

THE SHADOW OF A GUNMAN

A TRAGEDY IN TWO ACTS

Characters

Donal Davoren	}	Residents in the Tenement
Seumas Shields, a pedlar		
Tommy Owens		
Adolphus Grigson		
Mrs Grigson		
Minnie Powell	}	Residents of an adjoining Tenement
Mr Mulligan, the landlord		
Mr Maguire, soldier of the IRA		
Mrs Henderson		
Mr Gallogher		
An Auxiliary		

The period of the play is May 1920.

Act One

A return-room in a tenement house in Hilljoy Square. At the back two large windows looking out into the yard; they occupy practically the whole of the back wall space. Between the windows is a cupboard, on the top of which is a pile of books. The doors are open, and on these are hanging a number of collars and ties. Running parallel with the windows is a stretcher bed; another runs at right angles along the wall at right. At the head of this bed is a door leading to the rest of the house. The wall on the left runs diagonally, so that the fireplace – which is in the centre – is plainly visible. On the mantelshelf to the right is a statue of the Virgin, to the left a statue of the Sacred Heart, and in the centre a crucifix. Around the fireplace are a few common cooking utensils. In the centre of the room is a table, on which are a typewriter, a candle and candlestick, a bunch of wild flowers in a vase, writing materials and a number of books. There are two chairs, one near the fireplace and one at the table. The aspect of the place is one of absolute untidiness, engendered on the one hand by the congenital slovenliness of Seumas Shields, and on the other by the temperament of Donal Davoren, making it appear impossible to effect an improvement in such a place.

Davoren is sitting at the table typing. He is about thirty. There is in his face an expression that seems to indicate an eternal war between weakness and strength; there is in the lines of the brow and chin an indication of a desire for activity, while in his eyes there is visible an unquenchable tendency towards rest. His struggle through life has been a hard one, and his efforts have been handicapped by an

inherited and self-developed devotion to 'the might of design, the mystery of colour, and the belief in the redemption of all things by beauty everlasting'. His life would drive him mad were it not for the fact that he never knew any other. He bears upon his body the marks of the struggle for existence and the efforts towards self-expression.

Seumas Shields, who is in the bed next to the wall to the right, is a heavily built man of thirty-five; he is dark-haired and sallow-complexioned. In him is frequently manifested the superstition, the fear and the malignity of primitive man.

Davoren (*lilting an air as he composes*)

Or when sweet Summer's ardent arms outspread,
Entwined with flowers,
Enfold us, like two lovers newly wed,
Thro' ravish'd hours –
Then sorrow, woe and pain lose all their powers,
For each is dead, and life is only ours.

A Woman's figure appears at the window and taps loudly on one of the panes; at the same moment there is loud knocking at the door.

Voice of Woman at window Are you awake, Mr Shields – Mr Shields, are you awake? Are you goin' to get up today at all, at all?

Voice at the door Mr Shields, is there any use of callin' you at all? This is a nice nine o'clock, do you know what time it is, Mr Shields?

Seumas (*loudly*) Yus!

Voice at the door Why don't you get up, then, an' not have the house turned into a bedlam tryin' to waken you?

Seumas (*shouting*) All right, all right, all right! The way

these oul' ones bawl at a body! Upon my soul! I'm beginnin' to believe that the Irish People are still in the stone age. If they could they'd throw a bomb at you.

Davoren A land mine exploding under the bed is the only thing that would lift you out of it.

Seumas (*stretching himself*) Oh-h-h. I was fast in the arms of Morpheus – he was one of the infernal deities, son of Somnus, wasn't he?

Davoren I think so.

Seumas The poppy was his emblem, wasn't it?

Davoren Ah, I don't know.

Seumas It's a bit cold this morning, I think, isn't it?

Davoren It's quite plain I'm not going to get much quietness in this house.

Seumas (*after a pause*) I wonder what time is it?

Davoren The Angelus went some time ago.

Seumas (*sitting up in bed suddenly*) The Angelus! It couldn't be that late, could it? I asked them to call me at nine so that I could get Mass before I went on my rounds. Why didn't you give us a rap?

Davoren Give you a rap! Why, man, they've been thundering at the door and hammering at the window for the past two hours, till the house shook to its very foundations, but you took less notice of the infernal din than I would take of the strumming of a grasshopper.

Seumas There's no fear of you thinking of anyone else when you're at your poetry. The land of Saints and Scholars 'ill shortly be a land of bloody poets. (*Anxiously*) I suppose Maguire has come and gone?

Davoren Maguire? No, he hasn't been here – why, did you expect him?

Seumas (*in a burst of indignation*) He said he'd be here at nine. 'Before the last chime has struck,' says he, 'I'll be coming in on the door,' and it must be – what time is it now?

Davoren Oh, it must be half-past twelve.

Seumas Did anybody ever see the like of the Irish People? Is there any use of tryin' to do anything in this country? Have everything packed and ready, have everything packed and ready, have . . .

Davoren And have you everything packed and ready?

Seumas What's the use of having anything packed and ready when he didn't come? (*He rises and dresses himself.*) No wonder this unfortunate country is as it is, for you can't depend upon the word of a single individual in it. I suppose he was too damn lazy to get up; he wanted the streets to be well aired first – Oh, Kathleen ni Houlihan, your way's a thorny way.

Davoren Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

Seumas That's from Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. I could never agree with Shelley, not that there's anything to be said against him as a poet – as a poet – but . . .

Davoren He flung a few stones through stained-glass windows.

Seumas He wasn't the first nor he won't be the last to do that, but the stained-glass windows – more than ever of them – are here still, and Shelley is doing a jazz dance down below. (*He gives a snarling laugh of pleasure.*)

Davoren (*shocked*) And you actually rejoice and are exceedingly glad that, as you believe, Shelley, the sensitive,

high-minded, noble-hearted Shelley, is suffering the tortures of the damned.

Seumas I rejoice in the vindication of the Church and Truth.

Davoren Bah. You know as little about truth as anybody else, and you care as little about the Church as the least of those that profess her faith; your religion is simply the state of being afraid that God will torture your soul in the next world as you are afraid the Black and Tans will torture your body in this.

Seumas Go on, me boy; I'll have a right laugh at you when both of us are dead.

Davoren You're welcome to laugh as much as you like at me when both of us are dead.

Seumas (*as he is about to put on his collar and tie*) I don't think I need to wash meself this morning; do I look all right?

Davoren Oh, you're all right; it's too late now to start washing yourself. Didn't you wash yourself yesterday morning?

Seumas I gave meself a great rub yesterday. (*He proceeds to pack various articles into an attaché case – spoons, forks, laces, thread, etc.*) I think I'll bring out a few of the braces too; damn it, they're well worth sixpence each; there's great stuff in them – did you see them?

Davoren Yes, you showed them to me before.

Seumas They're great value; I only hope I'll be able to get enough o' them. I'm wearing a pair of them meself – they'd do Cuchullian, they're so strong. (*Counting the spoons*) There's a dozen in each of these parcels – three, six, nine – damn it, there's only eleven in this one. I better

try another. Three, six, nine – my God, there's only eleven in this one too, and one of them bent! Now I suppose I'll have to go through the whole bloody lot of them, for I'd never be easy in me mind thinkin' there'd be more than a dozen in some o' them. And still we're looking for freedom – ye gods, it's a glorious country! (*He lets one fall, which he stoops to pick up.*) Oh, my God, there's the braces after breakin'.

Davoren That doesn't look as if they were strong enough for Cuchullian.

Seumas I put a heavy strain on them too sudden. There's that fellow Maguire never turned up, either; he's almost too lazy to wash himself.

As he is struggling with the braces the door is hastily shoved in and Maguire rushes in with a handbag.

This is a nice nine o'clock. What's the use of you coming at this hour o' the day? Do you think we're going to work be moonlight? If you weren't goin' to come at nine couldn't you say you weren't . . .

Maguire Keep your hair on; I just blew in to tell you that I couldn't go today at all. I have to go to Knocksedan.

Seumas Knocksedan! An' what, in the name o' God, is bringin' you to Knocksedan?

Maguire Business, business. I'm going out to catch butterflies.

Seumas If you want to make a cod of anybody, make a cod of somebody else, an' don't be tryin' to make a cod o' me. Here I've had everything packed an' ready for hours; you were to be here at nine, an' you wait till just one o'clock to come rushin' in like a mad bull to say you've got to go to Knocksedan! Can't you leave Knocksedan till tomorrow?

Maguire Can't be did, can't be did, Seumas; if I waited till tomorrow all the butterflies might be dead. I'll leave this bag here till this evening. (*He puts the bag in a corner of the room.*) Goodbye . . . ee. (*He is gone before Seumas is aware of it.*)

Seumas (*with a gesture of despair*) Oh, this is a hopeless country! There's a fellow that thinks that the four cardinal virtues are not to be found outside an Irish Republic. I don't want to boast about myself – I don't want to boast about myself, and I suppose I could call meself as good a Gael as some of those that are knocking about now – knocking about now – as good a Gael as some that are knocking about now, – but I remember the time when I taught Irish six nights a week, when in the Irish Republican Brotherhood I paid me rifle levy like a man, an' when the Church refused to have anything to do with James Stephens, I tarred a prayer for the repose of his soul on the steps of the Pro-Cathedral. Now, after all me work for Dark Rosaleen, the only answer you can get from a roarin' Republican to a simple question is 'goodbye . . . ee'. What, in the name o' God, can be bringin' him to Knocksedan?

Davoren Hadn't you better run out and ask him?

Seumas That's right, that's right – make a joke about it! That's the Irish People all over – they treat a joke as a serious thing and a serious thing as a joke. Upon me soul, I'm beginning to believe that the Irish People aren't, never were, an' never will be fit for self-government. They've made Balor of the Evil Eye King of Ireland, an' so signs on it there's neither conscience nor honesty from one end of the country to the other. Well, I hope he'll have a happy day in Knocksedan. (*A knock at the door.*) Who's that?

Another knock.

(*Irritably*) Who's that; who's there?

Davoren (*more irritably*) Halt and give the countersign – damn it, man, can't you go and see?

Seumas goes over and opens the door. A man of about sixty is revealed, dressed in a faded blue serge suit; a half-tall hat is on his head. It is evident that he has no love for Seumas, who denies him the deference he believes is due from a tenant to a landlord. He carries some papers in his hand.

The Landlord (*ironically*) Good-day, Mr Shields; it's meself that hopes you're feelin' well – you're lookin' well, anyhow – though you can't always go be looks nowadays.

