

# **“THE JESUS HICKEY”**

**a comic fable in one act**

**by Luke Yankee**

**(Four men, two women, one unit set)**

THE JESUS HICKEY is a modern day fable about the seduction of celebrity funneled through the window of religious fanaticism. Funny, bawdy, outrageous and touching, the dialogue crackles with wit as this thought-provoking comedy heartily entertains. Imagine JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK performed by The Second City or THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE re-interpreted by Mel Brooks.

The play takes place in the industrial, portside town of Sligo, Ireland. Agnes Flynn is an innocent, small-town Irish girl who dreams of stardom. She has visions of moving to Hollywood and changing her name to Genevieve. Agnes has been raised by Grandmaire, her outspoken, deliciously coarse grandmother and Sean, her humorless, hard-drinking father who has turned to the bottle since the death of his wife. “Why would ya want to change your name to Genevieve?” Grandmaire asks. “Half the people I know couldn’t pronounce it. Besides, it sounds like ya got gas.” Her grandmother is much more concerned about the company Agnes is keeping and that she stays away from boys and the embankment, the local make-out pit. “I’d had three kids by the time I was nineteen,” she warns, “all because o’ that feckin’ embankment!” In particular, Grandmaire wants Agnes to stay away from the young man she likes, Seamus O’Malley. Seamus’ father once jilted Grandmaire and she cannot forgive anyone in the family.

Sean has been unemployed for many months now and is getting angry and scared, not to mention embarrassed to be living off his mother’s charity. He tells Agnes that if things don’t change, she is going to have to quit school and become a charwoman. Depressed, Agnes goes for a walk and runs into the infamous Seamus O’Malley, who offers to cheer her up and takes her to the embankment. Agnes is nervous and anxious as she sees the young couples around her in various states of sexual exploration. In an attempt to put her at ease, Seamus starts talking about vampire movies. The two begin role-playing Dracula and the fair damsel as Seamus plants a huge hickey on Agnes’ neck. Horrified, she runs home in distress.

The next morning, Agnes tries in vain to hide the hickey from her father, who discovers it and explodes in anger. “I swear, if you’re knocked up,” Sean screams, “I’ll throw you out on your arse!” Grandmaire comforts Agnes and tries to put some make-up on her love bite. As she does, she realizes a face in it...the face of Jesus! She rushes Agnes to see Father Boyle, the befuddled, local priest, who is skeptical at first and unwilling to even look at Agnes’ neck. Ultimately, he cannot deny it and asks if Agnes has any special gifts as a result of being blessed by The Jesus Hickey. Grandmaire touches Agnes’ neck in order to heal her failing eyesight and begins reading the fine print in the bible at breakneck speed. Father Boyle touches Agnes’ hickey to heal his bad back and begins break dancing around the church. Still, Agnes is mistrustful of her new gifts and doesn’t want to be treated like a freak. Father Boyle agrees to stay silent until he gets counsel from the bishop.

An hour later, when Agnes arrives at home, Sean is there with Paddy Martin, one of his co-workers, whose beloved Maggie is about to die. Paddy has heard of Agnes' powers from the loose-lipped Father Boyle and comes for a miracle. Maggie is healed in a matter of moments and Sean sees a business opportunity. "You're the feckin' fatted calf!" he proclaims, and names himself Agnes' manager. In an attempt to capture one of her own dreams, Agnes agrees to play along if she can now be called Genevieve. Sean replies, "I'll call you Nicole feckin' Kidman as long as you make five quid every time some stupid bugger touches your neck!"

Sean becomes the ultimate huckster and people are soon paying five pounds and up to view The Jesus Hickey and to be healed by Agnes (who is now called Genevieve). He has convinced people that the love bite was given to his daughter by a mysterious stranger with a beard, a long robe and sandals. The hickey never goes away and in the next six months, Agnes becomes an international celebrity. Sean is spending the money as fast as they make it. Just to be safe, Sean puts Seamus O'Malley on the payroll to keep his mouth shut. Seamus just wants to date Agnes, but Sean won't let him near her. Sean says, "Imagine if the public knew she'd been makin' out with the likes of you rather than Jesus himself. My livelihood would be in the crapper!"

Agnes enters in satin robes (open at the neck, of course), escorted by Grandmaire in high heels and a Chanel suit. Sean has his daughter booked on numerous appearances and healings every day to the point where she is exhausted and burned out. Grandmaire shares the big news that an American television producer wants to meet with them in a few days to discuss starring Agnes/Genevieve in her own reality show. Agnes says she is not enjoying this and wants to stop. Sean's temper flares as he tells her she cannot quit – she's got a family to support and a public to think of. He agrees to lighten up on the schedule once the American deal is set. Paddy martin enters with the sad news that his beloved Maggie has died. Agnes is devastated by the news and questions the validity of her gifts. "What's the point if I can't help people out o' their misery?" she asks.

Two days later, on the morning of the meeting with the Americans, Agnes wakes up to discover the hickey is gone. Sean goes into a panic. He sends Grandmaire to find Seamus O'Malley, who must give her another hickey immediately. "It doesn't have to be Jesus," he says. "You can be creative. How about the Virgin Mary on her thigh or The Last Supper on her buttocks?" Seamus reluctantly agrees to try and Agnes says, "No. It's over." Still, Agnes and Seamus have had a chance to re-kindle their feelings for one another and agree to start dating as she returns to a normal life.

The miracle has ended ...or has it? Agnes and Grandmaire have their own secrets and a different definition of happiness than Sean. As Agnes prepares to meet Seamus at the embankment later that night, Grandmaire calls to her. "Agnes – for Chrissake, wear a feckin' turtleneck!"

**Luke Yankee** is a Los Angeles based writer, director, producer and actor. He is the author of *JUST OUTSIDE THE SPOTLIGHT: GROWING UP WITH EILEEN HECKART* (Back Stage Books, 2006). His first play, *A PLACE AT FOREST LAWN* (co-written with James Bontempo) has been produced at a number of regional theatres and is published by Dramatists Play Service. His one-man show, *DIVA DISH!* has been performed at regional theatres throughout the U.S. and abroad.