

Author: Jim Cullinane

## SHEARE STREET SOCIAL CLUB

Characters:

Mick: A mix of cynicism and innocence.

Robert: Theatrical, bombastic, instigates argument.

Jerry: Emigrates. Sincere.

Sean: Bartender, quiet and deep.

Gusty: Chairs meetings. Steady and calming influence.

Tommy: Ladies man.

J.J.: Unemployed.

Age is relatively unimportant except for Tommy and Jerry, both late twenties.

Location: A men's social club in a small village in Ireland, 1950's.

There is an air of decline, a scent of death almost, amid all the repartee, wisecracks and talk. It's as if they know this environment is in decline – of male only social club habitués – and soon cracks appear. They begin to question their existence, how they'll be remembered, their dreams abandoned, their potential unrealized. But in the end they decide to try – to do better, realize dreams, make a difference.

ACT 1, SCENE 1: 7P.M. Club empty, lights dimmed. Lights come on and Sean, whistling, comes in and starts to set up a small bar. Tune is unintelligible, one of Sean's making.

Moments later Gusty comes in and sits at table, listens to Sean's tune.

Jerry comes in, goes to dartboard. They both stop and listen to Sean's tune, puzzling over its identity.

Gusty: Well, Sean? I didn't hear that one before. (Sean pulls a pint and brings it to Gusty.)

Sean: Ah, just something running in my head. (Gusty pulls out paper and starts to read.)

Jerry: Well? (Sean brings him a drink)

Sean: Quiet enough.

Tommy comes in, goes to mirror, checks himself, sits down. 'The usual Sean.'

Mick comes in, looks at Jerry.

Mick: No natural ability whatsoever. (Sean pulls two pints and brings them to Tommy and Mick)

THE DOOR BURSTS OPEN AND ROBERT COMES IN. HE STANDS

THEATRICALY. RUNS FOR TOILET. COMES OUT ZIPPING UP.

Robert: God almighty, that was close. As the man said up in Dublin, (slowly, in Dublin accent) you couldn't buy that relief now, could you.

Gusty: The bard of the village.

Robert: Oh Abbeyside, oh Abbeyside, your Church, your chapel and your steeple, and a bunch of oul' hoors, hanging over half doors, reading other people. Would you look at the mangy-looking group assembled before me. The dregs of humanity. D'ye know, I love this place. (pause) How d'ye like the coat, lads?

Gusty: That's a great coat you have on ye.

Robert: I bought it from the Hawkers today, over in the square.

Mick: (disparaging) Second-hand, taken off some dead body.

Robert: (ignoring him) As the man who sold it said, 'Twas woven be the Negroes and spun be the blacks, guaranteed to wear and tear like a woman's tongue, smooth as a baby's bottom, gargle and gray, the color of a mouse's tit.

Tommy: He's off.

Sean: Profanity, Robert, profanity.

Tommy: (to Robert) Have you forgotten our charter....

Jerry: Yes, the Sheare Street Social Club Charter.

Gusty: ...that we aspire to the highest standards in speech, dress and compartment.

Mick: And you struck out in all three.

Robert: How so?

Mick: Speech – profanity used, dress – the oul' second hand coat, compartment – you do not, I repeat you do not - zip outside the confines of the lavatory, right Gusty?

Gusty: You are correct, sir.

Robert: What profanity are you referring to, Sean?

Sean: Tit. The word 'tit' is vulgar and bordering on the profane.

Tommy: There you go, Sean.

Robert: Tit, okay. When I wish to refer to that part of the anatomy, I will say breast. Does that meet the profanity standards?

Sean: Breast is acceptable.

Robert: Thank you. Gentlemen, is there a drink for a thirsty traveler?

Jerry: Traveler, traveler, you only live up the road, in the very same place that you're denigrating in that awful verse.

Robert: And dare another man say a word against it. The native is allowed to be critical of his native place. But tread softly stranger, if you lift a hand or raise a voice against that place of beauty, that wind-swept and sea surrounded village of Abbeyside, clustered round it's church, the church of St. Augustine, named in honor of our patron saint, Augustine, who has been with us and succored us down all the years....

Mick: He loves the sound of his own voice.

Robert: Do you gentlemen, know who St. Augustine is – or was?

Jerry: He's the patron saint of that wind swept and sea surrounded Village of Abbeyside...

Robert: (interrupting) Why would we want a church, a village dedicated to a man who was born and lived all his life in North Africa, North Africa mind you, over 1500 years ago, who testified to his own sexual sins: *The stream of fellowship, I polluted with the dregs of lust, clouding its clarity with dark longing. I was reckless for love, wanting to be its captive.*

Sean: Saint Augustine thus spoke?

Robert: *My childhood past, I was clothed in unstable manhood.*

Mick: Unstable manhood? What manner of man was this. Why is he our patron saint?

Jerry: Unstable manhood, did that mean he couldn't control his, his... ?

Robert: It means as men, we are all subject to sexual arousal, to a lesser or greater degree.

THEY ALL LOOK AT TOMMY

Tommy: What ? ( LONG SILENCE)

Jerry: Following in the footsteps of Augustine.

Robert: (feigning indignation) God forbid. St. Augustine was a man of great intellect, a luminary of the early Church, philosopher, and writer. He preached 8000 sermons, wrote over 90 books. No, this pallid imitation should not be compared to him.

Tommy: I'm a pallid imitation and you're a wanker.

Sean: There is some merit attached to even a pallid imitation of the great Saint Augustine.

Robert: No, not this extremely pallid – imitation.

Gusty: Lads, lads, okay. We have to have a short meeting. Sean?

SEAN REACHES BEHIND THE BAR, BRINGS OUT A WOODEN MALLET AND BRINGS IT OVER TO GUSTY.

Gusty bangs the mallet, brings the meeting to order and calls the roll – all present except J.J.

Calls for a financial statement – (Sean- Fin. Sec.) Financial condition the same, two pounds, Mister Chairman.

Correspondence – (Mick- Corr. Sec.) No correspondence, Mister Chairman.

Membership update – (Jerry- Mem. Chairman.) No new members, Mister Chairman.

Request to join from Bridgie Power again – denied again: Contravenes male only policy of club.

Gusty: The question before the meeting tonight has to do with our yearly outing less than two week's away. As you know, the pope died on Wednesday. A moment's silence.

(They bow their heads for a silent prayer) And – the question before the meeting: Should we cancel our outing as a mark of respect on the death of Pope Pius XII?

Mick: Didn't we just pray for his soul. Ah, won't there be enough paying respect and offering up prayers? Isn't he going to heaven anyway? God almighty, if he's not going to Heaven, what chance have we?

Robert: Gentlemen, gentlemen, we must have respect for the man, and if we can't respect the man, we must respect the office.

Tommy: Go 'way, you hypocrite you.(slow)

Robert: (pontificating) Gentlemen, the Pope is the natural successor to Peter the apostle, who was appointed vicar by the Son of God himself. (Here he bows his head)

Jerry: Peter was a sinner too, no better than any one of us.

Robert: A direct line of succession from the Son of God himself...

Gusty: (interrupting) Might we return to the question before the meeting - should we cancel the outing?

Sean: I'm between two minds.

Gusty: So, you're not sure?

Sean: There are arguments for and against.

Robert: Ambiguous.

Mick: He said one word and shut up?

Gusty: Tommy?

Tommy: It's complicated. As Mick says, does he not have all the prayers he'll ever want?

They should be distributing the surplus around, to the poor people that really need them.

But...

Gusty: Does that mean you're for – or not for - canceling the outing?

Tommy: Not sure.

Gusty: I see. How about you, Jerry?

Jerry: Could you come back to me.

Tommy: Y'know, we could have a moment's silence, at the beginning of our outing.

Send him a mass card and to hell with it.

Robert: (jumps up) Mr. Chairman, I object to the scathing tone of the previous speaker and his uncle a priest, into the bargain.

Tommy: My uncle the priest is the greatest highwayman since Crotty the robber - except Crotty robbed the rich and helped the poor. My uncle the priest takes from the poor to join the rich.

Robert: (instigating) How can you say that about a priest of God? You're liable to be struck dead in your raggedy boots.

Tommy: If God strikes me, He's striking the wrong man. My uncle accumulates wealth at a ferocious rate.

Gusty: Gentlemen, gentlemen, can we get this done without insulting each other?

Tommy: We can if he shuts up about my uncle.

Jerry: It won't matter. Tommy Moore won't give us the bus. He'll be draped - along with his bus - in black for a month.

Gusty: Gentlemen, let us continue voting. Jerry?

Jerry: Could you come back to me.

Gusty: No.

Jerry: Ah, I'm for having it

Gusty: Robert?

Robert: I'm for not having it.

Gusty: Sean?

Sean: I'm against having it

Gusty: (SLOWLY) You're against - for not - having it? Mick, your vote?

Mick: I'll abstain. With J.J absent we could have a tie. I'll abstain.

Gusty: Sure?

Mick: I'm sure.

Gusty: Tommy?

Tommy: ( gets up and paces ) I'm for – against – not - having it

SILENCE. THEY ALL LOOK AT TOMMY

Gusty: You're for against not having it.

Tommy: That's right. That's how I'm voting.

Gusty: Does it mean you're for it or not?

Tommy: I am (pause) not.

Gusty: You're not what?

Tommy: Just what I said.

Gusty: Do you want the fecking outing cancelled or not?

Tommy: Not.

Gusty: Not cancelled?

Tommy: Right.

Gusty: Right, well, I vote to not have it, which carries the vote. So the proposal against having it, that is for canceling, (pause) to postpone, wins. Okay, any other business? If not, I'll take a motion to adjourn. ( Jerry raises hand) Motion to adjourn, Jerry. All in favor, aye (aye.) Okay, motion accepted, meeting adjourned.



