the room.)*

**TEACHER.** Thank you, Father, for that lovely blessing. And I'm sure we'll all be thinking about your words on how the Holy Spirit is kind of like God's midwife in the days to come. *(Mamie snorts with glee. She whispers to a SNOTTY GIRL standing next to her...)*

**MAMIE.** Thank CHRIST I missed that malarkey. *(The girl shushes Mamie.)*

**TEACHER.** As we wrap up our little celebration, I'd like to leave you ladies with a few warning words: Midwifery is a disgusting business filled with blood and piss and shite. (Pardon me, Father.) This profession is not for the delicate. If you're the type of lass who would swoon at the sight of a syphilitic sore (sorry, Father) or panic when a babe is born with the umbilical cord wrapped round its neck, then you'd better grow some bollocks (SO sorry, Father) ... because no amount of drink can take away the horrors you're about to see. After you deliver your first breach birth, you'll be cursing the day you decided midwifery was the path for you. That's when you must remember why you answered the call. Remember

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that you were guided by the saints and angels to be of service to the suffering and the innocent. Remember that you will be present at the exact moment a human life begins. Who aside from God himself could claim that privilege? Every life you deliver is a miracle. Never forget that.

**MAMIE.** And the pay's quite decent as well. *(The other students erupt in nervous laughter.)*

**TEACHER.** Mary Anne Cadden, that is ENOUGH.

**MAMIE.** I'm just being practical. If all I cared about was being of service, I could have stayed on my father's farm. Sheep and cows give birth too, you know... and they complain a great deal less.

**TEACHER.** Miss Cadden, you haven't even passed your exams. You shouldn't be here.

**MAMIE.** I'm not one to miss a party. Besides, I've paid my tuition like everybody else. *(The snotty girl who told Mamie to shush whispers to another STUDENT.)*

**SNOTTY GIRL.** She'll never graduate. She's nearly as old as my mother.

**STUDENT.** And twice as stupid, the old crone. *(The girls giggle.)*

**MAMIE.** While your mother was wiping your arse, I was running the grocery on my parent's farm. They couldn't afford to send me to school so I had to wait a dozen or so years till I could pay for it myself. So,

**PARDON** me if I'm having a bit of a hard time. It's been a long while since I've been tested on my book learning. But once I pass those exams, I'm going to be the most successful midwife to come out of this school. I'll open my own nursing home and it'll be so luxurious and grand that the Archbishop himself will send his mistresses there.

**PRIEST.** What did that horrible woman say?!

**TEACHER.** Father, I do apologize. Cadden, GET OUT. *(Mamie shrugs and heads for the door, but not before helping herself to some punch. She takes a sip, makes a disgusted face and exits.)*

**PRIEST.** How could you allow a rude thing like that in your program?

**TEACHER.** Do forgive her father, she's from Mayo. She can't help it.

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### SCENE 4

*Mamie's cell. Mamie and Sister Mary Margaret sit in a silence that's been going on a long time. Sister Mary Margaret prepares herself to break the silence but thinks better of it. She pulls out her rosary beads and starts to pray. The sound of Sister Mary Margaret saying prayers under her breath mixed with the clacking of the rosary beads echoes around the cell. Mamie can't take it.*

**MAMIE.** You're not allowed to have those in here.

**SISTER.** Why not? (*Mamie mimes someone hanging themselves to death with a rosary.*) Oh, dear.

**MAMIE.** You know what, Sister? I can take those beads off your hands. I'm DESPERATE for a good pray.

**SISTER.** I don't think that's funny.

**MAMIE.** I'm a midwife, not a comedian.

**SISTER.** Can I ask you a question, Nurse Cadden?

**MAMIE.** I obviously can't stop you.

**SISTER.** When you became a midwife, you made a vow to protect the lives of mother and baby. That vow must have meant something to you, once.

**MAMIE.** Not particularly.

**SISTER.** What made you think-- I mean, it's not like they teach you how do that at the Maternity Hospital, do they?

**MAMIE.** You want to know about my first time?

**SISTER.** Never mind. I shouldn't have asked.

**MAMIE.** You always remember your first time, don't you? Whether it's your first kiss or first fuck. First termination.

**SISTER.** I wouldn't know about any of that, would I?

**MAMIE.** No one at the Dublin Maternity Hospital ever taught us how to do it, you're right about that. We weren't DOCTORS, after all. But if you paid attention, you could figure it all out.

**SISTER.** But why would you ever want to figure it out?

**MAMIE.** After I completed the Midwifery course, I spent a year working as an apprentice under a Nurse Murphy. One day, she had me examine this

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young girl... she couldn't have been any more than 11 or 12. She'd been raped, of course. By her own grandfather. And as I made my way through the examination, I couldn't stop thinking about what kind of life was in store for her and her baby. So, I asked her if she wanted me to get rid of it.

**SISTER.** That's not your decision.

**MAMIE.** No, it was HERS. After it was over, I told Nurse Murphy that there had been a miscarriage, but I think she knew what I'd done. Maybe she had wanted me to do it, I don't know. A few weeks later, the girl came back and gave me a beautiful rosary to thank me. I was touched.

