

ONE HALLOWS' EVE

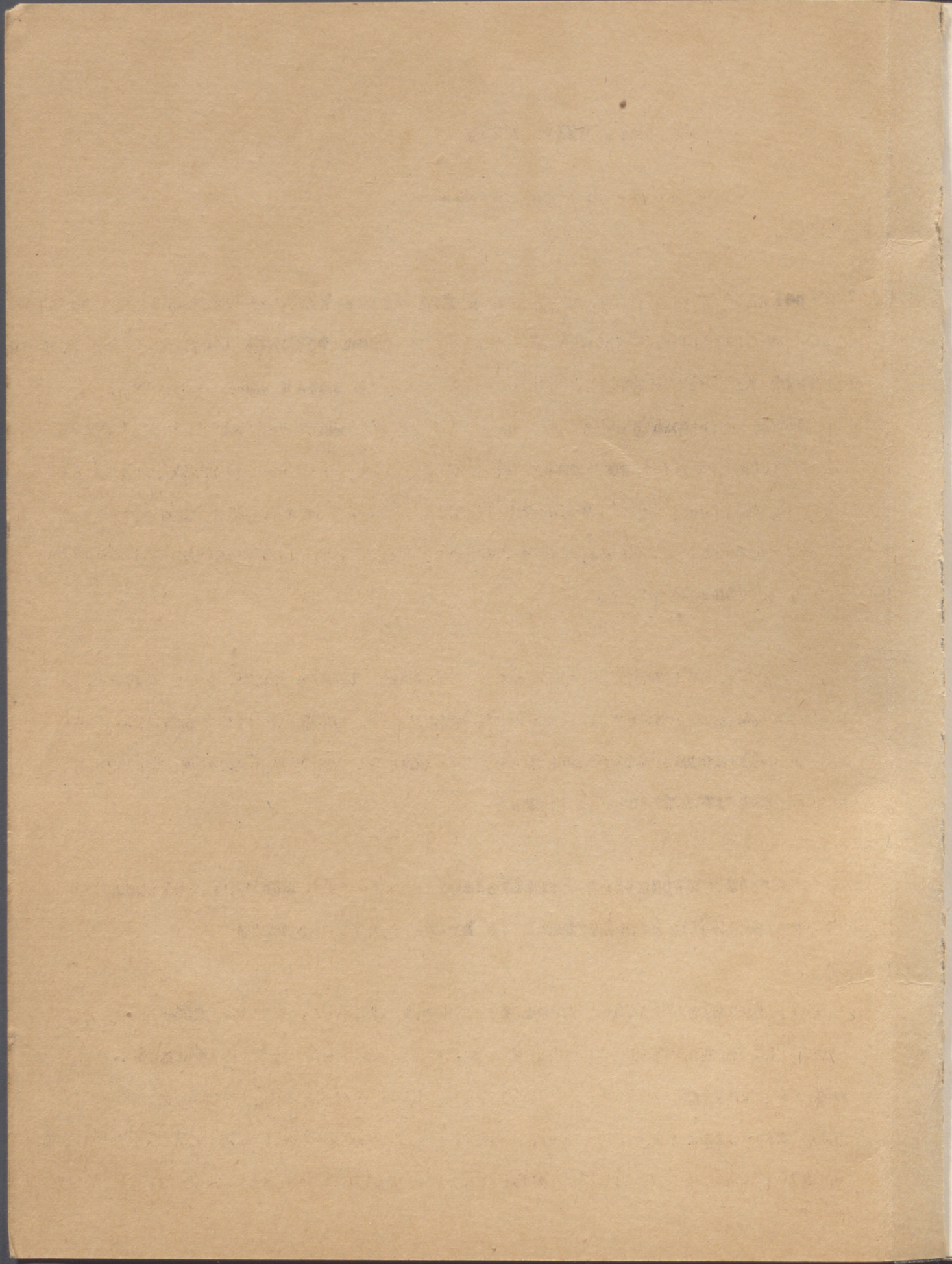
3 Act play —

Wm. L. L. L.

Beech Cottage, ~~Caldorley~~

Killiney -

~~Glenageary.~~
Co. Dublon.



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ONE HALLOWS' EVE.

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Synopsis

Fr Juniper, a Friar, is waiting in a fog for a belated bus. It is Hallow E'en. He encounters strange figures, who seem to have come from a Masque. The first is Usheen, the last of the Fianna, next come Isolde and her elderly husband, King Mark. All sit and converse with the Friar. Isolde, earthbound by her passion for Tristan, wants to attain to the divine light and seeks counsel from the Friar. Half jestingly he says that scrubbing is a short way to Heaven. A gard appears here, the fog lifts and they part.

ACT. I.

Isolde is now reborn and in a working man's home in a Dublin street. She is supporting a drunken and lazy husband. To add to her small means they are glad to take a lodger, Christy Welch, who is Tristan her former lover.

ACT. II

History is repeating itself. Isolde and Christy are falling in love, and Mark her husband is brooding on murder.

ACT. III

This is the testing time for Isolde. Weary of her life and in love with Christy, she determines to reject her aspirations and her religion and go away with Christy to England. But this same day Mark, who has seen the doctor, announces what is his death sentence. At last it is pity that conquers Isolde and she refuses

to leave Mark, though in renouncing Christy her heart is broken.
In spite of her promise to him Mark is mad with jealousy and lurks
outside the door to murder Christy. The play concludes with the arrival
of the Friar to the dying man.

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~~ONE~~ HALLOWS' EVE.

PROLOGUE

Time....Present century. It is Hallows' Eve.

Scene....Dublin on a foggy night.

The stage is dark, except for light from a street light which shines on seat at a Bus halt.

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Characters as they appear.

Fr Juniper, a Capuchin Friar.

Usheen...Later known as Ussher, a pedlar.

Queen Isolde..Later called 'Solda', a domestic worker.

King Mark....Later is Mark Rea, an old waster.

Garda - *Demphy*

Christy Welch..a mechanic, and a harp-player with a vague memory of a different past.

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~~ONE~~ HALLS' EVE

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Prologue.

A Bus stop in a poorish part of Dublin. Night. Hallows' Eve.

ACT I

Scene I A small Dublin house. May Eve.

" 2. Same - that evening.

Interval

ACT. II

Scene 1. ~~Same~~ scene. Bank holiday of same year.

" 2 Same " II. P.M. same night.

Interval

ACT. III

Scene I. Same place. Hallows' eve of same year.

" 2. That evening.

Epilogue. The Bus Stop again. Time same as Prologue.

Act 1-
Scene 1.

Fr. Juniper enters from R. He has an electric torch and is groping his way. From L comes a tattered elderly man, a flute sticks out of his pocket. They collide in middle of stage.

Friar God bless us, I nearly ran you down. Are you lost too, my poor man?

Ush Lost is it? I've been lost these hundreds of years.

Friar Lost on the waves of the world? We mostly are and I'm supposed to have life-belts to save you all. But-God help me, we need Noah's Ark again, and he must have seen a lot of drowning people, but he bothered more about the animals.

Ush: Wasn't he right too? Cattle and horses have more civility and Christianable feeling than many in this place. But what sort of man are you at all? Are you St. Patrick by any chance?

Friar That's a strange question..but after all it's Hallows Eve and there's a bad fog so one can believe a lot....but see here it must be a Bus stop for there's a seat here-let the two of us sit down. Maybe a bus will come along.

Ush: Indeed that's a good idea, for I've wandered far and long.
(They sit down together. Usheen groans with relief- Ah that's a rest, you'd be weary walking the long roads of Ireland.

Friar You would so. May I ask your name?

Ush: It's Usheen, did you ever hear it?

Friar I fancy it has some romantic, historic connection.

Ush: You may say so, but that doesn't fill the belly,..and in the heel of the hunt that's what counts most.

Friar Why did you think I was St Patrick?

Ush: Wasn't he a holy man like yourself? And he had a great down on

sinner. He'd think more of a man's soul, -whatever that may be -
than his body.

Friar After all that was his job.

Ush: Were'nt Finn and his companions the finest men that ever hunted
the hills and valleys of Ireland - would you ask better company
for Almighty God?

Friar I daresay He'd be the first to agree with you. I sometimes
think we Churchmen don't really know His mind as well as He
knows it Himself. We are so glib to say who He likes and who
He does'nt. But Christ said we'd get some queer surprises on
Judgement Day.

Ush: Now you're talking sense and I can be at ease with you. Tho'
mind you I liked St Patrick. He saw to it that I got my belly-
ful from those old skinny monks... and he loved the old stories
and no wonder ^{he was} a boy that grew up in a Druid's house. Ah - he
loved me to tell him of the Fianna and tales of Tir-na-n-oge,
tho' he would have it that Heaven would be better.

Friar It's a wonder to hear you talk. Do you know where we are?

Ush: I do not, but it seems like some big town where the stones wear
out one's ~~shoes~~ soles. Looka, mine don't hold water. (He examines
his boots sadly.)

Friar. I'll tell you where we are... it's Dublin and this is Grangegorman.
Were you staying in a big house hereabouts?

Ush: I was not, only a cheap lodging where the woman let me sleep
for a few pence I'd earn playing the flute here. Music and
a story can melt even a saint's heart.

Friar You're very down on the saints.

Ush: I am. Did't the saints wreck Tara? that was the world's wonder for song and dance, for courage and beauty. They and their curses left it to the rabbits and crows. And have'nt they ~~st~~ stopped the merry dances at the cross roads? Aye! would'nt some of the clergy whip them home-girls and boys that would dance for the joy of youth?