THERE ARE THREE KNOCKS ON THE DOOR (AND A LOUD SHOUT OF 'POST'). IT MEANS THE POSTMAN HAS DELIVERED MAIL. SEAN GOES OUT TO GET IT, BRINGS IT IN, RIFLING THROUGH IT. THEY BREAK UP AND LOUNGE AROUND BAR. J.J. COMES IN. HE'S QUIET, UNLIKE HIM. THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER.

Jerry: J.J, how are you. You missed the meeting

J.J.: (subdued) Sorry. Lads, how are ye.

Gusty: You all right, J.J, everything all right?

J.J.: Fecking Guards, they're a law unto themselves. Like little Hitlers they are. They make my blood boil.

Mick: What happened?

J.J.: They have the country ruined.

Jerry: Will you tell us what happened?

J.J.: Goddamn them.

J.J. IS QUIET FOR A LONG MOMENT, TAKES A DEEP BREATH

J.J.: Give us a small bottle, Sean. (pause) I'm driving the oul' car into town last night.

Out by Master McGrath's, I'm flagged down. Somebody is shining this bright light in my face. No clue who it is. So I say if ye don't turnoff that flashlight before I'm half blinded, it'll end up your arse. The light is turned off and who is standing there only Guard Brosnan and some very official looking fella. (pause) Spot checking, they are.

Sean: For what?

J.J.: They are not - at liberty - to divulge - that information (slow). I asked the same question. What are ye hoping to find? I says to Tommy Brosnan. Tommy and myself

plays the 45 every Tuesday evening in Quill's. He looks at me and flicks his eyes at the inspector, in other words, tread softly, no messing with this fellow. The inspector was drafted in from Clonmel, mind you, for the occasion. Now himself steps forward, very official. Would you please step out of the vehicle, he says. So I say again, what in the name of God are ye looking for?

He ignores my question. Sir, he says, I won't tell you again. Step out of the vehicle, speak only when spoken to.

Speak only when spoken to, speak only when spoken to, I sez? My mother's people *and* my father's people fought for this country's freedom and you're telling me, speak only when spoken to. So I told him, maybe your people did or didn't - fight for this country - and if they didn't, they bloody well should have. I need no permission to speak, mister whoever you are.

(All murmur) Good on you, J.J.

Well, he was fit to be tied, his face red as a beetroot. (pause) Now he's out to do damage - makes me open the boot, take everything out, searches the oul' car for a good fifteen minutes. Brosnan is uncomfortable about the situation, but what can he do? Anyway, my man tells me to get in the car, which I do, turn on the engine, which I do and put on the indicators - which I do. He comes back up to the driver's window (pause) a big smirk on his puss and real quiet, staring me down, he tells me, Your right rear indicator is not working. (pause) I'm issuing you a summons.

(angry) That light was working. I'm conscientious about those things - and I can't afford a summons. And then the bastard, (pause) the bastard drove off with all my belongings sitting on the road. I'm a peace-loving man but I was sorely tempted.

Tommy: As you should. He should go back to Clonmel and crime rampant there.

Jerry: He should be shot with balls of his own shit – or hanged.

Tommy: The country would be better without them.

Gusty: They're not all bad, lads.

Mick: Like the general population, they're good and bad. And sometimes there's good in the bad and bad in the good. (they all look at him)

Sean: Sit into the fire there, J.J. You deserve a brandy after that ordeal.

J.J.: (still angry) I was born in Two-Mile-Bridge, two miles outside the town. My father and mother are buried up back of the Parish Church. Their fathers and mothers are buried in the same grave, and this gobshite (pause) comes from Clonmel to harass me. Then they wonder why somebody wants to take their head off. (pause) I'll have that brandy, Sean.

Sean: A root in the arse he needs.

Robert: Outcasts in our own land.

J.J.: We've swopped one foreign occupation for another. (Long pause)

Sean: Any start?

J.J.: Nothing, boy. The economy is bad, that's all I'm hearing. I'm hearing it with weeks.

Gusty: Something will turn up, boy.

J.J.: That's what the missus keeps saying. I'm walking around with coppers in my pocket, can't even stand to ye.

Robert: Who's asking, J.J.?

J.J.: I know, I know, thanks lads.

Sean: I heard they locked up Caruso last night.

Gusty: They did?

Robert: A pale imitation of Enrico.

Sean: In the horrors, singing at the top of his lungs all by his lonesome, the Square deserted.

Mick: They locked him up for singing?

Sean: Somebody rang the Guards to do something to shut him up.

Gusty: And they locked him up?

Sean: They told him to go home and he wouldn't. He said he had to finish the song.

Robert: And ...

Sean: He started another one.

Gusty: They let him finish?

Sean: They did. After that, when he wouldn't shut up and he wouldn't go home, they locked him up.

Jerry: The worst thing ever happened to him, someone telling him he had a voice like Caruso. It went to his head.

J.J.: Sure he's a right eejit.

Jerry: The guards set him off.

Robert: He provokes 'em. He fancies himself defender of the oppressed, railing against injustice –only when he's lingers drunk, mind you, talking about his rights, which includes everything but defecating in the middle of the square, but - includes singing at the top of his voice in the middle of that same square at two o' clock in the morning. The Lord Savior, if he listened to himself, he'd never sing again.

Sean: The only thing he hasn't been charged with, is 'Driving Under the Influence.'

Tommy: Sure he can't drive.

Sean: That's why. If he could, he'd be charged with that too.

SILENCE. THEY ALL LOUNGE AROUND

Jerry: (reading the paper) Holy God almighty. Listen to this, lads. A man in France was caught having intercourse with a cow.

Gusty: What?

Robert: The final barrier has been breached. We have regressed to the primitive core that dwells deep within us.

Jerry: (reading) And his defense was...

Tommy: What?

Jerry: Will you listen to this. He said the cow instigated it.

SILENCE. THEY ALL LOOK AT EACH OTHER.

Robert: The world is teetering on the edge of chaos, inhibition banished, anarchy in the ascendant.

Sean: What's the charge?

Jerry: Having his way with the cow.

Mick: How do they know?

Jerry: What?

Mick: That he forced himself on the cow.

J.J.: God be with the days.

Gusty: How would they know, is right.

Jerry: He said the cow pursued him for weeks, rubbing against him and arousing him. In the end, he couldn't resist.

J.J.: Shy but willing like a bride in bed.

Robert: That's his defense?

Mick: What?

Robert: That he did not force himself on the cow? That it was exactly the opposite?

Tommy: How will he prove it?

Robert: Well, if the cow still feels the same?

Jerry: By God you're right. Bring the jury out to the cowshed.

Sean: Unless...

Mick: Unless what?

Sean: She may be fickle.

Mick: Who?

Sean: Her affections may have shifted.

Robert: The trial of the amoral bovine.

Jerry: No, the trial of the amoral bovine lover.

J.J.: Was he married?

Jerry: He's single – a bachelor farmer.

Gusty: There you go. If he had a woman for himself, he wouldn't be in that predicament.

I always said it. There are some benefits to having a woman. They're not always apparent but...

Mick: Hold it boys. If the cow was a willing participant, would it still be wrong?

Robert: Do you really have to ask whether it's okay to have sexual intercourse with a cow, willing or not?

Mick: Ah, but what if they're in love, really in love?

Jerry: Love does conquer all.

J.J.: What if they brought a bit of happiness to each other?

Sean: We do, don't we – bring a little happiness to each other? Isn't that why we've coexisted for so long? There's a mutual benefit. We provide food and shelter and in return...

J.J.: We kill them.

Sean: We kill them, we do. (pause) But if we treat them well until we do kill them? Is it okay?

Robert: I have no answer to that question.

THEY THINK ABOUT IT.

Mick: Well, lads, I'm off for the bit of grub. (They all leave. Scene ends)

## ACT 1 SCENE 2

### THEY'RE ALL LOUNGING AROUND SOCIAL CLUB

J.J. COMES IN.

Sean: Well, will you have something?

J.J.: I won't, I won't. I just came in to, (pause) to bid ye adieu, as the man sez. I'm off to Offaly, lads.

Sean: Offaly?

J.J.: The wife's cousin is working with Bord Na Mona. He's a foreman there and he got me a start.

Gusty: You're joking me? You're going today?

J.J.: There's a good chance of a start today, so I'm going today. He wants me there right away, as fast as I can.

Sean: When will we see you again?

J.J.: I'll stay there – for a while anyway – if the work is steady.

Mick: Then this is goodbye, for a while?

J.J.: For a while anyway, Mick. I haven't worked in three months. It's demeaning, lads. I'd go to Timbuktu now, for a job.

Robert: Sure we could do a bit of a collection....

J.J.: No, no, no. I owe ye too much already. I'll be back and I'll buy ye back.

Sean: Hey, we all have good and bad days, J.J.

J.J.: I know. But the worst feeling in the world is putting your hand in your pocket and finding nothing, nothing, not a brass farthing – and no prospects. Only for the wife making a bit here and there, we'd be up in the poorhouse.

Gusty: We'll miss you.

J.J.: Likewise, Gust, likewise, I can tell you that. I'll go now quick.

SHAKES HANDS QUICKLY AND RUNS OUT THE DOOR.

Gusty: He's misfortunate, the poor devil. 'Tis like every job he ever had, folded.

Sean: And he's a hard worker.

Mick: Didn't his father die at eighty wan with a shovel in his hand.

Tommy: They say hard work never killed anybody. Now there's a lie.

Mick: And you're an expert on work, read up on it and studied it from all angles, never went near it but studied it – from a distance.



Tommy: The men who have money never made it working hard. They made it with this, (points to head) off the backs of others.

Gusty: What's holding you back?

Tommy: I have a few irons in the fire.

Mick: And they'll stay there, you sitting on your arse every day.

PHONE RINGS. JERRY MOTIONS TO SEAN THAT HE'LL PICK IT UP.

