

A M D G



TALKING WITH MY FATHER

by Frank McHugh

Dramatis Personae

Archie Sinclair (the Gaoler)
John Ogilvie
William Ogilvie (John's father)
Margaret Ogilvie (John's mother)
John Ogilvie as a boy (age 7)
Harry Sinclair (the Gaoler's son, age 10)
John Spottiswoode (the Protestant Archbishop of Glasgow)
King James
Cecil, Earl of Salisbury (the King's Chief Minister)
Crowd at execution

A note on music performance

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Performance

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Music 1: *The Gael* (Dougie MacLean)

Glasgow. March 9th 1615. A dimly lit cell, leaded windows, candles casting an orange glow. There is a bed, a table and a bench. Inside, two men: Archie Sinclair, turnkey at the Bishop's Castle gaol, and the prisoner, John Ogilvie – bearded, shackled hand and foot to a low bar, kneeling in front of a roughly-fashioned cross. He is tired and drawn. He passes his rosary beads through his fingers.

ARCHIE: *(unlocks John's hand shackles)* John – let up your praying and come and eat. His Grace says even priests get to eat before . . . well, you know . . . before tomorrow like.

OGILVIE: *(rises stiffly)* Thank you, Archie. You're a good man – and I thank you for that. My last supper, eh? I hope to God it's not your famous brose? That would do the hangman's job for him! *(laughs)*

ARCHIE: You're some man, John, laughing at a time like this. Are you not afraid of dying?

OGILVIE: No more afraid than you are of going home for your dinner, Archie.

ARCHIE: That's faith, right enough. I can't say I agree with your ways John and I wish you had just sworn their oaths and got yourself out of here, but I wish more folk had your faith.

OGILVIE: *(makes the sign of the cross and starts to eat, with difficulty)* Will you be here all night, Archie?

ARCHIE: I will – and I've brought my Harry with me. He was 10 today John – nearly a man! He's started looking after the Bishop's horses. He's just finishing off their feed, and bedding them John. I expect he'll be back just now.

OGILVIE: Aye, I spoke to him earlier when he brought the water in. He seems a fine lad, Archie. A good son is a blessing.

ARCHIE: He is that, John.

Lights fade on cell.

Lights up on the Ogilvie home, Drum-Na Keith. The year is 1587.

Walter Ogilvie of Drum is reading a letter aloud to his wife.

John is around 7 years old and listens in.

WILLIAM: News from Edinburgh, Margaret – and not news you'll want to hear. Mary Stuart is dead. Beheaded it says.

MARGARET: Dear Lord, Walter – where will it all end? Elisabeth is her cousin, her own flesh and blood. Oh, *(sobs)* this is terrible.

YOUNG JOHN: Who's dead, Father?

WILLIAM: Queen Mary Stuart, John. She may have been of the old faith – but she was a Stuart. And we Ogilvies share a long history with that house. Come, John, walk with me a while *(John runs to catch up)*. Do you hear that? A curlew.

Gradual fade.

Music 2: *Talking with my Father* (Dougie MacLean)

Lights up on the cell.

Ogilvie is daydreaming. Harry is sitting beside him.

HARRY: John! *(shakes his arm)*

ARCHIE: *(off stage)* **Father** John to you, lad.

HARRY: Father John!

OGILVIE: It's yourself Harry. I was miles away.

HARRY: I get scolded for daydreaming too. All the time. What were you thinking about?

OGILVIE: My father – Walter Ogilvie, a fine man – and the place I grew up – a long way north of here. It was called Drum (*comes to*) . . . in fact, it still is!

HARRY: Drum? Like a bang! bang! drum?

OGILVIE: Exactly Harry. But this Drum was very quiet. I used to sit down by the burn and listen to what my father called the forest choir.

HARRY: (*pleased with himself*) He meant the birds, didn't he?

OGILVIE: You're a smart lad Harry, he did indeed. I've been away a long time. I was only a few years older than you when I left Scotland. Just a boy.

HARRY: My father says you've been all over the world – to France and Europe and even to England! He says you've spoken to King James. Is that true, Father John?

