

Elegy for Daughters

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ABSTRACT

Elegy for Daughters

Nuala Madden

A five-act play, *Elegy for Daughters* is the story of Margaret Keane, the orphan daughter of an Irish émigrée. Ten years after her mother's drowning, Margaret learns that a theatre troupe in Galway is staging a play that her mother wrote before she left Ireland to go to Canada. Completely disconnected from her roots, and uncertain as to whether or not her mother committed suicide, Margaret flies to Ireland with the hope of obtaining a sense of closure when she hears her mother tell a story, one last time.

In Galway, Margaret stays at *The Star of the Sea*, a boarding house-cum-bed and breakfast on Nun's Island. There she meets a cast of characters with stories and histories as unlikely as her own; indeed, with stories that shed light on her own mythical lineage. The action takes place in the recently renovated kitchen at *The Star of the Sea*, where a desk lamp functions as the family hearth, and folk gather 'round for accounts of local history and family legend.

Elegy for Daughters questions chance, the supernatural, and notions of blind faith. As Lugh the lodger remarks in the final act, "There's no harm in looking at things upside down as well as right-side up. Sure none of us knows which way 'round things are meant to be hanging."

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Elegy for Daughters

Dramatis Personae

Margaret Keane, *an orphan*

Carmel Keane, *Margaret's deceased mother*

Thomas Kavanagh, *the proprietor of The Star of the Sea*

Des McCrink, *a guest at The Star of the Sea*

Kitty O'Connor, *Kavanagh's sister*

Lugh, *a drama student and resident at The Star of the Sea*

Morrighu Cliodna, *an American drama student*

The action takes place in Margaret's apartment in Toronto and at *The Star of the Sea* boarding house-cum-bed and breakfast on Nun's Island, Galway.

Prologue Margaret's apartment. *The present day.*

Act One The Star of the Sea. *One week later.*

Act Two Later that evening.

Act Three The following afternoon.

Act Four Later that night.

Act Five The same night.

Elegy for Daughters

Prologue

An armchair in a dust cover, downstage centre. A gauzy black curtain is drawn across the rest of the stage. A short flight of stairs leads up from the pit, centrestage. Enter Margaret, stage right. She sits on the chair and looks out.

The sound of street traffic fades in.

Margaret: When all is said and done, there are two kinds of people in the world: those who long for the mountains and those who long for the sea.

She huddles on the chair.

My mother's words, not mine. It was all right for her. She was from the West coast of Ireland where there's plenty of sea and mountain to go 'round, so they can take their pick. I grew up in a high rise building in the West end of Toronto. Apart from the murky Ontario, there's no sea to speak of, and my mountain peak is, well, here. The view from the seventh floor.

A train rattles, whistles past. She leans forward, peering out.

Westbound cargo, Canadian National Rail. That train's got thousands of flat Canadian miles to cover before it reaches the West coast and its greedy store of sea and mountain range.

She gets up; she stands at the edge of the stage, looking out.

My mother and I moved around the city quite a bit, but we always stayed North of the tracks. That was a good thing, or at least I used to think so. I don't see what the difference is now; and I wonder if a discrepancy ever existed at all, or if it was something I picked out of stories and TV. North versus South. East versus West. Here versus There. Always at odds.

Enter Carmel in winter gear, stage left. She is humming the tune to 'Galway Bay' to herself. She hands a toque and scarf to Margaret.

Carmel: Put your clothes on before you catch your death.

Margaret dresses.

The sound of wind, water and the outdoors fades in.

Margaret: I asked her about it one day, about the right and wrong sides of the track, and the crunch and squeak of her boots in the snow stopped at once. Her face was pink, and she was panting.

Carmel stops and turns to face Margaret; she speaks solemnly.

Carmel: There are but two sorts of people, Margaret. Those who long for the mountains and those who long for the sea. You may find yourself in a castle or a cottage, but that only speaks to where you are. Not who you are.

Margaret puts her hand in the deep pocket of Carmel's coat. They walk along the edge of the stage, then stop, looking out.

Margaret: My mother loved the sea. She feared it, as well. Even on the coldest days in February, she and I would bundle up and trek through High Park and over the Boulevard to the shores of Lake Ontario. The flat grey sky dipped into the flat grey lake, which bubbled and gurgled under patchy sheets of ice. Our eyes watered from the cold whip of the wind and the tip of her nose went pink and started to run, so that when she kissed my forehead, it was damp. She strained her eyes over the horizon and I wondered what she saw, for to me it was all a dull nothingness.

They stare ahead. Margaret tugs on Carmel's sleeve.

It's freezing, let's go.

Carmel peers over the edge, heedless.

Mom, come on. Let's go.

Carmel: There was a man drowned in Grenadier Pond my first winter here.

Margaret: I know, I know. He saved the kid on the toboggan. Let's go.

Carmel: There was this fool of a boy, he couldn't have been more than nine or ten I suppose, and he set his sleigh on the hill that slopes down to the pond.

Margaret (*impatiently*): I know, I know. The old man tried to save him. Let's go, I'm freezing.

Carmel: He soared, so he did, for he was only a wee slip of a thing, and the hill was desperate steep and covered in snow.

Margaret rubs her arms, stomps her feet, tries to keep warm.

Away out he was, a good ten yards or so from the edge of the pond, still sat atop his sleigh, and the ice starting to creak and groan, and he, frozen to the spot, his eyes as wide as saucers.

Margaret: You weren't even there! How could you know what his face looked like?

Carmel (*stops*): It was in the papers.

Margaret: How could anyone see what his face looked like if he was so far away?

Carmel (*heedless*): And there he was, frozen to the spot, and his eyes as wide as saucers, and he not knowing what to do at all.

Margaret rolls her eyes, rubs her arms, and stomps her feet.

And right then, there was this old fellow passing by, and he, a retired marine and as fit as a fiddle, for he used to be walking up and down and all through the park every day. (*Softly*) I think I may have seen him once myself. I think he may have asked me the time. He had the bluest eyes you can imagine, and his hair was still quite dark, but the whiskers on his face were white. (*Firmly*) He called out to the boy and his voice rumbled and echoed across the pond, and the boy knew that he was saved, for the old marine had a fine deep voice on him.

Margaret: I don't remember him being a marine the last time you told it. (*Beat*) I thought he was a train conductor.

Carmel: And the old marine pulled off his great galosh boots, and you can only imagine the ice and snow nipping and biting away at his stocking feet, and he dropped to his knees and spread his great strong body over the ice, and he hadn't crept far when there was an almighty thunder of splitting ice, and he was swallowed whole. (*She shudders*). The boy was all right, for the sleigh was made of wood, and it bridged the split in the ice. A crowd had gathered by then, and they called out to him to keep his body on the sleigh and to kick his feet in the water, and he did, and when he was close enough, they hauled him in with a belt or a bit of rope. (*Sadly*) But the old marine... (*Spryly, playfully*) And what should you do, our Margaret, if your old mum were to topple into the pond or down to the bottom of the lake?

Carmel wraps her arms about Margaret's waist from behind, tickling her. Margaret tries to restrain her laughter, but is unable.

Margaret (*playfully*): I would drop to my knees and lay flat on the ice and throw you my scarf.

Margaret breaks away. She removes her scarf and throws an end to Carmel. Carmel grabs hold, dances underneath it, and pulls Margaret in.

Carmel: And what if the ice were to creak and groan? (*Mimicking the sound*) Creak!
Groan!

Like children, they shriek and rub their hands together, frightened and delighted. Carmel takes hold of the scarf and plucks the toque off Margaret's head. She dances off, stage left. Margaret sits.

Overlaying sound of wind and water fades out.

Margaret: Those who long for the mountains and those who long for the sea. I'm not even sure what that means. She was full of that sort of stuff. She was full of it. (*Matter of factly*) That was just her way. That was just my mom.

Offstage, Carmel sings in a haunting voice.

Carmel (*singing*): If you ever go across the sea to Ireland, then maybe at the closing of your day...

Margaret: Most of my memory of her is a tangled mess, a motley spool of wool, like the colour-coded routes that snake through countries and are recorded on road maps.

Carmel (*singing*): You will sit and watch the moon rise over Claddagh and see the sun go down on Galway Bay.

Margaret huddles in the chair. She stares ahead.

Margaret: At thirteen years of age, there are no thoughts of mortality. There are friends and boys and not having any money to go anywhere or do anything. Those are the kinds of thoughts that preoccupy at thirteen.

Enter Carmel, quietly, stage right. She sneaks up behind Margaret and rests her hands on the back of the armchair. Margaret stares ahead.

That winter the television burned out. It was right after Christmas and my mother was out of work.

Carmel: Will we go for a walk, our Margaret?

Margaret: It's too cold and it's nearly dark.

Carmel leans over the chair, looking down at Margaret.

Carmel: It's only half-three! There's time enough for a breath of air.

Margaret stares ahead.

Margaret: If we go out, I won't talk. My lips get all dry and cracked and they start to bleed.

Carmel raises herself back up, defeated.

Carmel: You're a right misery, Maggie May.

Margaret: I'm bored, that's all.

Carmel: Well you may carry on being bored if it's winter's end, you're after.

Carmel sighs. She begins to play with Margaret's hair.

There was a man and his wife, and they had an only daughter, and she was the apple of their eye.

Margaret: Have you told me this one already?

Carmel: One day the father was out cutting turf, for that's what they did in those days to make a bit of money.

Margaret: What's turf?

Carmel: When dinnertime came, the mother sent the girl with her father's supper in a wooden dish, and the father sat down at the edge of the bog to eat. *(Beat)* Turf is a bit of earth you would burn on the fire for fuel; you would find it in a bog. *(Beat)* And it was a fine day, and the two of them were looking out over the sea and it wasn't long 'til a large ship came into view, and the girl said to her father, "I wonder where that ship is going to?" "I'd say she's making for Killybegs," said he.

Margaret: You've told me this one already. *(Beat)* But I forget, where's Killybegs?

Carmel: And the girl said, "If I wished it, the ship would never reach there, big and all as she is." "Shut up," said the father, "what could you do to a ship that's out on the sea? Have a bit of sense." The girl waited 'til her father had finished his meal, then she took the dish to wash it, and when she had done that, she started to play tricks with the dish in the water. The father took no notice of her, for he thought she was only playing. "Look now, Father, and see what I

can do with that ship,” said she. The father looked out at the sea and saw that the ship was coming straight for the cliffs below them.

Margaret moves to speak, but Carmel places a finger over Margaret’s lips to prevent her.

“Who taught you how to do that?” he asked. “My mother,” said she. “And what are you going to do to the ship when you get her near the shore?” he asked. “As soon as I get her near enough to the rocks, I can turn this dish upside down, and the same will happen to the ship on the sea,” said she. But the little girl let the ship go free, and it floated out to sea again. Her father passed no remark on whether what she had learned from her mother was good or bad. That night, when he returned home, he washed himself well and put on his best suit of clothes. He left the house that night, and wherever he went, she never saw him again.

Pause. Carmel continues to play with Margaret’s hair.

Margaret: If I had power like that, I’d skip over the rest of winter and go straight to spring.

Carmel: I wouldn’t like that at all. Imagine all the things that could come to pass in six weeks’ time!

Margaret looks up.

Margaret: Like what?

Carmel: I could win the lottery.

Margaret drops her head, facing forward.

Margaret: You never win anything.

Carmel: When is your school dance?

Margaret: On Friday.

Carmel (*playfully*): You never know what may happen *then*, our Margaret. You could find a Valentine.

Margaret looks up. She is embarrassed, but pleased.

Margaret: What about you?

Carmel: Me?

Margaret (*quickly*): You could find a job.

Carmel (*seriously*): Jesus, that reminds me. I need to leave my suit jacket in with the dry cleaner. The state of that jacket!

Margaret (*heedless*): One where you had your own office, or maybe you could share with another secretary so you had someone to talk to, and I could work there in the summer...

Carmel (*anxiously*): You must remind me, Margaret. You must remind me to leave in my jacket.

Exit Carmel, quickly, stage left.

Margaret (*obliviously*): Emma's sister worked at their dad's office last summer and he's going to find something for Emma to do as soon as she turns fourteen.

Margaret reaches up for Carmel's hands, but they are gone. Quickly, she turns around in her chair; slowly, she turns back. She draws herself in close.

What can happen in six weeks' time?

Pause. Offstage, Carmel begins the final stanza of 'Galway Bay'. With each line, her voice gains strength. Margaret raises her own voice in turn.

Carmel (*singing*): And if there is going to be a life hereafter...

Margaret: My mother died on the eleventh of February.

Carmel (*singing*): And somehow I am sure there's going to be...

Margaret: A few weeks later I moved in with Gracie, a lady from the Church.

Carmel (*singing*): I will ask my God to let me make my heaven...

Margaret: That's what can happen in the pause before spring.

Carmel (*singing*): In that dear land across the Irish Sea.

Pause.

Margaret: The eleventh of February fell on a Friday in 1994. In all our lives, there are

days that change the whole order of things. It's strange how you can look at a date full on in the face, on the top corner of a newspaper or on a bus transfer or on the chalkboard at school, and it seems to be as meaningless as a hundred other calendar days. *(Beat)* Then, all of a sudden, it's not. It's the most important day in your life; a day that resounds in your ears ever after. *(Beat)* That changes your imagination.

Offstage, Carmel can be heard singing 'Galway Bay'. Her voice echoes, and the effect is haunting. Margaret speaks numbly over the din.

