

ZERO TO HERO

Four plays for children

by Andrew Liddell

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Radius

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KISSING THE LEPER

The story of St Francis

Scene 1.

Characters:

Party-Goers (PGs) – friends of Francis, dressed in party gear. –at least 7 of them.

Waiters and Waitresses in aprons with jugs of wine and trays of food, 2 or 3.

Francis Bernadone in party gear.

Clare, Francis' girlfriend, dressed in party gear

The Father of Francis

The Mother of Francis

A Leper dressed in rags, with a stick and a bell.

Voice of Jesus (off stage).

Scenery: none.

Props: table and glasses

The scene: the scene is a restaurant in the city of Assisi. There is a table set with glasses, right of stage. Outside the restaurant, left of stage, is the main street of the city of Assisi.

The Party-Goers enter from the left and cross the main street to the restaurant. They sit themselves around the table.

PG1 It's Friday – we'll have some fun tonight.

PG2. If Francis comes it's always fun, he's the life and soul of the party.

(Waiters and Waitresses enter from the right carrying bottles of wine and plates of food They pour drinks for the guests and put the plates of food on the table.)

Waiter 1 *(To the guests,)* Francis has ordered a specially good wine for you tonight.

PG1. What is it?

Waiter 2 *(Showing him the label on the bottle)* It's a Chianti, vintage 1200, six year old – in its prime.

PG3 Francis is always so generous. Nothing but the best for his friends.

PG4 Oh, he's rich, his father is the richest clothing merchant in the city!

PG5 Yes and he likes young Francis to throw his money around – it shows off how rich he is.

PG6 And it's good for business too. Francis is a fashion model for the family business.

PG7 They say that Francis is in love with Clare. Let's hope he doesn't get married yet. All the fun will stop if he settles down!

(Francis enters from the left with Clare, hand in hand. They cross the road to the front of the restaurant, Francis lets go of Clare's hand and waves to the guests.)

Francis Hi folks. Let's party! Bring me some wine.

(A Waiter gives him a large glass of wine)

Francis Here's a toast to the prettiest girl in town!

Clare: Don't be silly Francis *(but she looks quite pleased)*.

(Mother and Father enter from the left and move around the guests.)

Francis Hullo Dad, Hi Mum.

Father Good to see all you young people enjoying yourselves – have a good time tonight – send the bill to me.

Mother I wish I were young again, I'd like to dance.

Father Come off it Mother! You're too old for that caper, besides the young people don't want us around spoiling their fun!

Mother Well we used to love to dance when we were young, remember?

Clare Do stay!

Father Rheumatism and arthritis puts dancing out of the question. Come along home, old girl.

Mother Yes, we're much too old! Clare, you go and look after Francis.

(Mother and Father go off stage together, left, arm in arm).

PGs *(all together)* Here's a toast to Francis Bernadone. Let's eat drink and be merry for tomorrow is Saturday.

Francis Come on my friends, let's dance the Conga.

(Francis with Clare lead the PGs out of the restaurant into the street and they form a Conga line and begin to dance from the back of the stage towards the front. At that moment a Leper comes on stage from the front left and walks towards them, ringing his bell and calling out)

Leper: Unclean, unclean. Keep away from me, my disease is infectious. I am an untouchable. Keep away, if you value your lives!

(The Conga line halts. The Party Goers run away in disarray through the restaurant stage right. Francis stands as if frozen to the ground – staring at the Leper. Clare stands back, watching Francis anxiously.)

Jesus' Voice Go on Francis, he's a human being. I love him just as I love you. Show him my love.

(Francis steps towards the Leper)

Francis I hear the voice of Jesus.

Clare Francis, No. No. Don't go near him.

(Francis steps back.)

Jesus' Voice Go on, Francis, don't be afraid.

(Francis moves forward a couple of paces.)

Clare No! No! Come away with me.

Jesus' Voice It's easy. You'll see. Just go to him as a loving brother.

(Francis darts forward to the Leper and presses some gold pieces into the Leper's hand. Then takes off his coat and wraps it around the Leper before hugging him.)

Francis Clare, God loves us all –we are all brothers and sisters in the eyes of God.

Lights out.

(Exeunt).

PILLAR TO POST

The story of St Paul

Scene 1.

Characters:

Paul

Crowd (as many as are available)

Soldier 1

Soldier 2

Stephen

Priest 1

Priest 2

Priest 3

Scenery: none**Props:** a pile of stones made from screwed up brown paper, or something appropriate.**The scene:** outside the city wall of Jerusalem. The wall is the right hand side of the stage, there is an entrance in the middle. The centre stage is an open space with exits left. Back stage there is a pile of stones.

The Crowd enter from the left and stand front of stage chatting:

Crowd 1 It looks as if there's going to be a public stoning: they always do it here outside the City walls.

Crowd 2 That's a bit of luck for us. We haven't had one for ages. Do we know who it is?

Crowd 3 It's a man called Stephen; he's a member of the Jesus movement.

Crowd 1 Oh, that lot! They're crazy people. They believe that deluded carpenter, Jesus, came back to life again after his crucifixion.

