



# INTERMISSION IMPOSSIBLE

**A ONE ACT PLAY DIRECTORY**

*Compiled by Donn McMullin ADA*

*With*

**3 ONE ACT PLAYS**

*Commissioned by Macra na Feirme*



macra na feirme

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## **A ONE ACT PLAY DIRECTORY**

*Compiled by Donn McMullin ADA*

*With*

## **THREE ONE ACT PLAYS**

*Commissioned by Macra na Feirme*

*Edited by Jackie O'Keeffe & Joe Molloy*

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## **FOREWORD**

### **Not everyone with get up and go has got up and gone!**

Macra na Feirme appointed its first ever Arts Officer in 1996, following a four month consultative process within the organisation and further building on issues arising from the Maynooth Audit carried out in 1994. The brief for the position was wide. Conceived as a national position, the opportunities were literally as long as a piece of string. What emerged as the strategic plan for the arts in that first year was an approach geared to have impact both locally and nationally. Projects and initiatives were designed both to meet the specific needs of our members and also to address generic issues about perceptions of rural Ireland, the role of the arts in rural development and how artists and writers engage with contemporary rural life in the images they choose to portray.

The One Act Play has long been the stomping ground for amateur drama and is often the first point of contact which amateur groups have with theatre. Macra na Feirme members come to drama in the first place through a competitive framework. Choice of play is more often a result of cast numbers, gender breakdown etc. than because of the intrinsic artistic value or subject matter of the play.

Travelling the circuit of Macra clubs and observing their participation in the One Act Drama competition, it became clear that often plays chosen were beyond the age range of the participants, but even more importantly, spoke of an Ireland no longer relevant to the members themselves. In encouraging beginners to engage with theatre, it is vital that the subject matter has an emotional resonance which amplifies the experience and encourages growth and personal development. In addition, we saw the opportunity to focus on the One Act Play as an important genre in and of itself and an opportunity to platform the changing face of rural life and to present that canvas to three contemporary writers.

Loughlin Deegan, Johnny Hanrahan and Arthur Riordan are all very different writers, all of whom come from rural Ireland, not each of them carrying the same level of muck on their boots. Their differing approaches provide an interesting insight into contemporary rural life – Loughlin's play examining small town life from the perspective of someone who has left and returned; Arthur's giving us a snapshot of those travelling from country to

city; Johnny's set in a more traditional yet transitory geography. Two of the plays subvert the association between Traditional and Naturalistic. All of the plays are rich in challenge and texture.

In parallel to the process of commissioning these three new plays, writer Declan Gorman worked with a group of Monaghan Macra members to produce a community play entitled *Connected*. Further information on this initiative is available from Head Office. That initiative arose from a meeting I had with Monaghan Macra na Feirme members where they described their anger at the continuing assumption about rural Ireland, that 'everyone with get up and go, had got up and gone and only the disadvantaged and oppressed remained behind'. Nothing is further from the truth and this special collection along with the directory of One Act Plays seeks not to interject new life into rural Ireland but to portray its diversity and realities. The canon of One Act Plays is, I believe, enriched by these, and I look forward to their performance not only in the Macra na Feirme and broader amateur sector, but also in the professional theatre field.

I want to pay particular tribute to Loughlin, Johnny and Arthur for their imagination and committed response to the commission brief and to Declan Gorman for both his work in Monaghan and his facilitation of a development meeting with the writers, myself and Jackie O'Keeffe, early on in the commissioning process. Special thanks to Siân Ede of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation who supported this project from the outset.

I would also like to thank Donn McMullin for his sterling work on the compilation of the One Act Directory, the current Macra National Arts Officer Jackie O'Keeffe for her ongoing involvement, the Chief Executive Tom Curran for his support, evaluator Susan Coughlan, Press Office Gráinne O'Brien and the staff at Macra Head Office.

*Emer McNamara*

*National Arts Officer, Macra na Feirme 1996*

## INTRODUCTION

### 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 such groups with information concerning copyright and performance rights and how these apply to all play presentations, both amateur and professional; thirdly, 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 to date. As time passes and more new scripts become available it is hoped to extend this initial publication.

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 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 three sources. Firstly, *Samuel French Ltd*, the internationally renowned publishers of plays; secondly, 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 Samuel French plays may be obtained from their Irish agent: Mr. Tom Mooney, 282 Swords

Rd, Dublin 9, Tel. (01) 8427928. The fees due for the *Cork Arts Theatre One Act Play Competition* entries (generally £15 per performance) are payable directly to the authors (addresses available from Donn McMullin). The fees in respect of the specially commissioned Macra na Feirme plays are payable to the authors or respective agents. However, for a period of one year from the date of publication, all Macra na Feirme clubs are exempt from production fees for these specially commissioned plays only.

Since many of the Cork Arts Theatre plays are unpublished, photocopies may be obtained at a cost of £5 each from Donn McMullin. Should, however, any prospective producer wish to read any of these plays, he/she may do so by calling in person to: Cork Arts Theatre, 7 Knapps Square, Cork. The requested scripts may then be read, on the premises, at no cost. Finally, while this publication can not 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 may assist groups in choosing from a wider and more adventurous variety of plays than have been known or accessible to them to date.

A final note of encouragement. The *Cork Arts Theatre One Act Play Competition* is an annual event, which is usually announced early each new year. It offers two prizes of £100 each, one for best writing and one for best production of a short-listed play during the ensuing performance period. These productions usually occur in September of each year. The number of such plays performed depends on the number of groups in Cork city and county who are prepared to present one of the chosen plays. This varies from year to year, but it 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 see it performed. If that's the case you need look no further! Just write to: *The Cork Arts Theatre, 6 Knapps Square, Cork. Tel. (021) 508398* and ask for details. Then 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 ADA*



# **PART 1**

## **One Act Play Directory**

# **ONE ACT PLAY DIRECTORY**

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## **SYNOPSIS OF PLAYS**

*(In alphabetical order)*

### ■ **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?

A difficult but rewarding two-hander, requiring sensitivity from both actors and director.

*Agent: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

### ■ **A HOUSE WITHOUT WINDOWS**

*By Joe Valentine. 2M. 2F. 1 boy 11yrs., 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 chance 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 all this his father drops a bombshell and declares his intention of starting a new life in America, leaving Alan reeling from the double shock. There can be no easy solution and he must make some hard decisions. A strong dramatic piece, with worthwhile acting opportunities. It requires a composite set, a careful lighting plot, and assured direction.

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel. (01) 8427928*

### ■ **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 TV! When Gloria brings home good-looking but mother-fixated Paul, all is set for complications and a love tangle! The amorous activities are frequently interrupted by the urgent ringing of the invalid's bell from upstairs! 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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ 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 practiced 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 and only then as Owen tells her about his encounter, it suddenly strikes him that they 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.

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel. (01) 8427928*

## ■ 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.

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! A strong emotional drama providing two satisfying roles.

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel. (01) 8427928*

## ■ 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.

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel. (01) 8427928*

## ■ **CLEANING UP**

*By Michael Lynch. 5F.*

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! Their days are governed by vacuum cleaners, polishers and a shortage of proper equipment. 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 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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ **CUPBOARD LOVE**

*By Max Mc Gowan. 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 RTE in 1996.

*Agent: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ **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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ FINE GIRLS YOU ARE!

*By Sarah Varian-Barry. 2M. 5F.*

Carmel and Deirdre – two friends, both with rocky marriages – are feisty and tough with earthy tongues to match. They 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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ 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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777**

## ■ FLIGHT OUT OF MALAGA

*By Michael Lynch. 1M. 3F.*

Three young Irish women 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 all the cast a chance to display their comic abilities.

**Agent: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777**

## ■ 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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777**

## ■ LUNCH HOUR

*By John Mortimer 1M. 2F.*

Set in a small and featureless bedroom of a small hotel, the play tells of a lunch-time 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.

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel. (01) 8427928*

## ■ MAGNETISM

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

This play tells the story of a past and passing affair and what happens when the couple meet 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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ MANNA

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

Apparently set in a cheap café 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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ MEN'S TALK

*By Fintan McCutcheon. 4M. 1F*

Fourteen year old Junior Tully has come home from boarding school. He finds himself isolated from his primary school pals of some years ago. He is bored and confused. He is befriended by a local farmer, Pat, 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 for 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 demands sensitivity in playing and directing.

*Agent: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ ONE FOR THE ROAD

*By Harold Pinter. 2M. 1F. 1 Boy.*

This is an exercise in terror. Set in the interrogation room in some unnamed 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'.

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel.(01) 8427928*

## ■ PAST CARING

*By Frances O'Keeffe. 2M. 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 move 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.

Strong emotional drama giving plenty of scope for actors and a challenge for the director.

*Agent: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ 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 provide unusual and strong roles for both actors involved.

*Agent: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ 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 all the cast and a challenge for the director.

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel. (01) 8427928*

## ■ PORTRAIT OF A MADONNA

By Tennessee Williams. 4M. 2F.

This play is almost a blueprint for the author's celebrated drama *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!

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel. (01) 8427928*

## ■ 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 focussed 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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ RETARDED

*By Michael Lynch. 2M. 2F. 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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ RISKS TAKEN

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

This powerful two-hander deals with a young couple, Seán and Vera who are deeply in love, but Vera is refusing to take the final step to marry Seán. 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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ ROMAN FEVER

*By Hugh Leonard. 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 the same 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 actors and to a director who appreciates a clever, polished script.

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel. (01) 8427928*

## ■ ROZZY COMES HOME

*By Frances O'Keefe. 2M. 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 *Cork Arts Theatre One-Act Play Competition* in 1989.

*Agent: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

### ■ **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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

### ■ **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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*



## ■ 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 (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 centering 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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ THE ANGUISH AND THE ECSTASY

*By Max McGowan. 2M. 2F.*

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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ 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 layabout 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 also providing strong roles for all three actresses.

*Agent: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ 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 .

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel. (01) 8427928*

## ■ 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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

### ■ 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.

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel. (01) 8427928*

### ■ 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 and requires a firm directorial hand.

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel.(01) 8427928*

## ■ THE FREE RADICAL

*By Max Mc Gowan. 3M. 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 for production, this play won the writers award in the 1995 *Cork Arts Theatre One Act Play Competition*.

*Agent: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ 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.

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel.(01) 8427928*

## ■ 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.

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel.(01) 8427928*

## ■ 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 local organisations for meetings, whist drives, jumble sales etc. and by touring groups for plays or concerts. 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, 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.

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel. (01) 8427928*

## ■ THE OBITUARY SHOW

*By Steve Farr. 3M. 3F. Plus extras.*

By devoting one complete edition of its arts programme – The Obituary Show – through a discussion and assessment of his work, in studio in Virginia, the ‘enfant terrible’ of the poetry world who is also a film critic and author. She is joined by Michael, a dyslexic inhabitant of the chair of poetry in a north of England university. Both are there to speak of the enormous impact of Magenta’s genius on the literary world and to quote from his amazing poetic outpouring. 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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ THE PARTY

*By Derek O’Gorman. 1M. 1F.*

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 play offers two meaty parts for the actors involved.

*Agent: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ 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?

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.

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel.(01) 8427928*

## ■ 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.

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!

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel. (01) 8427928*

## ■ 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 '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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

### ■ **THREE MEN IN A PUB**

*By Frances O'Keefe. 3M. 1F. 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 phones 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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

### ■ **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.

A powerful vehicle for an experienced cast and a firm-handed producer.

*Agent: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*



## ■ 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 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, that Miss Gilbert has taken it all down in shorthand in her notebook and 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. *Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel. (01) 8427928*

## ■ VERY LIKE A WHALE

By Frances O’Keefe. 2M. 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: Donn McMullin. Tel. (021) 372777*

## ■ 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 the occupants are slumped, dejected and above all, non-communicative. Then the outrageous Rita Onions and her side-kick Dolly enter! Instantly all is changed as Rita refuses to be regimented or even conform. In no time at all the atmosphere is totally altered as Rita sets about breaking every rule and regulation! Some of her fellow patients are either shocked by her language or bemused by her behaviour. 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 strong comic roles should appeal to groups with talented female members – though the two male roles should also prove attractive – particularly that of the seemingly repressed husband, James! Be warned however, this play requires a strong, firm directorial hand!

*Samuel French agent: Mr Tom Mooney. Tel. (01) 8427928.*

## ■ 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 acting opportunities for all in the cast and also for incisive direction. A simple, composite set, reliant on good lighting adds to the play's dramatic attractions.

*Samuel French agent: Tom Mooney. Tel. (01) 8427928.*

# **PART 2**

## **Three One Act Plays**

*Commissioned by Macra na Feirme*

# HEALING THE DEAD

**A ONE ACT PLAY**

*by*

*Johnny Hanrahan*

*Commissioned by Macra na Feirme*

**AGENT:** *c/o Meridian Theatre Co., 11/12 Marlboro St, Cork*

## NOTES FROM THE WRITER

*This play was written for a simple staging. I would advise keeping the stage as bare as possible. A few items of furniture, a few well chosen props, a simple screen arrangement to suggest the house. A few expressive elements are all that is needed. If you have access to someone who knows about lighting I think you should be as ambitious as is practical for you. This play is about moods changing, blending over a period of time. Lighting could be used to great effect in signalling the changes. The gaps between the scenes are very important and thought should be given to the staging. Blackouts should not be used as the actors moving to take up their new positions is an important element in the overall action. I think whether they are treated in a kind of dreamlike way or in a livelier more functional fashion, a simple style should be maintained for them throughout.*

*While the themes of the play are simple and basic, they could also create melodrama if things are played too high. The characters are constrained, trapped in their family history. I think all the scenes will benefit from keeping a firm rein on the performers. The life of the play is created by the tension between the huge emotions felt by the characters and the mundane controlled social code they live by.*

### SETTING

*A comfortable farmhouse. The home of affluent, strong farming folk. The family are sitting up, keeping a vigil of sorts. A coffin stands at the back – an old lady lies dead in it.*

### CAST

PEARL: 32 - 38. A clever, angry woman who has nursed her aunt for years.

SADIE: 28 - 35. Her sister.

MICHAEL: 35 - 40. Her brother. A priest.

### ACTION

*The action takes place over one night. It takes the form of a series of very short scenes. A device must be used to show that time has elapsed between one scene and the next. Silence, waiting, personal reveries surround these small bursts of action.*

## SCENE I

*Sadie is sitting. She is drinking whiskey, sobbing quietly. Pearl is standing behind her, near coffin.*

PEARL: You know, there was a time when it was common at wakes to dance with the corpse. It was a mark of respect, I believe, in case the stiff felt left out lying there with everybody else carrying on around them. Arm wrestling, bucklepping, trials of strength, mad bastards caterwauling and dancing polkas all night while the family paid out for the neighbourly sport. And then the highlight, out steps the cause of our jollity, the life and soul resurrected for the céilí. *[Moving away]* Twice around the house and mind the dresser... Why are you crying, Sadie ?

SADIE: What?

PEARL: Why are you crying?

SADIE: Is that one of your questions?

PEARL: What?

SADIE: Is that one of your questions?

PEARL: What questions?

SADIE: Your questions that aren't questions at all.

PEARL: *[Impatient]* What?

SADIE: Isn't that just a subtle way of saying 'Sadie you're pissed?'

PEARL: You are pissed, Sadie.

SADIE: And you are so.... sober! *[Enter Michael]*

MICHAEL: Have you seen the moon? Come and see. It's filling the lake.

PEARL: *[Sings, crossing to door]* Oh moon of Alabama, we now must say goodbye. *[She stands at door with Michael]*

### PAUSE

SADIE: I'm crying because I'm sad.... if you must know, Pearl. I'm crying. I'm just crying.

MICHAEL: That's all right, Sadie. *[He turns to her]*

PEARL: *[Still looking out]* It's all right that you're sad, Sadie. It's normal, I believe.

SADIE: Normal.

PEARL: What I wonder is if it's all right that I feel.... exultant tonight. Gleeful. I feel a savage glee.... I feel like a satisfied killer.

MICHAEL: Don't Pearl....

PEARL: I've often felt that I could kill someone. It seems entirely possible. I imagine I would be relaxed.... and remorseless.

MICHAEL: Pearl!

PEARL: *[Turning]* I am glad that she is dead *[looking at coffin]* – I'm glad that you're dead. I wish I didn't feel that. It's clearly a bit weird.... a bit bats. But sure, I suppose I'm a bit bats in general, like.

MICHAEL: Far from it.

SADIE: You're just a bitch, Pearl. *[Slight pause]*

PEARL: I think I'll have a drink.

## SCENE II

MICHAEL: *[Gazing into coffin]* She looks so peaceful now.

SADIE: So young.

PEARL: Corpses are like that.

SADIE: And to think of all she suffered.

MICHAEL: She's at peace at last.

PEARL: Asleep in Jesus. *[Hands out drinks]* Or is it only Protestants who end up in that rather odd position?

### PAUSE

MICHAEL: *[Wondering what or whom to toast]* Well, here we are.

SADIE: I can't believe I'm so upset. I didn't feel anything earlier. I didn't even feel numb.... just normal.

MICHAEL: It takes a while to hit you.

SADIE: It's just when everybody went and we were left here together. Just the three of us. On our own.

MICHAEL: It's fifteen years since we sat here together.

- SADIE: The place doesn't seem empty without her. It's more than that. It's like you feel her absence is everywhere.
- PEARL: Like a black hole!
- MICHAEL: Pearl!
- PEARL: Anti-mass. A positive absence.
- SADIE: Is that what a black hole is?
- PEARL: Roughly.
- SADIE: Is that what the scientists call it?
- PEARL: Yes.
- SADIE: And what term do the scientists have for a fury that is so overwhelming that it drives out every ounce of tenderness and ease. And....
- PEARL: Love? Could that be it?
- SADIE: You're too angry, Pearl. You're too angry for your own good.
- PAUSE*
- PEARL: I know.

