Spiritual Connections Episode Four: Bloody Mary

By

Craig Cooper-Flintstone
INT. MARY’S HOUSE– HALLWAY

Drab walls and a tiled floor. A vase of decaying flowers stand on the window sill.

MARY, fifties, stands at the foot of the stairs.

"She yells."

MARY

Mother! You’ve been in this bloody downstairs toilet again, haven’t you?

"A feeble, muffled response echoes from upstairs."

EDITH (O.S.)

Yes, dear. I nipped in this morning, when I came down for a drink.

MARY

Well, how many times have I got to tell you? Those things don’t flush! The last thing I want when I’ve got a hangover is to be up to my bloody elbow in u-bend.

EDITH (O.S.)

Sorry, love. I keep forgetting.

MARY

Are you nearly ready?

EDITH (O.S.)

Give us a couple of minutes love.

MARY

Oh Mother, will you please hurry up? If you’re going to insist on coming up town with me, you could at least have the decency to be ready when I am. I’ve got lots to do today, remember?

EDITH (O.S.)

I’m coming, dear. I’ve just got to brush my teeth.
MARY
Why in God’s name you feel the need to brush your teeth when they’ve been standing in a glass of sterilising fluid all night, I’ll never know.

EDITH (O.S.)
It’s the taste of the Domestos, Mary. I can’t be doing with it.

MARY
Oh leave it, Mother, we haven’t got time. Can’t you just suck on a Werther’s or something? I’m running late as it is.

EDITH (O.S.)
Okay, dear. Just let me get dressed then.

Mary shakes her head and tuts.

INT. MARY’S CAR- LATER
Mary drives aggressively, EDITH, eighties, floral dress and cardigan, holds the sides of the passenger seat as if her life depends on it.

Loud reggae music plays on the stereo.

EDITH
Can’t you turn this down a little, dear? I can’t concentrate.

MARY
And what exactly do you need to concentrate on? I’m the one driving.

EDITH
I know. That’s the problem. You ought to slow down a little, dear. You know all these speed humps play havoc with my piles.

MARY
I don’t know why you had to come anyway. I’m only going to the supermarket. You only get in the way.
EDITH
Which one are you going to? There’s that new Lidl just opened in Wilmot, you know?

MARY
Lidl? I am certainly not going to bloody Lidl. I wouldn’t be seen dead in a place where the carrier bags cost more money than the meat.

EDITH
Which one are you going to then?

MARY
Mother, will you please be quiet? You’re more irritating than shingles, and I’m a bit delicate today.

EDITH
You? Delicate? I’ve seen brickies more delicate than you.

MARY
And I’ve had more bearable shingles. Now please, be quiet!

Mary turns up the volume even louder.

Edith holds her hands over her ears.

INT. SUPERMARKET- LATER

A huge sprawling expanse of aisles. Easy listening music is piped in at low levels, as shoppers amble around.

Mary marches along the aisle as Edith pushes the trolley, struggling to keep up.

MARY
Will you get a move on, Mother? If you must demand to push the trolley at least have the good manners to keep up with me.

EDITH
I’m sorry, Mary. I’m going as fast as I can. I’m getting on a bit, you know.
MARY
Well let me push the trolley. You can meander around to your heart’s content then.

EDITH
No. It helps me keep my balance, dear.

MARY
Your balance would be fine if you didn’t keep quaffing all my bloody vodka at night. Now I’m not telling you again, shut up and keep up.

Edith mutters to herself. She fishes around in her pocket, finds a boiled sweet then pops it in her mouth.

Mary stops to peruse items on a shelf.

Edith watches, as she places a catering size box of cling-film in the trolley.

EDITH
Why do you need that amount of cling-film, dear? It’s very expensive. There’s a value one there for fifty pence.

MARY
I’m not having cheapo stuff, Mother. You get what you pay for. I wouldn’t want it to rip, would I?

Edith shakes her head as they continue walking.

EXT. CREM DE LA CREM FUNERAL PARLOUR- DAY

Two black hearses stand outside the large brick building. The front window is dressed with thick red curtains.

A woman exits through the big wooden door onto the street, dabbing her tears away with a tissue.

INT. CREM DE LA CREM FUNERAL PARLOUR- RECEPTION

SAM, sixties, wearing a black suit and tie, sits behind the reception desk adorned with vases of flowers and leaflets.

IONA, Thirties, appears from a door marked ‘Staff’.

