

1 hr play 'Money for Jam'
Dusk scene. W. M. Letts.

Lark Hill

Killiney,

Dublin.



P.R.

MONEY FOR JAMM.

.....

played with song one hour.

Place..Ireland

Time.. about 1942 and 5 years later.

W.M.Letts.

Lark Hill

Ballinlea Road

Killiney Dublin

.....

Author 2short plays performed at Abbey Theatre

3 act play at Gate theatre Dublin.

2 plays B.B.C. West.

M O N E Y F O R J A M .

Scene: Carrickshee - a country house.

of Georgian period ~~to~~ Wicklow.

Time. Some time about 1943.

Characters.

Michael John Heffernan	-	a railway porter
Bidsy Fitzmorris		of Carrickshee house
Terry Dunne		formerly a Grocer's assistant.
Major Morris Fitzmorris		of Carrickshee.
Nanno - Mrs. Connor	-	nurse at one time at Carrickshee, now housekeeper.
Malachy, her son		once in a Mental home.
Mrs. Fitzmorris		widow of Colonel Fitzmorris and mother of Bidsy and Morris
Miss O'Hara		Secretary to the new Jam factory.

There is a sound of sweeping, banging tins while a man's voice is singing rather untunefully the Mountains of Mourne, he stops abruptly at a quick footstep and a voice:

BIDSY: Michael John - is there any word of the Dublin train?

M.J.: There is not yet, Miss Bidsy. She may be stuck anywhere down the line -- it's no good to raise your hopes.

BID.: But Michael John - what can I do? The pony trap has gone back now and anyway I must wait in hopes the train will come. Oh! it's dreadful - no fuel, no trains, sitting in the dark at night for lack of oil and candles.

M.J.: It is indeed, Miss Bidsy, it is indeed. But God's good, maybe she's got to ~~Wodenbridge~~ *by a new some place near.*

BID.: What does Mr. Heeney say - where is he anyway?

M.J.: He's beyond, digging in the garden. Why would he stick in the station, says he, in a station master's cap when the trains don't run an' he wants to dig.

BID.: It drives one mad - this waiting about, if only one could see the wretched engine in sight.

M.J.: Well, miss, engines is only human after all, how can she run on a bellyful of turf - it's not in nature - they have to stop and clean her out an' start again.

BID.: Same old story - 'there's a War on' - and if we're not fighting we're freezing and groping in the dark - Oh! I know it's fair enough that we should have a share - but this East wind!

M.J.: Stand out of it, Miss Bidsy, round by the booking office. In the name of goodness why didn't you come in the motor the way you'd have a warm spot to sit in?

BID.: I wanted to give Malachy the drive in the trap, he loves it so, and he'll drive his mother back and put up the pony. It does him good, makes him feel useful.

M.J.: (with a mysterious tone in his voice) Is that one all right these days, Miss Bidsy?

BID.: Of course he is! He only wants a normal life and kindness - - and happiness. There's no reason why he should ever get -- get odd again.

M.J.: Still an' all it's a risk with them ones. Once they've been in the madhouse you'd not know when the turn would come on them.

BID.: (angrily) Nonsense, Michael John, I won't have you say it-- I hate these hints and this chatter. Malachy is cured! The doctor says he just needs outside work and he gets it in the garden, and with quiet and affection he's as sane as you or I.

M.J.: (doubtfully) He's the lucky man to have you to take him in an' give him his chance.

BID.: An' why wouldn't we? Hasn't his mother been good to us all our lives, the dearest, best nurse children could have? Do you think we'd throw her son out to be driven mad again?

M.J.: God will reward you- there's never a family so good to sick an' sorry as yourselves.. ~~Come into the office-- Mr. Heeney would bid you step inside.~~ but looka, Miss Bidsy, you're shivering. Come into the office.. Mr. Heeney would bid you step inside.

BID.: Into the station master's office?

M.J.: An' why not? - I tell you I'll get a bit of fire lighted - there's some old boxes around.

BID.: I bet the turf is damp.

- M.J.: It is so -- but there's a lot of old forms an' correspondence an' it may go -- where's them matches gone?
- BID.: I've got a lighter -- here you are.
- M.J.: I'll have you warm yet, an' by the help of God the train will be in ~~Worcester~~ ~~Worcester~~ ~~Worcester~~ ~~Worcester~~.
- Bid: Well done! the boxes are kindling.
- M.J.: An' do you sit down now, there's an old Independent for you to pass the time.
- BID.: It's a week old, but I expect I've forgotten the news by now.
- M.J.: There's someone coming down the road, it'll be another passenger.
- BID.: Anyone we know?
- M.J.: It is so, Miss Bidsy - it's Terry Dunne, the returned Yank.
- BID: Do you mean young Terry Dunne who used to be at Dempsey's -- at the bacon counter?
- M.J.: The very same. Did you not know he was back from the States with a fortune?
- BID: Nanno did say she heard he'd come back with a lot of money. How did he get it?
- M.J.: It was the uncle left it to him. They say the uncle was terrible hard on him the ten years he was out there serving in the store, kept him slaving, letting on he'd no money. Then he took a shock one day an' died suddenly leaving young Terry a fortune.
- BID.: He was a nice boy, a shy boy as far as I remember him. He used to bring out our groceries on his bicycle. I

suppose he's a bit above himself now.

M.J.: Well now -- I'd not say that. He's been sleeping at the Post Office and Miss Gaffney says he's very humble in himself, an' he goes into the Dempseys just like one of themselves.

BID.: That sounds all right -- he'd a very nice mother.

M.J.: He had so -- a quiet, decent poor woman. He had her out to share the money an' didn't she get sick an' die on him. Miss Gaffney says it near broke his heart - 'a real mother's son' -- whisht now -- he's coming.

(Voice outside) Anyone around here?

M.J.: (going out noisily) I'm here, Mr. Dunne, is it the Dublin train you're wanting?

T.D.: I'm not Mr. Dunne to you, Michael John. Go on - or I'll call you Mr. Heffernan. But I do want the Dublin train.

M.J.: She'll be here in a while -- Terry. But we've got to be patient. This isn't the States, you know. We're not in such a mortal hurry here.

