Proclamation of Independence

POBLACHT NA H EIREANN

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom. Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and, supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory. We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty; six times during the last three hundred years they have asserted it to arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations. The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and all of its parts, cherishing all of the children of the nation equally and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past. Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people. We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God. Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, in humanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called. Signed on Behalf of the Provisional Government. Thomas J. Clarke, Sean Mac Diarmada, Thomas MacDonagh, P. H. Pearse, Eamonn Ceannt, James Connolly, Joseph Plunkett

**CATHLEEN NI HOULIHAN**

*Interior of a cottage close to Killala, in 1798.*BRIDGET*is standing at a table undoing a parcel.*PETER*is sitting at one side of the fire,*PATRICK*at the other.*

PETER.

What is that sound I hear?

PATRICK.

I don’t hear anything. [*He listens.*] I hear it now. It’s like cheering. [*He goes to the window and looks out.*] I wonder what they are cheering about. I don’t see anybody.

PETER.

It might be a hurling.

PATRICK.

There’s no hurling to-day. It must be down in the town the cheering is.

BRIDGET.

I suppose the boys must be having some sport of their own. Come over here, Peter, and look at Michael’s wedding-clothes.[34]

PETER [*shifts his chair to table*].

Those are grand clothes, indeed.

BRIDGET.

You hadn’t clothes like that when you married me, and no coat to put on of a Sunday more than any other day.

PETER.

That is true, indeed. We never thought a son of our own would be wearing a suit of that sort for his wedding, or have so good a place to bring a wife to.

PATRICK [*who is still at the window*].

There’s an old woman coming down the road. I don’t know is it here she is coming?

BRIDGET.

It will be a neighbour coming to hear about Michael’s wedding. Can you see who it is?

PATRICK.

I think it is a stranger, but she’s not coming to the house. She’s turned into the gap that goes down where Murteen and his sons are shearing sheep. [*He turns towards*BRIDGET*.*] Do you remember what Winny of the Cross Roads was saying the other night about the strange woman that goes through the country whatever time there’s war or trouble coming?[35]

BRIDGET.

Don’t be bothering us about Winny’s talk, but go and open the door for your brother. I hear him coming up the path.

PETER.

I hope he has brought Delia’s fortune with him safe, for fear her people might go back on the bargain and I after making it. Trouble enough I had making it.

[PATRICK*opens the door and*MICHAEL*comes in.*

BRIDGET.

What kept you, Michael? We were looking out for you this long time.

MICHAEL.

I went round by the priest’s house to bid him be ready to marry us to-morrow.

BRIDGET.

Did he say anything?

MICHAEL.

He said it was a very nice match, and that he was never better pleased to marry any two in his parish than myself and Delia Cahel.

PETER.

Have you got the fortune, Michael?

MICHAEL.

Here it is.[36]

[MICHAEL*puts bag on table and goes over and leans against chimney-jamb.*BRIDGET*, who has been all this time examining the clothes, pulling the seams and trying the lining of the pockets, etc., puts the clothes on the dresser.*

PETER.  
[*Getting up and taking the bag in his hand and turning out the money.*]

Yes, I made the bargain well for you, Michael. Old John Cahel would sooner have kept a share of this a while longer. ‘Let me keep the half of it until the first boy is born,’ says he. ‘You will not,’ says I. ‘Whether there is or is not a boy, the whole hundred pounds must be in Michael’s hands before he brings your daughter to the house.’ The wife spoke to him then, and he gave in at the end.

BRIDGET.

You seem well pleased to be handling the money, Peter.

PETER.

Indeed, I wish I had had the luck to get a hundred pounds, or twenty pounds itself, with the wife I married.

BRIDGET.

Well, if I didn’t bring much I didn’t get much. What had you the day I married you[37] but a flock of hens and you feeding them, and a few lambs and you driving them to the market at Ballina. [*She is vexed and bangs a jug on the dresser.*] If I brought no fortune I worked it out in my bones, laying down the baby, Michael that is standing there now, on a stook of straw, while I dug the potatoes, and never asking big dresses or anything but to be working.

PETER.

That is true, indeed.

[*He pats her arm.*

BRIDGET.

Leave me alone now till I ready the house for the woman that is to come into it.

PETER.

You are the best woman in Ireland, but money is good, too. [*He begins handling the money again and sits down.*] I never thought to see so much money within my four walls. We can do great things now we have it. We can take the ten acres of land we have a chance of since Jamsie Dempsey died, and stock it. We will go to the fair of Ballina to buy the stock. Did Delia ask any of the money for her own use, Michael?

MICHAEL.

She did not, indeed. She did not seem to take much notice of it, or to look at it at all.[38]

BRIDGET.

That’s no wonder. Why would she look at it when she had yourself to look at, a fine, strong young man? it is proud she must be to get you; a good steady boy that will make use of the money, and not be running through it or spending it on drink like another.

PETER.

It’s likely Michael himself was not thinking much of the fortune either, but of what sort the girl was to look at.

MICHAEL [*coming over towards the table*].

Well, you would like a nice comely girl to be beside you, and to go walking with you. The fortune only lasts for a while, but the woman will be there always.

PATRICK [*turning round from the window*].

They are cheering again down in the town. Maybe they are landing horses from Enniscrone. They do be cheering when the horses take the water well.

MICHAEL.

There are no horses in it. Where would they be going and no fair at hand? Go down to the town, Patrick, and see what is going on.[39]

PATRICK.  
[*Opens the door to go out, but stops for a moment on the threshold.*]

Will Delia remember, do you think, to bring the greyhound pup she promised me when she would be coming to the house?

MICHAEL.

She will surely.

[PATRICK*goes out, leaving the door open.*

PETER.

It will be Patrick’s turn next to be looking for a fortune, but he won’t find it so easy to get it and he with no place of his own.

BRIDGET.

I do be thinking sometimes, now things are going so well with us, and the Cahels such a good back to us in the district, and Delia’s own uncle a priest, we might be put in the way of making Patrick a priest some day, and he so good at his books.

PETER.

Time enough, time enough, you have always your head full of plans, Bridget.

BRIDGET.

We will be well able to give him learning, and not to send him tramping the country like a poor scholar that lives on charity.[40]

MICHAEL.

They’re not done cheering yet.

[*He goes over to the door and stands there for a moment, putting up his hand to shade his eyes.*

BRIDGET.

Do you see anything?

MICHAEL.

I see an old woman coming up the path.

BRIDGET.

Who is it, I wonder? It must be the strange woman Patrick saw a while ago.

MICHAEL.

I don’t think it’s one of the neighbours anyway, but she has her cloak over her face.

BRIDGET.

It might be some poor woman heard we were making ready for the wedding and came to look for her share.

PETER.

I may as well put the money out of sight. There is no use leaving it out for every stranger to look at.

[*He goes over to a large box in the corner, opens it and puts the bag in and fumbles at the lock.*[41]

MICHAEL.

There she is, father! [*An*Old Woman*passes the window slowly, she looks at*MICHAEL*as she passes.*] I’d sooner a stranger not to come to the house the night before my wedding.

BRIDGET.

Open the door, Michael; don’t keep the poor woman waiting.

[*The*OLD WOMAN*comes in.*MICHAEL*stands aside to make way for her.*

OLD WOMAN.

God save all here!

PETER.

God save you kindly!

OLD WOMAN.

You have good shelter here.

PETER.

You are welcome to whatever shelter we have.

BRIDGET.

Sit down there by the fire and welcome.

OLD WOMAN [*warming her hands*].

There is a hard wind outside.

[MICHAEL*watches her curiously from the door.*PETER*comes over to the table.*

PETER.

Have you travelled far to-day?[42]

OLD WOMAN.

I have travelled far, very far; there are few have travelled so far as myself, and there’s many a one that doesn’t make me welcome. There was one that had strong sons I thought were friends of mine, but they were shearing their sheep, and they wouldn’t listen to me.

PETER.

It’s a pity indeed for any person to have no place of their own.

OLD WOMAN.

That’s true for you indeed, and it’s long I’m on the roads since I first went wandering.

BRIDGET.

It is a wonder you are not worn out with so much wandering.

OLD WOMAN.

Sometimes my feet are tired and my hands are quiet, but there is no quiet in my heart. When the people see me quiet, they think old age has come on me and that all the stir has gone out of me. But when the trouble is on me I must be talking to my friends.

BRIDGET.

What was it put you wandering?[43]

OLD WOMAN.

Too many strangers in the house.

BRIDGET.

Indeed you look as if you’d had your share of trouble.

OLD WOMAN.

I have had trouble indeed.

BRIDGET.

What was it put the trouble on you?

OLD WOMAN.

My land that was taken from me.

PETER.

Was it much land they took from you?

OLD WOMAN.

My four beautiful green fields.

PETER [*aside to*BRIDGET].

Do you think could she be the widow Casey that was put out of her holding at Kilglass a while ago?

BRIDGET.

She is not. I saw the widow Casey one time at the market in Ballina, a stout fresh woman.

PETER [*to*OLD WOMAN].

Did you hear a noise of cheering, and you coming up the hill?[44]

OLD WOMAN.

I thought I heard the noise I used to hear when my friends came to visit me.

[*She begins singing half to herself.*

I will go cry with the woman,

For yellow-haired Donough is dead,

With a hempen rope for a neckcloth,

And a white cloth on his head,——

MICHAEL [*coming from the door*].

What is that you are singing, ma’am?

OLD WOMAN.

Singing I am about a man I knew one time, yellow-haired Donough that was hanged in Galway.

[*She goes on singing, much louder.*

I am come to cry with you, woman,

My hair is unwound and unbound;

I remember him ploughing his field,

Turning up the red side of the ground,

And building his barn on the hill

With the good mortared stone;

O! we’d have pulled down the gallows

Had it happened in Enniscrone!

MICHAEL.

What was it brought him to his death?

OLD WOMAN.

He died for love of me: many a man has died for love of me.[45]

PETER [*aside to*BRIDGET].

Her trouble has put her wits astray.

MICHAEL.

Is it long since that song was made? Is it long since he got his death?

OLD WOMAN.

Not long, not long. But there were others that died for love of me a long time ago.

MICHAEL.

Were they neighbours of your own, ma’am?

OLD WOMAN.

Come here beside me and I’ll tell you about them. [MICHAEL*sits down beside her at the hearth.*] There was a red man of the O’Donnells from the north, and a man of the O’Sullivans from the south, and there was one Brian that lost his life at Clontarf by the sea, and there were a great many in the west, some that died hundreds of years ago, and there are some that will die to-morrow.

MICHAEL.

Is it in the west that men will die to-morrow?

OLD WOMAN.

Come nearer, nearer to me.

BRIDGET.

Is she right, do you think? Or is she a woman from beyond the world?[46]

PETER.

She doesn’t know well what she’s talking about, with the want and the trouble she has gone through.

BRIDGET.

The poor thing, we should treat her well.

PETER.

Give her a drink of milk and a bit of the oaten cake.

BRIDGET.

Maybe we should give her something along with that, to bring her on her way. A few pence or a shilling itself, and we with so much money in the house.

PETER.

Indeed I’d not begrudge it to her if we had it to spare, but if we go running through what we have, we’ll soon have to break the hundred pounds, and that would be a pity.

BRIDGET.

Shame on you, Peter. Give her the shilling and your blessing with it, or our own luck will go from us.

[PETER*goes to the box and takes out a shilling.*

BRIDGET [*to the*OLD WOMAN].

Will you have a drink of milk, ma’am?

OLD WOMAN.

It is not food or drink that I want.[47]

PETER [*offering the shilling*].

Here is something for you.

OLD WOMAN.

This is not what I want. It is not silver I want.

PETER.

What is it you would be asking for?

OLD WOMAN.

If anyone would give me help he must give me himself, he must give me all.

[PETER*goes over to the table staring at the shilling in his hand in a bewildered way, and stands whispering to*BRIDGET*.*

MICHAEL.

Have you no one to care you in your age, ma’am?

OLD WOMAN.

I have not. With all the lovers that brought me their love, I never set out the bed for any.

MICHAEL.

Are you lonely going the roads, ma’am?

OLD WOMAN.

I have my thoughts and I have my hopes.

MICHAEL.

What hopes have you to hold to?

OLD WOMAN.

The hope of getting my beautiful fields back again; the hope of putting the strangers out of my house.[48]

MICHAEL.

What way will you do that, ma’am?

OLD WOMAN.

I have good friends that will help me. They are gathering to help me now. I am not afraid. If they are put down to-day they will get the upper hand to-morrow. [*She gets up.*] I must be going to meet my friends. They are coming to help me and I must be there to welcome them. I must call the neighbours together to welcome them.

MICHAEL.

I will go with you.

BRIDGET.

It is not her friends you have to go and welcome, Michael; it is the girl coming into the house you have to welcome. You have plenty to do, it is food and drink you have to bring to the house. The woman that is coming home is not coming with empty hands; you would not have an empty house before her. [*To the*OLD WOMAN*.*] Maybe you don’t know, ma’am, that my son is going to be married to-morrow.

OLD WOMAN.

It is not a man going to his marriage that I look to for help.[49]

PETER [*to*BRIDGET].

Who is she, do you think, at all?

BRIDGET.

You did not tell us your name yet, ma’am.

OLD WOMAN.

Some call me the Poor Old Woman, and there are some that call me Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan.

PETER.

I think I knew someone of that name once. Who was it, I wonder? It must have been someone I knew when I was a boy. No, no; I remember, I heard it in a song.

OLD WOMAN.  
[*Who is standing in the doorway.*]

They are wondering that there were songs made for me; there have been many songs made for me. I heard one on the wind this morning.

[*Sings.*] Do not make a great keening

When the graves have been dug to-morrow.

Do not call the white-scarfed riders

To the burying that shall be to-morrow.

Do not spread food to call strangers

To the wakes that shall be to-morrow;

Do not give money for prayers

For the dead that shall die to-morrow . . .

they will have no need of prayers, they will have no need of prayers.[50]

MICHAEL.

I do not know what that song means, but tell me something I can do for you.

PETER.

Come over to me, Michael.

MICHAEL.

Hush, father, listen to her.

OLD WOMAN.

It is a hard service they take that help me. Many that are red-cheeked now will be pale-cheeked; many that have been free to walk the hills and the bogs and the rushes, will be sent to walk hard streets in far countries; many a good plan will be broken; many that have gathered money will not stay to spend it; many a child will be born and there will be no father at its christening to give it a name. They that had red cheeks will have pale cheeks for my sake; and for all that, they will think they are well paid.

[*She goes out; her voice is heard outside singing.*

They shall be remembered for ever,

They shall be alive for ever,

They shall be speaking for ever,

The people shall hear them for ever.

BRIDGET [*to*PETER].

Look at him, Peter; he has the look of a man that has got the touch. [*Raising her voice.*] Look here, Michael, at the wedding clothes.[51] Such grand clothes as these are! You have a right to fit them on now, it would be a pity to-morrow if they did not fit. The boys would be laughing at you. Take them, Michael, and go into the room and fit them on.

[*She puts them on his arm.*

MICHAEL.

What wedding are you talking of? What clothes will I be wearing to-morrow?

BRIDGET.

These are the clothes you are going to wear when you marry Delia Cahel to-morrow.

MICHAEL.

I had forgotten that.

[*He looks at the clothes and turns towards the inner room, but stops at the sound of cheering outside.*

PETER.

There is the shouting come to our own door. What is it has happened?

[Neighbours*come crowding in,*PATRICK*and*DELIA*with them.*

PATRICK.

There are ships in the Bay; the French are landing at Killala!

[PETER*takes his pipe from his mouth and his hat off and stands up. The clothes slip from MICHAEL’S arm.*

[52]

DELIA.

Michael! [*He takes no notice.*] Michael! [*He turns towards her.*] Why do you look at me like a stranger?

[*She drops his arm.*BRIDGET*goes over towards her.*

PATRICK.

The boys are all hurrying down the hill-sides to join the French.

DELIA.

Michael won’t be going to join the French.

BRIDGET [*to*PETER].

Tell him not to go, Peter.

PETER.

It’s no use. He doesn’t hear a word we’re saying.

BRIDGET.

Try and coax him over to the fire.

DELIA.

Michael, Michael! You won’t leave me! You won’t join the French, and we going to be married!

[*She puts her arms about him, he turns towards her as if about to yield.*

OLD WOMAN’S *voice outside*.

They shall be speaking for ever,

The people shall hear them for ever.

[MICHAEL*breaks away from*DELIA*, stands for a second at the door, then rushes out, following the*OLD WOMAN’S*voice.*BRIDGET*takes*DELIA*, who is crying silently, into her arms.*

PETER.  
[*To*PATRICK*, laying a hand on his arm.*]

Did you see an old woman going down the path?

PATRICK.

I did not, but I saw a young girl, and she had the walk of a queen.

PREFACE

In writing THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD, as in my other plays, I have used one or two words only that I have not heard among the country people of Ireland, or spoken in my own nursery before I could read the newspapers. A certain number of the phrases I employ I have heard also from herds and fishermen along the coast from Kerry to Mayo, or from beggar-women and ballad-singers nearer Dublin; and I am glad to acknowledge how much I owe to the folk imagination of these fine people. Anyone who has lived in real intimacy with the Irish peasantry will know that the wildest sayings and ideas in this play are tame indeed, compared with the fancies one may hear in any little hillside cabin in Geesala, or Carraroe, or Dingle Bay. All art is a collaboration; and there is little doubt that in the happy ages of literature, striking and beautiful phrases were as ready to the story-teller’s or the playwright’s hand, as the rich cloaks and dresses of his time. It is probable that when the Elizabethan dramatist took his ink-horn and sat down to his work he used many phrases that he had just heard, as he sat at dinner, from his mother or his children. In Ireland, those of us who know the people have the same privilege. When I was writing *The Shadow of the Glen*, some years ago, I got more aid than any learning could have given me from a chink in the floor of the old Wicklow house where I was staying, that let me hear what was being said by the servant girls in the kitchen. This matter, I think, is of importance, for in countries where the imagination of the people, and the language they use, is rich and living, it is possible for a writer to be rich and copious in his words, and at the same time to give the reality, which is the root of all poetry, in a comprehensive and natural form. In the modern literature of towns, however, richness is found only in sonnets, or prose poems, or in one or two elaborate books that are far away from the profound and common interests of life. One has, on one side, Mallarmé and Huysmans producing this literature; and on the other, Ibsen and Zola dealing with the reality of life in joyless and pallid words. On the stage one must have reality, and one must have joy; and that is why the intellectual modern drama has failed, and people have grown sick of the false joy of the musical comedy, that has been given them in place of the rich joy found only in what is superb and wild in reality. In a good play every speech should be as fully flavoured as a nut or apple, and such speeches cannot be written by anyone who works among people who have shut their lips on poetry. In Ireland, for a few years more, we have a popular imagination that is fiery and magnificent, and tender; so that those of us who wish to write start with a chance that is not given to writers in places where the springtime of the local life has been forgotten, and the harvest is a memory only, and the straw has been turned into bricks.

J. M. S.

*January* 21*st*, 1907.

PERSONS

CHRISTOPHER MAHON.  
OLD MAHON, *his father, a squatter*.  
MICHAEL JAMES FLAHERTY (called MICHAEL JAMES), *a publican*.  
MARGARET FLAHERTY (called PEGEEN MIKE), *his daughter*.  
SHAWN KEOUGH, *her cousin, a young farmer*.  
WIDOW QUIN, *a woman of about thirty*.  
PHILLY CULLEN and JIMMY FARRELL, *small farmers*.  
SARA TANSEY, SUSAN BRADY, and HONOR BLAKE, *village girls*.  
A BELLMAN.  
SOME PEASANTS.

The action takes place near a village, on a wild coast of Mayo. The first Act passes on an evening of autumn, the other two Acts on the following day.

THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD

ACT I.

SCENE: Country public-house or shebeen, very rough and untidy. There is a sort of counter on the right with shelves, holding many bottles and jugs, just seen above it. Empty barrels stand near the counter. At back, a little to left of counter, there is a door into the open air, then, more to the left, there is a settle with shelves above it, with more jugs, and a table beneath a window. At the left there is a large open fire-place, with turf fire, and a small door into inner room. Pegeen, a wild-looking but fine girl, of about twenty, is writing at table. She is dressed in the usual peasant dress.

PEGEEN.  
*slowly as she writes.*—Six yards of stuff for to make a yellow gown. A pair of lace boots with lengthy heels on them and brassy eyes. A hat is suited for a wedding-day. A fine tooth comb. To be sent with three barrels of porter in Jimmy Farrell’s creel cart on the evening of the coming Fair to Mister Michael James Flaherty. With the best compliments of this season. Margaret Flaherty.

SHAWN KEOGH.  
*a fat and fair young man comes in as she signs, looks round awkwardly, when he sees she is alone.*—Where’s himself?

PEGEEN.  
*without looking at him.*—He’s coming. (*She directs the letter.*) To Mister Sheamus Mulroy, Wine and Spirit Dealer, Castlebar.

SHAWN.  
*uneasily.*—I didn’t see him on the road.

PEGEEN.  
How would you see him (*licks stamp and puts it on letter*) and it dark night this half hour gone by?

SHAWN.  
*turning towards the door again.*—I stood a while outside wondering would I have a right to pass on or to walk in and see you, Pegeen Mike (*comes to fire*), and I could hear the cows breathing, and sighing in the stillness of the air, and not a step moving any place from this gate to the bridge.

PEGEEN.  
*putting letter in envelope.*—It’s above at the cross-roads he is, meeting Philly Cullen; and a couple more are going along with him to Kate Cassidy’s wake.

SHAWN.  
*looking at her blankly.*—And he’s going that length in the dark night?

PEGEEN.  
*impatiently.*—He is surely, and leaving me lonesome on the scruff of the hill. (*She gets up and puts envelope on dresser, then winds the clock.*) Isn’t it long the nights are now, Shawn Keogh, to be leaving a poor girl with her own self counting the hours to the dawn of day?

SHAWN.  
*with awkward humour.*—If it is, when we’re wedded in a short while you’ll have no call to complain, for I’ve little will to be walking off to wakes or weddings in the darkness of the night.

PEGEEN.  
*with rather scornful good humour.*—You’re making mighty certain, Shaneen, that I’ll wed you now.

SHAWN.  
Aren’t we after making a good bargain, the way we’re only waiting these days on Father Reilly’s dispensation from the bishops, or the Court of Rome.

PEGEEN.  
*looking at him teasingly, washing up at dresser.*—It’s a wonder, Shaneen, the Holy Father’d be taking notice of the likes of you; for if I was him I wouldn’t bother with this place where you’ll meet none but Red Linahan, has a squint in his eye, and Patcheen is lame in his heel, or the mad Mulrannies were driven from California and they lost in their wits. We’re a queer lot these times to go troubling the Holy Father on his sacred seat.

SHAWN.  
*scandalized.*—If we are, we’re as good this place as another, maybe, and as good these times as we were for ever.

PEGEEN.  
*with scorn.*—As good, is it? Where now will you meet the like of Daneen Sullivan knocked the eye from a peeler, or Marcus Quin, God rest him, got six months for maiming ewes, and he a great warrant to tell stories of holy Ireland till he’d have the old women shedding down tears about their feet. Where will you find the like of them, I’m saying?

SHAWN.  
*timidly.*—If you don’t it’s a good job, maybe; for (*with peculiar emphasis on the words*) Father Reilly has small conceit to have that kind walking around and talking to the girls.

PEGEEN.  
*impatiently, throwing water from basin out of the door.*—Stop tormenting me with Father Reilly (*imitating his voice*) when I’m asking only what way I’ll pass these twelve hours of dark, and not take my death with the fear. (*Looking out of door.*)

SHAWN.  
*timidly.*—Would I fetch you the widow Quin, maybe?

PEGEEN.  
Is it the like of that murderer? You’ll not, surely.

SHAWN.  
*going to her, soothingly.*—Then I’m thinking himself will stop along with you when he sees you taking on, for it’ll be a long night-time with great darkness, and I’m after feeling a kind of fellow above in the furzy ditch, groaning wicked like a maddening dog, the way it’s good cause you have, maybe, to be fearing now.

PEGEEN.  
*turning on him sharply.*—What’s that? Is it a man you seen?

SHAWN.  
*retreating.*—I couldn’t see him at all; but I heard him groaning out, and breaking his heart. It should have been a young man from his words speaking.

PEGEEN.  
*going after him.*—And you never went near to see was he hurted or what ailed him at all?

SHAWN.  
I did not, Pegeen Mike. It was a dark, lonesome place to be hearing the like of him.

PEGEEN.  
Well, you’re a daring fellow, and if they find his corpse stretched above in the dews of dawn, what’ll you say then to the peelers, or the Justice of the Peace?

SHAWN.  
*thunderstruck.*—I wasn’t thinking of that. For the love of God, Pegeen Mike, don’t let on I was speaking of him. Don’t tell your father and the men is coming above; for if they heard that story, they’d have great blabbing this night at the wake.

PEGEEN.  
I’ll maybe tell them, and I’ll maybe not.

SHAWN.  
They are coming at the door, Will you whisht, I’m saying?

PEGEEN.  
Whisht yourself.

[*She goes behind counter. Michael James, fat jovial publican, comes in followed by Philly Cullen, who is thin and mistrusting, and Jimmy Farrell, who is fat and amorous, about forty-five.*]

MEN.  
*together.*—God bless you. The blessing of God on this place.

PEGEEN.  
God bless you kindly.

MICHAEL.  
*to men who go to the counter.*—Sit down now, and take your rest. (*Crosses to Shawn at the fire.*) And how is it you are, Shawn Keogh? Are you coming over the sands to Kate Cassidy’s wake?

SHAWN.  
I am not, Michael James. I’m going home the short cut to my bed.

PEGEEN.  
*speaking across the counter.*—He’s right too, and have you no shame, Michael James, to be quitting off for the whole night, and leaving myself lonesome in the shop?

MICHAEL.  
*good-humouredly.*—Isn’t it the same whether I go for the whole night or a part only? and I’m thinking it’s a queer daughter you are if you’d have me crossing backward through the Stooks of the Dead Women, with a drop taken.

PEGEEN.  
If I am a queer daughter, it’s a queer father’d be leaving me lonesome these twelve hours of dark, and I piling the turf with the dogs barking, and the calves mooing, and my own teeth rattling with the fear.

JIMMY.  
*flatteringly.*—What is there to hurt you, and you a fine, hardy girl would knock the head of any two men in the place?

PEGEEN.  
*working herself up.*—Isn’t there the harvest boys with their tongues red for drink, and the ten tinkers is camped in the east glen, and the thousand militia—bad cess to them!—walking idle through the land. There’s lots surely to hurt me, and I won’t stop alone in it, let himself do what he will.

MICHAEL.  
If you’re that afeard, let Shawn Keogh stop along with you. It’s the will of God, I’m thinking, himself should be seeing to you now. [*They all turn on Shawn.*]

SHAWN.  
*in horrified confusion.*—I would and welcome, Michael James, but I’m afeard of Father Reilly; and what at all would the Holy Father and the Cardinals of Rome be saying if they heard I did the like of that?

MICHAEL.  
*with contempt.*—God help you! Can’t you sit in by the hearth with the light lit and herself beyond in the room? You’ll do that surely, for I’ve heard tell there’s a queer fellow above, going mad or getting his death, maybe, in the gripe of the ditch, so she’d be safer this night with a person here.

SHAWN.  
*with plaintive despair.*—I’m afeard of Father Reilly, I’m saying. Let you not be tempting me, and we near married itself.

PHILLY.  
*with cold contempt.*—Lock him in the west room. He’ll stay then and have no sin to be telling to the priest.

MICHAEL.  
*to Shawn, getting between him and the door.*—Go up now.

SHAWN.  
*at the top of his voice.*—Don’t stop me, Michael James. Let me out of the door, I’m saying, for the love of the Almighty God. Let me out (*trying to dodge past him*). Let me out of it, and may God grant you His indulgence in the hour of need.

MICHAEL.  
*loudly.*—Stop your noising, and sit down by the hearth. [*Gives him a push and goes to counter laughing.*]

SHAWN.  
*turning back, wringing his hands.*—Oh, Father Reilly and the saints of God, where will I hide myself to-day? Oh, St. Joseph and St. Patrick and St. Brigid, and St. James, have mercy on me now! [*Shawn turns round, sees door clear, and makes a rush for it.*]

MICHAEL.  
*catching him by the coattail.*—You’d be going, is it?

SHAWN.  
*screaming.*—Leave me go, Michael James, leave me go, you old Pagan, leave me go, or I’ll get the curse of the priests on you, and of the scarlet-coated bishops of the courts of Rome. [*With a sudden movement he pulls himself out of his coat, and disappears out of the door, leaving his coat in Michael’s hands.*]

MICHAEL.  
*turning round, and holding up coat.*—Well, there’s the coat of a Christian man. Oh, there’s sainted glory this day in the lonesome west; and by the will of God I’ve got you a decent man, Pegeen, you’ll have no call to be spying after if you’ve a score of young girls, maybe, weeding in your fields.

PEGEEN.  
*taking up the defence of her property.*—What right have you to be making game of a poor fellow for minding the priest, when it’s your own the fault is, not paying a penny pot-boy to stand along with me and give me courage in the doing of my work? [*She snaps the coat away from him, and goes behind counter with it.*]

MICHAEL.  
*taken aback.*—Where would I get a pot-boy? Would you have me send the bell-man screaming in the streets of Castlebar?

SHAWN.  
*opening the door a chink and putting in his head, in a small voice.*—Michael James!

MICHAEL.  
*imitating him.*—What ails you?

SHAWN.  
The queer dying fellow’s beyond looking over the ditch. He’s come up, I’m thinking, stealing your hens. (*Looks over his shoulder.*) God help me, he’s following me now (*he runs into room*), and if he’s heard what I said, he’ll be having my life, and I going home lonesome in the darkness of the night. (*For a perceptible moment they watch the door with curiosity. Some one coughs outside. Then Christy Mahon, a slight young man, comes in very tired and frightened and dirty.*)

CHRISTY.  
*in a small voice.*—God save all here!

MEN.  
God save you kindly.

CHRISTY.  
*going to the counter.*—I’d trouble you for a glass of porter, woman of the house. [*He puts down coin.*]

PEGEEN.  
*serving him.*—You’re one of the tinkers, young fellow, is beyond camped in the glen?

CHRISTY.  
I am not; but I’m destroyed walking.

MICHAEL.  
*patronizingly.*—Let you come up then to the fire. You’re looking famished with the cold.

CHRISTY.  
God reward you. (*He takes up his glass and goes a little way across to the left, then stops and looks about him.*) Is it often the police do be coming into this place, master of the house?

MICHAEL.  
If you’d come in better hours, you’d have seen “Licensed for the sale of Beer and Spirits, to be consumed on the premises,” written in white letters above the door, and what would the polis want spying on me, and not a decent house within four miles, the way every living Christian is a bona fide, saving one widow alone?

CHRISTY.  
*with relief.*—It’s a safe house, so. [*He goes over to the fire, sighing and moaning. Then he sits down, putting his glass beside him and begins gnawing a turnip, too miserable to feel the others staring at him with curiosity.*]

MICHAEL.  
*going after him.*—Is it yourself fearing the polis? You’re wanting, maybe?

CHRISTY.  
There’s many wanting.