### SCENE III

- PEARL: I don't want it.
- MICHAEL: It's only right, Pearl.
- PEARL: I have no interest in it.
- SADIE: He's not asking you to pull mangles, you know.
- MICHAEL: The place is yours. And that's all there is to it.
- PEARL: No!
- SADIE: You don't have to get shit on your shoes.
- MICHAEL: I've asked Bartley to amend the deeds.
- PEARL: You shouldn't bother, Michael.
- MICHAEL: Anything else would be a travesty.
- PEARL: I'm not staying.
- MICHAEL: But it's yours by right.



PEARL: But....

SADIE: Oh for Gods sake, Pearl. Stop being such a pain. You've lived here for the last ten years. You've nursed her for five. Who the hell else should have the place if not you?

PEARL: I'm leaving, Sadie.

MICHAEL: That's not the point.... It must be yours to use as you see fit.

SADIE: Hock it and retire in style. That's what I'd do.

PEARL: Then you have it, Sadie.

SADIE: No thanks. I have an allergy to nature.

PEARL: It's a burden, Michael. It's nothing but a burden.

MICHAEL: It's your home.

PEARL: It's her home. I just live here.

SADIE: You know that's not true.

## SCENE IV

*Michael is reading*

My dearest Michael, Thank you for your letter. Those drug addicts sound terrible altogether. It's heroic work you're doing. I don't know how you stand it. My pains are not as bad today, I am able to sit up. I'm sure that Doctor Kelly is giving me morphine now though he says he's not. Often these days, I sleep for ten or twelve hours. Pearl wakes me to eat but I eat nothing. I am full all the time these days of the idea that you and your sisters have been told certain things that are not entirely true and that I should not go to my grave without clearing them up. It may cause you distress to know the full facts of your parents life together but I feel that I have to set the record straight now that my time is coming so soon. You have always been told that your mother died in a tragic accident and that you were sent back here to me be be cared for while your father earned his living in England. That story is only half true. Your mother and father were always

touring with that band. They lived a hectic, wild kind of a life rushing here there and everywhere there were dances for him to play at. Your mother could not bear to be away from him for any time at all. She was a passionate woman and her passion for him could be frightening to watch. It worked its way right through her. She left the three of you here for a summer once so that she could tour the North of England with him. Times were hard then and a life on the road was no life for young children. But then your father injured his hand and couldn't play for nearly a year. He couldn't work. So, they were desperate for money living in some grimy digs in Preston and your mother wrote to me asking me to rear you until things got better. Things never got better. Your father was a very attractive man and things had happened over the years that could have ended other marriages. But now it seems that he began to disregard his marital duties completely. It was the landlady of some bar he frequented apparently. Your mother still clung to him but in her despair it seems she started drinking heavily. She was killed by a bus when she fell in front of its wheels. Your father never contacted me again. He simply disappeared.

## SCENE V

*Pearl is pacing – Michael is at window – Sadie is sitting*

PEARL: Being dead is no drawback. You can rule from beyond the grave. You can stretch out your dead hands and grab them all by the throat. The ones who presume to continue without you.

SADIE: Blah blah fucking blah.

PEARL: It's all a matter of will-power. Will-power and evil intelligence.

MICHAEL: Perhaps she really wanted to make a clean breast of things.

PEARL: A clean breast.

MICHAEL: Have you considered that possibility?

PEARL: Yes. For about a milli-second. But I know her, I know her form. This letter, this masterpiece of veiled cruelty is the written version of those arched eyebrows, those pursed lips that conveyed infinitely subtle variations on her life-long theme – fastidious disapproval. Too much salt in the soup, too much sugar in the tea. The pillows are too high, too low, too blue, too white, too whatever you're havin' yourself. You don't say what's wrong. You don't explain the problem so that somebody can deal with it. Oh no, you hoard your grievances, you examine them, you deploy them expertly, you graft them so that they mutate into other bigger better grievances. And whatever you say, you say nothing.

SADIE: *[In northern accent]* Whatever you say – say nothin'.

PEARL: You're a virtuoso, a maestro of silent negativity. You don't have to speak. You just saturate the whole atmosphere with your contempt. Your rage at the world is evident in every tiny gesture. And nothing anyone can do is ever enough. Nothing is ever enough. You cannot be satisfied.

SADIE: Is this a self-portrait, Pearl?

PEARL: And when you have a real grievance such as that you're dying and everybody else isn't – what do you do? You write a letter, measured, mature, apparently caring which in fact is designed to do one thing – and that is cause emotional devastation. Your mother was a floosie, your father was a bum. He screwed anything that moved, she ended up screwing a bottle of gin.

MICHAEL: Stop it, Pearl. Stop.

PEARL: And the stupid bitch fell under a bus one night after closing time.

MICHAEL: Pearl. Please.

PEARL: I think it's best that you know that.

SCENE VI

*Sadie and Pearl [both drinking]*

SADIE: I was seeing an analyst for a while last year. Lots of chat. Lots of writing down dreams. It was interesting. Only then I started having erotic dreams about him. Quite common says he, all professional like. A useful phase of development. Only it didn't last long. I had him in bed inside a fortnight. A dream come true. *[They laugh]* I freaked the bugger out completely.

PEARL: Who's the latest?

SADIE: Oh, it's kind of multiple choice.

PEARL: That sounds strenuous.

SADIE: Ah sure, I pace myself. I go swimming on Mondays and Thursdays.

PEARL: Nobody special as they say in the social columns.

SADIE: No. Never. There's never anybody special. Or at least there hasn't been yet.

PAUSE

PEARL: I'm having an affair with Tom Jordan.

SADIE: What?

PEARL: Yea. I know. It's pathetic. It's pure recreation. He likes doing it. The same way he likes getting chips. Something to do after the pub. Fill the yawning gap between bar stool and bed.

SADIE: And you?

PEARL: I'm a mystery to myself.

SADIE: Do you care about him?

PEARL: I like the sex.

SADIE: But....

PEARL: I don't give a damn about him.

SADIE: Then why....

PEARL: As I say.... I'm a mystery to myself. I know every imaginable argument against doing what I'm doing. He's got kids. I like his wife.... much more than I like him. He's a philanderer. There's no possibility of a relationship. Lots of people could get hurt for no good reason. He's smelly.... I still do it.

SADIE: You should stop.

PEARL: That's true.

SADIE: Will you?

PEARL: I don't know.

## SCENE VII

*Pearl and Michael are sitting, Sadie is reading.*

Dear Sadie,

It is strange to be writing you a letter. I was never one for correspondence with you or with anyone else for that matter. In your case I always felt that the restless life you chose took up all your attention and that any news from this quiet place would be of no interest to you over there in London. But now, as I am coming to the end it is exactly because you are living far from this family's home in a place where nobody really knows you that I am writing you this letter. It is meant as a kind of gift to you and I hope you will take it that way.

You know me and this place as quiet and orderly. You always found things too quiet and too orderly here. Even as a young girl you were fighting a kind of a war in this house. You wanted more gaiety, more laughter than I was ever able to provide and in this you are like your mother and, indeed, I'm sure it will surprise you to know, like me when I was young. Gaiety was normal here when we were girls. Not a giddy, frivolous kind of gaiety but a feeling, a joyful feeling that grew from the love between our parents and the life they made here from that love. This was a wonderful home and as children we never knew the kind of anger and resentment that were such a part of your childhood. It seemed that the house and the land were part of us, that we were a part of them and when we were girls we ran wild through the place. We knew the fields and the hedges and ditches as animals know them. I can still picture the fields in those days. Sometimes the fields

are clearer and more real in my memory that the land I can see from my bedroom window. We were at home in this place. At home in every sense. A small memory I want to leave with you in your city. For some reason it keeps pressing to the surface of my mind. It is of one summer night when your mother and I were twelve or thirteen. We were sitting up late by the open window of our bedroom. We slept in those days in what is now Pearl's room and as you may remember the window of that room looks out onto the lake. It was hot, so hot that night. And under the clear heavens the lake was shining like a mirror. We had been sitting at our open window a long time when suddenly we heard the sound of wing-beats right above the house. Three swans came sailing over the house right above our heads and glided down directly in front of us to land in the middle of the lake. I don't remember speaking. I don't remember what I thought either. All I remember is running over the grass, chasing your mother in her white nightclothes. She ran ahead of me like a small ghost. The grass felt springy under my feet and then there were stones under my feet and we were diving off the rock and swimming far out into the lake. We swam towards the swans but they were far out on the water. So we swam in circles, and for whole minutes underwater and then we lay on our backs gazing up at the wisps of cloud crossing what we felt was our sky. We swam and played in the water that night for what seemed like an eternity.

## **SCENE VIII**

PEARL: What is she doing?

MICHAEL: I think she's trying to say she's sorry.

PEARL: Do you think it happened?

MICHAEL: What?

PEARL: That incident. That night. The mystical swim.

- SADIE: It happened.  
PEARL: How do you know?  
SADIE: I just know.  
PEARL: But how?  
SADIE: I just do.

*PAUSE*

- MICHAEL: I don't think she could have made it up if she'd wanted to.  
PEARL: A gift. She calls it a gift.  
SADIE: It is a gift.  
PEARL: But it's so kitch. It's so....  
SADIE: It's a gift. It makes me feel better.  
PEARL: What? How could it possibly make you feel better?  
SADIE: I don't know. It just does. Isn't that enough?

*PAUSE*

*[Pearl is at a loss]*

- MICHAEL: She was trying to communicate. It seems she felt compelled to say something, to set the record straight in some way.  
PEARL: I wish I could believe that.  
MICHAEL: It can't have been easy for her.  
SADIE: I should have come back when she was diagnosed. I should have known it would be quick in the end.  
PEARL: Oh Jesus!  
SADIE: I mean so much was unsaid. So much that can never be said now.  
PEARL: It wouldn't have happened.  
SADIE: What?  
PEARL: Real talk. It wouldn't have happened. It couldn't have happened. She wouldn't have allowed it.  
SADIE: I wish I had seen her.  
PEARL: You saw her Michael. You saw her every week – twice a week towards the end. Did she ever speak one word to you that was spontaneous, that was unguarded?  
MICHAEL: Well....  
PEARL: Did she? One word that came from the heart. *[Michael shrugs]*  
No she didn't. Any more that she did to me.

SADIE: I dunno.

PEARL: How many times did I think she might say something? How many times did I see the pain and the fear in her eyes as I washed her or raised her on her pillows? How many times did I want to say I feel for you? I can imagine what you're suffering. But I had to be careful. I had to protect myself from that pride and that casual contempt. Touch me not. Touch me not. Do not presume to know me.

SADIE: Did she write you a letter?

PEARL: No.

SADIE: No?

PEARL: Well there's something. An envelope in her room. I haven't really looked.

SADIE: She wrote you a letter and you haven't even opened it!

PEARL: It won't do any good. *[Pause]* There's nothing she can say. There's nothing anyone can say. It will never be all right.  
*[Sadie gets up and walks out]*

## SCENE IX

*Michael and Pearl sit*

MICHAEL: I wonder if there are many priests who don't believe in God.... I wonder if there are many priests who go on and on being priests for decades, all their lives, without the slightest belief in the creed they preach.

PEARL: Plenty, I'd say.

MICHAEL: These days all we ever hear about is sex. I mean if it isn't paedophilia, it's prostitution. Sex and the bottle, the demons assailing the clergy, you know.  
At one point I began to wonder if there was something wrong



with me. Was I some sort of natural eunuch or something that I wasn't chasing after widows or altar boys or anything? Celibacy doesn't bother me. It's not an issue. Can you believe that?

PEARL: Yes.

MICHAEL: I seem to be consumed by other passions altogether. I mean instead of lying awake at night lusting after the flesh I'm there yearning for a certain faith. It's real torment, Pearl, as real as physical craving. It consumes me or at least it did until lately.... It's so old fashioned. I'm so old fashioned. I sound like some medieval monk or something when I'm like this.

PEARL: You're all right.

MICHAEL: I'm naive, you see. My emotions are naive. They seem to come from another time. I believe in service. I want to serve the cause of justice and good. I want to serve God through serving the afflicted. I believe that I must do this. I want it with my whole being. It is my deepest wish.

PEARL: You're lucky.

MICHAEL: Lucky?

PEARL: To know your deepest wish.

MICHAEL: Maybe, or maybe I'm just an innocent at large.

PEARL: Do you really believe that?

MICHAEL: No.

PEARL: Then what are you going on about?

MICHAEL: I don't know. I just don't want to end up where I started. I want to accomplish something. I want my life to mean something.

PEARL: Yeah. Right.

MICHAEL: No. I do.

PEARL: And I want to be an astronaut.

MICHAEL: And one morning last year I woke up and said out loud, I don't believe in any of it and then I had to get up and say Mass.  
*[Enter Sadie carrying her clothes – she is soaking from her swim]*

**SCENE X**

*All drinking, Sadie wrapped in a blanket.*

SADIE: I can't let it go. I need it to be here. I need to know it's here.

MICHAEL: As long as you're not.

SADIE: What can I do? I'm an emigrant. An emigrant. Unhappy at home and heartbroken anywhere else.

MICHAEL: We have to make a decision about this. The will clearly states that we must act by mutual agreement. Sell it, keep it, all live here, one live here whatever we want as long as we all agree to do something.

PEARL: The trouble is "we" don't want to do anything.

SADIE: I just want it to be here.

MICHAEL: But you know that if we keep it then at least one of us has to live here. That's in the will too.

SADIE: Well, that can't be me. I'd go mad here inside a week.

MICHAEL: That leaves Pearl or me. Have you any suggestions as to which of us should live here?

SADIE: I have no suggestions. I just have feelings.

MICHAEL: Feelings!

SADIE: Yes. I love this place.... I do. Oh, I know I'm never here that – I can't be here really. But that doesn't stop me loving it. It's precious to me.

MICHAEL: It's precious to all of us.

SADIE: You just think I'm a bit pissed. A bit tired and emotional. Stupid Sadie with her sloppy sentimentality goes diving in the lake. Just sloppy sentimentality, isn't that right Pearl?

PEARL: No.

SADIE: But it isn't just that. It's like the place, the place is a necessity. It's necessary to carry it inside you.

MICHAEL: A fantasy place.

SADIE: No it's not a fantasy. It's real. A real place that's printed on your mind. It's the place you need to have inside you. It helps you to hold on.

MICHAEL: It just makes me feel helpless. Have you any idea how helpless a man like me feels when he looks around him in a place like this? Those fields, those animals. They are all quite foreign to me. I can't work. I can't make those fields grow, I can not tend to those animals. I'm a useless poor crathur and nothing makes that clearer to me than being here. I see fellas I went to school with clattering by on machines bigger than houses. Have you ever noticed how casual they are, how easy they are with all that raw power? They frighten me. They seem like giants up there on those monstrous machines.

PEARL: I imagine myself old here. I imagine that as a comfortable phase of life. I'll grow silent, silent and mad in the decades of solitude here. I'll have a role then. There's old Pearl they'll say. Harmless, I believe, but I wouldn't trust her all the same. The children will have me to terrify themselves with. I'll be a crazy old lady. Whereas now I'm just a crazy young lady and craziness doesn't seem to go quite so well with youth. I'll be *Wuthering Heights* material or Miss Havisham in her dotage. I'll be an old bat in a venerable tradition.

MICHAEL: It's not plausible, is it?

PEARL: Pearl, the old bat?

MICHAEL: No. No. You'll be a perfect old bat.... No, there's no plausible life for any of us here, is there? There's no way we can really imagine ourselves passing our time away here.

SADIE: Can you imagine a plausible life without it?

MICHAEL: I can't imagine a plausible life in any shape or form.

PEARL: My problem exactly.

## SCENE XI

*Sadie reading Pearl's letter to the other two.*

I am writing you a letter. You left my room five minutes ago and still I am writing you a letter. I have no wish to do this, but I feel compelled, I have to write down what I know I will never say to you. If I could say anything it would be very short and simple and you would understand me clearly and completely. We would know each other then without any doubt. But that can never happen. I am as I am and you must have it so. We keep our small world upright by sheer force of will, by sticking to our roles. We live from our pride and our silence. They are the poisons that sustain us both.

And yet I sometimes think that there is nothing to be spoken that is not already understood. When you move around this room, when you clean and settle things I can read your intentions as clearly as can be. It's not that you're predictable in the normal way. You seem to take pleasure in not having a routine. But I know, I always know what you will do. Your gestures, your thoughts seem my own. Once you set the pattern – it's your mood that sets the pattern and I can read your moods like a book – Once you set the pattern I can see it all unfolding in my mind before it really does.

We are the same stuff, Pearl. We are made of the same stuff. I know you know this and that it is the cause of so much of the pain I can sense in you. But I say it now so that when I am gone you will not evade it. It's only when you recognise how alike we are that you can lay me to rest in your world.

I don't really know why I'm saying these things to you now. I learned long ago that it is very hard indeed to know really why you do anything. In my experience the less said and done the less the pain and damage. But now these days perhaps because of my illness, certainly because I'm dying I feel I have to try and explain some things to you and the others that I hardly understand myself. I often wonder still why I was so hard on you all as children, why my love for you took the stern and rigid form it did. I loved you well enough, Pearl. I loved you

all as much as it was possible for me to love. I cannot imagine loving any man woman or child more than you. But I tried to stop myself from loving you completely. As I say, it is impossible to know why we do what we do. In the front of my mind was the pride of the family, the honour of the family. I swore when I realised that I would be your mother that every act of mine would help you to live honest, upstanding lives. Your mother and father were like wild children. The world was a playground for them, a playground they never knew how to leave. They did what they wanted, free as the breeze. Your mother's life ended in disgraceful failure. Your father was a disgraceful failure in every thing to do with his wife and family. Only I was left to try and carry on the family, to keep us alive in this place, the place we've lived from always. I was the sensible one, the one who picked up the pieces. I kept things going. That was my role and I did the best I could with it. But I want you to know that it was not natural to me. I had an honourable life thrust upon me. Every twist and turn of events made that route more inevitable for me.