Friar You're a controversial man..maybe I'd better not say how far I agree with you. The key question is -what is a saint?

(There is a noise off stage L. someone is complaining and someone else is shouting.)

Friar Someone else has lost their way in the fog. What a night it is -and no buses running.

(He goes L to see what the noise is)

(Calls) Hi!.there!.are you lost? Can I help you? There's a seat here where the old man can rest.

(Enter Queen Isolde, a beautiful woman richly dressed. She is half-supporting an elderly man who is certainly drunk.)

Friar You could bring your father to this seat, Madam, he seems tired.

Isolde Oh, he's not my father, he's my husband and he's drunk as you can see. Mead is such a heady drink, it's always too much for him. Could we prop him up somehow?

Friar This seat has a back to it, we'll help him.

(Friar and Usheen get hold of the drunk man and prop him up but he rolls sideways.)

Ush I mind how the heroes would be blind drunk on mead-ah-that is great stuff. Pick him up again and let him lean on me. My

heart goes out to a man who's drunk on mead.

Friar Very good-we'll raise him so..Hi!..mister!.. can you lift a ~~bit~~ bit?

Isolde Oh!..he's not a Mister..he's King Mark,my husband.

Friar (M^Ystified and polite) And you were getting him to Grangegorman?

Isolde Of course..I ~~was~~ was trying to find the Palace.

Friar The Palace ?

Isolde Yes,my father's palace..he's king Gorman..I thought you'd know that.

Ush: We have fine company,holy priest.These are people I can understand.

Friar That's more than I can..Grangegorman seems out on the spree tonight..or am I the mad one? But we had better get the king fixed,he's rolling off.

(Friar and Usheen take Mark's arms and try and raise him)

Friar Your Majesty...that's a good king..try and lift a bit..that's it, upsy-daisy..I think he's gone to sleep.If only a taxi..or an old cab would come along-we'd get him taken to th -er- Palace.

Isolde I'm very tired,he's a great weight when he's drunk.Is there room for me on this seat?

Friar Yes,Madam..I'll stand a bit.

Isolde No,please sit down..I like your habit..it reassures me.There is always the Church,our ~~kind~~ kind old mother,waiting to welcome us back..however far one strays.

Friar It's good to hear you say that,my daughter.Then you've no grudge against the Church like Usheen here?

Isolde No...No...I always come back. Do you know my chapel? The one I had built by the Liffey and endowed for a Mass priest? Oh, that is a lovely spot, the river near so calm and shining, the kingfisher flashing by, the tall crane standing watching. I could always find peace there for my troubled heart, ~~there~~. God seemed very near, He understood even when the words would not come because of my tears.

Friar Tell me your name, Ma'am.

Isolde Isolde..do you not know it ?

Friar Wait...it's coming back..a chapel, built by Isolde near the Liffey..that would be Chapelized. It's called that today. So your name lives on , a Queen's name and her chapel.

Isolde And my Father was king near here..King Gorman.

Friar Dear..Dear and I never thought of that and I passing Dunphy's Corner so often, that a king lived there. And your husband here, Ma'am, King Mark..does he live near?

Isolde No..he came from Cornwall,..he wants me to go back there. I don't like Cornwall, I love Ireland.

Friar I believe there are a lot of saints in Cornwall.

Isolde Yes, too many , I don't think they would like me.

Friar Why, your Majesty?

Because of Tristan..you must know about Tristan, they always couple our names together.

Friar Ah, yes, that rings a bell. There's an opera..Tristan and Isolde that would be about the two of you..poor souls, you had trouble enough.

Isolde That was our fate, but we loved and love never grew stale and
peevish and bald and pot-bellied.

Friar Tristan died?

Isolde Yes, Mark killed him.

Friar What? Murdered him?

Isolde Murder is a vulgar, grovelling word, but yes, he murdered him.

Friar He's much older than you. Did they make you marry him?

solde Of course, it was a suitable match for a princess, that was
the custom..it's really as good as any other way..it may come
to the same in the long run.

(Enter Garda, torch in hand) Oh, Goodnight..it's you Father, I could
barely see you in the fog. There won't be a bus this night.
Can I guide the lady home?

Friar Her husband is a little overcome, Sergeant,

Gard: So I see, the poor gentleman..well, it's Hallows E'an and
we must be lenient, but maybe you will get them moving,
Father. It's no night for a lady to be out in her Fancy
dress. (He moves off L.)

Friar Goodnight, Sergeant, and God bless you, I'll get a move on them
when I know where they're going.

Isolde Where are we going?

Friar You said your father lived near by?

Isolde He did once. (She stands up) What is tonight, Father?

Friar All Hallows' Eve, one of the holiest nights in the year.

Isolde And tomorrow?

Friar The Feast of All Saints..all ..every saint, known, unknown,

overworked mothers, rough-handed charwomen, tired little clerks, decent working men..some people, maybe, who don't go to church but work for God in their neighbour, blind, deaf, crippled saints as many as there are stars above us and as hidden as the stars in this fog,..unknown, uncountable except to God.

Isolde You warm my heart, Father. How can I be one of them? at long last? What penance would you give a queen, a bereaved lover? How may she win through this fog to the light beyond?

Friar Penance? ...What shall I say, my Queen, ..my daughter? If I wanted to point a way of holy penance to any woman I'd tell her to go out and scrub floors and doorsteps as she'd clean ~~KE~~ her soul..(he laughs) What counsel to give a queen, but my charwomen penitents are mostly saints in their Confessor's eyes.

Ush:(waking UP-)T'is great fine talk you've had this long while, and time we moved from this damp spot. Can't we get this king here to his bed.

Friar You're right, Ush. If you follow that guard, ~~W~~ mind call him Sergeant-he'll help you on your way...God send we meet again.

Isolde What is your name, Father?

Friar Juniper, I took the name of that foolish fellow, companion to St Francis...an ass of a man for ~~may~~ I'm an ass too. He meant well and he loved God and Francis, still he was a great eejit..Am'n't I much the same?

Isolde We shall remember you.

Friar And I shall remember you at my Mass tomorrow.

(Ush. has reared King Mark to his feet. The darkness has lifted and

the light of the moon shines on the little group. Friar has turned towards R. but looks back at them. They exit L. Friar still gazes after them.)

Friar They're gone...I wonder did I dream they ever were there.
(Stands in moonlight)

Curtain

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ACT I.

SCENE #1

Scene Kitchen of a small Dublin house. Street door is at back. against this wall is a couch, in corner a little shrine with red lamp before it and flowers. In centre the usual deal table with chairs about it. At R. is the stove or fireplace. At either side old more comfortable chairs. Door L. leads to stairs. The room has a certain elegance, a flowering spray is in vase on mantelpiece.

Isolde is busy with frying pan over the fire. She is in neat plain dress with apron. She is humming to herself.

Mark enters from L. He is unkempt of choice, hair too long, ^{he's} unshaved and wilfully unkempt. (He is coughing and wheezing.)

Mark. This fog is choking me, I'm only fit for hospital this day.

Isolde. Nonsense, there's no fog today..it's lovely, it would do you good to go out,

Mark. Go out is it? That would be my death and well you know it. How'd I get my sick insurance if I went out trampaging the streets?

Isolde. (putting down a plate before him as he sits down to the table) You don't find it so hard creeping out to Moloney's at night.

Mark. It's only the drop I get there keeps me alive at all. Will you get me a paper the way I'll read the bad news of this wicked world?

Isolde. You know well I may be late as it is, getting you breakfast.

Don't you know I've a new lady now and that means every Tuesday.
I must be on time, it's a bus journey.

Mark. That's the weary way of all wives to do anything but attend to their own husbands who they've sworn to maintain in comfort. It's very cold in here. Can you not make up the fire?

Isolde. I can't. We haven't got the coal and the turf is damp. Here's your old cloak. (She unhooks it from door. Mark wraps it round him.)

Mark. A touch of ermine and this would be a cloak to suit a king. Am't I the descendant of kings and heir to a throne if we had our rights. But there is 'a tide in the affairs of men'.. and it has washed most of the kings down the drain.

Isolde. It seems to me we Irish are much prouder of coming down in the world than we are of getting up in it.
(She puts on a hat and a neat worn coat.)

Mark. I'm not Irish, I come of an ancient Cornish family.. 'A far, far better thing,' as Shakespeare says.

Isolde. I'm off,.. your dinner is in the oven. Put some cinders on the fire.. I may earn enough for a bag of turf. (Exit)

(Mark swallows his tea, gets up slowly and peers about the dresser at wall. He looks in jugs and teapots)

Mark. (counting) Three...four...two halfpeenies.. that makes £2 fi'pence. That's all she leaves me for a smoke. What can fi'pence do in this grudging world?

(He puts it back hastily as there comes a knock at street door.)

Mark. Come in... come in.... and shut the door there's the devil's own draught from the street.

(Enter ^{Usher} ~~Ushen~~, now known as Usher, he looks a shabby pedlar. He has a basket with holy images, cards and beads.)

Usher. God bless all here!

Mark. That sounds odd from you that's a heathenish sort of a man, full of stories of old wicked gods and goddesses and illicit lovers.

Usher. Ah well, that does'n't go down well with the clergy. Have we not a holy Censor that's scandalized we'd know the sound of a broken commandment?

ark. Indeed I need a blessing, the way I am, but I never looked for it from you.