Crowd 2 Who do they think will believe that rubbish!

Crowd 3 Funny you should say that, because it's caught on in a big way. People will believe anything.

Crowd 1 The Jesus people usually keep their heads down; a sort of underground movement. The priests call them terrorists.

Crowd 2 How did this fellow get caught then?

Crowd 3 He defied the priests. He spoke openly to a crowd, accusing the priests of conspiring with the Romans to crucify God's chosen one – the Messiah.

Crowd 2 Good heavens! That's suicide.

Crowd 1 Looks as if he's going to get his just desert now. Look, here they come.

(Two Soldiers enter right, dragging Stephen behind them. They are followed by the three Priests, with Paul following them. The Soldiers stand Stephen with his back to the right side of the stage, [the city wall] then move back to the pile of stones.

Priest 1 Listen all of you. This man was caught openly blaspheming against our God.

Priest 2 He dares to say that we, the Temple Priests, killed the Messiah.

Priest 3 He says that a crazy carpenter from Galilee, who was crucified as a rebel by the Romans, was the Messiah of God: and people are actually believing him.

Priest 1 This man accuses you and me of being the murderers of the Son of God!

Crowd *(moving forward towards Stephen menacingly)* We'll tear him limb from limb for that.

Paul Hold it. Get back all of you.

(The Crowd stops)

Paul This is a legal execution not a lynching! It must be done in accordance with the law.

(The Crowd moves back shamefacedly)

Priest 1 That's a promising young man.

Priest 2 Yes, I know him. That's Paul of Tarsus – he has been studying under the Rabbi Gamaliel. Paul is well qualified in the Jewish law

and scripture.

Priest 3 Zealous and eager by the looks of it.

Priest 1 Now let's proceed with the execution in a proper orderly manner. *(turning to Stephen)*, have you anything to say before you die?

Stephen *(looking up to heaven and raising his hands in a gesture of welcome)* Look! I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.

Priest 2 Blasphemy!

Priest 3 Let the proceedings begin. Stone him.

(The Crowd strip off their coats, throw them at the feet of Paul, then run back to the pile of stones and start hurling them at Stephen).

Stephen *(falling to his knees and looking up to heaven)* Jesus forgive them.

(He falls forward)

Paul All right. That's enough. Well done.

(The Crowd pick up their cloaks and exit right)

Paul These followers of Jesus are fanatics. They must be stamped out everywhere.

(All exit right)

THE SHAMROCK

The story of St Patrick

Scene 1.

Characters:

Patrick, a boy of 15.

Ben, (Benignus) a boy of 13, friend of Patrick.

Foreman,

Slave 1

Slave 2

Leader of the Barbarian raiders

Barbarian raiders (up to five).

Scenery: none.**Props:** none.**The scene:** the stage is the grounds of a grand Roman Villa. Back stage is a field of ripe corn.

Enter from the left two Slaves carrying bill hooks followed by the Foreman with whip in hand. The Slaves start working upstage, on their knees, harvesting with their bill hooks. The Foreman stands over them.

(Enter from the right (the house), Patrick and Ben. They stop, looking at the view.)

Patrick This is it Ben. I could not show it to you last evening because it was already getting dark when we arrived from Gloucester.

Ben It's a smashing looking place. I'd no idea you had such a big place in Wales.

Patrick I'm lucky. My father is a very rich man.

Ben Everybody knows of Calpornius. Not just rich, but a good man too.

Patrick He was a tax collector you know. But he hated doing that, so he got exemption by becoming a Deacon of the Church. My grandfather had been a priest. My family have been Christians from the earliest times.

Ben Are you a Christian?

Patrick Well, I call myself a Christian, but I've never studied it seriously and, to be honest, I don't know much about it!

Ben Me too! You are lucky your parents letting you come here on your own like this. But don't you miss your parents in Gloucester and your home there?

Patrick The trouble is that if I'm at home, they make me study! It's Latin or Grammar or Maths from morning to night! They are ambitious for me you see. But I hate school work!

Ben I suppose it doesn't matter. You don't have to worry about getting a job. What will you do?

Patrick I'd really like to live here and be a country gentleman, manage the estate and go hunting and boating too, the sea's not far from here and I've got a boat. Perhaps we might do that tomorrow.

Ben The boy who has everything! I shall probably have to go into the army.

Patrick There should be a good future for an ambitious young man there. The empire seems in danger of being overwhelmed by the Barbarians. We need to strengthen our defences.

Ben The number of illegal immigrants is scary. They are coming from all directions.

Patrick It's not just illegal immigrants. Whole tribes are invading from the East. The Roman army can't cope. What we need is a new Julius Caesar to carry the war into the enemy's heart land and teach them a lesson. Perhaps you will be he!

Ben And here in Britain, the Picts and Scots are massing on the Northern border.

Patrick Thank goodness we've got Hadrian's Wall. It's an unbreakable defence line.

Ben We hope!

(They turn looking towards the Slaves working in the back.)

Foreman *(raising his whip and shouting)* Get on with it you lazy swine. *(He whips the Slave on the back, repeatedly)* We've got to get this field finished by nightfall.

