**Three Plays eBook**

**Three Plays by Zora Neale Hurston**

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**Page 1**

**Title:  Three Plays**

Author:  Padraic Colum

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\*\*\* *Start* *of* *this* *project* *gutenberg* EBOOK *three* *plays* \*\*\*

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**THREE PLAYS**

  *The* *fiddler’s* *house*
  the land
  Thomas Muskerry

By *Padraic* *colum*

*Boston
little*, *Brown*, *and* *company*

1916

*To* *my* *friend
Thomas* *Hughes* *Kelly
these* *three* *Irish* *plays*

  *AUTHOR’S NOTE*

I have been asked to say something about the intentions and ideas that underlie the three short plays in this volume.

These plays were conceived in the early days of the Irish National Theatre.  I had been one of the group that formed the National Theatre Society and I wrote plays for players who were my colleagues and my instructors; I wrote them for a small, barely-furnished stage in a small theatre; I wrote them, too, for an audience that was tremendously interested in every expression of national character.  “The Land” was written to celebrate the redemption of the soil of Ireland—­an event made possible by the Land Act of 1903.  This event, as it represented the passing of Irish acres from an alien landlordism, was considered to be of national importance.  “The Land” also dealt with a movement that ran counter to the rooting of the Celtic people in the soil—­emigration—­the emigration to America of the young and the fit.  In “The Land” I tried to show that it was not altogether an economic necessity that was driving young men and women out of the Irish rural districts; the lack of life and the lack of freedom there had much to do with emigration.

“The Land” touched upon a typical conflict, the conflict between the individual and that which, in Ireland, has much authority, the family group.  This particular conflict was shown again in “The Fiddler’s House.” where the life, not of the actual peasants, but of rural people with artistic and aristocratic traditions, was shown.

I tried to show the same conflict working out more tragically in the play of middle-class life, “Thomas Muskerry.”  Here I went above the peasant and the wandering artist and came to the official.  I had intended to make plays about the merchant, the landowner, the political and the intellectual leader and so write a chapter in an Irish Human Comedy.  But while I was thinking of the play that is third in this volume my connection with the National Theatre Society was broken off.  “Thomas Muskerry” was produced in the Abbey Theatre after I had ceased to be a member of the group that had founded it.

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  *Padraic* *colum*
  *new* *York*
  *August, 1916*

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  *Author’s* *Note*
  *the* *fiddler’s* *house*
  *the* *land*:  *An* *agrarian* *comedy* *in* *three* *acts*
  *Thomas* *Muskerry*

  *THE FIDDLER’S HOUSE*

  *CHARACTERS*

*Conn* *Hourican*, a Fiddler.  *Maire* (Mary) [1] *Hourican*, his daughter.  *Anne* *Hourican*, a younger daughter.  *Brian* MACCONNELL, a younger farmer.  *James* *Moynihan*, a farmer’s son.

The action passes in the Houricans’ house in the Irish Midlands.

[Footnote 1:  The name is pronounced as if written “Maurya.”]

**ACT I**

Scene:  *The interior of a farmer’s cottage; the kitchen.  The entrance is at the back right.  To the left is the fire-place, an open hearth, with a fire of peat.  There is a room door to the right, a pace below the entrance; and another room door below the fire-place.  Between the room door and the entrance there is a row of wooden pegs, on which men’s coats hang.  Below this door is a dresser containing pretty delpht.  There is a small window at back, a settle bed folded into a high bench; a small mirror hangs right of the window.  A backed chair and some stools are about the hearth.  A table to the right with cloth and tea things on it.  The cottage looks pretty and comfortable.  It is towards the close of an Autumn day*.*James Moynihan has finished tea; Anne Hourican is at the back, seated on the settle knitting, and watching James.  James Moynihan is about twenty-eight.  He has a good forehead, but his face is indeterminate.  He has been working in the fields, and is dressed in trousers, shirt, and heavy boots.  Anne Hourican is a pretty, dark-haired girl of about nineteen*.

  *James Moynihan rises*.

Anne
And so you can’t stay any longer, James?

*James* *(with a certain solemnity)* No, Anne.  I told my father I’d be back while there was light, and I’m going back. *(He goes to the rack, takes his coat, and puts it on him)* Come over to our house to-night, Anne.  I’ll be watching the girls coming in, and thinking on yourself; there’s none of them your match for grace and favour.  My father wanted me to see a girl in Arvach.  She has three hundred pounds, besides what the priest, her uncle, will leave her.  “Father,” says I, “listen to me now.  Haven’t I always worked for you like a steady, useful boy?” “You have,” says he.  “Did I ever ask you for anything unreasonable?” says I.  “No,” says he.  “Well then,” says I, “don’t ask me to do unreasonable things.  I’m fond of Anne Hourican, and not another girl will I marry.  What’s money, after all?” says I, “there’s gold on the whin-bushes if you only knew it.”  And he had to leave it at that.

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*Anne*
You always bring people around.

*James*
The quiet, reasonable way is the way that people like.

*Anne*
Still, with all, I’m shy of going into your house.

*James*
Don’t doubt but there’ll be a welcome before you; come round
with Maire.

  *Anne rises, and comes to him.  She has graceful, bird-like movements.*

ANNE *(putting her hands on James’ shoulders)* Maybe we won’t have a chance of seeing each other after all.

  *James Moynihan kisses her reverently*

JAMES Sit down now, Anne, because there’s something I want to show you.  Do you ever see “The Shamrock”?

ANNE
Very seldom.

  *James and Anne go to the settle; they sit down*.

JAMES There be good pieces in it sometimes.  There’s a poem of mine in it this week.

ANNE
Of yours, James?  Printed, do you mean?

JAMES
Ay, printed. *(He takes a paper out of his pocket, and opens it)*
It’s a poem to yourself, though your name doesn’t come into it. *(Gives paper)* Let no one see it, Anne, at least not for the present.
And now, good-bye.

  *Goes to the door.  Anne continues reading the verse eagerly.  At the
  door James turns and recites*:—­

    When lights are failing, and skies are paling,
      And leaves are sailing a-down the air,
    O, it’s then that love lifts my heart above
      My roving thoughts and my petty care;
    And though the gloom be like the tomb,
      Where there’s no room for my love and me,
    O, still I’ll find you, and still I’ll bind you,
      My wild sweet rose of Aughnalee!

That’s the first stanza.  Good-bye.

  *James goes out.  Anne continues reading, then she leaves the paper
  down with a sigh*.

ANNE O, it’s lovely! *(She takes the paper up again, rises and goes to the door.  She remains looking out.  Some one speaks to her)* No, Brian, Maire’s not back yet.  Ay, I’ll engage she’ll give you a call when she does come back. *(Anne turns back.  She opens drawer in the dresser and puts paper in.  She begins to clear table, putting the delpht back on dresser.  To herself, anxiously)* I hope Maire won’t forget to call at the mill. *(Room door right opens, and Conn Hourican comes down.  Conn Hourican is a man of about fifty, with clear-cut, powerful features, his face is clean-shaven, his expression vehement.  His dress is old-fashioned.  He wears knee-breeches, a frieze coat rather long, a linen shirt with a little linen collar and a black string for bow.  He carries a slick and moves about restlessly)*

ANNE
Had Maire any talk of going to the mill, father?

CONN
I heard nothing of it.

ANNE
I hope she’ll mind of it.  We must get the meal there, and not
be going to the shop so often.

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CONN
I suppose we must.

  *He moves about restlessly*.

ANNE
And I was just thinking that one of us ought to go to Arvach on
Tuesday, and get the things there.

CONN
The mean, odious creatures!

  *Anne is startled.  She turns from dresser*.

ANNE
What are you thinking of, father?

CONN That den of robbers.  Well, well, I’m finished with them now; but I’m a proud man, and a passionate man, and I’ll be even with them yet.

ANNE
There’s no comfort in going into rough places.

CONN
You know nothing at all about it.  Were the men in yet?

ANNE
James Moynihan was here, because he had to go away early; but
Brian MacConnell is outside still.  Father, you were home late two
nights this week.

CONN And is a man to have no life to himself?  But sure you know nothing at all about it.  I’m going out now to give Brian MacConnell a hand.

ANNE
It’s hardly worth while going out now.

CONN There’s still light enough to do a bit of mowing, and you ought to know that it isn’t right to neglect the boy that’s come to do a day’s work with you. *(Going to the door)* Many’s the day I put in with the scythe in Ireland, and in England too; I did more than stroll with the fiddle, and I saw more places than where fiddling brought me. *(Brian MacConnell comes to the door)* I was just going out to you, Brian.  I was telling the girl here that it’s not right to neglect the boy that’s giving you a day’s work out of his own goodness.

BRIAN
I’m only coming in for a light.

CONN
As you’re here now, rest yourself.

*Brian MacConnell comes in, and goes over to the hearth.  He is dark and good-looking, and has something reckless in his look.  He wears corduroy trousers, and a shirt loose at the neck.  Anne comes to Brian.  Conn stands at entrance, his back turned*.

BRIAN *(lighting his pipe with a coal)* When do you expect Maire back?

ANNE
She’ll be here soon.  Shell give you a call if you’re outside,

BRIAN
How is it you couldn’t keep James Moynihan?

ANNE
It’s because you didn’t say the good word for me, I must think.
Be sure you praise me the next time you’re working together.

BRIAN
Will you do as much for me?

ANNE
Indeed, I will, Brian.  Myself and another are making a devotion
to Saint Anthony.

BRIAN
And what would that be for?

ANNE
That the Saint might send us good comrades.

BRIAN
I thought it was Saint Joseph did that for the girls.

ANNE
Sure we couldn’t be asking the like from him.  We couldn’t talk
to Saint Joseph that way.  We want a nice young saint to be looking at.

  *Conn turns from the door*.

CONN *(bitterly)* It’ll be a poor season, Brian MacConnell.

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BRIAN
The season’s not so bad, after all.

CONN God help them that are depending on the land and the weather for the bit they put into their heads.  It’s no wonder that the people here are the sort they are, harassed, anxious people.

ANNE
The people here mind their own business, and they’re a friendly
people besides.

CONN
People that would leave the best fiddler at the fair to go and
look at a bullock.

ANNE *(to Brian)* He’s not satisfied to have this shelter, Brian.

CONN *(to Brian)* I’m saying, Brian, that her mother had this shelter, and she left it to go the roads with myself.

ANNE That God may rest my mother.  It’s a pity she never lived to come back to the place.  But we ought to be praising grandmother night and day, for leaving this place to Maire.

CONN
Your grandmother did that as she did everything else.

ANNE *(to Brian)* Now, Brian, what would you do with a man that would say the like?

  *Anne goes outside.*

CONN *(to Brian)* It’s small blame to the girl here for thinking something of the place; but I saw the time, Brian MacConnell, when I could make more playing at one fair than working a whole season in this bit of a place.

BRIAN
Girls like the shelter, Conn.

CONN Ay, but the road for the fiddler.  I’m five years settled here, and I come to be as well known as the begging ass, and there is as much thought about me.  Fiddling, let me tell you, isn’t like a boy’s whistling.  It can’t be kept up on nothing.

BRIAN
I understand that, Conn.

CONN
I’m getting that I can’t stand the talk you hear in houses,
wars and Parliaments, and the devil knows what *ramais*.

BRIAN
There’s still a welcome for the man of art, somewhere.

CONN
That somewhere’s getting further and further away, Brian.

BRIAN
You were not in the town last night?

CONN
I was not, Brian.  God help me, I spent the night my lone.

BRIAN
There’s Sligomen in the town.

CONN Is there, now?  It would be like our times to play for them. *(Anne comes in with some peat)* Anne, would you bring me down my spectacles?  They’re in the room, daughter. *(Anne goes to room.  Conn turns to Brian eagerly) I* suppose the Sligomen will be in Flynn’s.

BRIAN
They were there last night.

CONN Listen, Brian, I’ve a reason for not going to Flynn’s.  Would you believe it, Brian, Flynn spoke to me about the few shillings I owe him?

BRIAN
That was shabby of him.  He got a lot out of you in the way of
playing.

CONN It’s just like them.  Besides, Maire keeps us tight enough, and I often have to take treats from the men.  They’re drovers and rambling labourers and the like, though, as you say, they’ve the song and music, and the proper talk.  Listen, Brian, could you leave a few shillings on the dresser for me?

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BRIAN
To be sure I will, Conn.

  *Brian goes to the dresser, and puts money on a shelf*.

CONN *(with dignity)* Thank you, Brian.  There’s few I’d let put me under a compliment; but I take it from you.  Maire, as I said, is a careful girl, but some of us must have our freedom.  Besides, Brian, the bird that sings lone sings slow.  The man of art must have his listeners. *(Conn takes the money off dresser)* Anne, daughter, what’s keeping you there?  Sure the spectacles were in my pocket the whole time, child. *(Anne comes dawn)* When I spoke against the people about here, I was leaving you out of it, Brian.

BRIAN
I’m fond of tune, though it wasn’t here I got fond of it.

  *Brian goes to the door*.

ANNE *(going to Brian)* You won’t be rambling again, Brian?

BRIAN
I’m settled here, Anne; I made it up with my brothers.

ANNE
They used to say that a MacConnell quarrel was a lasting quarrel.

BRIAN
Maybe we’re working the bad blood out of us.

ANNE
Don’t be staying out long, Brian.

BRIAN
Till Maire gives me the call.

  *Brian MacConnell goes out*.

ANNE
We oughtn’t to take another clay from Brian MacConnell.  There’s
only the patch at the back to be mown, and you could do that yourself.

CONN
You can depend on me for the mowing.  I’m going up now, to go
over an oul’ tune I have.

ANNE
James Moynihan would come over and stack for us.

CONN
James Moynihan is a decent boy, too.

ANNE
You won’t be going out to-night, father?

CONN
Now, how’s a man to know what he’ll be doing?

ANNE
It leaves me very anxious.

CONN I’ll give you this advice, and it’s proper advice to give to a girl thinking of marrying.  Never ask of your menkind where they’re going.

ANNE
The like of that brings bad luck on a house.

CONN
You have too much dead knowledge, and the shut fist never
caught a bird.

ANNE
I only wish you were settled down.

CONN
Sure I am settled down.

ANNE
I can’t speak to you, after all.

CONN You’re a good girl, Anne, and he’ll be lucky that gets you.  And don’t be grieving that you’re not bringing James Moynihan a fortune.  You’re bringing him the decency of birth and rearing.  You’re like the lone pigeon I often think—­the pet that doesn’t fly, and keeps near the house.

ANNE
That’s the way you always treat me, and I never can talk to you.

CONN *(at window)* Hush now, here’s the other, your sister Maire.  She’s like the wild pigeon of the woods. *(Maire Hourican comes in)* We were discoursing on affairs, Maire.  We won’t be bringing Brian MacConnell here tomorrow; there’s only the bit at the back to be mown, and I’ll do that myself.

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*Conn Hourican goes into the room right; soon after the fiddle is heard.  Anne goes to the settle, and takes up her knitting.  Maire takes her shawl off, and hangs it on the rack.  Maire Hourican is over twenty.  She is tall, and has easy, graceful movements; her features are fine and clear-cut; the nose is rather blunted, the mouth firm.  Her gaze is direct and clear.  She has heavy auburn hair, loose now, and falling.  Maire comes down to the table, opens basket, and takes some flowers from top.  She turns to dresser and arranges some of the flowers in a jar*.

MAIRE
We’d have no right to take another day from Brian.  And when
there’s no one here to-morrow, you and me could draw some of the turf.

ANNE
Your hair is loose, Maire.

  *Maire goes to the mirror and fixes her hair*.

MAIRE
The wind blew it about me, and then I let it down.  I came home
by the long way, just to feel young again with my hair about me.

ANNE
And did you meet any one?

MAIRE
Indeed I did.  I met James Moynihan.

ANNE
James had to go early.  They’re building at his place.

MAIRE
Indeed they ought to let James build a house for himself.  ANNE
Some day they will, Maire.

MAIRE But
we must not let some day be a far day.

ANNE *(hesitatingly)* I think I’ll show you something.

MAIRE What is it, daughter?

  *Anne rises and goes to the dresser.  She opens drawer.  Maire
  watches her*.

MAIRE *(waiting)* I made a good girl out of you, anyway.

ANNE
You wouldn’t let me use stroller words when we were on the road.
Do you mind of that?

MAIRE
I kept you to the mannerly ways.  I have that to my credit.

ANNE *(showing Maire the verses)* Read that, Maire.  It was James that made it.

MAIRE
It’s a song, I declare.

ANNE
No, Maire, it’s a poem.

MAIRE
A poem?  O, that’s grand!

  *She begins to read it eagerly*.

ANNE
And, Maire—­

MAIRE
Well?

ANNE
James says it’s about me.

MAIRE
About you?  O, I wish some one would put me into a song, or into a poem;
I suppose a poem would be best.  You might ask James.  No, I’ll coax him
myself.  Ah, no I won’t, Anne.

ANNE
You may keep it for a while, but don’t let any one know.

MAIRE
He must be very fond of you, and I thinking him so quiet.

ANNE *(happy)* He has grand thoughts about me.

MAIRE
Well, you’ll be seeing him to-night.

ANNE
I don’t know that I’ll go out to-night.

MAIRE
Sure Grace Moynihan asked us to go over.

ANNE
I’m shy of going into James’.

MAIRE
Anne, you’re the only one of us that has any manners.  Maybe
you’re right not to go.

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ANNE
I’ll stay in to-night.

MAIRE
Then Brian and myself will go to Moynihan’s.

ANNE
You’d get an indulgence, Maire, if you missed a dance.

MAIRE Would it be so hard to get an indulgence? *(She takes flowers from dresser and puts them in window)* The house looks nice this evening.  We’ll keep Brian here for a while, and then we’ll go to Moynihan’s.

ANNE
Father will be going out to-night.

MAIRE *(turning suddenly from window)* Will he?

ANNE
He will.  I think I ought to stay in.  Maire, father was in only
a while before you the night before last and another night.

MAIRE
O, and I thinking things were going so well with us.  He’s
drinking again.

ANNE
He’s going to Flynn’s again.

MAIRE
Disgracing us again.

ANNE
I’ll stay in to-night.

MAIRE
I’m tired of this.

ANNE
Don’t say it that way, Maire.

MAIRE
What will people say of us two now?

ANNE
I’ll talk to him to-night.

MAIRE
No, you’re going out—­you’re going to Moynihan’s—­you’re going
to see your sweetheart.

ANNE
I think you’re becoming a stranger to us, Maire.

MAIRE
You’re going to Moynihan’s to-night, and I’m going, too.  But I’m going
to settle this first.  Once and for all I’m going to settle this.

  *The fiddle has ceased.  As Maire goes towards the room, Conn
  Hourican comes down, the fiddle in his hand*.

CONN Were you listening to the tune I was playing?  Ah, that was a real oul tune, if there was anyone that knew it.  Maire, my jewel, were you listening?

MAIRE
I heard you.

CONN It was a real oul’ tune, and while I was playing it a great scheme came into my head.  Now, listen to me, Maire; and you listen, too, Anne.  Both of you would like to see your father having what’s his due after all, honour and respect.

MAIRE
Both of us would like to see our father earn the same.

CONN
I could earn the same, ay, and gold and silver cups besides, if
I had the mind to earn them.

  *He puts fiddle on table and prepares to speak impressively*.

CONN Let ye listen to me now; I’ve a scheme to put before ye.  When I was going over the oul tune, I remembered that I’d heard of a Feis [2] that’s coming on soon, the Feis of Ardagh.  I’m thinking of going there.  There will be great prizes for some one; I don’t doubt but I’d do at Ardagh better than I did at the Feis of Granard, where people as high as bishops were proud and glad to know Conn Hourican the Fiddler.

[Footnote 2:  Feis, pronounced Fesh, a musical or literary gathering, with competitions.]

ANNE
Father, you’ve a place to mind.

CONN I’m tired of that kind of talk; sure I’m always thinking of the place.  Maire hasn’t little notions.  What do you say to it, Maire, my girl?

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MAIRE What do I say?  I say you’re not a rambler now, though indeed you behave like one.

CONN
You have something against me, Maire.

MAIRE
I have.

CONN
What has she against me, Anne?

MAIRE
All the promises you broke.

CONN
You were listening to what the town is saying.

MAIRE What does the town know?  Does it know that you stripped us of stock and crop the year after we came here?  Does it know that Anne and myself, two girls of the roads, had to struggle ever since to keep a shelter?

CONN *(bitterly)* It knows that.  It couldn’t help but know it, maybe.
But does it know all the promises you made and broke?

CONN *(angrily)* Hush now; I’ll hear no more.  I went my own way always, and I’ll go my own way always.

  *He goes to the entrance, and remains with his back turned.  Maire
  goes to Anne*.

MAIRE *(raising her voice)* Ay, he’ll go his own way always.  What was the good of working and saving here?

ANNE
Be quiet with him.

MAIRE
He’ll go his own way always, and it’s foolish of us to be
fretting for him night and day.

  *Maire sits on stool and puts her hands across her face*.

CONN *(turning his head)* Fretting for me.  It was too easy that I reared you.

ANNE God help Maire!  She kept the house together at the worst, and she is always fretting for us.

CONN
I’m oul’ enough to mind myself.  Let her remember that.

ANNE
It’s you that ought to remember that.

CONN *(going to Maire)* Did I ever give the harsh word to you, child?

  *No answer*.

CONN
There, there; I never could see tears in a woman’s eyes; there,
there, colleen.  I’m an oul’ man; I won’t be a trouble to you long.

MAIRE *(rising)* Why need you play in Flynn’s?  You’re as good as any that goes there.

CONN
I know that.  I’m disgusted with Flynn.  May hell loosen his
knees for him!  I’ll go in and throw his money on the counter.

MAIRE
Some one else can do that.  Promise me you won’t go near the
place.

CONN
You’ll have me promise.  I promise.

MAIRE
Take this in your hand and promise.  It’s a medal that belonged
to mother.

  *She takes a medal from her neck*

CONN *(taking the medal)* I’m disgusted with Flynn.  I promise you,
Maire.

MAIRE
Now you’ve honour and respect.

CONN
And what about Ardagh, Maire?

MAIRE
Sure, you’re not the rambling fiddler any more.

CONN
That would be the good rambling.  I see the trees making shadows
across the roads.

MAIRE
We’ll talk about it again.

ANNE
Brian MacConnell will be coming in now.  CONN I’m going out to
Brian MacConnell.

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  *He goes to the door*.

ANNE
Tell Brian to come in now.

  *Conn Hourican goes out.  There is a pause.  Maire hums a tune as she
  goes to the mirror*.

MAIRE
Am I looking well to-day?

ANNE *(rather distantly)* You’re looking your best, I think. *(Seriously)* Maire, I didn’t like the way you talked to father.

MAIRE *(petulantly)* What have you against it?

ANNE
You’re becoming a stranger to us, Maire.

MAIRE *(as an apology)* I’m out often, I know, but I think as much as ever of the house, and about you and father.  You know we couldn’t let him go to the Feis at Ardagh.  We couldn’t let him go off like a rambling fiddler.

ANNE
We couldn’t let him go off by himself.

MAIRE
You’re going to Moynihan’s.

ANNE
Maybe I’ll go.

MAIRE
Anne, honey, do something for me.

ANNE
What will I do?

MAIRE
You’ll meet father coming up with Brian, and take him away.

ANNE
And will you tell me everything to-night?

MAIRE Who else would I talk to but yourself, Nancy? *(Anne goes out)* I wish Anne hadn’t spoken to me like that.  I feel the like of that. *(Desperately)* Well, I’ll pray for nothing now but to look my best. *(She goes to the fire.  Brian MacConnell comes in)* You’re welcome, Brian.

BRIAN
We didn’t finish to-day.  I’ll come in to-morrow and finish.

MAIRE
O no, Brian, we won’t take another day from you.

BRIAN
Well, what’s a day after all?  Many’s the day and night I put
in thinking on you.

MAIRE
But did you do what I asked you to do?

BRIAN I did.  I made it up with my brothers.  It was never my way before.  What I wanted I took with the strong hand; or if I mightn’t put the strong hand on it, I left it alone.

MAIRE *(eagerly)* Tell me what your brother said to you.

BRIAN When I came up to the door, Hugh came out to meet me.  “What destruction are you bringing me?” he said.  “There’s my hand,” says I, “and I take your offer.”  MAIRE Ah, that’s settled.  You could settle anything, Brian. *(She goes to the settle and sits down)* I wonder could you settle something for us?

BRIAN
What is it, Maire?

MAIRE
It’s my father.  He wants to be rambling again.  He wants to be
going to some Feis.

BRIAN
Sure, let him go.

  *He takes her hand*.

MAIRE
I couldn’t, Brian.  Couldn’t you help us?  Couldn’t you keep
father’s mind on the right things?

BRIAN
Sure, let the fiddler go on the roads.

MAIRE
You might stay here this evening with ourselves.  Father would
be glad to talk with you.

BRIAN *(putting his arm around her)* But I want the two of us to be seen in Moynihan’s to-night.

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MAIRE *(resistance in her voice)* Stay here with us, and let all that go by.

BRIAN
Hugh will be there with that woman that brought him the big
fortune; and I want you to take the shine out of her.

MAIRE *(rising)* I was out often lately.  You know that, Brian.

  *She goes to chair at table, and sits away from him*.

BRIAN *(rising and going to her)* But this night above all you must be with me.

MAIRE *(turning to him impulsively)* Stay here and I’ll be as nice to you as if we were in another house. *(He kisses her.  She rises and goes from him)* If you knew me at all, Brian MacConnell, that’s not the way you’d treat me.

BRIAN
Are you not coming out with me?

MAIRE
You must leave me to myself now. *(Conn Hourican comes in)* Is
Anne with you, father?

CONN
She’s gathering posies or something like that.  Brian, did you
hear about the Feis at Ardagh?

MAIRE *(with vehemence)* Oh, what’s the good of talking about that?
You can’t go.

CONN
Can’t go, did you say, girl?

MAIRE
Oh, how could you go?

CONN
Is that the way?  Well, God help us.  Give me that fiddle till I
leave it up.

  *He takes the fiddle off dresser, and turns to go*.

MAIRE
Father, let me be with you to-night; oh, I’m sorry if I vexed
you. *(No reply)* Well, stay with Brian MacConnell; I’m going out to
Anne.

  *Maire goes out.  Brian goes to rack, and puts on his coat*.

BRIAN
Are you coming, Conn?  I’m off.

