

THE PEARL OF YORK

© Bruce Goodman 1993

CHARACTERS:

Margaret Clitherow
John Clitherow - Margaret's husband
Henry Clitherow - Margaret's son - 11/12 years
Anne Clitherow - Margaret's daughter - 7/8 years
William Clitherow - Margaret's son - 5/6 years
John Bretton - Margaret's servant - young, athletic
Martha Fufthrop - later Martha Bretton

Five Stagehands

Henry May - Mayor of York, Margaret's Step-father

Edmund Campion - Jesuit priest

Edward Fufthrop
Elizabeth Fufthrop
Percival Geldart
Janet Geldart

Reverend Wigginton's Wife

TIME: 1586

PLACE: York, England

INTRODUCTION

Is this play about holiness? Probably. But it is more than that. It is an anti-romantic statement that perhaps will help us overcome the nineteenth century proclivity to turn saints into something unhuman. I want somehow to show Margaret Clitherow as someone truly human, and therefore someone truly holy. Yet she was one of those extraordinary humans who become singularly heroic by understanding and confronting the circumstances of her time. How many of them are there today in Rwanda and Somalia? Are there any in good old Godzone?

Some have accused me, in writing this play, of simply reinforcing Roman Catholicism's anti-woman "let's keep them in the kitchen" stance. She was a woman of her time - and that can't be helped. But she was liberated in many things: she learnt to read and write; she taught her children, and her neighbours' children - girls included; she let her children play freely; she encouraged the courtship of lovers in her house; she was an Anglican who became a Roman Catholic married to a Roman Catholic who became an Anglican - with an ecumenical openness that would put many of us today to shame. And most extraordinary, she refused to be tried as a woman - "In matters of law you may know more, but as a woman, I assure you, I am in no whit inferior to a man". I think that these insights of Margaret should be proclaimed because they're still valid.

The actual point however of the stance that led to her cruel death was the protection of her children. In this she was a wild lioness protecting her cubs on instinct, and it could be construed that the point of the play is to hold her up in this regard as a paradigm of womanhood. In as much as she was a parent I think her stance is valid. But she is also the patron saint surely of the right to remain silent, of the rights of children, and of the right to maintain a conviction in the face of all odds. In these regards I don't see her as conservative or liberal, left or right, feminist or fascist. I see her simply as one of those extraordinary humans that grace the planet from time to time.

The fact that she was a Roman Catholic living in Reformation England is in no way intended to glorify Roman Catholicism at the expense of Anglicanism. A few years before her, the boot was on the other foot. The play is about this bloodiest of animals - called humans. But it is primarily a tribute to the human spirit that in every century rises above the cruelties of the times to enoble our bloody histories.

The Pearl of York was first performed by The Actors' Company at St Mary's Hall, Manchester Street, Christchurch, from 29 October to 12 November 1994. It was directed by Lex Matheson.

The cast was as follows:

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------------|
| <i>Margaret Clitherow</i> | - | Linley-Jane Bullen |
| <i>John Clitherow</i> | - | Brian Ellwood |
| <i>Henry Clitherow</i> | - | Toby Raine |
| <i>Anne Clitherow</i> | - | Sophie Walshe |
| <i>William Clitherow</i> | - | Stuart Vial |
| <i>John Bretton</i> | - | Michael Downey |
| <i>Martha Fufthrop</i> | - | Nicola Mora |
| <i>Five Stagehands</i> | - | Daivd Johnstone |
| | - | Daniel Bruce |
| | - | Dai Eveleigh |
| | - | Paul Sullivan |
| | - | Kevin Gregory |
| <i>Henry May</i> | - | Lex Matheson |
| <i>Edmund Campion</i> | - | Robert Percy |
| <i>Edward Fufthrop</i> | - | Justin Ward |
| <i>Elizabeth Fufthrop</i> | - | Sally McIver |
| <i>Janet Geldart</i> | - | Emma Maguire |
| <i>Rev Wigginton's Wife</i> | - | Leanne Thompson |

Percival Geldart was written out for the performance!

ACT ONE

PROLOGUE

For five minutes or so before the play begins, the stage lights come on - so that the audience can watch the stage if they wish. On stage are make-up tables and mirrors. The actors are seated at the various tables, applying their make-up and the finishing touches to their costumes. The actors, director, backstage, etc. can come and go as they wish, but the stage should never be empty - nor should they communicate with the audience. It should not be too orchestrated, but very natural. A Stagehand could give the stage a final sweep. When it is time for the play to begin, Margaret begins to speak to the audience. The Stagehands remove the tables, mirrors and chairs, and set the stage up for the first scene. Margaret's mirror and chair are removed off last, because she begins to speak to the audience while still seated. By the end of her speech all actors and makeup props have gone.

Margaret: *(to audience)* Well the play's about to begin. We've put on our costumes and makeup. We've, hopefully, learned our lines.

Stagehand 1: *(removing last piece of furniture)* I've only got one, and this is it.

Margaret: It's a play about some ones life. She was a real person - Mrs Clitherow. A sixteenth century English woman. Margaret Clitherow. *(She stands)* You may never have heard of her. I hadn't. *(Backing away)* Don't know if I agree with her. *(She comes closer to the audience)* But, in every life there's... *(She ponders for words)* there's a loveliness. That's it! There's a loveliness.

She puts on her hat and exits. Lights fade.

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

Outside a prison in York. There is a stone wall stage right. Music fades to bells. Lights rise. The sound of spring birds is heard. John Clitherow is standing towards the wall. His three children are stage left. The children are "messaging about" - William is "busy"; Henry and Anne are "fighting". John is tense.

John: Henry, don't!

The children continue to play.

John: DON'T!

The children stop.

Anne: When's mummy coming?

John: Soon, Anne. Soon.

William: Why are they letting her out?

John: Because she's finished Will-Bill.

William: Finished what?

John: Her time.

William: *(comprehending, but not comprehending and going off to play)*
Oh.

William exits stage left.

Anne: Daddy, why did she go to prison?

John: *(trying to be patient, but very tense)* I've told you Lamb.

Henry: *(as a know-all)* Because...

John: *(annoyed)* Go and play. Go and play, Lamb.

Anne goes off stage left.

Henry: When we're bigger, will we go to prison too?

John: *(his mind clearly on other things, but patient)* Maybe, Henry. Maybe.

Henry: Why? Don't you know?

John: *(getting a little bit rattled)* No, Henry, no! There's a lot of things I don't know. I don't understand.

Anne and William appear excitedly stage left. Anne's hands are cupped.

Anne: Daddy, look what William found!

William: It's mine! It's mine!

Anne: It's a bird!

The children crowd around. She shows her father.

John: It's a sparrow.

William: *(getting ignored)* It's mine! I found it!

John: It's a baby sparrow.

William: It's mine!

Henry: It's not yours. It's no ones. Mummy said that the birds are no ones. They're every ones.

William: *(chanting)* It's mine! It's mine! It's mine!

Anne: Can we keep it?

John: I think so.

The children excitedly rush to another part of the stage to play with the bird.

Henry: We'll build a cage...

Anne: What will we call it?..

William: Give it to me...

Suddenly there is the loud clank of a door closing. Margaret enters stage right. She is thirty, and usually beautiful and energetic. Here she is a wreck - dirty, tentative, and almost at the limit of her resources. The children rush over excitedly at first, but then approach with more caution. Margaret and John hug. Then she hugs the children.

John: Maggie!

Margaret: John!

John: You're back!

Margaret: John! And the children!

The children show her the sparrow.

Anne: Will-Bill found a bird!

Henry: It's a sparrow.

William: It's mine!

Anne: Daddy said we can keep it.

Margaret: (*uncomfortable*) John, you shouldn't have.

Margaret looks at the bird in Anne's cupped hands.

Margaret: It's lovely.

They begin to walk, circling the stage anti-clockwise, as if walking home.

Margaret: It's mother is probably somewhere near.

Anne: Will found it.

Henry: It fell out of its nest.

Anne gives the bird to William.

Margaret: (*gently*) Now Will, I think you should let it go. It misses its mummy.

Anne: Daddy said we could keep it.

There is a small tension between her and her husband.

Margaret: (*firmer this time*) John, you shouldn't have.

William: But I found it.

Margaret: (*almost at her limit*) It misses its mummy.

William pauses. Henry May - Mayor of York - enters, robed as Mayor. He is accompanied by the Five Stagehands. He stands and waits. Margaret sees him and goes up to him.

Margaret: Father.

She kisses him politely. He exits with Stagehands.

William: *(reluctantly)* Shall I let it go over there?

Margaret: Over there is good.

The others stop walking while William goes slightly off stage left to release the bird. They watch, then cheer - as if it has flown off. William returns. Anne begins skipping and singing ahead of them as they resume walking around the stage. Henry joins her.

Margaret: There now. Free! Free as a bird!

Margaret's success at getting them to let the bird go is a slight reprimand of her husband, and at the same time re-establishes her authority with the children. There is no longer the same tension in their relationships. Margaret gains strength from this.

Anne: Fly, birdie, fly birdie,
High in the sky.
Fly birdie, fly birdie,
Fly, fly, fly.

Henry joins in. William takes his mother's hand. John has his arm around Margaret's waist.

Henry and Anne: If no one ever catches you
Then you can sing all day;
Sing away, sing away,
Sing away all day.

The song continues for as long as necessary while Margaret speaks.

Margaret: I had forgotten the smell of the world. Early spring. Grape hyacinths. And the trees in flower. And the sunshine and the birds. And soon the smell of hay, and the feel of grass. And the warmth of sun. And the children. Two years now, but you never forget what the world is like. *(Reflecting, introverted)* They were kind.

They pause to watch the children.

Margaret: *(suddenly, with hitherto unseen energy)* I've learnt to read. And the children will learn too. I'll teach them.

John: You can read?

Margaret: I taught myself.

William: What's read?

Margaret: (*ignoring William*) It's so nice to see a distance! (*Looking in the distance*) St Peter's, the minster of York!

John: How far? Maggie, you won't get back to prison again will you? Don't go away again?

Margaret: We do what we must.

John: I'm not asking you to be Church of England. You weren't always Roman.

Margaret: (*interrupting with determination*) We do what we do what we do.

John: (*chastised, resigned*) Aye. I suppose so. I've been made a chamberlain of York.

Margaret: (*as if he has betrayed his religion for secular promotion*) Your family is Catholic.

John nods, close to tears.

Margaret: You've a brother a priest - and you're Protestant. Is it ambition that makes you that way? Or do you cluck with the hens and quack with the ducks?

John makes no reply.

Margaret: You're already the richest man in York. You've enough money now, surely, to be following your conscience.

John nods again, even closer to tears. He turns away.

Margaret: (*gently*) I'm sorry.

They hug closer, and pause while they reflect.

Margaret: (*brighter*) Can we have fish for supper? I crave for fish!

John: Aye my Pearl of York! Friday or not, if it's fish you want, it's a fish you'll get.

Music. The lights fade.

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO

Inside the Clitherow household. There is a table and chairs left of stage centre with a jar and several mugs. There is a panelled wall at the back which includes a sliding panel concealing the "priest's hide-away". John Bretton is sitting at the table lacing a boot. Margaret enters stage left chasing William with broom. Margaret has changed her clothes. Bretton stands. Music fades.

Margaret: Well, John Bretton!

He sits. Margaret sits.

Margaret: Well, John Bretton?

Bretton: *(uncomfortable, not knowing if Margaret has changed with prison experience)* Just threading a boot, Mrs Clitherow.

Margaret: *(offering help)* And the other?

He reaches down and puts another boot and lace on the table. William sits on the table. Margaret begins to lace the boot.