**SISTER.** I thought you didn't pray.

**MAMIE.** I don't. The beads were made of Waterford Crystal! They were valuable. So, I started wondering what else I could get for my services. I didn't make much as an apprentice and I kept sending money back to Mayo, so... *(She shrugs.)* Word spread around Dublin like a very profitable case of gonorrhoea. And soon I had a pretty good business for myself. I opened my own maternity home – St. Maelruin's.

**SISTER.** What's he the patron saint of again?

**MAMIE.** How should I know? We opened on his feast day, so that was our name. People let you get away with more if they think you're a bit religious. Isn't that right, sister? *(The lights dim and Mamie steps into a SPOTLIGHT.)* It was a three-story Victorian house, with a large garden and a garage where I could park my cherry red MG sports car. *(Sister Mary Margaret takes a white doctors coat and places it around Mamie's shoulders, then disappears back into the shadows.)* Business was BOOMING. I had a full staff, can you imagine? And the beds at St. Maelruin's were always full. *(Mamie takes a tube of lipstick and puts it on, turning into a younger version of herself.)* Soon everybody in Dublin knew my name. "There goes Mamie Cadden, living it up in that SEXY car! Did you see Mamie Cadden drinking at The Shelbourne last night with those actors from the Gaiety? Didn't she look stunning in that beaver coat? What I wouldn't give for just a fraction of her verve and charisma!" I had EVERYTHING and people were goddam JEALOUS. *(Beat.)* How'd I manage to feck that all up?

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### SCENE 5

*A private examination room in St. Maelruin's, the maternity home that Mamie runs. It's 1935. MISS BRADY, a young woman of about 17, sits on the examination table as MOLLY O'GRADY, a shy woman in her early 30s, takes her blood pressure. Her hand shakes as she puts the cuff around Miss Brady's arm.*

**MISS BRADY.** You've done this before, haven't you? *(Molly nods.)*

**MOLLY.** *(Barely audible.)* Yes.

**MAMIE.** *(Off.)* MOLLY! *(Molly jumps.)*

**MOLLY.** Oh, Jesus. Not again. *(MAMIE enters in her red lipstick and white doctor's coat. She's now 44 but pretends she's 35.)*

**MAMIE.** Molly, Mrs. Donaldson needs her enema! *(Molly scrambles out.)* She's not slow, if that's what you were thinking.

**MISS BRADY.** Not at all.

**MAMIE.** She's just terribly shy, I don't know WHAT she'd do without me. She'd probably be in a field somewhere, talking to sheep. Anyway, congratulations, Mrs. Brady. You are, in fact, pregnant.

**MISS BRADY.** Oh.

**MAMIE.** I take it we're not happy about the news?

**MISS BRADY.** I'm only seventeen.

**MAMIE.** You don't have to BRAG about it. I can see that you're young.

**MISS BRADY.** But isn't that too young?

**MAMIE.** I've had patients younger than you. You're nothing special.

**MISS BRADY.** Oh.

**MAMIE.** In my opinion, seventeen is the perfect age to have a child. The whole process can be a bit of an ordeal for women in their 30s, but for you, the babe will slide right out! You'll probably get your figure back, as well.

**MISS BRADY.** What happens now?

**MAMIE.** MOLLY! BRING US THE BOOK! *(BEAT as they wait for Molly.)* She's not a trained professional, but she's just as good, I SWEAR TO GOD. *(Molly runs in, clutching an oversized scrapbook. She hands it to Mamie.)* Did you wash your hands? *(Molly nods. Mamie accepts the book and opens it to show Miss Brady.)* Here at St. Maelruin's Maternity



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Home, we offer quality lying-in care for expectant mothers. Depending on the package you purchase, you'll be treated to such luxuries as breakfast in bed and a PINT of well-deserved Guinness after the labor is over.

**MISS BRADY.** This is just a photograph of yourself.

**MAMIE.** I thought the book could do with a bit of glamour. *(She flips the page for Miss Brady.)*

**MAMIE.** Those are the prices. You can take the book home to show your husband. He'll say it's all terribly dear, but remind him that it's better for you to be here, safely attended to by medical professionals, then at home... screaming while he's trying to listen to the rugby match and you're soaking your marital bed in blood and fluid and --

**MISS BRADY.** I don't have a husband.

**MAMIE.** Then why didn't you correct me when I called you "Mrs." Brady? That's very rude!

**MISS BRADY.** I'm sorry, Nurse Cadden.

**MAMIE.** Do you have well-off parents, by any chance?

**MISS BRADY.** No.

**MAMIE.** Right so. *(Mamie tosses the book to Molly.)* It'll be a home birth for you, then. And I DON'T make house calls, so you might as well be on your way. *(Miss Brady doesn't move.)* Molly, fetch her things. Have a lovely day, MISS Brady. *(Mamie exits.)*

**MISS BRADY.** *(Bursting into tears.)* What will become of me?!

**MOLLY.** You and your bastard will be wretched outcasts for the rest of your lives. *(This makes Miss Brady cry even harder. Molly awkwardly pats Miss Brady on the head.)* There, there. There are other options, too.

**MISS BRADY.** Like what? *(Molly and Miss Brady FREEZE as Mamie re-enters and addresses the audience.)*

**MAMIE.** *(Like a game show host.)* SO, you've found yourself in the family way and the father is nowhere to be found. What do you do? *(Silly theme music plays. Molly and Miss Brady unfreeze.)* It's time to play UP THE DUFF! The game where you get to pretend that you're in charge of your own destiny. *(She turns to the other women.)* Are you ready girls?

