

THE GREENING OF BRIDGET KELLY

A short play

by

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CHARACTERS

BRIDGET KELLY, aged 16  
PRIEST

SETTING

A church confessional

TIME

The present

THE GREENING OF BRIDGET KELLY

A church confessional. Two chairs are placed alongside each other facing the audience; the structure and dividing wall are imagined. The actors mime their actions in relation to the confessional. At rise, THE PRIEST is sitting reading a copy of *Organic Gardening* magazine. BRIDGET comes on stage. For a long moment, she agonizes about whether to enter the confessional. Finally she does. She sits down. The PRIEST slides the screen.

PRIEST

(As he reads the magazine)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

BRIDGET

Amen. Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been two weeks since my last confession.

(Beat.)

PRIEST

(Reading)

Yes?

(Beat.)

What is it, my child?

BRIDGET

I can't say, Father.

PRIEST

(Kindly, still reading)

Yes, you can.

(Pause. She is emotionally paralyzed)

I had a call from the archbishop today. He's giving our church a special environmental stewardship award for our pioneering work. He complimented you in particular.

(Beat.)

How's the campaign going?

BRIDGET

Very well, Father. We have forty-seven families signed up for the weatherization and solar hot water program. No, forty-eight—Mrs. McDonagh on Lakeview Drive joined us just this morning.

PRIEST

Wonderful. What is it you need to tell me?

(Beat. She remains in tortured silence.)

I understand the composting toilets are really catching on, too. Even St. Michael's is planning to install one. Father Costello wants you to come over and advise him.

(Beat.)

Make your confession, my child.

BRIDGET

I can't.

PRIEST

God is merciful.

BRIDGET

I'm sorry, Father.

She leaves the confessional.

PRIEST

Come back here, Bridget. The Lord demands it.

She hesitates and then returns.

Now then. I have other people waiting.

(Slight pause. She is still tongue-tied.)

Very well—

BRIDGET

(Quickly)

I killed a man.

PRIEST

What did you say?

BRIDGET

I killed a man.

PRIEST

You killed a man?

BRIDGET  
Yes.

PRIEST  
Who?

BRIDGET  
My father.

PRIEST  
You killed your father?

BRIDGET  
He'd started in on Patsy.

PRIEST  
Your sister is nine years old.

BRIDGET  
Eight.

PRIEST  
Bridget—

BRIDGET  
I couldn't let her go through what I went through, and people not believing *her* either.  
(Beat.)

PRIEST  
How did you—?

BRIDGET  
He was passed out drunk on the kitchen floor. I slit an artery in his neck and bled him out. It seemed the most humane way.

PRIEST  
You planned this?

BRIDGET  
I did a carbon footprint analysis. To see what the true costs would be of him living another twenty years, if the drink didn't kill him sooner. Like the resources he'd use—transportation, food, clothes, housing, medical treatment. And I factored in a few other things, like brewery waste, and the gas lawnmower

BRIDGET (CONT.)

because I know he'd never switch to a manual. And you know something, Father? The pollution savings are substantial.

PRIEST

Bridget, you can't just do away with people you don't like to stop global warming.

BRIDGET

The planet is better off without him, Father.

PRIEST

He was a human being. He was your Dad.

BRIDGET

He was a monster.

PRIEST

Every person is sacred in the eyes of God.

BRIDGET

I figured that God would understand.

PRIEST

You presume to know what is in God's mind?

(Beat.)

Does your mother know?

BRIDGET

Like she'd notice. She thinks he's off on one of his binges.

PRIEST

And Patsy?

BRIDGET

She's happy as a lark now. You should see her, Father, she's a different kid. She smiles, she laughs, she plays—she plays games. The other day, you're not going to believe this—

PRIEST

Bridget, you have committed a crime against God.

BRIDGET

I know I should see it that way.

PRIEST

Murder is a mortal sin.

BRIDGET

We killed people in Iraq and Afghanistan and we didn't call it murder.

PRIEST

War is a terrible thing, terrible.

BRIDGET

So is being fucked by your father every Friday night for four years.