She puts on her coat.
IONA
Right I’m off, Sam. Thanks for letting me nip out.

SAM
Not a problem, Iona. You take as long as you need.

IONA
Thanks, Sam. You know I wouldn’t go if it wasn’t important, don’t you?

SAM
Of course I do, love. Stop worrying. You are okay, aren’t you? You look like death.

IONA
Well that’s fitting seeing as I work in a Funeral Parlour isn’t it? Yeah I’m fine. I’m just a bit nervous about this afternoon, that’s all.

SAM
Well whatever it is, I’m sure you’re worrying over nothing, love.

IONA
You’re probably right. I always imagine the worst. That way, you’re never disappointed, are you?

SAM
Give over whittling, love. Nothing’s ever as bad as you first imagine. Trust me.

Iona smiles sweetly at Sam.

IONA
You sure you’re going to be alright on your own for a bit?

SAM
I’ll be fine. Besides, I’m not on my own.

Iona looks surprised at the news.

IONA
You’re not?
SAM
No, love. I’ve got an agency worker in to cover you. He’s in with Mrs Price preparing her for the Chapel Of Remembrance as we speak.

IONA
Oh okay. Well I’m off then. Wish me luck!

SAM
Good luck love.

Iona leaves the building.

Sam idly flicks through a diary.

A door slams down the corridor.

He hears a voice yell from a distance.

JOEY (O.S.)
Mr Jackson! Mr Jackson!

Sam emerges from behind the desk then heads towards the commotion.

JOEY, forties, wearing an ill fitting suit and bow tie, bounds towards him.

JOEY
Mr Jackson!

SAM
What is it Joey? What’s the matter?

JOEY
The lady got a gherkin, Mr Jackson.
The lady got a gherkin.

SAM
A gherkin? What? Stuck on her body you mean?

Joey nods enthusiastically, showering saliva everywhere.

SAM (cont’d)
Oh dear! Come on then, I’d better have a look.

They enter a door marked 'Preparation Room 1' closing it behind them.

An awkward silence.
SAM (O.S.)
You mean this, Joey?

JOEY (O.S.)
Yeah.

SAM (O.S.)
Haven’t you ever seen a naked body before? That’s not a gherkin!
That’s her...

JOEY (O.S.)
Well, it tastes like a gherkin.

INT. SUPERMARKET

Mary and Edith natter as they peruse the frozen food section.

MARY
Do you think I should get some nibbles for later? You know, party food.

EDITH
Are we having a party, dear?

MARY
Jesus, Mother. You really are a bind. How many times have I got to tell you? My bastard of a daughter is coming this afternoon, isn’t she?

EDITH
Yes. I’m sorry, dear. My memory’s not what it used to be.

MARY
It’s funny how you always manage to remember where I keep the alcohol though, isn’t it? You just don’t listen, that’s the problem.

EDITH
I’m sorry, dear? I didn’t catch that.

Edith reaches out to grab a jar of Pickled Gherkins from the shelf above the freezer.

She unscrews the lid, the gently fishes a gherkin out of the jar.
She sniffs it, then licks it.

Her face screws up into a look of disgust.

She puts the jar back onto the shelf, then pops the gherkin into her pocket.

Mary glares, then heads off along the aisle.

Edith ambles along, pushing the trolley.

She turns the corner into the drinks section, where Mary inspects various bottled spirits.

MARY
Ooh, now that’s a good one. I might treat myself to that.

She places the bottle into the trolley.

MARY (cont’d)
And you can have this one.

She addresses Edith as if speaking to a child.

MARY (cont’d)
Look, Mother— your own bottle of vodka. That’s nice isn’t it? It’s all for you!

Edith grabs the bottle and holds it close to her face, reading the label.

She looks down into the trolley.

EDITH
Why have I got value brand? Why should I have the value brand when you’ve got Smirnoff? You said that you get what you pay for.

MARY
I’ve got Smirnoff because I’m paying for it, aren’t I? You’ll never tell the difference anyway. You lost your sense of taste years ago, along with your dignity and your bladder control.

Edith nods, as if in agreement, then places the value vodka in the trolley.

They continue towards the checkout.
EDITH
Ooh Mary. We need to get some milk, we’ve only got a bit left.

MARY
Now she tells me! Look at the size of these bloody queues. Doesn’t anybody go to work around here? You nip and get some milk, and I’ll wait in the queue, or we’ll be here all bloody day.

EDITH
Okay, dear. Won’t be long.

Edith shuffles away as Mary waits in line.