Seumas It doesn't matter whether I'm lookin' well or feelin' well; I'm all right, thanks be to God.

The Landlord I'm very glad to hear it.

Seumas It doesn't matter whether you're glad to hear it or not, Mr Mulligan.

The Landlord You're not inclined to be very civil, Mr Shields.

Seumas Look here, Mr Mulligan, if you come here to raise an argument, I've something to do – let me tell you that.

The Landlord I don't come here to raise no argument; a person ud have small gains argufyin' with you – let me tell you that.

Seumas I've no time to be standin' here gosterin' with you – let me shut the door, Mr Mulligan.

The Landlord You'll not shut no door till you've heard what I've got to say.

Seumas Well, say it then, an' go about your business.

The Landlord You're very high an' mighty, but take care

you're not goin' to get a drop. What a baby you are not to know what brings me here! Maybe you thought I was goin' to ask you to come to tea.

Davoren Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

Seumas Are you goin' to let me shut the door, Mr Mulligan?

The Landlord I'm here for me rent; you don't like the idea of bein' asked to pay your just an' lawful debts.

Seumas You'll get your rent when you learn to keep your rent-book in a proper way.

The Landlord I'm not goin' to take any lessons from you, anyhow.

Seumas I want to have no more talk with you, Mr Mulligan.

The Landlord Talk or no talk, you owe me eleven weeks' rent, an' it's marked down again' you in black an' white.

Seumas I don't care a damn if it was marked down in green, white, an' yellow.

The Landlord You're a terribly independent fellow, an' it ud be fitter for you to be less funny an' stop tryin' to be billickin' honest an' respectable people.

Seumas Just you be careful what you're sayin', Mr Mulligan. There's law in the land still.

The Landlord Be me sowl there is, an' you're goin' to get a little of it now. (*He offers the papers to Seumas.*) Them's for you.

Seumas (*hesitating to take them*) I want to have nothing to do with you, Mr Mulligan.

The Landlord (*throwing the papers in the centre of the room*) What am I better? It was the sorry day I ever let you

come into this house. Maybe them notices to quit will stop your writin' letters to the papers about me an' me house.

Davoren For goodness' sake, bring the man in, and don't be discussing the situation like a pair of primitive troglodytes.

Seumas (*taking no notice*) Writing letters to the papers is my business, an' I'll write as often as I like, when I like, an' how I like.

The Landlord You'll not write about this house at all events. You can blow about the state of the yard, but you took care to say nothin' about payin' rent: oh no, that's not in your line. But since you're not satisfied with the house, you can pack up an' go to another.

Seumas I'll go, Mr Mulligan, when I think fit, an' no sooner.

The Landlord Not content with keeping the rent, you're startin' to bring in lodgers – (*to Davoren*) not that I'm sayin' anythin' again' you, sir. Bringin' in lodgers without as much as be your leave – what's the world comin' to at all that a man's house isn't his own? But I'll soon put a stop to your gallop, for on the twenty-eight of the next month out you go, an' there'll be few sorry to see your back.

Seumas I'll go when I like.

The Landlord I'll let you see whether you own the house or no.

Seumas I'll go when I like!

The Landlord We'll see about that.

Seumas We'll see.

The Landlord Ay, we'll see.

The Landlord goes out and Seumas shuts the door.

(*Outside*) Mind you, I'm in earnest; you'll not stop in this house a minute longer than the twenty-eight.

Seumas (*with a roar*) Ah, go to hell!

Davoren (*pacing the room as far as the space will permit*) What in the name of God persuaded me to come to such a house as this?

Seumas It's nothing when you're used to it; you're too thin-skinned altogether. The oul' sod's got the wind up about you, that's all.

Davoren Got the wind up about me!

Seumas He thinks you're on the run. He's afraid of a raid, and that his lovely property'll be destroyed.

Davoren But why, in the name of all that's sensible, should he think that I'm on the run?

Seumas Sure they all think you're on the run. Mrs Henderson thinks it, Tommy Owens thinks it, Mrs an' Mr Grigson think it, an' Minnie Powell thinks it too. (*Picking up his attaché case*) I'd better be off if I'm goin' to do anything today.

Davoren What are we going to do with these notices to quit?

Seumas Oh, shove them up on the mantelpiece behind one of the statues.

Davoren Oh, I mean what action shall we take?

Seumas I haven't time to stop now. We'll talk about them when I come back . . . I'll get me own back on that oul' Mulligan yet. I wish to God they would come an' smash his rookery to pieces, for it's all he thinks of, and, mind you, oul' Mulligan would call himself a descendant of the true Gaels of Banba – (*as he goes out*)

Oh, proud were the chieftains of famed Inisfail.
Is truagh gan oidher 'na Vfarradh.
The stars of our sky an' the salt of our soil –

Oh, Kathleen ni Houlihan, your way's a thorny way! (*He goes out.*)

Davoren (*returning to the table and sitting down at the typewriter*) Oh, Donal Og O'Davoren, your way's a thorny way. Your last state is worse than your first. Ah me, alas! Pain, pain ever, for ever. Like thee, Prometheus, no change, no pause, no hope. Ah, life, life, life! (*There is a gentle knock at the door.*) Another Fury come to plague me now! (*Another knock, a little louder.*) You can knock till you're tired.

The door opens and Minnie Powell enters with an easy confidence one would not expect her to possess for her gentle way of knocking. She is a girl of twenty-three, but the fact of being forced to earn her living, and to take care of herself, on account of her parents' early death, has given her a force and an assurance beyond her years. She has lost the sense of fear (she does not know this), and, consequently, she is at ease in all places and before all persons, even those of a superior education, so long as she meets them in the atmosphere that surrounds the members of her own class. Her hair is brown, neither light nor dark, but partaking of both tints according to the light or shade she may happen to be in. Her well-shaped figure – a rare thing in a city girl – is charmingly dressed in a brown tailor-made costume, her stockings and shoes are a darker brown tint than the costume, and all are crowned by a silk tam-o'-shanter of a rich blue tint.

Minnie Are you in, Mr Shields?

Davoren (*rapidly*) No, he's not, Minnie; he's just gone out

– if you run out quickly you're sure to catch him.

Minnie Oh, it's all right, Mr Davoren, you'll do just as well; I just come in for a drop o' milk for a cup o' tea; I shouldn't be troublin' you this way, but I'm sure you don't mind.

Davoren (*dubiously*) No trouble in the world; delighted, I'm sure. (*Giving her the milk*) There, will you have enough?

Minnie Plenty, lashins, thanks. Do you be all alone all the day, Mr Davoren?

Davoren No, indeed; I wish to God I was.

Minnie It's not good for you then. I don't know how you like to be by yourself – I couldn't stick it long.

Davoren (*wearily*) No?

Minnie No, indeed; (*with rapture*) there's nothin' I'm more fond of than a Hooley. I was at one last Sunday – I danced rings round me! Tommy Owens was there – you know Tommy Owens, don't you?

Davoren I can't say I do.

Minnie D'ye not? The little fellow that lives with his mother in the two-pair back – (*ecstatically*) he's a gorgeous melodeon player!

Davoren A gifted son of Orpheus, eh?

Minnie (*who never heard of Orpheus*) You've said it, Mr Davoren: the son of poor oul' Battie Owens, a weeshy, dawning, bit of a man that was never sober an' was always talkin' politics. Poor man, it killed him in the long run.

Davoren A man should always be drunk, Minnie, when he talks politics – it's the only way in which to make them important.

Minnie Tommy takes after the oul' fellow, too; he'd talk from morning till night when he has a few jars in him. (*Suddenly; for like all her class, Minnie is not able to converse very long on the one subject, and her thoughts spring from one thing to another*) Poetry is a grand thing, Mr Davoren, I'd love to be able to write a poem – a lovely poem on Ireland an' the men o' '98.

Davoren Oh, we've had enough of poems, Minnie, about '98, and of Ireland, too.

Minnie Oh, there's a thing for a Republican to say! But I know what you mean: it's time to give up the writing an' take to the gun. (*Her roving eye catches sight of the flowers in the vase.*) What's Mr Shields doin' with the oul' weeds?

Davoren Those aren't Shields', they're mine. Wild flowers is a kindlier name for them, Minnie, than weeds. These are wild violets, this is an *Arum maculatum*, or Wake Robin, and these are Celandines, a very beautiful flower related to the buttercups. (*He quotes.*)

One day, when Morn's half-open'd eyes
Were bright with Spring sunshine –
My hand was clasp'd in yours, dear love,
And yours was clasp'd in mine –
We bow'd as worshippers before
The Golden Celandine.

Minnie Oh, aren't they lovely, an' isn't the poem lovely, too! I wonder, now, who she was.

Davoren (*puzzled*) She, who?

Minnie Why, the . . . (*roguishly*) Oh, be the way you don't know.

Davoren Know? I'm sure I don't know.

Minnie It doesn't matter, anyhow – that's your own business; I suppose I don't know her.

Davoren Know her – know whom?

Minnie (*shyly*) Her whose hand was clasped in yours, an' yours was clasped in hers.

Davoren Oh, that – that was simply a poem I quoted about the Celandine, that might apply to any girl – to you, for instance.

Minnie (*greatly relieved, coming over and sitting beside Davoren*) But you have a sweetheart, all the same, Mr Davoren, haven't you?

Davoren I? No, not one, Minnie.

Minnie Oh, now, you can tell that to someone else; aren't you a poet an' aren't all the girls fond o' poets?

Davoren That may be, but all the poets aren't fond of girls.

Minnie They are in the story-books, ay, and fond of more than one, too. (*With a questioning look*) Are you fond of them, Mr Davoren?

Davoren Of course I like girls, Minnie, especially girls who can add to their charms by the way in which they dress, like you, for instance.

Minnie Oh, now, you're on for coddin' me, Mr Davoren.

Davoren No, really, Minnie, I'm not; you are a very charming little girl indeed.

Minnie Then if I'm a charmin' little girl, you ought to be able to write a poem about me.

Davoren (*who has become susceptible to the attractiveness of Minnie, catching her hand*) And so I will, so I will,

Minnie; I have written them about girls not half so pretty as yourself.

Minnie Ah, I knew you had one, I knew you had one now.

Davoren Nonsense. Every girl a poet writes about isn't his sweetheart; Annie Laurie wasn't the sweetheart of Bobbie Burns.

Minnie You needn't tell me she wasn't; 'An' for bonnie Annie Laurie I'd lay me down an' die'. No man ud lay down an' die for any but a sweetheart, not even for a wife.