PRIEST

I will not have that language spoken in God's house!

BRIDGET

Sorry. So is being forced to have sexual relations with your father every Friday night for four years. Father.

(Beat.)

PRIEST

Have you been to the police?

BRIDGET

No.

PRIEST

I'm sorry, Bridget, but you must. You must tell the police.

BRIDGET

What good will that do?

PRIEST

They will be lenient, I'm sure. Given the circumstances.

BRIDGET

And what about Patsy? What would happen to her? Mom's useless. I'm all she's got.

PRIEST

You don't have a choice.

BRIDGET

I'm not leaving Patsy. I'm not.

PRIEST

There are some things we have to do no matter what the consequences.

BRIDGET

That's why I killed the bastard.

PRIEST

Language!

BRIDGET

Sorry, Father.

PRIEST

You realize you put me in a very difficult position.

BRIDGET

I'm sorry, Father, but I had to tell someone.

PRIEST

What did you do with the body?

BRIDGET

Dad used to say that if I didn't do what he wanted he'd take me down to his workshop in the basement and cut me up into little pieces.

PRIEST

Bridget—

BRIDGET

It was easier than I thought with the power tools. The table saw was great for the big bones and the head.

PRIEST

Really?

BRIDGET

Oh God, Father, it feels so good to talk about this.

PRIEST

Does it?

BRIDGET

I'm so glad I'm a vegetarian. I'm never going back to meat now. You know, when I was down there, chopping away, I kept thinking of the cows on those factory farms. Do you know what they do to them, Father?

PRIEST

No, why don't you tell me.

BRIDGET

Cows eat grass, that's their natural food. But these companies feed them corn because it's subsidized and they make more money that way. Well, the corn makes the cows real sick, creates all this acid in their stomachs and wrecks their livers. So they pump them full of antibiotics to keep them alive just long enough until they're ready for slaughter. Isn't that cruel? And it's terrible for the environment—all those fossil fuels used to grow the corn in the first place, and the waste from the factory farms, it's seriously toxic, full of heavy metals and hormone residues.

(Beat.)

PRIEST

Bridget, are you sorry for what you've done?

BRIDGET

I stopped worse things from happening, Father.

PRIEST

Two wrongs don't make a right.

BRIDGET

Do *you* think I'm a criminal?

PRIEST

I think you're a very troubled young woman, and we need to get you some help.

BRIDGET

You won't go to the police will you, Father?

PRIEST

I cannot violate the privacy of this confessional. As you well know.

BRIDGET

I do, Father.

PRIEST

But that does not absolve you of responsibility. You must take it upon yourself to face the justice of God and the civil authorities.

BRIDGET

But you can't make me.

PRIEST

No, but God will punish you severely if you don't.  
(Beat.)

BRIDGET

Father, there's something else I haven't told you.

PRIEST

Something else?

BRIDGET

Don't worry, I haven't killed my Mom, too.

PRIEST

Good.

BRIDGET

Although sometimes the way she treats Patsy—

PRIEST

What is it?

BRIDGET

The disposal of the body.

PRIEST

The remains.

BRIDGET

Yes. I wanted to do it in an environmentally responsible way.

PRIEST

Of course.

BRIDGET

I mean, like you always say, we must take every opportunity to do our part. Every little bit helps.

PRIEST

Yes, well, that is generally... What did you do?

BRIDGET

Well, I didn't want to leave any easy clues, you know. So I ground it all up.

PRIEST

You ground up the body?

BRIDGET

In the food processor. It took me quite some time.

PRIEST

It would.

BRIDGET

The blade got pretty dull.

PRIEST

Yes, well, they're not exactly made for... What did you do with the, er...?

BRIDGET

I used him as fertilizer.

PRIEST

Fertilizer?

BRIDGET

Of course. The blood and bone meal are rich in nitrogen and phosphorus, and it's all organic.

PRIEST

And did you apply this....fertilizer?

BRIDGET

On your tomato plants.

The PRIEST gags silently.

Father? What shall I do for my penance?

Blackout.

END OF PLAY.