INT. SUPERMARKET- LATER

Mary places the bottles of vodka, the milk and the cling-film on the conveyor belt.

The CHECKOUT GIRL, twenties, smiles politely as she scans the items.

CHECKOUT GIRL
Have you got a Clubcard, duck?

MARY
No dear, I haven’t.

CHECKOUT GIRL
Would you be interested in applying for one today?

MARY
Would you be interested in hurrying up and actually bloody serving me?

CHECKOUT GIRL
A few manners wouldn’t go amiss.

MARY
No, and neither would a few GCSEs. Maybe then you wouldn’t be sat behind the checkout at this hellhole of a place. Can’t you see I’m in a hurry?

The checkout girl feigns a smile.
CHECKOUT GIRL
That’s thirty-six pounds and four pence, please.

Mary opens her purse then counts out the money.

MARY
Ten, twenty, thirty, five, and one makes six. Oh! Have you got four pence Mother? I’ve run out of change, and I don’t really want to break into a fifty.

She holds a Fifty Pence piece out towards Edith.

Edith empties her pockets showing Mary the contents; a button, a gherkin and a boiled sweet covered in fluff.

MARY (cont’d)
You really are a waste of skin, Mother. An out and out oxygen thief.

She turns to the checkout girl.

MARY (cont’d)
I haven’t got time to be fannying about. Lose the milk!

EXT. CARPARK

Mary struts along the carpark, Edith struggling behind with the shopping.

Mary opens the boot of the car, then stands hands on hips, waiting for Edith.

She slams the boot, then they get into the car.

INT. MARY’S CAR

MARY
Put your seatbelt on, Mother. I don’t want you damaging my windscreen.

Edith obliges without any retaliation.

Mary turns the key in the ignition.

The car groans. She turns the key again. The car wheezes and splutters.
MARY (cont’d)
I don’t bloody believe this. The car’s bloody knackered now. God, I need a drink!

EDITH
Aren’t you in the AA, Mary?

MARY
I’ve told you a thousand times, I don’t have a problem, it just takes the edge off the day. You drink just as much. Probably more. Now get out.

EXT. CARPARK

Mary angrily exits the car then slams the door.

MARY
Come on we’ll have to bloody walk, won’t we? Jesus, it must be getting on for at least a mile away.

Edith clambers out the passenger side. Mary grabs the shopping and locks the doors.

EDITH
Why are you locking it?

MARY
I don’t want it to get stolen, do I?

EDITH
But it won’t start, dear.

MARY
No need to rub it in. Just shut it and get walking, you vile old hag.

Mary hands Edith the shopping bag as they walk across the carpark in silence.

EXT. HIGH STREET

Mary and Edith continue the silent trek, trudging the busy streets.

A few more paces then Mary stops in her tracks, placing her hands on her back.
MARY
I’m absolutely knick-knacked. I’m going to have to have a sit down for five minutes.

She looks around.

MARY (cont’d)
Come on, Mother. This’ll do.

She points towards ’The Red Lion’ pub, with it’s huge sign which reads ‘Double up on all spirits for £1’.

INT. IONA’S HOUSE- LIVING ROOM- LATER

BARBARA, fifties, sits on the sofa watching the news on the television.

Iona blusters in, then joins her mother.

BARBARA
Are you okay, love?

IONA
Yeah, I think so.

BARBARA
And you’re sure that you want to do this?

IONA
Yes, Mum. I need to know, just to put my mind at rest.

BARBARA
Okay, if you’re sure.

IONA
I am... Do I look okay?

Barbara leans back, looking her daughter up and down. She smiles.

BARBARA
You look beautiful, love.

Iona stands then heads to the door.

IONA
Thanks. I’ll ring you as soon as I get chance. Love ya, Mum.
BARBARA
I love you too. You sure you don’t need me to come with you?

IONA
No, I’ll be fine. Laters!

Iona blows a kiss towards Barbara as she leaves the room.

EXT. MARY’S HOUSE

A large, crumbling house. The front gate groans and falls from its hinges as Iona forces it open.

She treads carefully along the front yard, stepping over weeds and bracken.

The net curtains twitch in the downstairs window as Iona nears the front door.

She reaches out to press the doorbell, pausing to reassure herself.

IONA
It’s gonna be okay. Be brave.

She exhales and slowly raises her finger. Another pause.

She turns, ready to walk away.

IONA
Come on, you can do this.

In a burst of courage she confidently presses the doorbell.