Her hands looked red-raw against the white hospital sheet, and her fingernails were blue. I kept my eyes closed when I kissed her. Her forehead felt like clay, and before any other part of me knew it, my lips knew that she was gone. I can remember thinking, "Where is she? Where did she go?"

Margaret falls silent. Carmel's voice gains strength.

Carmel *(singing)*: And if there is going to be a life hereafter, and somehow I am sure there's going to be, I will ask my God to let me make my heaven in that dear land across the Irish Sea.

Margaret: I stayed next door with Mrs. Romano for a while. She made lemon tea and her bed sheets smelled of cinnamon. *(Beat)* I remember thinking how her living room was the mirror reflection of our living room, and how I had somehow been trapped on the wrong side of the wall. Mrs. Romano didn't want to let me back into our apartment, and I couldn't understand why. I suppose she had a sense of what I was thinking: that things could right themselves as long as I was home. Of course, I knew that wasn't true. But it was deep down under so many other feelings and reactions that I knew that. On the surface, I just wanted to be home again. *(Beat)* But when I thought about it, I didn't even know where that was. It seems like there is no distance at all between then and now, but it is the length of ten years. *(Beat)* What can happen in ten years' time? My mother might have made a game of the possibilities. I started high school. I found a part-time job and lost it and found another. I found a boy and lost him and found another. I graduated and went to university. *(Beat)* I learned how to disremember.

Margaret gets up; she walks to the edge of the stage.

At first I tried to remember everything. I would talk to myself because there was only myself to talk to. I would say, "Margaret, how many hours since..." "Margaret, what was that last thing she..." "Margaret, how many days since..." "Margaret, where did she leave the..." "Margaret, how many weeks since..." "Margaret, how did she used to..." "Margaret, when did we..."

"Margaret, what did she..." "Margaret, why did she..." "Margaret, why did she..." "Margaret, why..." Margaret.

She composes herself.

I went to university and graduated. Two months ago, I moved into my own apartment not far from where I used to live with my mother, near the park and North of the tracks. In the crowd of boxes were two belonging to my mother. At the bottom of one, I found an old road map of Ireland; I spread it out on the bare mattress in my bedroom and traced my finger around the contours of the country: Spiddal, Barna, Salt Hill, Galway. *(Beat)* When I was a kid, we had a globe in our classroom at school, and Ireland seemed a mere breadcrumb off the shores of Europe, the place where History came from. I never gave much thought to Ireland, for my mother hadn't, and she was Irish. *(Softly)* Most of my memory of her is a tangled mess. *(Beat)* My mother was one Carmel Keane. Who was she? My mother. She lived where I lived. In the massive expanse of land that was Canada, there was Carmel and there was me. I was the axle on which she spun, the centre of everything in both of our lives. The map spread open on the bare mattress in my empty bedroom was a portal into her otherness: I traced my finger around a lump of land that had nothing to do with me, but much to do with her, and it hit me, quickly and viciously, that I had never really known her at all.

A train rattles, whistles past. She peers out, speaks softly.

I've never been out West. I've never been anywhere. I've been circling the same city blocks my whole life.

She collects herself.

I got a tourist's guidebook to Galway and wrote away for some more information.

She removes a brochure from her pocket.

Six weeks ago an envelope arrived. Postmarked June 1. *(Beat)* Funny how you can look at a date full on in the face, on the top corner of a newspaper or on a bus transfer or on the chalkboard at school, and it seems to be as meaningless as a hundred other calendar days. Then, all of a sudden, it's not.

She skims the brochure.

She wrote a play. My mother. She wrote a play and they're going to stage it, some playhouse in Galway city.

The train whistles, fades away. She peers out, speaking softly.

I've been circling the same city blocks for twenty-three years.

She reads aloud.

"Spotlight Galway proudly presents work from local playwrights Little Jim Nee, Arthur Treanor, Mark Murphy and Carmel Keane. The Galway Arts Festival, July 16-28. Spotlight Galway asks you to kindly support our sponsors."

She looks up.

An ad for my mother's play and a number to ring for a B & B on Nun's Island, Galway city.

The curtain draws back slowly to reveal a bare Irish kitchen in dim, blue-grey light. At right, the dining table and chairs. The table is covered in a jaunty tablecloth; a vase of flowers serves as the centrepiece. Behind the table is Kavanagh's desk, covered in file folders and stacks of paper.

At left, a cluttered, old fashioned kitchen-dresser crowds the rear wall, pressing against the cupboards and counter top. The cupboards, counter top, sink and oven line the length of the stage, at left. There is a small window above the sink.

Downstage right, a door leads out to the hall, front room and main staircase. Across the stage, at left, the back door opens into the pantry and back stairs, and leads into the garden.

Lights up in the kitchen. Spotlight off Margaret.

Enter Kitty, stage left. She drags the armchair upstage left to face the cupboards, sink and oven. She tears off the dust cover, shakes it out and folds it.

Exit Kitty through the back door.

Lights fade.

Blackout.

Act One

The kitchen. While the stage is an open, fluid space, it must be understood that a wall divides the kitchen into separate cooking and dining areas. Stage left shall be referred to as 'the kitchen'; stage right, 'the dining room'. In relation to the kitchen, the dining room appears spacious and modern.

Enter Kitty, stage left. She carries a basket of laundry. She looks around, not sure where to put it, then leaves it on the chair. She clears the junk off the top of the dresser onto the counters, stovetop and the dresser's upper shelves, then spreads a clean towel on the newly-cleared space. Exit Kitty, stage left.

Enter Kavanagh and Des, stage right. Their conversation breaks when they enter the dining room.

Des: Christ, Kav! You weren't having me on. It looks brilliant.

Kavanagh: It'll do.

Des looks around in wonderment.

Des: Bloody hell.

Des walks around the table. He turns to Kavanagh.

What happened to Kitty's chair?

Kavanagh: She's still got it.

Kavanagh gestures towards the kitchen.

Just there in the kitchen.

Des walks downstage centre. He ducks his head slightly as he turns into the kitchen. He looks around in wonder; he calls over his shoulder.

Des: It's a bit snug in here, Kav.

Kavanagh follows Des into the kitchen.

Kavanagh: Your man's measurements were off.

Des: Aye.

Des opens the oven door; it skims Kitty's chair.

It's a good thing Kitty's as small as she is.

Kavanagh stands over Des who is hunched over, looking into the oven.

Kavanagh: Right enough.

Des shuts the oven door; he stands up.

Des: How's she keeping?

Enter Kitty, stage left, with an iron.

Kitty: You may ask her yourself, Des McCrink.

Kitty looks to put the iron down, but there is nowhere to put it. Des holds her shoulders and kisses her cheek.

Des: You're looking well, Kitty.

Kitty: Ah, Des. We could use the likes of you the year 'round.

She holds the iron out to Kavanagh.

Take this, would you Thomas, and leave it on the dresser.

She reaches up and takes Des' face in her hands.

You're looking grand yourself, Des. *(Beat)* You've put on weight.

Des looks down at himself; he sucks in his stomach.

Des: I'm not sure that I have, Kitty.

Kitty: You have indeed. A fair bit.

She removes the laundry basket from the chair, and places it on the floor.

Have a seat there, Des, while I get the kettle on and give me a bit of the craic from Canada.

She fills the electric kettle.

Kavanagh: I'm not having my tea out of that contraption.

Kavanagh goes over to the dresser and takes a stovetop kettle from one of the shelves.

Kitty (*to Des*): As fussy as all get out.

Kavanagh fills his kettle at the sink; he gestures towards the electric model.

Kavanagh: Never reaches the boil, that one.

Kitty: Will I tell you, Des, he's been drinking fine cups of tea out of this here kettle all week and he's been none the wiser.

Kavanagh: Get away out.

Kitty: You have indeed.

Des: So what do you think of the new kitchen, Kitty?

Kitty (*sighing*): Ah, now.

Des: The dining room's brilliant.

Kitty: There's hardly room enough to open the oven door.

Des stands up and turns to face the 'wall'.

Des: Who was it put the wall in?

Kavanagh: One of the Markowskis.

Des: Markowski?

Kavanagh: Polish fella.

Des: What's his first name?

Kavanagh (*to Kitty*): Paul, was it?

Kitty (*enunciating clearly*): Pawel.

Des: Right, like your man in Rome. (*Beat*) I'm not sure I know him.

Kitty: You're long before his time, Des. What age are you now?

Des: Christ, Kitty. I've only been in the door five minutes and I'm already feeling a bit of a fat old bugger.

Kitty (*scolding*): It's a salty tongue you have there, Des.

Des: A fat, old, cursing sailor of a sinner of a man. How's that, Kav?

Kavanagh: Ah, now.

Des: What was it made you put the wall in?

Kitty (*to Des*): It was his lordship's...

Kavanagh (*cutting in*): Not a bit of it! Not a bit!

Kitty (*to Kavanagh*): It was you rang the Markowskis.

Kavanagh: It was you wanted a dining room, Kitty. The kitchen was fine as it was.

Kitty (*to Des*): I thought it might be nice to have a quiet spot for the guests to take their breakfast.

Des gets up, and walks downstage and into the dining room.

Des: Well the dining room's smashing, Kitty. Really. (*Beat*) Smashing.

Kitty: If you were to come down at five in the morning you wouldn't know it with this one's rubbish littered about the place.

Kitty nods towards Kavanagh. He ignores her and follows Des into the dining room. Des sits at the table; Kavanagh, at his desk.

Des: You're busy at the books then, Kav. Are you booked up for the rest of the summer?

Kitty (*calling from the kitchen*): What sort of milk is it you take, Des?

Des: Milk milk, Kitty. The cow stuff.

Kitty: I've full, semi and skim.

Des: Whatever's on hand there, Kitty. I'm not fussed.

Kitty goes out the back door into the pantry.

Des: You're getting pretty flash, hey Kav?

Kavanagh: She's enough to drive me mad. I can see now what the old man had to put up with. She's every bit her mother.

Des: Is she now?

Kitty re-enters the kitchen.

Kitty: Do you take sugar, Des?

Des: A bit, Kit.

Kitty: I thought as much.

Kavanagh: Every bit of her.

Kitty enters the dining room with tea and biscuits on a tray.

Kitty: I've been on my feet all day. I'm wrecked.

Des: But you'll sit for a cup?

Kitty: Go on.

Des: So business is good then?

Kavanagh: It is.

Des: The rooms are booked?

Kitty: 'Til the first week of September.

Des: Disney'll be looking to invest.

Kavanagh: Right enough.

Des: Euro Disney Galway.

Kavanagh: Aye.

Des: Mickey and Paddy.

Kavanagh: What?

Kitty: Will you be 'round for race week, Des?

Des: I don't think so. I fly back to Canada on the third of August.

Kavanagh: You'll miss them, right enough.

Kitty: We've had the rooms for race week booked since March.

Kavanagh: A wee Canadian rang up yesterday looking for a room.

Kitty: Stranded, she was.

Des: From whereabouts?

Kavanagh: Canada.

Kitty: Toronto.

Des: It's a nice enough place, Toronto.

Kavanagh: So she says.

Kitty (*to Kavanagh*): Does she?

Des: Was there room at the inn?

Kavanagh: What?

Des: For the Canadian?

Kavanagh: Ah, now. Do you remember Lugh?

Des: Does he still come 'round?

Kavanagh: Come 'round?

Kitty: He has yet to leave.

Des: Get away off.

Kavanagh: Kitty here has him staying with a friend for the next few weeks to make room for that Canadian one.

Des: Kitty!

Kitty: Don't bother feeling sorry for him, Des. He'll still be over scrounging for his dinner.

Des: Has he not finished college yet? What was he studying the last time I was here? Medicine, was it?

Kavanagh: He made a short run of it. (*Laughing*) He was in the course a week when Kitty there nicked her finger. She's on the rat poison.

Kitty: Jesus, Thomas! (*To Des*) Warfarin. To thin the blood.

Des: Are you all right, Kitty?

Kitty: I'm grand.

Kavanagh: She's still on the cigarettes.

Kitty: Shut up, you.

Des: You were on about the rat poison. (*Quickly*) The Warfarin.

Kavanagh: It was a paper cut, but the blood was streaming out of her.

Kitty: Underneath the nail there.

She shows him.

Kavanagh (*laughing*): Lugh took one look at her and scampered off.

Kitty: He was sick. I had to take him his tea in bed.

Des: Is he at school at all?

Kitty: He is indeed.

Des: What's he studying?

Kavanagh: Not your area of expertise.

Kitty: Drama.

Des: Drama?

Kavanagh: He's going with an American girl.

Kitty: An actress.

Kavanagh: He's staying with her now that Kitty's let his bed.

Kitty: Rubbish. He's staying with one of the lads.

Kavanagh (*wryly*): He is indeed.

Des: Turning students out of their beds. I wouldn't have thought it of you, Kitty.
(*To Kavanagh*) She's been bit by the tiger, I take it.

A door slams. Kitty gets up, her ear cocked.

Kavanagh (*to Des*): That's not it. She's doing handstands for this Canadian one.

Exit Kitty, stage right.

Des: She's a bit high-strung, all right.

Kavanagh: Aye.

Des: Captain of Industry, she is.

Kavanagh: Ah, now.

Pause.

Des: How old is she, now?

Kavanagh: Just gone seventy-two.

Des: Good on her. (*Beat*) And yourself?

Kavanagh: Seventy-seven come October.

Des: Well done.

Enter Kitty, stage right.

Kitty: It was only Minette. She forgot her day planner.

Kavanagh: Her day planner? What in God's name is she doing with her day that needs planning?

Kitty: Let her alone, Thomas.

Des pulls out a pocket calendar of his own.