OGILVIE: I've been to many countries Harry – some with mountains higher than Scotland's and with great cities and rivers that make the Clyde look like the Molindinar – I've seen princes and paupers and I've heard music you wouldn't believe played in great Cathedrals. It's been quite a life Harry! Listen to this . . . Can you hear it?

Music 3: Ave Maris Stella (Jean Titelouze)

Map of 1600 Rouen projected over cell.

HARRY: No, Father John.

OGILVIE: Listen harder, Harry. Listen with your heart, not your ears . . .
(*both listen as music gets louder – eyes closed*)

ARCHIE: (*after a few minutes, he puts his head into the cell*) I must be going soft in the head. I thought I could hear music. (*John and Harry share a look of conspiracy*)

HARRY: But I don't understand why you're in here, Father John. You don't seem like a criminal. Are you a criminal?

ARCHIE: Harry, leave the man alone. He doesn't need you speiring questions all night.

OGILVIE: It's fine, Archie. The boy's good company. I'm not a criminal, Harry. I'm a Catholic – a Jesuit priest and I say Mass for the Catholics here in Glasgow.

HARRY: But Bishop Spottiswoode says that the Jesuits want to kill the King. He says there aren't any Catholics in Glasgow.

OGILVIE: There aren't many, Harry – and those that are keep it well hidden. If you believe Bishop Spottiswoode, then a Catholic priest is worse than a criminal. I love our King as much as any man, I don't want him dead.

HARRY: Do you say prayers?

OGILVIE: I do, son, every day. I remember once staying in a house near here – the good people had no idea I was a priest as I was in disguise. Before bed I lit a candle downstairs and was saying my breviary – my prayers – in a quiet voice so no-one would hear. The next morning the lady of the house approached me all excited – “Mr Watson,” – that's the name I used, Harry – “is it true you are a wizard?” *(laughs)* The poor dear thought I had been chanting spells. I wish I had got a frog and put it in the chair her husband had been sitting on. *(laughs)* That would have given her a turn! *(both laugh)*

HARRY: What were you disguised as? Was it a bear? Or a clown?

OGILVIE: *(laughs)* Fools for Christ, eh? A what? A bear? Aye, Harry – a Jesuit priest parading around Scotland dressed as a bear! There's no way *that* would ever be noticed! *(laughs)*. No, son, nothing as interesting as that – but if Bishop Spottiswoode ever lets me out of here I might give both of your ideas a go! When I came back from Europe, I travelled with two friends, two brother priests – James and John – not the apostles, mind! – and we travelled disguised as horse-traders. And it worked. Just like you, Harry, I was good with the horses. The three of us split up. I came here to minister to the Catholics in Paisley and across in Edinburgh and here in Glasgow. It's been a life in the shadows, Harry. In the shadows.

Movement and fade.

Music 4: Liberation (Martyn Bennett)

Groups turning together (military) step

Back-lit gauze showing shadow scenes of guards chasing/Mass/hiding etc. done rhythmically.

Harry watches them with John. A cross is painted on the cloth.

Lights fade up.

OGILVIE: *(cheerier)* My horse, Harry. The Bishop's men took it when I was arrested. She's a chestnut with two white socks on her hind legs. You can't miss her. Her name's Stella – she'll be at the Bishop's stables in Townhead. I want you to have her. She's old, mind, but there's a few miles left in her yet.

HARRY: Are you sure, Father John? Th . . . thank you – wait till I tell my Fath . . .

ARCHIE: I heard. You're a lucky one you – just like your mother. If you fell in the Clyde, you'd come out with a salmon in your pocket. *(John laughs)*

HARRY: He says my mother actually *did!* She's with God now but . . . She was from the Highlands.

OGILVIE: Then that makes you 'Hielan Harry'. I learned a song about you when I was young. How did it go now? . . . Right, you bang your foot like this . . .