T.D.: Still it's a pretty cold station this an' the wind is east.

M.J.: Aye -- it's a humoursome harsh wind today. Maybe you'd come inside the office -- there's a lady here -- Miss Fitzmorris.

T.D.: Miss Fitzmorris from Carrickshee house?

M.J.: That same -- Miss Bidsy, would you mind Terry Dunne coming inside?

BID.: But of course not -- how are you, Mr. Dunne, it's ages since we met -- I was a little girl when you went to America.

- T.D.: And you called me Terry, Miss Fitzmorris, when you came to get rashers in Dempsy's shop -- and when I came out with parcels to Carrickshee.
- BID.: So I did -- very well then, Terry, come and sit down-- I'm afraid I have the only chair -- there's a box there, come near the fire.
- T.D.: But it's the long time! and yet it seems only yesterday -- you were little Miss Bidsy and you and your nurse used to come in to Dempsy's.
- BID.: That was Nanno -- Mrs. Connor, she's with us still -- always will be -- and her son Malachy works in the garden.
- T.D. He's all right then -- he got his wits back?
- BID.: Of course, he only suffered from the shock -- seeing his father killed that way in the Troubles -- it would drive anyone mad.
- T.D.: I'm glad -- and Mrs. Fitzmorris, she's well?
- BID.: Yes, mother is fine -- and my brother the Major he is now, -- he's back with us just now. He's left the army and has a job in London.
- T.D.: And you -- you still live here? I can't picture you anywhere but here, Miss Bidsy.
- BID: It wouldn't be life anywhere else -- only existence. I believe I love Carrickshee more than I could love any person. It's my one romance -- but that sounds silly. Please tell me about yourself -- don't you like being a rich man?
- T.D.: Yes, it's like a fairy story -- Dick Whittington maybe. One minute I'm young Terry Dunne, everybody's butt, the boy to do the dirty work and in a trice I'm Terence Dunne with a fortune -- Mr. Dunne, the object of envy -- from whom jobs and drinks are expected -- but I'm still

the boy who brought the groceries to Carrickshee.

BID.: Yes, I remember you so well. You came and swung me one day - Nanno thought us both 'bold'-I to ask you and you to swing me.

T.D.: You had long hair that blew out in the wind.

BID.: I remember another day. The beech tree near the house was leafing and the anemones were all in bloom underneath. You stood and stared at it and said: 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever'. Morris and I didn't even know the quotation.

T.D.: What a young prig I was --

BID.: That's what we thought.

T.D.: I'd just discovered Keats.

BID.: You were reading poetry in your spare time?

T.D.: Yes, we had an old Golden Treasury in the house and I used to read it in bed -- but before that when my father was alive he used to read us Pope's translation of the Iliad at night - so I love poetry and am always ashamed to say so.

BID.: Why? I expect you write it too -

T.D.: I do .. now I'm a rich business man it'll be just my excusable odditty -- but for a grocer's assistant it would be presumption.

BID.: Why? who said this --

'I like to know a butcher paints
Candlestick-maker much acquaints
His soul with song --

- T.D.: 'Or haply mite
Blows out his brains upon the flute.'
It's Browning. I don't know if we've got it right. But
you feel that's an excuse for a grocer's boy to write
poetry?
- BID.: But you're not a grocer's boy now - I'm sure you're an
idealist -
- T.D.: Perhaps - if I may be a realist too.
- BID.: Don't they combine?
- T.D.: The realist must admit all the obstacles in his way - his
own laziness and selfishness, the obstructiveness of human
nature to every scheme proposed for its own good.
- BID.: I know you have some splendid idea and you have the money
to carry it out - I suppose we'll know soon?
- T.D.: Yes - if it comes off you'll know soon as I shall want to
get started.
- Bid.: I feel thrilled already. No - I won't ask you. It shall be
a surprise.
- T.D.: But surprises aren't always nice.
- BID.: That's so! I once got a hateful black doll in my Christmas
stocking. I felt cheated.
- T.D.: Perhaps you'll feel cheated when you know my plan.
- BID.: I suppose you're going up to Dublin about it?
- T.D.: Yes - Solicitors complicate life, don't they?
- BID.: What about a cigarette - I've got enough really -
please do.

- T.D.: I'm a dull dog, I don't smoke. I had to do without the price of them for so long that I lost the youthful zest - but I wish I could offer you one.
- BID.: I've got my own. You have been poor, Terry - you know how it feels when you can't afford to get your shoes mended?
- T.D.: Yes - but I had an object in economizing and that gilds a bitter pill.
- BID.: What?
- T.D.: My mother - to bring her out to America, to dress her in a rustling silk skirt, to see her by my fireside - and when the chance came it was too late.
- M.J.: (from the door speaking loudly) Take heart now, she's at Carrigduff ~~Woodenbridge~~, with the help of God she should be here in twenty minutes.
- T.D.: Well I'm not in such a hurry -- tell her to take it easy, Michael John.
- BID: I'm in a hurry, I want to do a lot in Dublin.
- T.D.: Oh, so do I, but you've witched me off business. I've always thought of Carrickshee as the land of romance where time was forgotten. Did you know my mother was a maid there once?
- BID.: Yes, to Granny - we loved your mother, she was beautiful and so - I think elegant is the word.
- T.D. She loved your grandmother - the household, the old General your grandfather, the dignified easy way of the house, its graciousness, its kindness - are such households doomed?
- BID.: Carrickshee is. It's down on the books - for sale. (gives a sob) oh! I'm sorry - but I can't bear it, I just can't bear it.

T.D.: I'm so sorry, Miss Bidsy -- can't you keep it?

BID.: No . . . you know what wages are now, and the cost of everything -- it's going to rack and ruin - the garden all nettles and brambles now, the avenue overgrown -- Nanno is the only house servant and Malachy works in the garden in his own way. Morris says we must sell - but he doesn't really care.

T.D.: And you can't bear the idea of seeing it sold - even to someone who could keep it up?

BID.: To a private owner - someone rich -- yes, I could bear that - or a Convent - Religious orders are so tidy aren't they?