I lost the secret of my joy. That was my sin, Pearl. I had started to die before any of you were born. I think if your father had walked in the door at any time, any time at all I'd have had no choice but to go with him. But he wanted nothing of me from the moment he met your mother. We were together six months when that happened and my death began on that day. I hope I did not punish you all for my old pain. I know I did but I still hope I didn't.

You must find the secret of your joy, Pearl. Without it you cannot live.  
*[Pearl is weeping quietly]*

## SCENE XII

*The sisters sit wrapped in Sadie's blanket.*

PEARL: It's nearly bright

SADIE: [*Stroking Pearls hair*] I haven't seen the dawn for ages.

PEARL: [*Sings*] Oh moon of Alabama, we now must say goodbye  
[*hums another line*]

PEARL

& SADIE: [*Sing*] – We must have whiskey, Oh you know why.

PEARL: [*Sings*] – We must have camomile tea, or we may die.

SADIE: Doesn't have the same ring to it, somehow.

PEARL: No.

SADIE: Michael! Where's the tay, a bhuachaill.

MICHAEL: [*Off*] Fan nóiméad! Tá sé ag teacht.

PEARL: Tíocfaidh ár té. [*Pause*] What'll you do with the money?

SADIE: I dunno. Something useless, I hope. Something that has no lasting effect.

PEARL: This place is worth over a million, you know.

SADIE: My ability to part with money foolishly is a thing of wonder, you should know that.

PEARL: Yes. I know that. It's your most endearing quality.

SADIE: Is that an insult?

PEARL: If you like! [*Pause*]

SADIE: Do I look as bad as you?

PEARL: You look completely fucked.

SADIE: Yeah. But do I look as bad as you?

PEARL: Impossible. [*Pause*] You know, you're right.

SADIE: What?

PEARL: The letters.

SADIE: What?

PEARL: The letters make me feel better.

SADIE: They're her gift. She said it.

PEARL: I feel relieved.

SADIE: That's right.

- PEARL: Some burden is lifted, and it's not just her. Not just a sick woman off my back.
- SADIE: It's a feeling of pressure. A tightness. All around here [*her skull*] and here [*her throat*]. I've had it since the moment I heard she was dead. But the pressure wasn't to do with her death. It was because I was coming back here. Just thinking about it starts it off and then it gets stronger and stronger. By the time I walk in the door it's like hoops of steel tightening around me. I suppose it's panic. Panic in slow motion – I've had it every time I've come back here. For decades.
- PEARL: It's gone. The weight isn't bearing down now. I feel.... full of air.
- SADIE: That's how it was in the lake. I think it's called freedom.
- PEARL: I've heard of that. They often mention it in books.
- SADIE: It's just this vast feeling.... of relief.
- PEARL: You know I never believed that I would leave here, Sadie. Before tonight that option just didn't seem real to me.
- SADIE: But you kept saying you were.
- PEARL: I said it because I didn't know what else to say. I said it because I hoped saying it might somehow make it happen.
- SADIE: It did.
- PEARL: No. She has allowed it. She's allowing me to go.
- SADIE: Pearl!
- PEARL: Sadie, I'm older than our mother ever was. Do you realise that?
- SADIE: I'm the age she was when she died.
- PEARL: She was hardly adult. She was still a girl more or less. And our father, Michael is older than he was....
- SADIE: The sexy old devil with the tenor sax.
- PEARL: He could still be alive, you know. She says he simply disappeared. She never knew what became of him.
- SADIE: He's dead, Pearl. To us he's well and truly dead.
- PEARL: [*Pause*] That's true.... Just these young people. Driven wild by rock and roll. Burnt out by the sheer excitement of it all.... Our parents.
- SADIE: Mad whoors the two of them by the sounds of things.

PEARL: Just these people. Real people in a real time.

SADIE: I think I preferred them with their warts removed.

PEARL: Oh no. It's the warts I love. It's the warts that set me free.

*[Enter Michael with tea and toast]*

MICHAEL: Now, who are the lucky girls?

SADIE: Oh Jaysus. I'd ate the lamb o' God. *[They squat on the floor]*

MICHAEL: I hope this is all right now.

PEARL: *[Pouring tea]* What's good enough for Mick....

PEARL

& SADIE: Is good enough for me.

MICHAEL: You know, I've been thinking. Giving it all away is a mug's game.

PEARL: A three year old child could have told you that.

MICHAEL: No. No. Not because I should keep it for myself. I'm a priest in a fat parish, for God's sake. I've got pots of cash. No. It's because I can make that money work long-term. A big hand-out is a lazy gesture. If I invest it properly I can run a whole long-term re-habilitation programme.

PEARL: You're such a fucking eejit, Michael.

MICHAEL: I know. I know.

PEARL: Is that why I love you?

MICHAEL: *[Holding up jams]* Three kinds of jam. *[Pause]*

SADIE: It will kind of balance things out anyway.

MICHAEL: What?

SADIE: I'm going to waste every penny. I'm going to piss it all away as quick as ever I can.

MICHAEL: What about you, Pearl?

PEARL: I dunno. Put it in the bank or something. Go back to college. Go on a holiday. Buy a man. I couldn't care less to be honest....

MICHAEL: You could come and be my housekeeper, Pearl.

PEARL: Great idea.... I'll do that once I finish being an astronaut.

*[They eat and drink]*



### SCENE XIII

*The three stand near the coffin*

PEARL: It's eight o'clock. We'd better get dressed.

SADIE: [*Looking in coffin*] Goodbye, Sally. Thanks for the lake.

PEARL: Do we.... [*to Michael*] Should we say something?

MICHAEL: What?

PEARL: A prayer or something. Something the three of us....

MICHAEL: I don't pray, Pearl.

SADIE: But there must be something.... something we can say.

MICHAEL: I don't know.

SADIE: Something we three can do....

MICHAEL: We can get on with it. Just get on with things. That's all we can do.

PEARL: [*Picking up book*] Here's what we can do...! How many times did she read it to us? How many times did she live it?  
[*They stand around as if in prayer*]

PEARL: [*Reading*]

Hold your noise cried a terrible voice, as a man started up  
from among the graves at the side of the church porch.  
Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat. A fearful  
man, all in coarse grey.

MICHAEL: With a great iron on his leg.

PEARL &

MICHAEL: A man with no hat and with brown shoes and with an old rag  
tied round his head.

ALL: A man who had been soaked in water and smothered in mud  
and lamed by stones and cut by flints and torn by briars.

MICHAEL

& SADIE: [*As Pearl gazes at them*] Who limped and shivered and glared  
and growled and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized  
me by the chin.

PEARL: Oh! Don't cut my throat, Sir. I pleaded in terror pray don't do  
it, Sir.

*Healing the Dead*

ALL: Tell us your name said the man. Quick! Pip, Sir. Once more,  
said the man staring at me. Give it mouth. Pip! Pip! Sir.

*[The voices fade as do the lights]*

# ONE MAN DOWN

**A ONE ACT PLAY**

*by*

*Loughlin Deegan*

*Commissioned by Macra na Feirme*

**AGENT:** *The Red Hall Agency, 7 Goodge Place, London  
W1P 1FL. Tel. 0171 6370 706*

## **CAST**

- SUSAN: Early thirties  
TOMMY: Early twenties.  
MURPH: Early twenties.  
MARY: Early twenties. Murph's girlfriend.  
PETE: Early thirties. Susan's husband.

## **SCENE I**

*Lights are dimmed on the main street of a small town. Two shop fronts are in view: The Golden Grill and O'Loughlin's Lounge. The footpath (which is obviously raised slightly and constitutes the main playing area) leads onto the road. In front of the two buildings a telegraph pole rises from the edge of the footpath. The lights rise and Susan appears in the door to O'Loughlin's, which is open. She works in the pub and is wearing the typical black skirt and white shirt. She leans against the side of the door, silently observing the street. She slowly takes a packet of cigarettes from her pocket and lights one. After a significant pause she speaks to somebody across the street.*

- SUSAN: How are you now? Fine, fine. *[Looking up at the sky]* It is, isn't it? A lovely evening alright. *[Slight pause]* Any word on the match yet? No, no I haven't heard either. We'll know soon enough I suppose. I've never seen the town so quiet, have you? The whole street must be over. *[Another pause.]* There was alright. There was great excitement alright. We were run off our feet inside, you'd swear they'd never gotten to a county final before. Do you think they have any chance at all? Sure I'm the same, I'm not the one to be asking either. Sixteen years! It's not, is it? Since they won a county title! Well, I suppose it must be when you think about it. *[She thinks]* You know I think

you're right. It must be. God, sixteen years! Is it any wonder they get excited so? Although it's not as if they don't reach the final often enough. They'll be back any minute, again, with their tails between their legs. What? I suppose you're right. We shouldn't give up hope yet. We'll know soon enough anyway. Yeah, yeah. Okay so. See you now, see you then. Bye. Bye.

*She stands motionless again, watching the person leave and observing the quiet street once more. She continues smoking. After a few moments the lights fade to blackout.*

## SCENE II

*The lights come back up on Tommy and Murph, who are sitting together on the side of the pavement outside O'Loughlin's. They are drinking pints. It is late in the evening, the door to O'Loughlin's is open and the lights are on inside. There is music and chatter spilling out onto the street.*

TOMMY: We shouldn't be drinking at all. You know that as well as I do.

MURPH: Yeah, yeah.

TOMMY: We'd be dead if O'Connor caught us.

MURPH: Ah sure it's only the one.

TOMMY: One is too many already. You don't drink before a big match, before any match. We should know that without a trainer having to tell us.

MURPH: I know, I know.

TOMMY: It's not right though. O'Connor has put a lot of work in for this. We all have. This is stupid, this is.

MURPH: It's only one pint to calm the nerves Tommy. To make us sleep, remember? No matter what O'Connor says I wouldn't get a wink tonight thinking about the morning.

TOMMY: Yeah, but still, it's not on. Years ago they used to give up the

drink months before a....

MURPH: Listen Tommy, if you don't want the pint don't drink the fucking thing. I can't enjoy the one I'm having the way you're going on. Take it easy would you? You're getting all worked up again.

TOMMY: I am not getting worked up.

MURPH: I didn't mean....

TOMMY: I'm not getting worked up. Jesus Murph, every time I open my mouth now, people think I'm going crazy.

MURPH: I know. I didn't mean it like that Tommy. Honestly I didn't. Honestly.

*Tommy says nothing.*

Honestly.

TOMMY: Okay, okay, forget it so. There's a lot of people depending on us tomorrow, that's all I meant. The whole town is depending on us to win this match. They're all behind us.

MURPH: They are.

TOMMY: There's great support in this town when it comes down to it.

MURPH: There is, I know that. \*

TOMMY: We let them down year after year, but they come up trumps every time. Fair play to them. There's great spirit in this town. No matter what they say.

MURPH: You're right there.

TOMMY: I love this town Murph, you know that, don't you?

MURPH: *[Resigned again]* I do. I do.

*He turns away from Tommy, he has heard him like this too many times before. Tommy stands up and moves into the street.*

TOMMY: Like the way the Americans love their country I suppose or the way some people love their children, you know. Like I can feel it, in here. *[He thumps his chest]*.

MURPH: Ah Jesus, don't start again.

TOMMY: *[Smiling – he is used to Murph getting annoyed with him]*

What? What? I can, I can feel it, always, that I belong here. I can close my eyes and concentrate and I can feel it in my breathing. You don't believe in the weight of a place Murph, do

you? The pull. The knowing where you belong.

MURPH: Ah jaysus lad.

TOMMY: Recognising people's faces, the colour, or an accent, you know. Driving home at night without even having to think of the way. The shape of the place Murph. That's what's special about here, that's what it is.

MURPH: You're bullshitting now, you know that don't you?

TOMMY: [*Enjoying himself now*] "Tommy talk" again is it?

MURPH: Yeah it is. "Tommy talk!"

TOMMY: So what? What's wrong with talk? It's only words. Air! I have this place in my blood, Murph. I can feel the pressure of it against my eardrums, like the weather. [*He holds up his arms*] In here, you know.

MURPH: Oh right, I see. In your arms as well is it?

TOMMY: In my veins. Against my chest. I can feel it. You think I'm full of it, don't you? But I do, I love this town. I could be anywhere else in the world and I'd want to be here. Anywhere, you name it, and I'd be thinking of this street, that pub [*pointing to O'Loughlin's*] and the craic, and who was out and what was being said and....

MURPH: Okay, okay, you love it. Jesus!

TOMMY: [*Getting more serious now*] No, no, you don't understand you see, you've never been away. When I was up in Dublin, up in that bloody college, every waking moment I wanted to be back here, where things were easy you know, where I could feel it again.

MURPH: You got depressed, that's all.

TOMMY: I didn't get depressed, Murph. I didn't get depressed. Fuck that. It's too easy for them to say that. I was unhappy, that's all. I hated the place. There's nothing wrong with that. [*He is silent for a moment*]

I used to lie in bed at night, in that flat. A sick stomach on me, lying in the cold and damp with those dirty sheets at my feet.... and all I could think about was here, this place. Wanting to be here, desperately. I'd be out in the bar with all my class and

they'd be drinking, off there heads Murph, really off their heads.... and all I could do was sit there in a corner on my own, looking at them, panicking you know and wondering how they were doing it, how they were getting on with it, when all I wanted to do was to go home, to be at home.

MURPH: I know, Tommy, I know. It was tough. But sure you're home now, aren't you. You're home now.

*[Tommy looks at him for a moment]*

TOMMY: Yeah, I am. *[He smiles at him]* I'm home now.

*[He sits back down on the pavement again. They are silent briefly]*

I have to win this match tomorrow Murph.

MURPH: We all do Tommy.

TOMMY: No it's different for me Murph. It's different. I have to win it. I have to. My father was on the county team, you know?

MURPH: *[Knows what's coming]* Yes. Yes, I know.

TOMMY: He was the best player this town ever saw.

MURPH: Yeah, I know.

TOMMY: That's not bullshit. Ask anyone. He won four county finals for this town. Four! In centre forward he was, as well. Like me. Four county finals!

MURPH: Yes Tommy but....

TOMMY: I know, I know. He's dead now, and I'm not him and I don't have to prove myself to anybody tomorrow except myself, and all that. I've heard all that. But.... *[He pauses briefly, taking a drink from his pint]* there are marks on the ceiling of that shop over there. Did you know that? Did I show them to you? *[He rubs the top of his index finger]* Little red dots, well orangey now, faded, all over the white ceiling. All over it. Little orange dots. Did I tell you?

*[Murph sits back down again, he has heard this before]*

Every evening at six o'clock they would all arrive, the whole team. Just as my father was shutting up the shop, in they would come. Johnny Darcy, Peter Munroe.... I remember them all. I was only three or four but I still remember them. For hours



they would be at it, dipping their fingers in the blood from the meat and jumping, competing to see who could touch the ceiling. One at a time, in turns. They'd know if they had reached it by the little red dots they'd leave behind. A tiny red dot. Orange now. Sixteen feet high that ceiling is. Sixteen feet! That's how fit they were. Sixteen feet!

MURPH: But we've trained hard as well, we've trained as hard as we possibly could.

TOMMY: No, no. Not hard enough. We'll never train as hard as they did, never. We can't, we're different, we're.... I've never reached it once you know, not once. Have you any idea how many times I've tried, how many times I've jumped at that fucking ceiling.

MURPH: Tommy....

TOMMY: Just one dot, that's all I want. One bright red drop of blood burning away amongst all those orange ones.

*[They are silent momentarily. Murph is worried about Tommy, but he just stands there watching him as Tommy dips his index finger into his pint and stands up]*

MURPH: With O'Connor Tommy. We couldn't be fitter.

TOMMY: We could you know. We could. We've let them all down.

*[Tommy is hardly listening to Murph now. He takes a few steps backwards up the street]*

Pub boys, that's all we are.

*[He stops and stares down the street. After a few moments he runs down the street, jumping into the air and reaching for the sky with his finger, shouting as he does so]*

Pub boys!

BLACKOUT.

### SCENE III

*Mary, wearing a navy jacket, enters along the pavement from stage left. She hurries along the path with her head down, determined.*

MARY: *[Looking up briefly]* Oh yeah, hello Mrs Myers. How are you?  
*[Slight pause]* Good, good, I'm fine thanks.

*[She almost bumps into Susan, who is coming out of O'Loughlins]*

SUSAN: Jesus Mary, what kept you? I thought you'd never get back.

MARY: Sorry, sorry I....

SUSAN: *[Across the street]* Oh how are you Mrs Myers? I didn't see you there. *[She leads Mary up the street away from her]* It is yes, it is. Lovely isn't it? *[To Mary]* Nosy bitch.

MARY: Susan!

SUSAN: What? Shut up, she is. Well anyway?

MARY: Well what?

SUSAN: The match of course, did we win or what?

MARY: Oh God, the match.

SUSAN: Jesus!

MARY: Sorry. Sorry. They didn't play well at all, they....

SUSAN: Mary!

MARY: Sorry, I'm sorry. No, no, we didn't. We lost. By a goal and three points.

SUSAN: A goal and three points!