CONN
Where to, man?

BRIAN
To Flynn’s.

CONN
I can’t be going, I’m sorry to say.

BRIAN
I’m going anyway.  It’s a great thing to be in the company of
men.

CONN
Ay, in troth.  Women, Brian, leave the heart of one very lonesome.

BRIAN *(masterfully)* Why can’t you come out?  I thought you were going to-night.

CONN
I can’t, Brian, and that reminds me.  Give these few shillings
to Flynn for me.  I’ll owe them to you still.

BRIAN
I’m not going to be bothered by the like.  Why can’t you come?

CONN
I promised Maire.

  *Brian strides away.  He turns, comes back deliberately, and sits on
  table beside Conn*.

BRIAN
They’ll be all looking out for you at Flynn’s.

CONN
Well, the next time they see me they may respect me.

BRIAN
Some of the boys will take it very unkindly.  CONN They’re
decent enough fellows, some of them.

BRIAN
And above all nights they’ll be watching out for you this night,
on account of the Sligomen.

CONN
They’re decent enough fellows, as I said, and I’ll be sorry to
disappoint them.

BRIAN
The Sligomen will have great stories about Shawn Heffernan.

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CONN
Shawn Heffernan!  Is that impostor still alive?

BRIAN
He is, and for fiddling these Sligomen think there’s not the
like of him in the whole of Ireland.

CONN God help them if that’s all they know.  We played against each other at the Granard Feis.  He got the prize, but everybody knew that it was me played the best.

BRIAN
There’s few of them alive now that mind of the Granard Feis.
He got the prize, and there’s no talk of you at all.

CONN
No talk of me at all?

BRIAN
It’s said that since you settled down you lost your art.

CONN
And what had the men at Flynn’s to say about that?  BRIAN They
bragged about you for a while, but the Sligomen put them down.

CONN I wonder would we have time to go up, play a few tunes, and come back, while Maire would be doing something?  It would be a pity not to give them fellows a lesson and close their ignorant mouths for them.  I wonder would we have time? *(Anne comes in with Maire)* I thought you went somewhere and left Brian and myself here.

ANNE
We’re going somewhere and Brian might come with us.

MAIRE
Every one is going to Moynihan’s.

CONN
It’s a pleasant house, a pleasant house.  Brian will make his *ceilidh [3]* with me.  We might go over a few tunes.

ANNE
Let Brian come where there are girls that might miss him.

MAIRE
Anne, you’re a great one for keeping up the story that girls
are always thinking about men.

ANNE
And so they are.  Just as men are always thinking about girls.

MAIRE
You’d make a good ribbonman.[4] You’d put a face on anything
you said.

[Footnote 3:  Celidh, pronounced cayley, a visit.]

[Footnote 4:  A ribbonman—­a member of a secret agrarian society.]

ANNE
Ribbonism and secret societies were denounced off the altar.

MAIRE
Goodness!  The men will begin to think they’ve secrets worth
telling.

ANNE
Have you secrets worth telling, Brian?

MAIRE
I daresay he has.  There are foolish women in the world.

ANNE
Are you coming to Moynihan’s, Brian?

BRIAN
No.  I’m going where there’s men.

MAIRE Come, Anne, till I deck you out.  Come here, daughter, don’t wear flowers.  I think they’re unlucky.  Here I am talking like this, and I going to a dance.  I suppose I’ll dance with seven or eight and forget what’s on my mind....  Everyone is going to Moynihan’s except the men here.  Are you going out, father?

CONN
I’m making a *ceilidh* with Brian.

MAIRE
Well, God be with you both.  Come on, Anne.

  *Maire takes down her shawl, and puts it over her head.  She stands
  at the door, watching Anne, who goes to Brian.*

ANNE
Brian, what have you against Moynihan’s?

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BRIAN
Nothing at all.  I may go in.  MAIRE Come on, Anne.  God be with
you both.

  *Maire and Anne go out.  They are heard talking for a while.  Conn
  goes to the door*.

CONN
Maire and Anne are turning the bohereen. [5] Come on now.

  *He takes his fiddle and begins to wrap it up eagerly*.

BRIAN
Ay, let’s go.

CONN *(at door)* I never forget, I never forget.  The Granard Feis is as fresh in my mind as the day I played at it.  Shawn Heffernan, indeed!  I never forget.  I never forget.

  *Conn Hourican and Brian MacConnell go out*.

[Footnote 5:  Bohereen—­the little path going from the cottage to the main road.]

**CURTAIN**

**ACT II**

  *The next day:  The scene is as in previous Act.  It is now in the
  forenoon.  Maire Hourican is seated at the fire in a listless attitude.
  Anne is busy at the dresser.  Maire rises*.

MAIRE
We shouldn’t have stayed at Moynihan’s so late.

ANNE
Indeed it would have been better to go home, but I was sure
that Brian MacConnell would come in.

MAIRE
Well, it was his own loss if he didn’t come.  Maybe there was
one there that I liked better.

ANNE
You couldn’t have liked Connor Gilpatrick better than Brian
MacConnell.

MAIRE
Connor’s the best-looking boy in the country.  Was it noticed
that we were together often?

ANNE *(significantly)* Peggy Carroll noticed it.

MAIRE Well, the boy was glad to talk to me.  Connor’s a good dancer, and he has fine talk besides.  If Brian MacConnell had come to the door, I wouldn’t have turned my head towards him.

ANNE
Sure, you wouldn’t compare a young boy like Connor Gilpatrick
with Brian MacConnell?

MAIRE I wouldn’t have turned my head towards Brian.  O! never expect kindness from men.  Why did you let me stay on?  I’m afraid to look at myself in the glass to-day. *(She goes over to the mirror)* You were hard on me, Anne, yesterday.

ANNE
I didn’t like the way you talked to father.

MAIRE
I think I’m getting different to what I used to be.  Well, I’ve
reason to be sorry for what I did yesterday. *(She is at window)*
Was Peggy Carroll vexed at the way I went on?

ANNE
She never took her eyes off the pair of you.  You know she’s
very fond of Connor.

MAIRE
Anne, never remind me of my foolishness, I’m heartsick of
myself to-day.

ANNE
I’ll comb out your hair for you, and you’ll look well enough.

MAIRE
Then you’re expecting Brian MacConnell?

ANNE
It’s likely he’ll come in to see if there’s anything to be done.

MAIRE
I suppose he’ll come in.  Gracious, how did father get out?
He’s coming up the path.

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ANNE *(coming to Maire)* Father’s not up, surely?  Maire, be easy with Brian MacConnell when he comes in.

MAIRE
Father’s coming up the path.  Anne!

ANNE
What is it, Maire?

MAIRE
Father wasn’t in at all, last night.

ANNE
Then he went to Flynn’s, after all.

MAIRE
Ay, he went to Flynn’s.

  *She goes to Anne*.

ANNE
O Maire, what will become of us all?

MAIRE
I don’t know.

  *Maire goes to the settle, and sits down*.

ANNE
What will we do with him at all?

  *Conn Hourican comes in*.

CONN
God save you! *(He looks around)* Well, I came back to ye.

ANNE
You did, God help us!  And we depending on you.  It’s the bad way
you always treated us.

CONN
Did you hear what happened to me, before you attack me?

ANNE
What happened to you?  What always happens to you?

CONN
I wonder that a man comes in at all!  The complaints against him
are like the Queen’s Speech, prepared beforehand.

ANNE Ever since I can remember, you treated us like that.  Bringing us into drinking-places and we little.  It’s well we got to know anything, or got into the way of being mannerly at all.

CONN
You know too much.  I always said that.  Is James Moynihan coming
here to-day?

ANNE
No, he isn’t coming here to-day.

CONN
Well, we can do without him.  There’s something to be done to-day.
I said I’d do the bit of mowing, and I was thinking of that all along. *(He looks at Maire)* Did you hear what happened to me, Maire?

MAIRE
It’s no matter at all.

CONN
I went over to Flynn’s, I may tell you.

ANNE
In troth we might have known that.

CONN
But did you hear what happened to me?

ANNE How could we hear?  It was Maire went to the door, and there you were coming up the path; and we thinking you were in bed, resting yourself.

CONN I went over to Flynn’s, but I had good reason for going there. *(He puts the fiddle down on the table)* Didn’t you hear there were Sligomen in the town, Maire?  Well, one of them was in the way of rewarding the prizes.  I told you about the Feis; well, it’s no matter now, I’ll say no more about that.  At all events the man I mentioned wanted to know what music was in the country, so he sent a message to myself.

ANNE *(as satirical as she can be)* That was kind of him.

CONN It was.  I could do no less than go.  I’ll rest myself now, and then get ready for the mowing. *(He goes to the room door; he turns again and watches Maire)* Maire, I’m sorry you weren’t on the spot.  You might have advised me.  I couldn’t think of where you went or I’d have followed you.  I had to make haste.

MAIRE
It’s no matter at all now.

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CONN
I’ll stretch myself on the bed before I begin work.  Anne, did
you say you were leaving something in the room for me?

ANNE
I suppose I’ll have to leave the tea in the room for you.

  *She gets the tea ready.  Maire remains motionless*.

CONN Well, I have the pattern of daughters, anyway.  I wouldn’t give this house for the praise of Ireland, no, not if they carried me on their backs. *(Anne takes the tea up to the room)* It’s a pity you weren’t there, Maire, though of course I wouldn’t bring you into such a place.  But they were decent fellows, decent, warm-hearted fellows.  If you were to see their faces when I played *An Chaitin Donn*.  I’ll warrant they’ll be whistling it, though they never heard the tune before.  And the manners they have!  I offered the fiddle to one of them.  “No,” says he, “not a string will I touch while the master of us is here.”  That’s something like the spirit. *(Maire has turned to him and is attentive)* But there, I won’t fill myself up with false music telling you about it all.

  *He turns to the room*.

MAIRE
Bring up your fiddle.

CONN *(taking fiddle and going towards room again)* It will be as good as sound sleeping for me.  I’ll never forget it.  Flynn will never forget it.  It will be the making of Flynn.

  *Maire rises*.

MAIRE
You’ve only your fiddle; we shouldn’t forget that.

  *Conn goes up to the room.  Maire turns to the fire.  Anne comes down*.

ANNE
O Maire, what will become of us at all?

MAIRE
He is very pleased with himself.  He has only his fiddle, we
shouldn’t forget that.

ANNE
It will be a long time till he does the like again.

MAIRE
It will be a long time, I suppose.  Both of us might be in a
different house and have different cares.

ANNE
That would be terrible.  I’ll never leave him, Maire.  MAIRE You
can’t say the like now.

ANNE
Why?

MAIRE How could you take such things upon you and life stretching out before you?  You’re not young enough, Anne.  Besides, it’s not what we say; it’s what we feel.  No, it’s not what we feel either; it’s what grows up in us.

ANNE
He might never do the like again.

MAIRE
Many’s the time mother said that, and she and me lying together.

ANNE
Will we ever get out of it, Maire?

  *James enters*.

MAIRE
You have only a while to stay with us.

ANNE
O James, what will your father say if he hears of you giving us
another day?

JAMES
My father took a stick in his hand this morning, and went off
with himself.

MAIRE
You’re welcome, James.  It was a pleasant time we had in your
house last evening.

JAMES I hope you liked the company, Maire.  I’m afraid there was very little to be called refined or scholarly, and the conversation at times was homely enough.  But we did our best, and we were proud to see you.

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MAIRE
Sit down, James.

  *James sits on chair, near table.  Maire is seated at fire, left of
  James.  Anne leans against table, right of him*.

JAMES
Your father is outside, maybe?

MAIRE
No.  He’s above in the room.

JAMES Yes.  Practising, I suppose.  Them that have the gift have to mind the gift.  In this country there isn’t much thought for poetry, or music, or scholarship.  Still, a few of us know that a while must be spared from the world if we are to lay up riches in the mind.

ANNE
I hope there’s nothing wrong at home?

JAMES *(turning to Anne)* To tell you the truth, Anne, and to keep nothing back, there is.

MAIRE
And what is it, James?

JAMES *(turning to Maire)* Anne was talking to my father last night.

ANNE
Indeed I was, and I thought him very friendly to me.

JAMES Ay, he liked you well enough, I can tell you that, Anne.  This morning when he took a stick in his hand, I knew he was making ready for a journey, for the horse is laid up.  “Walk down a bit with me,” said he, “and we’ll go over a few things that are in my mind.”  Well, I walked down with him, and indeed we had a serious conversation.

ANNE
Well?

JAMES
“Anne Hourican is too young,” said my father; “she’s a nice
girl, and a good girl, but she’s too young.”

MAIRE
Sure in a while Anne will be twenty.

JAMES *(turning to Maire)* Ten years from this father would still think Anne too young.  And late marriages, as everybody knows, is the real weakness of the country.

ANNE
I thought your father liked me.

JAMES He likes you well enough, but, as he says, “what would she be doing here and your sisters years older than herself?” There’s truth in that, mind you.  I always give in to the truth.

MAIRE
James?

JAMES *(turning to Maire)* Well, Maire?

MAIRE
Is Anne a girl to be waiting twenty years for a man, like
Sally Cassidy?

JAMES God forbid, Maire Hourican, that I’d ask your sister to wait that length.  MAIRE She hasn’t got a fortune.  We were brought up different to farmers, and maybe we never gave thought to the like.

JAMES
She has what’s better than a fortune.

MAIRE
Why aren’t your sisters married off?

JAMES
Big fortunes are expected with them.

MAIRE
And they look to your wife to bring a big fortune into the
house?

JAMES
Ay, they do that.

MAIRE You, James, ought to have some control in the house.  You’re the only son.  Your father is well off.  Get him to fortune off your sisters, and then bring Anne to the house.

JAMES
But how could I get father to fortune off the girls?

MAIRE
How?  By wakening up.  You have the right.  When we have the right,
we ought to be able to do anything we like with the people around us.

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JAMES
I give in to the truth of that, Maire.

MAIRE
What will come of you giving in to the truth of it?  But sure
you ought to remember, Anne.

ANNE *(taking James’s hand)* James has the good way with people.

MAIRE Well, I suppose it will come out right for you in the end.  You are both very deserving. *(She rises)* But some time or another we have to take things into our own hands.

JAMES
Indeed that’s true, Maire.

  *Maire goes to back*.

ANNE *(holding James’s hand)* Did you make any more songs, James?

JAMES
I have a song in my head since last night.

ANNE
The one in the paper is lovely.  I know it by heart.

JAMES
The next I make will be ten times better.

  *Conn Hourican comes down*.

CONN
I heard your voice, James, and I thought I’d come down.  It’s
very good of you to come here again.  I’ll be out with you to-day.

JAMES
It’ll be a good day from this on.  Were you practising above,
Mister Hourican?

CONN Well, no, James, I wasn’t practising.  I was at a big gathering last night, and my hands are unstrung like.  We’ll talk for a while, and then I’ll go out with you.

ANNE *(taking James’s arm)* Come out with me for a minute, James.

JAMES *(going off)* I’ll see you again, Mister Hourican.

  *James and Anne go out*,

CONN
Well, God help us. *(He turns to go back to the room.  Maire
comes down from back)* Are you going out, Maire?

MAIRE
No, I’m staying here.

CONN *(aggrieved)* Do you mind them two, how they went out together.
I think I’ll go out and see what’s to be done about the place.

  *Conn goes towards the entrance.  Maire goes towards the fire*.

CONN *(pausing at door)* I broke my word to you, Maire.

MAIRE
I don’t know what to say to you now.

CONN
It was the music and the strange faces that drew me.

MAIRE
I know that now.

CONN
It will be a long time till I break my word to you again.

MAIRE
I’ll never ask for your word again.

CONN *(warmly)* I can tell you this, Maire.  There’s many’s the place in Ireland where Conn Hourican’s word would be respected.

MAIRE I’ll never ask for your word again.  You have only your fiddle, and you must go among people that will praise you.  When I heard you talking of your listeners, I knew that.  I was frightened before that.  When I saw you coming, I went and sat there, and I thought the walls of the house were crowding in on me.

CONN
You were partly to blame, Maire.  You left me there very lonesome.

MAIRE I was to blame, I suppose.  I should have treated you differently.  Well, I know you better now.  Let you sit down and we’ll talk together. *(Conn sits on chair to right of table)* What’s to become of myself I don’t know.  Anne and James Moynihan will marry, I hope.  Neither of us have fortunes, and for that reason our house should be well spoken of.

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CONN
Sure I know that.  I wouldn’t bring the shadow of a disgrace
near ye.

MAIRE If the father isn’t well spoken of, how could the house be well spoken of?  They’re big drinkers that go to Flynn’s, and it’s easy for the fiddler to get into the way of drinking.

CONN
I won’t go to Flynn’s when you put it that way.

MAIRE
I’ll ask for no word.  I’ll let you know the real way of the
house, and then trust you.

CONN
You’re a good girl, Maire.  I should have been said by you.

MAIRE From this out there will be dances at the schoolhouse and the like of that.  You could be playing at them.  CONN None of the oul’ people go to the like, and the young don’t understand me nor my ways.  God knows will I ever play again.  That thought is often with me of late, and it makes me very lonesome.

MAIRE
That’s foolishness.

CONN I was very lonesome when you left me.  You don’t know how I was tempted, Maire.  There was Brian MacConnell putting on his coat to go to Flynn’s, and talking of the Sligomen.

MAIRE *(startled)* And was it to Flynn’s that Brian MacConnell went?

CONN
It was Brian that brought me to Flynn’s.

MAIRE
Was it Brian MacConnell that brought you to Flynn’s?

CONN
It was.

MAIRE *(passionately)* You must never go to Flynn’s.

CONN
I’m ashamed of myself.  Didn’t I say that, Maire?

MAIRE *(with hardness)* You must never go again.

CONN
And is a man to have no life to himself?

MAIRE That’s talk just.  It’s time you thought of your own place and your own children.  It’s time you gave up caring for the praise of foolish people,

CONN
Foolish people, did you say?

MAIRE Ay, foolish people.  You had all your life to yourself, and you went here and there, straying from place to place, and caring only for the praise of foolish people.

CONN God help you, if that’s your way of thinking!  Sure the world knows that a man is born with the gift, and isn’t the gift then the sign of the grace of God?  Foolish people, indeed!  Them that know the gift have some of the grace of God, no matter how poor they may be.

MAIRE
You’re always thinking of them.  You never think of your own.
Many’s the time your own cried tears over your playing.

CONN *(passionately, starting up)* I’ll go out of the house.

MAIRE
Let you stay here.

CONN *(going towards entrance)* I’ll go out of the house, I tell you.

MAIRE
No.

  *Conn goes over to the fire.*

CONN God help me that ever came into this country at all. *(He sits down on the armchair, his hands resting on his stick)* I had friends once, and was well thought of; I can tell you that, my daughter.  MAIRE I know that.  CONN Well, you can have your own way with me now.

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MAIRE Why can’t you stay here?  There’s lots to be done here.  Our fields are a laughing-stock to the neighbours, they’re that poor and wasted.  Let us put all our minds into working, and have a good place of our own.

CONN Ay, and the grabbers and informers of this place would think well of you then.

MAIRE
Who do you call grabbers and informers?

CONN
The people of this place.  The people *you* want to shine before.

MAIRE
I don’t want to shine before the people.

CONN
I’m not saying against you, Maire.

MAIRE
You’re wrong in thinking I want to shine at all.

CONN
Sure you go to every dance and ceilidh; and to every house
where you can show off your face, and dancing, and conversation.

MAIRE
Do I?  Maybe I do.  Every girl does the like.

CONN
I’m not saying against it.

  *Pause.*

MAIRE
You think I’m like yourself, wanting the praise of the people.

CONN
And what’s the harm if you do?

MAIRE
No harm at all.  But I don’t go to houses to show myself off.

CONN
Troth and you do, Maire.

  *He rises and goes towards the entrance, and remains looking out*.

MAIRE
I won’t believe it.

  *She goes to the settle.  Anne comes in.  Anne goes to the glass to
  fix her hair*.

CONN
Had you a good night at Moynihan’s, Anne?

ANNE
A sort of a good night.

CONN
I was going to tell you about a man I met last night.  He had a
song about your grandmother.

ANNE
Was grandmother a great beauty, father?

CONN
Honor Gilroy had good looks, and indeed she made the most of
them.

MAIRE
It’s likely there was some to tell her that she was showing off.

CONN
No one was to her liking unless they praised her.

ANNE
Ah well, a fiddler ought to forgive that to a woman.  MAIRE
Fiddlers and women are all alike, but don’t say that to him.

  *Anne goes to Maire and sits beside her*.

CONN *(speaking to both)* Well, Honor Gilroy wasn’t the worst, maybe.

MAIRE
And fiddlers and women oughtn’t be hard on each other.

CONN
Do you say that, Maire?

MAIRE *(rising and going to him)* I say it, father.

CONN
God forgive me if I vexed you, Maire.

ANNE It’s clearing up now, father, and you ought to go out to James. *(Conn turns to the door.  He remains in the doorway.  Anne rises and goes to Maire)* What did you say to him?

MAIRE *(looking at Conn)* He doesn’t feel it at all.  Father will always be the fiddler, no matter what we say.

ANNE
Maire.  Come and talk to me. *(They sit at fire)* I was talking
to James.  He’ll never be happy until we’re under the one roof.

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  *Maire clasps Anne’s hands passionately*.

MAIRE *(with cry)* Anne, daughter, I’ll be very lonesome for you.

ANNE
But sure I won’t be far off, Maire.

MAIRE
Ay, but it’s terrible to face things alone.

*James has come to the door.  Conn and James have been talking.  They turn in*.

CONN
But I’ll be glad enough to have the scythe in my hands after it
all, James.

JAMES
Anne was telling me how you took the victory from Connaught.

CONN
Still I’m sorry for him!  That poor Heffernan!  He’ll never hold
up his head again.

JAMES
Sure I’d have it in a ballad that would be sung in his own town.
It would be well worth putting into a ballad.

CONN
Well indeed, it would make a right good ballad, James.

JAMES
I’d like to make a ballad about it, that would be sung all
over Connaught.

CONN And why wouldn’t you do it, James Moynihan?  Sure it would be the making of you.  It would be sung all over Ireland, and your name to it.  Do you hear that, Maire?  Do you hear that, Anne?

JAMES
I’m saying that I’d like to do a ballad about your father’s
victory.

CONN
Maybe you could have it this night week, James?  ANNE Will it be
a poem or a ballad, James?

  *Anne goes to him*.

CONN If you had it this night week, we could bring the boys to the place.  What do you say to that, Maire?  We’ll bring the boys here this night week to hear James Moynihan’s ballad.

MAIRE
I was thinking of the Feis at Ardagh.

CONN
The Feis at Ardagh?

MAIRE
Maybe you’ll be going to it this night week.

CONN
Sure you’re not joking with me, Maire?

MAIRE
No.

  *She rises*.

CONN
God forgive me, Maire, if I vexed you.

  *Maire goes up to Conn’s room*.

CONN
Anne, jewel, had Maire anything to say about Ardagh?

ANNE
We weren’t talking about that at all.

JAMES
Play me a rouse on the fiddle and maybe the ballad will come
into my head.

  *Maire comes down, a fiddle in her hands*.

MAIRE
Here’s the fiddle that was your favourite, the Granard fiddle.

CONN
And this is the fiddle I’ll bring with me to Ardagh.

ANNE
And is he going to Ardagh?

JAMES
And what about the ballad, Mister Hourican?

CONN
I leave it all to Maire now.  How well she bethought of the
Granard fiddle.

MAIRE
Father, we were always together.

  *She hands him the fiddle.  Conn, Maire, James, Anne, are at table*.

**CURTAIN**

*ACT III*

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*A week later:  The scene is as in previous Acts.  The table is near entrance.  It is laid for a meal.  The time is near sunset.  Conn Hourican, Maire Hourican, and James Moynihan are seated at table.  Maire Hourican rises.  She goes to entrance and remains looking out.  Conn and James go on eating*.

CONN However it is, I could never play my best in this place.  The houses are too scattered, I often think.  And it doesn’t do for the fiddler to remain too long in the one place.  The people get too used to him.  Virgil made better songs than any man, but if Virgil was sung in the fairs constant, divil much heed would be given to his songs.

JAMES
Now, I often thought of that.

CONN
Another thing, James Moynihan, Ribbonism and the Land League
ruined the country.

  *Maire goes out*.

JAMES
But sure we must be doing something for the Cause.

CONN
They were all Fenians here when I came into this country first,
over twenty years ago.

  *He rises and goes into room*.

JAMES Well, he’s a great man, Conn Hourican. *(James rises and goes to fire.  Conn comes out of room, carrying a greatcoat)* How do you think you’ll do at Ardagh?

CONN
I think I’ll do very well at Ardagh, James.

  *He leaves coat on settle*.

JAMES
Everything’s ready for the start.

CONN
Ay, and it’s near time for going.  I’m playing very well lately,
James.  It’s the thought of being before people who’ll know music.  If
I was staying in this place any longer, James, I’d put my fiddle in
the thatch, and leave it there for the birds to pick holes in.

JAMES
But won’t you be back here after the Feis at Ardagh?

CONN
Well, I will, for a while anyway.

JAMES And would you be going off again after a while?

CONN I’m thinking that when my daughters are settled I’ll have the years before me.  I was reared in a place south of this, and I’d like to go back there for a while.

JAMES
But wouldn’t you come back to us?

CONN There’s many’s the place in Ireland that I never saw, town and countryside. *(He takes the greatcoat off settle and puts it on him)* Tell me, James Moynihan, is your father satisfied with the settlement that Maire’s making for yourself and Anne?

JAMES
My father is very well satisfied.

CONN *(going towards his room)* And so he ought to be, James Moynihan.

  *Goes into his room*.

JAMES
My father had always a great liking for Anne. *(Anne comes out
of the other room.  James Moynihan goes to her)* May you never think,
Anne, that you made the bad choice when you took James Moynihan.

  *They sit on settle*.

ANNE
Sure I was never fond of any one but yourself.

JAMES
And I never cared for any one after I saw you.

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ANNE
I used to hear that you were fond of another girl.

JAMES
I was fond of the girl that used to be in the newspaper shop
in the town.

ANNE
And used you to talk with her?

JAMES The elbows were worn out of my coat with leaning on the counter to talk with her.  But she married a policeman after that.  He was a friend of mine, too.  It was me that got him the words and music for “I’ll hang my harp on a willow tree”—­a song that he was always looking for.

ANNE
Did you make any songs about the girl?