Usher. When I bless a house it seems to loosen the pockets of those inside. When they feel the comfort of a holy image.

ark. Well, sit down so. Leave the old basket on the floor. There may be a drop of water in the kettle and a tea-leaf in the pot if you rinse it round..and there's a heel of an old loaf.

Usher. Right enough,..I never broke my fast.

ark. Ah, don't waste a good lie on me. You can keep that for the fine ladies walking through Stephen's Green to the Shelbourne or some place of refreshment, lest they should faint between their breakfast and their lunch.

Usher. It's not those places I go, but to the poor parts of the city the people there have'nt much to sustain them but God, so they take kindly to a holy card or an image.

(They both sit at the table to finish the meagre breakfast.)

ark. That holy Friar must have got around you, for you're not the racey man you were.

Usher. Is it Father Juniper you mean?

Mark. Aye, that same, a queer sort of a fellow, but better than some with a cord round their bellies.

Usher. He has a heart in him, he set me up in my little business here. And since I started I've had a better liking for the saints than I ever had before. Are they not good to be bothering praying for the likes of you and me when they might be enjoying the care-free pleasures of Heaven, in the company of angels instead of looking at a lot of lousy sinners here below?

Mark. What do the saints do for me I'd ask you? Didn't I lose ~~the~~ a shilling out of my pocket last night at Moloney's and did St. Anthony find it for me? not he... only a hairpin was what he offered me.

Usher. Pity the poor man. Is'nt he asked to find all the lost jewels, not to mention fountain pens and spectacles that are missing.

Mark. Who else have you got in the basket?

Usher. (producing image from basket) Look at here.. this is my pet. Is'nt she the dote of the world?

Mark. The Little Flower.. she's young and pretty right enough. But what would she do for you or me?

Usher. Didn't she say she wouldn't go into Heaven till the last sinner was inside. That was a fine thing from a slipeen of a girl, who never knew the worst of this wicked world. I'm thinking you may need her help one day.

Mark. (with disgust) T'is the Friar has you converted, you'll be

Joining the Third Order and have me moidhered woth your talk of Social
-ities and pilgimages and the like.

(Loud knock at street door.)

Mark. Who can that be. Open the door, Usher.

Usher opens door and a fine-looking youngish man steps in. He has a
^{Kibbag} ~~little~~ ⁱⁿ his hand. He looks with a friendly look at both men.)

Stranger. Good day, sir, I heard from a ^{guard} ~~guard~~ I met that you might have
lodgings for a working man.

Mark. Well.. Well... the wife is out, but there is a room upstairs
she has talked of setting if she heard of a decent young
working man, you look the spit of what she mentioned but
you see she's out, so you'd best sit down for a bit and
we'll have a chat.

Usher. (Getting up.) I'll be going my rounds, there'll be folk with
their hearts soft from Mass. Goodbye now. (Exit)

Mark. Sit down.. sit down. That's a queer type of a man, but well
born and educated in his way.. take the easier chair, the
springs are gone for we're in a poor way since my health
compelled me to retire from the active list.

Stranger lets himself down cautiously into chair near fire, takes out
cigarettes and offers them.)

Mark. Thankyou,.. I'm a pipe man when I have the 'bacca. What I have
here may last out your cigarette. So you're wanting a bed
and your grub? What may your name be, Mister, if we are to
converse?

Stranger. Christy Welsh.

Mark. Irish? Tho' you might be any part of Britain to hearyau.

but I think you're an educated man like myself.

Chris.,.,., Maybe I have what education a man may get from sailing seas and looking at new lands, and I read what I can pick up, but it's music is the life for me, ..everything you can't say, everything you've just missed, whatever lies the far side of the sea and beyond the turn of the road-that's in music.

Mark. Oh, you're a poetical young man by your talk. All you say of music I'd say of whiskey, and by the same token isn't it a sin I have'n't a drop to offer you? It's the wife keeps me so short I'm shamed before a guest.

(He rises and goes to cupboard of dresser where he rummages, only to produce some empty porter bottles which he ranges on the table.)

Chris. Never mind for me, sir, I was never great on the drink and I've no use for porter, a muddy stuff like the Liffey..and for spirit~~e~~-I keep off them in the morning.

Mark. You're not T.T. man surely..or have the Whiskey Fathers got a hold of you?

Chris. Whiskey Fathers? They should be jolly men.

Mark. They're agin' the whiskey..do you not know Father Matthew beyond the Pillar? They're his lot..they wear whiskers on their chins, maybe that gives them the name, but the proper title is Capuchins ..they hold great missions against the drink. We have one of them round about..a queer type of a man-Fr Juniper..I thought maybe he had sent you here.

Chris. No it was a Gard~~e~~ gave me your address.

Mark. Ah, my wife is great with the police and the clergy..tell me are you a married man?

Chris. No, as single as you see me.

(Mark hobbles to chair and sits down.)

Mark. You're lucky so. Women are a great contention. Before you marry her a woman listens to you as if your words were pearls and rubies. You're the wisest and wittiest man since Solomon but when you take your first breakfast with her as your wife she'll yawn in your face and ask you has the paper come for she's doing the crossword puzzle.

Chris. No harm in that surely?

Mark. Your words of wisdom whereby you'd improve her mind are only old gas to her from that day on.

Chris. (laughing) I think you're a misogynist, Mr Rea.

Mark. What is that ~~at~~ all ..is it the opposite to polygamist?

Chris. No, it means you have no use for women. You shock me ..you with a nice tidy wife I'd say.

Mark. You are still too young to know them. I'll be bound Adam would have asked the Almighty to stay His hand had he known what Eve would be once she was Mrs Adam.

Chris. Where would all the great love stories be if there had been no women?

Mark. Those are the first chapters of the story. Weren't they careful to die before the glamour got lost in the kitchen? I tell you, young man, Woman is a materialist. All she thinks of is food and clothes and how she'll buy them. It's Man is the intellectual being-with his head among the stars. It's

Man who invents the great wonders of the world, the Atom bomb and the torpedo and the great warlike wonders of the ^{earth} world.

What use is science to women?

Chris. I fancy there was a woman who helped to discover Radium because she hoped it would heal-and not destroy.

Mark. Ah, you are one of these idealists, young man, and they are best to be celibates, but I declare for what I know of the sex that they delight in interrupting a man in the throes of his intellect. He may be on the track of some atom that will blow the world to pieces when she rushes in to tell him the coalman is there waiting for money and will he find it. Or she wants to tell him that Johnny needs new boots and she must have money at once-what does she care that his ideas have gone to blazes?

Chris. Well, your inventors and scientists, -and their children must be clothed and fed or we'd have no inventions, and these wives and mothers are in the power house-and get small thanks.

Mark. You are doubtless in love and see women in a haze of glamour. But the Church does well to exclude women from its counsels and from the Vatican or you'd have them rushing in to tell ^{The holy Cardinals} ~~them~~ there was no butter or the butcher had'nt called. The Pope himself would not be safe.

Chris. You forget, Mr Rea, that there have been women so important in the church that they did counsel the Pope? Did you ever read of a saint called Catherine of Siena?

Mark. I did not.

Chris. But you did hear of Saint Brigid?

Mark. I did so.
I did so
Chris.

Then you may have read how she rebuked Bishops for their extravagance over new vestments..no,you can't exclude women from the Church.

Mark. Young man,some woman must have you by the ear.I have outlived such dependancy.I often think that Mahomet was wise in allowing men a variety in their wives,but it was for ornament and such,I fancy, that he allowed it, not for their conversation,for he kept them in a harem and veiled their mouths so as not to hear their babble.

Chris.(getting up) Ah well,I must be off,I'm to see about a job in a Garage,so I'll hope to see you this evening if your wife consents to take me in.

Mark. Oh,she will..she will. And then come down and you'll find me in Moloney's ..just round the corner.That's the place where you'll hear wit and wisdom .

Chris. For all you say against women,Mr Rea,it's only a woman would give this room such a homely look.Who but a woman would put that flowering branch there?(He points to mantel-piece)there's a breath of the Spring in that,reminds one it is May-Eve.

Mark. Ah,you're a fanciful young man,but I don't dislike you for it..I felt like that long ago,and now I'm old enough to be your father..or your uncle,maybe.

Chris. Very good,Mr Rea,..or shall I call you Uncle..Uncle what?

Mark. Mark..that's a good one..Uncle Mark..found a nephew,the

wife will like that. And will she be your Aunt?

Chris. If she likes. What is her name?

Mark. I call her [?]Solda..but she had a queer outlandish name...don't
ever let on but she was a foundling. The nuns took her in
from a baby. They say she must have come from decent people,
silk clothes she had and a note from the mother giving this
queer name.

Chris. I'll be dumb.

Mark. Yes, I would'nt have it known at Moloney's ..nothing would
be safe there, but t'is mostly politics we talk. If some of the
politicians, Winston Churchill or Dev, himself, could hear the
talk in the Snug they'd be illuminated, they'd get some
useful hints.

Chris. Aye, when the whiskey goes in the wit comes out.

Mark. It was ever so. Did'nt the gods of Olympus have a drink of
their own? And ever through history it has been the same, it
is there ^{in the Pub} uninterrupted by woman, the great literature has
been made..no female voice asks ^{the poet} ~~him~~ has he a shilling for
the gas metre.

Chris. I fancy there's a gas metre in the pub that only needs a
glass of alchohol to get it going. (he moves to door, stands
looking round.)