Bretton: *(taking a plunge back to his former jovial relationship with Margaret)* And how was the place? Had you racked daily I s'pose? We thought of you little - only briefly when we heard the screaming from here. Had to sing louder to cover the noise.

Margaret: You're in a carefree mood young Bretton. Too free for a servant maybe.

Bretton: *(genuinely)* We missed you. *(Covering up his sincerity)* Down in the master's butcher's shop we thought of you every day as we quartered the carcasses. Chop! Chop!

He chops the table with his hand.

Margaret: *(in jovial retribution)* It's two years passed and still you're not married. I'll have to find you a leg of mutton myself.

Bretton: When you're Catholic there's not much to choose from. They're all Protestant. Mind you, looking at the Protestants there's little either to choose. They've all got big noses.

Margaret: So you think my husband's got a big nose.

Bretton: I was talking of the girls.

Margaret: I can tell you're Catholic. Your eyes are too far spaced in the head.

Bretton: *(he looks at her)* Then your eyes are spaced too, Mrs Clitherow.

Margaret: That's right! Look into a woman's eyes. That way you'll fall in love. There's a nice girl I know whose eyes you could look into. She's the daughter of a grocer. More of a cabbage than a leg of mutton.

He begins to put his boots on. He is interested.

Bretton: Is she Catholic?

Margaret: More Catholic than Father Champion - and better looking.

Bretton: And her name?

Margaret: Martha.

Bretton: That's nice.

Margaret: Martha FUFTHROP!

Bretton: Fufthrop?

Margaret is amused.

Bretton: Fufthrop!

Margaret: Well it's no doubt a name she'd like to change. She could be getting Bretton.

Bretton: *(embarrassed)* I don't know.

Margaret: Better and Bretton by the minute.

Bretton: I've seen her. I know her.

Margaret: I'll see her father. You're probably in love with her already.

Bretton: *(wanting to, but not wanting to)* I don't know.

John Clitherow enters stage left.

John: Bretton, the meat needs cutting in the shop.

Margaret: Quartered.

John: Keep the flaps for Mrs Watkins.

Bretton exits stage left.

John: Council of York's called a meeting.

Margaret: Chamberlain of York. My chamberlain of York, and soon you'll match my father as sheriff - and my step-father, maybe, as Mayor. It's about what?

John: (*teasing*) Catching Catholics maybe.

Margaret: You're cruel, John Clitherow.

John: Not cruel, Maggie. But that's the strife we're in. I've paid your fines for not attending the parish church.

Margaret: You're a good man, John Clitherow.

John: I'm Protestant, that's why.

John pauses as if he wants to say something.

John: (*blurting it out*) Margaret do you have to have those priests stay here.

Margaret: (*determined*) Yes.

John: It's dangerous.

Margaret: These are dangerous times, and it's dangerous things we do.

John: You don't have to harbour them.

Margaret: You've a brother a priest.

John: (*rattled*) That makes no difference.

Margaret: (*almost angry*) If it was the reign of Queen Mary and not Elizabeth, and the Church of England was being slaughtered by the dozens, and there knocked on our door one run-away Church of England priest, what would you do then? Tell him to go and get butchered by the bloody Catholic queen. I say nothing against her. But it's humans on the run, and Jesuit priests scuttling like rabbits from one warren to another without a bed of their own. It's not just because they're Catholic John, it's because... It's not that they're thieves or murderers. They've done not a leaf wrong, except stay true to what they believe.

John: *(admonished)* It's a pickle we're in.

Margaret: *(recovered)* Aye, if it's a pickle we're in then maybe it's God's way of preserving us.

John: *(he laughs, gently)* You're a good woman, Margaret Clitherow. I'd be married to none other.

Margaret: If you married another I'd have something to say.

John: You've enough to say as it is. If you can relieve young Bretton at the butcher's shop?

Margaret: Later.

John: A bit later.

He kisses Margaret and William and exits stage left. Henry and Anne enter stage right and begin to play, opening the panel to the priest's hide-away.

Margaret: *(picking up William and leaving)* You make sure that thing's closed when you've finished. Father Campion says I'm too lenient as it is.

She exits stage left. Henry and Anne noisily play hide-and-seek. Margaret hastily returns, stage left, still holding William.

Margaret: *(urgently, whispered)* Quick! Shut that! Shut that thing! They're here!

Henry and Anne quickly close the panel. Three Stagehands enter stage left - Stagehand 1, Stagehand 2 and Stagehand 3 - to play the part of Guards.

Stagehand 1: We have orders to search the house, Mrs Clitherow.

Margaret: Search for all you like, you won't find things here as you know. It's not usual to enter the house without knocking.

Stagehand 1: We thought we were one of the family.

Margaret: Well you'd better stop and have a cup of cider then or something, and a cake.

Margaret pours them a drink from the jar on the table. She is genuinely hospitable, but careful.

Margaret: *(to Stagehand 1)* And your family? I hear, Johnny, that your aunt had a fever and was near to death. I said a prayer for her.

Stagehand 1: She's better now.

Margaret: (*teasing*) Well there's the power of Catholic prayer.

Stagehand 2: (*interrupting, threatening*) You've been hiding priests.

Margaret: Priests?

Stagehand 2: Where's the hide-away?

Margaret: Where's the warrant?

Stagehand 3: Answer the question. Where's the priest's hide-away?

Stagehand 2: (*to Henry*) Where's it, boy?

Margaret: Leave him alone.

Stagehand 2: (*ignoring her*) Where's the hole?

Margaret puts William down.

Margaret: If there's any questions I'll be answering them. There's little need to come bursting in here, warrant or none, and be disturbing the household with aimless questions.

Stagehand 1: I'm sorry, Mrs Clitherow, but we do have to search.

Stagehands 1 and 3 exit stage right to search.

Margaret: You can search all you want, but there's nothing you'll find.

Stagehand 2: (*to Anne*) Where's the hole?

Anne: There isn't one.

Stagehand 2 looks along the panels and finds nothing.

Stagehand 2: (*to Henry*) Is there a trap door?

Henry: There's not.

Margaret: If it's a trap door you're looking for, then look on the floor. Look under the table and chairs. Look through the rooms. You can strip the house board by board if you wish, as you did with the Vavasour's, but there's no trap door from here to eternity. My

husband's a Chamberlain of York. We've no business with secret holes. What would we want them for?

Stagehand 2: To hide priests lady, that's what.

Margaret: And for what would I be wanting to hide priests?

Stagehand 2: Off your chair lady, the whole world knows you hide priests.

Margaret: Then the whole world should stick to its business.

Stagehands 1 and 3 return.

Stagehand 1: Found nothing.

Stagehand 3: *(to Stagehand 2)* Anything?

Stagehand 2: A stubborn papist.

Margaret: And you search in the name of the Lord! You should pray to Saint Anthony - he's a good Catholic saint. He'll help you find things.

Stagehand 3: *(to William)* Where do they hide the priests boy?

William stands with his mother.

Margaret: *(angrily)* Leave the children! You've no business being here. I am Catholic, as you know - as hopefully the whole world would know.

Stagehand 2: Then the whole world should stick to its business.

Margaret: My husband pays the recusancy fines. I don't attend the parish church because I'm Catholic, but the fines are paid for, so you best be going. My father was Sheriff of this city. You've no right to be here.

Stagehand 1: *(interested)* Who's your father?

Margaret: He's dead.

Stagehand 2: *(threatening)* Who's your father?

Margaret: Thomas Middleton.

Stagehand 3: That was years ago. There is new rules now lady.

- Margaret:** The name's Mrs Clitherow. I'd be pleased if you used it.
- Stagehand 2:** And I'd be pleased if you stopped your tongue.
- Margaret:** My step-father is the Mayor. He'll hear of this.
- Stagehand 3:** We know that, Mrs Clitherow. He's the one who sent us here.
- Margaret is shocked.*
- Stagehand 3:** There's a priest here. Where is he?
- Stagehand 1:** *(to other Stagehands)* There's no need to insult the lady.
- Margaret:** *(recovered)* There's no priest here.
- Stagehand 3:** There is indeed!
- Stagehand 2:** You know it.
- Margaret:** *(genuinely)* I don't know it. Who?
- Stagehand 1:** Edmund Campion.
- Margaret:** Father Campion? *(Taunting)* I know him well.
- Stagehand 2:** *(cynically, with innuendo)* We know that too, Mrs Clitherow. You know him well. You look like the type to know him well.
- Margaret:** *(equally cynically)* So my piety shines forth, does it?
- Stagehand 2:** *(agitated)* Where's the priest?
- Margaret:** *(almost angry)* Well if Father Campion was here, you'd smell him because his breath stinks. Why don't you sniff your way along the track and smell him out elsewhere.
- Stagehand 2:** I warn you lady.
- Margaret:** *(angry)* It's Mrs Clitherow, and you can smell him down the road like some mongrel dog and cock your leg and piss on every gate post of England, but by the saints of England you'll not be cocking your leg on my door. Out of the house! You've finished your search.
- Stagehand 2:** I warn you. If you're harbouring priests you'll get strung up.

Margaret: Christian of you to warn me. (*Suddenly kind*) But perhaps I will show you around the house.

Stagehand 2: (*suspicious*) Show us around?

Margaret: I'll show you myself, since you find naught for yourselves.

She makes as if to show them around.

Margaret: First of all, I'll show you (*with sudden vehemence*) ...the door!
There's the door! Use it!

Stagehand 3: *(with considerable bitterness, and growing retribution)* Clever. But if we don't get what we want from you, we'll get it from the children. There is little an apple does not solve. And if an apple does not see the fall of the world, then there's the rod.

The following speech grows in vehemence. It grows into a tirade with an element of amusement because her threats are impossibilities. Her deep-felt conviction, however, shines through.

Margaret: *(turning on him)* Sticks are for dogs, sir, and even then it's a stupid master that beats the pups to teach the bitch. You'll leave the children alone. Get on your way.

The Stagehands make as if to go, but she is blocking their exit, having no intention yet of letting them pass.

Margaret: Better that a mill-stone be tied around your neck and you be flung into the sea.

Stagehand 1: It's a Royal Edict.

Margaret: You beat a child of mine by Royal Edict and I'll beat the Royal Face to such a pulp that the cries of the Virgin Queen's lovers will be heard whimpering and wailing in every corner of England.

Stagehand 2: That's treason!

Margaret: Treason or not, I'll die before one child of mine is forced by a stick to give evidence. You don't want me for treason, you want me for hiding priests. I'm the bait to catch your fish.

Stagehand 3: *(shouting)* Lady, let us out!

Margaret: *(unabated)* And the bribes of an apple! I'll not have innocence ripped by your serpent's fangs. No child should testify against its own mother, and no child of mine will. Never! *(She is near to tears)* Never! You'll leave the children alone.

Stagehand 3: *(shouting)* Out of our way!

There is a knock on the door.

Margaret: That would be heartless.

Stagehand 2: *(shouting)* Step aside!

Margaret: *(shouting)* To hurt me for some wanton law is one thing. But to do it with cruelty is beyond comprehension.

There is a louder knock on the door.

Margaret: (*quite calm, to Anne*) See to the door, Anne.

Anne exits stage left, but Margaret does not stop.

Margaret: (*building up again*) Never! Never! Our Lord was flogged for his innocence, and flogged because he would not speak to Pilate and the cruel guards. But he was a man, not a child, and you can whip me for the truth too - but not the children.

Stagehand 2: So you're like Our Lord are you?

Margaret: (*still shouting*) Would that I was! Would that I could suffer just one drop, and drive this bitterness from England - this embittered England - (*she begins to calm down*) and from the Queen, and we might live in peace. (*Almost to self*) Together. Gentlemen, enough. Enough for today. You've had your cider, you can go. Why do you taunt me? (*With humour*) Next time come just for the drink.