Davoren No man, Minnie, willingly dies for anything.

Minnie Except for his country, like Robert Emmet.

Davoren Even he would have lived on if he could; he died not to deliver Ireland. The British Government killed him to save the British nation.

Minnie You're only jokin' now; you'd die for your country.

Davoren I don't know so much about that.

Minnie You would, you would, you would – I know what you are.

Davoren What am I?

Minnie *(in a whisper)* A gunman on the run!

Davoren *(too pleased to deny it)* Maybe I am, and maybe I'm not.

Minnie Oh, I know, I know, I know. Do you never be afraid?

Davoren Afraid! Afraid of what?

Minnie Why, the ambushes of course; I'm all of a tremble when I hear a shot go off, an' what must it be in the middle of the firin'?

Davoren *(delighted at Minnie's obvious admiration; leaning back in his chair, and lighting a cigarette with placid affectation)* I'll admit one does be a little nervous at first, but a fellow gets used to it after a bit, till, at last, a gunman throws a bomb as carelessly as a schoolboy throws a snowball.

Minnie *(fervently)* I wish it was all over, all the same. *(Suddenly, with a tremor in her voice)* You'll take care of yourself, won't you, won't you, Donal – I mean, Mr Davoren?

Davoren *(earnestly)* Call me Donal, Minnie; we're friends, great friends now – *(putting his arm around her)* go on, Minnie, call me Donal, let me hear you say Donal.

Minnie The place badly needs a tidyin' up . . . Donal – there now, are you satisfied? *(Rapidly, half afraid of Davoren's excited emotions)* But it really does, it's in an awful state. Tomorrow's a half-day, an' I'll run in an' straighten it up a bit.

Davoren *(frightened at the suggestion)* No, no, Minnie, you're too pretty for that sort of work; besides, the people of the house would be sure to start talking about you.

Minnie An' do you think Minnie Powell cares whether they'll talk or no? She's had to push her way through life up to this without help from anyone, an' she's not goin' to ask their leave, now, to do what she wants to do.

Davoren *(forgetting his timidity in the honest joy of appreciating the independent courage of Minnie)* My soul within art thou, Minnie! A pioneer in action as I am a pioneer in thought. The two powers that shall 'grasp this

sorry scheme of things entire, and mould life nearer to the heart's desire'. Lovely little Minnie, and brave as well; brave little Minnie, and lovely as well!

His disengaged hand lifts up her bent head, and he looks earnestly at her; he is stooping to kiss her, when Tommy Owens appears at the door, which Minnie has left partially open. Tommy is about twenty-five years of age. He is small and thin; his words are uttered in a nasal drawl; his voice is husky, due to frequent drinks and perpetual cigarette-smoking. He tries to get rid of the huskiness by an occasional cough. Tommy is a hero-worshipper, and, like many others, he is anxious to be on familiar terms with those who he thinks are braver than he is himself, and whose approbation he tries to win by an assumption equal to their own. He talks in a staccato manner. He has a few drinks taken – it is too early to be drunk – that make him talkative. He is dressed in a suit of dungarees, and gives a gentle cough to draw attention to his presence.

Tommy I seen nothin' – honest – thought you was learnin' to typewrite – Mr Davoren teachin' you. I seen nothin' else – s'help me God!

Minnie We'd be hard put to it if we minded what you seen, Tommy Owens.

Tommy Right, Minnie, Tommy Owens has a heart – Evenin', Mr Davoren – don't mind me comin' in – I'm Tommy Owens – live up in the two-pair back, workin' in Ross an' Walpole's – Mr Shields knows me well; you needn't be afraid o' me, Mr Davoren.

Davoren Why should I be afraid of you, Mr Owens, or of anybody else?

Tommy Why should you, indeed? We're all friends here – Mr Shields knows me well – all you've got to say is, 'Do

you know Tommy Owens?' an' he'll tell you the sort of a man Tommy Owens is. There's no flies on Tommy – got me?

Minnie For goodness' sake, Tommy, leave Mr Davoren alone – he's got enough burgeons on him already.

Tommy Not a word, Minnie, not a word – Mr Davoren understands me well, as man to man. It's 'Up the Republic' all the time – eh, Mr Davoren?

Davoren I know nothing about the Republic; I have no connection with the politics of the day, and I don't want to have any connection.

Tommy You needn't say no more – a nod's as good as a wink to a blind horse – you've no meddlin' or makin' with it, good, bad, or indifferent, pro nor con; I know it an' Minnie knows it – give me your hand. (*He catches Davoren's hand.*) Two firm hands clasped together will all the power outbrave of the heartless English tyrant, the Saxon coward an' knave. That's Tommy Owens' hand, Mr Davoren, the hand of a man, a man – Mr Shields knows me well. (*He breaks into song.*)

High upon the gallows tree stood the noble-hearted
three,
By the vengeful tyrant stricken in their bloom;
But they met him face to face with the spirit of their
race,
And they went with souls undaunted to their doom!

Minnie (*in an effort to quell his fervour*) Tommy Owens, for goodness' sake . . .

Tommy (*overwhelming her with a shout*)

God save Ireland ses the hayros, God save Ireland ses
we all,
Whether on the scaffold high or the battle-field we die,
Oh, what matter when for Ayrinn dear we fall!

(*Tearfully*) Mr Davoren, I'd die for Ireland!

Davoren I know you would, I know you would, Tommy.

Tommy I never got a chance – they never gave me a chance – but all the same I'd be there if I was called on – Mr Shields knows that – ask Mr Shields, Mr Davoren.

Davoren There's no necessity, Tommy; I know you're the right stuff if you got the chance, but remember that 'he also serves who only stands and waits'.

Tommy (*fiercely*) I'm bloody well tired o' waitin' – we're all tired o' waitin'. Why isn't every man in Ireland out with the IRA? Up with the barricades, up with the barricades; it's now or never, now an' for ever, as Sarsfield said at the battle o' Vinegar Hill. Up with the barricades – that's Tommy Owens – an' a penny buys a whistle. Let them as thinks different say different – what do you say, Mr Davoren?

Davoren I say, Tommy, you ought to go up and get your dinner, for if you wait much longer it won't be worth eating.

Tommy Oh, damn the dinner; who'd think o' dinner an' Ireland fightin' to be free? – not Tommy Owens, anyhow. It's only the Englishman who's always thinkin' of his belly.

Minnie Tommy Owens!

Tommy Excuse me, Miss Powell, in the ardure ov me anger I disremembered there was a lady present.

Voices are heard outside, and presently Mrs Henderson comes into the room, followed by Mr Gallogher, who, however, lingers at the door, too timid to come any farther. Mrs Henderson is a massive woman in every way; massive head, arms, and body; massive voice, and a massive amount of self-confidence. She is a mountain

of good nature, and during the interview she behaves towards Davoren with deferential self-assurance. She dominates the room, and seems to occupy the whole of it. She is dressed poorly but tidily, wearing a white apron and a large shawl. Mr Gallogher, on the other hand, is a spare little man with a spare little grey beard and a thin, nervous voice. He is dressed as well as a faded suit of blue will allow him to be. He is obviously ill at ease during his interview with Davoren. He carries a hard hat, much the worse for wear, under his left arm, and a letter in his right hand.

Mrs Henderson (*entering the room*) Come along in, Mr Gallicker, Mr Davoren won't mind; it's him as can put you in the way o' havin' your wrongs righted; come on in, man, an' don't be so shy – Mr Davoren is wan ov ourselves that stands for govermint ov the people with the people by the people. You'll find you'll be as welcome as the flowers in May. Good evenin', Mr Davoren, an' God an' His holy angels be between you an' all harm.

Tommy (*effusively*) Come on, Mr Gallicker, an' don't be a stranger – we're all friends here – anything special to be done or particular advice asked, here's your man here.

Davoren (*subconsciously pleased, but a little timid of the belief that he is connected with the gunmen*) I'm very busy just now, Mrs Henderson, and really . . .

Mrs Henderson (*mistaking the reason of his embarrassment*) Don't be put out, Mr Davoren, we won't keep you more nor a few minutes. It's not in me or in Mr Gallicker to spoil sport. Him an' me was young once, an' knows what it is to be strolling at night in the pale moonlight, with arms round one another. An' I wouldn't take much an' say there's game in Mr Gallicker still, for I seen, sometimes, a dangerous cock in his eye. But we won't keep you an' Minnie long asunder; he's the letter an' all written.

You must know, Mr Davoren – excuse me for not introduc'in' him sooner – this is Mr Gallicker, that lives in the front drawin'-room ov number fifty-five, as decent an' honest an' quiet a man as you'd meet in a day's walk. An' so signs on it, it's them as 'ill be imposed upon – read the letter, Mr Gallicker.

Tommy Read away, Mr Gallicker, it will be attended to, never fear; we know our own know, eh, Mr Davoren?

Minnie Hurry up, Mr Gallicker, an' don't be keeping Mr Davoren.

Mrs Henderson Give him time, Minnie Powell. Give him time. You must know in all fairity, Mr Davoren, that the family livin' in the next room to Mr Gallicker – the back drawin'-room, to be particular – am I right or am I wrong, Mr Gallicker?

Mr Gallogher You're right, Mrs Henderson, perfectly right, indeed – that's the very identical room.

Mrs Henderson Well, Mr Davoren, the people in the back drawin'-room, or, to be more particular, the residents – that's the word that's writ in the letter – am I right or am I wrong, Mr Gallicker?

Mr Gallogher You're right, Mrs Henderson, perfectly accurate – that's the very identical word.

Mrs Henderson Well, Mr Davoren, the residents in the back drawin'-room, as I aforesaid, is nothin' but a gang o' tramps that oughtn't to be allowed to associate with honest, decent, quiet, respectable people. Mr Gallicker has tried to reason with them, and make them behave themselves – which in my opinion they never will – however, that's only an opinion, an' not legal – ever since they have made Mr Gallicker's life a HELL! Mr Gallicker, am I right or am I wrong?

Mr Gallogher I'm sorry to say you're right, Mrs Henderson, perfectly right – not a word of exaggeration.

Mrs Henderson Well, now, Mr Gallicker, seein' as I have given Mr Davoren a fair account ov how you're situated, an' ov these tramps' cleverality, I'll ask you to read the letter, which I'll say, not because you're there, or that you're a friend o' mine, is as good a letter as was decomposed by a scholar. Now, Mr Gallicker, an' don't forget the top sayin'.

