



**intermission  
impossible 2**

**A One Act Play Directory with  
3 One Act Plays commissioned  
by Macra na Feirme**

# intermission impossible 2

**ONE ACT PLAY DIRECTORY**

With

**3 ONE ACT PLAYS**

Commissioned by Macra na Feirme



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Produced by Macra na Feirme

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While every care has been taken in the preparation of this book, the publisher cannot be held responsible for errors or omissions in the text.

The characters and situations in this book are entirely imaginary and bear no relation to any real person or actual happenings



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## **Foreword**

It is my pleasure to introduce *Intermission Impossible 2*. Building on the success of the first publication, this book offers a vibrant collection of over ninety 'One-Act' plays. For ease of access, an alphabetical listing of both authors and plays is included. Part One of the book also includes a guide to useful services for the amateur drama sector and most particularly Macra na Feirme members involved in drama.

The three new scripts, commissioned by Macra na Feirme form the second part of the book. They are a reflection of the energetic and changing face of contemporary rural Ireland. This project, which we celebrate in this second publication, marks a new departure in bridging the relationship between professional and amateur theatre sectors. *Intermission Impossible 2* is a testament to the interest and dedication of Macra na Feirme in support of the arts.

*Intermission Impossible 2* reflects the richness of our contemporary literary culture as well as the wealth of talent among our own members involved in the creative process. I am confident that you the reader will find this book an invaluable resource. On behalf of Macra na Feirme I wish to congratulate all involved.

*Tommy Maguire*  
*National President*

## Introduction

In 1997, Macra na Feirme made a commitment to commission and publish nine new one act plays over a three-year period. This initiative was responding to the lack of new, contemporary and challenging material available to members of Macra na Feirme and to the wider one act drama sector. Intrinsic to this commitment was the intention to assist emerging Irish writers and create linkages leading to the showcasing of new writing.

In 1997, *Intermission Impossible* was published. In addition to new works by Arthur Riordan, Loughlin Deegan and Johnny Hanrahan, a directory of one-act plays was also compiled and incorporated within the publication. *Intermission Impossible 2* is a valuable resource for one-act drama practitioners, while also stimulating interest from the professional theatre sector.

Working towards the second publication, an integrated approach was adopted in order to incorporate the initiative into the arts programme of Macra na Feirme. The arts programme, co-ordinated by an officer is a three-year initiative supported by the Arts Council/An Comhairle Ealaíon. By the end of 1997, a programme of multi-disciplinary arts activities was developing, in each project Macra members were making art with professional artists. The commissioning of three plays for publication in 1998 was incorporated within this framework.

In order to create a play that reflects contemporary rural life a careful selection process of participating groups and writers was essential. Three very different groups were selected in order to explore the wealth of experiences within the wider drama sector. Once groups were established, playwrights with experience of working creatively within a community context were selected. The first task of the writers was to source an experienced drama facilitator to work with them at each workshop. The role of the facilitator was to co-ordinate and lead workshops thus allowing the writer freedom to remain objective in the creation of the work and the capacity to ensure the development of the aesthetic. The brief for the writer was to write a play reflecting the contemporary rural experience, drawing from ideas, stories, improvisations etc. of the group. The working brief for the facilitator was to engage in the community drama, building the capacity of the group, to enable each group member to actively participate in the making of the play. Finally, the brief for the group was to commit to working with a writer and a drama facilitator for ten weeks in order to create a new work. In every case, working methodologies were developed by the writer and facilitator in consultation with the group.

In this way, three new plays were commissioned which culminate and are celebrated in this publication. 'Family Planning' was written by Michelle Read and Red Cross Drama Group. The process was facilitated by Sue Mythen.

Red Cross Drama Group based in rural Wicklow was formed for this project. It is made up of ex-Macra na Feirme members from the area who had a wealth of experience in drama, and current Macra members from the area keen on learning new drama skills.

"Homeground" was written by Margaret Hawkins together with a new group comprised of Macra members from the neighbouring clubs and the experienced amateur drama group - The Enniscorthy Players. This project was facilitated by Michael Rodden. As the second play was near completion, Glanworth Macra na Feirme asked to be a part of a play writing project. This marked an important progression in the playwriting initiative as the process of community writing was beginning to be accepted as a club activity by the membership of the organisation. Glanworth club worked with playwright Jack Healy and facilitator Brid ni Chionaiola and "Margarita" was written.

Macra na Feirme wish to thank all that were involved in the making of these new plays. While drawing together of material and editing of the script was the responsibility of the writer, the substance of these plays was created through the imagination and participation of the individuals that attended workshops. The wealth of material gleaned from these three groups cannot be measured nor the working experience be recreated. "Family Planning", "Homeground" and "Margarita" are plays that generously add to the canon of one-act plays and not least are a celebration of community arts practice.

*Jackie O' Keeffe.*

## Acknowledgements.

Intermission Impossible 2 would really be impossible without the dedication and hard work of many people. I would like especially to thank Jackie O' Keeffe, previous arts officer with Macra na Feirme who developed the Intermission Impossible project to allow for deeper involvement of the members in the process of devising a play script. The three playwrights were of course the vital element in the process - Michelle Read, Margaret Hawkins and Jack Healy must be congratulated on the insight and dedication to the process. Each of the facilitators, Sue Mythen, Michael Rodden and Brid ní Chionaiola played an important role in bridging the work of the playwrights and the activity of the club members and thus bringing the play to life.

Donn McMullin worked tirelessly and effortlessly to produce this book, and must be congratulated on its production. Rachel and Barry at DBA had the task of designing the book and must be thanked again for their dedication to seeing the project through its final stages. Joe Molloy previously worked with the arts officer and must be acknowledged for the creation of the title of this three phase project - Intermission Impossible. I would also like to thank Siobhain O' Dowd who has assisted in seeing this project to final fruition. Most importantly, I would like to thank and commend all of the Macra na Feirme members who participated in the project and without whom this process would not have been possible. On behalf of Macra na Feirme congratulations and thankyou.

*Jessica Fuller*  
*National Arts Officer*



## An Aid to Play Selection

The aim of this publication is threefold. Firstly, it is to welcome all Macra groups who have become interested in theatrical production, but have difficulty in gaining access to suitable playscripts. Secondly, it is to provide a modest but varied selection of plays, which can conform to Macra regulations with regard to playing time, and setting, while also offering a range of titles hitherto either unknown or unavailable. (As time passes and more new scripts become available, it is hoped to extend this selection.) Thirdly, it is to provide such groups with information concerning copyright and performance rights, and how these apply to all play presentations, both amateur and professional.

With regard to copyright and performance rights, it is an unfortunate fact that many amateur dramatic societies are unaware of the responsibilities, and more importantly, the legalities, which arise when a play production is planned. The reality is that all plays are protected by copyright, and the rights to perform them must be sought and obtained in writing, from the appropriate agent, before any performances can take place. This process will automatically involve the Production Company in the payment of production fees. It is also an offence to photocopy scripts unless permission to do so has been obtained from the author or his agent. The reason for these regulations should be apparent. Such performance fees as are requested, and such scripts as are needed, represent an important source of income for the respective authors. It must be recognised that the author - like any member of any profession - is entitled to payments for his/her services! Apart from these considerations, *any group ignoring the laws of copyright leaves itself open to costly legal proceedings! So be warned!*

The plays listed in this publication are drawn from six different sources: the Samuel French Guide to Selecting Plays; the Warner/Chappell Play Catalogue; the Dramatic Publishing Catalogue /Nick Hern Books; the Drama Association of Wales Library; the collection of one-act play scripts which have featured in the Cork Arts Theatre One-Act Play Competition (established 1989) - and lastly, from the plays which have been specially commissioned by Macra na Feirme for this publication.

The details of fees relating to all plays listed in this directory may be obtained from the appropriate agent. After each listed play, the initials of the appropriate source identify the appropriate agent. The names and addresses of these agents are included in part one. An average of £24 - £36 (Sterling where applicable) is required for each production.

Fees for other synopsised plays specially commissioned by Macra na Feirme are negotiable, please contact agent directly or Macra na Feirme.

Since many of the Cork Arts Theatre plays are unpublished, photocopies may be obtained at a cost of £5.00 each from Donn McMullin. Should, however, any prospective producer wish to read any of these plays, they may do so by calling on person to the **Cork Arts Theatre, 7 Knapps square, Cork**. The requested scripts may then be read, on the premises, at no cost.

Finally, while this publication cannot, and does not, claim to be a comprehensive and definitive guide to play selection, it is hoped that it will at least prove informative and helpful. It is hoped that it may assist groups in choosing from a wider and more adventurous variety of plays than have been known or accessible to date.

A Final note of encouragement. The Cork Arts Theatre One Act Play Competition inaugurated in 1989, is an annual event, which is usually announced early in each new year. It offers two prizes of £100 each, one for best writing, and one for the best production of the plays, which are short-listed in the competition. This latter event usually occurs later in the year, at a time specifically designated for such premiere productions. The number of plays performed during this event depends on the availability of groups prepared to present one of the short-listed plays. This varies from year to year, but generally results in between six and nine productions. So, maybe in your group, there is someone with a burning ambition to write a play and better still - having made the short-list, finally see it performed. If that's the case they need look no further! Just write to: The Cork Arts Theatre, 6 Knapps Square, Cork Tel. (021) 508398, and ask for details. And if that is not enough to galvanise a budding playwright, there is the further news that The Drama Association of Wales also has a very attractive and similar competition, with the added bonus of possible publication for the winning entry. For further details of this particular competition you should turn to the page devoted to the Drama Association of Wales. This is listed in the contents of this guide. With either, or both of these exciting opportunities in mind, now is the time to take out your pen and pad and start writing! Who knows, we could be including your play in the next edition of this directory? Looking forward to hearing from you! And good luck!

*Donn McMullin*  
1998





# **PART I**

## **One Act Play Directory**



**List of one-act plays per title**

N.B. In the following listing, "the" and "a" are not included when placing titles in alphabetical order. The listing is determined by the next work in the title. For example, "The Baggage Carriers" is entered under "b" for "baggage".

Afterwards	Cian McGarrigle.	19
Amazon	Susan Knight.	19
Anguish of the Ecstasy, The	Max McGowan.	20
Ark, The	Helen Griffin.	20
Baggage Carriers, The	Bridgid Galvin.	20
Bespoke Overcoat, The	Wolf Mankowitz.	21
Bethrothal, A	Lanford Wilson.	21
Bookends	Scott Perry.	22
Chance to Cry Out, A	Brendan Griffin.	22
Clara	Arthur Miller.	23
Cleaning Up	Michael Lynch.	23
Cupboard Love	Max McGowan.	24
Curse	Sinclair Hilton.	24
Dark Side Of Thirty, The	Michael Lynch.	24
Dead	David Abolafia.	25
Deeper Than Dark, Darker Than Blood	Lindsay Sedgwick.	25
Dock Brief, The	John Mortimer.	25
Donahue Sisters, The	Geraldine Aron.	26
Drag Factor, The	Frank Vickery.	26
Duplex	Keith Trezise.	26
Faint Voices	John Mckenna.	27
Fine Girls You Are	Sarah Varian-Barry.	27
Fire	Paul Connolly.	28
Flight Out Of Malaga	Michael Lynch.	28
Flowers For Algernon	David Rogers.	28
Free Radical, The	Max McGowan.	29
Geneva Window, The	Max McGowan.	29
Greatest Hits	Thomas Mcloughlin.	30
Healing The Dead	Johnny Hanrahan.	30
Hebrew Lesson, The	Wolf Mankowitz.	31

Home Talk From Abroad	Brendan Griffin.	31
House With No Windows, A	Joe Valentine.	32
Hubie's Best Friend	Jules Tasca.	32
Invisible Man, The	Jennifer Johnson.	32
Last Bread Pudding, The	Nick Warburton.	33
Last Temptation Of Michael Flatley, The	Arthur Riordan.	33
Legacy, The	Meredith Knight.	34
Lifelines	Amy Rosenthal.	35
Little Miss Fresno	Mary Gallagher.	35
Louder, I Can't Hear You	Bill Gleason.	35
Lunch Hour	John Mortimer.	36
Magnetism	Michael Lynch.	36
Man Who Didn't Fit In, The	Fintan McCutcheon.	37
Manna	Susan Knight.	37
Men's Talk	Fintan McCutcheon.	38
Moment In Time, A	Eddie Kennedy.	38
Mozart Man, The	Tony Powell.	39
Nightingale And Not The Lark, The	Jennifer Johnson.	39
Night Under Canvas, A	Lisa Hunt.	40
Obituary Show, The	Steve Farr.	40
Office Song	Nick Warburton.	40
Old Goat Song	Jules Tasca.	41
One For The Road	Harold Pinter.	41
One Man Down	Loughlin Deegan.	42
Party, The	Derek O'Gorman.	43
Past Caring	Frances O'Keeffe.	43
Picking Up Soldiers	Brendan Griffin	43
Pizzazz	Hugh Leonard.	43
Porch, The	Jennifer Johnson.	44
Portrait Of A Madonna	Tennessee Williams.	44
Quiet Place, The	Eddie Kennedy.	45
Rats, Brats, And Bureaucrats	Neil Rhodes.	45
Remember Me	Lindsay Sedgwick.	46
Retarded	Michael Lynch.	46

Risks Taken	Michael Lynch.	46
Riverview. Tape 23	Coleen Neuman.	47
Roman Fever	Hugh Leonard.	47
Rozzy Comes Home	Frances O'Keeffe.	48
Sex Lives Of The Superheroes	Stephen Gregg.	48
Shared Mutual Experience	Lesley Ross.	48
Sharks In The Custard	Tony Layton.	49
Small Pillow	Brendan Griffin.	50
Snap Tins, The	Carol James.	50
Something Blue	Tony Layton.	50
Story Like A Pencil	Steve Farr.	51
Strange Case For Mortimer, A	Paschal O'sullivan.	51
Stupid People's Pointless Lives	Steve Farr.	52
Surfing, Carmarthen Bay	Roger Williams.	52
Sweet B. A	Anwen Huws.	53
There's Always Spring	Arthur Lovegrove.	53
Three Men In A Pub	Frances O'keeffe.	53
Trade Me A Dream	Lindsay Sedgwick.	54
Try It Again	J.B. Priestley.	54
Very Like A Whale	Frances O'Keeffe.	55
View From The Obelisk, A	Hugh Leonard.	55
Visit From Miss Protheroe, A	Alan Bennett.	55
Wind Netters, The	Ian Staples.	56
Within The Shadows	Scott Shallenbarger.	56
Wit's End	Neil Rhodes.	57
Womberang	Sue Townsend.	57
Words Of Advice	Fay Weldon.	58
Zoo Story, A	Edward Albee.	58

**List of Authors and Relevant Play Titles**

Abolafia, David.	Dead.
Albee, Edward.	A Zoo Story.
Aron, Geraldine.	The Donahue Sisters.
Varian-Barry, Sarah.	Fine Girls You Are.
Bennett, Alan.	A Visit From Miss Protheroe.
Connolly, Paul.	Fire.
Deegan, Loughlin.	One Man Down.
Farr, Steve.	The Obituary Show. Story Like A Pencil. Stupid People's Pointless Lives
Gallagher, Mary. (See Also Watson, Ara)	Little Miss Fresno
Galvin, Bridgid.	The Baggage Carriers.
Gleason, Bill.	Louder, I Can't Hear You.
Gregg, Stephen.	Sex Lives Of The Superheroes.
Griffin, Helen.	The Ark.
Griffin, Brendan.	A Chance To Cry Out. Home Talk From Abroad. Picking Up Soldiers. Small Pillow.
Hanrahan, Johnny.	Healing The Dead.
Hilton, Sinclair.	Curse.
Hunt, Lisa.	A Night Under Canvas.

Huws, Anwen.

James, Carol.

Johnson, Jennifer.

Kennedy, Eddie.

Knight, Meredith.

Knight, Susan.

Layton, Tony.

Leonard, Hugh

Lovegrove, Arthur.

Lynch, Michael.

Mankowitz, Wolf.

McCutcheon, Fintan

McGarrigle, Cian.

Sweet B.A.

The Snap Tins.

The Invisible Man.

The Nightingale And Not The Lark.

The Porch.

A Moment In Time.

A Quiet Place.

The Legacy.

Amazon.

Manna.

Sharks In The Custard.

Something Blue

Pizzazz.

Roman Fever.

A View From The Obelisk.

There's Always Spring.

Cleaning Up.

The Dark Side Of Thirty.

Flight Out Of Malaga.

Magnetism.

Retarded.

Risks Taken.

The Bespoke Overcoat.

The Hebrew Lesson.

The Man Who Didn't Fit In.

Men's Talk.

Afterwards.

McGowan, Max	The Anguish And The Ecstasy. Cupboard Love. The Free Radical. The Geneva Window. Faint Voices.
McKenna, John.	
McLoughlin, Thomas.	Greatest Hits.
Miller, Arthur	Clara.
Mortimer, John.	The Dock Brief. Lunch Hour.
Neuman, Colleen.	Riverview. Tape 23.
O'Gorman, Derek.	The Party.
O'Keefe, Frances.	Past Caring. Rozzy Comes Home. Three Men In A Pub. Very Like A Whale.
O'Sullivan, Paschal.	A Strange Case For Mortimer.
Perry, Scott.	Bookends.
Pinter, Harold.	One For The Road.
Powell, Tony.	The Mozart Man.
Priestley, J.B..	Try It Again.
Rhodes, Neil.	Rats, Brats And Bureaucrats. Wits End.
Riordan, Arthur.	The Last Temptation Of Michael Flatley.
Rogers, David. (Based On The Book By Daniel Keyes.)	Flowers For Algernon.
Rosenthal, Amy.	Lifelines.



Ross, Lesley.	Shared Mutual Experience.
Sedgwick, Lindsay.	Deeper Than Dark, Darker Than Blood. Remember Me. Trade Me A Dream.
Shallenbarger, Scott.	Within The Shadows.
Staples, Ian.	The Wind Netters.
Tasca, Jules.	Hubie's Best Friend. Old Goat Song.
Townsend, Sue.	Womberang.
Trezise, Keith.	Duplex.
Valentine, Joe.	A House With No Windows.
Vickery, Frank.	The Drag Factor.
Warburton, Nick.	The Last Bread Pudding. Office Song.
Weldon, Fay.	Words Of Advice.
Williams, Roger.	Surfing, Carmarthen Bay.
Williams, Tennessee.	Portrait Of A Madonna.
Wilson, Lanford	A Betrothal.
Watson, Ara (See Also Gallagher, Mary)	Little Miss Fresno.

## Agents Listings

**Samuel French Catalogue = S.F.C.**

**Agent:** Mr. Tom Mooney,  
Swords Road,  
Dublin 9.  
Tel: (01) 8427928.

**Warner / Chappell Plays = W.C.P**

**Agent:** Mr. Tom Mooney  
Swords Road  
Dublin 9.  
Tel.: (01) 84279298

**Dramatic Publishing / Nick Hern Books. = N.H.B.**

**Agent:** Ms. Jemima Rhys Evans,  
The Glasshouse,  
49A, Goldhawk Road,  
Shepherd's Bush,  
London W12 8QP.  
England.  
Tel: (0044) 181 749 4953. Fax (0044) 181 746 2006.

**Drama Association of Wales = D.A.W.**

**Agent:** The Library,  
Singleton Road,  
Splott,  
Cardiff,  
Wales.  
Tel: (0044) 1222 452200. Fax (0044) 1222 452277.

**Cork Arts Theatre. = C.A.T.**

**Agent:** Mr. Donn McMullin A.D.A.  
Ard na Rí,  
Kilmoney,  
Carrigaline,  
Co. Cork.  
Tel: (021) 372777.

## Guide to and Synopses of Plays



## SYNOPSIS OF PLAYS (In Alphabetical order)

**AFTERWARDS.** By Cian McGarrigle. 2M. 1F.

Brian and Alan have just returned from the funeral of their friend Kieran. Emotions are raw. At eighteen they are finding it very difficult to come to terms with his sudden and totally unexpected death in a drowning accident. In an attempt to achieve some sort of normality, they reminisce about the last summer holiday, and their long friendship. They and all the others of their group have agreed to meet that night at their favourite meeting place, simply referred to as 'The Hill'. However Alan reveals that he has asked Jean, Kieran's ex-girlfriend to join them. Brian thinks that this is a mistake, as that relationship was broken off a year or so ago, and Kieran was very upset when it had happened. As they are discussing the situation Jean appears. She is full of guilt, but Brian, in his anger does not wish to talk about his - and their close friend's death. Jean tells them that she feels as powerless and shattered as they do. What could she have done to prevent it? After all it was just an accident, wasn't it? At first Brian is reluctant to talk any further. Jean, suspecting that Brian is not levelling with her continues to press the point. In his confusion and pain, Brian blurts out something that he has kept secret, at great cost to himself. Kieran had left a note! It was suicide! Alan and Jean are stunned, and now find themselves burdened with a secret that they cannot, and must not, share with anyone. Now, more than ever, they must stick together. This tender and painful play has been short-listed in the Cork Arts Theatre One-Act Play Competition for 1998. An affecting short play, it offers three strong, emotional roles for young actors. The sitting room setting provides no difficulties. The sadly up-to-the-minute theme will appeal to any director looking for a play, which deals with a sensitive area in modern day living in Ireland.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)

**AMAZON.** By Susan Knight. 1M. 2F.

Unmarried Gloria and her separated sister Maria share the family home while looking after their bedridden mother. However, Maria does little of the caring, preferring to stuff herself with chocolates while watching a linguistically incomprehensible, but visually torrid soap on T.V! When Gloria brings home good-looking, but mother-fixated Paul, all is set for complications and a love tangle. The urgent ringing of the invalid's bell from upstairs frequently interrupts the amorous activities! At a later stage, with the problem of mother solved to everyone's satisfaction, Maria, lured by the attraction of "Amazon" - her favourite soap - decides on a cruise up that river. However, before she departs she plans a surprise for her stay-at-home sister! An improbable comedy, but with some serious undertones, this play won the Production Award at the Cork Arts Theatre One-Act Play Competition in 1995. An unusual play, with many comic moments it should prove attractive to seasoned groups seeking something different.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)

**THE ANGUISH OF THE ECSTASY**, By Max McGowan. 2M. 2 F.

A successful expatriate, living in an unnamed eastern country, decides that polygamy may be the answer to his flagging sex-life. However, there is one slight complication -- He still wants his wife of some twenty years to remain his 'number one'! At first she refuses point blank to have anything to do with his bizarre suggestion, but later, in conspiracy with the already targeted 'number two', she changes her mind, and finds a devilishly clever way of foiling her husband's plan. Funny, with clever dialogue and a neat twist in the plot, this could prove an attractive choice for advanced groups.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)

**THE ARK**, By Helen Griffin. 3F.

Cecilia's husband is dead, and in both shock and grief, she finds it impossible to come to terms with her loss. In her depression, she even finds it very difficult to get out of her bed. However her biggest regret is that she discouraged him in his great ambition to build his own boat- his ark - and it is now too late to make amends. Because of this she cannot even face a walk on the beach. Her two daughters, - Martha and Agnes, - though also grief-stricken, try to help in any way they can. Martha, the more outgoing of the two, uses her offbeat humour and quirky view on life to tries to jolly her out of listlessness and depression. Agnes, the more level-headed one, trying a more practical approach, suggests disposing of Jimmy's clothes, as a way of putting some sort of end to her mother's endless recalling of the past. At the same time she admits to a strange feeling that she seems to get a glimpse of her father, now and again, out of the corner of her eye, standing at the top of the stairs, or in a doorway! However when she turns to look directly, there's nobody there! The conversation seems to bring some ease to Cecilia, though she sadly admits that what she misses is his calming hand on her shoulder. When the parish priest phones to say that he would like to call, the simple fact that there is no cake to offer him pushes her into action. Going to the wardrobe to choose a dress, her resolve weakens when she is confronted with Jimmy's clothes hanging there. Broken-heartedly she starts to talk to Jimmy, pouring out her pain and loss, and when she seems to feel his comforting hand on her shoulder, she suddenly decides that a visit to the beach is the happiest solution! This is a beautifully crafted and deeply touching play, by turns both funny and sad. It contains three satisfying roles for the all female cast. The bedroom setting should provide little difficulty.

\*(Agent: D.A.W.)

**THE BAGGAGE CARRIERS**. By Bridgid Galvin. 3F.

This play looks at the lives of three sisters who are collected in the family home on the eve of their mother's funeral. They are Phil-tough, critical, and very successful in business; Susan - gentle, decent and only scraping by, while married to a lay-about husband; Mags, who though in



her thirties has the mental age of a young child and has always lived at home. While funeral arrangements are made, the matter that lies most heavily on both Phil and Susan, is how they can tell Mags that she is to be placed in residential care now that there is nobody in the family home to look after her. Each is torn by the decision they have to take. While both Phil and Susan already have their own burdens to carry, Mags - to a great extent - is protected from harsh reality by her child-like state. So, who then are "The Baggage Carriers" of the title? Delicate, emotive, thought-provoking and dealing with a painful problem for many families nowadays, this play catches at the heart, while providing strong roles for all three actresses.

\* (Agent: C.A.T.)

#### **THE BESPOKE OVERCOAT.** By Wolf Mankowitz. 4M.

This acclaimed little classic tells of Fender, a brow-beaten warehouse clerk, who having worked for forty-three years for a callous employer, finds himself sacked. The years of perishing cold in the warehouse have taken their toll and Fender is now dead. Before his death he had placed an order with his old friend Morry, the tailor, for a new, splendid overcoat --- the Bespoke Overcoat of the title. Now dead, he cannot complete payment for the coat, and returns to beg Morry to help him obtain an overcoat from the stock of his ex-boss -- an overcoat that he considers is his due! In his alcohol-induced, dream state, Morry and Fender set out to raid the warehouse, with strange results. A simple, composite set with three acting areas being indicated by careful lighting, will help with this demanding piece. Biting and funny by turns, the play calls for an ability to capture the distinctive Jewish expressions, rhythms and cadences. This can be a rewarding choice for those willing to take the risk of tackling something out of the ordinary.

\*(Agent: S.F.C.)

#### **A BETROTHAL.** By Lanford Wilson. 1M.1F.

Set at a flower show, the play tells of the hopes and disappointments of two fanatical flower-growers. For years each of them have been concentrating on only one species of flower- the iris. Ms. J.H. Joslyn and Mr. Wasserman are both Intermediate Breeders, and are seated in a tent occasionally taking a scornful glance at the judging procedure, taking place outside. Ms Joslyn is quite angry as her entry, named Little Soldier has been repeatedly passed over. Mr. Wasserman, having a gentler nature, is upset and disappointed that his carefully nurtured entry Little Tanya has been equally ignored. When he tries to engage Ms. Joslyn in social conversation, she continually rebuffs him, denies where she lives, or that she has any connection with a school which had recently visited the municipal gardens where he works. Because of her frustration and wounded pride she refuses any compliments or words of comfort. Finally each grudgingly admits that their respective entries may just possibly have some tiny flaw! So when he says "If my Tanya had the texture of your Little Soldier." and she replies "If my Soldier had the colour of Tanya.", the scene is set for the betrothal of the title! This is a warm-hearted, humorous play with delightful

dialogue. When first seen in London the reviewer in *The Times* had this to say "The fierce humour of this short but substantial play makes you wish it was twice as long". The setting is minimal, and apart from the need for some background noise from the crowd outside, there are no technical problems to be faced. The two roles are cleverly crafted and provide plenty of scope for subtle comedy playing. The unusual theme should appeal to directors looking for new material.

\*(Agent: W. C. P.)

**BOOKENDS.** By Scott Perry. 2 M.

Ron and Bill, two old men, sit on a park bench. They come here each afternoon by long standing arrangement for their daily meeting at their usual '5 o'clock spot'. However as the play opens there has been a break in their routine. Both of them have been away without telling the other and now there's some catching up to do on the events of the past few weeks. Each feel aggrieved at the others absence, and is touchy and grumpy. It gradually emerges that Bill has been away, reliving the past at the hotel where he had spent his honeymoon. At the same Ron, having escaped from the old people's home where his family had placed him, has been enjoying himself on the cross - channel ferry to Amsterdam. As they talk their conversation ranges over a variety of topics of major importance for Senior Citizens - old people's homes, the distress of growing old, the lack of understanding in families, and the bewildering changes wrought by the passage of time. However, far from being depressed, they are full of fighting spirit. The play is both moving and funny by turns and ends with them agreeing to continue to meet for their usual '5 o'clock spot'. The simple and economical setting makes it easy to stage this play. However it does demand sensitive playing by both actors, who may well be playing characters considerably senior to their actual ages. It should also prove a challenge to a director looking for something a little different.

\*(Agent: S.F.C.)

**A CHANCE TO CRY OUT.** By Brendan Griffin. 2M.

A thoughtful and moving play dealing with a father / son relationship. As the plot progresses we learn that the son has died as a young boy. At that time the father had to make the choice as to whether he should, or should not, tell the boy of his impending death. However for the tortured father the boy remains alive, questioning, frightened. Since then, the father has carried a burden of guilt and deep pain. Can there never be peace and release from the past? This is a difficult but rewarding two-hander, requiring sensitivity from both actors and director.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)



**CLARA.** By Arthur Miller. 3M. 1F.

As the play starts Clara is already dead - brutally murdered! Her father, Albert Kroll, who is now in a state of acute shock, has discovered her body. The hard-boiled and cynical Detective Lieutenant Fine has arrived on the scene and is becoming frustrated by the old man's inability to answer his questions. Is Albert unable to help, or merely unwilling? Gradually it becomes apparent that the horror of the situation has caused him to block out the memory, and that only astute coaxing can help. In his pain and loss, Albert conjures up memories of his beloved dead daughter, and even has short conversations with her. Clara had been a social worker in a depressed and dangerous part of the city, but had steadfastly refused to acknowledge the dangers of her job. Then, becoming even more involved, she had opted for prisoner rehabilitation. In this way she had become emotionally involved with one particular man, an ex-convict who had served time for the murder of his girlfriend. Though he had known of the man's criminal record, Albert had done little to stop the relationship, because he had once seen a female fellow worker kiss Clara, and the possible implications of that vague relationship had caused him even greater fears than her attachment to the apparently rehabilitated murderer! Now he feels only huge guilt and desolation. The detective wants to know the name of the ex-convict, but in his grief and horror Albert is unable to remember. It is only when a sudden and brutal memory from his wartime past suddenly returns that the elusive information is released. This is a powerful, dramatic play from the pen of one of the greatest dramatists of modern times. While the setting is relatively simple, the costuming of the police officers may provide some difficulties. However a dedicated director will, no doubt, take such a problem in his stride!

\*(Agent: W.C.P.)

**CLEANING UP.** By Michael Lynch. 5 F.

A light-hearted comedy concerning some cleaning ladies in a factory - all of different ages and attitudes but united on one point -- a decided lack of either affection or respect for their boss! Vacuum cleaners, polishers and a shortage of proper materials govern their days. It is not a very exciting existence, until a sizeable sum of money is found concealed in an unusual location! Wild imagination and suggestions run riot and their lives suddenly become much more exciting! Why was such a sum of notes left in an unmarked envelope? Why was it left in this particular spot? Who left it there? Who was it left for? What's it all about? And of course... Is it a question of "finders-keepers"? Each member of the group has her own ideas about the intriguing situation, but it is the unlikely and timid Sarah who - quite unintentionally - makes the revelation in the end! An amusing play calling for good comic abilities from all concerned.

\*( Agent: C.A.T. )

**CUPBOARD LOVE.** By Max McGowan. 2M. 1F.

An unusual and off-beat play -part comedy, part thriller/ chiller concerning Emma, a woman who believes that she can contact "The Dear Departed" and pass on messages! When she does, however, she unleashes very strange and powerful forces, and opens a truly frightening can of worms. As a result, she has taken on board more than she can handle. The play requires skill in dealing with Special Effects, and an ability to find unusual props! Short-listed in the Cork Arts Theatre One Act Play Competition, the play subsequently won second prize in the P.J.O'Connor awards on R.T.E. in 1996.

\* (Agent: C.A.T.)

**CURSE.** By Sinclair Hilton. 3M. 3F.

Richard Blane at 45 is, in his own words "Too old to be a yuppie, and too young for a senior citizen's rail-card. So what's left? Death?" His life seems totally aimless, and worse still, useless. As the play opens, his only daughter Sarah is returning from her honeymoon. Not particularly liking his new son-in-law, Richard opts for a walk in the nearby park. Conversations with the coffee-stall owner and a young Punk girl reveal much about his current state of mind, and also why he feels that he has reached a dead end. However, he knows that he must still face the boring and distasteful party with an unsympathetic wife and the blushing honeymooners. When he decides to derail the celebration by making an appearance in his wife's clothes, the reactions of the others are both predictable and startling at the same time. It is left to Sarah to try and salvage her parents' wobbly marriage. Compassion and a need for understanding lie at the heart of this totally humorous and moving play, which deals with the rarely acknowledged pain and sadness of men travelling through the psychological bewilderment of the male menopause. The split setting of park and suburban living room is easy to achieve. All the roles provide worthwhile acting opportunities, and the play should prove of particular interest to directors seeking a script that addresses an up-to-date and important issue.

\*(Agent: D.A.W.)

**THE DARK SIDE OF THIRTY.** By Michael Lynch. 1M. 1F.

Set on a seaside golf course, which at one point borders on a cliff-top, this unusual drama starts with the chance meeting between Henry - a thirty-something loner- with a rather dark sense of humour - and Sheila an attractive young wife who longs for a child, but who now accepts that adoption is the only option remaining open to her. Sheila, intrigued by Henry's off-beat attitude and conversation, reveals more about herself than would appear wise, while Henry lets slip mysterious and unsettling hints about his past and his future hopes. But is it the truth? All of it? Any of it? A clever mixture of comedy and pathos, with an undercurrent of menace, give this play a gripping quality, and an unusual and unexpected end. Requiring the minimum of setting, this play depends on strong characterisation and deft direction.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)

**DEAD.** By David Abolafia. 1M. 1F.

This unusual play tells of Jack Martin, a thirty-five year old Romeo, who has shown little respect or regard for the many women who have fallen for his dubious charms. He's also more than a little fond of the delights of Demon Drink! Now all that is over! As the play opens Jack finds himself face-to-face with a formidable receptionist, Delia. It appears that just minutes ago Jack's human body suffered a lethal dose of alcoholic poisoning, and he is now in some unearthly waiting room, while his final destination is being arranged! With the aid of a celestial computer, Delia seems to be in possession of endless, accurate and discreditable information on the life and times of Jack Martin. As she says, "To you, women are subordinate creatures, meant to cater to the whims of men like you" and she goes on to recite a formidable list. At first Jack refuses to believe he is dead, but feeling as ill as he does, he gradually accepts this seemingly inevitable conclusion. It's then that the awfulness of the situation hits him! But despite the use of his one-time charms, Delia will not give him the slightest hint of his final destination Up or Down! And when Delia finally bids him goodbye, there is still another twist to the plot! This is a macabre two-hander, but not without its share of humour. There are two interesting roles. The setting is simple. For a director with a liking for a surprise ending, this play should prove ideal!

\*(Agent: N.H.B.)

**DEEPER THAN DARK, DARKER THAN BLOOD.** By Lindsay Sedgwick. 2M.

This taut psychological thriller tells of Ian, a young man who places an advertisement in a newspaper, seeking participants for what appears to be a scientific experiment. When Doc, a mild middle-aged man appears in response to it, all is set for a taut game of cat-and-mouse. Are the two men really total strangers to each other? Does Ian know Doc's wife? Is this a blackmail attempt? Why the hints about murder, knives and blood? This is a tense and rewarding two-hander, but be prepared for a truly violent ending! Not for the squeamish! Calls for tight imaginative production and sharp edgy acting from both actors in these strong roles.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)

**THE DOCK BRIEF.** By John Mortimer. 2M.

Fowle, a hen-pecked bird-fancier has murdered his wife, and is now in his cell awaiting trial. Having no legal representative himself, he has a barrister appointed by the court to defend him. This is the bumbling and bungling Morgenhall. In the first scene Morgenhall questions his client, lays out what he considers is a splendid defence, and tries to rehearse his client in his responses. They then leave the cell for the courtroom. In the second scene, on their return to the cell, we learn that the case has been lost. However there is a surprising, sardonic twist in the tail that will delight audiences. The simple setting should appeal to many groups. However this biting, and sad, comic drama requires two sharp, quick-fire performances, and a sure directorial hand.

\*(Agent: S.F.C.)



**THE DONAHUE SISTERS.** By Geraldine Aron. 3F.

This is a chilling and disturbing play about three sisters who have returned home for a family funeral. Now in their middle years, they decide to visit the attic of the family home, in which they played as children. At first all seems normal on the surface, with just occasional bitchy comments and tensions. However their childhood holds one horrendous secret. Gradually and ritualistically they relive, yet again, a truly shocking incident, and end with a frightening decision. The setting can be simple but requires a considerable clutter. The play provides the cast of three with meaty acting opportunities, but also requires a firm directorial hand.

\* (Agent: C.A.T.)

**THE DRAG FACTOR.** By Frank Vickery. 2M. 1F.

Ruby is tearful and distressed as she waits in the hospital corridor outside the door of her son Nigel's room. He has been double jobbing, had fallen asleep at the wheel of his car, and has suffered quite serious injuries. The only comfort that Ruby has received is from the male nurse in attendance. Then Griff, her husband, arrives and it quickly becomes apparent that there is considerable tension between the couple, when Griff declares that he has come to support Ruby but that he has no intention of seeing Nigel. It emerges that the previous Saturday, at a night-club, Griff had discovered that his son was gay, when Nigel and his partner appeared on stage as a drag duo. Griff stunned, hurt and above all ashamed wants to have nothing further to do with Nigel. Ruby, who also finds the situation difficult, tries to calm and console her husband, and to convince him that now, more than ever, Nigel is going to need their love and support. Try as she may, Griff cannot accept the situation. When he declares "You can say what all you want, I can't like him for what he does." she replies "All right don't - you can still love him for what he is." From there on the play moves to its poignant ending. Despite its serious theme, the play is also blisteringly funny with totally convincing and effective dialogue. The setting is simplicity itself, and the characters of Ruby and Griff offer brilliant opportunities for younger actors to tackle more mature roles.

\*(Agent: D.A.W.)