Jerry: Hello, hello. Is that you, Joan? How is the telephone business? I'm good, girl. No, no, Joan, we sent it in. Late again? There's no way. We sent it as soon as we got it. I'm not calling you a liar. To Dublin, that's right. And how would you know when they got it up in Dublin? Hello, hello. She hung up on me.

Gusty: Joan over in the telephone exchange?

Sean: She's a roaring bitch that one.

Gusty: We were late again?

Jerry: That's what she said.

PHONE RINGS AGAIN. ROBERT WALKS OVER AND PICKS UP PHONE

Robert: Joan? D'ye know, Joan, you're the finest looking woman in the parish. Don't worry about the bill. Listen, listen till I tell you. Every time I pass you on the street, my little heart jumps – and that's not all that jumps. I'm telling you. I lie in the bed at night and I toss and I turn and I have the most, the most – provocative – dreams about you, Joan, about you. You dominate my waking and sleeping hours. You do, you do my darling – if I may call you that. Can we not, somehow get together and consummate this, this... Hello, hello.

Jerry: Joan?

Robert: That'll shut up the owl fart.

Tommy: Herself and the other two think they own that exchange.

Mick: (Indignant) The brother was ringing from England at Christmas and I was waiting and waiting for the call to come. You know yourself the lines get backed up. So after two hours I rang the exchange to find out how long more it would be.

Do you know what she said to me? "It won't be long at all because it won't be coming through my exchange." Her exchange, imagine. They listen in on every conversation.

Gusty: I was talking to my cousin in Wexford a week ago, she cut in, told my cousin to watch his language. He told her to stop listening and she cut us off.

Jerry: (out of the blue. He's been pacing back and forth, nervous, the others casting glances in his direction)

Jerry: Lads, lads, lads, listen, there's something I have to tell you, something's been on my mind for a while.

Mick: Well?

Jerry: And I've given it a lot of thought.

Sean: We wait with bated breath.

Jerry: My mind is made up.

Sean: What is it you want to tell us?

Jerry: I'm emigrating.

Tommy: To, hmmm, Cappoquin?

Jerry: America.

Mick; (they all look at Jerry) Ah, go 'way, boy.

Jerry: I'm serious. I made up my mind.

Mick: God almighty. J.J. just left us and now you're talking about emigrating. Don't you have a top job in the creamery?

Jerry: I didn't know J.J. was going. I'm sorry to tell you so soon after, but I'm going. I made up my mind.

Tommy: You're turning your back on your country.

Robert: Jerry's l'amour de la patrie, to use the French expression should not be questioned. He's a proud Paddy.

Tommy: Why won't he stay?

Robert: Because he has to go.

Tommy: Why does he have to go?

Gusty: Ah, Jerry. Are you sure?

Sean: Is it a phase you're going through, or the winter blues. Another month or two, boy, the summer will be here – if it's to come.

Jerry: It's no phase or no winter blues. I made up my mind. I should have gone two years ago. It's on my mind since.

Gusty: (angry) Don't you have everything here, the oul' craic with us, a good job. What more could a man want? What's wrong with you?

Robert: We're losing our best and brightest to foreign shores. They're helping build- and run, America, the U.S., England, Australia.

Tommy: America is the U.S.

Robert: I meant South America - and the U.S.

Mick: Nobody emigrates to South America.

Robert: Did you ever hear of the flight of the Earls. After the Treaty of Limerick in – I believe it was 1690 – when they scattered to the four corners of the world to fight for every cause but their own. Many went to South America at that time.

Mick: But they didn't emigrate.

Robert: They went reluctantly, as all our people did.

Mick: They didn't emigrate.

Robert: They were forced to leave. What is emigration if it's not being forced to leave one's native shores? The Earls took flight, they emigrated. The evidence is anecdotal and empirical.

Tommy: What in the name of God is he talking about.

ROBERT BURSTS INTO SONG *AN IRISH BOY WAS LEAVING*. 'An Irish boy was leaving, Leaving his own native home, Crossing the broad Atlantic, Once more he wished to roam, And as he was leaving his mother, while standing on the quay, He threw his arms around her neck..

GUSTY INTERRUPTS BEFORE HE GOES ANY FURTHER.

Gusty: Whisht, whisht Robert, if we could hold off on the singing until we get this squared away? Now, Jerry, are you sure? What will the mother do when you're gone? She's getting up there. What....

Jerry: It's not up for discussion, Gusty. My mother is sound. She gave me her blessing. She said 'Go, boy, go for if you don't you'll always regret it.' She's right, you know. I discussed it in my head a thousand times, for and against. It's an ache inside me, a

wanting and if I don't go I'll die a miserable bastard, regretting it for the rest of my life

Sean: Then go, son. If you feel that strongly, you should go. (All quiet)

Jerry: But I'm leaving a life that I know, a job that I can do blindfolded. The mother will be on her own, she's using a cane now. It always held me back before. But the wanting never went away.

Gusty: It'll be hard to leave her.

Jerry: She said, go, go, that there's a time for living and dying, that she had her life and I must have mine.

Robert: That's it.

Jerry: That's what?

Robert: What you just said, a job you can do blindfolded. There's no challenge. We thrive on challenge.

Jerry: (pause) Maybe? I feel if I don't do it soon, I won't do it. I won't have the ambition to do it later.

Gusty: Did you make any arrangements yet?

Jerry: 'Tis all set. My uncle John in Butte (pronounced Butt) Montana is sponsoring me. I booked my passage.

Gusty: You never told us.

Jerry: I only booked two days ago.

Robert: When is it happening?

Jerry: I'm taking the boat a week from tomorrow.

Mick: (incredulously) You'll be gone in a week?

Robert: Butt, Montana. It sounds like a place where a man could do well.

Jerry: The sooner the better, no more should I, shouldn't I.

Mick: And the job?

Jerry: Mick Cleary has it.

Mick: The greatest arse-licker our nation has ever known.

Gusty: His Uncle Mick pulled the strings there.

Tommy: I might have been interested. You could have told me (they all look at him in disbelief).

Mick: You couldn't cut bread, boy, without takin' a finger off and if there wasn't a wall to lean against, you'd fall down.

Tommy: Hold on now....

Robert: Well, gentlemen. Our brother Jerry is setting out on a great adventure, following in the footsteps of countless other Irishmen and women who have crossed the storm-tossed Atlantic to find their fortune in the promised land, or as the Chinese call it, the 'Golden Mountain', the land of the free and the home of the brave, the land of hope and glory...

Mick: Here we go.

Robert: ...of limitless opportunity. Gentlemen, might I make a prediction. That Jerry will take to his adopted land like our friend here (Mick drinking a pint) takes to porter. With his pleasant personality, keen wit and abundant skills, great achievements are in store for him. All I ask (pause) all we ask, is that he remembers us and periodically puts pen to paper and apprise us of his adventures there.

Jerry: You can write it down, lads.

Robert: Now lads, let us drink to Jerry's happiness and prosperity and that the ache that's in him will finally be no more.

THEY ALL LOOK AT JERRY. LONG SILENCE.

Jerry: I'll miss ye all, I'll tell ye that. (Near tears ) Will one of ye take care of Mikey for me? The mother wouldn't be able for it.

Tommy: Is he pure-bred?

Jerry: No (defensively), he's a mix. There's everything in him, Irish Terrier (tarrier), Jack Russell, collie. He's some watchdog and gentle with children. He'll eat what you're eating, spuds, bacon and cabbage, loves crubeens – no bother. He's great company for a walk in the country. Many a day we hunted rabbits together. I'd bring a flask of tea and a packet of Kerry Creams. We had great times together.

Gusty: I'll be honored to take him, Jerry.

Jerry: Good man, Gusty.

Jerry: I have to go lads. (Exits)

Gusty: I hate to see him go, to a strange place with strange people – but he has his uncle.

Sean: (sighs) He's a good lad, he'll be okay—not like some of the lachicos we send out.

(Silence)

Gusty: But he'll miss this place. 'Twas a second home to him – and we'll miss him.

Tommy: He should have given us some warning. It's not right, the way he did it.

Gusty: He did it the way he had to.

Tommy: He should have talked to us.

Mick: T'was a decision he had to make.

Tommy: But we're family and we come together here.

Robert: We do and what draws us here?

Mick: The cheap porter.

Robert: And the drink is the obvious answer. But isn't it more the company, the craic, the camaraderie.

Tommy: A man would be hard put listening to you all without a drink in his hand.

Robert: (Mick is about to speak but Robert waves him to silence) We are a nation of poets and storytellers. We crave an audience like the actor or singer. So where do we find this audience? Right here gentlemen, right here. The club - and the pub - is our theatre. This is where we hone our skills and with the aid of a little whiskey, uisce beatha - the water of life for those among us who are unfamiliar with our native tongue, shame on them - we tell the tales that captivate the world.

Mick: But...(Robert holds his hand up to silence him)

Robert: The drink is the psychiatrist's couch for an Irishman. Drink enables us to step out of our diminished existence and loosens inhibitions so we confront the legacy of colonial occupation, devastating famine. It gives free rein to our deep, unswerving hatred of that same colonial occupation and what it did to our psyches, ambitions, dreams, aspirations, country.

Tommy: Imagine what he could have been with a bit of education?

Gusty: Well said there, Robert.

Robert: With their blood-thirsty ambitions and imperialist attitudes, for eight hundred years they burned our homes, killed and raped our people. (pause, quieter) In doing so, they stifled a flowering of our God-given talents in music, art and literature.

Gusty: We have to remember not to forget.

Robert: But (pause) this gathering together is not just an Irish trait. It is a human trait.



In the deepest, darkest recesses of the rainforest, the natives gather to tell stories and pass on the legends of their people. Their whiskey is the leaf, the nut or the root. They gather in the hut or by the fire just as we did. We listened to the seanchai tell about our heroes and battles. They listened to the shaman or the village elder.

Mick: So we're carrying on a grand tradition?

Robert: In a manner of speaking, yes.