**MISS BRADY.** What's happening?

**MAMIE.** MISS BRADY! You're pregnant and you aren't married. What are your options?

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**MISS BRADY.** I don't know. I'm scared.

**MAMIE.** *(Sounding like an angry buzzer.)*

EHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH. WRONG! MOLLY O'GRADY! What are her options?

**MOLLY.** Well, ahm...

**MAMIE.** Go on.

**MOLLY.** There's the Mother and Baby homes? *(There's canned applause or a dinging bell to indicate she's gotten it right.)*

**MAMIE.** YES! The Mother and Baby Homes... also known as the Magdalene Laundries. The kind sisters will give you a place where you can have your bastard in secret... you'll just have to work in indentured servitude for YEARS to pay off your debt. How does that sound?

**MISS BRADY.** Awful.

**MAMIE.** Really? You'll get a diet of slop, no medical care to speak of and you'll never see your child again, are you sure?

**MISS BRADY.** I'm sure.

**MAMIE.** Right so, Molly, what's her next option?

**MOLLY.** She could give the baby to us. *(A half-hearted DING!)*

**MAMIE.** I'll give that one to you, I guess... but you forgot the fee, Molly. *(To Miss Brady and the audience.)* Yes, for an adoption fee we will place your baby with a family. We can't guarantee they'll be Catholics, but it's better than us dumping it on the side of the road, WHICH IS A THING WE'D NEVER DO.

**MISS BRADY.** Is there anything else?

**MAMIE.** Molly?

**MOLLY.** I'm not allowed to talk about the last one.

**MAMIE.** Very good, Molly! That was a test. *(More dinging/applause.)*

**MISS BRADY.** Well, what is it?

**MAMIE.** There's a procedure I can do. You'll be out of here in 20 minutes and you can pretend your pregnancy and your visit here never happened.

**MISS BRADY.** I'll take option number three, please. That's grand.

**MAMIE.** I need fifty pounds. Cash up front. I don't do favors.

**MISS BRADY.** Where am I going to get that much money?

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**MAMIE.** Hell of a lot cheaper than birthing and raising the bastard yourself. Do you know who the father is? (*Miss Brady nods.*) Do you mind whispering his name in my ear? (*Miss Brady does so. Mamie cackles when she hears the name.*) Why his wife was only here last month, delivering his baby boy. Tell him what's become of you and make him pay for it. Tell him it costs twice that for all I care. Bleed him fecking dry! (*The theme music plays as Mamie joyfully struts off stage. The lights change and we're back in reality.*)

**MISS BRADY.** I've heard that it's dangerous. That sometimes women don't make it through the procedure.

**MOLLY.** That won't happen. Not with Nurse Cadden. She's the best at it.

**MISS BRADY.** You trust her then?

**MOLLY.** I wouldn't work here if I didn't. She's like a mother to me.

## SCENE 6

*St. Brigid's Monastery, Kildare. The stage is dark, except for the flickering light of a sacred flame. ST. BRIGID enters, looking holy in her flowing green robes.*

**ST. BRIGID.** I used to be a GODDESS. Back in the pagan days, Virgin priestesses tended to my sacred flame and in return, I'd bless the people of Kildare with a fruitful harvest. (*Two PRIESTESSES enter, each carrying a torch. They do a ritualistic chant and dance, which ends with them throwing their torches into the fire.*) Then, Christianity stomped its way through Ireland and my sacred fire burned out. (*The flame is extinguished.*) I had to reinvent myself. So, this Goddess of the Harvest transformed herself into a SAINT!

**PRIESTESS.** What a rebrand.

**ST. BRIGID.** I built a monastery in Kildare and relit my sacred flame. (*The flame is relit. The priestesses now wear nun's veils.*) Nineteen nuns tended to my holy hearth. The Brigidine Sisters! (*The nuns sing "AMEN" in a medieval chanting sort of way.*) Once, while visiting my Holy shrine, I discovered something unpleasant.

## NURSE CADDEN

*(A PREGNANT NUN steps out of the shadows.)* A pregnant nun is bad for public image. Especially why my whole “brand” is chastity and virginity. So, I invoked the Holy Spirit. *(Brigid looks really holy. Divine music plays as she blesses the nun’s pregnant belly... and the belly deflates. The nun sinks to her knees.)*

**PREGNANT NUN.** Oh, most Holy St. Brigid, what is my penance?

**ST. BRIGID.** Say twelve Hail Mary’s and you’re grand.

**PREGNANT NUN.** Thanks very much, Brigid. It didn’t even hurt at ALL. *(Brigid and the nun high five.)*

**ST. BRIGID.** And THAT was the first abortion performed in Ireland. But I don’t think you’ll be hearing about it in your Sunday School Catechism.