**DUPLEX.** By Keith Trezise. 3M. 2F. 2Extras.

Is Paul Wentworth playing some game in order to fool his wife and his brother? Is he cheating on his wife, Judy? Is he leading a double life? Certainly his brother, Rick, is convinced that he has seen him with another woman, and also stepping out of a car which has been involved in a minor traffic accident. Paul furiously denies it all! At the same time he cannot understand or explain how their joint bank account has been cleaned out, nor why the cash machine has swallowed his card. There is no doubt that he has been working very hard, spending long hours at the office trying to drum up more business in order to pay off their bills or so he says! In the face of growing evidence to the contrary, neither Judy nor Rick is inclined to believe him. When Paul

continues to insist forcefully and angrily that they are both wrong, Judy begins to waver. Could Paul have a double a doppelganger? Paul latches on to the idea, comes up with some strange theories, and becomes quite threatening. Now greatly alarmed, Judy decides to send for their doctor. At this Paul becomes violent, with serious consequences. When finally all seems to have been resolved, there is yet another bizarre twist to the plot! This is a tense, tightly-written play, providing meaty roles for the four principal actors. The setting is a modern flat, and should pose few difficulties, though careful design will help the action considerably. For a director with a 'Hitchcock' turn of mind this play should prove very attractive.

\*(Agent: D.A.W.)

**FAINT VOICES.** By John McKenna. 2M. 2F. 2M extras 2F extras.

As the play opens the Irish poet Francis Ledwidge is already dead on a battlefield in France in World War 1. Born in Slane, Co. Meath, Ledwidge had joined the English army when the long-term love of his life had married another man, after the persistent pressure of her family. Ironically, Ellie herself had pre-deceased Ledwidge, dying in child-birth in Manchester in 1915. In this lyrically retelling of their love story we are introduced to Francis Ledwidge's mother and his old friend Matty McGoona. The ghosts of both Francis and Ellie are there to tell a little more, to comment, and through Ledwidge's poetry reveal his love. Finally, when Mrs. Ledwidge reads from the letter of the Padre who officiated at her son's burial it is left to Matty to add his own tender goodbye to the two people whom he loved. This is a gentle and evocative play which requires great sensitivity both in acting and directing. The setting is an open stage divided into separate areas by careful imaginative lighting. Attention will also need to be paid to ensuring accurate period costuming. This play won the All Ireland One Act Festival in 1995.

\*(Agent: N.H.B.)

**FINE GIRLS YOU ARE !** By Sarah Varian-Barry. 2M and 5F.

Carmel and Deirdre, two friends - both with rocky marriages, are feisty and tough with earthy tongues to match, meet for a night out at their favourite pub. Both are very concerned about the third member of their group - Joan, a separated mother with three small children. Likeable Joan seems dogged by ill-luck! Now, to add to her troubles her most recent boyfriend - a Frenchman - has done a runner, together with her savings, bits of jewellery and her car. A sanctimonious gossip at the next table earwigs on Carmel and Deirdre's conversation, and makes vicious jibes at everyone. In an attempt to cheer up their unfortunate friend, Carmel phones Joan and coaxes her to join them. When Joan arrives help and sympathy for her misfortunes seem to be on hand in the guise of Heno, the manager of a local factory. But there is still another shock in store for Joan - and her friends must rally again to her aid! Funny and sad by turns, strong characterisation together with some salty, broad humour make this a lively choice for groups with confident actors.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)

**FIRE.** By Paul Connolly. 6M. 3F (1 Teenager.)

Ireland in the next century - very much under the control of Brussels and the E.U. Global temperatures have risen, and the country is sweltering. Hubert, a senior civil servant, is sent by the Minister for Forestry to investigate mysterious fires which threaten the huge and immensely valuable tracts of trees which have been planted - by government order - all over the midlands. Dairy farming is all but wiped out! Now back in his own native county, Hubert meets with old friends and also an odd assortment of characters, including reformed men of violence, a local "spacer", and bewildered forest dwellers. A further forest fire brings both the Minister and Hubert's wife on the scene and this leads to a surprising conclusion. A most unusual piece of theatre involving song, dance and special effects, it provides an exciting challenge for any group or director in search of something novel and taxing.

\*( Agent: C.A.T. )

**FLIGHT OUT OF MALAGA.** By Michael Lynch. 1M. 3F.

Three young Irishwomen arrive for the Spanish holiday of a lifetime. They have been loaned an apartment by a friend-of-a-friend, and right from the start things seem set to go wrong! The key doesn't fit the apartment door and the drastic action they take to rectify this leads to further complications. When Sam, an expatriate Englishman appears on the scene everything seems set to improve. However when Sam - who fancies himself as a bit of a Romeo - makes blatant passes at each of the women in turn, the trio decide to teach him a lesson! The opportunity to do so comes quickly and their revenge is fairly drastic - maybe even illegal! However, with the holiday all but ended, and their bags packed for the return flight home, they are delighted with their handiwork. After all, they'll never see Sam again. But are they right...? Bright, light entertainment, this play gives the entire cast a chance to display their comic abilities.

\*( Agent: C.A.T. )

**FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON.** By David Rogers. Based on the book by Daniel Keyes. 4M. 1W. or 3M. 2W.

Alice Kinnian is a remedial teacher, one of whose pupils is Charlie Gordon a retarded young man. Though Charlie is thirty-three, he has the mental age of an eight year old child. He has been institutionalised and there is no known record of the whereabouts of his parents or indeed any other relative. When Charlie first joined Alice's class he was totally unable to read or write. Now, however with her encouragement and devotion he can do both. So, when Alice reads that two neurosurgeons, Professor Nemur and his younger colleague, Dr. Strauss are seeking volunteers to undergo brain surgery that apparently can help persons suffering from mental impairment, she makes contact with the two men. When she then learns that there is some risk involved and that the outcome might be unsuccessful, she is disturbed and uncertain whether to agree to Charlie



undergoing such uncertain procedures. She is even more alarmed when she learns that this surgical procedure has to date only been used on mice. However, together, the two surgeons succeed in allaying her fears, and Charlie is prepared for the operation. During the waiting period Charlie becomes friendly with a young laboratory technician, and through this association, meets up with Algernon, one of the mice which have undergone the operation with startlingly positive results. From there on the play charts the parallel fortunes of Charlie and his mouse -friend, Algernon. In an age when we hear much about genetic engineering, this play is both topical and disturbing. It poses a special challenge for the actor taking the role of Charlie, though all the roles should prove attractive to an experienced group. It should also appeal to the director searching for a script on an unusual and provocative theme.

\*(Agent: N.H.B.)

**THE FREE RADICAL.** By Max Mc Gowan 3M and 2F.

A lady-killer with a most unusual method of grass cutting convinces a snobbish lady to let him tend her lawns. Though intrigued by his line of banter, when he tries a con job on her, she and her timid next door neighbour turn the tables on him, and reveal a dark secret from the past. Witty, comic and scary by times, this play offers a real alternative to any group or directors seeking a departure from the usual theatrical fare. Short listed, this play won the authors' award in the 1995 Cork Arts Theatre One Act Play Competition.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)

**THE GENEVA WINDOW.** By Max McGowan. 12M (Allows doubling) 4 F.  
1 Street Singer M or F.

The story behind the play is based on a series of true incidents, which happened in Ireland in the early twenties of this century. However, they are embellished by the author's imagination, and by the introduction of a number of fictional characters along side of real figures of the time. It is therefore neither all Fact nor all Fiction but rather a clever mixture of both. The government of that time decided to commission a very accomplished stained glass artist, Harry Clarke to design and execute a window to represent Ireland in the newly constructed headquarters of the International Labour organisation, on the shores of Lake Geneva. Clarke, though seriously ill with T.B., and plagued by financial worries, struggled long and arduously to complete this major work, which consisted of eight panels. In this task he is aided by both his adoring wife, and by William Butler Yeats. The original cartoons are approved by a government delegation and this massive opus is completed. However, at the last moment the shipment, ready to be transported to Geneva for installation, was seized, on government orders. No rational explanation was ever given except for a statement that the work was 'not suitable for our purpose'! The work vanished into obscurity, only to be re-discovered in a dusty storage place over thirty years later and purchased by



an American museum for a sum way beyond Harry Clarke's wildest dreams! Unfortunately, by that time Harry and Margaret were both dead. The play is divided into twelve scenes, cleverly linked by a topical satirical ballad. There is need for attention to costume. Slick, fast-moving direction is also required to keep the action flowing. The doubling of a number of a number of roles, should prove a challenge to the actors.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)

**GREATEST HITS.** By Thomas McLoughlin. 2M.

This is a tense play concerning two men caught up in the underground world of terrorism. They meet in a featureless room and their edgy conversation quickly establishes hidden tensions and suppressed violence. Soon they begin to realise that they are involved in international terrorism, involving in many cases, the brutal deaths of innocent people. As Johnny drinks a beer he tries to persuade Bobby, who has been on the wagon for a year, to do the same. He also tries unobtrusively to pump Bobby on various 'hits' he's made recently. It then appears that some of these murders were not actually sanctioned by "The Board", and that they may have been committed for personal gain. Then the conversation veers off in another direction with mention of a new 'contract' specially arranged just because there appears to be no possible reason for it! "Violence" John says "It's dull. It's become dull. But what would grab people's imagination? Random violence! We should be going with whatever's happening. The mood of the times. Whatever fear and despair is out there, we should be using." Behind all this Johnny is playing his own merciless game to get Bobby to incriminate himself in the 'unauthorised' executions. They may well be friends of long standing but self preservation is more important! When push comes to shove it is a question of dog eat dog. In the concluding moments of the play we learn that Bobby is to be the next execution as accepted and engineered by his friend Johnny. This is a ruthless and chilling portrait of a vicious underground world that all too many suspect is out there, and just hidden below the surface. The setting is simple. The play provides two very strong edgy roles but will require a firm directorial hand.

\*(Agent: N.H.B.)

**HEALING THE DEAD.** By Johnny Hanrahan. 1M. 2F.  
(Specially commissioned by Macra na Feirme.)

Pearl, living in the famil home, has nursed her Aunt Sally for many years. Now her aunt is dead, and Pearl's brother, Michael and her sister, Sadie have arrived for the funeral. While the corpse lies in a coffin behind them, the trio reminisces, drink and quarrel as they struggle to sort out their emotions. Pearl is exhausted and bitter, declaring that she's glad that her aunt is dead. Sadie, who has had a string of casual affairs, including one with her current analyst, is drifting through life without purpose or ambition. Michael, a priest, is devastated by his total loss of faith, but still longs to help and serve the drug- addicts of his current parish. The dead woman has made a firm

stipulation in her will that all three beneficiaries must act by mutual agreement about the family home: sell it, keep it, live in it. She has also left a letter for each of them, and by the time the final letter is read, and a long-concealed secret revealed, a sense of peace and healing is granted to this wounded and troubled family. Their decision about the family home made, it is then time to make their final farewells to the mortal remains of the enigmatic Aunt Sally. However they find themselves unable to pray. Instead, they agree to read from a favourite book of hers, which she had read to them many times as children. Pearl commences and then the others join in, reciting the well-remembered and loved words from the Dickens' classic "Great Expectations." This is a finely-tuned and moving play, packing a strong emotional punch, and providing three attractive, worthwhile roles. The author also provides most useful suggestions on setting, lighting, and the effective linking of the short scenes that go to make up the action of this play.

\*(Agent: Johnny Hanrahan)

#### **THE HEBREW LESSON.** By Wolf Mankowitz. 4M.

This unusual play is set in Cork, at the height of the "Troubles". As an elderly Jew tries to master the intricacies of the Irish language a trigger-happy young man breaks into his upstairs room. He is trying to escape from the Black and Tans. He is tense and dangerous. The old man however shows no fear, and eventually gains the intruder's grudging trust. By the time the searching "Tans" arrive, he has taught the young man a few basic Jewish phrases, and by persuading him to put on some Jewish ceremonial robes, he passes him off as a young Hebrew scholar. After a tense and intimidating scene the Tans leave and the young intruder is safe. Has he learned anything from the encounter, and especially from the calm courage of his saviour? A delightful off-beat play with two strong central acting roles and two worthwhile cameo parts. It needs only a simple setting but does require firm attention to costume.

\*( Agent: S.F.C. )

#### **HOME TALK FROM ABROAD.** By Brendan Griffin. 2M.

Set in a small, cheap New York apartment on a Christmas morning the play deals with the buried loneliness of two young Irish emigrants, Tony and Greg. Forced to leave home by unemployment and other family problems, they have failed to settle in their adopted country. Alternately they curse Ireland and then become maudlin about it! Throughout, they struggle to maintain the required tough-guy exterior. Now it is Christmas morning and as they recover from a night of mindless booze and boasting about their assumed sexual conquests, one of them decides to phone home...! Delicate and devastatingly accurate in its portrayal of a lonely life far away from home and family this is a moving, challenging play for two young actors, offering them satisfying and meaty roles.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)

**A HOUSE WITH NO WINDOWS.** By Joe Valentine. 2M. 2F. 1Boy 11 yrs., 1 girl 4yrs.

(The young parts can be played by the older actors who are cast as Alan and Emily - as the boy and girl are simply Alan and Emily as children. If however, the presenting group have talented young performers of these ages, they will have a perfect opportunity to display those talents!) Their father has raised both Emily and Alan single-handedly, and now each is a young adult, faced with their own needs and problems. Alan is torn between his love for his girlfriend, Rita, and the need to care for Emily, who is pregnant. To add to this, his father drops a bombshell, and adds to the effect by declaring his intention of starting a new life in America, which leaves Alan reeling from the double shock. There can be no easy solution and he must now make some difficult decisions. This is a strong, dramatic piece with worthwhile acting opportunities. It requires a composite set, a careful lighting plot, and assured direction.

\* (Agent: S.F.C.)

**HUBIE'S BEST FRIEND.** By Jules Tasca. 2M. 1F.

Hubie and Alvin have been friends since childhood, and are now college room-mates. On the surface it seems a most unlikely friendship, as the two young men are the complete opposite of each other. Hubie is short on charm, is studious, hard working, interested in astronomy, and very decidedly 'uncool!' Alvin on the other hand is the handsome, charming, slick-talking, girl-chasing 'jock'. As the play begins Alvin has once again taken Hubie's most recent girlfriend away from him. This proves to be the final straw, and Hubie plans an elaborate revenge. He concocts the perfect girlfriend, Beatrice. He sticks little notes from her on their apartment door, where Alvin cannot avoid seeing them, arranges for bogus phone calls from her, and feeds Alvin details about her physical attractions. The plan works beautifully, and Alvin falls under the spell of this perfect girlfriend and then ----- ! This is a delightful, outrageous play with great comic dialogue, and provides very attractive roles for all three actors. Clever lighting and effects are needed to achieve the maximum audience enjoyment.

\*(Agent: N.H.B.)

**THE INVISIBLE MAN.** By Jennifer Johnston. 2M.

Set in a featureless theatre dressing-room, this play charts the stormy relationship between Tony, a middle-aged actor, and his father who is dying in a nearby hospital. Deserted by his high-flying mother when young, it has been persistently difficult for Tony to relate to his unemotional father. Now, in his dressing room he is preparing to go on stage in the title role of King Lear. Disturbing thoughts, and images from the past fill his mind. His dresser and constant companion, Mack is missing, the minutes are ticking away to curtain-up - and he can't remember a line! Panic is about to set in, when Mack does arrive. After some stormy words it emerges that Mack has been visiting Tony's father and got caught up in a traffic jam. He tries to calm Tony down, as he prepares him



for this major role. Most of Tony's anger and frustration stems from his personal feelings of guilt at being unable to face this man he scarcely knows, - the father who was always bluff and hearty, but could never show affection! Because of this he has invented reasons for not visiting him in his dying days, and now hates himself for it. As the play moves towards its end we learn of the relationship between Tony and Mack, and in the very last moments there is a final surprise in store. A simple setting is needed to frame this funny/sad, moving and delicate piece, which offers rewarding acting roles for both actors.

\* (Agent; S.F.C.)

**THE LAST BREAD PUDDING.** By Nick Warburton. 2M. 3F. 1 M/F.

The committee of an amateur drama group is meeting to discuss the merits or otherwise of a new play written by Jan, a member of the group. Ken insists that the play should have 'a beginning, a middle and an end' - and that it should not contain any coarse language. Denise, who is noted for her blunt and colourful turn of phrase, takes this as a personal rebuke. Fleur is heavily into symbolism, while Jack is more concerned with the backstage aspects of the production. As author, Jan is aghast at the treatment meted out to her delicate creation! Tempers are frayed. Insults are traded. In the midst of all the mayhem the mute Phyllis, as secretary, tries to take the minutes. A heavy knock on the door, and in billowing mist a mysterious Tramp appears, carrying a dead duck! After this anything can happen and indeed a great deal does! The author, Nick Warburton enjoys himself by indulging in sly, humorous swipes at a variety of stage conventions and styles while providing a light-hearted and clever script. A simple setting adds to the possible attraction of this play. However, it also calls for firm direction, and a cast aware of the discipline required by this type of over-the-top comedy.

\*(Agent:S.F.C.)

**THE LAST TEMPTATION OF MICHAEL FLATLEY.** By Arthur Riordan. 3M. 2F.

(Specially commissioned by Macra na Feirme.)

This unusual play starts as all but one of the casts enter after attending a performance of "Lord of the Dance" at the Point Depot in Dublin. With the sound and tempo of the music still echoing in their heads, they talk in a kind of jig-rhythm, or 'Diddly Eye' as one of them puts it! Mick, Lorraine and Jackie are quite bowled over by the experience. Tom, Lorraine's boyfriend is considerably less impressed. Lorraine's brother, Lar, who works as a bouncer in a country-town disco owned by Mick, has not been at the performance, but has come to meet the others. They have made an arrangement to go on to Temple Bar after the show. While everything seems normal on the surface, there are hidden tensions and frictions. Apart from the usual rivalries between the city dwellers and their country cousins, the relationship between Lorraine and Tom has just ended, and none too sweetly at that! Jackie and Mick were also, at one time, very closely involved. However, Jackie had decided to pursue a career as a stand-up comedienne in England, and has

only returned home for a flying visit. Mick now feels that he can rekindle the flame of their old love. (At the same time he secretly fancies himself as a second Michael Flatley!) When Jackie turns him down he then sets his sights on Lorraine, and tricking her into believing that all the others have gone, offers her a lift home to her flat. His plan backfires, and many cats are let out of many bags! Then the dirt truly begins to fly and much is revealed before the play ends! The setting couldn't be simpler, requiring only some chairs, which can be moved around, as the script dictates. Effective, clever lighting is needed to suggest the various changes of locale. A director looking for something different, should find this play an attractive option.

\*(Agent:Rough Magic Theatre Co.)

**THE LEGACY.** By Meredith Knight. 2M. 2F. Plus 2 Voices & 1M. 1F.

At rise of curtain Bethany is standing and listening to the voice of the vicar, as he concludes her mother's funeral eulogy. Now in her forties, she finds it extremely hard to grieve for her stern parent. From Bethany's childhood up to the time of death, her mother far from showing affection - had been critical, emotionless and penny-pinching, ruling her only child with a rod of iron. In order to escape cold, barren atmosphere Bethany had married William, who also lacks any great warmth or charm. In consequence this marriage has done little to add to her happiness, or even increase any feeling of self-worth. Bethany's only friend is the much-married Heather, who is totally different to her in every way. Outgoing, carefree and devoid of any money worries, she does her best to cheer up Bethany. Now she offers to help her clear out the accumulated clutter of years that her mother has left behind her. Then comes the big surprise! Megan, Bethany's mother had been hoarding a not-so-small fortune of £250,000! As her only surviving relative Bethany inherits it all! But where can all this money have come from, and with all this money readily available why had Megan scrimped and saved all her life? It had certainly not come from Bethany's father who had left her mother before Bethany was born, taking with him any money there was in order to fund his compulsive gambling. So what is the source of this amazing wealth? Clearance of the attic reveals among other things an old doll's house and inside it a mysterious key. Bethany knows nothing about the key and is adamant that she never had a doll's house. To whom then did it belong? When the key turns out to belong to a deposit box, Bethany at first refuses to open it, but Heather finally persuades her to do so. Inside are yellowing documents, strange souvenirs and a newspaper clipping all leading to another bombshell. Bethany has, or maybe had, a sister! There is yet another twist before this taut, gripping and award winning play ends.

While the play requires a number of acting areas, imaginative lighting and specific props will achieve the necessary result. A director looking for a play to intrigue an audience should find this an attractive option. All the acting roles should prove worthwhile, but particularly so in the case of the two female characters. However, it should be noted that apart from the four acting roles, the two additional voices are an important ingredient in the performance of the play. This is particularly true in the case of the 'mother's voice' which interjects frequently during the action. So a well-prepared tape and a skilled operator are very necessary.

\*(Agent: D.A.W.)



**LIFELINES.** By Amy Rosenthal. 1M. 1F.

When Robert mis-dials, Amy is less than polite and, ready to hang up, mistaking him for a nuisance caller or worse! Apart from that he has also interrupted her in the middle of a having a good cry! After this initial misunderstanding, they have an uneasy few minutes of conversation. This then is to be the beginning of a long-distance, yet significant, relationship for two lonely people. Both are troubled by currently-strained love affairs, and this unexpected and unusual phone call gives them both an opportunity to let off steam, take on board a few tips, and perhaps even find the courage to begin again. That done they say their good-byes. But is it the end? This is a short, delightful, and gentle play providing insight into the lives of two lonely people, who share an all -too -common need to be heard, or better still, to be listened to! Funny and sad by turns, it offers satisfying roles to the two actors, but also requires a delicate touch from the director. A simple setting is a further advantage.

\*(Agent:S.F.C.)

**LITTLE MISS FRESNO.** By Ara Watson and Mary Gallagher. 2F.

Doris Nettles and Ginger Khabacki, are two proud mothers whose respective daughters Ashley and Amber are contestants in a little girl's beauty pageant, which is being held at a country fairground in Fresno, California. As we join them, the judging has been completed, and they are anxiously awaiting the results. Nerves are a little frayed and they pass the time referring to their children's special attributes and talents. Both mothers are loud in their protestations that they would never, ever push their respective darlings into such contests and declare that it's the little moppets' own wish to be there! Polite though the chat may be, the conversation is not without its carefully concealed bitchiness! However, the other competitors also come in for more than their share of caustic comment. Then over the loudspeakers comes the judges' verdict! When produced in Dublin, the Irish Times critic wrote " a marvellous piece of contrast, handling one-up-womanship beautifully." The setting can be as simple as a few folding chairs and some bunting. Though short, the play provides two worthwhile and diverting acting roles.

\*(Agent: W.C.P.)

**LOUDER, I CAN'T HEAR YOU.** By Bill Gleason. 3M. 3F.

Marge is a very harassed mother, whose family scarcely seems to notice her except when they need something - a special diet, clean clothes, the TV schedule, extra pocket money. Could Mom have any special needs of her own? Apparently none that her husband or children can see! Thinking that the family doctor may be some help, or at least supply a sympathetic ear, Marge makes an appointment. However, even here Marge finds that she is the one who does the listening. Years of being unable to make herself heard have taken their toll! After this further fiasco Mom decides that she has had enough, and returns to her family, full of new resolve. However nothing has

changed and the usual lack of listening is the order of the day! She tries a song and dance routine, and nobody even halts in his or her chatter. She announces that she is pregnant, and nobody bats an eye! An announcement that she's leaving husband, Oscar, falls on deaf ears! However when she makes a ball of Oscar's paper, that's a different matter. Now having the floor to herself, she declares "If some things don't change around here, good old Mom is going to be good and gone!" Pandemonium! All promise to change their ways, but as the curtain falls! A light-hearted comedy, but with some serious thought behind it. It does call for a split setting, but the furnishings can be simplified. While Marge is the central role there are good acting opportunities provided by all the roles. Should prove attractive to groups who prefer humorous offbeat scripts.  
\*(Agent: N.H.B.)

**LUNCH HOUR.** By John Mortimer Im. 2F.

Set in a small and featureless bedroom of a small hotel, the play tells of a lunchtime assignation between a man and a younger girl. In order to present a facade of respectability, and to allay the suspicions of the manageress, the man finds himself forced to spin a tale about his imaginary wife who is travelling to the city to meet him briefly, before returning home to their three, equally imaginary, children! When the girl does arrive for the illicit meeting, some minutes later, she is at first puzzled by the manageress' concern and sympathy, and only later discovers the reasons for her solicitude. This causes her to see her erstwhile admirer in a much less favourable light, and what was planned as a romantic interlude turns out very differently! Comic, but with a cutting edge the play offers dramatic scope for both players and director. Only a simple setting is required.

\*(Agent: S.F.C.)

**MAGNETISM.** By Michael Lynch. 1M. 1F.

This play tells the story of a past and passing affair and what happens when the couple meets again purely by chance, after many years. Loneliness, selfishness and youthful stupidity in the past now lead on to the tense present day confrontation. From this freak chance reunion, the action moves on to reveal old hurts, shattered dreams, insensitivity and bitterness. Is it possible to forgive and forget, and maybe start again? A clever mixture of comedy and drama this is a tightly-written neat little drama, requiring subtle characterisation and light deft direction.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)

**THE MAN WHO DIDN'T FIT IN.** By Fintan McCutcheon. 5M. 1F.

Mike is a self-made man in his mid-fifties. A bachelor and a bit of a rough diamond, he has just bought himself a four-bedroom house in a very upmarket estate. However though the area appeals to him the neighbours most definitely do not! All their attempts to involve him in community matters fall on deaf ears. Despite enjoying his own company, he has begun to find that the mortgage repayments are a bit heavy to carry on his own. As a result he reluctantly decides to advertise for a suitable lodger. When Kenneth arrives in answer to his advertisement, he seems to be the perfect answer to Mick's problem. In no time at all Kenneth ingratiates himself with the neighbours while at the same time carefully undermining any little standing Mick might have in the community. Later, when the residents decide to erect a suitably tasteful Estate name-sign and turn to Mick - with his previous building-site skills in mind - with a request that he might dig a large hole for the monument's base, they are met with a blunt refusal. However Kenneth persuades Mick to change his mind, and he starts the excavation, little realising that he is literally digging his own grave. This unusual play is a skilful blending of black comedy and theatre of the absurd, resulting in biting satirical observation on human behaviour. The setting is both simple and cleverly stylised. In the author's own words he suggests "a set of architraves and free-standing windows at angles to each other to give a quizzical geometric look to the stage". A director looking for the offbeat will welcome this very different play.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)

**MANNA.** By Susan Knight. 2M. 4F.

Apparently set in a cheap cafe in Dublin, much of the action arises from the musings, memories and fantasies of the central character - a middle-aged, shy spinster-Breda. She has come in for a snack and to read her romantic, historical novel. The waitress who serves her becomes - (in Breda's imagination) a number of different characters including a nun, a Californian 'New-Ager' and a prostitute. Josie; a lonely old lady, Ollie a middle-aged ladies man, and a couple of the "beautiful people" from Dublin 4 all make appearances. At times comical, the play's core verges on the tragic, being about loneliness and hopeless dreams. In the words of one of the characters it is all about "taking comfort where you can"- the "Manna from Heaven" of the title. Wistful and delicate, this play gives the cast a chance to portray a variety of characters not normally to be found together in most one-act plays, while it also poses a few problems for an adventurous director!

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)



**MEN'S TALK.** By Fintan Mc Cutcheon. 4M. and 1F.

Fourteen years old Junior Tully has come home from boarding school. He finds himself isolated from his primary school pals of some years ago. He's bored and confused. He is befriended by a local farmer, who offers him a summer job. Junior's mother dislikes and distrusts Pat, but his father considers it will help "to make a man of him"! Though Pat frequently boasts of his success with women, his attitude towards Junior is ambivalent. Confused and embarrassed by his own awakening sexuality, the boy finds it impossible to turn to either parent for help or advice. So the field is left free to Pat to offer his kind of help and advice! A strong and challenging play on a disturbing theme that has become a world-wide problem. The play requires a high degree of sensitive playing, and directing.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)

**A MOMENT IN TIME.** By Eddie Kennedy. 3M. 4F. 2 Extras.

Kevin is in intensive care after a road accident. His two sisters Nancy and Alice are seated in the hospital waiting room. They are anxiously awaiting the news of his condition. A younger brother, Charles and his cousin, Brian are with them. However, the boys' boisterous behaviour, and seeming insensitivity to the seriousness of the situation cause tensions. The children's parents have recently divorced, and Katherine, Kevin's twin has been frantically trying to contact their father to let him know about the accident. The final and oldest member of the family, Richard is expected at any minute. In the meantime it is up to Katherine to calm the situation. Her best friend, Laura who has come to give her support, helps her in this. It is not easy for Laura to be in this particular hospital, as it was to here they had brought her brother, William, after he had shot himself only two years before. While waiting for any further news, Katherine hesitantly asks Laura about the circumstances surrounding William's suicide. She herself suspects that Kevin's accident is in fact not an accident, but rather a suicide attempt, brought on by the parents' divorce. She is stunned and alarmed to learn of the many similarities between the two incidents, but when she tells Richard of her fears and suspicions, he refuses to listen. When she persists, he angrily orders her forget such notions and furthermore to mention them to nobody! He declares "Mama can't handle this. Dad doesn't want to hear this. Alice and Nancy and Charles don't ever need to hear this. It stops, and it stops today, now". But it doesn't stop for any of them! This is a powerful play with strong emotional roles, particularly for the three principal characters, and should prove attractive to a director seeking a dramatic script. The set is simple with minimal furnishings required. The entire cast is young. However, there is need for the sound effects common to a busy hospital.

\*(Agent: N.H.B.)



**THE MOZART MAN.** By Tony Powell. 2M. 1F.

For over a year Detective Chief Superintendent Philip Meredith has been trying to track down a brutal serial killer. Indeed it has become an obsession with him. He is certain that there is a definite pattern, some sort of mad logic, to the murders. By scientific deduction he knows quite a lot about the murderer his height, his weight, his shoe size, his blood group, his DNA coding, but after twelve murders, the final clues that will inevitably lead to the capture of the killer, still elude him. Now, as the play starts he is informed by his superiors that he is to be taken off the case, much to the relief of his wife, Lynn. Then, a polite but strange young man, Mark Sorrel, arrives at his home and calmly confesses to being the killer! Meredith's initial reaction of irritation and disbelief turns, first to anger, then to fear, as Sorrel's disclosures and his obsession with the works of the composer Mozart uncannily begin to provide so many missing pieces of the horrendous puzzle. This bizarre confession builds to a chilling, frenzied climax, which leaves Meredith with an appalling and terrifying dilemma. This is a strong and tense play, which provides meaty central roles for the two male protagonists. The setting, a traditionally furnished lounge, should pose few difficulties. The play will appeal to groups who like to keep their audiences perched on the edges of their seats!

\*(Agent: D.A.W.)

**THE NIGHTINGALE AND NOT THE LARK.** By Jennifer Johnston. 1M. 2F.

Mamie is the caretaker of an old hall in an Irish provincial town. The hall is regularly rented by touring groups for plays or concerts, and by local organisations for meetings, whist drives, jumble sales etc. As it happens there is just such a group presenting a production of "Romeo and Juliet", and Mamie is seated in her dusty and untidy flat overhead listening to the murmur of the players voices on the stage below. This sets her to musing about her own theatrical career of many years ago. Her only companion is her husband, Owen, seated in the shadows, and taunting her with old memories. Owen, also an actor in a touring company at one time, eventually walked out on her, deserting her for another woman, and lured by the bright lights of London. However he was shortly to meet his death in the wartime Blitz. Now, conjured by Mamie's drink fuddled mind they relive their stormy relationship, only interrupted by the over-worked and disorganised stage-manager from the play downstairs in the hall. Dream-life, stage-life, and real life all mingle in this bitter, sad and moving drama. The play provides interesting acting and directorial opportunities, and should appeal to groups looking for the unusual.

\*( Agent: S.F.C. )

**A NIGHT UNDER CANVAS.** By Lisa Hunt. 2F.

Brenda and Valmai have come up to the city for the day, and have decided to visit the museum. Now part-way through a long and tedious guided tour, they deliberately lag behind the main party in order to sit down and rest their weary feet. Though they have been friends for many years, now as they sit and chat they discover that there is much they have never known about each other's life. Then as the lights suddenly dim and doors begin to slam, they are certain that they have been locked in. In panic Brenda stumbles into an incomprehensible piece of abstract sculpture, which collapses. In the dimmed light they try to repair it, with seeming success.

Resigned to having to spend the night locked in, they decide to investigate the works of art surrounding them with some humorous and touching results. Then Brenda asks the surprising question "Why did we come here Val?" Reluctant to answer at first Valmai eventually and reluctantly replies that all her neighbours are involved in some sort of cultural activity and ends by saying that "it seems the whole world and their families are more interesting than I am." When they discover that they are not locked in after all, they decide to donate their personal and surprising addition to the collected art treasures! This is a warm-hearted and gentle play with two equally rewarding roles.

\*(Agent: D.A.W.)

**THE OBITUARY SHOW** By Steve Farr. 3M. 3F. And Extras.

Carlos Stuart Magenta, the renowned poet is dead and a radio station have decided to pay homage to the great man, by devoting one complete edition of its arts programme - The Obituary Show - to a discussion and assessment of his work. In studio is Virginia, the "enfant terrible" of the poetry world who is also a film critic and author. Michael, a dyslexic inhabitant of the Chair of Poetry, in a north of England University, joins her. Both are there to speak of the enormous impact of Magenta's genius on the literary world and to quote from his amazing, poetic outpourings. Sally is there to front this important Arts Show, while Dominic is there to bring listeners up to date on current news. Finally, to make the poet's words come to full, vibrant life, are two actors - Jane and Paul- who recite from Magenta's decidedly obscure-if not totally unintelligible poetry! Personal animosities, antagonisms and downright bitchery emerge during this chaotic radio programme. A delightful caustic swipe at pretentious, arty-crafty Radio/T.V. arts programmes, this play presents both director and actors with a golden opportunity to enjoy themselves, while at the same time entertaining their audiences!

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)

**OFFICE SONG.** by Nick Warburton. 1M.2F.

Timid Brian is not enjoying the yearly office party, and decides to slip away, confident that nobody will notice his disappearance. However, in the cloakroom, Claire, a fellow worker, gently

encourages him to talk about himself. Eventually he admits that he likes to do impressions of Doris Day songs. At this point, Wendy bursts in trying to avoid the unwelcome advances of one of the office managers. Brian, who secretly fancies Wendy, declares that he will speak to the offending manager, and leaves the two women together. It then emerges that Wendy considers Brian to be a wimp, and when he returns she proceeds to tease him. When Claire blurts out that Brian likes to sing Doris Day songs, Wendy uses the information to wind Brian up, by encouraging him to rehearse a song, goading him into giving it more feeling, more passion. Claire thinking it just a bit of harmless fun initially joins Wendy in her coaching, but when Brian starts to enter into the fantasy too fully and gets carried away, Claire decides to leave. Wendy however would seem to have further serious mischief in mind. This is a taut little play, which mixes comedy and menace very cleverly. It requires only a simple setting, and provides a neat challenge for both director and actors.

\*(Agent: S.F.C.)

#### OLD GOAT SONG. By Jules Tasca. 1M. 3F.

Bill Fast, an old gentleman, has lost the love of his life his wife Danielle. Now in hospital, his wandering mind flits back and forward in time. Since the death of his beloved Danielle, his lonely, but bossy sister, Cora, has cared for him. In order to escape from time to time - and to avoid Cora's awful cooking - Bill has taken to going down to the local diner. Here he meets the young waitress, Cara, who has just that day started to work there. Indeed, Bill is her very first customer! An instant rapport takes place between them. For Bill the young woman becomes the reincarnation of Danielle, the young Danielle, whom he persuaded to elope with him in the face of opposition from her family. In his reveries, Bill conjures up his beloved Danielle, talks to her and relives parts of his life. When the young Cara comes to his house to read to him, past and present gradually merge. Bill's sister is less than happy with the development. She considers that he is making a fool of himself and also worries that Cara may be a gold-digger, only interested in Bill's considerable wealth. Eventually their disagreements develop into a full-scale row and Bill has a heart attack. Now, in hospital, it emerges that Bill has made a new will. Cora is determined to have it set aside, but in the end, Bill proves too clever for her. This very moving and also very funny play offers delightful and satisfying roles for all concerned, but is probably best suited to more experienced groups. Though the setting calls for a number of locations, clever lighting and minimal but effective props will greatly simplify these requirements. Anyway, such considerations should not deter any adventurous director from staging this rewarding play.

\*(Agent: N.H.B.)

#### ONE FOR THE ROAD. By Harold Pinter. 2M. 1F. 1 Boy.

This is an exercise in terror. Set in the interrogation room in some un-named totalitarian state, Victor, quiet-voiced and deadly, questions dissidents Nicholas, his wife Gila and their young son



Nicky. What their offence is we never learn! Remorseless, vicious, increasingly drunken, and quite probably mad, he calmly declares "God speaks through me"! But this god is one of vengeance and limitless evil. Victor has no mercy, no doubts, and his victims have no chance. The play builds to an horrific ending. Definitely not for the squeamish, the play does demand firm knowledge of Pinter's style, his unique use of menace for no apparent reason, and especially the all-important "pauses" and "silences" clearly indicated in the script. Though short in playing-time the play delivers a powerful punch. One reviewer called it "a brilliantly controlled little masterpiece".

\* (Agent: S F.C. )

**ONE MAN DOWN.** By Loughlin Deegan. 3M. 2F.  
(Specially commissioned by Macra na Feirme.)

Set in a country town, the play charts the events immediately before and after an important county final hurling match. Tommy and his friend Murph are guiltily enjoying a prohibited pint, while keeping a watchful eye out for their trainer! Tommy has recently returned to his hometown after an unsuccessful stint at college in Dublin. In reality, he is only recovering from a nervous breakdown, a fact that he angrily denies - even to himself! Tommy's father had been the centre forward in the local hurling team that had last won the championship, sixteen years before. Indeed, his father had played on the team on the four previous occasions that their team had been victorious. Tommy now occupies that same position and is obsessed with winning, and so living up to his father's reputation of being the best player in the county. Murph, who also plays, would like to see the team win, but cannot go along with Tommy's fanatical view. Also on the team is Pete, sharp-tongued and dangerous, and married to Susan, who works as a bar-person at the team's 'local' O'Loughlin's Lounge. It is well known locally that Susan's marriage vows sit very lightly on her conscience, and her various fleeting liaisons include both Murph and Tommy. However Tommy totally refuses to believe in the well-founded gossip, and remains staunchly convinced that his is no casual affair, or a passing infatuation on his part. Mary, Murph's adoring and naive girl-friend remains blissfully unaware of the dangerous emotions bubbling away, just below the surface. On the day of the match Tommy fails to turn up. The team is forced to play 'one man down', and they lose. The following day there is still no sign of Tommy. Where can he be? An air of suspense and menace pervade the end of this chilling and tense play. The setting is made up of the frontages of two buildings - the pub and the 'take-away', but it should prove possible to achieve this quite simply. All five roles offer strong acting opportunities, and the director should certainly enjoy the challenge of knitting together the thirteen short, tense scenes.