MICHAEL.  
Many surely, with the broken harvest and the ended wars. (*He picks up some stockings, etc., that are near the fire, and carries them away furtively.*) It should be larceny, I’m thinking?

CHRISTY.  
*dolefully.*—I had it in my mind it was a different word and a bigger.

PEGEEN.  
There’s a queer lad. Were you never slapped in school, young fellow, that you don’t know the name of your deed?

CHRISTY.  
*bashfully.*—I’m slow at learning, a middling scholar only.

MICHAEL.  
If you’re a dunce itself, you’d have a right to know that larceny’s robbing and stealing. Is it for the like of that you’re wanting?

CHRISTY.  
*with a flash of family pride.*—And I the son of a strong farmer (*with a sudden qualm*), God rest his soul, could have bought up the whole of your old house a while since, from the butt of his tailpocket, and not have missed the weight of it gone.

MICHAEL.  
*impressed.*—If it’s not stealing, it’s maybe something big.

CHRISTY.  
*flattered.*—Aye; it’s maybe something big.

JIMMY.  
He’s a wicked-looking young fellow. Maybe he followed after a young woman on a lonesome night.

CHRISTY.  
*shocked.*—Oh, the saints forbid, mister; I was all times a decent lad.

PHILLY.  
*turning on Jimmy.*—You’re a silly man, Jimmy Farrell. He said his father was a farmer a while since, and there’s himself now in a poor state. Maybe the land was grabbed from him, and he did what any decent man would do.

MICHAEL.  
*to Christy, mysteriously.*—Was it bailiffs?

CHRISTY.  
The divil a one.

MICHAEL.  
Agents?

CHRISTY.  
The divil a one.

MICHAEL.  
Landlords?

CHRISTY.  
*peevishly.*—Ah, not at all, I’m saying. You’d see the like of them stories on any little paper of a Munster town. But I’m not calling to mind any person, gentle, simple, judge or jury, did the like of me. [*They all draw nearer with delighted curiosity.*]

PHILLY.  
Well, that lad’s a puzzle—the world.

JIMMY.  
He’d beat Dan Davies’ circus, or the holy missioners making sermons on the villainy of man. Try him again, Philly.

PHILLY.  
Did you strike golden guineas out of solder, young fellow, or shilling coins itself?

CHRISTY.  
I did not, mister, not sixpence nor a farthing coin.

JIMMY.  
Did you marry three wives maybe? I’m told there’s a sprinkling have done that among the holy Luthers of the preaching north.

CHRISTY.  
*shyly.*—I never married with one, let alone with a couple or three.

PHILLY.  
Maybe he went fighting for the Boers, the like of the man beyond, was judged to be hanged, quartered and drawn. Were you off east, young fellow, fighting bloody wars for Kruger and the freedom of the Boers?

CHRISTY.  
I never left my own parish till Tuesday was a week.

PEGEEN.  
*coming from counter.*—He’s done nothing, so. (*To Christy.*) If you didn’t commit murder or a bad, nasty thing, or false coining, or robbery, or butchery, or the like of them, there isn’t anything that would be worth your troubling for to run from now. You did nothing at all.

CHRISTY.  
*his feelings hurt.*—That’s an unkindly thing to be saying to a poor orphaned traveller, has a prison behind him, and hanging before, and hell’s gap gaping below.

PEGEEN.  
*with a sign to the men to be quiet.*—You’re only saying it. You did nothing at all. A soft lad the like of you wouldn’t slit the windpipe of a screeching sow.

CHRISTY.  
*offended.*—You’re not speaking the truth.

PEGEEN.  
*in mock rage.*—Not speaking the truth, is it? Would you have me knock the head of you with the butt of the broom?

CHRISTY.  
*twisting round on her with a sharp cry of horror.*—Don’t strike me. I killed my poor father, Tuesday was a week, for doing the like of that.

PEGEEN.  
*with blank amazement.*—Is it killed your father?

CHRISTY.  
*subsiding.*—With the help of God I did surely, and that the Holy Immaculate Mother may intercede for his soul.

PHILLY.  
*retreating with Jimmy.*—There’s a daring fellow.

JIMMY.  
Oh, glory be to God!

MICHAEL.  
*with great respect.*—That was a hanging crime, mister honey. You should have had good reason for doing the like of that.

CHRISTY.  
*in a very reasonable tone.*—He was a dirty man, God forgive him, and he getting old and crusty, the way I couldn’t put up with him at all.

PEGEEN.  
And you shot him dead?

CHRISTY.  
*shaking his head.*—I never used weapons. I’ve no license, and I’m a law-fearing man.

MICHAEL.  
It was with a hilted knife maybe? I’m told, in the big world it’s bloody knives they use.

CHRISTY.  
*loudly, scandalized.*—Do you take me for a slaughter-boy?

PEGEEN.  
You never hanged him, the way Jimmy Farrell hanged his dog from the license, and had it screeching and wriggling three hours at the butt of a string, and himself swearing it was a dead dog, and the peelers swearing it had life?

CHRISTY.  
I did not then. I just riz the loy and let fall the edge of it on the ridge of his skull, and he went down at my feet like an empty sack, and never let a grunt or groan from him at all.

MICHAEL.  
*making a sign to Pegeen to fill Christy’s glass.*—And what way weren’t you hanged, mister? Did you bury him then?

CHRISTY.  
*considering.*—Aye. I buried him then. Wasn’t I digging spuds in the field?

MICHAEL.  
And the peelers never followed after you the eleven days that you’re out?

CHRISTY.  
*shaking his head.*—Never a one of them, and I walking forward facing hog, dog, or divil on the highway of the road.

PHILLY.  
*nodding wisely.*—It’s only with a common week-day kind of a murderer them lads would be trusting their carcase, and that man should be a great terror when his temper’s roused.

MICHAEL.  
He should then. (*To Christy.*) And where was it, mister honey, that you did the deed?

CHRISTY.  
*looking at him with suspicion.*—Oh, a distant place, master of the house, a windy corner of high, distant hills.

PHILLY.  
*nodding with approval.*—He’s a close man, and he’s right, surely.

PEGEEN.  
That’d be a lad with the sense of Solomon to have for a pot-boy, Michael James, if it’s the truth you’re seeking one at all.

PHILLY.  
The peelers is fearing him, and if you’d that lad in the house there isn’t one of them would come smelling around if the dogs itself were lapping poteen from the dungpit of the yard.

JIMMY.  
Bravery’s a treasure in a lonesome place, and a lad would kill his father, I’m thinking, would face a foxy divil with a pitchpike on the flags of hell.

PEGEEN.  
It’s the truth they’re saying, and if I’d that lad in the house, I wouldn’t be fearing the loosed kharki cut-throats, or the walking dead.

CHRISTY.  
*swelling with surprise and triumph.*—Well, glory be to God!

MICHAEL.  
*with deference.*—Would you think well to stop here and be pot-boy, mister honey, if we gave you good wages, and didn’t destroy you with the weight of work?

SHAWN.  
*coming forward uneasily.*—That’d be a queer kind to bring into a decent quiet household with the like of Pegeen Mike.

PEGEEN.  
*very sharply.*—Will you whisht? Who’s speaking to you?

SHAWN.  
*retreating.*—A bloody-handed murderer the like of....

PEGEEN.  
*snapping at him.*—Whisht I am saying; we’ll take no fooling from your like at all. (*To Christy with a honeyed voice.*) And you, young fellow, you’d have a right to stop, I’m thinking, for we’d do our all and utmost to content your needs.

CHRISTY.  
*overcome with wonder.*—And I’d be safe in this place from the searching law?

MICHAEL.  
You would, surely. If they’re not fearing you, itself, the peelers in this place is decent droughty poor fellows, wouldn’t touch a cur dog and not give warning in the dead of night.

PEGEEN.  
*very kindly and persuasively.*—Let you stop a short while anyhow. Aren’t you destroyed walking with your feet in bleeding blisters, and your whole skin needing washing like a Wicklow sheep.

CHRISTY.  
*looking round with satisfaction.*—It’s a nice room, and if it’s not humbugging me you are, I’m thinking that I’ll surely stay.

JIMMY.  
*jumps up.*—Now, by the grace of God, herself will be safe this night, with a man killed his father holding danger from the door, and let you come on, Michael James, or they’ll have the best stuff drunk at the wake.

MICHAEL.  
*going to the door with men.*—And begging your pardon, mister, what name will we call you, for we’d like to know?

CHRISTY.  
Christopher Mahon.

MICHAEL.  
Well, God bless you, Christy, and a good rest till we meet again when the sun’ll be rising to the noon of day.

CHRISTY.  
God bless you all.

MEN.  
God bless you. [*They go out except Shawn, who lingers at door.*]

SHAWN.  
*to Pegeen.*—Are you wanting me to stop along with you and keep you from harm?

PEGEEN.  
*gruffly.*—Didn’t you say you were fearing Father Reilly?

SHAWN.  
There’d be no harm staying now, I’m thinking, and himself in it too.

PEGEEN.  
You wouldn’t stay when there was need for you, and let you step off nimble this time when there’s none.

SHAWN.  
Didn’t I say it was Father Reilly....

PEGEEN.  
Go on, then, to Father Reilly (*in a jeering tone*), and let him put you in the holy brotherhoods, and leave that lad to me.

SHAWN.  
If I meet the Widow Quin....

PEGEEN.  
Go on, I’m saying, and don’t be waking this place with your noise. (*She hustles him out and bolts the door.*) That lad would wear the spirits from the saints of peace. (*Bustles about, then takes off her apron and pins it up in the window as a blind. Christy watching her timidly. Then she comes to him and speaks with bland good-humour.*) Let you stretch out now by the fire, young fellow. You should be destroyed travelling.

CHRISTY.  
*shyly again, drawing off his boots.*—I’m tired, surely, walking wild eleven days, and waking fearful in the night. [*He holds up one of his feet, feeling his blisters, and looking at them with compassion.*]

PEGEEN.  
*standing beside him, watching him with delight.*—You should have had great people in your family, I’m thinking, with the little, small feet you have, and you with a kind of a quality name, the like of what you’d find on the great powers and potentates of France and Spain.

CHRISTY.  
*with pride.*—We were great surely, with wide and windy acres of rich Munster land.

PEGEEN.  
Wasn’t I telling you, and you a fine, handsome young fellow with a noble brow?

CHRISTY.  
*with a flash of delighted surprise.*—Is it me?

PEGEEN.  
Aye. Did you never hear that from the young girls where you come from in the west or south?

CHRISTY.  
*with venom.*—I did not then. Oh, they’re bloody liars in the naked parish where I grew a man.

PEGEEN.  
If they are itself, you’ve heard it these days, I’m thinking, and you walking the world telling out your story to young girls or old.

CHRISTY.  
I’ve told my story no place till this night, Pegeen Mike, and it’s foolish I was here, maybe, to be talking free, but you’re decent people, I’m thinking, and yourself a kindly woman, the way I wasn’t fearing you at all.

PEGEEN.  
*filling a sack with straw.*—You’ve said the like of that, maybe, in every cot and cabin where you’ve met a young girl on your way.

CHRISTY.  
*going over to her, gradually raising his voice.*—I’ve said it nowhere till this night, I’m telling you, for I’ve seen none the like of you the eleven long days I am walking the world, looking over a low ditch or a high ditch on my north or my south, into stony scattered fields, or scribes of bog, where you’d see young, limber girls, and fine prancing women making laughter with the men.

PEGEEN.  
If you weren’t destroyed travelling, you’d have as much talk and streeleen, I’m thinking, as Owen Roe O’Sullivan or the poets of the Dingle Bay, and I’ve heard all times it’s the poets are your like, fine fiery fellows with great rages when their temper’s roused.

CHRISTY.  
*drawing a little nearer to her.*—You’ve a power of rings, God bless you, and would there be any offence if I was asking are you single now?

PEGEEN.  
What would I want wedding so young?

CHRISTY.  
*with relief.*—We’re alike, so.

PEGEEN.  
*she puts sack on settle and beats it up.*—I never killed my father. I’d be afeard to do that, except I was the like of yourself with blind rages tearing me within, for I’m thinking you should have had great tussling when the end was come.

CHRISTY.  
*expanding with delight at the first confidential talk he has ever had with a woman.*—We had not then. It was a hard woman was come over the hill, and if he was always a crusty kind when he’d a hard woman setting him on, not the divil himself or his four fathers could put up with him at all.

PEGEEN.  
*with curiosity.*—And isn’t it a great wonder that one wasn’t fearing you?

CHRISTY.  
*very confidentially.*—Up to the day I killed my father, there wasn’t a person in Ireland knew the kind I was, and I there drinking, waking, eating, sleeping, a quiet, simple poor fellow with no man giving me heed.

PEGEEN.  
*getting a quilt out of the cupboard and putting it on the sack.*—It was the girls were giving you heed maybe, and I’m thinking it’s most conceit you’d have to be gaming with their like.

CHRISTY.  
*shaking his head, with simplicity.*—Not the girls itself, and I won’t tell you a lie. There wasn’t anyone heeding me in that place saving only the dumb beasts of the field. [*He sits down at fire.*]

PEGEEN.  
*with disappointment.*—And I thinking you should have been living the like of a king of Norway or the Eastern world. [*She comes and sits beside him after placing bread and mug of milk on the table.*]

CHRISTY.  
*laughing piteously.*—The like of a king, is it? And I after toiling, moiling, digging, dodging from the dawn till dusk with never a sight of joy or sport saving only when I’d be abroad in the dark night poaching rabbits on hills, for I was a divil to poach, God forgive me, (*very naïvely*) and I near got six months for going with a dung fork and stabbing a fish.

PEGEEN.  
And it’s that you’d call sport, is it, to be abroad in the darkness with yourself alone?

CHRISTY.  
I did, God help me, and there I’d be as happy as the sunshine of St. Martin’s Day, watching the light passing the north or the patches of fog, till I’d hear a rabbit starting to screech and I’d go running in the furze. Then when I’d my full share I’d come walking down where you’d see the ducks and geese stretched sleeping on the highway of the road, and before I’d pass the dunghill, I’d hear himself snoring out, a loud lonesome snore he’d be making all times, the while he was sleeping, and he a man ’d be raging all times, the while he was waking, like a gaudy officer you’d hear cursing and damning and swearing oaths.

PEGEEN.  
Providence and Mercy, spare us all!

CHRISTY.  
It’s that you’d say surely if you seen him and he after drinking for weeks, rising up in the red dawn, or before it maybe, and going out into the yard as naked as an ash tree in the moon of May, and shying clods against the visage of the stars till he’d put the fear of death into the banbhs and the screeching sows.

PEGEEN.  
I’d be well-nigh afeard of that lad myself, I’m thinking. And there was no one in it but the two of you alone?

CHRISTY.  
The divil a one, though he’d sons and daughters walking all great states and territories of the world, and not a one of them, to this day, but would say their seven curses on him, and they rousing up to let a cough or sneeze, maybe, in the deadness of the night.

PEGEEN.  
*nodding her head.*—Well, you should have been a queer lot. I never cursed my father the like of that, though I’m twenty and more years of age.

CHRISTY.  
Then you’d have cursed mine, I’m telling you, and he a man never gave peace to any, saving when he’d get two months or three, or be locked in the asylums for battering peelers or assaulting men (*with depression*) the way it was a bitter life he led me till I did up a Tuesday and halve his skull.

PEGEEN.  
*putting her hand on his shoulder.*—Well, you’ll have peace in this place, Christy Mahon, and none to trouble you, and it’s near time a fine lad like you should have your good share of the earth.

CHRISTY.  
It’s time surely, and I a seemly fellow with great strength in me and bravery of.... [*Someone knocks.*]

CHRISTY.  
*clinging to Pegeen.*—Oh, glory! it’s late for knocking, and this last while I’m in terror of the peelers, and the walking dead. [*Knocking again.*]

PEGEEN.  
Who’s there?

VOICE.  
*outside.* Me.

PEGEEN.  
Who’s me?

VOICE.  
The Widow Quin.

PEGEEN.  
*jumping up and giving him the bread and milk.*—Go on now with your supper, and let on to be sleepy, for if she found you were such a warrant to talk, she’d be stringing gabble till the dawn of day. [*He takes bread and sits shyly with his back to the door.*]

PEGEEN.  
*opening door, with temper.*—What ails you, or what is it you’re wanting at this hour of the night?

WIDOW QUIN.  
*coming in a step and peering at Christy.*—I’m after meeting Shawn Keogh and Father Reilly below, who told me of your curiosity man, and they fearing by this time he was maybe roaring, romping on your hands with drink.

PEGEEN.  
*pointing to Christy.*—Look now is he roaring, and he stretched away drowsy with his supper and his mug of milk. Walk down and tell that to Father Reilly and to Shaneen Keogh.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*coming forward.*—I’ll not see them again, for I’ve their word to lead that lad forward for to lodge with me.

PEGEEN.  
*in blank amazement.*—This night, is it?

WIDOW QUIN.  
*going over.*—This night. “It isn’t fitting,” says the priesteen, “to have his likeness lodging with an orphaned girl.” (*To Christy.*) God save you, mister!

CHRISTY.  
*shyly.*—God save you kindly.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*looking at him with half-amazed curiosity.*—Well, aren’t you a little smiling fellow? It should have been great and bitter torments did rouse your spirits to a deed of blood.

CHRISTY.  
*doubtfully.*—It should, maybe.

WIDOW QUIN.  
It’s more than “maybe” I’m saying, and it’d soften my heart to see you sitting so simple with your cup and cake, and you fitter to be saying your catechism than slaying your da.

PEGEEN.  
*at counter, washing glasses.*—There’s talking when any’d see he’s fit to be holding his head high with the wonders of the world. Walk on from this, for I’ll not have him tormented and he destroyed travelling since Tuesday was a week.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*peaceably.*—We’ll be walking surely when his supper’s done, and you’ll find we’re great company, young fellow, when it’s of the like of you and me you’d hear the penny poets singing in an August Fair.

CHRISTY.  
*innocently.*—Did you kill your father?

PEGEEN.  
*contemptuously.*—She did not. She hit himself with a worn pick, and the rusted poison did corrode his blood the way he never overed it, and died after. That was a sneaky kind of murder did win small glory with the boys itself. [*She crosses to Christy’s left.*]

WIDOW QUIN.  
*with good-humour.*—If it didn’t, maybe all knows a widow woman has buried her children and destroyed her man is a wiser comrade for a young lad than a girl, the like of you, who’d go helter-skeltering after any man would let you a wink upon the road.

PEGEEN.  
*breaking out into wild rage.*—And you’ll say that, Widow Quin, and you gasping with the rage you had racing the hill beyond to look on his face.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*laughing derisively.*—Me, is it? Well, Father Reilly has cuteness to divide you now. (*She pulls Christy up.*) There’s great temptation in a man did slay his da, and we’d best be going, young fellow; so rise up and come with me.

PEGEEN.  
*seizing his arm.*—He’ll not stir. He’s pot-boy in this place, and I’ll not have him stolen off and kidnapped while himself’s abroad.

WIDOW QUIN.  
It’d be a crazy pot-boy’d lodge him in the shebeen where he works by day, so you’d have a right to come on, young fellow, till you see my little houseen, a perch off on the rising hill.

PEGEEN.  
Wait till morning, Christy Mahon. Wait till you lay eyes on her leaky thatch is growing more pasture for her buck goat than her square of fields, and she without a tramp itself to keep in order her place at all.

WIDOW QUIN.  
When you see me contriving in my little gardens, Christy Mahon, you’ll swear the Lord God formed me to be living lone, and that there isn’t my match in Mayo for thatching, or mowing, or shearing a sheep.

PEGEEN.  
*with noisy scorn.*—It’s true the Lord God formed you to contrive indeed. Doesn’t the world know you reared a black lamb at your own breast, so that the Lord Bishop of Connaught felt the elements of a Christian, and he eating it after in a kidney stew? Doesn’t the world know you’ve been seen shaving the foxy skipper from France for a threepenny bit and a sop of grass tobacco would wring the liver from a mountain goat you’d meet leaping the hills?

WIDOW QUIN.  
*with amusement.*—Do you hear her now, young fellow? Do you hear the way she’ll be rating at your own self when a week is by?

PEGEEN.  
*to Christy.*—Don’t heed her. Tell her to go into her pigsty and not plague us here.

WIDOW QUIN.  
I’m going; but he’ll come with me.

PEGEEN.  
*shaking him.*—Are you dumb, young fellow?

CHRISTY.  
*timidly, to Widow Quin.*—God increase you; but I’m pot-boy in this place, and it’s here I’d liefer stay.

PEGEEN.  
*triumphantly.*—Now you have heard him, and go on from this.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*looking round the room.*—It’s lonesome this hour crossing the hill, and if he won’t come along with me, I’d have a right maybe to stop this night with yourselves. Let me stretch out on the settle, Pegeen Mike; and himself can lie by the hearth.

PEGEEN.  
*short and fiercely.*—Faith, I won’t. Quit off or I will send you now.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*gathering her shawl up.*—Well, it’s a terror to be aged a score. (*To Christy.*) God bless you now, young fellow, and let you be wary, or there’s right torment will await you here if you go romancing with her like, and she waiting only, as they bade me say, on a sheepskin parchment to be wed with Shawn Keogh of Killakeen.

CHRISTY.  
*going to Pegeen as she bolts the door.*—What’s that she’s after saying?

PEGEEN.  
Lies and blather, you’ve no call to mind. Well, isn’t Shawn Keogh an impudent fellow to send up spying on me? Wait till I lay hands on him. Let him wait, I’m saying.

CHRISTY.  
And you’re not wedding him at all?

PEGEEN.  
I wouldn’t wed him if a bishop came walking for to join us here.

CHRISTY.  
That God in glory may be thanked for that.

PEGEEN.  
There’s your bed now. I’ve put a quilt upon you I’m after quilting a while since with my own two hands, and you’d best stretch out now for your sleep, and may God give you a good rest till I call you in the morning when the cocks will crow.

CHRISTY.  
*as she goes to inner room.*—May God and Mary and St. Patrick bless you and reward you, for your kindly talk. (*She shuts the door behind her. He settles his bed slowly, feeling the quilt with immense satisfaction.*)—Well, it’s a clean bed and soft with it, and it’s great luck and company I’ve won me in the end of time—two fine women fighting for the likes of me—till I’m thinking this night wasn’t I a foolish fellow not to kill my father in the years gone by.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE *as before. Brilliant morning light. Christy, looking bright and cheerful, is cleaning a girl’s boots.*

CHRISTY.  
*to himself, counting jugs on dresser.*—Half a hundred beyond. Ten there. A score that’s above. Eighty jugs. Six cups and a broken one. Two plates. A power of glasses. Bottles, a school-master’d be hard set to count, and enough in them, I’m thinking, to drunken all the wealth and wisdom of the County Clare. (*He puts down the boot carefully.*) There’s her boots now, nice and decent for her evening use, and isn’t it grand brushes she has? (*He puts them down and goes by degrees to the looking-glass.*) Well, this’d be a fine place to be my whole life talking out with swearing Christians, in place of my old dogs and cat, and I stalking around, smoking my pipe and drinking my fill, and never a day’s work but drawing a cork an odd time, or wiping a glass, or rinsing out a shiny tumbler for a decent man. (*He takes the looking-glass from the wall and puts it on the back of a chair; then sits down in front of it and begins washing his face.*) Didn’t I know rightly I was handsome, though it was the divil’s own mirror we had beyond, would twist a squint across an angel’s brow; and I’ll be growing fine from this day, the way I’ll have a soft lovely skin on me and won’t be the like of the clumsy young fellows do be ploughing all times in the earth and dung. (*He starts.*) Is she coming again? (*He looks out.*) Stranger girls. God help me, where’ll I hide myself away and my long neck naked to the world? (*He looks out.*) I’d best go to the room maybe till I’m dressed again. [*He gathers up his coat and the looking-glass, and runs into the inner room. The door is pushed open, and Susan Brady looks in, and knocks on door.*]

SUSAN.  
There’s nobody in it. [*Knocks again.*]

NELLY.  
*pushing her in and following her, with Honor Blake and Sara Tansey.*—It’d be early for them both to be out walking the hill.

SUSAN.  
I’m thinking Shawn Keogh was making game of us and there’s no such man in it at all.

HONOR.  
*pointing to straw and quilt.*—Look at that. He’s been sleeping there in the night. Well, it’ll be a hard case if he’s gone off now, the way we’ll never set our eyes on a man killed his father, and we after rising early and destroying ourselves running fast on the hill.

NELLY.  
Are you thinking them’s his boots?

SARA.  
*taking them up.*—If they are, there should be his father’s track on them. Did you never read in the papers the way murdered men do bleed and drip?

SUSAN.  
Is that blood there, Sara Tansey?

SARAH  
*smelling it.*—That’s bog water, I’m thinking, but it’s his own they are surely, for I never seen the like of them for whity mud, and red mud, and turf on them, and the fine sands of the sea. That man’s been walking, I’m telling you. [*She goes down right, putting on one of his boots.*]

SUSAN  
*going to window.*—Maybe he’s stolen off to Belmullet with the boots of Michael James, and you’d have a right so to follow after him, Sara Tansey, and you the one yoked the ass cart and drove ten miles to set your eyes on the man bit the yellow lady’s nostril on the northern shore. [*She looks out.*]

SARA.  
*running to window with one boot on.*—Don’t be talking, and we fooled to-day. (*Putting on other boot.*) There’s a pair do fit me well, and I’ll be keeping them for walking to the priest, when you’d be ashamed this place, going up winter and summer with nothing worth while to confess at all.

HONOR.  
*who has been listening at the door.*—Whisht! there’s someone inside the room. (*She pushes door a chink open.*) It’s a man. (*Sara kicks off boots and puts them where they were. They all stand in a line looking through chink.*)

SARA.  
I’ll call him. Mister! Mister! (*He puts in his head.*) Is Pegeen within?

CHRISTY.  
*coming in as meek as a mouse, with the looking-glass held behind his back.*—She’s above on the cnuceen, seeking the nanny goats, the way she’d have a sup of goat’s milk for to colour my tea.

SARA.  
And asking your pardon, is it you’s the man killed his father?

CHRISTY.  
*sidling toward the nail where the glass was hanging.*—I am, God help me!

SARA.  
*taking eggs she has brought.*—Then my thousand welcomes to you, and I’ve run up with a brace of duck’s eggs for your food today. Pegeen’s ducks is no use, but these are the real rich sort. Hold out your hand and you’ll see it’s no lie I’m telling you.

CHRISTY.  
*coming forward shyly, and holding out his left hand.*—They’re a great and weighty size.

SUSAN.  
And I run up with a pat of butter, for it’d be a poor thing to have you eating your spuds dry, and you after running a great way since you did destroy your da.

CHRISTY.  
Thank you kindly.

HONOR.  
And I brought you a little cut of cake, for you should have a thin stomach on you, and you that length walking the world.

NELLY.  
And I brought you a little laying pullet—boiled and all she is—was crushed at the fall of night by the curate’s car. Feel the fat of that breast, Mister.

CHRISTY.  
It’s bursting, surely. [*He feels it with the back of his hand, in which he holds the presents.*]

SARA.  
Will you pinch it? Is your right hand too sacred for to use at all? (*She slips round behind him.*) It’s a glass he has. Well, I never seen to this day a man with a looking-glass held to his back. Them that kills their fathers is a vain lot surely. (*Girls giggle.*)

CHRISTY.  
*smiling innocently and piling presents on glass.*—I’m very thankful to you all to-day....

WIDOW QUIN.  
*coming in quickly, at door.*—Sara Tansey, Susan Brady, Honor Blake! What in glory has you here at this hour of day?

GIRLS.  
*giggling.*—That’s the man killed his father.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*coming to them.*—I know well it’s the man; and I’m after putting him down in the sports below for racing, leaping, pitching, and the Lord knows what.

SARA.  
*exuberantly.*—That’s right, Widow Quin. I’ll bet my dowry that he’ll lick the world.

WIDOW QUIN.  
If you will, you’d have a right to have him fresh and nourished in place of nursing a feast. (*Taking presents.*) Are you fasting or fed, young fellow?

CHRISTY.  
Fasting, if you please.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*loudly.*—Well, you’re the lot. Stir up now and give him his breakfast. (*To Christy.*) Come here to me (*she puts him on bench beside her while the girls make tea and get his breakfast*) and let you tell us your story before Pegeen will come, in place of grinning your ears off like the moon of May.

CHRISTY.  
*beginning to be pleased.*—It’s a long story; you’d be destroyed listening.

WIDOW QUIN.  
Don’t be letting on to be shy, a fine, gamey, treacherous lad the like of you. Was it in your house beyond you cracked his skull?

CHRISTY.  
*shy but flattered.*—It was not. We were digging spuds in his cold, sloping, stony, divil’s patch of a field.

WIDOW QUIN.  
And you went asking money of him, or making talk of getting a wife would drive him from his farm?

CHRISTY.  
I did not, then; but there I was, digging and digging, and “You squinting idiot,” says he, “let you walk down now and tell the priest you’ll wed the Widow Casey in a score of days.”

WIDOW QUIN.  
And what kind was she?

CHRISTY.  
*with horror.*—A walking terror from beyond the hills, and she two score and five years, and two hundredweights and five pounds in the weighing scales, with a limping leg on her, and a blinded eye, and she a woman of noted misbehaviour with the old and young.

GIRLS.  
*clustering round him, serving him.*—Glory be!

WIDOW QUIN.  
And what did he want driving you to wed with her? [*She takes a bit of the chicken.*]

CHRISTY.  
*eating with growing satisfaction.*—He was letting on I was wanting a protector from the harshness of the world, and he without a thought the whole while but how he’d have her hut to live in and her gold to drink.

WIDOW QUIN.  
There’s maybe worse than a dry hearth and a widow woman and your glass at night. So you hit him then?

CHRISTY.  
*getting almost excited.*—I did not. “I won’t wed her,” says I, “when all know she did suckle me for six weeks when I came into the world, and she a hag this day with a tongue on her has the crows and seabirds scattered, the way they wouldn’t cast a shadow on her garden with the dread of her curse.”

WIDOW QUIN.  
*teasingly.*—That one should be right company.

SARA.  
*eagerly.*—Don’t mind her. Did you kill him then?

CHRISTY.  
“She’s too good for the like of you,” says he, “and go on now or I’ll flatten you out like a crawling beast has passed under a dray.” “You will not if I can help it,” says I. “Go on,” says he, “or I’ll have the divil making garters of your limbs tonight.” “You will not if I can help it,” says I. [*He sits up, brandishing his mug.*]

SARA.  
You were right surely.

CHRISTY.  
*impressively.*—With that the sun came out between the cloud and the hill, and it shining green in my face. “God have mercy on your soul,” says he, lifting a scythe; “or on your own,” says I, raising the loy.

SUSAN.  
That’s a grand story.

HONOR.  
He tells it lovely.

CHRISTY.  
*flattered and confident, waving bone.*—He gave a drive with the scythe, and I gave a lep to the east. Then I turned around with my back to the north, and I hit a blow on the ridge of his skull, laid him stretched out, and he split to the knob of his gullet. [*He raises the chicken bone to his Adam’s apple.*]

GIRLS.  
*together.*—Well, you’re a marvel! Oh, God bless you! You’re the lad surely!

SUSAN.  
I’m thinking the Lord God sent him this road to make a second husband to the Widow Quin, and she with a great yearning to be wedded, though all dread her here. Lift him on her knee, Sara Tansey.