T.D.: Yes, very tidy - but there are so many Convents and Monasteries.

BID.: I couldn't bear some tradesman to get it - or these housebreakers who just buy to break up the house and cut all the trees - our lovely beeches - the avenue trees would go.

T.D.: That would be sacrilege - you don't think a tradesman might respect your trees?

BID.: No - imagine a Canning factory at Carrickshee.

T.D.: Think of the work it could give. Where do your girls go nowadays? Do they find work here near their homes?

BID.: No, they go to Dublin - or to England.

T.D.: You wouldn't rather they stayed in the country with work near by?

BID.: Oh! I would - I'm wondering if I couldn't get a job near here - (pauses) Terry - I'll tell you a secret - I'm going up to Dublin to see about a secretarial course -- I thought maybe I could lodge at the Post

office and get a job in the town - but I'm afraid it will be very slow - I'll have to learn shorthand.

T.D.: You will, it's a good idea, a hard idea for you, Miss Bidsy, - but go on with it, work will come.

BID: Oh! I have wild dreams - to write a best-seller and buy back Carrickshee..

T.D.: From that horrible tradesman you picture sitting in your drawingroom?

BID.: Yes - how I hate him!

T.D.: But will he sell? I doubt it.

(Door opens loudly)

M.J.: She's signalled - you'll want to get your ticket. Miss Bidsy.

BID: Get it for me, Michael John, third return.

M.J.: Right, Miss, you won't have a crowd, I'll look you out a carriage for your two selves.

BID: I expect Mr. Dunne goes first-class.

T.D.: Not I! I like third class society every time.

BID: You could read in first-class solitude. Haven't you a book of poetry on you?

T.D.: Certainly, - the collected Yeats - I'm trying to understand the later poems, as a boy I spent a hectic holiday on a very second-rate bicycle following the early ~~trails~~ ^{trails} to Drumcliff and Dromahaire, the Rosses and Lisadell - trade and poetry can meet, Miss Bidsy -- ~~Let~~ ^{Let} me take your bag for you. We'd best follow Michael-John.

(Sounds of a train are heard)

Pause

PART II

Sound of a gong.

Major F. Thank the Lord for that. I thought the President had proclaimed a general Fast. Are we allowed to eat, Nanno?

NAN: Now, Master Morris, have patience, dear. Didn't I say it to you a dozen times a day before you got into breeches - you were always in a hurry.

MAJOR: I'm like the army mules, Nanno, my stomach tells me when a meal is due.

NAN: You've got very Englishy with your Army ways but here you are and you'd best start, for the mistress is using the iron while it's hot and Miss Bidsy is weeding - the poor child she does nothing else and she might as well sweep back the sea off the shingle.

MAJ.: Like Canute! . . . What is it today? - - smells good. Stuffed breast of mutton? Nanno, you're the good cook! Anyway there's food in this happy island.

NAN.: I hope the potatoes will be done enough, Malachy brought them a bit late. He was wanting to help Miss Bidsy. He's like her shadow, always at her heels . . . no wonder, for she's so good to him.

MAJ.: Nan, is Malachy really all right?

NAN: He is indeed, Master Morris, he'll have his moods - but which of us doesn't? Some days he's quiet in himself but always gentle and biddable. He's as harmless as a baby.

MAJ.: I hate to say it, Nanno, but it's a risk you take and if the house gets sold what do you plan to do?

NAN: There's the lodge at the south gate, Miss Bidsy has a notion for the three of us to go there.

MAJ.: But whoever buys the house - and I pray it is sold - will want the lodges, we'll have to sell with free possession.

NAN: God is good - Miss Bidsy will find a way.

MAJ.: Of course you'll have your pension out of the sale, Nanno, you're one of the family.

NAN: I know it, Master Morris, it's the love that counts, not the money.

MAJ.: Still one can't live on air - this mutton is very good - did Jimmy the Post come yet?

NAN: He should be here any minute, I'll see if his bicycle is in sight - and I hear the mistress on the stairs.

(Sounds of exit and rather hasty entrance)

MRS. F.: Morris dear - you started, I'm so glad. I was ironing a blouse, I seemed to have nothing to wear for the afternoon - yes, carve for me, dear. I do like Nanno's stuffing, a bit of thyme makes all the difference.

MAJ.: Thyme in stuffing and time in starting, it does, mother; if you want to get to the Moores in time for Bridge. It's a long way, we must start after lunch. Is Bidsy coming?

MRS. F.: No, she won't do anything that's reasonable, Morris. She is a worry, that child. I wish she was normal like you - it's all the land and the place, but she knows it must go.

MAJ.: Where does she get her notions? - you're a realist, Mum, you accept the sustained negatives of life.

MRS. F.: I think it's your Aunt Isabel, she wrote poetry and lived on an island with cats. Cats and islands do seem to comfort people - hush .. I hear Bidsy.

- ID.: Hulloo, Morris - here's the post, Jimmy had a puncture, so it's later than usual. Potatoes won't be cooked enough, I should have chased Malachy off sooner, he was sweeping for me, he's so keen to work, poor boy!
- MAJ.: Bidsy - Malachy is not a boy, he's a strong, big man - the truth is I hate to go away and leave an ex maniac about the place with you three women.
- BID.: We've talked all this out before Morris, Malachy's only chance is a quiet, happy life, he gets it here and a Mental home might send him off again. Mother agrees.
- MRS. F.: Yes, Morris. I promised Nanno he should stay while he seems all right, and except for getting headaches and being a bit depressed I think he's sane enough - and he really does quite a lot. So many people in England I hear employ imbeciles, they say no sane person will do house work *once* (rings a hand bell) *they've done it.*
- MAJ.: We'd better start after lunch, the Moores want us early. What are you doing, Bidsy?
- BID: I'm perfectly happy, thanks. Dogs and garden for me on a day like this - I don't know how I'll endure Dublin when I take my course of Secretarial.
- MAJ.: I wish you well in whatever office you finally achieve -- ah! here's a good old Apple Charlotte - Nanno knows I love it -
- NAN.: Don't I remember all your likings? - indeed I had you well spoilt - (goes out, shutting door).
- MRS. F.: Anything in your post, Morris, you've got a business letter? Is it Hadden and Jones?
- MAJ.: Wait a bit - hum! - oh! - I say this is good news - they've had an offer at our price, say we should take it, perfectly sound money - there, mother, read it.