\*(Agent: The Red Hall Agency)



**THE PARTY.** By Derek O'Gorman. 1M and 1F.

This is an unusual play concerning a woman who has planned a party and awaits her husband's return with their children. On hand is the clown who has been engaged to provide the entertainment. But is everything as normal as it appears? Is the clown just a clown? Has this all happened before? There is a dark undercurrent to this drama, which results in a shocking climax. Short-listed in a recent Cork Arts Theatre One-Act Play Competition, this offers two meaty parts for the actors involved.

\* (Agent: C.A.T.)

**PAST CARING.** By Frances O'Keeffe. 2M and 2F.

Cath is living with her mother, an agoraphobic, totally unable to leave the house they share. This illness struck after Cath's wheelchair-bound father died some years ago Cath is now trapped with no life of her own. Martin, Cath's boyfriend has received word of promotion, which necessitates that he moves to another city, and he desperately wants Cath to down face her mother and come with him. Tom, Cath's brother also tells her that she must break away and lead her own life. But when Mother reveals a dark family lie, Cath is faced with frightening facts and a very difficult decision. This is a strong emotional drama giving plenty of scope for actors and actresses and a challenge for the director.

\* (Agent: C.A.T.)

**PICKING UP SOLDIERS.**By Brendan Griffin. 1M. 1F.

Ruth, a young mother with two small children is stifled by her boring and mundane lifestyle - an endless round of housekeeping, laundry, cleaning, cooking, and gathering up toys strewn all over the place... in fact an existence of "picking up soldiers"! In desperation she embarks on a passionate affair, that gives her the excitement, mental stimulation and above all - the love she desperately craves. However, on this fateful day her professor / lover presumes to call on her in her own home! Or does he? An intriguing study in the frustration of a seemingly pointless existence, the play provides unusual and strong roles for both actors and actress involved.

\* (Agent: C.A.T.)

**PIZZAZZ** By Hugh Leonard 2M. 3F.

The author of this play refers to it as "the dramatic equivalent of a Chinese Box, -the toy that is simple to look at, and drives one to near madness when played with!" And that is a very fair description of this deft and amusing play. Set in the reception area of a company, which hires out cabin cruisers on the River Shannon, we firstly meet Marion, a vivacious American and her Irish secretary Olivia, who are

waiting to gain possession of their cruiser. Shortly afterwards G.P. Conroy, a successful doctor arrives also intent on booking his cabin cruiser. In no time at all he and Marion are at loggerheads, trading insults at top speed, and equally quickly, these two strangers are engaged in a wild re-enactment of a marriage that is on the rocks. But whose marriage is it? With increasing speed all the other people present find themselves, willy-nilly, caught up in the action and playing assumed roles in this crazy marital drama. But are Marion and Conroy strangers? Is Olivia really a secretary? And where do Rooney the dim Receptionist, and Mrs. Hand, the motherly Housekeeper/cleaner fit into the merry mayhem? The plot of the play shoots off in all directions, with dazzling skill, and comic invention, and the ending is as clever and unexpected as anyone could want! The play requires a good, but not elaborate set, and provides ample acting opportunities for the entire cast and a challenge for the director.

\*(Agent: S.F. C.)

**THE PORCH.** By Jennifer Johnston. 2M. 1F.

The author describes this gentle and evocative play as "almost a monologue", which is only part true, as anyone reading will find out! Maud, an old lady, who is living alone, is now considered by her son and daughter-in-law to be no longer capable of taking care of herself. Up to now feisty, and independent, this is a sad and even frightening thought for Maud. She will greatly miss the porch of the title, and all her beloved plants. However even more important to her is the garden she never had in reality, but which she has created in her mind - each flower and shrub, with their exotic-sounding Latin names, and every flower-bed, path, hedge, and garden feature, are totally real and vivid in her imagination. Indeed it has all become so vivid that she now lives in a world of her own, making little contact with those around her. So who's to blame for her isolation? Is anybody? Or is it just the inevitable reality of old age. This is a gentle, moving play requiring only a simple setting, but with a challenging central role and two worthwhile supporting roles. It also cries out for sensitive direction.

\*(Agent: S.F.C.)

**PORTRAIT OF A MADONNA .** By Tennessee Williams. 4M. 2F.

This play is almost a blueprint for the author's celebrated drama "a Streetcar Named Desire" - at least in the depiction of its central character. There is no doubt that Lucretia in this play bears more than a passing resemblance to Blanche DuBois in "Streetcar". Closeted in her shabby cluttered room in a seedy hotel, tricked out in faded finery, she constantly relives her romantic past as a 'Southern Belle'. The manager, the bell-boy, and other staff humour her as best they can, but are forced to recognise that her state of mind is steadily deteriorating. Now, sadly all that can be done is to arrange for her to be placed in a mental institution. However, her final destination is kept hidden from her, as she chatters through her endless fantasies. Deeply moving and compassionate, this is a disturbing study of mental disintegration. The play demands a strong

performance from the lead actress, and indeed none of the other roles are easy targets either! All call for good American accents, with Lucretia's being the classic 'Southern drawl'. Not an easy choice, but a rewarding experience for well-established groups!

\* (Agent: S.F.C.)

**THE QUIET PLACE.** By Eddie Kennedy. 2M .5F.

This is a play for a young cast. With the exception of David, all the other characters are teenagers, attending the same school. They are four 17/18-year-old girls, and two 18-year-old boys. While deceptively simple on the surface, the play addresses issues that are of major importance for young people of to -day. As the play opens, Sheila is seated on a bench overlooking a cemetery. Pam and Janet, two of her friends are trying to persuade her to leave, as they are fearful of Tony and his two sidekicks, Steve and Patsy - all members of a school gang. Danny, who was Sheila's boyfriend, is dead after an overdose. He had always been a quiet, gentle student, and so was a natural target for the bullying and jeering tactics of Tony and his mates. They have made life unbearable for him, and in an attempt to get relief from their endless mockery and torment he gives in to their coaxing, and swallows the pills they give him, washing them down with beer. The result is fatal. Then the gang panic when Sheila is seen talking to Danny's older brother and come to threaten her into silence. However, Sheila is made of sterner stuff than they had imagined. This is a strong emotional drama on an up-to-the minute theme. It is ideally suited to a group with a number of young members. A very simple setting is another attraction.

\*(Agent: N.H.B.)

**RATS, BRATS, AND BUREAUCRATS.** By Neil Rhodes. 1M. 1F.

Tessa has had a very rough day, trying to maintain discipline in the classroom and is now totally worn out. Having endured a difficult marriage, she eventually walked out on her husband, and decided to go back to teaching. However things have altered drastically since she last taught a class. As she explains "What can I do if a child misbehaves? Tell them to write an essay. If they don't do it, give them a lunchtime detention. If they don't turn up, suspend them. Which they love! They're out of school. They laugh at me. Laugh!" In the midst of all her misery, nervous unassuming Russell Hughes enters the classroom. He is, in his own words, a Rodent Operative, in common language, a rat catcher! He has heard that there has been an outbreak of rats at the school, and he is the proud, if hesitant, inventor of a revolutionary process for the total extermination of all pests involving the use of sound waves. Tessa is too busy marking school homework to show any interest until Russell blurts out that his invention operates on a whole range of frequencies including a human one! In fact it works especially well on little humans! Her attention captured, Russell goes on to explain the intricacies of the device, and also gives a short demonstration. Tessa is intrigued! So begins an unusual comedy, which involves a new twist on the classic story of The Pied Piper of Hamelin and a whole lot more. The setting of a school classroom



should provide few difficulties. This witty and different two-hander offers plenty of scope for comic characterisation, which should prove enjoyable for both audience and performers.

\*(Agent: D.A.W.)

**REMEMBER ME.** By Lindsay Sedgwick. 1M. 1F.

Jimmy lies in a hospital bed, paralysed from the waist down, where he is visited by Nora, his one-time girlfriend. At first all sympathy is focused on the unfortunate Jimmy, but as the action progresses other facts and issues emerge. By means of a series of flashbacks we begin to learn that all is not quite as it appears on the surface and the play builds to an unusual climax. As a mixture of 'thriller' and a study of possessive love, this play is both exciting and clever. It requires sensitivity, both in direction and acting.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)

**RETARDED.** By Michael Lynch. 2M. 2F. And 1M/F Doctor.

This powerful and disturbing drama centres around Podge a violent boy with a mental disability, who has totally disrupted his family's life. Unwilling to impose on him the pains and rigors of an institution, his parents have decided to keep him in their own specially devised accommodation. This, however, despite all their love and care is still a prison for both them and the boy, and additionally imposes a heavy degree of sacrifice and unhappiness in their isolation from friends and neighbours. When the deaths of his parents follow quickly one on the other, this leaves his only relative - his Aunt Nora, with the problem of deciding what is now best for him. After some heart-searching she feels that committal to a special home is the only answer. However, Jack her husband has other and disturbing reasons to oppose her. In desperation he turns to a doctor, with surprising results. This is a tough, bleak and disturbing drama calling for strong acting ability, and deft, sensitive direction.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)

**RISKS TAKEN.** By Michael Lynch. 1M. 1F.

This powerful two-hander deals with a young couple, Sean and Vera who are deeply in love, but Vera is refusing to take the final step to marry Sean. Their hopes, dreams and fears are revealed in clever and moving dialogue. The mood, throughout the action, changes from playful to exasperated, from quarrelsome to bantering, but always with the undercurrent of a truly loving and caring relationship. Strong, challenging and tightly-written, the play is both sad and funny by turns, rising to a dramatic and emotive climax. Winner of both the Writers and Performance Awards in the first Cork Arts Theatre One-Act Play Competition in 1987, it should appeal strongly to groups seeking a dramatic and gripping play providing - as it does - rewarding roles for both actors.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)



**RIVERVIEW. TAPE 23.** By Colleen Neuman. 3 F.

Kathy, frustrated by disappointments in her journalistic career and her personal life, is sent to a retirement home to interview the residents about "The Good Old Days". As the play starts, she has already interviewed over twenty of the home's residents. To-day's tape - "Tape 23", of the title - is to be concerned with the story and thoughts of Lydia, an uncooperative and feisty, old woman who entertains herself by faking senility whenever it suits, or when it is most likely to frustrate the management. Though seeming to co-operate at times, Lydia also succeeds in turning the interview process on its head by questioning Kathy about her divorce, needling her about her looks, and generally giving her a hard time. When Kathy fights back, Lydia switches identities with her sister Loretta. However Kathy does succeed in provoking her into some harsh and gritty revelations about her earlier life, including the stark statement "No doctors, no hospitals, no medicine! I lost two little girls in three years! No picnic!" So much for the sentimental myth about "The Good Old Days!" Kathy's troubles pale into insignificance when faced with the true grit of the old woman. Her initial irritation and exasperation with this blunt and uncompromising woman slowly undergoes a change, being transformed, firstly into respect, then affection, and finally, that sincerest form of flattery, imitation! However it's left to Lydia to spring the final surprise! A strong, funny and moving play with three rewarding roles and a meaty choice for a director. Set in the recreation room of the retirement home it should prove an interesting choice for a keen stage manager.

\*(Agent:N.H.B.)

**ROMAN FEVER.** By Hugh Leonard. (Based on a Story by Edith Wharton.) 2F. 1M.

Grace Ansley and Alida Slade, both Americans and friends for many years, sit and chat on the terrace of a smart hotel in Rome, in 1930. Each is the mother of an only daughter, and both have only recently become widows. Their conversation, occasionally interrupted by the entry of the waiter, ranges over the years of their friendship, eventually touching on their respective acceptance of a marriage proposal in that same city, some twenty or so years ago. Now, it appears that their daughters are about to make similar happy announcements. In among all this polite chatter, there occurs the odd sharp, even barbed, remark. However, when one of these barbs reveals an old, hidden jealousy, and strikes a particularly sensitive nerve, the play moves swiftly to its conclusion, but not before there is more than one surprising revelation! The smooth, sophisticated dialogue, and the nicely contrasted characterisation will appeal to groups with experienced actresses, and to a director who appreciates clever, polished dialogue.

\*(Agent: S.F.C.)

**ROZZY COMES HOME** By Frances O'Keeffe. 2M and 1F.

Rozzy, a head -strong young teenager has left home, much to the distress of her doting father and the anger of her mother. Now, on returning home after a holiday break, the parents - Frank and Helen-find a strange and rather scruffy young man asleep on their sofa. An intruder? A burglar? He claims that he knows Rozzy very well indeed and that she will be returning shortly, after a visit to the local shop to get some provisions. Uncertain and suspicious a tense situation develops as they wait. Strong characterisation, readily-believable plot together with punchy dialogue, make this an attractive option for any group. Winner of the Cork Arts Theatre One-Act Play Competition in 1989.

\* (Agent: C.A.T.)

**SEX LIVES OF SUPERHEROES.** By Stephen Gregg. 1M. 2F. 3M/F Extras.

Michael is so totally obsessed with his ex-girlfriend that he not only allows her hold on to the key of his flat so that she may call there at any time in his absence, but also in order to facilitate her in systematically stripping it of his possessions, piece by piece! Indeed his only worry now is that there is so little left in his scantily furnished flat, that she may soon have no reason to call. As the play commences, Elenor, his date for the evening is suitably amazed to discover his bizarre reaction to Lisa's systematic, daylight robbery. However she is to be further startled when she discovers that his method of dealing with the situation, and coping with his obsession, is to deliver fantasy lectures on the sexual habits and behaviour of his comic-book heroes, Superman, Spiderman, and the other superheroes. Not only does he lecture, but he also answers questions from imaginary members of his imaginary audience, and is even heckled by Lisa! Astonished as she well might be, Elenor herself is scarcely in a strong position to censure Michael's outlandish behaviour, as she herself is later to admit to her own strange obsession a compulsion to rewrite the happy endings of famous love stories, so as to transform them into tragedies! This is a decidedly offbeat, even zany comedy, but it also has a somewhat disturbing undertone. The unusual roles should appeal to actors seeking something different, and for the same reason appeal to directors. The setting an almost denuded flat - is simplicity itself. However if the director follows author's instruction rigidly he will need to be able to lay his hands on a Superman/Spiderman costume! However that should not deter the adventurous!

\*(Agent: N.H.B.)

**SHARED MUTUAL EXPERIENCE.** By Lesley Ross. 1M. 2F.

Yvonne, a tough feisty woman in her early sixties reluctantly puts up with the ministrations of her new home help, Rachel, who comes in twice a week to clear up and tidy Yvonne's little house, and also do the shopping for her. In spite of her attempts to care and make life easier for her older charge, Rachel is at the receiving end of Yvonne's rough tongue. Indeed the only one for



whom Yvonne nurses a soft spot is her grandnephew Matthew, who is studying at the university in the nearby city. As the play opens, she is standing and looking out the window waiting for Matthew, who has not been home for the last six months. It turns out neither of his parents has much time for Matthew and he, in turn, starved of their love or understanding, is especially devoted to Yvonne. Indeed, while he cannot bring himself to confide in his parents, he has told Yvonne that he is gay. Saddened and upset as she is by his news, she nevertheless gives him her support, and respects his confidences. However, when he does arrive, sporting a black eye, she is angry and worried. Then it emerges that he has moved in with his new partner, and there had been a major row when he said he was going home to visit his family. The black eye is the outcome of this row. Yvonne is very concerned and shocked, and warns him of the dangers to himself. In order to convince him, she tells him of her experiences with her late husband. But is she telling him the truth, and can such revelations really help? It is here that her reliance on her belief in 'shared mutual experience' is demonstrated. When Rachel challenges her and states that her stories may do more harm than good, Yvonne has her own answer. While she may not agree with Matthew's chosen lifestyle, her love for him and concern for his possible future is of paramount importance. The play ends with her hoping that what she has told Matthew, may convince him to re-examine his life. This very compassionate, moving and challenging play contains two strong acting roles. The simple living room setting should provide no difficulties. \*(Agent:D.A.W.)

**SHARKS IN THE CUSTARD.** By Tony Layton. 7F. (One role is non-speaking)

Four women, one Scottish, one English, one Welsh and one Irish, feature in this entertaining comedy. The first three are all cleaning ladies in a municipal art gallery, while the fourth is the curator. As the play starts they are going about their daily duties, at the same time indulging in some pithy comments on the various exhibits. Vera is in charge of Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Renaissance; Liz has her hands full with Baroque, Chinese, Contemporary, Impressionists and 20th. Century sculpture; Mair is in Abstract and Surrealism! In spite of this mighty cultural load, none of them is unduly over-awed by the works of art which surround them. Indeed, to put it mildly, they view some of the exhibits as eminently ridiculous. Their discussions on these pieces of art give rise to some highly entertaining observations and add greatly to the light-hearted fun of the play. Then comes the rumour that their jobs are in jeopardy, with government cutbacks looming on the horizon. However these resourceful ladies are not easily put down, and in the nick of time Mair comes up with an ingenious plan which will not only save their jobs, but will also provide them with a spot of foreign travel! This diverting comedy should greatly appeal to groups with their share of accomplished actresses, who also enjoy using accents different from their own. While at first glance the play might appear to pose problems with the setting, a seasoned director backed by an astute designer will make short work of these!

\*(Agent:D.A.W.)

**SMALL PILLOW.** By Brendan Griffin. 2M.

Two brothers meet in a restaurant shortly after their father's death. Both are defensive and angry and mutually accusatory. As they talk and argue the many aspects of this classic sibling situation are explored. There is pathos and pain, but also gentle humour as they try to discover why they have drifted apart and also attempt to rebuild their childhood relationship. Is it even possible to do so? Tough, quirky and emotive drama with two interesting and taxing roles.

\* (Agent: C.A.T.)

**THE SNAP TINS.** By Carol James. 5M.

A beautifully crafted drama concerning five men - all coal-miners - but with very differing views and hopes. Despite their tough and difficult job they display courage and humour, and though arguments and disagreements occur they are supportive of each other. When the lunch break arrives and the lunch boxes (the "Snap Tins" of the title) are opened the dreams, hopes and tolerances are served up with "the butties". A winner of the Cork Arts Theatre One-Act Play competition, this play subsequently won the prestigious O.Z. Whitehead Award. Tough but moving, this play provides satisfying roles for skilled actors. It is also very worthwhile for groups looking to extend their skills and range.

\* (Agent: C.A.T.)

**SOMETHING BLUE.** By Tony Layton. 2M. 1F.

Enrico, a suave middle-aged Casanova, has invited Paula, an office colleague for what he plans to be a week-end of extra-marital adventure, all at the firm's expense, of course. He has booked the Honeymoon Suite at an hotel a discreet distance from their workplace. Champagne, flowers, and every possible luxury have been arranged. A well-tipped and crafty porter is standing by to deal with Enrico's slightest whim. Though Paula has agreed to this week-end, she now seems to shy a way from Enrico's amorous advances, and continually refers to her husband and family or indeed any other topic that may distract him. When she tells him that she can only stay overnight, and not for the week-end, this seems the final straw. So, when she leaves the room some minutes later, he makes a frantic phone-call in order to find a replacement! When she returns, she manages to get him to talk about his two previous marriages, and tells him more about her own, which is presently going through a crisis. This stalls his plans for the moment, but Enrico is not a man that gives up easily! However when he declares that she is the only member of the female office staff that he has ever asked out she very quickly exposes his lie by telling him that she knows that she is in fact the final conquest! From there on the revelations come fast and furious! The office staff have succeeded in tapping into company accounts and records. They know everything!



In addition, Paula still has a few more special surprises lined up for her boss before this fast-paced play ends! All three roles offer good acting opportunities. However, the play does require experienced actors and firm direction. Also, because of the up-market ambience, special attention décor, props and costuming is needed.

\*(Agent: D.A.W.)

#### STORY LIKE A PENCIL. By Steve Farr. 2M.

Nick Carter, a twenty-nine year old man is suffering from the excesses of his "stag night", rather stupidly arranged for the eve of his wedding to Angela. Waking from his stupor, he finds his father has arrived at his flat, and proceeds to have deep and concerned conversation with Nick about the suitability of the match. He takes great pains to point out Angela's faults. "She's dull!" he tells his son. "She tells you what to do!" "She's unromantic!" "She wants to put you in a box, and keep you there!" Nick's fuddled mind, and even more queasy stomach, find all this advice and criticism very hard to take. But worst of all, even in his alcoholic state, Nick is fully aware that his father is dead and has been for over twenty years! Is he hallucinating? Is he -----? Comic, acid, and disturbing this is a well-worthwhile drama for those groups or directors who are looking for something different.

\* (Agent: C.A.T.)

#### A STRANGE CASE FOR MORTIMER. By Paschal O'Sullivan. 4M.

Dr. Nugent and Dr. Mortimer are both psychiatric specialists in a decidedly bizarre institution for mentally unstable patients. However their own behaviour is so off-balance that it is arguable that they are more suited to be inmates rather than practitioners of healing therapy. Mortimer is an alcoholic, a chain-smoker and a writer of tacky soft-porn novels, perpetrated under a female pseudonym! Dr. Nugent, on the other hand, is a shambling wreck whose patients have driven him to seek support and consolation in the drugs cupboard! When Nugent is saddled with a particularly difficult and disturbing patient he reluctantly seeks Mortimer's help. After some zany and heavy bargaining a deal is agreed and the mysterious patient is ushered in. But, for once, the pompous Mortimer has bitten off more than he can chew! The patient insists that he is Death, in person, but without the traditional black cloak, skull head and scythe. He is, he declares, the up-to-date model, with black jeans, black polo-neck, an accounts book, biro and egg-timer! There are still further screwball twists before the curtain falls! This is a clever black comedy providing three rewarding roles. The cameo role of an orderly completes the cast list of four. For a director who relishes the unusual this play should have a special appeal. The office setting should be easily achieved.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)

**STUPID PEOPLE'S POINTLESS LIVES.** By Steve Farr. 1M.

Andy lives alone in a seedy London flat, his only companions being an assortment of teddy bears and a cheeky glove puppet! As the play opens he has just returned to his 'pad' from a pub. However, before leaving there he has relieved another pub patron, a Mr. Perkins, of his wallet, credit cards and mobile phone! He decides to explore the phone numbers that the unfortunate Mr. Perkins has programmed into his mobile's memory. After a few calls he finds himself in touch with The Samaritans and in no time is talking away animatedly to 'Tracy', who has answered his call. In spite of his banter it becomes apparent that Andy has got a number of problems all centring on a broken love affair with his Welsh girlfriend, Bethan. Despite his denials, he is obsessed with her! This is a strong, meaty one-hander, with clever and incisive writing, very reliant on firm direction and a strong, disciplined, skilled performance.

\* (Agent: C.A.T.)

**SURFING, CARMARTHEN BAY.** By Roger Williams. 2 M. 1F.

There is a beach party in progress on a summer's evening and voices and pop music can be heard in the distance. Angela, an almost empty bottle of gin in her hand is sitting talking to herself, while behind her Steven searches frantically in the sand. In a fit of exuberance, Angela has hurled Steve's car keys into the air. However the real problem is that the keys are not the keys of Steve's own car, but the keys of his father's car, which he has borrowed for the evening! Being more than a little high on gin, Angela finds the whole situation a bit of a laugh, which Steve certainly does not. Angela claims it's all a question of impulse, a condition that she declares that must lead to her becoming a leading light in her already chosen career, and perhaps even a future 'Oscar' winner! She and Steve alternately quarrel and banter as he continues in his search for the missing keys. Just as they make up, Morgan, another long-time friend enters. While they are all keen surfers, Morgan is recognised as the best of them, in this particular sport. Now that they have all passed their final school exams with flying colours, each is destined for University. For Angela this will mean London, for Steve it will mean Bristol. However Morgan intends to emigrate to Australia. As the play progresses we learn that there had been another member of their little group, Andrew, who had been killed in a road accident a year ago. There is a sudden air of tension as his name is mentioned. However it is only when the keys are found and they are preparing to leave, that an unexpected revelation brings this sensitive play to a poignant ending. Though set in Wales, this fact should not deter an experienced group from staging this sincere, beautifully written play, which blends comedy and drama so neatly. The beach setting could hardly be simpler and, all three contrasting roles should appeal to a group with members in their late teens. A director with a sensitive touch is also called for.

\*(Agent: D.A.W.)

**SWEET B. A.** By Anwen Huws. 4F.

In the back garden of an end-of-terrace house all is set for a barbecue. Four mature students are counting the hours until they receive the results that will tell them whether they have succeeded in obtaining their hard-sought degrees. Despite their many differences in education and background, over the years they have become friends and are now geared to let their hair down, and ease some of the tension caused by the waiting. T'resa is outgoing and entertains them all with her stories of the times she has met various pop stars. Sue is reserved and uncertain, still haunted by a teenage indiscretion which has had a drastic influence on her life. Christine's married life has been tough, and now her eldest son, at the age of twelve is making life even more difficult by stealing cars, to impress the girls. Shan, a drop-out from a rich background is cynical and manipulative, but behind it all is also vulnerable. When a bottle of tequila is produced the party swings into top gear, but takes a dangerous turn when they decide to play a 'truth' game. Skeletons begin to come out of the cupboard and some painful secrets are revealed before each woman decides to drink a toast - "to me!" Bitingly funny and sad by turns, the play provides strong acting possibilities for the all-female cast. The setting and 'propping' may cause some difficulties, but a clever design and an inventive stage manager will solve both these small problems. Though originally set in Wales it could easily transfer to an Irish setting.

\*(Agent: D.A.W.)

**THERE'S ALWAYS SPRING.** By Arthur Lovegrove. 3M. 3F.

A light-hearted comedy set in an entirely empty flat, it opens with a young couple-Jill and Ian - coming to view the property. Unseen and unheard by them the ghosts of the previous occupants - Brenda and Alan - are also there, doing their very best to 'will' the newcomers into taking the flat. However much Jill loves the feel of the flat, or the view, Ian is strangely reluctant to agree. When the estate agent leaves to give them a chance to discuss the matter, Ian reveals that he knows some disturbing facts about the previous owners' history. Just when it seems that the flat will remain untenanted, Miss Watson from the downstairs flat appears, banishes the doubts, and provides a happy ending. This is a charming, light play with plenty of opportunity for deft, comic acting, and for inventive direction. It also has the advantage of a very simple setting!

\*(Agent: S.F.C.)

**THREE MEN IN A PUB.** By Frances O'Keeffe. 3M and 1 F, plus optional extras.

Three men are having a friendly drink in their favourite pub - Joe, Steve, and Brian. However all is not well! Joe has just left his wife, or been thrown out! Now as the evening progresses, tongues are getting a little looser and Joe needs a bed for one night - at least!



Who can or will help? Each of his pals has his own agenda. So they suggest that he phone his wife, Margaret - talks, apologies, compromises. But there's a considerable fly in the ointment! One of Joe's friends knows much more than he's prepared to admit. A talkative waitress unwittingly adds fuel to the fire! A tense little drama offering good roles to all concerned.

\* (Agent: C.A.T.)

**TRADE ME A DREAM.** By Lindsay Sedgwick. 3M. 1F. 1 Young Boy.

As Lissa is preparing breakfast, two masked men burst in, and while the older man orders Jonny, her husband, out of the house at gun-point, the younger man is left behind to guard Lissa, her eight year old son and her baby daughter, who is asleep upstairs. This is done to ensure that the police are not alerted to the kidnapping. The tension mounts as Lissa tries various ruses to escape, or summon help. Failing in this, she turns her scorn and anger on her captor, engaging in the dangerous game of trying to rattle him. When this does not succeed, she changes tack again, as she tries to destroy his faith in his "cause". This is a taut, up-to-the minute, political drama that leads to a brutal climax. Winner of the Cork Arts Theatre One-Act Play Competition in 1996, this play won both the writing and production awards. This is a powerful vehicle for an experienced cast and a firm-handed producer.

\* (Agent: C.A.T.)

**TRY IT AGAIN.** By J.B.Priestley. 2M. 4F.

Set in the drawing room of a house in the country, the author - J.B.Priestley - engages in a favourite occupation of his as a playwright - examining the concept of "Time". As the play opens a verbal volcano is erupting in the home of Mrs. Arlott, where angry accusations and counter-accusations are being flung around. Colin, Mrs. Arlott's son, is caught between the anger and scorn of his wife, Clare, and the ridicule of his mistress, Helen. Mrs. Arlott, in turn, vents her anger on both of these women, and at the same time tries to mother Colin. Tired of all of them trying to manipulate him, and treat him as either a small boy, an object, or a plaything, Colin is about to storm out, when Kramer and Miss Gilbert appear. Both of them are total strangers to all the others. Kramer introduces himself as a producer/director of plays and films, and Miss Gilbert as his secretary. He calmly admits that he has overheard the angry scene, and that Miss Gilbert has taken it all down in shorthand in her notebook. Now he suggests that they "Try it again!" - with him as director! There is outrage! It's preposterous - at first - but strangely, and reluctantly they agree! The replay of the scene results in some considerable differences. An unusual and decidedly quirky play, it provides plenty of acting scope for the cast, and taxes the director's skills.

\* (Agent: S.F.C.)



**VERY LIKE A WHALE** By Frances O'Keefe. 2M and 3F.

Peadar, who at one time dreamed of fame on the stage, now finds himself stuck behind the counter of a small family corner-shop, where he suffers the endless interruptions and hindrances of his garrulous mother-in-law. Nor is his wife Monica all that sympathetic either! Still ever-cheerful, Peadar has no doubts that his histrionic ability does much to keep the family fortunes afloat, as he sympathises, advises and coaxes his customers to make purchases in the face of stiff opposition from the local supermarket. In the end a surprise event gives him the "star billing" which has escaped him down the years. Light-hearted and entertaining, this play will appeal to those seeking a simple but effective vehicle for a group.

\*(Agent: C.A.T.)

**A VIEW FROM THE OBELISK.** By Hugh Leonard. 2M.1F.

Owen has returned home to Dublin from London, with his new wife, Rosemary. He had been married before but had left his first wife, to pursue his career as an artist. Having been ill he has returned both to convalesce and to have a holiday. A re-union with his cronies of some years ago has been less than satisfactory. Now, as the play starts he has just climbed a favourite, but steep hill surmounted by an obelisk, in order to get a long-remembered -and hopefully breathtaking view. And that is precisely what it turns out to be - breath-taking! Rosemary, greatly alarmed by his dizziness, and laboured breathing, runs off to get help, but not before making Owen promise to stay and rest. He is just recovering when a scruffy young artist, Eoghain, appears and starts sketching. He and Owen get into conversation- and even argument. Eoghain is rough, ill-educated, and has little knowledge of the world - much like Owen at that age. Also to Owen's practised eye he has considerable talent, even if he is touchy. This is another characteristic they share! Eventually they have a few hot words, and Eoghain storms off. Rosemary returns to say help is on the way. It is only then, as Owen tells her about his encounter, that it suddenly strikes him that Eoghain and himself might have even more in common than appeared on the surface! Crisp, clever dialogue and clearly depicted characters make this an interesting play with an up-to-the-minute theme. A simple setting may prove yet another bonus.

\*(Agent: S.F.C.)

**A VISIT FROM MISS PROTHEROE.** By Alan Bennett. 1M.1F.

Mr. Dodsworth is retired after a long, worthwhile, and self-fulfilling life, and is perfectly happy with his retirement presentation, the appreciation of his late employers, and the regard of his recent fellow-workers. He is totally contented in his neat little house with his cherished possessions, his budgerigar and above all, his peace of mind. Now Miss Protheroe, his former secretary, charitably thinking that he may be lonely after such an active life, has called to see him. A constant flow of office chat, gossip, and news of numerous changes in the office routines and systems he had so carefully, and lovingly instituted, and maintained over the years, gushes over

him. He is surprised to find that this news saddens and upsets him. His chattering and basically kindly visitor is blithely unaware of the emotional havoc she is wreaking on his contentment of mind. She departs, confident that her mission of comfort and concern has been a complete success! However, for Mr. Dodsworth, it has truly been a visit from Miss Protheroe that he will remember for many a long and saddened day!

\* (Agent: S.F.C.)

**THE WIND NETTERS.** By Ian Staples. 2M.

This highly diverting and unusual two-hander is set in a betting office where two complete strangers get into conversation. Gideon, the older of the pair has been observing Bic, the younger man, and notes his choice of horses. As the play starts Gideon decides to offer some advice and tells of a friend of his who was invariably right with regard to horses, pools and spot-the-ball competitions and other kind of wager. From here on the plot gets zanier and zanier. According to Gideon luck has nothing to do with winning! In his own words "luck is a dance with the gods, a wrestle with thunder, - it's like trying to "net the wind". This last statement explains the title of this outrageously "goonish" comedy. Gideon reveals that his fantastically successful friend owed all his good fortune to a 'possessed' washing machine and an endless supply of odd socks. The topics covered in this rapid-fire play range from socks to goldfish, God, systems, jelly babies, and their own respective and unusual names. The pace is hectic, the plot outlandish and the script really needs to be read more than once in order to appreciate the off-the-wall humour. The roles are rewarding but also challenging. Great concentration is required to master the staccato dialogue, which jumps from topic to topic until the play ends as abruptly as it begins! However the setting is easily achieved though the accompanying sound tape does call for realistic betting-shop noises and subdued race commentary. The play should appeal to a director with an anarchic or at least quirky sense of humour.

\*(Agent: D.A.W.)

**WITHIN THE SHADOWS.** By Scott Shallenbarger. 1M. 1F.

Stephen is a professional dancer. Sandra has just opened a small art gallery. They are two members of an exceptionally close trio of college friends. As the play opens they have returned from the opening of the Vankirk Art Gallery, Sandra's dream child. Excited and merry, they are trying to catch on news, not having met for some years. The conversation quickly turns to Sean, the third member of their trio, and Sandra's fiancé. Sean, a highly successful artist, has taken his own life for some unsuspected reason, while Steven has been on tour in Europe. Now, each time Steven talks of him, Sandra seems reluctant to carry on the conversation. Eventually long buried memories and emotions come to the surface, and we learn more of the complex character of the dead man. Finally, there comes a truly startling revelation that is to have a major and lasting affect on both Sandra and Steven. This is a dramatic and dynamic play, which explores the destructive



consequences of suppressing emotional truth. The setting, in an artist's studio, may pose some difficulties, and the role of Steven does call for an actor who has some ability as a dancer or at least can give that impression. However these minor considerations should not deter a director from choosing this powerful, and moving play, which provides two strong, meaty roles.

\*(Agent: N.H.B.)

**WIT'S END.** By Neil Rhodes. 2M.

Nigel Phillips, a chat show host at the peak of his career, has just received word that his contract has been renewed and has settled down in his fashionable flat to celebrate with a bottle of champagne. His expected for the evening has told him that she cannot make it that evening, but nothing can dampen his spirits, and he decides to pop the cork anyway! Then, out of nowhere a stranger, calling himself Dave appears. Thinking that the man is a burglar, Nigel valuing his life, tells him to help himself to anything he fancies! However, it soon appears that worldly goods have no attraction for Dave. He is after something much more valuable. It appears that one evening, when Nigel was at university, and lying despondently in his bath, he had said aloud and fervently that he'd sell his soul to be famous! That was sixteen years ago, and now the time of reckoning has come! At first Nigel is stunned, even disbelieving, but gradually the awful gravity of the situation begins to hit him. He tries to bargain but Dave insists that he sign the contract. Nigel immediately thinks that he has found the perfect loophole. No signed contract, no deal! Dave however has a few more tricks up his sleeve, and so the plot builds to its clever but scary climax. So, which of these two is at his 'wit's end'? This crisp and witty retelling of the Faust legend has both its comedy and its chills, and provides the two actors with equally rewarding roles. While the script calls for a smart setting, a clever stage-manager should be able to achieve the necessary effect by providing good props. Sound effects are equally important. A director with an eye for an original and sharply written script should find this play attractive.

\*(Agent:D.A.W.)

**WOMBERANG.** By Sue Townsend. 2M. 8F.

This is a splendid, anarchic comedy, in the unlikely setting of the dreary and intimidating waiting-room of a gynaecology clinic. At the start, all of the occupants of the waiting room are slumped, dejected and above all non-communicative. Then the outrageous Rita Onions and her sidekick, Dolly, enter! Instantly all is changed, as Rita refuses to be regimented, or even conform. In no time at the entire atmosphere is totally altered as Rita sets about breaking every rule and regulation! Some of her fellow patients are shocked by her language, or bemused by her behaviour or frequently both. The only man seated in the clinic is demolished in double-quick time! Rita deals with a premature delivery, reduces an assistant matron to pulp and subdues the doctor! Indeed all on stage in this fast-moving comedy get their chance to show their paces in the merry mayhem that ensues, though there are also moments of sadness and poignancy. This play, with its easy

staging and comic roles should appeal to groups with talented female members though the two male role should also prove attractive particularly that of the seemingly-repressed husband, James! Be warned however, this play also requires a strong directorial hand!

\*(Agent: S.F. C.)

**WORDS OF ADVICE.** By Fay Weldon. 2M. 4F.

The play charts a marriage that is falling asunder, while giving acute insights into the circumstances and family backgrounds that have all contributed to this situation. Tammy, a schoolteacher married to Julia, offers the spare bedroom in their house to another female teacher, without first consulting with his wife. This sparks off a row, which sends both partners scurrying off to their own parents to seek 'advice'. The results are not as they might have expected! Feelings run high and emotions are raw until a compromise is reached. Or is it? All the characters in the play are damaged in one way or another and seem to be unable to make real contact with each other. A sharp and disturbing examination of marital relationships, the play provides interesting roles for all in the cast, and also an opportunity for incisive direction. A simple, composite set, reliant on good lighting adds to the play's dramatic attractions.

\*(Agent: S.F.C.)

**A ZOO STORY.** By Edward Albee. 2M.

A chilling and disturbing play by one of America's leading playwrights, it deals with an encounter between two men Peter and Jerry in a public park. Initially it seems that Jerry is just a lonely, odd-ball character who needs to talk. At first Peter is ill-at-ease with Jerry's endless barrage of questions, and then annoyed, as it interferes with his reading. Then he finds himself fascinated by the tales Jerry spins. Gradually however, this changes, as he becomes alarmed and repelled by certain aspects of these stories. Finally, these feelings boil over into rage with shocking results. The play needs only the very simple setting of two park benches and some greenery. However, strong and edgy performances are essential in order to provide the vital tension, and the sense of hidden menace. Ideally, American accents are to be preferred, as they will help to add to the inherent rhythms, and tone of this dark, tense drama.