Gusty: Wait till I go home and tell the wife. SILENCE

Sean: Will he see it through?

Gusty: He'll go. He's determined.

Mick: Aren't we all, at times.

Robert: Do you know what determination is? I'll tell you what determination is. Do you know Mickey Burke out in Old Parish. (waits a minute, then continues) Well, Mickey Burke wanted a son, but the wife kept having daughters.

Robert: Do you know how many daughters they had?

Mick: No.

Robert: Ten, ten daughters they had and then they had two sons, one after the other.

(Pause) Now that's what I call determination.

Tommy: Stupidity, I'd call it.

Gusty: Maybe, maybe stupidity, but definitely determined.

SILENCE

Mick: He'll be all right.

Gusty: They say he can fix anything, great hands.

Robert: And drink was never an issue for him, not like others I could mention.

## THEY ALL LOOK AT TOMMY

Tommy: What are ye looking at me for?

Mick: The drink was his weakness and as time passed, the weakness got stronger.

Robert: You'd think butter wouldn't melt in his mouth.

Mick: Look at the head on him, the greatest bowsy that God ever created. Wine, women and song, or porter, women and song in his case and in that order.

Tommy: Well I won't deny the women like me.

Mick: I won't deny the women like me, he says. Will you listen to him and half the young fellas running around the spitting image of him. I don't know if the women like you, but they're definitely attracted to you. And for the life of me, I cannot understand why.

Robert: One of the great mysteries of our time.

Gusty: If I were a fly on the wall?

Tommy: Whoa, whoa now lads, don't be spreading stories. I had my share like youse all, and no more.

Mick: No wonder he never married. He's like a bee flitting from flower to flower.

Robert: What do they see in him?

Mick: They say he carries a wondrous weapon with him.

Gusty: Go 'way?

Mick: That's what I hear. (pause) He's flushing.

Tommy: I am not. Ye're a real shower of bastards.

Mick: Come on, whip it out and give us a look.

Gusty: Walk softly and carry a big stick is what they say.

Robert: They say big is not always better.

Tommy: Feck off the lot of ye, a shower of bollixes.

Robert: Gentlemen, gentlemen, order, order. You realize we have to give Jerry a send-off, an American Wake. He may never return.

Tommy: That place bewitches them.

Robert: His departure is imminent so we must move quickly.

Gusty: How is Saturday night, Sean?

Sean: No problem, boys, about half eight. Sausages, brown bread and butter?

Robert: Sausages, brown bread and butter.

Mick: Anymore would spoil the drink

Robert: Saturday night we rendezvous.

ALL AGREE

.

ACT1 SCENE 3

THE AMERICAN WAKE. PARTY IS IN FULL SWING. STAGE DARK, SOUND OF SINGING, A SONG FINISHING, LIGHTS UP, APPLAUSE.

Gusty: You okay, Jerry?

Jerry: I'm fine. Mixed emotions.

Gust: About going?

Jerry: About going and leaving.

Sean: It's to be expected.

Jerry: Did you ever think of America, Gust?

Gusty: I did, 'twas my first choice.

Jerry: What happened?

Gusty: Well, I had an aunt there, said she'd claim me, then she got sick, then she got forgetful. So I headed for England.

Sean: I forgot that you spent time there. How was it?

Gust: Ah, it wasn't for me. I never got a sense of belonging or wanting to belong. Maybe it was that they didn't want me to belong. I'd see those signs, 'No blacks or Irish.'

Sean: In this day and age?

Gust: Still there, the last I heard.

Mick: I heard you were doing okay, Gust, and then I see you walking down the village.

Gust: I up and left like that.

Sean: You were lucky to get the E.S.B. job.

Gusty: I was. They were hiring, the first time in years and I fell into it.

Mick: Will this country ever provide enough jobs?

Sean: I was up in Glasgow for a while myself. D'ye know the men from the west of Ireland snore in Irish?

Mick: Snoring in Irish?

Sean: I'm telling you. They snore in Irish. I didn't believe it either.

Tommy: Do you really expect me to believe that?

Sean: When I heard of it first, I said exactly the same. 'Do you really expect me to believe that.'

Mick: Ah, go 'way, Sean.

Sean: Well, ye believe in ghosts, now, don't ye?

Mick: Of course we do, but ghosts are real.

Sean: If you hear it, you'll know it, without a shadow of a doubt.

Mick: But...

Sean: But, but. I'm only telling you what I know.

Jerry: She'd be old, now, your aunt?

Gust: She's dead now, I'd say. She'd be nearly a hundred.

Tommy: You'd never know. The oldest woman in the world is a hundred and twenty three.

Gust: Who told you that?

Tommy: She lives someplace in Russia.

Mick: Don't believe the Russians.

Robert: Yogurt.

Mick: What?

Robert: Yogurt, my friends, is the secret to longevity. Hitchhiking across Eastern Europe many years ago, I discovered yogurt, made from goat's milk.

Sean: That's a mighty age.

Gusty: Now, lads, Jerry will make the noble call. Right you are, Jerry.

Jerry: No better man than Sean himself.

Sean: Ah no, come on lads.

SEAN IS SUDDENLY NERVOUS, COUGHING AND CLEARING HIS THROAT,  
SHIFTING FROM FOOT TO FOOT.

Sean: I'd rather swim the bay than sing. I get awful nervous.

Gusty: Come on, Sean, you have a lovely voice. Settle down now. Don't stare at him, lads. Look away a bit. Go on, Sean, give it a lash. Don't be afraid of it.

THEY ALL LOOK AWAY. SEAN SINGS “SCARLET RIBBONS.”

GREAT APPLAUSE.

Gusty: Okay, Sean, your call.

Sean: I'll return the compliment and call on Jerry.

Jerry: I can't, not tonight. It's too emotional.

Tommy: Go on, go on. (pause) It'll be the last time for a long time.

Jerry: (angry) Why did you have to say that?

Tommy: Well, won't it?

Jerry: It might be the last time ever. Lads, am I doing the right thing? What if it doesn't work out?

Robert: It will. It will for you.

Gusty: You'll end up mayor of Butt, boy, mark my words.

Jerry: It'll work out?

Robert: It will. Now give us a song.

JERRY SINGS 'HOW MUCH IS THAT DOGGIE IN THE WINDOW.' GREAT APPLAUSE.

Jerry: I call on Robert.

Mick: Look at the head on him. He can't wait to be asked.

Robert: For this going-away hooley for our dear friend, Jerry, I've composed a poem specially for the occasion.

TAKES A DEEP BREATH.

Once more a boy pursues a dream and leaves these ancient shores,

With strong resolve he journeys west to face the great unknown

He leaves behind a family dear and friends he's known so long  
The time has come and naught to do (Pause) but sing a mournful song  
He travels with his mother's prayers, she never will forget  
The little boy, her apple's eye, who grew to be a man  
Not just a man but upright he, and kind and gentle too  
He made her proud, as he grew tall, was all that he could be  
Too soon he'll take the bus and train and sail across the sea  
He'll journey o'er the Western Plains – fulfill his destiny  
And we will wait and hope and pray that God be good to him  
That he will make a good life there, a life full to the brim-  
Of laughter, joy, accomplishments, we wish him these and more  
That he will make the village proud, Abbeyside to the core. (all clap, he silences them)  
And then some day, return he will to where is always home  
The Pond, the Strand, the Ministers, he once again will roam  
And we will say a boy left us, to face the great unknown  
But now a man who's made his mark, is once again back home.  
Applause. Good on you, Robert, boy. (All)  
Robert: (To Jerry) You will come home again to us.  
Jerry: (emotional) Thanks Robert.  
Robert: The upside to leaving home is the returning.  
Sean: That's a good way of looking at it.

SUDDENLY ROBERT STARTS TO SAG. IT'S OBVIOUS HE'S NOT FEELING WELL. CHORUS OF VOICES 'ARE YOU ALL RIGHT.' THEY HELP HIM TO A CHAIR.

Gusty: Get him some water.

Mick: Forget the water. Get him some whiskey.

Robert: (after long moment) No, I'll take the water. Did somebody stick a knife in my ribs? Is the Man upstairs trying to tell me something? (minute or two) I thought I was a goner.

Gusty: You're looking fairly shook. I've never seen you like this before?

Robert: Never felt like this before.

Tommy: You must have forgotten your yogurt today.

Mick: Well, if the good die young, you got a ways to go.

Robert: That's a comforting thought. I'll head home and take a bit of a rest.

Gusty: Good man. I'll walk home with you, just in case.

Robert: That would be appreciated, Gust. Lads, the night is young, so keep it going.

Jerry: You'll be all right.

Robert: God speed you over the ocean and watch over you till you come back to us again.

Jerry: Thanks, Robert.

JERRY IS EMOTIONAL. ROBERT WAVES A HAND OVER SHOULDER AS HE EXITS DOOR.

Tommy: Is he all right?



Mick: Indigestion I'd say. He has a bad stomach – pays no attention to what he eats.

Tommy: He'll be all right. (suddenly, all gaiety has gone. There's a sense of foreboding, of impending doom. The room is deathly quiet)

Sean: Lads, will we call it a night?

Jerry: I'll head away home, spend some time with the mother.

ALL LEAVE EXCEPT MICK AND SEAN

Mick: I have a bad feeling in my gut.

Sean: About?

Mick: I don't know. I never do.

Sean: Don't start.

Mick: (Silence) It just comes. I can't help it, don't want it.

Sean: Robert will be all right.

Mick: Maybe it's not Robert.

Sean: Give it a rest, okay. 'Tis nothing but fear and superstition.

Mick: This is the way I am. I feel things.

Sean: Yes, and they're always bad.

Mick: (Sighs) And they're always bad.

Sean: Robert will be all right. It was indigestion, I'd say.

Mick: You couldn't kill him.

FADEOUT

## INTERMISSION

ACT 2 SCENE 1

MICK COMES INTO CLUB DOING A LITTLE DANCE, TOMMY READING PAPER, GUSTY STARING INTO SPACE.