Mark. You're going...goodbye now..we'll be seeing you.

Chris. I'll be back surely. (Exit at street door.)

Curtain

Act 1.

SCENE 22

Time...same day ,evening.

Isolde is sitting at fireplace,mending socks and singing to herself-it might be 'She is far from the land',or 'Dannyboy'
a knock at street door.

Isolde. Come in.

(Enter Garda Dempsy,he stands in doorway)

Gard. Good evening,Mrs Rea.

Isolde. You're welcome,Mr Dempsy.

Gard. I only looked in, Ma'am, to tell you I took the liberty of advising a young man to come to you looking for lodgings, he looked a decent young fellow,or be sure I would not have presumed.

Isolde. Indeed you were very good,for as you know money is scarce these times

Gard. Indeed well I know it.Has himself not found a job yet?

Isolde. Nothing he'll condescend to.

Gard. Well,well,that's a pity,for he's an educated type of a man.

Isolde. He is,he was a schoolmaster once on a time,that was how we met.

Gard. You were a teacher yourself?

Isolde. No, I was one of his pupils.

Gard. That's so? Now I had remarked that you were much younger. What does Shakespeare say..'Still let a woman take an elder than herself'?

Isolde. You're a reading man,Mr Dempsy.

Gard. I heard it in a theatre, Ma'am, and I thought it good as applying to my own case, my second wife being a juvenile you might say..but I won't keep you as I must resume my duties to the public. (Exit)

(Isolde goes on with her song. It is taken up in a whistle by a young man, Christy, who stands in the doorway.)

Isolde. God save us, who are you? You scared me.

Chris. Sorry, Madam,..I'm Christy Welch Looking for lodgings and the door was open or I'd not have been so bold.

(Isolde rises to look at Christy)

Isolde. You'll be the young man my husband told me of. It seems he took a liking to you and settled the matter. Did he show you the bedroom?

Chris. No, but I knew I'd like it.

Isolde. How would you know that?

Chris. The look of this one..the flowers there, and a sort of look of welcome about it.

Isolde. (rather sharply) Ah, you're fanciful enough I can see, but the bedroom is clean and the bed a decent one. Can you pay two pounds a week-breakfast, and sandwiches and a meal at night-and your dinner on a Sunday if you like to be here.

Chris. That suits me well. I've got my job at the Garage..and I make a bit with my harp.

Isolde. You play the harp?

Chris. I do, it's the old Irish harp-one I can carry, I get a lot of engagements, at pubs or Ceilidhs, weddings and the like.

Isolde. And you sing too?

Chris. I do, I knew the song you were singing. (He lays a bunch of pramroses on the table) I made bold to buy you these off a woman in the street-a country Tinker woman, she says they are nearly over..it'll be roses soon.

Isolde. (taking them up, holding them to her face)-that was a gentle thought you had. There's all youth in the smaeell of them, what youth dreams tho' it never comes true. But I've no time for fancies. Will you have some tea..did you have any supper?

Chris. Don't worry yourself..I want nothing.

Isolde. My husband said you'd likely join him at Moloney's, it's near by.

Chris. No, thanks, I've no fancy for that, Ma'am. The night is too warm for a pub with its noise and smell.

Isolde. Then sit down for a while, but it will be dull for you for I'm no talker. Is'nt it strange how men made up the notion that it's women who talk so much?

Chris. You think the men talk more?

Isolde. I know they do. There's no man would listen to the same amount of gas if a woman gave it out. Women in this country don't talk. The men here have no curiosity about what's in a woman's mind. If she feeds him and waits upon him and holds her tongue she is nearly as worth her keep as his cow or his mare.

Chris. Ah now you are too hard on us. There would never have been

the great stories of faithful lovers if men were so boorish.

Isolde. What lovers?

Chris. Naisi and Deirdre, Lancelot and Guinevere..Tristan and Isolde.

Isolde. That is my name, the name my mother put upon my clothes when she left me in the church porch for the nuns to bring up. It's a queer fancy name and they called me Solda. My mother must have been full of high notions like yourself. But what was the story of this other Isolde?

Chris. It's a sad story, they mostly are. She was married to a grumpy old king, but she and Tristan loved each other till Tristan died, murdered by her husband.

Isolde. That was a sad end, still they loved and ^{she} had the memory to cheer her in the long years. Was that in Ireland that it all happened?

Chris. Part of it. Isolde came from these parts but Tristan came from my own old home-Cornwall. Seemingly he was a great fighting man..indeed I'm a good one as a boxer, I like a fair fight. But in the story I think the old king stabbed Tristan in the back.

Isolde. And what did she do all the lone years of her life?

Chris. I suppose she went into a convent, they mostly did in those days.

Isolde. It's a poor compliment to God to give Him the dribs and drabs of your life.

Chris. It's a wonder to me why a young woman marries an old man

Isolde. I'll tell you, young man; she knows young men have fancies here and there, like the west wind, blowing great gusts and shaking the hearts of women, then off and away. But a woman wants a steadfast man and a quiet hearth and a man to bring his wages back at the end of the week and sit quiet by her side and she thinks the old man will be father and husband both and be ever grateful for her youth.

Chris. And is it so?

Isolde (getting up and moving to cupboard) Maybe not, now I'm dry talking and I'll make a cup of tea.

Chris. I'll give you better than that. I've brought a bottle of wine with me. I thought we might drink to the days to come.

Isolde. Sherry is it? That's what the rich folk drink to give them an appetite.

Chris. No, not sherry. It's a wine I got on my travels, it seems to have the flowers of Spring in it, they call it Alicante

Isolde. But I have no wine glasses—only these old tumblers, we could'n't use them. Wait now, I once had Jelly glasses from Woolworth, would they do?

(She goes to cupboard and produces two goblet-shaped glasses)

Chris. Good enough—

(Chris takes bottle from bag and draws the cork and fills the glasses, facing each other they drink.)

Chris. To our friendship in the coming days!

Isolde. To your happiness here, Christy Welch.

(They stand silent, looking at each other)

Chris. But this has all happened before..you and I standing like this, drinking to each other.

Isolde. It could'nt be..we never met before.

Chris. But I feel we did. Since I came in I've been searching my mind to think where I had seen you before.

Isolde. ~~I~~ must be like someone you saw on your travels..I fancy you were a rover in love and war and you've seen many women-one was like me..that is all.

(A knock at the door but it is opened and Ussher looks round the corner.)

Ussh. Oh, you have company, Solda, I thought you might be lonesome, for himself is down at Moloney's uttering great wisdom.

Isolde. Come in, Ussher, this is Christy Welch, the new lodger. Sit down and I'll make you a cup of tea.

Chris. We can give him better than that..have a glass of this wine. ~~We~~ have to celebrate my coming. (He pours out glass and Ussher sips it thoughtfully)

Ussh. That is a wonderful drink..not what you'd get in the pubs. I fancy that is what the heroes of old would have drunk. ~~Would~~ it be like mead?

Isolde. (laughing) Ah now you've set him off, Mr Welch, he's mad about old days and heroes and the Fianna and such like, he'll be telling you about Tir-na-n-oge in a minute.

Ussh. And why not ? I was there once upon a time and now I can't get back-the loveliest place, where you'll be for ever young

the heroes live there with their horses and dogs and there's
no partings or tears, only laughter and music and love.
(Isolde looks at Chris and touches her forehead with a glance at
Ussher.)

Chris. That would be a grand place if we could find it. In Cornwall, where I lived they had stories of a place like that; they say King Arthur of the Round Table was rowed there by three queens and he wounded to death, Avalon they called it-but I suppose these stories are all what the wise ones call wishful thinking.

Isolde (bitterly) Yes, all a dream, a dream you forget when you scrub floors and polish shoes and wash up greasy plates, lay by lay and come back too tired to climb the stairs to bed.

Ussh. Indeed, Solda, I often wonder you chose so hard a job, you that would be elegant behind a counter, or in the Sweep office.

Isolde. All work is hard, and when you talk of dreams I had a dream -do you know the way you're close to sleep and still awake and some word will come into your head, like a message, and you'll wonder where it came from, and you'll say that must be a dream?

Chris. And what was the message, Mrs Rea?

Isolde. Such a queer sentence it was-

Ussh. Tell us, Solda,

Isolde. (slowly) Scrubbing sanctifies the soul. that was what the voice said and then I really was dreaming for I was

scrubbing a door-step and the door opened onto a passage and at the end was a garden..all lovely and shining,and I knew I should get there but I must scrub that passage first.

Ussh. Did you tell Father Juniper that dream?

Isolde. I did and he said I had found my vocation and the light was ahead of me.

(A knock at the door, Isolde opens it and Father Juniper is seen there.)

Isolde. Why, Father, don't they say talk of angels you'll hear their wings?

Friar. Or the other way, mention the Devil and you smell brimstone

Isolde. Come in, Father. You know Usher as well as your shadow, but here is a stranger-Christy Welch. My husband took a great fancy to him and they fixed it up he is to lodge here.

Friar. He's a wise man to come here, Solda, for he'll be in a good tidy home-that's what a man needs,

(Chris rises and offers his chair. Friar shakes his hand but stands)

Friar. Thankyou, Mr Welch., but indeed I shall call you Christy, I've heard of you already that you play the harp, and so you're the very man I want for our next Show at the Hall. You must come, Solda, and get the old man to miss Moloney's for one night. We have the best of talent and a play, you never saw such acting..and there's dancing, I think the 'Man Above' will surely look down and give us a clap.