\*(Agent: S.F.C.)



## Useful Services and Information



## Agencies and Organisations

In order to help Macra na Feirme groups to expand their knowledge on all aspects of theatre, and to encourage them to extend the range of their theatrical activities, the following new section has been added to this edition of "Intermission Impossible". The aim of this particular section is to provide information on drama organisations and on business' which provide services that are especially geared toward theatrical productions.

### I. Drama League of Ireland.

Down the years amateur drama has been energetically undertaken and enthusiastically supported all around Ireland. It is a source of expertise, innovation and skill. It provides a training ground for actors, directors and technicians, and The Drama League has been continuously fostering this activity.

#### What is The Drama League of Ireland?

- DLI is a National Association dedicated to amateur drama.
- DLI provides Training Workshops and Seminars in all aspects of Drama.
- DLI organises and runs a one-week residential summer school annually.
- DLI maintains regular contact with its members through a newsletter, which ensures that members are informed and can contribute to their organisation.
- DLI provides National representation for over one hundred groups (and growing) and more than one hundred individual members.
- DLI provides a County network, bringing groups together and listening to members.
- DLI offers participation in an Insurance Scheme specially devised for Drama Groups.

#### What are the Aims of the Drama League of Ireland?

The aim of the Drama League of Ireland is to promote and foster all aspects of amateur drama in Ireland. The DLI represents the interest of members and provides them with relevant services to encourage and assist the improvement of standards in acting, production and presentation of amateur drama.

The DLI works to foster awareness and sensitivity to amateur drama through innovative and inclusive links with appropriate agencies.

The **Drama League of Ireland** was founded in 1966 (as the ADL) and is an umbrella body for groups and individuals. The DLI believe that amateur drama is making a significant and positive contribution to the arts in Ireland.

- The DLI co-ordinates activities of groups and festivals abroad and is a member of I.A.T.A.
- The National Association of Youth Drama (N.A.Y.D.) was established as a result of an Amateur Drama League initiative.
- The DLI is a nominating body for Seanad Eireann.

**For further details application should be made to:**

The Drama League of Ireland  
P.O.Box 3094,  
Dublin 8.

## **2. The Drama Association of Wales**

Founded in 1934 and a registered charity since 1973, the Association offers a wide and varied range of services to Community Drama. Among others, members include amateur and professional theatre practitioners, educationalists and playwrights.

### **Library**

The D.A.W. has been running a playscript library for over sixty years. The D.A.W. now hold the world's largest specialist drama lending library. Over 200,000 volumes of plays, biographies, critical works and technical theatre books including the entire Playsets and Lending Collections of the former British Theatre Association. Members in the UK, Europe and worldwide are served by return of post from Cardiff.

### **Playwriting Competition.**

An annual competition is run with a typical entry of between eight and a hundred scripts. The competition is for one-act plays of between 25 and 45 minutes running time. The theme is changed annually.

### **Script Reading Service.**

The script reading service costs (£10 Sterling). For this authors get three scripts from potential end-users of their work. These scripts are not edited in any way and they are anonymous. This service typically takes three months from receipt of your play to the issue of the scripts. If you get three "raves" or a strong recommendation from the reviewers, the script is automatically considered for the publication service.



### The Publication Service.

Selected scripts from the reading service or from the playwriting competition are considered for publication. The criterion is always: "will this play get performed?"

D.A.W. arranges for publication of a short run (typically 250-750 copies). The editions are professionally printed with art board covers.

D.A.W. welcomes enquiries from interested individuals and groups world-wide.

For Further Details, applications should be made to:

Drama Association of Wales,

The Library,

Singleton Road,

Splott,

Cardiff CF2 2ET.

Wales

### 3. One-Act Festival Circuit

Information on the One-Act Festival Circuit, run by the Drama League of Ireland (D.L.I.) in conjunction with The Amateur Drama Council of Ireland (A.D.C.I.)

All One Act Festivals are held annually between the last week of October and late November. Details of actual dates can be obtained by writing to the respective secretaries at the addresses given below. The Festivals are listed in *chronological order*, Naas Festival being held in late October and Waterford in late November.

#### NAAS,

Moll Fulham,

Johnstown,

Naas,

Co. Kildare.

Ph: 045 8747774

#### NEWPORT,

Catherine Campbell,

Crag,

Birdhill (via Killaloe),

Co. Clare.

Ph: 061-379369

#### CORK,

Barry O'Reilly,

125 Beech Park, Station

Road,

Ballincollig,

Co. Cork.

Ph: 021-870473; 503077

#### TRIM,

Margaret Lynch,

Loman Street,

Trim,

Co.Meath.

Ph: 046-28619

#### HAULBOWLINE,

Pat Mahony,

Inver,

Rushbrooke,

Cobh,

Co. Cork,

Ph: 021-514220;813307

#### KILMALLOCK,

Robin Lee,

Adrivale,

Kilmallock,

Co. Limerick,

Ph: 063-98003; 98024

**SKERRIES,**

Marianne Gibney,  
114 Downside,  
Skerries,  
Co. Dublin.  
Ph: 01-8491936; 4546488

**CARRICK ON SHANNON,**

Brendan G. Kieran,  
Main Street,  
Carrick on Shannon.  
Ph: 078-20130

**SCREEN,**

Margaret Sinnott,  
Garryvadden,  
Blackwater,  
Co. Wexford.  
Ph: 053-29210

**PALMERSTOWN,**

Molly O'Callaghan,  
14 Turret Rd.,  
Palmerstown, Dublin 20.  
Ph: 01-6261725

**KILTIMGH,**

Joan King,  
James Street,  
Kiltimagh,  
Co. Mayo.  
Ph: 094-81589; 51031

**MAUDABAWN,**

Bridie Farrell,  
Maudabawn,  
Cootchill,  
Co. Cavan.  
Ph: 049-52454

**NEWTOWNABBEY,**

Maureen Dunn,  
11 Doagh Road,  
Newtownabbey,  
Co. Antrim.  
Ph: 01232-862960

**MANORHAMILTON,**

Betty Duignam,  
Nure, Manorhamilton,  
Co. Leitrim.  
Ph: 072-55237/  
56016/56833

**BALLYMAHON,**

Sheelagh Stafford,  
Ballymulvey,  
Ballymahon,  
Co. Longford.  
Ph: 0902-32252

**PALLASGREEN,**

Aine Commons,  
Templebraden,  
Pallasgreen,  
Co. Limerick.  
Ph: 062-57366

**BALBRIGGAN,**

Grainne McKeon,  
90 Drogheda Street,  
Balbriggan, Co. Dublin.  
Ph: 01-8411405

**SHANNON,**

Joe Walsh,  
St. Tola's N.S.,  
Shannon,  
Co. Clare.  
Ph: 061-362894; 364970

**PROSPEROUS,**

Anne Clarke,  
Prosperous, Naas,  
Co. Kildare.  
Ph: 045-861081

**DOWNPATRICK,**

Patricia McGee,  
15 Knocknashinna Rd.,  
Downpatrick,  
Co. Down,  
Ph: 01396-615523

**GLENAMADDY,**

Ann Keavany,  
Beechview Hse.,  
Ballinlass,  
Glenamaddy,  
Co. Galway,  
Ph: 0904-59365

**KILMUCKRIDGE,**

Bernie Sheridan,  
Littermore,  
Kilmuckridge,  
Gorey,  
Co. Wexford.  
Ph: 053-30239

**LONGFORD,**

Grainne Milner,  
38 Demesne,  
Longford.  
Ph: 043-41706; 41124/5

**ROSSMORE,**

Mary Deasy,  
Gearagh,  
Rossmore,  
Clonakilty,  
Co. Cork.  
Ph: 023-38607; 33205

**TUAM,**  
Maureen Pierce,  
Uppr. Athenry Road,  
Tuam,  
Co. Galway  
Ph: 093-24097

**DOONBEG,**  
Murt McNerney,  
Mount Rivers,  
Doonbeg,  
Co. Clare,  
Ph: 065-51359; 55010

**WATERFORD,**  
Geri Oakes,  
12 Kilcohan Park,  
Waterford.  
Ph: 051-855837

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## **EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS**

### **COSTUME HIRE.**

Mr. Pat McGann,  
Ballycarney,  
Clarina,  
Limerick.  
Co.Limerick.  
Tel: (061) 353160.

Nomac Productions,  
Unit 1A,  
Tycor Trading Centre,  
Tycor Avenue,  
Waterford.  
Co. Waterford.  
Tel: (051) 379829. (See also  
Make-Up.)

Irish Operatic Repertory  
Company Ltd.,  
Kinlay House,  
Bob and Joan Walk,  
Shandon,  
Cork,  
Co. Cork.  
Tel: (021) 506133.  
Fax: (021) 506017.

Show Time,  
11, Henry Street,  
Galway.  
Co. Galway.  
Tel: (091) 582088. (See also  
'Make-Up'.)

Ms. Breege Fahy.  
Tel: (091) 846046. Mobile:  
(087) 2716327.  
Also makes costumes.

### **MAKE-UP.**

Duffy's,  
95/96 St. Patrick's Street,  
Cork,  
Co.Cork.  
Tel: (021) 272566.

Falvey's,  
Douglas Shopping Centre,  
Douglas,  
Cork,  
Co.Cork.  
Tel: (021) 894184.

Ferguson's,  
20 O'Connell St.,  
Limerick,  
Co. Limerick.  
Tel: (061) 414917.  
Fax: (061) 415057.

Make-Up Forever,  
40 Clarendon Street,  
Dublin 2.  
Tel: (01) 679 9043.  
(01) 672 9012.

Minihane's,  
108 Oliver Plunkett Street,  
Cork,  
Co. Cork.  
Tel: (021) 273900.

Nomac Productions,  
Unit 1A,  
Tycor Trading Centre,  
Tycor Ave.,  
Waterford,  
Co. Waterford.  
Tel: (051) 379829.

Playlight,  
12, Mount Carmel,  
Newbridge,  
Co.Kildare.  
Tel/Fax: (045) 433082.  
Mobile: (087) 2229470.

Show Time,  
11, Henry Street,  
Galway,  
Co.Galway.  
Tel: (091) 582088. (See also  
'Costume Hire.')



Stage Services North,  
Unit 10,  
6-16, Duncrue Crescent,  
Belfast BT3 9BW.  
Tel: (0801) 23277668. (See  
also 'Lighting'.)

**WIGS.**  
Cork Hair Clinic.  
(Contact : Kay.)  
129, Oliver Plunkett Street,  
Cork,  
Co. Cork.  
Tel. and Fax: (021) 275027.

Playlight,  
12, Mount Carmel,  
Newbridge,  
Co. Kildare.  
Tel: (045) 433082. (See also  
'Make-Up' and 'Lighting'.)

### LIGHTING EQUIPMENT - HIRE.

Allight.  
37, John Street,  
Cork.  
Co. Cork.  
Tel: (021) 505881.

Mr. Tom McGann,  
Barrington's Bridge,  
Co. Limerick.  
Tel: (061) 386180.

Playlight.  
12 Mount Carmel,  
Newbridge,  
Co. Kildare.  
Tel/Fax: (045) 433082.  
Mobile: (087) 2229470.

Soundtrax.  
11, Mulgrave Road,  
Camden Quay,  
Cork,  
Co. Cork.  
Tel: (021) 509888.  
Fax: (021) 509777. (See also '  
Sound Equipment - Hire'.)

Stage Lighting Centre.  
12, Brunswick Place,  
Dublin 2,  
Co. Dublin.  
Tel: (01) 677 3044.  
Fax: (01) 677 3724.  
Mobile: (087) 632838.

Stage Services North,  
Unit 10,  
6-16, Duncrue Crescent,  
Belfast BT3 9BW.,  
Co. Antrim.  
Tel: (0801) 23277668.  
Fax: (0801) 232 771707.  
Mobile: (0044) 410 017066.  
(See also 'Sound Equipment -  
Hire' and 'Make-Up'.)

### SOUND EQUIPMENT - HIRE.

Soundtrax.  
11, Mulgrave Road,  
Camden Quay,  
Cork.  
Co. Cork.  
Tel: (021) 509888.  
Fax: (021) 509778.

Kiernan Sound Services.  
Main Street.  
Maynooth,  
Co. Kildare.  
Tel: (01) 628 6294.  
Mobile: (087) 2320642.

Paul Hennessy Sound  
Systems,  
Grove Lane,  
Eyre Street,  
Newbridge,  
Co. Kildare.  
Tel: (045) 431632.  
Mobile: (086) 8128432.

Stage Services North,  
Unit 10,  
6-16 Duncrue Crescent  
Belfast BT3 9BW.,  
Co. Antrim.

Tel: (0801) 23277668.  
Fax: (0801) 232771707.  
Mobile: (0044) 410 017066.  
(See also 'Lighting')

**Equipment - Hire**  
Star Systems.  
Loughlahan,  
Thurles,  
Co Tipperary.  
Tel: (0504) 21073.  
Fax: (0504) 21075.



## Part Two

New Works: Commissioned by Macra na Feirme





## **FAMILY PLANNING**

Written by Michelle Read, edited by Sue Mythen

Contact: The Read Company. Tel./Fax: 01 - 4732285



**Family Planning** was written by Michelle Read and edited by Sue Mythen in association with Redcross Macra. Workshops were also facilitated by Sue Mythen.

**Macra na Feirme Participants were:**

Billy Armstrong

Rachel Martin

John Doyle

Margaret Kinney

Kathleen Moloney

Marian O' Mahony

Liz Sharkey

Paul Sharkey

Padraic O' Murchu

Henry Hurley

Paul Downes

Maurice Flannery

This play was commissioned by Macra na Feirme and developed through a workshop process as part of the Macra na Feirme Arts Initiative.

## Cast & Setting

- JIM O'BRIEN:** (Fifties)  
Local councillor and publican. Jim is a widower who has recently remarried and is celebrating his first anniversary. He has three daughters from his first marriage, all of whom are now grown up. He is a family man who has mellowed with age and is close to his daughters but often bewildered by them. In his professional life he is a bit of a 'wheeler-dealer' and is not above using his position in the community to get what he wants. He is in the process of refurbishing his pub.
- GINGER :** (Late thirties)  
Jim's second wife. They are very much in love. Ginger is an elegant, well-groomed woman who has a pleasant and amiable personality but when challenged can demonstrate a surprising strength of character.
- BARBARA:** (Late twenties)  
The eldest of the O'Brien sisters, Barbara works as a midwife. She still lives at home and her natural good humour has been eclipsed by her negative feelings about Jim's remarriage.
- MARY:** (Mid twenties)  
The second O'Brien sister, Mary works as a Garda and lives nearby. She can be pedantic but apart from that is a happy and open person.
- SARAH:** (Early twenties)  
The youngest and most adventurous of the sisters, Sarah has just returned from three years of travelling, which has broadened her view of the world. She's coming back to settle down with a job at the local radio station.
- 'LUCKY':** (Real name Harry Doyle - never mentioned)(Forties)  
A builder working on the renovations of the pub, he can be as 'cute' as Jim when it comes to negotiating. He is a family man with a heart of gold and a fondness for his pint.
- GER McCARTHY:** (Mid twenties)  
Works for Lucky. Ger sees himself as a local Casanova. He is more interested in notching up conquests than having a relationship and thinks that he is immune to falling in love. Himself and Sarah hung around together when they were younger.



## SCENE I

The back bar of Councillor Jim O'Brien's pub, which is in the process of being renovated. It is early morning on Valentines Day. Barbara, in her nurses uniform, is making tea. She is not in a good mood, and bangs the mugs and kettle around as she works. She lights up a cigarette.

- BARBARA:** Bloody bitch!  
*(Mary enters from the street door, wearing her Garda uniform. She has just finished her night shift and has popped in for a cup of tea.)*
- MARY:** Morning Barbara.  
*Barbara gives her a dirty look.*
- MARY:** Any tea in the pot?  
*Barbara pours herself the last drop.*
- MARY:** Euh! It's so smoky in here!  
*Barbara deliberately blows smoke towards Mary.*
- BARBARA:** I think you have something to say to me.
- MARY:** Mm?..... Happy Valentine's Day?
- BARBARA:** *(Flaring)* You bitch! How could you?
- MARY:** You were over the limit...
- BARBARA:** Only just.
- MARY:** That's not the point!
- BARBARA:** I only had a bloody lager shandy.
- MARY:** Well then if you weighed more, you'd have been all right.
- BARBARA:** Oh, so if I was as fat as you, you wouldn't have charged me, is that what you're saying?
- MARY:** There's no need to be abusive Barbara - the law's the law - just because you're a nurse doesn't mean you can flout it.
- BARBARA:** You're my sister for Chris sakes!
- MARY:** Look I've had a long night, I don't want to argue about it!
- BARBARA:** Well I do!
- MARY:** I don't know what's got into you these days, you're like a bear with a sore head - all the time.  
*(Barbara looks away - sullen.)*
- Why did you drive over to Mulligans anyway, you could have had a pint here?
- BARBARA:** Because I needed to get out of the house!
- MARY:** Oh not this again.
- BARBARA:** It's all right for you, you don't have to live with her. She's not here five minutes and the whole place is being turned upside down; 'Oh Ginger thinks this', and 'Ginger has great idea for that'. It makes me sick. It's my home too.
- MARY:** Barbara! Dad's wanted to refurbish the pub for ages and anyway Ginger

- has had a lot of good ideas. I don't know why you don't like her; she's always lovely to you.
- BARBARA:** Yeah well there's things I could tell you about Ginger.
- MARY:** *(Exasperated)* Barbara, nobody's perfect. Why don't you move out? If I've asked you once I've asked you a hundred times - come and share with us.
- BARBARA:** A houseful of garda?! You'd arrest me for indecent exposure every time I got out of the bath.
- MARY:** You're just being stubborn. Nuala and Jean both think you're great - you'd love it.
- BARBARA:** Why would I want to move in with you?! You just made me lose my license over a pint of lager shandy!
- MARY:** You haven't lost your license..... You'll just be banned for a few months that's all.
- BARBARA:** That's all!? I'm a midwife Mary! I have to visit pregnant women. I have to visit them all over the county carrying forty pounds of equipment with me. How am I going to get around?
- MARY:** Dad's got an old bike out the back somewhere.
- BARBARA:** *(Lunging at her hair)* I'm going to kill you.
- MARY:** *(Screaming)* Get off! Ow!  
*Ger enters with a bunch of red, heart-shaped, helium-filled balloons. The girls abort their scrap swiftly and try to appear as if nothing was going on.*
- GER:** Is everything all right?
- BARBARA:** Fine.
- MARY:** Yeah.
- GER:** What were you doing?
- BARBARA:** Hair.
- GER:** What?
- MARY:** Barbara was doing my hair...for the party tonight.
- GER:** Oh right. Yeah, it suits you. I'm really looking forward to this party. Now lovely ladies - here are the balloons your dad wanted. Is he up yet?
- BARBARA:** On his anniversary!? No, he's upstairs celebrating one year of marital bliss.  
*(She thrusts her pelvis in and out suggestively).*
- MARY:** Barbara!
- GER:** No better man! With, I must say, no better daughters. It's like waking to one of my fantasies - a bangarda, a nurse and a bar full of liquor. *(He leans towards her)* Do I get a Valentines kiss Mary?
- MARY:** *(Seductively)* Ger McCarthy if you ever get that close to me again, do you know what I'll be forced to do?
- GER:** No what?

- MARY: *(Changing tone abruptly)* Rip your arm off and hit you with the soggy end!
- BARBARA: Or breathalise you!  
*Mary gives Barbara a dirty look.*
- MARY: Anyway aren't you supposed to be at the airport?
- GER: Patience, my little flower of the constabulary. I am on my way this very moment to pick up your darling sister, the missing jewel in the O'Brien family crown, and restore her to your side.
- BARBARA: Well bugger off then.
- GER: I need some petrol money.
- BARBARA: I'll get it.
- MARY: No! I'll get it. *(Barbara gives Mary a dirty look)*  
*(To Ger)* How much do you need?
- GER: Thirty quid.
- MARY: How much!?
- GER: Call it a tenner. It'll be good to see Sarah again after all this time.
- MARY: You know she's changed her name don't you?
- GER: What?
- MARY: For her new job - presenting on the Irish radio station.
- GER: What's she changed it to?
- BARBARA: Sorcha. Sorcha n' Bhriain - can you believe it?
- GER: Mm, yeah, it suits her, Sorcha. It's quite sexy.
- BARBARA: You're not going to try and get off with Sarah are you?
- GER: Ah no. Sarah and me are friends.
- BARBARA: Why would that stop you?
- GER: Because there's women and there's friends and the two don't mix - otherwise I might go for the record.
- BARBARA: What record?
- GER: You know - A full house, the holy trinity - all three Sisters O'Brien  
*(Barbara and Mary react with outrage to his scurrilous suggestion)*
- BARBARA: I wouldn't touch you with somebody else's!
- MARY: Barbara!
- BARBARA: And neither would the virgin Mary here.
- MARY: I'm going to work! Here's the petrol money. *(Sarcastically to Barbara)*  
Need a lift?  
*Mary exits.*
- GER: *(Pursuing her to the door)* Oh don't leave me Mary I find you so arresting  
*(Returning to Barbara)*. Bar-bara that uniform is giving me a temperature!
- BARBARA: Knock it off Ger. *(Getting up)* You better go and pick up the born again gaelgor, we don't want her fatted calf to go cold!
- GER: You're nothing but a tease. You know your heart's bursting for me.

- BARBARA: *Barbara bursts one of the balloons with her cigarette.*  
Oh yeah. *(As in; 'you're right')*  
GER: Ah Barbara don't! You're dad'll kill me.  
BARBARA: Bye Ger!  
*She holds her cigarette close to a second balloon.*  
GER: All right, all right I'm going.  
*Ger exits hurriedly.*

## SCENE 2

Barbara is about to burst the balloon, when she changes her mind. She checks whether anyone's around then pushes the balloon inside her top and walks around imagining what it would be like to be pregnant. Just then Ginger enters unnoticed. She is in her dressing gown. She watches Barbara and smiles to herself, then:

- GINGER: It suits you.  
BARBARA: *(Surprised, then annoyed - pulling the balloon out)*  
Jesus, you don't get a minute to yourself round here!  
GINGER: Sorry Barbara - I didn't mean to creep up on you. Did I hear Mary come in this morning?  
BARBARA: She's gone home.  
GINGER: Oh I see. *(There's an awkward pause while Barbara puts her coat on).* And you're off to work are you?  
BARBARA: *(Sarcastically, indicating her nurses uniform)* No I'm a kissagram!  
GINGER: Right. Well, we'll see you later at the party I expect.  
BARBARA: I expect so. *(She goes to leave).*  
GINGER: It should be a bit of craic - I'm really looking forward to it.  
*(Barbara turns and looks Ginger up and down, then)*  
BARBARA: Yeah, it must be a long time since you've, 'entertained'.  
*(Jim enters - also in his dressing gown.)*  
JIM: There you are! Come back to bed you saucy little rascal!  
*(Suddenly).* Oh hello Barbara I didn't notice you there. Off to work are you?  
BARBARA: *(Exasperated)* Yes I am!  
JIM: What's wrong with you? Did you not get any Valentines, is that it?  
GINGER: Ah Jim the post hasn't even come yet.  
JIM: Here, you're not rowing with your sister again are you?  
*Barbara doesn't answer.*  
Listen, I don't want any bickering on our special day. You can do what you like tomorrow but today we're going to be one big happy family - understood?!



- BARBARA: You should tell Mary - she's the one who started it!  
(*Barbara exits slamming the door*)
- JIM: That girl never stops complaining. She's a mouth like a torn pocket these days.
- GINGER: You should have heard her before you came in. It's not getting any easier Jim - she just doesn't like me.
- JIM: Well that's her look out. I like you! (*smuggling up to her*) In fact I really like you.
- GINGER: 'like' is it Jim?
- JIM: Ah come on, you know what I mean.
- GINGER: Do I?
- JIM: Ah Ginger.
- GINGER: No go on - what do you mean?
- JIM: All right. (*Bashfully*) I love you Ginger.
- GINGER: Ah Jim. I love you too.
- JIM: (*He takes a small box from his pocket*) Here, I got you this.
- GINGER: What is it?
- JIM: It's a special Valentines anniversary present.
- GINGER: (*Holding up a necklace*) Oh Jim, it's beautiful. It must have cost a fortune.
- JIM: 'Money no object'. (*Putting it on her*). Happy anniversary. Mrs. O'Brien.
- GINGER: Happy anniversary Mr. O'Brien.  
*They kiss. Ginger remembers something.*  
What time is Sarah arriving?
- JIM: I don't know, (*trying to kiss her some more*) - later on.
- GINGER: Jim, I'm a bit nervous about meeting her like this.
- JIM: Ah love why?
- GINGER: Think about it. She's been away for three years and in the meantime her dad's married a woman she's never even heard of let alone met and now she's arriving back, probably with severe jet lag, straight into their grand, first anniversary bash, to which you've invited practically every politician you could get your hands on. I thought this was supposed to be an intimate family gathering!
- JIM: Ah Ginger, don't be getting all het up.
- GINGER: And then there's the other thing - you're not going to announce that at the party are you?
- JIM: Soothingly. Of course I'm not - we'll just tell the girls later...before the party. Now, there's no need to get upset.
- GINGER: You're right - I'm just a bit tense that's all.
- JIM: Well then I think we should definitely go back to bed and take care of that tension.

GINGER: Mr. O'Brien, you're incorrigible.  
JIM: No Mrs. O'Brien, I'm insatiable!  
(*They exit back upstairs giggling.*)

### SCENE 3

FX: outro music of the Gay Byrne Show and a slight brightening of the lights indicates time passing. It is now late morning. Harry 'Lucky' Doyle enters and begins to tap the walls with the air of a master builder, until at one point some lumps of plaster fall down. He looks both ways, scoops the plaster in to his pocket and whistling, helps himself to a drink from behind the bar. (*This covers Jim's change.*) Jim enters (*fully dressed.*)

JIM: I see you've made yourself at home.  
LUCKY: We don't want it to go off. (*Takes a swig of drink*)  
JIM: (*Furtively.*) Are you right Lucky, have a seat there. Now that matter we discussed yesterday, can we finally shake on it?  
LUCKY: Hold on a minute Jim, there's a little something that's hitherto been omitted from our negotiations. Before we shake on anything, I want to know what sizable chunk of cash you're offering me. Ginger has wonderful taste Jim, but dado rails don't come cheap and then there's the other thing. This isn't just a refurbishment is it? This is...added exterior walls!  
JIM: Ssh! Jeysus Lucky, keep your voice down.  
LUCKY: Do I take it the planning permission is still 'under consideration'?  
JIM: It's all in hand Lucky, all in hand. I mean what's the point of being a councillor if you can't bring joy to the faces of the children, serve the people every day and shove a forty foot extension through planning disguised as a conservatory.  
LUCKY: Ah, but that's the very point. It's building Jim, but not as we know it! The whole mission must be shrouded in secrecy d'ya see. Myself and my highly trained work force will be living in the shadow of fear and detection. Constantly struggling with our conscience to win the long battle against bureaucracy.  
JIM: And that costs more I take it?  
LUCKY: What are you offering?  
JIM: Ten grand including materials.  
LUCKY: (*Indignant.*) Ten grand! Including materials! Who do you take me for?  
JIM: A man with five kids and another one on the way.  
LUCKY: Twenty - excluding materials!  
JIM: Ah now Lucky - It'll all be cash in hand - what are your overheads?

- LUCKY: What about me highly trained work force?  
 JIM: Ger McCarthy! Highly trained in dipping his wick more like. Twelve and we go halves on the bricks.
- LUCKY: Eighteen and I erase the words 'planning permission' from me vocabulary.  
*Mary enters suddenly.*
- MARY: *(Cheerfully)* He-llo.  
 LUCKY: *(Under his breath to Jim)* Working in the shadow of fear and detection!  
 MARY: What are you two plotting?  
 JIM: Lucky was just wishing me a happy anniversary. Anyway I'll see you later Lucky.
- LUCKY: But what about me money?!
- JIM: Come back in a minute - I'll get rid of her.  
*Lucky just manages to knock back his drink as Jim takes the glass off him and hurries him out.*
- JIM: Ah Mary what are you doing here? Shouldn't you be resting up for the party?
- MARY: Did I hear you two talking about planning permission?  
 JIM: Planning permission? Sure why would we be talking about that? I'm only giving the place a bit of a face lift - you don't need permission for that.  
 MARY: Dad! You're hiding something, I can always tell.  
 JIM: *(Sternly)* Mary - I saw Barbara this morning.  
 MARY: Oh.  
 JIM: What's going on?  
 MARY: *(Defensively)* Look dad, it was her own fault, she was over the limit.  
 JIM: *(Realisation dawning)* You're not telling me you breathalised your own sister?!
- MARY: She's a menace to society dad!  
 JIM: She's a nurse Barbara - It balances out.  
 MARY: I was just doing my duty. You're the one who taught us that; 'Do your duty and serve the people' that's what you always say!
- JIM: There's duty Mary and then there's going to far. How would you like it if you went into hospital with a cold and Barbara amputated your leg!  
 Hm?
- MARY: Oh don't be ridiculous dad, it's not the same thing and anyway Barbara's a midwife, she doesn't do amputations!
- JIM: Police harassment Mary. You want to watch out for it! You have a glowing career ahead of you, according to the Superintendent, and you don't want to ruin it.
- MARY: Dad! You haven't been talking to the Super again, have you?!
- JIM: *(Changing the subject again)* Well Sarah'll be home soon, I better go and get the spare room ready.

- Jim exits hurriedly followed by Mary.*
- MARY: Dad! I told you not to interfere. *(From offstage)* Dad! Come back here. Lucky pops his head round the door, checks the coast is clear and pours himself another drink. Jim rushes on looking behind him.
- JIM: I think I've lost her. Where were we?
- LUCKY: Eighteen hundred.
- JIM: Thirteen.
- LUCKY: Seventeen.
- JIM: Fourteen.
- LUCKY: Sixteen.
- JIM: Fifteen and a half, the bricks and all the sandwiches you can eat!
- LUCKY: Done!  
*They spit and shake on it.*
- JIM: Now I'm off before Sherlock Holmes finds me.
- MARY: *(Offstage)* Dad!  
*They both jump up.*
- JIM: *(Exiting.)* No you stay here or it'll look suspicious.
- LUCKY: *(Moving towards the bar for another drink)* My pleasure.  
*Mary enters and startles Lucky.*
- MARY: Where's dad?
- LUCKY: He had some business down the town. I'm minding the shop.
- MARY: Drinking the shop more like!
- LUCKY: A good salesman knows his wares! Anyway when's Sarah due back?
- MARY: Sarah? Oh you mean Sorcha - in a couple of hours I think.
- LUCKY: Sorcha?
- MARY: Yes, she's gone all Irish on us!  
*Mary exits - street door.*
- LUCKY: In Australia?  
*Lights fade down on Lucky - he freezes.*

#### SCENE 4

Airport. Played downstage - Lights up . FX of general crowd noise fades in.  
A flat bearing airport-type information could be used. Ger enters downstage. He is waiting for Sarah.

*FX: Noise of airport then; Bing bong.*

- TANOY: *(nasal female voice)* Would Passenger Sarah O'Brien, sorry, passenger Sorcha ní Bhriain recently arrived on the E101 from Sydney, please



make her way to the meeting point. Thank you.

*FX: Bing bong and airport noise fades down.*

GER: *(Waiting)* Sorcha ní Bhriain! She won't know whose come to pick her up when she hears that. I should hide as well and jump out at her when she goes past.

*He takes out a pair of sunglasses and tries to blend into the background.*

*FX: Bing bong.*

TANOY:

Would Sarah O'Brien, ah feck it. Would Sorcha ní Bhriain please make her way to the meeting point. Thank you.

*FX: Bing bong.*

*Sarah enters looking for Ger. She is wearing shorts and is very tanned with a rucksack on her back. He doesn't recognise her. He is completely bowled over for the whole scene.*

SARAH:

Ger. Ger it's me.

GER:

*(Amazed by her transformation)* Sarah?

SARAH:

Yeah! Is it very bright outside?

GER:

What? Oh these. *(He takes off sunglasses)* No it's just my eyes are very sensitive to....er...airports. You look amazing! You've.. really changed.

SARAH:

Well you haven't Ger McCarthy. Don't give me any of your old lines. I suppose it was you who got them to announce my name in Irish?

GER:

*(Still gob smacked)* Oh that, yeah - for a bit of a wind up.

SARAH:

You really do look amazing. Your travels must have agreed with you.

GER:

They did...You never wrote!

SARAH:

Ah, I hate writing. You only wrote twice!

SARAH:

Well I never got a reply.

Ger you don't know how good it is to see you, c'mere give us a hug.

*They hug.*

That's funny.

GER:

What is?

SARAH:

You won't laugh?

GER:

No.

SARAH:

I just remembered I used to have the biggest crush on you.

GER:

*(Hopeful)* You did?

SARAH:

God, I probably had a crush on you since I was six. Isn't that mad?

*(Playful/teasing)* But of course, you were too busy steaming up the inside of your dad's tractor...

GER:

Sarah!

SARAH:

...to notice my poor little heart sitting on my sleeve.

GER:

Sarah...I didn't know...if I had..

SARAH:

I'm only messing. Don't tell me you've got all sensitive in your old age.

*(Pause)* So what are you up to these days?

GER:

Ah, same old, same old - you know yourself.

- SARAH: Still working for Lucky?  
GER: Yeah - it's a living.  
SARAH: Listen, thanks for coming to pick me up, it must be a madhouse at home.  
GER: Here, give us your rucksack.  
SARAH: Ger McCarthy?! A gentleman?!  
GER: Indeed my lady and your carriage awaits. (*Taking rucksack*) Jesus what have you got in here?  
SARAH: Presents mostly - I got a didgeridoo for dad.  
GER: Well that's one thing I'd love to see - Jim O'Brien above in Grafton Street - playing the didgeridoo. Sarah - it's really good to have you back.  
SARAH: Thanks Ger. It's good to be back.  
GER: Do you think you'll stay long?  
SARAH: Yeah. I've made a decision - I'm home for good. I mean don't get me wrong, I had a brilliant time travelling; I've seen some amazing places, and met the most amazing people but now, well, I need to settle down. (*He is staring at her*). What?  
GER: You know, you have a sort of glow about you.  
SARAH: Come on Prince Charming. Get your carriage in gear - remember I've got a step-mother to meet.

## SCENE 5

Lights fade back up in the pub. Lucky is reading the paper. Jim and Ginger enter through the outside door with shopping bags.

- LUCKY: Happy anniversary to you Mrs. O'Brien - did you buy the town?!  
GINGER: Oh this - this isn't half of it Lucky, the caterer's bringing the rest later.  
LUCKY: I'd say that'll cost you a pretty penny Jim.  
GINGER: 'Money no object' Lucky. (*Romantically to Jim*) He's the most generous man in the world.  
*Lucky gives Jim a look.*  
LUCKY: 'Money no object'?  
JIM: A figure of speech Lucky. Could you ever hang on here a bit longer?  
GINGER: There's still a lot to do..  
JIM: *To Ginger with a glint in his eye.* Upstairs!  
*They exit.*  
LUCKY: 'Money no object'! It is if you're building his shagging extension!  
*Ger arrives in with Sarah.*  
SARAH: Lucky!

- LUCKY: Well he-llo Miss Fancy pants! *(They hug)* Are you not cold?!
- SARAH: It was seventy five in the shade when I left Sydney.
- LUCKY: Holy Jesus! What sort of unchristian weather is that for February?!
- SARAH: You'd love it Lucky! Blue skies, soaring temperatures.
- LUCKY: You better go in now and change before you start temperatures soaring round here. Your dad's just gone in with Ginger.
- SARAH: *(Looks nervous)* What's Ginger like?
- LUCKY: She's lovely Sarah. Now you want to hurry or you might miss them.
- SARAH: Wish me luck.
- LUCKY: Good luck.
- SARAH: *(To Ger)* See you later.  
*She exits.*
- GER: *(Calling after her)* Yeah see you later at the party.
- LUCKY: Now Ger, sit down 'til I talk to you.
- GER: *(Staring after Sarah)*
- LUCKY: Ger!
- GER: Sorry. What Lucky?  
*(Lucky is being very covert)*
- LUCKY: C'mere. Now, I've just had a 'chat' with the governor. The summit met, so to speak, and I feel the ensuing negotiated settlement will be to everyone's mutual benefit.
- GER: *(Stares at him)* You're spending too much time with Jim O'Brien, d'ya know that? You're beginning to sound like him. *(He goes to leave)*
- LUCKY: Where are you going? Will you sit down 'til I give you the Johnny McGrory.
- GER: What?
- LUCKY: The story!  
*Ger stares at him uncomprehendingly.*
- GER: About the spondulicks!
- LUCKY: What are you talking about?
- GER: Jaysus Ger! *(Shouts)* The feckin' refurbishment, ya feckin' cejit!
- GER: Oh. Has he got the planning permission then?
- LUCKY: Ssh! *(Looking around paranoid)* Not exactly.
- GER: Well then why are you shouting about it?
- LUCKY: Jesus, Mary and Joseph I give up! Look do you want to hear about the job or not?
- GER: Yeah, course.
- LUCKY: Right...
- GER: Lucky?
- LUCKY: *(Tolerantly)* Yes Ger?
- GER: When you were courtin', when exactly did you....know?
- LUCKY: Know what?