Mick: (singing) I am a little beggarman and begging I have been, for three score years in this little isle of green...

Tommy: (grumpy, possibly hungover.) Truer words were never spoken, about the begging, I mean.

Mick: (pauses, then continue to sing) Of all the trades going, sure begging is the best, for when a man is tired, he can sit down and rest...

Tommy: Would you give us a little peace, now, would you? This is what we come in here for.

Mick: (comes over and studies Tommy from different angles). Crawsick from the drink. But why? It could be that a certain horse – a sure thing – took a dive. It couldn't be that he lost a job, for he hasn't had one in years. But he's crawsick - the head pounding, the heart racing, the stomach doing flip flops, the dry heaves, the throat constricted. Ah yes, our old friend the hangover. (Tommy gives him a withering look)

Gusty: Leave him be.

Mick: How ya Gusty.

Gusty: Well, Mick.

Mick: Do you know, life takes unexpected turns? I get up out of bed this morning. I look out the window. It's raining. Nothing unusual about that, you might say. But when it rains, day after day after day, it starts wearing on a man. So I look out the window and say - a word I rarely use, but in that time and in that place, appropriate, I say 'fuck.'  
(pause) I'm feeling a bit depressed, I won't deny it. Does it ever stop raining in this

Godforsaken country, I ruminat? Rivers overrunning their banks, locks of water, mud, dirt, wet and dampness everywhere you turn. Farmers don't take off their Wellingtons from one end of the day to the other. Some wear 'em in bed, I hear, t'is so damp in the house. Mine is a bleak outlook, I do admit. So I'm having a bit of breakfast in the kitchen, sitting on top of the fire, trying to warm up, when there's a knock at the door. I call out, "What is it? I'm indisposed right now," for I'm not in the mood to entertain, considering my bleak outlook and all. This female voice says, "Hello Mick." Well, this stops me dead in my tracks. I can't place the voice. "I'll be right out," I says, "as soon as I make myself presentable," and I hear her say "Oh, Mick." Now I'm very intrigued. I pull on my pants, put a bit of Vaseline on the hair and I open the door. Who do you think is standing there?

Tommy: Who?

Mick: Who do you think is standing there?

Tommy: Who?

Mick: You won't believe it.

Tommy: Who?

Mick: None other than - wait for it?

Tommy: Who, you bollix you?

Mick: (pause) None other than, (pause) Angela Moore, me oul' girl friend.

Gusty: Back from England?

Mick: Back from Tooting Bec, London, to be exact.

Gusty: There's 'atin and drinking in that one. She's a fine cut of a woman.

Mick: Well, I'm telling you, it was still raining but it was like it wasn't. All of a sudden, I didn't have a care in the world. It was as if she never left.

Tommy: Don't tell me she still has a thing for you?

Mick: She does. And why wouldn't she?

Tommy: Is that what she said?

Mick: We're going away for a few days, touring the West of Ireland, in her rental motorcar. Life does take unexpected turns.

Tommy: She should have more sense.

Mick: Who was it said, 'Go west young man, go west.'

Tommy: Is she staying – or going?

Mick: Well, she's going back – for now but...

Tommy: She's going back. (nods head) She sees no future with you.

Mick: ( suddenly serious) What do you mean?

Tommy: Do you honestly believe she'd leave her big job in London to come back and live in your little cottage - you with your spancelled goat and the few clocking hens? And what money is in selling blocks.

Gusty: It's honest work, Tommy.

MICK GETS UP AND WALKS OVER TO HIM, STANDS CLOSE TO HIM.

Mick: The facts are, I have a nice cottage free and clear, not one farthing owed on it.

Chopping and selling wood is honest work

Tommy: The woods are all cut down. If a tree falls in a storm, the whole village is out there with every kind of a saw and hatchet.

Mick: I have...

Tommy: The tree disappears from the face of the earth.

Mick: I have my sources.

Tommy: The only sources you have are another man's property.

Mick: And what's your situation?

Tommy: We're not talking about me.

Mick: When did you last work?

Tommy: I'm on disability.

Mick: You're on disability. You're disabled? I see no disability when you're running after the young ones – or tripping the light fantastic down in the parish hall.

Tommy: A man needs his exercise.

Mick: How long?

Tommy: How long what?

Mick: Your supposed disability.

Tommy: My... disability occurred a year ago.

Mick: I'd say it was more like two - and no end in sight. Right Gust?

Gusty: I'll stay out of this one – but I'm enjoying it.

Tommy: It was a bad fall.

Mick: Was it accidental or on purpose?

Tommy: Why don't you mind your own damn business.

Mick: Why don't you mind your business and I'll mind mine.

Tommy: You're the one hopping around and bragging.

Gusty: Ye're like two tinkers. Will ye stop.

THREE KNOCKS ON THE DOOR. MICK GOES OUT AND RETURNS WITH THE POST. THERE'S A LETTER FROM JERRY.

Mick: A letter postmarked Butt, Montana. Will you read it, Gusty?

Gusty: I will, boy.

Gusty: Dear Sean, Joe, Mick, Tommy, Robert and of course Gusty. How is Robert? I hope he's good. Any news from J.J.? I hear from mother regularly and she's going great. How are ye all? So many good things have happened since I landed. I'm working with an engineering firm. Money is only fair now, but it gets better. I'm homesick and I feel very alone at times, but it'll pass. I like what I see so far. Everybody works hard here. They're up at six or seven o' clock in the morning...

Mick: ...Six and seven in the morning? Are they mad?

...The Yanks I've met so far are a decent bunch. My uncle wants me to go back to school, nights. He says I could be an engineer. Imagine me an engineer? If I go back home a fully fledged engineer I won't even look at you shower of bowsies and drunks.(pause) Ah, but I miss the slagging and the jokes. They have a different sense of humor here and it takes a bit of getting used to. But a man can make a good living here if he gets an education. By the way, Butte is pronounced Butte, rhymes with 'cute'. Well, lads I'll write soon again. With best regards, Jerry.

Gusty: Butt? Butte, cute?

Mick: Butt sounds better.

Tommy: He's staying.

Mick: He won't. He's homesick, dying of loneliness.

Gusty: Is it coddling me you are? The man loves the country. You won't see hide nor hair of him. When they go they stay – in that damn country. Whatever the hell the attraction is.

Tommy: What if he marries one of them?

Mick: If he marries one of them, draw a line through his name. He's gone.

Gusty: What do you mean?

Mick: Do you think a Yank is going to come back here with him. And if she does, do you think she'll let him come here to the club?

Gusty: He's right. The women are different out there. Not alone do they want jobs like the men, they want the same money as the men.

Tommy: The cheek of 'em.

Gusty: Bold as brass, boy.

Mick: He'll never again see the inside of the Sheare Street Social Club.

Tommy: (indignant) Serve him right, if he's stupid enough to get caught.

Gusty: Whoa, whoa, nothings happened.

Tommy: He's not wise in the ways of women.

Gusty: Women are the greatest mystery that God ever created. I'm telling you, you could live with them for years and know less about them than you did, starting out. I have one at home and after eight years, I still don't know what I have. Do you know what she said to me the other day? I'm sorry I never took up swimming. I think I could have been a champion swimmer. Twice she was ever in the water in her life, twice ever.

Mick: What did you say to her?

Gusty: By God I think you would, I said to her. I haven't learned much in eight years but you do develop an instinct.

Tommy: He was never much good with women. I should have taught him a few things before he left.

Mick: What the hell they see in you is beyond me.

Tommy: If you're too lazy to get off the stool, you won't be climbing up too often.

Mick: Now he's a jockey.

Tommy: ( to Mick) Oh, by the way, I heard you had a soft spot for Glass Arse.

Gusty: Who, Joan Daly?

Tommy: She walks around like there's a poker up her arse, but can she ride...

Mick: When did this happen?

Tommy: No, no, no, shut mouth catches no flies. My lips are sealed.

Mick: It's a pity someone wouldn't seal your lips and your arse, throw you over the bridge and watch the tide carry you away.

Tommy: I think we hit a sore spot.

Gusty: Any news of Robert?

Tommy: He'll be all right. Sean is gone to see him today. He'll have a bit of news.

(silence)

Mick: I wonder what Jerry is doing right now, at this exact moment? I'd kinda like to see America myself.

Gusty: I'd like to see how he's adapting. He was always a bit on the shy side, but that country will straighten him out. He'll come back and we won't be able to shut him up.

Mick: That's right. They never stop yapping. I guess this and I guess that.



Gusty: We could use a couple of them over here. When they get going, skin flies. That's why they are who they are. I heard when they have nothing more to build or fix, they pick an old building or bridge, knock it down and build it again. That's why there's nothing old in that country.

Tommy: Go 'way.

Gusty: I'm telling you.

Mick: It takes all kinds.

ROBERT COMES IN WITH A WALKING STICK. HE'S OBVIOUSLY SICK, UNSTEADY ON HIS FEET. TOMMY RUSHES OVER TO ESCORT HIM TO CHAIR.

Robert: Well, lads

Tommy: You all right?

Robert: They want me to take pills to get up, lie down, defecate, urinate, to sleep and to wake up.

Gusty: Are they helping? (pause) You won't take 'em?

Robert: Nah, prolonging the inevitable. Lads, would ye do something for me?

Gusty: Anything, Robert.

Robert: The sister is talking about all the rites of the Church and I have no interest in all that, that... I want to be cremated, a quick few prayers and scatter the ashes up Kilgobinet way. My grandfather is buried up there. 'Tis a quiet place.

Mick: Whatever you want, Robert.

Robert: (taking out an envelope) - the instructions.

Gusty: You have a ways to go.

Robert: I was told, a long time ago, I wouldn't see fifty out - by a gypsy I met on Monamean Strand. Believe it or believe it not.

Tommy: When?