Des: A day planner's not such a bad idea, Kav. There's a load of things I want to get 'round to...

Kavanagh: Like scrubbing the toilets and stripping the beds?

Kitty: Jesus, Thomas!

Des (*confused*): Who's Minette, then? Is she not a guest?

Kitty: She works for us.

Des (*incredulous*): Works for you?

Kavanagh/Kitty: Aye.

Des (*laughing*): There's no end to it!

Kitty: To what?

Des: The renovations.

Kavanagh: Ah, now.

Enter Lugh, stage right. He carries a unicycle, and props it against the dining room table.

Des: The man himself!

Lugh: Well now, Dizzy! Are you 'right?

Lugh and Des shake hands. Lugh sits down at the table. Kitty gets up and stacks the dishes onto a tray.

Kitty (*to Lugh*): If it's your tea you're after, I won't be getting 'round to it for another while yet.

Lugh: All I'm after is your delightful company, Kit.

Kitty clucks her tongue.

Kitty: I've a few things need a once over with the iron. Is there anything you need pressed, Des?

Des: I'm grand.

Kitty: If you'll excuse me, lads.

As the men talk, Kitty takes the dishes into the kitchen and sets about the ironing. Spotlight on Kavanagh, Des and Lugh in the dining room.

Kavanagh (to Lugh): Who let you in the front?

Lugh: It was open.

Kavanagh: Bloody Minute!

Lugh: It wasn't Minette. The Canadian one's out front having a fag.

Des: The usurper?

Lugh (laughing): The very one.

Kavanagh (serious): Did you shut the bloody gate?

Lugh (mocking): I bloody well did, Kav. Bloody right.

Kavanagh: I don't need any of your cheek.

Lugh (conciliatory): Sorry, Kav. (To Des) We lost Lisa the other week.

Des: She ran away?

Kavanagh: She was hit.

Des: Out front?

Lugh: On the Headford Road.

Des: What Lisa was that then?

Kavanagh: The third.

Des: I'm sorry, Kav.

Lugh: He's getting another one next week.

Des: Another cocker spaniel?

Kavanagh: Aye.

Des: Another Lisa?

Kavanagh: Aye.

Lugh: It's a good solid name, that.

Kavanagh: Lisa, aye.

Des: Right. *(Beat)* So. *(Beat)* Kitty's kicked you from your bed then, Lugh?

Lugh: She has, Dizzy. I was still sleeping in it when she gave me word.

Kavanagh *(to Des)*: It's bloody difficult to catch him when he's not sleeping.

Lugh: That's not fair, now. You just happen to be dead to the world when I'm at my wily best.

Des: Where is it you're staying then?

Lugh: With a friend. Out the Newcastle Road. And yourself?

Des: Here.

Lugh: Bloody foreigners. *(To Kavanagh)* Stealing a man's bed.

Des: Would you not go home to your Ma in the summer?

Lugh: There's not much going on out that way. *(Beat)* I'm doing a bit of acting.

Des: So I hear. What sort of stuff is it?

Des gestures towards the unicycle.

Lugh: I've a couple fringe things lined up. *(He nods at the unicycle)* She's my wee bit on the side; a bit of spare change, like.

Kavanagh: Are you going to the Festival at all, Des?

Des: That's why I'm here.

Lugh: Well done. I thought you might be staking your claim to put a few bob down at the track.

Des: I'll be gone before then.

Lugh: Back to Canada?

Des: I'm driving up the West coast this year through Mayo and up to Donegal.

Lugh: Lovely.

Kavanagh: Where was it you were to last year?

Des: I flew into Dublin and went through Carlow, Waterford...

Kavanagh: Cork...

Des: Aye...

Lugh: Through Kerry...

Des: Aye, Limerick and Clare.

Kavanagh: That's it.

Des: Brilliant. Ended up here at race week and lost a bundle at the track—and twice it at the King's Head.

Lugh: That was brilliant craic. I don't remember the half of it.

Des: But I missed the Festival so I thought I should start out in Galway this time 'round.

Kavanagh: That Canadian one's here for the Festival herself.

Kitty puts the iron down, and walks into the dining room.

Des: Is she?

Kitty: Did she tell you that?

Kavanagh: She did.

Kitty: And when were you having such great chat?

Kavanagh: This morning.

Kitty: Right.

Kitty returns to her ironing in the kitchen. However, she does not move, but listens in to their conversation.

Kavanagh: She flew here for some play or other.

Lugh: Maybe she's an agent!

Kavanagh: What?

Des: How old is she?

Kavanagh: Ach, she's only a child.

Lugh: They all are. Christ...

Exit Lugh, stage right.

Kavanagh (*loudly*): Shut the bloody gate! (*Beat*) Lisa ran out on us a couple weeks back.

Des: So you said.

Kavanagh: Aye.

Des: Aye. (*Beat*) The dining room looks grand, Kav.

Kavanagh: Aye.

Des: Aye.

Kavanagh sighs.

Lights fade.

Blackout.

Act Two

Apart from the lamplight from Kavanagh's desk, the stage is dark. Books are piled up on the dining room table. Kavanagh is typing at his desk; he is very slow, and the punch of each key penetrates the quiet. A church bell strikes one.

Enter Margaret, stage left. She turns on a light in the kitchen. Kavanagh looks up from his work; he freezes. The blanket that Kitty was ironing earlier is folded neatly and sitting on top of the dresser. Margaret picks it up, unfolds it, and realizes that it is an old baby's blanket. She puts it down and stares at the dishes and knickknacks. She picks up a few objects, turning them over in contemplation. Kavanagh coughs. Margaret picks up the blanket and walks downstage, crossing into the dining room.

Margaret: I just came down to get a blanket. Your wife told me there was a spare one on the dresser.

She holds up the blanket for Kavanagh to see.

Is this it?

Kavanagh: God Almighty, is that what she gave you?

Margaret: It's the only one there.

Kavanagh: Soft in the head, she is.

Margaret: Your wife?

Kavanagh: Kitty's my sister.

Margaret: Your? Oh! Oh. *(Beat)* She wears a ring.

Kavanagh: That she does.

Margaret: I just assumed...

Kavanagh: No matter.

Margaret: Right. *(Beat)* Okay, then. Good night, Mr. Kavanagh.

Margaret makes to leave.

Kavanagh: Are you cold, Margaret?

Margaret: Not really. (*She looks at the blanket*). Well, a little.

Kavanagh: Jet lagged, are you?

Margaret: I suppose I am.

Kavanagh: You're well used to it, surely?

Margaret: Yesterday was my first time on a plane.

Kavanagh: Get away!

Margaret: Really.

Kavanagh: I thought you Canadians and Australians were making tracks all over the map?

Margaret: Not me.

Margaret steps into the dining room. She rests her hands on the back of a chair.

You can't sleep either?

Kavanagh: I'm across the hall from Kitty. She's a terrible one for the snoring.

Margaret (*laughing*): Really?

Kavanagh: Ah, well. (*Beat*) Not really, no.

Margaret looks at the piles of paper, files, books and the typewriter. Kavanagh observes her.

There aren't enough hours in the day.

Margaret sits down at the table.

Margaret: Do you have lots of paperwork to do?

Kavanagh: For this place? I don't, no.

Margaret: Oh.

Pause.

Kavanagh: I've a wee project on the go.

Margaret picks up one of the hard cover books, and reads the spine.

Margaret: What are you working on?

Kavanagh: A bit of genealogical research.

Margaret: On your family tree?

Kavanagh: Not at all. It's for other folks. Visitors, tourists.

Margaret: Like the family crests and things you find on tea towels? I saw a pile of that stuff when I was out shopping today.

Kavanagh: A load of rubbish.

Margaret: Kind of. I couldn't make up my mind.

Margaret takes a key ring from her pocket.

I bought a key ring. *(She reads off it)*. "Keane, Kane, McKeane, McCahan. A family of West Clare people who were coarbs of Saint Senan of Scattery Island." *(She looks up)*. I don't even know what that means.

Kavanagh: Coarbs were heirs of holy functions.

Margaret: Where's Scattery Island?

Kavanagh: Near Kilrush. South West Clare. County Clare's on the other side of Galway Bay, there.

Margaret nods and continues reading aloud.

Margaret: "This name gives you a highly sensitive, idealistic, and intuitive nature. You could be expressive and creative in the arts, music, or drama. You feel and sense much that you do not fully understand."

Kavanagh: You're a Keane?

Margaret: I am.

Kavanagh: Where's your Da from?

Pause.

Margaret: My mother was from here.

Kavanagh: Your mother is a Keane?

Margaret: She was.

Pause. Margaret does not feel responsible for filling the silence. She is well used to these sorts of questions and she has tired of them.

Kavanagh: So what does that key ring yoke tell you about yourself, Margaret?

Margaret: Not much, actually.

Kavanagh: Aye.

Margaret: So what is it you do, genealogically?

Kavanagh: Genealogy. *(Beat)* How many Keanes do you know yourself, Margaret?

Margaret: There are twenty-two Keanes listed in the telephone directory back home. I don't know any of them.

Kavanagh: There are Keanes up the Headford Road and on Bohermore. The Eamon Keanes have a grocery in Salt Hill. They've a pub as well. There's a Keane runs the pharmacy on Shop Street and the priest over at St. Ignatius is Keane or Kane. They're no more related to one another than they are to you or me. The whole lot of them.

Margaret: Really?

Kavanagh: Not at all. We've Keanes marrying Keanes and Murphys with Murphys all over the map. *(Quickly)* But there's nothing...objectionable about it.

Margaret: I see. *(Beat)* But what is it you do?

Kavanagh: When you're tracing your ancestors, Margaret, it's not the coarb of Saint Senan you're wanting to hear about, now is it?

Margaret: It's not?

Kavanagh: Well is it?

Margaret: He's not the first person I'm interested in, no.

Kavanagh: It's the folk a bit closer to you?

Margaret: I guess so.

Kavanagh: It is indeed.

Margaret: So?

Kavanagh: We use other names.

Margaret: I don't understand.

Kavanagh: When you've Murphys scattered all over the map you need names to sort between them. The Bakers run the bakery on Williamsgate. The Nellys live over the road.

Margaret: Who are they?

Kavanagh: Murphys.

Margaret: The Nellys?

Kavanagh: And the Bakers. Murphys both. I'm not rightly sure where the name Nelly came from; I'm working on them now. They all tell me something different. They're a contrary bunch, the Nellys.

Margaret: You mean the Murphys.

Kavanagh: The Nelly-Murphys, aye.

Margaret (*amused*): I see!

Kitty enters in her night robe, stage left. She hovers in the kitchen, eavesdropping.

Kavanagh: So what's your make, Margaret?

Margaret: Pardon?

Kavanagh: What sort of a Keane are you?

Margaret: A Keane-Keane.

Kavanagh: A keen Keane? What are you so gung-ho about?

Margaret (*laughing*): No, I'm just a Keane. Margaret Keane.

Kavanagh: Where's your Ma from?

Margaret: Galway.

Kavanagh: Whereabouts?

Margaret: I don't know.

Kavanagh: Who's your Nan?

Margaret: I don't know.

Kavanagh: You don't know?

Margaret: No.

Kavanagh: Do you care to know?

Margaret (*frustrated*): Of course I do.

Kavanagh: Then why haven't you asked her?

Margaret: My mother is dead.

Pause.

Kavanagh: So's my own. (*Beat*) You never thought to ask her while she was living?

Kavanagh is well used to death; he unsettles Margaret with his flippancy.

Margaret: She died ten years ago. I was thirteen. (*Beat*) No, I didn't think to ask.

Pause.

Kavanagh: You're a coarb of Saint Senan, I take it.

Margaret: I guess so.

Margaret reads the back of the key ring.

What's a coarb again?

Kavanagh: An heir of holy functions.

Margaret: What does that mean?

Kavanagh: I'm not rightly sure.

Margaret studies the key ring.

Margaret: Where's...

Kavanagh: Near Kilrush. South West Clare.

Margaret: Clare's on the other side of Galway Bay.

Kavanagh: That's it.

Pause. Kitty sits in her chair and listens.

Margaret: She drowned.

Kavanagh: Your Ma?

Margaret nods.

She wasn't much of a swimmer?

Margaret: She died in February.

Kavanagh: Does it not get terrible cold in Canada?

Margaret: Below zero. Minus twenties.

Kavanagh: Celsius?

Margaret: Celsius.

Kavanagh: Bloody hell. *(Beat)* Where was it she drowned?

Margaret: In a pond.

Kavanagh: She fell through the ice?

Margaret nods.

Were you with her?

Margaret: I was at school.

Kavanagh: Thirteen you were?

Margaret nods.

Ah, now.

Pause.

Margaret: She was chasing my hat. I didn't even like it. I used to take it off the minute I walked out the front door. *(Beat)* She used to start things and never finish them. Even with small stuff like the laundry. She'd put the clothes in the washing machine and forget to take them out, then she'd open the dryer and wonder where they were, and they were still in the machine, smelling like mildew. *(Beat)* My entire childhood I smelt like mildew. *(Beat)* But she finished knitting the hat. That's why I was so happy for her. I guess I thought she was making it for herself. *(Beat)* But it was for me.

Pause.

Kavanagh: The coarb of Saint Senan.

Margaret nods.

What time are you on there, Margaret?

Margaret: Pardon?

Kavanagh: What time is it in Canada?

Kitty stands up and exits quietly, stage left.

Margaret: It's after eight.

Kavanagh: Post meridiem?

Margaret nods.

Jet lagged, are you?

Margaret: I suppose I am.