## SCENE 7

*Back in Mamie’s cell, 1959. Mamie looks around furtively before removing a cigarette from somewhere in her dress. She holds it up to her nose and inhales deeply. She doesn’t see her old friend Molly, stepping out of the shadows.*

**MOLLY.** Where’d you get that? *(Mamie jumps.)*

**MAMIE.** Molly! Oh, how happy I am to see your stupid face! *(Mamie embraces Molly, but the hug is not returned.)*

**MOLLY.** I don’t have to be here, you know.

**MAMIE.** I’ll be nice, Molly, I promise. I’ve missed you.

**MOLLY.** You’ve never needed me. You always had your late-night parties and your fancy friends.

**MAMIE.** And where were those friends when I was sitting in prison? I think they only liked me for my car!

**MOLLY.** That was a beautiful car!

**MAMIE.** Dublin had never seen anything like it.

**MOLLY.** Shall we go for a ride?

**MAMIE.** I sold that car ages ago. Had to pay my legal fees somehow.

**MOLLY.** Then what are these? *(Molly pulls out a set of keys and hands them to Mamie.)*

## NURSE CADDEN

**MAMIE.** Oh, Molly! You're an angel! (*Mamie and Molly sit on the bed, as if they're sitting in the front seat of a car. Mamie turns the keys. VROOM.*)

**MAMIE.** What a dream! Can you feel the wind in your hair, Molly?

**MOLLY.** I should have brought a hat!

**MAMIE.** Who needs a husband when you can have a car like this?

**MOLLY.** If you had a husband, you'd have to get his permission to buy a car like this! (*They both laugh at the idea of Mamie ever asking permission for anything.*)

**MOLLY.** Do you think someone will find her?

**MAMIE.** What? Who?

**MOLLY.** The baby. (*Uh oh, we're in another memory.*)

**MAMIE.** Oh. It's not our problem anymore, Molly. It's in the PAST.

**MOLLY.** Maybe we should go back.

**MAMIE.** Let's get a drink. I'm buying.

**MOLLY.** No. Thanks very much.

**MAMIE.** Babies get abandoned in the countryside every day, Molly. What's one more? (*Molly notices someone driving behind them.*)

**MOLLY.** Mamie, there's someone behind us!

**MAMIE.** It's just your imagination. (*Mamie checks her rearview mirror.*) It's the gardai. Feck. (*A siren sounds.*)

## SCENE 8

*St. Brigid lights up a cigarette. The Virgin Mary shuffles cards. They are waiting for Mary Magdalene.*

**VIRGIN MARY.** Where is Mary Magdalene? It's not like her to keep us waiting.

**ST. BRIGID.** Isn't time irrelevant when you're an eternal, spiritual being?

**VIRGIN MARY.** No.

**ST. BRIGID.** Maybe she's on her period.

**VIRGIN MARY.** Don't be daft. There are no periods in heaven. (*Beat.*) Right? Because when I ascended into heaven, all of my feminine organs just disappeared!

NURSE CADDEN

**ST. BRIGID.** They disappeared?

**VIRGIN MARY.** The Mother of God isn't allowed to have private parts. I suppose. (*Mary Magdalene enters.*)

**MARY MAGDALENE.** Sorry I'm late, gals. I was... helping someone who was going through childbirth. It was disgusting.

**VIRGIN MARY.** Childbirth? That's not your job!

**MARY MAGDALENE.** I'm the patron saint of all women. I think it falls under my jurisdiction.

**VIRGIN MARY.** No. St. Gerard is the Patron Saint of Childbirth.

**MARY MAGDALENE.** A man? What could he possibly understand about pregnancy?

**VIRGIN MARY.** I'm the Patron Saint of Bicyclists. Did you ever see me riding around Ancient Nazareth on a bike?

**ST. BRIGID.** Saint Gerard. Which one is he?

**VIRGIN MARY.** Italian fella.

**MARY MAGDALENE.** Can't we do something? Create a holy petition to give childbirth to one of the women saints? Either one of you would be much better equipped—

**ST. BRIGID.** Don't look at me. I was a virgin nun. What do I know about delivering a baby?

**VIRGIN MARY.** And my conception was so holy, I barely had to push! Will you deal us in, Mags?

**MARY MAGDALENE.** No, I don't think so.

**VIRGIN MARY.** WHAT.

**MARY MAGDALENE.** I don't feel much like playing anymore. There's too much work to be done.

**VIRGIN MARY.** You and your causes. It's all so exhausting.

**MARY MAGDALENE.** Did you know that all over Ireland, frightened young women are just abandoning their babies in the countryside? It's an epidemic!

**VIRGIN MARY.** Moses was an abandoned baby. He turned out great!

**MARY MAGDALENE.** If these women were just given access to birth control and proper education --

**VIRGIN MARY.** They have Religion. That's the same thing.

**MARY MAGDALENE.** No, it isn't!

## NURSE CADDEN

**ST. BRIGID.** Potato, potahto.. am I right, ladies?

**VIRGIN MARY.** If they choose to fornicate before they've entered into the sacrament of Holy Matrimony, then they must pay the consequences for their sins!

**MARY MAGDALENE.** And what about those women who ARE married, but can't afford to feed a seventh or eighth child?

**VIRGIN MARY.** The Lord never gives us more than we can handle. And since I can no longer handle this conversation, I'm going to bid you both goodnight. *(The Virgin Mary exits in an angry flash.)*

**MARY MAGDALENE.** Why can't she see what's going on?

**ST. BRIGID.** Yeah, I'm sick of her whole "Holier Than Thou" attitude. It's like she thinks she's the only saint in heaven.

