

TRIPTYCH

By Ian Lucas

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I: MARBAN THE BOY PRIEST

[The stage is dark. A spotlight, Stage Right, reveals DAUI hung by his feet and ankles from a stave. The light disappears as

*A spotlight, Centre stage, reveals an empty chair. The light fades as
A spotlight, Stage Left, reveals an American rifle lying on the round.
Blackout.*

*Lights up Stage Right. DAUI, an executed Irish criminal, hangs from a stave. His throat is cut. A wooden bowl collects the blood from the wound.
Britain, 54 BC.*

Stillness. Far off, a dog barks.

*Into this, MARBAN, a young Druid priest, appears. He stops. He looks ahead.
He turns and looks at Dauí.*

A beat.]

MARBAN: Pity.

Shame.

A fellow like you.

What has happened to you?

Those priests.
Those frightening old men and women,
That seem so happy,
So full of magic tricks,
Who can summon spirits
For
Amusement.

They make sacrifices of people like you.

Excuse me.
I never introduced myself.
Well...
I feel that might be too familiar.
Not knowing you,
I cannot give you
My name.
Not just
Like That.

Perhaps,
If we get on...
If we discover we have
A lot in common,
You and I,
Then...

[He crouches]

What is the world like,
From your point of view,
I wonder.
Pathetic corpse,
Upended,
Spilling into the earth.
What is your understanding of it all,
I wonder.

It can't go on like this,
We can't have corpses like you
Littering our hills,
Covering the valleys with your
Warm trickles.
It upsets the dogs,
They don't know what to make of it.

The Matriarch,
Our leader,
Sees it as a personal insult
To have her territory
Staked out with rotting flesh.

Do you mind if I sit?
I'm straining my neck
Trying to look at you.
And I don't know why I
Bother.

They say you're a criminal.
A wild man from over the sea.
Is that true?
The world seems full of criminals these days.
There has to be some -
Retribution.

You're no Roman, though,
No war machine.
No brass cock of power.

Flesh, you are.
Flesh.

[Beat]

Listen,
I'm sorry, OK?
I'm terribly, terribly
Sorry
It turned out like this.

I am apologising to you,
You ridiculous upended criminal.

[Beat]

They say –
At least it is a widely held belief –
That
Criminals return to the scene of their
Crime.

Absolute bollocks,
I think.
How can you return
In the condition you're in?
There's no slow boat home
For you.

No.
Dai is one criminal
Who's not returning to the scene
Of his crime.

As for your murderer...

Well,

Here I am.

[He flashes a grin and shakes Dai's hand.]

Marban the Druid.
Marban the Priest.
Marban the Boy.

Marban.
Your murderer.
I still have my name.
But that is all.
Marban.
My name.
That's all that remains.

I come,
This time,
In peace.
An equal.

Sacrifice meeting sacrifice.
Neither of us hiding now.
What is there to hide?

Let us make this
An altar of truth.
For I am as
Dispossessed
As you.
Not dead,
Near dead.

Raped of body and spirit,
Celtic whore
Who has serviced Rome.

I think
I have been mistreated.
I know
I have been mistreated.

Oh,
You see,
It wasn't just
The Romans.
What they...
What they did to me.
Their
Abuse
Of me.

No, it wasn't just that.

I have had great injustices done to me,
I have.

Because,
I was allowed no voice.
You see,
When they'd
...done with me,
I was only given the one option.

I could only ask for the knife,
For relief,
The knife.

I think,
I am owed more than that.
After being put through
Everything,
I do think
I am owed more than that.

To be created only
For destruction
Is no creation
At
All.

There were a lot of scars.
Didn't see them.
Didn't allow
Room
For them.

Wasn't just an afternoon of Roman pleasure.
Not for me, it wasn't.

You see,
We are not so different.
The gods -
There seem to be so many of them -
breathe life into us
To serve their
'purpose'

And then
Abandon
Us.

[Beat]

Sometimes.
At the strangest times,
I can feel him in me.
The smell of my own blood,
It comes back to me,
And I am choking,
CHOKE CHOKE
On the phlegm,
And my mouth is full of it,
He is in me,
They are holding me down again,
Cutting at me,
Inside me,
And they have taken me,

I am on my knees,
And they have entered my Temple,
That which no man should enter.