Anne enters with Campion. He is an old man, loaded with containers of jam.

Campion: Do you want jam, madam? Jam?

Margaret: Ah! Jam? I'll see these people out.

Campion: (*to Stagehand 2*) You want jam?

Stagehand 2: Want do I want jam for?

Campion: (*feigned amazement*) Bread!

Stagehand 2 sneers.

Stagehand 1: I'll have some jam. Have you strawberry?

Campion: Strawberry, sir.

Stagehand 1 exchanges money for a pot of jam.

Campion: It's good jam.

Stagehand 1: It better be. We'll be going Mrs Clitherow.

Margaret: See yourselves out as you saw yourselves in.

The Stagehands exit stage left. The group waits on stage. Suddenly, all kneel. Campion straightens from an old man. He blesses them.

Campion: Et benedictio Dei omnipotentis, Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti, descendat super vos et maneat semper.

All bless themselves: Margaret helping William to bless himself.

All: Amen!

All stand.

Margaret: That was too daring, Father Campion.

Campion: I was through the door before I knew.

Margaret: Well, you're very welcome. And from where have you come?

Campion: I was with Ralph Grimston of Nidd near Knaresborough last night. I thought you'd been told.

Margaret: Not a trace. Not a word. But you're most welcome. Do the others know?

Campion: Not yet.

Margaret: (*amused*) Jam! Henry will go tell that the Father is here. (*To Henry*) Tell the Geldarts and the Fufthrops. And tell young Bretton at the butcher's. Tell young Bretton to get his heart strings strung.

Henry: Tell him what?

Margaret: Just tell him the Father is here. And if anyone asks what you're about, say you're fixing a goose's bridle and a whip for the gander.

Music. The lights fade.

ACT ONE, SCENE THREE

It is almost dark except for two candles on a table, which is placed at the front of the stage. Campion stands vested for Mass behind the table - facing the audience. Margaret is present, with John Bretton, Martha Fufthrop, Elizabeth and Edward Fufthrop, and Janet and Percival Geldart. They are kneeling behind the table - facing the audience. The music fades.

Campion: *(reading from Missal, sotto voce)* Per haec sancta quae sumpsimus, Domine, perfice in nobis gratiam tuam, qui expectationem Simeonis implesti, ut, sicut ille mortem non videt nisi prius Christum suscipere mereretur, ita et nos, in occursum Domini procedentes, vitam obtineamus aeternam. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

In the following sequence, the English is orchestrated above the Latin which continues to be said. The prayers in English are not shared prayers, but the thoughts of the speakers.

Margaret: I pray for the realm, for the Catholics of the realm, and for the Protestants too. I pray for the queen, Elizabeth, and all the governors of the realm.

Campion: Deus qui per beatae Mariae Virginis partum genus humanum sua voluit benignitate redimere, sua vos dignetur benedictione ditare. Amen.

Each one stands as they begin to speak. Percival and Janet speak not only over the Latin, but over the chant of the names - once the names have got underway.

Margaret: I pray for those who have died in persecution: Percival Kirkman, James Thompson, William Hart, Percival Thirkeld.

Edward: Francis Ingleby, Robert Bickerdike, Edmund Sykes, John Finglow.

Elizabeth: George Douglas, Alexander Crow, John Amias, William Spenser.

Percival: Ye shall be drawn through the open city to the place of execution,

Janet: and there be hanged and let down alive,

Percival: and your privy parts cut off,

Janet: and your entrails taken out and burnt in your sight;

Percival: then your head to be cut off and your body to be divided into four parts,

Janet: to be disposed of at her Majesty's pleasure.

Campion: Eiusque semper et ubique patrocina sentiatis, per quam auctorem vitae suscipere meruistis. Amen.

- Margaret:** Robert Hardesty, Robert Thorpe, Thomas Watkinson, William Knight.
- Edward:** Edward Osbaldeston, George Errington, William Abbot, Antony Bates.
- Elizabeth:** William Andleby, James Harrison, John Fisher, Thomas More.
- Percival:** You shall be stripped naked, laid down, your back upon the ground,
- Janet:** and as much weight laid upon you as you are able to bear,
- Percival:** and so to continue for three days without meat or drink,
- Janet:** and on the third day to be pressed to death,
- Percival:** your hands and feet tied to posts,
- Janet:** and a sharp stone under your back.
- Campion:** Et qui ad eius celebrandam sollemnitatem hodierna die devotis mentibus convenistis, spiritalium gaudiorum caelestiumque praemiorum vobiscum munera reportetis. Amen.

They all kneel, except for Margaret.

- Margaret:** I pray for the children - for Henry, Anne, William. And for my husband John. I pray that young Bretton may find himself a woman.
- Bretton:** Me? A wife?
- Margaret:** And for Father Campion, that he be kept safe and free.
- All:** Amen.

Margaret kneels. The English now finishes. Campion turns his back to the audience and blesses the congregation. They all make the sign of the cross.

- Campion:** Et benedictio Dei omnipotentis, Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti, descendat super vos et maneat semper.
- All:** Amen.
- Campion:** Ite, missa est.
- All:** Deo gratias.

There is an appropriate pause. Campion begins to unvest. They all stand. The table used for Mass is moved further up stage. Bretton and Martha are engrossed in each others attentions.

- Margaret:** I see young Bretton that you have met Martha Fufthrop.

Bretton: Spaced eyes indeed!

Martha: Spaced eyes?

Margaret: It's a little talk, Martha, that young Bretton and I have had.

Bretton: It's nothing.

Martha: Nothing? What is it?

Bretton: It's nothing, Martha.

Martha: Tell me?

Bretton: It's nothing, Martha. It's a secret.

Martha: A secret? So you and Mrs Clitherow have a secret. What is it?

Bretton: It's nothing, Martha.

Margaret: I'll tell you what it is.

Bretton: (*uncomfortable*) Don't!

Margaret: (*michevously*) Oh yes I will! I'll tell the secret!

Bretton: (*in a panic*) Don't!

Margaret: I'm going to start a school!

Bretton: (*relieved*) Oh!

Martha: Is that all?

Elizabeth: A school?

Janet: But you can't read.

Margaret: I taught myself in prison to read. And I can begin to teach the children.

Campion: You could teach them the catechism.

Percival: And to read the scriptures.

Margaret: I could.

- Campion:** Douai's English version of the New Testament. I could get a copy.
- Edward:** That would be dangerous.
- Elizabeth:** Not at all.
- Margaret:** I could teach them in the mornings. Here, in the house. And then they could go to Trinity College like Father Wharton. Or Rheims. Or Christ's Hospital. Or become the star of St John's at Oxford like Father Campion, and be the orator at Oxford to welcome the queen.
- Elizabeth:** They could become like Father Campion in his eloquence.
- Janet:** Or like Father Campion and his printing press.
- Margaret:** They could brag like Campion's Brag to the Privy Council. And cry alarm spiritual against foul vice and proud ignorance.

The chorus grows in intensity and excitement.

- Edward:** They could write books!
- Elizabeth:** And work in the queen's court!
- Percival:** And be teachers!
- Janet:** And doctors!
- Edward:** And judges!
- Elizabeth:** And priests!
- Margaret:** And the girls! We must teach the girls!
- Percival:** But why?
- Janet:** A bishop even!
- Elizabeth:** Who knows?
- Martha:** Or wed a prince.
- Bretton:** Or princess.

They pause, pondering the possibility.

Edward: It's a good idea, Margaret.

Margaret: (*practically*) I think I'll start by teaching them how to read before they become the kings and queens of England.

Elizabeth: We could start. Let their names ring through the corridors of the palace!

Margaret: *(joyously pretentious)* Aye. Let the name of Clitherow ring out through the nurseries of the world! Though for what I'll never know.

Lights fade. Music.

ACT ONE, SCENE FOUR

As for Scene Two. John Bretton and Martha Fufthrop are sitting at the table. Henry, Anne and William are variously arranged around the table and on the floor. Martha and Bretton are reading out loud. Anne and Henry are looking at books. William is obliviously drawing.

Martha: When I was fair and young, and favour graced me,
Of many was I sought, their mistress for to be;
But I did scorn them all, and answered them therefore,
Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere,
Importune me no more!

Henry: What does importune mean?

Bretton: (*ignoring him*) How many weeping eyes I made to pine with woe
How many sighing hearts, I have no skill to show;
Yet I the prouder grew, and answered them therefore,
Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere,
Importune me no more!

Margaret: (*calling from off stage*) That's enough children.

Anne: (*reading*) O mighty God, preserve the throne of thy servant E...
Eli...

Anne takes the book to Henry. Martha and William continue to flirt.

Anne: (*pointing*) What's that word?

Henry: Elizabeth.

Henry looks on as Anne continues to read.

Anne: Preserve the throne of thy servant, Elizabeth: her royal...

She pauses.

Henry: Sceptre.

Anne: Sceptre and her crown, our pearl, our joy, our stay and health.

Martha: Then spake fair Venus' son, that proud victorious boy,
And said: Fine Dame, since that you be so coy,
I will so pluck your plumes that you shall say no more,
Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere,
Importune me no more!

Anne: O heavenly God, O Father dear, cast down thy tender eye, upon a...

She pauses.

Henry: Wretch.

Anne: Wretch that...

Henry: Prostrate here.

Anne: Prostrate here, before thy throne doth lie.

Margaret: (*calling from off stage*) Children, that's enough. Say a prayer and go to play.

William exits stage right.

Bretton: When he had spake these words, such change grew in my breast
That neither night nor day since that, I could take any rest.
Then lo! I did repent that I had said before,
Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere,
Importune me no more!

He stops reading.

Bretton: That was composed by Elizabeth, the Queen.

Margaret appears stage right with William.

Margaret: Did you say a prayer?

Anne: We're finishing first.

Margaret: What are you reading?

Henry takes the book and shows his mother.

Margaret: You can read that for the prayer if you like.

Henry: (*reading*) O mighty God, preserve the throne of thy servant Elizabeth. Preserve the throne of thy servant, Elizabeth: her royal sceptre and her crown, our pearl, our joy, our stay and health.

Margaret: Amen.

All: Amen.

Margaret: (*because he did not answer*) William!

William: Amen.

Margaret takes the book and puts it on the table.

Margaret: Off you go.

Henry and Anne exit stage left.

Anne: Come on Will-Bill.

William stays with his mother. He is trying to tell his mother something.

Margaret: (to Martha and Bretton) Like pools of crystal!

Bretton: What?

Margaret: The eyes!

William is tugging her dress.

Margaret: What is it William?

William: (confidentially) I dirtied my pants.

Margaret: Oh Will-Bill, you're too old for that. Come with me.

She carries him off stage right. Bretton and Martha close the book they have been reading. Martha takes out a small wooden container and tips a pile of buttons on the table.

Martha: Now young Bretton John, what buttons do you want on the doublet I'm making you?

Bretton: Do I have a choice? What about this one?

Martha is spreading the buttons across the table.

Martha: You simply picked the first that was nearest.

Bretton: It's red. I like red.

Martha: But the doublet's yellow. You said you liked yellow.

Bretton: I like yellow too. What of this one here? The little green button? Like your nose.

He presses his finger on her nose.

Bretton: It's not like a Protestant nose. It's a nice nose.

Martha: You've got a nice nose too John Bretton.

She presses her finger on his nose.

Martha: But it's five green buttons now we're looking for.

Bretton: Five green buttons is what you want? I thought we'd have as many green buttons as we could?

Martha: How many green buttons we have is in the hands of God.

Bretton: I thought that we might have something to do with it. Five buttons?

They begin to look through the buttons for similar ones.

Martha: We've got one already, so we need four more. Here's one.