JAMES
I did not.

ANNE
Oh, James, I’m glad of that.  I’m glad you made no songs about her.

JAMES
Are you content to marry me in the town of Ardagh, after the
Feis, as Maire wishes?

ANNE
It will be strange to be married in Ardagh, away from the
people I know.

JAMES
It will be lucky getting married after the Feis.

ANNE
James, it’s a great trial for a girl to face marriage; but,
James, I’m very fond of you.

  *James kisses her*.

JAMES
I don’t know what to think of them writers who say that the
Irish girls haven’t the heart for love.

ANNE
Is Maire outside?

JAMES
She went out.

ANNE
It’s a wonder that Brian MacConnell isn’t here before this.

  *Anne rises.  Maire comes in*.

ANNE
Is there no one coming here?

MAIRE
There is no one on the road.

ANNE
Brian MacConnell is late in coming.

  *Maire comes up to the fire.  Anne stands with her.  James goes to
  entrance, and remains looking out*.

MAIRE
I saw Brian yesterday.

ANNE
And did you tell him that you were going at the sunset?

MAIRE
I told him we were going in the evening.

ANNE
Maybe you were distant with Brian?

MAIRE
He looked like a man that something had happened to.  Connor
Gilpatrick came up, and then I went away.

  *Conn Hourican comes out of room.  He has left the greatcoat in room.
  He brings the fiddle with him.  Maire and Anne go to the settle.  They
  talk.*

JAMES *(to Conn)* What would you think of a row of trees planted before the door?

  *Conn leaves fiddle on dresser, and comes to him*.

CONN
They might be very becoming, James.

JAMES
My father was saying that the front looked very bare.

CONN
A row of trees, when they’d grow, would make a great difference.

JAMES
That’s what my father was saying.

  *They talk, Conn leaning on the half-door.*

ANNE
I’m glad to be here.  It would be very strange for me to be
married, and in another house.

MAIRE
I was thinking, Anne, that father and myself ought to stay a
while on the road, till you and James get settled here.

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ANNE Listen, Maire.  James says that he’ll be giving this place back to you after a while.  With this start he’ll be able to get a house and land near his father’s place.  He has fine schemes for making this place prosperous.  James, come here. *(James turns from door)* Come here, James, and talk with Maire.

  *James comes to girls, leaving Conn looking out.  Maire rises.*

JAMES
I’ll make a path down to the road, and, with a row of trees
before the door, the place will be well worth looking at.

MAIRE
We won’t know the place after a while.

JAMES
We can never forget, Maire, that it is to you that we owe the
place and the start in life.

MAIRE
I never looked on the place as my own.

JAMES
And now that the land is in Anne’s name, my father will be
glad to stock the place.

MAIRE
You have all our will of the place.  Father, speak to James and
tell him that he has your will of the place.

CONN *(turning from door)* Indeed you have, James, and we’re overglad to have Anne settled with a steady boy.

JAMES
Well, long life to you, Conn; and may the man of art never
want fame nor a friend.

CONN *(going to dresser)* Drink to that, James.

  *He takes up a bottle and fills two glasses*.

JAMES
I never touch anything, Conn; but if Anne won’t think bad of me,
I’ll drink to your prosperity.

ANNE
I won’t be watching you at all. *(She goes to door.  To Maire)*
I’m going down the road, and if there’s any one coming here, I’ll
let you know.

  *Anne goes out.  James takes the glass from Conn*.

JAMES Here’s to the fiddler, first of all.  May it be again like in the days of Ireland’s glory, when the men of art had their rights and their dues.

  *He drinks*.

CONN Long life to yourself, James Moynihan. *(Conn drinks)* I know you a long time now, and I know nothing to your discredit.  You’re one of the few people here that are to my liking.  Well, if I’m nothing to them, they’re nothing to me.  I lived my own life, and I had the gift.

JAMES *(with excitement)* If Anne was here, I’d drink to her.  I must go after Anne.  May she never repent of her choice. *(He goes to the door, then turns round)* But sure I’m forgetting the jewel of them all, yourself, Maire Hourican.  Long may you reign in splendour and success, and in the wish of your heart.

  *James Moynihan goes out.  Conn Hourican goes back to the door, and
  remains looking out.  Maire stands at fire*.

CONN It’s strange to be looking across that door, and the sun setting for our journey.  And now we’re letting the place go out of our hands.  Well, Honor Gilroy’s bit of land has been brought to a great many people.

  *He comes down to dresser.  Maire goes up to window, and remains
  looking out*.

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CONN
Is there any one coming here, Maire?

MAIRE
There is no one coming.  It’s no wonder James’s father thought
the place was bare-looking.

CONN
Well, the bit of land is going to James, and I was saying that
it has been brought to a great many people.

  *Maire takes paper out, and looks at it*.

CONN
What paper is that, Maire?

MAIRE It’s a paper that I have to put my name to. *(She goes and sits at table)* There’s a pen and ink near your hand on the dresser, and you might give them to me.  It’s about giving this place to Anne, and James’s father wants my name on the paper.

CONN Well, isn’t James’s father the councillor, with his paper and his signing? *(He brings pen and ink from dresser, and leaves them on table.  Maire makes preparations for writing.  Conn lights candle at fire, and brings it over to table)* And does that give the place to Anne for ever?

MAIRE It gives it to herself. *(Maire signs the paper with the slowness of one unaccustomed to writing)* It will be a great change for us when we come back to this place.

CONN *(going to chair at fire)* It will be a great change for you and me, no matter what we say.

MAIRE
And now that James’s father is putting stock on the land, the
Moynihans will have great call to the place.

CONN
Maire, your father is thinking of taking to the road.

MAIRE
And how long would you be staying on the roads?

CONN
Ah, what is there to bring me back to this country, Maire?

MAIRE
Sure you’re not thinking of going on the roads altogether?

CONN
The road for the fiddler.

MAIRE
Would you leave the shelter and the settled life?  Would you go
on the road by yourself?

CONN
Anne and yourself will be settled, and I’ll have the years before me.

MAIRE
Then you’d go on the roads by yourself?

CONN
Sure I did it before, Maire.

MAIRE Ah, but do you not remember the prayers that mother used to say for us to get some shelter?  Do you not remember how proud and glad we were when we come by a place of our own?

CONN
The shelter was for Anne and yourself.  What had I to do with it?

MAIRE
The Moynihans are not the sort to make us feel strangers in
the place.

CONN
The place was your own, Maire, and you gave it to your sister
rather than see her waiting years and years.

MAIRE
I came to give it to her after I saw how hard I was on yourself.

CONN Listen, my jewel, even if the Moynihans had nothing to do with the place, what would Conn Hourican the fiddler be doing in this country?

MAIRE
Ah, there are many you might play to; there are lots that know
about music.  There’s Michael Gilpatrick and John Molloy—­

CONN
And that’s all, Maire.  MAIRE You might go to Flynn’s an odd time.

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CONN And what do they know about music in Flynn’s?  Young Corney Myles was up there a while ago, and you’d think, from what the men said, that there was never the like of Corney for playing, and the boy isn’t three years at the fiddle,

MAIRE
Father, stay here where the shelter is.

CONN Sure, I’d be getting ould, and staying in the chimney-corner, with no one to talk to me, for you’d be going to a place of your own, and Anne? after a while, would have too much to mind.

MAIRE
The people here are kinder than you think.

CONN
But what has Conn Hourican to do with them anyhow?  The very
greatest were glad of my playing, and were proud to know me.

MAIRE
I know that, father.

CONN
Well, one is always meeting new life upon the roads, and I want
to spend the years I have before me going from place to place.

MAIRE *(going to him)* If you took to the roads, I’d think I ought to go with you, for we were always together.

CONN
Ah, Maire, there are some that would keep you here.

MAIRE
Do you know who would keep me here?

CONN
Brian MacConnell is very fond of you.

MAIRE
Do you know that, father?

CONN
And I know that you are fond of Brian. *(There is no answer)*
That my jewel may have luck and prosperity. *(Goes towards room door,
leaving Maire standing there)* I’ll be taking this fiddle, Maire.

MAIRE
Oh, are we going on the roads?

CONN
To Ardagh, Maire.

MAIRE
To Ardagh.

CONN
I’ll go up now, and make ready.

  *He takes candle off table, and goes back towards room door.*

MAIRE
Oh, what do I know about Brian MacConnell, after all?

CONN
Brian is wild, but he is free-handed.

MAIRE
Wild and free-handed!  Are all men like that?  Wild and
free-handed!  But that’s not the sort of man I want to look to now.

CONN That’s nothing to Brian’s discredit.  MAIRE Ah, what do I know about Brian MacConnell, except that he’s a man of quarrels and broken words?

  *Conn holds up his hand warningly.  Brian MacConnell comes to door*.

CONN *(opening half-door)* You’re welcome, Brian.

BRIAN
Thank you for the good word, Conn.

  *He comes in*.

MAIRE
You’re welcome, Brian MacConnell.

CONN *(taking candle off dresser)* I was going up to the room to make ready, but Maire will be glad to speak to you.  I knew you wouldn’t let us go without wishing us the luck of the road.

  *Goes up to room.  Maire goes and sits on settle*.

MAIRE
Brian MacConnell has come to us again.

BRIAN
I’m before you again.  Let me tell you what I was doing since I
was here last.

MAIRE
What were you doing, Brian?  Making quarrels, may be?

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BRIAN *(startled)* Why do you say that?

MAIRE
I’m thinking that you were doing what would become you, Brian
MacConnell, with the free hand and the wild heart.

BRIAN
They were telling you about me?

MAIRE
I know you, Brian MacConnell.

BRIAN You don’t know how I care for you, or you couldn’t talk to me like that.  Many’s the time I left the spade in the ground, and went across the bogs and the rushes, to think of you.  You come between me and the work I’d be doing.  Ay, and if Heaven opened out before me, you would come between me and Heaven itself.

MAIRE
It’s easy taking a girl’s heart.

BRIAN
And I long to have more than walls and a roof to offer you.
I’d have jewels and gold for you.  I’d have ships on the sea for you.

MAIRE
It’s easy to take a girl’s heart with the words of a song.

BRIAN
I’m building a house for you, Maire.  I’m raising it day by day.

MAIRE
You left me long by myself.

BRIAN
It’s often I came to see the light in the window.

MAIRE
Brian, my father wants to go back to the roads.

  *Brian goes and sits by her*.

BRIAN
I know that Conn would like to go back.

MAIRE
He wants to go on the roads, to go by himself from place to
place.

BRIAN
Maybe he has the right to go.

MAIRE
He has the right to go.  It’s the life of a fiddler to be on
the roads.

BRIAN
But you won’t go on the roads.

MAIRE
Oh, what am I to do, Brian?

BRIAN
Do you think of me at all, Maire?

MAIRE
Indeed I think of you.  Until to-day I’d neither laugh nor cry
but on account of you.

BRIAN
I’m building a house, and it will be white and fine, and it’s
for you that I’m building the house.

MAIRE
You’re going to ask for my promise.

BRIAN
Give me your promise before you go to Ardagh.

  *Maire rises*.

MAIRE
If I gave you my promise now, I’d have great delight in coming
back to this place again.

BRIAN
You won’t deny me, my jewel of love?

MAIRE
Oh, I’m very fond of Aughnalee.  I feel that I was reared in
the place.  I’d like to live all my life in the place.

BRIAN
And why would you go from it?  MAIRE You might come with us to
Ardagh, Brian.

BRIAN
Your father might stay with us when he’d be in this country.

MAIRE
That’s true; I’m glad to think on that.

BRIAN
Give me your promise, Maire.

MAIRE
We’ll talk on the road.  There’s the blackbird.  I’ll hear him
every evening on the road, and I’ll think I’m a day nearer home.

BRIAN
Sure you’d leave them all to come with me.

MAIRE Ay, I think I would. *(She takes up a new kerchief, and puts it on her, standing before the mirror)* Do you know where I saw you first, Brian?

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BRIAN
Where was it, Maire?

MAIRE
In a field by the road.  You were breaking a horse.

BRIAN
I was always a good hand with a horse.

MAIRE
The poor beast was covered with foam and sweat, and at last
you made it still.  I thought it was grand then.

  *She sings*.

  I know where I’m going,
  I know who’s going with me,
  I know who I love,
  But the dear knows who I’ll marry.

Are your brothers with you, Brian?

BRIAN
Is it building with me?

MAIRE
Building with you?

  *She sings*.

  Some say he’s dark,
  I say he’s bonny.
  He’s the flower of the flock,
  My charming, coaxing Johnny.

BRIAN *(with sombre passion)* No.  My brothers are not with me.  I quarrelled with them all and I am nearly heart broken for what I did.

MAIRE
Ah, Brian MacConnell, I don’t know what to say to you at all.

BRIAN
You’ll give me your promise, Maire?

MAIRE
Promise.  I’ve no promise to give to any man.

BRIAN
Remember that these days past I had only yourself to think on.

MAIRE
There was never a man but failed me some time.  They all leave
me to face the world alone.

BRIAN
You said that I might go with you as far as Ardagh.

MAIRE
No.  You’re not to come.  Myself and my father go to Ardagh by
ourselves.

BRIAN
How was I to know that you would take that quarrel to heart?

MAIRE I thought you were strong, but I see now that you are only a man who forces himself to harsh behaviour.  I have my own way to go; my father wants to go back to the roads, and it’s right that I should be with him, to watch over him.

BRIAN
What shelter will you have on the road?

MAIRE
I’ll have the quiet of evening, and my own thoughts, and I’ll
follow the music; I’ll laugh and hold up my head again.

BRIAN
Maire Hourican, would you leave me?

MAIRE
What can I do for you, Brian MacConnell?

  *Brian goes to settle, and puts his hands before his eyes.  She goes
  to him*.

BRIAN
You have thought for your father, and you have no thought for me.

MAIRE
Indeed I have thought for you.

BRIAN
O Maire, my jewel, do you care for me at all?

  *She kisses him*.

BRIAN
Maire!

  *She rises*.

MAIRE
I’m going to call my father.

BRIAN
You go to him, and you go from me.

MAIRE
You are both my care:  my father and yourself.

BRIAN
What will become of me when you go?

MAIRE Isn’t it right, Brian, that I should be with my father on the roads?  Even if I was in your house, I would be thinking that I should watch over him.

BRIAN
Then it’s good-bye you’d be saying?

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MAIRE
Good-bye, Brian MacConnell.

BRIAN *(at door)* Good-bye, Maire Hourican; gold and jewels, ships on the sea, may you have them all.

*He goes out.  With a cry Maire follows him to the door.  She stands before door for a minute, then she goes back to table, and throwing herself down, remains with her head buried in her hands.  James Moynihan comes in.  Maire raises her head, and remains looking before her.  James comes to table, and puts flowers beside Maire*.

JAMES We gathered them for you, Maire.  They’re the woodbine.  We were saying that you would be glad of the flower of the road. *(Maire puts her hand on the flowers.  James goes to the fire)* Anne remembers a good deal about the road.  She minds of the grassy ditches, where the two of you used to catch the young birds.

MAIRE
I mind of them too.

JAMES
And the women that used to be with your mother, that used to
tell you the stories.

MAIRE And the things we used to talk about after a story!  There’s the turn of the road, and who’s waiting for you?  If it’s your sweetheart, what will you say to him?

JAMES I’m often taken with the thought of the road!  Going to the fair on a bright morning, I’d often wish to leave everything aside and follow the road.

  *A fiddle is heard outside.  Conn Hourican comes down, dressed for
  the road.  He has on the greatcoat.  He carries fiddle.  He puts fiddle
  on dresser*.

CONN
What music is that, James?

JAMES
Some of the boys are coming to meet you, and they have a
fiddle with them.

CONN
Well, now, that’s friendly of the boys.

JAMES I’ll go out now, and let them know that you’re coming. *(He goes to door)* Brian MacConnell turned the other way, and Anne went after him.

  *He goes out*.

CONN *(anxiously)* Why did Brian MacConnell go away?

MAIRE
We didn’t agree; no, not after all you said.

CONN
Maybe we’ll see Brian at Ardagh.

MAIRE
How would he ever come back when I bid him go from me?

CONN You bid Brian go from you! *(He goes to the window)* And there was myself that had the mind to go on the road that I see stretched out before me.

MAIRE *(going to him)* You need never come back here.

CONN
I’ll come back with yourself.

MAIRE I remember the time when we were on the roads.  I remember sights we used to see!  Little towns here, and big towns far away, and always the road.

CONN
And the lasting kindness of the road!

MAIRE
There is no need for you to come back here, father.

CONN
And would you follow the road?

MAIRE Go back to the fiddler’s life, and I’ll go back with you.  Well see Anne and James at Ardagh, and we’ll be at their marriage. *(She turns round as though to take farewell of the house)* It’s right that this place should go to Anne.  The house wasn’t for you, and it wasn’t for me either, I begin to think.

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  *Anne comes in*.

ANNE *(with a cry)* Maire, you are going on the roads!

MAIRE
How do you know that?

ANNE
You bid Brian MacConnell go from you, and where else would you
go but on the roads?

  *She goes to the settle and throws herself down, her hands before
  her face.  Maire puts cloak on.  Conn goes to Anne.  He takes her hands
  from her face and holds them*.

CONN Don’t be grieving that we’re going from you, Anne.  When you come back here again, your own care will begin.  I know that you grieve for Maire going from you, and my own heart is unquiet for her. *(He goes to dresser, takes fiddle and wraps it up.  He puts hat on.  Maire goes to settle, and sits beside Anne)* Well, here’s Conn Hourican the fiddler going on his travels again.  No man knows how his own life will end; but them who have the gift have to follow the gift.  I’m leaving this house behind me; and maybe the time will come when I’ll be climbing the hills and seeing this little house with the tears in my eyes.  I’m leaving the land behind me, too; but what’s land after all against the music that comes from the far, strange places, when the night is on the ground, and the bird in the grass is quiet?

  *The fiddle is heard again.  Conn Hourican goes to door.  Maire
  embraces Anne again, rises and goes to door.  Anne follows slowly.
  Conn goes out.  Maire turns to Anne*.

MAIRE Tell Brian MacConnell that when we meet again maybe we can be kinder to each other.

  *Maire Hourican goes out with Conn.  Anne is left standing at the
  door in the dusk*.

*END OF PLAY*

THE FIDDLER’S HOUSE was first produced on 21st March, 1907, by the Theatre of Ireland, in the Rotunda, Dublin, with the following cast:  —­

CONN HOURICAN Joseph Goggin
MAIRE HOURICAN Maire MacShiubhlaigh
ANNE HOURICAN Eileen O’Doherty
BRIAN MACCONNELL Ed. Keegan
JAMES MOYNIHAN P. MacShiubhlaigh.

*THE LAND:  AN AGRARIAN COMEDY IN THREE ACTS*

**CHARACTERS**

MURTAGH COSGAR, a farmer
MATT, his son
SALLY, his daughter
MARTIN DOURAS, a farmer
CORNELIUS, his son
ELLEN, his daughter
A group of men,
A group of boys and girls.

The scene is laid in the Irish Midlands, present time.

*ACT I*

*The interior of Murtagh Cosgar’s.  It is a large flagged kitchen with the entrance on the right.  The dresser is below the entrance.  There is a large fireplace in the back, and a room door to the left of the fireplace; the harness-rack is between room door and fireplace.  The yard door is on the left.  The table is down from the room door.  There are benches around fireplace*.

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*It is the afternoon of a May day.  Sally Cosgar is kneeling, near the entrance chopping up cabbage-leaves with a kitchen-knife.  She is a girl of twenty-five, dark, heavily built, with the expression of a half-awakened creature.  She is coarsely dressed, and has a sacking apron.  She is quick at work, and rapid and impetuous in speech.  She is talking to herself*.

SALLY Oh, you may go on grunting, yourself and your litter, it won’t put me a bit past my own time.  You oul’ black baste of a sow, sure I’m slaving to you all the spring.  We’ll be getting rid of yourself and your litter soon enough, and may the devil get you when we lose you.

  *Cornelius comes to the door.  He is a tall young man with a slight
  stoop.  His manners are solemn, and his expression somewhat vacant*.

CORNELIUS
Good morrow, Sally.  May you have the good of the day. *(He comes in)*

SALLY *(impetuously)* Ah, God reward you, Cornelius Douras, for coming in.  I’m that busy keeping food to a sow and a litter of pigs that I couldn’t get beyond the gate to see any one.

CORNELIUS *(solemnly)* You’re a good girl, Sally.  You’re not like some I know.  There are girls in this parish who never put hands to a thing till evening, when the boys do be coming in.  Then they begin to stir themselves the way they’ll be thought busy and good about a house.

SALLY *(pleased and beginning to chop again with renewed energy)* Oh, it’s true indeed for you, Cornelius.  There are girls that be decking themselves, and sporting are themselves all day.

CORNELIUS
I may say that I come over to your father’s, Murtagh
Cosgar’s house, this morning, thinking to meet the men.

SALLY
What men, Cornelius Douras?

CORNELIUS Them that are going to meet the landlord’s people with an offer for the land.  We’re not buying ourselves, unfortunately, but this is a great day—­the day of the redemption, my father calls it—­and I’d like to have some hand in the work if it was only to say a few words to the men.

SALLY
It’s a wonder Martin, your father isn’t on the one errand with
you.

CORNELIUS We came out together, but the priest stopped father and us on the road.  Father Bartley wanted his advice, I suppose.  Ah, it’s a pity the men won’t have some one like my father with them!  He was in gaol for the Cause.  Besides, he’s a well-discoursed man, and a reading man, and, moreover, a man with a classical knowledge of English, Latin, and the Hibernian vernacular.

  *Martin Douras comes in.  He is a man of about sixty, with a refined,
  scholarly look.  His manner is subdued and nervous.  He has a stoop,
  and is clean-shaven.*

CORNELIUS
I was just telling Sally here what a great day it is,
father.

MARTIN DOURAS
Ay, it’s a great day, no matter what our own troubles
may be.  I should be going home again. *(He takes a newspaper out of
his pocket, and leaves it on the table)*

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CORNELIUS
Wait for the men, father.

MARTIN DOURAS
Maybe they’ll be here soon.  Is Murtagh in, Sally?

  *Cornelius takes the paper up, and begins to read it*.

SALLY
He’s down at the bottoms, Martin.

MARTIN DOURAS
He’s going to Arvach Fair, maybe.

SALLY
He is in troth.

MARTIN DOURAS
I’ll be asking him for a lift.  He’ll be going to the
Fair when he come back from the lawyer’s, I suppose?
Ay, he’ll be going to-night. *(She gathers the chopped cabbage
into her apron, and goes to the door)*

SALLY *(at the door)* Cornelius.

  *Cornelius puts down the paper, and goes to the door.  Sally goes out*.

MARTIN DOURAS
Cornelius!

  *Cornelius goes to Martin*.

SALLY *(outside)* Cornelius, give me a hand with this.

  *Cornelius turns again*.

MARTIN DOURAS
Cornelius, I want to speak to you.

  *Cornelius goes to him*.

MARTIN DOURAS
There is something on my mind, Cornelius.

CORNELIUS
What is it, father?

MARTIN DOURAS
It’s about our Ellen.  Father Bartley gave me news for her.
“I’ve heard of a school that’ll suit Ellen,” says he.  “It’s in
the County Leitrim.”

CORNELIUS If it was in Dublin itself, Ellen is qualified to take it on.  And won’t it be grand to have one of our family teaching in a school?

MARTIN DOURAS *(with a sigh)* I wouldn’t stand in her way, Cornelius; I wouldn’t stand in her way.  But won’t it be a poor thing for an old man like me to have no one to discourse with in the long evenings?  For when I’m talking with you, Cornelius, I feel like a boy who lends back all the marbles he’s won, and plays again, just for the sake of the game.

CORNELIUS We were in dread of Ellen going to America at one time, and then she went in for the school.  Now Matt Cosgar may keep her from the school.  Maybe we won’t have to go further than this house to see Ellen.

MARTIN DOURAS
I’m hoping it’ll be like that; but I’m in dread that
Murtagh Cosgar will never agree to it.  He’s a hard man to deal with.
Still Murtagh and myself will be on the long road to-night, and we
might talk of it.  I’m afeard of Ellen going.

CORNELIUS *(at the door)* It’s herself that’s coming here, father.

MARTIN DOURAS
Maybe she has heard the news and is coming to tell us.

  *Ellen comes in.  She has a shawl over her head which she lays aside.
  She is about twenty-five, slightly built, nervous, emotional*.

ELLEN
Is it only ourselves that’s here?

MARTIN DOURAS
Only ourselves.  Did you get any news to bring you over, Ellen?

ELLEN
No news.  It was the shine of the day that brought me out; and
I was thinking, too, of the girls that are going to America in the
morning, and that made me restless.

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  *Martin and Cornelius look significantly at each other*.

MARTIN DOURAS
And did you see Matt, Ellen?

ELLEN He was in the field and I coming up; but I did not wait for him, as I don’t want people to see us together. *(Restlessly)* I don’t know how I can come into this house, for it’s always like Murtagh Cosgar.  There’s nothing of Matt in it at all.  If Matt would come away.  There are little labourers’ houses by the side of the road.  Many’s the farmer’s son became a labourer for the sake of a woman he cared for!

CORNELIUS
And are you not thinking about the school at all, Ellen?

ELLEN
I’ll hear about it some time, I suppose.

MARTIN DOURAS You’re right to take it that way, Ellen.  School doesn’t mean scholarship now.  Many’s the time I’m telling Cornelius that a man farming the land, with a few books on his shelf and a few books in his head, has more of the scholar’s life about him than the young fellows who do be teaching in schools and teaching in colleges.

CORNELIUS That’s all very well, father.  School and scholarship isn’t the one.  But think of the word “Constantinople!” I could leave off herding and digging every time I think on that word!

MARTIN DOURAS
Ah, it’s a great word.  A word like that would make you
think for days.  And there are many words like that.

ELLEN
It’s not so much the long words that we’ve to learn and teach
now.  When will you be home, father?  Will Cornelius be with you?

MARTIN DOURAS
Ellen, I have news for you.  There is a school in
Leitrim that Father Bartley can let you have.

ELLEN
In Leitrim!  Did you tell Matt about it?

MARTIN DOURAS
I did not.

  *Sally is heard calling “Cornelius.”  Cornelius goes to the door.*

CORNELIUS
Here’s Matt now.  The benefit of the day to you, Matt.