- GER: You know. 'Know'.
- LUCKY: No, I don't know, 'know'!
- GER: When did you realise, she was the one.
- LUCKY: Jeysus Ger. I can't remember that far back.
- GER: But was there a feeling Lucky, a sudden realisation?
- LUCKY: Well you know the old saying: 'there's a boot for every foot.' I took one look at my Margaret's face and knew I'd found me...ah well you know what I mean!
- GER: But you do love her, don't you?
- LUCKY: Of course I love her man! I might not say it to her face, but by god, I love that woman. (*Sentimentally*) We've been through thick and thin together. Seen good times and bad. I tell you I wouldn't swap her for all the tea in China.
- GER: Yeah but would you swap her for another woman?
- LUCKY: Another woman! Sure where would I get the energy?! Anyway, what's this all about? Don't tell me you've some young one up the pole.
- GER: No!
- LUCKY: Well I'd say that's more luck than judgment! (*Poking him*) Do you not carry condoms? You're supposed to nowadays you know.
- GER: What would you know about condoms?
- LUCKY: I've done my bit for the Catholic population and anyway Father Morrissey thinks you lose the urge after forty.
- GER: (*Laughing uncertainly*) But you don't do you? I mean you and the wife still.....don't you?
- LUCKY: Is there anything else you'd like to know?
- GER: I don't mean to be nosy Lucky...
- LUCKY: Yeah right!
- GER: It's just that I discovered something today. Something that's never happened to me before. Something that frightened me.
- LUCKY: Jeysus man you've the clap?!
- GER: No! Lucky - I think.....I think I'm falling in love.
- LUCKY: (*Pause as Lucky digests this amazing information*) You? Fall in love? I thought you were pathologically opposed to the condition. Who is the unfortunate girl anyway?
- GER: I can't tell you.
- LUCKY: Oh it's serious so. (*Playing detective*) Is she local?
- GER: You could say.
- LUCKY: And you've asked her out have you?
- GER: No, I can't. That's just it - she thinks of me as a friend.
- LUCKY: Oh I see; she wants to be friends but you want to get her round the back of the Esso station!
- GER: Lucky I'm serious. It's like a bolt out of the blue. I feel queasy when I



think about her, my palms sweat when she's near me, I can't think about anything else.

**LUCKY:** Oh ho, that's love all right and no better day to catch a dose of it. You've one of Cupid's little darts stuck fast in you and I'd say it'd be very hard to shift. Especially if she keeps wearing those shorts! *(He taps his nose and exits)*

**GER:** *(Calling after him)* How did you know? Lucky.  
*(He exits - from off)* Lucky wait! I need advice. This has never happened to me before.

## SCENE 6

Early evening. The O'Brien clan are gathering for a champagne toast before the party. They enter with glasses. Barbara and Mary are still not speaking and Sarah looks pecky.

**JIM:** *(Raising bottle)* Does everyone have champagne? Now I'd like to make a toast..Jesus what are those balloons doing still in here?

**GINGER:** Jim never mind the balloons - make your toast.

**JIM:** Sarah are you all right?

**SARAH:** I'm just a bit jet-lagged that's all dad.

**JIM:** Well before I make my toast I'd just like to say a few words...

**BARBARA:** We'll be here all night.

**JIM:** I'm delighted to have all my family back together on this special day and I'm particularly delighted to welcome home Sarah and to tell her how very proud we all are of her and her new job at the radio station. So many of our young folk go away, emigrate - it's good to see some of them returning at last...

**BARBARA:** Here we go.

**JIM:** ...I think as a father I have a right to be very proud indeed. Three lovely daughters all working to serve the community as I myself have attempted to do in my small way as councillor and, of course, publican. Well girls after your mother died, god rest her soul, I didn't think I could be happy again. I was content to believe I would live out my days as a widower, but then wasn't I the luckiest man in the world when Ginger...  
*(he kisses Ginger on the cheek)*

**BARBARA:** *(Under her breath but loud enough for Ginger to hear)*...got her claws into you.

**MARY:** Ssh!

**JIM:** ...came into my life and I fell in love all over again. So my toast is very simple - To the O'Brien family.

- ALL:** (*They stand.*) The O'Brien family.
- SARAH:** Congratulations.
- GINGER:** Sarah are you sure you're all right? You do look a bit queasy.
- SARAH:** Well actually I have something I have to tell...(you all).
- JIM:** Come on Ginger I think it's time for our special announcement. (*Proudly*) Ginger and I...(*They exchange loving glances.*)
- GINGER:** We're going to have a baby!  
(*General amazement*)
- BARBARA:** (*Horrified*). I don't believe it!
- MARY:** (*Delighted*) A baby!
- BARBARA:** I can't live with a baby.
- GINGER:** Well you wouldn't have to move out right away, it's not due until August.
- BARBARA:** The cuckoo has landed!
- MARY:** A baby!
- SARAH:** (*Nervously*) Could I just say something? It seems appropriate to mention this now and I'd have to tell you all sooner or later...actually.....I'm going to have a baby as well!  
*Pandemonium.*
- MARY:** (*More delighted*) Another baby!
- JIM:** You're going to what?!
- GINGER:** Remember your blood pressure Jim.
- SARAH:** I'm going to have a baby! I'm pregnant dad.
- JIM:** How can you be pregnant?
- BARBARA:** By going to bed with a big hairy Aussie....
- MARY:** Shut up Barbara!
- JIM:** You think you can just hop into bed and get pregnant. Who's the father?
- SARAH:** Look I'm sorry. I shouldn't have brought this up now. Let's leave it until tomorrow.
- JIM:** When did you get married?
- SARAH:** What? I didn't.
- JIM:** Well you're not welcome in my house without a ring on your finger. You floozy!
- GINGER:** Jim!
- SARAH:** (*Getting angry*) Listen dad, I'm not marrying anyone. In fact there is no father because...I went to a sperm bank!  
*Everyone is taken aback.*
- BARBARA:** What?!
- JIM:** Holy Mary mother of Jesus...  
*Ger enters.*
- JIM:** - a sperm bank!

*Sarah runs out past Ger.*

GER: Em...Mr. O'Brien, sorry to interrupt but the guests are arriving. Mr. Dawson from the planning office is looking for you, something about a conservatory.

JIM: *(Pretending everything's normal)* Ah right, yes. Come on then everyone - *(threateningly)* one great big happy family.

*Jim rushes out followed by Ger. Mary gives Barbara a dirty look and follows. Barbara notices she's left with Ginger and goes to leave. Ginger calls her back.*

## SCENE 7

GINGER: Barbara! Can I have a quick word?

BARBARA: What?

GINGER: There's something I want to say to you.

BARBARA: *(Sarcastic.)* Pack your bags you're leaving! You already said it.

GINGER: I didn't mean it to sound like that.

BARBARA: This is what you wanted all along isn't it? To force me out of my home!

GINGER: Barbara what exactly is your problem? Is it that your father married again? Is it me personally? Or is it that you took on the mammy role as a kid and now you won't let it go?

BARBARA: You can't talk to me like that.

GINGER: *(Sympathetic)* I know it was tough after your mum died, Jim's told me about it. You were the oldest, it hit you hardest. You did have a hard time - but you're not the only one in the world who's had it rough.

BARBARA: *(Sarcastic)* Oh here it comes the tragic story.

GINGER: Barbara I know what it feels like. I lost my mother when I was a girl...

BARBARA: That's no excuse!

GINGER: *(Taken by surprise)* Excuse for what? For marrying your father?

BARBARA: You know what I'm talking about.

GINGER: No I don't. What are you trying to say Barbara?

BARBARA: I know all about you.

GINGER: What do you mean?

BARBARA: I've been listening in to you on the phone.

GINGER: You've been what?!

BARBARA: When you were talking to your old 'friends', you know, from the 'escort agency'.

GINGER: You've been listening to my phone conversations?! *(Pause)* All right then - and what did you find out?

BARBARA: Well, that you used to work there...in the escort agency

GINGER: Yes?

- BARBARA: *(Uncertainly)* So I know.
- GINGER: You know what?
- BARBARA: Do you really want me to spell it out?
- GINGER: Yes I do Barbara - let's get this out in the open.
- BARBARA: All right then. I know that you worked as a...as a...call girl!  
*Pause.*
- GINGER: Well 'escort' is the term I would use but yes, you're right, your snooping paid off - I did work for an agency. So?
- BARBARA: What do you mean: 'so'? I could tell dad everything.
- GINGER: You could but I don't think he'd be surprised - how do you think I met him in the first place?!
- BARBARA: What?!
- GINGER: Yes Barbara. Jim O'Brien was the best client I ever had - remember all those business trips to Dublin? So if you want to fuel gossip with your sarcastic little remarks - go ahead, but remember you won't just be hurting me. I know you think I'm a gold digger but I'm not! I didn't marry your father for his money, Barbara and I certainly didn't marry him to become your evil stepmother - I married him because he was decent to me and I fell in love! You can believe it or not I don't care any more. I've been trying to make friends with you for the best part of a year and you've just thrown it all back in my face and I'm sorry, but I've had enough. If you don't want to accept me that's fine - all I'm saying is, the gloves are off and, believe me Barbara, I can be as much of a bitch as you can!  
*Pause.*  
*Then cheerfully but still in control.*  
Right, I think we should join the others before we're missed. One big happy family' remember?!  
*Ginger exits. There is a pause while we take in Barbara's consternation. She then gathers her thoughts and exits.*

## SCENE 8

*Lights cross fade - time passes. FX: 'Ay, ay, ay, ay Conga' - the party is now in full swing offstage. Lucky slips in and helps himself to a pint. Sarah enters looking exhausted, she suddenly notices Lucky. FX fade out as soon as they start to speak.*

- SARAH: Are you looking for sanctuary too?
- LUCKY: No, the free bar's finished in the other room.  
*Sarah starts to cry.*



- LUCKY: Oh Sarah love, whatever's the matter?  
 SARAH: Sorry Lucky, it's just tiredness.  
 LUCKY: Well come on, sit down. Can I get you anything?  
 SARAH: Just a hankie, if you have one.  
*As Lucky pulls out a rather stringy piece of loo roll, the plaster he scooped into his pocket earlier falls out - Sarah doesn't notice. He shakes the dust out of the loo roll and hands it to her.*
- LUCKY: It is clean. It's been through the wash in these trousers.  
 SARAH: Oh Lucky, I'm so confused.  
 LUCKY: Ah well that'll be the time difference. Things'll be better tomorrow.  
 SARAH: Will they? I wonder. *(Pause)*Lucky, what's it like having children?  
 LUCKY: A drain on the purse and a pain in the bollocks! People are asking me the strangest questions today.  
 SARAH: But they are...lovely as well. Aren't they?  
 LUCKY: All children's lovely. It's what they get dealt when they come out that makes 'em or breaks 'em.  
 SARAH: Do you think I'd make a good mother?  
 LUCKY: Sarah, I think you'd be good at whatever you did. Now is there something you're not telling me?  
 SARAH: I'm going to have a baby Lucky.  
 LUCKY: Ah love. Congratulations.  
 SARAH: It's just that...well...I'm doing it on my own.  
 LUCKY: Oh. And are you happy about that?  
 SARAH: Yes. Well not exactly. Oh I don't know!  
 I just blurted it out to the family before the party. Dad went mental and said I had to marry the father and I over-reacted and told him I'd been to a sperm bank.  
 LUCKY: A sperm bank! Well I suppose that's one way of looking at the fella.  
 SARAH: Oh Lucky it wasn't like that. It just wouldn't have worked out.  
 LUCKY: I was only joking. Ah, you're dad'll come round. His bark's worse than his bite.  
 SARAH: I don't know...I was thinking maybe it's selfish to bring a child into the world without having planned it properly, maybe I shouldn't...  
 LUCKY: Sarah. Did I ever tell you how I came to be called 'Lucky'?  
 SARAH: No...but what's that got to do...?  
 LUCKY: We'd been married about three years at the time and Margaret was mad keen to start a family, but I wasn't sure and I kept putting her off; 'we'll wait a bit longer', I'd say, 'til there's more money in the bank'. I was working for a man called Milo Rafferty at the time, you might have heard of him.  
*Sarah shakes her head.*  
 He'd taken me on as an apprentice and taught me everything he knew.

The man was practically a father to me, Sarah. Anyway, one Saturday we went out to a house to do some rewiring. It was a straightforward enough job but, we were talking about football - a great passion of Milo's, and we'd forgotten to switch the electricity off.

SARAH:

Oh no.

LUCKY:

It's worse than that. Milo turned to me, exposed wires in the one hand, metal pliers in the other, to wax lyrical once again about the silky skills of the great Georgie Best, when all of a sudden, didn't he bring his two hands together and explode in a great fountain of blue sparks.

SARAH:

Dead?

LUCKY:

Dead! Electrocuted to death. I ran over and grabbed him - I just wasn't thinking. If it hadn't been for the wellies the wife made me wear on the bike, there'd have been two blue fountains.

SARAH:

And that's why you're called Lucky.

LUCKY:

After I got over the shock, if you'll pardon the pun, I stopped my dithering and I says to the wife; 'lets make babies!'. Life is too precious to be worrying about the consequences all the time Sarah - you have to get out there and live it!

SARAH:

You're right Lucky.

*FX: Gradual fade up "It's Not Unusual To Be Loved..."*

*(Tom Jones).*

LUCKY:

And you never know the right man might come along sooner than you think.

*Non-verbal party noise from off - people enjoying themselves.*

Now will you have a dance Sarah? *(Looking offstage)*

From what I can see, you're the only O'Brien not on the floor.

SARAH:

I'll follow you out in a minute Lucky.

LUCKY:

Ah, take your time Sarah - you've had a long day.

*Lucky exits.*

## SCENE 9

*Sarah gets up to look at the balloons. Ginger enters. Their conversation is initially awkward and stilted.*

*Music fades out as they begin to speak.*

GINGER:

Hi.....I wondered if you were all right?

SARAH:

Oh thanks, no I'm fine. *(Pause)* Congratulations....on the...(baby).

GINGER:

Thanks.....You too.

- SARAH: Oh thanks.  
*They smile at each other - there is a pause where they both visibly relax. Sarah confides;*
- SARAH: It wasn't really a sperm bank.
- GINGER: I didn't think so.
- SARAH: He was an American. We just hooked up for a while in Asia - then I was going on to Australia and he was going back to Chicago, so we went our separate ways.
- GINGER: It wasn't planned then?
- SARAH: No. By the time I realised I was pregnant it was two months later and he was already in my past somehow. Do you know what I mean?
- GINGER: I think so. And you decided to keep the baby?
- SARAH: Once I got over the shock...I realised I wanted it.
- GINGER: And will you tell the father now you've decided?
- SARAH: I'm not sure. I could send him tapes of the show.
- GINGER: The show?
- SARAH: You know for the Irish radio station. I'm going to do a series following my own pregnancy on air.
- GINGER: I was wondering but now I'm convinced - you're definitely an O'Brien!
- SARAH: It's going to be a sort of As Gaeilge Marion Finucane on oestrogen!  
*From offstage.*
- JIM: Ginger! Ginger come and meet Mr. Dawson.
- GINGER: Duty calls! I don't suppose you want to come and plamá the planning officer do you?
- SARAH: No thanks.
- Ginger goes to exit.*
- SARAH: Ginger. Are you looking forward to it...the baby?
- GINGER: *(With feeling)* Oh yes. I never thought I'd fall in love and get married and have a baby. I thought I'd missed the boat and now here I am on the QE2!
- JIM: *(Offstage)* Ginger!
- GINGER: See you later. *(She exits)*
- MALE DJ: *(Older male voice from offstage)* Now we're going to slow it right down and specially for Valentine's Day, here's Whitney Houston with; "I Will Always Love You".  
*FX: Song starts.*  
*Sarah smiles to herself and sits down.*

## SCENE 10

- LUCKY: *Ger and Lucky appear in the doorway.*  
Go on man  
*Lucky gives Ger a little shove into the room and disappears.*  
*Ger is nervous.*  
*FX fades out.*
- GER: Hiya Sarah.
- SARAH: Oh hi Ger. You taking a breather as well?
- GER: I've, em, been doing a bit of thinking.
- SARAH: Oh yeah? Me too.
- GER: Oh what have you been thinking about?
- SARAH: Oh, this and that.
- GER: Yeah, me too.  
*(Pause)*  
Erm, Lucky told me about your...news.
- SARAH: Oh.....So what do you think?
- GER: Well, I think.....*(Suddenly blurts)* Marry me!
- SARAH: What?!
- GER: *He kneels.*  
*(Earnestly)* Marry me Sarah!
- SARAH: Ger I don't know if you know this but you just proposed to me.
- GER: Sarah I'm serious. I think I'm in love with you.
- SARAH: You think you're in love with me?
- GER: I am in love with you. From the moment I saw you at the airport I knew. It all just clicked into place, we're mates and now I fancy you as well. It's perfect. And you said you used to have a crush on me too.
- SARAH: Ger, we haven't seen each other in ages, in years. I did have a crush on you when I was sixteen, but I'm not sixteen any more.
- GER: So, what are you saying?
- SARAH: I'm saying, I'm not in love with you.
- GER: But what about the baby? I could help out, be a father for it.
- SARAH: I'm not looking for a father.
- GER: It'd solve all your problems.
- SARAH: Ger, I don't have any problems. I'm having a baby not a nervous breakdown. Look Ger, I don't mean to be harsh and please don't think I'm not grateful but.....
- GER: I've got a job, I could support you.
- SARAH: I've got a job, I can support myself! Ger, it's not a reflection on you; you're funny, you're handsome, you're great company - you're a great



guy! It's just that....I'm not in love with you.....Sorry.

*(Pause)*

GER: Oh god now I feel like an awful gobshite!

SARAH: Ah come on. You don't look like a gobshite - that took a lot of guts.

GER: Yeah, well. I think I'll go get a drink.

*(He goes to leave)*

SARAH: Ger.

*(He turns back)*

What I really need right now is friends. We are still friends aren't we?

GER: Course we are.

*(He comes back and gives her a hug)*

SARAH: Are you all right?

GER: No. I still fancy the arse off you - I'm going to have to go to the jacks and rearrange my trousers.

*(He exits. Sarah smiles to herself)*

SARAH: Well, it's nice to feel attractive.

*FX: Ceili-type music fades up quickly. Whoops are heard from offstage. The party is still in full swing.*

SARAH: Looking offstage. Oh no, I'm not able for that.

*(She yawns and lays her head on the table for a nap)*

*FX: Music and voices fade up and then fade out.*

*Lights fade down a little - time passes.*

## SCENE II

*From off stage, we hear Barbara and Mary singing; 'Ay ay ay ay Conga'. They dance on stage - Mary holding onto Barbara's hips, their shoes in their hands. They are tipsy. They see Sarah.*

BARBARA: Ssshhh!

MARY: Ssshhh, ssshhh.

*(Mary attempts to wake Sarah up)*

BARBARA: Gently, she's pregnant.

MARY: Everbody's bloody pregnant.

BARBARA: Except us!

MARY: Sarah. Sarah! It's your two lovely sisters.

*(Sarah wakes up)*

SARAH: Oh god, I must have nodded off. What time is it?

BARBARA: Six o'clock...

MARY: ...in the morning. We've been awake for twenty four hours.

SARAH: God, I feel like I've been awake for two whole weeks.

- BARBARA:** Now, you want to mind yourself in your condition. C'mere 'til I check your belly.
- SARAH:** Get off Barbara, you're pissed!
- MARY:** Excuse me madam, you seem to be under the influence of alcohol. I will have to ask you to walk this way.  
*(Mary starts up another chorus of 'Ay ay ay ay Conga' and dances across the floor - Barbara joins in)*
- SARAH:** I take it you two are friends again.
- MARY:** I am happy to announce that myself and Florence Nightingale have made up our differences.
- BARBARA:** Yup! Me and Kojak are friends again. Oh Jesus I'm knackered.
- MARY:** Let's sit down.  
*They sit around the table with Sarah and look expectantly at her.*
- BARBARA:** So!
- SARAH:** What?
- MARY:** Come on you dark horse. Who's the fella?
- SARAH:** What? What fella?
- MARY:** Well, you didn't think we swallowed the sperm bank did you?
- BARBARA:** Euh - Mary!
- MARY:** Sorry.
- SARAH:** Okay, there was a man, but...well, it didn't work out.
- BARBARA:** Ah come on tell us about him, we're your sisters.
- SARAH:** Ah not tonight.
- MARY:** Why not?
- SARAH:** 'Cos I'm tired.
- MARY:** Aw, come on.
- SARAH:** No I don't want to!
- MARY:** Why not?
- SARAH:** Because I don't.
- BARBARA:** *(Suspicious)* What are you hiding?
- SARAH:** Nothing!
- MARY:** You are. Come on, who is it?
- BARBARA:** Yeah, who is it? We swear we won't tell anyone.
- SARAH:** *(With a glint in her eye)* I can't tell you.
- MARY:** Please.
- BARBARA:** Please Sarah.
- SARAH:** I can't.
- BARBARA:** Ah you have to. You can't leave us dangling!
- SARAH:** All right. But you're sworn to secrecy - okay?
- MARY & BARB:** Okay.
- SARAH:** All right I'll tell you. It was....

MARY & BARB: Yeah.  
 SARAH: Rolf Harris!  
*Mary looks stunned and then realises she's joking.*  
 MARY: Ah Sarah. I believed you for a minute.  
 SARAH: Look I'll tell you all about it tomorrow, I'm just too tired now.  
 BARBARA: All right. But are you okay, you know, about it?  
 SARAH: Yeah, I am.  
*Jim enters.*

## SCENE 12

JIM: Well that's the last of them.  
 MARY: Hi dad, where's Ginger?  
 JIM: She's gone up, you know, she's got to mind herself.  
 MARY: So did you have a good night?  
 JIM: Ah 'twas great apart from some of the gobshite's you have to be nice to.  
 MARY: You got your planning permission then so!  
 JIM: How do you know about that?  
 MARY: Like father like daughter.  
 JIM: Did you tell Barbara you were dropping the charges?  
 BARBARA: I can hear you dad - and yes she did.  
 JIM: Oh right. *(Awkwardly)* Hello Sarah.  
 SARAH: Dad.  
 JIM: Listen, I was a bit harsh earlier. It was the shock. I said some things I didn't mean and...  
 BARBARA: Go on.  
 JIM: I want to apologise.  
 SARAH: *(Going to him)* Ah da, you don't have to apologise - I shouldn't have blurted it out like that. You had your special announcement and I ruined it.  
 JIM: Ah you didn't. Where would the O'Brien's be without a bit of a bluster and ruckus. Anyway, the important thing now, as Ginger says, is the two new O'Briens - yours and mine.  
 BARBARA: Yeah dad, we didn't know you had it in you.  
 JIM: Oh I always knew I had it in me. I just didn't know it was going to come out again!  
 MARY: Dad!  
 JIM: Ah, I'm a lucky man! Surrounded, as I am, by the loveliest women in the world. Sure if I were to count my blessings....  
 BARBARA: Come on it's time for bed - dad's getting sentimental.

- SARAH:** *Half asleep.* Good night dad. It's going to be great you'll see - you're going to be a dad and a grand dad all at once!  
*Jim rolls his eyes to heaven. Mary and Sarah leave, Barbara is just behind them when Jim calls her back.*
- JIM:** Barbara. I heard you had a little chat with Ginger.
- BARBARA:** *(Sheepish)* Oh yeah?
- JIM:** I just wanted to say, I'm glad you two have made friends at last.
- BARBARA:** Made friends?.....Oh.....yeah. Good night dad. *(She exits)*  
*(Jim smiles to himself - pause.)*
- JIM:** Well I'm glad that day's over. Women! They're enough to drive you mad. *(Looking to heaven)* Dear god, just one simple request, the new babies.....let them both be boys!  
*Fade to black.*

**The End.**





## HOMEGROUND

Written by Margaret Hawkins

**Agent:** Tom Mooney,  
282 Swords Road, Dublin 9.  
Tel.: 01-8427928



## HomeGround

A one-Act Play written by Margaret Hawkins with the Wexford Playwriting Project Group:

Michael Rodden (Facilitator)

Seamus Burke (Boolavogue Drama Group)

Anne Kehoe (Enniscorthy Theatre Group)

Anne Maguire (Camolin Macra/Gorey Theatre Group)

Paul Kehoe (Bree Macra)

Betty Woodbyrne (Inch Macra)

also with thanks to Macra members Pat, Liam, Paul, Sinead, Seamus and PJ.

This play was commissioned by Macra na Feirme and developed through a workshop process as part of the Macra na Feirme arts initiative.

Agent: Tom Mooney, 282 Swords Road, Dublin 9. Tel.: 01-8427928

## Cast & Setting

<b>Sadie:</b>	50. A woman who is determined to keep a firm grip on her homestead.
<b>Jim:</b>	23, her son, a newly-qualified mechanical engineer.
<b>Uncle Mikey:</b>	<i>(pronounced "My-key")</i> . 85, Sadie's uncle-in-law.
<b>Alex:</b>	24, farm manager and agri-babe.
<b>Leo:</b>	30, nephew of Sadie's. The Euro clerk from hell.
<b>Time:</b>	The year 2050.
<b>Place:</b>	South-East Ireland.
<b>Set:</b>	Farmhouse



## Production Notes

This play emerged from discussions about the changes taking place in farming today and the frightening speed of that change. Although the play is a comedy, its 'fear of loss' theme gives it serious intent. What, we wondered, would farming be like in 50 years time - bureaucracy gone mad? Would the Irish family farm still exist or would it have disappeared under a mountain of paper and torment.

Five characters were developed to tell the story. Set and costume design for this play need not be problematic. Groups should feel free to use their imagination in representing a 2050 world, whether it be by silver wellies, triangular computers or hexagonal tags and so on. The demolition of the computer can be done on/off stage but on-stage would be more effective - perhaps using a dummy? Lighting and set changes are minimal.

## SCENE I

UNCLE MIKEY, in wheelchair, is on stage, near pseudo fire. He wakes when Sadie comes in, carrying a stainless steel tray with several tinfoil dishes on it (new Euro food samples). She is dressed in clinical clothing. She wears a triangular tag in her ear and she gives her head a shake as if to clear it.

SADIE: I wish to hell we didn't have to go into that sterilization chamber every time we come into the house - all these hygiene regulations are getting the better of me. (*Putting tray on table*) God be with the days when a bit of muck didn't make a difference.

MIKEY: (*Going over to computer*) Scutter!

SADIE: Muck, Uncle Mikey - for the sake of decency.

MIKEY: It's the same thing.

SADIE: (*Sorting a lot of documents*) I doubt if it ever harmed anyone. Now if a cow's dropping isn't caught before it hits the ground, you get the slap of a Euro directive before you can say Jack rabbit.

MIKEY: (*Tapping randomly at keys and singing*)

"Run rabbit, run rabbit, run, run, run..

SADIE: (*Sighing*) He's off again..

MIKEY: Chase all officials with a gun, gun, gun - (*He points pretend gun*)

SADIE: I wouldn't sing that if I were you.

MIKEY: I'll sing what I like!

SADIE: If his lordship, Leo, comes in on us, he'll have your guts for garters.

MIKEY: Shoot the bugger!

SADIE: There wouldn't be much point in that. There'd be another Euro Co-ordinator along to replace him straight away - you could count on it. Don't touch that thing, good man..

MIKEY: (*Sulkily leaves computer*) I was only trying to help!

SADIE: (*Going to computer*) I know, but it took Alex two hours to recover from your help last time..

MIKEY: (*Muttering*) Huh!

SADIE: I doubt if she'd like you criticizing Leo..

MIKEY: She's not that fussed about that Brussels Sprout herself.

SADIE: Then why has she started going out with him?

MIKEY: 'Cos she hasn't had a better offer anywhere else, that's why. If she stopped her sprocking Jim might put more pass on her..

SADIE: (*Going over to look at food samples*) If I didn't know any better I'd say you were talking about a heifer!

MIKEY: Huh!

SADIE: If Jim came home he wouldn't have to be jealous of me having an outsider running the place. (*Looking at labels*) In the meantime I'm lucky

to have Alex to do the job. Come here and try a bit of this..this is what we'll have to be producing soon..(Reading) "Syntho cheese.." (She makes a face) "Macro-burgers.." (Tasting a sample. Uncle Mikey goes over) "BVO - a mixture of laboratory-developed beef and venison with a hint of dried ostrich - the meat that's really worth bellowing about.." I don't know. It's not my cup of tea. (Uncle Mikey spits his sample into the wastepaper bin) Give me a decent bit of steak any day.

MIKEY:

SADIE:

Still, they say it's all the rage in Belgium

ALEX enters, wearing white overalls, carrying clipboard and a camera.

Uncle Mikey is still spitting.

ALEX:

What's all the rage in Belgium?

SADIE:

This stuff. (She offers her a piece)

ALEX:

(Looking at labels) Yeah. I tried some at Leo's the other night. (Tasting cautiously) He says the future is 'meat without death' - that's what the market wants.

SADIE:

The market can keep it as far as I'm concerned.

ALEX:

One of these days we'll be growing roasts in laboratories instead of getting them off the rumps of cattle.

(Smelling a few more samples) Scutter!

MIKEY:

ALEX:

How are you today, Mikey?

MIKEY:

Dyin'.

SADIE:

(Picking up clipboard) Don't mind him, he's been saying that as long as I remember and he hasn't popped a clog yet. I hope he hasn't made a pig's ear of anything on that..

ALEX:

(At computer, grinning) I'm sure he hasn't. Have you, Mikey?

MIKEY:

(Sulkily) I was only trying to help.

ALEX:

Course you were.

SADIE:

Right. (Looking at watch) 1500 hours. Time to verify work completed. You made the appointment for the hens to see their psychiatrist?

Yes.

ALEX:

(Imitating hen) Bawk bok-bok-bok..

MIKEY:

SADIE:

You shot those contraceptive darts at the rabbits?

ALEX:

Yep.

SADIE:

God be with the days when we just shot the rabbits. Did you photograph the calves for the Euromart?

Yes.

ALEX:

SADIE:

Ten of each one? All angles?

ALEX:

Yes. All done.

SADIE:

Good. Let's see - what's next?

(Bleep of E.mail coming in)

Not another message! (Hopeful) Is it from Jim?

- ALEX: Nope. (*Keying in to access e-mail*) Brussels again.
- SADIE: For God's sake! That's the third one in two days. If any more of them come through, that thing'll get the belt of a sledgehammer.  
(*MIKEY heads for computer with sledgehammer*)
- MIKEY: No problem!  
(*SADIE and ALEX stop him*)
- SADIE: No! No...
- MIKEY: (*Sulkily*) I was only trying to help.
- SADIE: That sort of help we don't need. You put the heart crossways in me.  
(*Alex takes hammer and pushes Mikey back to fire*)  
Stay over there where we can keep an eye on you. What does the message say?
- ALEX: (*Both look at screen*) It's a new directive - applicable immediately, by the looks of it.
- SADIE: Immediately? (*Reading over her shoulder*) "...The compilation and collocation of conditions vis a vis the.." How is a body supposed to understand all this gobbledegook?
- ALEX: (*Looking anxious*) I think we should get Leo to explain it properly.
- SADIE: You'd think they'd put it in plain English..
- MIKEY: When did the feckers ever do that?
- SADIE: Can you not make out what it says? I'm lost.
- ALEX: (*Reading*) It ...em...
- SADIE: Yes..
- ALEX: (*Reluctantly*) It looks like this place is going to be taken over.
- MIKEY: What?
- SADIE: Taken over?
- ALEX: By...compulsory purchase order
- MIKEY: Over my dead body!
- SADIE: Ssh! Let her finish! That couldn't be right.
- ALEX: ..if a blood relative of yours doesn't agree to farm it after you're fifty..
- MIKEY: The lousers!
- SADIE: (*Shocked*) Tell me this isn't happening. They can't take the last family farm in Ireland - I won't let them..
- ALEX: They couldn't do that..could they?
- SADIE: They've got every other place around here, one way or another. Finnegan's, Wilson's, McGrath's - bought out, sold out, tormented out..
- MIKEY: Shoot the buggers!
- ALEX: (*hopefully*) Maybe I'm reading it wrong..you really should wait for Leo to explain it..
- MIKEY: This is all his doing...
- ALEX: I'm sure it's not. It's one new rule after another these days, you know it is - it won't have anything to do with him.



- SADIE: He must have known it was in the pipeline.
- ALEX: He didn't mention it, honest. (*Soothingly*) It's probably not as bad as you think.
- SADIE: (*Going to computer*) You've never been wrong reading these things before. Jim'll have to be told. Send him a copy of that directive, quick - he won't be long getting here when he sees it.
- ALEX: (*At keyboard*) I thought wild horses wouldn't drag him away from his engineering.
- SADIE: Wild Mammies might have to.  
(*ALEX taps at keys*)
- ALEX: That's it!
- SADIE: Good girl. The sooner he's here the better.
- MIKEY: (*Muttering*) Trying to take land that's been in the family for generations.
- ALEX: I'm sure it couldn't be as bad as that.
- SADIE: I know what they're at. It's the small fella they want rid of. They won't be content until we're all sucked into those factory farms.
- MIKEY: Shoot the buggers!
- ALEX: It's going to put you in a very difficult position if Jim doesn't want to take over..
- SADIE: (*Looking around*) How could we even think of leaving this place? I couldn't bear it..
- MIKEY: They'll take me out of here in a box - that's the only way I'm going. The Brophys didn't fight in '98 to have the land taken off them now. I'll show the feckers! I'll..(*Coughing and spluttering*) I'll.. put manners on them..
- SADIE: You'll give yourself a heart attack, that's what you'll do. Take it easy!
- ALEX: (*Giving him some water*) There! It may not come to that. Are you okay now? (*Mikey nods*)  
(*Doorbell rings. Twice*)
- SADIE: That's Leo!  
(*Alex hurries to answer it*)
- MIKEY: With his two clipped little rings!
- SADIE: He probably has a directive on doorbell ringing in his pocket.  
(*LEO enters, carrying a briefcase*)
- LEO: Aunt Sarah! Delighted, as always - how are you?
- MIKEY: You get to hell out of here! (*Leo gives him a wide berth*)
- SADIE: Mikey - please! (*To Leo*) I'd be a whole lot better if I didn't have that thing bleeping bad news at me..
- MIKEY: Shoot the bugger!
- LEO: Bad news?
- ALEX: The new directive ..
- LEO: Ah, yes, directive 296810. It should have arrived at (*checking watch*) 3.21

- precisely.
- SADIE: So you did know about it, Leo?
- MIKEY: Of course he did!
- LEO: I had an inkling, yes, but do I detect some negativity? Negativity breeds discontent and you know that's frowned upon at head office, don't you? Rule 1192, section 3, paragraph 1068 - 'look on the bright side at all times.' And it's Leonard, please.
- SADIE: It's far from Leonard you were reared..
- MIKEY: Upstart!
- ALEX: *(At computer)* Could you read this? I hope I have it wrong..
- LEO: Certainly, my dear. After all, it is my duty to ensure that all parties are acquainted with documentation. I have a copy in here - along with my directive on doorbell-ringing. *(He takes his own copy of directive out of briefcase)*  
*(Reading fast)* "Following a decision of the Acquisitions Committee of the Procurement Convention it is hereby, forthwith and thereby proposed that all farms under 100 hectares, deemed to be without inhabitants under fifty years of age, should be compulsorily and deliberately attained, should the aforementioned farms have no heir or blood relative willing to acquire the mantle of farmer, in accordance with the compilation and collocation of conditions vis a vis the conglomeration of said properties."  
There - what could be simpler? I fail to see what the problem is - you have a son fitting the requirements, I believe, my cousin James. Will he not be returning home to carry on the family tradition?
- SADIE: You know as well as I do he's started work in town...
- LEO: Perhaps, but it would be only natural for a son to inherit his mother's land.
- SADIE: We'll talk about it when he gets here.
- MIKEY: *(Coming up close to LEO and threatening him with fist)* He'll put the run under the likes of you!
- LEO: I would be obliged if you would keep our relative of ..indeterminate intellect under proper control - directive 1136-AZ, concerning the ultimate safety of Euro Co-ordinators.
- SADIE: He's harmless, for God's sake.  
*(Alex quickly pushes MIKEY back to fire)*
- MIKEY: Who are you calling names?
- SADIE: Stay over there, good man.
- MIKEY: *(Sulkily)* I was only trying to help.
- ALEX: *(Kindly)* We know - ssh!
- SADIE: And what if Jim doesn't want to farm? You just can't take the place away from me.