Bretton: Now that's a boy button.

Martha: It don't look like a boy button to me.

Bretton: His name's John Bretton - after his father.

Martha: Then the first button's a girl. Called Martha after her mother. And this one here's a girl too - called Agnes because I like the name.

Bretton: You're having all girls? It's a boy button. You can tell from it's wee face.

Martha: It's name's Agnes. You've got to find your own button if you want a boy. We need two more.

They look.

Both: *(together)* Got one! It's a boy/girl!

They look at each other.

Both: Twins?

They laugh.

Bretton: The boy's called Samuel.

Martha: We're not Jewish.

- Bretton:** But John's Jewish. And Martha. They're Christian names.
- Martha:** The girl's called Margaret - after Mrs Clitherow - and they'll be no complaining of that. I think we'll call the first one Margaret instead of Martha.
- Bretton:** You can name the girls what you like, and I'll name the boys. Anyway, boys is all we'll have.
- Martha:** What makes you so sure of that?
- Bretton:** You make the boys by night and the girls by day.
- Martha:** (*feigning resignation*) Well there's the evenings gone.
- Bretton:** (*not wishing to place limits on himself*) That's most of the hours of the day wasted. Boys or girls, I've decided it doesn't matter. We'll be married soon, and your days and nights'll be spent sewing green buttons.
- Martha:** (*interrupting him because he is getting too frisky*) In the mean time, John Bretton, we'll go to the river Foss and look at the ships from London.

They stand, put the buttons away, and begin to go.

- Bretton:** And we'll walk the bank of the Foss and count the fish and wait for Father Campion to come for the wedding.
- Martha:** And look at the houses and wonder which one will be our own. We'll live in The Shambles like the other butchers, for one day we'll start our own butchery like Mr Clitherow and Mr Geldhart and the Bachelars.
- Bretton:** It'll be a great shambles and a great day. And the sun will always shine. And we'll always have a place for our friends like Margaret here.

Lights out. Music.

ACT ONE, SCENE FIVE

As for the previous Scene, but early evening. It is a wedding feast. Martha and Bretton are sitting together at the table, with Father Campion. John and Margaret Clitherow are present, with Edward and Elizabeth Fufthrop, and Percival and Janet Geldart. The three children are sitting on the floor playing. Music fades. Bretton stands. He is not very articulate when he gives his speech.

Bretton: Thank you to Mrs Clitherow and Mrs Fufthrop for putting on this feast. And thanks too to Father Campion for coming to do the wedding. And thanks especially to Mr Clitherow...

John: John.

Bretton: ...John, for coming to our wedding when it is such a danger. And to let his house be used. And for turning such a blind eye to various comings and goings when he is a Chamberlain of York. And for keeping me at work in the butcher's shop, and for letting Martha and me stay at the house after the wedding.

Margaret: I'll drink to that.

They raise their glasses and stand. Bretton sits.

All: To Martha and young Bretton.

They sit. Campion stands. He speaks articulately.

Campion: It is Shrove Tuesday, and all have been shriven in readiness for Ash Wednesday tomorrow and the beginning of Lent, the time of our fast. Be mindful of this poor priest who can't shrive himself of his own sins! Of all the homes of Lancashire, and Yorkshire, and the Midlands, which I visit, this house provides the most lovely welcome and the greatest time of peace. It is the kindness and spirit of Mrs Clitherow that I find here, and this kindness is known throughout this City. I have heard people of all kinds - even heretics - speak of her: how they love to claim her as their friend, as I do, a pearl to them and a light, and the irrepressible guest of their banquets.

Margaret: Get away!

Campion: Even the beggars vie as to which she loves best! I know there is no better counsel given in the whole of York than that given by her.

Campion sits. John stands.

John: I've drunk a little too much cider - so Maggie tells me. But one thing I wish to say with my heart: when I married Margaret Middleton, I married the Pearl of York.

John Bretton stands.

Bretton: Here's to the health of the Pearl of York!

All stand, except for Margaret.

All: The Pearl of York!

They sit. Margaret stands.

Margaret: Thank you, but I'm not used to making speeches.

They laugh.

Margaret: Especially with Father Campion here, and him having made a speech to the Queen herself when he was a student at Oxford. But it's the children's bed time, and since tomorrow is the start of Lent we have prepared our own mystery play to start the season.

Bretton and Martha stand.

Bretton: If it's Lent you're starting already when the sun's barely set on our wedding day, and Lent not starting till midnight, then Martha and I will be going. For it's been a long day.

Percival: *(having him on)* If it's tired you are, then sleep here on the floor!

Bretton: *(embarrassed)* Well...

Janet: Aye. Sleep here on the floor!

All: *(except Margaret)* No! Stay! You don't have to leave so early!...

Margaret: *(equally in the spirit of things)* Of course they're not tired. And of course they must be going. And we'll not hazard a guess at the reason. And you'd best be keeping your mind clean Janet Geldart, and all the others too, for tomorrow's Lent.

Margaret begins to shoo them off stage right.

Martha: Thank you.

Margaret: So off the two of you, and don't go apologizing Young Bretton, for you're a husband now and young Martha a wife. And there's nothing strange in leaving for it's what you've waited for, and we're all glad of the time - for we're not prudish like the Calvinists up north of here.

Martha and Bretton pause at the exit.

Margaret: Go!

Bretton: We bought you a gift.

Martha: It's a little cross. For your neck. On a chain.

Bretton: And Father Campion has blessed it.

Martha produces a cross and chain and puts it around Margaret's neck.

Margaret: That is lovely!

Margaret kisses Martha and Bretton.

Margaret: That is lovely! So lovely! But it cost too much. Now go!

Bretton and Martha exit stage right. Margaret shows the cross to the others.

Margaret: So lovely. Wasn't that a beautiful thing to do?

Elizabeth: We wish them well.

Margaret: But now our mystery play.

Margaret gets a Bible and finds the place. She gives the Bible to Elizabeth. The children prepare themselves to act, while Elizabeth reads.

Margaret: It's our Lord's temptations in the desert, when he fasted for forty days and nights, and the devil came, and he never yielded.

The stage lights darken as Elizabeth begins to read.

Elizabeth: And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from the Jordan: and was led by the spirit into the desert, for the space of forty days.

William, flapping his arms like the wings of a bird, leads Anne across the stage.

Elizabeth: And was tempted by the devil.

William flies off. Henry enters, making menacing gestures and goes to Anne.

Elizabeth: And he did eat nothing in those days: and when they were ended he was hungry.

Anne holds her stomach as if she is hungry.

Elizabeth: And the devil said to him:

Henry: If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.

Henry points to the ground.

Elizabeth: And Jesus answered him:

Anne: It is written: That man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word of God.

Elizabeth: And the devil led him into a high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time:

Henry, still menacingly, leads Anne back across the stage and they climb onto chairs.

Elizabeth: And he said to him:

Henry: To thee will I give all this power, and the glory of them: for to me they are delivered, and to whom I will I give them. If thou, therefore, wilt adore before me, all shall be thine.

Elizabeth: And Jesus answering, said to him:

Anne: It is written: Thou shalt adore the Lord, thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Elizabeth: And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a high pinnacle of the temple.

Henry leads Anne back across the stage. They carry the chairs with them, and after placing them, climb onto them again.

Elizabeth: And said to him:

Henry: (*pointing expansively*) If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence. For it is written, that he hath given his angels charge over thee, that they keep thee: And that in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Elizabeth: And Jesus answering said to him:

Anne: It is said: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God.

Elizabeth: And when all the temptation was ended, the devil departed from him for a time.

Henry leaves Anne, still menacingly. Anne climbs off the chair and departs to the other side of the stage from Henry.

Elizabeth: And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and the fame of him went through the whole country.

There is a pause, then Campion prays.

Campion: O God, who by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, didst instruct the hearts of thy faithful servants; grant us in the same Spirit, to discern what is right, and enjoy his comfort for ever: through Our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth one God, with thee and the same Spirit, world without end.

All: Amen.

John: That was very good, children! That was very good.

William: I was the Holy Ghost. That is like a bird.

John: That was very good Will-Bill.

Edward: Well done!

Margaret: To bed now children. Give every one a kiss and go to bed.

The children do the rounds of the adults: William and Anne kissing each in turn, and Henry shaking hands.

Janet: And we must be off too. And thank you Margaret for the wedding.

They all stand.

Percival: Yes, thanks very much.

There is much hand-shaking and kissing, and making farewell, after which the children exit stage right, and the Fufthrops and Geldarts stage left. John and Margaret see the guests out. Now only Margaret, John and Campion remain at the table.

John: A cider to finish the day?

Campion: And a good day at that.

Margaret: And a long day. And then the long Lent tomorrow.

John: *(to Campion)* Lent makes little difference to my wife - she fasts four days a week as it is.

John pours drinks and hands them out. There is silence. John sits at the table.

Campion: You won't see me again.

There is no response.

Campion: I won't be here again. The walls close in. They'll have me hanged at Tyburn soon. They'll get me soon. I know it. I feel it.

Margaret: I know it too.

Campion: I'm frightened.

Silence.

Campion: That young Henry of yours. He should go to Douai for his studies. They teach them well at Douai.

Margaret: I'm beyond teaching him any more.

John: To the Continent, you say?

Silence.

Campion: Do you think Margaret, you could sew a button or two on my doublet? I've barely a button left.

Margaret does not answer.

Campion: When Our Lord died they threw dice for his garment. They won't be throwing dice for mine with no buttons.

Margaret: Give it here. It'll be done by morning.

Campion takes off his doublet and leaves it on the table.

Campion: *(finishing his drink)* I'll be going to bed.

Margaret and Campion make their way to the panelled wall. John remains seated. Margaret opens the panel. They hug.

Campion: Stay brave, Margaret.

Margaret: And you be brave too, Father.

Campion goes through the panel, but reappears.

Campion: In condemning us they condemn all of their ancestors, and all the ancient bishops and kings, and all that was once the glory of England.

Margaret: (*putting a brave end to their last meeting*) Yes, Father. Good night.

John: (*calling out but not turning around*) Good night, Father.

Campion: Good night, John.

Campion goes through the panel again and Margaret closes it. She goes to the table, and empties the container of buttons. She sits at the table. She takes the tunic and begins to sew. They sit in silence for a while. The following gets quite heated.

John: You don't have to. You don't have to.

Margaret: What?

John: You don't have to put the children at risk.

Margaret: I'm not.

John: They could spend the rest of their lives without a mother.

Margaret: I don't know what to do.

John: Well you shouldn't hide priests to start with.

Margaret: They have to stay somewhere.

John: Not here.

Margaret: What does that tell the children?

John: That you have to live carefully.

Margaret: Without charity.

John: I'm not saying that.

Margaret: You are. You'd be a Pharisee if you lived back then.

John: Don't be silly. There's places you have to draw the line.

Margaret: There's no place to draw the line. We don't draw lines. If you're stuck in the swamp you don't stand there waiting for the water to drain. You walk out.

John: And drown?

Margaret: Sometimes drown and sometimes not. It's risks we take.

John: But not the children.

Margaret: The children too if we must.

John: Not the children, Margaret!

Margaret: I'm not using them that way. They are trapped between me and the queen. I don't know what to do.

The mood softens.

John: Change, Margaret.

Margaret: I can't.

John: You must change, Margaret.

Margaret: I can't. You know I can't.

John: There's a place in you, you can't share with me.

Margaret: I don't know what to do.

John: We can't share it.

Margaret: Somewhere, some place inside the heart, in the darkest place of all, that's the part we can't share. You have a dark place too, a secret place, John.

There is a brief silence while they ponder.

Margaret: It's like a cell. I go there sometimes. It's a cell of self-knowledge. It's place I can't describe. I can't share.