In those few seconds of their entrance
They

have

undone

me.

They

have

taken

me.

Separated me from my own Power.

A cheap vessel for their lust.

And I feel dirty

And I feel soiled,

And I feel destroyed,

And I feel

All BUGGERED UP now,

All FUCKED UP inside,

And I try to flee,

When I remember,

To put it out of mind,

Pretend it didn't happen,

That

It wasn't me

They took.

It was someone

Far away.

Long ago.

They enjoyed what I did not.

I have heard tales,
Of what they do in Persia
And places,
But this -
This
Happened in my own
Back yard.

I thought,
When they branded me
With their Venus medallion,
That they had made me one of them.
I did not ask to be one of them,
But they overpowered me,
Magicked me.

I cannot go back to my own people,
Tell them I am lost.
Ask them to heal me,
When I am the healer.

[Beat]

There was a look about you
As we sported with you;
I recognised you as
Outlaw.
We both had roles set out
Parts to
Play.
The gods,
They are unkind
To people such as
You and I.

They did not give me a voice.
After the event,
When there was so much thunder
FROM everybody else,
I was silenced.

People said,
Witnesses to my
Humiliation,
How awful it was,
Such a crime,
It must not happen again.

But nobody asked me.
How I felt.
Nobody asked me.

Now,
When I remember,
When I start choking,
- yes, sometimes tears,
Tears sometimes,
For they took that part
Of me too -
I choke alone,

So as
Not to embarrass.

Oh,
Unromantic metaphor,
Ugly reality,
We were
In this game of power.

Use images,
The gods say,
Stories, pictures,
To explain to people.
Explain things,
So they understand.

Unpleasant scene
They called it.

So polite.
So very
Doesn't-really-happen,
I think.

They gave me destruction
When I was already destroyed.
Crushed
Not under Roman barbarity
But the thought
If only I had my knife then,
If only pride had allowed me
To remain
Standing.

And you...
Too late now for you to speak.
Incoherent gurgles
Slow drip of life
Into the bowl.
Did their work for them,
Didn't I?

[Beat]

Marban the broken.
Flesh.
Blood.
Bones.
But no more,
No -
Spirit.
No magic wonders
To surprise you with.

Do not pity me.
Please,
Do not pity me.
I did not ask for that.
Ask instead,
WHY I was made silent.
Ask why
I wasn't given a punchline,
A laugh.
I would have liked that.

Yes I would have liked that.
The priest with a laugh
I could have been.

Instead,
TABOO.

There is nothing so infuriating
As being discussed
Without being understood,

It was a sunny day
And I wanted to swim.
Then all of this happened.

*[He looks at DAUI. He moves over to the bowl. He picks up the bowl.
He stands. He holds the bowl above his head.]*

A beat.

He is about to pour the blood over himself as -

BLACKOUT

II: INGA

[Hysterical laughter in the darkness. Lights up centre stage. INGA, in street drag, is covered in blood and tie to a chair. Norway, 1943.]

INGA: My appearance
 Is not so good today.
 I am,
 Perhaps,
 A little
 Sloppy
 In my dress sense.

[She looks at her skirt.]

 A tear.
 I will have to mend that.
 Cannot go onstage with a ripped costume.
 Cannot.

[Silence.]

 Mountains,
 This country.
 All mountains.

[Beat]

 Mountains
 And fjords.
 Mountains and
 Trickling fjords.

[Beat]

Echoes in the mountains.
Echoes of Norwegian imaginations,
Trolls and the like.

[Beat]

Mountains,
Fjords and trolls;
Trolls,
Mountains
And fjords.

Fjords,
Trolls
And mountains.

[Beat]

Of course
The fjords *are*
Terribly
Terribly
Beautiful.

When you can see them.
Which I can't at the moment,
So I just have to
Remember
Their beauty.

[Beat]

They get so carried away,
The Boys.
They do not always -
Restrain themselves
As they should.

They were playing games with me.
Vicious games.