Enter Lugh, stage left. He is inebriated and has mistakenly come home to The Star of the Sea.

Kavanagh: Who in God's name is that at this hour?

Lugh enters the dining room.

Lugh: Well, Kav. Are you 'right?

Lugh stares at Margaret as if he is trying to remember her name.

And Canada? Are you well?

Kavanagh: What are you playing at, Lugh? Go on now. Get home and get to bed.

Lugh: I'm two steps ahead of you, Kav. Two steps.

Lugh takes off his coat and leaves it over one of the chairs. He sits down.

Kavanagh: What are you doing?

Lugh looks at Kavanagh blankly.

Where are you staying, Lugh?

Margaret gets up.

Margaret: I think I'll try to get to sleep. Good night, Mr. Kavanagh. Good night, Lugh.

Margaret moves to leave.

Lugh: Christ, Kav! I bloody well forgot. Canada's in my bed.

Margaret: Pardon?

Lugh: Fuck! Sorry, Canada. Just let me grab a few things and I'll be out of your road.

Lugh gets up.

Kavanagh: For Christ's sake. Wise up, Lugh! Where are you staying?

Lugh looks searchingly at Kavanagh. He sits back down.

Are you at Morrigu's?

Lugh: Morrigu! Aye, Morrigu. Fuck!

Kavanagh: You can't go knocking at her door at this hour.

Kavanagh stands up and begins to stack his books and papers.

Lugh: Fuck! *(To Margaret)* Sorry, Canada.

Margaret *(to Lugh)*: Did I take your bed?

Kavanagh: Not at all.

} *In unison*

Lugh: You did indeed.

Margaret: What?

Lugh: Kitty'll kill me.

Kavanagh: Margaret, would you give Lugh the lend of that scrap of a blanket, there.

Margaret: Of course.

Kavanagh: He can stay on the couch in the front room and be glad of it. Right. I'm off to bed. *(To Lugh)* Mind that you're up before Kitty comes down. She'll kill you if she sees you there.

Exit Kavanagh, stage right.

Lugh: Fuck.

Margaret: Did I really take your bed?

Margaret hands Lugh the blanket. He accepts it, but ignores her question, surveying the table.

Lugh: Were you looking to Kav for some genealogical assistance?

Margaret: Pardon?

Lugh *(in a broad American accent)*: Are you tryin' to rustle up some information 'bout your grand pappy and grand mammy?

Margaret *(laughing)*: That's a terrible accent.

Lugh: Get off! I've made a fortune at High and Mainguard with that accent.

Margaret: Doing what with it, exactly?

Lugh (*mimicking*): Doin' what, exack-ly.

Margaret: No, really. What?

Lugh (*mimicking*): Exack-ly. Exack-ly.

Margaret: What?

Lugh: That.

Margaret: What?

Lugh: That. Doing that. Exack-ly. Exack-ly. You could be useful to me, Canada. That's a fine accent you've got. Nasal, like. A bit of a honk. (*He wets his lips*). Exack-ly, exack-ly. (*He clears his throat*). Exack-ly. Bloody brilliant!

Margaret: You're a mimic?

Lugh: An actor!

Margaret: Close cousins?

Lugh: Far from! That's like tracing a picture and passing it off as High art. Fucking blasphemy. (*In an American accent*) Blaz-phemous.

Margaret sits down.

Margaret: What do you do on High Street?

Lugh: Many's a thing.

He sits back in his chair and folds his arms.

Tell me, Canada. What's your take on the wilful suspension of disbelief?

Margaret: I don't believe in it. (*Beat*) I studied Science at school.

Lugh (*laughing, to himself*): She studied Science at school. (*To Margaret*) You can't not believe in disbelief, Canada. That's like turning cartwheels and calling yourself a paraplegic.

Margaret: I believe in disbelief. I just don't believe in suspending it. It's irresponsible. The only reason for it is escapism.

Lugh: And that's bad?

Margaret: I didn't say it was bad. It's just pointless.

Lugh: Ah, now. That depends.

Margaret: On what?

Lugh: Your experience.

Margaret: No it doesn't. Absolutely not.

Lugh: What if whatever it is you don't believe is how it really is. So by willfully suspending, you let yourself believe in the real thing. The truth or what have you. What then?

Margaret: What then?

Lugh: I haven't a bloody clue, Canada. I was only asking. This is good sobering chat.

Margaret: So what is it you're asking people to wilfully suspend on High Street?

Lugh: Did Kav show you his project?

Margaret: He told me a bit about it.

Lugh: He'll make no money at it.

Margaret: No?

Lugh: The only folk who call the Nellys the Nellys are from 'round here.

Margaret: So?

Lugh: The only folk looking to see their reflection in a map of Ireland are your kind.

Margaret: Keanes?

Lugh (*laughing*): Emigrants. The sons and daughters and the sons and daughters of the sons and daughters of emigrants. Not all of them, mind. Only the ones who come scampering back again, looking to see where they fit in.

He looks around in an exaggerated fashion: behind him, under the table, on the soles of his shoes.

They don't know who the Nellys are. Or the Bakers or Weavers or Skivers. All they have to go on is the surname on their credit card.

Margaret: That's hardly fair.

Lugh: Don't be sore about it. I say fucking well done. You've earned it. You've worked hard, made some dough, and now you can afford to throw it away on a monogrammed shillelagh, if that's what you're after. Good on you.

Margaret: Is that what you think?

Lugh: Well I'm in two minds about it.

Margaret: What's the other one?

Lugh: It used to be that your ones who left Ireland sent money from wherever it was they were to their folks back home.

Margaret: So?

Lugh: Well after so many years the blood gets a bit thin, doesn't it? You've no family to send your money and trinkets to, only the reminder of one in a name or an heirloom. So you fly all the way over here and buy our linen and Waterford crystal and monogrammed shillelaghs and there you are. Supporting. It's in the blood. Isn't that what you want to hear, Canada?

Margaret: My name is Margaret.

Lugh: Well, Margaret?

Margaret: I don't see what this has to do with the wilful suspension of disbelief.

Lugh: Right!

He reaches over, takes one of Kavanagh's file folders, and opens it up

You're a Keane, are you?

Margaret nods.

Lugh: The likes of you we have in the bag. But what about your German? Your Brazilian? Your Spaniard? They're all over Galway, the Spaniards.

He takes a sheet of paper from the folder, writes on it, and holds it up. In large black capitals he has spelled out: O'QUENDO.

Margaret: O'Quendo?

Lugh: Sure. He's your man came over to Galway with Christopher Columbus in 1477. He took to the women so he stayed.

Margaret: That's ridiculous.

Lugh: The wilful suspension of disbelief, if you please.

Lugh takes another sheet of paper and writes on it. He holds up the name O'LAFSSON.

Margaret (*laughing*): O'Lafsson? Who's he?

Lugh: Scandinavian fella. I haven't worked out his story yet. I've sold a couple of his key rings, mind.

Margaret: You sell this stuff?

Lugh: I've only got key rings made at the moment, but if I can get hold of a T-shirt press, I'll be flying.

Margaret: What does Mr. Kavanagh think of it?

Lugh: Kav? He's the one gave me the idea.

Margaret: I don't believe it.

Lugh: Ah-ah, Margaret. The wilful suspension of disbelief. Anyway, it was Kav gave me the idea. He just doesn't know he did.

Margaret: So you rip people off? That's what you do for a living?

Lugh: With the genealogy gig? Not at all. Folk buy the gimmicky bullshit yoke, but they don't buy into it. It's the wilful suspension of disbelief, Margaret.

He raps his knuckle against the tabletop.

Wilful. (*Beat*) Anyway, it's with the acting gig I rip folk off.

Margaret: What?

Lugh (*in a broad American accent*): I'm a lyin', cheatin', sunnuvabitch.

Margaret: That I believe. But I don't see how you could cheat anyone with that accent. It's terrible.

Lugh: Christ, I'm looking for an audience here, Margaret. Not a critic.

Margaret (*laughing*): Go on, I'm listening. You have my undivided attention.

Lugh: Ah, but now I'm feeling a bit shy.

Margaret: That's hard to believe.

Lugh: Fair enough.

Lugh turns his chair so that he is facing the audience. To Margaret, he is in profile. He blesses himself and bows his head.

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. I busk with an American accent to make a few bob off pitying Americans.

He turns his chair and faces Margaret, sheepish.

It's a bit disgraceful.

Margaret: I'm not sure that it is. Why do you think you're pitied?

Lugh: I've a shit singing voice and a rusty unicycle, and folk think that I'm one of their own away from home, without a prospect or a penny. I ask them all about themselves and we get to chatting and they feel a bit responsible for me. Like I'm their brother or son. (*Beat*) I know. It's disgraceful behaviour. When I'm cast in my first starring role or when the key ring business gets off the ground, I'll give it up altogether. Now: what's the penance?

Margaret (*laughing*): None at all. But I really think you should consider other reasons why people on the street might think to pity you.

Lugh: Christ, Margaret. A couple Hail Marys would've done the trick nicely. I'll be mucking up my act tomorrow. All self-conscious.

Pause.

Margaret: You've sobered up nicely.

Lugh: I have. You're a sobering force, Margaret.

Margaret: I get that a lot.

Lugh: I was having you on.

Margaret: Oh.

Pause.

Lugh (*stretching*): I'm beat.

Margaret: Did I really take your bed?

Lugh: Don't bother about it. It's an understanding between Kitty and myself.

Margaret: What is?

Lugh: This place used to be more of a boarding house than a B & B. Kitty and Kav have been fixing it up the last couple of years to make it more profitable.

Margaret: So you pre-date the refurbishment?

Lugh: A bit like Kitty's chair there in the kitchen. She wants rid of it, but she couldn't stand not having it around.

Margaret: So you live here during the year and get kicked out over the summer?

Lugh: Something like that. Kitty's never properly turned me out before.

Margaret: Up until this summer?

Lugh: Up 'til you.

Margaret: Oh. (*Beat*) I'm sorry.

Lugh: What are you sorry about?

Margaret: I don't know. I feel badly.

Lugh: Why's that?

Margaret: I took your bed.

Lugh: Slip me a few bob and we'll forget about it.

Margaret: I can take the couch. I don't mind.

Lugh: I was having you on, Canada.

Margaret: I can't sleep anyway. Go on, take the bed. *(Beat)* Really, I don't mind.

Lugh: Would you not come with me?

Margaret: What?

Lugh stands up, holding the blanket.

Lugh *(laughing)*: Ah, now. There's no need for wilful suspension with you at all.
You'd believe bloody well anything.

He takes her hand and stares at her intently.

I was having you on.

Exit Lugh, stage right. From offstage, he calls softly to her.

Sleep well, Canada.

Margaret *(whispering)*: Good night.

Margaret does not move. In the distance, a church bell strikes two.

Lights fade.

Blackout.

Act Three

The following day, late morning. Enter Kitty and Kavanagh, stage left, with the laundry from the line. They put their baskets on the floor and begin to fold. Lugh's coat is still hanging on the back of one of the dining room chairs.

Kitty: We could try it out is all.

Kavanagh: A bloody reception! Bloody brilliant. That's just bloody brilliant.

Kitty (*sharply*): Don't go feeling sorry for yourself, Thomas. I'm the one left picking up after you. (*Muttering*) Books and papers scattered about the place.

Kavanagh: Would you rather they were out in the hall? That's where they'll end up if you move the desk out there, Kitty. (*Beat*) A bloody reception! It was Minute put you up to this, I bet.

Kitty: Minette has a far better sense of these things, Thomas.

Kavanagh: She's a bloody chambermaid, for Christ's sake!

Kitty (*curtly*): She studies hotel management, Thomas. We're lucky to have her. (*Beat*) And would you kindly watch your tongue.

Kavanagh: When you said you needed help about the place, it was for stripping the beds and Hoovering the stairs. (*Beat*) This is a bloody bed and breakfast, Kitty. You give folk a bed, a rasher and a bit of sausage, and praise be to God, but that's the end of it. Why do we need a reception? To make folk sign a wee guest book? To read off the rules of bloody conduct?

Kitty (*curtly*): It's professional.

Kavanagh: Professional! Wise up, Kitty! Lugh there is fast asleep in the front room.

Kitty tugs roughly on the sheet she is folding with Kavanagh. She pulls it away from him and finishes folding it herself.

A reception isn't going to make this place any more professional, Kitty.

Exit Kitty, stage right. Kavanagh calls after her.

A great big lump of a lad, holes in his socks, sprawled on the couch. Aye, we're running a tight ship here, Kitty. A tight ship.

Kavanagh drops the sheet he is folding. He mutters to himself, "I couldn't be bothered..."

Exit Kavanagh, stage left.

Enter Kitty, stage right. Lugh follows closely behind.

Kitty: Right. Breakfast.

Lugh: I'm not all that hungry, Kitty.

Kitty: Nor am I all that interested, Lugh. I'm not bustling about for the likes of you.

Kitty disappears out the back door and returns almost immediately with cereal boxes, etceteras, which she places on the dining room table. Her voice is tight.

Lugh: Is Margaret not up yet?

Kitty: She is not.

Kitty walks back and forth between the kitchen, pantry and dining room, setting the table. She does not look at Lugh when he speaks.

Lugh: Can I give you a hand, Kitty?

Kitty: Stay where you are. It's easier with you out of the road.

Lugh: I had great chat last night with herself.

Kitty: Morrigu?

Lugh: Margaret.

Kitty stops and turns to face Lugh.

Kitty: Did you now?

Lugh: I did.