John: Like a monk's cell. I have it too.

Margaret: It's like Nazareth - where Mary and Joseph and the child Jesus - well... they were hidden. It was a secret place where God worked.

John: It would be better for us if religion didn't matter.

Margaret: Like a tunic thrown off in sunshine and thrown on in rain.

There is a brief silence while they ponder.

John: Henry to Douai, Father Campion said.

Margaret: It would be good.

John: But why not a school in England?

Margaret: I became a Roman Catholic three years after we were married. You were Catholic then. I didn't change to please you. I changed because I believed.

John: I remember.

Margaret: We decided then, no matter what, we would bring the children up as Catholics. Then you changed.

John: Did I not believe, Maggie?

Margaret: I'm not questioning the motives, John.

Silence.

John: Douai then?

Margaret: (*firmly*) Douai.

Pause.

Margaret: There's a place we can share.

John: What?

Margaret: I could be pregnant, John.

John: (*pleased, but restrained*) Pregnant? My Pearl is pregnant!

Margaret: I'm not sure.

John stands and goes behind Margaret's chair. He puts his arms around her from behind.

John: Well you've done enough for today. To bed!

Margaret: (*referring to sewing*) I'll finish this. Soon.

John: It's late in the evening.

Margaret: I'll be there soon.

John: We'll call it Edmund after Father Campion - if it's a boy. And Elizabeth - after the Queen - if it's a girl.

Margaret: I'm not sure or not.

John: Well I'm sure, Maggie. I'm sure.

John gives her a squeeze, and exits stage right. Lights darken further. Margaret continues to sew. A soft and terrible drum beat begins. A demonic masked figure appears. The Figures are played by Stagehands.

Margaret: Take me not, O Lord, to thy desert.

The masked Figure circles the table. Two further masked Figures appear and crowd behind Margaret.

Stagehand 1: It is stubbornness that stops you. Simple stubbornness.

Stagehand 2: It is pride.

Stagehand 3: You are uneducated. Do you think you know better than the Bishops of England?

Stagehand 1: They are with the Queen.

Stagehand 2: Do you think you know better than the Queen of England?

Stagehand 3: You are ignorant, and yet you stubbornly refuse to comply.

Stagehand 1: It would be so easy ... to turn.

Stagehand 2: Turn.

Stagehand 3: To turn.

Stagehand 1: In all things, turn...

Stagehand 2: That was the cry of Old Testament prophets.

Stagehand 3: Turn... Repent... Turn... Change...

Stagehand 1: That's what our Divine Lord is calling you to do.

Stagehand 2: To turn.

Stagehand 3: But you stubbornly refuse.

Stagehand 1: It is the sin of pride.

Margaret kneels on the floor. A fourth masked Figure appears. The Figures are now slightly more vehement.

Stagehand 4: Think of your husband.

Stagehand 1: You are not a good wife.

Stagehand 2: He is a good husband.

Stagehand 3: Has he complained?

Stagehand 4: No!

Stagehand 1: He could become the Sheriff of York.

Stagehand 2: But not while his wife's a papist.

Stagehand 3: Does he complain?

Stagehand 4: No!

Stagehand 1: Because he loves you.

Stagehand 2: But do you love him?

Stagehand 3: Don't you care for him?

Stagehand 4: You are an obstacle to his progress.

Stagehand 1: He could become Sir John Clitherow.

Stagehand 2: A man of history.

Stagehand 3: You could become Lady Clitherow.

Stagehand 4: Think of the good you could do.

Stagehand 1: Lady Clitherow, wife of Sir John, forever in the history of England.

Stagehand 2: Lady Clitherow.

Stagehand 3: Sir John and Lady Clitherow.

Stagehand 4: We speak not of ambition.

Stagehand 1: We speak of the good you could do.

Stagehand 2: But you refuse.

Stagehand 3: You stubbornly refuse.

Stagehand 4: It is the sin of pride.

Margaret lies on the floor. A fifth masked Figure appears. The Figures become almost angry.

Stagehand 5: Think of the children.

Margaret: (*calling out*) Don't!

Stagehand 1: Consider how you put them in danger.

Stagehand 2: They will be killed - like you.

Stagehand 3: And all for nothing.

Stagehand 4: Think of this...

Stagehand 5: Should you be arrested...

Stagehand 1: They will be called as witnesses.

Stagehand 2: Called to testify against their mother.

Stagehand 3: Called as witnesses against their mother.

Stagehand 4: Do you want them to perjure themselves for you?

Stagehand 5: Or do you want them to speak the truth?

Stagehand 1: And in speaking the truth they will condemn you.

Stagehand 2: And in condemning you, they murder their mother.

Stagehand 3: Could they live with that?

Stagehand 4: Condemning their own mother to death.

- Stagehand 5:** Or perjury.
- Stagehand 1:** Death to their mother.
- Stagehand 2:** Or perjury.
- Stagehand 3:** There's the choice you give them.
- Stagehand 4:** Death to their mother.
- Stagehand 5:** Or perjury.
- Stagehand 1:** But this could be so easily changed.
- Stagehand 2:** But for the sin of pride.
- Stagehand 3:** You refuse.
- Stagehand 4:** You stubbornly refuse.
- Stagehand 5:** Death to their mother.
- Stagehand 1:** Or perjury.
- Stagehand 2:** Perjury and eternal hell fire.
- Stagehand 3:** Don't you love them?
- Stagehand 4:** Don't you love them?
- Stagehand 5:** Don't you love them?

The Figures continue to softly chant "Don't you love them?". Margaret slowly rises to her knees.

Margaret: There is no answer. No answer. Just as with Mary at the foot of the cross - then - she had no answer. Either way I condemn my children. And they condemn me. I will never allow my children to witness against me - falsely or otherwise. Not for my sake, dear Lord, but for theirs.

She rises slowly to her feet.

Margaret: *(her voice gradually rises with confidence)* O God, a bargain! I strike a bargain. If I remain true as best I can, you, O God, amidst this butcher's shambles, will bring good from it.

Margaret returns to her sewing. The Figures slowly exit. Their chant fades as the drum rises. Darkness.

INTERVAL

ACT TWO

ACT TWO, SCENE ONE

Some weeks later. Music fades as lights rise to the Clitherow household - as in the previous scene. No one is present. Bretton hastily appears stage left. He is breathless. A sudden, loud, short drum roll crescends.

Bretton: *(calling loudly)* Martha! Martha! Are you here? Martha!

Martha enters stage right.

Martha: What is it?

Bretton: It's Father Champion.

Martha: What? What?

Bretton: It's Father Champion. They've killed him.

Martha: Who? Where?

A sudden, loud, short, crescendoing drum roll sounds. Margaret enters stage right.

Margaret: What's with the noise?

Bretton: It's Father Champion. They've killed him.

Margaret: *(stunned)* Father Champion?

Martha: It's Father Champion.

Bretton: In London. With Father Briant and Father Sherwin.

Martha: Father Champion.

A sudden, loud, short, crescendoing drum roll sounds. Elizabeth and Edward Fufthrop enter stage left.

Elizabeth: Have you heard?

Edward: It's Father Champion!

Elizabeth: He's been hanged, drawn and quartered.

Bretton: In London.

- Edward:** He was caught.
- Bretton:** James Finch heard. It was in London.
- Elizabeth:** He was here. Just here.
- Edward:** Not long ago. A fortnight, three weeks.
- Margaret:** Father Champion?
- Martha:** I can't believe it.

A sudden, loud, short, crescendoing drum roll sounds. Janet and Percival Geldart enter stage left. Margaret goes over to them.

- Percival:** It's Father Champion! Dead.
- Janet:** I don't believe it.
- Margaret:** O my grief!
- Janet:** He was here! He was just here!

A sudden, loud, short, crescendoing drum roll sounds. The Five Stagehands enter left and right. All arrange themselves into three groups on stage - Group 1: Margaret, Bretton and Martha; Group 2: The Fufthrops and Geldarts; Group 3: the Five Stagehands. During the litany which follows, they are variously choreographed into positions of prayer - standing, kneeling, prostration, arms up, hands joined, breast-beating... They also console one another. The movements are formalized. At each drum roll, these positions generally change.

- Margaret:** Lord, have mercy,
All: Lord, have mercy,
Bretton: Christ, have mercy,
All: Christ, have mercy.
Martha: Lord, have mercy,
All: Lord, have mercy.
Margaret: Christ, hear us.
All: Christ, graciously hear us.

A sudden, loud, short, crescendoing drum roll sounds.

- Edward:** God the Father of heaven,
All: Have mercy on us.
Elizabeth: God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
All: Have mercy on us.
Percival: God the Holy Ghost,

All: Have mercy on us.

A sudden, loud, short, crescendoing drum roll sounds. The Litany builds slowly.

Margaret: Holy Mary, Mother God,
All: Pray for us.
Bretton: Saint Michael,
All: Pray for us.
Edward: Saint Gabriel,
All: Pray for us.
Elizabeth: Saint Raphael,
All: Pray for us.
Percival: All ye holy angels and archangels,
All: Pray for us.
Janet: All ye holy orders of blessed spirits,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 1: Saint John the Baptist,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 2: Saint Joseph,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 3: All ye holy Patriarchs and Prophets,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 4: Saint Peter,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 5: Saint Paul,
All: Pray for us.
Margaret: Saint Andrew,
All: Pray for us.
Bretton: Saint James,
All: Pray for us.
Edward: Saint John,
All: Pray for us.
Elizabeth: Saint Thomas,
All: Pray for us.
Percival: Saint James,
All: Pray for us.
Janet: Saint Philip,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 1: Saint Bartholomew,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 2: Saint Matthew,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 3: Saint Simon,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 4: Saint Thaddeus,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 5: Saint Matthias,
All: Pray for us.

Margaret: Saint Barnabas,
All: Pray for us.
Bretton: Saint Luke,
All: Pray for us.
Martha: Saint Mark,
All: Pray for us.
Edward: All ye holy apostles and evangelists,
All: Pray for us.
Elizabeth: All ye holy disciples of Our Lord,
All: Pray for us.

Percival: All ye holy Innocents,
All: Pray for us.
Janet: Saint Stephen,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 1: Saint Lawrence,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 2: Saint Vincent,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 3: Saints Fabian and Sebastian,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 4: Saints John and Paul,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 5: Saints Cosmas and Damian,
All: Pray for us.
Margaret: Saint Thomas a Beckett,
All: Pray for us.
Bretton: All ye holy martyrs,
All: Pray for us.
Martha: Saint Sylvester,
All: Pray for us.
Edward: Saint Gregory,
All: Pray for us.
Elizabeth: Saint Ambrose,
All: Pray for us.
Percival: Saint Augustine of Canterbury,
All: Pray for us.
Janet: Saint Jerome,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 1: Saint Martin,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 2: Saint Nicholas,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 3: All ye holy bishops and confessors,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 4: All ye holy doctors,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 5: Saint Anthony,

All: Pray for us.
Margaret: Saint Benedict,
All: Pray for us.
Bretton: Saint Bernard,
All: Pray for us.
Martha: Saint Dominic,
All: Pray for us.
Edward: Saint Francis,
All: Pray for us.
Elizabeth: All ye holy Priests and Levites,
All: Pray for us.
Percival: All ye holy Monks and Hermits,
All: Pray for us.
Janet: St Mary Magdalene,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 1: Saint Agatha,
All: Pray for us.