Ussh. Ah, when you talk like that, Father, I can pray to Him.

Friar. When you get to know Him better, Ussher, you'll find the Almighty is as good a leader as Finn or Cuchulain..so, Christy, we can count on you, that's fine. You must let me know tomorrow what you'll play so I'll have it on the programme. Come on Ussher, walk with me to the Friary and tell me some of your fine old yarns..God bless you all.

Isolde. And you, Father. (Exit Friar and Ussher)

Chris. That priest seems human.

Isolde. They say Saint Francis was like that.

Chris. And he loved animals. I wish he lived in Ireland now to speak up for them..but you're tired, Mrs Rea.

Isolde. I am so..I have to be out early but I'll leave your breakfast.

Chris. I'll be early with you, I start work tomorrow. Do you think we'll see your husband tonight?

(There is a noise outside and shouting, then a knock at the door and it bursts open. Mark comes reeling in, he is followed by Garda)

Gard. Sorry to disturb you, Mrs Rea, but I don't want to make trouble over your husband..just get him off to bed-that young man there will give him an arm up, and we'll say no more.

Isola. Thankyou, Mr Dempsy, you're always kind.

Gard. The Law has a blind eye, Ma'am, specially for drunks, we're all human. (Exit Garda)

(Mark sways, staring at table with the bottle and glasses then at Christy and Isolde.)

Mark. I see it all..glasses,bottle..while I'm out..the lodger.
He can drink with my wife but he's too fine for Moloney's.
That's the Playboy..the harpist-
(He snatches bottle and hurls it across the room.)

Curtain.

.....

14 min.

Act 2.

Scene 1.

Time- August Bank holiday-afternoon.

Isolde is alone in the kitchen. The street door is ajar. She sits at the table, her head in her hands. Guard Dempsy appears at door, he looks in.

Gard. What has you in this lovely day, Mrs Rea? I thought you'd left the door open and I peeped in to catch a burglar.

Isolde. Come in, Mr Dempsy, it must be terribly hot in the streets. I'm all alone.. a holiday is the one day I can get at my own jobs, so I'm glad to have the house to myself.

Gard. (coming in) Well you're right, Ma'am, it is terrible hot, I'm ~~glad~~ ^{glad} to be going off duty. They say God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, but I could wish He'd temper the heat to a sweating policeman.

Isolde. I tell you what I'll give you. There's a bottle of cider — it's what Christy drinks, he's no use for porter but he says there's a poem in a glass of cider.

(Guard sits down, loosens collar and belt-)

Gard. Thankyou, Ma'am, anything to quench my thirst. That's a queer-~~queer~~ queer lad-Christy Welch, -full of music-ah, to God, to hear him play the harp you'd think he came out of Heaven, and next minute he's fighting like a devil. It was well for him he wasn't in court for the last fight.

Isolde. I never knew what it was all about.

Gard. Someone who shall be nameless used very uncivilized ~~in~~ language and my boyo hits him in the mouth.

Isolde. And got his own head so cut he had to go to hospital.

Gard. He did so. Ah well, I never wish to interfere in a fight if I can find duty in another direction, for a fight is a fair and manly way of settling a difference or concluding an argument. Indeed it would save a lot of the costs of an election if the two candidates fought it out with their fists.

Isolde. You're a very tolerant man, Mr Dempsy.

Gard. It's what I wish to be Ma'am, a guard on his patrols has a lot of time for thought and food for it too. Closing time and the drunks—they give me a lot of thought.

Isolde. And what do you make of drink? Is'nt it sheer lunacy—look at my husband.

Gard. Aye, he's a lunatic that way, and he an able man and a man of parts that might hold his head high but for the drink. But I tell you what the drink is to most men—it's a ticket to Fairyland.

Isolde. Fairyland—to be soaked in porter? You're as fanciful as Christy.

Gard. Wait now till I tell you what an old drunk said to me... and I can't forget it. Says I to him; 'Why do you keep being had up as drunk and disorderly and nothing to show for it but a headache?'

Isolde. And what did he say?

Gard. He says to me: 'It's the awful monotony of life that makes me drink.' There was an answer that tells you a lot.

Isolde. 'The awful monotony of life'-yes, we all know that. What had he, what have most of us but that monotony?

Gard. D'ye see now that drink makes a man feel the great man he wants to be? No one is content to be only what he really is. Don't I go around fancying myself an Inspector? Does'nt your husband see himself a T.D. haranguing the Daill?

Isolde. And maybe I see myself as a queen, with the bards making songs about me to their harps.

Gard. And well they might, Ma'am, well they might, you look like one now, if I may be bold to say it.

Isolde. What? In a cotton dress.. a queer queen going out to clean other people's houses.

Gard. What matter? It's the realest aristocrats are the plainest. But these little bits of girls all dolled up with lip-stick and bloody-looking nails-ar'nt they seeing themselves ~~as~~ film stars². It's not Fairyland but Hollywood they live in half their time.

Isolde. Hollywood to them and ¹⁶Ussher dreams of Tir-na-n-oge, and Christy dreams of Avalon.

Gard. ^Hollywood would have them old places bet. All these 'Juvenile delinquents' (cock them up with such fine names) nothing but young rascals-but the're all Hollywood gangsters in their own fancy

Isolde. You must be glad to be of real use in the world, Mr Dempsy.

Gard. Indeed, Mrs Rea, I do often thank the Man Above that I am where I am-I look upon Him, if I may say so without disrespect, as our Chief Inspector and I turn to Him for help in a tight place. And when I read of the Gestapo and these foreign police I'm thankful that we exist to guard and help the public. Guard-the name is a good one. It may be tame enough-seeing school children across the road, directing the traffic or telling a lot of born eejits the way to this place or that-still they come to us with trust in their eyes.

Isolde. You have the job of our guardian angels.

Gard. My wife would like me to be in the Detective branch-she's a terror for murders, so she is. She'd like me to arrest a murderer every day and I never met one yet.

Isolde. God send you never may.

(Door opens and Ussher's head peeps round.

Ush. Ah, you've company.. I thought you might be lonesome.

Isolde. Come in Ussher, there's a drop of cider there.

Gard. I'll be going so, Mrs Rea, and thank you for the refreshment
(Exit)

Ush. Did Christy come in yet?

Isolde. Of course not is'nt he out for the day?

Ush. Ah, not at all. Did'nt he have the little nurse out for a run in the car? Then he left her back at the hospital

...she'd be going on duty.

Isolde. (Stiffly) What nonsense are you talking, Ussher, what nurse are you romancing about?

Ush. The little nurse that helped stitch up his head after that last fight, he has a terrible wish for her. He's making a song about her two white hands, so cool and so gentle, 'Girl of the white hands' he calls it.

Isolde. It's queer he never mentioned her to me.

Ush. A man wouldn't waste words praising one woman to another.

Isolde. And he takes her out does he?

Ush. They go to a Movie on her night off-an' their two heads so close you can't see the picture they're such a barricade, for I've sat behind them.

Isolde. Well..why not^{??} is'nt it in human nature to walk with a girl?

Ush. Of course. Wouldn't he be right to settle down? His own home and childer round him would hold him...What is it, So[?]lda, You've gone terrible white..is it the heat?

Isolde. (faintly) It is, and my head is splitting.

Ush. You've a right to lie down..I'd best be going.

Isolde. I'll lie down..anyway I have the house to myself.

(Exit Ussher)

(Isolde stands up with her face in her hands, then turns to Image and lamp in corner. She kneels down. Christy has come in quietly from street. He tiptoes behind her, then throws his arms round her.)

Chris. My lovely what is it-are you crying?

(Isolde struggles to her feet and pushes him away, she turns to face him)

Isolde. Your lovely?...when you've just had her out with you, talking fine talk..your white-handed girl..don't come near me with your fine words.

Chris. (seizing her two hands)Yes..I took her out and now I'm taking you,you may frown and struggle but you'll come,Solda. Go and get ready,the car's outside and life is running away on us.

Isolde. And I'm to play second fiddle to your white-handed girl?

Chris.(laughing)"oes'nt a musician love the sound of two fiddles? And you won't change a man's nature,my heart's delight, so hurry and dress yourself,

(Exit IsodeL.)

(Ussher peeps in at street door)

Ush. Is she lying down? She said she had a terrible head on her.

Chris. She's coming out(holds up cider bottle) Who's been at my cider?

Ush. Only a drop,Christy,it was that big Guard had the most of it.He was sitting here at his ease.Did you leave the little nurse back?

Chris. Oh,it was you who talked about her and me to Solda?

Ush. Did I? I disremember..

Chris. I guessed there was a leaky valve somewhere.

(Enter from L. Isolde,she is wearing a pretty dress,a scarf round her head and carries a cloak on her arm.)

Ush. Solda...it's a queen you are now.

Chris. Yes,you're a queen..my queen.I've seen you like this in my dreams.

Isolde. Just a new dress and you open your mouths, I never bought it. One of my ladies was tired of it and gave it to me. The way you stare I might be a film star.

Chris. Out you go, Ussher, keep the chislers off my car, they'll be writing their names in the dust on the bonnet.

(Exit Ussher)

(Christy takes Isolde in his arms)

Chris. We've stood like this before..and in our dreams..do you remember? My name was Tristram of Lyonesse and you were Queen Isolde..wife of King Mark.

Isolde. And I'm still the wife of Mark and this is only a dream.