MARY: Yeah. It was awful.

SUSAN: Ah for Jesus sake, what are they like? And all the shite I've had to listen to.

MARY: They stopped off in the Cocks for a few pints. I came straight back.

SUSAN: Drowning their sorrows no doubt – again!

MARY: They're devastated. They were a man down.

SUSAN: What?

MARY: Well not really. I mean young Cullen had to move up for.... Tommy.

SUSAN: Tommy?

MARY: Yeah, Tommy. He never showed up. There's been no sign of him all day. Nobody knows where he got to. People were saying that it might be his.... he.... He never showed up anyway.  
*[She stops. Susan takes a packet of cigarettes out of her pocket and lights up]*

SUSAN: *[Thinking]* Oh God.

MARY: Yeah well, I know. He'll never live it down, will he?

SUSAN: No, no he won't.  
*[She is obviously distracted. She holds out the cigarettes to Mary]*

Fag?

MARY: No thanks, I've given them up.

SUSAN: Oh yeah, yeah so you have.  
*[They both stand silent for a moment]*

MARY: Do you have any idea where he might be Susan?

SUSAN: What? Me? Of course I don't? What makes you say that?

MARY: Nothing, I....

SUSAN: *[Looking around the street]* Jesus Mary!

MARY: I know, I know. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to.... I'm sorry.

SUSAN: I don't have a clue where Tommy Doyle gets himself to. It has absolutely nothing to do with me. I'm a married woman Mary, I don't know what Pete would have to say about that.

MARY: Yes, yes, I'm sorry.

SUSAN: You'd want to be.  
*[They stand silent again]*

MARY: I'm sorry.

SUSAN: Okay, okay, leave it.

BLACKOUT.

## SCENE IV

*Tommy is now on his own on the stage. He finishes what remains of his pint in one gulp, and leaves the empty glass by the pole. He walks out onto the road, and stands staring up the street for a few moments as Pete enters stage right.*

PETE: Ah Jaysus Tommy.

TOMMY: Pete.

PETE: How are you doing? Not drinking I hope?

TOMMY: What? Drinking? No. No, we're....

PETE: No, of course not. It wouldn't be on now would it? Not tonight of all nights. There's a great buzz around town isn't there? Fitz's below is jammed. You couldn't get a pint if you were in there all night.

TOMMY: Yeah?

PETE: Yeah. There's great support around all the same isn't there?

TOMMY: There is, there is.

PETE: This was always a great town for supporting the team.

TOMMY: It was. Yeah.

PETE: You can say that again. Will we win it do you think? The fucking thing. How many years is it now?

TOMMY: Sixteen.

PETE: Sixteen! That's right. Jaysus but that's woeful isn't it? Sixteen years. Sure that's right, your ole lad was on the team then, wasn't he?

TOMMY: Yeah he was.

PETE: Centre forward wasn't he? The same as yourself.

TOMMY: Yeah, yeah. Centre forward.

PETE: Now he was some hurler. Your Father was some hurler. You'll never fill his boots lad.

TOMMY: No, no. I know that.

PETE: As good as you are, you little bollocks, you'll never be the hurler your father was.

TOMMY: No, no I won't.

*[They are silent for a moment. Awkward in each others company]*

PETE: We've a good team now all the same. Wouldn't you think? The best in years. We'll win it alright I think. This year we'll win the fucking thing alright.

TOMMY: We will, we will.

PETE: And we'll be counting on you tomorrow as well.

TOMMY: Well.

PETE: We will too. In centre forward, we'll be counting on you to be on form tomorrow.

TOMMY: Yeah, well. We'll all have to be on form.

*[Another pause. Shorter this time]*

PETE: Where's Murph anyway? I doubt if he's tucked up in bed yet, although God knows we should all be.

TOMMY: No, no. He's inside getting the pint.... the minerals.

PETE: Fair play to him. Fair play to Murph, poor fucker. I'll head in for a minute myself, to see if herself is alright. Are you okay there?

TOMMY: I am, I'm fine. Murph is....

PETE: Good so. See you later so.

TOMMY: Okay, yeah, see ya.

*[Tommy is left on his own staring at the door. Murph comes out almost immediately with two fresh pints of Guinness. He hands one to Tommy]*

MURPH: There you go now, get that into you.

TOMMY: Thanks. We shouldn't be though.

MURPH: Will you shut up and drink it. Life is short, or so you keep telling me.

*[They drink from their pints in silence.]*

I see the brave Pete has arrived as well. Were you talking to him?

TOMMY: *[Ignores his question, he was obviously miles away]* You're my best friend Murph, you know that don't you?

MURPH: What? Yeah, of course I do. What's this got to do with now?

TOMMY: Nothing. It's just that they asked me about that in the hospital. They asked me about my friends and I had to tell them all

about you. I don't think they were interested really, I suppose they just wanted to know if I had friends, if I was lonely or anything, so I told them all about you.

MURPH: *[He smiles. He is embarrassed]* Well.... Thanks.... I suppose.

TOMMY: No problem. They asked me about everything, about my mother, my father, the shop, everything. Trying to get into my head they were.

MURPH: And did you let them?

TOMMY: Of course not. No way. No trespassers allowed, eh?

MURPH: Good, good. That's the way.

*[He pauses for a moment, smiling at Tommy who has wondered up the street a little]*

Will we head inside Tommy or what? All the crowd are inside.

TOMMY: What? Yeah, I suppose we should.

MURPH: Good lad. Come on so.

*[Murph puts his arm around Tommy's shoulder and they enter the pub]*

**BLACKOUT.**

## **SCENE V**

*The door to the Golden Grill opens and Mary sticks her head out, looking up the street. She turns, talking to someone inside. As she is talking Murph enters stage left.*

MARY: Yeah, it's him alright. I'd better go. He'll be in woeful form. Jesus! I'll see ya after Jean, OK? Next door, great Thanks. See ya. Yeah. See ya. Bye.

MARY: *[Closing the door of the chipper behind her]* Murph.

MURPH: *[Turning]* Oh. How a'ya?

- MARY: *[Holding out her bag of chips]* Do you want a chip love?
- MURPH: No thanks, I'm fine.
- MARY: Where did you get to anyway, I've been looking for you everywhere. The others have been inside ages. *[Slight pause]* I'm sorry about the match.
- MURPH: Yeah, well.... Fuck the match.
- MARY: There's always next year, eh?
- MURPH: Yeah sure, next year.
- MARY: The lads are very down inside.
- MURPH: They are, are they?
- MARY: I think they were sure of it this year.
- MURPH: Ah it's the same ole shite all the time.
- MARY: *[Hesitant]* They were giving Tommy an awful hard time.
- MURPH: I know.
- MARY: What they didn't call him wasn't worth calling him.  
*[Murph doesn't reply]*  
Pete seems fine about it though. He's in great form.
- MURPH: *[Sarcastic]* Really?
- MARY: Well.... yeah. Susan's working.
- MURPH: Is she now?  
*[There is a pause] Mary stands eating her chips.*
- MARY: I'm worried about Tommy, Murph.  
*[Murph says nothing]*  
He'd been acting a bit strange again, hadn't he? He was acting up a bit.
- MURPH: *[Turning to her. He is angry]* What do you mean? What does that mean? Acting up! What are you saying Mary?
- MARY: *[Flustered]* Nothing, nothing, I... *[Trying to make amends]*  
Mammy was just saying that Mrs Doyle is up the walls, that's all. Seemingly he didn't come home last night at all. She was going to call the guards and all, but someone was saying that they won't do anything until he is missing for over forty eight....
- MURPH: You don't know him Mary. You don't know anything about him. Tommy hasn't done anything stupid. Let me tell you that

now. He wouldn't. If I hear one more person suggesting that he has....

*[He stops. They are silent. Awkward]*

MARY: *[Gently]* I'm sorry love. I didn't mean to suggest.... I was just being stupid. He was fine last night, wasn't he? In great spirits. He's great gas, isn't he?

MURPH: *[Exasperated]* Yes, if you say so. I suppose he is.

MARY: I don't know what everybody's worrying about at all. I mean he's probably just embarrassed to come home now, after letting everybody down like that. Do you think?

MURPH: I don't know Mary. I don't know.

MARY: Sure listen, there's no point us worrying about him anyway, is there? He'll turn up after a while, you'll see. He'll sneak in home later on. *[Brief pause]* Come on, we'll head inside so, will we? The lads will all be wondering where you've got to. Sounds can be heard coming from the pub. They have started to sing.

Susan will be off now. She's inside with Pete. I told them we'd join them for a few anyway. Pete's in great form.

*[They are silent again]*

*[Gently]* Murph?

MURPH: What? Sorry. What? Pete?

MARY: Yeah, inside. He's inside with Susan. I told them we'd join them inside.

MURPH: Pete is inside?

MARY: Yeah with Susan. Are you alright love?

MURPH: What? Yeah, sorry. I'm fine. Sorry. You're right. Come on. Come on so.

*[He moves towards the door. Mary is hesitant.]*

**BLACKOUT.**



## SCENE VI

*Tommy is standing alone on the pavement. The door to O'Loughlin's opens behind him. Mary comes out.*

MARY: *[Back into the pub]* Will you come on Susan. He'll be grand. He's just gone back for his jacket. *[Shouting]* It's probably behind the bar Pete. Jim must have picked it up.  
*[She comes out onto the road]*  
*[To Tommy]* He couldn't tie his shoe laces without her, so he couldn't. What are they like? They never stop fighting, the two of them.  
*[Tommy isn't listening to her, he's looking back at the door waiting for Susan to come out]*

Are you okay Tommy?

TOMMY: *[Looking at her now]* What? Yeah I'm fine. Thanks.

MARY: Nervous, I suppose, are you? But sure that's only natural. There won't be a bother on you. At least you'll admit it. I know Murph is nervous as well, but he'd never say. Where is he gone to anyway, inside *[the chipper]* is it?

TOMMY: Yeah, he....

MARY: Hold on, I'll give him a hand. Are you okay, is he getting you anything?

TOMMY: No, I don't....

MARY: Are you sure?

TOMMY: Yeah, I'm sure.

MARY: Fine, fine. Back in a sec so.

*[She enters the chipper. Tommy is left standing on his own again for a few moments until the door to O'Loughlin's opens again and Susan comes out]*

SUSAN: Jesus but he'd forget his head if it wasn't. *[She sees Tommy]*  
Oh, it's you.

TOMMY: Yes it's me. *[Quickly, nervous]* Can I see you later?  
*[Susan looks around. Tommy approaches her. She moves back.]*

SUSAN: Not here. Be careful would you?

*[She is keeping an eye on the door to the pub.]*

TOMMY: I need to talk to you?

SUSAN: About what?

TOMMY: Us, of course.

SUSAN: Lord, how much talking do we need to do? I'm not sure about tonight, with the match and all.

TOMMY: Sod the match. I want to see you. I need to see you.

SUSAN: Tommy!

TOMMY: I mean it, really, I need to see you.

*[Susan goes to him, putting her hand to his face.]*

SUSAN: It's not me you need at all Tommy. Whoever it is it's not me.

*[He removes her hand.]*

TOMMY: Let me decide who I need, will you? I miss you, I want to talk to you.

*[As the bar door opens again, Susan steps back from him, turning away. Pete comes out carrying his jacket in his hands.]*

PETE: Thanks Jim, I'm always leaving this thing behind. I'll lose the shagging thing one of the days. Thanks, thanks. We'll need it. We'd better get some sleep I suppose, if we're to have any chance. Great so. Goodnight now. Goodnight.

*[The door closes behind him. He turns, putting on his jacket.*

*Are we right then? [He sees Tommy and he is suddenly suspicious] Where are the others?*

SUSAN: They're gone in for chips. Do you want any? I'll go in and get them for you if...

PETE: No I'm grand. I'm stuffed. I'll grab something at home.

*[He puts his arm around her shoulder.]*

PETE: See that Tommy. That's love for you that is.

*[Tommy doesn't respond.]*

Nothing like a woman to look after you, what? What do you say lad? A good wife, eh?

*[Mary and Murph come out of the chipper carrying bags.]*

MARY: See ya Jean. Thanks. Bye. Goodnight.

PETE: And Murph here will be the next to fall, there's no doubt about that. What do you think Tommy, the next one to bite the dust,

Eh?

TOMMY: Oh, I don't know about that.

PETE: Ah now, I've heard that before. Yourself and Mary now any day Murph. Sure what's keeping you, even the great must fall. The big day out, eh? Any day now.

MURPH: What?

PETE: He'll be popping the question any minute now Mary?

MARY: *[She is embarrassed but delighted]* Oh stop, would you?

MURPH: I wouldn't go holding my breath.

*[Mary is hurt by his comment, she turns away from him eating her food.]*

PETE: Well you might as well be getting something back for your money, eh Tommy? It's about time he reaped a harvest there wouldn't you think?

TOMMY: Whatever you say Pete, I wouldn't know.

PETE: Oh you know alright, you know alright. No better man, eh Murph? No better man.

There's no fear of our Tommy though, is there? You're in no rush are you Tommy?

TOMMY: No, no.

PETE: You're dead right too lad. Hang in there as long as you can. Isn't that right Murph? He'll be straddled like us two old work horses for long enough. No stay away from the women for as long as you can lad.

TOMMY: I've had my fair share of women.

PETE: Oh, I'm not saying that now, I'm just saying that you'd be....

TOMMY: You'd be surprised how many women I've had, actually. Very surprised. Right Murph?

*[Murph goes to say something, but doesn't. Pete turns towards Tommy, his mood has changed now. He stares straight at him.]*

I've had a lot more women than you'd think?

PETE: *[Slower, darker]* Oh have you now? Have you now?

TOMMY: I have, oh I have alright.

PETE: Well aren't you the clever fucker.

SUSAN: Pete. Come on home now love. I....

- PETE: Shut it a minute Susan, okay? One minute.
- SUSAN: Don't you talk to me like....
- PETE: I'll talk to you exactly how I....
- TOMMY: It's got nothing to do with being clever at all. It's about respect, that's what it's about, and love.
- PETE: Love? Love? *[To Murph]* Do you hear this gob-shite? Love! Fucking gob-shite. And we used to think you were the brainy fucker. Love! What kind of shite is that?
- SUSAN: Pete!
- PETE: You should have finished that bloody degree Doyle? That's fucking Dublin talk that is. "Tommy talk"! You should have stayed up in Dublin if that's the kind of shite you're going to be coming out with. But then again you weren't able to take the pressure up there, were you? Dublin was too much for you, wasn't it?
- TOMMY: I was fine in....
- SUSAN: I said now Pete.  
*[Pete looks at her briefly.]*
- PETE: Did you now?  
*[He looks back at Tommy.]*
- SUSAN: *[She is very annoyed]* Right so. Are you coming Mary?
- MARY: *[Still eating, flustered]* What, where?
- SUSAN: Do you want a lift home? We'll be going your way with Mammy anyway.
- MARY: Eh....  
*[She looks to Murph for a sign. He doesn't deliver.]*
- MARY: No, I don't think I will thanks, I'll....
- SUSAN: *[Interrupting her]* I said we would be going your way! Pete will be going your way, with Mammy.
- MARY: Oh right, yeah. I suppose I'd better then. *[She hesitates]*  
Eh, bye love so.
- MURPH: *[Eating]* Yeah, bye.
- MARY: I'll see you tomorrow so. At the match, okay?
- MURPH: Yeah, at the match. See you then.  
*[Mary hesitates for a brief moment waiting for some sign from Murph. He ignores her so she turns and walks stage left. Susan*

*follows, but turns suddenly.]*

SUSAN: *[Defiant]* We'll see you later then I suppose. *[Pause]* Right Tommy?

*[Pete turns to her immediately.]*

TOMMY: Huh? Sorry?

PETE: *[Walking towards her]* We're going Susan.

SUSAN: I said "we might see you later then I suppose".

PETE: *[Taking her by the arm, roughly]* I said "come on".

TOMMY: Oh right, yeah right. *[Looking at Pete, grinning slightly]* Sure. Later.

PETE: Susan, would you come on the fuck, would you? *[She doesn't move]* Susan!

SUSAN: *[Smiling at Tommy]* I'm coming. I'm coming. *[To Pete, shaking her arm free]* Fuck you, okay? I said I was coming.

*[She turns and is about to leave, seeing Mrs Myers as she does.]*

Oh how are you Mrs. Myers? I didn't see you there. *[Sarcastic]*

Keeping an eye on things again are you? What would we do without you at all, eh? We'd be lost altogether, wouldn't we, without our eyes and ears.

*[She turns and leaves.]*

## BLACKOUT

## SCENE VII

*Susan is standing at the door to O'Loughlin's on her own. She is smoking. Mary comes walking down the street from stage left, wearing the same jacket as before.*

SUSAN: You're late.

MARY: I know, I know, I...

- SUSAN: I only have an hour for lunch.
- MARY: I'm sorry. Have you eaten?
- SUSAN: I'm not hungry.
- MARY: Oh right so.
- SUSAN: I wouldn't eat in there anyway. He'd probably poison me if he got the chance.
- MARY: Who? O'Loughlin? Is he giving you a hard time again. I don't know why we drink in there.
- SUSAN: He's just crabby because I won't let him into my knickers.
- MARY: Susan!
- SUSAN: What? *[She stubs out her cigarette]* He is. He's always feeling me up behind the counter, and making snide remarks about it being okay for me to do overtime whenever I want.
- MARY: Jesus! You wouldn't though, would you?
- SUSAN: Of course not, give me some credit. I have better taste than that. *[She makes her way to the pole, taking a packet of cigarettes out of her pocket.]*
- MARY: He's disgusting isn't he? The belly on him.
- SUSAN: *[Lighting a cigarette]* I know, and he smells. Do you want one?
- MARY: No. I'm giving them up again.
- SUSAN: When are you not giving up something?
- MARY: I'm only thinking of my health.
- SUSAN: Your health? What's wrong with your health now? *[She holds the cigarette packet out to Mary]* Have a fucking cigarette, will you?
- MARY: *[Taking a cigarette]* Oh, okay then, if it's that important to you. You're a bad influence on me, do you know that? My mother even says so.
- SUSAN: Oh does she now?
- MARY: She does.
- SUSAN: *[Lighting her cigarette]* And sure mothers are never wrong. *[They are silent briefly as they smoke.]*
- MARY: They're dragging the river tomorrow.
- SUSAN: Oh right. I heard that alright.
- MARY: It's been three days now. He's unlikely to turn up at this stage,

is he?