Mr Gallogher prepares to read; Minnie leans forward to listen; Tommy takes out a well-worn note-book and a pencil stump, and assumes a very important attitude.

Tommy One second. Mr Gallicker, is this the twenty-first or twenty-second?

Mr Gallogher The twenty-first, sir.

Tommy Thanks; proceed, Mr Gallicker.

Mr Gallogher *(with a few preliminary tremors, reads the letter. Reading)*

'TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS COME,
GREETING

'Gentlemen of the Irish Republican Army . . .'

Mrs Henderson There's a beginnin' for you, Mr Davoren.

Minnie That's some swank.

Tommy There's a lot in that sayin', mind you; it's a hard wallop at the British Empire.

Mrs Henderson *(proudly)* Go on, Mr Gallicker.

Mr Gallogher *(reading)*

I wish to call your attention to the persecution me and my family has to put up with in respect of and appertaining to the residents of the back drawing-room

of the house known as fifty-five, Saint Teresa Street, situate in the Parish of St Thomas, in the Borough and City of Dublin. This persecution started eighteen months ago – or to be precise – on the tenth day of the sixth month, in the year nineteen hundred and twenty.'

Mrs Henderson That's the word I was trying to think ov – precise – it cuts the ground from under their feet – so to speak.

Mr Gallogher (*reading*)

'We, the complainants, resident on the ground floor, deeming it disrespectful . . .'

Mrs Henderson (*with an emphatic nod*) Which it was.

Mr Gallogher (*reading*)

'Deeming it disrespectful to have an open hall door, and to have the hall turned into a playground, made a solemn protest, and, in consequence, we the complainants aforesaid has had no peace ever since. Owing to the persecution, as aforesaid specified, we had to take out a summons again them some time ago as there was no Republican Courts then; but we did not proceed again them as me and my wife – to wit, James and Winifred Gallogher – has a strong objection to foreign Courts as such. We had peace for some time after that, but now things have gone from bad to worse. The name calling and the language is something abominable . . .'

Mrs Henderson (*holding out her hand as a constable would extend his to stop a car that another may pass*) Excuse me, Mr Gallicker, but I think the word 'shockin'' should be put in there after abominable; for the language used be these tramps has two ways o' bein' looked at – for it's abominable to the childer an' shockin' to your wife – am I right or am I wrong, Mr Davoren?

Tommy (*judicially*) Shockin' is a right good word, with a great deal o' meanin', an' . . .

Mrs Henderson (*with a deprecating gesture that extinguishes Tommy*) Tommy, let Mr Davoren speak; whatever Mr Davoren ses, Julia Henderson'll abide be.

Davoren (*afraid to say anything else*) I think the word might certainly be introduced with advantage.

Mrs Henderson Go over there, Mr Gallicker, an' put in the word shockin', as aforesaid.

Gallogher goes over to the table, and with a great deal of difficulty enters the word.

Tommy (*to Mr Gallogher as he writes*) Ey, there's two k's in shockin'!

Mr Gallogher (*reading*):

'The language is something abominable and shocking. My wife has often to lock the door of the room to keep them from assaulting her. If you would be so kind as to send some of your army or police down to see for themselves we would give them full particulars. I have to be always from home all day, as I work with Mr Hennessy, the harness maker of the Coombe, who will furnish all particulars as to my unvarnished respectability, also my neighbours. The name of the resident-tenant who is giving all this trouble and who, pursuant to the facts of the case aforesaid, mentioned, will be the defendant, is Dwyer. The husband of the aforesaid Mrs Dwyer, or the aforesaid defendant, as the case may be, is a seaman, who is coming home shortly, and we beg The Irish Republican Army to note that the said Mrs Dwyer says he will settle us when he comes home. While leaving it entirely in the hands of the gentlemen of The Republican Army, the defendant, that is to say, James Gallogher of fifty-five St Teresa Street,

ventures to say that he thinks he has made out a Primmy Fashy Case against Mrs Dwyer and all her heirs, male and female as aforesaid mentioned in the above written schedule.

'N.B. - If you send up any of your men, please tell them to bring their guns. I beg to remain the humble servant and devoted admirer of the Gentlemen of the Irish Republican Army.

'Witness my hand this tenth day of the fifth month of the year nineteen hundred and twenty.

'JAMES GALLOGHER.'

(*With a modest cough*) Ahem.

Mrs Henderson There's a letter for you, Mr Davoren!

Tommy It's the most powerfulest letter I ever heard read.

Minnie It wasn't you, really, that writ it, Mr Gallicker?

Mrs Henderson Sinn Fein Amhain: him an' him only, Minnie. I seen him with me own two eyes when me an' Winnie - Mrs Gallicker, Mr Davoren, aforesaid as appears in the letter - was havin' a chat be the fire.

Minnie You'd never think it was in him to do it.

Mrs Henderson An' to think that the likes ov such a man is to have the sowl-case worried out ov him by a gang o' tramps; but it's in good hands now, an' instead ov them settlin' yous, Mr Gallicker, it's yous 'ill settle them. Give the letter to Mr Davoren, an' we'll be goin'.

Gallogher gives the letter to Davoren.

(*Moving towards the door*) I hope you an' Mr Shields is gettin' on all right together, Mr Davoren.

Davoren Fairly well, thanks, Mrs Henderson. We don't see much of each other. He's out during the day, and I'm usually out during the evening.

Mrs Henderson I'm afraid he'll never make a fortune out ov what he's sellin'. He'll talk above an hour over a pennorth o' pins. Every time he comes to our place I buy a package o' hairpins from him to give him a little encouragement. I 'clare to God I have as many pins now as ud make a wire mattress for a double bed. All the young divils about the place are beginnin' to make a jeer ov him, too; I gave one ov them a mallavogin' the other day for callin' him oul' hairpins!

Mr Gallogher (*venturing an opinion*) Mr Shields is a man of exceptional mental capacity, and is worthy of a more dignified position.

Mrs Henderson Them words is true, Mr Gallicker, and they aren't. For to be wise is to be a fool, an' to be a fool is to be wise.

Mr Gallogher (*with deprecating tolerance*) Oh, Mrs Henderson, that's a parrottox.

Mrs Henderson It may be what a parrot talks, or a blackbird, or, for the matter of that, a lark - but it's what Julia Henderson thinks, any . . . whisht, is that a *Stop Press*?

Outside is heard the shriek of a newsboy calling 'Stop Press'.

Run out, Tommy, an' get it till we see what it is.

Tommy I haven't got a make.

Mrs Henderson I never seen you any other way, an' you'll be always the same if you keep follyin' your Spearmints, an' your Bumble Bees an' your Night Patrols. (*Shouting to someone outside*) Is that a *Stop Press*, Mrs Grigson?

Voice (*outside*) Yis; an ambush out near Knocksedan.

Mrs Henderson That's the stuff to give them. (*Loudly*)
Was there anybody hurted?

Voice (*outside*) One poor man killed – some chap named
Maguire, the paper says.

Davoren (*agitated*) What name did she say?

Minnie Maguire; did you know him, Mr Davoren?

Davoren Yes – no, no; I didn't know him, no, I didn't
know him, Minnie.

Minnie I wonder is it the Maguire that does be with Mr
Shields?

Davoren Oh no, not at all, it couldn't be.

Mrs Henderson Knocksedan? That's in the County Sligo,
now, or I'm greatly mistaken – am I right, Mr Gallicker, or
am I wrong?

Mr Gallogher (*who knows perfectly well that it is in the
County Dublin, but dare not correct Mrs Henderson*)
That's where it is – Knocksedan, that's the very identical
county.

Mrs Henderson Well, I think we better be makin' a move,
Mr Gallicker; we've kep' Mr Davoren long enough, an'
you'll find the letter'll be in good hans.

*Mr Gallogher and Mrs Henderson move towards the
door, which when he reaches it Mr Gallogher grips,
hesitates, buttons his coat, and turns to Davoren.*

Mr Gallogher Mr Davoren, sir, on behalf ov meself, James
Gallicker, an' Winifred, Mrs Gallicker, wife ov the said
James, I beg to offer, extend an' furnish our humble an'
hearty thanks for your benevolent goodness in interferin'
in the matter specified, particularated an' expanded upon
in the letter, mandamus or schedule, as the case may be.

An' let me interpretate to you on behalf ov meself an'
Winifred Gallicker, that whenever you visit us you will be
supernally positive ov a hundred thousand welcomes –
ahem.

Mrs Henderson (*beaming with pride for the genius of her
friend*) There's a man for you, Mr Davoren! You forgot to
mention Bidy and Shaun, Mr Gallicker – (*to Davoren*)
his two children – it's himself has them trained well. It ud
make your heart thrill like an alarm clock to hear them
sinigin' 'Faith ov Our Fathers' an' 'Wrap the Green Flag
Roun' Me'.

Mr Gallogher (*half apologetically and half proudly*) Faith
an' Fatherland, Mrs Henderson, Faith and Fatherland.

Mrs Henderson Well, good-day, Mr Davoren, an' God
keep you an' strengthen all the men that are fightin' for
Ireland's freedom.

She and Gallogher go out.

Tommy I must be off too; so-long, Mr Davoren, an'
remember that Tommy Owens only waits the call. (*He
goes out too.*)

Davoren Well, Minnie, we're by ourselves once more.

Minnie Wouldn't that Tommy Owens give you the sick –
only waitin' to hear the call! Ah, then it'll take all the brass
bands in the country to blow the call before Tommy
Owens ud hear it. (*She looks at her wristlet watch.*) Sacred
Heart, I've only ten minutes to get back to work! I'll have
to fly! Quick, Mr Davoren, write me name in typewritin'
before I go – just 'Minnie'.

Davoren types the name.

(*Shyly but determinedly*) Now yours underneath – just
'Donal'.

Davoren does so.

Minnie, Donal; Donal, Minnie; goodbye now.

Davoren Here, what about your milk?

Minnie I haven't time to take it now. (*Slyly*) I'll come for it this evening.

They both go towards the door.

Davoren Minnie, the kiss I didn't get.

Minnie What kiss?

Davoren When we were interrupted; you know, you little rogue, come, just one.

Minnie Quick, then.

Davoren kisses her and she runs out. Davoren returns thoughtfully to the table.

Davoren Minnie, Donal; Donal, Minnie. Very pretty, but very ignorant. A gunman on the run! Be careful, be careful, Donal Davoren. But Minnie is attracted to the idea, and I am attracted to Minnie. And what danger can there be in being the shadow of a gunman?

Curtain.