Kitty continues to set the table, but her movements are slow and pensive. She attempts indifference, but it is clear that she is very interested in what Lugh has to say.

Kitty: What was it you spoke about?

Lugh: Me, mostly.

Kitty: You?

Lugh: Aye.

Kitty: She was looking for a cure for her jet lag, I suppose.

Lugh: She doesn't talk that much. She asks a fair few questions, mind.

Kitty: What sort of questions?

Lugh: All sorts. *(Beat)* You're fond of her, are you, Kitty?

Kitty: Fond of her? I can hardly be fond of her! I scarcely know the child.

Lugh: Do you not?

Enter Des, stage right. He is wearing a gimmicky Aran wool hat. Outside, it is raining. Des takes off his hat, shakes it and drops it onto the table.

Des: Am I as good for the craic as that Canadian one?

Kitty: That's a terrible stink of damp wool off your hat, Des.

Des picks up the hat, smells it, and shrugs. Lugh shrugs back, then sniffs under his arms.

Lugh: Could just as well be me, Kit. Give us the lend of a towel, would you?

Kitty: Go on.

Lugh: How are you then, Dizzy?

Des: Grand, Lugh. Are you over for your tea already?

Kitty heads back into the kitchen, calling over her shoulder.

Kitty: He never left. God Almighty, but the child will never depart us.

Lugh shrugs sheepishly and follows her out. Des trails after them. Kitty stands at the sink, peering out the window. Des sits in her chair.

Exit Lugh, stage left.

It was just as well you were up to get a bit of the sun, Des. It's bucketing down now. *(Beat)* I managed to get a load of laundry dried, mind.

Des: I suppose I should get out of these damp clothes. I'm soaked through.

There is a tap at the window and Kitty jumps.

Kitty: Lord bless us and keep us.

Des: Who's that?

Kitty: Her ladyship, Miss Morrigu.

Exit Kitty, stage left. She returns a moment later with Morrigu.

Morrigu's appearance is that of a Celtic bohemian. Her dark hair is long and unkempt, and she is dressed entirely in black. She shakes out her shawl and tosses her damp hair.

Morrigu: Thanks, Kitty. I'm totally drenched.

Kitty: Well, Morrigu. What can I do you for? Is it Lugh you're after?

Morrigu: Yeah. I was wondering what happened to him last night.

Kitty *(sharply)*: Last night?

Morrigu *(casually)*: I was talking to a few of the guys this morning. *(Beat)* They happened to mention that he didn't come home.

Kitty: That's because that fool of a boy was here.

Morrigu: Was he?

Kitty: Isn't that what I'm after telling you?

Morrigu: Is he here now?

Kitty: He's washing up.

Morrigu: I'll wait for him.

Kitty: Suit yourself, Morrigu.

Morrigu walks into the dining room and sits down at the table. Kitty turns to face Des.

She always does.

Des: Is that Lugh's American actress?

Kitty: The very one.

Des (*laughing*): I was expecting more of a Kim or a Tiffany.

Des turns around in his chair and looks in the direction of the dining room. Morrigu is sitting opposite the 'wall', staring blankly ahead.

Morrigu? That's her name?

Kitty: Nonsense.

Des peers around the 'wall'. Morrigu leans over and catches him looking at her. Des straightens himself up and walks into the dining room, his right hand extended in greeting.

Des: Des McCrink.

Morrigu: Dizzy.

Des: I see my reputation precedes me.

They shake hands.

Morrigu: Morrigu Cliodna.

Des: There's a solid Irish name. Where are your parents from?

Morrigu: Hoboken.

Des: New Jersey?

Enter Margaret, stage left. She startles Kitty at the back door and Kitty shouts out.

Kitty: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, but you gave us a terrible fright, Margaret.

Des lopes into the kitchen. Morrigu follows behind.

Des: Are you all right, Kitty?

Kitty: I'm fine, Des. Margaret gave me a bit of a start is all.

Margaret: I'm sorry.

Kitty is awkward.

Kitty: Guests are to use the main stairs out front.

Des (*puzzled*): Is that right?

Kitty: It's a terrible mess back there. Lugh has yet to tidy it.

Des pokes in behind the door.

Des: It's not as bad as all that.

Morrigu (*musings*): I'm never allowed to come in through the front.

They all stand crowding the kitchen. Kitty is visibly frazzled.

Kitty: Right. Go on the lot of you and sit down while I set about the breakfast.

Kitty ushers Morrigu and Des into the dining room.

How are you for a cup of tea, Margaret?

Margaret: Do you have any coffee?

Kitty: Coffee?

Des (*calling*): A cup of tea would be lovely, Kitty.

Kitty: Give me a minute.

Exit Kitty, stage left. Margaret walks into the dining room and sits down with the others. Pause.

Morrigu (*to Margaret*): You're American.

Des: Would you say so? I think she's got more of a Canadian look about her.

Margaret: That's right!

Morrigu looks askance at Des.

Morrigu: Oh yeah. Lugh told me you were Canadian.

Margaret (*to Des*): You're from Canada?

Des: I'm from Dundalk, originally.

Margaret: Your accent's still pretty strong.

Des: I try to fit in a visit home once a year. Travel 'round. See things.

Morrigu: That's right! (*To Margaret*) That's why they call him Dizzy.

Margaret: Dizzy?

Morrigu: He comes here every summer and drives around the entire country. (*To Des*)
Lugh says you're looking for a way back in.

Morrigu draws circles in the air with her finger.

Des (*dryly*): You're the actress, I take it.

Morrigu (*primly*): Actor.

Des: Aye, actor. (*Beat*) Right. (*Beat*) If you'll excuse me then, ladies. I've these damp clothes to change out of. (*To Margaret*) I'm not certain I caught your name. Margaret is it?

Margaret: Margaret Keane.

Des extends his hand to her.

Des: Des McCrink. A pleasure, Margaret. (*To Morrigu*) Morrigu.

Morrigu: Dizzy.

Exit Des, stage right. Morrigu turns to face Margaret.

So you're a Keane as well? What type?

Margaret: Type?

Morrigu: Yeah, type. What Keanes do you belong to?

Margaret: I have no idea. *(Beat)* Mr. Kavanagh asked me the same question last night.

Morrigu: It's his bag. He's the one got me thinking about it.

Margaret: Are you a Keane?

Morrigu: A Cliodna.

Margaret *(slowly)*: A Cliodna-Keane.

Morrigu: Yeah.

Pause.

Margaret: Do you work here?

Morrigu: At *The Star of the Sea*? God, no. I'm a drama student at UCG.

Margaret: Like Lugh.

Morrigu: Yeah.

Margaret: He's supposed to be staying with you, isn't he?

Morrigu: Yeah, well. *(Beat)* He's treading on thin ice at the minute.

Morrigu checks her watch.

Margaret: Are your parents from around here?

Morrigu: They live in the States.

Margaret: I bet they miss Ireland.

Morrigu: I doubt it. They're not Irish.

Margaret takes her key ring out of her pocket and reads the back.

Margaret: Keane's an Irish name, though. From West Clare. *(Beat)* Scattery Island.

Morrigu: My father's Robertson. My mother's Spinelli.

Margaret: Oh.

Morrigu: I changed my name a few years ago. *(Beat)* To what it's supposed to be, you

know?

Margaret shakes her head. She does not understand.

I changed it back to my rightful name. It doesn't have anything to do with blood. Blood ties mean shit all. *(Beat)* My parents are Mormons from Hoboken, New Jersey. What the fuck does that have to do with me?

Pause.

Margaret: Mine's a blood thing.

Morrigu: Whatever.

Pause.

Margaret: What made you want to change your name?

Morrigu: I didn't change it. I changed back. *(Beat)* It's not like choosing a tattoo. It's a name. It's...elemental. Think about it: your environment, your appearance, all that changes. But your name? That's the thing that sticks. *(Beat)* At least it should. If you're given the right name to begin with. *(Beat)* Your name pulls straight through your history.

Margaret: Your family history?

Morrigu: I don't believe in blood ties. Anyway, I'm talking about first names.

Margaret: Morrigu's not your real name either?

Morrigu *(coolly)*: Morrigu is my real name.

Margaret *(quickly)*: That's what I meant.

Morrigu: My parents didn't have me baptized; they had me misappropriated. I was called Marjorie when I was a kid, but it never clicked. At school I was the only Marjorie in my class and when my teacher called on me, I wouldn't answer. I never thought she meant me.

Margaret *(bemused)*: Really?

Morrigu: I got ear tubes when I was six because my parents thought there was something wrong with my hearing.

Margaret: That's crazy.

Morrigu: I thought so. I could hear perfectly fine. Then when I was in high school we studied Cultural Myths and my teacher read us a story about the Tuatha de Danaan, and he told us about Morrighu, the Goddess of Feuds who guided the warriors with her predictions. *(Beat)* It was like a gong.

Margaret: When you heard the name Morrighu?

Morrigu: Yeah.

Margaret: Did the same thing happen when you...reverted to your family name?

Morrigu: That didn't happen until I came here. It was different. It wasn't about the name. It was more about the legend.

Margaret *(carefully)*: So you think you might be related to one of the pagan gods of Ireland?

Enter Lugh, stage right. He overhears her.

Lugh: She's flaky, Canada, but she's not as flaky as all that.

Lugh kisses the top of Morrighu's head.

Sorry about last night.

Morrigu: I waited up until three.

Lugh: I'll make it up to you. I promise.

Morrigu: I'm glad to hear to it. I need you to run some lines.

Lugh: Ach, sorry Morrighu. I thought I might do a bit of work if the weather clears.

Morrighu glares.

Run lines, you say? 'Course I will. Love to. With bells on. The whole bit.

Morrigu *(to Margaret)*: He actually thinks he's funny. *(To Lugh)* I've got some bills to post, but I'll stop by after dinner some time.

Margaret: Are you performing in the Festival?

Morrigu: Fringe kind of stuff. No one was interested in us. Are you going to see anything?

Margaret: I'm going to see a play at the Town Hall tonight.

Morrighu nods. She gets up.

Morrighu: Don't even think about bailing on me, Lugh.

Exit Morrighu, stage left.

Lugh: Love you, precious.

Morrighu (*calling*): Fuck you, Lugh.

Enter Kitty, stage left. She has just crossed paths with Morrighu. Kitty is wearing a jacket and she is carrying a shopping bag.

Kitty (*muttering*): That's lovely talk altogether! Just lovely!

Kitty begins to unpack the groceries in the kitchen. She calls into Lugh.

That's a lovely girl you're going around with, Lugh. The tongue on her! An absolute disgrace.

Kitty unpacks a jar of instant coffee and takes it into the dining room.

I'll have the water boiled in a wee minute, Margaret. They only had a jar of the instant down at the shop. (*Awkwardly*) I hope you don't think what you just witnessed is the sort of behaviour we tolerate here at *The Star of the Sea*.

Lugh: Serving instant coffee you mean?

Kitty: I'm talking about the filthy language coming out of that friend of yours.

Margaret: Don't worry about it, Mrs. O'Connor. I'm not easily offended.

Kitty (*to Lugh*): Such cheek!

Kitty storms into the kitchen and continues unpacking and sorting the groceries.

Lugh: She'll be all right. She's a tough old bird, our Kitty. (*Beat*) So you were having great craic altogether with Morrighu. She was going on about her name, was she?

Margaret: She told me all about it: the goddess, the ear tubes, Cliodna.

Enter Des, stage right. He has changed his clothes. He sits down with Lugh and Margaret at the table.

Des: Is she really one of the Cliodnas, that girlfriend of yours?

Lugh/Margaret: No.

Lugh: She's Marjorie.

Margaret: Robertson.

Lugh: Margie, Marge. Christ, you should see her when I call her that. Priceless, it is. *(Laughing)* Priceless.

Des: Where in God's name did she get Morrigu Cliodna from?

Lugh shrugs. Des turns to Margaret.

Are you still waiting on your tea, Margaret?

Margaret: I don't mind.

Lugh: I suppose I should give Kitty a hand.

Des: Good man.

Lugh goes into the kitchen. Spotlight on Des and Margaret in the dining room.

Margaret: You didn't ask me what sort of a Keane I was.

Des: I beg your pardon?

Margaret: When you asked me what my name was earlier. You didn't ask me what sort of a Keane I was.

Des: What do you mean? Like your temperament?

Margaret *(laughing)*: I'm glad I'm not the only one who trips over the question.

Des: Have folk really asked you that?

Margaret: Morrigu did. *(Beat)* And Mr. Kavanagh did last night.

Des: Ah, right. He's been looking at local genealogies.

Margaret: So no one ever asks you what kind of a McCrink you are?

Des: Keanes are more common than McCrinks, I suppose. Around these parts, anyhow. (*Musing*) It's a strange enough name now that I think about it. McCrink. Sounds a bit like fast food. (*Beat*) The McCrinkle.

Margaret laughs.

Fifty-eight years a McCrink and it's never dawned on me. Christ! What a rubbish name. No wonder the wife never took to it.

Margaret: Is your wife here with you?

Enter Kitty with the teapot. Des looks up at her and winks.

Des: She's a bit like our Kitty. She kicks me out of the house every so often.

Kitty: Poor thing's tired flying over here to circle the island with you year after year. You should take her on a proper holiday, Des. You shouldn't be leaving her at home while you're off gallivanting.

Des: Ah, now.

Enter Lugh. He takes his coat off the back of the chair and puts it on.

Lugh: That's why we call him Dizzy, Canada. He comes over every summer, hops in his car and circles 'round the country. Looking for a way back in, he is.

Margaret: So I hear.

Des: As cheeky as all get out.