Robert: A woman, sitting on the rocks. I never saw her come and I never saw her go. She was there and then she was gone.

Mick: And you believed her?

Robert: I didn't – in the beginning. But all she said happened.

Tommy: When?

Robert: When I was twenty.

Gusty: You believe a- a gypsy?

Robert: All that she told me came true.

Mick: Like what?

Robert: Like how my life would be – chapter and verse. It was uncanny – to see it unfold - as she said it would. (pause) Ah, fifty good years isn't so bad, surrounded by friends who tolerated my prognosticating and pontificating. (Pause) I ended up a buffoon...

Mick: You were never a buffoon.

Robert: ...too fond of the drink, living hand to mouth, holes in the arse of my pants.

Gusty: Now, Robert...

Robert: Reality, Gust. I had such a future once, Trinity College professor, held in the highest esteem.

Tommy: Trinity College, go 'way?

Robert: Trinity College no less, for seven years. Then, then - I lost focus, an outside ego and a superiority complex. I could never admit to being wrong. I was easily provoked and

then one day I shut down, couldn't write, could hardly think. So I walked away – with just the coat on my back and came here. This was a place to hide out. Time passed and I was old.

Gusty: You're an esteemed member of the Sheare Street Social Club.

Robert: (breaking down) I have no fear of death. I've been dying for years. I'm curious as to what comes next, a new beginning, a second chance to get it right. We're all dying animals, from the moment we're born, our souls tied to the body, our existence as bockety as a two-legged stool. Our dying looses the soul, the soul eternal, 'tis said.

Gusty: We had good times here.

Robert: We did. We had good times. I'll walk a little further and head home.

SEAN COMES IN AND SITS DOWN HEAVILY, SAYS NOTHING. HE LOOKS AT ROBERT AS HE WAVES GOODBYE AND LEAVES. THEY ALL LOOK AT HIM.

Sean: He's dying.

Tommy: He told us.

Sean: But he doesn't know.

Mick: He made the arrangements.

Sean: But he doesn't know.

Gusty: How do you know?

Sean: He's rotten with cancer. He has a month - maybe.

Tommy: A month?

Sean: (shouts) A month, he's rotten with cancer.

Gusty: But he doesn't know – about the cancer?

Sean: He doesn't know. He doesn't want to know.

Gusty: He believes the gypsy.

Sean: What gypsy? He told the doctor that if it's bad, real bad, he doesn't want to know.

It's the second time he's been to a doctor in his life.

Mick: The doctor told you?

Sean: The doctor told his sister. He's riddled with cancer. He won't go back to the doctor.

He has painkillers if he needs them.

Tommy: Why won't he go back to the doctor?

Sean: He has no time for doctors or hospitals. A doctor wouldn't give him medical clearance years ago, to emigrate.

Gusty: He had something wrong with him?

Sean: He had a spot on his lung, his sister told me.

Mick: God almighty.

Gusty: Is there anything we can do for him?

Sean: He'll be in bed awhile. Maybe we can walk with him. He'll be wanting to come down here too, if he feels up to it.

Gusty: He'll feel up to it.

Mick: Imagine, a gypsy told him he wouldn't see past fifty.

Sean: A gypsy, and he believed him?

Mick: Her. He was only twenty.

Sean: How old is he now?

Mick: Fifty.

Tommy: I'll miss him not being around.

Sean: He was provocative.

Mick: If that means he never shut up and he'd argue at the drop of a hat, he was provocative.

Gusty: He'd make you think, though. He said – how did he put it - we create our own reality.

Mick: How?

Gusty: By thinking it.

Tommy: That's all horseshit. I'm thinking I want to be rich for years. It didn't happen.

Gusty: By believing it. Thinking is the first step.

Tommy: It takes a lot more than that.

Sean: Isn't that why we're here tonight. We thought about coming before we came.

Tommy: Yeah, but...

Gusty: Yeah, but. How does a young fellow become a great hurler or footballer? He thinks he can, he believes he can and that's how it happens.

Tommy: How about the young fellow who thinks he can but can't?

Gusty: But does he, or does he think about failing?

Sean: Robert doesn't want to be sick, does he?

Gusty: I don't know? Maybe he doesn't want to grow old?

Tommy: Aw for jaysus sake, you're worse than he is.

Gusty: Our little band is fading away.

Tommy: If that's what you think, that's what will, according to what's his name.

Gusty: That's what I think, but that's not what I want.

ACT 11 SCENE11 SIX MONTHS LATER.

SEAN, GUSTY, TOMMY AND MICK SIT AROUND

THREE RAPS ON THE DOOR, MEANS POSTMAN HAS DELIVERED POST. SEAN GOES OUT TO COLLECT IT AND BRINGS IT IN.

Sean: There's a letter from America, (looks at postmark) with a postmark from Butte (Butt) Will you read it, Gusty? Quiet now, lads.

Gusty: (composes himself) Well, lads, I'm in America six months already and time flies here. I got my driving license and I'm the proud owner of a Chevrolet (mispronounced) Belair, second-hand, mind you, but what a beauty. There's more chrome on it than wan of Kiely's coffins. A friend of the uncles owns a car lot and as he said, he went over it from top to bottom for me. He said, 'Your uncle's a great guy and I sure wouldn't wanna screw his nephew.' Say this with an American accent. (He repeats it) Anyway, lads, I've taken a few drives into the mountains and I'm telling you, there's no feeling like it, especially when you have somebody nice sitting next to you.

Mick: He's banjaxed. Somebody is after getting her hooks into him. I told you.

Tommy: Looks like he's a goner.

Gusty: Maybe she's a nice girl who wants to be with a nice boy.

Tommy: This isn't like Jerry. He's getting rushed.

Sean: He's not a total eejit, you know. Go on with the reading.

Gusty: Especially when you have somebody nice sitting next to you. That's right, lads, I met a girl at a neighbors bar – bec - ue – that's when they cook outside on a grill – that's all they do in the summer, when the weather's good.

Mick: Why would they cook outside when they have a fine stove inside?

Gusty: He said because the weather is good.

Mick: Sure the weather is good here sometimes, too. That doesn't mean we have to move the bleddy stove out, does it?

Tommy: Why would you set up a kitchen in your house and then start cooking outside? It makes no sense.

Mick: It makes no more sense than moving the bed out. And what if it rains?

Gusty: Lads, lads, do you want me to read the letter? Ciuineas (quiet) Where was I?

Okay, here we go – Marie is her name. I don't know what she sees in me...

Tommy: A fecking ticket to the altar.

Gusty: (gives him a stare)... but we get on well together.

Tommy: I should have talked to him about women. They're too devious for him.

(indignant) He'll be married in a month.

Gusty: Ye're underestimating him.

Tommy: We should write back and warn him.

Mick: About what?

Tommy: Ah, for fecks sake, about her, of course.

Gusty: You don't even know her.

Tommy: I know her. I met a hundred like her.

Sean: Maybe she's an heiress and an only daughter?

Gusty: Whisht (continues reading) ... Her father has a small farm and they're hard-working people.

Mick: There goes the heiress angle.

Gusty: ...Lads, I wish ye could see this country. Last week I went horseback riding. A man could have a good life here. The people help each other. I suppose that's how they

survived, in the beginning. I miss the oul' slagging and the craic How is J.J.? Is he working? Will one of you lazy feckers write? Good luck, lads, Jerry.

SILENCE

Mick: J.J. is doing great, I hear.

NOBODY SAYS ANYTHING FOR A WHILE

Tommy: He's after taking to it all right, a Chevrolet (pronounced wrong) Belair, a girl, Marie.

Gusty: There's no stopping him now.

Sean: A couple of years and he won't even be writing.

Tommy: A couple of years and a couple of kids.

Gusty: Lads, lads, we're jumping to conclusions again. He met a girl and he had a few dates. That's all that happened.

Tommy: If she gets pregnant, he'll marry her, that's the kind he is?

Sean: That's what you're supposed to do, if you get a girl pregnant.

Tommy: Not if they walk you into it.

Sean: (quiet) If they love each other, they should be together.

THEY ALL LOOK AT SEAN

Tommy: The women never bothered you, Sean.

Sean: Do you not think I'm capable of loving?

Mick: Sounds like there was a great romance back there somewhere, Sean.

Gusty: (thinks) There was something, rumors swirling around a few years back, now that I think of it. There was a woman came over from England. Am I right, Sean, (pause) but it's your business?



Sean: (long pause) Eight years ago, it was, I met a woman.

Tommy: A limey?

Sean: No, she was a proud Welsh woman.

Tommy: They're all Brits.

Sean: (ignores him) She came over for a bit of peace and quiet, to spend some time alone and sort things out.

Tommy: And ye fell in love?

Sean: Did we? We wanted love, I know that and we found it. To fall in love, seems to me, is something that happens outside of one wanting or not. We both desperately wanted...love. You see, she was married but her marriage was breaking up, her husband was leaving – he had met someone else.

Tommy: Devious women, just what I was talking about.

Gusty: (loud) Tommy.

Sean: The husband was a playboy, always had been. He told her he wanted a divorce

Tommy: So she hooked onto you?

Gusty: Let the man finish or I'll, I'll...

Sean: I met her one evening walking up near Kilgobnet Church. She loved it up around there, said it cleared her head. I was walking up there and we fell in together and started talking away. It was like we had been friends for years. That first day, she told me her life story and how unhappy she had been in her marriage. She was reluctant to leave, no children but afraid of being alone for the rest of her life. Well, we hit it off right away. We spent weeks together, inseparable, we were. We went over to the Isle of Wight for a week. I was never happier. We'd walk and talk. We were good in bed, too...