WIDOW QUIN.  
Don’t tease him.

SARA.  
*going over to dresser and counter very quickly, and getting two glasses and porter.*—You’re heroes surely, and let you drink a supeen with your arms linked like the outlandish lovers in the sailor’s song. (*She links their arms and gives them the glasses.*) There now. Drink a health to the wonders of the western world, the pirates, preachers, poteen-makers, with the jobbing jockies; parching peelers, and the juries fill their stomachs selling judgments of the English law. [*Brandishing the bottle.*]

WIDOW QUIN.  
That’s a right toast, Sara Tansey. Now Christy. [*They drink with their arms linked, he drinking with his left hand, she with her right. As they are drinking, Pegeen Mike comes in with a milk can and stands aghast. They all spring away from Christy. He goes down left. Widow Quin remains seated.*]

PEGEEN.  
*angrily, to Sara.*—What is it you’re wanting?

SARA.  
*twisting her apron.*—An ounce of tobacco.

PEGEEN.  
Have you tuppence?

SARA.  
I’ve forgotten my purse.

PEGEEN.  
Then you’d best be getting it and not fooling us here. (*To the Widow Quin, with more elaborate scorn.*) And what is it you’re wanting, Widow Quin?

WIDOW QUIN.  
*insolently.*—A penn’orth of starch.

PEGEEN.  
*breaking out.*—And you without a white shift or a shirt in your whole family since the drying of the flood. I’ve no starch for the like of you, and let you walk on now to Killamuck.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*turning to Christy, as she goes out with the girls.*—Well, you’re mighty huffy this day, Pegeen Mike, and, you young fellow, let you not forget the sports and racing when the noon is by. (*They go out.*)

PEGEEN.  
*imperiously.*—Fling out that rubbish and put them cups away. (*Christy tidies away in great haste*). Shove in the bench by the wall. (*He does so.*) And hang that glass on the nail. What disturbed it at all?

CHRISTY.  
*very meekly.*—I was making myself decent only, and this a fine country for young lovely girls.

PEGEEN.  
*sharply.*—Whisht your talking of girls. [*Goes to counter right.*]

CHRISTY.  
Wouldn’t any wish to be decent in a place....

PEGEEN.  
Whisht I’m saying.

CHRISTY.  
*looks at her face for a moment with great misgivings, then as a last effort, takes up a loy, and goes towards her, with feigned assurance.*—It was with a loy the like of that I killed my father.

PEGEEN.  
*still sharply.*—You’ve told me that story six times since the dawn of day.

CHRISTY.  
*reproachfully.*—It’s a queer thing you wouldn’t care to be hearing it and them girls after walking four miles to be listening to me now.

PEGEEN.  
*turning round astonished.*—Four miles.

CHRISTY.  
*apologetically.*—Didn’t himself say there were only bona fides living in the place?

PEGEEN.  
It’s bona fides by the road they are, but that lot came over the river lepping the stones. It’s not three perches when you go like that, and I was down this morning looking on the papers the post-boy does have in his bag. (*With meaning and emphasis.*) For there was great news this day, Christopher Mahon. (*She goes into room left.*)

CHRISTY.  
*suspiciously.*—Is it news of my murder?

PEGEEN.  
*inside.*—Murder, indeed.

CHRISTY.  
*loudly.*—A murdered da?

PEGEEN.  
*coming in again and crossing right.*—There was not, but a story filled half a page of the hanging of a man. Ah, that should be a fearful end, young fellow, and it worst of all for a man who destroyed his da, for the like of him would get small mercies, and when it’s dead he is, they’d put him in a narrow grave, with cheap sacking wrapping him round, and pour down quicklime on his head, the way you’d see a woman pouring any frish-frash from a cup.

CHRISTY.  
*very miserably.*—Oh, God help me. Are you thinking I’m safe? You were saying at the fall of night, I was shut of jeopardy and I here with yourselves.

PEGEEN.  
*severely.*—You’ll be shut of jeopardy no place if you go talking with a pack of wild girls the like of them do be walking abroad with the peelers, talking whispers at the fall of night.

CHRISTY.  
*with terror.*—And you’re thinking they’d tell?

PEGEEN.  
*with mock sympathy.*—Who knows, God help you.

CHRISTY.  
*loudly.*—What joy would they have to bring hanging to the likes of me?

PEGEEN.  
It’s queer joys they have, and who knows the thing they’d do, if it’d make the green stones cry itself to think of you swaying and swiggling at the butt of a rope, and you with a fine, stout neck, God bless you! the way you’d be a half an hour, in great anguish, getting your death.

CHRISTY.  
*getting his boots and putting them on.*—If there’s that terror of them, it’d be best, maybe, I went on wandering like Esau or Cain and Abel on the sides of Neifin or the Erris plain.

PEGEEN.  
*beginning to play with him.*—It would, maybe, for I’ve heard the Circuit Judges this place is a heartless crew.

CHRISTY.  
*bitterly.*—It’s more than Judges this place is a heartless crew. (*Looking up at her.*) And isn’t it a poor thing to be starting again and I a lonesome fellow will be looking out on women and girls the way the needy fallen spirits do be looking on the Lord?

PEGEEN.  
What call have you to be that lonesome when there’s poor girls walking Mayo in their thousands now?

CHRISTY.  
*grimly.*—It’s well you know what call I have. It’s well you know it’s a lonesome thing to be passing small towns with the lights shining sideways when the night is down, or going in strange places with a dog nosing before you and a dog nosing behind, or drawn to the cities where you’d hear a voice kissing and talking deep love in every shadow of the ditch, and you passing on with an empty, hungry stomach failing from your heart.

PEGEEN.  
I’m thinking you’re an odd man, Christy Mahon. The oddest walking fellow I ever set my eyes on to this hour to-day.

CHRISTY.  
What would any be but odd men and they living lonesome in the world?

PEGEEN.  
I’m not odd, and I’m my whole life with my father only.

CHRISTY.  
*with infinite admiration.*—How would a lovely handsome woman the like of you be lonesome when all men should be thronging around to hear the sweetness of your voice, and the little infant children should be pestering your steps I’m thinking, and you walking the roads.

PEGEEN.  
I’m hard set to know what way a coaxing fellow the like of yourself should be lonesome either.

CHRISTY.  
Coaxing?

PEGEEN.  
Would you have me think a man never talked with the girls would have the words you’ve spoken to-day? It’s only letting on you are to be lonesome, the way you’d get around me now.

CHRISTY.  
I wish to God I was letting on; but I was lonesome all times, and born lonesome, I’m thinking, as the moon of dawn. [*Going to door.*]

PEGEEN.  
*puzzled by his talk.*—Well, it’s a story I’m not understanding at all why you’d be worse than another, Christy Mahon, and you a fine lad with the great savagery to destroy your da.

CHRISTY.  
It’s little I’m understanding myself, saving only that my heart’s scalded this day, and I going off stretching out the earth between us, the way I’ll not be waking near you another dawn of the year till the two of us do arise to hope or judgment with the saints of God, and now I’d best be going with my wattle in my hand, for hanging is a poor thing (*turning to go*), and it’s little welcome only is left me in this house to-day.

PEGEEN.  
*sharply.*—Christy! (*He turns round.*) Come here to me. (*He goes towards her.*) Lay down that switch and throw some sods on the fire. You’re pot-boy in this place, and I’ll not have you mitch off from us now.

CHRISTY.  
You were saying I’d be hanged if I stay.

PEGEEN.  
*quite kindly at last.*—I’m after going down and reading the fearful crimes of Ireland for two weeks or three, and there wasn’t a word of your murder. (*Getting up and going over to the counter.*) They’ve likely not found the body. You’re safe so with ourselves.

CHRISTY.  
*astonished, slowly.*—It’s making game of me you were (*following her with fearful joy*), and I can stay so, working at your side, and I not lonesome from this mortal day.

PEGEEN.  
What’s to hinder you from staying, except the widow woman or the young girls would inveigle you off?

CHRISTY.  
*with rapture.*—And I’ll have your words from this day filling my ears, and that look is come upon you meeting my two eyes, and I watching you loafing around in the warm sun, or rinsing your ankles when the night is come.

PEGEEN.  
*kindly, but a little embarrassed.*—I’m thinking you’ll be a loyal young lad to have working around, and if you vexed me a while since with your leaguing with the girls, I wouldn’t give a thraneen for a lad hadn’t a mighty spirit in him and a gamey heart. [*Shawn Keogh runs in carrying a cleeve on his back, followed by the Widow Quin.*]

SHAWN.  
*to Pegeen.*—I was passing below, and I seen your mountainy sheep eating cabbages in Jimmy’s field. Run up or they’ll be bursting surely.

PEGEEN.  
Oh, God mend them! [*She puts a shawl over her head and runs out.*]

CHRISTY.  
*looking from one to the other. Still in high spirits.*—I’d best go to her aid maybe. I’m handy with ewes.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*closing the door.*—She can do that much, and there is Shaneen has long speeches for to tell you now. [*She sits down with an amused smile.*]

SHAWN.  
*taking something from his pocket and offering it to Christy.*—Do you see that, mister?

CHRISTY.  
*looking at it.*—The half of a ticket to the Western States!

SHAWN.  
*trembling with anxiety.*—I’ll give it to you and my new hat (*pulling it out of hamper*); and my breeches with the double seat (*pulling it off*); and my new coat is woven from the blackest shearings for three miles around (*giving him the coat*); I’ll give you the whole of them, and my blessing, and the blessing of Father Reilly itself, maybe, if you’ll quit from this and leave us in the peace we had till last night at the fall of dark.

CHRISTY.  
*with a new arrogance.*—And for what is it you’re wanting to get shut of me?

SHAWN.  
*looking to the Widow for help.*—I’m a poor scholar with middling faculties to coin a lie, so I’ll tell you the truth, Christy Mahon. I’m wedding with Pegeen beyond, and I don’t think well of having a clever fearless man the like of you dwelling in her house.

CHRISTY.  
*almost pugnaciously.*—And you’d be using bribery for to banish me?

SHAWN.  
*in an imploring voice.*—Let you not take it badly, mister honey; isn’t beyond the best place for you where you’ll have golden chains and shiny coats and you riding upon hunters with the ladies of the land. [*He makes an eager sign to the Widow Quin to come to help him.*]

WIDOW QUIN.  
*coming over.*—It’s true for him, and you’d best quit off and not have that poor girl setting her mind on you, for there’s Shaneen thinks she wouldn’t suit you though all is saying that she’ll wed you now. [*Christy beams with delight.*]

SHAWN.  
*in terrified earnest.*—She wouldn’t suit you, and she with the divil’s own temper the way you’d be strangling one another in a score of days. (*He makes the movement of strangling with his hands.*) It’s the like of me only that she’s fit for, a quiet simple fellow wouldn’t raise a hand upon her if she scratched itself.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*putting Shawn’s hat on Christy.*—Fit them clothes on you anyhow, young fellow, and he’d maybe loan them to you for the sports. (*Pushing him towards inner door.*) Fit them on and you can give your answer when you have them tried.

CHRISTY.  
*beaming, delighted with the clothes.*—I will then. I’d like herself to see me in them tweeds and hat. (*He goes into room and shuts the door.*)

SHAWN.  
*in great anxiety.*—He’d like herself to see them. He’ll not leave us, Widow Quin. He’s a score of divils in him the way it’s well nigh certain he will wed Pegeen.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*jeeringly.*—It’s true all girls are fond of courage and do hate the like of you.

SHAWN.  
*walking about in desperation.*—Oh, Widow Quin, what’ll I be doing now? I’d inform again him, but he’d burst from Kilmainham and he’d be sure and certain to destroy me. If I wasn’t so God-fearing, I’d near have courage to come behind him and run a pike into his side. Oh, it’s a hard case to be an orphan and not to have your father that you’re used to, and you’d easy kill and make yourself a hero in the sight of all. (*Coming up to her.*) Oh, Widow Quin, will you find me some contrivance when I’ve promised you a ewe?

WIDOW QUIN.  
A ewe’s a small thing, but what would you give me if I did wed him and did save you so?

SHAWN.  
*with astonishment.*—You?

WIDOW QUIN.  
Aye. Would you give me the red cow you have and the mountainy ram, and the right of way across your rye path, and a load of dung at Michaelmas, and turbary upon the western hill?

SHAWN.  
*radiant with hope.*—I would surely, and I’d give you the wedding-ring I have, and the loan of a new suit, the way you’d have him decent on the wedding-day. I’d give you two kids for your dinner, and a gallon of poteen, and I’d call the piper on the long car to your wedding from Crossmolina or from Ballina. I’d give you....

WIDOW QUIN.  
That’ll do so, and let you whisht, for he’s coming now again. [*Christy comes in very natty in the new clothes. Widow Quin goes to him admiringly.*]

WIDOW QUIN.  
If you seen yourself now, I’m thinking you’d be too proud to speak to us at all, and it’d be a pity surely to have your like sailing from Mayo to the Western World.

CHRISTY.  
*as proud as a peacock.*—I’m not going. If this is a poor place itself, I’ll make myself contented to be lodging here. [*Widow Quin makes a sign to Shawn to leave them.*]

SHAWN.  
Well, I’m going measuring the race-course while the tide is low, so I’ll leave you the garments and my blessing for the sports to-day. God bless you! [*He wriggles out.*]

WIDOW QUIN.  
*admiring Christy.*—Well, you’re mighty spruce, young fellow. Sit down now while you’re quiet till you talk with me.

CHRISTY.  
*swaggering.*—I’m going abroad on the hillside for to seek Pegeen.

WIDOW QUIN.  
You’ll have time and plenty for to seek Pegeen, and you heard me saying at the fall of night the two of us should be great company.

CHRISTY.  
From this out I’ll have no want of company when all sorts is bringing me their food and clothing (*he swaggers to the door, tightening his belt*), the way they’d set their eyes upon a gallant orphan cleft his father with one blow to the breeches belt. (*He opens door, then staggers back.*) Saints of glory! Holy angels from the throne of light!

WIDOW QUIN.  
*going over.*—What ails you?

CHRISTY.  
It’s the walking spirit of my murdered da!

WIDOW QUIN.  
*looking out.*—Is it that tramper?

CHRISTY.  
*wildly.*—Where’ll I hide my poor body from that ghost of hell? [*The door is pushed open, and old Mahon appears on threshold. Christy darts in behind door.*]

WIDOW QUIN.  
*in great amazement.*—God save you, my poor man.

MAHON.  
*gruffly.*—Did you see a young lad passing this way in the early morning or the fall of night?

WIDOW QUIN.  
You’re a queer kind to walk in not saluting at all.

MAHON.  
Did you see the young lad?

WIDOW QUIN.  
*stiffly.*—What kind was he?

MAHON.  
An ugly young streeler with a murderous gob on him, and a little switch in his hand. I met a tramper seen him coming this way at the fall of night.

WIDOW QUIN.  
There’s harvest hundreds do be passing these days for the Sligo boat. For what is it you’re wanting him, my poor man?

MAHON.  
I want to destroy him for breaking the head on me with the clout of a loy. (*He takes off a big hat, and shows his head in a mass of bandages and plaster, with some pride.*) It was he did that, and amn’t I a great wonder to think I’ve traced him ten days with that rent in my crown?

WIDOW QUIN.  
*taking his head in both hands and examining it with extreme delight.*—That was a great blow. And who hit you? A robber maybe?

MAHON.  
It was my own son hit me, and he the divil a robber, or anything else, but a dirty, stuttering lout.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*letting go his skull and wiping her hands in her apron.*—You’d best be wary of a mortified scalp, I think they call it, lepping around with that wound in the splendour of the sun. It was a bad blow surely, and you should have vexed him fearful to make him strike that gash in his da.

MAHON.  
Is it me?

WIDOW QUIN.  
*amusing herself.*—Aye. And isn’t it a great shame when the old and hardened do torment the young?

MAHON.  
*raging.*—Torment him is it? And I after holding out with the patience of a martyred saint till there’s nothing but destruction on, and I’m driven out in my old age with none to aid me.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*greatly amused.*—It’s a sacred wonder the way that wickedness will spoil a man.

MAHON.  
My wickedness, is it? Amn’t I after saying it is himself has me destroyed, and he a liar on walls, a talker of folly, a man you’d see stretched the half of the day in the brown ferns with his belly to the sun.

WIDOW QUIN.  
Not working at all?

MAHON.  
The divil a work, or if he did itself, you’d see him raising up a haystack like the stalk of a rush, or driving our last cow till he broke her leg at the hip, and when he wasn’t at that he’d be fooling over little birds he had—finches and felts—or making mugs at his own self in the bit of glass we had hung on the wall.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*looking at Christy.*—What way was he so foolish? It was running wild after the girls maybe?

MAHON.  
*with a shout of derision.*—Running wild, is it? If he seen a red petticoat coming swinging over the hill, he’d be off to hide in the sticks, and you’d see him shooting out his sheep’s eyes between the little twigs and the leaves, and his two ears rising like a hare looking out through a gap. Girls, indeed!

WIDOW QUIN.  
It was drink maybe?

MAHON.  
And he a poor fellow would get drunk on the smell of a pint. He’d a queer rotten stomach, I’m telling you, and when I gave him three pulls from my pipe a while since, he was taken with contortions till I had to send him in the ass cart to the females’ nurse.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*clasping her hands.*—Well, I never till this day heard tell of a man the like of that!

MAHON.  
I’d take a mighty oath you didn’t surely, and wasn’t he the laughing joke of every female woman where four baronies meet, the way the girls would stop their weeding if they seen him coming the road to let a roar at him, and call him the looney of Mahon’s.

WIDOW QUIN.  
I’d give the world and all to see the like of him. What kind was he?

MAHON.  
A small low fellow.

WIDOW QUIN.  
And dark?

MAHON.  
Dark and dirty.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*considering.*—I’m thinking I seen him.

MAHON.  
*eagerly.*—An ugly young blackguard.

WIDOW QUIN.  
A hideous, fearful villain, and the spit of you.

MAHON.  
What way is he fled?

WIDOW QUIN.  
Gone over the hills to catch a coasting steamer to the north or south.

MAHON.  
Could I pull up on him now?

WIDOW QUIN.  
If you’ll cross the sands below where the tide is out, you’ll be in it as soon as himself, for he had to go round ten miles by the top of the bay. (*She points to the door*). Strike down by the head beyond and then follow on the roadway to the north and east. (*Mahon goes abruptly.*)

WIDOW QUIN.  
*shouting after him.*—Let you give him a good vengeance when you come up with him, but don’t put yourself in the power of the law, for it’d be a poor thing to see a judge in his black cap reading out his sentence on a civil warrior the like of you. [*She swings the door to and looks at Christy, who is cowering in terror, for a moment, then she bursts into a laugh.*]

WIDOW QUIN.  
Well, you’re the walking Playboy of the Western World, and that’s the poor man you had divided to his breeches belt.

CHRISTY.  
*looking out; then, to her.*—What’ll Pegeen say when she hears that story? What’ll she be saying to me now?

WIDOW QUIN.  
She’ll knock the head of you, I’m thinking, and drive you from the door. God help her to be taking you for a wonder, and you a little schemer making up the story you destroyed your da.

CHRISTY.  
*turning to the door, nearly speechless with rage, half to himself.*—To be letting on he was dead, and coming back to his life, and following after me like an old weazel tracing a rat, and coming in here laying desolation between my own self and the fine women of Ireland, and he a kind of carcase that you’d fling upon the sea....

WIDOW QUIN.  
*more soberly.*—There’s talking for a man’s one only son.

CHRISTY.  
*breaking out.*—His one son, is it? May I meet him with one tooth and it aching, and one eye to be seeing seven and seventy divils in the twists of the road, and one old timber leg on him to limp into the scalding grave. (*Looking out.*) There he is now crossing the strands, and that the Lord God would send a high wave to wash him from the world.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*scandalised.*—Have you no shame? (*putting her hand on his shoulder and turning him round.*) What ails you? Near crying, is it?

CHRISTY.  
*in despair and grief.*—Amn’t I after seeing the love-light of the star of knowledge shining from her brow, and hearing words would put you thinking on the holy Brigid speaking to the infant saints, and now she’ll be turning again, and speaking hard words to me, like an old woman with a spavindy ass she’d have, urging on a hill.

WIDOW QUIN.  
There’s poetry talk for a girl you’d see itching and scratching, and she with a stale stink of poteen on her from selling in the shop.

CHRISTY.  
*impatiently.*—It’s her like is fitted to be handling merchandise in the heavens above, and what’ll I be doing now, I ask you, and I a kind of wonder was jilted by the heavens when a day was by. [*There is a distant noise of girls’ voices. Widow Quin looks from window and comes to him, hurriedly.*]

WIDOW QUIN.  
You’ll be doing like myself, I’m thinking, when I did destroy my man, for I’m above many’s the day, odd times in great spirits, abroad in the sunshine, darning a stocking or stitching a shift; and odd times again looking out on the schooners, hookers, trawlers is sailing the sea, and I thinking on the gallant hairy fellows are drifting beyond, and myself long years living alone.

CHRISTY.  
*interested.*—You’re like me, so.

WIDOW QUIN.  
I am your like, and it’s for that I’m taking a fancy to you, and I with my little houseen above where there’d be myself to tend you, and none to ask were you a murderer or what at all.

CHRISTY.  
And what would I be doing if I left Pegeen?

WIDOW QUIN.  
I’ve nice jobs you could be doing, gathering shells to make a whitewash for our hut within, building up a little goose-house, or stretching a new skin on an old curragh I have, and if my hut is far from all sides, it’s there you’ll meet the wisest old men, I tell you, at the corner of my wheel, and it’s there yourself and me will have great times whispering and hugging....

VOICES.  
*outside, calling far away.*—Christy! Christy Mahon! Christy!

CHRISTY.  
Is it Pegeen Mike?

WIDOW QUIN.  
It’s the young girls, I’m thinking, coming to bring you to the sports below, and what is it you’ll have me to tell them now?

CHRISTY.  
Aid me for to win Pegeen. It’s herself only that I’m seeking now. (*Widow Quin gets up and goes to window.*) Aid me for to win her, and I’ll be asking God to stretch a hand to you in the hour of death, and lead you short cuts through the Meadows of Ease, and up the floor of Heaven to the Footstool of the Virgin’s Son.

WIDOW QUIN.  
There’s praying.

VOICES.  
*nearer.*—Christy! Christy Mahon!

CHRISTY.  
*with agitation.*—They’re coming. Will you swear to aid and save me for the love of Christ?

WIDOW QUIN.  
*looks at him for a moment.*—If I aid you, will you swear to give me a right of way I want, and a mountainy ram, and a load of dung at Michaelmas, the time that you’ll be master here?

CHRISTY.  
I will, by the elements and stars of night.

WIDOW QUIN.  
Then we’ll not say a word of the old fellow, the way Pegeen won’t know your story till the end of time.

CHRISTY.  
And if he chances to return again?

WIDOW QUIN.  
We’ll swear he’s a maniac and not your da. I could take an oath I seen him raving on the sands to-day. [*Girls run in.*]

SUSAN.  
Come on to the sports below. Pegeen says you’re to come.

SARA TANSEY.  
The lepping’s beginning, and we’ve a jockey’s suit to fit upon you for the mule race on the sands below.

HONOR.  
Come on, will you?

CHRISTY.  
I will then if Pegeen’s beyond.

SARA.  
She’s in the boreen making game of Shaneen Keogh.

CHRISTY.  
Then I’ll be going to her now. [*He runs out followed by the girls.*]

WIDOW QUIN.  
Well, if the worst comes in the end of all, it’ll be great game to see there’s none to pity him but a widow woman, the like of me, has buried her children and destroyed her man. [*She goes out.*]

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE *as before. Later in the day. Jimmy comes in, slightly drunk.*

JIMMY.  
*calls.*—Pegeen! (*Crosses to inner door.*) Pegeen Mike! (*Comes back again into the room.*) Pegeen! (*Philly comes in in the same state. To Philly.*) Did you see herself?

PHILLY.  
I did not; but I sent Shawn Keogh with the ass cart for to bear him home. (*Trying cupboards which are locked.*) Well, isn’t he a nasty man to get into such staggers at a morning wake? and isn’t herself the divil’s daughter for locking, and she so fussy after that young gaffer, you might take your death with drought and none to heed you?

JIMMY.  
It’s little wonder she’d be fussy, and he after bringing bankrupt ruin on the roulette man, and the trick-o’-the-loop man, and breaking the nose of the cockshot-man, and winning all in the sports below, racing, lepping, dancing, and the Lord knows what! He’s right luck, I’m telling you.

PHILLY.  
If he has, he’ll be rightly hobbled yet, and he not able to say ten words without making a brag of the way he killed his father, and the great blow he hit with the loy.

JIMMY.  
A man can’t hang by his own informing, and his father should be rotten by now. [*Old Mahon passes window slowly.*]

PHILLY.  
Supposing a man’s digging spuds in that field with a long spade, and supposing he flings up the two halves of that skull, what’ll be said then in the papers and the courts of law?

JIMMY.  
They’d say it was an old Dane, maybe, was drowned in the flood. (*Old Mahon comes in and sits down near door listening.*) Did you never hear tell of the skulls they have in the city of Dublin, ranged out like blue jugs in a cabin of Connaught?

PHILLY.  
And you believe that?

JIMMY.  
*pugnaciously.*—Didn’t a lad see them and he after coming from harvesting in the Liverpool boat? “They have them there,” says he, “making a show of the great people there was one time walking the world. White skulls and black skulls and yellow skulls, and some with full teeth, and some haven’t only but one.”

PHILLY.  
It was no lie, maybe, for when I was a young lad there was a graveyard beyond the house with the remnants of a man who had thighs as long as your arm. He was a horrid man, I’m telling you, and there was many a fine Sunday I’d put him together for fun, and he with shiny bones, you wouldn’t meet the like of these days in the cities of the world.

MAHON.  
*getting up.*—You wouldn’t is it? Lay your eyes on that skull, and tell me where and when there was another the like of it, is splintered only from the blow of a loy.

PHILLY.  
Glory be to God! And who hit you at all?

MAHON.  
*triumphantly.*—It was my own son hit me. Would you believe that?

JIMMY.  
Well, there’s wonders hidden in the heart of man!

PHILLY.  
*suspiciously.*—And what way was it done?

MAHON.  
*wandering about the room.*—I’m after walking hundreds and long scores of miles, winning clean beds and the fill of my belly four times in the day, and I doing nothing but telling stories of that naked truth. (*He comes to them a little aggressively.*) Give me a supeen and I’ll tell you now. (*Widow Quin comes in and stands aghast behind him. He is facing Jimmy and Philly, who are on the left.*)

JIMMY.  
Ask herself beyond. She’s the stuff hidden in her shawl.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*coming to Mahon quickly.*—you here, is it? You didn’t go far at all?

MAHON.  
I seen the coasting steamer passing, and I got a drought upon me and a cramping leg, so I said, “The divil go along with him,” and turned again. (*Looking under her shawl.*) And let you give me a supeen, for I’m destroyed travelling since Tuesday was a week.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*getting a glass, in a cajoling tone.*—Sit down then by the fire and take your ease for a space. You’ve a right to be destroyed indeed, with your walking, and fighting, and facing the sun (*giving him poteen from a stone jar she has brought in*). There now is a drink for you, and may it be to your happiness and length of life.

MAHON.  
*taking glass greedily and sitting down by fire.*—God increase you!

WIDOW QUIN.  
*taking men to the right stealthily.*—Do you know what? That man’s raving from his wound to-day, for I met him a while since telling a rambling tale of a tinker had him destroyed. Then he heard of Christy’s deed, and he up and says it was his son had cracked his skull. O isn’t madness a fright, for he’ll go killing someone yet, and he thinking it’s the man has struck him so?

JIMMY.  
*entirely convinced.*—It’s a fright, surely. I knew a party was kicked in the head by a red mare, and he went killing horses a great while, till he eat the insides of a clock and died after.

PHILLY.  
*with suspicion.*—Did he see Christy?

WIDOW QUIN.  
He didn’t. (*With a warning gesture.*) Let you not be putting him in mind of him, or you’ll be likely summoned if there’s murder done. (*Looking round at Mahon.*) Whisht! He’s listening. Wait now till you hear me taking him easy and unravelling all. (*She goes to Mahon.*) And what way are you feeling, mister? Are you in contentment now?

MAHON.  
*slightly emotional from his drink.*—I’m poorly only, for it’s a hard story the way I’m left to-day, when it was I did tend him from his hour of birth, and he a dunce never reached his second book, the way he’d come from school, many’s the day, with his legs lamed under him, and he blackened with his beatings like a tinker’s ass. It’s a hard story, I’m saying, the way some do have their next and nighest raising up a hand of murder on them, and some is lonesome getting their death with lamentation in the dead of night.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*not knowing what to say.*—To hear you talking so quiet, who’d know you were the same fellow we seen pass to-day?

MAHON.  
I’m the same surely. The wrack and ruin of three score years; and it’s a terror to live that length, I tell you, and to have your sons going to the dogs against you, and you wore out scolding them, and skelping them, and God knows what.

PHILLY.  
*to Jimmy.*—He’s not raving. (*To Widow Quin.*) Will you ask him what kind was his son?

WIDOW QUIN.  
*to Mahon, with a peculiar look.*—Was your son that hit you a lad of one year and a score maybe, a great hand at racing and lepping and licking the world?

MAHON.  
*turning on her with a roar of rage.*—Didn’t you hear me say he was the fool of men, the way from this out he’ll know the orphan’s lot with old and young making game of him and they swearing, raging, kicking at him like a mangy cur. [*A great burst of cheering outside, someway off.*]

MAHON.  
*putting his hands to his ears.*—What in the name of God do they want roaring below?

WIDOW QUIN.  
*with the shade of a smile.*—They’re cheering a young lad, the champion Playboy of the Western World. [*More cheering.*]

MAHON.  
*going to window.*—It’d split my heart to hear them, and I with pulses in my brain-pan for a week gone by. Is it racing they are?

JIMMY.  
*looking from door.*—It is then. They are mounting him for the mule race will be run upon the sands. That’s the playboy on the winkered mule.

MAHON.  
*puzzled.*—That lad, is it? If you said it was a fool he was, I’d have laid a mighty oath he was the likeness of my wandering son (*uneasily, putting his hand to his head.*) Faith, I’m thinking I’ll go walking for to view the race.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*stopping him, sharply.*—You will not. You’d best take the road to Belmullet, and not be dilly-dallying in this place where there isn’t a spot you could sleep.

PHILLY.  
*coming forward.*—Don’t mind her. Mount there on the bench and you’ll have a view of the whole. They’re hurrying before the tide will rise, and it’d be near over if you went down the pathway through the crags below.

MAHON.  
*mounts on bench, Widow Quin beside him.*—That’s a right view again the edge of the sea. They’re coming now from the point. He’s leading. Who is he at all?

WIDOW QUIN.  
He’s the champion of the world, I tell you, and there isn’t a hop’orth isn’t falling lucky to his hands to-day.

PHILLY.  
*looking out, interested in the race.*—Look at that. They’re pressing him now.

JIMMY.  
He’ll win it yet.

PHILLY.  
Take your time, Jimmy Farrell. It’s too soon to say.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*shouting.*—Watch him taking the gate. There’s riding.

