

Mary Mooney - 15-16

ONCE A CATHOLIC MARY O'MALLEY

First performed at the Royal Court Theatre in 1977 and set in the Convent of Our Lady of Fatima - a Grammar School for Girls - and in and around the streets of Willesden and Harlesden, London NW10, from September 1956 to July 1957.

Mary Mooney is a fifth-former, plain and rather scruffy but with a good singing voice. Her ambition is to become a nun. In this scene she is walking down the street with Mary McGinty and Mary Gallaher. All three are carrying heavy satchels and eating Mars Bars. Mary McGinty has refused to wear her hat and Mary Gallaher warns her that if a prefect sees her she'll get reported. McGinty doesn't care. It wouldn't worry her if she got expelled. She wonders what she'd have to do to get expelled from 'that old dump'. Perhaps she could 'make a big long willy out of plasticine and stick it on the crucifix in the chapel'. Mary Mooney is shocked - McGinty mustn't say things like that.

[MCGINTY: 'Why not? Do you reckon a thunderbolt is gonna come hurtling down from Heaven?']

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Mary Rooney

You mustn't say things like that . . . It doesn't happen straight away. It happens when you're least expecting it. You'd better make an Act of Contrition . . . My Dad knows this man who used to be a monk. But he couldn't keep his vows so he asked if he could be released. On the day he left he came skipping down the path with his collar in his hand. And when he opened the monastery gate he saw an alsatian sitting outside. So he hung his collar round the alsatian's neck and went on his way laughing all along the road. After that he started going into pubs every night and boasting to all the people about what he'd gone and done with his collar. Then one day he went and got married. And while he was on his honeymoon he started to get a really bad pain in his back. He was in such a terrible agony he could only walk about with a stoop. And after a while he was completely bent up double. Then he started to lose his voice. He went to loads of different doctors but none of them could do anything to help him. And now he can only get about on all fours. And when he opens his mouth to say anything he barks just like a dog. Of course it's true. He lives in Shepherds Bush . . . I bet if you were knocked down by a trolley bus this evening you'd be yelling your head off for a priest.