SUSAN: Well, no.

MARY: Murph is very down about it. He refuses to accept that he could have done it. Suicide like. But sure everybody body knows what Tommy was like.

*[She stops herself, noticing that Susan has turned away and moved further up the street.]*

Further down near the Locke. They think the current may have....

*[She stops again.]*

Mummy was saying that if he is in the river, they'll not get the body back. She says it takes three every year and that it only gives back the first two.

SUSAN: I've heard that said alright.

MARY: And there's already been two this year? Do you remember? That young lad up near....

SUSAN: *[Interrupting her]* That's right. That was a while back.

MARY: But then again, 'there's hope from the water, but none from the grave'. That's what they say, isn't it?

*[Brief pause, while they continue smoking.]*

Do you miss him?

SUSAN: *[Shaken]* Who? Tommy? Me? Miss him?

MARY: Yeah, you know. I think it must be really hard on you. I was just saying it to Murph last night.

SUSAN: What? What do you mean? Why would I miss him?

MARY: *[Looking around her]* You know. You and....

SUSAN: *[Trying to brush it off]* Me and Tommy! But that was nothing.

*[She laughs nervously]* It was just a bit of fun. A bit of a laugh. It was.... nothing.

MARY: That's not what Tommy thought.

SUSAN: What?

MARY: Didn't you love him at all?

SUSAN: Love him?

MARY: Yeah "love him". How could you.... you know, if you didn't even....

SUSAN: *[Annoyed now]* Oh easy Mary, easy. Trust me. Easier than

you'd ever imagine. It's fine and dandy for you to talk about love now, but wait five years girl and you'll be thinking differently then.

MARY: Oh God no, I could never. I wouldn't. Not to Murph.

SUSAN: Wouldn't you? That's what I said too. Not so long ago either. I wasn't always the wayward one around this town. The slut! Your mother used to think I was a grand girl one time. She was at our wedding you know. We were the happy young couple once, just like yourself and Murph. But things change pretty quickly after that. We don't have the hurling to keep us occupied Mary you know. There's only so many new rig-outs you can buy, only so many dos to go to. *[She pauses, stubbing her cigarette out on the ground]* No, I don't miss him at all. I gave up missing people a long time ago. *[Mary doesn't know what to say.]* I'm going back to work. I'll see you later I suppose.

MARY: I don't know, I.... Murph, he.... I might be.

SUSAN: Well yeah, whatever. Whatever Murph wants to do. *[She enters the pub. Mary is left standing on her own.]*

### *BLACKOUT*

## **SCENE VIII**

*Tommy and Murph are standing on the stage alone. Tommy is kicking at an empty Kentucky Fried Chicken box. O'Loughlin's is shut for the night, with the lights off. The blind is down on the chipper door, although there is still a light on.*

TOMMY: Do you love her Murph?

MURPH: *[Surprised]* Who? Mary?

TOMMY: Yes Mary, of course.



MURPH: Ah jaysus.

TOMMY: What? What?

MURPH: For fuck's sake Tommy.

TOMMY: [*Happy again in Murph's company*] What? I'm only asking. It's a simple bloody question. Do you love her?

MURPH: Fuck off would you?

TOMMY: Why? What's wrong with that? Embarrassed are you?

MURPH: I am not.

TOMMY: You are so. You've been going out now for what? [*He thinks*] Five years, for Christ's sake.

MURPH: It's not five years.

TOMMY: It is too. You started going out together in school, on that trip to France, remember? Fifth year that was.

MURPH: Fucking hell, it is then, isn't it? Five years!

TOMMY: Five years.

MURPH: Fuck.

TOMMY: So do you?

MURPH: Jaysus! I don't know.

TOMMY: How can you not know after five years? How can you be with somebody for five years and not know if you love them?

MURPH: Ah fuck off.

TOMMY: Jesus Murph, there's nobody listening. You can tell me. It's important. Do you think about her all the time?

MURPH: I do not.

TOMMY: [*Enjoying his joking now*] I bet you do. I bet you get nervous when you're on your own with her, do you? Do you shake and get all tongue tied.

MURPH: You're an eejit, do you know that.

TOMMY: Would you kill for her? Would you kill yourself for her? Do anything at all, anything, just to get her attention, to make her notice you in a crowd, to make her smile, to make her think that you were someone special and want to meet you.

MURPH: What are you on about? Love! You wouldn't know what love was if it knelt down and gave you a blow job.

TOMMY: How do you know?

*[Murph just looks at him. Tommy smiles.]*

MURPH: What have you been up to?

TOMMY: Why? Acting irrational, am I? They say that's what love does to you, don't they? Mood swings. Acting strange.

MURPH: What are you talking about? Jesus lad.

TOMMY: Love.

MURPH: What?

TOMMY: I'm in love.

MURPH: In love? Bollocks! *[Murph begins to comprehend]* With who?  
*[Tommy says nothing, just raises his eyebrows.]*

Not with Susan. Ah Jesus, cop on now, would you. She's....

TOMMY: What? She's married? So what? To Pete. She doesn't love Pete.

MURPH: It's not just that. It's not just Pete.

TOMMY: What, she's older than me, is that it? The children? What?

MURPH: It's.... Ah Jesus.

TOMMY: I don't care about her age, if that's what you mean. Age doesn't matter. That's only a matter of seconds, hundreds of seconds.  
*[He is intense again now]* The passion is there, that's all that matters. That's what life is about. I've realised that now.  
Passion Murph, passion.

MURPH: Listen to me for a minute, will you?

TOMMY: The children will be fine. They're a complication alright, but hey, marriages break up all the time, don't they? We'll sort it out, it'll be fine. They'll be fine. And Pete.... he's just a bastard, he's.... he's a coward so he is.

MURPH: *[Calm]* It's not love Tommy.

TOMMY: Eh? What would you know about.... He's a bollocks.

MURPH: It's not love. Susan doesn't love you.

TOMMY: Susan is a great woman. She's a great person.

MURPH: She's not in....

TOMMY: She's put up with a lot from that bastard. You know that don't you? She was only eighteen, so she was.

MURPH: Tommy.

TOMMY: Eighteen!

MURPH: Tommy!

TOMMY: And pregnant.

MURPH: *[Louder now]* Tommy!

TOMMY: *[Angry, loud]* What?  
*[Murph pauses briefly].*

What is it? Go on say it? What were you going to say?

MURPH: Oh nothing.

TOMMY: No, not nothing. What? He beats her you know, the bastard, and the children, all the time.

MURPH: Is that what she's been telling you?

TOMMY: What? Yes, that's what she's been telling me. And it's true.

MURPH: She's making a fool of you, can't you see that?

TOMMY: Sorry?

MURPH: The whole town knows about the two of you.... and all the rest.

TOMMY: Rest? What rest? What are you saying Murph?

*[The light suddenly goes off in the Chipper. They both turn to look, then back at each other.]*

MURPH: She's riding the hole off every man in the town. Come on, you know that, everybody knows that.

*[Tommy doesn't answer him. He thinks for a moment then turns away, moving down the street.]*

How do you think she broke her ankle that time then?

TOMMY: *[Turning back]* What? What time?

MURPH: Her ankle. Two months ago, when she was in plaster, how do you think that happened?

TOMMY: She tripped coming out of O'Loughlins. She was drinking. She told me.

MURPH: She was down the sports field with Red Mick, yes your sports field, at four in the morning. Pissed. She fell coming back over the church wall there.

TOMMY: She did not, she....

MURPH: She started howling and roaring like a banshee, right on the Main Street here.

TOMMY: She....

MURPH: Red Mick got such a fright that he ran off home – to his wife – and left her here on her own, broken leg and all.

- TOMMY: She tripped on the step there. She told me. She was going to sue them and everything only it was after hours so she couldn't do a thing.
- MURPH: Mrs Myers there had to get up and ring the doctor. The woman is nearly seventy years of age.
- TOMMY: That's not true. It's not true. I can't deal with this Murph. I can't. Pete even said....
- MURPH: Pete's a fool. It suits him just as well to lie about it. He knows there's more life in her than he'll ever be able to deal with. He's terrified of her and she knows it.... and so are you.  
*[They are silent again.]*  
*[Gently]* It is true Tommy. She's making a fool of you and the whole town's talking about it.
- TOMMY: *[Slowly]* She loves me. That's what it is. That's what's bothering you.
- MURPH: Come on home lad, she's not coming now.
- TOMMY: She said she'd see me later. She said she was coming.
- MURPH: It's two in the morning. Come on home. The match.
- TOMMY: Fuck the match, fuck the match. She loves me, that's what important, and I love her, more than anything else and you can't deal with it, can you, because you know that you'll never have it. You with your lies and your gossip and....
- MURPH: Love, is it?
- TOMMY: You know nothing about love. You know nothing of how it feels when two people come together, and it's meant to be, and you know that, just like you know that you're supposed to keep drawing breath and that if you stop it will all stop, everything. You and Mary, a joke, that's what that is.
- MURPH: Ah Tommy please. People care for you here, they....
- TOMMY: It's the passion, that's what you see. That's what you're all afraid of.
- MURPH: Passion?
- TOMMY: Yes, passion.
- MURPH: Fuck passion.
- TOMMY: Here *[He looks all around him]*. You've all forgotten. You think

this is it, don't you, with your ordinary jobs and your ordinary girlfriends and your ordinary fucking lives.

MURPH: Ordinary?

TOMMY: The same tune all the time. Get married and build the bungalow. But that's where you're wrong you see, because there's more to it than that. You're letting it die, you're killing it. You don't see it, but it's dying. This place is about something you don't even know and it's dying, while you lot piss about every year trying to win a county title that means less to you than another pint of that fucking stout.

MURPH: Hold on a minute now.

TOMMY: That you won't even train for, give up the drink for, make sacrifices for.

MURPH: You're full of shit, do you know that?

TOMMY: I'm telling the....

MURPH: You're full of fucking shit.

TOMMY: At least I'm telling the....

MURPH: At least you're what? At least you're what? You're no different from the rest of us. You're a failure Tommy, like everybody else, you're a failure and you can't accept that. You failed at your degree, you failed at trying to be your father and you failed at....

TOMMY: No. No, Murph stop.

MURPH: You want it all to fall into your lap. That's your problem. Pottering away in a stinking little butcher shop day in day out, surrounded by blood and guts and a ceiling covered in fading orange dots that means fuck all to anyone around here anymore. You think that's better do you?

TOMMY: Stop Murph.

MURPH: You think that's something to crow about? You trained no harder than the rest of us. I didn't see you down the field every evening running laps the way young Cullen does. I've never seen you up at the crack of dawn getting in a few hours training before work.

TOMMY: Stop.

MURPH: Practising, training, getting harder, fitter. It doesn't come without work Tommy. All I've ever seen you do is talk. Talking is all you're good for. Talking and jumping at a dirty old ceiling that will always be out of your reach.

*[There is a brief pause.]*

*[Tired now, slower]* A big mouth with big notions, getting frost bite on his hole from fucking the local whore in a ditch at four in the morning.

*Silence again.*

TOMMY: Fuck you Murph. *[He is upset]* That's not me at all.

*[Tommy turns and begins to exit stage right.]*

MURPH: Where are you going?

TOMMY: That's not me at all. That's not me.

MURPH: Tommy come back.

TOMMY: That's not me Murph.

*[He exits.]*

MURPH: Tommy! *[He waits]* Tommy! *[And again]* Ah Jesus Tommy, come back. Come back. I'm sorry. Jesus! I'm sorry.

## BLACKOUT

## SCENE IX

*It is early evening. The door to O'Loughlin's is open. Mary is standing on the pavement as Murph comes out of the chipper. Both are carrying chipper bags.*

MURPH: See ya Jean. Thanks. Bye.

*[Murph begins walking down the street, with Mary following, linking his arm..]*

MARY: Are you okay love? You're very quiet this evening.

- MURPH: *[Breaking his arm free]* Am I now? Jesus, but isn't that a surprise? My best friend is missing for over a week, and you wonder what's wrong with me.  
*[Mary stops walking, Murph continues.]*
- MARY: I'm sorry love, I didn't mean to....
- MURPH: *[Turning]* Oh I'm sure you are. Everybody is sorry. We're all fucking sorry. But I don't know what good that's going to do Tommy, so I don't.
- MARY: I know, I know love. But we shouldn't give up hope yet. They've dragged the river, and found nothing. You'd never know, he might be in London or anywhere for all we know.
- MURPH: He's not in London. He had nothing with him for fuck's sake.
- MARY: I know, I know.
- MURPH: He hadn't even got his jacket with him, he left it behind him in the pub.
- MARY: I know, I know but....
- MURPH: He's not anywhere. He was broke. He....  
*[Murph stops suddenly, lowering his head. He is upset. Mary moves towards him and touches his arm..]*
- MARY: I know pet. Leave it, leave it now. It's not your fault love, it's not your fault.
- MURPH: It is my fault, it is. It's my fault and your fault and Susan's and.... We're all to blame Mary. We all killed him, all of us.
- MARY: What are you talking about love? Nobody killed him.
- MURPH: Didn't they? Are you sure?
- MARY: Sush love, sush now. We don't know anything for definite yet. You know what they say: Where there's life there's hope. Come on love.
- MURPH: *[Loud, angry]* Jesus Christ, will you leave it be. Will you let it rest, will you? I'm sick and tired of listening to you going on about life and hope. He's dead okay. Dead. Tommy's Dead.  
*[Mary is silent for a moment. Stunned.]*
- MARY: Oh God love, I'm sorry. Me and my big mouth, I never know when to shut up. I'm always going on, always. Putting my foot in it. Don't be annoyed with me, please. I'm....

- MURPH: Annoyed with you! How could I possibly be annoyed with you? That would involve being honest, wouldn't it? Feeling something. *[Slight pause]* That would be "Tommy talk" that would, and we couldn't have that.
- MARY: *[Gently, timid]* I know love. I know.
- MURPH: *[Quickly]* Telling the truth, and we can't have that, we can't have the truth, because that's too fucking complicated, isn't it, the truth? We're like children in a row Mary, all of us, yourself, myself, Pete and Susan and their shambles of a marriage, all of us, a row of children dangling from a rope, hanging on for dear life because we have no idea what's below us if we let go.
- MARY: *[She is upset now]* What are you talking about pet? What are you saying? Stop love, will you?
- MURPH: Yes I'll stop. I'll stop just like I always do, because if I don't it will all come crumbling down around us, won't it? You and me, Pete and Susan. Is it really that unstable? If we stop pretending for one minute, if one of us lets go, just one of us, is that it? Is it over?
- MARY: You're upset love, stop please.
- MURPH: And what do we do then, tell me? What do we do then? Eh Mary? Tell me that. If we face up to the truth, where would we be then?  
*[He looks to Mary. She looks away from him. She is upset, crying. He stands motionless for a few moments, considering what to do next. He is about to go to her, but doesn't.]*  
Oh Jesus. *[He waits again]* Come on love, I'm sorry.  
*[And again]* I'm sorry. Let's go home. Come on. I'm sorry.  
*[He stands waiting for her. She doesn't respond. He turns from her, waiting, and as he does she turns towards him slowly.]*
- MARY: *[Barely audible]* Murph?
- MURPH: *[He doesn't turn around]* What?
- MARY: You'd never do anything to me like that, would you?
- MURPH: *[Turning to look at her]* Like what?
- MARY: You know, like.... like Susan.  
*[Murph hesitates for a few moments.]*



MURPH: Of course not.... No. Jesus! Of course not.  
*The both stand motionless on the street.*

BLACKOUT

SCENE X

*It is late morning. The street is in darkness. Murph is on his own on the stage looking down the street. As he stands there, Susan enters behind him. They remain like this for a few moments.*

MURPH: [*Quietly*] Ah Jesus Tommy. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.  
[*He turns to leave. Startled.*] Christ, what are you doing there,  
you frightened the shite out of me.

SUSAN: Oh you're easily frightened so.

MURPH: You're a little late aren't you? It's half two in the morning.

SUSAN: I'm out for a stroll. I often come out for a stroll when everyone  
else is in bed.

MURPH: [*He is angry with her*] Do you now?

SUSAN: It clears my head.

MURPH: I'm sure it does.

SUSAN: What are you doing here anyway? What about the big day?  
I thought you were all to get an early night for [*jeering*] the big  
match.

MURPH: I'm.... [*He looks behind to where Tommy left*] I'm on my way  
home now.

SUSAN: [*She moves a little bit closer to him*] Are you now?  
And where's tweedeldee gone to? Off home as well is he?

MURPH: Tommy? You know well where he is. He's waiting for you  
down at the field and well you know it.

SUSAN: Nobody's waiting for me anywhere. What gave you that idea?