JIMMY.  
*cheering.*—More power to the young lad!

MAHON.  
He’s passing the third.

JIMMY.  
He’ll lick them yet!

WIDOW QUIN.  
He’d lick them if he was running races with a score itself.

MAHON.  
Look at the mule he has, kicking the stars.

WIDOW QUIN.  
There was a lep! (*catching hold of Mahon in her excitement.*) He’s fallen! He’s mounted again! Faith, he’s passing them all!

JIMMY.  
Look at him skelping her!

PHILLY.  
And the mountain girls hooshing him on!

JIMMY.  
It’s the last turn! The post’s cleared for them now!

MAHON.  
Look at the narrow place. He’ll be into the bogs! (*With a yell.*) Good rider! He’s through it again!

JIMMY.  
He’s neck and neck!

MAHON.  
Good boy to him! Flames, but he’s in! [*Great cheering, in which all join.*]

MAHON.  
*with hesitation.*—What’s that? They’re raising him up. They’re coming this way. (*With a roar of rage and astonishment.*) It’s Christy! by the stars of God! I’d know his way of spitting and he astride the moon. [*He jumps down and makes for the door, but Widow Quin catches him and pulls him back.*]

WIDOW QUIN.  
Stay quiet, will you. That’s not your son. (*To Jimmy.*) Stop him, or you’ll get a month for the abetting of manslaughter and be fined as well.

JIMMY.  
I’ll hold him.

MAHON.  
*struggling.*—Let me out! Let me out, the lot of you! till I have my vengeance on his head to-day.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*shaking him, vehemently.*—That’s not your son. That’s a man is going to make a marriage with the daughter of this house, a place with fine trade, with a license, and with poteen too.

MAHON.  
*amazed.*—That man marrying a decent and a moneyed girl! Is it mad yous are? Is it in a crazy-house for females that I’m landed now?

WIDOW QUIN.  
It’s mad yourself is with the blow upon your head. That lad is the wonder of the Western World.

MAHON.  
I seen it’s my son.

WIDOW QUIN.  
You seen that you’re mad. (*Cheering outside.*) Do you hear them cheering him in the zig-zags of the road? Aren’t you after saying that your son’s a fool, and how would they be cheering a true idiot born?

MAHON.  
*getting distressed.*—It’s maybe out of reason that that man’s himself. (*Cheering again.*) There’s none surely will go cheering him. Oh, I’m raving with a madness that would fright the world! (*He sits down with his hand to his head.*) There was one time I seen ten scarlet divils letting on they’d cork my spirit in a gallon can; and one time I seen rats as big as badgers sucking the life blood from the butt of my lug; but I never till this day confused that dribbling idiot with a likely man. I’m destroyed surely.

WIDOW QUIN.  
And who’d wonder when it’s your brain-pan that is gaping now?

MAHON.  
Then the blight of the sacred drought upon myself and him, for I never went mad to this day, and I not three weeks with the Limerick girls drinking myself silly, and parlatic from the dusk to dawn. (*To Widow Quin, suddenly.*) Is my visage astray?

WIDOW QUIN.  
It is then. You’re a sniggering maniac, a child could see.

MAHON.  
*getting up more cheerfully.*—Then I’d best be going to the union beyond, and there’ll be a welcome before me, I tell you (*with great pride*), and I a terrible and fearful case, the way that there I was one time, screeching in a straightened waistcoat, with seven doctors writing out my sayings in a printed book. Would you believe that?

WIDOW QUIN.  
If you’re a wonder itself, you’d best be hasty, for them lads caught a maniac one time and pelted the poor creature till he ran out, raving and foaming, and was drowned in the sea.

MAHON.  
*with philosophy.*—It’s true mankind is the divil when your head’s astray. Let me out now and I’ll slip down the boreen, and not see them so.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*showing him out.*—That’s it. Run to the right, and not a one will see. [*He runs off.*]

PHILLY.  
*wisely.*—You’re at some gaming, Widow Quin; but I’ll walk after him and give him his dinner and a time to rest, and I’ll see then if he’s raving or as sane as you.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*annoyed.*—If you go near that lad, let you be wary of your head, I’m saying. Didn’t you hear him telling he was crazed at times?

PHILLY.  
I heard him telling a power; and I’m thinking we’ll have right sport, before night will fall. [*He goes out.*]

JIMMY.  
Well, Philly’s a conceited and foolish man. How could that madman have his senses and his brain-pan slit? I’ll go after them and see him turn on Philly now. [*He goes; Widow Quin hides poteen behind counter. Then hubbub outside.*]

VOICES.  
There you are! Good jumper! Grand lepper! Darlint boy! He’s the racer! Bear him on, will you! [*Christy comes in, in Jockey’s dress, with Pegeen Mike, Sara, and other girls and men.*]

PEGEEN.  
*to crowd.*—Go on now and don’t destroy him and he drenching with sweat. Go along, I’m saying, and have your tug-of-warring till he’s dried his skin.

CROWD.  
Here’s his prizes! A bagpipes! A fiddle was played by a poet in the years gone by! A flat and three-thorned blackthorn would lick the scholars out of Dublin town!

CHRISTY.  
*taking prizes from the men.*—Thank you kindly, the lot of you. But you’d say it was little only I did this day if you’d seen me a while since striking my one single blow.

TOWN CRIER.  
*outside, ringing a bell.*—Take notice, last event of this day! Tug-of-warring on the green below! Come on, the lot of you! Great achievements for all Mayo men!

PEGEEN.  
Go on, and leave him for to rest and dry. Go on, I tell you, for he’ll do no more. (*She hustles crowd out; Widow Quin following them.*)

MEN.  
*going.*—Come on then. Good luck for the while!

PEGEEN.  
*radiantly, wiping his face with her shawl.*—Well, you’re the lad, and you’ll have great times from this out when you could win that wealth of prizes, and you sweating in the heat of noon!

CHRISTY.  
*looking at her with delight.*—I’ll have great times if I win the crowning prize I’m seeking now, and that’s your promise that you’ll wed me in a fortnight, when our banns is called.

PEGEEN.  
*backing away from him.*—You’ve right daring to go ask me that, when all knows you’ll be starting to some girl in your own townland, when your father’s rotten in four months, or five.

CHRISTY.  
*indignantly.*—Starting from you, is it? (*He follows her.*) I will not, then, and when the airs is warming in four months, or five, it’s then yourself and me should be pacing Neifin in the dews of night, the times sweet smells do be rising, and you’d see a little shiny new moon, maybe, sinking on the hills.

PEGEEN.  
*looking at him playfully.*—And it’s that kind of a poacher’s love you’d make, Christy Mahon, on the sides of Neifin, when the night is down?

CHRISTY.  
It’s little you’ll think if my love’s a poacher’s, or an earl’s itself, when you’ll feel my two hands stretched around you, and I squeezing kisses on your puckered lips, till I’d feel a kind of pity for the Lord God is all ages sitting lonesome in his golden chair.

PEGEEN.  
That’ll be right fun, Christy Mahon, and any girl would walk her heart out before she’d meet a young man was your like for eloquence, or talk, at all.

CHRISTY.  
*encouraged.*—Let you wait, to hear me talking, till we’re astray in Erris, when Good Friday’s by, drinking a sup from a well, and making mighty kisses with our wetted mouths, or gaming in a gap or sunshine, with yourself stretched back unto your necklace, in the flowers of the earth.

PEGEEN.  
*in a lower voice, moved by his tone.*—I’d be nice so, is it?

CHRISTY.  
*with rapture.*—If the mitred bishops seen you that time, they’d be the like of the holy prophets, I’m thinking, do be straining the bars of Paradise to lay eyes on the Lady Helen of Troy, and she abroad, pacing back and forward, with a nosegay in her golden shawl.

PEGEEN.  
*with real tenderness.*—And what is it I have, Christy Mahon, to make me fitting entertainment for the like of you, that has such poet’s talking, and such bravery of heart?

CHRISTY.  
*in a low voice.*—Isn’t there the light of seven heavens in your heart alone, the way you’ll be an angel’s lamp to me from this out, and I abroad in the darkness, spearing salmons in the Owen, or the Carrowmore?

PEGEEN.  
If I was your wife, I’d be along with you those nights, Christy Mahon, the way you’d see I was a great hand at coaxing bailiffs, or coining funny nick-names for the stars of night.

CHRISTY.  
You, is it? Taking your death in the hailstones, or in the fogs of dawn.

PEGEEN.  
Yourself and me would shelter easy in a narrow bush, (*with a qualm of dread*) but we’re only talking, maybe, for this would be a poor, thatched place to hold a fine lad is the like of you.

CHRISTY.  
*putting his arm round her.*—If I wasn’t a good Christian, it’s on my naked knees I’d be saying my prayers and paters to every jackstraw you have roofing your head, and every stony pebble is paving the laneway to your door.

PEGEEN.  
*radiantly.*—If that’s the truth, I’ll be burning candles from this out to the miracles of God that have brought you from the south to-day, and I, with my gowns bought ready, the way that I can wed you, and not wait at all.

CHRISTY.  
It’s miracles, and that’s the truth. Me there toiling a long while, and walking a long while, not knowing at all I was drawing all times nearer to this holy day.

PEGEEN.  
And myself, a girl, was tempted often to go sailing the seas till I’d marry a Jew-man, with ten kegs of gold, and I not knowing at all there was the like of you drawing nearer, like the stars of God.

CHRISTY.  
And to think I’m long years hearing women talking that talk, to all bloody fools, and this the first time I’ve heard the like of your voice talking sweetly for my own delight.

PEGEEN.  
And to think it’s me is talking sweetly, Christy Mahon, and I the fright of seven townlands for my biting tongue. Well, the heart’s a wonder; and, I’m thinking, there won’t be our like in Mayo, for gallant lovers, from this hour, to-day. (*Drunken singing is heard outside.*) There’s my father coming from the wake, and when he’s had his sleep we’ll tell him, for he’s peaceful then. [*They separate.*]

MICHAEL.  
*singing outside*—  
    The jailor and the turnkey  
    They quickly ran us down,  
    And brought us back as prisoners  
    Once more to Cavan town.

[*He comes in supported by Shawn.*]

    There we lay bewailing  
    All in a prison bound....

[*He sees Christy. Goes and shakes him drunkenly by the hand, while Pegeen and Shawn talk on the left.*]

MICHAEL.  
*to Christy.*—The blessing of God and the holy angels on your head, young fellow. I hear tell you’re after winning all in the sports below; and wasn’t it a shame I didn’t bear you along with me to Kate Cassidy’s wake, a fine, stout lad, the like of you, for you’d never see the match of it for flows of drink, the way when we sunk her bones at noonday in her narrow grave, there were five men, aye, and six men, stretched out retching speechless on the holy stones.

CHRISTY.  
*uneasily, watching Pegeen.*—Is that the truth?

MICHAEL.  
It is then, and aren’t you a louty schemer to go burying your poor father unbeknownst when you’d a right to throw him on the crupper of a Kerry mule and drive him westwards, like holy Joseph in the days gone by, the way we could have given him a decent burial, and not have him rotting beyond, and not a Christian drinking a smart drop to the glory of his soul?

CHRISTY.  
*gruffly.*—It’s well enough he’s lying, for the likes of him.

MICHAEL.  
*slapping him on the back.*—Well, aren’t you a hardened slayer? It’ll be a poor thing for the household man where you go sniffing for a female wife; and (*pointing to Shawn*) look beyond at that shy and decent Christian I have chosen for my daughter’s hand, and I after getting the gilded dispensation this day for to wed them now.

CHRISTY.  
And you’ll be wedding them this day, is it?

MICHAEL.  
*drawing himself up.*—Aye. Are you thinking, if I’m drunk itself, I’d leave my daughter living single with a little frisky rascal is the like of you?

PEGEEN.  
*breaking away from Shawn.*—Is it the truth the dispensation’s come?

MICHAEL.  
*triumphantly.*—Father Reilly’s after reading it in gallous Latin, and “It’s come in the nick of time,” says he; “so I’ll wed them in a hurry, dreading that young gaffer who’d capsize the stars.”

PEGEEN.  
*fiercely.*—He’s missed his nick of time, for it’s that lad, Christy Mahon, that I’m wedding now.

MICHAEL.  
*loudly with horror.*—You’d be making him a son to me, and he wet and crusted with his father’s blood?

PEGEEN.  
Aye. Wouldn’t it be a bitter thing for a girl to go marrying the like of Shaneen, and he a middling kind of a scarecrow, with no savagery or fine words in him at all?

MICHAEL.  
*gasping and sinking on a chair.*—Oh, aren’t you a heathen daughter to go shaking the fat of my heart, and I swamped and drownded with the weight of drink? Would you have them turning on me the way that I’d be roaring to the dawn of day with the wind upon my heart? Have you not a word to aid me, Shaneen? Are you not jealous at all?

SHANEEN.  
*In great misery.*—I’d be afeard to be jealous of a man did slay his da.

PEGEEN.  
Well, it’d be a poor thing to go marrying your like. I’m seeing there’s a world of peril for an orphan girl, and isn’t it a great blessing I didn’t wed you, before himself came walking from the west or south?

SHAWN.  
It’s a queer story you’d go picking a dirty tramp up from the highways of the world.

PEGEEN.  
*playfully.*—And you think you’re a likely beau to go straying along with, the shiny Sundays of the opening year, when it’s sooner on a bullock’s liver you’d put a poor girl thinking than on the lily or the rose?

SHAWN.  
And have you no mind of my weight of passion, and the holy dispensation, and the drift of heifers I am giving, and the golden ring?

PEGEEN.  
I’m thinking you’re too fine for the like of me, Shawn Keogh of Killakeen, and let you go off till you’d find a radiant lady with droves of bullocks on the plains of Meath, and herself bedizened in the diamond jewelleries of Pharaoh’s ma. That’d be your match, Shaneen. So God save you now! [*She retreats behind Christy.*]

SHAWN.  
Won’t you hear me telling you...?

CHRISTY.  
*with ferocity.*—Take yourself from this, young fellow, or I’ll maybe add a murder to my deeds to-day.

MICHAEL.  
*springing up with a shriek.*—Murder is it? Is it mad yous are? Would you go making murder in this place, and it piled with poteen for our drink to-night? Go on to the foreshore if it’s fighting you want, where the rising tide will wash all traces from the memory of man. [*Pushing Shawn towards Christy.*]

SHAWN.  
*shaking himself free, and getting behind Michael.*—I’ll not fight him, Michael James. I’d liefer live a bachelor, simmering in passions to the end of time, than face a lepping savage the like of him has descended from the Lord knows where. Strike him yourself, Michael James, or you’ll lose my drift of heifers and my blue bull from Sneem.

MICHAEL.  
Is it me fight him, when it’s father-slaying he’s bred to now? (*Pushing Shawn.*) Go on you fool and fight him now.

SHAWN.  
*coming forward a little.*—Will I strike him with my hand?

MICHAEL.  
Take the loy is on your western side.

SHAWN.  
I’d be afeard of the gallows if I struck him with that.

CHRISTY.  
*taking up the loy.*—Then I’ll make you face the gallows or quit off from this. [*Shawn flies out of the door.*]

CHRISTY.  
Well, fine weather be after him, (*going to Michael, coaxingly*) and I’m thinking you wouldn’t wish to have that quaking blackguard in your house at all. Let you give us your blessing and hear her swear her faith to me, for I’m mounted on the spring-tide of the stars of luck, the way it’ll be good for any to have me in the house.

PEGEEN.  
*at the other side of Michael.*—Bless us now, for I swear to God I’ll wed him, and I’ll not renege.

MICHAEL.  
*standing up in the centre, holding on to both of them.*—It’s the will of God, I’m thinking, that all should win an easy or a cruel end, and it’s the will of God that all should rear up lengthy families for the nurture of the earth. What’s a single man, I ask you, eating a bit in one house and drinking a sup in another, and he with no place of his own, like an old braying jackass strayed upon the rocks? (*To Christy.*) It’s many would be in dread to bring your like into their house for to end them, maybe, with a sudden end; but I’m a decent man of Ireland, and I liefer face the grave untimely and I seeing a score of grandsons growing up little gallant swearers by the name of God, than go peopling my bedside with puny weeds the like of what you’d breed, I’m thinking, out of Shaneen Keogh. (*He joins their hands.*) A daring fellow is the jewel of the world, and a man did split his father’s middle with a single clout, should have the bravery of ten, so may God and Mary and St. Patrick bless you, and increase you from this mortal day.

CHRISTY *and* PEGEEN.  
Amen, O Lord!

[*Hubbub outside. Old Mahon rushes in, followed by all the crowd, and Widow Quin. He makes a rush at Christy, knocks him down, and begins to beat him.*]

PEGEEN.  
*dragging back his arm.*—Stop that, will you. Who are you at all?

MAHON.  
His father, God forgive me!

PEGEEN.  
*drawing back.*—Is it rose from the dead?

MAHON.  
Do you think I look so easy quenched with the tap of a loy? [*Beats Christy again.*]

PEGEEN.  
*glaring at Christy.*—And it’s lies you told, letting on you had him slitted, and you nothing at all.

CHRISTY.  
*clutching Mahon’s stick.*—He’s not my father. He’s a raving maniac would scare the world. (*Pointing to Widow Quin.*) Herself knows it is true.

CROWD.  
You’re fooling Pegeen! The Widow Quin seen him this day, and you likely knew! You’re a liar!

CHRISTY.  
*dumbfounded.*—It’s himself was a liar, lying stretched out with an open head on him, letting on he was dead.

MAHON.  
Weren’t you off racing the hills before I got my breath with the start I had seeing you turn on me at all?

PEGEEN.  
And to think of the coaxing glory we had given him, and he after doing nothing but hitting a soft blow and chasing northward in a sweat of fear. Quit off from this.

CHRISTY.  
*piteously.*—You’ve seen my doings this day, and let you save me from the old man; for why would you be in such a scorch of haste to spur me to destruction now?

PEGEEN.  
It’s there your treachery is spurring me, till I’m hard set to think you’re the one I’m after lacing in my heart-strings half-an-hour gone by. (*To Mahon.*) Take him on from this, for I think bad the world should see me raging for a Munster liar, and the fool of men.

MAHON.  
Rise up now to retribution, and come on with me.

CROWD.  
*jeeringly.*—There’s the playboy! There’s the lad thought he’d rule the roost in Mayo. Slate him now, mister.

CHRISTY.  
*getting up in shy terror.*—What is it drives you to torment me here, when I’d asked the thunders of the might of God to blast me if I ever did hurt to any saving only that one single blow.

MAHON.  
*loudly.*—If you didn’t, you’re a poor good-for-nothing, and isn’t it by the like of you the sins of the whole world are committed?

CHRISTY.  
*raising his hands.*—In the name of the Almighty God....

MAHON.  
Leave troubling the Lord God. Would you have him sending down droughts, and fevers, and the old hen and the cholera morbus?

CHRISTY.  
*to Widow Quin.*—Will you come between us and protect me now?

WIDOW QUIN.  
I’ve tried a lot, God help me, and my share is done.

CHRISTY.  
*looking round in desperation.*—And I must go back into my torment is it, or run off like a vagabond straying through the unions with the dusts of August making mudstains in the gullet of my throat, or the winds of March blowing on me till I’d take an oath I felt them making whistles of my ribs within?

SARA.  
Ask Pegeen to aid you. Her like does often change.

CHRISTY.  
I will not then, for there’s torment in the splendour of her like, and she a girl any moon of midnight would take pride to meet, facing southwards on the heaths of Keel. But what did I want crawling forward to scorch my understanding at her flaming brow?

PEGEEN.  
*to Mahon, vehemently, fearing she will break into tears.*—Take him on from this or I’ll set the young lads to destroy him here.

MAHON.  
*going to him, shaking his stick.*—Come on now if you wouldn’t have the company to see you skelped.

PEGEEN.  
*half laughing, through her tears.*—That’s it, now the world will see him pandied, and he an ugly liar was playing off the hero, and the fright of men.

CHRISTY.  
*to Mahon, very sharply.*—Leave me go!

CROWD.  
That’s it. Now Christy. If them two set fighting, it will lick the world.

MAHON.  
*making a grab at Christy.*—Come here to me.

CHRISTY.  
*more threateningly.*—Leave me go, I’m saying.

MAHON.  
I will maybe, when your legs is limping, and your back is blue.

CROWD.  
Keep it up, the two of you. I’ll back the old one. Now the playboy.

CHRISTY.  
*in low and intense voice.*—Shut your yelling, for if you’re after making a mighty man of me this day by the power of a lie, you’re setting me now to think if it’s a poor thing to be lonesome, it’s worse maybe to go mixing with the fools of earth. [*Mahon makes a movement towards him.*]

CHRISTY.  
*almost shouting.*—Keep off ... lest I do show a blow unto the lot of you would set the guardian angels winking in the clouds above. [*He swings round with a sudden rapid movement and picks up a loy.*]

CROWD.  
*half frightened, half amused.*—He’s going mad! Mind yourselves! Run from the idiot!

CHRISTY.  
If I am an idiot, I’m after hearing my voice this day saying words would raise the topknot on a poet in a merchant’s town. I’ve won your racing, and your lepping, and....

MAHON.  
Shut your gullet and come on with me.

CHRISTY.  
I’m going, but I’ll stretch you first. [*He runs at old Mahon with the loy, chases him out of the door, followed by crowd and Widow Quin. There is a great noise outside, then a yell, and dead silence for a moment. Christy comes in, half dazed, and goes to fire.*]

WIDOW QUIN.  
*coming in, hurriedly, and going to him.*—They’re turning again you. Come on, or you’ll be hanged, indeed.

CHRISTY.  
I’m thinking, from this out, Pegeen’ll be giving me praises the same as in the hours gone by.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*impatiently.*—Come by the back-door. I’d think bad to have you stifled on the gallows tree.

CHRISTY.  
*indignantly.*—I will not, then. What good’d be my life-time, if I left Pegeen?

WIDOW QUIN.  
Come on, and you’ll be no worse than you were last night; and you with a double murder this time to be telling to the girls.

CHRISTY.  
I’ll not leave Pegeen Mike.

WIDOW QUIN.  
*impatiently.*—Isn’t there the match of her in every parish public, from Binghamstown unto the plain of Meath? Come on, I tell you, and I’ll find you finer sweethearts at each waning moon.

CHRISTY.  
It’s Pegeen I’m seeking only, and what’d I care if you brought me a drift of chosen females, standing in their shifts itself, maybe, from this place to the Eastern World?

SARA.  
*runs in, pulling off one of her petticoats.*—They’re going to hang him. (*Holding out petticoat and shawl.*) Fit these upon him, and let him run off to the east.

WIDOW QUIN.  
He’s raving now; but we’ll fit them on him, and I’ll take him, in the ferry, to the Achill boat.

CHRISTY.  
*struggling feebly.*—Leave me go, will you? when I’m thinking of my luck to-day, for she will wed me surely, and I a proven hero in the end of all. [*They try to fasten petticoat round him.*]

WIDOW QUIN.  
Take his left hand, and we’ll pull him now. Come on, young fellow.

CHRISTY.  
*suddenly starting up.*—You’ll be taking me from her? You’re jealous, is it, of her wedding me? Go on from this. [*He snatches up a stool, and threatens them with it.*]

WIDOW QUIN.  
*going.*—It’s in the mad-house they should put him, not in jail, at all. We’ll go by the back-door, to call the doctor, and we’ll save him so. [*She goes out, with Sara, through inner room. Men crowd in the doorway. Christy sits down again by the fire.*]

MICHAEL.  
*in a terrified whisper.*—Is the old lad killed surely?

PHILLY.  
I’m after feeling the last gasps quitting his heart. [*They peer in at Christy.*]

MICHAEL.  
*with a rope.*—Look at the way he is. Twist a hangman’s knot on it, and slip it over his head, while he’s not minding at all.

PHILLY.  
Let you take it, Shaneen. You’re the soberest of all that’s here.

SHAWN.  
Is it me to go near him, and he the wickedest and worst with me? Let you take it, Pegeen Mike.

PEGEEN.  
Come on, so. [*She goes forward with the others, and they drop the double hitch over his head.*]

CHRISTY.  
What ails you?

SHAWN.  
*triumphantly, as they pull the rope tight on his arms.*—Come on to the peelers, till they stretch you now.

CHRISTY.  
Me?

MICHAEL.  
If we took pity on you, the Lord God would, maybe, bring us ruin from the law to-day, so you’d best come easy, for hanging is an easy and a speedy end.

CHRISTY.  
I’ll not stir. (*To Pegeen.*) And what is it you’ll say to me, and I after doing it this time in the face of all?

PEGEEN.  
I’ll say, a strange man is a marvel, with his mighty talk; but what’s a squabble in your back-yard, and the blow of a loy, have taught me that there’s a great gap between a gallous story and a dirty deed. (*To men.*) Take him on from this, or the lot of us will be likely put on trial for his deed to-day.

CHRISTY.  
*with horror in his voice.*—And it’s yourself will send me off, to have a horny-fingered hangman hitching his bloody slip-knots at the butt of my ear.

MEN.  
*pulling rope.*—Come on, will you? [*He is pulled down on the floor.*]

CHRISTY.  
*twisting his legs round the table.*—Cut the rope, Pegeen, and I’ll quit the lot of you, and live from this out, like the madmen of Keel, eating muck and green weeds, on the faces of the cliffs.

PEGEEN.  
And leave us to hang, is it, for a saucy liar, the like of you? (*To men.*) Take him on, out from this.

SHAWN.  
Pull a twist on his neck, and squeeze him so.

PHILLY.  
Twist yourself. Sure he cannot hurt you, if you keep your distance from his teeth alone.

SHAWN.  
I’m afeard of him. (*To Pegeen.*) Lift a lighted sod, will you, and scorch his leg.

PEGEEN.  
*blowing the fire, with a bellows.*—Leave go now, young fellow, or I’ll scorch your shins.

CHRISTY.  
You’re blowing for to torture me (*His voice rising and growing stronger.*) That’s your kind, is it? Then let the lot of you be wary, for, if I’ve to face the gallows, I’ll have a gay march down, I tell you, and shed the blood of some of you before I die.

SHAWN.  
*in terror.*—Keep a good hold, Philly. Be wary, for the love of God. For I’m thinking he would liefest wreak his pains on me.

CHRISTY.  
*almost gaily.*—If I do lay my hands on you, it’s the way you’ll be at the fall of night, hanging as a scarecrow for the fowls of hell. Ah, you’ll have a gallous jaunt I’m saying, coaching out through Limbo with my father’s ghost.

SHAWN.  
*to Pegeen.*—Make haste, will you? Oh, isn’t he a holy terror, and isn’t it true for Father Reilly, that all drink’s a curse that has the lot of you so shaky and uncertain now?

CHRISTY.  
If I can wring a neck among you, I’ll have a royal judgment looking on the trembling jury in the courts of law. And won’t there be crying out in Mayo the day I’m stretched upon the rope with ladies in their silks and satins snivelling in their lacy kerchiefs, and they rhyming songs and ballads on the terror of my fate? [*He squirms round on the floor and bites Shawn’s leg.*]

SHAWN.  
*shrieking.*—My leg’s bit on me. He’s the like of a mad dog, I’m thinking, the way that I will surely die.

CHRISTY.  
*delighted with himself.*—You will then, the way you can shake out hell’s flags of welcome for my coming in two weeks or three, for I’m thinking Satan hasn’t many have killed their da in Kerry, and in Mayo too. [*Old Mahon comes in behind on all fours and looks on unnoticed.*]

MEN.  
*to Pegeen.*—Bring the sod, will you?

PEGEEN.  
*coming over.*—God help him so. (*Burns his leg.*)

CHRISTY.  
*kicking and screaming.*—O, glory be to God! [*He kicks loose from the table, and they all drag him towards the door.*]

JIMMY.  
*seeing old Mahon.*—Will you look what’s come in? [*They all drop Christy and run left.*]

CHRISTY.  
*scrambling on his knees face to face with old Mahon.*—Are you coming to be killed a third time, or what ails you now?

MAHON.  
For what is it they have you tied?

CHRISTY.  
They’re taking me to the peelers to have me hanged for slaying you.

MICHAEL.  
*apologetically.*—It is the will of God that all should guard their little cabins from the treachery of law, and what would my daughter be doing if I was ruined or was hanged itself?

MAHON.  
*grimly, loosening Christy.*—It’s little I care if you put a bag on her back, and went picking cockles till the hour of death; but my son and myself will be going our own way, and we’ll have great times from this out telling stories of the villainy of Mayo, and the fools is here. (*To Christy, who is freed.*) Come on now.

CHRISTY.  
Go with you, is it? I will then, like a gallant captain with his heathen slave. Go on now and I’ll see you from this day stewing my oatmeal and washing my spuds, for I’m master of all fights from now. (*Pushing Mahon.*) Go on, I’m saying.

MAHON.  
Is it me?

CHRISTY.  
Not a word out of you. Go on from this.

MAHON.  
*walking out and looking back at Christy over his shoulder.*—Glory be to God! (*With a broad smile.*) I am crazy again! [*Goes.*]

CHRISTY.  
Ten thousand blessings upon all that’s here, for you’ve turned me a likely gaffer in the end of all, the way I’ll go romancing through a romping lifetime from this hour to the dawning of the judgment day. [*He goes out.*]

MICHAEL.  
By the will of God, we’ll have peace now for our drinks. Will you draw the porter, Pegeen?

SHAWN.  
*going up to her.*—It’s a miracle Father Reilly can wed us in the end of all, and we’ll have none to trouble us when his vicious bite is healed.

PEGEEN.  
*hitting him a box on the ear.*—Quit my sight. (*Putting her shawl over her head and breaking out into wild lamentations.*) Oh my grief, I’ve lost him surely. I’ve lost the only Playboy of the Western World.

CURTAIN.

THE DEAD by James Joyce

Lily, the caretaker’s daughter, was literally run off her feet. Hardly had she brought one gentleman into the little pantry behind the office on the ground floor and helped him off with his overcoat than the wheezy hall-door bell clanged again and she had to scamper along the bare hallway to let in another guest. It was well for her she had not to attend to the ladies also. But Miss Kate and Miss Julia had thought of that and had converted the bathroom upstairs into a ladies’ dressing-room. Miss Kate and Miss Julia were there, gossiping and laughing and fussing, walking after each other to the head of the stairs, peering down over the banisters and calling down to Lily to ask her who had come.

It was always a great affair, the Misses Morkan’s annual dance. Everybody who knew them came to it, members of the family, old friends of the family, the members of Julia’s choir, any of Kate’s pupils that were grown up enough, and even some of Mary Jane’s pupils too. Never once had it fallen flat. For years and years it had gone off in splendid style as long as anyone could remember; ever since Kate and Julia, after the death of their brother Pat, had left the house in Stoney Batter and taken Mary Jane, their only niece, to live with them in the dark gaunt house on Usher’s Island, the upper part of which they had rented from Mr Fulham, the corn-factor on the ground floor. That was a good thirty years ago if it was a day. Mary Jane, who was then a little girl in short clothes, was now the main prop of the household, for she had the organ in Haddington Road. She had been through the Academy and gave a pupils’ concert every year in the upper room of the Antient Concert Rooms. Many of her pupils belonged to the better-class families on the Kingstown and Dalkey line. Old as they were, her aunts also did their share. Julia, though she was quite grey, was still the leading soprano in Adam and Eve’s, and Kate, being too feeble to go about much, gave music lessons to beginners on the old square piano in the back room. Lily, the caretaker’s daughter, did housemaid’s work for them. Though their life was modest they believed in eating well; the best of everything: diamond-bone sirloins, three-shilling tea and the best bottled stout. But Lily seldom made a mistake in the orders so that she got on well with her three mistresses. They were fussy, that was all. But the only thing they would not stand was back answers.