Lugh winks.

Lugh: Right, Kitty. I'm off. Is there anything I can get you while I'm out?

Des: Some manners would do you.

Kitty: You're all right, Lugh. Go on. Will you be over for your tea?

Lugh: I will.

Kitty: Right.

Exit Lugh, stage right. Kitty hovers between the dining room and kitchen for a moment then steps back into the kitchen. Des and Margaret do not seem to notice her, but pick up their conversation. For the duration of the scene, Kitty sits in her chair, listening.

Des: So what's your business in Galway, Margaret?

Margaret: I have a feeling I'll be answering that question until the day I leave.

Des: You will, surely. *(Beat)* Tell folk you're here for the weather and the old fellas on bicycles. Give them a bit of a shake.

Margaret *(laughing)*: I might try that.

Des: Let me rephrase the question then. How in God's name did you end up at *The Star of the Sea*?

Margaret: I could ask the same of you!

Des: But my answer isn't all that interesting so we'll let it alone. *(Beat)* Kav said something to me about a play.

Margaret: I'm here to see one.

Des: Are you an actress?

Margaret *(jokingly)*: An actor, you mean.

Des: A bloody drama queen, more like. She's a right piece of work, that Morrigu one.

Pause.

Margaret: I don't know much about the theatre at all. I majored in Human Biology.

Des: A girl after my own heart! I teach zoology in Burnaby.

Margaret: Where's that?

Des: British Columbia.

Margaret: The West coast. *(Beat)* I've never been.

Des: Have you not?

Margaret: Not until now. I traveled East to get to the West.

Des: But they're very different, the West of Canada and the West of Ireland. I suppose it rains quite a bit in each, but that's about it.

Margaret: But they both have the sea and the mountains.

Des: I suppose.

Margaret: That's all I was really looking for. Apart from the play.

Pause.

Des: It's a terrible long way to come to see a play.

Margaret: Is it?

Des: It is indeed.

Margaret: I think it depends. On how long you've waited to see something.

Des: Fair enough. *(Beat)* What is it you're here to see?

Margaret: A play by Carmel Keane.

Des: Keane? Is she a relation of yours?

Margaret: She's my mother.

Des: Is she now? Well done! Is she over as well?

Margaret: She died ten years ago.

Des: I'm sorry.

Margaret: There's no need to be sorry.

Des: Right. *(Beat)* I'm sorry. I mean... Jesus.

Margaret: It's okay, really. It was ten years ago. I'm fine.

Pause.

Des: How old are you, Margaret, if you don't mind me asking?

Margaret: Twenty-three.

Des: Do you have any brothers or sisters at all?

Margaret: Just me. *(Beat)* Just me.

Pause.

Des: Was she ill?

Margaret: No.

Pause.

Des: Was it sudden?

Margaret: Yes. *(Beat)* But maybe it wasn't. I don't really know.

Margaret picks up Des' hat off the table. She pulls at the stray wool. Her head is down.

Des: It must have been great craic, though, having a writer for your Ma. She must have told you a load of stories.

Margaret: I guess. I don't know.

Des: You don't remember?

Pause.

Margaret: I got my own place in the city a couple of months ago, near the park where we used to live. North of the tracks, the good side. *(Beat)* My mother told me there was no such thing as good and bad sides, but the rent's almost double on the North end, so I'm not sure she was telling the truth.

Des: My mother used to say that you could live in a castle or a cottage, but it only spoke to where you were. Not who you were.

Margaret looks up.

Margaret: My mom said the same thing.

Des: She was a smart lady, your Ma.

Pause.

Margaret: I found a couple of boxes when I was moving. I don't know who packed them. Maybe Mrs. Romano. It wasn't Gracie.

Des: Did they take care of you?

Margaret: Gracie took me in almost straight away. She knew my mother from Church. *(Beat)* Mrs. Romano lived in the same building as my mother and me. I stayed with her at first.

Des: She packed up your mother's things, did she?

Margaret: I guess so. *(Beat)* She died a couple of years ago and I never got the chance to ask her about it. *(Beat)* Most of my mother's stuff they sold or gave away. The furniture and appliances and that sort of thing. I'm sure they asked me if I wanted anything at the time, but I guess I didn't. I didn't even want most of the things that belonged to me.

Des: But you said you found some boxes?

Margaret: Two. One had my baby blanket and some old baby clothes in it. My mom hid that blanket from me when I was five or six because I used to suck my thumb when I had it. I thought she had thrown it away. *(Beat)* The other one had a few books and scraps of paper with her writing on it. She used to tell folk stories and she would take bits and pieces from here and there and spin them into these kind of flawed histories about us.

Des: Is that what her play's about?

Margaret: I don't know. *(Beat)* There was a map of Ireland in the box, as well. I read out The place names, all foreign and awkward sounding. Then I hit Spiddal, Salt Hill, Barna, Galway. I don't know how I knew the names, but I did. They kind of rolled off my tongue. Like I was fluent.

Des: Is that why you came here? To see where it was your Ma was from?

Margaret: To start, maybe. I went through everything in the boxes bit by bit and when I was done... well, that was it. I was done. I got a couple of tourist-type books about Galway and I found out about the Festival. I wrote away for some literature on it and I got this in the mail.

She takes the brochure out of her pocket. She reads off it.

"Spotlight Galway proudly presents work from local playwrights Little Jim Nee, Arthur Treanor, Mark Murphy and Carmel Keane. The Galway Arts Festival, July 16-28. Spotlight Galway asks you to kindly support our sponsors."

Margaret looks up.

Des: An ad for your mother's play.

Margaret: And a number to ring for a B & B.

Pause.

Des: How was it she died?

Margaret: She drowned in Grenadier Pond.

Pause. Margaret drops her head. She is still fiddling with the hat.

Des (*softly*): In the park by your old apartment?

Margaret: How did you know?

Des: I was only just supposing.

Margaret: Oh.

Pause.

Des (*softly*): Margaret?

Margaret: Hmn?

Des: Was it an accident?

Margaret's head snaps up. She appears angry. Slowly, her expression moves through grief, resignation, and pain. She holds Des' unwavering gaze for several moments.

Margaret: I don't know.

Pause.

Des: *Stella Maris*, the Star of the Sea. Like this place now that I think about it.

Margaret: Hmn?

Des: The blessed Virgin. That's what the Carmelites call her, "the Star of the Sea." (*As if reciting a prayer*) "Mary, Mother of Carmel, a shining light guiding us towards heaven amidst the storms of life."

Margaret: Is that a prayer?

Des: Aye. When I was a boy at school we were under the Order of Carmel. Her feast day is the sixteenth of July.

Margaret: You mean today?

Des: Is it?

Margaret: How strange.

Des is struck by the coincidence, but he tries to conceal it.

Des: Ah, now. It's not as strange as all that. Doesn't it fall on the same day every year?

Margaret: Hmn.

Pause.

Des: So you don't know anything at all about your Ma's play?

Margaret shakes her head.

Nothing at all?

Margaret: It's playing tonight at the Town Hall at seven-thirty. (*She smiles*) See what I mean? It isn't really that far to come for a play.

Des: Would you like some company, Margaret? I'd be happy to come along.

Margaret: I think I need to go by myself. (*Beat*) It's just the way it's been.

She gets up.

Des: Right.

Margaret: But thank you, Des.

Exit Margaret, stage right.

Des: Right.

Spotlight on Kitty in her chair. Her head is in her hands.

Lights fade.

Blackout.

Act Four

After dinner. Kitty, Lugh and Des are sitting at the dining room table. In the kitchen, the counter space and stovetop are cluttered with pots, pans and cooking utensils.

Enter Kavanagh, stage right. He carries a stack of books and papers, ready to settle down for an evening's work.

Kitty: Your tea's gone cold, Thomas.

Kavanagh: Did you use that contraption of yours to boil the water?

Kitty: For the love of God.

Kavanagh: Never reaches the boil, that one.

Kavanagh leaves the stack he is carrying on the table and goes into the kitchen.

Kitty (*to the others*): Do you see what I have to put up with? (*Calling*) I had another word with Minette today.

Kavanagh is trying to make himself a cup of tea, but it is clear that the kitchen is not his domain—at least, not any longer. He is distracted.

Kavanagh: Minute?

Kitty (*calling*): She says we could fit a buffet in here. (*Beat*) In the space where the desk is now.

Kavanagh walks into the dining room.

Kavanagh: A buffet?

Kitty: It would save me traipsing back and forth, Thomas.

Lugh: It would class the place up a bit.

Kavanagh: Shut up, you. (*To Kitty*) There'd be no need for you traipsing back and forth if we'd let things alone from the start.

Kitty: Minette says we'll fall behind running the place like we do.

She points at the stack on the table.

Kavanagh: Don't we have the rooms booked 'til the first week of September?

Kitty: And after that?

Kavanagh: I'm going on eighty-years of age, Kitty. *(Mimicking)* "We'll fall behind!"
(Beat) I'll fall dead first.

The kettle starts to screech. Kavanagh storms back into the kitchen.

Kitty: Thomas? Thomas?

*Kitty gets up from the table and goes to console Kavanagh in the kitchen.
Spotlight on Lugh and Des in the dining room.*

Des: Kav has a point.

Lugh: He can be a right misery.

Des: He's all right. *(Beat)* He sold me my first pack of cigarettes, Kav did.

Lugh: Did he now?

Des: A gang of us used to come down to the Gaeltacht when we were lads. The Kavanaghs kept a shop on Dominick Street.

Lugh: Kav talks a bit about it. Kitty never does, mind.

Des: Kav took it over once their Ma was gone. Kitty moved back in after her man O'Connor died.

Lugh: Has she ever said anything to you about it?

Des: Not a word. She wouldn't.

Lugh: She wouldn't, no.

Pause.

Des: It's a bit odd Morrigu should think to christen herself a Cliodna.

Lugh: Why's that?

Des: Just. The Cliodnas have something to do with your man.

Lugh: O'Connor?

Des: Aye.

Lugh: Kitty's O'Connor?

Des nods and gestures to Lugh to keep his voice down. He does not want Kitty to overhear them. When Des speaks, it is in whispered tones.

Des: If Kav gets a couple of jars in him he might say a few words about it.

Lugh: Was it the Lucky Cliodnas they were called?

Des: That's it. *(Beat)* I'd forgotten that.

Lugh: Why was it they were lucky?

Des: Sure they weren't lucky at all! That was it. The whole lot of them was supposed to be cursed.

Lugh: That's it. I remember now.

Des: I went with one of them one summer I was down. She was this reckless sort of a thing. She frightened the daylights out of me.

Lugh: A bit like our Morrigu.

Des: What does she know about them? Sure no one talks about the Cliodnas anymore.

Kavanagh comes in with a mug of tea. He turns on the desk lamp, arranges the stack of papers and books, and sits down to work. Des and Lugh are silent while Kavanagh settles in. Kitty is in the kitchen, tidying up.

Pause.

Des: What's it you're working on there, Kav?

Kavanagh: Ah, now. A bit of this. *(Beat)* A bit of that.

Lugh: You've got me hooked already, so you have, Kav.

Kavanagh: Shut up, you.

Des: Do you remember, Kav... this is going a ways back now...

Kavanagh looks up, interested.

...but do you remember folk going on about the Lucky Cliodnas?

Kavanagh: Aye. *(Beat)* They had a curse on them.

Lugh: Get off.

Kavanagh: The whole of them.

Des: Ach, you don't really believe that do you, Kav?

Kavanagh: I haven't much time for nonsense. But the Cliodnas. *(Beat)* They had a hard go of it.

Lugh: How so do you mean?

Kavanagh: Ah, now. *(Beat)* Ah, now.

Kavanagh looks through the 'wall' at Kitty in the kitchen. She is standing over the sink, looking out the window. He lowers his voice.

That's going a ways back now. *(He stops to think)*. They came out of Munster some whereabouts. The South of Clare, it might have been. Or Cork. Along the coast.

Lugh and Des turn their chairs towards Kavanagh. The lights dim, illuminating Kavanagh in the glow of the desk lamp.

Eileen Rea. She was the first of them. The one who got folk talking.

Lugh: Morrigu knows a bit about her.

Des: I've never heard of her.

Kavanagh: She married a man from Barna. A fisherman. She was this reckless, dark-haired thing. When she first came up to Galway, the men went mad for her.

Lugh catcalls and Des laughs.

She was a rare one for the stories, Eileen Rea. Folk used to go down to the house on a night just for the craic off her, but the old fella stopped that shortly. He wasn't one for the stories at all.

Lugh: Why was that then?

Des: He hadn't much time for nonsense, I take it.

Kavanagh: Wasn't he out at sea the better part of the day? They're your ones with the stories to tell, the fisher folk. Whatever it was made him that way, he had no time for fairy talk and the like. But Eileen was another one altogether.

Kavanagh pauses to drink his tea. Lugh and Des are quiet. It is clear that Kavanagh enjoys the sense of empowerment.

Shortly after Eileen was married, she had her first child. Eileen was left on her own so much of the time that she fairly doted over the wee girl and was forever talking to her and telling her stories. She was that sort of a one, Eileen Rea. She had a bit of the old Celt in her. *(Beat)* But they were all like that in them days. Full of wonder. *(Beat)* It was my own mother first told me of Eileen Rea and she was a wise woman, Mary Kavanagh. She said you must be mindful of what you say to young ones, for they are true believers. And that is a true thing, what she said. *(Beat)* Years went by and Eileen Rea bore no children. But seven years to the day she was first made a mother, she was carrying again. And it was the very day she felt the first pangs of labour that her daughter went down to play at the water's edge at Trá Bhán. *(Beat)* There is a desperate undertow at Trá Bhán in Barna and many's a strong man has been pulled under with the force of it. The same day Eileen Rea gave birth to her stillborn son, her daughter slipped under the sea. *(Beat)* When the infant was laid to rest, Eileen went down to Trá Bhán herself. Seven days had passed and the wee girl had yet to wash ashore. Mad with the grief, Eileen was. She walked away out 'til the water was up about her waist, then she was pulled under the sea herself.