And yet,
They look so smart in their uniforms.
You really would not
Think it
Of them.

I am sorry.
I think, perhaps,
I will cancel tonight's performance.
The circumstances are
A little
- unfavourable -
For me.

I remember,
A long time ago,
A story I was told.
It was a good story,
Good.
I will
Will try and
Remember it.

My head.
They played a little too roughly,
I think,
A little
Too
Roughly.

I am sure
They did not mean
To hurt me.
I am sure,
That
The first blow,
The one with a blunt instrument
Which I did not have time to see,
I am sure
It was a mistake.

But they went on making mistakes.
Went on
With the blunt instrument

I did not have time to see
What they were doing
Hitting
Hitting,
Blow
After
VICIOUS
Blow.

I remember,
I think,
I saw one of them smile,
Just before
Before
Another 'mistake'.

The story I was told,
A long time ago,
Must remember...
It was
Important
To me.

[Beat]

Between you and me,
You'd be surprised
How many of the boys
Have their little
Foibles.

It is their uniforms.
My favourites were
The cuirassiers
At the turn of the century:
White pants
And knee-high boots.
Well,
Just to wear them
Was tantamount
To solicitation.

However.
I think
I do not like their games.
No,
I do not like their games.

That is why
I was
Uncooperative.
I did not wish to play
Their games.
And so
They made many, many
"Mistakes".

But I did not play.
Not me, no,
Not Inga,
I did not play.
I had my own game.
Running the lines,
A difficult and secret game!
But
I did not tell them that.

I
Denied
Everything.

A dragon!
Big, red, fierce
Dragon,
That's what the story was about.
It arrived,
Suddenly,
But once it had come,
The people,
The people in the town where it arrived,
They thought
It had *always* been there.
Big, fierce,
Always
Their master.

An unpleasant dragon,
Taking over
Their town.
Taking over
Their lives.

I see,
Before me,
My life.
This is not happening.
I will not
Allow
This to happen.
It is not part of my act.

The boys.
They will be back.
They said they
They would be back.

With more games.

I see
My parents;
Some years ago,
When *he* told them,
Some years ago,
When they
Disowned
Me.
My family
Who
Disowned me.

A little runt
called Karl
Demanded I suck him off.
Otherwise,
He said,
"I'll tell".
"Fuck off,"
I said,
"Warty little tapeworm."
Silly
Little
Boy.

So
The little bastard
Actually
Went and told them.
Well,
He must have been pleased.
They did

Just what he wanted them to.

What did he say,
I wonder?
Just knock on the door,
"Morning
... thought I'd pop round,
Tell you your son's
A queer.
Have a nice day."

IS THAT HOW IT WAS?

Or perhaps he was more subtle,
A bit embarrassed,
Hardly bring himself to say it.

IS THAT HOW IT WAS?

Embarrassed. was he?
For me? Embarrassed?

[Beat. Inga laughs. Beat]

I was never ashamed.
If that's what they thought,
What they
Wanted
To think.

The ensuing argument
Was brought to a head
By Father.
"Do keep your voice down,
Son,
There are the neighbours
To think of."
"FUCK THE NEIGHBOURS,"
I
Ejaculated.

[Beat]

I see,
Three years ago,
When *they* arrived.
The Boys.
When they changed
Everything.

Nazis,
I heard,
In the club.
Nazis in Norway.
The Boys had arrived
And things changed.

The dragon
Fed off the people.
Didn't eat *them*,
But their food:
Took things from them.

They resented
Its indulgence
At
Their expense.
But they were frightened.

The dragon,
Being large and fearsome,
Frightened them.

[INGA laughs]

When they caught me,
The Boys –
I'm sorry, I have to laugh,
Even now,
When it hurts me,
But I have to laugh
At them.
Drunken,
Stupid.
Mistaking me
For a woman,
As so many times before,
When I was running the lines,
But this time,
This time they thought,
Being drunken and stupid,
That I had
The *Body*
Of a woman.

[INGA laughs]

Their faces,
When they “found out.”
Stupid, drunken. faces.
Stupid, angry faces.

Silly
Little
Boys
In
Uniform

I see,
From the stage
In Oslo,
An audience.
I see
A safe world
I built.