Chris(still holding her hands) Tonight is our dream, in half an hour we'll be up among the mountains, walking over the heather and no-one to see us only a cock grouse or a mountain hare. The full moon will rise out of the sea and we'll have no thought in all the world only our two selves and the love between us.

(Isolde pulls her hands away. She goes to shrine in the corner and blows out the lamp.)

Chris. Why did you do that?

Isolde. I can't humbug God. What sin I do it's with my eyes open. The lamp is my conscience-and I've blown it out. I'm ready, my love.

(Chris takes her hand and exit at street door. Sound of a car going off. The noise of tipsy singing comes nearer and Mark stumbles into the kitchen. He glares about him.)

Mark. Solda...Solda..Devil take her, where is she?

(Usher Peeps round door.)

Mark. Oh that's you is it? Someone alive in this darned world.
Where's my wife. She told me she was staying in.

Ush. How would I know? When I saw her last she had a splitting
head. Maybe she went to the chapel for a sup of holy water
or to get a breath of air.

Mark. She should be at home when her lawful husband comes in
for his supper.

Ush. Did'nt you tell us you were off on an excursion and might
be out till midnight. I heard you say it to her.

Mark. That's all you know. Maybe a wise cat comes home to see
will he catch the mice at play. Who's had the cider out?
(he holds up bottle) My fine Christy has been back to
quench his thirst.)

Ush. Ah, not at all it was Guard Dempsy, he was sitting and chattin
with Solda. The three of us were colloguing, trying to
get cool.

Mark. Cider is outlandish stuff. Never trust a man who can't take
his porter, he's no decent-living man. Indeed I don't know
who to trust. I thought I heard a car going from this darn
door as I got round the corner, Was'nt it Christy?

Ush. It might have been for he had that young one out from the
hospital. the nurse he's great on.

Mark. He's after a nurse now, is he?

Ush. He is so. Solda and I were talking of it only this day.
We said it would be fine for him to get a wife and settle
down.

Mark. Oh, the wind blew that way, did it? I thought it blew nearer home. The lodger and his landlady is an odd story.

Ush. You should be ashamed, you with a decent docile type of a wife.

Mark. Did you never hear of the snake that came into Eden, maybe his name was Christy Welch.

Ush. Shame on you, Mark Rea.

Mark. You so innocent. If we knew all there must be a lot of descendants of lodgers and landladies.

Ush. That's a very obscene remark.

Mark. You've some fine new words and names of sins since you turned puppydog to a priest.

Ush; Indeed now I learnt that word off Guard Dempsey, obscene, uncivilized language, that's what he hears after closing time he says.

Mark. Maybe he does, but a pub is the only place for a civilized man to find refreshment for mind and body. Come you along to Moloney's. If Solda comes in she can just wait for me or tell me why.

Ush. I'll go to the chapel myself.

Mark. It's that Father Juniper has you bewitched..and you that once could'nt say a good words for the saints. What about your old heathen heroes now?

Ush. Well, I'm old now and its time I was taking the stoney road to Heaven.

Mark. And what of your old Fianna..you'll never meet them in Heaven.

Ush. You're wrong, Father Juniper says they'll all be there to give me a thousand welcomes.

Mark. The godless heathen-in Heaven?

Ush. He says the heroes will be welcome for their courage and nobility and forgiven for their invincible ignorance.

Mark. I've no use for you-go your way-you were a man once- now you're a mouse. I'm off to find company worth meeting.

(Exit to street)

(Ussher goes to shrine in corner, strikes a match on his boot and relights the lamp. He stands there with arms extended, cross-fashion.)

Curtain.

ACT 2

Scene 2. Time II P.M. same day

Room is dark. Voices are heard singing 'What shall we do with the drunken sailor'. They draw nearer and two men burst into the room.

Mark is leaning on Ussher as he sings. Ussher switches on light.

Mark Ahoy there...light on our port beam..Red..danger..I see danger for someone.

Ussh(staggering under Mark's weight)Best sit down-the couch here.Come on..easy does it.

Mark At times like this I could wish I was the Isle of Man

Ussh The Isle of Man?What's that for? Are you wishing yourself a cat without a tail?

Mark Ah,not at all.Has'nt the Isle of Man three legs to stand on?
(He laughs tipsily and subsides on couch near window)

Ussh There you are now.Best take a doze.I'll be going off now.

Mark You will not.You'll stay and witness an act of bloody murder.

Ussh Why would I do that and get you hanged in the heel of the hunt?

mark Such a murder would be an act of divine justice and the Jury would agree on such a verdict.That's what the French do.They burst into tears and say it was a crime of passion and so to be commended.

Ussh If they saw Solda all the Jury would be for her and you'd lose your case.

ark IT's as I thought you're in league with sin.Where's my wife?

mark Tell me that,my holy man that has been telling me lies all this day.

Ussh Likely she's in her bed upstairs.

Mark Call her so-you.

(Ussh goes L and calls)

Ussh Solda Solda....are you above there?

Mark Well you can act a part and you knowing that she and her paramour
paramour...that's a good word and a fine word but maybe beyond
your intellect,-anyways they're in the folds of the Featherbed
mountain or some such lovers's hiding place.

Ussh Not at all.Why do you start such notions? Can't they have a
puncture as well as another?

Mark A puncture is the father of illicit love.

Ussh You've great words tonight,Mark Rea.It's a wonder what porter
will do to a man's tongue.

Mark You'd not get those fine words on beer and that was all you had
to inflate your intellect.

Ussh Good enough.I have the use of my legs.

Mark Sit down then,I must have company to share the burning thoughts
in my brain and I wish to arraign you at the Bar of truth.
Did not you persuade me my lawful wife had gone to the chapel?
though you knew right well she'd gone off in a car with that
playboy-Christy Welch?

Ussh(stammering) Weel now..there's truth and there's convenience and
they don't always agree..there's tact,Mark,I believe in
tact.

Mark Ussher...You're far from canonized yet.You may look to be
called 'the Pedlar saint' but if the Holy Cardinals caught
you lying to a deceived and disgraced husbandyou'd get a blot

Mark on the scutcheon.

Ussh I haven't got a scutcheon, that ever I heard and t'is all nonsense you talk. You'd best shut your eyes and go to sleep and they'll be back when you wake up.

Mark Then give me the bread knife to have it handt when they come in
(Ussher snatches up knife and sits on it.)

Ussh Do you want to be hanged?

Mark I'd face even that to defend my honour. Did'nt they know at Moloney's that my wife-the wife of Mark Rea, descendant of kings, was off with a fellow that gets pennies playing the harp in pubs? That's an affront that's only wiped out by bāād.

Ussh That's only gas..it's not midnight yet and many a thing goes wrong with a car. I think it was Satan invented them, they're contrary divils.

Mark I'll liquidate him...that's what you do in these enlightened days..you don't murder,..you liquidate but it's all one in the end.

Ussh Best take a sleep then for you'll need a lot of strength to liquidate Christy Welch.

Mark Have you any money, Ussher?

Ussh Not a penny why would I ?

Mark Because I could give you a dead cert for the 3.30 Tomorrow.

Ussh Best take it yourself.

Mark If I should be in prison I'd have no use for it, It seems a pity to waste it.

Ussh All the horses you've backed are still running the length

Ussh and breadth of Ireland.

Mark Not at all. When they take me to the gallows you can have the few shillings in my pocket and put them on 'Pet-day' for the 3.3 and you can buy me a bit of 'bacca with your winnings. Put ten shillings on him.

Ussh And how did you come by ten shillings?

Mark (Laughing tipsily) That's my business. maybe I broke the Bank.

Solda thinks she hides her money from me, cute as a magpie she is, but I'm as cute and I thought to look in her shoes and there was the note under the sole of one shoe.

Ussh She'll know who took it.

Mark Can an injured husband not recoup his honour with ten shilling

Ussh You'll be in a queer way if they both go off and leave you to feed yourself, best think of that before you liquidate anyone.

Mark I perceive you have the subtle mind of the serpent. Maybe you're right..the materialist point of view lays stress on one's bread and butter.

Ussh Bread and butter..Did you ever taste it? But the money points to a porter bottle and you never found Christy grudge you that.

Mark For a man that tells his beads so much you still have some sense in your head. But do you lock the door for I won't have them creeping in while I sleep. I'll face them with their guilt.

Ussh Lock it yourself then for I won't. What harm is there in a tired woman having a breath of air up on the heather. Why wouldn't she take the offer of a drive?

Mark Oh, you're mighty innocent. It's plain you never read the Sunday papers. (he gets up with difficulty and locks the door) Go off now and sleep on Christy's bed if you've no wish to see the drama of sin. (He staggers back to couch, having switched off the light.)

(Ussher ext L.)

(Now room is dark the light is seen outside window, moonlight and a street light. Christy and Isolde are seen outside. There is a loud knock at door. Ussher appears from L. and unlocks door. He picks up bread-knife from chair. Isolde comes in followed by Christy, both are quietly composed and cheerful.)

Chris That's the lovely night. It was a grand holiday, glory be to God.

Isolde (standing near couch) Did you have a good excursion, Mark?

(Mark sits up and glares at them)

Mark Excursion? I never went. I'm no way fit for such jublations. I came back looking for my supper with Ussher here and not a crumb that would feed a robin.

Isolde (laughing) You're not so like a robin. But we'll have supper right away. We're hungry after that good air. Ussher, get me the frying pan, I've some rashers and you set the table, Christy, and cut us some bread.