Kavanagh pauses to drink. Again, he holds the silence.

When I was a lad there were folk used to say they had seen her pulled under. Perhaps they had. *(Beat)* It was after folk had tired searching for her, and had all gone home, that Eileen washed ashore, as vital as I am now. Nine months later, she bore her husband an infant girl, and the strain of it killed her.

Des: Are you serious about all this, Kav?

Kavanagh *(heedless)*: But as I say, folk in them days were full of signs and wonder. Word got back to the husband that Eileen had been *taken* at Trá Bhán, and the fairies had only let her back to replace the child that was owed him. He was a queer old fella, the husband. Up and left, he did, thinking the infant was a

child of the fairies. She was left to some relations to be reared and no one heard from the father again.

Lugh goes into the kitchen. He returns with a bottle of porter from the dresser and three glasses. As he pours, the men are silent. They tap glasses almost reverentially. There is a sense of ceremonial formality.

The wee girl was named Brigid, but folk took to calling her Cliodna after the Druid daughter who drowned at Teite's strand.

Lugh: Is that where the Lucky Cliodnas get their name then, Kav?

Des (*playfully*): You're a sharp one, Lugh.

Kavanagh: I suppose I was near enough her age, the Cliodna one. I never knew her to talk to, but sure we all knew enough about her in the end.

Kavanagh looks furtively in Kitty's direction. As he proceeds with the rest of the story, he frequently glances over, as if he is telling a secret he wishes to conceal from her. Kitty turns and leans against the counter top. As Kavanagh gets deeper into the story, she moves slowly across the kitchen, towards her chair, trance-like. As the scene progresses, a spotlight intensifies on her.

The Cliodna one was every bit her mother before her, a reckless sort of a thing. She had her first child without a husband or father in sight. The family disowned her. At least, publicly they did. There was an aunt wanted her to take the Vow with the Poor Clares just there up the road.

Kavanagh gestures with his hand.

Cliodna ended up here on Nun's Island all right, but at the Grace Asylum.

Des: Just there down the street?

Kavanagh: Across from the Samaritans.

Lugh: Didn't it used to be some sort of shelter for destitute women?

Kavanagh: It did indeed.

Des: Bloody hell.

Kavanagh: Folk said the child's father was a man from Aran, but no one knew rightly. It

was in the month of August that Cliodna made her way with the infant child to Ros an Mhil to take the ferry to Inis Mór.

Kavanagh consciously lowers his voice. Kitty is standing by the 'wall', her hands resting on the back of the chair to support herself.

It was on the way back to Ros an Mhil that the sea got rough, and great, white, shouting waves were crashing against the boat. Most of the folk were inside the cabin, but Cliodna fell ill with the rocking. She left the child in the arms of a stranger, and when she went to be sick out the stern of the boat, a sudden thrust sent her overboard.

Kitty and Kavanagh stare at each other intently through the 'wall'. She is in a state of silent frenzy. Kavanagh turns away slowly. He can not continue. Kitty turns around and slumps in her chair, depleted.

Des: But if the Cliodna one was drowned, who were the Lucky Cliodnas?

Kavanagh: Cliodna had a wee girl of her own, hadn't she? The child was taken in by some aunt or relation. Keanes, they were. Of course, the Keanes who were no relation had no desire to be lumped with the scandal, so they used to say that they were Keanes "but not one of the Cliodnas." That's how the Lucky Cliodnas first came about. But sure, no one speaks of them any longer.

Lugh: Our Morigu does all right.

Kavanagh glances in Kitty's direction.

Kavanagh: She would be just as well to let it alone.

Des: She'll grow out of it.

Kavanagh: She will surely.

Pause.

Des: Margaret's mother was a Keane.

Lugh: She's not dead, is she?

Kavanagh: She is.

Lugh: Bloody hell. There I was last night giving Canada a hard time about searching out relations. *(Beat)* How was it her mother died?

Des: She drowned.

Lugh: She drowned?

Kavanagh: Aye.

Des: Aye.

Kavanagh sighs.

Lugh: Strange, that.

A door slams shut, stage right. The men are silent, listening. Kitty stands up quickly. "Margaret," she murmurs. She grabs the old baby's blanket that is neatly folded on top of the dresser.

Exit Kitty, stage left.

Quick blackout.

Lights up. The curtain is pulled across the stage, as in the Prologue. Margaret stands at the edge of the stage, at left, her back to the stairs.

Enter Kitty from the pit, up the flight of stairs. Her movements are heavy. At the top, Kitty turns left and stares at Margaret. She moves towards her; she is carrying the old baby's blanket.

Margaret: It wasn't hers.

Margaret turns to face Kitty. She is visibly distraught.

Kitty: What's the matter, child?

Margaret: The play. It wasn't my mother's.

As if in a trance or waking dream, Margaret turns to face the front.

When Mrs. Romano and the police officer sat me down to tell me what had happened, I already knew. *(Beat)* How does a thirteen-year-old kid know something like that? That her mother is dead? *(Beat)* I never play that scene in my mind. Never. But if I were to stop disremembering and think back, those few minutes before Mrs. Romano spoke would play out forever. *(Beat)* She didn't keep me waiting, I'm sure of it. But somehow I had time to battle the truth of it back and forth in my mind. As long as no one said anything, it hadn't happened. I needed words to make the truth true, but I didn't want to

hear it. When Mrs. Romano opened her mouth to speak, I screamed. *(Shouting)* Don't say it! Please don't say it! *(Softly)* I wanted more time. *(Beat)* To prolong the moment when things were still...

The sound of applause, softly in the background.

...as they had been. *(Beat)* This evening the cast came out to take their final bow. The lead actor was all flushed and excited. He said, "Where's Carmel? Where's Carmel Keane?" It was the same moment all over again. "Don't say it," I wanted to scream, "Please don't say it!" *(Beat)* "Come up here Carmel and take a bow!"

The sound of applause thunders. There are whoops and cheers. The noise fades.

Pause.

Carmel Keane came up on stage, a woman in her late twenties. *(Beat)* My mother would have been...

Kitty: Forty-eight.

Margaret turns suddenly to face Kitty. It is as if she had forgotten that Kitty was there.

Margaret: In June.

Kitty: When I would see your mother, every now and again, on a chance Saturday on Shop Street or at Easter in the Cathedral, I could see how much she had grown. *(Softly)* To see the child grown was to see the age of my sorrow.

Margaret: You knew my mother?

Kitty: She lived with a great aunt 'til she was old enough to be sent away to school. It was very rarely I saw her after that. Then I never saw her again.

Margaret's tone is challenging.

Margaret: She went to Canada.

Kitty: I know that now.

Margaret: She died ten years ago.

Kitty: I know, child.

Margaret: She drowned.

Kitty: I know, child. Don't I know.

Margaret (*crying*): Do you? What do you know, because I don't know anything. I don't have anything. (*Beat*) I was going to hear her voice again. I was going to hear her words and breaths and sighs and all I had to do was get on a plane. She was going to tell me a story. (*Beat*) I just wanted to hear voices that weren't the voices in my head.

Pause.

Kitty: Growing up, we lived above our parents' shop on Dominick Street. Nine of us there were, and I was the youngest. There was a boy used to come in every afternoon and we used to get to talking. He was from Aran, but his mother sent him to the mainland to go to school. (*Beat*) He grew into a fine looking man with great broad shoulders and dark hair. We were married in the month of June.

Margaret: O'Connor.

Kitty (*proudly*): Michael O'Connor, he was.

Margaret looks at Kitty's ring.

Margaret (*softly*): Is that the wedding ring he gave you?

Kitty raises her hand and looks at it.

Kitty: I've never once taken it from my finger. It's there, just as he placed it.

Margaret: When did he die?

Kitty (*heedless*): We spent the summer with his people on Inis Mór and traveled back to Galway on a Saturday afternoon at the end of August. It was a fine day, and the bay looked as if it had caught on fire, for the sun was blazing down. The sea was calm, and I know this, for I used to be always sitting inside the cabin, but this day I stayed on the deck. I got to talking with a young one from Nun's Island; and she, with her baby newly born. I suppose she wasn't much younger than myself, but she was a pale, wispy sort of a girl with dark hair and restless eyes. (*Beat*) I have never once forgotten the age of her child, for she was born the very day Michael and I were wed. She was a funny one, the mother; she was forever whispering and singing to the child. I haven't a notion what it was she was saying. She spoke to me as well, but I don't recall

what it was she said. At the time it did not seem worth remembering. It was idle chat to pass the time as we made our way to Ros an Mhil.

Margaret (*anxiously*): What day were you and Michael married?

Kitty: We were half the length of the journey home when the wind picked up. I could see the girl's face changing colour. That she wanted to be sick. I took the sleeping child from her, and she moved away from us. (*Beat*) The storm lasted no more than a minute. I have not known anything like it to this day, and I often wonder what it was that happened—or if it happened at all. (*Softly*) But I have the ring on my finger to remind me of the truth of it. There was a sudden jolt, and I near lost my bearings. I struggled to steady myself and to keep hold of the child. A great spray washed over the deck and we were all made damp. Still the child slept, wrapped in its blanket. (*Beat*) The sudden shouts were softened by the wind in my ears. (*Beat*) That is the moment. That is the moment that splits me in two.

Margaret: What happened?

Kitty: None of it, I saw. When I turned, there was an empty space where the girl had been hunched over the stern of the boat. And Michael's coat and boots in a heap. (*Beat*) The wind dropped and the sea settled. After a time, we carried on towards Ros an Mhil for there was nothing could be done.

Margaret: She fell over the edge?

Kitty: She did.

Margaret: Did Michael try to save her?

Kitty: He was a fine man, Michael O'Connor.

Pause.

Margaret: Kitty, what day were you and Michael married?

Kitty: The tenth day of June.

Margaret: My mother was born on the tenth of June.

Kitty: I know, child. Don't I know.

Margaret: Oh my God.

Kitty: A few of the women tried to pry your mother from me, but I wouldn't let

them. She was so plump and pink and clean. When she finally opened her eyes, she smiled straight away. Such a contented child, she was. The rest of the journey, I held her tight to my chest. To feel the warmth of her. To keep me steady.

Margaret: Oh my God.

Kitty: When we got to the port at Ros an Mhil, I took your mother out of her blanket, for it was stiff with the salt water. The gardaí were waiting and they dressed her in clean clothes. They asked me for her name, but I didn't know it. I told them she was Carmel.

Margaret: The Star of the Sea.

Kitty: In the report, that's how her name appeared. Her birth certificate hadn't been registered.

Margaret: Did my mom know this? Did you tell her?

Kitty: I have never spoken a word of this to anyone, Margaret.

Pause.

Margaret: Kitty, what you saw... was it an accident?

Kitty: I didn't *see* any of what happened, Margaret.

Margaret buries her face in her hands. Pause.

But I don't need to have seen anything to know that what happened was an accident. *(Beat)* Nor do you, Margaret.

Margaret raises her head. She is overcome.

Margaret: I just wanted to hear her voice again.

Kitty: When the gardaí took your mother from me, I held onto her blanket. I wrapped it in brown paper and kept it in a trunk with my wedding gown in the attic on Dominick Street. I suppose I forgot about it. Or perhaps I...disremembered. I found it when we sold the shop to come here.

Kitty looks down at the blanket she is holding.

For all his desire to hold onto things, Thomas is the one wants rid of it. He doesn't know who it belongs to.

Kitty looks up at Margaret. Pause.

I know you said you wanted to hear your mother's voice. But even if the play had been her own. *(Beat)* It would have been no more than a production.

Margaret: I didn't think I could ask for anything more than that.

Kitty gives Margaret the blanket.

Kitty: There you are, then.

Lights fade.

Blackout.

Act Five

Later that night. Lugh is repairing his unicycle on the kitchen floor. His back is to the door. A tap sounds at the window. He exits and returns a moment later with Morrigu.

Lugh: I was expecting you before now, Morrigu.

Morrigu: What's wrong with your bike?

Morrigu does not wait for an answer. She walks past him into the dining room, turns on Kavanagh's desk lamp, and sits down. Lugh trails behind. He sits at the table with his back to the 'wall'.

Lugh: The chain's all buggered up.

Morrigu takes a folder from her bag and gives Lugh a copy of the script. Lugh glances at it, then looks up inquisitively.

Where did you come across this?

Morrigu: One of the Keanes from up the Headford Road gave it to me. He found it in a pile of his aunt's old correspondence. *(Beat)* He thought I might be able to do something with it.

Lugh: Eileen Rea. *(Beat)* Kavanagh was going on about her this evening.

Pause. Morrigu flips through the script distractedly. Lugh tries to get her attention.

About the drowning, and all.

Morrigu: Give me back the script, Lugh. I'll mark your lines.

Lugh hands Morrigu the script. Pause.

Lugh: Cliodna's Ma.

Morrigu looks up suddenly.

Morrigu: What?

Lugh: Eileen Rea. She was Cliodna's mother.

Morrigu: No, she wasn't.

Lugh: She was, indeed. Kav said so himself.