- MURPH: You're making a fool of him Susan. Leave him alone would you? He's not up to you. He's out of his depth.
- SUSAN: Is he now? I thought he was doing just fine.
- MURPH: He's getting all kinds of notions.
- SUSAN: Notions? We all have notions, don't we?
- MURPH: He thinks you're in love with him, that you're going to leave Pete and the children.
- SUSAN: Leave them? *[She laughs]* Really? Leave them? Well maybe I will do.... sometime.  
*[There is a brief silence. Murph strolls down the street.]*  
And I'll have you know that I never made a fool of any man. Ever. *[Pause]* And well you should know.
- MURPH: *[Turning towards her again, suddenly]* What? What do you....  
*He stops.*
- SUSAN: I never made a fool of you, did I Patrick Murphy?
- MURPH: Nobody never made a fool of me.
- SUSAN: You can sing that.
- MURPH: And that's only because I had the sense to quit when I was ahead.
- SUSAN: Quit did you? Quit? Well that's the first I've heard of it.  
*[He leans against the telegraph pole, smiling slightly.]*  
*He is beginning to enjoy the teasing now.]*  
You never handed your resignation in to me.  
*[She begins to move towards him..]*
- MURPH: Didn't I?
- SUSAN: Not to me you didn't.  
*[She is standing in front of him now.]*
- MURPH: I see.
- SUSAN: Do you?  
*[She moves closer to kiss him..]*
- MURPH: Not here for Christ's sake.
- SUSAN: Why not?
- MURPH: It's the main street. Everybody will see.
- SUSAN: It's nearly three o'clock. If they're still up at this hour let them see.

*[They begin to kiss, slowly at first but then more heavily. Murph starts to feel her breasts.]*

MURPH: You told O'Connor that I had the biggest prick in the town, didn't you?

SUSAN: He told you that?

MURPH: Yeah.

SUSAN: The bastard.

MURPH: Why, is it true?

SUSAN: Have you ever known me to tell a lie?

*[They smile and begin to kiss again, Murph begins to put his hands up her skirt and loosen his trousers.]*

Jesus Christ, take it easy. Not here. Relax would you. We'll....

MURPH: What? We'll what?

SUSAN: Not here, that's all.

MURPH: *[Imitating her]* "If they're still up at this hour let them see".  
*[She smiles. He lifts her skirt and is about to pull down her pants when Susan gets startled.]*

SUSAN: *[Pushing back down her skirt]* Jesus, what was that?

MURPH: What? What?

SUSAN: *[Pushing him away]* Down there. There was somebody looking.

MURPH: *[Fixing his trousers]* What?

SUSAN: In the alleyway. There was somebody there.

MURPH: *[Suddenly serious]* Jesus no! Who?

SUSAN: I don't know.

MURPH: *[Annoyed now. Angry]* Who was it for fuck's sake?

SUSAN: I don't know. I didn't see.

MURPH: Oh God. Tommy. Was it Tommy?

SUSAN: No. Maybe. I don't know.

MURPH: Susan!

SUSAN: I don't know. I don't know.

MURPH: Oh please God, no.

BLACKOUT

## SCENE XI

*The lights come up on a blank stage. O'Loughlin's door is closed, but opens from the inside and Mary, Pete, Susan and Murph all come out. Susan is wearing a coat over her work clothes.*

MARY: See you Jim. Thanks.

PETE: Yeah, good night Jim.

MURPH: Thanks.

SUSAN: *[As she is leaving]* Thanks Jim. See you in the morning so.  
*[They stand on the pavement fastening their coats etc.]*

MARY: Ah he's sound enough really, isn't he?

SUSAN: Who Jim?

MARY: Yeah. He's decent enough.

SUSAN: When he wants to be.

PETE: He's a bastard, he is.

MARY: Ah, I don't know.

PETE: I'm telling you, a walking bollocks, and if they were scarce he'd make two. Isn't that right Murph?

MURPH: Yeah, well, whatever you say.

PETE: He makes Sue here do overtime nearly every afternoon now, doesn't he love?

MARY: What? Overtime? Susan he doesn't?

SUSAN: Just a little Mary. Don't panic. I can handle it.  
*[Mary is speechless. Murph ambles out onto the road, he's not really interested in their conversation.]*

PETE: Did you see the match yesterday lad? Some game eh? Jesus but Villa are on form aren't they? That new lad is a great striker. What's his name again?

MURPH: Who? What match?

PETE: On the telly. Sky Sports. Villa and United. Yesterday.

MURPH: We don't have Sky. I didn't see it.

PETE: Oh Jaysus why didn't you say? You could have come up and watched it in our place, couldn't he love?

SUSAN: What?

PETE: There'd be no problem there, would there love? As long as you

behave yourself. Eh, Murph? No problem at all. We're all friends here, aren't we Murph?

*Murph doesn't say anything.*

PETE: Murph!

SUSAN: *[She turns to Pete, conscious of the situation]* You'd never go in and get us a burger off Jean would ya? Please love.

MARY: Yeah do, go on Murph. Get us a curry chips will you pet? I'll get you back.

MURPH: What?

MARY: A curry chips love. From Jean.

MURPH: Oh right yeah.

PETE: Come on lad, you're not with us at all tonight are you?  
*[He slaps him across the back]* For fucks sake lad, relax. Nobody's going to bite you. We're all friends here.  
*[He puts his arm around his shoulder and leads him to the chipper.]*

*[As they enter]* You should come up sometime and watch the Sky Sports all the same though. It's fucking mighty. You'd love it you would. Honestly. Come up whenever. You're more than welcome.

*[They exit.]*

MARY: What's up with him?

SUSAN: Who, Pete?

MARY: Yeah. He's acting strange for weeks now. I don't know. He's too friendly or something.

SUSAN: No he's not, he's.... *[She is a little flustered]* He's always like that.

MARY: Is he? Maybe so. I suppose he's still worried about Tommy as well.

SUSAN: *[Defensive]* What do you mean?

MARY: It's only been two weeks. Poor lad. I don't suppose they'll ever find the body at this stage. Mammy says it will have been washed out to sea by now. It could turn up anywhere.

SUSAN: It won't.

MARY: What?

*Intermission Impossible*

- SUSAN: Turn up. His body will never turn up.
- MARY: Why?
- SUSAN: No why. *[After a pause]* I don't think he killed himself, that's all.
- MARY: What? Why not? But sure what happened to him so?
- SUSAN: I don't know. I... I just don't think he killed himself.
- MARY: *[Thinking]* You were with him that night, weren't you?
- SUSAN: I told you I wasn't. Jesus, how many times do I have to tell you?
- MARY: I won't tell a soul. Honestly. You can tell me.
- SUSAN: I wasn't with him, with Tommy. I was.... I saw something, somebody, that's all.
- MARY: What? You saw somebody? Who? What do you mean?
- SUSAN: I don't know, I'm not sure. It was dark, I couldn't see very well. I saw somebody, in the alleyway there. At first we thought.... *[she checks herself]* At first I thought it was....  
*[She stops.]*
- MARY: Tommy?
- SUSAN: Yeah. But it wasn't.
- MARY: Who then?  
*[Pete and Murph return with the food. Susan looks towards them..]*
- PETE: Who? What love? What's this?  
*[Mary follows Susan's gaze to Pete.]*  
What love? What's wrong? What are you looking at?

**BLACKOUT**

## SCENE XII

*It is early morning. Murph is on his own on stage. He is standing against the pole with his gear bag and hurley. He is checking his watch and walking out onto the street every now and again, looking up and down. Pete eventually arrives along the pavement from stage right. He is also carrying a hurley and bag.*

MURPH: Jesus, where were you? You're fifteen minutes late.

PETE: Sure O'Connor's not here yet is he?

MURPH: Lucky for you he's not.

PETE: Don't you worry about me lad, don't be worrying about me at all. That bastard will be fine.

MURPH: *[Ignoring his humour]* Is Tommy with you?

PETE: Tommy? Why would Tommy be with me?

MURPH: No why. He hasn't shown yet, that's all. He's never late. I thought he might be with you.

PETE: I haven't seen him. Not since.... last night. Don't be worrying yourself, he'll be here. Why would I have seen him? O'Connor can call round to the house anyway.

MURPH: No I rang. There's no answer. His mother must have gone to Mass.

PETE: He'll be on his way so. Sure where else would he be?

MURPH: That was twenty minutes ago.

PETE: Jesus! Relax, would you? He's probably organised a different lift.

MURPH: No, he was to come with us.

PETE: Drop it, would you? What are you worried about? He's probably at the pitch waiting for us now.

MURPH: He would have said.

*[Pete looks at Murph for a moment without saying a word.]*

PETE: We can survive without that cocky fucker anyway. Thought he was God's gift to hurling, he did. We'll beat the bastards without him just as well. Young Cullen will move up to centre forward and Bozo can cover for him at half back. We'll be

grand. *[He pauses again, looking at Murph]* That's what he gets anyway for hanging around the town at all hours of the night when he should have been getting some sleep. Eh Murph?

MURPH: *[Looking up at him now]* What? What do you mean?

PETE: Oh I seen you. You don't expect to get away with that do you?

MURPH: What? With what?

PETE: Fooling around of course. Messing. Cod acting. Making a fool of a lad in public. That's not the way to do it, is it? That's no way to behave. We couldn't be putting up with that, now could we?

MURPH: What the fuck are you talking about. I wasn't.... I don't know what you're talking about.

PETE: Oh I think you know what I mean alright lad. I think you know what I mean alright.

*[He turns to look up the road.]*

*[Turning back]* It's dangerous that is. Very dangerous.

You could get yourself hurt very easy, carrying on like that.

*He looks up the street again. Murph remains silent, starring at Pete.*

*[He is hopping now from foot to foot, agitated]* You'd want to be getting a little more sleep yourself lad, eh?

MURPH: *[His voice is shaking]* What, what do you mean?

PETE: Nothing. People can get hurt, that's all. I think you get the message. *[He sees a car approaching]* There's O'Connor now. Come on. *[He shouts up the road]* You're okay, stay where you are, we're coming.

*[He grabs his bag and hurley. His mood has changed now, as if nothing was said.]*

Come on, would you? Jesus stop worrying. What's there to worry about. Relax. We're all friends here Murph. We're going to win this bloody match. We're going to beat the dirty bastards. We'll all be fine as soon as we learn to behave ourselves, eh? *[He waits. Murph is speechless]* Eh?

*[He runs off stage left. Murph looks up the road after him.]*

MURPH: Jesus Christ.

*[There is a beep of a horn. He picks up his hurley and bag.]*



*[Shook] I'm coming, I'm coming.*

*[He takes one last look down the road, then turns and runs off stage left.]*

**BLACKOUT**

**SCENE XIII**

*As in scene one Susan is leaning against the door to O'Loughlin's. She is wearing her work uniform. Again she is silently observing the street. After a significant pause she speaks to somebody across the street.*

SUSAN: How are you now? Fine, fine. *[Looking up at the sky]* It is, isn't it? A lovely evening alright. *[Slight pause]* Any word on the match yet? No, no I haven't heard either. We'll know soon enough I suppose. I've never seen the town so quiet, have you? The whole street must be over. *[Another pause]* There was alright. There was great excitement alright. Do you think they have any chance at all? Sure I'm the same, I'm not the one to be asking either. Seventeen years! It's not, is it? Since they won a county title! Well, I suppose it must be when you think about it. *[She thinks]* You know I think you're right. It must be so, God, seventeen years! They will, they'll find it hard to replace him alright. He was, he was a great centre forward. An awful shame, an awful shame is right. We'll know soon enough anyway. Yeah, yeah. We will. We'll know soon enough. Okay so. See ya. Bye.

*She stands motionless again, watching the person leave and observing the quiet street once more. She continues smoking. After a few moments the lights fade to blackout.*

**THE END**

# **THE LAST TEMPTATION OF MICHAEL FLATLEY**

**A ONE ACT PLAY**

*by*

*Arthur Riordan*

*Commissioned by Macra na Feirme*

**AGENT:** *c/o Rough Magic Theatre Co.,  
5 South Great George Street, Dublin 2.*

**CAST:**

- LAR: Mid-thirties. Works as a bouncer in Droocomper, but he's physically short, or slight, patently unsuited to his job.
- LORRAINE: Lar's sister, early twenties, a student in Dublin.
- TOMMY: Lorraine's boyfriend, early twenties, works in Mick's supermarket, and as a D.J. in the same club as Lar.
- MICK: Owns a shop, likes Michael Flatley.
- JACKIE: Mid-twenties, a stand up comedian living in London. She's also from Droocomper.

*Most of the characters have just been to see 'Lord of the Dance', so, with the music still in their heads, they talk in jig rhythm a lot of the time.*

*The stage is bare, apart from five or six chairs, which, when moved around, serve to change the scenes.*

**SCENE I**

*The Point Depot – We hear the end of 'The Lord of the Dance', applause etc. Lar is alone, waiting for the others to come out. Lorraine, Jackie and Tommy finally join him.*

- JACKIE: Gas!
- LORR: Gas!
- JACKIE: Wasn't it gas? Clattering around in their tights and their bras! Nothing in 'Riverdance' even came close to preparing me –
- LAR: What was it like, was it class?
- JACKIE: It was gross! Lar, you should've been there!
- LAR: Well, I would've been only I'd rather chew glass.
- JACKIE: But seeing as your sister had tickets to spare.
- LAR: Oh, did you? What happened that pair from your class?
- LORR: Well, Fiachra was well into coming, I know, He's the one with the goatee, remember him, Lar?

But Coir Iosa was meant to be driving, hel-LO?  
Coir Iosa's old dear wouldn't lend her the car.  
You must've met Fiachra, the one with the hair?  
He was *so* not amused about letting me down,  
And Coir Iosa was driving him totally spare,  
Wouldn't contemplate taking a bus into town!

PAUSE

LAR: So Jackie, I didn't expect to see you.

JACKIE: Did you not?

LAR: I mean, Flatley, Jesus sake!

JACKIE: He's a total professional, give him his due.

LAR: He's a total leprechaun, give us a break.

But what are you doing in Dublin, I mean?

JACKIE: Oh, checking the venues, that kind of stuff.

*[Mick enters]*

MICK: She's conquered the London comedy scene,

So Dublin get ready -

LAR: Oh, cool enough.

MICK: Dublin get ready for Jackie O' Dea,

The girl from Droocomper, doin' us proud!

And keep your distance, she's here with me -

LAR: You startin'? *[Mick and Lar good-humouredly makes shapes at each other]*

LORR: - Hel-LO? Can we not be so loud?

LAR: So Tommy, how was it? 'The Lord of the Dance'?

Celtic heroes in clingfilm pants?

PAUSE

TOM: Oh, it was.... well.... I mean.... it was okay, I suppose.

LORR: Do you ever say anything straight out?

TOM: Lorraine. I -

LORR: I don't *think* so!

MICK: Flatley showed the begrudgers a thing or two tonight. Great to see a man who isn't afraid of.... excellence.

JACKIE: Great to see a man who isn't afraid the style police will cart him off to the Gary Glitter wing of kitsch prison.

- LAR: The what? The style police?
- JACKIE: Yeah, well, you know.... I mean, you should've seen the costumes, they were....
- LAR: The.... sorry, the what wing of which prison?
- JACKIE: Never mind, it was just a joke. A cheap gag at Flatley's expense. Sorry.
- LAR: No, well, fair enough, that's allowed, I suppose.
- JACKIE: Thanks.
- MICK: Oh, it's easy to knock success, though. The national pastime.
- LAR: I know. Parnell, Oscar Wilde, Michael Flatley.
- LORR: Feel a bit threatened by Flatley, do we Lar?
- LAR: Threatened? No! Fuckin' terrified.
- LORR: They've no taste, Mick. 'Riverdance' was great, wasn't it?
- ALL: [*in 'Riverdance' rhythm*]:  
Wasn't it, wasn't it, great, great, great?  
Wasn't it, wasn't it, great, great, great?
- JACKIE: Are you guys going back down to Droocomper now?
- LORR: No they're staying up in my flat. I thought a night in civilisation would do them good.
- TOMMY: Lorraine –
- LAR: Lured out of the hills with red meat, hah?
- LORR: Now, Lar, I need to get into Temple Bar, okay? See, Fiachra, this guy I was telling you about –
- TOM: You mentioned him, yeah.
- LORR: Well, he couldn't come to the show –
- LAR: Coir Iosa's old dear, I know -
- LORR: But himself and his mate Fionnán said they'd try to get in later on, and I just *so* don't want to let them down, like. [*To Jackie and Mick*] How about you two, will you join us for a drink?
- JACKIE: Well, Mick needs to get the car from town, anyway, so –
- TOM: Lorraine, maybe I'll just go back to the flat –
- LAR: Ah, Tom, you can't fade. I just, you know, *so* want to go to Temple Bar.
- LORR: And Lar's just learned to drive, so he's dying to show off.
- TOM: Oh.... right.

- LORR: Jackie, Mick, please come with us, okay? This pair are plotting ways they can mortify me.
- JACKIE: Come on so, lead me to the trough.
- LAR: Can't wait to have my rural innocence ravaged by the decadent sophisticates in Bad Bob's.  
*[Lar, Jackie and Mick gets chairs and arrange them into a car.]*
- TOM: Lorraine, can we talk?
- LORR: It's too late, Tommy, it's over.
- TOM: Look, please –
- LAR: Come on, pile in!
- JACKIE: It really gets into your head, doesn't it?
- MICK: What?
- JACKIE: Well, does anyone else find themselves thinking in diddly eye rhythms?  
*[They sit in, Lar driving, Jackie beside him, Mick, Lorraine and Tommy in the back.]*
- LAR: Diddly eye?
- JACKIE: Ah, you know what I mean.
- LAR: Diddly eye?
- JACKIE: Ah, you know what I mean.  
*[Tom turns to face audience.]*
- TOM: We were having a drink in the bar at half time,  
She said to me over her lager and lime,  
It's over, Tommy, it's over and I'm  
Very sorry, but....
- LORR: Sorry but this is the end  
It's time to move on and I'll miss him o.k.  
But the moaning and bellyaching day after day,  
Are you spending the weekend in Dublin again  
Have you met any men, have you met any men?
- LAR: Diddly eye?
- JACKIE: Ah, you know what I mean.
- MICK: The minute he got on the stage you could see  
The command, the charisma, he could've been me.  
There's only a few of us with that appeal,

With the twinkly eyes and the buttocks of steel  
Course I have a better physique over all,  
Or I would if I did any dancing at all,  
But in many respects, I think you can see,  
I *am* Michael Flatley....