**MARY MAGDALENE.** You could talk to her, couldn't you? Give her your pagan perspective?

**ST. BRIGID.** Nah. The thing about Mary is— *(The radio crackles on and the announcer we heard in the first scene begins to speak.)*

**RADIO ANNOUNCER.** Today in Kerry, a 15-year-old girl pleaded guilty to abandoning her newborn on the side of the road. The baby was suffering from hypothermia and hunger and the umbilical cord was still attached! Nothing terribly exciting there, really.

**ST. BRIGID.** Oh, the poor dears!

**RADIO ANNOUNCER.** SPEAKING OF WOMEN WHO ABANDON AND MURDER BABIES... The Notorious Nurse Cadden has demanded that someone at the United States embassy take interest in her case. Cadden was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania and lived there until she was three years old. She thinks that ought to count for SOMETHING.

**ST. BRIGID.** Sounds like you'd better get down there.

**MARY MAGDALENE.** The other Mary forbade me from interceding...but I sent a nun to help. Hopefully Nurse Cadden can make use of that.

**ST. BRIGID.** You sent her a nun? That's a punishment. Not salvation. And I'm saying that AS a nun, Mary.

**MARY MAGDALENE.** I guess I just work in mysterious ways.

## NURSE CADDEN

### SCENE 9

*Nurse Cadden's cell. Mamie is asleep and having a nightmare. She's tossing and turning. Sweating and screaming. The door opens and Sister Mary Margaret enters. She approaches the bed.*

**SISTER.** Nurse Cadden! *(Mamie doesn't wake. She cries out in her sleep.)*

**MAMIE.** Stop following... NO. *(The nun jostles Mamie awake.)*

**SISTER.** Nurse Cadden, wake up! *(Mamie wakes and (understandably) screams when she sees the nun looming over her.)*

**MAMIE.** Get away from me, Dark Fairy!! *(Mamie realizes who is in front of her.)* Oh, it's you.

**SISTER.** You were having a nightmare.

**MAMIE.** I thought you were an evil Banshee.

**SISTER.** Wouldn't be the first time someone's made that assumption.

**MAMIE.** What do you want now? Why can't you leave me be?

**SISTER.** I've brought you something.

**MAMIE.** Whiskey? Cigarettes? *(Sister Mary Margaret hands Mamie a bible.)* Oh, GOODY!

**SISTER.** This will bring you as much comfort as alcohol. The effects might not be as instant but the benefits you'll reap will last your soul an eternity.

**MAMIE.** Do you have any matches on you, Sister? That way I can build a fire and get some use out of the thing. Couldn't you have brought me a blanket instead?

**SISTER.** It's a bit cold in here, to be sure. But this isn't supposed to be a luxury stay, Nurse Cadden.

**MAMIE.** A BIT cold? When I wake up in the morning there are icicles on my fanny. Does that sound a BIT cold to you?

**SISTER.** There's no need to be hyperbolic. If you believe in banshees and fairies, you might as well give the Holy Bible a chance.

**MAMIE.** I don't BELIEVE in banshees; I just had a dream about one. Can you control your dreams, Sister?

**SISTER.** No. Of course not.

**MAMIE.** Do you ever have steamy dreams, Sister? Dreams that the Lord, Our Father, would never approve of?



## NURSE CADDEN

**SISTER.** Nurse Cadden, please.

**MAMIE.** Do you dream of a quick fumble in the confession booth with the parish handyman?

**SISTER.** That's enough.

**MAMIE.** Or maybe it's WOMEN you dream of. Another nun, perhaps? When you close your eyes, does the Mother Superior take off her robes for you? Baby Jesus would blush if he could see the things your kind dream about.

**SISTER.** The way you talk... it's sacrilegious.

**MAMIE.** That's my POINT.

**SISTER.** I'll take it back then. I'm not supposed to be bringing you things anyway, you ungrateful—

**MAMIE.** Thanks very much, Sister, but I'll hold onto it just the same. It's awfully dull in here and I DO enjoy a good fairy story.

**SISTER.** Very well then.

**MAMIE.** My Da used to tell us fairy stories, back on the farm in Mayo. We'd all sit at his feet as he told us about the Selkies who shed their seal skin so they could walk on the land and about Finn McCool who got his intelligence from a magical salmon! My cousin, Molly, and I would spend hours pretending we were fairies who could turn the milk sour!

**SISTER.** It's difficult to picture you as a child. With friends.

**MAMIE.** I'm a very friendly and sociable person! I had lots of friends... when I had the money for them.

**SISTER.** What about Molly?

**MAMIE.** She doesn't speak to me anymore. She might even be dead by now, who knows?

**SISTER.** What happened?

**MAMIE.** What, are you one of the doctors... trying to psycho-analyze me?

**SISTER.** I'm just curious. Friends can be a great comfort in times of trouble.

**MAMIE.** Molly O'Grady was painfully shy and possibly touched in the head. We all worried about what would become of her when her parents finally died. So, when I opened my Maternity Home, I offered her a job. She mostly did domestic work, but she'd also help me out with other things. She was completely devoted to me! Kind of like a spastic dog.

## NURSE CADDEN

*(Suddenly, a vision of Molly appears. Mamie sees her and trembles.)* I was supposed to protect her. And I got us sent to prison. The FIRST time I went to prison. Nearly 20 years ago, now.