- LEO: It is not I, Aunt Sarah, as you are well aware, I am merely the..messenger.
- MIKEY: Shoot the bugger!
- LEO: I would not advise it. (*Opening coat and smiling*) I am, as you can see, wearing my bullet repellent vest.
- MIKEY: Scutter!
- LEO: And luckily for you, Aunt Sarah, there is another, more attractive, option...
- SADIE: Thanks be to God for that.
- LEO: I could purchase the place.
- SADIE: You?
- ALEX: You?
- MIKEY: (*Snorting*) What would you want with it?
- LEO: I would farm it, of course.
- MIKEY: You would in your arse!
- LEO: Language my dear uncle. I believe I have made you cognisant of directive 4672, appertaining to the proper use of same?  
*UNCLE MIKEY makes a fart noise.*
- SADIE: Mikey! Will you let us hear what he's saying!
- LEO: James may not want to acquire the mantle of farmer - he is not, after all, known for his farming dedication.
- SADIE: He just never got on with his father and well you know it.
- LEO: My uncle is no longer alive, I believe, but I don't see my cousin here.
- SADIE: He'll be here!
- MIKEY: Damn right he will!
- LEO: If James chooses not to take over, I am your only option. I am, after all, a blood relative.
- MIKEY: A bloody relative!
- LEO: I would be offering more than the compulsory purchase order price plus I would allow you, and my great-uncle, to have your day in the place - I can't say fairer than that.
- ALEX: At least you'd be able to stay on...
- LEO: Precisely.
- ALEX: (*To Sadie*) If the worst came to the worst, I mean..
- SADIE: We're saying nothing until we've talked to Jim!
- LEO: (*Smiling*) Of course. Take all the time you like - as long as it's within thirty-six hours.
- SADIE: Thirty-six hours?
- MIKEY: You can go take a running jump at yourself, boy!
- ALEX: It's not enough..how could anyone decide in ..
- LEO: I am aware it's not a lot of time - if I had my way I would, of course, allow you a greater sufficiency but alas, I do not have it within my power

- to grant such an extension..
- SADIE:** *(Sarcastically)* You're only the messenger.
- LEO:** Precisely.. *(Uncle Mikey imitates him)*
- SADIE:** *(Sitting down in shock)* I don't believe this is happening - and me looking forward to my birthday - some birthday!
- LEO:** Now, now, Aunt, you must look on tomorrow as one of life's landmarks - a day of transition, an opportunity to embrace change.
- SADIE:** Huh!
- LEO:** Yes, you must go out and celebrate - have a meal, perhaps. I would recommend the Erasmus, an excellent establishment. *(To Alex)* You are coming there with me later on?
- ALEX:** *(Reluctantly)* If I said I would..
- LEO:** Good. I've booked our favourite table. Dinner and light conversation - there's nothing quite like it. *(Uncle Mikey snorts)* I have this evening particularly earmarked for rest and relaxation, as you know, aimed at recharging the mental momentum of the psychologically-propulsive being.
- MIKEY:** The psychologically-propulsive backside..  
*(SADIE throws her eyes up to heaven)*
- ALEX:** It's just a night out, Leo.
- LEO:** No night is 'just a night out' with you, my sweet. But I must take leave of you now. Perhaps when I return my cousin will have arrived and made up his mind..
- SADIE:** *(Worried)* I hope so.
- LEO:** *(As he exits)* And you will, of course, tell him that there is the small matter of a test before he is allowed to farm..
- SADIE:** A test?
- MIKEY:** You bollix!
- ALEX:** I never heard of any test..
- LEO:** Rule 1611, paragraph 10 - "the candidate must have a sound knowledge of the business and the rules and regulations thereby pertaining." Farming is, after all, a complicated industry.
- MIKEY:** It is, when you're finished with it!
- SADIE:** How is Jim going to pass an exam with the rules changing every day? He can't cram years of ..of bureaucratic bunkum into his head in one night..
- LEO:** In that you are probably right, Aunt Sarah, he can merely try. And I'd prefer if you wouldn't refer to well-thought rules and regulations in that fashion.
- ALEX:** He'll never take it all in..no one would
- LEO:** This really isn't your problem, my dear.
- ALEX:** No, but it doesn't seem fair - nobody could be expected to learn all



- that..
- LEO: You mustn't trouble your little head about it, my sweet. You don't have to worry about your future.
- ALEX: What?  
*(LEO exits smiling, blowing her a kiss and forgetting briefcase, which only Mikey notices)*
- SADIE: *(Sarcastically)* Cheerio.
- MIKEY: Good riddance to bad rubbish.  
*(Mikey proceeds to hide Leo's briefcase while Sadie and Alex talk)*
- SADIE: Have you and he got some kind of understanding?
- ALEX: No, we have not. He likes to think we have.
- SADIE: You must be giving him some sort of impression that you liked him or he wouldn't be assuming..
- ALEX: *(As computer)* I've gone out with him a few times, that's all.. It's not a crime to go out sometimes, is it?
- SADIE: No, no, of course it isn't..I shouldn't be prying.
- ALEX: There isn't exactly a lot of men to choose from. At least in your day there were a few left on the land.
- SADIE: True.. *(PAUSE)*
- ALEX: So - what do you think you'll do?
- SADIE: Wait for Jim to get here - that's all I can do.
- ALEX: And if he won't take over the place?
- SADIE: I'll cross that bridge if I come to it.
- ALEX: *(Sympathetically)* Right. Well, if you need someone to help him pass the test, sorting out what to study and all, I don't mind giving a hand
- SADIE: But it's your weekend off..
- ALEX: I'm not doing much - I don't mind, honest.
- SADIE: You're very good. I'm sure he'd be glad of a hand.
- ALEX: Don't count on it! I doubt if he'd want a woman to teach him anything, especially not me. But it's no bother..if you do need me
- SADIE: Thanks.
- ALEX: *(Fetching wellies)* Meanwhile I'd better get back outside - the animals have to be looked after regardless of what's going on in here.
- SADIE: True. Keep an eye on that new ostrich like a good girl. If he clocks 50 round the yard let me know - I'll have to cut him down on his feed.
- MIKEY: Ostriches! With their big feckin' eyes...
- ALEX: *(Laughing)* All the better to see you with, Mikey. *(Hand on Sadie's shoulder)* Relax - he'll be here.
- SADIE: Yeah.. Course he will.
- ALEX: I'll finish keying all that stuff in later on.
- SADIE: Good girl - thanks.  
*ALEX exits.*

- SADIE: *(Looking at clock)* Did you ever think we'd see this day? In danger of losing the whole place..
- MIKEY: The whole world's gone cracked!
- SADIE: You could sing that if you had an air for it.
- MIKEY: *(Starting to put an air to it)* "The whole world... *(He stops abruptly realising it's not funny)* No. Why don't you go lie down for a while? I'll give you a shout when Jim comes..
- SADIE: I must be looking bad if you're telling me to lie down! Maybe I will - it might shift this headache.  
*UNCLE MIKEY watches her go, then checking that no one is around he pulls out his pipe. He sticks it in his mouth, unlit, then takes out briefcase and places it on table. As the "Mission Impossible/James Bond/thriller-type" theme fades up he roots carefully through case, reading this and that, is about to close it when he spies a few documents that interest him particularly. He looks at them closely, a grin breaking out on his face, then grabs camera and takes several photographs of documents, then returns them carefully to briefcase. Music fades and he has just returned to the fire when LEO re-enters, agitated.*
- LEO: *(Scowling at Uncle Mikey)* Smoking your filthy pipe again, you old git!
- MIKEY: Git, yourself.
- LEO: I should report you.
- MIKEY: *(Defiant)* Report away.  
*MIKEY exits, giving LEO the fingers up sign.*
- LEO: *(Calling after him)* Tobacco was banned forty years ago, has no one apprised you of that?  
*Fart noise from offstage.*  
*(Leo opens briefcase, and looks relieved when everything appears to be present and correct).*
- You won't be around here much longer if I have my way. Leonard's directive 999 - get rid of anything surplus to requirements.  
He exits.

LIGHTS DOWN

## SCENE 2

*UNCLE MIKEY is on-stage, trying to light his pipe. JIM enters, sneaking up on him.*

- JIM: Caught you! *(Mikey nearly jumps out of his skin)*
- MIKEY: Jimmy lad!
- JIM: I thought you'd given this up.
- MIKEY: If it hasn't killed me before now, it'll never kill me!
- JIM: *(Grinning)* It's a good job I brought you a little present, so.  
*(UNCLE MIKEY grabs the present - a tin of tobacco)*
- MIKEY: Attaboy!
- JIM: Mind you spare it. *(He takes a wrapped bottle out of his pocket - a present for Sadie's birthday)* If I'd been caught with that, my head'd be on the first plate to Brussels.
- MIKEY: Ah, don't mind them!
- JIM: I don't! *(Takes out copy of directive, worried)* What are we supposed to make of all this - that's what I want to know. Where's Ma?
- MIKEY: Inside.
- JIM: I must have hit ninety getting here. The feckin' cheek of them! *(He yells)* Ma! *(He is studying documents)* Talk about the last straw!  
*SADIE enters.*
- SADIE: Thanks be to God you're back, love. *(She hugs him)*
- JIM: This'd bring anyone back.. What the hell are they playing at?
- MIKEY: Tormenting people as usual - the gobshites!
- SADIE: I wish they were playing.
- JIM: I've read it five times and I still can't believe it.
- SADIE: Having only thirty-six hours to decide doesn't help.
- JIM: Who said that? Are they mad or what?
- SADIE: Leo was here.
- JIM: I might have known - the Euro clerk from hell.
- MIKEY: *(Muttering)* That fella isn't getting his hands on the place..
- JIM: Who isn't getting his hands on the place?
- SADIE: *(Quietly)* Leo has offered to buy the farm if you don't want it. And to let us have our day here.
- JIM: Leo?
- SADIE: He can, seeing as he's related.
- JIM: For God's sake, what would he know about farming? The only thing he's good at is pushing paper. He couldn't wipe his behind without a book of instructions.
- MIKEY: Hah!

- SADIE: Jim, please! I may have to sell it to him if you don't want it..I'll have no choice.
- JIM: What feel would he have for the place? And he'd want it for nothing. You know him - he'd skin a flea for the hide of it and look for a subsidy afterwards..
- SADIE: He's offered more than we'd get from Brussels but (*hopefully*) would you not take it over yourself? Farming's in your blood, you know it is.
- JIM: Then how come Da didn't say it was?
- SADIE: He did say it..
- JIM: Not to me, he didn't.
- SADIE: It's all he ever wanted - you back on your homeground. I know it is.
- MIKEY: You weren't ready before, son..
- SADIE: The two of you were so busy locking horns you couldn't see the wood for the trees. What father and son is any different?
- JIM: (*Leafing through pile of directives*) At least engineers don't need movement permits to scratch themselves!
- SADIE: Every job has its drawbacks. You wouldn't have to forget the engineering altogether - it'd be there for you if things didn't work out.
- JIM: I don't know..
- MIKEY: Railroading the boy is no use..
- SADIE: I have to fight to keep the place.
- JIM: (*Looking at food samples, making face*) What would I know about producing gunge like this?
- SADIE: It hasn't come to that yet..
- JIM: No, but it's only down the line - why else would they be sending you these? I'd have to dance to their tune - like some class of a puppet on a string. (*Lifting documents*) Look at all this!
- SADIE: At least you'd be holding onto Brophy land - what'd be more important than that?
- JIM: It's too much to decide too quick..
- SADIE: (*Looking at wrapped bottle*) And there I was thinking being fifty'd be something to celebrate!
- JIM: (*Looking at Alex's computer work*) I suppose herself thinks you should sell..
- SADIE: Who?
- JIM: Alex. Miss Bossy Boots.
- SADIE: No. She's as shocked as we are. She even said she'd help you with the test..
- JIM: What test?
- SADIE: (*Quietly*) You have to pass a test, before they'll let you farm..
- JIM: I've heard it all now - how am I supposed to do that?
- SADIE: If we all helped you, you could. Alex understands all the jargon



- JIM: Ah, what's the point? I wouldn't have a hope of passing in that length of time. If you ask me, it was all this stuff sent Da to an early grave.
- SADIE: You don't know that.
- JIM: It's a fair assumption, isn't it? (*Lifting sheaves of paper*) This stuff kept coming and coming until he couldn't stand it anymore. The subsidies might have been there as sweeteners one time but that didn't last long, did it? Now it's rule after regulation and do what you're told or else, just like he said it'd be.
- (*Alex enters from yard*)
- ALEX: Sorry - I'm interrupting.
- SADIE: Em.. no, no, you're not, love, come on in.
- ALEX: (*Going to computer*) You got the message then?
- JIM: (*Still agitated*) Yeah, why do you think I'm here?
- SADIE: There's no point in taking it out on Alex..
- JIM: (*Begrudgingly*) Sorry.
- ALEX: I was going to finish this but I can do it later if you like..
- SADIE: No, it's all right. Stay where you are. It has to be done before you go. (*To Jim*) You need some time to think about all this, that's all .It's a lot to take in all at once
- JIM: You can say that again.
- MIKEY: Where are you taking me now? (*SADIE is pushing Uncle Mikey towards door*)
- SADIE: To look at that ostrich.
- MIKEY: I'm not lookin' at any feckin' ostrich!
- ALEX: (*Grinning*) He'll be disappointed so. I think he's taken a shine to you, Mikey. He watches the door for you to come out.
- MIKEY: He does in his arse.
- SADIE: Lord, deliver me from torment.
- They exit.*
- ALEX: I'll be out of your way in a minute.
- JIM: (*Agitated*) Right. (*Jim checks through what she's working on. Alex doesn't like it*) So, how've you been?
- ALEX: Are you really bothered how I am?
- JIM: I was just asking a civil question. You don't have to bite my head off.
- ALEX: Like I've just had mine bitten off?
- JIM: Sorry..it's one of those days
- ALEX: Yeah.. *PAUSE.* So - what do you think you'll do?
- JIM: I don't know.
- ALEX: If I was you I wouldn't have any trouble deciding.
- JIM: Oh? And why's that?
- ALEX: There's people'd die for places like this.
- JIM: Like you, you mean?

- ALEX: I didn't say that.
- JIM: It's what you meant, though, isn't it? You're not content with running the place - you'd like to own it as well..
- ALEX: I said no such thing! (*Removing clipboard that he has been looking at*) Do you mind? Your mother is my boss, not you. If you have a problem with me working here just say so.
- JIM: I don't.
- ALEX: No? Then how come I get all these little asides from your mother. Jim says this, Jim thinks that.. I've heard your 'typical woman' comments..I'm not thick!
- JIM: I never said you were
- ALEX: You treat me like I'm some sort of invader..
- JIM: No, I don't. Ma says you've been great..
- ALEX: I'm glad to hear it. I'm here to do a job since your father died and I don't need you criticising every move I make - especially not behind my back! If you want the work done any better do it yourself! Now you have the opportunity..
- JIM: (*Jim is impressed with her earnestness. Pause*) You offered to help if I was going to do this test.
- ALEX: I said I'd do it for your mother - not for you.
- JIM: Right.
- ALEX: So, you've decided?
- JIM: Not yet.
- ALEX: (*Getting up and tidying her books*) Well, you'd better hurry up - time is running out.
- JIM: Where are you off to?
- ALEX: Out.
- JIM: With anyone in particular?
- ALEX: I don't have to tell you this but actually, it's your cousin Leo.
- JIM: Hah!
- ALEX: At least he knows how to treat a girl..
- JIM: He's probably got a manual in his breast pocket..
- ALEX: And what if he does? At least he acts like I'm alive and he respects me for the job I do here
- JIM: And I don't?
- ALEX: No, you don't. You don't want to run this place yourself, yet you don't want anyone else to run it.
- JIM: We have got off on the wrong foot, haven't we?
- ALEX: That's an understatement.
- JIM: It doesn't have to be like this..look, how about if ..
- LEO enters, dressed in casual clothes.
- LEO: Good evening.

- ALEX: Leo!
- LEO: James William! The door was open. I let myself in.  
(Going forward to shake hands with Jim)
- JIM: (Not responding) That's your style all right.
- LEO: My dear.. (He gives Alex a peck on the cheek - she doesn't object knowing Jim is watching) And how are you, cousin?
- JIM: I've been better. And how's the roost - since you seem to be ruling the roost around here..
- LEO: I am merely doing my job.
- JIM: How long have you two been an item..?
- ALEX: We're not an item!
- LEO: (Consulting watch) Three weeks, four days, sixteen hours and three minutes, to be precise.
- ALEX: Leo!  
SADIE enters pushing UNCLE MIKEY
- SADIE: I thought I heard you.
- MIKEY: Back like the proverbial bad penny.
- LEO: Aunt Sarah. (Addressing JIM) You've been acquainted with the circumstances, I take it..
- JIM: Yes.
- SADIE: (Pushing Mikey to fire) You can't expect him to have made up his mind already..
- ALEX: I'll leave you all to it. I have to change.
- LEO: Of course. (Surveying her boiler suit) I would wear something dressy, my dear.
- JIM: That'll make a change!
- ALEX: I'll do my best. (She exits, angrily eyeing JIM)
- LEO: I'm waiting to be apprised of your answer, cousin
- JIM: I haven't got one.
- SADIE: Give the lad a chance
- LEO: All he has to do, Aunt Sarah, is either say yes or no - it's quite simple.
- JIM: And let you get your hands on the place? You're not a farmer!
- LEO: I keep abreast of all agricultural practices, I assure you, cousin.
- MIKEY: You do in your arse!
- JIM: All you'd ever be is a book farmer.
- LEO: Ah yes - but a successful book farmer.
- SADIE: If you'd leave him alone he might be able to make up his mind..
- LEO: (Smiling) That was always your problem, wasn't it, James?
- JIM: What?
- LEO: You never could make a decision.
- JIM: I could so.
- LEO: Just like your father before you.

- JIM: Leave my father out of this!
- SADIE: What's that supposed to mean?
- MIKEY: You..you..you...
- LEO: I merely make an observation. My late uncle was, let's say, not known for embracing change. Some would have called him..backward.
- JIM: Who are you calling backward?
- SADIE: How dare you, you little whippersnapper! If he was here this minute he'd show you who was backward.
- MIKEY: Get to hell out of here before I set that friggin' ostrich on you!
- LEO: *(Realising he has gone too far)* Now, now, there's no need for all this..
- JIM: You can't come in here and insult my father's name! He was ten times the man you'll ever be. And he had no time for you and your kind. You'll get this place over my dead body!
- SADIE: Thanks be to God.
- MIKEY: That's my boy!
- LEO: *(Panicking a bit)* Now, now, let's not be hasty..
- JIM: Your mother will have told you I made a very good offer.
- MIKEY: I wouldn't take your money if it was the last bit on earth.
- SADIE: *(To Leo)* Put that in your pipe and smoke it!
- LEO: *(Hugging him)* You've made the right decision, son. I wish your Da was here to see this day.
- JIM: *(Regaining his composure)* You're forgetting the small matter of the test..
- SADIE: Ah, stuff your test. I can take anything you throw at me!
- LEO: Course you can, son.
- JIM: *(Smiling)* I'm glad to hear it.
- ALEX enters, dressed to the nines. JIM can't keep his eyes off her.
- ALEX: We'd better go, Leo.
- LEO: As soon as I finish here, my dear.
- SADIE: Jim is going to do the test!
- ALEX: Really? *(She is enjoying being stared at by JIM)*
- JIM: Yes.
- SADIE: I knew he wouldn't let his mother down.
- LEO: *(Noticing Jim's interest)* Should he fail the examination you may have to consider my offer.. *(SADIE is hurrying to sort books to be studied)*
- JIM: I'll swallow every book and disk if I have to stay up all night to do it.
- SADIE: You'll help him, won't you, love?
- ALEX: If that's what he wants.
- JIM: *(Looking at her admiringly)* Absolutely.
- LEO: Surely that will not be necessary, my dear.
- ALEX: I've said I would..it's no big deal.
- JIM: Isn't it up to her?



- ALEX: It's the least I can do - I do work here.
- LEO: You really are too sentimental for your own good sometimes, my dear, but that, of course, is part of your charm.
- JIM: Mr Smarm.
- LEO: I'm quite looking forward to owning this place, really. After all, there's nothing more romantic than the notion of a quaint little homestead in the country, (*looking at Uncle Mikey with derision*) with quaint little people living in it.
- JIM: You just watch who you're calling quaint.
- LEO: (*Smiling and checking the computer screen. To Alex*) I would make this margin 1.3 centimetres.
- ALEX: I'll change it tomorrow.
- LEO: Not that I mind, of course, but rules are rules.
- SADIE: Stuff your rules.
- LEO: Yes - well, that may not be a responsible attitude. You have your coat, my dear? Good. I shall return tomorrow at 1400 hours precisely to administer the test. I wish you good luck.
- JIM: I'll bet you do.
- ALEX: I'll be there in a minute. I said in a minute.  
*LEO exits looking at Jim and Alex suspiciously.*
- ALEX: (*Giving Sadie a hug*) I won't be late. Start him off on the computer programmes and the 49 articles of agricultural practice.
- SADIE: Right. I'll see you in the morning. And thanks, love.
- ALEX: No bother. Goodnight.
- JIM: 'Night.  
*(Jim looks out after her)*
- SADIE: (*Taking overalls*) Come on out to the yard - if you're going to run this place you'll need to catch up on the changes. Your Da'd be proud of you today - he always was.
- JIM: I wish he'd said it a bit more often.
- SADIE: You know him - he was never one for showing his feelings.
- JIM: No.
- SADIE: Do you remember that day we drove you up to college?
- JIM: Yeah. And he never said a word the whole way up - it was like he couldn't wait to get rid of me.
- SADIE: Then why did I find him in your room the next day, looking as if he'd lost something? It took him a long time to adjust to the fact that maybe he'd driven you out.
- JIM: He should have said.
- SADIE: People don't always say what they should..
- JIM: No.
- SADIE: Come on. I'll show you our new anti-noise-pollution cow.

- JIM: What the hell is that? (*Putting on his coat*)  
MIKEY: One bred with no voice box!  
JIM: Fuck it - that's terrible. They'll be breeding them so's they don't shit soon.  
MIKEY: Hah!  
SADIE: Jim!  
JIM: (*To Mikey*) You mind the house, do you hear? And don't let any mad fellas into it.  
MIKEY: I'll shoot the buggers!  
JIM: (*Cowboy-like*) Yahoo!  
SADIE: One of you is as bad as the other.  
JIM: (*Affecting a Leo pose*) I am extremely gratified to hear it, given the superior magnitude of our verbal loquacity.  
SADIE: (*Laughing*) Ah, will you stop.  
JIM: (*Quieter*) Maybe you shouldn't get your hopes up too much about this test.  
SADIE: Give it your best shot, son - that's all you can do.  
JIM: (*Putting on overalls*) Go down fighting, like Da used to say?  
SADIE: Yeah. Come on. (*SADIE and JIM exit*)  
MIKEY: (*Confidently*) You'll be all right, boy - (*examining camera*) One way or another...

### LIGHTS DOWN.

## SCENE 3

Late afternoon next day. Folders and papers strewn everywhere, computer on or off stage depending on sledgehammer arrangements.

- ALEX: Right - tell me again - why should all cloned sheep be kept in separate pens for the first three weeks?  
JIM: To observe any possible differences in their behaviour..  
ALEX: Correct. How many colours do Euro forms come in?  
JIM: Red, white, black, blue, green, yellow and dun-dukerdy-grey.  
ALEX: How many categories of forms are there?  
JIM: 6021. (*Throwing down book*) Ah, for God's sake, all this is driving me round the twist.

- ALEX: You'll get used to it after a while..give yourself a chance.
- JIM: Talk about paper mountains! It's no wonder Da couldn't stand it. It's all gone to hell.
- ALEX: If you feel that strongly about it why don't you do something to change it?
- JIM: Someone ought to.
- ALEX: You know what they say. It only takes one person to make a difference.
- JIM: Yeah - if they're determined enough.
- ALEX: Right now you'd better keep going or you won't get the chance to prove how determined you are. Have you read the In-Depth analysis of the Future Merits of Five-legged Cows?
- JIM: Who the hell wants five-legged cows?
- ALEX: People who want more milk, that's who. The third leg behind gives more support for bulging udders.
- JIM: Ah will you stop..
- ALEX: There's no point in saying "ah, will you stop.." Either you want me to help you or you don't.
- JIM: *(Sitting on chair in front of her)* I do.
- ALEX: The...basic tenet of this book is that cows have been four-legged for long enough *(Jim looks into the book with her)*
- JIM: Yeah...?*(Looking at her, not the book)*
- ALEX: And that in order for their maximum potential to be exploited they have to have this fifth...
- JIM: You never said what your night out was like?
- ALEX: When?
- JIM: Last night - with cousin Leo.
- ALEX: I thought you were supposed to be concentrating..
- JIM: I am concentrating..
- ALEX: It was all right..
- JIM: Just all right? You didn't stay out very late..
- ALEX: You were watching what time I came in?
- JIM: I was up studying, remember.
- ALEX: How would you like it if I asked you how your dates went.
- JIM: I'm not going out with anyone..
- ALEX: No..?
- JIM: I never saw you dressed up like that before..
- ALEX: I don't go around in overalls and bog boots all the time..
- JIM: That's all I've ever seen you in.
- ALEX: Well, you weren't around here often enough then..
- JIM: Obviously not.
- ALEX: And you needn't get excited just because you see a girl's legs.
- JIM: *(Smiling)* Was I not supposed to?

- ALEX: You were not!  
*SADIE enters, carrying a pile of books.*
- SADIE: There - that's the last of them..
- JIM: I'm not going to get any more done, Ma! It's nearly four as it is.  
*(MIKEY enters with photographs on his knee. Watches ALEX and JIM)*
- SADIE: *(Plonks down in chair)* I know. If you've done your best I can't really ask any more than that. *(To Alex)* What are his chances, do you think?
- ALEX: *(Eyeing Jim)* I'd say fair.. to middling.
- JIM: *(Flirtatiously)* Oh?
- ALEX: Depending on the questions!
- JIM: Huh!
- MIKEY: The boy'll be all right. Anyone want to look at a few photographs?
- SADIE: We've more to be thinking about than photographs!
- JIM: Later on maybe.
- MIKEY: Suit yourselves! *(He continues to look at them, grinning)*
- ALEX: You should take a last look at this..it could come up in the test.
- JIM: No, that's it, whatever's in my head'll have to do.
- SADIE: I hope to God it'll all come out when it's wanted.
- MIKEY: The lad'll be all right, I'm telling you.
- JIM: *(Hands on back of Alex's chair)* Why wouldn't I be when I've had a good helper..
- LEO enters.*
- LEO: Ah shit!
- LEO: Good afternoon.
- ALEX: Leo..
- SADIE: I wish there was something good about it. You're early..
- JIM: Don't tell me - you couldn't wait..
- LEO: Directive 893-765 - "Euro Co-ordinators must be present in advance of the allotted time, to ascertain that regulations are properly absorbed"
- JIM: Yeah, right.
- LEO: And how are you, my dear..
- ALEX: Fine, thank you.
- SADIE: I don't know what we'd have done without her - she's been a great help.
- JIM: *(Smiling)* I'd recommend her as a teacher any day. I'm ready to start when you are. Never let it be said that a Brophy doesn't face what's ahead of him.
- LEO: Fine. For this, we will need some peace and quiet..*(looking hard at Uncle Mikey)*
- MIKEY: I'm staying where I am!
- SADIE: He has the right to stay if he wants - what harm is he doing? I don't think I have the nerve though. You can call me when it's over. *(She gives JIM a hug)* Good luck, son.



- JIM: Thanks.
- LEO: Please remember to scan your tag on exiting the room..
- SADIE: *(Impatiently)* Right, right.
- JIM: Tag?
- LEO: It is the very latest in farmer ID equipment.
- JIM: I thought it was an earring! Is it not bad enough having to record where stock pissed last without having to keep tabs on humans as well?
- ALEX: *(Quietly)* It's a new rule.
- JIM: Well, stuff your rule, I won't be wearing one.
- LEO: *(To Alex)* Please be so kind as to tell my cousin why such items are required..
- ALEX: *(Recites tiredly)* For the proper monitoring of the agricultural population and for the greater good of Community, clique and coterie.
- LEO: Precisely.
- JIM: I never heard such bullshit!
- MIKEY: *(Imitating Leo)* Precisely. *(Looking up in Leo's face)* Would you like to see a few photographs?
- LEO: No, thank you!
- JIM: Later, Uncle Mikey...please.
- MIKEY: *(Grinning)* Suit yourselves.
- SADIE: Stay over there out of the way, good man, and give him a chance. I'll leave you all to it. *(SADIE exits. UNCLE MIKEY admiring photos)*
- LEO: The candidate should take his place.
- ALEX: Concentrate - you'll be okay..
- JIM: *(Looking at her, smiling)* Will I?
- LEO: *(Pacing, hands behind back)* We shall start with some questions on the regulations covering egg production on this farm - *(fast)* which end of the hen does an egg emanate from?
- JIM: The rear.
- LEO: Correct. Why have we not yet succeeded in getting such creatures to produce square eggs?
- JIM: Because their backsides are the wrong shape.
- MIKEY: Bawk-bok-bok..
- LEO: Incorrect. Because the internal structures of the aforementioned bipeds have insufficient capacity for the passage of cuboid accoutrements.
- ALEX: That's what he said.
- JIM: Yeah.
- LEO: I cannot accept answers that are couched in the incorrect fashion.. Next, the rules and regulations governing the welfare of wildlife - describe the manner in which quadrupeds of no fixed abode should be treated on this farm.
- JIM: The red carpet should be put down for them.

- LEO: Incorrect. Creatures of the wild should have their comfort considered at all times.
- ALEX: That's what he said..
- LEO: (*Handing him a document from briefcase*) This should have been seriously studied to achieve the required standard..
- ALEX: He's doing fine.
- JIM: Yeah.
- MIKEY: (*To Leo*) You little upstart!
- JIM: (*Picking up a bundle of papers*) Hold on there a minute - you answer me a question for a change.
- LEO: Certainly.
- JIM: (*Lifting a pile of documents*) How come the so-called technological age hasn't done away with all this paper like it was supposed to?
- MIKEY: (*Looking up in Leo's face*) Yeah!
- LEO: That is merely the result of a decision in the late 1990's where farmers were enticed into forestry - we have to do something with the wood. (*Uncle Mikey snorts*)
- JIM: Another great decision!
- LEO: Quiet. We will continue. Please tell me the predominant use of commodious herbage.
- ALEX: (*Quietly*) Grass.
- LEO: No prompting, please.
- JIM: For feeding livestock, what else?
- LEO: Incorrect. It may in future be used primarily for ornamentation. It is part of the new Euro vision. (*UNCLE MIKEY sings a few bars of "All Kinds of Everything"*)  
Newly-planned techno-stomachs in animals will be able to digest a variety of materials - including paper.
- JIM: They won't go hungry so.
- ALEX: Jim..!
- LEO: Can you explain the 21 aspects of the Quality Brood Farmer Scheme?
- JIM: No.
- LEO: The 39 advantages of a pig exercise unit?
- JIM: No...
- LEO: Why organisations such as the IFA have been banned?
- JIM: Because you lot don't want anyone telling you what to do..
- LEO: Correct. Discontented lobbyists are not part of the Euro vision.
- JIM: That's it! I can't take any more of this. There's something sorely wrong if you don't allow anyone to criticize you! Who'd want anything to do with farming when you're not even allowed to think for yourself..(*Throwing books off table*)
- ALEX: But you can't give up..

- JIM: What's the point? I haven't a hope of passing. I'd be as well a thousand miles away from farming if this is the pass it's reached.
- LEO: A wise decision, cousin..you have chosen correctly. (*Uncle Mikey is watching and grinning*)
- ALEX: What about trying to fight it? What'll your mother say?
- JIM: (*Yelling*) Ma! (*Quieter*) I can't do what I can't do.
- LEO: She will be pleased you've seen sense, I'm sure.
- JIM: If she sells this place to you, you'd better look after it, do you hear, or you'll have me to deal with..
- LEO: Of course.
- ALEX: Why can't you give him another chance..let him re-do the test..
- LEO: I'm afraid not, my dear..rules only permit one try.(*UNCLE MIKEY is grinning*)
- ALEX: I can't believe you're giving up so easily..
- LEO: You've heard my cousin - he's had enough.(*SADIE enters*).
- LEO: Aunt Sarah - James has decided not to continue.
- SADIE: What?
- LEO: My offer still stands.
- MIKEY: Stuff your offer!
- SADIE: Jim?
- JIM: I did try. Like I promised..
- LEO: (*Taking documents out of inside pocket*) I do believe I have the relevant sale documents here. For immediate signature.
- MIKEY: I'll bet you have.
- SADIE: (*Sadly*) Is this what you want, son?
- JIM: What choice do I have? I can't answer those questions..
- LEO: The documents?(*Holding pen out for Sadie to sign*)
- ALEX: You don't have to rush her so much.
- LEO: (*Smiling*) One must seize the moment, my dear..
- MIKEY: One must seize the gobshite.(*He grabs Leo from behind, squeezing him for dear life, or he twists his arm*)
- JIM: Lay off, Uncle Mikey..what are you at?
- SADIE: Stop, for God's sake - have you gone mad?
- LEO: (*Struggling but can't get away*) Get your hands off me!
- ALEX: Mikey!
- MIKEY: (*Still holding Leo*) Take a look at those photographs and then tell me if I've gone mad!
- LEO: There are laws against this!
- MIKEY: (*Shouting*) Look at the photographs! We should shoot the bugger!  
(*They look at the photos scattered on floor*)
- JIM: They're documents.
- MIKEY: The real ones are in his briefcase - have a look!

- LEO: Get your hands off me! I'll have you reported for this. Interfering with a Euro official in the course of his duty...
- MIKEY: Ah, whist!
- ALEX: *(Reading)* It's an offer to buy this land from Leo Brophy.
- SADIE: What? Let me see that!
- ALEX: ...this land is the proposed site for the new Weather Control Station.
- JIM: What weather control station?
- SADIE: What the hell's he talking about..?
- ALEX: Some conglomerate wants to build one here. There's a map of the place - look, the bridge meadow, the back lane field.. You were going to sell this place and make a packet..
- LEO: Of course I wasn't. Those are not my documents.
- JIM: You scumbag! *(JIM grabs briefcase and opens it)*
- MIKEY: Bollix!
- ALEX: You said you were going to farm it yourself..
- SADIE: *(Sarcastic)* That you were looking forward to it..
- LEO: Let me explain...all this is a misunderstanding..
- MIKEY: Ah shut up!
- LEO: You can't interfere with EU property. Leave that alone! *(He gets away from Uncle Mikey. Jim grabs him)*
- JIM: Stay back or I'll break EU property's neck!  
*(JIM pins LEO against the wall)*
- SADIE: No, Jim! *(UNCLE MIKEY shows ALEX documents)*
- ALEX: He's right.
- MIKEY: *(Folding arms)* I told you.
- JIM: So? A nice little scam. I should give you a good hiding..
- SADIE: Leave him, he's not worth touching..
- ALEX: *(To Leo)* You're despicable - do you know that?
- LEO: Please - let me explain..
- MIKEY: Explain, my arse!
- ALEX: No amount of explaining is going to get you out of the trouble you're in!
- SADIE: Codding decent people - family!
- LEO: Please..be reasonable...
- JIM: Get out of here before I do hit you..
- SADIE: If one word of this gets back to Brussels you're for it. Illegal property deals, falsifying tests as well, I wouldn't wonder. That was your insurance policy, wasn't it?
- JIM: To make sure I'd never get the place.
- LEO: *(Begging)* Now, now, there's no need to get excited. I can make things easy for all of you
- ALEX: Oh yeah?



- JIM: *(Going close to Leo)* You know something, folks? I think we have this fella right where we want him..by the short and curlies!
- MIKEY: *(Grinning, imitating Leo again)* Precisely!
- JIM: One little squeal from us and you can kiss your fancy job goodbye..your name'd be dirt. Aren't you fellas supposed to be full of honesty.. and integrity.
- LEO: Surely we can come to some kind of accommodation.
- JIM: You're dead right we can. You're going to make it your business to keep us sweet from now on.
- LEO: Anything. Anything.
- ALEX: God, you're such a slimeball.  
*(UNCLE MIKEY has taken out pipe and is relaxing)*
- SADIE: Go on back to the gutter you crawled out from.
- MIKEY: You heard the woman!  
*LEO exits, in a hurry.*
- ALEX: Good riddance. *(They all look at Uncle Mikey)*
- MIKEY: *(Grinning)* I was only trying to help..
- SADIE: What would we do without you, eh? At least someone was on to him..I knew there was a bad streak in that fella.  
*(To Alex)* Are you all right?
- JIM: Yeah.
- ALEX: She's had a shock, that's all..
- SADIE: I can't believe I was so stupid..
- ALEX: You're not stupid.
- JIM: Course you're not. He had us all coddled.
- SADIE: The gobshite!
- MIKEY: Where does this leave you? The farm?
- ALEX: The Brophys' aren't finished yet.
- SADIE: I'll be running the place, if that's what Ma wants.
- JIM: Course I do.
- SADIE: If a place this size can't keep the three of us, it'll be a poor look-out. We won't starve.
- JIM: I don't think Leo'll be demanding any test passes from now on.
- SADIE: Are you sure you'll be able to survive..?
- JIM: You know what you said earlier on about one person making a difference?
- ALEX: Yeah.
- JIM: Well..someone has to make people wake up and realise it's all gone too far.
- MIKEY: Proper bloody order!
- JIM: It's time we all got back down to earth
- SADIE: And a bit of common sense

- ALEX: *(Smiling)* To when steak was steak?  
SADIE: And when a bit of muck never harmed anybody  
MIKEY: *(Smiling)* Scutter!  
JIM: Yeah.  
SADIE: It won't be before time.  
ALEX: You do know that not everybody is going to agree with you..  
JIM: No, but some will. That'll be what matters.  
ALEX: Well - good luck.  
JIM: Thanks.  
SADIE: Your father'll never be dead while you're alive..he was the only one to stand up against all this nonsense.  
JIM: We'll start with these. Directives 1 - who cares. *(He tears up lots of documents - everyone joins in enthusiastically until computer bleeps again)*  
JIM: What's that?  
ALEX: Another directive, probably.  
JIM: *(Giving Uncle Mikey sledgehammer)* Hit it, Uncle Mikey!  
MIKEY: My pleasure! *(Uncle Mikey heads for computer. Sound of computer dying)*  
SADIE: *(Laughing)* Amen to that.  
ALEX: Yeah. *(Starting to tidy her belongings away)*  
JIM: What about you?  
ALEX: I'll be okay.  
JIM: For a job, I mean.  
ALEX: I'll get one somewhere - something'll turn up.  
JIM: You couldn't work on one of those factory farms - you're not the cog-in-a-wheel type.  
ALEX: I'd get used to it if I had to.  
JIM: You could always stay here - *(Smiling)* I might need help changing the world.  
ALEX: I don't know.  
JIM: Will you at least think about it?  
ALEX: Sure. *(Taking overalls)* In the meantime I'd better see to the cows - it's past milking time  
JIM: I'll give you a hand.  
ALEX: If you're sure you don't mind working with Miss Bossy Boots..  
JIM: You knew I called you that?  
ALEX: I called you a few names as well.  
JIM: Like what?  
ALEX: Let's see.. Mule. Chauvinist. Mammy's boy.  
JIM: Mammy's boy?  
ALEX: *(Handing him his boots)* Get your boots on, farmer..  
JIM: Sure. *(They exit, laughing. SADIE and MIKEY watch them go, SADIE opening the bottle of wine).*

SADIE: I think it's time we had a toast.

MIKEY: To the future.

SADIE: Whatever it holds. *(She pours some into a glass for Mikey who drinks it in one gulp)*

MIKEY: Shoot the bugger!

**THE END**

## MARGARITA

Written by Jack Healy

**Agent:** Jack Healy,  
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## MARGARITA

A One-Act Play written by Jack Healy in response to a series of workshops with Glanworth Macra Drama Group:

The process was facilitated by Brid Ni Chionaola.

The participants in the group were:

Donagh Fenton,  
Tomas Quirke,  
Rose Slattery,  
Elizabeth Desmond,  
John Bermingham,  
Liam Gallagher,  
Annis Gahan,  
Matthew Sheahan,  
Bernard Gallagher.

The play was commissioned by Macra na Feirme and developed through a workshop process as part of the Macra na Feirmearts initiative.

## Characters

- Franky Stapleton.** A publican in his early fifties.
- Alan.** A young man in his late twenties. Friend to Franky.
- Margaret Burke (Margarita).** A woman in her mid to late thirties, given to binge drinking.

### Three drinking cohorts of Margaret's:

- Denis.** A travelling salesman in his early thirties.
- Niall.** A man in his early twenties, quiet, sensitive. Side kick to Denis.
- Jimmy.** Very much the local town drunk. Late forties, early fifties. Clearly the worse for a lifetime of heavy drinking. Speaks incoherently to everyone except Niall.
- Brendan Burke.** Margaret's husband.

**Setting:**

The setting is a small "old mans" bar, somewhere in Co. Cork.

The play alternates between two time settings: a given night-time and the following morning. They both have the same physical location, the bar as described.