*He stands aside to let Matt enter.  Matt Cosgar is a young peasant of about twenty-eight.  He is handsome and well-built.  He is dressed in a trousers, shirt, and coat, and has a felt hat on.  Cornelius goes out.*

MATT *(going to Ellen)* You’re welcome, Ellen.  Good morrow, Martin.
It’s a great day for the purchase, Martin.

MARTIN DOURAS
A great day, indeed, thank God.

MATT
Ah, it’s a great thing to feel the ownership of the land, Martin.

MARTIN DOURAS
I don’t doubt but it is.

MATT
Look at the young apple-trees, Ellen.  Walking up this morning,
I felt as glad of them as a young man would be glad of the
sweetheart he saw coming towards him.

ELLEN
Ay, there’s great gladness and shine in the day.

MATT
It seems to trouble you.

ELLEN
It does trouble me.

MATT
Why?

ELLEN
Everything seems to be saying, “There’s something here,
there’s something going.”

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MATT
Ay, a day like this often makes you feel that way.  It’s a great
day for the purchase though.  How many years ought we to offer, Ellen?

  *Martin goes out*.

ELLEN
Twenty years, I suppose—–­*(suddenly)* Matt!

MATT
What is it, Ellen?

ELLEN
I have got an offer of a school in the County Leitrim.

MATT
I wish they’d wait, Ellen.  I wish they’d wait till I had
something to offer you.

ELLEN
I’m a long time waiting here, Matt.

MATT
Sure we’re both young.

ELLEN
This is summer now.  There will be autumn in a month or two.
The year will have gone by without bringing me anything.

MATT
He’ll be letting me have my own way soon, my father will.

ELLEN
Murtagh Cosgar never let a child of his have their own way.

MATT
When the land’s bought out, he’ll be easier to deal with.

ELLEN
When he owns the land, he’ll never let a son of his marry a
girl without land or fortune.

MATT Ellen, Ellen, I’d lose house and land for you.  Sure you know that, Ellen.  My brothers and sisters took their freedom.  They went from this house and away to the ends of the world.  Maybe I don’t differ from them so much.  But I’ve put my work into the land, and I’m beginning to know the land.  I won’t lose it, Ellen.  Neither will I lose you.

ELLEN
O Matt, what’s the land after all?  Do you ever think of America?
The streets, the shops, the throngs?

MATT
The land is better than that when you come to know it, Ellen.

ELLEN
May be it is.

MATT
I’ve set my heart on a new house.  Ay and he’ll build one for us
when he knows my mind.

ELLEN Do you think he’d build a new house for us, Matt?  I could settle down if we were by ourselves.  Maybe it’s true that there are things stirring and we could begin a new life, even here.

MATT
We can, Ellen, we can.  Hush! father’s without.

*Martin Douras and Murtagh Cosgar are heard exchanging greetings.  Then Murtagh comes in, Martin behind him.  Murtagh Cosgar is about sixty.  He is a hard, strong man, seldom-spoken, but with a flow of words and some satirical power.  He is still powerful, mentally and physically.  He is clean shaven, and wears a sleeved waistcoat, heavy boots, fell hat.  He goes towards Ellen.*

MURTAGH Good morrow to you. *(Turning to Matt)* When I get speaking to that Sally again, she’ll remember what I say.  Giving cabbage to the pigs, and all the bad potatoes in the house.  And I had to get up in the clouds of the night to turn the cows out of the young meadow.  No thought, no care about me.  Let you take the harness outside and put a thong where there’s a strain in it.

  *Murtagh goes to the fire.  Matt goes to the harness-rack.  Martin
  Douras and Ellen are at the door.*

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MARTIN DOURAS
Ellen, I’ll have news for you when I see you again.
I’ve made up my mind to that.

ELLEN
Are you going to the fair, father?

MARTIN DOURAS
Ay, with Murtagh.

ELLEN
God be with you, father. *(She goes out)*

MARTIN DOURAS
What purchase are you thinking of offering, Murtagh?

MURTAGH COSGAR
Twenty years.

MARTIN DOURAS
It’s fair enough.  Oh, it’s a great day for the country,
no matter what our own troubles may be.

  *Matt has taken down the harness.  He takes some of it up and goes
  out to yard.*

MURTAGH COSGAR *(with some contempt)* It’s a pity you haven’t a share in the day after all.

MARTIN DOURAS
Ay, it’s a pity indeed.

  *Murtagh goes to the door.*

MURTAGH COSGAR *(with suppressed enthusiasm)* From this day out we’re planted in the soil.

MARTIN DOURAS
Ay, we’re planted in the soil.

MURTAGH COSGAR
God, it’s a great day.

  *Cornelius comes back.*

CORNELIUS This is a memorial occasion, Murtagh Cosgar, and I wish you the felicitations of it.  I met the delegates and I coming in, and I put myself at the head of them.  It’s the day of the redemption, Murtagh Cosgar.

  *Murtagh, without speaking, goes up to the room.*

CORNELIUS He’s gone up to get the papers.  Father, we must give the men understanding for this business.  They must demand the mineral rights.  Here they are.  Men of Ballykillduff, I greet your entrance.

  *Six men enter discussing.*

FIRST MAN We’ll leave it to Murtagh Cosgar.  Murtagh Cosgar isn’t a grazier or a shopkeeper.

SECOND MAN
It’s the graziers and shopkeepers that are putting a
business head on this.

THIRD MAN
If we’re all on the one offer, we can settle it at the
lawyer’s.

FOURTH MAN
Sure it’s settled for twenty years on the first-term rents.

FIFTH MAN
There are some here that would let it go as high as
twenty-three.

SIXTH MAN
What does Murtagh Cosgar say?

SOME OF THE MEN
Well take the word from him.

MARTIN DOURAS
He mentioned twenty years.

SECOND MAN
Not as a limit, surely?

OTHER MEN
We’re not for any higher offer.

SECOND MAN Well, men, this is all I have to say.  If you can get it for twenty, take it, and my blessing with it.  But I want to be dealing with the Government, and not with landlords and agents.  To have a straight bargain between myself and the Government, I’d put it up to twenty-three, ay, up to twenty-five years’ purchase.

THIRD MAN
More power to you, Councillor.  There’s some sense in that.

SIXTH MAN
I’m with the Councillor.

FIRST MAN
It’s all very well for graziers and shopkeepers to talk, but what
about the small farmer?

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FOURTH MAN
The small farmer.  That’s the man that goes under.

FIFTH MAN *(knocking at the table)* Murtagh Cosgar!  Murtagh Cosgar!

CORNELIUS
I tell you, men, that Murtagh Cosgar is in agreement with myself.
Twenty years, I say, first term, no more.  Let my father speak.

MARTIN DOURAS
There’s a great deal to be said on both sides, men.

FIRST MAN
Here’s Murtagh now.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Twenty years first term, that’s what I agreed to.

SECOND MAN
And if they don’t rise to that, Murtagh?

MURTAGH COSGAR Let them wait.  We can wait.  I won’t be going with you, men.  I had a few words with the agent about the turbary this morning, and maybe you’re better without me.

FIRST MAN
All right, Murtagh.  We can wait.

FOURTH MAN
We know our own power now.

FIFTH MAN
Come on, men.

MURTAGH COSGAR
If they don’t rise to it, bide a while.  We can make a new offer.

SECOND MAN
We want to be settled by the Fall.

THIRD MAN
The Councillor is right.  We must be settled by the Fall.

SIXTH MAN
A man who’s a farmer only has little sense for a business like this.

SECOND MAN
We’ll make the offer, Murtagh Cosgar, and bide a while.  But we must
be settled this side of the Fall.  We’ll offer twenty years first term.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Do, and God speed you.

CORNELIUS *(to the men going out)*
I told you Murtagh Cosgar and myself are on the one offer.  And
Murtagh is right again when he says that you can bide your time.  But
make sure of the mineral rights, men; make sure of the mineral rights.

  *The men go out; Cornelius follows them.*

MURTAGH COSGAR *(with irony)* Musha, but that’s a well-discoursed lad.  It must be great to hear the two of you at it.

MARTIN DOURAS
God be good to Cornelius.  There’s little of the world’s harm in the
boy.

MURTAGH COSGAR
He and my Sally would make a great match of it.  She’s a bright one,
too.

MARTIN DOURAS
Murtagh Cosgar, have you no feeling for your own flesh and blood?

MURTAGH COSGAR
Too much feeling, maybe. *(He stands at the door in silence.  With
sudden enthusiasm)* Ah, but that’s the sight to fill one’s heart.
Lands ploughed and spread.  And all our own; all our own.

MARTIN DOURAS
All our own, ay.  But we made a hard fight for them.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Ay.

MARTIN DOURAS
Them that come after us will never see them as we’re seeing them now.

MURTAGH COSGAR *(turning round)* Them that come after us.  Isn’t that a great thought, Martin Douras? and isn’t it a great thing that we’re able to pass this land on to them, and it redeemed for ever?  Ay, and their manhood spared the shame that our manhood knew.  Standing in the rain with our hats off to let a landlord—­ay, or a landlord’s dog-boy—­pass the way!

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MARTIN DOURAS *(mournfully)* May it be our own generation that will be in it.  Ay, but the young are going fast; the young are going fast.

MURTAGH COSGAR *(sternly)* Some of them are no loss.

MARTIN DOURAS
Ten of your own children went, Murtagh Cosgar.

MURTAGH COSGAR
I never think of them.  When they went from my control, they went
from me altogether.  There’s the more for Matt.

MARTIN DOURAS *(moistening his mouth, and beginning very nervously)* Ay, Matt.
Matt’s a good lad.

MURTAGH COSGAR
There’s little fear of him leaving now.

MARTIN DOURAS *(nervously)*
Maybe, maybe.  But, mind you, Murtagh Cosgar, there are
things—­little things, mind you.  Least, ways, what we call little
things.  And, after all, who are we to judge whether a thing—­

MURTAGH COSGAR
Is there anything on your mind, Martin Douras?

MARTIN DOURAS *(hurriedly)* No; oh, no.  I was thinking—­I was thinking, maybe you’d give me a lift towards Arvach, if you’d be going that way this night.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Ay, why not?

MARTIN DOURAS And we could talk about the land, and about Matt, too.  Wouldn’t it be a heart-break if any of our children went—­because of a thing we might—­

MURTAGH COSGAR *(fiercely)* What have you to say about Matt?

MARTIN DOURAS *(stammering)* Nothing except in a—­in what you might call a general way.  There’s many a young man left house and land for the sake of some woman, Murtagh Cosgar.

MURTAGH COSGAR
There’s many a fool did it.

MARTIN DOURAS *(going to door)* Ay, maybe; maybe.  I’ll be going now, Murtagh.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Stop! *(clutching him)* You know about Matt.  What woman is he
thinking of?

MARTIN DOURAS *(frightened)* We’ll talk about it again, Murtagh.  I said I’d be back.

MURTAGH COSGAR
We’ll talk about it now.  Who is she?  What name has she?

MARTIN DOURAS *(breaking from him and speaking with sudden dignity)* It’s a good name, Murtagh Cosgar; it’s my own name.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Your daughter!  Ellen!  You’re—­

MARTIN DOURAS
Ay, a good name, and a good girl.

MURTAGH COSGAR
And do you think a son of mine would marry a daughter of yours?

MARTIN DOURAS
What great difference is between us, after all?

MURTAGH COSGAR *(fiercely)* The daughter of a man who’d be sitting over his fire reading his paper, and the clouds above his potatoes, and the cows trampling his oats. *(Martin is beaten down)* Do you know me at all, Martin Douras?  I came out of a little house by the roadway and built my house on a hill.  I had many children.  Coming home in the long evenings, or kneeling still when the prayers would be over, I’d have my dreams.  A son in Aughnalee, a son in Ballybrian, a son in Dunmore, a son of mine with a shop, a son of mine saying Mass in Killnalee.  And I have a living name—­a name in flesh and blood.

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MARTIN DOURAS
God help you, Murtagh Cosgar.

MURTAGH COSGAR
But I’ve a son still.  It’s not your daughter he’ll be marrying. *(He strides to the door and calls Matt)*

MARTIN DOURAS *(going to him)* Murtagh Cosgar—­for God’s sake—­we’re both old men, Murtagh Cosgar.

MURTAGH COSGAR
You’ve read many stories, Martin Douras, and you know many endings.
You’ll see an ending now, and it will be a strong ending, and a
sudden ending.

  *Matt comes in*.

MURTAGH COSGAR
You’re wanted here.

MATT
I heard you call. *(He sits on table)* So they’re sticking to the
twenty years.

MARTIN DOURAS *(eagerly)* Twenty years, Matt, and they’ll get it for twenty.  O, it’s a great day for you both!  Father and son, you come into a single inheritance.  What the father wins the son wields.

MURTAGH COSGAR
What the father wins, the son wastes.

MATT
What’s the talk of father and son?

MARTIN DOURAS
They’re the one flesh and blood.  There’s no more strife between them
than between the right hand and the left hand.

MURTAGH COSGAR *(to Matt)* We were talking about you.  We were fixing a match for you.

MATT *(startled, looking at Martin Douras)* Fixing a match for me? *(He rises)*

MURTAGH COSGAR
Ay, Matt.  Don’t you think it’s time to be making a match for you?

MATT *(sullenly, going to the door)* Maybe it is.  When you have chosen the woman, call.  I’ll be without.

MURTAGH COSGAR *(going to him)* We haven’t chosen yet.  But it won’t be Martin Douras’ daughter, anyhow.

MATT Stop.  You drove all your living children away, except Sally and myself.  You think Sally and myself are the one sort.

MURTAGH COSGAR *(tauntingly)* Martin’s daughter, Corney’s sister.  That’s the girl for you!

MATT We’re not the one sort, I tell you.  Martin Douras, isn’t he a foolish old man that would drive all his children from him?  What would his twenty years’ purchase be to him then?

MURTAGH COSGAR It wasn’t for my children I worked.  No, no; thank God; it wasn’t for my children I worked.  Go, if you will.  I can be alone.

MARTIN DOURAS O Murtagh, Murtagh, sure you know you can’t be alone.  We’re two old men, Murtagh.

MURTAGH COSGAR
He daren’t go.

MATT
Because I’m the last of them he thinks he can dare me like that.

MURTAGH COSGAR
There was more of my blood in the others.

MATT
Do you say that?

MARTIN DOURAS
Don’t say it again.  For God’s sake, don’t say it again, Murtagh.

MURTAGH COSGAR
I do say it again.  Them who dared to go had more of my blood in them!

MATT
Ah, you have put me to it now, and I’m glad, glad.  A little house, a
bit of land.  Do you think they could keep me here?

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MURTAGH COSGAR *(to Martin Douras)* It’s his own way he wants.  I never had my own way. *(To Matt)* You’re my last son.  You’re too young to know the hardship there was in rearing you.

MATT *(exultantly)* Your last son; that won’t keep me here.  I’m the last of my name, but that won’t keep me here.  I leave you your lands, your twenty years’ purchase.  Murtagh Cosgar, Murtagh Cosgar! isn’t that a great name, Martin Douras—­a name that’s well planted, a name for generations?  Isn’t he a lucky man that has a name for generations? *(He goes out)*

MURTAGH COSGAR
He can’t go.  How could he go and he the last of the name.  Close the
door, I say.

MARTIN DOURAS
He’ll go to Ellen, surely.  We’ll lose both of them.  Murtagh Cosgar,
God comfort you and me.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Ellen; who’s Ellen?  Ay, that daughter of yours.  Close the door, I say.

  *He sits down at fireplace.  Martin Douras closes door and goes to
  him*.

**CURTAIN**

**ACT II**

*Interior of Martin Douras’.  The entrance is at back left.  There is a dresser against wall back; a table down from dresser; room doors right and left.  The fireplace is below the room door right; there are stools and chairs about it.  There is a little bookcase left of the dresser, and a mirror beside it.  There are patriotic and religious pictures on the wall.  There are cups and saucers on table, and a teapot beside fire.  It is afternoon still.  Ellen Douras is near the fire reading.  Cornelius comes in slowly*.

CORNELIUS I left the men down the road a bit.  We ought to take great pride out of this day, Ellen.  Father did more than any of them to bring it about.

ELLEN He suffered more than any of them.  And it’s little we’ll get out of the day.

CORNELIUS It’s a great thing to have prophesied it, even.  We’ll be here to see a great change.

ELLEN
There will be no change to make things better!

CORNELIUS
Will you be taking that school, Ellen?

ELLEN
I’ll wait a while.

  *Sally coming in; she is hurried*.

SALLY *(breathlessly)* Oh, God save you, Cornelius.  Tell me, is my father gone?  I dread going back and he there!  It was all over that baste of a sow that has kept me slaving all through the spring till I don’t know whether greens or potatoes is the fittest for her!

CORNELIUS
He didn’t go, Sally.  I went down a bit of the road myself with the men.

SALLY
Oh, God help me!  And I’ll have to be going back to boil meal
for her now.  How are you, Ellen. *(She goes to Ellen)*

ELLEN
Sit down for a while, Sally; it’s a long time since I was speaking
to you.

  *Sally sits down beside Ellen*.

CORNELIUS
I’ll leave this paper where they won’t be looking for pipe-lights.
There are things in that paper I’d like to be saying. *(He takes a
newspaper out of his pocket and goes to room right)*

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ELLEN *(to Sally, who has been watching Cornelius)* Tell me, Sally, are they always that busy in your house?  Is your father as harsh as they say?

SALLY
Father ’ud keep us all working.  He’s a powerful great man.

ELLEN
Matt will be bringing a wife into the house soon from all I hear.
How would your father treat her?

SALLY
Oh, he’d have his way, and she’d have her way, I suppose.

ELLEN
And do you think your father will let him marry?

SALLY
Sure he must if the boy likes.

ELLEN
What would he say if Matt married a girl without a fortune?

SALLY
In my mother’s country there are lots of girls with fortunes
that Matt could have.

ELLEN
Supposing he wanted a girl that had no fortune?

SALLY
Oh, I suppose father would give in in the end.  It wouldn’t be
clay against flint when Matt and father would be to it.

ELLEN
You’re a good girl, Sally.  If I was Matt’s wife, do you think
you’d be fond of me?

SALLY
I’d like you as well as another, Ellen.

  *Cornelius comes down from room*.

CORNELIUS
I suppose they’ll be here soon.

ELLEN
I have tea ready for them.

SALLY
Who’s coming at all?

CORNELIUS
Some of the boys and girls that are for America.  They are going
to Gilroy’s to-night, and are leaving from that in the morning.
They are coming in to see Ellen on their way down.

SALLY There are a good many going this flight.  The land never troubles them in America, and they can wear fine clothes, and be as free as the larks over the bogs.  It’s a wonder you never thought of going, Ellen.

ELLEN
Father wouldn’t like me to be far from him, and so I went in
for the school instead.

SALLY
And now you’ve got a fine boy like Matt.  It was lucky for you
to be staying here.

ELLEN
Hush, Sally.

SALLY
Oh, I knew all about it before you talked to me at all.  Matt
always goes to the place where he thinks you’d be.

ELLEN *(rising)* I’ll be in the room when the girls come, Cornelius.

  *She goes into room left*.

SALLY *(going to Cornelius)* God help us, but she’s the silent creature.  Isn’t it a wonder she’s not filled with talk of him after seeing him to-day?  But Ellen’s right.  We shouldn’t be talking about men, nor thinking about them either; and that’s the way to keep them on our hands on the long run.  I’ll be going myself.

  *She goes towards door*.

CORNELIUS *(going to her)* Don’t be minding Ellen at all, Sally.

SALLY Well, as high as she is, and as mighty as she is, she came into his own house to see Matt.  God between us and harm, Cornelius, maybe they’ll be saying I came into your house to see you.

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CORNELIUS
Who’ll know you came at all?  And what isn’t seen won’t be
spoken of.

SALLY
Would you like me to stay, Cornelius?

CORNELIUS
Ay, I would.

SALLY
Divil mind the sow,

  *They sit down together*.

SALLY *(after a pause)* Would you like me to knit you a pair of socks,
Cornelius?

CORNELIUS
Oh, I would, Sally; I’d love to wear them.

SALLY
I’ll knit them.  We’ll be getting rid of the sow tonight, maybe,
and I’ll have time after that.

CORNELIUS
And you come along the road when I’m herding.  I don’t want to be going
near your father’s house.

SALLY
O Cornelius, it won’t be lucky for us when father hears about
Ellen and Matt.

CORNELIUS
That’s true.  No man sees his house afire but looks to his rick.

SALLY Come down a bit of the road with me, Cornelius.  The sow will be grunting and grunting, reminding father that I’m away.  Och, a minute ago I was as contented as if there was no land or pigs, or harsh words to trouble one. *(She goes to the door)* The boys and girls for America are coming here.

CORNELIUS
Give me your hands to hold, Sally. *(She gives him her
hands)* We are as young as any of them after all.

  *They hold each other’s hands, then stand apart*.

SALLY
It’s a fine time for them to be going when the leaves are
opening on the trees.

  *Three boys and three girls enter.  They are dressed for going away*.

SALLY
God save you, girls.  Good-bye, Cornelius.  I’ll have to run
like a redshank.

  *Sally goes out*.

CORNELIUS I’ll call Ellen down to you. *(He goes to the room door and calls)* I’m going herding myself.  Herding is pleasant when you have thoughts with you.

  *He takes up the rod and goes out.  The girls begin whispering, then
  chattering*.

FIRST GIRL Sure I know.  Every night I’m dreaming of the sea and the great towns.  Streets and streets of houses and every street as crowded as the road outside the chapel when the people do be coming from Mass.  I could watch the crowd in the street; I would think it better than any sight I ever knew.

SECOND GIRL
And the shops and the great houses.

SECOND BOY
There’s no stir here.  There’s no fine clothes, nor fine
manners, nor fine things to be seen.

THIRD BOY
There’s no money.  One could never get a shilling together
here.  In America there’s money to have and to spend and to send home.

THIRD GIRL
Every girl gets married in America.

  *Ellen comes down*.

ELLEN
I’m glad you came.  I have tea ready for you.  I can’t go to
Gilroy’s to-night.

  *Some come to the table and some remain near the door*.

A GIRL *(at table, to Ellen)* They say that a peat fire like that will seem very strange to us after America.  Bridget wondered at it when she came back.  “Do civilized people really cook at the like of them?” said she.

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A BOY It’s the little houses with only three rooms in them that will seem strange.  I’m beginning to wonder myself at their thatch and their mud walls.

ANOTHER GIRL
Houses in bogs and fields.  It was a heart-break trying
to keep them as we’d like to keep them.  A GIRL *(at door)* Ah, but
I’ll never forget Gortan and the little road to Aughnalee.

ANOTHER GIRL
I think I’ll be lonesome for a long time.  I’ll be
thinking on my brothers and sisters.  I nursed and minded all the
little ones.

FIRST BOY
A girl like you, Ellen, is foolish to be staying here.

SECOND BOY
She’ll be coming in the fall.  We’ll be glad to see you,
Ellen.

ELLEN
I have no friends in America.

FIRST GIRL
I have no friends there, either.  But I’ll get on.  You
could get on better than any of us, Ellen.

SECOND GIRL
She’s waiting for her school.  It will be a little place
by the side of a bog.

THIRD GIRL *(going to Ellen)* There would be little change in that.  And isn’t it a life altogether different from this life that we have been longing for?  To be doing other work, and to be meeting strange people.  And instead of bare roads and market-towns, to be seeing streets, and crowds, and theaters.

ELLEN *(passionately)* O what do you know about streets and theaters?  You have only heard of them.  They are finer than anything you could say.  They are finer than anything you could think of, after a story, when you’d be A GIRL You’ll be going after all, Ellen.

ELLEN
I won’t be going.

FIRST GIRL
Well, maybe you’ll be down at Gilroy’s.  We must go now.

  *The girls go to the door.  Ellen goes with them*.

ONE OF THE BOYS
Phil said that an egg was all he could touch while
he was on the sea.

SECOND BOY
God help us, if that was all Phil could take.

THIRD BOY
Light your pipes now, and we’ll go.

  *Ellen has parted with the girls.  The boys light their pipes at fire.
  They go to door, and shake hands with Ellen.  The boys go out*.

ELLEN
Theaters!  What do they know of theaters?  And it’s their like
will be enjoying them.

  *Sally comes back.  She is more hurried than before*.

SALLY
Ellen!  Ellen!  I have wonders to tell.  Where is Cornelius, at
all?  He’s never here when you have wonders to tell.

ELLEN
What have you to tell?

SALLY Oh, I don’t know how I’ll get it all out!  Matt and father had an *odious* falling out, and it was about you.  And Matt’s going to America; and he’s to bring you with him.  And Cornelius was saying that if father found out about yourself and Matt—­

ELLEN
Sally, Sally, take breath and tell it.

SALLY
Matt is going to America, like the others, and he’s taking you
with him.

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ELLEN
Sally, Sally, is it the truth you’re telling?

SALLY
It is the truth.  Honest as day, it is the truth.

ELLEN And I thought I’d be content with a new house.  Now we can go away together.  I can see what I longed to see.  I have a chance of knowing what is in me. *(She takes Sally’s hands)* It’s great news you’ve brought me.  No one ever brought me such news before.  Take this little cross.  You won’t have a chance of getting fond of me after all. *(She wears a cross at her throat; she breaks the string, and gives it to Sally)*

SALLY I don’t know why I was so fervent to tell you.  There’s the stool before me that myself and Cornelius were sitting on, and he saying—­*(She goes to the door)* Here’s Matt!  Now we’ll hear all about it.

ELLEN So soon; so soon. *(She goes to the mirror.  After a pause, turning to Sally)* Go down the road a bit, when he comes in.  Sally, you have a simple mind; you might be saying a prayer that it will be for the best.

SALLY *(going to the door muttering)* Go down the road a bit!  ’Deed and I will not till I know the whole ins and outs of it.  Sure I’m as much concerned in it as herself!  “No man sees his house afire but watches his rick,” he was saying.  Ah, there’s few of them could think of as fine a thing as that.

  *Matt comes in.*

MATT
Well, Sally, were you home lately?

SALLY
I was—­leastways as far as the door.  Father and oul’ Martin were
discoursing.

MATT
I’ve given them something to discourse about.  Maybe you’ll be
treated better from this day.  Sally.

SALLY
O Matt, I’m sorry.

  *She goes out.*

MATT *(going to Ellen)* It happened at last, Ellen; the height of the quarrel came.

ELLEN
It was bound to come.  I knew it would come, Matt.