Act Two

The same as in Act One. But it is now night. Seumas is in the bed that runs along the wall at back. Davoren is seated near the fire, to which he has drawn the table. He has a fountain-pen in his hand, and is attracted in thought towards the moon, which is shining in through the windows. An open writing-pad is on the table at Davoren's elbow. The bag left by Maguire is still in the same place.

Davoren

The cold chaste moon, the Queen of Heaven's bright isles,
Who makes all beautiful on which she smiles;
That wandering shrine of soft yet icy flame,
Which ever is transformed yet still the same.

Ah, Shelley, Shelley, you yourself were a lovely human orb shining through clouds of whirling human dust. 'She makes all beautiful on which she smiles.' Ah, Shelley, she couldn't make this thrice accursed room beautiful. Her beams of beauty only make its horrors more full of horrors still. There is an ugliness that can be made beautiful, and there is an ugliness that can only be destroyed, and this is part of that ugliness. Donal, Donal, I fear your last state is worse than your first. (*He lilt a verse, which he writes on the pad before him.*)

When night advances through the sky with slow
And solemn tread,
The queenly moon looks down on life below,
As if she read

Man's soul, and in her scornful silence said:
All beautiful and happiest things are dead.

Seumas (*sleepily*) Donal, Donal, are you awake? (*Pause.*)
Donal, Donal, are you asleep?

Davoren I'm neither awake nor asleep: I'm thinking.

Seumas I was just thinkin', too – I was just thinkin', too,
that Maguire is sorry now that he didn't come with me
instead of going to Knocksedan. He caught something
besides butterflies – two of them he got, one through each
lung.

Davoren The Irish people are very fond of turning a
serious thing into a joke; that was a serious affair – for
poor Maguire.

Seumas (*defensively*) Why didn't he do what he arranged
to do? Did he think of me when he was goin' to
Knocksedan? How can he expect me to have any
sympathy with him now?

Davoren He can hardly expect that now that he's dead.

Seumas The Republicans 'll do a lot for him, now. How
am I goin' to get back the things he has belongin' to me,
either? There's some of them in that bag over there, but
that's not quarter of what he had; an' I don't know where
he was stoppin', for he left his old digs a week or so ago –
I suppose there's nothing to be said about my loss; I'm to
sing dumb.

Davoren I hope there's nothing else in the bag, besides
thread and hairpins.

Seumas What else ud be in it? . . . I can't sleep properly
ever since they put on this damned curfew. A minute ago I
thought I heard some of the oul' ones standin' at the door;
they won't be satisfied till they bring a raid on the house;

an' they never begin to stand at the door till after curfew
. . . Are you gone to bed, Donal?

Davoren No; I'm trying to finish this poem.

Seumas (*sitting up in bed*) If I was you I'd give that game
up; it doesn't pay a working-man to write poetry. I don't
profess to know much about poetry – I don't profess to
know much about poetry – about poetry – I don't know
much about the pearly glint of the morning dew, or the
damask sweetness of the rare wild rose, or the subtle
greenness of the serpent's eye – but I think a poet's claim to
greatness depends upon his power to put passion in the
common people.

Davoren Ay, passion to howl for his destruction. The
People! Damn the people! They live in the abyss, the poet
lives on the mountain-top; to the people there is no
mystery of colour: it is simply the scarlet coat of the
soldier; the purple vestments of a priest; the green banner
of a party; the brown or blue overalls of industry. To
them the might of design is a three-roomed house or a
capacious bed. To them beauty is for sale in a butcher's
shop. To the people the end of life is the life created for
them; to the poet the end of life is the life that he creates
for himself; life has a stifling grip upon the people's
throat – it is the poet's musician. The poet ever strives to
save the people; the people ever strive to destroy the poet.
The people view life through creeds, through customs,
and through necessities; the poet views creeds, customs,
and necessities through life. The people . . .

Seumas (*suddenly, and with a note of anxiety in his voice*)
Whisht! What's that? Is that the tappin' again?

Davoren Tappin'. What tappin'?

Seumas (*in an awed whisper*) This is the second night I
heard that tappin'! I believe it bodes no good to me. There,

do you hear it again – a quiet, steady, mysterious tappin' on the wall.

Davoren I hear no tappin'.

Seumas It ud be better for me if you did. It's a sure sign of death when nobody hears it but meself.

Davoren Death! What the devil are you talking about, man?

Seumas I don't like it at all; there's always something like that heard when one of our family dies.

Davoren I don't know about that; but I know there's a hell of a lot of things heard when one of your family lives.

Seumas God between us an' all harm! Thank God I'm where I ought to be – in bed . . . It's always best to be in your proper place when such things happen – Sacred Heart! There it is again; do you not hear it now?

Davoren Ah, for God's sake go asleep.

Seumas Do you believe in nothing?

Davoren I don't believe in tappin'.

Seumas Whisht, it's stopped again; I'll try to go asleep for fear it ud begin again.

Davoren Ay, do; and if it starts again I'll be sure to waken you up.

Pause.

Seumas It's very cold tonight. Do you feel cold?

Davoren I thought you were goin' asleep?

Seumas The bloody cold won't let me . . . You'd want a pair of pyjamas on you. (*Pause.*) Did you ever wear pyjamas, Donal?

Davoren No, no, no.

Seumas What kind of stuff is in them?

Davoren (*angrily*) Oh, it depends on the climate; in India, silk; in Italy, satin; and the Eskimo wears them made from the skin of the Polar bear.

Seumas (*emphatically*) If you take my advice you'll get into bed – that poem is beginnin' to get on your nerves.

Davoren (*extinguishing the candle with a vicious blow*) Right; I'm going to bed now, so you can shut up.

Visibility is still maintained from the light of the moon.

Seumas I was goin' to say something when you put out the light – what's this it was? – um, um, oh, ay: when I was comin' in this evenin' I saw Minnie Powell goin' out. If I was you I wouldn't have that one comin' in here.

Davoren She comes in; I don't bring her in, do I?

Seumas The oul' ones'll be talkin', an' once they start you don't know how it'll end. Surely a man that has read Shelley couldn't be interested in an ignorant little bitch that thinks of nothin' but jazz dances, fox-trots, picture theatres an' dress.

Davoren Right glad I am that she thinks of dress, for she thinks of it in the right way, and makes herself a pleasant picture to the eye. Education has been wasted on many persons, teaching them to talk only, but leaving them with all their primitive instincts. Had poor Minnie received an education she would have been an artist. She is certainly a pretty girl. I'm sure she is a good girl, and I believe she is a brave girl.

Seumas A Helen of Troy come to live in a tenement! You think a lot about her simply because she thinks a lot about you, an' she thinks a lot about you because she looks upon

you as a hero – a kind o' Paris . . . she'd give the world an' all to be gaddin' about with a gunman. An' what ecstasy it ud give her if after a bit you were shot or hanged; she'd be able to go about then – like a good many more – singin', 'I do not mourn me darlin' lost, for he fell in his Jacket Green'. An' then, for a year an' a day, all round her hat she'd wear the Tricoloured Ribbon O, till she'd pick up an' marry someone else – possibly a British Tommy with a Mons Star. An' as for bein' brave, it's easy to be that when you've no cause for cowardice; I wouldn't care to have me life dependin' on brave little Minnie Powell – she wouldn't sacrifice a jazz dance to save it.

Davoren (*sitting on the bed and taking off his coat and vest, preparatory to going to bed*) There; that's enough about Minnie Powell. I'm afraid I'll soon have to be on the run out of this house, too; it is becoming painfully obvious that there is no peace to be found here.

Seumas Oh, this house is all right; barrin' the children, it does be quiet enough. Wasn't there children in the last place you were in too?

Davoren Ay, ten; (*viciously*) and they were all over forty. (*A pause as Davoren is removing his collar and tie.*)

Seumas Everything is very quiet now; I wonder what time is it?

Davoren The village cock hath thrice done salutation to the morn.

Seumas Shakespeare, *Richard the III*, Act Five, Scene III. It was Ratcliffe said that to Richard just before the battle of Bosworth . . . How peaceful the heavens look now with the moon in the middle; you'd never think there were men prowlin' about tryin' to shoot each other. I don't know how a man who has shot anyone can sleep in peace at night.

Davoren There's plenty of men can't sleep in peace at night now unless they know that they have shot somebody.

Seumas I wish to God it was all over. The country is gone mad. Instead of counting their beads now they're countin' bullets; their Hail Marys and paternosters are burstin' bombs – burstin' bombs, an' the rattle of machine-guns; petrol is their holy water; their Mass is a burnin' buildin'; their De Profundis is 'The Soldiers' Song', an' their creed is, I believe in the gun almighty, maker of heaven an' earth – an' it's all for 'the glory o' God an' the honour o' Ireland'.

Davoren I remember the time when you yourself believed in nothing but the gun.

Seumas Ay, when there wasn't a gun in the country; I've a different opinion now when there's nothin' but guns in the country . . . An' you daren't open your mouth, for Kathleen ni Houlihan is very different now to the woman who used to play the harp an' sing 'Weep on, weep on, your hour is past', for she's a ragin' divil now, an' if you only look crooked at her you're sure of a punch in th' eye. But this is the way I look at it – I look at it this way: You're not goin' – you're not goin' to beat the British Empire – the British Empire, by shootin' an occasional Tommy at the corner of an occasional street. Besides, when the Tommies have the wind up – when the Tommies have the wind up they let bang at everything they see – they don't give a God's curse who they plug.

Davoren Maybe they ought to get down off the lorry and run to the Records Office to find out a man's pedigree before they plug him.

Seumas It's the civilians that suffer; when there's an

ambush they don't know where to run. Shot in the back to save the British Empire, an' shot in the breast to save the soul of Ireland. I'm a Nationalist meself, right enough – a Nationalist right enough, but all the same – I'm a Nationalist right enough; I believe in the freedom of Ireland, an' that England has no right to be here, but I draw the line when I hear the gunmen blowin' about dyin' for the people, when it's the people that are dyin' for the gunmen! With all due respect to the gunmen, I don't want them to die for me.

Davoren Not likely; you object to any one of them deliberately dying for you for fear that one of these days you might accidentally die for one of them.

Seumas You're one of the brave fellows that doesn't fear death.

Davoren Why should I be afraid of it? It's all the same to me how it comes, where it comes, or when it comes. I leave fear of death to the people that are always praying for eternal life; 'Death is here and death is there, death is busy everywhere'.