**SISTER.** Was she a devout woman? Perhaps she found forgiveness in her heart. *(Molly shakes her head “no.”)*

**MAMIE.** No. Her heart hardened to me. Even though I said that she was innocent. Even though I told them that there was no way she could have been with me on that drive to County Meath. Even though she only had to serve two months and I served a whole year. And I lost my Maternity Home. And I had to sell my beautiful car to pay for our legal defense which was SHITE.

**SISTER.** What happened in County Meath?

**MAMIE.** Sometimes women paid me to place their unwanted children into foster care. I would take a cut, of course, but MOST of the money went to a Mrs. Kennedy who did the actual leg-work of finding families to take the bastards. But sometimes, I didn't FEEL like taking just a small cut. So, Molly and I would take the baby out to the countryside and conveniently FORGET it somewhere. Then, I'd buy us both a lovely drink and pocket the rest of the money.

**SISTER.** You just left it there to die?

**MAMIE.** They were FINE. They always had plenty of blankets and were well-fed before we dropped them somewhere. I still don't know WHAT the problem is.

**SISTER.** Well, for starters—

**MAMIE.** I don't want to hear it. The whole country has already told me how much of a monster I am. My own father, after he delivered my bail money, refused to see me. How do you think that feels?

**SISTER.** Were there really children buried in your back garden? *(Beat.)*

**MAMIE.** Where did you hear that malarkey?

**SISTER.** Another sister at the convent. She remembered how her friends used to talk--

**MAMIE.** Gossip is a sin, Sister Mary Margaret.

**SISTER.** Tell me what happened.

## NURSE CADDEN

**MAMIE.** My garden wasn't filled with the bones of children... or whatever the rumor was. There was just the one. And it was already born dead, so you can get off your high horse for a moment.

**SISTER.** Why wasn't it given a proper Catholic funeral then? Its soul will be trapped in Limbo. That's a terrible thing to do to an innocent child.

**MAMIE.** You can't say that THING was a child. It was a fetus. A Christian burial wasn't necessary. And it didn't need to be feckin' baptized.

**SISTER.** It isn't up to you to decide.

**MAMIE.** The mother had taken some pills to get rid of it, but she was too far along for that. She probably would have died herself if I didn't help. If I had reported anything, she would have been sent to prison.

**SISTER.** So, you actually helped someone.

**MAMIE.** Sure. Let's say that.

**SISTER.** It's not as black and white as I supposed.

**MAMIE.** Nothing's black and white. Except for feckin' nuns. (*Sister Mary Margaret exits. Molly is still there, looming in the corner.*) What are you looking at?

### SCENE 10

*Mamie addresses the audience.*

**MAMIE.** CONDOMS! They were outlawed in Ireland in 1939. So, now it's illegal to sell them. It's illegal to even talk about them. Which is lucky for me because I need all the business I can get. You'd think the government would have more important things to worry about... Like Northern Ireland. What are those fellas up to up there?! But people can get creative when they're desperate to get it off. When I was in Midwifery School, one of the Doctors told us a story. He had just delivered a baby that had a Guinness bottle cap stuck to its head. The mother, poor fool, thought she could stick it up there and block sperm from getting into her cervix. You know what great? CUNNILINGIS. You can't get pregnant from doing that.

### SCENE 11

## NURSE CADDEN

*Mamie's examination room – which is just the front room of her basement apartment. It's 1944 and Mamie is 53 years old. There's a single bed covered in a plastic sheet and a basin on the floor. Medical paraphernalia like speculums and medicine bottles are scattered haphazardly around the room. A sign on the wall proclaims: NO CREDIT GIVEN. ELLEN sits on a wooden chair, wearing her coat and a mauve silk scarf. She jumps as Mamie barges into the room, wearing her white doctor's coat and a rather absurd feathered hat.*

**MAMIE.** I'd ask what's ailing you, but I think I have an idea. *(Ellen blushes and looks down at her hands.)*

**MAMIE.** When did you first notice your courses had stopped? *(Ellen snuffles.)*

**ELLEN.** The last one... was at the end... of JULY! *(Ellen bursts into tears. Mamie ignores it and starts counting on her fingers.)*

**MAMIE.** There's still time then. *(Off of Ellen's wail...)* Are you quite finished? *(Ellen nods.)* Let's have a look. *(Ellen removes her coat and scarf, revealing her maid's uniform underneath. Mamie gestures to a privacy screen in the corner of the room.)* You may continue disrobing back there. You'll find a sheet you can cover yourself with. *(Ellen retreats behind the screen.)* If you are, in fact, in the family way, I can complete the procedure today. I require payment up front, of course. *(Ellen emerges, wrapped in a bed sheet.)*

**ELLEN.** Yes, please. I only get Sunday afternoons off and I usually spend them with my mother. I already had to make up a white lie about why I couldn't come for tea today.

**MAMIE.** She must be so proud. *(Ellen lays down on the bed and Mamie adjusts the sheet over her.)* Legs in the air. You're familiar with that position, aren't you? *(Ellen obeys her. Mamie drags a standing lamp over to the bedside and switches it on. She takes a speculum from a nearby table and pulls up the sheet to take a look. She places her head between Ellen's legs, which is kind of difficult in that ridiculous feathered hat. Ellen can't help but giggle.)* Is there something particularly amusing about this situation, Miss Thompson?