MATT
He was a foolish man to put shame on me after all I did for the land.

ELLEN
You had too much thought for the land.

MATT
I had in troth.  The others went when there was less to be done.  They
could not stand him.  Even the girls stole away.

ELLEN
There was the high spirit in the whole of you.

MATT
I showed it to him.  “Stop,” said I; “no more, or I fling lands
and house and everything aside.”

ELLEN
You said that.

MATT
Ay.  “Your other children went for less,” said I; “do you think
there’s no blood in me at all?”

ELLEN
What happened then?

MATT “I’m your last son,” I said; “keep your land and your twenty years’ purchase.  I’m with the others; and it’s poor your land will leave you, and you without a son to bring down your name.  A bit of land, a house,” said I; “do you think these will keep me here?”

ELLEN I knew they could not keep you here, Matt.  You have broken from them at last; and now the world is before us.  Think of all that is before us—­the sea, and the ships, the strange life, and the great cities.

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MATT
Ay—­there before us—­if we like.

ELLEN
Surely we like.

MATT
I was always shy of crowds.  I’m simple, after all, Ellen, and
have no thought beyond the land.

ELLEN
You said that house and land could not keep you.  You told him you
were going as your brothers went.

MATT
And I felt I was going.  I frightened him.  He’ll be glad to see me
back.  It will be long before he treats me that way again.

ELLEN *(suddenly)* Matt!

MATT
What is it, Ellen?

ELLEN
I don’t know—­I was upset—­thinking of the quarrel *(putting her
hands on his shoulders)* My poor Matt.  It was about me you quarrelled.

MATT
Ay, he spoke against you.  I couldn’t put up with that.

ELLEN
He does not know your high spirit.  He does not know your strength.

MATT
Ellen, it’s no shame for a man to have harsh words said to him when
it’s about a woman like you.

ELLEN Let nothing come between us now.  I saw you in the winter making drains and ditches, and it wet.  It’s a poor story, the life of a man on the land.

MATT
I had too much thought for the land.

ELLEN You had.  Have thought for me now.  There is no one in fair or market but would notice me.  I was never a favourite.  I lived to myself.  I did not give my love about.  You have never offered me anything.  In the song a man offers towns to his sweetheart.  You can offer me the sights of great towns, and the fine manners, and the fine life.

MATT
Ellen! *(He draws a little away)* It’s not me that could offer the
like of that.  I never had anything to my hand but a spade.

ELLEN
Your brothers—­think of them.

MATT
They all left some one behind them.  I am the last of my name.

ELLEN
Why should that keep you back?

MATT
His name is something to a man.  Could you hear of your own name
melting away without unease?  And you are a woman.  A man feels it more.

ELLEN
I do not understand men.  Will you go back to your father’s house
after he shaming you out of it?

MATT
He’ll be glad to see me back.  He’ll never cast it up to me that I
went.

ELLEN
Matt, your father said words against me.  Will you go to him and take
his hand after that?

MATT
It was little he said against you.  It was against your father he
spoke.

ELLEN *(sinking down on a chair, and putting hands before her face)*
My God!  After all my waiting, you talk like that.

MATT *(going to her)* Ellen, Ellen, tell me what I can do for you?  There’s land and houses to be had here.  Father will let me have my own way after this.

ELLEN *(rising, with anger)* What does it matter to me whether he lets you have your own way or not?  Do you think I could go into a farmer’s house?

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MATT
Ellen!

ELLEN
It’s a bad hand I’d make of a farmer’s house.  I’m not the sort
to be in one.  I’m not like Sally.

MATT *(getting angry)* Don’t be talking that way, Ellen Douras.

ELLEN *(with great vehemence)* I must be talking like this.  If you take me, you will have to go from your father’s house.  I always knew it.  You ought to know it now, Matt Cosgar.

MATT
You didn’t know it always.  And you have let some one come
between us when you talk like that.

ELLEN
I’m not one to be listening to what people say about you.  Nor
do I be talking in the markets about you.

MATT I suppose not.  You wouldn’t have people think you gave any thought to me; I’m not good enough for you.  The people you know are better.

ELLEN
You are foolish to be talking like that.  You are foolish, I say.

MATT
I know I am foolish.  Fit only to be working in drains and
ditches in the winter.  That’s what you think.

ELLEN
Maybe it is.

MATT
Ellen Douras!  Ellen Douras!  A farmer’s roof will be high enough
for you some day.

ELLEN
May I never see the day.  Go back, go back.  Make it up with
your father.  Your father will be glad of a labourer.

MATT
Maybe you won’t be glad if I go back; thinking on what you’ve
said.

ELLEN
I said too much.  We don’t know each other at all.  Go back.  You
have made your choice.

  *She goes up to room left.*

MATT Very well, then.  God above, am I to be treated everywhere like a heifer strayed into a patch of oats?  Neither man nor woman will make me put up with this any longer. *(Going to door)* When Ellen Douras wants me, she knows the place to send to. *(He stands at door.  There is no sound from room.  Going back he speaks loudly)* I’ll be waiting two days or three days to hear from Ellen Douras.

  *There is no sound.  Matt goes out.  The room door is thrown open,
  and Ellen comes down.*

ELLEN *(furiously)* Two days or three days he’ll wait for me.  As if I’d go into Murtagh Cosgar’s house.  As if I’d go into any farmer’s house.  As if I’d get married at all, and the world before me.  Two days or three days you’ll wait.  Maybe it’s lonesome, weary years you’ll be waiting, Matt Cosgar.

**CURTAIN**

**ACT III**

   *Interior of Murtagh Cosgar’s.  It is towards sunset.  Murtagh
   Cosgar is standing before the door looking out.  Martin Douras is
   sitting at the fire in an armchair.*

MARTIN DOURAS
It’s getting late, Murtagh Cosgar.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Ay, it’s getting late.

MARTIN DOURAS
It’s time for me to be going home.  I should be seeing
Ellen. *(He rises)*

MURTAGH COSGAR
Stay where you are. *(Turning round)* We’re two old
men, as you say.  We should keep each other’s company for a bit.

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MARTIN DOURAS
I should be going home to see Ellen.

MURTAGH COSGAR
If she’s going, you can’t stay her.  Let you keep here.

MARTIN DOURAS
She’ll be wondering what happened to me.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Divil a bit it will trouble her.  You’re going to the
fair anyway?

MARTIN DOURAS
I have no heart to be going into a fair.

MURTAGH COSGAR It’s myself used to have the great heart.  Driving in on my own side-car, and looking down on the crowd of them.  It’s twenty years since I took a sup of drink.  Oh, we’ll have drinking to-morrow that will soften the oul’ skin of you.  You’ll be singing songs about the Trojans to charm every baste in the fair.

MARTIN DOURAS
We’re both old men, Murtagh Cosgar.

MURTAGH COSGAR
And is there any reason in your scholarship why oul’
men should be dry men?  Answer me that!

MARTIN DOURAS
I won’t answer you at all, Murtagh Cosgar.  There’s no
use in talking to you.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Put it down on a piece of paper that oul’ men should
have light hearts when their care is gone from them.  They should be
like—­

MARTIN DOURAS
There’s nothing in the world like men with their
rearing gone from them, and they old.

  *Sally comes to the door.  She enters stealthily.*

MURTAGH COSGAR
Ha, here’s one of the clutch home.  Well, did you see
that brother of yours?

SALLY
I did.  He’ll be home soon, father.

MURTAGH COSGAR
What’s that you say?  Were you talking to him?  Did he
say he’d be home?

SALLY
I heard him say it, father.

MARTIN DOURAS
God bless you for the news, Sally.

MURTAGH COSGAR
How could he go and he the last of them?  Sure it
would be against nature.  Where did you see him, Sally?

SALLY
At Martin Douras’s, father.

MURTAGH COSGAR
It’s that Ellen Douras that’s putting him up to all
this.  Don’t you be said by her, Sally.

SALLY
No, father.

MURTAGH COSGAR
You’re a good girl, and if you haven’t wit, you have
sense.  He’ll be home soon, did you say?

SALLY
He was coming home.  He went round the long way, I’m thinking.
Ellen Douras was vexed with him, father.  She isn’t going either,
Matt says, but I’m thinking that you might as well try to keep a
corncrake in the meadow for a whole winter, as to try to keep Ellen
Douras in Aughnalee.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Make the place tidy for him to come into.  He’ll have
no harsh words from me. *(He goes up to the room)*

SALLY
Father’s surely getting ould.

MARTIN DOURAS *(sitting down)* He’s gone up to rest himself, God help him.  Sally, *a stor*, I’m that fluttered, I dread going into my own house.

SALLY
I’ll get ready now, and let you have a good supper before you
go to the fair.

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MARTIN DOURAS
Sit down near me, and let me hear everything, Sally.
Was it Matt that told you, or were you talking to Ellen herself?

SALLY O, indeed, I had a talk with Ellen, but she won’t give much of her mind away.  It was Matt that was telling me.  “Indeed she’s not going,” said he, “and a smart young fellow like myself thinking of her.  Ellen is too full of notions.”  Here’s Matt himself.  Father won’t have a word to say to him.  He’s getting mild as he’s getting ould, and maybe it’s a fortune he’ll be leaving to myself.

  *Matt comes to the door.  He enters*.

MATT
Where is he?  He’s not gone to the fair so early?

SALLY
He’s in the room.

MATT
Were you talking to him at all?  Were you telling him you saw
myself?

SALLY
I was telling him that you were coming back.

MATT
How did he take it?

SALLY
Very quiet.  God help us all; I think father’s losing his spirit.

MATT *(going to Martin)* Well, you see I’ve come back, Martin.

MARTIN DOURAS
Ay, you’re a good lad.  I always said you were a good
lad.

MATT
How did father take it, Martin?

MARTIN DOURAS
Quietly, quietly.  You saw Ellen?

MATT Ay, I saw Ellen *(gloomily)*.  She shouldn’t talk the way she talks, Martin.  What she said keeps coming into my mind, and I’m troubled.  God knows I’ve trouble enough on my head.

MARTIN DOURAS *(eagerly)* What did she say, Matt Cosgar?

MATT
It wasn’t what she said.  She has that school in her mind, I know.

MARTIN DOURAS
And is there anything to keep her here, Matt Cosgar?

MATT
I don’t know that she thinks much of me now.  We had a few words,
but there’s nothing in the world I put above Ellen Douras.

MARTIN DOURAS
I should be going to her.

MATT
Wait a bit, and I’ll be going with you.  Wait a bit.  Let us talk
it over.  She wouldn’t go from you, and you old.

MARTIN DOURAS
God forgive my age, if it would keep her here.  Would I
have my Ellen drawing turf, or minding a cow, or feeding pigs?

MATT I’m fond of her, Martin.  She couldn’t go, and I so fond of her.  What am I doing here?  I should be making it up with her.  What good will anything be if Ellen Douras goes? *(He turns to the door, then stops)* I came to settle with him.  I mustn’t be running about like a frightened child.

  *The room door opens, and Murtagh Cosgar is seen.  Sally has hung a
  pot over the fire, and is cleaning the dishes at the dresser*.

MURTAGH COSGAR *(at the room door)* Sally, it’s time to be putting on the meal.  If you have any cabbage left, put it through the meal. *(To Matt)* You put the thong in the harness?

MATT
I did *(pause)* Well, I’ve come back to you.

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MURTGAH COSGAR
You’re welcome.  We were making ready for the fair.

MATT
I’ll be going out again before nightfall.

MURTAGH COSGAR
I’ll not be wanting you here, or at the fair.

MATT *(sullenly)* There’s no good talking to me like that.

MURTAGH COSGAR
You said, “I’ve come back,” and I said, “you’re
welcome.”  You said, “I’m going out again,” and I said, “I’ll not be
wanting you.”

MATT
Father, have you no feeling for me at all?

MURTAGH COSGAR
Sure the wild raven on the tree has thought for her
young.

MATT
Ay, but do you feel for me, and I standing here, trying to talk
to you?

MURTAGH COSGAR
You’re my son, and so I feel sorry for you; and you
beginning to know your own foolishness. *(He turns to Sally)* I’m
not taking the pigs.  Put a fresh bedding under them to-night.

SALLY
I will, father.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Be up early, and let the cows along the road, or
they’ll be breaking into the young meadow.

SALLY
I’ll do that, too.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Be sure to keep enough fresh milk for the young calf.

SALLY
I’ll be sure to do it, father.

  *She goes out.  Martin takes out his paper, and begins to read it
  again*.

MATT *(turning on Murtag)* Before I go out again there’s something I want settled.

MURTAGH COSGAR
What is it you want?

MATT
Would you have me go, or would you have me stay?

MURTAGH COSGAR
Don’t be talking of going or staying, and you the last
of them.

MATT But I will be talking of it.  You must treat me differently if you want me to stay.  You must treat me differently to the way you treat Sally.

MURTAGH COSGAR
You were always treated differently, Matt.  In no
house that ever I remember was there a boy treated as well as you
are treated here.

MATT
The houses that you remember are different from the houses that
are now.  Will you have me go, or will you have me stay?

MURTAGH COSGAR
You’re very threatening.  I’d have you stay.  For the
sake of the name, I’d have you stay.

MATT
Let us take hands on it, then.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Wait, we’ll see what you want first.

MATT
You have no feeling.  I’d go out of this house, only I want to
give you a chance.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Stop.  We can have kindness in this.  We needn’t be
beating each other down, like men at a fair.

MATT
We’re not men at a fair.  May God keep the kindness in our hearts.

  *Martin rises*.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Don’t be going, Martin Douras.

MATT
Don’t be going yet.  I’ll be with you, when you’re going.

  *Martin sits down*.

MURTAGH COSGAR *(to Matt)* You’ll be getting married, I suppose, if you stay?

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MATT
Maybe I will.

MURTAGH COSGAR *(bitterly)* In the houses that are now, the young marry where they have a mind to.  It’s their own business, they say.

MATT
Maybe it is their own business.  I’m going to marry Ellen Douras,
if she’ll have me.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Ellen is a good girl, and clever, I’m told.  But I
would not have you deal before you go into the fair.

MATT
I’m going to marry Ellen Douras.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Her father is here, and we can settle it now.  What
fortune will you be giving Ellen, Martin?  That 100 pounds that was
saved while you were in Maryborough gaol?

  *Martin shakes his head*.

MATT *(stubbornly)* I’m going to marry Ellen Douras, with or without a fortune.

MURTAGH COSGAR *(passionately)* Boy, your father built this house.  He got these lands together.  He has a right to see that you and your generations are in the way of keeping them together.

MATT
I’ll marry Ellen Douras, with or without a fortune.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Marry her, then.  Marry Ellen Douras.

MATT
Now, Martin, we mustn’t let an hour pass without going to her. *(He takes Martin’s arm, and they go to the door)*

MURTAGH COSGAR Marry Ellen Douras, I bid you.  Break what I have built, scatter what I have put together.  That is what all the young will be doing,

  *Ellen Douras comes to the door as Matt and Martin reach it*.

MATT
Ellen!

  *She shrinks back*.

ELLEN
It’s my father I came to speak to.

MURTAGH COSGAR *(going to the door, and drawing the bolt from the half-door)*
When you come to my house, Ellen Douras, you are welcome within.

  *Ellen comes in*,

ELLEN
It’s right that I should speak to you all.  Matt Cosgar, I am
going from here.

MATT
Ellen, Ellen, don’t be saying that.  Don’t be thinking of the
few words between us.  It’s all over now.  Father agrees to us marrying.
Speak, father, and let her hear yourself say it.

ELLEN
I can’t go into a farmer’s house.

MATT
You said that out of passion.  Don’t keep your mind on it any
longer.

ELLEN
It’s true, it’s true.  I can’t go into a farmer’s house.  This
place is strange to me.

MATT
How can you talk like that?  I’m always thinking of you.

ELLEN
I’ve stayed here long enough.  I want my own way; I want to
know the world.

MATT
If you go, how will I be living, day after day?  The heart will
be gone out of me.

MURTAGH COSGAR
You’ll be owning the land, Matt Cosgar.

MATT *(passionately)* I’ve worked on the land all my days.  Don’t talk to me about it now.

  *Ellen goes to Martin.  Murtagh goes up to the door, and then turns
  and speaks*.

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MURTAGH COSGAR Listen to me, Matt Cosgar; and you listen too, Ellen Douras.  It’s a new house you want maybe.  This house was built for me and my generations; but I’ll build a new house for you both.  It’s hard for a man to part with his land before the hour of his death; and it’s hard for a man to break his lands; but I’ll break them, and give a share of land to you.

ELLEN You were never friendly to me; but you have the high spirit, and you deserve a better daughter than I would make.  The land and house you offer would be a drag on me. *(She goes to the door)*

MATT
Ellen, what he offers is nothing, after all; but I care for you.
Sure you won’t go from me like that?

ELLEN
Oh, can’t you let me go?
I care for you as much as I care for any one.  But it’s my freedom I
want.

MATT
Then you’re going surely?

ELLEN
I am.  Good-bye.

  *She goes out, Martin follows her.  Matt stands dazed.  Murtagh
  closes the door, then goes and takes Matt’s arm, and brings him down*.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Be a man.  We offered her everything, and she went.
There’s no knowing what the like of her wants.  The men will be in
soon, and we’ll drink to the new ownership.

MATT
Oh, what’s the good in talking about that now?  If Ellen was here,
we might be talking about it.

MURTAGH COSGAR
To-morrow you and me might go together.  Ay, the bog
behind the meadow is well drained by this, and we might put the
plough over it.  There will be a fine, deep soil in it, I’m thinking.
Don’t look that way, Matt, my son.

MATT
When I meet Ellen Douras again, it’s not a farmer’s house I’ll
be offering her, nor life in a country place.

MURTAGH COSGAR
No one could care for you as I care for you.  I know
the blood between us, and I know the thoughts I had as I saw each of
you grow up.

  *Matt moves to the door*.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Where are you going?

MATT
To see the boys that are going away.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Wait till the fall and I’ll give you money to go and
come back.  Farrell Kavanagh often goes to America.  You could go with
him.

MATT
I’ll go by myself, unless Ellen Douras comes now.  The creamery
owes me money for the carting, and I’ll get it.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Then go.  Good-bye to you, Matt Cosgar.

MATT
Good-bye to you.

  *He goes out.  Murtagh stands, then moves about vaguely*

MURTAGH COSGAR
The floor swept, the hearth tidied.  It’s a queer end
to it all.  Twenty years I bid them offer.  Twenty years, twenty years!

  *Martin comes back*.

MURTAGH COSGAR
The men will be coming back.

MARTIN DOURAS
I suppose they will.

MURTAGH COSGAR
You’re a queer fellow, Martin Douras.  You went to
gaol for some meeting.

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MARTIN DOURAS
Ay.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Them was the stirring times.  I can’t help but think
of you in gaol, and by yourself.  What brings you back now?

MARTIN DOURAS
Ellen told me to go back.  I should say something to
Matt, I think.

MURTAGH COSGAR
He went out as you came in.

MARTIN DOURAS
I’ll go in when the house is quiet.  I’ll have a few
prayers to be saying this night.

MURTAGH COSGAR
I’m going to the fair.

MARTIN DOURAS
I won’t be going to the fair.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Why won’t you be going to the fair?  Didn’t you ask me
for a lift?  You’ll be going with me.

MARTIN DOURAS
I won’t be going, and don’t be overbearing me now,
Murtagh Cosgar.

MURTAGH COSGAR
You will be going to the fair, if it was only to be
showing that, seemly face of yours. *(Going to the door, he calls)*
“Sally!” *(He turns to Martin Douras)* I’ve a daughter still, Martin
Douras.

MARTIN DOURAS
You have, and I have a son.

MURTAGH COSGAR
What would you say to a match between them, Martin
Douras?

MARTIN DOURAS
I have nothing to say again it.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Then a match it will be.

  *Sally comes in from yard*.

SALLY If you fed that baste on honey, she’d turn on you.  Cabbage I gave her and got into trouble for it, and now she’s gone and trampled the bad potatoes till they’re hardly worth the boiling.  I’ll put the bush in the gap when I’m going out again, father.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Ay.  Is that Cornelius Douras that’s coming up the path?

SALLY
O faith it is.  I’ll get him to give me a hand with the trough.

  *Cornelius comes in*.

CORNELIUS
Well, Murtagh Cosgar, a great and memorial day is ended.
May you live long to enjoy the fruits of it.  Twenty years on the
first term, and the land is ours and our children’s.  I met the men.

MURTAGH COSGAR
Ours and our children’s, ay.  We’ve been making a
match between yourself and Sally.

CORNELIUS
Between me and Sally?

SALLY
Between Cornelius and myself?

MURTAGH COSGAR
Ay, shake hands on it now.

CORNELIUS
And tell me one thing, Murtagh Cosgar.  Is it true that
Matt’s going to America, and that Ellen will wait for him for a year
at the school?  I met them together, and they told me that.

MURTAGH COSGAR
What they say is true, I’m sure.  The land is yours
and your children’s.

SALLY *(wiping her hands in her apron)* O Cornelius.

CORNELIUS Aren’t they foolish to be going away like that, father, and we at the mouth of the good times?  The men will be coming in soon, and you might say a few words. *(Martin shakes his head)* Indeed you might, father; they’ll expect it of you. *(Martin shakes his head.  Murtagh and Sally try to restrain him)* “Men of Ballykillduff,” you might say, “stay on the land, and you’ll be saved body and soul; you’ll be saved in the man and in the nation.  The nation, men of Ballykillduff, do you ever think of it at all?  Do you ever think of the Irish nation that is waiting all this time to be born?”

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  *He becomes more excited; he is seen to be struggling with words*.

**END OF PLAY**

THE LAND was first produced at the Abbey Theater, Dublin, in June, 1905, by The Irish National Theater Society, under the direction of W.G.  Fay, with the following cast:—­

MURTAGH COSGAR W. G. Fay
MATT Proinsias MacSiubhlaigh
SALLY Sara Allgood
MARTIN DOURAS F.J.  Fay
CORNELIUS Arthur Sinclair
ELLEN Maire Ni Gharbhaigh.

*THOMAS MUSKERRY*

**CHARACTERS**

THOMAS MUSKERRY The Master of Garrisowen Workhouse
MRS. CRILLY His Daughter
CROFTON CRILLY His Son-in-law
ALBERT CRILLY His Grandson
ANNA CRILLY His Granddaughter
JAMES SCOLLARD Thomas Muskerry’s Successor
FELIX TOURNOUR The Porter at Workhouse Lodge
MYLES GORMAN A Blind Piper
CHRISTY CLARKE A Boy reared in the Workhouse
SHANLEY |
MICKIE CRIPES | Paupers in Workhouse
AN OLD MAN |

SCENE:  *Garrisowen, a town in the Irish Midlands*.

**ACT FIRST**

*The Master’s office in Garrisowen Workhouse.  It is partly an office, partly a living room.  To the right is a door opening on corridor, and in the back, left, a door leading to the Master’s apartments.  There is an iron stove down from back and towards right, and a big grandfather’s clock back towards door of apartments.  A basket arm chair down from stove, and a wooden chair beside it.  There is a desk against wall, left, and an office stool before it.  Down from this desk a table on which is a closed desk.  On table are books, papers, and files.  On a wooden chair beside the arm chair is a heap of newspapers and periodicals.  There is a rack beside corridor door, and on rack a shawl, an old coat, a hat, and a bunch of big keys.  In the corner, right, is a little cabinet, and on it a small mirror.  Above door of apartments a picture of Daniel O’Connell.  The grandfather’s clock is ticking audibly.  It is 8.45 p.m.  The gas over desk is lighted*.*Christy Clarke, a youth of about seventeen, is seated in the armchair reading a periodical.  His clothes are threadbare, but brushed and clean.  He looks studious, and has intellectual possibilities.  The clock ticks on, the boy reads, but with little attention.  At the corridor door there is a knocking.  Christy Clarke turns slightly.  The door opens, and a tall man in the ugly dress of a pauper is seen.  The man is Felix Tournour.  He carries in a bucket of coal.  He performs this action like one who has acquired the habit of work under an overseer.  He is an ugly figure in his pauper dress.  His scanty beard is coal black.  He has a wide mouth and discoloured teeth.  His forehead is narrow and bony.  He is about forty-five.*

TOURNOUR *(in a harsh voice, after looking around)* Is he not back yet?

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CHRISTY *(without stirring)* Is who not back yet?

TOURNOUR
The master I’m talking about.  I don’t know where he does be
going those evenings.

  *He shovels coal into the stove*.

CHRISTY
And what is it to you where he does be going?

TOURNOUR Don’t talk to me like that, young fellow.  You’re poorhouse rearing, even though you are a pet.  Will he be sitting up here to-night, do you know?

CHRISTY
What’s that to you whether he will or not?

TOURNOUR
If he’s sitting up late he’ll want more coal to his fire.

CHRISTY
Well, the abstracts will have to be finished to-night.

TOURNOUR
Then he will be staying up.  He goes out for a walk in the
evenings now, and I don’t know where he does be going.

CHRISTY
He goes out for a walk in the country. *(Tournour makes a
leer of contempt)* Do you never go for a walk in the country, Felix
Tournour?

TOURNOUR
They used to take me out for walks when I was a little
fellow, but they never got me out into the country since.

CHRISTY
I suppose, now that you’re in the porter’s lodge, you watch
every one that goes up and down the road?

TOURNOUR
It gratifies me to do so—­would you believe that now?

CHRISTY
You know a lot, Felix Tournour.

TOURNOUR
We’re told to advance in knowledge, young fellow.  How long
is Tom Muskerry the Master of Garrisowen Workhouse?

CHRISTY
Thirty years this spring.

TOURNOUR
Twenty-nine years.

CHRISTY
He’s here thirty years according to the books.

TOURNOUR
Twenty-nine years.

CHRISTY
Thirty years.

TOURNOUR Twenty-nine years.  I was born in the workhouse, and I mind when the Master came in to it.  Whist now, here he is, and time for him.

*He falls into an officious manner.  He closes up the stove and puts bucket away.  Then he goes over to desk, and, with his foot on the rung of the office stool, he turns the gas on full.  Christy Clarke gets out of armchair, and begins to arrange the periodicals that are on wooden chair.  The corridor door opens.  The man who appears is not the Master, however.  He is the blind piper, Myles Gorman, who is dressed in the pauper garb.  Myles Gorman is a Gael of the West of Ireland, with a face full of intellectual vigour.  He is about sixty, and carries himself with energy.  His face is pale and he has a fringe of a white beard.  The eye-balls in his head are contracted, but it is evident he has some vestiges of sight.  Before the others are aware who he is, he has advanced into the room.  He stands there now turning the attentive face of the blind*.