MRS. F.: Oh! -- Bidsy darling, my glasses, they must be on my dressing table -- if not there they might be in the kitchen - anyway Nanno will know.

BID.: Very well, mother, I'll look (door shuts behind her).

MRS. F.: Oh, Morris, did you see how white she went?

AJ.: It can't be helped. We can't hang on here for a romantic girl and a mad man.

MRS. F.: That sounds so brutal, darling.

AJ.: Truth is a very brutal thing.

MRS. F.: Still I liked the good old days when one ignored it or wrapped it up.

AJ.: Won't do in these days, Mum. We swallow it without milk or sugar - one truth is that our 'landed gentry' are done - nobody wants them.

MRS. F.: But why not? They're all working harder than their own yard men and still trying to subscribe to all these nurses and doctors and funds to help people who'd rather be let alone.

Bid. Here are your spectacles, ^{Mother} Mum, in the bathroom.

AJ.: Exactly, but no-one wants flannel petticoats at Christmas, they prefer Nylons - why not? As for the children - they guess where ~~the~~ ^{the} toys come from and despise them accordingly - it's a brave new world and the tides of time have thrown us up dry and withered - flotsam - that's what our class is now.

BID.: You're very poetical, Morris, but suppose we are Flotsam, we can stay loyal to our old traditions.

AJ.: Meaning Nanno and Malachy - even if he cuts your throats one night?

BID.: Nonsense! Anyway mother's throat is safe because when the house is sold she's going to a nice suburban villa - Rathgar or Ballsbridge and playing Bridge three afternoons a week - aren't you, Mum?

MRS.: F.: I hope so, darling, after all one must pass the time somehow and I'll be improving my brain. I only wish you'd come too and enjoy life like an ordinary girl.

MAJ.: Being typist to a little one-hoss attorney in a country town in Ireland won't be quite a thrill - if you get such a job and it means hard work to get that.

BID.: Well then do let me be miserable in my own way.

MAJ.: So be it - they say the final aim of tolerance is to allow people to be as miserable as they like.

BID.: And you've never told me what the Agents said - Mother sent me for her spectacles so that you could discuss it without me.

MAJ.: Bright girl! They've got a good offer - at our price - considering the place didn't reach the reserve at the Auction this seems a gift from Heaven.

MRS. F.: It's probably some rich Englishman. They think they'll get cheap servants, and beefsteak every night for dinner.

BID.: Don't they say who it is?

MAJ.: No, the would-be buyer will probably call upon us personally and discuss the sale.

BID.: But he must know the place already if he's so keen to get it.

- MAJ.: Probably he's snooped about it secretly - but he's sure to be just a screen to some collective body, a Convent or School or Convalescent - still you'd think he'd want to bargain over the price - he can't be an Irishman!
- MRS. F.: Why not, dear ?
- MAJ.: If he were he'd appreciate our two national sports, haggling and smuggling.
- BID.: Now you're trying to be smart - but so long as he's not acting for some awful factory I'll try and bear it.
- MRS. F.: Morris! - look at the time, we must be going. I don't suppose he'll call today, but if he does do be nice to him, Bidsy. Be eloquent on the beauty of Georgian houses when the blinds don't go wrong and your step-ladders don't break down leaving you nine foot high in the air.
- BID.: If he's rich he'll love to get a hundred yards of damask for these windows.
- MRS. F.: What fun to have money and free will to choose all your furnishings. That's the worst of heredity - I mean inherited places, you must take what your forbears have left and we poor wives must accept our husband's forbears and their tastes!
- MAJ.: Portraits and all - Bidsy you may keep all the *family* portraits in your cottage. I don't see them glowering at me in a London flat, they'd feel dreadfully out of it - *and I should keep apologizing to them for the company I keep.*
- MRS. F.: Oh! I've forgotten my bag -- I won't be long, Morris, but I must get it. I'll want my purse . . . I hope I don't lose much - does this hat suit me, Bidsy - I've retrimmed it?

BID.: Twizzle round, darling. Yes, it's quite Dublin via Paris - arrange your veil over one eye - that's it.

MAJ.: Don't be too long, mother, I know you when you get upstairs.

MRS. F.: No, I'll hurry, (exit, shutting door).

MAJ.: You know Bidsy, mother is enchanted at the thought of leaving Carrickshee. Do you realize that she's been a prisoner since she came here as a pretty bride from Dublin.

BID.: She has an urban mentality but I think your prisoner idea is far-fetched. Dad was very kind. They didn't understand each other, but what married people do? After all they're not related - *as you and I are who can quarrel and enjoy it.*

MAJ.: Oh! yes they were as happy as people are who don't look to divorce to settle their little differences.

BID.: She was lucky to get Carrickshee. What more could she want?

MAJ.: Sister - you have a one-track mind.

BID.: I'm like Dad, the place is good enough for me. You've got Anglicized.

MAJ. We Anglo-Irish are neither fish nor flesh in this brave new world. We're all of us mongrels over here - except the Firbolgs in remote islands. But we don't call ourselves Gaels - the Gaels were determined Colonists who threw out the original Irish and have held on stoutly - but we're West Britons and no-one has any use for us.

BID. I don't care.

MAJ. I wish you did. I wish you'd chuck this place and

come to London with me - you'd soon get a job.

BID. ^{My}
~~The~~ body might live but my spirit would die.

MAJ. Rubbish! that's high-falutin'. You'd find yourself immensely popular. The dear sentimental English have always idealized the cold, commercial Celt. You could be the rage.

BID. They'd expect me to have a brogue - I notice that English novelists give their Irish heroines a brogue.

MAJ. Poor dears, they know no better -- you'll have to say 'Will I wet the tay, acushla?' if you want to be a real social success.

BID. I'd rather be dead. Anyway I can live on what Daddy left me and I'll get a job presently.