Stagehand 2: Saint Lucy,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 3: Saint Agnes,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 4: Saint Cecily,
All: Pray for us.
Stagehand 5: Saint Catherine,
All: Pray for us.
Margaret: Saint Anastasia,
All: Pray for us.
Bretton: All ye holy Virgins and Widows,
All: Pray for us.
Margaret: John of Beverley, bishop of York,
All: Pray for us.
Margaret: Wulfstan the second, bishop of York,
All: Pray for us.
Margaret: Thomas of Bayeux, bishop of York,
All: Pray for us.
Martha: Edmund Campion,
All: Pray for us.
Bretton: Edmund Campion,
All: Pray for us.
Margaret: Edmund Campion,
All: Pray for us.
Bretton: All ye holy Men and Women, saints of God,
All: Make intercession for us.

A sudden, loud, short, crescendoing drum roll sounds. Bretton now stands on a chair facing the audience and apart from the rest of the action on stage. Margaret also

leaves the action, and stands beside the chair. He proclaims loudly over the continuing litany. During his speech, Margaret protests loudly to Bretton to stop.

Bretton: Be merciful,
All: Spare us, O Lord.
Margaret: Be merciful,
All: Graciously hear us, O Lord.

Bretton: God bless the Catholic martyrs, cruelly butchered by this unchristian Queen. She is the Devil's Bitch, whose ugly and white-poked face is the very visage of the High God's enemy. She has defiled the throne. She has brought ruin on the glory of England. She has turned the country from God and sold it, under pain of death, to the devil's minions. Our Lady's Dowry has been used to form a marriage bond with sin. Let go the Whore of Babylon, her kingdom sorely falls. Let go the Whore of Babylon, the mother of all sin. So much Christian blood has she shed that she is drunk. Drunk on the blood of Catholic men and women. Drunk on their gore, drunk on that which Our Divine Lord shed. I stand to speak of her great wickedness, and her ungodliness. The Whore of Babylon rides on the back of the beast, crying how she loves the words of Christ the Lord, but in her heart she is an Egyptian who enslaves God's chosen people and delights in their captivity. Dragon! Dragon! A false idol of the Philistine's god, who has deceived so many souls. Let go the Whore of Babylon, and forsake the beast's mark. I don't care what they do to me. Some one must speak. I speak what everyone knows: that this unchaste virgin queen is the parody of whiteness, satan's strumpet puppet, Beelzebub's tyrant. History will paint her white, as she herself is painted white, but she is a murderer and a tyrant; Europe's blot. Showing no mercy, she shall have no mercy shown. False peace! False justice! Painted queen!

Martha: *(continuing over Bretton's speech)* From all evil,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Martha: From all sin,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Martha: From dangers that threaten us,
All: O Lord, deliver us.

Martha joins Margaret at the foot of the chair.

Edward: From thy wrath,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Elizabeth: From sudden and unlooked-for death,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Percival: From the snares of the devil,
All: O Lord, deliver us.

Janet: From anger, and hatred, and every evil will,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Stagehand 1: From the spirit of fornication,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Stagehand 2: From lightning and tempest,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Stagehand 3: From the scourge of earthquakes,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Stagehand 4: From plague, famine and war,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Stagehand 5: From everlasting death,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Edward: Through the mystery of thy holy incarnation,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Elizabeth: Through thy coming,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Percival: Through thy nativity,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Janet: Through thy baptism and holy fasting,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Stagehand 1: Through thy cross and passion,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Stagehand 2: Through thy death and burial,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Stagehand 3: Through thy holy resurrection,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Stagehand 4: Through thine admirable ascension,
All: O Lord, deliver us.
Stagehand 5: Through the coming of the Holy Ghost the Paraclete,
All: O Lord, deliver us.

A sudden, loud, short, crescendoing drum roll sounds. As the litany is continued by the Fufthrops and Geldarts, Bretton continues to speak. The group of Stagehands turn traitor and move towards Bretton. They arrest him, crying out "Treason! Treason! Arrest him!" It does not matter if the litany has to be cut short. Bretton is carted off stage left by the Stagehands. Martha is distraught and comforted by Margaret.

Edward: In the day of judgement,
All: We sinners, beseech thee, hear us.
Elizabeth: That thou wouldst spare us,
All: We beseech thee, hear us.
Percival: That thou wouldst pardon us,
All: We beseech thee, hear us.
Janet: That thou wouldst bring us true penance,
All: We beseech thee, hear us.
Edward: That thou wouldst vouchsafe to govern and preserve thy holy church,
All: We beseech thee, hear us.

Elizabeth: That thou wouldst vouchsafe to check and bring to naught the attempts of all Turks and heretics,
All: We beseech thee, hear us.
Percival: That thou would vouchsafe to preserve our priests, and all orders of the church in holy religion,
All: We beseech thee, hear us.
Janet: That thou wouldst vouchsafe to humble the enemies of holy church,
All: We beseech thee, hear us.
Edward: That thou wouldst vouchsafe to grant peace and true concord to Christian kings and princes,
All: We beseech thee, hear us.
Elizabeth: That thou wouldst vouchsafe to grant peace and unity to all Christian people,
All: We beseech thee, hear us.
Percival: That thou wouldst vouchsafe to bring back to the unity of the church all those who have strayed away, and lead to the light of the Gospel all believers,
All: We beseech thee, hear us.
Janet: That thou wouldst vouchsafe to confirm and preserve us in thy holy service,
All: We beseech thee, hear us.
Edward: That thou wouldst lift up our minds to heavenly desires,
All: We beseech thee, hear us.
Elizabeth: That thou wouldst render eternal blessings to all our benefactors,
All: We beseech thee, hear us.
Percival: That thou wouldst deliver our souls, and the souls of our brethren, relations, and benefactors from eternal damnation,
All: We beseech thee, hear us.
Janet: That thou wouldst vouchsafe to give and preserve the fruits of the earth,
All: We beseech thee, hear us.
Edward: That thou wouldst vouchsafe to grant eternal rest to all the faithful departed,
All: We beseech thee, hear us.
Elizabeth: That thou wouldst vouchsafe graciously to hear us,
All: We beseech thee, hear us.

A sudden, loud, short, crescendoing drum roll sounds. Bretton has been arrested and taken away.

Margaret: Son of God,
Janet: Lamb of God,
All: Have mercy on us.
Edward: Christ, hear us,
All: Christ, graciously hear us.
Elizabeth: Lord, have mercy.
Percival: Christ, have mercy.

Janet: Lord, have mercy.

There is a loud continuing drum roll. The actors on stage freeze in a formalized position. A loud voice booms from off stage.

Voice: *(offstage)* Ye shall be drawn through the open city to the place of execution, and there be hanged and let down alive, and your privy parts cut off, and your entrails taken out and burnt in your sight; then your head to be cut off and your body to be divided into four parts, to be disposed of at her Majesty's pleasure.

Martha is uncontrollable. Lights fade. Drum roll fades to music.

ACT TWO, SCENE TWO

Music fades. Lights rise to Margaret and Martha sitting at the table. Margaret has her head in her hands. William is sitting on the floor.

Martha: *(speaking to no one)* The world has crashed. Night's soft lights, our sole comfort, have flickered and fallen. Walls crush in. The darkness stays. My husband is dead; driven to treason by cruel pressure. Young Henry Clitherow is in Douai; on the Continent for education. It is the times. Champion is dead. *(Referring to Margaret)* They want her as their bait - to catch a priest. The Mayor is bent now on destroying her, illusioned that on her death he will receive the properties he thought were his. Even now he plots. Even now her husband makes his way to the Council of the North, called by the Mayor to ask, "Where is your son Henry, my grandson, my god child? Why has he left England?" Husband John will be fined a hundred pounds. Yet it is merely a ploy to get the husband from the house. For even now, the guards come to Margaret.

Martha and Margaret exit stage right. The five Stagehands enter as guards stage left. They go to William. Stagehand 1 offers him an apple. William goes to take it. Stagehand 3 snatches it away.

Stagehand 3: Where does your mummy hide the priests?

Stagehand 4: Where?

William: Mummy said we weren't to tell.

Stagehand 3 rips William's shirt off violently and produces a stick. He hits the stick on the table which produces an extremely violent sound.

Stagehand 3: I don't give a shit what mummy said, where does she hide priests?

He goes to hit William. William goes over to the panel and opens it. Stagehand 1 gives William the apple and William runs off stage right. Two of the Stagehands enter through the panel and return with a chasuble, stole, chalice and missal. They nod. Two guards go off stage right and return with Margaret. She has figs in her hand.

Margaret: By what authority do you arrest me?

Stagehand 5: We have been instructed by the Mayor himself.

Stagehand 4: Your... father.

Margaret: I pray God you yourselves intend no falsehood. You pick quarrels at me, and you have never ceased. And now you have me; God's will be done. But by every saint of time I pray God that he will forgive you for what you have done to that child of mine.

They push her.

Stagehand 3: *(to other Guards)* Take the children. Take the servants. Take them to the castle. For yourself, Mrs Clitherow, the Council of the North awaits.

Margaret: *(with composure fully regained)* Arrest me. I'm merry now and stout. I have the assurance, as I have asked God, that he will bring nothing but good from this. I have brought my children up, for the small time I have been given them, as best I could. And now that they be taken away I have no doubt that he will best provide for them.

She is pushed again.

Margaret: *(she is totally genuine)* I wish I had some good thing to give you for this good news you bring. Take these figs, for I have nothing better to thank you with.

She gives them the figs she is holding. They are confused.

Margaret: *(with delight)* Don't just stand there. To the Council of the North! They wait, and, with the grace of God, I will so move their fury by my smiling and cheerful countenance, and by the small esteem I make of their cruel threats, that they will see that it is God I trust - and that they will not like.

Guards 1 and 5 break down. They refuse to go.

Margaret: Come! Don't be tardy! You must be able to tell your children you're made of better stuff than this. Oh the weakness! Think of it as my wedding day!

Margaret laughs genuinely. As if she were arresting them, she leads them to exit stage left. Lights out.

ACT TWO, SCENE THREE

Music. The Stagehands set up the stage for a court scene. When they have finished, Stagehands 1 and 2 don judges' garb. The Judges sit at a bench. The other Stagehands sit in the stalls. Margaret enters, wearing a hat, and remains standing. Care must be taken that Margaret does not come across to the audience as either pious or arrogant, but full of genuine composure, wit, charm and intelligence.

Stagehand 1: Mrs Margaret Clitherow, you are charged with harbouring priests.

Margaret: I am not skillful in the temporal laws. Although from previous convictions I am not without experience in court procedure. Since the Council earnestly seek my blood, it must needs be done. For my part, having no counsel, I will defend myself with the truth.

Stagehand 2: What is truth?

Stagehand 5: (*calling out*) Prepare your neck for the rope!

Stagehand 1: (*to Stagehand 5*) It is apostasy we most desire. Not her death. (*To Margaret*) You are the first woman in England to be tried for harbouring priests, and we will show mercy because of your sex.

Margaret: (*on fire*) In Jesus Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female. In matters of law you may know more, but as a woman, I assure you, I am in no whit inferior to a man.

Stagehand 2: Then if you claim equal rights with men, you will receive the same treatment.

Margaret: I will not condone a lie for you to pamper me. In the New Testament Our Divine Lord says beware of men. They will deliver you before councils. Brother shall deliver up brother to death, and the father the daughter. And you shall be brought up before governors and before kings for my sake. (*Margaret is now waving her finger at them, her voice growing in volume*) But when they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what to speak. For it is not you that speak but the spirit of God that speaks in you. For the Holy Ghost will teach you in the same hour what you must say. (*Triumphantly*) Last Monday you dined with the Mayor, at my father's house. What say you to that?

Stagehand 2: (*unnerved*) You have harboured and maintained Jesuit and seminary priests, traitors to the Queen's Majesty and her laws, and you have heard Mass, and such like.

Stagehand 1: Margaret Clitherow, how say you? Are you guilty of this indictment, or no?