GORMAN
Mister Muskerry!  Are you there, Mister Muskerry?

TOURNOUR
What do you want, my oul’ fellow?

GORMAN *(with a puzzled look)* Well, now, I’ve a favour to ask of your honour.

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TOURNOUR
Be off out of this to your ward.

GORMAN
Is that Mister Muskerry?

CHRISTY
Mister Muskerry isn’t here.

GORMAN
And who am I talking to?

CHRISTY
You are talking to Felix Tournour.

GORMAN
Felix Tournour!  Ay, ay.  Good night, Felix Tournour.  When will
the Master be back?

TOURNOUR *(coming to him)* Not till you’re out of this, and back in your ward.

GORMAN
Wasn’t there a boy speaking to me?

CHRISTY
Yes *(speaking as if to a deaf man)* The Master will be
going the rounds in a while, and you can speak to him in the ward.

GORMAN I’ve a favour to ask the Master, and I don’t want to ask it before the others. *(To Christy)* Will the Master be here soon, a vick vig? [6]

TOURNOUR *(taking him by the shoulders)* Here, now, come on, this is your way out.

  *He turns Gorman to the door.  As he is putting him out Thomas
  Muskerry enters*

TOURNOUR This oul’ fellow came into the office, and I was leading him back into his ward.

MUSKERRY
Leave the man alone.

*Tournour retreats to the stove and takes up the bucket; after a look behind he goes out and closes the corridor door.  Christy Clarke takes the periodicals over to table and sits down.  Myles Gorman has been eager and attentive.  Thomas Muskerry stands with his back to the stove.  He is over sixty.  He is a large man, fleshy in face and figure, sanguine and benevolent in disposition.  He has the looks and movements of one in authority.  His hair is white and long; his silver beard is trimmed.  His clothes are loosely fitting.  He wears no overcoat, but has a white knitted muffler round his neck.  He has on a black, broad-brimmed hat, and carries a walking-stick.*

[Footnote 6:  *A mhic bhig,* my little son.]

MUSKERRY
Well, my good man?

GORMAN
I’m here to ask a favour from you, Master.

MUSKERRY
You should proffer your request when I’m in the ward.
However, I’m ready to give you my attention.

GORMAN I’m a blinded man, Master, and when you’re in the ward I can’t get you by yourself conveniently.  I can’t come up to you like the other oul’ men and speak to you private like.

MUSKERRY
Well, now, what can I do for you?

GORMAN *(eagerly)* They tell me that to-morrow’s the market-day, and I thought that you might give me a pass, and let me go out about the town.

MUSKERRY
We’ll consider it, Gorman.

GORMAN
Master, let me out in the town on the market-day.

MUSKERRY
We couldn’t let you out to play your pipes through the town.

GORMAN I’m not thinking of the music at all, Master, but to be out in the day and to feel the throng moving about, and to be talking to the men that do be on the roads.

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MUSKERRY
We’ll consider it, Gorman. *(He takes off muffler, and puts
it on back of armchair)*

GORMAN
Well, I’m very much obliged to your honour.  Good night to you,
Master. *(He passes Muskerry and goes towards the door.  Muskerry has
been regarding him)*

MUSKERRY
Tell me this, Gorman, were you always on the roads?

GORMAN I was driving cattle, and I was dealing in horses.  Then I took up with an oul’ man, and he taught me the pipes.  I’m playing the pipes ever since, and that’s thirty years ago.  Well, the eyes began to wither up on me, and now I’ve only a stim of sight.  I’m a blinded man from this out, Master.

MUSKERRY
And what will you do?

GORMAN
Oh, sure the roads of Ireland are before me when I leave this;
I’ll be playing my bit of music. *(He moves to the door)*

MUSKERRY
Tell me; have you any family yourself?

GORMAN
Ne’er a chick nor child belonging to me.  Ne’er a woman lay by
me.  I went the road by myself.  Will you think of what I asked you,
Master?

MUSKERRY
I’ll consider it.

GORMAN
Good night to your honour.  Remember my name, Master—­Gorman,
Myles Gorman.

  *Muskerry stands looking after Gorman*.

MUSKERRY
Now, Christy Clarke, I consider that the man gone out is a
very exceptional man.

CHRISTY
Is it Myles Gorman?

MUSKERRY
Yes.  I’d even say that, considering his station in life,
Myles Gorman is a very superior man.

CHRISTY
They say he’s not a good musician.

MUSKERRY And maybe he’s not.  I consider, however, that there’s great intelligence in his face.  He stands before you, and you feel that he has the life of a young colt, and then you’re bound to think that, in spite of the fact that he’s blind and a wanderer, the man has not wasted his life. *(Muskerry settles himself in the armchair)*

CHRISTY
Will you give leave for to-morrow?

MUSKERRY
No, Christy, I will not.

CHRISTY
Why not, Mister Muskerry?

MUSKERRY
That man would break bounds and stay away.

CHRISTY
Do you think he would?

MUSKERRY
He’d fly off, like the woodquest flying away from the tame
pigeons.

CHRISTY He and his brother had a farm between them.  His brother was married, and one day the brother told Myles to go to Dublin to see a comrade of his who was sick.  Myles was home in a week, and when he came back he found that his brother had sold the place and was gone out of the country.

MUSKERRY
His brother did wrong, but he didn’t do so much wrong to
Myles Gorman.

CHRISTY
How is that, Mister Muskerry?

MUSKERRY He sent Myles Gorman to his own life.  He’s a man who went his own way always; a man who never had any family nor any affairs; a man far different from me, Christy Clarke.  I was always in the middle of affairs.  Then, too, I busied myself about other people.  It was for the best, I think; but that’s finished.  On the desk under your hand is a letter, and I want you to bring it to me.

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CHRISTY *(going through papers idly)* “I am much obliged for your favour—­”

MUSKERRY
That’s not it.

CHRISTY *(reading another letter)* “I am about to add to the obligations under which I stand to you, by recommending to your notice my grandson, Albert Crilly—­”

MUSKERRY That’s the letter.  It’s the last of its kind.  Bring it to me. *(Christy Clarke brings over the letter)* There comes a turn in the blood and a turn in the mind, Christy.  This while back I’ve been going out to the country instead of into the town, and coming back here in the evenings I’ve seen the workhouse with the big wall around it, and the big gate going into it, and I’ve said to myself that Thomas Muskerry ought to be as secure and contented here as if he was in his own castle.

CHRISTY
And so you ought, Mister Muskerry.

MUSKERRY Look round at the office, Christy.  I’ve made it as fit for me as the nest for the wren.  I’ll spend a few more years here, and then I’ll go out on pension.  I won’t live in the town, I’ve seen a place in the country I’d like, and the people will be leaving it in a year or two.

CHRISTY
Where is it, Mister Muskerry?

MUSKERRY
I’ll say no more about it now, but it’s not far from this,
and its near the place, where I was reared.

CHRISTY
And so you’ll go back to your own place?

MUSKERRY
As Oliver Goldsmith my fellow county man, and I might
almost say, my fellow parishioner, says—­What’s this the lines are
about the hare, Christy?

CHRISTY
“And like the Hare whom Hounds and Horns pursue Pants to the
place from whence at first he flew.”

MUSKERRY
Aye.  “And like the Hare whom Hounds and Horns pursue”—­ *(The clock strikes nine)*

CHRISTY
You weren’t on the rounds yet?

MUSKERRY *(startled)* Would you believe it, now, it was nearly passing my mind to go on the rounds? *(He rises, putting the letter in his pocket)* Where’s that fellow, Albert Crilly?  He was to have been in here to give me a hand with the abstracts.  Christy Clarke, go down to Miss Coghlan’s and get me two novelettes.  Bring me up two nice love stories, and be here when I come back.

*Christy Clarke takes his cap off rack and goes out.  Thomas Muskerry puts on his scarf, goes to the rack and takes down the bunch of keys.  As he is going out Felix Tournour enters with a bucket of coal.  He carries it over to the stove*.

MUSKERRY
Now, Tournour, sweep up this place.

  *Thomas Muskerry goes out by corridor door.  Felix Tournour takes
  brush from under desk, left, and begins to sweep in the direction of
  corridor door*.

TOURNOUR Sweeping, sweeping!  I’ll run out of the house some day on account of the work I’ve to do for Master Thomas Muskerry. *(He leans on his brush in front of stove)* I know why you’re going for walks in the country, my oul’ cod.  There’s them in town that you’ve got enough of.  You don’t want to go bail for Madam Daughter, nor for Count Crofton Crilly, your son-in-law, nor for the Masters and Mistresses; all right, my oul’ cod-fish.  That I may see them laying you out on the flags of Hell. *(He puts the brush standing upright, and speaks to it)*:

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  “The Devil went out for a ramble at night,
   Through Garrisowen Union to see every sight.
   The ould men were dreaming of meat to come near them,
   And the Devil cocked ears at the words for to hear them.
  ‘Twice a year we get meat,’ said the toothless oul’ men,
  ‘Oh, Lord send the meat won’t be too tough again.’
   To clear away dishes Mick Fogarty goes,
   May the Devil burn the nails off his toes.
   Deep dreaming that night of fast days before,
   Sagging the walls with the pull of his snore,
   In his chamber above Thomas Muskerry lay snug,
   When the Devil this summons roared in his lug—­”

*The door of the Master’s apartments is opened and Albert Crilly enters.  Albert Crilly is a young man, who might be a bank clerk or a medical student.  He is something of a dude, but has a certain insight and wit*.

ALBERT *(lighting a cigarette)* Is the grandparent here, Tournour?

TOURNOUR
He’s gone on the rounds, Mister Albert.

ALBERT
What time was he up this morning?

TOURNOUR
He was late enough.  He wasn’t up in time to come to Mass
with us.

ALBERT
The old man will get into trouble.

TOURNOUR
If the nuns hear about it.

ALBERT
He’ll have to give the whole thing up soon.

TOURNOUR
He’s well off that can get somebody else to do the work for
him. *(He continues to sweep towards corridor)*

ALBERT
Tournour, you’re a damned clever fellow.  I heard a piece of
yours yesterday that I thought was damned good.

TOURNOUR
Was it a rhyme?

ALBERT
It was something called “The Devil’s Rambles.”

TOURNOUR *(taking a step towards him)* Don’t let the boss hear, and I’ll tell it to you, Mr. Albert. *(He holds the brush in his hands and is about to begin the recitation when Crofton Crilly enters from the Master’s apartments.  Crofton Crilly has a presentable appearance.  He is big and well made, has a fair beard and blue eyes.  A pipe is always in his mouth.  He is a loiterer, a talker, a listener)*

CRILLY
Are you going to finish the abstracts to-night, Albert?

ALBERT
I believe I am.  Go on with “The Devil’s Rambles,” Tournour.

CRILLY
I heard it in Keegan’s.  It’s damn good.

TOURNOUR
I don’t like saying it before Mister Crilly.

CRILLY *(with easy contempt)* Go on with it, man; I’ll leave a pint in Keegan’s for you.

TOURNOUR
Well, you mightn’t like it.

CRILLY
Have done talking and go on with it.

TOURNOUR *(reciting)*—­

   “In his chamber above—­a—­a *person* lay snug,
   When the Devil this summons roared in his lug—­
   ‘Get up,’ said the Devil, ’and swear you’ll be true,
   And the oath of allegiance I’ll tender anew.

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   You’ll have pork, veal, and lamb, mutton-chops, fowl and fish,
   Cabbage and carrots and leeks as you wish.
   No fast days to you will make visitation,
   For your sake the town will have dispensation.
   Long days you will have, without envy or strife,
   And when you depart you’ll find the same life,
   And in the next world you’ll have your will and your sway,
   With a Poorhouse to govern all your own way,
   And I’ll promise you this; to keep up your state,
   You’ll have Felix Tournour to watch at the gate.’”

CRILLY
That’s damn good.  I must get a copy of the whole of it to
show at Keegan’s.

  *Tournour has swept as far as the corridor door.  He opens it and
  sweeps down the passage.  He goes out and closes door*.

CRILLY That’s a damn clever fellow. *(He becomes anxious, as with a troubled recollection.  He goes to the little cabinet, opens it, and takes out a bottle of whisky and a glass.  He pours some whisky into the glass, and remains looking at himself in the mirror.  He smooths his beard.  He goes to the arm chair with the glass of whisky, the anxious expression still on his face)* This is a cursed town. *(He drinks)*

ALBERT
Every town in Ireland is a cursed town.

CRILLY But this is an extraordinarily cursed town.  Everybody’s in debt to everybody else.  I don’t know what’s to be done.  Now, imagine that fellow, James Covey, failing in business and getting clear out of the town.

ALBERT
Covey seems to have done it well.

CRILLY
God knows how many he has stuck.

ALBERT
Well, he didn’t stick the Crillys for anything.

CRILLY
Albert, you don’t know how these financial things work out.
Do you think would his brother settle?

ALBERT
Settle with whom?

CRILLY
Well ... with any of the ... any of the people that have ...
I don’t know.  It’s a cursed town.  If I had joined the police at your
age, I’d have a pension by this, and I mightn’t care for any of them.

ALBERT
I wish I had a job and I’d wait on the pension.

CRILLY
Oh, you’ll be all right.  The grandfather is seeing about your
job.

ALBERT
If the grandparent gets me that job I’ll want two new suits
at least.

CRILLY ’Pon my soul, Albert, I don’t know what’s to be done. ( *His mind wanders off)* I suppose the abstracts have to go out in the morning.

ALBERT
They have.  And damn all the old man has done to them.

CRILLY The Guardians hear that he’s late in the mornings, Albert, and some of them are beginning to question his fitness to check the stores.

ALBERT
The old man ought to resign.

CRILLY
I suppose he ought.  I’m not wishing for his resignation myself,
Albert.  You know your mother regards it as a settled thing that he
should come and live with us.

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ALBERT
The mother and Anna are preparing for the event.

CRILLY
How’s that, Albert?

ALBERT
Mother has James Scollard in her eye for the new Master.

CRILLY
Right enough!  Scollard would get it, too, and then he would
marry Anna.

ALBERT
That’s the arrangement, I expect.

CRILLY It mightn’t be bad.  Scollard mightn’t want Nancy’s money under that arrangement.  Still I don’t like the idea of the old man living in the house.

ALBERT
The mother would never think of letting him take himself and
his pension anywhere else.

CRILLY
I don’t think she would.

ALBERT
I wouldn’t be surprised if he did go somewhere else.  I hear
he often goes up to that cottage in Stradrina.

CRILLY
What cottage, Albert?

ALBERT
Briar Cottage.  I hear he sits down there, and talks of coming
to live in the place.

CRILLY *(warningly)* Albert, don’t clap hands behind the bird.  Take my word, and say nothing about it.

ALBERT
All right.

CRILLY
We’d have no comfort in the house if your mother’s mind was
distracted.

  *Mrs. Crilly enters from corridor.  She is a woman of forty, dressed
  in a tailor-made costume.  She has searching eyes.  There is something
  of hysteria about her mouth.  She has been good-looking.*

CRILLY
Good night, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY Are you finishing the abstracts, Albert?

ALBERT
I’m working at them.  It’s a good job we didn’t leave the old
man much latitude for making mistakes.

MRS. CRILLY *(closing door)* He’ll have to resign.

CRILLY
Good God, Marianne. *(He rises)*

MRS. CRILLY Well.  Let him be sent away without a pension.  Of course, he can live with us the rest of his life and give us nothing for keeping him.

CRILLY I don’t know what’s in your mind at all, Marianne. *(He crosses over to the cabinet, opens it, and fills out another glass of whisky)*

ALBERT
Let the old man do what suits himself.

CRILLY *(coming back to stove)* Do, Marianne.  Let him do what suits himself.  For the present.

MRS. CRILLY
For pity’s sake put down that glass and listen to what I
have to say.

CRILLY
What’s the matter, Marianne?

MRS. CRILLY James Scollard came to me to-day, and he told me about the things that are noticed....  The nuns notice them, the Guardians notice them.  He misses Mass.  He is late on his rounds.  He can’t check the stores that are coming into the house.  He may get himself into such trouble that he’ll be dismissed with only an apology for a pension, or with no pension at all.

CRILLY
I don’t know what’s to be done.

MRS. CRILLY
If he could be got to resign now James Scollard would
have a good chance of becoming Workhouse Master.  He would marry Anna,
and we would still have some hand in the affairs of the House.

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CRILLY
Yes, yes.  I think that Scollard could make a place for himself.

ALBERT
The old man won’t be anxious to retire.

MRS. CRILLY
Why shouldn’t he retire when his time is up?

ALBERT
Well, here he is what’s called a potentate.  He won’t care to
come down and live over Crilly’s shop.

MRS. CRILLY
And where else would he live in the name of God?

ALBERT
He won’t want to live with our crowd.

MRS. CRILLY What crowd?  The boys can be sent to school, you’ll be on your situation, and Anna will be away. *(She seats herself in the armchair)* I don’t know what Albert means when he says that the Master would not be content to live with us.  It was always settled that he would come to us when his service was over.

*Albert, who has been going over the books, has met something that surprises him.  He draws Crilly to the desk.  The two go over the papers, puzzled and excited.  Anna Crilly enters from corridor.  She is a handsome girl of about nineteen or twenty, with a rich complexion dark hair and eyes.  She is well dressed, and wears a cap of dark fur.  She stands at the stove, behind her mother, holding her hands over the stove.  Mrs. Crilly watches the pair at the desk*.

MRS. CRILLY
We can’t think of allowing a pension of fifty pounds a
year to go out of our house.  Where will we get money to send the
boys to school?

ANNA
Mother.  Grandfather is going to live away from us.

MRS. CRILLY
Why do you repeat what Albert says?

ANNA
I didn’t hear Albert say anything.

MRS. CRILLY
Then, what are you talking about?

ANNA Grandfather goes to Martin’s cottage nearly every evening, and stays there for hours.  They’ll be leaving the place in a year or two, and Grandfather was saying that he would take the cottage when he retired from the Workhouse.

MRS. CRILLY
When did you hear this?

ANNA
This evening.  Delia Martin told me.

MRS. CRILLY
And that’s the reason why he has kept away from us.  He
goes to strangers, and leaves us in black ignorance of his thought.

  *Crilly and Albert are busy at desk*.

CRILLY
Well, damn it all—­

ALBERT
Here’s the voucher.

CRILLY
God!  I don’t know what’s to be done.

ALBERT
It’s a matter of fifty tons.

*Albert turns round deliberately, leaving his father going through the papers in desperate eagerness.  Albert takes a cigarette from behind his ear, takes a match-box from his waistcoat pocket, and strikes a light.  He goes towards door of apartments.  Mrs. Crilly rises*.

ALBERT *(his hand on the handle of door)* Well so-long.

MRS. CRILLY
Where are you going?

ALBERT
I’m leaving you to talk it over with the old man.

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  *Mrs. Crilly looks from Albert to Crilly*.

CRILLY
The Master has let himself in for something serious, Marianne.

ALBERT
It’s a matter of fifty pounds.  The old man has let the
Guardians pay for a hundred tons of coal when only fifty were
delivered.

MRS. CRILLY
Is that so, Crofton?

CRILLY
It looks like it, Marianne.

ALBERT There were fifty tons of coal already in stores, but the Governor didn’t take them into account.  That cute boy, James Covey, delivered fifty tons and charged for the hundred.  The old man passed on the certificate, and the Guardians paid Covey.  They helped him to his passage to America. *(He opens door and goes through)*

MRS. CRILLY
They will dismiss him—­dismiss him without a pension.

ANNA
Mother.  If he gets the pension first, could they take it back
from him?

CRILLY
No.  But they could make him pay back the fifty pounds in
instalments.

MRS. CRILLY
Fifty pounds!  We can’t afford to lose fifty pounds.

ANNA
Who would find out about the coal, father?

CRILLY
The Guardians who take stock.

ANNA
And how would they know at this time whether there was a
hundred or a hundred and fifty tons there at first?

CRILLY
The business men amongst them would know.  However, there
won’t be an inspection for some time.

ANNA
Suppose grandfather had got his pension and had left the
Workhouse, who would know about the coal?

CRILLY
The new Workhouse Master.

MRS. CRILLY
The new Workhouse Master—­

CRILLY
Marianne—­

MRS. CRILLY
Well?

CRILLY
I think I’ll stay here and advise the old man.

MRS. CRILLY
No.  Go away.

CRILLY *(at door of apartments)* After all, I’m one of the Guardians, and something might be done.

MRS. CRILLY
You can do nothing.  We can do nothing for him.  Let him
go to the strangers.

  *Crilly goes out*.

MRS. CRILLY
Anna!

ANNA
Yes, mother.

MRS. CRILLY
The Martins are not giving up their house for a year or two?

ANNA
No, mother.

MRS. CRILLY
If he resigns now his pension will be safe.  There is
nothing else against him.

ANNA
But some one will find out the difference in the coal.

MRS. CRILLY
It’s the new Workhouse Master who will know that.

ANNA *(hardening)* But *he* could not pass such a thing, mother.

MRS. CRILLY *(abandoning a position)* Well, after your grandfather gets his pension we could make some arrangement with the Guardians.

ANNA
Yes, mother.  Hasn’t grandfather a hundred pounds invested in
the shop?

MRS. CRILLY
It’s not a hundred pounds.  Besides, it’s not an
investment.

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ANNA *(with a certain resolution in her rich voice)* Mother.  Is my money safe?

MRS. CRILLY
We could give you the eighty pounds, Anna, but after
that we would need all the help we could get from you.

ANNA
Yes, mother.

MRS. CRILLY *(again taking up a position)* But if we help James
Scollard to the place.

ANNA *(with determination)* Whether Mr. Scollard gets the place or does not get the place, I’ll want my fortune, mother.

MRS. CRILLY Very well, Anna.  If we could get him to come over. ... *(She sits in arm chair)* There’s a lamb in Ginnell’s field; you might call in to-morrow and ask them to prepare it for us.

ANNA
Then grandfather is coming to dinner on Sunday?

MRS. CRILLY
We must get him to come.

  *Some one is coming up the passage.  Anna’s hand is on handle of door.
  She holds it open.  Thomas Muskerry stands there*.

MUSKERRY *(pleased to see her)* Well, Nancy!

ANNA
Good night, grandpapa. *(He regards her with fondness)*

MRS. CRILLY
Good night, father.

MUSKERRY
This Nancy girl is looking remarkably well. *(He turns to
Mrs. Crilly)* Well, ma’am, and how are you?  I’ve written that letter
for that rascally Albert.

*He leaves his stick on table and goes to desk.  Mrs. Crilly watches him.  Anna comes to her.  Muskerry addresses an envelope with some labour.  Mrs. Crilly notices a tress of Anna’s hair falling down.  Anna kneels down beside her.  She takes off Anna’s cap, settles up the hair, and puts the cap on again.  Having addressed the envelope, Muskerry holds up a piece of wax to the gas.  He seals the letter then holds it out*.

MUSKERRY
Here’s the letter now, and maybe it’s the last thing I can
do for any of ye.

MRS. CRILLY
You are very good.

  *Muskerry goes to them*.

MUSKERRY
In season and out of season I’ve put myself at your service.
I can do no more for ye.

  *She takes the letter from him.  His resentment is breaking down.  He
  sits on chair beside armchair.  He speaks in a reconciling tone*.

MUSKERRY
You’re looking well, Marianne,

MRS. CRILLY
I’m beginning to be well again.

MUSKERRY
And the infant?  What age is he now?

MRS. CRILLY
Little Joseph is ten months old.

MUSKERRY
I dreamt of him last night.  I thought Joseph became a bishop.
He ought to be reared for the Church, Marianne.  Well, well, I’ve
nothing more to do with that. *(He settles himself in the armchair)*
Did Christy Clarke bring in the papers?

ANNA
Christy Clarke hasn’t been here at all, grandpapa.

MUSKERRY Stand here till I look at you Nancy. *(Anna comes left of stove)* I wouldn’t be surprised if you were the best-looking girl in the town, Nancy.

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ANNA *(without any coquettishness)* Anna Crilly is riot going into competition with the others. *(She wraps the muffler round him, then kisses him)* Good night, grandpapa. *(She goes out by corridor door)*

MRS. CRILLY
Thank you for the letter for Albert.

MUSKERRY
I think, Marianne, it’s the last thing I can do for you or
yours.

MRS. CRILLY
Well, we can’t tell a bad story of you, and things are
well with us.

MUSKERRY
I’m glad to hear that.  I was thinking of going to see you
next week.

MRS. CRILLY
Come to dinner on Sunday.  We are having a lamb.

MUSKERRY
What sort is the lamb?

MRS. CRILLY
Oh, a very young lamb.  Anna will make the dressing for
you.

MUSKERRY
I’ll send round a bottle of wine.  Perhaps we’ll be in the
way of celebrating something for Albert.

MRS. CRILLY
Nancy was saying that you might like to stay a few days
with us.

MUSKERRY
Stay a few days!  How could I do that, ma’am?

MRS. CRILLY
You could get somebody to look after the House.  James
Scollard would do it, and you could stay out for a few days.

MUSKERRY
Well, indeed, I’ll do no such thing.  What put it into your
head to ask me this?

MRS. CRILLY
Nancy said—­

MUSKERRY
Let the girl speak for herself.  What’s in your mind, woman?

MRS. CRILLY
Well, you’re not looking well.

MUSKERRY
I’m as well as ever I was.

MRS. CRILLY
Others do not think so.

MUSKERRY I suppose you heard I was late a few mornings.  No matter for that.  I’m as well as ever I was.  No more talk about it; I’m going on with the work. *(He rises and goes over to desk)*

MRS. CRILLY
I’m sorry to say that no one else thinks as well of you
as you do yourself.

MUSKERRY
Well, I’ll hear no more about it, and that’s enough about it.
Why isn’t Albert Crilly here?

MRS. CRILLY
Well, he was here, and he is coming back.

MUSKERRY I’ll want him. *(He takes up a card left on the desk.  He turns round and reads)*—­“You have let the Guardians pay for a hundred tons.  James Covey delivered only fifty tons of coal.”  Who left this here?

MRS. CRILLY
I suppose Albert left it for you.

MUSKERRY The impudent rascal.  How dare he address himself like that to me? *(He throws card on table)*

MRS. CRILLY
Perhaps he found something out in the books.