Hearing movement inside the house she bites her lip.

The door creaks open.

She is greeted by Edith.

EDITH
Can I help you, dear?

Iona coughs to clear her throat.

IONA
I hope so. Are you Mrs Allcock?

EDITH
Yes dear, I am. And you are...?
IONA
I’m... I’m the long-lost daughter!
My name’s Iona. Iona Wildthatch.
You’re expecting me?

EDITH
Oh my dear! Of course. Please, come
in and let me have a look at you.

Iona smiles then steps inside.

INT. MARY’S HOUSE- LIVING ROOM
Edith leads Iona in and gestures towards the sofa.

EDITH
Sit down, my dear. Make yourself at home. I’ll get you a nice cup of tea if we’ve got enough milk left. Sugar?

Iona sits, grinning.

IONA
Yes. Two please Mrs Allcock.

EDITH
Ooh. It’s rare to see a youngster with such impeccable manners. You’re lovely.

IONA
Thank you. I’m sure you are too.

Edith leaves the room.

Iona pulls her mobile out of her pocket then dials a number.

She speaks into the phone in a whisper.

IONA (cont’d)
Hello Mum? It’s me. I’m here.
(beat)
She seems lovely.
(beat)
Yeah. I don’t know what I was so worried about. She’s a lovely old dear.
(beat)
Oh, I’ve got to go, she’s coming back. Love ya. Bye.

She hangs up then slips the phone back into her pocket.
Edith re-enters the room with a mug of really strong tea. She hands the mug to Iona.

IONA (cont’d)
Thank you.

EDITH
You’re welcome my dear. I’m sorry it’s so strong. Out of milk, you see.

An awkward silence hangs in the air for a moment or two.

EDITH (cont’d)
Well it seems really strange to see you after all this time, dear.

IONA
I know what you mean. I’m still in shock a little.

EDITH
Yes, I suppose you are. It hit my daughter quite hard too.

IONA
Your daughter? I... I have a sister?

Edith looks puzzled.

EDITH
A sister? No dear. Did you think I was your mother? Oh no. I’m not your mum, dear. I’m your grandmother. My daughter is your mother, dear.

IONA
Oh God. I see. I was a little confused for the minute. I thought you were a bit old, if you don’t mind me saying.

Edith chuckles as she takes Iona’s hand.

EDITH
Come with me, dear. I’ll go and tell her that you’re here. She’s busy in the back yard.
IONA
Okay. I’m dying to meet her. If she’s as lovely as you, I’ll be more than happy.

Iona stands.

Edith leads her out of the room.

INT. MARY’S HOUSE- KITCHEN.

EDITH
You just wait here, my love. I’ll give her a shout.

Iona smiles then leans on the worktop.

She takes a sip of her drink.

Edith opens the back door then takes a step outside.

"She yells."

EDITH (O.S.)
Mary! Your daughter’s here... Mary!

Iona’s expression drops.

"She thinks out loud."

IONA
Mary? God no! Please!

Iona looks around the room. She notices two bottles of vodka on the side.

Her eyes dart towards the Welsh-Dresser, littered with copies of Mary’s book.

She cranes her neck to peer out of the kitchen window.

Her mouth gapes open wide as she witnesses the sight of MARY, jet wash in hand, hosing down a glass coffee table in the garden.

IONA (cont’d)
No! God, please, no!

She drops her cup.

It smashes on the floor.
She turns and flees in tears leaving the front door wide open.

Mary and Edith enter the kitchen.

MARY
Helllllllo.....Oh!

EDITH
Has she gone? She was here a minute ago, dear.

MARY
Well she’s not here now, is she? And look at the state of my best mug...What was she like, Mother?

EDITH
She seemed pleasant enough, dear. Looked a bit butch though. I think she might have been one of those vagi-terians.

EXT. WILMOT WELFARE CENTRE- EVENING

In the twilight, Sam stands in front of the building. He periodically checks his watch.

He strains to see up the driveway as he hears footsteps growing louder.

"He calls out."

SAM
Mary! Where the hell have you been? The crowd are growing restless in there... And why aren’t you in your car?

Mary staggers towards him, out of breath.

MARY
The bloody car’s broken down, hasn’t it!

She loses her footing then falls into his arms.

SAM
Aren’t you a member of the AA?
MARY
Not you as well! Shut the fuck up and mind your own business.

SAM
No time to split hairs, Mary. Get yourself in there before they start rioting. It’s chaos tonight. Even Iona’s blobbed it.