MAJ. You won't like seeing a stranger here - you'd be wise to go to Dublin with mother.

BID. No, Nanno and I will stick together.

MAJ. And Malachy?

BID. Yes, I'll give him a home - look at him out there, working away - he's going to plant my 'incarnations' as he calls them.

MAJ. I don't like it.

BID. Here's mother at last.

MRS. F. I'm sorry, darling, of course I couldn't find it, something on top of it - well, goodbye, Bidsy darling, take care of yourself.

BID: I always do, goodbye, mother, make some money.

MAJ. Goodbye, Bid, don't worry if we're late, I know what the Moores are - Irish hospitality and good whiskey - I hope I meet a pump, I fancy the petrol is low - bye, bye.

(Door shuts and a motor car is heard going off).

Bidsy moves about, humming to herself. A man's voice says urgently 'Miss Bidsy! Miss Bidsy!'

BID. Is that you, Malachy? Where are you?

MAL. Here -- at the window, Miss... *just behind you.*

BID. What's the matter? Why do you look excited? Anyway you mustn't open the window to speak to me. Why are you kneeling out there by the window? You know a real proper family gardener like you doesn't open the window that way.

MAL: What does he do, Miss Bidsy?

BID. He wipes his shoes carefully on the mat, tramps loudly down the hall, knocks at the door and says: 'What shall I do for you this afternoon, Miss Bidsy?'

MAL. I was looking to plant all your incarnations in the bed foreinst the window, miss - I was thinking I'd hear you singing, maybe - I love to hear you sing, Miss Bidsy... *it's like being in the Church... but the tears come some way.*

BID. *Is it* Do you, Malachy, what shall I sing?

MAL. The one about Robert Emmet an' the poor lady -- it's sad - I like that... *I like sad things and... deaths.*
(*slowly*) Deaths... *it's beautiful.*

BID. 'She is far from the land'. It's a bit beyond me, but I'll try, but you go on planting those carnations.

(Record of song 'She is far from the land' or another song could be used.)

(A door bell rings at some distance, then
sittingroom door opens and Nanno speaks)

NAN. 'Tis Mr. Dunne, Miss Bidsy -- Terry Dunne that was at Dempsys - 'deed I wouldn't have known him from the slipeen of a boy he was -- he's a fine figure of a man now.

BID. What does he want, Nanno?

NAN. He asked for the Major or your mother, but I'm after telling him they're out, so he says 'Would Miss Bidsy see me I wonder?' I showed him into the drawingroom that's as cold as a naked statue, and I says I'll ask you.

BID. Oh! show him in here, Nanno, and just shut the window, I was singing to please Malachy but there's a draught.

NAN. Very good, Miss, I'll bring him in. Well, well, life is topsy turvy with Terry Dunne in the drawingroom instead of at the back door with the messages!

(BIDSY plays a few notes on the piano till
the door opens again)

NAN. Mr. Dunne.

T.D. I'm disturbing you, Miss Bidsy, you were practising.

BID. No, I was strumming, do sit down -- I hope you had time enough for your business in Dublin that day - when we last met.

T.D. Oh! yes -- and you? Have you fixed up your secretarial course?

BID. Yes - I have a nice Aunt in a cottage in the Dublin Mountains, I'll live with her and get a bus into Dublin every day. You see, Terry, all my tiresome kinks are supposed to be inherited from her - or I share them with her - some common ancestor I suppose.

T.D. I wonder if you're as odd as you pretend. I grant you

you're a 'Romantic' in the old Irish tradition, but I expect you're ready to face facts, perhaps to weave them into a new magic carpet of romance.

- BID. No - not yet and not today. I'm up against a solid fact. We've got a buyer for the house. I believe I've been pretending that it wouldn't sell - and that we'd hang on somehow.
- T.D. And now you're sorry for the fact - of course, but it had to come. Do you know the buyer yet?
- BID. No, I suppose it's a rich Englishman, if he keeps things up I'll try and like him.
- T.D. Suppose it's a rich Irishman.
- BID. Still better if he has taste and can appreciate what he buys.
- T.D. You haven't a guess at the buyer, Miss Bidsy?
- BID. No - have you?
- T.D. Certainly - you know him.
- BID. Not - you don't mean - you can't, not YOU, Terry?
- T.D. Yes, if my bid is accepted I hope to be the buyer.
- BID. But - what will you do here? Are you married - or going to be married?
- T.D. Only in dreams, Miss Bidsy.
- BID. But it's so big - for one man! *It seems waste -- what can you do here?*
- T.D. I have bought it - or hope to do so, for a jam factory.

- BID. (Fiercely, chokingly) A jam factory! You're mad. Morris won't sell it for that - how dare you suggest it? - it's odious, frightful - the very thing I told you I dreaded -- and you sat there, laughing in your sleeve, planning this while you looked so smug.
- T.D. And you won't let me say a word on my side?
- BID. What can you say? That day at the station you let me talk to you, tell you my thoughts while you acted the sympathetic friend, the humble admirer of an old County house - humbug!
- T.D. Go on - say your worst.
- BID. Yes, I will. You played on me with poetry - how you loved the Iliad and now read Yeats and -- and you can look all starry-eyed and quote Keats - you and 'your thing of beauty is a joy for ever' - to make jam out of it. You prig and humbug.
- T.D. All that if you like - but do you see no beauty in an apple tree in Spring? - yet I guess your Nanno makes apple pies and apple jelly. Do you never look at a cherry tree in fruit and not praise God for its beauty? But it can give you canned cherries for your store-room. As a child did you never wish you could have a necklace of red currants as beautiful as jewels?
- BID. But you could grow all those things and not commercialize the place.
- T.D. Grow them all for myself? I want to grow them for Ireland - yes, one can serve Ireland other ways than writing ballads or making wars, one can give healthy work under good conditions, work that girls can do near their homes. Once you have them you can do a lot for them, mind and body. But there's no romance in that for you and your class?
- BID. Oh! be sarcastic if you like, but the thought of these rooms being full of vats of jam and piles of cans is just horrible.