Beautiful, beautiful clothes.
Enough frocks
For an entire
Panzer division.
My audience and me.
In Oslo.
Safe.

And I see Them,
Hurting people.
I see
My world
Destroyed.

The Dragon
Became greedy.
It ate too much.
Became fat
On its greed.
The Townspeople,
They saw that.
The Dragon was still strong,
But the people
Had found a word.

Resistance.

I see
A woman
Running the lines
With messages,
Secret messages.
But the woman
Is not
A woman.

It is Inga.

It is me.

The people
Who fed the dragon
And watched it
Grow fat
Saved bits of string,
Rope,
Even tiny, tiny bits
Of ribbon
That the children
Saved from dolls.
They hid the bits of string.
So funny,
So many people
Collecting tiny bits of string
As a dragon
Grows fat.

My family,
Who disowned me,
Met the Boys –
And we all know what happens
When people meet the Boys.
I didn't see them
After they –
I didn't see them.

[INGA looks ahead.]

Of course,
This is the final humiliation.
Their
Little
Joke.
Considerate of them to leave
A mirror
For me.

But

[He laughs]

The irony is
That
It is just out of my
Sightline.

They know
How vain
I am.

Mirror, mirror
On the wall,
Who is the most beautiful
Of them all?

Not quite
Beaten
Yet.

Not
Inga.

[A pause. INGA concentrates. Summons his strength; A final gesture against the Boys. INGA drags his chair to the side.

A break.

The effort is immense. He does it again. A smile as he closes his eyes.]

Now.

[He slowly open one eye. Look of horror and panic. He opens both eyes. His jaw drops in amazement.]

Oh.

[Closes both eyes. Opens them again.]

My
God,

I look
Like

Shit.

[Pause. Enter Guards and an Officer.]

The bits of string
Were tied together,
Everybody tied bits
Of string together
In the moonlight
As the dragon slept.

The boys are back.
To play their games.
Silly, vicious games.

The bits of string
Made a net.

OFFICER: Inga. Pretty Inga.

INGA: Stupid, drunken face.

[He laughs]

OFFICER: A cut.
 Let me make it better.

[He spits in Inga's face]

A big net made of
Small bits of string.
And the dragon,
Fat and sleeping,
Was trapped.

It was no longer
So fierce.

OFFICER: Your curtain call,
 Pervert.

INGA: Please,
 No games.
 I am a little
 Tired
 Tonight.

OFFICER: Ready.

INGA: No longer a game.
 It's real.
 No more games
 For Inga.

OFFICER: Aim.

[They aims their rifles at INGA.]

INGA: The secret
 to a good
 Comedy act
 Is -

Triptych by Ian Lucas

OFFICER: Fire!

[Blackout. Shots in the blackout,]

INGA: Timing.

[Inga's laughter. A soldier's voice cuts in.]

III: SOLDIER

IT'S ONE FOR THE MONEY,
TWO FOR THE SHOW,
THREE TO GET READY,
NOW GO CAT GO.
GET OFF
AND DON'T STEP ON MY BLUE SUEDE SHOE •
YOU CAN DO ANYTHING THAT YOU WANT TO DO
BUT GET OFFA MY BLUE SUEDE SHOES.

YOU CAN KNOCK ME DOWN,
STEP ON MY FACE,
SLANDER MY NAME ALL OVER THE PLACE,
DO ANYTHING THAT YOU WANT TO DO,
LAY OFF, HONEY, GET OFFA MY SHOES
DON'T STEP, GET OFFA MY BLUE SUEDE HOES.

BURN MY HOUSE,
STEAL MY CAR,
DRINK MY LIQUOR FROM AN OLD FRUIT JAR.
OO ANYTHING THAT YOUU WANT TO DO
BUT, OH BABY, LAY OFFA MY BLUE SUED SHOES.

[Lights up stage left. A camouflaged soldier holding a corpse. Vietnam, occasional burst of gunfire.]

*'Soldier sits back. Checks over corpse. Finds something.
Begins to roll a joint. He puts it in his mouth. He lights up. He smokes.
His face relaxes.*

Beat.]