Of course they had good reason to be fussy on such a night. And then it was long after ten o’clock and yet there was no sign of Gabriel and his wife. Besides they were dreadfully afraid that Freddy Malins might turn up screwed. They would not wish for worlds that any of Mary Jane’s pupils should see him under the influence; and when he was like that it was sometimes very hard to manage him. Freddy Malins always came late but they wondered what could be keeping Gabriel: and that was what brought them every two minutes to the banisters to ask Lily had Gabriel or Freddy come.

“O, Mr Conroy,” said Lily to Gabriel when she opened the door for him, “Miss Kate and Miss Julia thought you were never coming. Good-night, Mrs Conroy.”

“I’ll engage they did,” said Gabriel, “but they forget that my wife here takes three mortal hours to dress herself.”

He stood on the mat, scraping the snow from his goloshes, while Lily led his wife to the foot of the stairs and called out:

“Miss Kate, here’s Mrs Conroy.”

Kate and Julia came toddling down the dark stairs at once. Both of them kissed Gabriel’s wife, said she must be perished alive and asked was Gabriel with her.

“Here I am as right as the mail, Aunt Kate! Go on up. I’ll follow,” called out Gabriel from the dark.

He continued scraping his feet vigorously while the three women went upstairs, laughing, to the ladies’ dressing-room. A light fringe of snow lay like a cape on the shoulders of his overcoat and like toecaps on the toes of his goloshes; and, as the buttons of his overcoat slipped with a squeaking noise through the snow-stiffened frieze, a cold, fragrant air from out-of-doors escaped from crevices and folds.

“Is it snowing again, Mr Conroy?” asked Lily.

She had preceded him into the pantry to help him off with his overcoat. Gabriel smiled at the three syllables she had given his surname and glanced at her. She was a slim, growing girl, pale in complexion and with hay-coloured hair. The gas in the pantry made her look still paler. Gabriel had known her when she was a child and used to sit on the lowest step nursing a rag doll.

“Yes, Lily,” he answered, “and I think we’re in for a night of it.”

He looked up at the pantry ceiling, which was shaking with the stamping and shuffling of feet on the floor above, listened for a moment to the piano and then glanced at the girl, who was folding his overcoat carefully at the end of a shelf.

“Tell me, Lily,” he said in a friendly tone, “do you still go to school?”

“O no, sir,” she answered. “I’m done schooling this year and more.”

“O, then,” said Gabriel gaily, “I suppose we’ll be going to your wedding one of these fine days with your young man, eh?”

The girl glanced back at him over her shoulder and said with great bitterness:

“The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you.”

Gabriel coloured as if he felt he had made a mistake and, without looking at her, kicked off his goloshes and flicked actively with his muffler at his patent-leather shoes.

He was a stout tallish young man. The high colour of his cheeks pushed upwards even to his forehead where it scattered itself in a few formless patches of pale red; and on his hairless face there scintillated restlessly the polished lenses and the bright gilt rims of the glasses which screened his delicate and restless eyes. His glossy black hair was parted in the middle and brushed in a long curve behind his ears where it curled slightly beneath the groove left by his hat.

When he had flicked lustre into his shoes he stood up and pulled his waistcoat down more tightly on his plump body. Then he took a coin rapidly from his pocket.

“O Lily,” he said, thrusting it into her hands, “it’s Christmas-time, isn’t it? Just ... here’s a little....”

He walked rapidly towards the door.

“O no, sir!” cried the girl, following him. “Really, sir, I wouldn’t take it.”

“Christmas-time! Christmas-time!” said Gabriel, almost trotting to the stairs and waving his hand to her in deprecation.

The girl, seeing that he had gained the stairs, called out after him:

“Well, thank you, sir.”

He waited outside the drawing-room door until the waltz should finish, listening to the skirts that swept against it and to the shuffling of feet. He was still discomposed by the girl’s bitter and sudden retort. It had cast a gloom over him which he tried to dispel by arranging his cuffs and the bows of his tie. He then took from his waistcoat pocket a little paper and glanced at the headings he had made for his speech. He was undecided about the lines from Robert Browning for he feared they would be above the heads of his hearers. Some quotation that they would recognise from Shakespeare or from the Melodies would be better. The indelicate clacking of the men’s heels and the shuffling of their soles reminded him that their grade of culture differed from his. He would only make himself ridiculous by quoting poetry to them which they could not understand. They would think that he was airing his superior education. He would fail with them just as he had failed with the girl in the pantry. He had taken up a wrong tone. His whole speech was a mistake from first to last, an utter failure.

Just then his aunts and his wife came out of the ladies’ dressing-room. His aunts were two small plainly dressed old women. Aunt Julia was an inch or so the taller. Her hair, drawn low over the tops of her ears, was grey; and grey also, with darker shadows, was her large flaccid face. Though she was stout in build and stood erect her slow eyes and parted lips gave her the appearance of a woman who did not know where she was or where she was going. Aunt Kate was more vivacious. Her face, healthier than her sister’s, was all puckers and creases, like a shrivelled red apple, and her hair, braided in the same old-fashioned way, had not lost its ripe nut colour.

They both kissed Gabriel frankly. He was their favourite nephew, the son of their dead elder sister, Ellen, who had married T. J. Conroy of the Port and Docks.

“Gretta tells me you’re not going to take a cab back to Monkstown tonight, Gabriel,” said Aunt Kate.

“No,” said Gabriel, turning to his wife, “we had quite enough of that last year, hadn’t we? Don’t you remember, Aunt Kate, what a cold Gretta got out of it? Cab windows rattling all the way, and the east wind blowing in after we passed Merrion. Very jolly it was. Gretta caught a dreadful cold.”

Aunt Kate frowned severely and nodded her head at every word.

“Quite right, Gabriel, quite right,” she said. “You can’t be too careful.”

“But as for Gretta there,” said Gabriel, “she’d walk home in the snow if she were let.”

Mrs Conroy laughed.

“Don’t mind him, Aunt Kate,” she said. “He’s really an awful bother, what with green shades for Tom’s eyes at night and making him do the dumb-bells, and forcing Eva to eat the stirabout. The poor child! And she simply hates the sight of it!... O, but you’ll never guess what he makes me wear now!”

She broke out into a peal of laughter and glanced at her husband, whose admiring and happy eyes had been wandering from her dress to her face and hair. The two aunts laughed heartily too, for Gabriel’s solicitude was a standing joke with them.

“Goloshes!” said Mrs Conroy. “That’s the latest. Whenever it’s wet underfoot I must put on my goloshes. Tonight even he wanted me to put them on, but I wouldn’t. The next thing he’ll buy me will be a diving suit.”

Gabriel laughed nervously and patted his tie reassuringly while Aunt Kate nearly doubled herself, so heartily did she enjoy the joke. The smile soon faded from Aunt Julia’s face and her mirthless eyes were directed towards her nephew’s face. After a pause she asked:

“And what are goloshes, Gabriel?”

“Goloshes, Julia!” exclaimed her sister. “Goodness me, don’t you know what goloshes are? You wear them over your ... over your boots, Gretta, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” said Mrs Conroy. “Guttapercha things. We both have a pair now. Gabriel says everyone wears them on the continent.”

“O, on the continent,” murmured Aunt Julia, nodding her head slowly.

Gabriel knitted his brows and said, as if he were slightly angered:

“It’s nothing very wonderful but Gretta thinks it very funny because she says the word reminds her of Christy Minstrels.”

“But tell me, Gabriel,” said Aunt Kate, with brisk tact. “Of course, you’ve seen about the room. Gretta was saying....”

“O, the room is all right,” replied Gabriel. “I’ve taken one in the Gresham.”

“To be sure,” said Aunt Kate, “by far the best thing to do. And the children, Gretta, you’re not anxious about them?”

“O, for one night,” said Mrs Conroy. “Besides, Bessie will look after them.”

“To be sure,” said Aunt Kate again. “What a comfort it is to have a girl like that, one you can depend on! There’s that Lily, I’m sure I don’t know what has come over her lately. She’s not the girl she was at all.”

Gabriel was about to ask his aunt some questions on this point but she broke off suddenly to gaze after her sister who had wandered down the stairs and was craning her neck over the banisters.

“Now, I ask you,” she said almost testily, “where is Julia going? Julia! Julia! Where are you going?”

Julia, who had gone half way down one flight, came back and announced blandly:

“Here’s Freddy.”

At the same moment a clapping of hands and a final flourish of the pianist told that the waltz had ended. The drawing-room door was opened from within and some couples came out. Aunt Kate drew Gabriel aside hurriedly and whispered into his ear:

“Slip down, Gabriel, like a good fellow and see if he’s all right, and don’t let him up if he’s screwed. I’m sure he’s screwed. I’m sure he is.”

Gabriel went to the stairs and listened over the banisters. He could hear two persons talking in the pantry. Then he recognised Freddy Malins’ laugh. He went down the stairs noisily.

“It’s such a relief,” said Aunt Kate to Mrs Conroy, “that Gabriel is here. I always feel easier in my mind when he’s here.... Julia, there’s Miss Daly and Miss Power will take some refreshment. Thanks for your beautiful waltz, Miss Daly. It made lovely time.”

A tall wizen-faced man, with a stiff grizzled moustache and swarthy skin, who was passing out with his partner said:

“And may we have some refreshment, too, Miss Morkan?”

“Julia,” said Aunt Kate summarily, “and here’s Mr Browne and Miss Furlong. Take them in, Julia, with Miss Daly and Miss Power.”

“I’m the man for the ladies,” said Mr Browne, pursing his lips until his moustache bristled and smiling in all his wrinkles. “You know, Miss Morkan, the reason they are so fond of me is——”

He did not finish his sentence, but, seeing that Aunt Kate was out of earshot, at once led the three young ladies into the back room. The middle of the room was occupied by two square tables placed end to end, and on these Aunt Julia and the caretaker were straightening and smoothing a large cloth. On the sideboard were arrayed dishes and plates, and glasses and bundles of knives and forks and spoons. The top of the closed square piano served also as a sideboard for viands and sweets. At a smaller sideboard in one corner two young men were standing, drinking hop-bitters.

Mr Browne led his charges thither and invited them all, in jest, to some ladies’ punch, hot, strong and sweet. As they said they never took anything strong he opened three bottles of lemonade for them. Then he asked one of the young men to move aside, and, taking hold of the decanter, filled out for himself a goodly measure of whisky. The young men eyed him respectfully while he took a trial sip.

“God help me,” he said, smiling, “it’s the doctor’s orders.”

His wizened face broke into a broader smile, and the three young ladies laughed in musical echo to his pleasantry, swaying their bodies to and fro, with nervous jerks of their shoulders. The boldest said:

“O, now, Mr Browne, I’m sure the doctor never ordered anything of the kind.”

Mr Browne took another sip of his whisky and said, with sidling mimicry:

“Well, you see, I’m like the famous Mrs Cassidy, who is reported to have said: ‘Now, Mary Grimes, if I don’t take it, make me take it, for I feel I want it.’”

His hot face had leaned forward a little too confidentially and he had assumed a very low Dublin accent so that the young ladies, with one instinct, received his speech in silence. Miss Furlong, who was one of Mary Jane’s pupils, asked Miss Daly what was the name of the pretty waltz she had played; and Mr Browne, seeing that he was ignored, turned promptly to the two young men who were more appreciative.

A red-faced young woman, dressed in pansy, came into the room, excitedly clapping her hands and crying:

“Quadrilles! Quadrilles!”

Close on her heels came Aunt Kate, crying:

“Two gentlemen and three ladies, Mary Jane!”

“O, here’s Mr Bergin and Mr Kerrigan,” said Mary Jane. “Mr Kerrigan, will you take Miss Power? Miss Furlong, may I get you a partner, Mr Bergin. O, that’ll just do now.”

“Three ladies, Mary Jane,” said Aunt Kate.

The two young gentlemen asked the ladies if they might have the pleasure, and Mary Jane turned to Miss Daly.

“O, Miss Daly, you’re really awfully good, after playing for the last two dances, but really we’re so short of ladies tonight.”

“I don’t mind in the least, Miss Morkan.”

“But I’ve a nice partner for you, Mr Bartell D’Arcy, the tenor. I’ll get him to sing later on. All Dublin is raving about him.”

“Lovely voice, lovely voice!” said Aunt Kate.

As the piano had twice begun the prelude to the first figure Mary Jane led her recruits quickly from the room. They had hardly gone when Aunt Julia wandered slowly into the room, looking behind her at something.

“What is the matter, Julia?” asked Aunt Kate anxiously. “Who is it?”

Julia, who was carrying in a column of table-napkins, turned to her sister and said, simply, as if the question had surprised her:

“It’s only Freddy, Kate, and Gabriel with him.”

In fact right behind her Gabriel could be seen piloting Freddy Malins across the landing. The latter, a young man of about forty, was of Gabriel’s size and build, with very round shoulders. His face was fleshy and pallid, touched with colour only at the thick hanging lobes of his ears and at the wide wings of his nose. He had coarse features, a blunt nose, a convex and receding brow, tumid and protruded lips. His heavy-lidded eyes and the disorder of his scanty hair made him look sleepy. He was laughing heartily in a high key at a story which he had been telling Gabriel on the stairs and at the same time rubbing the knuckles of his left fist backwards and forwards into his left eye.

“Good-evening, Freddy,” said Aunt Julia.

Freddy Malins bade the Misses Morkan good-evening in what seemed an offhand fashion by reason of the habitual catch in his voice and then, seeing that Mr Browne was grinning at him from the sideboard, crossed the room on rather shaky legs and began to repeat in an undertone the story he had just told to Gabriel.

“He’s not so bad, is he?” said Aunt Kate to Gabriel.

Gabriel’s brows were dark but he raised them quickly and answered:

“O, no, hardly noticeable.”

“Now, isn’t he a terrible fellow!” she said. “And his poor mother made him take the pledge on New Year’s Eve. But come on, Gabriel, into the drawing-room.”

Before leaving the room with Gabriel she signalled to Mr Browne by frowning and shaking her forefinger in warning to and fro. Mr Browne nodded in answer and, when she had gone, said to Freddy Malins:

“Now, then, Teddy, I’m going to fill you out a good glass of lemonade just to buck you up.”

Freddy Malins, who was nearing the climax of his story, waved the offer aside impatiently but Mr Browne, having first called Freddy Malins’ attention to a disarray in his dress, filled out and handed him a full glass of lemonade. Freddy Malins’ left hand accepted the glass mechanically, his right hand being engaged in the mechanical readjustment of his dress. Mr Browne, whose face was once more wrinkling with mirth, poured out for himself a glass of whisky while Freddy Malins exploded, before he had well reached the climax of his story, in a kink of high-pitched bronchitic laughter and, setting down his untasted and overflowing glass, began to rub the knuckles of his left fist backwards and forwards into his left eye, repeating words of his last phrase as well as his fit of laughter would allow him.

Gabriel could not listen while Mary Jane was playing her Academy piece, full of runs and difficult passages, to the hushed drawing-room. He liked music but the piece she was playing had no melody for him and he doubted whether it had any melody for the other listeners, though they had begged Mary Jane to play something. Four young men, who had come from the refreshment-room to stand in the doorway at the sound of the piano, had gone away quietly in couples after a few minutes. The only persons who seemed to follow the music were Mary Jane herself, her hands racing along the keyboard or lifted from it at the pauses like those of a priestess in momentary imprecation, and Aunt Kate standing at her elbow to turn the page.

Gabriel’s eyes, irritated by the floor, which glittered with beeswax under the heavy chandelier, wandered to the wall above the piano. A picture of the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* hung there and beside it was a picture of the two murdered princes in the Tower which Aunt Julia had worked in red, blue and brown wools when she was a girl. Probably in the school they had gone to as girls that kind of work had been taught for one year. His mother had worked for him as a birthday present a waistcoat of purple tabinet, with little foxes’ heads upon it, lined with brown satin and having round mulberry buttons. It was strange that his mother had had no musical talent though Aunt Kate used to call her the brains carrier of the Morkan family. Both she and Julia had always seemed a little proud of their serious and matronly sister. Her photograph stood before the pierglass. She held an open book on her knees and was pointing out something in it to Constantine who, dressed in a man-o’-war suit, lay at her feet. It was she who had chosen the name of her sons for she was very sensible of the dignity of family life. Thanks to her, Constantine was now senior curate in Balbrigan and, thanks to her, Gabriel himself had taken his degree in the Royal University. A shadow passed over his face as he remembered her sullen opposition to his marriage. Some slighting phrases she had used still rankled in his memory; she had once spoken of Gretta as being country cute and that was not true of Gretta at all. It was Gretta who had nursed her during all her last long illness in their house at Monkstown.

He knew that Mary Jane must be near the end of her piece for she was playing again the opening melody with runs of scales after every bar and while he waited for the end the resentment died down in his heart. The piece ended with a trill of octaves in the treble and a final deep octave in the bass. Great applause greeted Mary Jane as, blushing and rolling up her music nervously, she escaped from the room. The most vigorous clapping came from the four young men in the doorway who had gone away to the refreshment-room at the beginning of the piece but had come back when the piano had stopped.

Lancers were arranged. Gabriel found himself partnered with Miss Ivors. She was a frank-mannered talkative young lady, with a freckled face and prominent brown eyes. She did not wear a low-cut bodice and the large brooch which was fixed in the front of her collar bore on it an Irish device and motto.

When they had taken their places she said abruptly:

“I have a crow to pluck with you.”

“With me?” said Gabriel.

She nodded her head gravely.

“What is it?” asked Gabriel, smiling at her solemn manner.

“Who is G. C.?” answered Miss Ivors, turning her eyes upon him.

Gabriel coloured and was about to knit his brows, as if he did not understand, when she said bluntly:

“O, innocent Amy! I have found out that you write for *The Daily Express*. Now, aren’t you ashamed of yourself?”

“Why should I be ashamed of myself?” asked Gabriel, blinking his eyes and trying to smile.

“Well, I’m ashamed of you,” said Miss Ivors frankly. “To say you’d write for a paper like that. I didn’t think you were a West Briton.”

A look of perplexity appeared on Gabriel’s face. It was true that he wrote a literary column every Wednesday in *The Daily Express*, for which he was paid fifteen shillings. But that did not make him a West Briton surely. The books he received for review were almost more welcome than the paltry cheque. He loved to feel the covers and turn over the pages of newly printed books. Nearly every day when his teaching in the college was ended he used to wander down the quays to the second-hand booksellers, to Hickey’s on Bachelor’s Walk, to Webb’s or Massey’s on Aston’s Quay, or to O’Clohissey’s in the by-street. He did not know how to meet her charge. He wanted to say that literature was above politics. But they were friends of many years’ standing and their careers had been parallel, first at the university and then as teachers: he could not risk a grandiose phrase with her. He continued blinking his eyes and trying to smile and murmured lamely that he saw nothing political in writing reviews of books.

When their turn to cross had come he was still perplexed and inattentive. Miss Ivors promptly took his hand in a warm grasp and said in a soft friendly tone:

“Of course, I was only joking. Come, we cross now.”

When they were together again she spoke of the University question and Gabriel felt more at ease. A friend of hers had shown her his review of Browning’s poems. That was how she had found out the secret: but she liked the review immensely. Then she said suddenly:

“O, Mr Conroy, will you come for an excursion to the Aran Isles this summer? We’re going to stay there a whole month. It will be splendid out in the Atlantic. You ought to come. Mr Clancy is coming, and Mr Kilkelly and Kathleen Kearney. It would be splendid for Gretta too if she’d come. She’s from Connacht, isn’t she?”

“Her people are,” said Gabriel shortly.

“But you will come, won’t you?” said Miss Ivors, laying her warm hand eagerly on his arm.

“The fact is,” said Gabriel, “I have just arranged to go——”

“Go where?” asked Miss Ivors.

“Well, you know, every year I go for a cycling tour with some fellows and so——”

“But where?” asked Miss Ivors.

“Well, we usually go to France or Belgium or perhaps Germany,” said Gabriel awkwardly.

“And why do you go to France and Belgium,” said Miss Ivors, “instead of visiting your own land?”

“Well,” said Gabriel, “it’s partly to keep in touch with the languages and partly for a change.”

“And haven’t you your own language to keep in touch with—Irish?” asked Miss Ivors.

“Well,” said Gabriel, “if it comes to that, you know, Irish is not my language.”

Their neighbours had turned to listen to the cross-examination. Gabriel glanced right and left nervously and tried to keep his good humour under the ordeal which was making a blush invade his forehead.

“And haven’t you your own land to visit,” continued Miss Ivors, “that you know nothing of, your own people, and your own country?”

“O, to tell you the truth,” retorted Gabriel suddenly, “I’m sick of my own country, sick of it!”

“Why?” asked Miss Ivors.

Gabriel did not answer for his retort had heated him.

“Why?” repeated Miss Ivors.

They had to go visiting together and, as he had not answered her, Miss Ivors said warmly:

“Of course, you’ve no answer.”

Gabriel tried to cover his agitation by taking part in the dance with great energy. He avoided her eyes for he had seen a sour expression on her face. But when they met in the long chain he was surprised to feel his hand firmly pressed. She looked at him from under her brows for a moment quizzically until he smiled. Then, just as the chain was about to start again, she stood on tiptoe and whispered into his ear:

“West Briton!”

When the lancers were over Gabriel went away to a remote corner of the room where Freddy Malins’ mother was sitting. She was a stout feeble old woman with white hair. Her voice had a catch in it like her son’s and she stuttered slightly. She had been told that Freddy had come and that he was nearly all right. Gabriel asked her whether she had had a good crossing. She lived with her married daughter in Glasgow and came to Dublin on a visit once a year. She answered placidly that she had had a beautiful crossing and that the captain had been most attentive to her. She spoke also of the beautiful house her daughter kept in Glasgow, and of all the friends they had there. While her tongue rambled on Gabriel tried to banish from his mind all memory of the unpleasant incident with Miss Ivors. Of course the girl or woman, or whatever she was, was an enthusiast but there was a time for all things. Perhaps he ought not to have answered her like that. But she had no right to call him a West Briton before people, even in joke. She had tried to make him ridiculous before people, heckling him and staring at him with her rabbit’s eyes.

He saw his wife making her way towards him through the waltzing couples. When she reached him she said into his ear:

“Gabriel, Aunt Kate wants to know won’t you carve the goose as usual. Miss Daly will carve the ham and I’ll do the pudding.”

“All right,” said Gabriel.

“She’s sending in the younger ones first as soon as this waltz is over so that we’ll have the table to ourselves.”

“Were you dancing?” asked Gabriel.

“Of course I was. Didn’t you see me? What row had you with Molly Ivors?”

“No row. Why? Did she say so?”

“Something like that. I’m trying to get that Mr D’Arcy to sing. He’s full of conceit, I think.”

“There was no row,” said Gabriel moodily, “only she wanted me to go for a trip to the west of Ireland and I said I wouldn’t.”

His wife clasped her hands excitedly and gave a little jump.

“O, do go, Gabriel,” she cried. “I’d love to see Galway again.”

“You can go if you like,” said Gabriel coldly.

She looked at him for a moment, then turned to Mrs Malins and said:

“There’s a nice husband for you, Mrs Malins.”

While she was threading her way back across the room Mrs Malins, without adverting to the interruption, went on to tell Gabriel what beautiful places there were in Scotland and beautiful scenery. Her son-in-law brought them every year to the lakes and they used to go fishing. Her son-in-law was a splendid fisher. One day he caught a beautiful big fish and the man in the hotel cooked it for their dinner.

Gabriel hardly heard what she said. Now that supper was coming near he began to think again about his speech and about the quotation. When he saw Freddy Malins coming across the room to visit his mother Gabriel left the chair free for him and retired into the embrasure of the window. The room had already cleared and from the back room came the clatter of plates and knives. Those who still remained in the drawing-room seemed tired of dancing and were conversing quietly in little groups. Gabriel’s warm trembling fingers tapped the cold pane of the window. How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk out alone, first along by the river and then through the park! The snow would be lying on the branches of the trees and forming a bright cap on the top of the Wellington Monument. How much more pleasant it would be there than at the supper-table!

He ran over the headings of his speech: Irish hospitality, sad memories, the Three Graces, Paris, the quotation from Browning. He repeated to himself a phrase he had written in his review: “One feels that one is listening to a thought-tormented music.” Miss Ivors had praised the review. Was she sincere? Had she really any life of her own behind all her propagandism? There had never been any ill-feeling between them until that night. It unnerved him to think that she would be at the supper-table, looking up at him while he spoke with her critical quizzing eyes. Perhaps she would not be sorry to see him fail in his speech. An idea came into his mind and gave him courage. He would say, alluding to Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia: “Ladies and Gentlemen, the generation which is now on the wane among us may have had its faults but for my part I think it had certain qualities of hospitality, of humour, of humanity, which the new and very serious and hypereducated generation that is growing up around us seems to me to lack.” Very good: that was one for Miss Ivors. What did he care that his aunts were only two ignorant old women?

A murmur in the room attracted his attention. Mr Browne was advancing from the door, gallantly escorting Aunt Julia, who leaned upon his arm, smiling and hanging her head. An irregular musketry of applause escorted her also as far as the piano and then, as Mary Jane seated herself on the stool, and Aunt Julia, no longer smiling, half turned so as to pitch her voice fairly into the room, gradually ceased. Gabriel recognised the prelude. It was that of an old song of Aunt Julia’s—*Arrayed for the Bridal*. Her voice, strong and clear in tone, attacked with great spirit the runs which embellish the air and though she sang very rapidly she did not miss even the smallest of the grace notes. To follow the voice, without looking at the singer’s face, was to feel and share the excitement of swift and secure flight. Gabriel applauded loudly with all the others at the close of the song and loud applause was borne in from the invisible supper-table. It sounded so genuine that a little colour struggled into Aunt Julia’s face as she bent to replace in the music-stand the old leather-bound songbook that had her initials on the cover. Freddy Malins, who had listened with his head perched sideways to hear her better, was still applauding when everyone else had ceased and talking animatedly to his mother who nodded her head gravely and slowly in acquiescence. At last, when he could clap no more, he stood up suddenly and hurried across the room to Aunt Julia whose hand he seized and held in both his hands, shaking it when words failed him or the catch in his voice proved too much for him.

“I was just telling my mother,” he said, “I never heard you sing so well, never. No, I never heard your voice so good as it is tonight. Now! Would you believe that now? That’s the truth. Upon my word and honour that’s the truth. I never heard your voice sound so fresh and so ... so clear and fresh, never.”

Aunt Julia smiled broadly and murmured something about compliments as she released her hand from his grasp. Mr Browne extended his open hand towards her and said to those who were near him in the manner of a showman introducing a prodigy to an audience:

“Miss Julia Morkan, my latest discovery!”

He was laughing very heartily at this himself when Freddy Malins turned to him and said:

“Well, Browne, if you’re serious you might make a worse discovery. All I can say is I never heard her sing half so well as long as I am coming here. And that’s the honest truth.”

“Neither did I,” said Mr Browne. “I think her voice has greatly improved.”

Aunt Julia shrugged her shoulders and said with meek pride:

“Thirty years ago I hadn’t a bad voice as voices go.”

“I often told Julia,” said Aunt Kate emphatically, “that she was simply thrown away in that choir. But she never would be said by me.”

She turned as if to appeal to the good sense of the others against a refractory child while Aunt Julia gazed in front of her, a vague smile of reminiscence playing on her face.

“No,” continued Aunt Kate, “she wouldn’t be said or led by anyone, slaving there in that choir night and day, night and day. Six o’clock on Christmas morning! And all for what?”

“Well, isn’t it for the honour of God, Aunt Kate?” asked Mary Jane, twisting round on the piano-stool and smiling.

Aunt Kate turned fiercely on her niece and said:

“I know all about the honour of God, Mary Jane, but I think it’s not at all honourable for the pope to turn out the women out of the choirs that have slaved there all their lives and put little whipper-snappers of boys over their heads. I suppose it is for the good of the Church if the pope does it. But it’s not just, Mary Jane, and it’s not right.”

She had worked herself into a passion and would have continued in defence of her sister for it was a sore subject with her but Mary Jane, seeing that all the dancers had come back, intervened pacifically:

“Now, Aunt Kate, you’re giving scandal to Mr Browne who is of the other persuasion.”

Aunt Kate turned to Mr Browne, who was grinning at this allusion to his religion, and said hastily:

“O, I don’t question the pope’s being right. I’m only a stupid old woman and I wouldn’t presume to do such a thing. But there’s such a thing as common everyday politeness and gratitude. And if I were in Julia’s place I’d tell that Father Healey straight up to his face....”

“And besides, Aunt Kate,” said Mary Jane, “we really are all hungry and when we are hungry we are all very quarrelsome.”

“And when we are thirsty we are also quarrelsome,” added Mr Browne.

“So that we had better go to supper,” said Mary Jane, “and finish the discussion afterwards.”

On the landing outside the drawing-room Gabriel found his wife and Mary Jane trying to persuade Miss Ivors to stay for supper. But Miss Ivors, who had put on her hat and was buttoning her cloak, would not stay. She did not feel in the least hungry and she had already overstayed her time.

“But only for ten minutes, Molly,” said Mrs Conroy. “That won’t delay you.”

“To take a pick itself,” said Mary Jane, “after all your dancing.”

“I really couldn’t,” said Miss Ivors.

“I am afraid you didn’t enjoy yourself at all,” said Mary Jane hopelessly.

“Ever so much, I assure you,” said Miss Ivors, “but you really must let me run off now.”

“But how can you get home?” asked Mrs Conroy.

“O, it’s only two steps up the quay.”

Gabriel hesitated a moment and said:

“If you will allow me, Miss Ivors, I’ll see you home if you are really obliged to go.”

But Miss Ivors broke away from them.

“I won’t hear of it,” she cried. “For goodness’ sake go in to your suppers and don’t mind me. I’m quite well able to take care of myself.”

“Well, you’re the comical girl, Molly,” said Mrs Conroy frankly.

“*Beannacht libh*,” cried Miss Ivors, with a laugh, as she ran down the staircase.

Mary Jane gazed after her, a moody puzzled expression on her face, while Mrs Conroy leaned over the banisters to listen for the hall-door. Gabriel asked himself was he the cause of her abrupt departure. But she did not seem to be in ill humour: she had gone away laughing. He stared blankly down the staircase.

At the moment Aunt Kate came toddling out of the supper-room, almost wringing her hands in despair.

“Where is Gabriel?” she cried. “Where on earth is Gabriel? There’s everyone waiting in there, stage to let, and nobody to carve the goose!”

“Here I am, Aunt Kate!” cried Gabriel, with sudden animation, “ready to carve a flock of geese, if necessary.”