Differentiation is made between the two time settings by lighting changes but also by the playing of a piece of classical music during the morning setting. It is Rachmaninov's second piano concerto and Franky, who owns the bar, plays it during the morning, having recorded it silently from the radio the night before, as is his habit.

As we go from one setting to the other, throughout the play, the lighting and sound changes take place very abruptly. The morning scenes (involving just Franky and Alan) are centred on a table downstage left. As the action switches to these scenes, the other characters remain frozen on stage where the previous scene has left them.

## Scene I

*As the lights come up, the stage is empty. The blinds are closed but you can tell that it is daytime by the sun light that is streaming in wherever it can find a chink.*

*(A knocking is heard and a voice calls from outside).*

VOICE OUTSIDE:

Franky, let us in.

*Franky enters. He is thin and well preserved for his age. He is dressed as a typical barman; white shirt with the sleeves rolled up, two pieces of a three-piece suit. He dresses with the air of someone who is concerned about appearance.*

FRANKY:

Well, they're in a right flap now. And why wouldn't they be? Franky Stapleton, middle aged bachelor publican, who opens his door every morning at half ten has failed to do so this morning, it now being nearly eleven. Christ what a calamity.

VOICE OUTSIDE:

Franky!

FRANKY:

If, twas after drink they were same, at least the situation would be clearer. OK, they know me for a creature of habit. What bugs the hell out of me is their conclusion that something must be wrong, simply because I have failed to open my door.

*A knocking is heard.*

And what bugs me even more is that, yes, they're right. And they know they're right. Oh I could be in here with a lover. Or maybe I could have just decided to sleep it out, or not open the door at the usual time for a change. And then I could laugh at them and their pessimistic assumption that every departure from the norm around here points to a tragedy of some kind.

But I can't laugh. I never did much laughing in any case.

*He turns on the radio. The announcer announces eleven AM and we hear the news at eleven. The first item on the news is an announcement that five people have died in a road accident the night before, when a jeep left the road and plunged into the river Blackwater.*

*(Franky turns it off just after the announcement is made).*

And I'm unlikely to start laughing now. But why depart from old habits?

*He takes a tape and puts it into the cassette part of the radio. He presses play. It is a recording from the radio of the night before. It announces eight PM and introduces a classical music programme. Franky lets it run, as he speaks and in due course we hear Rachmaninov's second piano concerto begin to play.*

VOICE OUTSIDE:

Franky, let us in!



FRANKY:

Go away! I I feel obliged, funnily enough, to make noise. Which is an odd thing for a man like myself, a man a man who is known as a man who doesn't say much, to be wanting to be doing. And it's not even that I want to be saying anything, for under the circumstances, "saying" seems to be of little use, in the particular situation that I find myself in. And yet, as a general rule, when I do speak, I tend to be coherent but now...now that I find myself in a situation where I have something to say about something, I find myself incapable of saying anything about anything, because the reality is that there isn't a fucking thing that any one can say or do about anything under these circumstances that I find myself under, that will make a difference about anything anyway. Or some fucking ... some fucking thing like that!

The cursing feel's good. Fuck! There you go. Fuck! Shit! Bollix! By God but they feel good in my mouth. Bollix! If people were to hear me saying those words they'd think I was gone mad. But then, how bad? Maybe that's the way to go, because around here, all you have to do is give some signs of being alive and people take it for insanity.

VOICE OUTSIDE:  
FRANKY:

Franky! Let us in, will you.

Fuck off the whole lot of ye! Ha, ha, that'll flatten 'em. 'Tis the last think they'll expect Franky Stapleton, half-dead bachelor barman to be saying.

Ah yes. A drink. *(He pours himself a drink)* That would take people by surprise too. Or would it? What do people think about me? Do they think about me at all? Is there anyone out there who thinks: Frank Stapleton, I wonder what kind of life he has? The most measured man you could meet. Keeps a tight ship. Is slow to tolerate messing of any kind, but tolerates a bit of fun. Never drinks a drop himself.

*He knocks back the drink and makes an utterance of pain.*

Alcoholics! I envy them their capacity for excess, those that don't end up puking on my floor. I was never able for it meself, or anything like it. Do they know about me that every night while I am serving in the bar I record the classical programs on FM3 and listen to them the next morning, while I'm cleaning up?

Do they know about the two dirty magazines I keep under the bar? That I brought with me when I came home from London after taking this place over from me dad. Do they know that I haven't left a day go by without having a look at them? They're well thumbed now.

*There is a knocking heard outside.*

Go away! Oh I have no doubt that it's out of some kind of concern for me that they are knocking, but right now I don't feel too good about them, so I just see it as an unwarranted interference.

VOICE OUTSIDE:

Franky, will you let us in!

- FRANKY:** And yes, my friends, there is something wrong. Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! How could I have been so foolish? Lording over the tragedy of others as I did.
- Franky, the reclusive bachelor publican has blood on his hands. Franky the living corpse has a few more ghosts to share his coffin with him. Because I never go out you know. And I have no friends really. I am an alien. I of course will not be held responsible in any way. I find that strange. No one will ever look at them as victims of an indulgence on my part. Rather as victims of their own excesses. And yet, when I heard she was on the tear, my heart filled with excitement, for I knew it was only a matter of time before she'd come walking through my door.
- A voice off, but from somewhere in the bar.*
- VOICE:** Franky!
- FRANKY:** Who's there?
- ALAN:** 'Tis only meself, Alan.
- FRANKY:** How did you get in?
- ALAN:** You gave me your car keys yesterday, remember? To go and buy the stuff for the cocktails. I forgot to give 'em back to you. There's a key to your old back gate there. I slipped in that way unbeknownst to anyone.
- FRANKY:** And what am I going to be saying to you?
- ALAN:** You shouldn't have to think about what to say to me Franky, we've always been good old mates. If you just had opened up as you usually do, they wouldn't be getting their knickerses in a knot.
- FRANKY:** Well, I'm glad that I have helped them to alleviate their boredom, even if it's only for a minute. Who's out there anyway?
- ALAN:** Erra the usual gang. The neighbors, the P.P. Sergeant Murphy, a few hangers on. First of all they thought you were dead.
- FRANKY:** I am dead.
- ALAN:** Then they thought you were going mad and they were scared that you might do something to yourself.
- FRANKY:** I might do something to meself yet.
- Noise outside again.*
- ALAN:** Franky, will you ever let me go out there and tell that crowd that you're OK.
- FRANKY:** Go on, go on.
- He does. There is some talk at the door. He comes back in.*
- FRANKY:** Thanks for that.
- ALAN:** Not at all.
- ALAN:** 'Twas a complete freak accident by the look of things. Sure wasn't it Brendan was driving, and you know yourself that he hadn't had a drop.
- FRANKY:** And I know now that around here, sobriety is no guarantee of safety. Jesus the jeep might have been safer with one of the other three ejits

- driving it. Or even Margaret herself. Oh God! What in the name of Jesus Christ was I playing at!
- ALAN:** Franky, it's not your fault.
- FRANKY:** Oh, I played my part all right. Look at Margaret Burke and her demented entourage and how I fed off their little tragedy.
- ALAN:** Franky, will you stop it for God's sake. You're being a little dramatic here if you don't mind me saying so. Can you not see any kindness in what you did?
- FRANKY:** Kindness! Kindness! Plying a bunch of chronic alcoholics with drink? Kindness? It's the kind of argument that I'm sure drug pushers use, that they're providing a service. That's the kind of stupid argument that I might have made myself yesterday, blind to my own ravenous need for the situation.
- ALAN:** Franky, listen. There are dozens of people around the place who she could have found to ply her with alcohol. Now you didn't deny her her drink, but unlike the others, you made an effort to give her something else as well.
- FRANKY:** I served her nothing except her own death, perhaps the starkest cocktail of them all. She knocked it back with relish it would seem. I used her as a canvas to paint some bizarre concoction of my own on. Oh God, I wish I could undo the whole damn thing now. She walked through that door there, and I didn't see anything except a reason to mix cocktails, something I love doing. Sure, I could have chosen to see lots of things, but all I saw was my own greedy need to mix.
- ALAN:** I have to say that when I came in, you were a bit wired up about the old cocktails all right.
- FRANKY:** What time was that?
- ALAN:** Just eight o'clock.
- FRANKY:** Are you sure it was eight?
- ALAN:** Yeah, because you were just putting the old tape into the tape recorder to record your program.

*The reality switches here, to 8.00 the night before. Franky has the radio on and we see him about to make the recording that we have been listening to, with himself and Alan during the morning scene that has just taken place. We hear the announcer announce 'Eight PM.' and the introduction to the piece of classical music, just as we have heard it. When the music starts to play, Franky turns the volume down and leaves the radio to record silently. Alan and Franky go from the morning scene to the night scene executing whatever readjustments and relocations are necessary in a crude and unceremonious way. Alan enters through the back entrance with bags.*



- FRANKY: Well?
- ALAN: Jesus, will you look at this place, it's more like a kitchen than a bar.
- FRANKY: A few tools of the trade. Any word of her?
- ALAN: They were in the Grand Hotel in Fermoy last night by all accounts. Her husband Brendan... do you know him Franky?
- FRANKY: He rang this morning. He'll be in to pick her up here whenever she comes. That's how it always happens.
- ALAN: A big farmer by all accounts. He turned up at the Grand Hotel this morning, but they had just left. Herself and three blokes. Denis Casey the medical rep, he's one of them. Do you know him?
- FRANKY: No.
- ALAN: A demon for the drink by all accounts and two other gougers.
- FRANKY: She'll surely come tonight. When did she start?
- ALAN: Tuesday apparently. Failed to pick the young fellow up from school.
- FRANKY: She'd be due tonight so.  
*Alan inspects a fridge that Franky has set up in the bar.*
- ALAN: Where did you get the fridge Franky?
- FRANKY: I have it ever. Certain things need to be kept cool.
- ALAN: First time I ever seen a fridge in a bar Franky. And what's this?
- FRANKY: A blender.
- ALAN: A blender? For feck sake.
- FRANKY: Did you get me things?
- ALAN: I did. Jesus, you're a lucky man I'm here at all. That ould Hillman Hunter is on it's last legs. You'd want to get it changed or serviced, one or the other.
- FRANKY: You're the only one who ever drives it.
- ALAN: Well, can I get it serviced so?
- FRANKY: If you want. *(Pause)* I've said it to you before, if you ever wanted to take a lend of it, for your own use like, to take a girl somewhere, or something...
- ALAN: Sure where would I be taking a girl Franky?
- FRANKY: Well, you never know now, do you?
- ALAN: *(With reference to the shopping bags)* Any way, here, look. Juices first: Tomato juice, apple juice, prune juice. Fruits: oranges, limes, lemon. Never new there was such a thing as a lime until I actually bought these today. Thought it was the stuff you used to put the life back into the land. Where was I? Oh yeah, green olives... look like rabbit shit or something. Cucumber.... 'Tisn't a salad bar you're thinking of opening Franky?
- FRANKY: Get out of that. I need them for the cocktails.
- ALAN: What kind of quare cocktails would they be now? Black cherries and, wait for it... Maraschino cherries and... you're not going to believe



- FRANKY: this... Maraschino cherry juice... and a pineapple.  
I didn't ask you to get a pineapple.
- ALAN: I know, but I got one any way, for a laugh like. First pineapple in Ballymoriv ever I'd say. Dead sexy looking yoke too, ain't it?
- FRANKY: Yeah.
- ALAN: Well so Franky, amn't I a good boy?
- FRANKY: Yeah, here look, give me a hand to squeeze these.
- ALAN: Jesus Franky, I've to go and open up the chipper. Daddy'll ate me otherwise.
- FRANKY: Ah go on, twon't take you a minute. They could arrive any minute and I'm not ready.
- ALAN: Oh all right. (He takes the squeezer and the fruits) Gimme a half-one there so.
- FRANKY: A half-one, at this hour of the day, for you?
- ALAN: Just give me the feckin half one, will ya! I asked for a half one and not a lecture.
- FRANKY: All right so. But if you're going to have a drink, why don't you try a cocktail?
- ALAN: Me? A cocktail?
- FRANKY: Why not 'you' a cocktail? I can give you one with whiskey in it.
- ALAN: Like?
- FRANKY: Well, A Gall Bracer or A Sea Dog.
- ALAN: Jesus Franky, all I want is a drink.
- FRANKY: Nobody wants just a drink. Why do Guinness drinkers drink Guinness? Well?
- ALAN: Gee I don't know Franky. Maybe it's because the adds on TV keep telling em to do it.
- FRANKY: No. They drink it because for some reason they need to drink darkness. Like a libation of the night. And sherry drinkers need to drink civilization, something to be sipped, not gulped. The night on the other hand is big and needs to be drunk out of a big glass. I've always felt that Guinness never works out of a half-pint glass. What do you want Alan? What do I want? A drink for feck sake!
- ALAN: Naw, what do you want in life?
- FRANKY: Jayney, no one ever asked me that before. What do I want? Sunshine. Love. Excitement. Freedom. Fun. Jesus Franky, I've none of those things. *Franky, with ceremony, sets about putting on a barman's waist length, white coat. It is impeccably clean and is one of those double breasted ones that bustons up the side and has a kind of a priest like dog collar.*
- ALAN: Well let me fix you up a Sea Dog, and you'll have em all in five minutes. (He describes what he's doing as he does it.) Two sugar cubes in a glass, a dash of Angostura bitters, leave to soak.

- ALAN: Leave to soak? Franky! For feck sake! I'm gasping.  
FRANKY: 'Twill only take a second.  
ALAN: Fire us up the magazines there for a second, while you're waiting.  
*The play flashes forward to the morning. Franky and Alan get up and go to the table that they have been sitting at for the morning scene. Rachmaninov cuts back in where we left him off earlier and the lights change. Every time there is a switch of scene from the night to the following morning, from now on, it will take this form. Scene switches from morning to night will involve the reverse.*  
We find Franky in the same state of agitation that we left him in before.
- FRANKY: You had something on your mind last night, hadn't you?  
ALAN: How do you mean?  
FRANKY: First of all you took a drink instead of a coffee and you kept on coming and going for drink, through out the night, getting drunk just like the rest of 'em.  
ALAN: Drunk in charge of a chip shop. Ha, ha. Drunk in charge of a deep fat fryer.  
FRANKY: And besides, you only ask for the magazines if you need to talk, for some odd reason. What was it Alan? Tell me now?  
ALAN: Now? Franky, it hardly matters under the circumstances.  
FRANKY: Tell me, for fuck sake!  
ALAN: Franky! Language from you!  
FRANKY: Yes, language from me. Language from Franky. From now on it'll be "fuckin' this" and "fuckin' that".  
ALAN: Franky!  
FRANKY: You're not embarrassed Alan, are you?  
ALAN: Well no, but...  
FRANKY: So, there's no problem between you and me about that then, is there? We have not been telling. That's the problem. And I have not been telling because I would not allow myself to say 'fuck' and for me to tell what I have to tell...I need to say 'fuck' and 'bollix' and 'cunt' and 'shit!'  
*Franky has become quite agitated as a consequence of this little explosion.*
- ALAN: Take it easy Franky. Take it easy. Sit down, sit down. Take another swig of that drink.  
FRANKY: If I had just told what I have to tell, say what I have to say and get on with it, those people wouldn't have been hauled out of that river this morning. Now, tell me what you have to tell!  
*Pause.*  
ALAN: He gave me a hammering again yesterday.  
*Silence.*

- FRANKY: I see.
- ALAN: He's such an expert at it. If I were to show you my body now, you'd see it covered in bruises. And I'm not able for it Franky. In school, I was never very good at fights and stuff, or anything like that. I think he broke a rib. He said if I ever did it again, he'd stick my head in the deep fat fryer. He meant it too. He held my face just right over it until I said I was sorry.
- FRANKY: If you ever did what again?
- ALAN: Said he'd have me on the menu. Battered numbskull. He's such a creative man when it comes to insulting me.
- FRANKY: If you ever did what again?
- ALAN: Promise you won't tell anyone Franky. I'd be the laughing stock of the place if word got out.
- FRANKY: Go on, tell me. You know it's safe with me.
- ALAN: Well, I started going a bit nuts there a while back, and I started deep fat frying all kinds of strange things.
- FRANKY: Like what?
- ALAN: Well... like... me underpants for example.
- FRANKY: What!
- ALAN: It's OK, they were clean. Into the basin of batter with them and into the deep fat fryer. Aw Jesus, you should a seen 'em Franky. I wanted to frame 'em and hang 'em up on the wall. And me socks and a brick.
- FRANKY: You deep fat fried a brick?
- ALAN: Yeah, that didn't work out so well. A five-pound note, lots of other things.
- FRANKY: *(Laughing)* You deep fat fried a pair of socks.
- ALAN: I'm bored out of me skull there Franky. You have no idea. It's the same old crack every night. Chips, batter burgers, sausages, cod, potato cakes. Chicken suppers. Peas. Fellows coming in drunk, and fights. A while back there I plucked up a bit of courage and suggested that we might fire a few new things on the menu, like kebabs and stuff. He told me that he was going to have no foreign food in his chip shop. I told him that chips and burgers were foreign. That was the last time he gave me a hammering.
- FRANKY: Why don't you leave.
- ALAN: Oh Jesus, I couldn't leave me mother behind Franky. Whatever kind of chance she has with me, she has no chance without me.
- FRANKY: And you think it makes her happy to see you, her only son die the death you're dying here.
- ALAN: Jesus, Franky if I knew what it was that made people happy, I'd be a millionaire. Any way, that's the update on my little drama. I reckon hell is a chip shop Franky, and we're the chips. Any way, it pales into



insignificance besides what happened Margaret Burke and her gang last night. Even my dramas get upstaged by other peoples.

FRANKY:

Yes, but they're dead now, and you're still alive. How did he catch you?

ALAN:

I made the mistake of frying another one of me underpantses, only this time it was nylon instead of cotton, you should have seen the mess it made. I was trying to clean it up when he caught me. I'm an awful fecking ejit Franky; there's no doubt about it.

*Flashback to the night before. Franky hands Alan the magazines.*

FRANKY:

Here. If you hear anyone coming in, just put 'em back. And don't get lemon juice on 'em. *(With reference to the drink he is making for Alan)*

Add orange and lemon wedges and press the juice from the fruit.

ALAN:

*(As he looks at magazines)* I still get a bit embarrassed about asking I have to say.

FRANKY:

Every single time you come in here and there's no one around, you ask.

Those two magazines were twenty years old when you came in first.

They're thirty years old now.

ALAN:

The embarrassment is still there though. Maybe that's all part of the fascination too. Embarrassment is an exciting thing kind of. I find them amazing more than anything else. *(Pause)* Jesus Franky, can you imagine two blokes doing that to one another?

FRANKY:

Well, those two blokes obviously did. We have this same conversation every time.

ALAN:

Ah I know though... but Christ. It's extraordinary all the same. They don't look as if they're having a great time. *(Pause)* The cameraman obviously forgot to say cheese.

FRANKY:

Serious business.

ALAN:

Where did you say you got these again?

FRANKY:

When I went to work in London, back in 1959, I was an innocent young fellow, wet around the ears. I got myself a small bedsit out in Stoke Newington and when I moved in there, I found those two magazines under the mattress.

ALAN:

Jesus Christ. You must have got a right land.

FRANKY:

I wasn't even aware that such a thing as homosexuality existed.

ALAN:

Two blokes kissing. I mean, if it was in the dark, and the other bloke was clean-shaven, how would you know the difference? Between him and a woman I mean.

FRANKY:

Jesus, you have me there. I haven't thought about it all that much to be honest with you.

ALAN:

*(Looking at the magazines again)* Can you imagine the sergeant and the PP doing that.

FRANKY:

Will you stop it! Give me those here. All those high temperatures in the



- chip shop are frying your brain.
- ALAN: Come to think of it, I can't imagine anyone in this town having sex, queer or otherwise.
- FRANKY: Well if you can't, then don't.
- ALAN: Me mother and Father, *(He shudders)* I'd say they did it only once Franky.
- FRANKY: For God sake will you stop it!
- ALAN: That's presumin' me dad hit the bull's eye.
- FRANKY: I don't care whether they did it once or sixty times.
- ALAN: Sixty times! *(Realising this, he shudders)* Wow.
- FRANKY: Alan! Here. *(As he continues to make the drink)* Fill the glass with cracked ice. Add the spirits, two thirds of a measure of whiskey, one measure of Benedictine.
- ALAN: Benedictine! Jesus, your not trying to poison me Franky, are you?
- FRANKY: All it is, is a kind of a Brandy with a funny name.
- ALAN: The name could poison me.
- FRANKY: Well if words can poison you, these words will.
- ALAN: Fire it in so, Jesus Franky, I'd love a job here, all I ever get to make are chips and ould batter burgers and... and shite.
- FRANKY: Top up the glass with chilled soda water.
- ALAN: And then there's me dad, the boss from hell. Any chance of a job here Franky?
- FRANKY: And serve with the muddler...
- ALAN: The muddler?
- FRANKY: Yeah, this thing here, called the muddler.
- ALAN: That's the yoke for me.
- FRANKY: Serve with the muddler so's that more juice can be pressed from the fruit according to taste. Decorate with a Maraschino Cherry. Now so...
- ALAN: That's it?
- FRANKY: That's it.
- ALAN: Christ Franky, I'm half-scared of it.
- FRANKY: Go on, give it a try, it won't bite you.
- ALAN: It's a right looking yoke.
- FRANKY: He sips cautiously.
- ALAN: Wow! Jesus Franky, it's fantastic, it's like a drink of... a drink of God.
- FRANKY: There you go. Liquid alchemy.
- ALAN: I'll never touch a half one again, as long as I live. Why don't you start selling these to the public?
- FRANKY: Sure who'd drink 'em?
- ALAN: Are you saying that you have to wait for this alcoholic woman to go on a binge every few years so's you can make 'em?
- FRANKY: She's the only one around here who ever asked for one. That's a while

ago now. I don't know how she knew about cocktails or how she ended up in here on that occasion. I think she was knocking a rise out of me, expecting that this would be the last place she'd get a cocktail. She asked me for a Margarita?

ALAN:

A Margarita?

Franky goes to the window and looks outside.

FRANKY:

As it happened, I had all the ingredients. She got the surprise of her life when I served it up. Then she made all the blokes who were with her have cocktails and because she was having a Margarita, they started calling her Margarita, her name being Margaret.

ALAN:

Jesus Franky, this thing is hitting the spot. There'll be some interesting chips made in Ballymoriv this night.

FRANKY:

Hang on a sec. *(He is looking out the window)* It's her, she's coming.

ALAN:

Jesus Franky, You'd swear 'twas the queen, the way you're carrying on.

FRANKY:

She is a queen, of sorts.

ALAN:

I better be clearing out. I'm not dressed for royalty.

*(Margaret enters. She is a woman in her thirties. In spite of looking a little the worse for wear, she is impeccably turned out. She has a slightly haunted look about her. As she enters, she is still shouting to someone outside).*

MARGARET:

For God sake, if you can't wake him up, just leave him there. *(Pause)* So what if he vomits in your car, since when are you so pernickety about your car.

*(Turning into the bar).*

You'd think 'twas a Rolls Royce he had.

*(She sees Franky).*

MARGARET:

Franky...I can't believe this, I can't believe that I am inside this door. I've passed it so many times in the past six years. You've been busy decorating, I see.

FRANKY:

Saucy as ever.

MARGARET:

God, do you remember that night? Since then, I've gone through so many other doors in search of bliss and it sadly evades me Franky.

FRANKY:

I think it evades us all... Margarita.

MARGARET:

You remembered my name of choice. I worried on the way over in the car. I thought to myself: he'll have forgotten.

FRANKY:

How could I forget. How could I forget? How are you any way Margarita?

MARGARET:

Miles away from that question Franky, miles away from it.

FRANKY:

You look well.

MARGARET:

In spite of everything, yeah. And you look as priest like as ever. Still turning the water into wine?

FRANKY:

I'll try and perform a few miracles before the night is out.

- MARGARET: What were we saying? What were we saying?
- ALAN: Bliss.
- MARGARET: Oh yeah, bliss. Who's this?
- FRANKY: This is Alan who works in the chip shop a few doors down.
- MARGARET: A chef.
- ALAN: Well now, that'd be pushing it a small bit.
- MARGARET: Then push it, why don't you. Push it! Delighted to make your acquaintance.
- ALAN: Delighted I'm sure.
- MARGARET: Such manners. Rare now a days. What were we saying?
- ALAN: Bliss.
- MARGARET: Ah yes: bliss. What were we saying about bliss?
- FRANKY: That it's hard to find, I think.
- MARGARET: Bliss. Most people survive by caring little for it. Alan, have you experienced it?
- ALAN: Me?
- MARGARET: Yes, you. You sound surprised that you should be asked such a question. If you'd experienced bliss, you'd remember I'm sure, wouldn't you? I daren't ask Franky. His privacy is too intense. Look at him Alan, what do you think his secrets are?
- ALAN: *(Embarrassed)* Ah.... Well.
- MARGARET: Tell us your secrets Franky. Go on... Only joking. Franky is a secret. Any way, what were we talking about?
- ALAN: Bliss.
- MARGARET: You're very good at remembering that, aren't you? And yet you can't remember experiencing it. Isn't that strange?
- ALAN: Well...
- MARGARET: You're very interesting. You know that. I can see I'm embarrassing you... That makes you even more interesting.
- ALAN: Well, I better be getting to work.
- MARGARET: I've frightened you away, haven't I?
- ALAN: Ah no, it's just that...
- MARGARET: That what... that you're not used to people being interested in you, is it?
- ALAN: Ah...*(He looks with embarrassment to Franky)*
- MARGARET: You want Franky to help you, is that it? Why am I so cruel to you, when I don't even know you? Franky, why do you allow this cruelty? Well?
- (Silence).*
- MARGARET: There are certain questions that Franky will not answer. Am I being cruel to you? Hm? And if I am, why can't you leave...it should be a simple question of just walking away. So go on.
- ALAN: *(With a sense of panic)* Me dad'll be furious if I'm late for work.
- MARGARET: That's OK, go.



- MARGARET: *(Alan breaks out of his paralysis and turns and almost runs).*  
Just say that one word one more time. Before you go.  
*(Alan stops and turns around again to face her).*
- MARGARET: Go on. It's so easy to say a word, isn't it? Go on.  
*(Silence, Alan trembles).*
- MARGARET: Go on. It's easy. *(She mouths the word "bliss" for him, with an amount of almost dance like movement.)* Go on. *(She keeps doing this. We see his lips begin to move.)* Good boy.  
*Slowly he adds sound to the movement. Then we hear him say:*  
*(With a quiet assertion.)* Bliss!
- ALAN: *(With a quiet assertion.)* Bliss!
- MARGARET: Keep it in your mouth all night. You will be tempted to swallow it, but don't.
- ALAN: *(Introspectively)* Bliss.  
*He exits. Flash forward to the following morning.*
- ALAN: She fair freaked me out Franky, I'll tell you that much for nothing.
- Franky: Freaked you out of what? is the question.
- ALAN: I don't know. All I know is that for the rest of the night, that one word was stuck like a curse in my mouth. A delicious curse.
- FRANKY: What word?
- ALAN: Don't you start now, for God sake,
- FRANKY: What word?
- ALAN: Yerra "bliss" for fuck sake. Bliss. It was there like a kind of weeping. As if I was crying. Every time I dumped in a fresh load of chips into the deep fat fryer, or put on some burgers or fish or whatever. Every time I looked at me father, taking the orders and joking with the customers as if he were the nicest man in the world, I'd find it there. I thought I was going to break down Franky. I thought I was going to start shouting it around the place. *(He does)* Bliss! Bliss! Bliss! Bliss!  
*(Silence).*  
Like a man in grief for a dead lover. And the more I drank, the more grief stricken I became. I thought I was going to kill me father Franky. I think he wants me to kill him. He taunts me constantly. The only way I can please him is by doing something to make him angry so he can beat me. Bliss! Fucking bliss! I couldn't learn Franky. He'd always find out what it was that I couldn't do, and then he'd make it his mission to try and teach me how to do it. I couldn't hurl for shite Franky, but he insisted on having me on the under eleven's hurling team. He was one of the selectors. Because I couldn't hurl for shite I ended up in goal. And I let in a goal in the last five minutes of some ould fucking semi fucking final and we lost. And when the whistle blew, he came straight onto the field and started leathering me across the ass with me own hurley. Bliss! Do you know what that word means Franky? Because I



- sure as fucking hell don't. That was the only time he ever beat me in public and the crazy thing was that nobody did a thing about it. They didn't even look. Bliss! Fucking Bliss! Bliss fucking bliss! Bliss, fucking bliss! Bliss! Bliss! Bliss! Bliss! Bliss!
- FRANKY:** Take it easy there now. Take it easy.
- ALAN:** Bliss!
- FRANKY:** (*Consoling him*) Shh! Shhh! It's OK.
- ALAN:** I didn't even want to be on the team. And I remember being at home alone with the pain. Lying in bed, my pillow, wet with my own tears. He broke the hurley.
- FRANKY:** Shhh! It's OK.
- ALAN:** They look at one another. Alan giggles on realising his outburst.  
Any chance of a drink of water?
- He goes and gets the water.*
- FRANKY:** Here.
- ALAN:** He never brought chips home, but I remember that night, something must have got him, and he brought me home chips. But it was two o'clock in the morning and he brings 'em into my room and wakes me up. I was all bleary eyed and sleepy, he hadn't even turned the light on. He didn't say anything. I thought he was going to beat me again but then I smelled the chips and he just left them, in their greasy bag, by my pillow, and walked out of the room. I ate them in the half sleepy silence and then five minutes later vomited the whole lot back up again. Since then, I have found his apologies, such as they are, even more terrifying than his beatings. It's always like the first punch of the next hammering.
- FRANKY:** Show me your body.
- ALAN:** What?
- FRANKY:** Show me your body. You said it was covered in bruises. Now show it to me.
- ALAN:** Ah Jesus Franky.
- FRANKY:** You said he knows where to hit you so's it wont show. But you don't show it to anyone either, do you? He has a great accomplice in you. Have you ever gone to a doctor? Have you? Have you ever shown your wounds to anyone? Now, show me your wounds.
- Flash back to the night before.*
- MARGARET:** As if Margaret Burke were qualified to teach anybody a damn thing about bliss. Have you my drink for me Franky?
- FRANKY:** One Margarita, coming up.
- MARGARET:** Where are those ejits gone? I'm rattled after my contact with that young man Franky. He was too much in earnest for me. I think I am garnished best by follow in others. Why do I do it Franky? Why?

- FRANKY:** Do what?
- MARGARET:** Do that to men. What I just did to him. Why?
- FRANKY:** Could Franky ever answer your questions, Margarita?
- MARGARET:** No, but it seems that I can't ask them of anyone else. Where are those three codgers gone? Has my husband been?
- FRANKY:** No.
- MARGARET:** And you won't call him now Franky, will you. Will you?
- FRANKY:** You'll be going along home though soon, wont you, after this.
- MARGARET:** Let us not talk about that now, Franky. Home. That's another word that has always evaded me. Home.
- Denis and Niall and Jim enter. Denis is dressed in a suit that is the worse for having been slept in over the past few days. It is clear that he is a rep. of some kind who is in the process of going from being a very heavy social drinker to an alcoholic. It is obvious that because of this binge with Margaret Burke, he has missed a few days work. He is in his late twenties. Niall is younger, possibly in his early twenties; He looks as if he is drowning in a pool of his own unaddressed feelings. Jim is older and incoherent for the most part, except to Niall who can always make out what he is saying. He is very much a local rural drunk, damaged from a life time of heavy drinking.*
- DENIS:** *(Talking to Niall as he enters)* And would it matter a damn if he was dead or not. Life, be the look of it has not been a whole pile of use to him. Da right Jimmy?
- JIM:** Ha?
- DENIS:** See! Jimmy is neither dead nor alive but somewhere on the border between the two.
- NIALL:** It's just that he didn't look as if he was breathing.
- DENIS:** Look at him. Does he ever look as if he's breathing? For a man who is reputed to have drunk two farms and a post-office, he doesn't look much.
- JIM:** I fell asleep.
- DENIS:** You did not fall asleep, you passed out.
- MARGARET:** You're not still going on about Jim.
- DENIS:** He's as good a topic of conversation as any.
- MARGARET:** So, gentlemen, let's waste no more time and move onto the honors course as promised. You've wasted your lives to date in an ignorant abyss of pints and half-ones. You responded so well to the first instalment of your education yesterday that I deem you ready and able for a sampling of the greater wisdom today.
- DENIS:** I suppose there's no chance of a pint, just to get us going like.
- MARGARET:** Don't even mention a pint. I place you now in the capable hands of Franky Stapleton, who will lead you to a better place. Meet the three

- apostles Franky. They need educating. They need educating real bad. I got them through the pass course yesterday, gin and tonics, rum and black, I even got them to chance Bacardi and Coke. I told them that I would have to take them to Franky Stapleton's Academy in Ballymoriv for the honors course. So Franky, show 'em the menus.
- DENIS: Menus?
- MARGARET: Yes. You are opening yourself up to a world of greater variety. You need to see your options written down.
- FRANKY: Gentlemen. *(He hands them the menus)*
- DENIS: Well, this feckin bet all.
- JIM: I forgot to bring me glasses.
- DENIS: What did he say?
- NIALL: He said he forgot his glasses.
- DENIS: For feck sake. I'd say he lost them back around nineteen sixty-two.
- MARGARET: And mine is on the way Franky?
- FRANKY: It's on the way my dear. On the way.
- NIALL: What is yours?
- MARGARET: A Margarita.
- NIALL: What's in that?
- FRANKY: A subtle blend of Tequila and Cointreau served in a salted glass with a garnish of cucumber and fresh lime.
- NIALL: Do you serve chips with that?
- They laugh.*
- MARGARET: Boys please. This is serious business.
- NIALL: I've always found it hard to take cucumbers seriously.
- DENIS: You never know, you might like it.
- NIALL: Carrots now, or turnips. I could talk away to them all night.
- DENIS: You'll be having cucumbers with your pints next. Hey barman, give us ten cucumbers there and a box of matches.
- JIM: Here, look. What are these?
- NIALL: Well, Jim, you can have a Gall Bracer, or a Gin Smash, or a Wilga Hill Boomerang.
- JIM: These are ladies drinks.
- NIALL: Jim says they're ladies drinks.
- MARGARET: Then become a lady Jim.
- DENIS: Can you imagine Jim getting a sex change.
- NIALL: Or a Harvey Wallbanger.
- JIM: Harvey Wallbanger!
- NIALL: Harvey Wallbanger. Do you want to know what's in it.
- JIM: Harvey Wallbanger!
- DENIS: Jim is going to try potluck with a Harvey Wallbanger. I think he has his mind made up.