Gusty: The foundation of a happy marriage

Sean: ...But I couldn't believe that this had happened to me, couldn't just accept it. I just could not accept it. This is what happened in the pictures but it wasn't Hollywood and I wasn't Rock Hudson. A voice in the back of my head kept saying, ah, go 'way, you out' fool. Do you really think a fine woman like she is, could spend the rest of her life with you? The voice wouldn't go away. (Pause) She said she was leaving her husband. She wanted a decent man and an uncomplicated life, loving and being loved and what we had – she said - didn't come along too often. Though we came from different backgrounds, we wanted the same things. She believed we could have a good life together. (pause) It was what I wanted too; it was all I had ever wanted. She'd said as long as we loved each other, which was fair enough, but I was afraid she'd stop loving me. I suppose I was afraid that she'd get bored, tired of me after a while. But I loved her, loved being with her, talking to her and looking at her and touching her. The voice kept telling me, she'll walk away some day and you'll never stop hurting. Well, I drove her away. (pause) I've never stopped hurting.

SILENCE. COUGHING AND CLEARING OF THROATS.

Gusty: Jaysus, Sean. I never knew it was anything like that.

Mick: Did you try to contact her?

Sean: I never had the guts. I drove her away the same time my gut hurt with wanting.

Isn't it crazy what we do to ourselves?

Gusty: There's a lesson there...

Sean: (vehemently) The lesson is to go after what you want. It might not last, may last only a day, a week, a month. But a day a week a month is better than nothing. And it

might last a lifetime. I never gave it a chance, was too frigging scared. I was a scared timid little soul and I ended up with what scared timid souls end up with – nothing.

Gusty: Though I am old with wandering, through hollow lands and hilly lands,

I will find out where she has gone, and kiss her lips and take her hands,

And walk among long dappled grass, and pluck till time and times are done.

The silver apples of the moon, the golden apples of the sun. The song of Wandering

Aengus, W.B Yeats.

LONG SILENCE. PHONE RINGS. SEAN ANSWERS. (NEWS OF ROBERT'S DEATH)

Sean: Yes, I see, yes. I'm sorry, yes, goodbye.

HANGS UP PHONE

SEAN: We've lost Robert.

THEY ALL STARE AT HIM.

## **LIGHTS DIM FOR A MOMENT.**

ALL ASSEMBLE AFTER FUNERAL, ALL IN SUITS. THEY LOOSEN TIES, SPRAWL IN SEATS.

Gusty: It wasn't a bad way to go. He was sick only a couple of months.

Tommy: He's up there now creating havoc, telling stories, reciting poetry, driving everybody to drink.

Mick: He won't like it down there in that wind-swept, sea-surrounded graveyard of St. Augustine. He never liked the cold.

Sean: The sister should have respected his wishes and burned him.

Tommy: It wouldn't be for me but a man's final instructions should be respected.

Mick: She said the priest wanted a regular burial, that cremation was heathen.

Tommy: And she went *with* him and *against* her own brother.

Gusty: Well, he had a fear of water and he'll get plenty of that between the waves and the rain.

Tommy: Does the grave still flood?

Mick: It does - too close to the sea wall.

Tommy: He'll be roaring like a banshee if he gets flooded.

Sean: What'll he have to say up there?

Tommy: Plenty.

Gusty: What'll *we* say when we go up? (they all look at him) What will we say when we get there?

Sean: Who said we're going up.

Tommy: I have a feeling ye won't all make it – up.

I'm serious. What did we do to make a difference? Robert's gone before his time, Jerry's making a new life for himself in America. Doesn't God give us all some ability? If we demean that ability through laziness or stubbornness or just plain vindictiveness, we diminish ourselves. So what will we have to report?

Mick: How do we know our abilities?

Gusty: We have to put in the hard work of finding out. Is anything worth having, easy to get? Isn't it the case that the harder we work for something, the more we value it. Isn't that right?

THREE KNOCKS AT THE DOOR – MEANS THE POST IS HERE. GUSTY BRINGS IN THE POST.

Gusty: Lads, lads, lads, there's a letter from Jerry.

Sean: You'll read it Gusty. (They all gather around)

Gusty: Somebody else read it. (they all stare at Gusty)

Mick: Why, Gust?

Gusty: Because I don't feel like reading it.

Sean: I'll read it. Well, lads, all goes well here. I owe a great debt of gratitude to my uncle. He has treated me like one of his own from the very beginning. How are ye all? Give my kindest regards to Robert. Hope J.J. is prospering in Offaly? Will one of ye write to me or are ye all illiterate? Are ye still hiding out in the Club, safe from the world and its problems? Do you know, lads I'm really settling in to this country. It's hard to explain – how it can take a hold of you, but it does. The job goes well, Marie is well and we're fairly steady together now, the two of us. I'm thinking, lads I'll settle down here. I miss where I come from, but on a good day, sitting on my porch just looking at the mountains and the sky streaked with all the different colors, well, it's hard to beat it. I tell them here there's no place like Ireland, and at times there's not, but by God, this is some kind of country.

Tommy: Do you hear him, this is some kind of country - he's talking like a Yank already.

PHONE STARTS TO RING. NOBODY GOES TO ANSWER IT.

Gusty: I don't know when I'll be coming back, not for a few years, I'd say. But what's to stop you from coming out. If ye all saved together for a year or two, you could do it.

PHONE CONTINUES TO RING.

Why not. If we put our minds to something, God only knows what we can do. I'm discovering that every day.

PHONE STOPS AND CONTINUES AGAIN. SEAN RELUCTANTLY GOES TO PHONE

Sean: Oh hello sir, how are you? How's J... Yes, yes. (tone changing) No, it can't be..on Sunday, arrangements. Yes, yes... thank you – for ringing, yes, yes.

HANGS UP PHONE SLOWLY. ALL STARE AT HIM. SITS DOWN, STARES AT LETTER

Sean: It's Jerry.

Mick: What about him?

Sean: He's gone...

Mick: He's gone. We know he's gone, so what?

Sean: Oh. My God.

Tommy: Where is he gone, Sean?

Sean: (screams) He's dead, he's dead. (Long silence)

Mick: How could he be dead?

Sean: He's dead. There was a terrible accident.

Tommy: There was a terrible accident and he's gone, just like that.

Mick: He's there hardly a year.

Sean: (calmer) That was the uncle. He's heart-broken.

Gusty: How did it happen?

Sean: It seems the roads ice up there, sudden-like. There was a sudden temperature drop. A tractor-trailer went out of control. Jerry was driving his Chevrolet. The tractor-trailer hit the ice, slammed into Jerry. He died before the ambulance got there.

Mick: Was the girl with him?

Sean: I don't know. He didn't say.

Sean: (continues reading letter, his voice is breaking) Anything is possible, lads. If any of you are wondering did I do the right thing by coming out here, wonder no more. I wouldn't have missed it for the world. Follow your dream, lads. I think of you all with fondness, With best regards, Jerry (member – Sheare Street Social Club)

THEY ALL STARE AT EACH OTHER. NO ONE MOVES. SOMEONE'S HEARD SOBBING. LIGHTS DIM SLOWLY

SOUND OF A FAR-OFF BELL TOLLING, RAIN FALLING AND THE SOUND OF PRAYER RESPONSES. LIGHTS COME UP. THEY STAND AROUND IN A CIRCLE WITH HEADS BOWED, BLACK OVERCOATS. GUSTY RECITES PRAYERS FOR JERRY'S SOUL.

Gusty: Do you understand, now, what I'm trying to say? We're dying off by the minute, first Robert and now Jerry. Who's next? We're sitting around here like mouldy rags, making pronouncements about the world, having sparkling conversation. It's like we'll live forever, but we only have a short time. What will we have to say when our time comes?

Tommy: Calm down there, boy. You're getting the knickers all twisted up.

Gusty: You heard what Jerry said. Follow your dream.

Sean: Gust, why are you so upset?

Gusty: Jerry's saying something to us in that last letter and we're not hearing it. We sit in our cozy little club boozing and arguing and doing nothing.

Tommy: So, what's wrong with that?

Gusty: That's what's wrong with it. We think there's nothing wrong with it. What's right about it. If we died tomorrow, what have we accomplished? We're just sitting around growing old.

Mick: What's wrong with a little recreation? Are we not entitled to that?

Gusty: There's anything wrong with a little recreation....

Tommy: The Lord resteth on the seventh day.

Gusty: ...but are we making the most of life. Well, are we?

Mick: I don't know?

Gusty: Jerry's giving us guidance from the grave, and he wants us to follow our dream.

Mick: Hang on now. There's some good talking goes on here.

Gusty: There is, but we're missing something.

Gusty: Look, look, if you knew you had a week to live, you know for a fact, would you spend it in here, doing what we're doing?

Mick: That's a good question. Would I?

Sean: I'm starting to get what you're getting at.

Gusty: I don't mean we have to go out and climb Mt Everest, or swim the Irish Channel, but Jaysus, there must be more to life than this.

Tommy: Ah, we're living in a poor country...

Gusty: Excuses, excuses. Eight hundred years of colonial oppression, etcetera, etcetera.



Tommy: In the clutches of a Church that lets us do shagall. Riding is a sin unless it's for procreation. We can't curse, we can't swear.

Mick: It didn't stop you.

Gusty: Lads, what I'm saying is, maybe we should be examining our – I don't know – lives, conscience?

Sean: Fuck the conscience. We should be examining our lives. What would we do if we had a week to go? (SILENCE)

Gusty: There's the answer, nothing. We'd do nothing, shagall. There's no will. We've lost our will to do anything.

Sean: But to do what?

Gusty: Something that would make us proud, give us a feeling of accomplishment. Do we know, any one of us, what we're capable of? How will we know sitting in here. And do you know the sad thing about it? Our situation is multiplied ten thousand times all over this 'green and fair land' (spoken in a superior tone). Poor, by Jaysus, there's more money spent in this country..... Thousands sitting around yapping to each other, their brains pickled by alcohol. There are poets and playwrights, sculptors, painters and composers, actors and singers in among 'em. But the lifestyle ...

Sean: You're painting a very dismal picture there, Gusty.

Gusty: Is it true?

Sean: Well, I don't know.