A fat brown goose lay at one end of the table and at the other end, on a bed of creased paper strewn with sprigs of parsley, lay a great ham, stripped of its outer skin and peppered over with crust crumbs, a neat paper frill round its shin and beside this was a round of spiced beef. Between these rival ends ran parallel lines of side-dishes: two little minsters of jelly, red and yellow; a shallow dish full of blocks of blancmange and red jam, a large green leaf-shaped dish with a stalk-shaped handle, on which lay bunches of purple raisins and peeled almonds, a companion dish on which lay a solid rectangle of Smyrna figs, a dish of custard topped with grated nutmeg, a small bowl full of chocolates and sweets wrapped in gold and silver papers and a glass vase in which stood some tall celery stalks. In the centre of the table there stood, as sentries to a fruit-stand which upheld a pyramid of oranges and American apples, two squat old-fashioned decanters of cut glass, one containing port and the other dark sherry. On the closed square piano a pudding in a huge yellow dish lay in waiting and behind it were three squads of bottles of stout and ale and minerals, drawn up according to the colours of their uniforms, the first two black, with brown and red labels, the third and smallest squad white, with transverse green sashes.

Gabriel took his seat boldly at the head of the table and, having looked to the edge of the carver, plunged his fork firmly into the goose. He felt quite at ease now for he was an expert carver and liked nothing better than to find himself at the head of a well-laden table.

“Miss Furlong, what shall I send you?” he asked. “A wing or a slice of the breast?”

“Just a small slice of the breast.”

“Miss Higgins, what for you?”

“O, anything at all, Mr Conroy.”

While Gabriel and Miss Daly exchanged plates of goose and plates of ham and spiced beef Lily went from guest to guest with a dish of hot floury potatoes wrapped in a white napkin. This was Mary Jane’s idea and she had also suggested apple sauce for the goose but Aunt Kate had said that plain roast goose without any apple sauce had always been good enough for her and she hoped she might never eat worse. Mary Jane waited on her pupils and saw that they got the best slices and Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia opened and carried across from the piano bottles of stout and ale for the gentlemen and bottles of minerals for the ladies. There was a great deal of confusion and laughter and noise, the noise of orders and counter-orders, of knives and forks, of corks and glass-stoppers. Gabriel began to carve second helpings as soon as he had finished the first round without serving himself. Everyone protested loudly so that he compromised by taking a long draught of stout for he had found the carving hot work. Mary Jane settled down quietly to her supper but Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia were still toddling round the table, walking on each other’s heels, getting in each other’s way and giving each other unheeded orders. Mr Browne begged of them to sit down and eat their suppers and so did Gabriel but they said they were time enough so that, at last, Freddy Malins stood up and, capturing Aunt Kate, plumped her down on her chair amid general laughter.

When everyone had been well served Gabriel said, smiling:

“Now, if anyone wants a little more of what vulgar people call stuffing let him or her speak.”

A chorus of voices invited him to begin his own supper and Lily came forward with three potatoes which she had reserved for him.

“Very well,” said Gabriel amiably, as he took another preparatory draught, “kindly forget my existence, ladies and gentlemen, for a few minutes.”

He set to his supper and took no part in the conversation with which the table covered Lily’s removal of the plates. The subject of talk was the opera company which was then at the Theatre Royal. Mr Bartell D’Arcy, the tenor, a dark-complexioned young man with a smart moustache, praised very highly the leading contralto of the company but Miss Furlong thought she had a rather vulgar style of production. Freddy Malins said there was a negro chieftain singing in the second part of the Gaiety pantomime who had one of the finest tenor voices he had ever heard.

“Have you heard him?” he asked Mr Bartell D’Arcy across the table.

“No,” answered Mr Bartell D’Arcy carelessly.

“Because,” Freddy Malins explained, “now I’d be curious to hear your opinion of him. I think he has a grand voice.”

“It takes Teddy to find out the really good things,” said Mr Browne familiarly to the table.

“And why couldn’t he have a voice too?” asked Freddy Malins sharply. “Is it because he’s only a black?”

Nobody answered this question and Mary Jane led the table back to the legitimate opera. One of her pupils had given her a pass for *Mignon*. Of course it was very fine, she said, but it made her think of poor Georgina Burns. Mr Browne could go back farther still, to the old Italian companies that used to come to Dublin—Tietjens, Ilma de Murzka, Campanini, the great Trebelli, Giuglini, Ravelli, Aramburo. Those were the days, he said, when there was something like singing to be heard in Dublin. He told too of how the top gallery of the old Royal used to be packed night after night, of how one night an Italian tenor had sung five encores to *Let me like a Soldier fall*, introducing a high C every time, and of how the gallery boys would sometimes in their enthusiasm unyoke the horses from the carriage of some great *prima donna* and pull her themselves through the streets to her hotel. Why did they never play the grand old operas now, he asked, *Dinorah, Lucrezia Borgia?* Because they could not get the voices to sing them: that was why.

“Oh, well,” said Mr Bartell D’Arcy, “I presume there are as good singers today as there were then.”

“Where are they?” asked Mr Browne defiantly.

“In London, Paris, Milan,” said Mr Bartell D’Arcy warmly. “I suppose Caruso, for example, is quite as good, if not better than any of the men you have mentioned.”

“Maybe so,” said Mr Browne. “But I may tell you I doubt it strongly.”

“O, I’d give anything to hear Caruso sing,” said Mary Jane.

“For me,” said Aunt Kate, who had been picking a bone, “there was only one tenor. To please me, I mean. But I suppose none of you ever heard of him.”

“Who was he, Miss Morkan?” asked Mr Bartell D’Arcy politely.

“His name,” said Aunt Kate, “was Parkinson. I heard him when he was in his prime and I think he had then the purest tenor voice that was ever put into a man’s throat.”

“Strange,” said Mr Bartell D’Arcy. “I never even heard of him.”

“Yes, yes, Miss Morkan is right,” said Mr Browne. “I remember hearing of old Parkinson but he’s too far back for me.”

“A beautiful pure sweet mellow English tenor,” said Aunt Kate with enthusiasm.

Gabriel having finished, the huge pudding was transferred to the table. The clatter of forks and spoons began again. Gabriel’s wife served out spoonfuls of the pudding and passed the plates down the table. Midway down they were held up by Mary Jane, who replenished them with raspberry or orange jelly or with blancmange and jam. The pudding was of Aunt Julia’s making and she received praises for it from all quarters. She herself said that it was not quite brown enough.

“Well, I hope, Miss Morkan,” said Mr Browne, “that I’m brown enough for you because, you know, I’m all brown.”

All the gentlemen, except Gabriel, ate some of the pudding out of compliment to Aunt Julia. As Gabriel never ate sweets the celery had been left for him. Freddy Malins also took a stalk of celery and ate it with his pudding. He had been told that celery was a capital thing for the blood and he was just then under doctor’s care. Mrs Malins, who had been silent all through the supper, said that her son was going down to Mount Melleray in a week or so. The table then spoke of Mount Melleray, how bracing the air was down there, how hospitable the monks were and how they never asked for a penny-piece from their guests.

“And do you mean to say,” asked Mr Browne incredulously, “that a chap can go down there and put up there as if it were a hotel and live on the fat of the land and then come away without paying anything?”

“O, most people give some donation to the monastery when they leave.” said Mary Jane.

“I wish we had an institution like that in our Church,” said Mr Browne candidly.

He was astonished to hear that the monks never spoke, got up at two in the morning and slept in their coffins. He asked what they did it for.

“That’s the rule of the order,” said Aunt Kate firmly.

“Yes, but why?” asked Mr Browne.

Aunt Kate repeated that it was the rule, that was all. Mr Browne still seemed not to understand. Freddy Malins explained to him, as best he could, that the monks were trying to make up for the sins committed by all the sinners in the outside world. The explanation was not very clear for Mr Browne grinned and said:

“I like that idea very much but wouldn’t a comfortable spring bed do them as well as a coffin?”

“The coffin,” said Mary Jane, “is to remind them of their last end.”

As the subject had grown lugubrious it was buried in a silence of the table during which Mrs Malins could be heard saying to her neighbour in an indistinct undertone:

“They are very good men, the monks, very pious men.”

The raisins and almonds and figs and apples and oranges and chocolates and sweets were now passed about the table and Aunt Julia invited all the guests to have either port or sherry. At first Mr Bartell D’Arcy refused to take either but one of his neighbours nudged him and whispered something to him upon which he allowed his glass to be filled. Gradually as the last glasses were being filled the conversation ceased. A pause followed, broken only by the noise of the wine and by unsettlings of chairs. The Misses Morkan, all three, looked down at the tablecloth. Someone coughed once or twice and then a few gentlemen patted the table gently as a signal for silence. The silence came and Gabriel pushed back his chair.

The patting at once grew louder in encouragement and then ceased altogether. Gabriel leaned his ten trembling fingers on the tablecloth and smiled nervously at the company. Meeting a row of upturned faces he raised his eyes to the chandelier. The piano was playing a waltz tune and he could hear the skirts sweeping against the drawing-room door. People, perhaps, were standing in the snow on the quay outside, gazing up at the lighted windows and listening to the waltz music. The air was pure there. In the distance lay the park where the trees were weighted with snow. The Wellington Monument wore a gleaming cap of snow that flashed westward over the white field of Fifteen Acres.

He began:

“Ladies and Gentlemen,

“It has fallen to my lot this evening, as in years past, to perform a very pleasing task but a task for which I am afraid my poor powers as a speaker are all too inadequate.”

“No, no!” said Mr Browne.

“But, however that may be, I can only ask you tonight to take the will for the deed and to lend me your attention for a few moments while I endeavour to express to you in words what my feelings are on this occasion.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, it is not the first time that we have gathered together under this hospitable roof, around this hospitable board. It is not the first time that we have been the recipients—or perhaps, I had better say, the victims—of the hospitality of certain good ladies.”

He made a circle in the air with his arm and paused. Everyone laughed or smiled at Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia and Mary Jane who all turned crimson with pleasure. Gabriel went on more boldly:

“I feel more strongly with every recurring year that our country has no tradition which does it so much honour and which it should guard so jealously as that of its hospitality. It is a tradition that is unique as far as my experience goes (and I have visited not a few places abroad) among the modern nations. Some would say, perhaps, that with us it is rather a failing than anything to be boasted of. But granted even that, it is, to my mind, a princely failing, and one that I trust will long be cultivated among us. Of one thing, at least, I am sure. As long as this one roof shelters the good ladies aforesaid—and I wish from my heart it may do so for many and many a long year to come—the tradition of genuine warm-hearted courteous Irish hospitality, which our forefathers have handed down to us and which we in turn must hand down to our descendants, is still alive among us.”

A hearty murmur of assent ran round the table. It shot through Gabriel’s mind that Miss Ivors was not there and that she had gone away discourteously: and he said with confidence in himself:

“Ladies and Gentlemen,

“A new generation is growing up in our midst, a generation actuated by new ideas and new principles. It is serious and enthusiastic for these new ideas and its enthusiasm, even when it is misdirected, is, I believe, in the main sincere. But we are living in a sceptical and, if I may use the phrase, a thought-tormented age: and sometimes I fear that this new generation, educated or hypereducated as it is, will lack those qualities of humanity, of hospitality, of kindly humour which belonged to an older day. Listening tonight to the names of all those great singers of the past it seemed to me, I must confess, that we were living in a less spacious age. Those days might, without exaggeration, be called spacious days: and if they are gone beyond recall let us hope, at least, that in gatherings such as this we shall still speak of them with pride and affection, still cherish in our hearts the memory of those dead and gone great ones whose fame the world will not willingly let die.”

“Hear, hear!” said Mr Browne loudly.

“But yet,” continued Gabriel, his voice falling into a softer inflection, “there are always in gatherings such as this sadder thoughts that will recur to our minds: thoughts of the past, of youth, of changes, of absent faces that we miss here tonight. Our path through life is strewn with many such sad memories: and were we to brood upon them always we could not find the heart to go on bravely with our work among the living. We have all of us living duties and living affections which claim, and rightly claim, our strenuous endeavours.

“Therefore, I will not linger on the past. I will not let any gloomy moralising intrude upon us here tonight. Here we are gathered together for a brief moment from the bustle and rush of our everyday routine. We are met here as friends, in the spirit of good-fellowship, as colleagues, also to a certain extent, in the true spirit of *camaraderie*, and as the guests of—what shall I call them?—the Three Graces of the Dublin musical world.”

The table burst into applause and laughter at this allusion. Aunt Julia vainly asked each of her neighbours in turn to tell her what Gabriel had said.

“He says we are the Three Graces, Aunt Julia,” said Mary Jane.

Aunt Julia did not understand but she looked up, smiling, at Gabriel, who continued in the same vein:

“Ladies and Gentlemen,

“I will not attempt to play tonight the part that Paris played on another occasion. I will not attempt to choose between them. The task would be an invidious one and one beyond my poor powers. For when I view them in turn, whether it be our chief hostess herself, whose good heart, whose too good heart, has become a byword with all who know her, or her sister, who seems to be gifted with perennial youth and whose singing must have been a surprise and a revelation to us all tonight, or, last but not least, when I consider our youngest hostess, talented, cheerful, hard-working and the best of nieces, I confess, Ladies and Gentlemen, that I do not know to which of them I should award the prize.”

Gabriel glanced down at his aunts and, seeing the large smile on Aunt Julia’s face and the tears which had risen to Aunt Kate’s eyes, hastened to his close. He raised his glass of port gallantly, while every member of the company fingered a glass expectantly, and said loudly:

“Let us toast them all three together. Let us drink to their health, wealth, long life, happiness and prosperity and may they long continue to hold the proud and self-won position which they hold in their profession and the position of honour and affection which they hold in our hearts.”

All the guests stood up, glass in hand, and turning towards the three seated ladies, sang in unison, with Mr Browne as leader:

For they are jolly gay fellows,  
For they are jolly gay fellows,  
For they are jolly gay fellows,  
Which nobody can deny.

Aunt Kate was making frank use of her handkerchief and even Aunt Julia seemed moved. Freddy Malins beat time with his pudding-fork and the singers turned towards one another, as if in melodious conference, while they sang with emphasis:

Unless he tells a lie,  
Unless he tells a lie.

Then, turning once more towards their hostesses, they sang:

For they are jolly gay fellows,  
For they are jolly gay fellows,  
For they are jolly gay fellows,  
Which nobody can deny.

The acclamation which followed was taken up beyond the door of the supper-room by many of the other guests and renewed time after time, Freddy Malins acting as officer with his fork on high.

The piercing morning air came into the hall where they were standing so that Aunt Kate said:

“Close the door, somebody. Mrs Malins will get her death of cold.”

“Browne is out there, Aunt Kate,” said Mary Jane.

“Browne is everywhere,” said Aunt Kate, lowering her voice.

Mary Jane laughed at her tone.

“Really,” she said archly, “he is very attentive.”

“He has been laid on here like the gas,” said Aunt Kate in the same tone, “all during the Christmas.”

She laughed herself this time good-humouredly and then added quickly:

“But tell him to come in, Mary Jane, and close the door. I hope to goodness he didn’t hear me.”

At that moment the hall-door was opened and Mr Browne came in from the doorstep, laughing as if his heart would break. He was dressed in a long green overcoat with mock astrakhan cuffs and collar and wore on his head an oval fur cap. He pointed down the snow-covered quay from where the sound of shrill prolonged whistling was borne in.

“Teddy will have all the cabs in Dublin out,” he said.

Gabriel advanced from the little pantry behind the office, struggling into his overcoat and, looking round the hall, said:

“Gretta not down yet?”

“She’s getting on her things, Gabriel,” said Aunt Kate.

“Who’s playing up there?” asked Gabriel.

“Nobody. They’re all gone.”

“O no, Aunt Kate,” said Mary Jane. “Bartell D’Arcy and Miss O’Callaghan aren’t gone yet.”

“Someone is fooling at the piano anyhow,” said Gabriel.

Mary Jane glanced at Gabriel and Mr Browne and said with a shiver:

“It makes me feel cold to look at you two gentlemen muffled up like that. I wouldn’t like to face your journey home at this hour.”

“I’d like nothing better this minute,” said Mr Browne stoutly, “than a rattling fine walk in the country or a fast drive with a good spanking goer between the shafts.”

“We used to have a very good horse and trap at home,” said Aunt Julia sadly.

“The never-to-be-forgotten Johnny,” said Mary Jane, laughing.

Aunt Kate and Gabriel laughed too.

“Why, what was wonderful about Johnny?” asked Mr Browne.

“The late lamented Patrick Morkan, our grandfather, that is,” explained Gabriel, “commonly known in his later years as the old gentleman, was a glue-boiler.”

“O now, Gabriel,” said Aunt Kate, laughing, “he had a starch mill.”

“Well, glue or starch,” said Gabriel, “the old gentleman had a horse by the name of Johnny. And Johnny used to work in the old gentleman’s mill, walking round and round in order to drive the mill. That was all very well; but now comes the tragic part about Johnny. One fine day the old gentleman thought he’d like to drive out with the quality to a military review in the park.”

“The Lord have mercy on his soul,” said Aunt Kate compassionately.

“Amen,” said Gabriel. “So the old gentleman, as I said, harnessed Johnny and put on his very best tall hat and his very best stock collar and drove out in grand style from his ancestral mansion somewhere near Back Lane, I think.”

Everyone laughed, even Mrs Malins, at Gabriel’s manner and Aunt Kate said:

“O now, Gabriel, he didn’t live in Back Lane, really. Only the mill was there.”

“Out from the mansion of his forefathers,” continued Gabriel, “he drove with Johnny. And everything went on beautifully until Johnny came in sight of King Billy’s statue: and whether he fell in love with the horse King Billy sits on or whether he thought he was back again in the mill, anyhow he began to walk round the statue.”

Gabriel paced in a circle round the hall in his goloshes amid the laughter of the others.

“Round and round he went,” said Gabriel, “and the old gentleman, who was a very pompous old gentleman, was highly indignant. ‘Go on, sir! What do you mean, sir? Johnny! Johnny! Most extraordinary conduct! Can’t understand the horse!’”

The peal of laughter which followed Gabriel’s imitation of the incident was interrupted by a resounding knock at the hall door. Mary Jane ran to open it and let in Freddy Malins. Freddy Malins, with his hat well back on his head and his shoulders humped with cold, was puffing and steaming after his exertions.

“I could only get one cab,” he said.

“O, we’ll find another along the quay,” said Gabriel.

“Yes,” said Aunt Kate. “Better not keep Mrs Malins standing in the draught.”

Mrs Malins was helped down the front steps by her son and Mr Browne and, after many manœuvres, hoisted into the cab. Freddy Malins clambered in after her and spent a long time settling her on the seat, Mr Browne helping him with advice. At last she was settled comfortably and Freddy Malins invited Mr Browne into the cab. There was a good deal of confused talk, and then Mr Browne got into the cab. The cabman settled his rug over his knees, and bent down for the address. The confusion grew greater and the cabman was directed differently by Freddy Malins and Mr Browne, each of whom had his head out through a window of the cab. The difficulty was to know where to drop Mr Browne along the route, and Aunt Kate, Aunt Julia and Mary Jane helped the discussion from the doorstep with cross-directions and contradictions and abundance of laughter. As for Freddy Malins he was speechless with laughter. He popped his head in and out of the window every moment to the great danger of his hat, and told his mother how the discussion was progressing, till at last Mr Browne shouted to the bewildered cabman above the din of everybody’s laughter:

“Do you know Trinity College?”

“Yes, sir,” said the cabman.

“Well, drive bang up against Trinity College gates,” said Mr Browne, “and then we’ll tell you where to go. You understand now?”

“Yes, sir,” said the cabman.

“Make like a bird for Trinity College.”

“Right, sir,” said the cabman.

The horse was whipped up and the cab rattled off along the quay amid a chorus of laughter and adieus.

Gabriel had not gone to the door with the others. He was in a dark part of the hall gazing up the staircase. A woman was standing near the top of the first flight, in the shadow also. He could not see her face but he could see the terracotta and salmon-pink panels of her skirt which the shadow made appear black and white. It was his wife. She was leaning on the banisters, listening to something. Gabriel was surprised at her stillness and strained his ear to listen also. But he could hear little save the noise of laughter and dispute on the front steps, a few chords struck on the piano and a few notes of a man’s voice singing.

He stood still in the gloom of the hall, trying to catch the air that the voice was singing and gazing up at his wife. There was grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something. He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of. If he were a painter he would paint her in that attitude. Her blue felt hat would show off the bronze of her hair against the darkness and the dark panels of her skirt would show off the light ones. *Distant Music* he would call the picture if he were a painter.

The hall-door was closed; and Aunt Kate, Aunt Julia and Mary Jane came down the hall, still laughing.

“Well, isn’t Freddy terrible?” said Mary Jane. “He’s really terrible.”

Gabriel said nothing but pointed up the stairs towards where his wife was standing. Now that the hall-door was closed the voice and the piano could be heard more clearly. Gabriel held up his hand for them to be silent. The song seemed to be in the old Irish tonality and the singer seemed uncertain both of his words and of his voice. The voice, made plaintive by distance and by the singer’s hoarseness, faintly illuminated the cadence of the air with words expressing grief:

O, the rain falls on my heavy locks  
And the dew wets my skin,  
My babe lies cold....

“O,” exclaimed Mary Jane. “It’s Bartell D’Arcy singing and he wouldn’t sing all the night. O, I’ll get him to sing a song before he goes.”

“O do, Mary Jane,” said Aunt Kate.

Mary Jane brushed past the others and ran to the staircase, but before she reached it the singing stopped and the piano was closed abruptly.

“O, what a pity!” she cried. “Is he coming down, Gretta?”

Gabriel heard his wife answer yes and saw her come down towards them. A few steps behind her were Mr Bartell D’Arcy and Miss O’Callaghan.

“O, Mr D’Arcy,” cried Mary Jane, “it’s downright mean of you to break off like that when we were all in raptures listening to you.”

“I have been at him all the evening,” said Miss O’Callaghan, “and Mrs Conroy too and he told us he had a dreadful cold and couldn’t sing.”

“O, Mr D’Arcy,” said Aunt Kate, “now that was a great fib to tell.”

“Can’t you see that I’m as hoarse as a crow?” said Mr D’Arcy roughly.

He went into the pantry hastily and put on his overcoat. The others, taken aback by his rude speech, could find nothing to say. Aunt Kate wrinkled her brows and made signs to the others to drop the subject. Mr D’Arcy stood swathing his neck carefully and frowning.

“It’s the weather,” said Aunt Julia, after a pause.

“Yes, everybody has colds,” said Aunt Kate readily, “everybody.”

“They say,” said Mary Jane, “we haven’t had snow like it for thirty years; and I read this morning in the newspapers that the snow is general all over Ireland.”

“I love the look of snow,” said Aunt Julia sadly.

“So do I,” said Miss O’Callaghan. “I think Christmas is never really Christmas unless we have the snow on the ground.”

“But poor Mr D’Arcy doesn’t like the snow,” said Aunt Kate, smiling.

Mr D’Arcy came from the pantry, fully swathed and buttoned, and in a repentant tone told them the history of his cold. Everyone gave him advice and said it was a great pity and urged him to be very careful of his throat in the night air. Gabriel watched his wife, who did not join in the conversation. She was standing right under the dusty fanlight and the flame of the gas lit up the rich bronze of her hair, which he had seen her drying at the fire a few days before. She was in the same attitude and seemed unaware of the talk about her. At last she turned towards them and Gabriel saw that there was colour on her cheeks and that her eyes were shining. A sudden tide of joy went leaping out of his heart.

“Mr D’Arcy,” she said, “what is the name of that song you were singing?”

“It’s called *The Lass of Aughrim*,” said Mr D’Arcy, “but I couldn’t remember it properly. Why? Do you know it?”

“*The Lass of Aughrim*,” she repeated. “I couldn’t think of the name.”

“It’s a very nice air,” said Mary Jane. “I’m sorry you were not in voice tonight.”

“Now, Mary Jane,” said Aunt Kate, “don’t annoy Mr D’Arcy. I won’t have him annoyed.”

Seeing that all were ready to start she shepherded them to the door, where good-night was said:

“Well, good-night, Aunt Kate, and thanks for the pleasant evening.”

“Good-night, Gabriel. Good-night, Gretta!”

“Good-night, Aunt Kate, and thanks ever so much. Good-night, Aunt Julia.”

“O, good-night, Gretta, I didn’t see you.”

“Good-night, Mr D’Arcy. Good-night, Miss O’Callaghan.”

“Good-night, Miss Morkan.”

“Good-night, again.”

“Good-night, all. Safe home.”

“Good-night. Good-night.”

The morning was still dark. A dull yellow light brooded over the houses and the river; and the sky seemed to be descending. It was slushy underfoot; and only streaks and patches of snow lay on the roofs, on the parapets of the quay and on the area railings. The lamps were still burning redly in the murky air and, across the river, the palace of the Four Courts stood out menacingly against the heavy sky.

She was walking on before him with Mr Bartell D’Arcy, her shoes in a brown parcel tucked under one arm and her hands holding her skirt up from the slush. She had no longer any grace of attitude but Gabriel’s eyes were still bright with happiness. The blood went bounding along his veins; and the thoughts went rioting through his brain, proud, joyful, tender, valorous.

She was walking on before him so lightly and so erect that he longed to run after her noiselessly, catch her by the shoulders and say something foolish and affectionate into her ear. She seemed to him so frail that he longed to defend her against something and then to be alone with her. Moments of their secret life together burst like stars upon his memory. A heliotrope envelope was lying beside his breakfast-cup and he was caressing it with his hand. Birds were twittering in the ivy and the sunny web of the curtain was shimmering along the floor: he could not eat for happiness. They were standing on the crowded platform and he was placing a ticket inside the warm palm of her glove. He was standing with her in the cold, looking in through a grated window at a man making bottles in a roaring furnace. It was very cold. Her face, fragrant in the cold air, was quite close to his; and suddenly he called out to the man at the furnace:

“Is the fire hot, sir?”

But the man could not hear with the noise of the furnace. It was just as well. He might have answered rudely.

A wave of yet more tender joy escaped from his heart and went coursing in warm flood along his arteries. Like the tender fire of stars moments of their life together, that no one knew of or would ever know of, broke upon and illumined his memory. He longed to recall to her those moments, to make her forget the years of their dull existence together and remember only their moments of ecstasy. For the years, he felt, had not quenched his soul or hers. Their children, his writing, her household cares had not quenched all their souls’ tender fire. In one letter that he had written to her then he had said: “Why is it that words like these seem to me so dull and cold? Is it because there is no word tender enough to be your name?”

Like distant music these words that he had written years before were borne towards him from the past. He longed to be alone with her. When the others had gone away, when he and she were in their room in the hotel, then they would be alone together. He would call her softly:

“Gretta!”

Perhaps she would not hear at once: she would be undressing. Then something in his voice would strike her. She would turn and look at him....

At the corner of Winetavern Street they met a cab. He was glad of its rattling noise as it saved him from conversation. She was looking out of the window and seemed tired. The others spoke only a few words, pointing out some building or street. The horse galloped along wearily under the murky morning sky, dragging his old rattling box after his heels, and Gabriel was again in a cab with her, galloping to catch the boat, galloping to their honeymoon.

As the cab drove across O’Connell Bridge Miss O’Callaghan said:

“They say you never cross O’Connell Bridge without seeing a white horse.”

“I see a white man this time,” said Gabriel.

“Where?” asked Mr Bartell D’Arcy.

Gabriel pointed to the statue, on which lay patches of snow. Then he nodded familiarly to it and waved his hand.

“Good-night, Dan,” he said gaily.

When the cab drew up before the hotel, Gabriel jumped out and, in spite of Mr Bartell D’Arcy’s protest, paid the driver. He gave the man a shilling over his fare. The man saluted and said:

“A prosperous New Year to you, sir.”

“The same to you,” said Gabriel cordially.

She leaned for a moment on his arm in getting out of the cab and while standing at the curbstone, bidding the others good-night. She leaned lightly on his arm, as lightly as when she had danced with him a few hours before. He had felt proud and happy then, happy that she was his, proud of her grace and wifely carriage. But now, after the kindling again of so many memories, the first touch of her body, musical and strange and perfumed, sent through him a keen pang of lust. Under cover of her silence he pressed her arm closely to his side; and, as they stood at the hotel door, he felt that they had escaped from their lives and duties, escaped from home and friends and run away together with wild and radiant hearts to a new adventure.

An old man was dozing in a great hooded chair in the hall. He lit a candle in the office and went before them to the stairs. They followed him in silence, their feet falling in soft thuds on the thickly carpeted stairs. She mounted the stairs behind the porter, her head bowed in the ascent, her frail shoulders curved as with a burden, her skirt girt tightly about her. He could have flung his arms about her hips and held her still, for his arms were trembling with desire to seize her and only the stress of his nails against the palms of his hands held the wild impulse of his body in check. The porter halted on the stairs to settle his guttering candle. They halted too on the steps below him. In the silence Gabriel could hear the falling of the molten wax into the tray and the thumping of his own heart against his ribs.

The porter led them along a corridor and opened a door. Then he set his unstable candle down on a toilet-table and asked at what hour they were to be called in the morning.

“Eight,” said Gabriel.

The porter pointed to the tap of the electric-light and began a muttered apology but Gabriel cut him short.

“We don’t want any light. We have light enough from the street. And I say,” he added, pointing to the candle, “you might remove that handsome article, like a good man.”

The porter took up his candle again, but slowly for he was surprised by such a novel idea. Then he mumbled good-night and went out. Gabriel shot the lock to.

A ghostly light from the street lamp lay in a long shaft from one window to the door. Gabriel threw his overcoat and hat on a couch and crossed the room towards the window. He looked down into the street in order that his emotion might calm a little. Then he turned and leaned against a chest of drawers with his back to the light. She had taken off her hat and cloak and was standing before a large swinging mirror, unhooking her waist. Gabriel paused for a few moments, watching her, and then said:

“Gretta!”

She turned away from the mirror slowly and walked along the shaft of light towards him. Her face looked so serious and weary that the words would not pass Gabriel’s lips. No, it was not the moment yet.

“You looked tired,” he said.

“I am a little,” she answered.

“You don’t feel ill or weak?”

“No, tired: that’s all.”

She went on to the window and stood there, looking out. Gabriel waited again and then, fearing that diffidence was about to conquer him, he said abruptly:

“By the way, Gretta!”

“What is it?”

“You know that poor fellow Malins?” he said quickly.

“Yes. What about him?”

“Well, poor fellow, he’s a decent sort of chap after all,” continued Gabriel in a false voice. “He gave me back that sovereign I lent him, and I didn’t expect it, really. It’s a pity he wouldn’t keep away from that Browne, because he’s not a bad fellow, really.”

He was trembling now with annoyance. Why did she seem so abstracted? He did not know how he could begin. Was she annoyed, too, about something? If she would only turn to him or come to him of her own accord! To take her as she was would be brutal. No, he must see some ardour in her eyes first. He longed to be master of her strange mood.

“When did you lend him the pound?” she asked, after a pause.

Gabriel strove to restrain himself from breaking out into brutal language about the sottish Malins and his pound. He longed to cry to her from his soul, to crush her body against his, to overmaster her. But he said:

“O, at Christmas, when he opened that little Christmas-card shop in Henry Street.”

He was in such a fever of rage and desire that he did not hear her come from the window. She stood before him for an instant, looking at him strangely. Then, suddenly raising herself on tiptoe and resting her hands lightly on his shoulders, she kissed him.

“You are a very generous person, Gabriel,” she said.