Stagehand 1 sits. Margaret smiles.

Stagehand 2: (*affronted*) Why are you smiling?

Margaret: I was thinking of how I am guilty...

Stagehand 2: Good.

Margaret: I am guilty of wearing my hat in court, and must needs remove it. I know it to be against... procedure. (*She removes her hat*) There! No longer guilty.

Stagehand 1: (*nice enough to be amused*) But how do you plead to the charge?

Margaret: I know no offence whereof I should confess myself guilty.

Stagehand 1: Yes, you have harboured and maintained Jesuits and priests, enemies to her Majesty.

Margaret: I never knew nor have harboured any priest who was not the Queen's friend. God defend me from such a thing.

Stagehand 1: How will you be tried?

Margaret does not answer.

Stagehand 1: How will you be tried? The correct answer is "by God and the country". By "country" is meant "jury".

Again Margaret does not answer.

Stagehand 2: (*with vehemence*) How will you be tried?

Margaret: Having made no offence, I need no trial.

Stagehand 1: We cannot start the trial unless you plead.

Stagehand 2: You have offended the statutes, and therefore you must be tried. How will you be tried?

Margaret: If you say I have offended, and that I must be tried, I will be tried by none but by God and your own consciences.

Stagehand 1: No, you cannot do so, for we sit here to see justice and law, and therefore you must be tried by the country.

Margaret: I will be tried by none but by God and your own consciences.

Stagehand 2: (*angrily*) Break this vase! We will smash you to submission. (*To other Stagehands*) Get the things.

Stagehands 3,4 and 5 put on priests' chasubles and other liturgical garb, making considerable glee of it. They take a chalice and wafers.

Stagehand 3: (*holding up a wafer*) Behold the god in whom you believe.

Margaret is unmoved.

Stagehand 2: What think you now of these vestments?

Margaret: (*matter of factly, as if she has not noticed anything improper*) Oh, I like them very much. I like them well if they were on the backs that know to use them to God's honour, as they were made.

The lewd Stagehands remove the garments and return to their seats.

Stagehand 1: (*standing*) In whom do you believe?

Margaret: I believe in God.

Stagehand 1: In what God?

Margaret: I believe in God the Father, in God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; in these Three Persons and One God I fully believe, and that by the passion, death and merits of Christ Jesu I must be saved.

Stagehand 1: (*confused*) You say well.

The two Judges confer.

Stagehand 1: You must plead guilty or not guilty or the case cannot be tried.

Stagehand 2: Margaret Clitherow, how say you yet? Are you content to be tried by God and the country?

Margaret: (*with force*) No.

The Judges are shocked.

Stagehand 1: (*with sympathy*) If you do not plead, the punishment is worse than that for harbouring priests. If you do not plead the punishment is death by crushing. You will be laid on the ground and for three days be crushed slowly to death. How will you be tried?

Margaret: If I plead not guilty, you will bring me to trial. Still if I plead guilty you will bring me to trial. Either way, you will bring my children and my friends to witness against me. I do not have the heart to let you do that to them. (She is fighting tears) And so I do not plead.

Stagehand 1: You must.

Margaret: I do not plead.

The Judges consult among themselves again.

Stagehand 1: Good woman, consider well what you must do; if you refuse to be tried by the country, you make yourself guilty and accessory to your own death, for we cannot try you but by order of law. You need not fear this kind of trial, for I think the country cannot find you guilty upon the slender evidence of children.

Margaret: My children have been taught to tell the truth, sir. And their evidence will be as worthy as from any one. Again, I will not plead.

Stagehand 2: Was not you husband privy to your doings in keeping priests?

Margaret: (*Margaret laughs*) If I say "Yes" you say, "Ha! So you kept priests!" If I say "No" you say, "Ha! So you kept priests!" My husband is a Protestant, despite all my best attempts at convincing him otherwise, and to this day still is. (*Still laughing*) You cannot get me to testify against my good husband.

Stagehand 1: We must proceed by law against you, which will condemn you to a sharp death for want of trial.

Margaret: God's will be done; I thank God I may suffer any death for this good cause.

There is an outcry from Stagehands 3,4 and 5.

Stagehand 3: She is mad! Look at her smile!

Stagehand 4: She's possessed by a smiling spirit!

Stagehand 5: It's not for religion that you've harboured priests, but for whoredom!

The Judges stand.

Stagehand 1: The Bench will rise tonight without pronouncing sentence. The night will give you time to think. You will be taken from this hall to John Trewe's house on the bridge and there shut up in a closed parlour.

Margaret: May I see my children?

Stagehand 2: No.

Margaret: May I see my husband?

Stagehand 2: No.

Lights fade as the drum roll sounds loudly.

ACT TWO, SCENE FOUR

Lights rise to a prison room with a bed. Margaret is plaiting rope. She lies on the floor on her back, as if practising her death, stretching her arms out with the ropes around her wrists. Henry May dressed as Mayor enters suddenly. Margaret rises hastily.

Mayor: Jane is dead.

Margaret: My mother?

Mayor: Your mother is dead. She's left you all her land and titles that should rightfully go to her husband as I expected.

Margaret: My mother?

Mayor: I have a right to them.

Margaret: You come to me when I am tried for my life, at my mother's death, and...?

Mayor: I want that land. And when you die, since the title seems not to go to the husband...

Margaret: *(keeping tone down)* When I die, there's one thing I'm afeared, and that's you will abuse my daughter as you abused me in my youth. That's the thing I fear. The only thing. Now get out.

Mayor: *(going)* When you die... *(To audience)* She's mad, gone mad. She craves death. She despises her children and her husband. She's suicidal. I've done all I can to dissuade her.

He goes. Margaret plaits the rope. She cries. Lights fade.

ACT TWO, SCENE FIVE

Lights rise. They are in the same positions as they were at the end of Scene Three.

Stagehand 1: Margaret Clitherow, how say you yet? Yesternight we passed you over without judgement, which we might have then pronounced against you if we would: we did it not, hoping you would be something more conformable, and put yourself to the country, for otherwise you must needs have the law. We see nothing why you should refuse; there be but small witness against you. We have found a boy, not your own child, but a small Flanders boy, who will witness against you.

Margaret: Indeed, I think you have no witnesses against me but children, which with an apple and a rod you may make to say what you will.

Stagehand 2: It is plain that you had priests in your house by these things which were found.

Margaret: As for good Catholic priests, I know no cause why I should refuse them as long as I live; they come only to do me good and others.

Stagehand 3: *(standing and shouting)* They are traitors! They are deceivers of the Queen's subjects!

Margaret: God forgive you. You would not say so of them if you knew them.

Stagehand 4: *(standing)* You would detest them yourself if you knew their treason as we do.

Margaret: I know them for virtuous men, sent by God only to save our souls.

Stagehand 1: What say you? Will you put yourself to the country, yea or nay?

Margaret: I see no cause why I should do so in this matter: I refer my cause only to God and your own consciences. Do what you think good.

Stagehand 1: *(very sympathetically)* Well, we must pronounce a sentence against you. Mercy lies in our hands, in the country's also, if you put your trial to them; otherwise you must have the law. Put yourself to the country. There is no evidence but a boy against you, and whatsoever they do, yet we may show mercy afterwards.

Margaret: *(sternly)* I will not plead.

Stagehand 2: (*standing, angry*) Why stand we all this day about this naughty, willful woman? Dispatch her.

Stagehand 1 pauses, realizing that he must pass sentence.

Stagehand 1: If you will not put yourself to the country this must be your judgement: you must return from whence you came, and there, in the lowest part of the prison, be stripped naked, laid down, your back upon the ground, and as much weight laid upon you as you are able to bear, and so to continue three days without meat or drink, except a little barley bread and puddle water, and the third day to be pressed to death, your hands and feet tied to posts, and a sharp stone under your back.

Margaret: (*loud, amazed*) No!

Stagehand 2: You wish to plead?

Margaret: I am ashamed. I am ashamed on behalf of those who put me to death that you should strip me naked. To press me to death naked in the sight of men. I thought... I thought my womanhood... they might have concealed.

Stagehand 1: That is the punishment.

Margaret: If this judgement be according to your own conscience, I pray God send you better judgement. You should be ashamed to strip a woman naked in public so.

Stagehand 1: (*desperate*) It is not my personal judgement, it is according to the law, and I tell you this must be your judgement, unless you put yourself to be tried by the country. Consider of it, you have husband and children to care for; cast not yourself away.

Margaret: I have given now my children to God's care, for it is my conscience that I follow. I would to God my husband and children were graced enough to suffer with me for so great a cause.

Stagehand 5: (*standing*) She'd have her own husband and children hanged.

Margaret: That is not what was said.

Stagehand 2: (*to other Stagehands*) Get him!

Stage and 3 and 4 exit and return with John Clitherow.

Stagehand 2: Your husband accuses you of being a faithless wife. *(To John)*
Speak!

John: *(dazed, almost unaware that Margaret is there)* Will they kill my wife? Take all I have but save Maggie, for she is the best wife in all England, and the best Catholic too. She...

Stagehand 2: *(standing, raging)* Take him out! Remove him!

Margaret: *(softly)* John!

John does not notice Margaret. The same Stagehands remove him and return.

Stagehand 1: *(covering up the mistake of bringing John in, and even more desperate for her to change her mind)* We have given sentence, yet will we still show mercy if you but plead.

Margaret: *(kneeling, praying)* God be thanked. All that he shall send me shall be welcome; I am not worthy of so good a death as this - that I like my dear Saviour shall be bound hands and feet to the point of Paradise. *(She stands and speaks to the Judges)* I have deserved death for my offences to God, but not for anything that I am accused of.

Stagehand 2: *(to other Stagehands)* Look to her.

Margaret: *(with serenity)* I pray God his will may be done, and have that which he sees most fit for me. But I see not in myself any worthiness of martyrdom; yet, if it be his will, I pray him that I may be constant and persevere to the end. This is God's quarrel. My cause is God's quarrel.

Stagehands 3,4 and 5 come forward and take her out. Lights fade. Drum roll.

ACT TWO, SCENE SIX

Lights rise to a prison room as for Scene Four. Margaret is sitting on a bed. Stagehand 3 enters. The action and dialogue is formalized.

Stagehand 3: I am Reverend Bunney. Do you remember me? I met you last when you were last in prison. How changed you are! How more persistent in your papist notions! How less conformable! How hardened you've become! How...

Margaret: I marvel how you've changed me thus. I've always answered you the same and always shall, Mr Bunney.

Stagehand 3 exits. Stagehand 4 enters.

Stagehand 4: I am Reverend Pace. I pray the Lord to make you more conformable.

Margaret: I pray too that we both may conform to the will of God, Mr Pace. So cease troubling me.

Stagehand 4 exits. Stagehand 5 enters.

Stagehand 5: I am Reverend Harwood, the preacher for the city. You are the Whore of Babylon spoken of in Sacred Scriptures. You...

Margaret: (*standing, angry*) These are my last hours, Mr Harwood. I've better to do than listen to your nonsense and prattle. Get out and bother me not!

Stagehand 5 exits. Stagehand 3 enters with Reverend Wigginton's Wife.

Stagehand 3: I am the Reverend Wigginton the Puritan, Mistress Clitherow. I pity your case. Take pity on yourself. Christ himself fled his persecutors, so did his apostles; and why should not you favour your own life?

Margaret: God defend I should favour my life in this point. I am not assured of martyrdom, for I am still alive.

Stagehand 3: Are you not assured?

Margaret: (*gently*) No indeed. So long as I am living I am not assured.

Stagehand 3: If you hear a godly sermon, just one, you will escape the danger of the law.

Margaret: (*delightfully*) I will with all my heart to hear a sermon.