Morrigu (*expertly*): Eileen Rea died from complications during childbirth. Her baby girl was named Brigid.

Lugh: Correct on two counts. But you forgot the bit about folk calling her Cliodna after the Druid daughter who drowned...

Morrigu: At Teite's Strand...

Lugh: Aye. In Munster.

Pause.

Morrigu: How did you know that?

Lugh: I already told you. Kav was going on about it. (*Beat*) Did you not know? Hey now! That's one for the records! Have I actually gone and done it? Have I actually told Morrigu something she doesn't know? (*He whoops*).

Morrigu (*softly*): It makes sense.

Lugh: What does?

Morrigu: I knew I was connected to her somehow.

Lugh: To Eileen Rea? You've got to be joking.

Morrigu (*heedless*): I knew it!

Lugh: How can you be bloody well connected to her, Morrigu? You're not one of the bleeding Cliodnas.

Morrigu looks askance at Lugh, then laughs sardonically.

Morrigu: Rile me up as much as you want, Lugh. You're not going to get out of reading these lines.

Lugh: I'm not trying to rile you up, Morrigu.

Morrigu (*firmly*): Just leave it, Lugh.

Lugh sighs. Morrigu thrusts him his copy of the script. They both begin to flip through the pages.

Enter Margaret, stage right. She hovers at the threshold until Lugh calls her in.

Lugh: You're just in time, Canada.

Margaret: What for?

Lugh: To give us a lend of that fine nasal honk of yours.

Margaret pulls up a chair at the table, facing Lugh and across from the 'wall'.

Morrigu: We're running lines for a play I want to put on.

Margaret: What's it about?

Morrigu: Eileen Rea.

Lugh (*to Margaret*): Have you heard of her?

Margaret: Is she historical?

Lugh: With a bit of wilful suspension, she is.

Morrigu: Suspension of what?

Lugh/Margaret: Disbelief.

Lugh (*to Morrigu*): Canada here thinks it's irresponsible. Escapism, she calls it.

Margaret: I guess it depends on what way you look at it.

Lugh (*bemused*): Does it now?

Lugh and Margaret stare at each other across the table. Oblivious, Morrigu presses ahead with the rehearsal.

Morrigu: I'll be playing the part of Eileen. Which one of you is the Daughter?

Margaret: I guess I am.

Morrigu: Lugh, you can read the stage directions.

Lugh flips through the pages of the script.

Lugh: Are there no lads in it at all?

Morrigu: It's a play about mothers and daughters, Lugh. Women of the Sea.

Margaret: Women of the Sea?

Morrigu: The sea is in their blood. It courses through them.

Lugh (to Margaret): This is what I meant by wilful suspension. (Beat) But there's no harm in looking at things upside down as well as right-side up. Sure none of us knows which way 'round things are meant to be hanging.

Morrigu: Wise words, Lugh. Can you quit calling me Marjorie, then?

Lugh: Ah, Margie. You're a different case altogether.

Morrigu: Go to hell, Lugh.

Lugh: I'm only having you on. (Beat) Morrigu. I wouldn't have you any other way.

Morrigu looks up at Lugh and holds his gaze for several seconds. When she speaks again, her voice is softer. She flips through the pages of her script.

Morrigu: Right. (Beat) Well. (Beat) I guess we should get started.

Lugh: Right. (Reading) "The exterior of a one-room cottage. Eileen Rea, heavy with child, stands at the spinning wheel. Her daughter sits on a stool beside her. The shore, beyond."

As there is no spinning wheel to occupy her hands, Morrigu stands behind Margaret and begins to play with her hair. When she is playing the part of Eileen Rea, Morrigu speaks in a soft brogue. Otherwise, she uses her own American accent.

Morrigu (in brogue): "I was the only child born to my mother and father, and when I was a girl, I was the apple of their eye. One day, my father was out cutting turf, and my mother sent me with his dinner in a wooden dish. It was a fine day, and my father was gazing out at the sea beyond and holding his hand up to his eyes, for there was a great big ship heading for the mouth of the river."

With Morrigu's hands in her hair, Margaret appears mesmerized. At times, it is as if she slips into her thirteen-year-old self. Margaret looks up, inquisitive.

Margaret: What's turf?

Morrighu stops.

Morrighu: That's not the line, Margaret.

Lugh looks up at Margaret.

Lugh: It's a bit of earth you'd burn on the fire for fuel.

Margaret nods her head.

Morrighu: Read your line.

Margaret's voice has a childlike quality.

Margaret (*reading*): "I wish my own father cut turf so I could bring him his dinner and sit and watch the boats on the bay; and so you wouldn't be after worrying when he's home late, and thinking he's drowned."

Lugh (*reading*): "Eileen does not hear her daughter speak. The act of spinning flax mesmerizes her. She does not fully realize what she is saying to the child nor how much she has already said. She carries on with her story, heedless."

Morrighu (*in brogue*): "And I turned to my father and said, 'I wonder where that ship is going to?' And he supposed it was Killybegs."

Margaret (*reading*): "I should like to make for Killybegs myself, but I haven't a boat to take me."

Morrighu (*in brogue*): "But my mother had taught me how to turn a trick, so I turned to my father and said, 'If I so wish, that ship will never reach Killybegs.' But my father only told me to shut up, for what could I do to a great big ship that was out on the sea?"

Margaret (*reading*): "I shouldn't be telling things like that to my own father for want of trouble."

Morrighu (*in brogue*): "But my mother had taught me the trick well, so when my father finished his dinner, I took his dish and washed it in a pool of water; and when I turned the bowl on its side, the ship at sea creaked and groaned. 'Look now, Father,' says I. 'See what I can do with the great big ship out at sea.' And he saw as well as I did that the ship was heading for the cliffs below."

Margaret (*reading*): "What was it you did, Mama, to make the ship creak and groan?"

Morrigu (*in brogue*): "And when my father saw what I had done, he turned on me sharply and said, 'Who is it then has taught you such a trick?' And I could see that he was cross, but I couldn't see why, so I told him that my mother had shown me how I might play with a wooden dish in a pool of water, and how I might turn the dish upside down so the same would come of the ship at sea."

Margaret (*reading*): "I wouldn't go turning the ships upside down; I'd put them upright, instead. And I'd bring the curraghs ashore with everyone safely in them."

Morrigu (*in brogue*): "I let go of the dish and let the ship go free, and it was my father took the dish home again."

Margaret (*reading*): "And he was very cross with you, was he?"

Morrigu (*in brogue*): "I know now that he had the fear. When he came home from the bog, he spoke not a word, but washed and dressed and left through the door. And wherever it was he went, I never did see him again."

Lugh (*reading*): "Eileen relaxes her hands on the wheel, depleted."

Margaret (*reading*): "And were you very sorry, were you?"

Morrigu (*in brogue*): "Terrible sorry, I was."

Margaret (*reading*): "But you were very clever all the same."

Morrigu (*in brogue*): "How so do you mean?"

Margaret (*reading*): "For you were stronger in mind than the great big ship and all the men within. I should like to be that clever. I should like to learn such tricks."

Morrigu (*in brogue*): "Pray, child! I was only speaking a story."

Margaret (*reading*): "Will I tell you, Mama, will I tell you what I saw there the other day, when my hands were black from the grate, and the coal dust in my eyes? The basin was dry, so I went to wash them in the trough, and after seven days' rain, the trough itself was bone dry! And my eyes were scalded with the coal in them, and I wasn't crying, but my eyes were wet and weeping."

Morrigu (*in brogue*): "Hush, child."

Margaret (*reading*): "And a woman came upon me and picked my tears from off the

ground like seashells on the strand. She was very pale and thin, and she climbed into the trough and laid down, so that I thought she was dead and ready for the grave. So pale, she was, I could see straight through her, and a mist rose above her as the mist over the sea."

Morrighu (*in brogue, shouting*): "Enough, child!"

Margaret (*reading*): "And then the trough was full! See there, the trough is full, and we are after having two fine days and not a drop of rain!"

Morrighu (*in brogue, panicking*): "Shall I speak of this to your father? Of such foolish talk and nonsense? You are bold not to listen."

Margaret (*reading*): "I have learned these things from you, Mama. Only you."

Lugh (*reading*): "The Daughter kisses Eileen on the cheek and dances off."

Margaret keeps her head lowered. She speaks quietly with childlike naiveté.

Margaret: If I had power like that, I'd skip over the rest of winter. (*Beat*) You never know what might come to pass in six weeks' time.

Lugh (*softly*): Are you all right, Canada?

Margaret looks up, startled; it is as if she had been asleep.

Margaret: Pardon?

Lugh: Are you all right?

Margaret: I'm fine. (*Beat*) A bit tired, maybe.

Lugh: Still a bit jet lagged, are you?

Margaret: That's probably it.

Pause.

Lugh (*reading*): "Eileen begins to fret. She rifles through the basket that is piled high with freshly spun spools."

Morrighu (*in brogue*): "How is it now, for want of seed, I have spun yarn to fill the baskets full? We shall suffer for this, to be sure. I have reaped too far afield and sown in reckless rows."

Lugh (*reading*): "Scene change. The shore, low-tide. A woman cries out, in the distance. Enter the Daughter, carrying a wooden bowl."

Lugh looks up at Margaret.

Margaret (*reading*): "The fear is not upon me, for I know the sound of my mother's cry. She is going to give us a son."

Lugh (*reading*): "The Daughter wades slowly into the water."

Margaret (*reading*): "There are cries that sound long and low and echo 'cross the bay. Cries for brothers and the brothers and sons and husbands of other mothers."

Lugh (*reading*): "She sets the wooden bowl on the surface of the water. It bobs out with the tide, and she follows it."

Margaret (*reading*): "I shouldn't like to make a cry such as that, for it sinks you low to the ground and pales the face and tears at the hair."

Lugh (*reading*): "She shivers and reaches out for the bowl."

Margaret (*reading*): "I will send my father home from the fishing boat. He'll be wanting the news that Mama is wailing, but only to give him a son. And he'll be pleased."

Lugh (*reading*): "She takes hold of the bowl, but is pulled underwater in the instant. In the distance, there are shouts and confusion. A heavy silence falls, then a long, low cry of mourning echoes across the bay."

Morrighu keens softly.

"The shore, low-tide. Enter Eileen, thin and disheveled, picking seashells."

Morrighu (*in brogue, distraught*): "And a woman came upon the child and picked her tears from off the ground, like seashells on the strand."

Lugh (*reading*): "When the infant son was laid to rest, Eileen made for the shore, and slipped the shoes from off her feet so to wade amongst the ashes. And she wet her face and head, and further still she went, further out to sea. And strange, it was, that her daughter should fail to wash ashore, and the tide in and out, as fingers that seize and surrender."

Morrighu (*in brogue*): "The weight of the water is great, and I need strength to return home."

Lugh (*reading*): "Eileen unclasps her long, dark hair and leans back into the sea."

Morrighu (*in brogue*): "See here, daughter! Spun flax for to spool. Come back to me and we shall fill the baskets with bundle-linen."

Lugh (*reading*): "Eileen is pulled under the water in the instant. There is a protracted silence, then a long, low moan sounds, at right." (*Beat*) "Then at left." (*Beat*) "Then from the rear." (*Beat*) "Eileen Rea rises up out of the water. All sound in a rising crescendo."

Above them, a loud thud sounds. They look up.

Morrighu: What was that?

Lugh: Kav's after dropping one of his books on the floor. He's up there reading.

As they continue, Margaret is clearly distracted. She looks up at the ceiling repeatedly.

(*Reading*) "Scene change. The exterior of the cottage. Eileen's drowned daughter sits on the stool, ghostlike, idly spinning the wheel. From within, Eileen cries out in pain."

Margaret (*reading*): "Surely you have heard of the Women of the Sea. Like mist upon the shore, they rise, for all the world like you and me. Listen now."

Lugh (*reading*): "There is a sharp cry of pain from within the cottage."

Margaret (*reading*): "Beyond the wall is Eileen Rea, nine months dead and gone. Listen now."

Lugh (*reading*): "The first cry of a newborn sounds. There are shouts and confusion from within."

Above them, Kavanagh can be heard calling out to Kitty.

Margaret (*reading*): "Listen with an ear that is quick and roving, an ear that listens to see."

Enter Kitty, stage left. She is dressed in her good coat, hat, and gloves. She carries her wedding gown over her arm. She looks out the window, waiting.

(*Reading*) "What passes here shall pass; and unseen, no less true. For mortal eyes are blind before these whitewashed walls."

Lugh (*reading*): "The Daughter gets up and peers through the window."

Margaret (*reading*): "Eileen Rea is laid to rest, the infant pried from her cold, damp breast."

Margaret looks up. She stares straight ahead, through the 'wall'. She freezes.

Enter Kavanagh, stage right.

Kavanagh (*distraught*): Lugh! There's something the matter with Kitty. I found her in a heap on the floor. Christ, I need to ring the priest.

Exit Kavanagh, stage right.

Lugh (*panicking*): Christ, Kav! Where's Des?

Lugh gets up quickly.

Morrigu? Canada? Are you coming?

Exit Lugh and Morrigu, quickly, stage right.

Margaret pushes back her chair slowly, her eyes fixed on Kitty in the kitchen. She walks over to the 'wall' and stands behind Kitty's chair, transfixed. There is a knock at the back door.

Exit Kitty, stage left.

Lights fade.

Blackout.

In the darkness, Carmel's voice can be heard singing:

*"And if there is going to be a life hereafter
And somehow I am sure there's going to be
I will ask my God to let me make my heaven
In that dear land across the Irish sea."*

Curtain.