Gabriel, trembling with delight at her sudden kiss and at the quaintness of her phrase, put his hands on her hair and began smoothing it back, scarcely touching it with his fingers. The washing had made it fine and brilliant. His heart was brimming over with happiness. Just when he was wishing for it she had come to him of her own accord. Perhaps her thoughts had been running with his. Perhaps she had felt the impetuous desire that was in him, and then the yielding mood had come upon her. Now that she had fallen to him so easily, he wondered why he had been so diffident.

He stood, holding her head between his hands. Then, slipping one arm swiftly about her body and drawing her towards him, he said softly:

“Gretta, dear, what are you thinking about?”

She did not answer nor yield wholly to his arm. He said again, softly:

“Tell me what it is, Gretta. I think I know what is the matter. Do I know?”

She did not answer at once. Then she said in an outburst of tears:

“O, I am thinking about that song, *The Lass of Aughrim*.”

She broke loose from him and ran to the bed and, throwing her arms across the bed-rail, hid her face. Gabriel stood stock-still for a moment in astonishment and then followed her. As he passed in the way of the cheval-glass he caught sight of himself in full length, his broad, well-filled shirt-front, the face whose expression always puzzled him when he saw it in a mirror and his glimmering gilt-rimmed eyeglasses. He halted a few paces from her and said:

“What about the song? Why does that make you cry?”

She raised her head from her arms and dried her eyes with the back of her hand like a child. A kinder note than he had intended went into his voice.

“Why, Gretta?” he asked.

“I am thinking about a person long ago who used to sing that song.”

“And who was the person long ago?” asked Gabriel, smiling.

“It was a person I used to know in Galway when I was living with my grandmother,” she said.

The smile passed away from Gabriel’s face. A dull anger began to gather again at the back of his mind and the dull fires of his lust began to glow angrily in his veins.

“Someone you were in love with?” he asked ironically.

“It was a young boy I used to know,” she answered, “named Michael Furey. He used to sing that song, *The Lass of Aughrim*. He was very delicate.”

Gabriel was silent. He did not wish her to think that he was interested in this delicate boy.

“I can see him so plainly,” she said after a moment. “Such eyes as he had: big, dark eyes! And such an expression in them—an expression!”

“O then, you were in love with him?” said Gabriel.

“I used to go out walking with him,” she said, “when I was in Galway.”

A thought flew across Gabriel’s mind.

“Perhaps that was why you wanted to go to Galway with that Ivors girl?” he said coldly.

She looked at him and asked in surprise:

“What for?”

Her eyes made Gabriel feel awkward. He shrugged his shoulders and said:

“How do I know? To see him, perhaps.”

She looked away from him along the shaft of light towards the window in silence.

“He is dead,” she said at length. “He died when he was only seventeen. Isn’t it a terrible thing to die so young as that?”

“What was he?” asked Gabriel, still ironically.

“He was in the gasworks,” she said.

Gabriel felt humiliated by the failure of his irony and by the evocation of this figure from the dead, a boy in the gasworks. While he had been full of memories of their secret life together, full of tenderness and joy and desire, she had been comparing him in her mind with another. A shameful consciousness of his own person assailed him. He saw himself as a ludicrous figure, acting as a pennyboy for his aunts, a nervous, well-meaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealising his own clownish lusts, the pitiable fatuous fellow he had caught a glimpse of in the mirror. Instinctively he turned his back more to the light lest she might see the shame that burned upon his forehead.

He tried to keep up his tone of cold interrogation, but his voice when he spoke was humble and indifferent.

“I suppose you were in love with this Michael Furey, Gretta,” he said.

“I was great with him at that time,” she said.

Her voice was veiled and sad. Gabriel, feeling now how vain it would be to try to lead her whither he had purposed, caressed one of her hands and said, also sadly:

“And what did he die of so young, Gretta? Consumption, was it?”

“I think he died for me,” she answered.

A vague terror seized Gabriel at this answer as if, at that hour when he had hoped to triumph, some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him, gathering forces against him in its vague world. But he shook himself free of it with an effort of reason and continued to caress her hand. He did not question her again for he felt that she would tell him of herself. Her hand was warm and moist: it did not respond to his touch but he continued to caress it just as he had caressed her first letter to him that spring morning.

“It was in the winter,” she said, “about the beginning of the winter when I was going to leave my grandmother’s and come up here to the convent. And he was ill at the time in his lodgings in Galway and wouldn’t be let out and his people in Oughterard were written to. He was in decline, they said, or something like that. I never knew rightly.”

She paused for a moment and sighed.

“Poor fellow,” she said. “He was very fond of me and he was such a gentle boy. We used to go out together, walking, you know, Gabriel, like the way they do in the country. He was going to study singing only for his health. He had a very good voice, poor Michael Furey.”

“Well; and then?” asked Gabriel.

“And then when it came to the time for me to leave Galway and come up to the convent he was much worse and I wouldn’t be let see him so I wrote him a letter saying I was going up to Dublin and would be back in the summer and hoping he would be better then.”

She paused for a moment to get her voice under control and then went on:

“Then the night before I left I was in my grandmother’s house in Nuns’ Island, packing up, and I heard gravel thrown up against the window. The window was so wet I couldn’t see so I ran downstairs as I was and slipped out the back into the garden and there was the poor fellow at the end of the garden, shivering.”

“And did you not tell him to go back?” asked Gabriel.

“I implored of him to go home at once and told him he would get his death in the rain. But he said he did not want to live. I can see his eyes as well as well! He was standing at the end of the wall where there was a tree.”

“And did he go home?” asked Gabriel.

“Yes, he went home. And when I was only a week in the convent he died and he was buried in Oughterard where his people came from. O, the day I heard that, that he was dead!”

She stopped, choking with sobs and, overcome by emotion, flung herself face downward on the bed, sobbing in the quilt. Gabriel held her hand for a moment longer, irresolutely, and then, shy of intruding on her grief, let it fall gently and walked quietly to the window.

She was fast asleep.

Gabriel, leaning on his elbow, looked for a few moments unresentfully on her tangled hair and half-open mouth, listening to her deep-drawn breath. So she had had that romance in her life: a man had died for her sake. It hardly pained him now to think how poor a part he, her husband, had played in her life. He watched her while she slept as though he and she had never lived together as man and wife. His curious eyes rested long upon her face and on her hair: and, as he thought of what she must have been then, in that time of her first girlish beauty, a strange, friendly pity for her entered his soul. He did not like to say even to himself that her face was no longer beautiful but he knew that it was no longer the face for which Michael Furey had braved death.

Perhaps she had not told him all the story. His eyes moved to the chair over which she had thrown some of her clothes. A petticoat string dangled to the floor. One boot stood upright, its limp upper fallen down: the fellow of it lay upon its side. He wondered at his riot of emotions of an hour before. From what had it proceeded? From his aunt’s supper, from his own foolish speech, from the wine and dancing, the merry-making when saying good-night in the hall, the pleasure of the walk along the river in the snow. Poor Aunt Julia! She, too, would soon be a shade with the shade of Patrick Morkan and his horse. He had caught that haggard look upon her face for a moment when she was singing *Arrayed for the Bridal*. Soon, perhaps, he would be sitting in that same drawing-room, dressed in black, his silk hat on his knees. The blinds would be drawn down and Aunt Kate would be sitting beside him, crying and blowing her nose and telling him how Julia had died. He would cast about in his mind for some words that might console her, and would find only lame and useless ones. Yes, yes: that would happen very soon.

The air of the room chilled his shoulders. He stretched himself cautiously along under the sheets and lay down beside his wife. One by one they were all becoming shades. Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age. He thought of how she who lay beside him had locked in her heart for so many years that image of her lover’s eyes when he had told her that he did not wish to live.

Generous tears filled Gabriel’s eyes. He had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love. The tears gathered more thickly in his eyes and in the partial darkness he imagined he saw the form of a young man standing under a dripping tree. Other forms were near. His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead. He was conscious of, but could not apprehend, their wayward and flickering existence. His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself which these dead had one time reared and lived in was dissolving and dwindling.

A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window. It had begun to snow again. He watched sleepily the flakes, silver and dark, falling obliquely against the lamplight. The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward. Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.

**Easter, 1916**

BY [WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/william-butler-yeats)

I have met them at close of day

Coming with vivid faces

From counter or desk among grey

Eighteenth-century houses.

I have passed with a nod of the head

Or polite meaningless words,

Or have lingered awhile and said

Polite meaningless words,

And thought before I had done

Of a mocking tale or a gibe

To please a companion

Around the fire at the club,

Being certain that they and I

But lived where motley is worn:

All changed, changed utterly:

A terrible beauty is born.

That woman's days were spent

In ignorant good-will,

Her nights in argument

Until her voice grew shrill.

What voice more sweet than hers

When, young and beautiful,

She rode to harriers?

This man had kept a school

And rode our wingèd horse;

This other his helper and friend

Was coming into his force;

He might have won fame in the end,

So sensitive his nature seemed,

So daring and sweet his thought.

This other man I had dreamed

A drunken, vainglorious lout.

He had done most bitter wrong

To some who are near my heart,

Yet I number him in the song;

He, too, has resigned his part

In the casual comedy;

He, too, has been changed in his turn,

Transformed utterly:

A terrible beauty is born.

Hearts with one purpose alone

Through summer and winter seem

Enchanted to a stone

To trouble the living stream.

The horse that comes from the road,

The rider, the birds that range

From cloud to tumbling cloud,

Minute by minute they change;

A shadow of cloud on the stream

Changes minute by minute;

A horse-hoof slides on the brim,

And a horse plashes within it;

The long-legged moor-hens dive,

And hens to moor-cocks call;

Minute by minute they live:

The stone's in the midst of all.

Too long a sacrifice

Can make a stone of the heart.

O when may it suffice?

That is Heaven's part, our part

To murmur name upon name,

As a mother names her child

When sleep at last has come

On limbs that had run wild.

What is it but nightfall?

No, no, not night but death;

Was it needless death after all?

For England may keep faith

For all that is done and said.

We know their dream; enough

To know they dreamed and are dead;

And what if excess of love

Bewildered them till they died?

I write it out in a verse—

MacDonagh and MacBride

And Connolly and Pearse

Now and in time to be,

Wherever green is worn,

Are changed, changed utterly:

A terrible beauty is born.

**The Man and the Echo**

Man

IN a cleft that’s christened Alt

Under broken stone I halt

At the bottom of a pit

That broad noon has never lit,

And shout a secret to the stone.

All that I have said and done,

Now that I am old and ill,

Turns into a question till

I lie awake night after night

And never get the answers right.

Did that play of mine send out

Certain men the English shot?

Did words of mine put too great strain

On that woman’s reeling brain?

Could my spoken words have checked

That whereby a house lay wrecked?

And all seems evil until I

Sleepless would lie down and die.

Echo

Lie down and die.

Man

That were to shirk

The spiritual intellect’s great work,

And shirk it in vain.  There is no release

In a bodkin or disease,

Nor can there be work so great

As that which cleans man’s dirty slate.

While man can still his body keep

Wine or love drug him to sleep,

Waking he thanks the Lord that he

Has body and its stupidity,

But body gone he sleeps no more,

And till his intellect grows sure

That all’s arranged in one clear view,

pursues the thoughts that I pursue,

Then stands in judgment on his soul,

And, all work done, dismisses all

Out of intellect and sight

And sinks at last into the night.

Echo

Into the night.

Man

O Rocky Voice,

Shall we in that great night rejoice?

What do we know but that we face

One another in this place?

But hush, for I have lost the theme,

Its joy or night-seem but a dream;

Up there some hawk or owl has struck,

Dropping out of sky or rock,

A stricken rabbit is crying out,

And its cry distracts my thought.

“An Irish Airman Foresees His Death” W.B. Yeats

I know that I shall meet my fate

Somewhere among the clouds above;

Those that I fight I do not hate,

Those that I guard I do not love;

My country is Kiltartan Cross,

My countrymen Kiltartan’s poor,

No likely end could bring them loss

Or leave them happier than before.

Nor law, nor duty bade me fight,

Nor public men, nor cheering crowds,

A lonely impulse of delight

Drove to this tumult in the clouds;

I balanced all, brought all to mind,

The years to come seemed waste of breath,

A waste of breath the years behind

In balance with this life, this death.

148 Juno and the Paycock: ACT I

**SEAN O'CASEY**

*The living room of a two room tenancy occupied by the Boyle family in a tenement house in Dublin. Left, a door leading to another part of the house; left of door a window looking into the street; at back a dresser; farther to right at back, a window looking into the back of the house. Between the window and the dresser is a picture of the Virgin; below the picture, on a bracket, is a crimson bowl in which a floating votive light is burning. Farther to the right is a small bed partly concealed by cretonne hangings strung on a twine. To the right is the fireplace; near the fire place is a door leading to the other room. Beside the fireplace is a box containing coal. On the mantelshelf is an alarm clock lying on its face. In a corner near the window looking into the back is a galvanized bath. A table and some chairs. On the table are breakfast things for one. A teapot is on the hob and a frying-pan stands inside the fender. There are a few books on the dresser and one on the table. Leaning against the dresser is a long-handled shovel—the kind invariably used by labourers when turning concrete or mixing mortar. Johnny Boyle is sitting crouched beside the fire. Mary with her jumper*[[1]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-1)*off—it is lying on the back of a chair—is arranging her hair before a tiny mirror perched on the table. Beside the mirror is stretched out the morning paper, which she looks at when she isn’t gazing into the mirror. She is a well-made and good-looking girl of twenty-two. Two forces are working in her mind—one, through the circumstances of her life, pulling her back; the other, through the influence of books she has read, pushing her forward. The opposing forces are apparent in her speech and her manners, both of which are degraded by her environment, and improved by her acquaintance—slight though it be—with literature. The time is early forenoon.*

**Mary:**(*looking at the paper*).On a little by-road, out beyant Finglas,[[2]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-2), he was found.  
[Mrs. Boyle *enters by the door on right; she has been shopping and carries a small parcel in her hand. She is forty-five years of age, and twenty years ago she must have been a pretty woman; but her face has now assumed that look which ultimately settles down upon the faces of the women of the working-class; a look of listless monotony and harassed anxiety, blending with an expression of mechanical resistance. Were circumstances favourable, she would probably be a handsome, active and clever woman*.]

**Mrs. Boyle:**Isn’t he come in yet?  
**Mary:**No, mother.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Oh, he’ll come in when he likes; struttin’ about the town like a paycock with Joxer, I suppose. I hear all about Mrs. Tancred’s son is in this mornin’s paper.  
**Mary:**The full details are in it this mornin’; seven wounds he had — one entherin’ the neck, with an exit wound beneath the left shoulder-blade; another in the left breast penethratin’ the heart, an’…  
**Johnny:**(*springing up from the fire*).Oh, quit that readin’ for God’s sake! Are yous losin’ all your feelin’s? It’ll soon be that none of you’ll read anythin’ that’s not about butcherin’! [*He goes quickly into the room on left.***Mary:**He’s gettin’ very sensitive, all of a sudden!  
**Mrs. Boyle:**I’ll read it myself, Mary, by an’ by, when I come home. Everybody’s sayin’ that he was a Diehard[[3]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-3) — thanks be to God that Johnny had nothin’ to do with him this long time….(Opening the parcel and taking out some sausages, which she places on a plate) Ah, then, if that father o’ yours doesn’t come in soon for his breakfast, he may go without any; I’ll not wait much longer for him.  
**Mary:**Can’t you let him get it himself when he comes in?  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Yes, an’ let him bring in Joxer Daly along with him? Ay, that’s what he’d like an’ that’s what he’s waitin’ for — till he thinks I’m gone to work, an’ then sail in with the boul’ Joxer, to burn all the coal an’ dhrink all the tea in the place, to show them what a good Samaritan[[4]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-4) he is! But I’ll stop here till he comes in, if I have to wait till tomorrow mornin’.  
*Voice of Johnny* inside**.**Mother!  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Yis?  
**Johnny:**Bring us in a dhrink o’ wather.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Bring in that fella a dhrink o’ wather, for God’s sake, Mary.  
**Mary:**Isn’t he big an’ able enough to come out an’ get it himself?  
**Mrs. Boyle:**If you weren’t well yourself you’d like somebody to bring you in a dhrink o’ wather. [*She brings in drink and returns*.]  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Isn’t it terrible to have to be waitin’ this way! You’d think he was bringin’ twenty poun’s a week into the house the way he’s going on. He wore out the Health Insurance long ago, he’s afther wearin’ out the unemployment dole, an’, now, he’s thryin’ to wear out me! An’ constantly singin’, no less, when he ought always to be on his knees offerin’ up a Novena[[5]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-5) for a job!  
**Mary**(*trying a ribbon fillet-wise around her head*): him I don’t like this ribbon, ma; I think I’ll wear the green — it looks better than the blue.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Ah, wear whatever ribbon you like, girl, only don’t be botherin’ me. I don’t know what a girl on strike wants to be wearin’ a ribbon round her head for, or silk stockin’s on her legs either; it’s wearin’ them things that make the employers think they’re givin’ yous too much money.  
**Mary:**The hour is past now when we’ll ask the employers’ permission to wear what we like.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**I don’t know why you wanted to walk out for Jennie Claffey; up to this you never had a good word for her.  
**Mary:**What’s the use of belongin’ to a Trades Union if you won’t stand up for your principles? Why did they sack her? It was a clear case of victimization. We couldn’t let her walk the streets, could we?  
**Mrs. Boyle:**No, of course yous couldn’t — yous wanted to keep her company. Wan victim wasn’t enough. When the employers sacrifice wan victim, the Trades Union go wan betther be sacrificin’ a hundred.  
**Mary:**It doesn’t matther what you say, ma — a principle’s a principle.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Yis; an’ when I go into oul’ Murphy’s tomorrow, an’ he gets to know that, instead o’ payin’ all, I’m goin’ to borry more, what’ll he say when I tell him a principle’s a principle? What’ll we do if he refuses to give us any more on tick?  
**Mary:**He daren’t refuse — if he does, can’t you tell him he’s paid?  
**Mrs. Boyle:**It’s lookin’ as if he was paid, whether he refuses or no.

[Johnny *appears at the door on left*. *He can be plainly seen now; he is a thin, delicate fellow, something younger than Mary. He has evidently gone through a rough time. His face is pale and drawn; there is a tremulous look of in­definite fear in his eyes. The left sleeve of his coat is empty, and he walks with a slight halt.*]  
  
**Johnny:**I was lyin’ down; I thought yous were gone. Oul’ Simon Mackay is thrampin’ about like a horse over me head, an’ I can’t sleep with him — they’re like thunder-claps in me brain! The curse o’ — God forgive me for goin’ to curse!  
**Mrs. Boyle:**There, now; go back an’ lie down again an’ I’ll bring you in a nice cup o’ tay.  
**Johnny:**Tay, tay, tay! You’re always thinkin’ o’ tay. If a man was dyin’, you’d thry to make him swally a cup o’ tay! [*He goes back*.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**I don’t know what’s goin’ to be done with him. The bullet he got in the hip in Easter Week[[6]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-6) was bad enough; but the bomb that shatthered his arm in the fight in O’Connell Street[[7]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-7) put the finishin’ touch on him. I knew he was makin’ a fool of himself. God knows I went down on me bended knees to him not to go agen the Free State.[[8]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-8)  
**Mary:**He stuck to his principles, an’, no matther how you may argue, ma, a principle’s a principle.  
*Voice of Johnny***:**Is Mary goin’ to stay here?  
**Mary:**No, I’m not goin’ to stay here; you can’t expect me to be always at your beck an’ call, can you?  
**Johnny:**I won’t stop here be meself!  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Amn’t I nicely handicapped with the whole o’ yous! I don’t know what any o’ yous ud do without your ma. (*To* Johnny) Your father’ll be here in a minute, an’ if you want anythin’, he’ll get it for you.  
**Johnny:**I hate assin’ him for anythin’ — He hates to be assed to stir — Is the light lightin’ before the picture o’ the Virgin?  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Yis, Yis! The wan inside to St. Anthony isn’t enough, but he must have another wan to the Virgin here!

[Jerry Devine *enters hastily. He is about twenty-five, well set, active and earnest. He is a type, becoming very common now in the Labour Movement, of a mind knowing enough to make the mass of his associates, who know less, a power, and too little to broaden that power for the benefit of all. Mary seizes her jumper and runs hastily into room left.*]

**Jerry:** (*breathless*) Where’s the Captain, Mrs. Boyle, where’s the Captain?  
**Mrs. Boyle:**You may well ass a body that: he’s wherever Joxer Daly is — dhrinkin’ in some snug[[9]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-9) or another.  
**Jerry:**Father Farrell is just afther stoppin’ to tell me to run up an’ get him to go to the new job that’s goin’ on in Rathmines;[[10]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-10) his cousin is foreman o’ the job, an’ Father Farrell was speakin’ to him about poor Johnny an’ his father bein’ idle so long, an’ the foreman told Father Farrell to send the Captain up an’ he’d give him a start — I wondher where I’d find him?  
**Mrs. Boyle:**You’ll find he’s ayther in Ryan’s or Foley’s.  
**Jerry:**I’ll run round to Ryan’s — I know it’s a great house o’ Joxer’s. [*He rushes out*.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**(*piteously)*There now, he’ll miss that job, or I know for what! If he gets win’ o’ the word, he’ll not come back till evenin’, so that it’ll be too late. There’ll never be any good got out o’ him so long as he goes with that shouldher-shruggin’ Joxer. I killin’ meself workin’, an’ he sthruttin’ about from mornin’ till night like a paycock!

[*The steps of two persons are heard coming up a fight of stairs. They are the footsteps of Captain Boyle and Joxer. Captain Boyle is singing in a deep, sonorous, self‑honouring voice.*]  
**The Captain:**Sweet Spirit, hear me prayer! Hear — oh — hear — me prayer — hear , oh, hear — Oh, he…ar — oh, he…ar — me — pray…er![[11]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-11)  
**Joxer:** (*outside*)Ah, that’s a darlin’ song, a daaarlin’ song!  
**Mrs. Boyle:** (*viciously*).Sweet spirit hear his prayer! Ah, then, I’ll take me solemn affeydavey,[[12]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-12) it’s not for a job he’s prayin’! [*She sits down on the bed so that the cretonne hangings hide her from the view of those entering*.

[The Captain *comes in. He is a man of about sixty; stout, grey‑haired and stocky. His neck is short, and his head looks like a stone ball that one sometimes sees on top of a gate‑post. His cheeks, reddish‑purple, are puffed out, as if he were always repressing an almost irrepressible ejaculation. On his upper lip is a crisp, tightly cropped moustache; he carries himself with the upper part of his body slightly thrown back, and his stomach slightly thrust for­ward. His walk is a slow, consequential strut. His clothes are dingy, and he wears a faded seaman’s‑cap with a glazed peak*.]  
**Boyle:** (*to* Joxer, *who is still outside*).Come on, come on in, Joxer; she’s gone out long ago, man. If there’s nothing else to be got, we’ll furrage out a cup o’ tay, anyway. It’s the only bit I get in comfort when she’s away. ‘Tisn’t Juno[[13]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-13) should be her pet name at all, but Deirdre of the Sorras,[[14]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-14) for she’s always grousin’.

[Joxer *steps cautiously into the room. He may be younger than the Captain but he looks a lot older. His face is like a bundle of crinkled paper; his eyes have a cunning twinkle; he is spare and loosely built; he has a habit of constantly shrugging his shoulders with a peculiar twitching movement, meant to be ingratiating. His face is in­variably ornamented with a grin.*]  
**Joxer:**It’s a terrible thing to be tied to a woman that’s always grousin’. I don’t know how you stick it — it ud put years on me. It’s a good job she has to be so ofen away, for (*with a shrug*) when the cat’s away, the mice can play!  
**Boyle:** (*with a commanding and complacent gesture*).Pull over to the fire, Joxer, an’ we’ll have a cup o’ tay in a minute.  
**Joxer:**Ah, a cup o’ tay’s a darlin’ thing, a daaarlin’ thing — the cup that cheers but doesn’t… [Joxer’s *rhapsody is cut short by the sight of Juno coming forward and confronting the two cronies. Both are stupefied.*]

**Mrs. Boyle:** (*with sweet irony—poking the fire, and turning her head to glare at*Joxer).Pull over to the fire, Joxer Daly, an’ we’ll have a cup o’ tay in a minute! Are you sure, now, you wouldn’t like an egg?  
**Joxer:**I can’t stop, Mrs. Boyle; I’m in a desperate hurry, a desperate hurry.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Pull over to the fire, Joxer Daly; people is always far more comfortable here than they are in their own place.

[Joxer *makes hastily for the door.*Boyle*stirs to follow him; thinks of something to relieve the situation—stops, and says suddenly*]: Joxer!  
**Joxer:** (*at door ready to bolt*).Yis?  
**Boyle:**You know the foreman o’ that job that’s goin’ on down in Killesther,[[15]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-15) don’t you, Joxer?  
**Joxer:** (*puzzled*).Foreman — Killesther?  
**Boyle:** (*with a meaning look*).He’s a butty o’ yours, isn’t he?  
**Joxer:** (*the truth dawning on him*).The foreman at Killesther — oh yis, yis. He’s an oul’ butty o’ mine — oh, he’s a darlin’ man, a daarlin’ man.  
**Boyle:**Oh, then, it’s a sure thing. It’s a pity we didn’t go down at breakfast first thing this mornin’ — we might ha’ been working now; but you didn’t know it then.  
**Joxer:** (with a shrug).It’s betther late than never.  
**Boyle:**It’s nearly time we got a start, anyhow; I’m fed up knockin’ round, doin’ nothin’. He promised you — gave you the straight tip?  
**Joxer:**Yis. “Come down on the blow o’ dinner,” says he, “an’ I’ll start you, an’ any friend you like to brin’ with you.” “Ah,” says I, “you’re a darlin’ man, a daaarlin’ man.”  
**Boyle:**Well, it couldn’t have come at a betther time — we’re a long time waitin’ for it.  
**Joxer:**Indeed we were — but it’s a long lane that has no turnin’.  
**Boyle:**The blow up for dinner is at one — wait till I see what time it ’tis.

*[He goes over to the mantelpiece, and gingerly lifts the clock.*]  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Min’ now, how you go on fiddlin’ with that clock — you know the least thing sets it asthray.  
**Boyle:**The job couldn’t come at a betther time; I’m feelin’ in great fettle, Joxer. I’d hardly believe I ever had a pain in me legs, an’ last week I was nearly crippled with them.  
**Joxer:**That’s betther an’ betther; ah, God never shut wan door but He opened another!  
**Boyle:**It’s only eleven o’clock; We’ve lashin’s o’ time. I’ll slip on me oul’ moleskins afther breakfast, an’ we can saunther down at our ayse. (*Putting his hand on the shovel*) I think, Joxer, we’d betther bring our shovels?  
**Joxer:**Yis, Captain, yis; it’s betther to go fully prepared an’ ready for all eventualities. You bring your long-tailed shovel, an’ I’ll bring me navvy. We mighten’ want them, an’, then agen, we might : for want of a nail the shoe was lost, for want of a shoe the horse was lost, an’ for want of a horse the man was lost — aw, that’s a darlin’ proverb, a daarlin’… [*As*Joxer *is finishing his sentence, Mrs. Boyle approaches the door and Joxer retreats hurriedly. She shuts the door with a bang.*]

**Boyle:**(*suggestively*).We won’t be long pullin’ ourselves together agen when I’m working for a few weeks. [Mrs. Boyle *takes no notice*.]

**Boyle:**The foreman on the job is an oul’ butty o’ Joxer’s; I have an idea that I know him meself – (*Silence*) There’s a button off the back o’ me moleskin trousers — If you leave out a needle an’ thread I’ll sew it on meself — Thanks be to God, the pains in me legs is gone, anyhow!  
**Mrs. Boyle:** (*with a burst*).Look here, Mr. Jacky Boyle, them yarns won’t go down with Juno. I know you an’ Joxer Daly of an oul’ date, an’ if you think you’re able to come it over me with them fairy tales, you’re in the wrong shop.  
**Boyle:**U-u-u-ugh!  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Butty o’ Joxer’s! Oh, you’ll do a lot o’ good as long as you continue to be a butty o’ Joxer’s!  
**Boyle:** (*coughing subduedly to relieve the tenseness of the situation*).U-u-u-ugh!  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Shovel! Ah, then, me boyo, you’d do far more work with a knife an’ fork than ever you’ll do with a shovel! If there was e’er a genuine job goin’ you’d be dh’other way about — not able to lift your arms with the pains in your legs! Your poor wife slavin’ to keep the bit in your mouth, an’ you gallivantin’ about all the day like a paycock!  
**Boyle:**It ud betther for a man to be dead, betther for a man to be dead.  
**Mrs. Boyle:** (*ignoring the interruption*).Everybody callin’ you ‘Captain’, an’ you only wanst on the wather, in an oul’ collier[[16]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-16) from here to Liverpool, when anybody, to listen or look at you, ud take you for a second Christo For Columbus!  
**Boyle:**Are you never goin’ to give us a rest?  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Oh, you’re never tired o’ lookin’ for a rest.  
**Boyle:**D’ye want to drive me out o’ the house?  
**Mrs. Boyle:**It ud be easier to dhrive you out o’ the house than to dhrive you into a job. Here, sit down an’ take your breakfast — it may be the last you’ll get, for I don’t know where the next is goin’ to come from.  
**Boyle:**If I get this job we’ll be all right.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Did ye see Jerry Devine?  
**Boyle:** (*testily*).No, I didn’t see him.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**No, but you seen Joxer. Well, he was here lookin’ for you.  
**Boyle:**Well, let him look!  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Oh, indeed, he may well look, for it ud be hard for him to see you, an’ you stuck in Ryan’s snug.  
**Boyle:**I wasn’t in Ryan’s snug — I don’t go into Ryan’s.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Oh, is there a mad dog in there? Well, if you weren’t in Ryan’s you were in Foley’s.  
**Boyle:**I’m telling you for the last three weeks I haven’t tasted a dhrop of intoxicatin’ liquor. I wasn’t in ayther wan snug or dh’other — I could swear that on a prayer-book — I’m as innocent as the child unborn!  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Well, if you’d been in for your breakfast you’d ha’ seen him.  
**Boyle:** (*suspiciously*).What does he want me for?  
**Mrs. Boyle:**He’ll be back any minute an’ then you’ll soon know.  
**Boyle:**I’ll dhrop out an’ see if I can meet him.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**You’ll sit down an’ take your breakfast, an’ let me go to me work, for I’m an hour late already waitin’ for you.  
**Boyle:**You needn’t ha’ waited, for I’ll take no breakfast — I’ve a little spirit left in me still!  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Are you goin’ to have your breakfast — yes or no?  
**Boyle:** (*too proud to yield*).I’ll have no breakfast — yous can keep your breakfast. (*Plaintively*) I’ll knock out a bit somewhere, never fear.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Nobody’s goin’ to coax you — don’t think that.*[She vigorously replaces the pan and the sausages in the press.*

**Boyle:**I’ve a little spirit left in me still.

[Jerry Devine *enters hastily*.]