Seumas Ay, in Ireland. Thanks be to God I'm a daily communicant. There's a great comfort in religion; it makes a man strong in time of trouble an' brave in time of danger. No man need be afraid with a crowd of angels round him; thanks to God for His Holy religion!

Davoren You're welcome to your angels; philosophy is mine; philosophy that makes the coward brave; the sufferer defiant; the weak strong; the . . .

A volley of shots is heard in a lane that runs parallel with the wall of the back-yard. Religion and philosophy are forgotten in the violent fear of a nervous equality.

Seumas Jesus, Mary, an' Joseph, what's that?

Davoren My God, that's very close.

Seumas Is there no Christianity at all left in the country?

Davoren Are we ever again going to know what peace and security are?

Seumas If this continues much longer I'll be nothing but a galvanic battery o' shocks.

Davoren It's dangerous to be in and it's equally dangerous to be out.

Seumas This is a dangerous spot to be in with them windows; you couldn't tell the minute a bullet ud come in through one of them – through one of them, an' hit the – hit the – an' hit the . . .

Davoren (*irritably*) Hit the what, man?

Seumas The wall.

Davoren Couldn't you say that at first without making a song about it?

Seumas (*suddenly*) I don't believe there's horses in the stable at all.

Davoren Stable! What stable are you talking about?

Seumas There's a stable at the back of the house with an entrance from the yard; it's used as a carpenter's shop. Didn't you often hear the peculiar noises at night? They give out that it's the horses shakin' their chains.

Davoren And what is it?

Seumas Oh, there I'll leave you!

Davoren Surely you don't mean . . .

Seumas But I do mean it.

Davoren You do mean what?

Seumas I wouldn't – I wouldn't be surprised – wouldn't be surprised – surprised . . .

Davoren Yes, yes, surprised – go on.

Seumas I wouldn't be surprised if they were manufacturin' bombs there.

Davoren My God, that's a pleasant contemplation! The sooner I'm on the run out of this house the better. How is it you never said anything about this before?

Seumas Well – well, I didn't want – I didn't want to – to . . .

Davoren You didn't want to what?

Seumas I didn't want to frighten you.

Davoren (*sarcastically*) You're bloody kind!

A knock at the door; the voice of Mrs Grigson heard.

Mrs Grigson Are you asleep, Mr Shields?

Seumas What the devil can she want at this hour of the night? (*To Mrs Grigson*) No, Mrs Grigson, what is it?

Mrs Grigson opens the door and stands at the threshold. She is a woman about forty, but looks much older. She is one of the cave-dwellers of Dublin, living as she does in a tenement kitchen, to which only an occasional sickly beam of sunlight filters through a grating in the yard; the consequent general dimness of her abode has given her a habit of peering through half-closed eyes. She is slovenly dressed in an old skirt and bodice; her face is grimy, not because her habits are dirty – for, although she is untidy, she is a clean woman – but because of the smoky atmosphere of her room. Her hair is constantly falling over her face, which she is as frequently removing by rapid movements of her right hand.

Mrs Grigson He hasn't turned up yet, an' I'm stiff with the cold waitin' for him.

Seumas Mr Grigson, is it?

Mrs Grigson Adolphus, Mr Shields, after takin' his tea at six o'clock – no, I'm tellin' a lie – it was before six, for I remember the Angelus was ringin' out an' we sittin' at the table – after takin' his tea he went out for a breath o' fresh air, an' I haven't seen sign or light of him since. 'Clare to God me heart is up in me mouth, thinkin' he might be shot be the Black an' Tans.

Seumas Aw, he'll be all right, Mrs Grigson. You ought to go to bed an' rest yourself; it's always the worst that comes into a body's mind; go to bed, Mrs Grigson, or you'll catch your death of cold.

Mrs Grigson I'm afraid to go to bed, Mr Shields, for I'm always in dread that some night or another, when he has a sup taken, he'll fall down the kitchen stairs an' break his neck. Not that I'd be any the worse if anything did happen to him, for you know the sort he is, Mr Shields; sure he has me heart broke.

Seumas Don't be downhearted, Mrs Grigson; he may take a thought one of these days an' turn over a new leaf.

Mrs Grigson Sorra leaf Adolphus 'll ever turn over, he's too far gone in the horns for that now. Sure no one ud mind him takin' a pint or two, if he'd stop at that, but he won't; nothin' could fill him with beer, an' no matter how much he may have taken, when he's taken more he'll always say, 'Here's the first today'.

Davoren (*to Seumas*) Christ! Is she going to stop talking there all the night?

Seumas 'Sh, she'll hear you; right enough, the man has the poor woman's heart broke.

Davoren And because he has her heart broken, she's to have the privilege of breaking everybody else's.

Mrs Grigson Mr Shields.

Seumas Yes?

Mrs Grigson Do the insurance companies pay if a man is shot after curfew?

Seumas Well, now, that's a thing I couldn't say, Mrs Grigson.

Mrs Grigson (*plaintively*) Isn't he a terrible man to be takin' such risks, an' not knowin' what'll happen to him. He knows them Societies only want an excuse to do people out of their money – is it after one, now, Mr Shields?

Seumas Aw, it must be after one, Mrs Grigson.

Mrs Grigson (*emphatically*) Ah, then, if I was a young girl again I'd think twice before gettin' married. Whisht! There's somebody now – it's him, I know be the way he's fumblin'.

She goes out a little way. Stumbling steps are heard in the hall.

(*Outside*) Is that you, Dolphie, dear?

After a few moments Adolphus, with Mrs Grigson holding his arm, stumbles into the room. He is a man of forty-five, but looks, relatively, much younger than Mrs Grigson. His occupation is that of a solicitor's clerk. He has all the appearance of being well fed; and, in fact, he gets most of the nourishment, Mrs Grigson getting just enough to give her strength to do the necessary work of the household. On account of living most of his life out of the kitchen, his complexion is fresh, and his movements, even when sober, are livelier than those of

his wife. He is comfortably dressed; heavy top-coat, soft trilby hat, a fancy coloured scarf about his neck, and he carries an umbrella.

Mrs Grigson Dolphie, dear, mind yourself.

Adolphus Grigson I'm all right; do you see anything wrong with me?

Mrs Grigson Of course you're all right, dear; there's no one mindin' you.

Adolphus Grigson Mindin' me, is it, mindin' me? He'd want to be a good thing that ud mind me. There's a man here – a man, mind you, afraid av nothin' – not in this bloody house anyway.

Mrs Grigson (*imploringly*) Come on downstairs, Dolphie, dear; sure there's not one in the house ud say a word to you.

Adolphus Grigson Say a word to me, is it? He'd want to be a good thing that ud say anything to Dolphus Grigson. (*Loudly*) Is there anyone wants to say anything to Dolphus Grigson? If there is, he's here – a man, too – there's no blottin' it out – a man.

Mrs Grigson You'll wake everybody in the house; can't you speak quiet.

Adolphus Grigson (*more loudly still*) What do I care for anybody in the house? Are they keepin' me; are they givin' me anything? When they're keepin' Grigson it'll be time enough for them to talk. (*With a shout*) I can tell them Adolphus Grigson wasn't born in a bottle!

Mrs Grigson (*tearfully*) Why do you talk like that, dear? We all know you weren't born in a bottle.

Adolphus Grigson There's some of them in this house think that Grigson was born in a bottle.

Davoren (to *Seumas*) A most appropriate place for him to be born in.

Mrs Grigson Come on down to bed, now, an' you can talk about them in the mornin'.

Adolphus Grigson I'll talk about them, now; do you think I'm afraid of them? Dolphus Grigson's afraid av nothin', creepin' or walkin', – if there's anyone in the house thinks he's fit to take a fall out av Adolphus Grigson, he's here – a man; they'll find that Grigson's no soft thing.

Davoren Ah me, alas! Pain, pain ever, for ever.

Mrs Grigson Dolphie, dear, poor Mr Davoren wants to go to bed.

Davoren Oh, she's terribly anxious about poor Mr Davoren, all of a sudden.

Adolphus Grigson (*stumbling towards Davoren, and holding out his hand*) Davoren! He's a man. Leave it there, mate. You needn't be afraid av Dolphus Grigson; there never was a drop av informer's blood in the whole family av Grigson. I don't know what you are or what you think, but you're a man, an' not like some of the goughers in this house, that ud hang you. Not referrin' to you, Mr Shields.

Mrs Grigson Oh, you're not deluding to Mr Shields.

Seumas I know that, Mr Grigson; go on down, now, with Mrs Grigson, an' have a sleep.

Adolphus Grigson I tie meself to no woman's apron strings, Mr Shields; I know how to keep Mrs Grigson in her place; I have the authority of the Bible for that. I know the Bible from cover to cover, Mr Davoren, an' that's more than some in this house could say. And what does the Holy Scripture say about woman? It says, 'The woman shall be subject to her husband', an' I'll see that Mrs

Grigson keeps the teachin' av the Holy Book in the letter an' in the spirit. If you're ever in trouble, Mr Davoren, an' Grigson can help – I'm your man – have you me?

Davoren I have you, Mr Grigson, I have you.

Adolphus Grigson Right; I'm an Orangeman, an' I'm not ashamed av it, an' I'm not afraid av it, but I can feel for a true man, all the same – have *you* got me, Mr Shields?

Seumas Oh, we know you well, Mr Grigson; many a true Irishman was a Protestant – Tone, Emmet an' Parnell.

Adolphus Grigson Mind you, I'm not sayin' as I agree with them you've mentioned, Mr Shields, for the Bible forbids it, an' Adolphus Grigson 'll always abide be the Bible. Fear God an' honour the King – that's written in Holy Scripture, an' there's no blottin' it out. (*Pulling a bottle out of his pocket*) But here, Mr Davoren, have a drink, just to show there's no coolness.

Davoren No, no, Mr Grigson, it's too late now to take anything. Go on down with Mrs Grigson, and we can have a chat in the morning.

Adolphus Grigson Sure you won't have a drink?

Davoren Quite sure – thanks all the same.

Adolphus Grigson (*drinking*) Here's the first today! To all true men, even if they were born in a bottle. Here's to King William, to the battle av the Boyne; to the Hobah Black Chapter – that's my Lodge, Mr Davoren; an' to The Orange Lily O. (*Singing in a loud shout*)

An' dud ya go to see the show, each rose an' pinkadilly
O,
To feast your eyes an' view the prize won be the Orange
Lily O.

The Vic'roy there, so debonair, just like a daffadilly O,
 With Lady Clarke, blithe as a lark, approached the
 Orange Lily O.
 Heigh Ho the Lily O,
 The Royal, Loyal Lily O,
 Beneath the sky what flower can vie with Erin's Orange
 Lily O!