- T.D. I shall keep these rooms much as they are - I shall want a library and one can have gracious offices - why not? But - as you say, the Major will probably refuse my bid, especially when you have talked it over with him.
- BID. No, he wants the money, so does mother.
- T.D. And you?
- BID. Oh! I shall go away. I'll find a place for Nanno and Malachy and myself.
- T.D. I had planned to offer you one of the lodges, and to build an addition to it if you'd like it.
- BID. Thank you - no, I'd rather go right away, I want to remember Carrickshee as it was and never -- never to see it again.
- T.D. Not with all its acres in fruit blossom and the garden kept as it used to be when you were little Miss Bidsy with the floating hair.
- BID. No, I don't want any more poetry.
- T.D. I'm afraid you can't escape it, for you are making me think of you as 'La belle Dame sans merci'.
- BID. (very coldly) Suppose we get back to business, you want to see Major Fitzmorris? He may be late this evening, but if you care to call in the morning I'll tell him to expect you.
- T.D. Thank you, I'll be grateful. Goodbye, Miss . . Miss Fitzmorris.
- BID. Goodbye, Mr. Dunne - I'll ring for Mrs. Connor.
- T.D. No, - please, don't. I know my way out..

(A pause, the door shuts behind him. A hoarse whisper from the window - 'Miss Bidsy').

BID: Oh! Malachy - how you startled me! What are you doing? I told you not to open that window at the bottom.

MAL: I had it open this long while, listening to that one.

BID: That was very wrong - please go back to your work, Malachy, I want to be alone.

MAL: You're crying, Miss, he made you cry.

BID: Nonsense, I'm getting a cold, my eyes are watering, ... don't stare at me like that, Malachy.

MAL: The voices told me to listen, they keep at me these days - they said 'That one will put you in a mad-house, Malachy -- he'll put Miss Bidsy in too - '

BID: Nonsense, Malachy, there are no voices, you must stop your ears - you've not talked like that since you came out - cured.

MAL: They're whispering about me, Miss, I hear them at it, under the bed they are, whisper, whisper. They're going to drop poison down the chimney. That one had poison in his pocket for you, Miss Bidsy, you mustn't eat those sweets he gave you.

BID: There are no sweets, Malachy, you'd best go to the kitchen and get a cup of tea and ask your mother to bring my tea.

MAL: Best not -- they'll maybe put poison into it.

BID: Rubbish, shut the window and go round to the kitchen. I'm going to ring for tea. (rings bell and calls) Nanno! Nanno!

NAN: I'm coming, Miss Bidsey -- what is it at all? Why,

child dear, your face is white as the tablecloth - what is it has you so upset?

BID: (wildly) Everything, Nanno, Terry Dunne is buying the place for a jam factory.

NAN. God forgive him - what a notion!

BID. But that's not all -- Malachy is queer today, he's got ~~visions again~~ *his voices again.*

NAN. It's true, he's been odd, talking of plots against him and those voices he hears.

BID. We must get the doctor for him tomorrow, get him to bed early and give him a bromide. I'd lock his door, Nanno, *if I were you.*

NAN. I will so. I wish Master Morris and the mistress would come back, I'd be easier with a man about the place.

BID. Don't fret, get him off to bed.

(Fade out with music)

Clock strikes seven. Footsteps and rattle of a tray.

NAN. They're not back yet, - would you think it was a puncture?

BID. Not a bit - it's another rubber of Bridge -- you might put the saucepan on the stove with the cocoa, I'll have it later. Did Malachy go off to bed?

NAN. Quiet as a lamb. I left his cup of tea by him and he'd taken it when I looked in, so he'll go off to sleep, please God, an' no trouble before morning. One learns to live by the day, Miss Bidsy.

BID. You look done to death yourself, Nanno, do go to bed too.

NAN. I will when I've said my prayers, it's just one of these headaches again.

BID: Good night then, they'll be back any minute now -

NAN: Good night, my dotey. God keep you (door shuts)

BID: (dialling a number on telephone) Is that Doctor O'Hara? - yes, it's Bidsy Fitzmorris - oh yes, we're all right, thanks, but I'm a bit worried about Malachy Connor - Nanno's son - well, he's talking oddly about voices he hears - those persecution notions - oh! no, he's perfectly gentle. He's almost like a pet dog with me. Yes, of course, tomorrow will be heaps of time, his mother has got him off to bed with a bromide. She says everything is quiet - No, of course I'm not *scared* and we have Morris in the house. Right! - good night.
(Plays some bars on the piano - there is a noise from the window.)

BID: (sharply) Who's that?

MAL. 'Tis only myself, Miss Bidsy, I went out to shoot at the Devil.

BID: (fear in her voice) How did you get that gun, Malachy?

MAL: 'Tis the Major's, and a lovely gun too. Did you know I could use a gun, Miss?

BID. No, I don't know it now. Put it down, Malachy, over there on the table - just to please me, like a good boy.

MAL. I'd rather hold it so, Miss Bidsy, it's safer, the Devil might be after me.

BID. Don't you know you can't shoot him without a silver bullet.

MAL. I've not got one - have you, Miss?

- BID. No, we'll have to wait till morning and get some. But the Major will be so angry about his gun. How did you get it, Malachy? I thought you'd gone to bed -
- MAL. You did so, an' they locked the door on me but I got out at the window, there's a loose bar, they've never guessed I'd escape them that way.
- BID. But how did you get the gun?
- MAL. Didn't I slip round by the side door and into the gun room, that's a lovely gun - I went to the wood, I thought that man might be in it, the voices said to kill him, the way he'd do us no harm. He may be listening to us now. He made you cry, I'll shoot him when I see him.
- BID. I shall cry if you don't give me the gun, Malachy.
- MAL. (obstinately) I will not. You'd maybe hurt yourself - I'll not part with it.
- BID. I'm going to make you some cocoa, Malachy. It's hot already - watch now, I'll put in a lot of sugar.
- MAL. I'll not drink it, for it's poisoned. The voices say the devil is putting poison in everything.
- BID. That's nonsense - watch me drinking it - there now! I'm not dead, now I'll give you the same cup.
- MAL. Ah! no, you're after the gun - I'm watching you. Do you hear a little scrabbling noise by the sofa?
- BID. I've heard a mouse there.
- MAL. It's no mouse, it's old Horny himself, he's watching us.
- BID. (jumping to her feet, upsetting something) Do you

hear the car - it's by the lodge. Mr. Morris will be angry if he finds you with his gun.