MUSKERRY No matter whether he did or not, he’ll have to have respect when he addresses me.  Anyway it’s a lie—­a damn infernal lie.  I was in the stores the other day, and there was eighty tons of coal still there.  Certainly twenty tons had been taken out of it.  The Provision Check Account will show. *(He takes up a book and turns round.  He goes back some pages.  He lets the book fall.  He stands there helpless)* I suppose you all are right in your judgment of me.  I’m at my failing time.  I’ll have to leave this without pension or prospect.  They’ll send me away.

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MRS. CRILLY
They had nothing against you before this.

MUSKERRY
I was spoken of as the pattern for the officials of Ireland.

MRS. CRILLY
If you resigned now—­

MUSKERRY
Before this comes out. *(He looks for help)* Marianne, it
would be like the blow to the struck ox if I lost my pension.

MRS. CRILLY
If you managed to get the pension you could pay the
Guardians back in a lump sum.

MUSKERRY
If I resigned now, where would I go to?

MRS. CRILLY
It was always understood that you would stay with us.

MUSKERRY
No, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY
You’ll have the place to yourself.  The boys will be
going to school, and Albert will be away, too.  Anna and myself will
look after you.

MUSKERRY
I could stay for a while.

MRS. CRILLY
Oh, well, if you have a better place to go—­

MUSKERRY Remember what I said, Marianne.  I’ve worked for you and yours, in season and out of season.  There should be no more claims on me.

MRS. CRILLY
There are no more claims on you.

MUSKERRY
I’m willing to leave in the shop what I put into the shop.
Let Anna know that it will come to her from me.  I’ll write to the
Guardians to-night and I’ll send in my resignation.  I venture to
think that they’ll know their loss.

  *Mrs. Crilly goes out quietly by corridor door*.

MUSKERRY *(by himself)* And I had made this place as fit for me as the nest for the wren.  Wasn’t he glad to write that card, the impudent rascal, with his tongue in his cheek?  I’ll consider it again.  I won’t leave this place till it fits myself to leave it.

  *Christy Clarice enters by corridor door with papers*.

MUSKERRY
They want me to resign from this place, Christy.

CHRISTY
You’re thirty years here!  Aren’t you, Mister Muskerry?

MUSKERRY Thirty years, thirty years.  Ay, Christy, thirty years; it’s a long time.  And I’m at my failing time.  Perhaps I’m not able to do any more.  Day after day there would be troubles here, and I wouldn’t be able to face them.  And in the end I might lose my position.  I’m going to write out my resignation. *(He goes to the desk and writes.  Christy is at table.  Muskerry turns round after writing)*

MUSKERRY No one that comes here can have the same heart for the poor that I had.  I was earning in the year of the famine.  I saw able men struggling to get the work that would bring them a handful of Indian meal.  And I saw the little children waiting on the roads for relief. *(He turns back and goes on with letter.  Suddenly a bell in the House begins to toll)* What’s that for, Christy?

CHRISTY
Malachi O’Rourk, the Prince, as they called him, is dead.

MUSKERRY
Aye, I gave orders to toll him when he died.  He was an
estated gentleman, and songs were made about his family.  People used
to annoy him, but he’s gone from them now.  Bring me a little whisky,
Christy.

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  *Christy goes to Cabinet.  Muskerry follows him*.

CHRISTY
There’s none in the bottle, Mister Muskerry.

MUSKERRY *(bitterly)* No, I suppose not.  And is that rascal, Albert
Crilly, coming back?

CHRISTY
He’s coming, Mister Muskerry.  I left the novelette on the
table.  Miss Coghlan says it’s a nice love story.  “The Heart of
Angelina,” it is called.

MUSKERRY
I haven’t the heart to read.

  *The bell continues to toll.  Christy goes to door*.

CHRISTY
Good night, Mister Muskerry.

MUSKERRY
Good night, Christy.

  *Christy Clarke goes out through apartments.  Thomas Muskerry is
  standing with hand on arm chair.  The bell tolls*.

**CURTAIN**

**ACT SECOND**

*In Crilly’s, a month later.  The room is the parlour off the shop.  A glass door, right, leads into the shop, and the fireplace is above this door.  In the back, right, is a cupboard door.  Back is a window looking on the street.  A door, left, leads to other rooms.  There is a table near shop door and a horse-hair sofa back, an armchair at fire, and two leather-covered chairs about.  Conventional pictures on walls, and two certificates framed, showing that some one in the house has passed some Intermediate examinations.*

   *It is the forenoon of an April day.  Mrs. Crilly is seated on sofa,
   going through a heap of account books.  Anna Crilly is at window.
   Crofton Crilly enters from the shop.*

CRILLY
It’s all right, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY
Well?

CRILLY The Guardians insisted on appointing an outside person to take stock of the workhouse stores.  It’s the new regulation, you know.  Well, the job lay between young Dobbs and Albert, and Albert has got it.  I don’t say but it was a near thing.

MRS. CRILLY
I hope Albert will know what to do.

CRILLY
He’ll want to watch the points.  Where’s the Master?

MRS. CRILLY
He’s in his room upstairs.

CRILLY
Was he not out this morning?

MRS. CRILLY
He’s not dressed yet.

CRILLY
He was more particular when he was in the workhouse.

ANNA
I know who those two children are now.  They are the new
gas-manager’s children.

CRILLY
He’s a Scotchman.

ANNA
And married for the second time.  Mother, Mrs. Dunne is going to
the races.  Such a sketch of a hat.

MRS. CRILLY
It would be better for her if she stayed at home and
looked after her business.

ANNA
She won’t have much business to look after soon.  That’s the
third time her husband has come out of Farrell’s public-house.

CRILLY
He’s drinking with the Dispensary Doctor.  Companions!  They’re
the curse of this town, Marianne. *(He sits down)*

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ANNA
She’s walked into a blind man, hat and all.  He’s from the Workhouse.

CRILLY
He’s the blind piper out of the workhouse, Myles Gorman.

MRS. CRILLY
There’s no one within.  You should go into the shop, Anna.

ANNA
Yes, mother. *(She crosses)* James Scollard is coming in, mother.

MRS. CRILLY
Very well, Anna.  Stay in the shop until Mary comes.

  *Anna goes into the shop.  Crilly moves about*.

MRS. CRILLY
You’re very uneasy.

CRILLY
Yes, I am uneasy, Marianne.  There’s some presentment on me.
Fifty pounds a year is a good pension for the old man.  He’s a month
out now.  He ought to be getting an instalment.

  *Anna comes in from shop*.

ANNA
Mother, the doctor’s daughter is in the shop.

MRS. CRILLY
What does she want?

ANNA *(imitating an accent)* Send up a pound of butter, two pounds of sugar, and a pound of tea.

MRS. CRILLY
These people are paying nobody.  But we can’t refuse her.
I suppose we’ll have to send them up.  Be very distant with her, Anna.

ANNA
I’ve kept her waiting.  Here’s a letter, mother.

MRS. CRILLY *(taking letter)* When did it come, Anna?

ANNA
It’s just handed in.

  *Anna goes out.  Mrs. Crilly opens letter*.

MRS. CRILLY
It’s from the bank.  They want me to call.  What does the
bank manager want with me, I wonder?

CRILLY
I have something to tell you, Marianne.  I’ll tell you in a
while. *(He takes a turn up and down)*

MRS. CRILLY
What do you want to tell me?

CRILLY
Prepare your mind, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY
What is it?

CRILLY
I owe you money, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY
Money!  How do you owe me money?

CRILLY
That cute boy, James Covey, who took in all the town—­

MRS. CRILLY *(rising)* Covey!  My God!  You backed a bill for him?

CRILLY
I’ll make a clean breast of it.  I did.

MRS. CRILLY *(with fear in her eyes)* How much is it?

CRILLY *(walking away to window)* I’ll come to that, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY
Did any one back the bill with you?

CRILLY
I obliged the fellow.  No one backed the bill with me.

MRS. CRILLY
Does any one know of it?

CRILLY
No, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY
The bank....  Tell me what happened.

CRILLY
The bank manager sent for me when he came to the town after
Covey cleared.

MRS. CRILLY
We had four hundred pounds in the bank.

CRILLY
We had, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY
Tell me how much was the bill.

CRILLY
There’s no use in beating about the bush.  The bill was for
three hundred pounds.

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MRS. CRILLY
And what has the bank done?

CRILLY
I’m sorry to say, Marianne, the bank has taken the money over
from our account.

MRS. CRILLY
You’ve ruined us at last, Crofton Crilly.

CRILLY
You should never forgive me, Marianne.  I’ll go to America and
begin life again. *(He turns to go out by shop)*

MRS. CRILLY
We have no money left.

CRILLY
A hundred pounds, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY
That’s Anna’s money.

CRILLY
Scollard should be satisfied.

MRS. CRILLY
Anna insists on getting her money.

CRILLY
Very well, Marianne.  I’ll leave it all to yourself.

  *James Scollard comes in.  Anna is behind him.  Scollard has an
  account book in his hand*.

SCOLLARD
Good morning, Mrs. Crilly.  Good morning, Mr. Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY
Good morning, Mr. Scollard.

  *Crofton Crilly turns to go*.

ANNA
Don’t go, father.

SCOLLARD
Don’t go, Mr. Crilly.  I have something particular to say to
yourself and Mrs. Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY
Sit down, Mr. Scollard.

  *Anna brings chair, and Scollard sits center.  Anna stands behind him.
  Mrs. Crilly sits left of him*.

SCOLLARD
I am here to propose for the hand of your daughter, Miss
Anna Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY
We have nothing to say against your proposal, Mr. Scollard.

CRILLY
Won’t you take something, James?

SCOLLARD
No, thanks, Mr. Crilly.  I never touch intoxicants.

  *Crofton Crilly goes into shop*.

MRS. CRILLY We couldn’t wish for a better match for Anna.  But I feel bound to tell you, Mr. Scollard, that we have had a very severe loss in our business.

ANNA
What is it, mother?

MRS. CRILLY
I don’t mind telling you.  Mr. Crilly has made himself
responsible for a bill on the bank.

SCOLLARD
In whose interest, Mrs. Crilly?

MRS. CRILLY
He backed a bill for James Covey.  A bill for three
hundred pounds.

ANNA
Oh, mother!

MRS. CRILLY
It’s a dead sure loss.  I don’t know what we are to do,
Anna.

SCOLLARD
This is very bad, Mrs. Crilly.

*Crofton Crilly comes back from shop.  He brings in a glass of whisky.  He puts whisky on chimney-piece.*

MRS. CRILLY
The bank has taken over three hundred pounds from our
account.

CRILLY
Perhaps Scollard—­

SCOLLARD
What were you saying, Mr. Crilly?

CRILLY
Oh, I was just thinking—­about a bill you know—­If some one
would go security for us at the bank—­

ANNA
Father, what are you saying?

MRS. CRILLY
It’s unnecessary to talk like that.  In spite of your
foolishness, we still have a balance at the bank.

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ANNA
My portion comes to me from my grandmother.

SCOLLARD
May I ask, Mrs. Crilly, is Miss Crilly’s portion safe?

MRS. CRILLY
It is safe, Mr. Scollard.

SCOLLARD
I have been definitely appointed Master of the Union, and I
may say that Anna and myself are anxious to marry.

MRS. CRILLY
It needn’t be soon, Mr. Scollard.

SCOLLARD
After Easter, Mrs. Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY
But that’s very soon.

SCOLLARD I am anxious to settle down, Mrs. Crilly.  I’m on my way to a meeting of the Board of Guardians, but before I go I’d like to have some more information about your loss.

MRS. CRILLY
Anna’s portion is not touched, but we could hardly
afford to let the money go from us now.

SCOLLARD
Is that so, Mrs. Crilly?

MRS. CRILLY
Three hundred pounds is a very severe loss.

SCOLLARD Very severe, indeed.  Still, you understand, Mrs. Crilly, the difficulties of taking such a step as marriage without adequate provision.

CRILLY
Damn it all, man, Marianne and myself married without
anything at all.

MRS. CRILLY *(bitterly)* Anna won’t be such a fool as her mother.

CRILLY
Well, Scollard has his position, and we helped him to it.

SCOLLARD
I acknowledge that.

ANNA
Isn’t my portion eighty pounds, mother?

MRS. CRILLY
Yes, Anna.  But I’d like to tell Mr. Scollard that it
would come as a strain on us to let the money go at once.

SCOLLARD
I daresay, Mrs. Crilly.

ANNA
But, mother, wouldn’t the money be safer with us?

MRS. CRILLY
Well, I leave the whole thing in the hands of Mr.
Scollard.

SCOLLARD
Anna and myself have been talking things over, Mrs. Crilly.

ANNA
And we don’t want to begin life in a poor way.

SCOLLARD
We see the advantage of being always solvent, Mrs. Crilly.

ANNA
James has ambitions, and there’s no reason why he shouldn’t
venture for the post of Secretary of the County Council when old
Mr. Dobbs retires.

SCOLLARD
In a few years, Mrs. Crilly, when I had more official
experience and some reputation.

ANNA
Then he would have seven or eight hundred a year.

SCOLLARD
As I said, a man like myself would want to be in a
perfectly solvent position.

ANNA
Besides, James has no money of his own.

SCOLLARD
I never had the chance of putting money by—­Family calls,
Mrs. Crilly.

ANNA
And we don’t want to begin life in a poor way.

MRS. CRILLY
You won’t want the whole of the money.  I’ll give you
forty pounds now.

CRILLY
And forty when the first child is born.

ANNA
Oh, father, how can you say such a thing?

SCOLLARD I need only say this.  Anna and myself were talking over affairs, and we came to the conclusion it would be best not to start with less than eighty pounds. *(He rises)* I have to go down to the Board Room now, for there is a meeting of the Guardians. *(He goes towards door)*

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CRILLY
Won’t you take a glass?

SCOLLARD
No, thanks, Mr. Crilly.  I never touch stimulants.  Good day
to you all.

  *He goes out.  Crofton Crilly goes after him*.

MRS. CRILLY
Anna, you won’t be deprived of your money.

ANNA
Then what’s the difficulty, mother?

MRS. CRILLY
Let half of the money remain with us for a while.

ANNA
But, mother, if I don’t get all my money, what security have I
that what’s left will be good in six months or a year?

MRS. CRILLY
I’ll watch the money for you, Anna.

ANNA
It’s hard to keep a hold on money in a town where business is
going down.

MRS. CRILLY
Forty pounds will be given to you and forty pounds will
be kept safe for you.

ANNA
Forty pounds!  There’s not a small farmer comes into the shop
but his daughter has more of a dowry than forty pounds.

MRS. CRILLY
Think of all who marry without a dowry at all.

ANNA
You wouldn’t have me go to James Scollard without a dowry?

MRS. CRILLY Well, you know the way we’re situated.  If you insist on getting eighty pounds we’ll have to make an overdraft on the bank, and, in the way business is, I don’t know how we’ll ever recover it.

ANNA
There won’t be much left out of eighty pounds when we get what
suits us in furniture.

MRS. CRILLY
I could let you have some furniture.

ANNA
No, mother.  We want to start in a way that is different from
this house.

MRS. CRILLY
You’ll want all the money together?

ANNA
All of it, mother.

MRS. CRILLY
You’ll have to get it so.  But you’re very hard, Anna.

ANNA
This house would teach any one to look to themselves.

MRS. CRILLY Come upstairs. *(Anna goes, left)* Three hundred pounds of a loss.  Eighty pounds with that.  I’m terrified when I think. *(She goes after Anna)*

  *Crofton Crilly comes in from shop.  He takes glass of whisky from
  table, and sits down in arm chair*.

CRILLY
I don’t know what Marianne’s to do at all.  She has a shocking
lot to contend with.  Can anything be got from the old man, I wonder?

  *Albert Crilly comes in by door, left*.

ALBERT
Well, pa.

CRILLY
Well, Albert.  What’s the news in the town, Albert?

ALBERT
They say that you’ve backed a bill for Covey.

CRILLY
If your mother hears that kind of talk she’ll be vexed, Albert.

ALBERT
But did you back the bill?

CRILLY
For Heaven’s sake, let me alone, Albert.  Yes, I backed the
bill.

ALBERT
How much?

CRILLY
You’ll hear all about it from your mother.

ALBERT
They say the bill was for three hundred.

CRILLY
It was three or thereabouts.

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ALBERT
’Pon my word, father, the mother will have to take out a
mandamus against you.

CRILLY *(with parental dignity)* Don’t talk to me in that way, Sir.

ALBERT
It’s scandalous, really.  I expect you’ve ruined the business.

CRILLY
I hate the world and all its works and pomps.

ALBERT
I believe you’ve done for the business.  I’m going away.

CRILLY
Then you’ve got the other appointment?

ALBERT
Temporary clerkship in the Land Department.  I wonder would
the mother let me have the money for clothes?

CRILLY *(desperately)* Don’t mention it at all to her.

ALBERT
I have a card from a Dublin tailor in my pocket.  If I could
pay him for one suit, I could get another on tick.

CRILLY
I tell you not to talk to your mother about money.  That fellow,
Scollard, has put her out.

ALBERT
How’s that?

CRILLY
Money again.  Wants the whole of Anna’s portion down.  And
Anna’s backing him up, too.  I don’t know how your mother can stand it.
I don’t like Scollard.  Then you won’t be staying on, Albert, to do
the stocktaking in the Workhouse?

ALBERT
No; they’ll have to get some one else.  I’m glad to be out of
that job.

CRILLY
I’m not sorry, Albert.

ALBERT
The mother would expect me to do something queer in my report.

CRILLY Between you and me, Albert, women aren’t acquainted with the working of affairs, and they expect unusual things to happen.  Who will they make stocktaker, now?

ALBERT
Young Dobbs, likely.  I suppose the whole business about the
coal will come out then?

CRILLY
I suppose it will; but say nothing about it now, Albert.  Let
the hare sit.

ALBERT
What does the old man think about it now?

CRILLY
He’s very close to himself.  I think he has forgotten all
about it.

ALBERT
I wouldn’t say so.

CRILLY
Who’s that in the shop, Albert?

ALBERT
Felix Tournour.

CRILLY *(rising)* I wonder what they think about Scollard in the Poor-house. *(He and Albert go into the shop as Muskerry enters from left)*

  *Muskerry is untidily dressed.  His boots are unlaced.  He walks
  across the room and speaks pettishly*.

MUSKERRY They haven’t brought my soup yet.  They won’t give much of their time to me.  I’m disappointed in Anna Crilly.  Well, a certain share in this shop was to have gone to Anna Crilly.  I’ll get that share, and I’ll hoard it up myself.  I’ll hoard it up.  And the fifty pounds of my pension, I’ll hoard that up, too.

  *Albert comes in from shop*.

MUSKERRY
That’s a black fire that’s in the grate.  I don’t like the
coal that comes into this place.

ALBERT
Coal, eh, grandpapa.

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MUSKERRY
I said coal.

ALBERT
We haven’t good stores here.

MUSKERRY
Confound you for your insolence.

ALBERT
Somebody you know is in the shop—­Felix Tournour.

MUSKERRY
Bid Tournour come in to me.

ALBERT *(talking into the shop)* You’re wanted here, Tournour.  Come in now or I’ll entertain the boss with “The Devil’s Rambles.” *(He turns to Muskerry)* I was given the job of stocktaking.

MUSKERRY
That’s a matter for yourself.

ALBERT
I don’t think I’ll take the job now.

MUSKERRY
Why won’t you take it?

ALBERT
I don’t know what to say about the fifty tons of coal.

MUSKERRY
I was too precipitate about the coal.  But don’t have me at
the loss of fifty pounds through any of your smartness.

ALBERT
All right, grandfather; I’ll see you through.

MUSKERRY
Confound you for a puppy.

  *Felix Tournour enters.  He looks prosperous.  He has on a loud check
  suit.  He wears a red tie and a peaked cap*.

ALBERT
The Master wants to speak to you, Tournour.

TOURNOUR
What Master.

ALBERT
The boss, Tournour, the boss.

MUSKERRY
I want you, and that’s enough for you, Tournour.

ALBERT
I suppose you don’t know, grandpapa, that Tournour has a
middling high position in the Poorhouse now.

MUSKERRY
What are you saying?

ALBERT
Tournour is Ward-master now.

MUSKERRY
I wasn’t given any notice of that.

ALBERT
Eh, Tournour—­

  “The Devil went out for a ramble at night,
  Through Garrisowen Union to see every sight.
  He saw Felix Tournour—­”

**TOURNOUR**

  “He saw one in comfort, of that you’ll be sure.
  With his back to the fire stands Felix Tournour,”

  *He puts his back to fire*.

ALBERT
Well, so-long, gents. *(He goes out by shop door)*

MUSKERRY
Let me see you, Tournour.

TOURNOUR
I’m plain to be seen.

MUSKERRY
Who recommended you for Ward-master?

TOURNOUR
Them that had the power.

MUSKERRY
I would not have done it, Tournour.

TOURNOUR
No.  And still, d’ye see, I’m up and not down.  Well, I’ll be
going.

MUSKERRY
Come back here, Tournour.  I made it a rule that no
Ward-master should let drink be brought in to the paupers.

TOURNOUR
It’s a pity you’re not Master still!

MUSKERRY
What are you saying?

TOURNOUR
It’s a pity that you’re not still the Master over us.

MUSKERRY
Tournour, you’re forgetting yourself.

TOURNOUR
Well, maybe you are still the Master.

MUSKERRY
How dare you speak to me with such effrontery?  How dare you?

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TOURNOUR
I dunno.  I’m going away now, if your *honour* has nothing
more to say to me. *(He turns to go)*

MUSKERRY
You shall not.  You shall not, I say.

TOURNOUR
What?

MUSKERRY
You shall not go away until you’ve apologised to me.

TOURNOUR
Don’t be talking, Thomas Muskerry.  You’re not Master over me.

MUSKERRY
Not the Master over you?

TOURNOUR
No.  There’s an end to your sway, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY Go out of the house.  No, stay here.  You think I’m out of the Workhouse.  No.  That’s not so.  I’ve claims, great claims, on it still.  Not for nothing was I there for thirty years, the pattern for the officials of Ireland.

TOURNOUR
Twenty-nine years, I’m telling you.

MUSKERRY
The Guardians will take account of me.

TOURNOUR
And maybe they would, too.

MUSKERRY
What’s that you’re saying?

TOURNOUR
The Guardians might take an account of Thomas Muskerry in a
way he mightn’t like. *(He goes to door)*

MUSKERRY
Come back here, Felix Tournour.

TOURNOUR
I’m not your sub-servant.

MUSKERRY
Stand here before me.

TOURNOUR
You and your before me!  Your back to heaven and your belly
to hell.

MUSKERRY
Go away.  Go away out of this.

TOURNOUR
Don’t try to down-face me.  I know something about you.

MUSKERRY
About me!

TOURNOUR Aye, you and your fifty tons of coal. *(Muskerry goes back from him)* Great claims on the Workhouse have you.  The Guardians will take account of you.  Will they?  Talk to them about the fifty tons of coal.  Go and do that, my pattern of the officials of Ireland!

  *Tournour goes out by shop.  Muskerry stands with his hands on the
  arm chair*.

MUSKERRY This minute I’ll go down to the Guardians and make my complaint. *(He notices his appearance)* I’m going about all day with my boots unlaced.  I’m falling into bad ways, bad, slovenly ways.  And my coat needs brushing, too. *(He takes off his coat and goes to window and brushes it)* That’s Myles Gorman going back to the Workhouse.  I couldn’t walk with my head held as high as that.  In this house I am losing my uprightness.  I’ll do more than lace my boots and brush my coat.  I’ll go down to the Guardians and I’ll pay them back their fifty pounds.

  *Anna Crilly comes in from left with a bowl of soup*.

ANNA
Here’s your soup, grandpapa.

MUSKERRY
I can’t take it now, Anna. *(He puts on his coat)*

ANNA
Are you going out, grandpapa?

MUSKERRY
I’m going before the meeting of the Board of Guardians.

ANNA
Are you, grandpapa?

MUSKERRY
Yes, Anna, I am.  I’m going to pay them back their fifty
pounds.

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ANNA
And have you the fifty pounds?

MUSKERRY
Your mother has it for me.

ANNA
Sit down, grandpapa, and take your soup.

MUSKERRY No, Anna, I won’t take anything until my mind is at rest about the coal.  A certain person has spoken to me in a way I’ll never submit to be spoken to again.

  *Mrs. Crilly comes in*.

MRS. CRILLY
What has happened to you?

MUSKERRY
Felix Tournour knows about the coal, Marianne.  He can
disgrace me before the world.

ANNA
And grandpapa wants to go before the Guardians and pay them
back the fifty pounds.

MRS. CRILLY
Wait until we consult Mr. Scollard.

  *Anna goes out*.

MUSKERRY
No, Marianne.  I’m not going to be a party to this any longer.
I’m going before the Guardians, and I’ll pay them back their fifty
pounds.

MRS. CRILLY
Fifty pounds.  From what place is fifty pounds to come so
easily?

MUSKERRY
I’ll ask you to give me the fifty pounds, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY
I’ll do no such thing.  Anna is getting married, and she
claims her fortune.

MUSKERRY
Anna getting married.  This was kept from me.  And who is
Anna getting married to?

MRS. CRILLY
To James Scollard.

MUSKERRY To James Scollard.  And so Anna is getting married to my successor, James Scollard.  My successor.  How well I knew there was some such scheme behind shifting me out of the Workhouse.  And Anna Crilly was against me all the time.  Well, well, well.  I’ll remember this.

MRS. CRILLY
I’m at great losses since you came here.

MUSKERRY
I’m at greater losses, Marianne.

MRS. CRILLY
What losses are you at?

MUSKERRY
The loss of my trust, the loss of my dignity, my
self-respect, and—­

MRS. CRILLY
I think we did all we could for you.

MUSKERRY I’m going out now to pay back the Guardians the sum due to them from me.  I want fifty pounds from you.  I claim it, and I have a right to claim it.

MRS. CRILLY We have no money at all.  Listen.  Crofton Crilly backed a bill for James Covey, and three hundred pounds has been taken from our account.

MUSKERRY
Three hundred pounds!

MRS. CRILLY
Yes.  Three hundred pounds.

MUSKERRY He backed a bill for three hundred pounds.  And do you think, Marianne Crilly, there can be any luck, in a house where such a thing could happen?  I tell you there is no luck nor grace in your house. *(He puts on his hat and goes to cupboard to get his stick.  He opens the cupboard.  He turns round)*

MUSKERRY *(greatly moved)* My God, my God.  I’m made cry at the things that happen in this house.