Ben Stop him Patrick, that's cruel.

Patrick No it's not. They're not human you know, just slaves.

Ben But he shouldn't just flog them like that – they're doing their best.

Patrick No they're not. They're lazy beasts. Bar-bar-bar-bar, Barbarians. You can't even understand what they say. I had one beaten to death once.

Ben You didn't! You couldn't!

Patrick Yes I did. He let my pony graze on a yew hedge – of course the pony died. I had him flogged for it.

Ben But surely you did not mean to kill him?

Patrick No. I just meant to punish him but he was weak and the Foreman went on too long ... and he died.

Ben That's terrible. How could you allow it? I thought I knew you better than that, Patrick. It's not your true nature at all.

(At that moment, Barbarians, waving swords, dash in from the left, jumping in the air, shouting, "Surrender! Surrender". They grab hold of Patrick and Ben.)

Patrick Let go of us. We are Roman citizens! You'll pay for this.

Leader Romans you were! Now you are captives of the High King Niall of Ireland. You will be sold in the slave market of Tara. Take 'em away!

(They drag Patrick and Ben off stage left).

TRUST A BEAR

The story of St Columban

Scene 1.

Characters:

Gall,

Maureen.

Columban.

Kathleen,

Columban's Mother

Wise Woman

Maeve,

Scenery: none,**Props:** table, bottles, glasses.**The Scene:** a room in Columban's Mother's house. There is a table back stage with bottles of wine and glasses.

(Gall enters left and moves to centre stage:)

Gall My name is Gall. This is the story of my friend Columban. It starts in Ireland in the year 548 A.D., Columban's 18th birthday. I had been asked to the party at Columban's Mother's house.

(Columban enters from the right)

Columban Gall my friend. We'll have some fun this evening. I have invited some girls around to celebrate. Mum's cooking and look, there are drinks already for us on the table.

(He pours out drinks.)

Gall It was good of you to ask me along.

Columban Rubbish, I couldn't have a celebration without my best mate! Look, here come the girls!

(Enter from the left, Columban's Mother followed by three pretty girls.)

Columban Hello Mum.

Mother You and Gall look after these girls here. Supper will be along in a minute.

(She exits left. The Girls rush up to Columban)

Maeve *(putting her arms around Columban)* Hullo, gorgeous.

Kathleen Leave a bit for me, Maeve.

(She pushes Maeve away and throws her arms around Columban.)

Maureen Come off it Kathleen. We all want a share.

Maeve Yes, Maureen is right. Share and share alike.

Columban Come off it girls. Young Gall here is much better looking than me and much more intelligent. You should pay attention to him.

Kathleen No. He is not as good looking.

Maureen And he is not as intelligent.

Maeve Nobody is as handsome and intelligent or nicer than you, Columban.

Gall Sadly the girls are right! Nobody can match Columban. But handsome is as handsome does! You can try me, girls.

Kathleen I'll make do with you Gall,

(She takes his arm in hers. Mother enters left, with a tray of food, which she puts down on the table.)

Mother There's a lady to see you, Columban.

Columban A lady?

Mother Yes, dear. A lady in black. She's very insistent. Wants to see you now.

Columban OK, OK Ma. Show her in. The more ladies the merrier.

(Mother goes upstage left)

Mother Please come in.

(Enter Wise Woman)

Gall It's the Wise Woman from the Hermitage. What can she want with us?

Wise Woman It is to you, blessed Columban that I come. The Lord Jesus has sent me to you with this message, 'Wine, women and partying will lead your soul to ruin. You must give them up because you have been chosen by the Lord to take his gospel to the pagan people of Europe. Hear and obey!'

Columban Oh no. No. I am just ordinary. I've no qualifications and ... and no wish to be a missionary.

Wise Woman It was our great St. Patrick who brought the flame of Christianity here to Ireland when the Roman empire fell and the Barbarians over-ran the whole of Europe and Britain. We Irish have been the guardians of the Christian faith for 200 years; and now it is the Lord's wish that we take the faith back to the pagan continent of Europe. You, Columban have been chosen to do this sacred task.

Columban You are mistaken, Wise Woman. I am not the stuff that saints are made of.

The Girls Don't go, don't leave us Columban!

Wise Woman Listen, Columban. The Lord does not just see the outside of a man, but sees deep into his soul. The Lord knows you and sees within you what he wants. You are to abandon frivolous ways and become a monk.

Columban Why me? Why now? I did not ask for this and I don't want it.

Wise Woman You know in your heart that you have to obey. Come Columban, accept your destiny. You are to come with me.

Mother Oh no! No!

Wise Woman Come Columban...

Mother No. *(she throws herself to the ground in front of him)* You shall not leave me!

(Columban moves slowly and reluctantly towards the upstage exit)

Columban Mother, I don't want to, but I feel that I'm being called and ... must go. Gall, my friend, I need you, come with me... please.

(He exits left. Gall and the Wise Woman follow him out. Mother slowly gets up. Kathleen, Maureen and Maeve go to comfort her and then, in tears, they all exit right.)