## NURSE CADDEN

**ELLEN.** It's your hat! I'm sorry. One of the feathers was tickling me. *(Mamie rolls her eyes and goes back to work.)* Nurse Cadden? Couldn't you take it off?

**MAMIE.** No! It was very expensive and it looks gorgeous on me. I intend to get my money's worth. *(Mamie's head disappears behind the sheet. Ellen winces as the examination progresses. She calms herself by reciting the "Hail Mary.")*

**ELLEN.** "Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee..." *(A sharp intake of breath.)* "Blessed are you among women...andblessedisthefruitofyourwomb... JESUS!" *(Mamie emerges and puts Ellen's legs down.)*

**MAMIE.** It's a little late to be praying to the VIRGIN Mary, don't you think, dear?

**ELLEN.** Ahm...I'm not sure?

**MAMIE.** You were right. You're about three months gone. I can take care of it for 45 pounds. *(Ellen gulps.)*

**ELLEN.** But I only make a tenner a week!

**MAMIE.** If you don't have the money, you could always try throwing yourself down the stairs.

**ELLEN.** No, I have the money. It just seems very dear.

**MAMIE.** Quality comes at a price, Miss Thompson. I'm a trained medical professional. That eedjit, Mr. Coleman, who practices on Holles Street? He trained as an electrician! He thinks he can do what he wants, just because he purchased a feekin' X-Ray machine!

**ELLEN.** Does it hurt?

**MAMIE.** You'll barely feel a thing. There will be some irritation afterwards, of course, but nothing worse than what happens every month. *(Mamie goes to a shelf and removes a small cardboard box. She opens it and removes what looks like a tampon.)*

**MAMIE.** This is called a "Sea-Tangle Tent." Once inserted, the thing will expand, causing the cervix to dilate. *(Ellen nods like she knows what this means.)* Now, in a few days, the thing will come away. You must collect that, and anything else that might come out and bring it back to me here. I'll make sure it's properly disposed of. Do you understand?

## NURSE CADDEN

**ELLEN.** Yes, Nurse Cadden.

**MAMIE.** Under no circumstances do you show anyone what you're bringing me.

**ELLEN.** Yes, ma'am.

**MAMIE.** I'll take the payment now.

**ELLEN.** My handbag is on the chair. You'll find an envelope with the money inside. *(Mamie finds Ellen's handbag and opens it. She removes the envelope and counts the money.)*

**MAMIE.** Forty-five pounds. *(She takes the cash and stuffs it in a desk drawer. Then she returns to Ellen and puts her legs into position.)*

**MAMIE.** Time to get that bugger the hell out of there!

## SCENE 12

*ST. BRIGID and ST. CIARÁN sit around Brigid's flame.*

**ST. BRIGID.** This here is St. Ciarán

**ST. CIARÁN.** Oh, hello!

**ST. BRIGID.** St. Ciarán is another holy abortionist from the Middle Ages.

**ST. CIARÁN.** It's no big deal, really.

**ST. BRIGID.** Before he was conceived, Ciarán's druid mother had a dream that a star fell into her mouth.

**ST. CIARÁN.** That has nothing to do with this story.

**ST. BRIGID.** I know, but it's a nice visual.

**ST. CIARÁN.** There was this nun, Bruinnech. *(Beautiful BRUINNECH enters. Brigid and Ciarán are overcome by her loveliness.)*

**ST. CIARÁN.** And she was so lovely, so perfect... that a King fell in love with her.

**ST. BRIGID.** Who wouldn't?

**ST. CIARÁN.** He wanted to make her his wife. It didn't matter that she had already made an oath to God. That she had made an oath to me! So, he kidnapped her and made her his wife.

**ST. BRIGID.** And how did bonny Bruinnech feel about all this? *(Ciarán shrugs.)*

## NURSE CADDEN

**ST. CIARÁN.** I dunno. I just knew I had to be the hero and rescue her! (*A bit of swashbuckling. St. Ciarán frees Bruinnech only to discover that she is PREGNANT.*) I got her back, but she was pregnant. Gross. And I couldn't stand the thought of this beautiful, holy vessel being ruined with the seed of that VIPER. (*St. Ciarán tenderly lies Bruinnech down and pulls up her skirt.*) So, I blessed her vulva with the sign of the cross. (*He does this.*)

**ST. BRIGID.** That's seems like a bit much. The stomach would have done, Ciarán.

**ST. CIARÁN.** And I pressed down on her womb. (*He does this. Bruinnech screams.*) And I forced the womb to be emptied. (*Bruinnech lies in the fetal position. Crying.*)

**ST. BRIGID.** That whole thing was very upsetting.

**ST. CIARÁN.** It was all worth it. Now she's pure again.

## SCENE 13

*Back in Mamie's cell. Mamie is hallucinating that she's watching a trial. Ellen Thompson stands in the center of the cell, as if she's on the stand. A LAWYER interrogates her.*

**LAWYER.** Ellen Thompson, will you tell the court what happened next?

**ELLEN.** The procedure was quick and painless, just like Nurse Cadden had said it would be. I was home in time for tea.