- MARGARITA:** I didn't know he had a mind.  
**DENIS:** He has a fierce mind for drink.  
*(They laugh).*  
Do any of these have whiskey in them?
- FRANKY:** I can serve you a Gall Bracer or a Sea Dog.  
**DENIS:** What was that first one, what did he say? A Ball Breaker, is that what he said?
- NIALL:** Comes with a helping of turnip.  
**MARGARET:** Gentlemen!  
**DENIS:** I'll chance an ould Gall Bracer so.  
**MARGARET:** You won't regret it, I guarantee you.  
**NIALL:** And I'll have an ould cut off a Gin Smash.  
**DENIS:** Sounds like a car crash.  
**NIALL:** Or a fight.  
**MARGARET:** Stop, please! These jokes... I am saturated with them. I am at breaking point.
- DENIS:** Erra Jesus Margaret, don't be such an ould killjoy.  
**MARGARET:** What's joy? Tell me now Denis, since you're such an authority on it. You and your silly ould jokes and your pints and your half ones. Is that joy? Oh I must try it some time.
- FRANKY:** Now my dear, one Margarita. And the rest are on the way.  
*(Flash forward to the morning again).*
- FRANKY:** Show me your wounds Alan.  
**ALAN:** Ah well, maybe another time Franky. By rights now, I should be getting home. Somebody has to give the grub to mammy.
- FRANKY:** What's the problem for God sake?  
**ALAN:** Well, you're the man who seems to know what all the problems are Franky.
- FRANKY:** But that's just the problem, everyone goes round the place keeping hidden wounds hidden and pretending everything is grand.  
**ALAN:** Well you see, what about your self Franky? No man ever asked me to take me shirt off before. I'm not used to it.
- FRANKY:** I'm sorry, I'm lost.  
**ALAN:** Well, what are your secrets Franky? Or secret at any rate. What do you have to tell, yourself?
- FRANKY:** Jesus man, you're talking about it as if you know more about it than I do meself. What is it?  
**ALAN:** Well, you see, like, me showing me body, to you?  
**FRANKY:** Jesus man, I just want to take a look at the damage he has inflicted on you. But if you have a problem with it, that's OK.
- ALAN:** But say if 'twas another man was here now, and I was a woman? Would it be OK for you to ask in that situation? Well, I mean, if you were a



- different man to the man you are.
- FRANKY: I'm sorry, I'm completely... you mean... you think... the magazines?
- ALAN: Well yeah... I mean why else would you...?
- FRANKY: *(The penny finally dropping)* Ah now I see... You think I'm...
- ALAN: But aren't you? The whole town thinks you're...
- FRANKY: Jesus Christ! That's the best yet.
- ALAN: Well, I presumed with the magazines and all that, that you had to be.
- FRANKY: Jesus, man, you're the one who's most interested in them.
- ALAN: Ah, I know, but 'tis only curiosity from my point of view.
- FRANKY: Curiosity? Ha! And it's something else for me. Now go on, take off that shirt there, and let's take a look at those bruises.
- ALAN: *(Pause)* Are you sure it's OK?
- FRANKY: Oh for God's sake! If you have a problem with it don't do it.
- ALAN: Well, all right so.  
*(He slowly and silently removes his jumper and his shirt. Franky looks at his bare Torso).*
- FRANKY: Jesus, he made a right job of you, didn't he? Here, try some of this.  
He hands him an unmarked bottle of clear liquid, which he takes from under the counter.
- ALAN: Is this what I think it is?
- FRANKY: What else would it be? Just rub it on.  
*(He does).*
- ALAN: Aw Jesus, Franky, it's burning the bejesus out of me.
- FRANKY: It'll calm down after a while.
- ALAN: I hope to God it does. I hope no one comes in.
- FRANKY: It's OK, the door is still locked.
- ALAN: It's beginning to calm down now.
- FRANKY: So if the whole town thinks I'm... they must entertain suspicions about you too. Seeing as how you come in here so much.
- ALAN: Sure you should hear me dad Franky. He never stops at me. Jesus if I was the fecking Pope himself, me dad'd find a way of throwing it in me face. I'm no good with girls Franky. That's not to say that I don't fancy 'em, I do. It's just that there doesn't seem to be any formula for a bloke like me in a place like this. I can't do what the other blokes do be doing. And I've yet to meet a girl who can meet me half ways on me own terms. This can't be too bad a place Franky. If it was truly the jungle, the likes of meself would be extinct long go. Sure, a lot of the old blokes around call me "faggot" and "bum boy". The weird thing about it is, that I take a kind of a strange pride in it because it means that at the very least they see me as being different, and I take it as a great relief that they don't see me as being like themselves.  
*(Flash back. Franky serves the three lads their drinks as ordered.)*

- FRANKY: Now gentlemen, one Harvey Wallbanger, one Gall Bracer, one Gin Smash, as ordered.
- DENIS: Jesus Christ.
- JIM: Didn't I tell ye these were ladies drinks.
- DENIS: They're more like feckin flower arrangements than drinks.
- MARGARET: Well, are you going to give them a try?  
They drink.
- DENIS: Christ ha! I'll never touch a pint again.
- NIALL: 'Tis nice all right.
- JIM: *(With enthusiasm)* Harvey Wallbanger! Harvey Wallbanger.
- MARGARET: Well, praise the Lord! They are transformed; they have seen the light! Enter Brendan. He is a large man, well dressed but without one vestige of flair or imagination. He is in his thirties. Silence when he enters.
- MARGARET: Well, if it isn't the old hunter-gatherer, come to fetch me home to his lair.
- BRENDAN: Come on!
- DENIS: What's the hurry Brendan, surely you'll stop for an ould cocktail.
- MARGARET: Brendan doesn't stop for anyone or anything.
- JIMMY: *(Indistinct as usual)* Tell him, he should chance one of these Harvey Wallbangers.
- NIALL: What's that Jim?
- JIMMY: He should chance a Harvey Wallbanger.
- NIALL: He says you should try a Harvey Wallbanger.
- BRENDAN: Oh for Jesus sake!
- MARGARET: Brendan stops for no one except me. Isn't that right hun?
- BRENDAN: What kind of a circus is this?
- NIALL: All clowns Brendan, all clowns.
- DENIS: And one ringmaster, Franky. An ould Harvey Wallbanger for Brendan there Franky and the same again for us.
- BRENDAN: Stop it!
- MARGARET: *(Laughing with slight hysteria)* Brendan probably thinks a Harvey Wallbanger is some kind of a demolition tool?
- DENIS: I'd say you're strictly a pints man Brendan, Ha?
- MARGARET: Like a jackhammer.
- DENIS: Be a great name for a cocktail... a "jackhammer". Franky, any chance of a "jackhammer".
- FRANKY: I don't know how to make such a thing.
- BRENDAN: Drink that up, will you Margaret.
- MARGARET: *(With real anger)* Don't rush me! *(Pause)* Don't rush me. This is my last drink. I know you have heard me say that many times before, but every time I say it, it appears to be true, and so it does now.
- DENIS: Or a "low loader". That 'ud be another great name for a cocktail. A

- "low loader".
- MARGARET:** Besides, I am no longer called Margaret.
- NIALL:** Or a "JCB". Or a "buck rake".
- DENIS:** Or a "combine harvester".
- MARGARET:** I've decided to change my name to Margarita.
- BRENDAN:** Come on now, enough of that ould nonsense.
- JIMMY:** Or a "bag of calf nuts".
- NIALL:** What's that Jim?
- JIMMY:** A "bag of calf nuts". A good name for a cocktail.
- NIALL:** *(Laughing)* Ha Ha. He says... A "bag of calf nuts"...
- DENIS:** What? What?
- NIALL:** He says a "bag of calf nuts" 'ud be a good name for a cocktail.  
*(Hilarity all round).*
- DENIS:** I'll have a Long Slow Screw Against the Wall, and a "bag of calf nuts".
- MARGARET:** I thought I saw you laughing Brendan, did I see you laughing.
- DENIS:** Can you imagine 'em up in Dublin 4, or in the bars of Brussels.
- NIALL:** A Long Slow Screw Against the Wall, and a "bag of calf nuts".
- MARGARET:** Did I? Did I see you smile?
- BRENDAN:** You did not see me smile, now drink that thing up before I take it off you and lets get out of here.  
*(With anger)* If you as much as touch that, I'll order another ten.
- MARGARET:** And ten each for us as well.
- DENIS:** Marg... Margarita....
- FRANKY:** Thank you.
- MARGARET:** Surely it's time...
- FRANKY:** No Franky. No! Of anyone I know I presumed I could expect loyalty from you. *(Pause)* *(To Brendan)* Will you not sit with me for the few minutes remaining, as long as it takes me to finish this and have some damn thing with me?
- MARGARET:** *(He sits)* Oh Margaret, please...
- BRENDAN:** Margarita!
- MARGARET:** She's drank enough of 'em to merit the name.
- DENIS:** *(Bounding up, he grasps Denis by the scruff).* You shut your fucking mouth!
- BRENDAN:** Please!
- FRANKY:** I'm sorry. It was just a joke. I didn't mean to...
- DENIS:** *(Calming down.)* I didn't mean to...
- BRENDAN:** *(Franky serves up the second round of drinks as ordered).*
- MARGARET:** Sit down Brendan and stop a while. *(He does)* I am always so flattered when you take my side like that. It is some indication to me that you value me in some way.
- BRENDAN:** Yes...



- MARGARET: This is your cue to say: "I love you Margarita" Don't you know that.  
*(Standing up and with drama)* "I love you more..."
- BRENDAN: *(With a panic of embarrassment)* Sit down Margaret and stop it!
- MARGARET: What? You're not embarrassed are you? Is it the case that you don't love me?
- BRENDAN: Margaret!
- MARGARET: Margarita! Call me Margarita or I'll keep talking about love. He's always been embarrassed by that subject gents, before I got married one of the things that attracted me to marrying a farmer was some kind of silly pastoral notion I had of rolling in the hay.
- BRENDAN: Margaret!
- MARGARET: Of course a roll in the silage is not quite the same thing...and in any case...
- BRENDAN: Margaret!
- MARGARET: Margarita! And in any case there wasn't much roll...
- BRENDAN: Margarita! Or whatever you want to call yourself! Will you give over?
- MARGARET: OK my sweet, whatever you want. *(She drinks)*
- MARGARET: Where is Serge?
- BRENDAN: Serge?
- BRENDAN: *(Seething with anger)* Keep out of it!
- MARGARET: Oh but no, my dear. Why shouldn't he know? Serge is our son. We adopted him from Romania. We export our beef and import our children. Serge was a little sop to me at one point to keep me on the straight and narrow path. Where is he now?
- BRENDAN: With my mother.
- MARGARET: She's probably trying to dye his hair red and paint freckles onto his face. Where am I going?
- BRENDAN: We'll talk about that outside.
- MARGARET: I will not leave until you tell me where I am going.
- BRENDAN: Sarsfield Court.
- DENIS: Great view of Cork from there by all accounts.
- MARGARET: It mightn't do you any harm to check it out for yourself.
- DENIS: *(Laughing)* Go on Margarita, I wouldn't doubt you.
- MARGARET: Good by gentlemen. When you think, think of me. When you drink, drink to me.  
*(She takes a fist of money out of her pocket and throws it into the air. As they exit Alan from the chip shop next door, enters. The three lads have scattered to the floor grasping the money).*
- ALAN: Another Gall Bracer there for me Franky.
- JIM: And a Harvey Wallbanger for me.
- DENIS: The very cornerstones of our society are beginning to crumble.
- ALAN: Like what.



- DENIS: Pints and half ones.
- ALAN: You're not serious.
- DENIS: Yerrah, not really.
- ALAN: Thanks be to Jesus.
- DENIS: Still though.... There's food for thought there.
- ALAN: Food for thought. That's what I'd like to be selling instead of bags of chips.
- DENIS: I'll compromise. I'll have a pint of Guinness, a half one, and a Harvey Wallbanger.
- ALAN: How's does he do it.
- DENIS: This is all your fault Jimmy, you know that?  
*(Commotion is heard outside. Margaret re-enters in a fury followed by Brendan).*
- MARGARET: I absolutely refuse to go anywhere in that thing.
- BRENDAN: Margaret please...
- MARGARET: Margarita!
- BRENDAN: Please please please, stop this nonsense!
- MARGARET: As if I were a calf or a bail of straw, with a fine big spotless ninety eight Audi sitting outside the door at home, and you come to take me to Sarsfield Court in a jeep.
- BRENDAN: Does it matter?
- MARGARET: That's what you think of me.
- BRENDAN: What does it matter?
- MARGARET: It matters. It matters a lot. I wasn't born to your cow shit. You have never respected that in me.
- BRENDAN: Oh God!
- MARGARET: Another Margarita please Franky.
- BRENDAN: Don't give it to her.
- MARGARET: Give it to me! Give it to me now!
- BRENDAN: Do not give her that drink!
- MARGARET: I don't care how you two gentlemen deal with this, but I am going to the ladies cloakroom, and when I come out, there better be a Margarita sitting up there on the counter for me.  
*(She exits. Brendan sits on a barstool).*
- BRENDAN: *(Putting his head in his hands)* What am I going to do? She had been doing so well. Six whole years. I was down in the mart in Fermoy when the call came.
- FRANKY: I know it can't be easy Brendan, I know.
- BRENDAN: Then why do you sell her drink?
- FRANKY: What would you have me do? Put her through the indignity of barring her? Is that what you want? I have hardly seen you in six years Brendan. Or her. She will leave here tonight. She will have had her cocktails. For a

moment at least there will have been a little bit of colour in what I imagine is otherwise a dark escapade. Ye will leave, and with God's help, I will never see ye again, because believe it or not it doesn't do my heart any good to see her as she is. But I know how to read her, and I know that she is just having her fling, so let her have her fling and then she'll go home with you.

*(Flash forward again to the following morning).*

ALAN: Jesus, this stuff is doing the job all right Franky.

Silence.

ALAN: "Gay!" You know why people don't use that word around here? You can't insult someone with it. *(He tries)* "Go way you fucking gay!" Naw, doesn't work. "Homosexual" That's a right mouthful all right Franky. *(Playfully)* "Hello, I'm' Homo Sexual. I'm one of the Sexuals of Bally Go Backwards." Get it Franky? Bally Go Backwards. "Oh, you're Hetero Sexual? We must be related. Both descended from the legendary 'Boy' Sexual. Youthful to the very end apparently."

FRANKY: I think you should go now Alan.

ALAN: What?

FRANKY: You should go.

ALAN: Go?

FRANKY: That's what I said, Go! Go!

ALAN: But... Franky... Hang on now...

FRANKY: Give me that. *(He takes the poistin bottle from him)*

ALAN: But Franky...

FRANKY: I won't be needing these any more.

*(He starts pouring the cocktail drinks down the sink).*

ALAN: Franky, hold on now, will ya, sit down for a while and take it easy.

FRANKY: Take it easy! Take it easy! What's that suppose to mean? Easy. That's a word that has no meaning here. Oh God, how could I have been so foolish?

ALAN: Franky, would you stop it. You weren't foolish.

FRANKY: I was foolish! *(With mockery)* "I know how to read her Brendan, I know how to read her" Franky, the expert on everyone's life except his own.

*(He starts to pour the poistin down the sink).*

ALAN: Hey! I'm not done with that.

FRANKY: I thought I told you to go.

ALAN: But if I could just... I still have to do me back.

FRANKY: Do your back! Do your back! Here, let me do your back for you.

He comes outside the counter and starts beating Alan on the back.

ALAN: Aw Jesus Franky, would you stop. Stop it will ya. Aw Franky, for fuck sake, stop! Franky, Stop!

*Franky does.*

- FRANKY: What chance did she have? What chance? When I kept her drinking alive in my mind as one of the only things I could truly relate to. To me she was like a little icon of colour in this desert of mourning. But colour at such a cost to her. Did I care? And now that she's gone, look at me here with you, leeching off your tragedy, building a nice cosy little life around it.
- ALAN: It helps Franky.
- FRANKY: Helps! This is a help? Blotting out your pain with alcohol, a help? Feel the fucking thing! Feel it! And realise that it should not be, and that it need not be! I abuse you as much as your own father does. Can you not see that? At least he makes no pretence about doing you any favours.
- ALAN: I don't know what I would do if I couldn't come in here Franky.
- FRANKY: You might realise that you're life is shite and you might wake up and do something about the... the... fucking thing but if you want to keep your head in the sand until that man has you murdered, then Franky Stapleton is the boy for you. Franky Stapleton and his poitin rub.
- ALAN: I wouldn't know what to do Franky.
- FRANKY: Oh Jesus, here... look.  
*(He goes under the counter and comes out with a big fist of cash).*
- FRANKY: Here, look. You have the car keys, take this and go! Now!
- ALAN: Oh God Franky, no. I can't do that. Me mother...
- FRANKY: Leave the dead bury the dead! I didn't understand that expression until today. There's plenty of us to do it. Now go!
- ALAN: I can't take this... It's too much. Really.
- FRANKY: Take it for God sake! I have the blood of five people on my head; I don't want yours on me head as well.
- ALAN: Why are you doing this? Why?
- FRANKY: Because I love you for Jesus sake!
- ALAN: What?
- FRANKY: I love you.  
*(Flash back again to the night before).*
- FRANKY: Now, what can I get you?
- BRENDAN: I'll have a Club Orange. Is she OK in there?
- FRANKY: Go and check.
- BRENDAN: Oh God, I couldn't
- FRANKY: It's the ladies toilet. Given the clientele here, she is the only one who ever really uses it. She's your wife. Go to the door and shout into her for God sake.
- BRENDAN: Margaret!
- FRANKY: Will you ever just call her Margarita, just for tonight and do one small thing to make life easier for yourself.
- BRENDAN: *(With hesitation, but then gently)* Margarita?



- MARGARET: What!
- BRENDAN: Are you OK?
- MARGARET: Yeah, I'm having a great time.  
*(We hear a flushing. She enters).*
- MARGARET: Elizabeth Arden. My God Franky. This must be the most exotic lady's toilet in all of north Cork
- DENIS: 'Tis probably the only lady's toilet in all of north Cork.
- MARGARET: Talcum powder. Hand cream. Perfume.
- FRANKY: Tisn't often we have a woman in here to use it.
- BRENDAN: A great encouragement to your alcoholism.
- MARGARET: *(With fury)* Don't you dare use that word here. Save it for Sarsfield Court.
- FRANKY: What would you have me do Brendan, punish it.
- MARGARET: At least he knows the difference between a woman and a heifer, Something that you have not quite worked out for yourself yet. Where's my drink?  
*(She takes her drink from the bar. They all look at her. She takes it to her lips with ceremony and sips).*
- MARGARET: Ah, nectar of the Gods. *(She sips)*
- DENIS: Aqua vitae. *(He sips)*
- JIMMY: Tequila Sunrise. *(He sips)*
- DENIS: What did he say?
- NIALL: Tequila sunrise.  
They laugh.
- DENIS: Jesus, one minute it's calf nuts, the next it's Tequila Sunrise.
- NIALL: Spirit of life. *(He sips)*  
*(They look to Alan).*
- ALAN: *(Thinking)* Ah...Juice of the sprites. *(He sips)*  
*(They look to Brendan.)*
- BRENDAN: What?
- MARGARET: Say something.
- BRENDAN: What am I suppose to say? How am I supposed to take part in this silly ritual. Honest to Christ!
- MARGARET: Brendan. Calm down. Just say something about your drink.
- BRENDAN: It's a glass of Club Orange for God sake.
- MARGARET: True, and in choosing it for yourself, you obviously had a sense of enjoyment about it.
- BRENDAN: Yeah.
- MARGARET: So say something that acknowledges that sense of joy.
- BRENDAN: Oh for God's sake. This is mad.
- MARGARET: Do you remember how you used to feel about Club Orange when you were a child, before you became overwhelmed by quotas and headage



- payments and bulk tanks and slurry pits. Do you remember how you felt about a glass of fizzy orange?
- BRENDAN:** Well, yeah.
- MARGARET:** Then tell us?
- BRENDAN:** Well... Oh this is fucking ridiculous.
- MARGARET:** Why? Why is it ridiculous? Why? Do you remember when you had a name for every cow on you father's farm? And once, when the love I think you had for me once, softened you momentarily, you told me about how you wept when your father sold on your favourite cow. One with whom you had a special relationship.
- DENIS:** I didn't know you felt that way about...
- BRENDAN:** Shut your fuckin mouth Casey.
- MARGARET:** So now. You can, cause I know you can, come up with something simple that describes how Club Orange once was for you.
- BRENDAN:** No! No! No!  
*(Pause. He walks away from them.)*
- ALAN:** Well... that was grand. I must go back and torture a few more potatoes.
- DENIS:** Hey, Franky, is it OK if we get chips in here.
- FRANKY:** Well...
- MARGARET:** Oh go on Franky, the boys must eat, they've been working hard.
- FRANKY:** Oh all right, on this one occasion.
- ALAN:** OK so, what's it to be?
- DENIS:** Chips all round, I s'ppose. Franky fire us up the same again there while we are waiting. Jim, chips for you?
- JIMMY:** What?
- DENIS:** I said, chips for you?
- JIMMY:** Oh yeah, chips. Chips and a batter burger.
- DENIS:** What was that last bit.
- JIMMY:** And a batter burger.
- DENIS:** What is he saying?
- NIALL:** He says he wants a batter burger.
- ALAN:** Very appropriate food under the circumstances.
- DENIS:** Brendan, will you ate chips?
- MARGARET:** Chips! Chips for the big farmer man? Give him roast beef. Give him potatoes. Give him turnips. But don't insult him with chips. Eh Brendan?  
*(Silence.)*
- MARGARET:** He's sulking lads.
- FRANKY:** It wouldn't do you any harm to eat something. Brendan.
- DENIS:** A bag of chips is a bag of chips.
- ALAN:** Jesus lads, Confucius is after speaking.
- MARGARET:** Get him a bag of chips.

- DENIS: Bring us in an ould rake of burgers and sausages and potato cakes, and a fish or two.
- ALAN: We could call it the batter basket.
- DENIS: Brendan, I'd say you'd ate a fish? (Pause) Ha?  
(*Silence*).
- DENIS: Yerrah be a devil and have a fish.
- MARGARET: Get him a fish as well.
- ALAN: Right so, I'll be back in a flash with all that.  
(*Exit Alan*).
- DENIS: Christ lads but you know what it is, but I'm in party mood all of a sudden.
- FRANKY: Last drinks now folks!
- NIALL: What in God's name have you been doing for the past few days?
- DENIS: I don't know, but it wasn't a party.  
(*He looks at the menu*).
- DENIS: Do you know what it is Franky, but I'm going to chance an Ould Wilga Hill Boomerang. Can you mix me up one of those?
- FRANKY: It would be my pleasure.
- DENIS: Niall, what about you? You'd get sick of the ould Gin Smashes wouldn't you?
- NIALL: Christ, I don't know... (*He looks at the menu*) I'll chance a Singapore Sling so.
- JIMMY: Harvey Wallbanger!
- DENIS: Jesus Christ! You can't teach an ould dog new tricks. Well, maybe one new trick per day.
- MARGARET: The usual for me and a "slurry pit" for ould stuff shirt here.  
(*Silence*).
- MARGARET: Hey Brendan, would you chance a "slurry pit"?
- BRENDAN: You must think of me as such a bore.
- MARGARET: Aw! Lads, big farmer boy is hurtin' real bad.
- BRENDAN: Stop! Stop this cruelty. Please.
- MARGARET: Cruelty! Me stop the cruelty? You talk to me about stopping the cruelty?
- BRENDAN: You can be so cruel Margaret....
- MARGARET: Margarita!
- BRENDAN: You can be so cruel, when you're like this.
- MARGARET: Drunk, drunk is it?
- BRENDAN: If that is what you want to call it, yes.
- MARGARET: And have you any idea about your own cruelty?
- BRENDAN: Me? Cruel?
- MARGARET: "Me? Cruel?" he says, all innocence.

- BRENDAN: I don't know what you are talking about.
- MARGARET: Cruel? Moi?
- BRENDAN: Oh for God's sake.
- MARGARET: Have you ever watched yourself with the cattle? Have you? Have you?
- BRENDAN: Ah for Jesus sake!
- MARGARET: Have you ever seen yourself with the land?
- BRENDAN: Cruel... to the land...
- DENIS: Jesus lads, she's turning into one of them environmentalists on us.
- MARGARET: You can't even imagine that such a thing is possible. You who cried once when your father sold your favourite cow.
- BRENDAN: Not that again.
- MARGARET: Can you remember that cows name? Can you? Can you?
- BRENDAN: Give over Margaret.
- MARGARET: Marga-fuckin'-rita!
- DENIS: She's turning into an environmentalist and a user of bad language.
- MARGARET: Now, the cow's name? What was it? Come on!
- BRENDAN: Stop!
- MARGARET: Oh you can remember it all right. Of course you can. But your too embarrassed to let it be seen, you who deal in cows by the hundred now, that you once had such feeling for a particular cow that you actually had a cherished name for it. Now what was that name?
- BRENDAN: Stop it!
- MARGARET: Just say the fuckin' thing!
- BRENDAN: Your language...
- MARGARET: Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!
- BRENDAN: Stop it!
- MARGARET: I'll stop when you say the cow's name. Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck...
- BRENDAN: Bluebell!
- (Silence).
- MARGARET: There you go.
- BRENDAN: (With introspection) Bluebell.
- MARGARET: And you in some remote part of your heart wanted to say that, didn't you? Didn't you?
- BRENDAN: Yes, yes I did.
- MARGARET: I can see you with her, as she lagged behind the others to wait for you, lingering almost flirtatiously at little bits of grass along the dykes.
- BRENDAN: Don't indulge yourself.
- MARGARET: I will! I'll indulge myself at your expense and all. Where was I? Oh yeah... Always last into the stall for milking that you could spend a little more time with her. A good milker, I seem to remember you tell. It didn't make sense that she should be sold when she was. Your hands lingering longer on the warm rough softness of her teats. The playful



swish of her tail, the soft lull of her moo making it's way through your ear, into your heart.

**BRENDAN:** Please, please...

**MARGARET:** It's embarrassing, isn't it?

**BRENDAN:** Yes, yes...can't we go now, Marg... Margarita?

**MARGARET:** And your whole life has become a war against embarrassment. It's the enemy. It has become the enemy.

**BRENDAN:** You're not being fair to me Marg... Marg...

**MARGARET:** .....arita, what does fairness have to do with it? Ha? You don't think of your self as being cruel in any way, but do you remember the set-aside fields.

**BRENDAN:** Oh no.

**MARGARET:** We have some land gentlemen, or at least Brendan has some land, for I technically do not own any and the EC were paying us not to use it. Pretty soon they'll be paying us not to fart. So I had this notion, a silly notion perhaps that we could sprinkle them with wild flower seed. I saw such a thing advertised in one of my magazines, you could get it in cans. But you were having none of it! And oh, there was all kinds of rigmarole about EC regulations etc. But the bottom line was that it would have killed you with embarrassment for anyone to see your land bearing colour in any way.

**DENIS:** Maybe it's against the law, like buachalans.

**MARGARET:** Colour is against the law around here! Everything has become black and white, the cows especially. And do you know the really crazy thing Brendan, and I never told you this... I went ahead and did it any way... And it came to nothing. Not one bloody flower grew! Like every other thing I have ever touched in my life, it came to nothing.

**BRENDAN:** I really don't know what to say.

**MARGARET:** Say "fuck!" That's my policy from now on. When in doubt say "fuck"

**BRENDAN:** Please, please Margarita, I can't bear to hear you using language.

**MARGARET:** Bad language, you mean, or just language in general.

*(His mobile phone rings. Brendan and Margaret are in a lull in response to this. The three lads go into a comic routine with reference to it.)*

**DENIS:** Hey Jim, it's for you.

**NIALL:** No it's for you.

**JIMMY:** Franky, it's for you.

**NIALL:** No Jim it's for you.

**DENIS:** It's...it's ... ah fuck it!

*(Brendan calmly takes it out and answers).*

**BRENDAN:** Hello mum... yes, yes, I should be home in a while. Yes yes, she's here.

**MARGARET:** Hello! Mother in law! I'm here, look what your son married.



- BRENDAN: *(Brendan covers the mouthpiece and glares at her).*  
OK, OK. Put him on. Hi buddy... It's OK... I'll be home in a while...  
Are you a good boy?... She's fine. She's fine. If you like.... *(To Margaret)*  
It's Serge, he wants to talk to you.
- MARGARET: *(Pained)* I can't, I can't.
- BRENDAN: Please Margaret, please.
- MARGARET: *(Silently, to herself, with tears in her eyes)* Margarita, Margarita.
- BRENDAN: She's actually busy at the moment love... OK... You go off to bed now  
for your granny and we'll see you in the morning.  
*(The scene flashes forward again to the following morning).*  
*(Putting on his shirt with a sense of urgency)* I can't believe you said that.
- ALAN: What are you doing?
- FRANKY: Putting on me shirt of course. Jesus, you told me you weren't...
- ALAN: I told you I wasn't what, Alan?
- FRANKY: You told me you weren't ... gay so! For fuck sake. There I said it.
- ALAN: And what has changed?
- FRANKY: Well, you just said...
- ALAN: What did I just say?
- FRANKY: Oh for fuck sake! Why does everyone keep doing this to me? It seems to  
be a fucking local pass time that people have to be dragging words out of  
me.
- ALAN: What did I say Alan?
- FRANKY: You said you loved me for fuck sake!
- ALAN: Did I say I was gay? Did I? Did I?
- FRANKY: No, no, you did not.
- ALAN: And does the fact that I have said I love you automatically mean that I  
am gay? Ha?
- FRANKY: Well, no...
- ALAN: So what's the problem then?
- FRANKY: Well blokes don't go round saying that to one another, do they?
- ALAN: You're annoyed Alan. I can't believe this. Someone has just told you that  
they loved you, and you're offended.
- FRANKY: Well, wouldn't you be?
- ALAN: Offended? Because someone said they loved me? Show me how I have  
wounded you? Well, how have you been wounded?
- FRANKY: Ah Jesus, I don't know.
- ALAN: What kind of a place is this, that a man can beat the shit out of you as  
much as he likes and it doesn't draw any response from you. And yet  
when someone tells you that they love you, you get pissed off.
- FRANKY: Once I told him to stop. Biggest mistake I ever made. I was out of  
school for a week that time. Now I just go numb and leave him hammer  
away.

- FRANKY:** I don't know what it is like to be told that I am loved because no one ever told me that they loved me and I have never told anyone that I loved them until now. Ever. And I don't really know what love is, so I can't be sure that I am telling you the truth. All I know is that I look forward to you coming in here every morning for your elevenses as you do, with the papers. I love you being here with me. That's all I know. I love your sense of fun. I love the way you say things. I love the way you see the world. I do not want you to be gone, but for the first time I realise that my keeping you here is no true indication of the love I have for you.
- ALAN:** Sounds like ... sounds like...
- FRANKY:** Queer talk, is it?
- ALAN:** That's not fair Franky, you don't know if I was going to say that?
- FRANKY:** Do you know what you were going to say? Do you?
- ALAN:** Era Jesus, Franky, I haven't a clue about anything any more.
- FRANKY:** Have you heard "gay" talk?
- ALAN:** Oh excuse me, "gay talk". No I haven't.
- FRANKY:** It may be. I don't know what kind of a love it is, because I don't now what kind of a man I am. I never had the guts to find out. I killed off the imagination in myself along time ago because it was too terrifying a thing for me to live with. I may be gay, I may not be. I don't know. But whether I am or not, I still love you. It may be the love a father has for a son.
- ALAN:** I wouldn't know much about that.
- FRANKY:** If I had a son, I might feel this way about him. It may be the love that one lover feels for another. I don't know what it is. Nor do I care; all I know is that it is what it is. Are there different categories of love? Well?
- ALAN:** I don't know a whole pile about love Franky.
- FRANKY:** What are you afraid of, Alan? Hm? What are you afraid of?
- ALAN:** Well, Jesus, I don't know.
- FRANKY:** That I might want to touch you, is that it?  
*(As he speaks, he slowly reaches out and takes Alan's hands. Alan reluctantly allows him to do so).*
- Alan, look at me. Look. Do you see someone that you need to fear? Do you? Do you?
- ALAN:** Jesus Franky, you're making me feel as awkward as shite. I see someone that's changing before me eyes, every five minutes.
- FRANKY:** But do you see someone that you need to fear?
- ALAN:** Well, no.  
*(He takes both his hands).*
- FRANKY:** OK. As long as we are clear on that. Alan, I care about what happens to you. That's all I know. Your reality is so terrifying that you dare not

even contemplate going into your imagination and see what it has to offer. Look at the monster it's turning me into. Hm? And yet in spite of that, you have not let your imagination die, yet. I may be a very confused man Alan, but I'm not going to hurt you. I have allowed my confusion to hurt too many already.

**ALAN:** *(Lost in his own thoughts)* I just go numb Franky. Last day he had me by the back of the neck, up against the door...

**FRANKY:** You're dying here Alan. Dying. And I am not going to be your accomplice. I have enough blood on my hands. And I have tragically refused to live my own life. Now you can do what you like, but you are not coming in here any more for anything other than to hear this: You have to go, Alan. I'll be as lonesome as anything without you, but you have to go. Do you hear me? Do you?

**ALAN:** Yes.

**FRANKY:** Do you!

**ALAN:** Yes! Yes! Oh Jesus Franky, what am I going to fucking do?  
*(He falls crying into Franky's arms, Franky holds him in an embrace. Flash back to night before. They are all eating chips, except Brendan. Brendan and Margaret are sitting separately. Margaret is eating absent-mindedly.)*

**FRANKY:** Gone the time now folks.

**DENIS:** One last round for us all there, Franky, go on.

**MARGARET:** I'm such a loser?

**DENIS:** Jesus, they do a grand chip in that place. Franky, are you going to try some?

**FRANKY:** I'm afraid my stomach....

**BRENDAN:** Don't say that love... don't say...

**MARGARET:** Stop! Stop it. Tenderness doesn't suit you. I know you mean well, but don't do anything that makes you look ridiculous.

**BRENDAN:** Margarita...

**MARGARET:** *(Gently)* Margaret. Margaret, for God's sake. Enough of that silliness. To think that I just didn't bother to pick him up.

**BRENDAN:** Margaret. Come on. Let me take you home. It's OK.

**MARGARET:** No, no. Margarita Franky!

**BRENDAN:** Jesus.

**MARGARET:** Don't despair on me. Soon this will end. Another Club Orange for Brendan.

**BRENDAN:** No thanks, I've had enough.

**DENIS:** Hey lads, Brendan has had enough Club Orange. How do you have enough Club Orange? Yerrah go on, be a devil, have another one.

**MARGARET:** Denis... Denis... Stop.

**DENIS:** I was only trying to lighten things up.



- MARGARET:** To think that I could have been selfish enough to leave him there outside the school gates... Nature must have known what kind of a mother I would make. And to think that we went to all that trouble to get him and for me to treat him like that. Nature knew what it was doing when it left my womb empty.
- BRENDAN:** Margaret, don't...
- MARGARET:** (*Pained, gentle*) Margarita! Margarita! Come and have some chips my sweet. Lets us not despair on an empty stomach. This tragedy business is hungry work.
- DENIS:** Jesus Margarita, I always knew you for a bit of an ould drama queen.
- MARGARET:** Margaret!
- DENIS:** Make up your mind for God's sake.
- MARGARET:** Here, let me feed you. What kind of a wife am I?  
(*She brings some chips to him. They sit and eat.*)
- BRENDAN:** These chips are good.
- MARGARET:** Big farmer man needs his grub.
- DENIS:** Hey lads, Brendan likes the chips.
- BRENDAN:** Tell him to stop.
- MARGARET:** Stop it Denis, stop it.
- DENIS:** He's not so sure about Club Orange, but chips...
- MARGARET:** Please my sweet, stop.
- DENIS:** I was only having a laugh,
- MARGARET:** Stop having a laugh. (*To Brendan*) Do you remember, I think it was our second date, sitting on the wall in Kinsale, a beautiful summer's evening, our feet dangling over a rising tide, eating chips?  
Throwing chips to the swans and laughing.
- BRENDAN:** They were the worst chips I have ever eaten in my life.
- MARGARET:** The swans seemed to like them.
- BRENDAN:** Not the kind of thing you expect a swan to be doing, eating chips.
- DENIS:** Swan's nowadays.
- BRENDAN:** We laughed at the notion of a swan having a cholesterol problem.
- MARGARET:** Where is that swan now?
- FRANKY:** (*As he serves drink*) Come on folks, finish up.
- DENIS:** Hey Niall, can you imagine a punk swan?
- NIALL:** With an earring in it's beak.
- DENIS:** That 'ud be a beak ring.
- BRENDAN:** Where are those swans now?
- DENIS:** Probably in an intensive care unit somewhere by the sound of 'em.
- MARGARET:** My shoe fell into the water, do you remember? We laughed so much.
- BRENDAN:** And you threw the other one in and went home barefoot. I thought you were so cool. You have such beautiful feet.
- DENIS:** Hey, Niall, Brendan said, "cool"



- MARGARET:** Thank you, thank you. And I was bowled over that a man like you could have such a sense of fun.
- DENIS:** And what went wrong.
- BRENDAN:** Keep out of it!
- DENIS:** Sorry.
- MARGARET:** Fun was not to be part of the ongoing scheme of things. No grants from the EC for fun. No headage payments for dreams.
- DENIS:** Swan farming! There's a notion now. Did you ever think of going in for that Brendan?
- BRENDAN:** Don't mock me!
- DENIS:** I believe they're very open to new ideas in the EC.
- BRENDAN:** I said, don't mock me!
- MARGARET:** Oh don't be so touchy love. He takes his farming very seriously does our Brendan.
- DENIS:** Still now, there must be an ould pick of meat on a swan. I believe they were a right delicacy in medieval times.
- NIALL:** "Swan burgers" Can you imagine?
- DENIS:** "A MacSwan Sandwich" Or can you imagine herding the swans in home of an evening. "How, how how..."
- FRANKY:** Time now folks.
- JIMMY:** What did he say?
- NIALL:** He said it was time. He's been saying it for the past half an hour.
- JIMMY:** What did he mean by that.
- NIALL:** Jesus, Jimmy, you mean you don't know. It means he's going to give us no more drink and he wants us to leave the pub.
- JIMMY:** That's very unreasonable of him.
- FRANKY:** Gone the time now.
- MARGARET:** Gone the time. What can that mean?
- BRENDAN:** Come home with me Margaret.
- MARGARET:** Home. Brendan, Home. Where is that for us?
- BRENDAN:** Please, don't ask.
- MARGARET:** That day, in Kinsale Brendan. We were home that day. We've been away for so long. I'll go home with you Brendan, but where is home?
- DENIS:** Go on Franky. Another round there. I know how much you like making 'em.
- FRANKY:** No more drink now.
- DENIS:** Ah fuck it lads, we can't finish here. The night is surely young.
- NIALL:** What are our options?
- DENIS:** The Crystal! Inside in Mitchelstown.
- MARGARET:** The Crystal, what's that?
- DENIS:** You don't know what the Crystal is? Margarita, you haven't lived.
- BRENDAN:** You're coming home, Margaret! You're coming home!

- MARGARET:** I will go where I like! Besides, you don't get the message, do you? Home is not home for me.
- BRENDAN:** Oh God!
- MARGARET:** The Crystal might be home. It may be home for both of us Brendan. You know that. Home is not home for you either. If you could only just see. Your farm has become your way of avoiding that fact.
- BRENDAN:** Please Margaret, come with me. Please.
- MARGARET:** No. No Brendan. I am not ready for it yet.
- BRENDAN:** Oh Jesus,
- DENIS:** All right then, who's coming.
- BRENDAN:** Margaret, you can't get into that car with him.
- MARGARET:** He's safer with drink on him believe me.
- BRENDAN:** You're not going to drive, are you?
- DENIS:** How else are we going to get to the Crystal?
- MARGARET:** Brendan could drive us, couldn't you love?
- BRENDAN:** No way.
- MARGARET:** We could all go in the jeep, it would be such fun.
- DENIS:** All right then, let's go.  
Brendan takes out his mobile. Makes a call.
- MARGARET:** Who are you ringing?
- BRENDAN:** The Guards. There's no way that that man can be left out on the road with that kind of drink in him.  
*(Margaret snatches the phone off him, throws it to the ground. Jumps on it.)*
- MARGARET:** He is driving me to the Crystal! Somebody is driving me to the Crystal. I will be in Sarsfield's Court tomorrow; I want to have one last fling.  
*(Softer)* You drive us Brendan. Come with us. Share this with me. Pretend just for this last night that nothing is wrong. Come with me. Hm? We can find that lost day again. We can. We can.  
*(Flash forward again to the next morning. Rachmaninov's Piano concerto cuts in at it's last most dramatic emotional moment. Franky switches it off before it finishes. Silence. The others freeze on stage).*
- Franky: So, he's gone. My days will be left lonely. He's gone with the Hillman Hunter. I may see him again. I will never see the Hillman Hunter again. It was on its last legs any way. One journey left in it. Father Breen will come on a Sunday to give me my communion. A routine that began when my mother was ill and neither of us could leave the house. I kneel in the middle of the floor and receive by both species. Something I talked Father Breen into. Body and blood. Species. Ha! As if they were animals. *(Pause)* He is gone. *(Pause)* I'm not a drinking man, but I refuse to believe that the blood of Jesus should be represented by anything less than a late bottled vintage port. Call it snobbery. Father

Breen performs the necessary transformation there on the bar as I kneel. Alan always did my shopping for me. Every Saturday morning I would give him a list and he would go away, in the Hillman Hunter and return some time later, through that door there, with all these plastic bags hanging from his hands, like bags of fun. I will talk to Father Breen about getting someone new to do the honours for me. O' Flynn the tailor will come once a year, and measure me up and see me good for clothes for another year. And he will stay and have a half one and we'll talk about London, where he spent some time as well. And I will keep him under the illusion that I actually experienced the place. I will have FM3 in the mornings and an ever decreasing number of old men for my evening custom and long silent days in-between.

Alan will own this place some day. Who else would I leave it to? But 'tis the brave man that comes back, or fools like myself. And I am left finally talking to the darkness, a conversation that I have been avoiding for too long now. For much too long.

*Lights fade on Franky as he sits in the middle of the stage.*

**The End.**







MACRA NA FEIRME