MAL. I've got to use it quick, an' then put it back where I found it.

BID; Shoot at the devil then - quick - then let me have the gun.

MAL. I'm tricking you, Miss Bidsy - It's you I'm going to shoot. The voice said if you're shot you'll go to heaven - and you'll never want to cry. It's easy dying, Miss, I'll hold the gun just so, an' you're done - did you not see rabbits shot - it's easy.

BID . (her voice shaking) Very well, Malachy, but you must let me say my prayers first.

MAL. Ah, you're good enough - the car's coming - I'll have you dead for Master Morris to find.

BID. Let me go - let me go!

(Sounds of a car outside. It stops at the hall door).

BID. Help! - quick - it's Malachy -

(Door opens violently, there's the sound of a shot)

MAJ. My God -- Bidsy!

Five Years later.

Terry Dunne is on the telephone - He is dialling.

D. Hulloo! - Hulloo! - is that Kelly's Hotel? good!
 This is Dunne's Jam factory - yes, it's Mr. Dunne
 speaking - oh! you, Mr. Kelly? Everything fixed for
 the dinner tonight? - ah, that's good, You know I
 want it to be a real harvest home occasion - you'll
 be out this morning with all the crockery and stuff?
 Fine - yes, I want it to be in the old dining room
 - oh! will you bring out candles - what? Oh, of
 course we've electric light - but I'm using the
 old silver candelabra - old fashioned? Of course
 it is, I want the Georgian atmosphere - Very well,
 You'll come out yourself - what's that? Flowers?
 I hadn't thought of that - we've got lots in the
 garden - oh, I'll find some girl to arrange them -
 Right! - so long. (rings off)

(He whistles to himself - door opens)

D. Oh! good morning, Miss O'Hara, this is a lovely day for
 our Festa - Indian Summer, isn't it?

ec. Yes, it looks fine so far, Mr. Dunne. Do you want me to
 take down letters?

D. Not just yet. I've been ringing Kelly about the dinner,
 he's bringing everything out this morning and the cook
 and waiters will come in the afternoon. Is the band
 fixed for dancing.

ec. That's all right, Mr. Dunne. Everyone is thrilled about
 it. There's not been anything like this before in the
 village.

D. But they've earned it, haven't they? We've all been
 working for five years, thro' difficult days too.
 We've weathered a lot - frost and snow - that ghastly
 spring of last year when everything froze. But it's a
 kind soil this - we won through.

ec. I was in Dublin last week ^{end} and I saw Carrickshee jams

and jellies in all the good shops - and that poster, Mr. Dunne, the one with the fairies dancing round the jam pot - it looks lovely - it was on all the hoardings going out to Dun Laoghaire.

T.D. (laughing) Wasn't I wise to save the life of the lone thorn in the south field?

SEC. Of course it's nonsense, but no sensible person would risk moving a lone thorn.

T.D. Exactly! I don't think the fairies will desert us now. Perhaps they'll be dancing tonight while we're dancing. By the way you might look at the drawing room and see if it looks all right for dancing - I hope your fiance can come down in time, can he?

SEC: He'll come on his motor-bike - did you get anyone to fill my place, Mr. Dunne - I won't leave you till you do, have you had any good answers to your advert?

T.D. Yes, I've got some replies to look over, but I'll miss you, Miss O'Hara. You seem a bit of Carrickshee by now. When you're married you must both come down for week-ends. Now - anything else?

SEC. Oh! the proof of the new poster came, you must see it.

T.D. The Pomona one? The girl under the apple tree? Let's see it.

SEC. Here it is, it came this morning - Isn't it lovely?

T.D. That's a real artist's work - that poster will be bought on its own merits - the girl's upturned face - it's a picture. Why shouldn't an advertisement be a picture?

SEC. Does the girl remind you of anyone, Mr. Dunne?

T.D. No - who is it?

SEC. It's like Miss Fitzmorris.

T.D. Miss Fitzmorris - I've scarcely seen her above three times in the last five years.

SEC. I see her . . . in the town, and I've met her wandering in the wood here when the primroses were out.

T.D. Have you? I never meet her -- I know she feels the changes here - it's natural. Well, buzz off like a good girl to look round at things.

(Exit Miss O'Hara shutting door. Terry whistles again and the Secretary reappears)

SEC. Mr. Dunne - isn't that a coincidence? Miss Fitzmorris is here, asking to see you.

T.D. To see me?

SEC. Yes, she says if you're free may she see you for a few minutes. She won't keep you.

T.D. Oh - of course . . . of course. Show her in.

SEC. Come in please, Miss Fitzmorris, Mr. Dunne is disengaged . . . I'll go round the rooms now, Mr. Dunne.

T.D. Come in, Miss Fitzmorris . . . do sit down, how are you?

BID: I'm quite well, Mr. Dunne, thanks, but I won't waste your time with chat, I've come about your advertisement for a secretary. I know Miss O'Hara is getting married. . . Could I take her place?

T.D. You? You're looking for a post - here?

BID. Yes, I know you'll think me raw and inexperienced.

In fact I haven't had any business experience except learning book-keeping. But I've been for four years with Mr. Davis, the solicitor in Ballyslane. He's retiring - will you look at his letter . . . that's my only . . . testimonial.

T.D. Of course I'll read it. . well! that's high praise from old dry-as-dust Davis!

BID. I found him very kind.

T.D. But . . Miss Fitzmorris .. forgive me, I'm feeling rather dazed .. the last time we talked was over five years ago, and then you told me pretty frankly what you thought of me - you said I was a humbug and a prig.

BID. I know.

T.D. Then you can't want to work with a man who's a humbug and a prig - the very words 'Confidential Secretary' imply a friendly attitude that you can't feel.

BID. That's the point - I've come to eat my own words - that's called 'humble pie', isn't it ?