MRS. CRILLY
What is it?

MUSKERRY The good meat I brought in.  There it is on the floor and the cat mangling it.  I’ll go out of this house, and I’ll never put foot into it again.

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MRS. CRILLY
And where will you go?

MUSKERRY
I’ll go before the Board of Guardians and I’ll ask them to
provide for me.

MRS. CRILLY
What do you want me to do for you?

MUSKERRY
Give me fifty pounds, so that I can pay them off now.

MRS. CRILLY
Haven’t I told you the way I’m straitened for money?

MUSKERRY
You have still in the bank what would save my name.

MRS. CRILLY
Don’t be unreasonable.  I have to provide for my children.

MUSKERRY Your children.  Yes, you have to provide for your children.  I provided for them long enough.  And now you would take my place, my honour, and my self-respect, and provide for them over again. *(He goes out)*

MRS. CRILLY
I’ll have to put up with this, too.

  *Anna re-enters.*

ANNA
Where has he gone, mother?

MRS. CRILLY
He has gone down to the Workhouse.

ANNA
What is he going to do, mother?

MRS. CRILLY
He says he will ask the Guardians to provide for him.

ANNA
It’s not likely they’ll do that for a man with a pension of
fifty pounds a year.

MRS. CRILLY
I don’t know what will happen to us.

ANNA
He’ll come back, mother.

MRS. CRILLY
He will.  But everything will have been made public, and
the money will have to be paid.

ANNA *(at the window)* There he is going down the street, mother.

MRS. CRILLY
Which way?

ANNA
Towards the Workhouse.  And here’s the doctor’s daughter coming
into the shop again, mother.

MRS. CRILLY
I’ll go out and see her myself. *(As she goes out she
hands Anna a cheque)* That’s the last cheque I’ll be able to make out.
There’s your eighty pounds, Anna. *(She goes into the shop)*

ANNA
We can begin to get the furniture now.

  *She sits down at the table and makes some calculation with a pencil*.

**CURTAIN**

**ACT THIRD**

*The infirm ward in the Workhouse.  Entrance from corridor, right.  Forward, left, are three beds with bedding folded upon them.  Back, left, is a door leading into Select Ward.  This door is closed, and a large key is in lock.  Fireplace with a grating around it, left.  Back, right, is a window with little leaded panes*.

   *It is noon on a May day, but the light inside the ward is feeble.*

*Two paupers are seated at fire.  One of them, Mickie Cripes, is a man of fifty, stooped and hollow-chested, but with quick blue eyes.  The other man, Tom Shanley, is not old, but he looks broken and listless.  Myles Gorman, still in pauper dress, is standing before window, an expectant look on his face*.*Thomas Muskerry enters from corridor.  He wears his own clothes, but he has let them get into disorder.  His hair and beard are disordered, and he seems very much broken down.  Nevertheless, he looks as if his mind were composed*.

MUSKERRY
It’s dark in here, Michael.

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GRIPES
It is, sir.

MUSKERRY I find it very spiritless after coming up from the chapel.  Don’t pass your whole day here.  Go down into the yard. *(He stands before the window)* This is the first fine day, and you ought to go out along the country road.  Ask the Master for leave.  It’s the month of May, and you’ll be glad of the sight of the grass and the smell of the bushes.  Now here’s a remarkable thing.  I venture to think that the like of this has never happened before.  Here are the bees swarming at the window pane.

GORMAN
You’ll hear my pipes on the road to-day.  That’s as sure as
the right hand is on my body. *(He goes out by corridor door)*

CRIPES
Myles Gorman must have been glad to hear that buzzing.

MUSKERRY
Why was Myles glad to hear it?

SHANLEY
He was leaving on the first fine day.

CRIPES
The buzzing at the pane would let any one know that the air
is nice for a journey.

MUSKERRY
I am leaving to-day, myself.

CRIPES
And where are you going, Mr. Muskerry?

MUSKERRY
I’m going to a place of my own.

  *Muskerry goes into the Select Ward*.

CRIPES I’ll tell you what brought Thomas Muskerry back to the workhouse to be an inmate in it.  Living in a bad house.  Living with his own.  That’s what brought him back.  And that’s what left me here, too.

SHANLEY *(listlessly)* The others have the flour, and we may hawk the bran.

  *An old pauper comes into the ward.  His face looks bleached.  He has
  the handle of a sweeping-brush for a staff.  He moves about the ward,
  muttering to himself.  He seats himself on chair, right*.

THE OLD MAN *(speaking as if thinking aloud)* I was at twelve o’clock Mass.  Now one o’clock would be a late Mass.  I was at Mass at one o’clock.  Wouldn’t that be a long time to keep a priest, and he fasting the whole time?

CRIPES I’ll tell you what Thomas Muskerry did when he left the bad house he was in. *(He puts coal on the fire)*

THE OLD MAN I was at one o’clock Mass in Skibbereen.  I know where Skibbereen is well.  In the County Cork.  Cork is a big county.  As big as Dublin and Wicklow.  That’s where the people died when there was the hunger.

CRIPES He came before the meeting of the Guardians, and he told them he owed them the whole of his year’s pension.  Then he got some sort of a stroke, and he broke down.  And the Guardians gave him the Select Ward there for himself.

SHANLEY
They did well for him.

CRIPES Why wouldn’t they give him the Select Ward?  It’s right that he’d get the little room, and not have to make down the pauper’s bed with the rest of us.

SHANLEY He was at the altar to-day, and he stayed in the chapel after Mass.

CRIPES
He’ll be here shortly.

THE OLD MAN Skibbereen!  That’s where the people died when there was the hunger.  Men and women without coffins, or even their clothes off.  Just buried.  Skibbereen I remember well, for I was a whole man then.  And the village.  For there are people living in it yet.  They didn’t all die.

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SHANLEY
We’ll have somebody else in the Select Ward this evening.

CRIPES
That’s what they were talking about.  The nuns are sending a
patient up here.

SHANLEY
I suppose the Ward-master will be in here to regulate the
room. *(He rises)*

CRIPES
Aye, the Ward-master.  Felix Tournour, the Ward-master.  You’ve
come to your own place at last, Felix Tournour.

SHANLEY
Felix Tournour will be coming the master over me if he finds
me here. *(Shanley goes out)*

CRIPES
Felix Tournour!  That’s the lad that will be coming in with
his head up like the gander that’s after beating down a child.

  *Christy Clarice enters.  He carries a little portmanteau*.

CHRISTY
Is Mr. Muskerry here?

CRIPES
He’s in the room. *(A sound of water splashing and the
movements of a heavy person are heard)* Will you be speaking with him,
young fellow?

CHRISTY
I will.

CRIPES Tell him, like a good little boy, that the oul’ men would be under a favour to him if he left a bit of tobacco.  You won’t forget that?

CHRISTY
I won’t forget it.

CRIPES
I don’t want to be in the way of Felix Tournour.  We’re going
down to the yard, but we’ll see Mr. Muskerry when he’s going away.

  *Cripes goes out*.

MUSKERRY *(within)* Is that you, Christy Clarke?

CHRISTY
It is, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY
Have you any news, Christy?

CHRISTY
No news, except that my mother is in the cottage, and is
expecting you to-day.

MUSKERRY I’ll be in the cottage to-day, Christy.  I’m cleaning myself. *(A sound of splashing and moving about)* The Guardians were good to get the little house for me.  I’d as lieve be there as in a mansion.  There’s about half an acre of land to the place, and I’ll do work on the ground from time to time, for it’s a good thing for a man to get the smell of the clay.

CHRISTY
And how are you in health, Mr. Muskerry?

MUSKERRY
I’m very well in health.  I was anointed, you know, and
after that I mended miraculously.

CHRISTY
And what about the pension?

MUSKERRY I’m getting three hundred pounds.  They asked me to realize the pension.  I hope I have life enough before me. *(He comes out.  He has on trousers, coat, and starched shirt.  The shirt is soiled and crushed)*

MUSKERRY On Saturdays I’ll do my marketing.  I’ll come into the town, and I’ll buy the bit of meat for my dinner on Sunday.  But what are you doing with this portmanteau, Christy?

CHRISTY
I’m going away myself.

MUSKERRY
To a situation, is it?

CHRISTY
To a situation in Dublin.

MUSKERRY I wish you luck, Christy. *(He shakes hands with the boy, and sits down on a chair)* I was dreaming on new things all last night.  New shirts, new sheets, everything new.

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CHRISTY
I want to be something.

MUSKERRY
What do you want to be?

CHRISTY
A writer.

MUSKERRY
A writer of books, is it?

CHRISTY
Yes, a writer of books.

MUSKERRY
Listen, now, and tell me do you hear anything.  That’s the
sound of bees swarming at the window.  That’s a good augury for you,
Christy.

CHRISTY
All life’s before me.

MUSKERRY
Will you give heed to what I tell you?

CHRISTY
I’ll give heed to it, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY
Live a good life.

CHRISTY
I give heed to you.

MUSKERRY
Your mother had great hardship in rearing you.

CHRISTY
I know that, Mr. Muskerry, but now I’m able for the world.

MUSKERRY
I wish success to all your efforts.  Be very careful of your
personal appearance.

CHRISTY
I will, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY
Get yourself a new cravat before you leave the town.

CHRISTY
I’ll get it.

MUSKERRY
I think I’d look better myself if I had a fresher shirt.

CHRISTY
I saw clean shirts of yours before the fire last night in my
mother’s house.

MUSKERRY
I wish I could get one before I leave this place.

CHRISTY
Will I run off and get one for you?

MUSKERRY
Would you, Christy?  Would it be too much trouble?

  *Muskerry rises*.

CHRISTY
I’ll go now.

MUSKERRY You’re a very willing boy, Christy, and you’re sure to get on. *(He goes to a little broken mirror on the wall)* I am white and loose of flesh, and that’s not a good sign with me, Christy.  I’ll tell you something.  If I were staying here to-night, it’s the pauper’s bed I’d have to sleep on.

  *Mrs. Crilly comes to the door*.

MRS. CRILLY
Well, I see you’re making ready for your departure.

MUSKERRY *(who has become uneasy)* I am ready for my departure.

MRS. CRILLY
And this young man has come for you, I suppose?

MUSKERRY
This young man is minding his own business.

CHRISTY
I’m going out now to get a shirt for the Master.

MRS. CRILLY
A starched shirt, I suppose, Christy.  Go down to our
house, and tell Mary to give you one of the shirts that are folded up.

MUSKERRY
The boy will go where he was bid go.

MRS. CRILLY
Oh, very well.  Run, Christy, and do the message for the
Master.

  *Christy Clarke goes out*.

MUSKERRY
I don’t know what brought you here to-day.

MRS. CRILLY
Well, I wanted to see you.

MUSKERRY
You could come to see me when I was settled down.

MRS.
CRILLY Settled in the cottage the Guardians have given you?

MUSKERRY
Yes, ma’am.

MRS. CRILLY *(with nervous excitement, restrained)* No one of us will ever go near the place.

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MUSKERRY
Well, you’ll please yourself.

MRS. CRILLY
You put a slight on us all when you go there to live.

MUSKERRY
Well, I’ve lived with you to my own loss.

MRS. CRILLY
Our house is the best house in the town, and I’m the
nearest person to you.

MUSKERRY
Say nothing more about that.

MRS. CRILLY
Well, maybe you do right not to live with us, but you
ought not to forsake us altogether.

MUSKERRY
And what do you mean by forsaking you altogether?

MRS. CRILLY When you leave the place and do not even turn your step in our direction it’s a sign to all who want to know that you forsake us altogether.

MUSKERRY
What do you want me to do?

MRS. CRILLY
Come up to Cross Street with me, have dinner and spend
the night with us.  People would have less to talk about if you did
that.

MUSKERRY
You always have a scheme.

MRS. CRILLY
Come to us for this evening itself.

MUSKERRY
I wish you wouldn’t trouble me, woman.  Can’t you see that
when I go out of this I want to go to my own place?

MRS. CRILLY
You can go there to-morrow.

MUSKERRY
Preparations are made for me.

MRS. CRILLY
You don’t know what preparations.

MUSKERRY
Two pounds of the best beef-steak were ordered to be sent
up to-day.

MRS. CRILLY
I wouldn’t trust that woman, Mrs. Clarke, to cook
potatoes.

MUSKERRY
Well, I’ll trust her, ma’am.

MRS. CRILLY *(taking Muskerry’s sleeve)* Don’t go to-day, anyway.

MUSKERRY
You’re very anxious to get me to come with you.  What do you
want from me?

MRS. CRILLY
We want nothing from you.  You know how insecure our
business is.  When it’s known in the town that you forsake us,
everybody will close in on us.

MUSKERRY God knows I did everything that a man could do for you and yours.  I won’t forget you.  I haven’t much life left to me, and I want to live to myself.

MRS. CRILLY I know.  Sure I lie awake at night, too tired to sleep, and long to get away from the things that are pressing in on me.  I know that people are glad of their own way, and glad to live in the way that they like.  When I heard the birds stirring I cried to be away in some place where I won’t hear the thing that’s always knocking at my head.  The business has to be minded, and it’s slipping away from us like water.  And listen, if my confinement comes on me and I worried as I was last year, nothing can save me.  I’ll die, surely.

MUSKERRY *(moved)* What more do you want me to do?

MRS. CRILLY
Stay with us for a while, so that we’ll have the name of
your support.

MUSKERRY
I’ll come back to you in a week.

MRS. CRILLY
That wouldn’t do at all.  There’s a reason for what I ask.
The town must know that you are with us from the time you leave this.

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MUSKERRY *(with emotion)* God help me with you all, and God direct me what to do.

MRS. CRILLY
It’s not in you to let us down.

  *Muskerry turns away.  His head is bent.  Mrs. Crilly goes to him*.

MUSKERRY
Will you never be done taking from me?  I want to leave this
and go to a place of my own.

  *Muskerry puts his hand to his eyes.  When he lowers his hand again
  Mrs. Crilly lays hers in it.  Christy Clarke comes in.  Muskerry turns
  to him.  Muskerry has been crying*.

MUSKERRY
Well, Christy, I’ll be sending you back on another message.

  *Mrs. Crilly makes a sign to Christy not to speak*.

MUSKERRY
Go to your mother and tell her—–­

CHRISTY
I met my mother outside.

MUSKERRY
Did she get the things that were sent to her?

CHRISTY
My mother was sent away from the cottage.

MUSKERRY
Who sent your mother away from the cottage?

CHRISTY
Mrs. Crilly sent her away.

MUSKERRY
And why did you do that, ma’am?

MRS. CRILLY
I sent Mary to help to prepare the place for you, and
the woman was impertinent to Mary—­

MUSKERRY
Well, ma’am?

MRS. CRILLY
I sent the woman away.

MUSKERRY
And so you take it on yourself to dispose of the servants
in my house?

MRS. CRILLY
I daresay you’ll take the woman’s part against my
daughter.

MUSKERRY
No, ma’am, I’ll take no one’s side, but I’ll tell you this.
I want my own life, and I won’t be interfered with.

MRS. CRILLY
I’m sorry for what occurred, and I’ll apologise to the
boy’s mother if you like.

MUSKERRY
I won’t be interfered with, I tell you.  From this day out
I’m free of my own life.  And now, Christy Clarke, go down stairs and
tell the Master, Mr. Scollard, that I want to see him.

  *Christy Clarice goes out*.

MRS. CRILLY
I may as well tell you something else.  None of the
things you ordered were sent up to the cottage.

MUSKERRY
Do you tell me that?

MRS. CRILLY
I went round to the shop, and everything you ordered was
sent to us.

MUSKERRY
And what is the meaning of that, ma’am?

MRS. CRILLY
If the town knew you were going from us, in a week we
would have to put up the shutters.

MUSKERRY
Well, I’ll walk out of this, and when I come to the road
I’ll go my own way.

MRS. CRILLY
We can’t prevent you.

MUSKERRY
No, ma’am, you can’t prevent me.

MRS. CRILLY
You’ve got your discharge, I suppose?

MUSKERRY
I’ve given three hours’ notice, and I’ll get my discharge
now.

MRS. CRILLY *(at corridor door)* We can’t prevent you going if you have the doctor’s discharge.

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MUSKERRY
The doctor’s discharge!  He would have given it to me—­

MRS. CRILLY
You can’t leave without the doctor’s sanction.

MUSKERRY
Out of this house I will go to-day.

  *James Scollard enters*.

SCOLLARD
I believe you want to see me, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY
I do, Mr. Scollard.  I am leaving the house.

SCOLLARD
I will be glad to take up the necessary formalities for you,
Mr. Muskerry.

MRS. CRILLY
First of all, has the doctor marked my father off the
infirmary list?

SCOLLARD
No, Mrs. Crilly.  Now that I recall the list, he has not.

MUSKERRY
I waited after Mass to-day, and I missed seeing him.

MRS. CRILLY
My father was seriously ill only a short time ago, and I
do not believe he is in a fit state to leave the infirmary.

SCOLLARD That certainly has to be considered.  Without the doctor explicitly sending you down to the body of the house you are hardly under my jurisdiction, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY
Mr. Scollard, I ask you to give me leave to go out of the
Workhouse for a day.  You can do this on your own responsibility.

MRS. CRILLY
In the present state of his mind it’s not likely he
would return to-night.  Then if anything happened him your situation
is at stake.

MUSKERRY
I’m not a pauper.  I’ll go out of this to-day without leave
or license from any of you.

SCOLLARD
As you know yourself, Mr. Muskerry, it would be as much as
my situation is worth to let you depart in that way.

MUSKERRY
Well, go I will.

SCOLLARD
I cannot permit it, Mr. Muskerry.  I say it with the
greatest respect.

MUSKERRY
How long will you keep me here?

SCOLLARD
Until the doctor visits the house.

MUSKERRY
That will be on Monday morning.

SCOLLARD
And this is Saturday, Mr. Muskerry.

MUSKERRY
And where will you put me until Monday?

SCOLLARD
Other arrangements will be made for you.

MUSKERRY
It’s the pauper’s bed you would give me!

SCOLLARD
The old arrangements will continue.  Can I do anything
further for you, Mr. Muskerry?

MUSKERRY No, you can do nothing further for me.  It’s a great deal you have done for me!  It’s the pauper’s bed you have given me! *(He goes into the Select Ward)*

MRS. CRILLY
Sit down, Mr. Scollard.  I want to speak to you.

  *Mrs. Crilly seats herself at the table.  Scollard sits down also.*

MRS. CRILLY
The bank manager is in the town to-day, and there are
people waiting to tell him whether my father goes to our house or
goes away from us.

SCOLLARD No doubt there are, Mrs. Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY
But you have nothing to do with that, Mr. Scollard.

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SCOLLARD
No, Mrs. Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY
I have my own battle to fight, and a hard battle it is.
I have to make bits of myself to mind everything and be prepared for
everything.

SCOLLARD
No doubt, Mrs. Crilly.

MRS. CRILLY
There are people who will blame me, but they cannot see
into my mind.

SCOLLARD
Will you come down to the parlour, Mrs. Crilly?

MRS. CRILLY
Yes, I’ll go down.

  *She remains seated, looking out steadily before her.  Myles Gorman
  comes in.  He is dressed in his own clothes*.

SCOLLARD
Well, Gorman, what brings you back to the ward?

GORMAN
I just want to do something to my pipes, Master.

SCOLLARD
Very well, Gorman.  You have your discharge, and you are
free to leave.

GORMAN
Oh, in a while I’ll be taking the road.

  *He seats himself at the fire and begins to fix the bag of his pipes*.

SCOLLARD
Now, Mrs. Crilly, come down to the parlour.

MRS. CRILLY
Yes.

SCOLLARD
Anna is waiting to see you.

MRS. CRILLY *(rising)* He will be well cared for here.

SCOLLARD
He will, Mrs. Crilly.  I will give him all attention.

MRS. CRILLY
He expected to be in a different place to-day, but delay
does little harm.

SCOLLARD
Come down to the parlour, Mrs. Crilly, and drink a glass of
wine with us.

*They go out.  The door of the Select Ward opens, and Thomas Muskerry appears.  He has got a stroke.  His breathing makes a noise in his mouth.  As he moves he lags somewhat at the right knee.  He carries his right hand at his breast.  He moves slowly across ward.  Felix Tournour enters, carrying a bunch of keys*.

TOURNOUR
And where are you going?

MUSKERRY *(in a thickened voice)* Ow—­out. *(Motioning with left hand.
He moves across ward, and goes out on door of corridor)*

TOURNOUR Well, you’re not getting back to your snuggery, my oul’ cod. *(He goes into the Select Ward and begins to pitch Muskerry’s belongings into the outer ward.  First of all come the pillows and clothes off the bed)* And there’s your holy picture, and there’s your holy book. *(He comes out holding another book in official binding.  He opens it and reads)* “Marianne, born May the 20th, 1870.” *(He turns back some pages and reads)* Thomas Muskerry wrote this, 1850—­

  “In the pleasant month of May,
  When the lambkins sport and play,
    As I roved out for recreation,
  I spied a comely maid,
  Sequestered in the shade,
    And on her beauty I gazed in admiration.”

  “I said I greatly fear
  That Mercury will draw near,
    As once he appeared unto Venus,
  Or as it might have been
  To the Carthaginian Queen,
  Or the Grecian Wight called Polyphemus.”

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*Muskerry comes back to the ward.  He stands looking stupidly at the heap Tournour has thrown out.  Tournour throws down the book.  Muskerry goes towards the open door of the ward.  Felix Tournour closes the door deliberately turns the key and holds the key in his hand*.

TOURNOUR
You have no more to do with your snug little ward, Mr.
Muskerry. *(He puts the key on his bunch and goes out)*

MUSKERRY *(muttering with slack lips and cheeks)* It’s—­it’s—­the pau—­pauper’s bed they’ve given me.

GORMAN *(turning round his face)* Who’s there?

MUSKERRY
It’s—­it’s—­Thomas Muskerry.

GORMAN
Is that the Master?

MUSKERRY
It’s—­it’s the pauper’s bed they’ve given me.

GORMAN
Can I give you any hand, Master?

MUSKERRY I’ll want to make—­the bed.  Give me a hand to make the bed. *(Gorman comes over to him)* My own sheet and blanket is here.  I needn’t lie on a pauper’s sheet.  Whose bed is this?

GORMAN
It’s the middle bed, Master.  It’s my own bed.

MUSKERRY *(helplessly)* What bed will I take, then?

GORMAN
My bed.  I won’t be here.

MUSKERRY
And where are you going?

GORMAN
I’m leaving the house this day.  I’ll be going on the roads.

MUSKERRY Myles—­Myles Gorman.  The man that was without family or friends.  Myles Gorman.  Help me to lay down the mattress.  Where will you sleep to-night, Myles Gorman?

GORMAN At Mrs. Muirnan’s, a house between this and the town of Ballinagh.  I haven’t the money to pay, but she’ll give me the place for to-night.  Now, Master, I’ll spread the sheet for you. *(They spread the sheet on the bed*.)

MUSKERRY
Can you go down the stairs, Myles Gorman?  I tried to get
down the stairs and my legs failed me.

GORMAN
One of the men will lead me down.

MUSKERRY *(resting his hand on the bed and standing up)* Sure one of the men will lead me down the stairs, too.

  *Myles Gorman spreads blanket on bed.  He stands up, takes pipes,
  and is ready to go out.  Muskerry becomes more feeble.  He puts
  himself on the bed*.

MUSKERRY
Myles—­Myles Gorman—­come back.

GORMAN
What will I do for you, Master?

MUSKERRY
Say a prayer for me.

GORMAN
What prayer will I say, Master?

MUSKERRY
Say “God be good to Thomas Muskerry.”

GORMAN *(taking off his hat)* “God be good to Thomas Muskerry, the man who was good to the poor.”  Is that all, Master?

MUSKERRY
That’s—­that’s all.

  *Gorman goes to the door*.

GORMAN
In a little while you’ll hear my pipes on the road.

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*He goes out.  There is the sound of heavy breathing from the bed.  Then silence.  The old pauper with the staff enters.  He is crossing the ward when his attention is taken by the humming of the bees at the window pane.  He listens for a moment*.

THE OLD PAUPER A bright day, and the clay on their faces.  That’s what I saw.  And we used to be coming from Mass and going to the coursing match.  The hare flying and the dogs stretching after her up the hill.  Fine dogs and fine men.  I saw them all.

  *Christy Clarke comes in.  He goes to table for his bag.  He sees the
  figure on the bed, and goes over*.

CHRISTY
I’m going now, Mister Muskerry.  Mister Muskerry!
Mister Muskerry!  Oh! the Master is dead. *(He runs back to the door)*
Mrs. Crilly.  Mrs. Crilly. *(He goes back to the bed, and throws
himself on his knees)* Oh!  I’m sorry you’re gone, Thomas Muskerry.

THE OLD PAUPER And is he gone home, too!  And the bees humming and all!  He was the best of them.  Each of his brothers could lift up their plough and carry it to the other side of the field.  Four of them could clear a fair.  But their fields were small and poor, and so they scattered.

  *Mrs. Crilly comes in*.

MRS. CRILLY
Christy Clarke, what is it?

CHRISTY
The Master is dead.

MRS. CRILLY
My God, my God!

CHRISTY
Will I go and tell them below?

MRS. CRILLY
No.  Bring no one here yet.  We killed him.  When
everything is known that will be known.

CHRISTY
I’ll never forget him, I think.

MRS. CRILLY
What humming is that?

CHRISTY
The bees at the window pane.  And there’s Myles Gorman’s
pipes on the road.

  *The drear call of the pipes is heard*.

**END OF PLAY**

“Thomas Muskerry” was first produced on May 5th, 1910, by the Abbey Theater Company, at the Abbey Theater, Dublin, with the following cast:—­

THOMAS MUSKERRY Arthur Sinclair
MRS. CRILLY Cara Allgood
CROFTON CRILLY J.M.  Kerrigan
ALBERT CRILLY Eric Gorman
ANNA CRILLY Maire O’Neill
MYLES GORMAN Fred O’Donovan
FELIX TOURNOUR Sydney Morgan
JAMES SCOLLARD J.A.  O’Rourke
CHRISTY CLARKE U. Wright
MICKIE GRIPES Fred Rowland
TOM SHANLEY Ambrose Power
AN OLD PAUPER J.M.  Kerrigan.