Mick: There's truth in it, I suppose.

Gusty: Don't you see. Jerry realized he had to go away to accomplish his dream.

Tommy: (angry) Jerry is dead – and if he didn't go away, he'd be alive

Sean: Hold on now, hold on. Gusty has a point and we should talk it out. What would we do if we were left a week, a week only? Think about it. SILENCE

Sean: I'll tell you what I'd do. I'd put the lock on the door and I'd be looking for that woman I talked about – the finest woman I ever met and I'd be apologizing to her for the underhanded way I treated her and beg her forgiveness. I'd ask would she spend a few days with me, walking and talking as we did long ago?

Tommy: She's married by now.

Sean: She might be, but what if she's not? What if she still thinks about me? What if there's still a chance, still a bit of love left – enough to get it going again and I got enough for the both of us?

Tommy: Ah, Sean, don't get your hopes up too high.

Sean: That's what I said years ago, 'Sean, don't get your hopes up too high. Don't be coddling yourself.' That's where it all went wrong. Reduced expectations. I won't make that mistake again. Head high and feck the begrudgers. I'll give it my best shot and rest easy which or whether.

Gusty: Good on you, Sean. And I'll try and show some of the courage you've shown (long pause, hesitant then looks at them) with a confession, a confession of omission and shame. I have... I have a son. When I was in England I met a girl - from Liverpool, she was. She got pregnant. I made her pregnant and I took off. I heard 'twas a boy. He'd be ten or eleven now.

Tommy: That's when you came back sudden-like.

Sean: The wife...

Gusty: Knows nothing about it.

Tommy: You did the right thing. She woulda tied you up.

Sean: You're not ....?

Gusty: I'm telling her, finally. I never wanted to leave that young fella without a father. That's a low class of a man – leaving a little boy without a father. For a while it was easier to leave it as it was, but no more. It's always on my mind, never leaves. The boy should know his father...

Tommy: Leave it be.

Gusty: No way, no more. I made a balls of it. I keep thinking of the boy – in school and young fellas asking him, 'Where's your father, you have no father, he ran off, ha ha.' It's not right. She was a nice girl, I'd say a good mother. But a boy needs his father. I had a good father. How could I do that to a little boy, my own flesh and blood?

Mick: What will you do?

Gusty: I have an address a couple of years old. I'll go from there.

Tommy: You're not going?

Gusty: I'm going – late, but I'm going.

Sean: It'll work itself out. You're doing the right thing.

Tommy: You're cracked, boy.

Gusty: I always knew what the right thing was. We imagine in time we'll forget and go on. But what offends our soul, what goes against our nature, will always be there – cutting us and making us bleed. I've been bleeding a long time. (pause) It's time to stop the bleeding. (SILENCE)

Sean: Well, Mick?

Mick: Well what?

Sean: What's your deep, dark secret?

Mick: I have no deep, dark secret.

Sean: But what's in there, a dream, a wanting, hidden from the world.

Mick: No dream, no wanting.

Sean: You're happy enough cut blocks for a living?

Mick: No – well I don't know.

Sean: You had, have a dream too, Mick.

Mick: I can't remember any dreams. I'm too old.

Sean: You can and you're not, Mick.

Mick: No.

Sean: Yes, Mick. It's buried deep in there somewhere.

Mick: I don't know.

Sean: (goes to Mick, covers his eyes) Listen to me, Mick. What's your favorite place in all the world?

Mick: Oh, that's easy. Up in Colligan at my mother's place.

Sean: Doing what?

Mick: Well, ye didn't know but I'm good with animals – and birds. (hesitates) Do you remember when the swan hit the electric lines, dropping down into the harbor? It was May last year.

Tommy: I remember. She lay there a day or two. She died?

Mick: No, she broke a wing. She would have died but I took her up to Colligan. My mother has three acres there. Didn't I splint the wing and didn't she fly off, as good as

new, six weeks later. That was a sight, boy, she lifting off into the sky. She came down low for one turn, right over me like a salute and away she went.

Tommy: So?

Mick: I'll tell you, Tommy, that was the greatest feeling I ever had. Because of me, that bird was flying in the sky again. I gave her back her life. That must count for something. But the feeling, the feeling I got when I watched her rising up and heading off. She was heading off like she knew where she was going, like she had a definite plan in mind. She was resuming her life and all on account of me. And I thought this is what I should be doing with my life.

Tommy: Mending broken wings?

Sean: Your dream, Mick.

Mick: Taking care of injured birds and animals and whatever else is out there. Didn't I find a fox, out past Kilmeaden way, caught in a snare two years ago, with a broken leg. Wasn't he trying to bite off his leg to escape. I took him home, fixed him up and released him weeks later. You'd want to see him heading off. He cut up diagonally across a meadow and stopped at the top of it - a red fox against a blue sky with white clouds in a golden meadow. It was a sight to behold. He dipped his head once and then he was gone - not a look back out of him. I have some kind of gift for it. My mother is a Towler and they're all bonesetters going way back. I must have it.

Gusty: So use it.

Mick: I was talking to Pat Byrne, the Vet and he was saying there might be a grant from the Gov't or from animal foundations in England or America. It would be the only place in Ireland.

Gusty: Well, give it a lash.

Mick: I never felt as good as watching that swan in the sky. I felt I could do or be anything. You read about the monks having a mystical experience. Well that was my mystical experience, as close to God as I'll ever get.

Sean: Go for it.

Mick: Ah, but...

Sean: Stop right there. Go for it and put your heart and soul into it. You'll never look back.

Mick: Do you think, Sean?

Sean: I know. God gave you the touch to heal. Now go and do it.

Gusty: What about yourself, Tommy?

Tommy: What about me? Are ye all gone mad?

Gusty: What's your dream? Don't you want to settle down, love one good woman?

Tommy: I couldn't love just one. Wouldn't it be depriving all the others? I love 'em all. When they ask me, do you love me, Tommy? I tell them, of course I love you. Don't I buy you chips and ride you?

Sean: They settle for that?

Tommy: They do, boy. The ride and the chips are good. What more could they want?

Sean: Commitment.

Tommy: (Laughs) That's the last thing they want. They thought they had commitment. They married her and then he forgot her. Oh he'll make her pregnant every year or so – to demonstrate his virility, you know. But he's living his life the same as always, the pub, the match, the horses, hanging out with his mates. Commitment my arse. Why do you

think they come to me? They know there's no commitment here. I tell 'em I love 'em— while I ride 'em, (Pause) they appreciate the honesty.

Gusty: A sad commentary on our way of life.

Sean: Needs must when the Devil rides.

Tommy: What does that mean?

Sean: We do what we have to, I suppose.

Tommy: I'll keep on doing what I'm doing and make apology to no man. I don't know why you're all so dissatisfied with your lives? My life's ambition is to find the perfect ride and when I find it, I'll die happy with a smile on my face. Sure isn't a good ride the nearest we get to Heaven in this life? What can compare? You tell me.

Gusty: You're incorrigible.

Tommy: I don't know what that means, but it sounds noble, like something a man should be striving for. (gets up) I'm away.

Sean: Will we go for it?

Gusty: We have to.

Sean: It's time.

Gusty: What's for you, won't go by you.

Mick: Will ye be there for me?

Sean: We'll always be there for you, right, Gust?

Gusty: We'll be there for each other.

Sean: What about the club?

Gusty: We'll shut it down. We have work to do.

Sean: Mick?

Mick: I'm in. FINAL SCENE

SEAN IS BUSY WORKING IN BAR. TOMMY COMES IN.

Tommy: Where's everybody?

Sean: You're the first.

Tommy: Any word from Gusty?

Sean: I believe he's gone to England.

Tommy: Go 'way?

Sean: Himself and the wife.

Tommy: About the son?

Sean: I believe so.

Tommy: Are you serious? He took the wife?

Sean: The wife with him.

Tommy: Where's Mick?

Sean: Gone.

Tommy: Gone where?

Sean: To Dublin.

Tommy: For what?

Sean: Himself and the Vet are gone up.

Tommy: You're joking?

Sean: He told me himself.

Tommy: About setting up the whatchacallit?

Sean: That's right.



Tommy: This is getting serious. What about the club? The club is in jeopardy. We should be together with Jerry and Robert gone. Members should be helping members. Isn't that right, Sean?

Sean: We have to help ourselves first.

Tommy: What the hell does that mean?

Sean: We have to do the things that make our lives right.

Tommy: There's nothing wrong with my life.

Sean: That's good. The others are working on theirs – and good luck to them.

Tommy: (increasingly agitated) God almighty. (pause) Give us a pint there, Sean. (Sean – no answer)

Tommy: Sean, are you there? Would you pull a pint of plain?

SEAN COMES OUT OF BACK WITH A SUITCASE IN HIS HAND, DROPS SUITCASE, LOOKS AROUND, STRAIGHTENS A CHAIR. TOMMY IS STARING AT HIM. SEAN SIGHS.

Sean: It's time for a change, and hopefully a change for the better.

Tommy: Ah, you're not going, too? What about the club? Who's going to keep it going? What about me? What about me? What will I do?

Sean: (turns to Tommy) Well I'm out of here. Good luck to you. I hope you find that perfect ride.

SEAN LEAVES. TOMMY STARES AFTER HIM, OPEN-MOUTHED, SITTING ALONE IN CLUB. AN ECHO OF ROBERT'S VOICE CAN BE HEARD – ' SPUN BE THE BLACKS, GUARANTEED TO WEAR AND TEAR LIKE A WOMAN'S TONGUE, SMOOTH AS A BABY'S BOTTOM, GOGGLE AND GREY, THE COLOR

OF A MOUSE'S TIT.' JERRY'S VOICE CAN BE HEARD 'FOLLOW YOUR  
DREAMS. IF I DON'T GO NOW, I'LL NEVER GO. IT'S AN ACHE INSIDE ME'  
FADE OUT.

THE END