**Jerry:**Oh, here you are at last! I’ve been searchin’ for you everywhere. The foreman in Foley’s told me you hadn’t left the snug with Joxer ten minutes before I went in.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**An’ he swearin’ on the holy prayer-book that he wasn’t in no snug!  
**Boyle:**What business is it o’ yours whether I was in a snug or no? what do you want to be gallopin’ about afther me for? Is a man not to be allowed to leave his house for a minute without havin’ a pack o’ spies, pimps an’ informers cantherin’ at his heels?  
**Jerry:**Oh, you’re takin’ a wrong view of it, Mr. Boyle; I simply was anxious to do you a good turn. I have a message for you from Father Farrell : He says that if you go to the job that’s on in Rathmines, an’ ask for Foreman Managan, you’ll get a start.  
**Boyle:**That’s all right, but I don’t want the motions of me body to be watched the way an asthronomer ud watch a star. If you’re folleyin’ Mary aself, you’ve no pereeogative to be folleyin’ me. (*Suddenly catching his thigh*) U-ugh, I’m afther gettin’ a terrible twinge in me right leg!  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Oh, it won’t be very long now till it travels into your left wan. It’s miraculous that whenever he scents a job in front of him, his legs begin to fail him! Then, me bucko, if you lose this chance, you may go an’ furrage[[17]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-17) for yourself!  
**Jerry:**This job’ll last for some time too, Captain, an’ as soon as the foundations are in, it’ll be cushy enough.  
**Boyle:**Won’t it be a climbin’ job? How d’ye expect me to be able to go up a ladder with these legs? An’, if I get up aself, how am I goin’ to get down agen?  
**Mrs. Boyle:** (*viciously*).Get wan o’ the labourers to carry you down in a hod![[18]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-18) You can’t climb a laddher, but you can skip like a goat into a snug!  
**Jerry:**I wouldn’t let myself be let down that easy, Mr. Boyle; a little exercise, now, might do you all the good in the world.  
**Boyle:**It’s a docthor you should have been, Devine — maybe you know more about the pains in me legs than meself that has them?  
**Jerry:** (*irritated*).Oh, I know nothin’ about the pains in your legs; I’ve brought the message that Father Farrell gave me, an’ that’s all I can do.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Here, sit down an’ take your breakfast, an’ go an’ get ready; an’ don’t be actin’ as if you couldn’t pull a wing out of a dead bee.  
**Boyle:**I want no breakfast, I tell you; it ud choke me afther all that’s been said. I’ve a little spirit left in me still.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Well, let’s see your spirit, then, an’ go in at wanst an’ put on your moleskin trousers!  
**Boyle:** (*moving towards the door on left*)It ud be betther for a man to be dead! U-ugh! There’s another twinge in me other leg! Nobody but meself knows the sufferin’ I’m goin’ through with the pains in these legs o’ mine! [*He goes into the room on left as* Mary *comes out with her hat in her hand*.]

**Mrs. Boyle:**I’ll have to push off now, for I’m terrible late already, but I was determined to stay an’ hunt that Joxer this time. [*She goes off*.]  
**Jerry:**Are you going out, Mary?  
**Mary:**It looks like it when I’m putting on my hat, doesn’t it?  
**Jerry:**The bitther word agen, Mary.  
**Mary:**You won’t allow me to be friendly with you; if I thry, you deliberately misundherstand it.  
**Jerry:**I didn’t always misundherstand it; you were often delighted to have the arms of Jerry around you.  
**Mary:**If you go on talkin’ like this, Jerry Devine, you’ll make me hate you!  
**Jerry:**Well, let it be either a weddin’ or a wake! Listen, Mary, I’m standin’ for the Secretaryship of our Union. There’s only one opposin’ me; I’m popular with all the men, an’ a good speaker — all are sayin’ that I’ll get elected.  
**Mary:**Well?  
**Jerry:**The job’s worth three hundred an’ fifty pounds a year, Mary. You an’ I could live nice an’ cosily on that; it would lift you out o’ this place an’…  
**Mary:** I haven’t time to listen to you now — I have to go. [*She is going out, when Jerry bars the way*.  
**Jerry:** (*appealingly*).Mary, what’s come over you with me for the last few weeks? You hardly speak to me, an’ then only a word with a face o’ bittherness on it. Have you forgotten, Mary, all the happy evenin’s that were as sweet as the scented hawthorn that sheltered the sides o’ the road as we saunthered through the country?  
**Mary:**That’s all over now. When you get your new job, Jerry, you won’t be long findin’ a girl far betther than I am for your sweetheart.  
**Jerry:**Never, never, Mary! No matther what happens, you’ll always be the same to me.  
**Mary:**I must be off; please let me go, Jerry.  
**Jerry:**I’ll go a bit o’ the way with you.  
**Mary:**You needn’t, thanks; I want to be by meself.  
**Jerry:** (*catching her arm*).You’re goin’ to meet another fella; you’ve clicked with someone else, me lady!  
**Mary:**That’s no concern o’ yours, Jerry Devine; let me go!  
**Jerry:**I saw yous comin’ our o’ the Cornflower Dance Class, an’ you hangin’ on his arm — a thin, lanky strip of a Micky Dazzler, with a walkin’-stick an’ gloves!  
*Voice of Johnny* (*loudly*)**:**What are you doin’ there — pullin’ about everything!  
*Voice of Boyle***:** (loudly and viciously).I’m puttin’ on me moleskin trousers!  
**Mary:**You’re hurtin’ me arm! Let me go, or I’ll scream, an’ then you’ll have the oul’ fella out on top of us!  
**Jerry:**Don’t be so hard on a fella, Mary, don’t be so hard.  
**Boyle:** (*appearing at the door*).What’s the meanin’ of all this hillabaloo?  
**Mary:**Let me go, let me go!  
**Boyle:**D’ye hear me — what’s all this hillabaloo about?  
**Jerry:** (*plaintively*)Will you not give us one kind word, one kind word, Mary?  
**Boyle:**D’ye hear me talkin’ to yous? What’s all this hillabaloo for?  
**Jerry:**Let me kiss your hand, your little, tiny, white hand!  
**Boyle:** Your little, tiny, white hand — are you takin’ leave o’ your senses, man?

[Mary *breaks away and rushes out*.]  
**Boyle:**This is nice goin’s on in front of her father!  
**Jerry:**Ah, dhry up, for God’s sake! [*He follows*Mary.

**Boyle:**Chiselurs[[19]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-19) don’t care a damn now about their parents, they’re bringin’ their fathers’ grey hairs down with sorra to the grave, an’ laughin’ at it, laughin’ at it. Ah, I suppose it’s just the same everywhere — the whole worl’s in a state o’ chassis![[20]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-20) (*He sits by the fire*). Breakfast! Well, they can keep their breakfast for me. Not if they went down on their bended knees would I take it — I’ll show them I’ve a little spirit left in me still! (*He goes over to the press, takes out a plate and looks at it*) Sassige! Well, let her keep her sassige. (*He returns to the fire, takes up the teapot and gives it a gentle shake*)

The tea’s wet right enough. [*A pause; he rises, goes to the press, takes out the sausage, puts it on the pan, and puts both on the fire. He attends the sausage with a fork*.]

**Boyle:***(singing*)

When the robins nest agen,  
And the flowers are in bloom,  
When the Springtime’s sunny smile seems to banish all sorrow an’ gloom;  
Then me bonny blue‑ey’d lad, if me heart be true till then—  
He’s promised he’ll come back to me,  
When the robins nest agen!

[He *lifts his head at the high note, and then drops his eyes to the pan*.]

**Boyle:***(singing)*When the…

[*Steps are heard approaching; he whips the pan off the fire and puts it under the bed, then sits down at the fire. The door opens and a bearded man looking in says*]*:*

**Bearded man:**You don’t happen to want a sewin’ machine?  
**Boyle:** (*furiously*).No, I don’t want e’er a sewin’ machine! [*He returns the pan to the fire, and commences to sing again.*]

**Boyle:**When the robins nest agen,  
And the flowers they are in bloom,  
He’s… [*A thundering knock is heard at the street door*.]

**Boyle:**There’s a terrible tatheraraa — that’s a stranger — that’s nobody belongin’ to the house. [*Another loud knock*.]  
**Joxer:** (*sticking his head in at the door*).Did ye hear them tatherarahs?  
**Boyle:**Well, Joxer, I’m not deaf.  
**Johnny:**(*appearing* *in his shirt and trousers at the door on left; his face is anxious and his voice is tremulous*). Who’s that at the door; who’s that at the door? Who gave that knock — d’ye yous hear me — are yous deaf or dhrunk or what?  
**Boyle:** (*to* Johnny).How the hell do I know who ’tis? Joxer, stick your head out o’ the window an’ see.  
**Joxer:**An’ mebbe get a bullet in the kisser? Ah, none o’ them thricks for Joxer! It’s betther to be a coward than a corpse!  
**Boyle:** (*looking cautiously out of the window*).It’s a fella in a thrench coat.[[21]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-21)  
**Johnny:**Holy Mary, Mother o’ God, I…  
**Boyle:**He’s goin’ away — he must ha’ got tired knockin’.

[Johnny *returns to the room on left*.]

**Boyle:**Sit down an’ have a cup o’ tay, Joxer.  
**Joxer:**I’m afraid the missus ud pop in on us agen before we’d know where we are. Somethin’s tellin’ me to go at wanst.  
**Boyle:**Don’t be superstitious, man; we’re Dublin men, an’ not boyos that’s only afther comin’ up from the bog o’ Allen[[22]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-22) — though if she did come in, right enough, we’d be caught like rats in a thrap.  
**Joxer:**An’ you know the sort she is — she wouldn’t listen to reason — an’ wanse bitten twice shy.  
**Boyle:** (*going over to the window at back*).If the worst came to the worst, you could dart out here, Joxer; it’s only a dhrop of a few feet to the roof of the return room, an’ the first minute she goes into dh’other room I’ll give you the bend, an’ you can slip in an’ away.  
**Joxer:** (*yielding to the temptation*).Ah, I won’t stop very long anyhow. (*Picking up a book from the table*) Whose is the buk?  
**Boyle:**Aw, one o’ Mary’s; she’s always readin’ lately — nothin’ but thrash, too. There’s one I was lookin’ at dh’other day : three stories, *The Doll’s House*, *Ghosts*, an’ *The Wild Duck* [[23]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-23)— buks only fit for chiselurs!  
**Joxer:**Didja ever rade *Elizabeth, or Th’ Exile o’ Sibayria*?[[24]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-24) — Ah, it’s a darlin’ story, a daarlin’ story!  
**Boyle:**You eat your sassige, an’ never min’ *Th’ Exile o’ Sibayria*. [*Both sit down*; Boyle *fills out tea, pours gravy on Joxer’s plate, and keeps the sausage for himself*.

**Joxer:**What are you wearin’ your moleskin trousers for?  
**Boyle:**I have to go to a job, Joxer. Just afther you’d gone, Devine kem runnin’ in to tell us that Father Farrell said if I went down to the job that’s goin’ on in Rathmines I’d get a start.  
**Joxer:**Be the holy, that’s good news!  
**Boyle:**How is it good news? I wonder if you were in my condition, would you call it good news?  
**Joxer:**I thought…  
**Boyle:**You thought! You think too sudden sometimes, Joxer. D’ye know, I’m hardly able to crawl with the pains in me legs!  
**Joxer:**Yis, yis; I forgot the pains in your legs. I know you can do nothin’ while they’re at you.  
**Boyle:**You forgot; I don’t think any of yous realize the state I’m in with the pain in my legs. What ud happen if I had to carry a bag o’ cement?  
**Joxer:**Ah, any man havin’ the like of them pains id be down an’ out, down an’ out.  
**Boyle:**I wouldn’t mind if he had said it to meself; but, no, oh no, he rushes in an’ shouts it out in front o’ Juno, an’ you know what Juno is, Joxer. We all know Devine knows a little more than the rest of us, but he doesn’t act as if he did; he’s a good boy, sober, able to talk an’ all that, but still…  
**Joxer:**Oh ay; able to argufy, but still…  
**Boyle:**If he’s runnin’ afther Mary, aself, he’s not goin’ to be runnin’ afther me. Captain Boyle’s able to take care of himself. Afther all, I’m not gettin’ brought up on Virol.[[25]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-25) I never heard him usin’ a curse; I don’t believe he was ever dhrunk in his life — sure he’s not like a Christian at all!  
**Joxer:**You’re afther takin’ the word out o’ me mouth — afther all, a Christian’s natural, but he’s unnatural.  
**Boyle:**His oul’ fella was just the same — a Wicklow[[26]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-26) man.  
**Joxer:**A Wicklow man! That explains the whole thing. I’ve met many a Wicklow man in me time, but I never met wan that was any good.  
**Boyle:**‘Father Farrell,’ says he, ‘sent me down to tell you.’ Father Farrell! — D’ye know, Joxer, I never like to be beholden to any o’ the clergy.  
**Joxer:**It’s dangerous, right enough.  
**Boyle:**If they do anything for you, they’d want you to be livin’ in the Chapel. — I’m goin’ to tell you somethin’, Joxer, that I wouldn’t tell to anybody else — the clergy always had too much power over the people in this unfortunate country.  
**Joxer:**You could sing that if you had an air to it!  
**Boyle:** (*becoming enthusiastic*).Didn’t they prevent the people in ’47 from seizin’ the corn,[[27]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-27) an’ they starvin’; didn’t they down Parnell;[[28]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-28) didn’t they say that hell wasn’t hot enough nor eternity long enough to punish the Fenians?[[29]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-29) We don’t forget, we don’t forget them things, Joxer. If they’ve taken everything else from us, Joxer, they’ve left us our memory.  
**Joxer:** (*emotionally*).For mem’ry’s the only friend that grief can call its own, that grief — can — call — its own!  
**Boyle:**Father Farrell’s beginnin’ to take a great intherest in Captain Boyle; because of what Johnny did for his country, says he to me wan day. It’s a curious way to reward Johnny be makin’ his poor oul’ father work. But that’s what the clergy want, Joxer — work, work, work for me an’ you; betther fettle when they come hoppin’ round for their dues! Job! Well, let him give his job to wan of his hymn-singin’, prayer-spoutin’, craw-thumpin’ Confraternity[[30]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-30) men!

[*The voice of a coal-block vendor is heard chanting in the street.*]

*Voice of Coal Vendor***:**Blocks — coal-blocks! Blocks — coal-blocks!  
**Joxer:**God be with the young days when you were steppin’ the deck of a manly ship, with the win’ blowin’ a hurricane through the masts, an’ the only sound you’d hear was, “Port your helm!” an’ the only answer, “Port it is, sir!”  
**Boyle:**Them was days, Joxer, them was days. Nothin’ was too hot or too heavy for me then. Sailin’ from the Gulf o’ Mexico to the Antanartic Ocean. I seen things, I seen things, Joxer, that no mortal man should speak about that knows his Catechism. Ofen, an’ ofen, when I was fixed to the wheel with a marlin-spike, an’ the win’s blowin’ fierce an’ the waves lashin’ an’ lashin’, till you’d think every minute was goin’ to be your last, an’ it blowed, an’ blowed — blew is the right word, Joxer, but blowed is what the sailors use…  
**Joxer:**Aw, it’s a darlin’ word, a daarlin’ word.  
**Boyle:**An’, as it blowed an’ blowed, I ofen looked up at the sky an’ assed meself the question — what is the stars, what is the stars?  
*Voice of Coal Vendor***:**Any blocks, coal-blocks; blocks, coal-blocks!  
**Joxer:**Ah, that’s the question, that’s the question — what is the stars?  
**Boyle:**An’ then, I’d have another look, an’ I’d ass meself — what is the moon?  
**Joxer:**Ah, that’s the question — what is the moon, what is the moon?

[*Rapid steps are heard coming towards the door. Boyle makes desperate efforts to hide everything; Joxer rushes to the window in a frantic effort to get out; Boyle begins to innocently lilt, ‘Oh, me darlin’ Jennie, I will be thrue to thee’, when the door is opened, and the black face of the Coal Vendor appears.* ]  
**The Coal Vendor:**D’yez want any blocks?  
**Boyle:** (*with a roar*).No, we don’t want any blocks!  
**Joxer:** (*coming back with a sigh of relief*).That’s afther puttin’ the heart across me — I could ha’ sworn it was Juno. I’d betther be goin’, Captain; you couldn’t tell the minute Juno’d hop in on us.  
**Boyle:**Let her hop in; we may as well have it out first as at last. I’ve made up me mind — I’m not goin’ to do only what she damn well likes.  
**Joxer:**Them sentiments does you credit, Captain; I don’t like to say anythings as between man an’ wife, but I say as a butty, as a butty, Captain, that you’ve stuck it too long, an’ that it’s about time you showed a little spunk.

How can a man die betther than facin’ fearful odds,  
For th’ ashes of his fathers an’ the temples of his gods?[[31]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-31)

**Boyle:**She has her rights — there’s no one denyin’ it, but haven’t I me rights too?  
**Joxer:**Of course you have — the sacred rights o’ man!  
**Boyle:**Today, Joxer, there’s goin’ to be issued a proclamation be me, establishin’ an independent Republic,[[32]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-32) an’ Juno’ll have to take an oath of allegiance.  
**Joxer:**Be firm, be firm, Captain; the first few minutes’ll be the worst: if you gently touch a nettle it’ll sting you for your pains; grasp it like a lad of mettle, an’ as soft as silk remains!  
*Voice of Juno outside:* Can’t stop, Mrs. Madigan — I haven’t a minute!  
**Joxer:** (*flying out of the window*).Holy God, here she is!  
**Boyle:**I knew that fella ud stop till she was in on top of us!

[He sits down by the fire.]

[Juno *enters hastily; she is flurried and excited*.]

**Juno:**Oh, you’re in — you must have been only afther comin’ in?  
**Boyle:**No, I never went out.  
**Juno:**It’s curious, then, you never heard the knockin’. [She *puts her coat and hat on bed*.]**Boyle:**Knockin’? Of course I heard the knockin’.  
**Juno:**An’ why didn’t you open the door, then? I suppose you were so busy with Joxer that you hadn’t time.  
**Boyle:**I haven’t seen Joxer since I seen him before. Joxer! What ud bring Joxer here?  
**Juno:**D’ye mean to tell me that the pair of yous wasn’t collogin’[[33]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-33) together here when me back was turned?  
**Boyle:**What ud we be collogin’ about? I have somethin’ else to think of besides collogin’ with Joxer. I can swear on all the holy prayer-books…  
**Mrs. Boyle:**That you weren’t in no snug! Go on in at wanst now, an’ take off that moleskin trousers o’ yours, an’ put on a collar an’ tie to smarten yourself up a bit. There’s a visitor comin’ with Mary in a minute, an’ he has great news for you.  
**Boyle:**A job, I suppose; let us get wan first before we start lookin’ for another.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**That’s the thing that’s able to put the win’ up you. Well, it’s no job, but news that’ll give you the chance o’ your life.  
**Boyle:**What’s all the mysthery about?  
**Mrs. Boyle:**G’win an’ take off the moleskin trousers when you’re told! [Boyle *goes into room on left*.

[Mrs. Boyle *tidies up the room, puts the shovel under the bed, and goes to the press*.

**Mrs. Boyle:**Oh, God bless us, looka the way everything’s thrun about! Oh, Joxer was here, Joxer was here!

*[Mary enters with Charlie Bentham; he is a young man of twenty‑five, tall, good‑looking, with a very high opinion of himself generally. He is dressed in a brown coat, brown knee‑breeches, grey stockings, a brown sweater, with a deep blue tie; he carries gloves and a walking‑stick.*]  
  
**Mrs. Boyle:** (*fussing round*).Come in, Mr. Bentham; sit down, Mr. Bentham, in this chair; it’s more comfortabler than that, Mr. Bentham. Himself’ll be here in a minute; he’s just takin’ off his trousers.  
**Mary:**Mother!  
**Bentham:**Please don’t put yourself to any trouble, Mrs. Boyle — I’m quite all right here, thank you.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**An’ to think of you knowin’ Mary, an’ she knowin’ the news you had for us, an’ wouldn’t let on; but it’s all the more welcomer now, for we were on our last lap!  
*Voice of  Johnny inside***:**What are you kickin’ up all the racket for?  
**Boyle:** (*roughly*).I’m takin’ off me moleskin trousers!  
**Johnny:**Can’t you do it, then, without lettin’ th’ whole house know you’re takin’ off your trousers? What d’ye want puttin’ them on an’ takin’ them off again?  
**Boyle:**Will you let me alone, will you let me alone? Am I never goin’ to be done thryin’ to please th’ whole o’ yous?  
**Mrs. Boyle:**(*to* Bentham).You must excuse th’ state o’ th’ place, Mr. Bentham; th’ minute I turn me back that man o’ mine always makes a litther o’ th’ place, a litther o’ th’ place.  
**Bentham:**Don’t worry, Mrs. Boyle; it’s all right, I assure…  
**Boyle:** (*inside*).Where’s me braces; where in th’ name o’ God did I leave me braces? — Ay, did you see where I put me braces?  
**Johnny:** (*inside, calling out*).Ma, will you come in here an’ take da away ou’ o’ this or he’ll dhrive me mad.  
**Mrs. Boyle:** (*going towards the door*)Dear, dear, dear, that man’ll be lookin’ for somethin’ on th’ day o’ Judgement. Look at your braces, man, hangin’ round your neck!  
**Boyle:** (*inside*).Aw, Holy God!  
**Mrs. Boyle:** (*calling*).Johnny, Johnny, come out here for a minute.  
**Johnny:**Ah, leave Johnny alone, an’ don’t be annoyin’ him!  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Come on, Johnny, till I inthroduce you to Mr. Bentham. (*To* Bentham) My son, Mr. Bentham; he’s afther goin’ through the mill. He was only a chiselur of a Boy Scout in Easter Week, when he got hit in the hip; and his arm was blew off in the fight in O’Connell Street. (*Johnny comes in*.) Here he is, Mr. Bentham; Mr. Bentham, Johnny. None can deny he done his bit for Irelan’, if that’s goin’ to do him any good.  
**Johnny:** (*boastfully*).I’d do it agen, ma, I’d do it agen; for a principle’s a principle.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Ah, you lost your best principle, me boy, when you lost your arm; them’s the only sort o’ principle that’s any good to a workin’ man.  
**Johnny:**Ireland only half free’ll[[34]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-34) never be at peace while she has a son left to pull a trigger.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**To be sure, to be sure — no bread’s a lot betther than half a loaf. (*Calling loudly in to* Boyle) Will you hurry up there?

[Boyle *enters in* *his best trousers, which aren’t too good, and looks very uncomfortable in his collar and tie.*]  
**Mrs. Boyle:**This is my husband; Mr. Boyle, Mr. Bentham.  
**Bentham:**Ah, very glad to know you, Mr. Boyle. How are you?  
**Boyle:**Ah, I’m not too well at all; I suffer terrible with pains in me legs. Juno can tell you there what…  
**Mrs. Boyle:**You won’t have many pains in your legs when you hear what Mr. Bentham has to tell you.  
**Bentham:**Juno! What an interesting name! It reminds one of Homer’s glorious story of ancient gods and heroes.  
**Boyle:**Yis, doesn’t it? You see, Juno was born an’ christened in June; I met her in June; we were married in June, an’ Johnny was born in June, so wan day I says to her, ‘You should ha’ been called Juno,’ an’ the name stuck to her ever since.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Here, we can talk o’ them things agen; let Mr. Bentham say what he has to say now.  
**Bentham:**Well, Mr. Boyle, I suppose you’ll remember a Mr. Ellison of Santry[[35]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-35) — he’s a relative of yours, I think.  
**Boyle:***(viciously).*Is it that prognosticator an’ procrastinator! Of course I remember him.  
**Bentham:**Well, he’s dead, Mr. Boyle…  
**Boyle:**Sorra[[36]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-36) many’ll go into mournin’ for him.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Wait till you hear what Mr. Bentham has to say, an’ then, maybe, you’ll change your opinion.  
**Bentham:**A week before he died he sent for me to write his will for him. He told me that there were two only that he wished to leave his property to : his second cousin, Michael Finnegan of Santry, and John Boyle, his first cousin, of Dublin.  
**Boyle:** (*excitedly*).Me, is it me, me?  
**Bentham:**You, Mr. Boyle; I’ll read a copy of the will that I have here with me, which has been duly filed in the Court of Probate. [*He takes a paper from his pocket and reads:*

*6th February 1922*

This is the last Will and Testament of William Ellison, of Santry, in the County of Dublin. I hereby order and wish my property to be sold and divided as follows: £20 to the St. Vincent de Paul Society. £60 for Masses for the repose of my soul (5s. for each Mass). The rest of my property to be divided between my first and second cousins. I hereby appoint Timothy Buckly, of Santry, and Hugh Brierly, of Coolock, to be my Executors. William Ellison. Hugh Brierly. Timothy Buckly. Charles Bentham, N.T.[[37]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-37)  
**Boyle:** (*eagerly*).An’ how much’ll be comin’ out of it, Mr. Bentham?  
**Bentham:**The Executors told me that half of the property would be anything between 1500 and 2000 pounds.  
**Mary:**A fortune, father, a fortune!  
**Johnny:**We’ll be able to get out o’ this place now, an’ go somewhere we’re not known.  
**Mrs. Boyle:**You won’t have to trouble about a job for awhile, Jack.  
**Boyle:** (*fervently*).I’ll never doubt the goodness o’ God agen.  
**Bentham:**I congratulate you, Mr. Boyle. [*They shake hands*.]

**Boyle:**An’ now, Mr. Bentham, you’ll have to have a wet.  
**Bentham:**A wet?  
**Boyle:**A wet — a jar — a boul!  
**Mrs. Boyle:**Jack, you’re speakin’ to Mr. Bentham, an’ not to Joxer.  
**Boyle:** (*solemnly*). Juno — Mary — Johnny — we’ll have to go into mournin’ at wanst — I never expected that poor Bill ud die so sudden — Well, we all have to die some day — you, Juno, to-day — an’ me, maybe, to-morrow — It’s sad, but it can’t be helped — Requiescat in pace[[38]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-38) — or, usin’ our oul’ tongue like St. Patrick or St. Bridget, Guh sayeree jeea ayera![[39]](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#footnote-933-39)  
**Mary:**Oh, father, that’s not Rest in Peace; that’s God save Ireland.  
**Boyle:**U-u-ugh, it’s all the same — isn’t it a prayer? — Juno, I’m done with Joxer; he’s nothin’ but a prognosticator an’ a…  
**Joxer:** (*climbing angrily through the window and bounding into the room*).You’re done with Joxer, are you? Maybe you thought I’d stop on the roof all the night for you! Joxer out on the roof with the win’ blowin’ through him was nothin’ to you an’ your friend with the collar an’ tie!  
**Mrs. Boyle:**What in the name o’ God brought you out on the roof; what were you doin’ there?  
**Joxer:** (*ironically*).I was dhreamin’ I was standin’ on the bridge of a ship, an’ she sailin’ the Antartic Ocean, an’ it blowed, an’ blowed, an’ I lookin’ up at the sky an’ sayin’, what is the stars, what is the stars?  
**Mrs. Boyle:** (*opening the door and standing at it*).Here, get ou’ o’ this, Joxer Daly; I was always thinkin’ you had a slate off.  
**Joxer:** (*moving to the door*).I have to laugh every time I look at the deep-sea sailor; an’ a row on a river ud make him seasick!  
**Boyle:**Get ou’ o’ this before I take the law into me own hands!  
**Joxer:** (*going out*).Say aw rewaeawr, but not good-bye. Lookin’ for work, an’ prayin’ to God he won’t get it! *[He goes.*  
**Mrs. Boyle:**I’m tired tellin’ you what Joxer was; maybe now you see yourself the kind he is.  
**Boyle:**He’ll never blow the froth off a pint o’ mine agen, that’s a sure thing. Johnny — Mary — you’re to keep yourselves to yourselves for the future. Juno, I’m done with Joxer — I’m a new man from this out. [*Clasping*Juno’s*hand, and singing emotionally*]:

— O, me darlin’ Juno, I will be thrue to thee;  
Me own, me darlin’ Juno, you’re all the world to me.

CURTAIN

1. A cardigan sweater. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-1)
2. Beyant Finglas. Beyond Finglas, a suburb on Dublin’s northside. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-2)
3. A member of the IRA who rejected the treaty creating the Irish Free State in 1922. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-3)
4. See Luke 10: 30-36. The stranger who helped the man who had fallen among thieves; thus an exemplar of Christian charity. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-4)
5. In Roman Catholic devotions, a prayer for some special object or occasion extended over nine days. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-5)
6. Reference to The Easter Rebellion of 1916 led by Padraic Pearse and James Connolly. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-6)
7. In 1920, during the Irish War of Independence. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-7)
8. Name of the former state of southern Ireland 1922–37, established as a result of the Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921). It was replaced by Eire in 1937 and the Republic of Ireland in 1949. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-8)
9. Small drinking area in a public-house. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-9)
10. A suburb on the southside of Dublin. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-10)
11. From the romantic opera *Lurline* (1860) by Irish composer William Vincent Wallace (1812-1865). [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-11)
12. Juno’s rendering of "affidavit," a written statement confirmed by oath. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-12)
13. Roman goddess of women and childbirth, queen of the gods and of heaven. The peacock drove her chariot. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-13)
14. Deirdre of the Sorrows. In Irish myth, the beautiful Deirdre deserted King Conchubar to run off with Naoise, as prophesied, thus bringing ruin upon Ulster. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-14)
15. A small suburb of Dublin on the northside. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-15)
16. A ship used to transport coal. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-16)
17. Forage, look out for. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-17)
18. A tray or trough with a pole handle and that is borne on the shoulder for carrying bricks, mortar, or similar loads. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-18)
19. Children. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-19)
20. Chaos. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-20)
21. Trench coats were commonly worn by members of the IRA. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-21)
22. An extensive area of bog, now partially reclaimed, 25 miles west-southwest of Dublin. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-22)
23. Three tragedies by Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), mistakenly considered by Boyle to be children’s books [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-23)
24. Elizabeth, or the Exile of Siberia, a popular tale by Madame Sophil Cottin (1770-1807). [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-24)
25. A malt-extract given to children as a health food. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-25)
26. A county and town in the mid-east region of Ireland. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-26)
27. The height of the Great Famine in 1847. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-27)
28. Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-1891). Irish Nationalist politician. He became president of the Home Rule Party in 1877, but his career was ruined when his affair with Katherine O’Shea was exposed in 1890. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-28)
29. The Irish Republican Brotherhood, founded in 1858 as a radical, militarist form of nationalism. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-29)
30. Roman Catholic organization of lay people created for the purpose of promoting special works of Christian charity or piety, and approved by the Church hierarchy. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-30)
31. Lines from Thomas Macaulay (1800-1859) *Lays of Ancient Rome*, “Horatius at the Bridge” (1842). [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-31)
32. Here Boyle alludes to the Easter Rebellion of 1916, in which Irish republicans declared an independent Irish republic and hoisted the tricolour flag on the roof of the Dublin Post Office. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-32)
33. Conspiring. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-33)
34. A reference to the Treaty of 1921, which resulted in the partition of Ireland. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-34)
35. A Dublin suburb on the northside. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-35)
36. Sorra many. Not many. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-36)
37. National-school teacher. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-37)
38. Latin. Rest in peace. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-38)
39. Phonetic spelling for prayer, “God Save Ireland”. [↵](https://opentextbc.ca/englishliterature/chapter/juno-and-the-paycock-act-i/#return-footnote-933-39)