Music 5: *Hielan Harry* (*John sings and Harry joins in the chorus – a big smile on his face*)

It's a beautiful country we have here Harry. I was away a long time and I missed it every day. And even though the other places are dear to my heart and gave me great gifts – my education, my faith – their hills were not my land's hills, their people not my people. You know, sometimes I used to stand on the north coast of Europe, Harry, and watch the ships sail off towards Scotland. Often I'd dream of boarding one and stepping off here. I would always get a wee bit homesick but then I'd think of Father Ignatius or Father Xavier – God rest them – or my other brother Jesuits and how far they travelled to spread the Good News – some of them to the very edge of the world, Harry. I knew I would go wherever I was sent but dear Lord, I prayed so hard to be sent home.

Music 6: *This Love Will Carry* (Dougie MacLean)

John picks up his cross and goes over to the small window looking out onto Glasgow, his chain s just stretch that far. Harry looks sleepy and lies on the bench.

As the music ends, Harry has fallen asleep. His father comes in and lifts him carefully out. As he reaches the door he turns (sadly) towards John.

ARCHIE: It's nearly dawn, Father. You should get some sleep. Your journey tomorrow is a long one.

OGILVIE: Tomorrow, Archie, is my wedding day! (*sets the cross on the small window sill and takes out his rosary beads again*)

Lights up on Spottiswood, Archbishop of Glasgow. John remains at the window.

SPOTTISWODE: You were an over insolent fellow to say your Masses in a reformed city.

OGILVIE: You do not act like a Bishop . . . but more like an executioner.

Lights fade.

Lights up on King James and his Chief Minister, Cecil, Earl of Salisbury. Cecil is holding a letter.

CECIL: Will your Majesty permit me to read a letter. It is from Spottiswoode in Glasgow.

KING JAMES: Read . . . but only that which is relevant. He does go on.

CECIL: "Most sacred and gracious sovereign. It has pleased God to cast into my hands a Jesuit that calls himself Ogilvie . . . (*fades down in volume*)

Light up on John Ogilvie.

OGILVIE: (*John recites prayer of St Ignatius- quietly but with commitment*) Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do your will.

CECIL: (*fades up in volume*) . . . For the Jesuit your majesty may be pleased to command him to be examined by such of the Council as your majesty should please nominate. . . .

I beseech Almighty God to preserve your majesty and to disappoint the practices of the wicked.” Signed John Spottiswoode. Archbishop of Glasgow.

Sound of hammers on wood – gibbet built in shadow.

SPOTTISWODE: Jesuit – do you continue to claim that the Pope’s jurisdiction extends over the King’s dominions?

OGILVIE: I do, your Grace. But I do say also that James is *de facto* King of Scotland.

SPOTTISWODE: Why did you come to Scotland? You ought not to have come to this kingdom!

OGILVIE: This is my country. My home. James cannot forbid me my own country. He may have forgotten but I have not, that he is the son of Mary Stuart – and yet he owns no superior in his realms? (*angry now*) His mother died with this – a rosary – in her hand. I can hear her heart breaking from here!

Music 7: *Mary Queen of Scots* (Dougie MacLean)

During the music, the sun begins to rise through the cell window. A quiet dawn – John walks from his cell like a ghost, and down the High Street. A line of people either side say quietly ‘God speed you’ and the like as he passes.

Lights up on the scaffold – backlit, behind gauze. John arrives in front of the scaffold. In a distinct voice he says:

OGILVIE: Mary, mother of grace, mother of mercy, defend me from the enemy and receive me at the hour of my death.

The High Street crowd gathers, John turns and throws his rosary into the crowd. He mounts the steps, the noose is placed and sudden drop to black with drumbeat. The crowd remain still, facing the gibbet, quietly humming ‘On the Battlefields of Scotland’.

Light up on Harry.

HARRY: Father John’s body was carried up the High Street and buried in the ground reserved for criminals. I knew that people – pilgrims, I suppose – would look for it. So I paced it out: The north side of the Cathedral . . . twenty paces from the western door . . . close to the Cathedral wall. There’s no stone, but that’s where you’ll find him. At least . . . that’s where his body lies.

Crowd turns and sings (gradually building from one voice) . . .

Music 8: *On the Battlefields of Scotland* (end on chorus)

End

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