**MAMIE.** Damn right she was. (*Ellen clutches her stomach, as if she's just had a sharp pain.*)

**LAWYER.** When exactly did the pains start?

**ELLEN.** Two days later, as I was going about my work, I felt as if I might faint or fall down. I tried to get myself a drink of water, but I could barely lift the pitcher. I immediately took to my bed. (*Ellen collapses to the floor, convulsed in pain. Maybe she even bleeds?*) Mrs. Doyle!!!

**LAWYER.** That's when you called out for Mrs. Doyle, your employer?

**ELLEN.** She phoned the doctor, who told her to wait and see if the pain subsided.

**LAWYER.** But it didn't?

## NURSE CADDEN

**ELLEN.** I thought I was going to die.

**LAWYER.** When the doctor arrived later that evening, he performed a physical evaluation. Is that correct?

**ELLEN.** Yes.

**LAWYER.** And what did the doctor discover?

**ELLEN.** They tell me that he found the remnants of whatever Nurse Cadden had inserted inside me. He tried to remove it by tugging at the string, but it was so lodged in there that the strings came away in his hand. He had to call an ambulance.

**LAWYER.** You were taken to the National Maternity Hospital, where it was discovered that you were suffering from peritonitis, an inflammation of the abdominal cavity that could lead to DEATH if not treated immediately.

**ELLEN.** Yes. I was operated on that night and released sixteen days later.

**LAWYER.** You're very lucky to be alive, Miss Thompson.

**ELLEN.** Yes, thank God.

**LAWYER.** And what makes you think you're special that you don't deserve to pay the consequences for your fast and loose ways?

**ELLEN.** What?

**LAWYER.** Under the Offenses Against the Person Act of 1861, it is illegal to attempt an abortion. You broke the law.

**ELLEN.** I had no choice. My reputation...

**LAWYER.** You certainly weren't thinking about your reputation when you were keeping company with boys.

**ELLEN.** You promised me. You said I wouldn't get in trouble if I gave you her name.

**LAWYER.** On Judgement Day, you'll still have to stand before God Almighty. You did commit a MORTAL sin, Miss Thompson. *(Ellen starts to cry. Mamie approaches the lawyer and jeers at him.)*

**MAMIE.** If I hadn't been on trial, I would have told you what a bastard you were. Why didn't you ask her about the man who put her in this position? Can't you see she's covering up for someone? She wasn't "keeping company with boys" as you so quaintly say... she was RAPED by her employer's husband, Larry Doyle. HE gave her the money for the procedure. Can you imagine, a MAID with an extra 45 pounds to spare?



## NURSE CADDEN

*(She waits for a reaction from the lawyer. It never comes.)* And what's WORSE is that old Larry Doyle had already tried to get rid of the thing himself. With a piece of lead piping and a HAT PIN. That's what caused the infection. I treated her with the utmost professionalism and care. Why should I be punished because somebody else gave her peritonitis? *(She leans in closer to him.)* Is Larry Doyle paying you off? Or do you just not care? You're just looking for any excuse you get me behind bars again, aren't you? THIS IS A WITCH HUNT!

**LAWYER.** The court would like to call Mary Anne Cadden to the stand. *(A spotlight shines on Mamie and suddenly, she's not in her cell. She's right there in the courtroom in 1945. She stands opposite Ellen Thompson.)* Mary Anne Cadden, is this woman one of your patients? *(Mamie takes a hard look at Ellen.)*

**MAMIE.** I don't know her.

**LAWYER.** Ellen Thompson claims that on Wednesday, the 25th of October, 1944, you inserted a "sea-tangle" tent into her womb.

**MAMIE.** I don't know what you're talking about. I treat VD patients. THE POX. That's my job. Can I sit down now? My varicose veins are throbbing something terrible. *(The Lawyer produces a MAUVE SCARF from his pocket.)*

**LAWYER.** Miss Thompson mentioned that she lost a scarf on the night of the incident. If you've never seen the woman, what was her scarf doing on your premises? *(Mamie shrugs.)*

**MAMIE.** Lots of women have mauve scarves. *(The Lawyer hands the scarf to Ellen.)*

**LAWYER.** Ellen Thompson, is this your scarf? *(Ellen examines it.)*

**ELLEN.** Yes! It was a present from my mother. I'd know it anywhere. *(She finds a small spot on the scarf.)* And you can see the mark where I singed it when I was drying it out too close to the fire.

**MAMIE.** Oh, for feck's sake.

**LAWYER.** Mary Anne Cadden, are you SURE this woman never came to your practice for treatment?

**MAMIE.** Well, now that you mention it, the name does ring a bell. Yes. She came to see me because she had some ALARMING WHITE DISCHARGE.

NURSE CADDEN

**LAWYER.** Ms. Cadden, please!

**MAMIE.** Gonorrhoea, probably. She couldn't pay my fee, so I sent her away! *(The court erupts into an enraged hubbub. We hear the banging of a judge's gavel. His booming voice fills the courtroom.)*

**JUDGE.** *(OFF)* Order! Order, I say! *(More banging. As the lights start to dim, the judge delivers the verdict.)* Mary Anne Cadden, you are found guilty of attempting to procure a miscarriage for one Miss Ellen Thompson. You are sentenced to five years of penal servitude at Mountjoy Prison.

**MAMIE.** Oh, feck it all to hell.

**END OF ACT ONE**

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