**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*

*CONTENTS*

*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.

**Page 22**

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.