LAR: Diddly eye?

JACKIE: Ah, you know what I mean. Watch out –  
*[All lurch to one side as Lar takes a sharp turn..]*

ALL: Wooh!

JACKIE: Watch out for the bend.

LORR: To be perfectly candid I just couldn't stand it,  
And so I decided it's time we disbanded.  
I told him I'm sorry, but this is the end  
And really I hope you and I can be -

TOM: Hope you and I can be friends she said  
Going back to the show with a toss of her head,  
So there I am wishing that I could be dead  
And I'm sitting through 'Lord of the Dance' instead.

LAR: Diddly eye?

JACKIE: Diddly eye, now left at the lights.

MICK: I *am* Michael Flatley, no two ways about it,  
Just check out these hips and you won't need to doubt it  
Come on, the resemblance is only uncanny,  
He could be my brother, if I had had any.  
*[All lurch again, as Lar takes two sharp turns.]*

ALL: Wooh! Wooh!

MICK: On Jean Butlers ringlets I vow  
I am never again getting into this car  
Hey, Lar, we could nearly slow down a bit now,  
We could maybe slow down a bit Lar? LAR?!

LAR: Diddly eye?

JACKIE: Diddly eye, now a right if you can.

LAR: I've never heard anything cornier, man.

TOM: I want her, I need her, I love her, you know?  
But Fiachra, Fiachra, Fiachra, oh,

We have to meet Fiachra, we all have to go,  
To see Fiachra , Fiachra, Fiachra, Fiachra-

LORR: Fiachra, Fiachra.... Fiachra said there might be a party later on, but this probably isn't the best time. Poor Tommy, I didn't really choose my moment, did I? But it's over, it's like, SO over, I mean, hel-LO? We hardly ever see each other, now he's working in Mick's shop, and D.J.ing most weekends. And we've both changed so much. I know, big cliché, he thinks coming up to college has turned my head and I'm getting notions and whatever, and maybe that's.... partly true, but what about him? He's changed too. It's like, okay, he thinks I'm being pretentious, so he's decided to get back at me by being like, *so* down to earth about everything.

[All lurch as Lar takes a turn.]

ALL: Wooh!

LORR: Like, a few weeks ago, I'd persuaded him to come up and visit me for once, and as usual he spent the whole time being surly and rude, saying the pubs were all too posey, and me and my] friends had stupid accents.... Fiachra was not impressed. Anyway, on the morning Tommy was going home, we had coffee in this restaurant. Well, I had cappuccino, which I wouldn't have thought was that ostentatious, but he looked at me like I'd stamped my little foot and demanded swans livers in menstrual blood, I mean come *on!* I wasn't going to see him for a week. We could've been, you know, that pair of young lovers gazing into each others' eyes over a cappuccino, but no, he was too busy being unpretentious and saying I could just go and kill him if he ever grew a goatee, and I was about to tell him get a grip when something caught my eye. It was a sunny morning, and outside the cafe window there was this skip. One of the big stores had dumped some display gear in it, window dressing kind of lark, and it was full of this coloured netting, and that styrofoam packing stuff that looks like snow. These three little kids had climbed in and.... they were, like, *so* in heaven! Pulling the netting this way and that, all pink and



yellow and lime green in the sun, winding themselves up in it and letting it stream out of the yellow skip onto the path, cont'd.... strutting and screaming and laughing, flinging up blizzards of foam, and somewhere in the rubbish they'd found a purple tinselly wig each, so they looked like, I dunno, Martians on acid kind of effort.

And I know it was a silly thing to say, and so NOT what Tommy wanted to hear, but you'd have to say something, wouldn't you, seeing that?

"See that?" I said, "That's.... that's what Dublin is to me. Sometimes anyway. Do you know what I mean?"

And he said, "I know exactly what you mean"

"Yeah?" – I was thrilled.

"Oh, yeah, I agree. An oversized dustbin full of noisy, show-off little brats."

I said nothing. I wanted to say, well, is it a noisy, show-off little brat thing to tell your girlfriend you love her these days? Is showing affection pretentious all of a sudden? What's the point? It's like, anything that makes me happy, he just wants to pee all over it. Mind you, that's what one of the kids had started doing out over the side of the skip. But anyway.... I couldn't be bothered going home last weekend.

ALL: Watch out for the lorry!

LAR: I see it, okay?

ALL: The lights, the lights!

LAR: All right, I'm sorry.

ALL: Go left.

LAR: Thank you, I know the way, if you'd all relax –

ALL: Jesus, the lorry!

MICK: Hands on my hips, looking left, looking right,  
Looking good, is it going to be Jackie tonight?  
Might if she's lucky, she's looking impeccable,  
On for it obviously, that's unmistakable.

ALL: Lar, go easy, they're yellow, they're yellow –

LAR: That's why I'm putting the boot to the floor,

- ALL: Come on, we'll make it, there's no need to bellow -  
Wooh!
- LAR: This car is a great little goer.
- TOM: I've got to get home to Droocomper tonight,  
I can't stay here with Lorraine.  
Sure Mick'll be going - I'll take him aside,  
And tell him I just couldn't bear to be stayin'.
- MICK: Jackie and I have a history, you know?  
Oh, the talk of Droocomper a couple of years ago,  
Magical days they were, nights of romance,  
When she just couldn't wait to get into my pants.  
And tonight I've a chance to get crackin' again,  
When we're on the way home in the car.  
*[All lurch forward as Lar breaks suddenly]*
- ALL: Thanks be to Jesus. Never again.
- LAR: Welcome to Temple Bar.  
*[They got out of the car and look around, all aghast Lorraine.]*
- LAR: Oh my God.
- JACKIE: Yeah.
- TOM: It's.... it's....
- MICK: This is....
- LORR: I know, isn't it just so cool?
- JACKIE: Stepping in puke always is.
- MICK: Two gin and tonic, a lager and lime, and a couple of pints for  
the boys?
- LAR/TOM: Great.  
*Mick makes his way through an imaginary crowd at the bar.  
The others arrange the chairs as pub seats, they're all  
cramped, and occasionally gets jostled by the crowd.*
- LORR: No sign of them yet. That's so weird.
- LAR: Diddy eye?
- JACKIE: Ah, you know what I mean. And you only ever listen to Garth  
Brooks so don't go all authentic on me.
- LORR: Don't be giving him any lip there, Jackie. You know he's a  
bouncer now?

- JACKIE: Yeah, I heard that....
- LAR: Just the odd night, down at Caligula's. Gets me off the farm for a few hours.
- JACKIE: A bouncer....?
- LAR: Yeah. What? They didn't have any vacancies in the style police.
- JACKIE: But.... aren't you a bit.... em....
- LAR: Overqualified? I know, but hell, sure I don't mind slumming it. Just as well in a kip like this says you.
- LORR: You know what she means, Lar.
- LAR: What?
- TOM: That you're a puny-ass.
- JACKIE: No! I didn't mean -
- LAR: Oh, that!
- JACKIE: Sorry, I didn't mean -
- LORR: He's small but deceptively psychotic.
- TOM: Yeah, that's one of the rumours he puts out anyway.
- LORR: Along with the the one about having a black belt -
- TOM: And sometimes a weak heart -
- LORR: Anything to avoid getting the lard bet out of him.
- LAR: I turn away all these mad mountainy bastards but none of them has the heart to hit me.
- LORR: Best time was when this huge drunken lunatic comes to the door, Lar says sorry, I can't let you in, but please don't cause any trouble, cause I'm lucky to have this job -
- LORR/TOM: What with being just out of jail !
- JACKIE: And are you still D.J-ing there, Tommy?
- LAR: Oh, yeah, Tommy's well known there alright.  
*[Lar and Tommy exchange a look.]*
- LORR: How do you mean?
- LAR/TOM: Ah, nothing.
- LORR: Oh, yeah, Tommy, there's this club up here, the G-Spot. I went there with Coir Iosa and Maol Muire one night. SO amazing, I mean, the kind of stuff they play, seriously experimental, right? And okay, it'd be way too weird for Droocomper, like, but still all the same, it'd be good for you to get a look at.... you know -

TOM: At a proper Dublin D.J.?

LORR: I didn't mean....

TOM: Sorry, I know.

*[Lights isolate Tom as he addresses the audience.]*

TOM: Great. Lorraine mentioned a nightclub and I took it as a personal insult. I wish I could stop myself. But, every time she mentions Dublin, or places she goes, or the wonderful Fiachra, it feels like a challenge: he's just so cool, Tommy, how do you measure up? And I don't measure up, I can't, Lorraine's known me all her life, how could I suddenly look cool to her? It'd take more than a goatee.

Oh, well. Probably best that it's over. At least she needn't ever find out about last Saturday night. How could I have been so stupid? And I thought Lar was going to spill the beans about it a minute ago. Embarrassing. Don't know how I'm going to show my face around Caligula's again.

Need to get home, away from this. I'll ask Mick for a lift while he's at the bar. Then, be cool. Say goodnight to her, friendly peck, see you soon no doubt.... Christ I hope Fiachra and the others don't show up. "Hey, Tommy, how are things down, - where is it? You know, my dad's from the country too! Mad crack it is down there, we all got bombed down in Enniskerry last year, but the people were *so nice!* Are they like that down in - where is it? And do you have, like, barn dances or what?" Hope Mick didn't hear about Saturday night. He'd never let me forget it.

*[Lights up on Mick, at the bar, waiting to get served.]*

I am Michael Flatley in many respects,  
How I walk, how I talk, how I radiate sex,  
No question, no argument, it's apparent,  
I am Michael Flatley and these people aren't.

*[He turns back to the bar to order a drink.]*

MICK: Hello? Excuse me?

*[Lights up on Jackie, Lorraine, Lar and Tom.]*

JACKIE: Ah, no. I don't think so, really.

- LORR: It'd be great, Jackie. You could do your show in Caligula's. It'd be like a homecoming gig. You'd have the town at your feet, girl.
- JACKIE: At my throat, more like.
- LORR: Go 'way, we'll all be rootin' for you.
- TOM: I'll give Mick a hand with the drinks.
- LORR: He hasn't even ordered them yet.... [*Tom goes over to Mick*] suit yourself.
- JACKIE: Ah, I don't know. Home town, you know? I'd feel like a chancer doing it in Droocomper.
- LAR: Too shocking for us rednecks?
- JACKIE: No –
- LAR: Bit of diddly eye would be more our line, I suppose.
- JACKIE: Not that again.
- LAR: What was it they said about you in the *Telegraph*?
- JACKIE: Oh, you saw that.
- LAR: What was it again? "... A brilliant comic. But then, if half of her stories about the strange little hamlet of Droocomper are true, then her home town is obviously a cross between Twin Peaks and Glocca Morra,"-
- LORR: What?
- LAR: "- and if it's good citizens are anything as weird as Ms O' Dea describes, I wouldn't care to drink too many shelelaghs with them."
- JACKIE: It was a stupid article, I know. It made my act sound patronising. I swear, it isn't anything like that. Anyone who'd grown up in Droocomper would have the same stories.
- LORR: What kind of stories?
- LAR: Do us one now, sure.
- JACKIE: Go 'way, Lar, here?
- LORR: Don't mind him, Jackie. But what are they about, like?
- JACKIE: Just.... observational stuff.
- LORR: About people in Droocomper?
- JACKIE: Well....
- LORR: People we'd know?

- LAR: We'll die wondering I'd say.  
*[Lights up on Mick and Tommy at the bar.]*
- MICK: I'd love to be able to oblige, Tommy, and I'm sorry to hear about yourself and Lorraine, but.... I can't, sorry pal.
- TOM: Are you not going down?
- MICK: No.... Yeah. But there won't be room. I've Jackie and .... well.... you know.... Jackie's in the front, and.... and the back is full up. Deliveries.
- TOM: You're delivering groceries?
- MICK: Yeah.
- TOM: Tonight?
- MICK: Nnno. No. It's not groceries, it's Jackie's.... stuff. Private stuff. Woman's.... stuff.
- TOM: A.... a car full of it?
- MICK: Look, I know you're upset about Lorraine, but there's no need to take it out on me, you know? It's em.... it's stuff for her show.
- TOM: Oh.
- MICK: See? No mystery, It's all quite straightforward, if you weren't so suspicious.
- TOM: Sorry boss. So she's doing the show in Drocoomper?
- MICK: What?
- TOM: Well, if you're taking the stuff down there in the car...?
- MICK: Ah.... Yeah, well, we wanted to keep it as a surprise, but, yes, Jackie is doing the show in.... in Caligulas, as a matter of fact. Now I need to order some drinks here, alright?
- TOM: Oh, right, sorry boss.
- MICK: Oh.... Tommy?
- TOM: Yeah?
- MICK: Sorry about Lorraine and all. My advice would be, don't sit around whining about it. Pick yourself up off the canvas.
- TOM: What??
- MICK: Like Flatley after 'Riverdance'. That's the phrase he used. He got up and he fought back. People respect that. Oh, they pretend they don't because it's not politically correct, but you've

got to have it, you've got to have the killer instinct....  
Especially in a supermarket.

TOM *[backing away towards the others]:.... Yeah. Right, boss.  
[Lights follow Tom as he joins the others.]*

LORR: Where are the drinks?

TOM: What? Oh, I forgot.

LORR: Jackie, aren't we well out of Droocomper? They all turn strange eventually –

LAR: Maybe we should order a round of shelelaghs.

LORR: – Some quicker than others.

TOM: How would you know? You never –

JACKIE: It's not such a bad place. No weirder than anywhere else.

LAR: There's a slogan Bord Failte missed out on.

LORR: You'll have to come down to Caligula's, I'd say you'd get lots of fresh material with these two working down there.

*[Lar and Tommy exchange a look.]*

LAR: ....Yeah, she might alright. Sure maybe yourself and Mick'll be in some night?

JACKIE: Myself and....? Oh, yeah, sure. whatever. So come on, is Mick having us on or did he really like the show?

LAR: Ah, I think he admires your man's attitude. Ambition, hard neck. A bit like himself, I suppose. I don't mean that in a bad way, I mean, you two are obviously–

JACKIE: Obviously what?

LAR: Well, you know –

JACKIE: Me and Mick? Ah, come on! Sure we split up yonks ago. I was down in Carrick last week and he asked me along to the show, that's all.

LORR: You should've held onto him, girl.

*[Lights on Mick.]*

MICK: I'd say I'm romantic, a regular Byron,  
A lovin' machine with all cylinders firin'.  
The twinkly eyes, and the muscular thighs  
And a gluteus maximus made of cast iron.  
I'm looking around at the women tonight,

Sure I'll hardly be stuck if herself doesn't bite.

*[Lights on Jackie, Lorraine, Lar and Tommy.]*

LORR: He's done, like, *so* well. How many working there now, Tommy? Six or seven? And a couple part time?

JACKIE: What's he like to work for, Tommy?

TOM: Well....

*[Lights on Mick.]*

MICK: I *am* Michael Flatley, no two ways about it,  
Just check out my store you won't need to doubt it,  
I choreograph all the staff in my shop,  
I say hop and they hop when I tell them to hop.  
I am Michael Flatley, God damn it, I'm more.  
I'm a go-getting, thrusting young entrepreneur,  
So fuck the begrudgers, I rate myself highly,  
I am Michael Smurfit and Tony O'Reilly.  
I'm the dominant male, you can see at a glance,  
By my forthright, aggressive, yet elegant stance,  
I'm the cock of the walk, I'm the ram of the flock,  
I'm the species' best chance, I'm the Lord of the Dance.

*[His drinks arrive.]*

Hm? Oh cheers, thanks.

*[Lights on Jackie, Lorraine, Lar and Tommy.]*

LORR: Sure Tommy's only biding his time till the D.J- ing gets more regular, aren't you? He could do alright up here.

JACKIE: So how's Caligula's doing these days anyway?

*[During the following the cast can act out the scenes described.]*

LAR: How's Caligula's?

TOM: – Manic, I swear!

LORR: Oh, Jackie, it's *so*, like, manic, you know?

LAR & TOM: They ought to send peacekeeping forces in there.

JACKIE: Great, the same as it ever was, *so*.

ALL: Wasn't it, wasn't it great, great, great!

*[Mick joins them, bringing drinks.]*

MICK: Two gee and tees and a lager and lime and a couple of pints of the black.