Davoren Holy God, isn't this terrible!

Adolphus Grigson (*singing*)

The elated Muse, to hear the news, jumped like a
 Connaught filly O,
 As gossip Fame did loud proclaim the triumph av the
 Lily O.
 The Lowland field may roses yield, gay heaths the
 Highlands hilly O;
 But high or low no flower can show like Erin's Orange
 Lily O.
 Heigh Ho the Lily O,
 The Royal, Loyal Lily O,
 Beneath the sky what flower can vie with Erin's Or . . .

While Adolphus Grigson has been singing, the sound of a rapidly moving motor is heard, faintly at first, but growing rapidly louder, till it apparently stops suddenly somewhere very near the house, bringing Grigson's song to an abrupt conclusion. They are all startled, and listen attentively to the throbbing of the engines, which can be plainly heard. Grigson is considerably sobered, and anxiously keeps his eyes on the door. Seumas sits up in bed and listens anxiously. Davoren, with a shaking hand, lights the candle, and begins to search hurriedly among the books and papers on the table.

(*With a tremor in his voice*) There's no need to be afraid, they couldn't be comin' here.

Mrs Grigson God forbid! It ud be terrible if they came at this hour ov the night.

Seumas You never know now, Mrs Grigson; they'd rush in on you when you'd be least expectin' them. What, in the name o' God, is goin' to come out of it all? Nobody now cares a traneeen about the orders of the Ten Commandments; the only order that anybody minds now is, 'Put your hands up'. Oh, it's a hopeless country.

Adolphus Grigson Whisht; do you hear them talking outside at the door? You're sure of your life nowhere now; it's just as safe to go everywhere as it is to anywhere. An' they don't give a damn whether you're a loyal man or not. If you're a Republican they make you sing 'God save the King', an' if you're loyal they'll make you sing the 'Soldiers' Song'. The singin' ud be all right if they didn't make you dance afterwards.

Mrs Grigson They'd hardly come here unless they heard something about Mr Davoren.

Davoren About me! What could they hear about me?

Adolphus Grigson You'll never get some people to keep their mouths shut. I was in the Blue Lion this evening, an' who do you think was there, blowin' out av him, but that little blower, Tommy Owens; there he was tellin' everybody that *he* knew where there was bombs; that *he* had a friend that was a General in the IRA; that *he* could tell them what the Staff was thinkin' av doin'; that *he* could lay his hand on tons av revolvers; that they wasn't a mile from where he was livin', but that *he* knew his own know, an' would keep it to himself.

Seumas Well, God blast the little blower, anyway; it's the like ov him that deserves to be plugged! (*To Davoren*) What are you lookin' for among the books, Donal?

Davoren A letter that I got today from Mr Gallogher and Mrs Henderson; I'm blessed if I know where I put it.

Seumas (*peevishly*) Can't you look for it in the mornin'?

Davoren It's addressed to the Irish Republican Army, and, considering the possibility of a raid, it would be safer to get rid of it.

Shots again heard out in the lane, followed by loud shouts of 'Halt, halt, halt!'

Adolphus Grigson I think we had better be gettin' to bed, Debby; it's not right to be keepin' Mr Davoren an' Mr Shields awake.

Seumas An' what made them give you such a letter as that; don't they know the state the country is in? An' you were worse to take it. Have you got it?

Davoren I can't find it anywhere; isn't this terrible!

Adolphus Grigson Goodnight, Mr Davoren; goodnight, Mr Shields.

Mrs Grigson Goodnight, Mr Shields; goodnight, Mr Davoren.

They go out. Seumas and Davoren are too much concerned about the letter to respond to their goodnights.

Seumas What were you thinkin' of when you took such a letter as that? Ye gods, has nobody any brains at all, at all? Oh, this is a hopeless country. Did you try in your pockets?

Davoren (*searching in his pockets*) Oh, thanks be to God, here it is.

Seumas Burn it now, an', for God's sake, don't take any letters like that again . . . There's the motor goin' away;

we can sleep in peace now for the rest of the night. Just to make sure of everything now, have a look in that bag o' Maguire's: not that there can be anything in it.

Davoren If there's nothing in it, what's the good of looking?

Seumas It won't kill you to look, will it?

Davoren goes over to the bag, puts it on the table, opens it, and jumps back, his face pale and his limbs trembling.

Davoren My God, it's full of bombs, Mills bombs!

Seumas Holy Mother of God, you're jokin'!

Davoren If the Tans come you'll find whether I'm jokin' or no.

Seumas Isn't this a nice pickle to be in? St Anthony, look down on us!

Davoren There's no use of blaming St Anthony; why did you let Maguire leave the bag here?

Seumas Why did I let him leave the bag here; why did I let him leave the bag here! How did I know what was in it? Didn't I think there was nothin' in it but spoons an' hairpins? What'll we do now; what'll we do now? Mother o' God, grant there'll be no raid tonight. I knew things ud go wrong when I missed Mass this mornin'.

Davoren Give over your praying and let us try to think of what is best to be done. There's one thing certain: as soon as morning comes I'm on the run out of this house.

Seumas Thinkin' of yourself, like the rest of them. Leavin' me to bear the brunt of it.

Davoren And why shouldn't you bear the brunt of it? Maguire was no friend of mine; besides, it's your fault; you

knew the sort of a man he was, and you should have been on your guard.

Seumas Did I know he was a gunman; did I know he was a gunman; did I know he was a gunman? Did . . .

Davoren Do you mean to tell me that . . .

Seumas Just a moment . . .

Davoren You didn't know . . .

Seumas Just a moment . . .

Davoren That Maguire was connected with . . .

Seumas (*loudly*) Just a moment; can't . . .

Davoren The Republican Movement? What's the use of trying to tell damn lies!

Minnie Powell rushes into the room. She is only partly dressed, and has thrown a shawl over her shoulders. She is in a state of intense excitement.

Minnie Mr Davoren, Donal, they're all round the house; they must be goin' to raid the place; I was lookin' out of the window an' I seen them; I do be on the watch every night; have you anything? If you have . . .

There is heard at the street door a violent and continuous knocking, followed by the crash of glass and the beating of the door with rifle butts.

There they are, there they are, there they are!

Davoren reclines almost fainting on the bed; Seumas sits up in an attitude of agonized prayerfulness; Minnie alone retains her presence of mind. When she sees their panic she becomes calm, though her words are rapidly spoken, and her actions are performed with decisive celerity.

What is it; what have you got; where are they?

Davoren Bombs, bombs, bombs; my God! in the bag on the table there; we're done, we're done!

Seumas Hail, Mary, full of grace – pray for us miserable sinners – Holy St Anthony, do you hear them batterin' at the door – now an' at the hour of our death – say an act of contrition, Donal – there's the glass gone!

Minnie I'll take them to my room; maybe they won't search it; if they do aself, they won't harm a girl. Goodbye . . . Donal. (*She glances lovingly at Donal – who is only semi-conscious – as she rushes out with the bag.*)

Seumas If we come through this I'll never miss a Mass again! If it's the Tommies it won't be so bad, but if it's the Tans, we're goin' to have a terrible time.

The street door is broken open and heavy steps are heard in the hall, punctuated with shouts of 'Old the light 'ere', 'Put 'em up', etc. An Auxiliary opens the door of the room and enters, revolver in one hand and electric torch in the other. His uniform is black, and he wears a black beret.

The Auxiliary 'Oo's 'ere?

Seumas (*as if he didn't know*) Who – who's that?

The Auxiliary (*peremptorily*) 'Oo's 'ere?

Seumas Only two men, mister; me an' me mate in t'other bed.

The Auxiliary Why didn't you open the door?

Seumas We didn't hear you knockin', sir.

The Auxiliary You must be a little awd of 'earin', ay?

Seumas I had rheumatic fever a few years ago, an' ever since I do be a – I do be a little deaf sometimes.

The Auxiliary (to Davoren) 'Ow is it you're not in bed?

Davoren I was in bed; when I heard the knockin' I got up to open the door.

The Auxiliary You're a koind blowke, you are. Deloighted, like, to have a visit from us, ay? Ay? (threatening to strike him) Why down't you answer?

Davoren Yes, sir.

The Auxiliary What's your name?

Davoren Davoren, Dan Davoren, sir.

The Auxiliary You're not an Irishman, are you?

Davoren I-I-I was born in Ireland.

The Auxiliary Ow, you were, were you; Irish han' proud of it, ay? (To Seumas) What's your name?

Seumas Seuma . . . Oh no; Jimmie Shields, sir.

The Auxiliary Ow, you're a selt (*he means a Celt*), one of the seltic race that speaks a lingo of its ahn, and that's going to overthrow the British Empire - I don't think! 'Ere, where's your gun?

Seumas I never had a gun in me hand in me life.

The Auxiliary Now; you wouldn't know what a gun is if you sawr one, I suppose. (*Displaying his revolver in a careless way*) 'Ere, what's that?

Seumas Oh, be careful, please, be careful.

The Auxiliary Why, what 'ave I got to be careful abaht?

Seumas The gun; it-it-it might go off.

The Auxiliary An' what prawse if it did; it can easily be relowded. Any ammunition 'ere? What's in that press? (*He searches and scatters contents of press.*)

Seumas Only a little bit o' grub; you'll get nothin' here, sir; no one in the house has any connection with politics.

The Auxiliary Now? I've never met a man yet that didn't say that, but we're a little bit too ikey now to be kidded with that sort of talk.

Seumas May I go an' get a drink o' water?

The Auxiliary You'll want a barrel of watah before you're done with us. (*The Auxiliary goes about the room examining places.*) 'Ello, what's 'ere? A statue o' Christ! An' a Crucifix! You'd think you was in a bloomin' monastery.

Mrs Grigson enters, dressed disorderly and her hair awry.

Mrs Grigson They're turning the place upside-down. Upstairs an' downstairs they're makin' a litter of everything! I declare to God, it's awful what law-abidin' people have to put up with. An' they found a pint bottle of whiskey under Dolphie's pillow, an' they're drinkin' every drop of it - an' Dolphie 'll be like a devil in the mornin' when he finds he has no curer.

The Auxiliary (*all attention when he hears the word whiskey*) A bottle of whiskey, ay? 'Ere, where do you live - quick, where do you live?

Mrs Grigson Down in the kitchen - an' when you go down will you ask them not to drink - oh, he's gone without listenin' to me.