Chris I will, but Ussher has the knife as if he was ready to murder someone.

(Ussher hands it looking confused, he glances at Mark who coughs.)

Mark Was it a puncture had you late?

Chris You guess right, but I changed it in record time. There was

Chris plenty of help if I'd wanted it, that mountain road was like O'Connell street for cars and walkers-it's what you expect on a Bank holiday.

(Christy lays table as Isolde bends over pan on stove)

Ussh Well praise God the day has ended well and no didasters.

(They gather round table)

Isolde Are you coming, Mark?

Mark(sulkily) I am not. I've no heart or stomach for rashers. You know well they bring on that cursed old pain.

Chris Then I shall eat your share for I'm as hungry as a wolf.

Isolde I'm more sleepy than hungry so I'll take up my cup and a piece of bread and go to bed for I have to be early again tomorrow. Goodnight to you all. (Exit L.)

Ussh It was a good thought to take Solda out for she had a terrible pain in her head today.

Mark(in an oily voice) Aye it was so, Christy, and I thank you for the thought and good of you that has your own girl waiting for you.

Chris(L_n differently) Oh, I took her first, she was on duty later. She was glad to think Solda would get a drive too.

Mark Well now it's not every girl that's so reasonable. Most would be jealous and as the poet says-'jealousy is cruel as the grave.

Chris Girls are more sensible these days. There's no time for that sort of thing-it's live and let live.

Mark Well why would she be jealous of a married woman. No one would think a decent young feller the like of yourself would turn his eyes that way.

Chris Of course not.

(He gets up and goes to hearth and sits down with his back to Mark who is sitting up on the couch.)

Mark Still I'd say-would'nt you that the men of today have no the fine sense of honour that our ancestors could boast. What has become of duelling? Those were brave days when gentlemen were falling like nine-pins in the PHOENIX Park-over some slight to their pride.

Chris(laughing) I think it was a waste of good red blood. Today they'd be blood donors and some use in the world.

Mark(angrily) You laugh because you're young but laughter in those days would have been a mortal offence.

Chris(carelessly) I've a pair of fists on me and they'd do me as well as duelling pistols. But anyway what has us talking of duels and the like?

Mark Oh, nothing at all, it was just in the way of conversation.

(Ussher is nodding with sleep, his feet stuck out in front of him)

Chris It's time we all had a sleep there's Ussher snoring. He's dreaming he's in Tir-na-n-oge.

Ussh(rousing himself) What's that, Christy? Indeed I'd rather be in my bed than in Tir-na-n-oge.

Chris I'll take off my boots here and clean them in the morning.

(He bends down to take them off. Mark has risen, taken the knife off the table and made a move towards Christy. Ussher trips him up.

Mark sprawls on floor and knife rattles towards Christy who picks it up.

Chris It was great duels they had with their pistols, Mr Rea, but they never thought to use bread knives. Curtain.

ACT. 3

Afternoon Hallows' Eve

(Christy comes in from street. He looks round anxiously, then goes to door L.)

Chris (calling) 'Solda...Solda...

(He moves to mantelpiece, looks at clock, shakes it, winds it, then opens street door and looks out. Next he disappears at door L, returning with kit-bag. He begins to repack it. Street door opens, Isolde comes in. She has a full basket which she puts on table. She wears a head kerchief.)

Isolde Oh, you're back.

Chris Yes..we must be all ready. Are you all right. I was in a sweat lest something had happened you. I shall be like that every minute till we're on the boat and out beyond the harbour. (He draws her to him) I feel everything is in league to separate us..angels and devils combined against our happiness..it was always like that. Promise me you won't go to the Chapel.

Isolde I promise. I wouldn't mock God by going to visit Him with a sin hot in my heart.

Chris Oh, stop talking about sin. I've etold you you don't owe anything to that old porter-shark. He'll drink himself to death in his own time, you'd never stop him.

Isolde That's true enough.

Chris Where is he now?

Isolde He went off to Dr O'Farrell at the hospital. He was to hear the result of the X Ray.

Chris Likely he'll be off to the Pub as soon as it opens. Anyway I'll

be calling for you with thw taxi at seven O' clock.And I'll
take you out of this house in face of all the devils in Hell.
So be ready

Isolde I've told you I'll go with you,my mind is made up.

Chris (Going to look in her basket on table)Show me what you bought.Did
I give you enough money? Did you get the dote of a hat you saw
in that window?I'd love you in that..you'd make all the girls
in Cornwall envy you.

solde Don't be angry,Christy..I never bought it..the truth is I got
things for Mark..socks and a shirt,I'd not the heart to leave
him in rags.Men are such helpless poor cweatures when there's
no woman around to clothe and feed them.

(She unpacks shirt and socks)If it was a sin to spend your
money so I'll earn some in England and pay you back.

Chris (putting arm round her)Let the old rascal have his shirt and his sock
so long as I have his wife.You're lovely as you are but will
you be warm enough in the cold sea wind?

Isolde This coat is shabby but it's warm.

Chris ~~Tham~~ I'll have my wish so.

solde What was your wish?

Chris To be up on the deck with you,the two of us close linked against t
the wind with the stars above us and the waves carrying us on
to England..to the new life together.

Isolde Will you not mind that I'm not your wife before God or the law?

Chris You will be someday..and while we're true to eachother none need
know in a strange place.

Isolde Is it Cornwall where we'll go?

Chris It is. I'll be easy in my mind there and I've heard of a job. I won't have you go out working any more, you're to live like a queen.

Isolde (laughing) Is it me a queen?..that's like a dream or a story Ussher would tell at Hallows'Eve.

Chris Who can tell what we have been or what we may be. Sometimes when I play the harp I seem to be someone else..a man whose name I forget, I'm a knight or a minstrel..then I wake up and I'm in a pub, and it's only old gas that I'm dreaming.

Isolde I could see you like that..only that is Hollywood stuff, we're just working people.

Chris So we are and I must go out and get some money and I want to make sure of that taxi....Don't go out again..I'm terrified that we'll be parted someday yet.

Isolde (clinging to him) Never...never,, nothing can part us, not life... not death.

Christy kisses her then goes off to door, pausing to look back at her. (Exit)

Isolde takes things out of basket, examines them and hangs shirt on chair before fire, next lays table for tea)

(Knock at door)

Isolde Come in.

(Enter Father Juniper)

Friar Good evening, Solde, Old Ussher told me I might find Christy Welsh here.

Isolde You're late for him, Father, he's just gone out, and he's off to England tonight.

Friar He is? We'll miss him..a kind boy and a lovely harpist, God must

love a good harpiat. He might be wanting him for the orchestra one of these days.

Isolde Don't say that it's unlucky. ~~It's~~ He's too young for Heaven- he has life before him yet..but sit down, Father.

(friar takes chair) I've e got a thing to tell you..I never did tell you a lie.(She stands before him) the truth is I'm going away with Christy.

friar (without emotion) I expected this.

Isolde What are you going to say to me? You'll be cursing me. You know now I'll be damned.

Friar I shall not know that. God never let me know that anyone I knew was damned.

solde Then don't try to pray me into a better mind. I'm not asking ~~pr~~ prayers or excuses. I'd not pretend to God..I've told him I'll choose love tho' it means damnation ...

Friar Love is a big word..the saints have found that it covered a lot of ground. St Paul could tell you a lot it means. You promised to love that poor old Mark..in his case it would be pity only- not that he deserves it or that anyone will blame you for leaving the drunken old rascal.

Isolde We'll try and send him money now and then.

Frâar And he'll drink it and himself to death fast enough.

solde And then you'll think his death is at my door.

Friar I'm not judging you, Solda,..you'l judge yourself, we do. We make excuses to God, but we can't hoodwink ourselves.

solde I'll be a just judge, sure enough..there'll be no whining to God I promise you when I come to die. I'll set my face to the

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gates of Hell and walk in boldly.

Friar Then there's nothing to say to you, my child, but that you're in my prayers.

Isolde No..no..you must'nt pray, that's how you holy people cheat us, you go and pray us into Heaven when we want to go to Hell our own way.

Friar I'm getting to be an old man and I've learnt at last that God knows His own business, I need'nt give Him hints.

Isolde Then it's goodbye for the two of us.

Friar (taking her hand) Goodbye the, Solda, I doubt we shall ever meet again.

Isolde Goodbye, Father and God bless you.

Friar Thankyou, child. (Exit to street)

(Isolde exit at L. With noise and stumbling enter Mark. He staggers to a chair groaning and sits there, wiping face and rocking himself. Enter Isolde from L. She stands staring for a moment)

Isolde You're back from the hospital. You've been a long time..I suppose you had to wait.

Mark (doubled up as if in pain) Wait? ..doesn't the prisoner wait by the hour for the Jury to talk away his life, smoking their cigars the while. Wait-how are you? He has to wait next while the Judge fits on his black cap -

Isolde Oh, that's all talk-what did he say?

Mark Sentenced me to death as coolly as the judge does, felling now he won't be late for his dinner.

Isolde (drawing nearer) Why you're shaking all over. Are you so cold?

Mark The marrow of my heart is cold. I'm the condemned prisoner going back to his cell.

Isolde You need a cup of hot tea. I'll put on the kettle. Did you leave a drop in the whiskey bottle.. I'll put it in your tea.

Mark See did I ..it's what I need.

Isolde I got a Baby Power to leave for you.. maybe I'll open it now.

Mark To leave me? Are you gadding to the Pictures that you talk of leaving me?