- ALL: Cheers!
- JACKIE: Does Gerry still go there?
- LAR: Gerry McCann?
- LORR: Bye bye! No way! Don't mention that man!
- JACKIE: He'd be talking away, like a regular guy,  
About anything under the sun.
- LORR: That's right.
- JACKIE: And as soon as you open your gob to reply....
- ALL: He's in with the yellowy tongue.
- LORR: – Stop the lights!
- LAR: It's like armageddon above at the bar,
- TOM: And I have the rest of them out on the floor,
- MICK: Young fellas playin' the air guitar,
- LAR: They should've been stopped at the door!
- JACKIE: And a young couple arguing out by the loos.
- LAR: She's spittin' and roarin' a stream of abuse.
- JACKIE: 'I'm sorry', he says, looking down at his shoes,
- ALL: I was only admiring her jumper.
- TOM: And the jiving, the jiving is mental, you know?  
Around and above and about and below,  
And behind and between like a binding machine,  
Just give her a shove and she'll go.
- ALL: I know!
- LAR: And Tommy above at the deck, in the dark,  
Surveying his kingdom of rhythm and sweat,  
And watching the punters all taking their marks,
- ALL: When it's time for the final slow set!  
*[Lar hums 'Je T'aime']*
- LORR: And everyone's watching to see who goes first
- MICK: And nobody wants to be left until last.
- JACKIE: Ask me sister, I'm sweatin' –
- LORR: If worst comes to worst.  
You can always just keep dancing fast.
- JACKIE: Same as it ever was, wasn't it great?
- ALL: Wasn't it, wasn't it great, great, great?

Wasn't it, wasn't it great, great, great?

Wasn't it, wasn't it great, great, great?

JACKIE: Anyone having a drink?

ALL: Great!

LAR: Mine's a water, I'm driving.

LORR: Mine's a valium if he's driving.

There they are! Fiachra! Luidin! Bran!

*[Jackie and Lorraine go off in different directions.]*

TOM: And Naoise and the sons of Ushna are down in the Clarence with the twelve Bens. Do they have some kind of competition in South County Dublin for the most makey-up Irish name?

MICK: I'll see if Jackie needs a hand.

*[He goes after Jackie.]*

LAR: Diddy eye, did you hear her? Oh very superior, hardly in London a year, and she's already sneering you know? If she paid me to see her oul' show I don't know if I'd go.

TOM: You still fancy her so?

LAR: Never fancied her more. Lorraine giving you a hard time?

TOM: It's over, Lar.

LAR: Ah, shit. I'm sorry to hear that, Tommy.

TOM: Yeah.

LAR: Are you okay? I could give you a lift back to Droocomper if you like.

TOM: Ah.... nno, you're grand.

LAR: Well, if you change your mind.

TOM: .... Yeah. Lar, you won't tell her about last Saturday night, will you?

LAR: 'Course not.

*[Lights on Mick and Jackie at the bar.]*

JACKIE: Oh, hi!

MICK: Just a water for me too, Jackie, we'd better get motoring soon.

JACKIE: Sure.

MICK: Sorry about tonight.

JACKIE: Why? It was great.

MICK: Well, it could've been really great, if we hadn't bumped into the

others. Just you, me, and the rhythms of Ronan Hardiman....

JACKIE: It was great to meet the others though. Well, Lar was being a bit unreasonable, I mean, what's his problem? If he'd just wait to see my show before judging. He'd like it, he's got a great sense of humour himself –

MICK: Please, let's not talk about Lar! Jackie, that time we were together – it was.... special, wasn't it?

JACKIE: Of course it was. How do you get a drink around here? Hel-lo? Oops. I sound like Lorraine.

MICK: No, she's a child. You're.... you're a woman, Jackie.

JACKIE: Thanks Mick. [*to bar*] Excuse me?

MICK: You.... you understood me better than.... anyone else.

JACKIE: Yeah, well, it was grand while it lasted.

MICK: So I was wondering....

JACKIE: And that diddly eye thing, what was that all about? You'd think he was the sole guardian of our musical heritage or something!

MICK: Jackie!

JACKIE: Oh.... what is it?

MICK: Well, you know.... why do you think I asked you up here tonight?

JACKIE: Oh.

MICK: Come on, do you want me or what?

JACKIE: I.... think that'd have to be an "or what". But.... thanks Mick.

MICK: You mean....

JACKIE: Yeah. Thanks, though.

MICK: Why do people waste my time like this?

JACKIE: What?

MICK: Oh.... nothing! Never mind! It's fine, it's absolutely.... fine. I hope you enjoyed your evening!

JACKIE: Well.... yeah, it was fun.

MICK: Yeah, but I'm obviously not entitled to a bit of appreciation. Never mind, that's just fine.

JACKIE: Appreciation? I've never heard it called that before.

MICK: Okay, okay.... Jackie....

JACKIE: What?

- MICK: *[In a small voice]*... Please?  
*[Jackie shakes his head.]*
- MICK: Right.... okay.... You can manage the drinks yourself, so?
- JACKIE: Yeah.
- MICK: I'll go and check on my car.  
*[Mick goes outside. Jackie bursts out laughing. Lights on Lorraine, in tears. Mick joins her.]*
- Lorraine, what's the matter? I heard about you and Tommy.  
I'm sorry.... Is he giving you a hard time? Don't you mind him, I could tell you stories -
- LORR: They were out here. Fiachra and the others.
- MICK: Oh, you caught up with them, good.
- LORR: Yeah, it was, like, such a laugh. As if....
- MICK: Yeah?
- LORR: I was telling Fiachra about the show, and how he missed it, and the other two were giggling. And every time Fiachra said something they'd burst out laughing.
- MICK: And what was he saying?
- LORR: It wasn't what he was saying, it was the way he said it.
- MICK: ....Timing, like?
- LORR: I didn't notice it for ages. He was imitating the way I talk?
- MICK: Oh.
- LORR: To my face. And Luidin said it was like so funny? He said I'd have to make up my mind whether I'm Phoebe from Friends or a buck-leppin bogtrotter, but I can't be both in the same breath.
- MICK: C'mere, it's alright.  
*[He puts his arms around her, to console her.]*
- LORR: So not funny, like. Sorry, there I go again.
- MICK: Don't mind them, they're just children.
- LORR: Thanks, Mick.
- MICK: You're.... you're a woman.
- LORR: Sorry about this, Mick, you're very good. No, I'm an insecure little fool who's so desperate to be accepted she'll....
- MICK: ....What?
- LORR: He never paid me for the tickets, Mick. They were just having a

laugh all the time.

*[She weeps uncontrollably.]*

MICK: Don't mind them, you're worth the whole lot of them.

LORR: Ah, thanks, Mick, you're a sweetheart.

MICK: Sure anyone'd do the same. A woman like you....

LORR: I doubt Tommy would at the moment.

MICK: If I was him I wouldn't let you go so easily. I'd be up here chasing you around every chance I got.

LORR: Yeah?

MICK: Oh, yeah.

*[They kiss. Lorraine eventually pulls away.]*

LORR: We'd better get back inside.

MICK: Okay.

*[They kiss again.]*

LORR: Oh. That's enough of that. What am I *doing*?

MICK: It's been a rough night for you, why don't I give you a lift back to your flat, hm?

LORR: No, I'm fine, really, we should go in to the others.

MICK: No, wait! They.... they went off.

LORR: What?

MICK: Yeah, they thought you'd gone with Fiachra so they all went home to Droocomper.

LORR: Oh....

MICK: So why don't you wait in my car – here's the keys – and.... and I'll be out in a minute.

LORR: But –

MICK: Go! The car, now!

*Lorraine goes.*

Yess! Yess!

*[Lights up on Jackie, Lar and Tom as Mick runs in to join them, breathless.]*

Lar, I need a big favour.

LAR: What's the problem, Mick?

MICK: Can you drive Jackie home? Only, my car's been stolen. I called the guards and they said to come up to the station and

wait for news there.

JACKIE: Oh, that's terrible, Mick!

MICK: Tommy, you needed a lift too, didn't you?

LAR: No problem, I can drive you both down.

TOM: Well....

JACKIE: Em....

TOM: Maybe I should stay up, Mick. Pick myself up off the canvas, like.

MICK: Em.... no, I just met Lorraine, she's gone to a party with Fiachra. What can I say? Better off going home.

JACKIE: Well, I'll keep you company at the station.

MICK: No! Please, I'd.... I'd rather be alone. Okay? Sorry about this and I'll see you all soon -

*[Mick starts to exit]*

TOM: But Jackie's gear was in the car too.

JACKIE: What gear?

MICK: Tommy, shut up.

TOMMY: Jackie's gear for the show in Droocomper.

MICK: I really should be getting up to the Garda station -

JACKIE: What? What show?

MICK: Well, I wasn't going to tell you till it was all arranged -

JACKIE: A gig in Droocomper? I can't do that! Mick, how could you do this without telling me? And what sort of gear did you have in the car?

MICK: You know.... stuff for your show. Lights, microphones.... em.... props....

LAR: Spacious car.

JACKIE: What kind of props? I don't use any. Well, apart from the suction pump.

*[They all look at her.]*

Don't ask.

LAR: Mick, what's going on?

MICK: This is typical! You try to get anything done in this country and little small minds get in the way, with their niggling irrelevant objections! My.... my car is stolen, and I'm trying to take deci-

sive action, show a bit of dynamism, but am I allowed?  
Oh, no, it's not bloody politically correct I suppose! Every  
bloody misfit and begrudger has to get their little dig in.  
You make me sick! Do I have to carry the whole bloody lot  
of you all my life?

*[The others stare open-mouthed.]*

Now, if you'll excuse me -

*[As Mick goes to exit again, Lorraine answers.]*

- LORR: Mick, I couldn't get the key to work....  
LAR: Hi Lorraine. You didn't go to the party, so?  
LORR: Mick didn't tell you what happened?  
TOM: No.  
JACKIE: Except that his car had been stolen of course.  
LORR: It's outside, I was just trying to open the doors.  
JACKIE: Did you happen to notice some luggage inside?  
LORR: Like what?  
JACKIE: Oh, microphones, props, and lights.  
LAR: Suction pump?  
LORR: No, there was nothing like that.  
TOMMY: What are you playing at, Mick?  
LAR: You prat?  
MICK: Easy now, easy now, easy now, easy now -  
LORR: Tommy, I'm sorry, I kissed him outside.  
LAR: And then he came in and said we were to go.  
LORR: He told me you'd gone -  
LAR: - Well either he lied,  
Or I'm being really incredibly slow.  
TOM: So it wasn't enough to invite me to town  
And then dump me but now you get off with this clown -  
LAR: Take it easy -  
TOM: This pompous embarrassing fool -  
LORR: Tommy, stop!  
LAR: Take it easy -  
MICK: Yeah, Tommy, be cool.  
LORR: Tommy please!

- TOM: Do I really deserve such a kick in the teeth, that you'd dump me for someone like Mick?  
I mean, Mick?
- LORR: Tommy, please !
- TOM: – I mean, how could you kiss  
Such a boil on humanity's buttock as this?
- MICK: You're.... you're way out of line Tommy.
- LAR: Back off, Mick.
- MICK: Did you tell her about last Saturday night?  
*[Tommy makes a lunge at Mick. Lar tries to intervene, but Tommy knocks him over.]*
- LAR: Ow! Leave it, Mick....
- MICK: You know what I'm talking about, Lar, I'm surprised you didn't tell her about it yourself.
- LAR: Shut up!
- MICK: What he did outside Caligula's? I think Lorraine deserves to hear.
- LORR: I don't care! I love you, Tommy, whatever you did.
- LAR: Lorraine, it really wasn't that bad -
- MICK: That's not what you thought at the time -
- LAR: I'm sure there's an explanation -
- LORR: Whatever, it's not important.
- MICK: Very important at the time, though, wasn't it, Tommy?  
Collecting the stuff all week he was, ransacking my storeroom every chance he got, and then he's on the phone, telling them be sure and send a yellow one. As if they came in any other colour.
- LORR: A.... a yellow one?
- MICK: A big skip outside Caligula's entrance! Full of owl nets and styrofoam.
- LAR: It wasn't in the way or anything. And, I mean, we all do mad things sometimes. Nobody's.... nobody's....  
*[Lorraine goes over to Tommy. They kiss]*
- LORR: .... perfect!
- LAR: Oh, right. Perfect....



- JACKIE: Okay, listen everyone, I think I'll do a bit of my routine now.
- TOM: Jackie, all due respect to your comic timing, but can't it wait till I've smashed his face in?
- JACKIE: No, really, you'll enjoy this. I won't do the whole thing.
- LAR: Oh, well then.... Are you insane?
- JACKIE: Okay! Listen! Those times when you're doing it with a man, right?
- LORR: Tommy, I'm sorry. I was upset and –
- JACKIE: Quiet Lorraine!.... So you're doing it, and suddenly the old problem raises – or to be strictly accurate, ha – ha, – doesn't raise its head -
- TOM: Jackie –
- MICK: You're fired by the way.  
*[Tom and Mick scuffle, Lar gets hit again.]*
- JACKIE: Shh, I'm getting to the good bit now. So you try to reassure him, though not to the point of saying, "don't worry, this happens to me all the time", okay? And there you, well, you usually let it lie, so to speak. But there was this one guy – now this is a bit embarrassing –
- LAR: We left embarrassing behind ages ago. We're nostalgic for embarrassment now.
- JACKIE: Because he and I had this problem frequently, until we discovered a strange but sure-fire way of getting the show on the road again.
- MICK: I really don't think –
- JACKIE: All I had to do was whisper, in a suitably reverential tone, "you are Dr. A.J.F. O'Reilly. You carry the trappings of success with practiced ease. The great and the good hang on your every word, and you move as a collossus among men", and this guy would give a gratified little whisper and say, "yes? Go on", so then it was, "you are Michael Smurfit. You have the buccaneer swagger of those born to the entrepreneurial elite. What's good for you is good for this little country."
- LAR: What...?
- MICK: Look, maybe we should just call it a night –

- JACKIE: So he's "oh, yeah, oh, yeah" breathing noisily, these funny piggy snorts, and swallowing hard, and the eyes are glazing over.  
"You are Henry Kissinger. You play hardball. Not for you the petty restrictions borne by lesser men."
- LORR: This wasn't.... [*she looks at Mick*]....Oh!
- JACKIE: By now he was usually hot to trot, his brain teeming with lurid fantasies of wealth, influence, and discreetly opulent menswear. You know what I reckon?
- MICK: No, and we don't want to hear, you ignorant -
- LAR: Shh. I think she's quite good.  
[*Mick lunges at Jackie. Lar gets in the way and gets knocked down again.*]
- LAR: Don't they have any real bouncers in this pub?
- JACKIE: I reckon there was a tiny little germ of humanity in him, you know? A bit of him that felt embarrassed by his selfishness, his arrogance, his ludicrous posturing. So he had to be constantly reminded that being selfish, arrogant, and ludicrous put him in exalted company. So I'd reel off a few more names, Hugh Hefner, J.R.Ewing, Ben Dunne -
- MICK: This is all lies. I never -
- JACKIE: "You are Ben Dunne. You have earned the right to your own mortality, so fuck the begrudgers." Well, there was never any turning back after that, but just in case, I'd let out random, ecstatic cries, stuff like, "enterprise ethos" and "thrusting young entrepreneur". Mind you, there was no avoiding the fact that what followed must have made me a de facto begrudger.
- MICK: I never, ever snorted like a pig.  
[*Mick goes.*]
- LORR: I wasn't there to see your skip. Oh, Tommy, I'm like, so.... [*she catches herself*].... sorry.
- TOM: Don't be. I know I haven't been fair to you, or your friends.
- LORR: You needn't worry about them. And kissing Mick, well -
- TOM: A cry for help.
- LORR: Exactly.

TOM: Had to be.

LORR: Obviously.

TOM: I guess I'll be looking for more D.J. work now.

LORR: Maybe a couple of nights in Dublin?

TOM: We'll sort something out.

*[Tom and Lorraine go.]*

JACKIE: How was I?

LAR: Dah-ling, you were wonderful!.... That wasn't part of your routine, though, was it?

JACKIE: What makes you say that?

LAR: I mean, if say, you went with someone, you wouldn't really take....private stuff like that, and turn it into a skit, would you?

JACKIE: No. Well, not until it was over.

LAR: Right. But then you.... you would?

JACKIE: Depends.

LAR: On what?

JACKIE: On who.

LAR: Right.

*PAUSE*

LAR: Well, of course, with the right person, it wouldn't ever *be* over.

JACKIE: Right.

LAR: But if someone, say, got involved with you....

JACKIE: Yes?

LAR: He couldn't know, at the start, whether it was going to work out or not....

JACKIE: I suppose not.

LAR: No matter how attractive he found you initially?

JACKIE: Right.

LAR: And funny.

JACKIE: Of course.

LAR: Sexy funny, not, you know....

JACKIE: Attractive covers it.

LAR: Sure. But.... there'd always be the threat of being turned into a comedy routine. I wonder.

JACKIE: You'll die wondering....

*[They look at each other and smile. Spotlight on Mick. Loud drumbeat. He's in a nightclub, dancing, drunk and out of breath.]*

MICK: This is more like it, more my kind of speed, those others were holding me back, but this is more – this is the inside track, would you look at the women, oh, this is more – her over there – more like it, I swear, would you look at – *[addresses passing girl]* I am Michael Flatley come over and dance.... Right....well, maybe later anyway, hah?

I am Michael Flatley, you know at a glance,  
My raunchy, aggressive, yet elegant stance  
I'm the cock of the walk, I'm the ram of the flock,  
I'm the species' best chance, I'm the -

*[Sees another girl]* Dance? Dance? *[She goes]* Wherever you may be....*[he laughs, snorting a bit, then wipes his forehead]*.  
Jesus, I'm wetter than County Fermanagh. *[Trips over someone]* Oops! Sorry pal, I didn't.... It's you!!!! You're him!!!!  
I mean.... See who it is??? What? No, I'm not bothering him,  
I.... relax, I'm.... I'm like him, no time for losers. What, is he too good for us? Alright, I'll get off the dance floor, fine, I was just getting a drink anyway. Michael! Michael! Old son, *[Points to his glass]* Can I tempt you?

THE END

*Design and Production by Deborah Murphy*



macra na feirme