Stagehand 3: *(delighted at his success)* Oh good Mrs Clitherow!

Margaret: I mind to do it if I have a Catholic priest, but to come to your sermons I will never.

Stagehand 3: *(not abashed)* If you will come to a sermon, I shall procure you a good and godly man both of life and doctrine, though I seek him to the furthestmost part of England.

Margaret: *(still gently, for she likes him)* My faith is stayed already, and I purpose not to seek for a new doctrine.

Stagehand 3: *(producing his trump card)* I have seen Christ in a vision, and I am assured of my salvation.

Margaret laughs uproariously. Wigginton is offended.

Margaret: I have not seen Christ in a vision, and I am not assured of my salvation! Visions come but rarely, Mr Wigginton, and then even so, the beholder is loathe to boast about them.

She continues to laugh. Wigginton becomes a little spiteful.

Stagehand 3: Well, Mrs Clitherow, you follow blind guides. I follow the Doctors of the Church, and I perceive you will cast yourself willingly away, without regard of husband or children.

Margaret is deeply hurt.

Margaret: *(with annoyance)* You discuss the Doctors of the Church with a butcher's wife!

Stagehand 3: See how ignorant you are. In their writings the Doctors of the Church proclaim you to be wrong.

Margaret: What religion, what faith of the Church did these Doctors follow, Giles Wigginton? Peruse their works! *(She laughs at her pun)* Peruse their works, and you shall see!

Stagehand 3 begins to go.

Margaret: You are a sincere man, Giles Wigginton. Unlike the others. I am without the consolation of others of my faith to pray with me. Could you stay with me a while? I am fearful, not that I will change what I believe, but that my body will not be able to withstand the fear.

Margaret kneels by the bed. Stagehand 3 sits on the bed. He looks puzzled, then kneels. Reverend Wigginton's Wife kneels next to Margaret.

Stagehand 3: Heavenly Father, we pray...

Margaret: No, Mr Wigginton! Just stay with me!

Reverend Wigginton's Wife puts her arm around Margaret. The lights darken. The characters who enter are as images. Martha enters.

Martha: Mrs Clitherow. The house is dull without you. Your husband weeps into the night. Come back. Come back.

Elizabeth Fufthrop enters.

Elizabeth: Margaret. Margaret. The children are distraught. Henry has returned from Douai. Anne's heart has broken. Young William cries for his mother. Come back. Come back.

Edward Fufthrop enters.

Edward: Margaret. The children cannot understand where their mother stays. Come back.

Percival Geldart enters.

Percival: Margaret. Margaret. The Shambles is lonely without you. The butchers' shops have lost all cheer. Come back. Come back.

Janet Geldart enters.

Janet: Margaret. The women of York, your friends and all, miss your good company. Come back.

John Clitherow enters.

John: Maggie?

Margaret: *(calling out)* Where's Father Campion and Young Bretton now? These martyrs to console me?

Campion and Bretton appear on stage, but not to Margaret.

Campion: We cannot console you in this temptation.

Bretton: As Christ in the garden could not be consoled.

Campion: And cried out, Father, let this cup pass me by.

Bretton: But it did not pass him by.

Campion: And neither shall yours.

The visitors fade and disappear. The lights rise slightly. Margaret, Stagehand 3 and Reverend Wigginton's Wife stand. Stagehand 3 and Wife exit.

Margaret: Visions are rare things - and God does not give them even at a martyr's death.

Lights fade. A slow drum beat sounds.

ACT TWO, SCENE SEVEN

The scene as for the trial, except present are only Margaret and Stagehands 1 and 2. The drum stops. Lights rise.

Stagehand 1: Is it true you are pregnant? For if you be with child I will not consent to your death.

Margaret: I know not certainly that I am with child, and will not yet take it upon my conscience either that I am or am not.

Stagehand 1: But surely... but surely it is a way out?

Margaret: If I am with child it is very young. I think I am, rather than otherwise.

Stagehand 1: So you are?

Margaret: I know not certainly that I am.

Stagehand 1: *(desperate to find a way out)* Just say you are.

Margaret: By now, sir, you must know me. I will not lie. I am not accustomed to change my mood with each month's moon. Would that I was with child, but I know not certainly that I am.

Stagehand 2: *(angrily to Stagehand 1)* This woman is not to have the benefits of her condition, for that she has refused trial by the country, and the sentence of death is passed against her.

Stagehand 1: *(fairly calm)* The child in her womb has not offended, and I would not for a thousand pounds give my consent until she be further tried.

Stagehand 2: *(still angry)* She is the only woman of note in the north parts who clings to the false religion, and if she be suffered to live, there will be more of her order without any fear of law. And therefore, my Lord, consider with yourself, and let her have law according to judgement passed, for I will take it upon my conscience that she is not with child. The Mayor will have his way.

Margaret: *(to Stagehand 1, referring to Stagehand 2)* Kind Sir, he wants the thorn in your foot. Why not give it him?

Stagehand 2: *(to Margaret)* Was it a priest was the father? - *(correcting self)* if you are pregnant - which you are not. For the little boy has confessed that you have offended your husband, that you have sinned with priests. The little boy has confessed that the priests would have delicate cheer, while you set before your husband mere bread and jam.

Margaret laughs.

Margaret: If the little boy said so, I warrant you he will say a lot more for a pound of figs. The little boy, I might suggest, requires a little spanking and sent home to his mother - *(incidentally)* if she still be living by your gracious mercy. I trust my husband will not accuse me that I have offended him at any time, unless in such small matters as are common incident to husband and wife. For that I ask God and my husband forgiveness. *(To Stagehand 1)* I would be happy if you gave him my hat. It's all I have here. Since he is the head, I give him my hat. *(She gives Stagehand 1 her hat)* And my shoes. *(She takes off her shoes and gives them to Stagehand 1)* My shoes to my daughter, Anne. Tell her to walk in the steps of virtue.

Stagehand 2: *(totally ignoring her)* The execution will take place in two days time - this coming Friday.

Margaret: *(with joy)* That's Good Friday!

Stagehand 2: Good for whom?

A slow drum sounds. Lights fade. Stagehands 1 and 2 exit.

ACT TWO, SCENE EIGHT

A spot rises on Martha, sitting at the table of the Clitherow household. A Stagehand brings in a mirror and Martha begins to take off her make-up and parts of her costume. She gradually comes out of being Martha into the actress herself (though still an actress). Throughout the speech the Stagehands bring out the various tables, chairs and mirrors, and the Fufthrops, Geldarts, Campion and Bretton enter and begin to take off their make-up.

Martha: *(to audience)* I've had enough. I cannot bear to see her at her death. How she laughs at how ridiculous it is. Oh how she's fearful she will give in. In giving in she knows she will be telling her children that things precious to her no longer matter. If it is the will of God it is the will of God - she says. There's no way out. If she found the way, she'd be like a rabbit running from a stoat - she says. See how she's spent the last two days plaiting the rope, making the rope, so carefully, so beautifully, the rope that will tie her hands and feet at her death. She has standards, damn her. It's alright to have standards, but it doesn't hurt to let them slip. She loves her children passionately but she doesn't have to go that far. I mean, to make the rope, to make it beautifully. At her death, she convinced the guards she should wear something. She'd made a white shift to wear while crushed to death. She said it was her wedding day - a bride of Christ. Her hair up nice, as best she could in prison; walking to her death place as to a fair ground. Amazing. Deep down I think I hate her.

She continues to take off her make-up. Lights fade.

ACT TWO, SCENE NINE

The prison wall of the opening scene of the play is in place. Lights immediately rise to the actors sitting at their mirrors busy with their demasking: the Fufthropps, Geldarts, Campion, Bretton and Martha. Margaret appears wearing a loose white robe. She is barefoot, and carries small ropes. She is hatless, her hair beautifully tied with tabs. She is accompanied by the five Stagehands. It is like a wedding procession. She has flowers and money. One by one she goes to each make-up table and gives a flower and some money - even perhaps passing through the audience. Each actor stands to greet her. By now they are pretty much in their modern clothes. This procession should be as if it was a time warp: the modern person reacting, each in their own way, to this Reformation woman's death. Thus, each might reject her, or accept her; be sad or cynical; drop the flower or treasure it. When she reaches the Mayor she goes to embrace him, but he ignores her. Margaret is not to be sloppy - but genuine and practical. Once she reaches the place of execution those at the mirrors turn their eyes away. They freeze.

Stagehand 4: *(stopping her from alms-giving)* Come away, Mrs Clitherow.

Margaret: Good Master Sheriff, let me deal my poor arms before now I go, for my time is short.

She continues to greet each actor, then reaches the part of the stage set aside for the execution. There is a contrivance there that will allow her to lie down so that she is unseen by the audience. Margaret kneels down to pray.

Stagehand 5: You pray with us, and we will pray with you.

The five Stagehands kneel. Margaret stands. The standing and kneeling should be humorous.

Margaret: I will not pray with you, and you shall not pray with me; neither will I say Amen to your prayers, nor shall you to mine. Some may construe that my Amens to your prayers will mean I broke at last.

The five Stagehands stand. Margaret kneels.

Margaret: I do pray for the Catholic Church, for the pope's holiness and cardinals, for all such as have care of souls, and for all Christian princes in the world.

Stagehand 3: So you do not put her Majesty in that company?

Margaret: And especially for Elizabeth, Queen of England, that after this mortal life she may receive the blessed joys of heaven. For I wish as much good to her Majesty's soul as to mine own.

Stagehand 1 goes to the make-up table. He has gone to pieces.

Stagehand 1: This is a cruel thing.

Margaret: See to the man.

Stagehand 2: *(to Margaret)* Ask for the Queen's forgiveness.

Margaret: *(evading)* I have prayed for the Queen.

Stagehand 3: Ask pardon of your husband and children.

Margaret: If ever I offended them, but for my conscience, I ask their forgiveness.

Stagehand 4: Mrs Clitherow, you must remember and confess that you die for treason.

Margaret: No, no, Master Sheriff, I die for the love of my Lord Jesu.

She gives them the ropes. The slow drum starts to beat. Stagehand 2 is seen placing a large jagged rock in place.

Margaret: *(with terrible fear, almost despair)* Jesu! Jesu! Jesu! Have mercy on me!

They take Margaret and lie her down. They tie her hands and feet. They place a door over her. They begin to add weights.

Stagehands sit and wait. Lights out. The drum stops its slow beat. Silence.

EPILOGUE

Music - not romantic, but honest. Lights rise to reveal the prison wall as for the opening scene. The sound of spring birds is heard. The make-up tables are still present, though vacated. John Clitherow is standing towards the wall. His children are playing with a ball. John watches them. Margaret enters - dressed, not in her white gown, but in her usual costume. They do not see her. She watches her children as they play. She looks at her husband. Then she goes and sits at a make-up desk, and begins to take off her make-up and parts of her costume. The children continue to play during her speech, part of which sees Anne and William discover a bird which they show their father. Unlike the opening scene of the play, they let it go.

Margaret: *(to audience - loving her and hating her)* I'm not here to draw a moral. I'm not Margaret Clitherow - just an actor. You can take a moral if you wish - if you're that way inclined - but I've nothing more to say. It was the end of Margaret Clitherow. Son Henry became a Dominican priest and died somewhere in Italy. Anne ran away from home to become a nun. She died in Paris. *(Female bravado!)* Fluent Latin scholar. *(Cynically)* Young William stayed in York and became a butcher like his father. Husband John married again. *(She laughs at that)*. They don't even know that wife's name! As for Margaret's body: York's Sheriffs didn't know what to do with it. They left it dead in the press for six hours. No one would go near it. That night they chucked it in the sewerage pit.

Frantic taking off of make-up. The children play. Music and lights fade.

THE END