T.D. The last thing I want you to do.

BID. But I can't be happy till I do.

T.D. But why should you change? We've only passed each other three or four times in five years. In fact if I've seen you in Ballyslane I've purposely kept out of your way.

BID. Yet I've been here quite often on Summer evenings - down by the river and in the woods.

T.D. Then I'm glad you weren't bothered by a very distasteful presence.

BID. You don't admit that a girl in her twenties, a very

opinionated, one-track type of girl may change her mind.

T.D. Possibly she may - but I don't think a girl of your class in Ireland changes her mind about trade. It's just a thing she has avoided entirely except when she goes shopping.

BID. I suppose that has been so in the past.

T.D. You see Ireland hasn't - socially - had a middle class that counted.

BID. You mean as England has?

T.D. Exactly - there have been the Gentry and the Peasantry - no poet or novelist condescends to notice anything between.

BID. Wasn't that due really to fear?

T.D. Fear - why fear?

BID. Because it's an agricultural country and the gentry and the peasants were simple-headed folk who feared the sharper wits of the town and so feared trade - and fear will always pretend to despise.

T.D. You've noticed things, Miss Bid .. Miss Fitzmorris, but I still don't see why you've changed your mind about me.

BID. Because I've looked and listened. I've seen what Carrickshee means to the people here. It's a centre and a country centre and I know that's what Ireland needs, country centres. I've seen the place growing.

T.D. You do realize that with orchards one looks ahead a long way - we're only at the start and depending on the soft fruit.

BID. Yes, it's exciting to work for the future.

T.D. And you mean you really want to join us? - it's hard work, you know.

BID. I know that - I know Miss O'Hara. I know several of the girls here. I know all about the Clubs and the Dramatic Society and the Welfare schemes. I've kept watch on Carrickshee these five years.

T.D. I still feel rather dazed - you see I can't forget the look you gave me when we parted that afternoon I told you I'd bought the place.

BID. I know - and it was the day I was very near death . . . you too if Malachy had met you.

T.D. I'd have never left the house if I'd guessed the danger to you.

BID. It was a near thing - Morris came just in time - Malachy fired, but the bullet hit a picture and Morris got hold of him - poor Malachy, it was ghastly - and now he's dead and I'm glad for him!

T.D. Malachy dead - in the Asylum?

BID. Yes, he got pneumonia. Nanno was with him. They were very kind to him always, but he was rather like some wild animal in captivity.

T.D. Will Nanno mind your new job?

BID. No - she knows my change of heart. She'll stay in the cottage you got for her and I'll lodge at the post-office with Miss Gaffney.

T.D. Yes . . . one plants and lives for the future when the orchards will blossom. I want to show you the new poster of Pomona under an apple tree -

where is it? - now look!

(Knock at the door. Miss O'Hara
looks in)

SEC. Excuse me, Mr. Dunne .. what do you want about the flowers for tonight?

T.D. You're very busy, aren't you Miss O'Hara?

SEC. Yes I am, but I daresay I'll squeeze it in, but I never was any good at flowers - how about Miss Fitzmorris?

T.D. Would you do that for us - you know the garden better than any of us - you'll find old Heggarty there - he'll allow you to pick his flowers.

BID. I'd love to do that. Miss O'Hara will find me scissors.

SEC. I'll go and look for them - and you'll want a basket.

BID. And when may I start work, Mr. Dunne?

T.D. Next month .. Miss O'Hara will tell you her dates.

BID. Thanks, good bye, you're very busy.

T.D. Oh! just a minute .. could you, would you join us tonight? - the dinner is at seven o'clock and then there'll be the dance -- if you would come it would mean a lot to us.

BID. I'll come, but I'm not even one of your workers yet.

T.D. You'll be a sort of embodiment of Carrickshee. Ireland has a long memory and the old families

live on in our memories.

BID. I think you're wrong - we've been scorned as the Ascendency class and now we'll be forgotten as the Descendency. We have to be proud of our descent, it's all that's left us.

T.D. You told me once you loved the place - the land more than you could love a person.

BID. Yes, I'm like that, but I believe since I left the place I've learnt to love it better - for itself, not for myself. I've seen how it is doing its proper work, producing - not just for one family but for the nation.

T.D. Miss Bidsy, did you notice the beech tree by the house?

BID. Yes, it's turning auburn.

T.D. That was where you used to swing - and where I swung you all those years ago.

BID. I was bold and asked you to swing me.

T.D. And I'm bold - will you give me a dance tonight?

BID. (laughing) I'll dance with the boy who swung me years ago - but next month I shall be secretary to a jam factory - nothing else.

D. Nothing else? anyway a good secretary is one version of the perfect woman.

Bid. You who knew me five years ago knew how far from that you'll find me.

D. I found you 'La Belle Dame sans merci', but now the mercy seems to have come.

Bid. 'It droppeth as the gentle ^{rain} dew from Heaven'... I shall always be looking up your quotations, Mr Dunne, and trying to be intelligent. By the way there was a lovely poem in the Irish Times last Saturday and for once I seemed to understand it.

T.D. What was it called?

Bid. 'Pomona'..and it was signed T.D. but I thought it might be by someone in the Dail--that sort of T.D.

D. No, he's not that yet..he's just a jam maker, a tradesman. But I'll show you the poster that inspired the words...there...is it like anyone?

Bid. Vaguely, but I can't put a name to her

D. Miss O'Hara says it's like you..I see the likeness..Pomona in the orchards of Carrickshea.

Miss O'Hara comes in with fuss and bustle, she speaks rather breathlessly)

ec. That's Mr Kelly to see you, Mr Dunne, he seems in a fuss to get on and here's a basket for Miss Fitzmorris ..and the scissors I needn't tell you the way to the walled garden..you'll find

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old Hegarty there, he'll be glad to see you and recall the old days he's always talking of..well,well all good things must go or change, must'nt they? I know Mr Dunne is going to propose the health and wealth of the new days for I've been typing out his speech for him..it's a good one too. I'm nearly T.T. but I shall drink that one ..to the future of Carrickshe~~a~~.

End