While Mrs Grigson is speaking the Auxiliary rushes out.

Seumas (*anxiously to Mrs Grigson*) Are they searchin' the whole house, Mrs Grigson?

Mrs Grigson They didn't leave a thing in the kitchen that they didn't flitter about the floor; the things in the

cupboard, all the little odds an' ends that I keep in the big box, an' . . .

Seumas Oh, they're a terrible gang of blaguards – did they go upstairs? – they'd hardly search Minnie Powell's room – do you think would they, Mrs Grigson?

Mrs Grigson Just to show them the sort of a man he was, before they come in, Dolphie put the big Bible on the table, open at the First Gospel of St Peter, second chapter, an' marked the thirteenth to the seventeenth verse in red ink – you know the passages, Mr Shields – (*quoting*): 'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, an' for the praise of them that do well . . . Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King.'

An' what do you think they did, Mr Shields? They caught a hold of the Bible an' flung it on the floor – imagine that, Mr Shields – flingin' the Bible on the floor! Then one of them says to another – 'Jack,' says he, 'have you seen the light; is your soul saved?' An' then they grabbed hold of poor Dolphie, callin' him Mr Moody an' Mr Sankey, an' wanted him to offer up a prayer for the Irish Republic! An' when they were puttin' me out, there they had the poor man sittin' up in bed, his hands crossed on his breast, his eyes lookin' up at the ceilin', an' he singin' a hymn – 'We shall meet in the Sweet Bye an' Bye' – an' all the time, Mr Shields, there they were drinkin' his whiskey; there's torture for you, an' they all laughin' at poor Dolphie's terrible sufferins.

Davoren In the name of all that's sensible, what did he want to bring whiskey home with him for? They're bad enough sober, what'll they be like when they're drunk?

Mrs Grigson (*plaintively*) He always brings a drop home with him – he calls it his medicine.

Seumas (*still anxious*) They'll hardly search all the house; do you think they will, Mrs Grigson?

Mrs Grigson An' we have a picture over the mantelpiece of King William crossing the Boyne, an' do you know what they wanted to make out, Mr Shields, that it was Robert Emmet, an' the picture of a sacret society!

Seumas She's not listenin' to a word I'm sayin'! Oh, the country is hopeless an' the people is hopeless.

Davoren For God's sake tell her to go to hell out of this – she's worse than the Auxsie.

Seumas (*thoughtfully*) Let her stay where she is; it's safer to have a woman in the room. If they come across the bombs I hope to God Minnie 'll say nothin'.

Davoren We're a pair of pitiable cowards to let poor Minnie suffer when we know that we and not she are to blame.

Seumas What else can we do, man? Do you want us to be done in? If you're anxious to be riddled, I'm not. Besides, they won't harm her, she's only a girl, an' so long as she keeps her mouth shut it'll be all right.

Davoren I wish I could be sure of that.

Seumas D'ye think are they goin', Mrs Grigson? What are they doin' now?

Mrs Grigson (*who is standing at the door, looking out into the hall*) There's not a bit of me that's not shakin' like a jelly!

Seumas Are they gone upstairs, Mrs Grigson? Do you think, Mrs Grigson, will they soon be goin'?

Mrs Grigson When they were makin' poor Dolphie sit up in the bed, I 'clare to God I thought every minute I'd hear

their guns goin' off, an' see poor Dolphie stretched out dead in the bed – whisht, God bless us, I think I hear him moanin'!

Seumas You might as well be talking to a stone! They're all hopeless, hopeless, hopeless! She thinks she hears him moanin'! It's bloody near time somebody made him moan!

Davoren (*with a sickly attempt at humour*) He's moaning for the loss of his whiskey.

During the foregoing dialogue the various sounds of a raid – orders, the tramping of heavy feet, the pulling about of furniture, etc., are heard. Now a more definite and sustained commotion is apparent. Loud and angry commands of 'Go on', 'Get out and get into the lorry', are heard, mingled with a girl's voice – it is Minnie's – shouting bravely, but a little hysterically, 'Up the Republic'.

Mrs Grigson (*from the door*) God save us, they're takin' Minnie, they're takin' Minnie Powell! (*Running out*) What in the name of God can have happened?

Seumas Holy Saint Anthony grant that she'll keep her mouth shut.

Davoren (*sitting down on the bed and covering his face with his hands*) We'll never again be able to lift up our heads if anything happens to Minnie.

Seumas For God's sake keep quiet or somebody'll hear you; nothin'll happen to her, nothin' at all – it'll be all right if she only keeps her mouth shut.

Mrs Grigson (*running in*) They're after gettin' a whole lot of stuff in Minnie's room! Enough to blow up the whole street, a Tan says! God tonight, who'd have ever thought that of Minnie Powell!

Seumas Did she say anything, is she sayin' anything, what's she sayin', Mrs Grigson?

Mrs Grigson She's shoutin' 'Up the Republic' at the top of her voice. An' big Mrs Henderson is fightin' with the soldiers – she's after nearly knockin' one of them down, an' they're puttin' her into the lorry too.

Seumas God blast her! Can she not mind her own business? What does she want here – didn't she know there was a raid on? Is the whole damn country goin' mad? They'll open fire in a minute an' innocent people'll be shot!

Davoren What way are they using Minnie, Mrs Grigson; are they rough with her?

Mrs Grigson They couldn't be half rough enough; the little hussy, to be so deceitful; she might as well have had the house blew up! God tonight, who'd think it was in Minnie Powell!

Seumas Oh, grant she won't say anything!

Mrs Grigson There they're goin' away now; ah, then I hope they'll give that Minnie Powell a coolin'.

Seumas God grant she won't say anything! Are they gone, Mrs Grigson?

Mrs Grigson With her fancy stockins, an' her pom-poms, an' her crêpe de chine blouses! I knew she'd come to no good!

Seumas God grant she'll keep her mouth shut! Are they gone, Mrs Grigson?

Mrs Grigson They're gone, Mr Shields, an' here's poor Dolphie an' not a feather astray on him. Oh, Dolphie, dear, you're all right, thanks to God; I thought you'd never see the mornin'.

Adolphus Grigson (*entering without coat or vest*) Of course I'm all right; what ud put a bother on Dolphie Grigson? – not the Tans anyway!

Mrs Grigson When I seen you stretched out on the bed, an' you . . . singin' a hymn . . .

Adolphus Grigson (*fearful of possible humiliation*) Who was singin' a hymn? D'ye hear me talkin' to you – where did you hear me singin' a hymn?

Mrs Grigson I was only jokin', Dolphie, dear; I . . .

Adolphus Grigson Your place is below, an' not gosterin' here to men; down with you quick!

Mrs Grigson hurriedly leaves the room.

(*Nonchalantly taking out his pipe, filling it, lighting it, and beginning to smoke*) Excitin' few moments, Mr Davoren; Mrs G. lost her head completely – panic-stricken. But that's only natural, all women is very nervous. The only thing to do is to show them that they can't put the wind up you; show the least sign of fright an' they'd walk on you, simply walk on you. Two of them come down – 'Put them up', revolvers under your nose – you know, the usual way. 'What's all the bother about?' says I, quite calm. 'No bother at all,' says one of them, 'only this gun might go off an' hit somebody – have you me?' says he. 'What if it does,' says I, 'a man can only die once, an' you'll find Grigson won't squeal.' 'God, you're a cool one,' says the other, 'there's no blottin' it out.'

Seumas That's the best way to take them; it only makes things worse to show that you've got the wind up. 'Any ammunition here?' says the fellow that come in here. 'I don't think so,' says I, 'but you better have a look.' 'No back talk,' says he, 'or you might get plugged.' 'I don't know of any clause,' says I, 'in the British Constitution

that makes it a crime for a man to speak in his own room,' – with that, he just had a look round, an' off he went.

Adolphus Grigson If a man keeps a stiff upper front – Merciful God, there's an ambush!

Explosions of two bursting bombs are heard on the street outside the house, followed by fierce and rapid revolver- and rifle-fire. People are heard rushing into the hall, and there is general clamour and confusion. Seumas and Davoren cower down in the room; Grigson, after a few moments' hesitation, frankly rushes out of the room to what he conceives to be the safer asylum of the kitchen. A lull follows, punctuated by an odd rifle-shot; then comes a peculiar and ominous stillness, broken in a few moments by the sounds of voices and movement. Questions are heard being asked: 'Who was it was killed?' 'Where was she shot?' which are answered by: 'Minnie Powell'; 'She went to jump off the lorry an' she was shot'; 'She's not dead, is she?'; 'They say she's dead – shot through the buzzom!'

Davoren (*in a tone of horror-stricken doubt*) D'ye hear what they're sayin', Shields, d'ye hear what they're sayin'? – Minnie Powell is shot.

Seumas For God's sake speak easy, an' don't bring them in here on top of us again.

Davoren Is that all you're thinking of? Do you realize that she has been shot to save us?

Seumas Is it my fault; am I to blame?

Davoren It is your fault and mine, both; oh, we're a pair of dastardly cowards to have let her do what she did.

Seumas She did it off her own bat – we didn't ask her to do it.

Mrs Grigson enters. She is excited and semi-hysterical, and sincerely affected by the tragic occurrence.

Mrs Grigson (*falling down in a sitting posture on one of the beds*) What's goin' to happen next! Oh, Mr Davoren, isn't it terrible, isn't it terrible! Minnie Powell, poor little Minnie Powell's been shot dead! They were raidin' a house a few doors down, an' had just got up in their lorries to go away, when they was ambushed. You never heard such shootin'! An' in the thick of it, poor Minnie went to jump off the lorry she was on, an' she was shot through the buzzom. Oh, it was horrible to see the blood pourin' out, an' Minnie moanin'. They found some paper in her breast, with 'Minnie' written on it, an' some other name they couldn't make out with the blood; the officer kep' it. The ambulance is bringin' her to the hospital, but what good's that when she's dead! Poor little Minnie, poor little Minnie Powell, to think of you full of life a few minutes ago, an' now she's dead!

Davoren Ah me, alas! Pain, pain, pain ever, for ever! It's terrible to think that little Minnie is dead, but it's still more terrible to think that Davoren and Shields are alive! Oh, Donal Davoren, shame is your portion now till the silver cord is loosened and the golden bowl be broken. Oh, Davoren, Donal Davoren, poet and poltroon, poltroon and poet!

Seumas (*solemnly*) I knew something ud come of the tappin' on the wall!

Curtain.

JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK

A TRAGEDY IN THREE ACTS