SOLDIER: Better.
 That's better.

[Beat]

So.

[Beat]

Shit, I'll start that again.

[Beat]

ONE FOR THE MONEY,
TWO FOR THE SHOW.

[He smokes the joint, giggles. Beat.]

Ha fucking ha.

[Beat. He stares ahead. Long, tense silence. He is about to cry.]

No - fuck, no, will not,
WILL NOT.

No.

No.

THREE TO GET READY,
NOW GO CAT GO.
GET OFF,
AND DON'T STEP ON MY BLUE SUEDE SHOES.

[Beat. Another smoke of the joint. He looks out.]

C'MON THEN, YER BASTARDS!
C'MON!
C'MON!
RAT-A-TAT-A-TAT-A-TAT-A-TAT.
C'mon, get a load of this G.I.,
Yer slanty eyed bastards!
RAT-A-TAT-A-TAT-A-TAT-A-TAT.

[He frantically puffs the joint. He offers it to the corpse.]

Say, man, you want some?
No, no, 'course you don't.
Lesson number one;
Corpses don't smoke.
No need.
Beyond it, the lucky bastards.
Aren't yer?

AREN'T YER?

Well?

Answer me, G.I.

[Beat]

Answer me,

ANSWER ME~

[Beat]

Fuck you, then, pal.
Yeah, fuck you.
Fuck you for leaving me here.
Fuck you for dying, fucker.

[Beat]

Yeah, fuck you,
Dumas.

[Long pause. Whispers]

Hey, man.
Hey, Chris.
Shhh, no, shh.
Hey man, I got a horn.
Yeah, man, yeah, I'm hard.
Feel it, feel it,
It's hard.

[He guides the corpse's hand to his groin]

C'mon, Chris,
C'mon,
Hold it,
Oh man,
C'mon, c'mon,
Rub,
Oh, yeah,
Yeah,
That's it,
Yeah,
Oh, faster, faster,
Chris,
Oh - Jesus,
You can do it,
Oh,
Yeah,
You can,
Oh, Jesus,
Chris,
That's good,
Shhhh, shhhh,
Oh I'm,
I'm
JESUS -

[He breaks off, sobbing. He holds the body]

CHRIS!
Where are you?

Where've you gone?
C'mon, c'mon back to me.

Shhhh~
You hear them?
You hear them,
What they're saying 'bout us?
Shhh, don't listen,
Oh baby,
Don't listen to them.

[He covers the body's ears with his hands]

No, not true,
Don't listen,
Shhhhh.
Don't listen.
Hear the Lieutenant?
IT DOESN'T HAPPEN IN THE ARMY!
No Sir, no Sir,
Not us, Sir,
No, Sir.

[Beat]

[He glances round frantically. Whispers]

Cocksuckers.
Cocksuckers.
Cocksuckers, cocksuckers.

[Beat]

Yes.
I can say it now,
YES,
Damn you,

Yes.

We lay together,
In this shit of a place,
Me and you,
We managed it,
Amidst the stink of death,
With napalm boiling children's flesh,
And trees coloured orange with rotting,
Pregnant women shot even as they wiped
GI cum from their mouths,
Watching eighteen year olds jerk off in the dark,
Calling Momma in their sleep,
Spitting marijuana to get through another day.

And no,
No it wasn't just MISSING IT
That caused it.
Wasn't just the fear,
Every day,
That we wouldn't come out of those rat holes alive,
Suffocate under lead ridden pals,
Eaten away by rats fatter than we were.
NO
It wasn't
Missing warm beauty in Kansas,
Apple pie and white skirts,
Soft pussy in the Ballroom,
No, not women we were missing.

Like the corn-holing commander
And his boy soldier,
Take as take can,
The darkness makes everything beautiful,
Every hole sweet and loving,
A warm niche called home.