MARY
Blobbed it?

SAM
Not shown up. Have you seen anything of her?

MARY
No. Isn’t it gay pride in Derby this week? She’s probably in the Duke of York playing tranny bingo.

INT. WILMOT WELFARE CENTRE—ASSEMBLY ROOM

The room is packed out by a rowdy crowd.

They drop into silence as Mary and Sam enter.

MARY
Better late than never, eh people? Sorry about that. Bit of car trouble I’m afraid.

She staggers to her place at the front of the room.

Sam sits behind the desk.

MARY (cont’d)
Right, I’ll crack on. Blah-blah phones off, blah-blah healing book. You get the idea.

Her head slumps forward.

Her breathing deepens.

She slowly raises her head.

MARY (cont’d)
Congratulations are in order! They’re popping the corks and having a little celebration!
She grins inanely as she looks around the room.

MARY (cont’d)
Who’s had the good news this week then? The spirits are really excited. It’s really great news.

The crowd look around checking for raised hands.

MARY (cont’d)
It’s a message for a lady... A young lady... And I’m drawn to you, my dear.

She points towards CHANTELLE, late teens.

Chanette smiles nervously.

MARY (cont’d)
You’ve had some exciting news this week, haven’t you my lovely?

CHANTELLE
Well, yes. I... I have, but I’ve not told anyone yet.

MARY
What, not even your boyfriend? That’s your boyfriend sat there, isn’t it?

She nods towards LEE, early twenties, who sits beside her.

CHANTELLE
Yeah it is, and no I haven’t!

LEE
Haven’t told me what, Chantelle?

Chanette pauses, stuck for words.

MARY
Come on, love. It’s great news. If you don’t tell him, I will!

CHANTELLE
I’m...I’m...

MARY
She’s preggers, dear. She’s having a baby!

Lee breaks into a beaming smile.
Lee
Is that true ’Telle? Are we having a kid?

Chantelle
Yeah, it’s true. I was gonna tell you later.

Mary
The spirits are absolutely made up for you, dear. They’re telling me all sorts of things. Where it was conceived, what you’re going to call him...

Chantelle
Him? It’s a boy? How will they know what I’m gonna call him?

Mary
Because they’re telling me that you’re going to name him after his daddy.

Lee’s eyes well with water.
He looks towards Chantelle, smiling.
He grabs her hand.

Mary (cont’d)
Winston. It’s quite an unusual name for a little one. But, Winston it is!

Lee
Winston? Who the fuck’s Winston, ’Telle?

Chantelle
I’m sorry Lee. I’m so sorry. He’s my dealer. I...I couldn’t afford my last hit.

Mary
Ooh, it’s so lovely. Just think, in seven months time you’ll have a lovely new coffee-coloured addition to the family.

Lee
You slag ’Telle. Not again.
CHANTELLE
I’m sorry Lee. I’m sorry.

Chantelle flees the room breaking into tears as she goes.

Lee sits silently in his seat.

MARY
Best of luck to you, dear.
Congratulations.

A number of the crowd look unsettled.

Mary’s head drops forward again.

Her breathing shallows.

Lee ups and leaves.

MARY (cont’d)
I’m getting more family news. Quite important. Has anyone had an upheaval in the family?

No-one responds.

MARY (cont’d)
They’re telling me it’s very important. Have we got someone in the audience called M...Mary?

The crowd look around.

Still no response.

MARY (cont’d)
They’re saying to me Mary, there’s big news on the family front. They’re saying your daughter’s back on the scene, and there’s going to be trouble.

Sam looks confused as Mary concentrates deeply to receive the message.

MARY (cont’d)
Your daughter’s back and life’s going to be in turmoil. Be prepared, Mary, they’re saying. Any takers?

The assembly hall door bursts open violently as Iona staggers in, beer bottle in hand, her hair a mess and make-up smeared.
IONA
Mary! You bitch!

Mary looks aghast at the sight of Iona struggling to keep her balance.

IONA (cont’d)
I can’t stand you as it is, but you have to go one step further don’t you? How dare you be my mother?

MARY
Your...Your mother?

IONA
Yeah, Mary! You’re my bleeding mother. I was round your house this afternoon. How the hell could you do this to me? I hate you, you fucking obnoxious witch.

Iona spins around quickly then grabs a waste paper bin.

She vomits and collapses.

SAM
Mary? Is this true? My God, that means...

FADE OUT