Isolde No, Mark, I'm leaving you for good and all.

Mark (Rousing himself) Leaving me.. my God, you can't leave a dying man.

Isolde Who says you're dying. You're tricking me to make me change my mind, but you can't. I'm sick of you and sick of life here. It's a purgatory.. I've stood it these years but I'LL have no more.

mark (sobbing and clutching her skirt) But you'll be free soon, I'm dying.. that's what he meant. I heard my death sentence.. ask him yourself.

Isolde What did he say.. draw your breath and try and tell me. Here.. the kettle's boiling, take your tea. (She fills teapot and pours out a cup)

Mark It was the Specialist. that's what they call him. 'Well, my man,' says he, 'I can't do more for you. I can't operate and you'll have to face it out. We all have to some day. easy for him to say that's barely pushing forty.

Isolde (handing him the cup of tea) Did he say how long he gave you?

mark He said it might be six months.. or a year with luck.. it would depend what care I could get at home. He says: 'Have you got a wife?' 'I have', says I, 'the very best'. 'You're lucky so', says he, 'for a good wife is the very best nurse God ever made. She'll keep your heart up and later we'll take you in here and ease things for you.'

'and try not to worry,' says he, the way the warders cheer up the condemned man paying cards with him till he's near the scaffold
Isolde Well..I'm sorry, Mark, but I've left you provided, I got a bag of coal for you and there's food in the cupboard and you'll draw sick allowance and I daresay old Usher would stay with you for company.

Mark Is it that old gomme of a man to be comforting my last hours. He'd be romancing of Tir-na-n-oge while I lay dying. (He falls on his knees clutching Isolde's skirt) Don't leave me, for God's sake stay the little time I have..I dare'nt face it alone.

Isolde They're kind in the hospital.

Mark Kind and careless and terrible clean. Your bed must be tidy tho' you're in the locks of death. I'll die of the clean cold ward as soon as I get there.

Isolde You think it easy to turn me after years you neglected me.

Mark I know it..I've been a poor sort of husband. My intellect led me astray for the good talk you get at the bar..but my heart was faithful to you, Solda, all the same. I'll be the best husband yet yo you if you'll stay. I'll keep the house nice for you when you go out to work. I'd wash up and sweep maybe and we'd be great company in the long Winter evenings. Have you no love for me, Solda, your lawful wedded husband?

Isolde No love, Mark, -not a spark, you killed it long ago.

Mark Then have you no pity. Does the Sacred Heart not teach you any pity?

Isolde I have pity, that may break me yet.

Mark Stay with me the little while left., then you'll be free. If I could

tuch you in the long dark night I'd maybe get courage to face
..what's coming. Will you turn from a dying man and his last prayer
Isolde (desperately) I was going this very night. Oh, God, to stop me now
and my heart's desire but a step beyond.

Mark (Clutching at her hands) I was never one for the clergy or their
talk, but a woman at the fireside and her hand to hold can
give one courage..but for you I've nothing ..nothing in this cold
and weary world.

Isolde It's all a trick to keep me..am I never to have my own life?

Mark You'd pity a dog that was dying on your doorstep.

Isolde A dog is faithful, he can love.

Mark Wasn't I faithful? Never did I sleep away from you.

Isolde And so drunk you could barely climb the stairs.

Mark I dare'nt die alone..the cold and the dark and the old nagging
pain..

Isolde There, you may dry your eyes..you've won, I won't go.

Mark (cheered at once) Solda..my blessed girl, my heart's jewel..as lovely
as the day I married you..(he leans forward to embrace her)

Isolde Let go my dress..I don't want lovemaking, but I'll look after you.
You'd best go to Moloney's ..you need to cheer yourself.

Mark "ut I dare'nt let you out of my sight..you'll maybe go off yet
with that playboy and his harp.

Isolde I don't break my word to dog or devil, I've promised and you'll
find me here however late you are.

Mark I will then, maybe it will ease the pain and give me courage.
Will you kiss me, my Queen.

Isolde I'm no queen and I want no kisses -go off now for I'm tired.

(Exit Mark rather shakily)

(Isolde goes to shrine in corner and stands there for some seconds)

Isolde(bitterly)You've conquered-You've played me a trick-You always
get the last trick.

(She is standing there when Christy enters from street)

Chris Hurry up,darling,I have the car bespoke.I saw youe old man going
off to Moloney's .He'll be there till closing time and by then
we'll be beyond Howth.

Isolde(turning round)No-I'll be here-He's conquered.

Chris Who-that old porter-shark-your husband.

Isolde No-the Man -Above,He's tricked me.

Chris You've been to the chapel,and you promised me not to go.

Isolde No,it's not that Ihave'nt stirred out.It's the poor pitiable
creature crawling to my feet because he's dying and dare'nt
die alone.He's like some beaten dog creeping to my skirt to
die there.No-one but me wouod bother with him.

Chris(fiercely) And for that half-man you'll turn me down.You've no
pity for me with the flame of love destroying me.

Isolde No-I've no pity for you-I love you that are beautiful and
strong and need no help.

Chris Do you know what you do to a man that is fierce with love
when you drive him away? It's to another woman you drive him.

Isolde I know...I give you your freedom,Christy.

Chris you'll send me off so..to another?

Isolde Go if you must to your white-handed girl.I won't hold you
against your will,Christy.

Chris It's a sore and bitter night for me.You'll never see me again.

Isolde I must take what comes.

Chris Then Good-bye.Go to Heave your own way..I doubt you'll meet me there.It's to the Devil you're sending me.

(He goes out quickly,slamming door behind him.Isolde stands as if paralysed,the goes to mantel-piece and leans her head against it. Door opens hastily and Christy comes in again.)

Chris We can't part like this..Solda,look at me.

(She turns and is in his arms)

Isolde My heart is yours to break.

Chris It's not life nor death can part the two of us that were pledged before ever we were born.I'll be back for you one day,You are my queen whatever parts us now.

Isolde I'll wait till the other side of death if need be.

(He kisses her and goes to door,looking back at her before exit)

(Isolde sits down wearily by the fire her back to the door.A minute passes then a confused noise of shouting draws nearer to door,a police whistle is sounded twice.Door opens violently and Ussher rushes in ,slamming door behind him and leaning against it.)

USSh Oh,my God..my God..what an awful night's work.Don't look out? you'd lose your life to see the sight..to murder him.. he's mad,roaring mad.

(Isolde springs to her feet and moves to door)

Isolde Speak,manwho's killed,who's murdered?

Ussh Don't go out,Solda..the sight would freeze you ..to see him lying there,the lovely bold young man.

Isolde Speak can't you? Who's lying there?

Ussh It's Christy..Mark has murdered him..hit him with a bottle
sneaked behind him..oh it was dirty work and he'll hang for it.

Isolde Let me go to him.

Ussh(trying to hold her back) It's no sight for you?Solda,
(There is a loud knock at the door and Ussher stands aside.Door opens and
Guard Dempsy stands there)

Gard I've heavy news for you,Mrs Rea,I'm heart-scalded to bring you
such news but we'll have to bring the young man in here till
the ambulance comes.You'll need all your courage,ma'am,this
night.

Isolde..(struggling to speak)Who...who?

Gard It's young Christy Welch..Someone has gone for a priest..but
I think it's too late.We must bring him in out of the crowd
that's gathering.Best lay him on this couch.

Isolde Who did it.

Gard It was your husband,Mrs Rea..maybe he had drink taken..or it
might be insanity.

Isolde Where is he..my husband.

Gard They're taking him to the station..he was raving like a madman.
(Gard signs to Ussher and they go out together and return,carrying
Christy,They lay him in the couch.Isolde bends over him.)

Isolde Speak to me,Christy...Speak to me.

Gard He's beyond speech,Ma'am, but the priest may reach the ears of
his soul.

(They stand in silence,looking down at Christy.Enter quickly and Quietly
Father Juniper.)

Friar Pax Huic Domini.

Curtain

ACT 3

Epilogue

The stage is dark. With heavy step a Garda comes from L. He carries a torch which he shines on a figure on the bench near a Bus stop. It is Father Juniper, slouched wearily on the seat.

Gard Why, Father, you're still here. The fog lifted but it's down again. I doubt you'll get a bus tonight if you sit here till sunrise.

Friar (Bewildered) Oh, it's you, Guard. Did the ambulance come yet?

Gard Ambulance..but you don't need an ambulance, Father, I'll guide you over the cross-roads and you'll soon be back.

Friar No, not for me. The ambulance was to come for poor Christy Welch. That was a terrible murder.

Gard I've caught you napping, Father. There's no murder -not in these parts..and who at all is Christy Welch?

Friar Do you not know them all-Mark Rea and his young wife and old mad Ussher-why you were often round there, you know them all.

~~I don't know any of them~~

Gard I can't recall one of them and it seems to me you had a dream while you waited here. You clergy have a hard life, up so early, t'is no wonder you'd drop off.

Friar I can't have dreamt of all those people, so real as they were.

Gard Well you surely did, for I found you here in the fog with some queer play-acting folk, dressed up like the 'Vizards' that go round in the country on a Hallow-E'en. I put them on the right road, and now I'll do the same for you.

Friar Thankyou, for if I don't get a sleep I shall never wake up

fresh for the first Mass on All Saints' Day.

Gard Come on then. Follow the light.

Friar Aye, follow the light and dream folk or real folk God show us
the right road.

Final Curtain

SWIFT SAVING
BOND