"What's that, Sir?"
"Yes, sir, trousers down, Sir."
"No sir, it's fine, sir,
No, sir, it doesn't hurt, Sir,
Sir, yes, Sir, I'll be quiet, Sir."
"Sir, it's different, Sir,
Here, sir,
Isn't it,
Sir?"
"Sir, Sir,
That's it,
Sir,
I know, Sir. "
"I trust you, Sir,
You're Chief, Sir,
You're Boss, Sir,
When you fuck me, Sir,
It's pals, Sir,
Together, Sir,
It's alright, Sir.
You've got a wife, Sir,
You miss her, Sir,
I understand."

"Sir,
Sir?
Will you hold me, Sir?
When I go, Sir?
Don't let me

Be alone, Sir."

NO, NOT US!
We did it knowing,
Knowing,
Our sweat-ridden bodies
Were full of coarse hair.
Smelling and tasting
Men's cum,

Delighting in being together.
Despite this whole fucking scene,
Growing rows of empty boots,
Names crossed off lists,
Buddies buried in mud.

Despite the insanity of
Those who ran out into bombing paths,
Just to end it all.

Or was it sanity?

And us
Locked up in this nightmare.

[Beat]

Chris, Chris,
They'll make a film of us,
They will,
They'll colour us beautiful,
Years hence,
And they'll forget everything
About spilled brains
And torn guts,
And they'll say
"Look, look,
There was BEAUTY
In that war,
Worship it."

And,
At the same FUCKING TIME,
They'll say
"What pals:
They cared for each other,
They supported each other,
That's what loyalty's about,
Rough with the smooth."

And they'll edit
Your dick,
They'll forget
The REAL NATURE
of it.

They'd take the beat out of
Rock 'n' Roll,
They would,
And call it
Music.

GET OFFA MY BLUE SUEDE SHOES!

[Beat]

What's it about, then, Chris?
This killing business?
What's a nice boy like you
Doing in a place like this?

Dead.

[Beat]

It's all this politics I don't dig.

I mean, if they want us to shoot,
We'll shoot, yeah?
Why the big deal
About issues?
Just point us,
And we'll do the work,
We don't need to know
WHY?

[Beat]

I watched.

I watched you fall, pal.
They held me back,
They told me not to come after you,
They tried to ignore -

To ignore

IT,

Between us.

I -

I wanted,
Wanted to see if
If you were alright.

[Beat]

They held me back,
While I watched you fall.

I surprised myself, actually,
There weren't tears,
No scream.
We've been trained so well,
I thought.

WHATWOULDTIIEYHAVEDONEIFITWASTHEIRMISSUSMOWED
DOWNINFRONTOTHEM?

I'm upset now, Chris,
And I was doing so well.

[Beat]

You bastard.
I loved you,
And you failed me.
You

Were the one fucking thing
I had.

I don't have anyone to go back to;

[Beat.]

*[The corpse moves slightly - A twitch of pain. The SOLDIER closes his eyes.
Screams.]*

NOOOOOO.

Not a last twitch
Not a
- Too cruel, this -
Spasm of life,
Flickering candle
In this

Darkness.

Not hope,
Please,
Not hope,

Don't set me thinking,
Of how it could be.
Orange sunsets,
Hot cocoa,
A game of golf.

Ridiculous optimism.

[Another twitch from the corpse]

"O captain"

I've lost too much
To want to
Salvage
The wreckage
Now.

And you,
Which is more painful?
These cruel spasms
That torture your last breaths,
Or

Not being able
To speak

Of love?

*[Long pause. The SOLDIER picks up his rifle. He shoots Chris in the head.
Silence]*

This film they make,
The one without the sweat,
The gore,
The real story
Behind this unholy mess.

But
The film about
THE BEAUTY
They find in war;
What,
Exactly,
Will happen to me?

[Long silence]

ONE FOR THE MONEY,
TWO FOR THE SHOW,
THREE TO GET READY,
NOW - GO CAT GO.

They'd take the beat out of
Rock In' Roll,
They would,
And call it
Music.

[Silence. SOLDIER slowly kisses Chris. Blackout.]

[Light up SR on Marban's bowl of blood. Fade.]

[Lights up centre stage on Inga's empty chair. Fade.]

[Lights up SL on Soldier and corpse. Fade.]

[Same sequence, dimmer.]

[Same sequence, dimmer still.]

[Same sequence, barely visible.]

HOUSE LIGHTS UP.